Interventions to improve access to cultural and/or naturalistic sites/paths to facilitate the visit of people with motor or sensory-sensory disabilities with the adoption of equipment for the abatement of Barriers and/or for tourist assistance and information

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Project Acronym: TOURISM4ALL

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Project Title: Development of a cross-border network for the promotion of the accessible tourism destinations

Priority Axis: 3 Environment And Cultural Heritage

Specific objective: 3.1 Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development

Work Package Number: 4

Work Package Title: Implementation of pilot actions improving the tourism destination accessibility

Activity Number: 4.2

Activity Title: Improvement of the destination accessibility

Partner in Charge: Public institution RERA SD

Partners involved: All partners

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Table of content

1.   TOURISM4ALL project

The TOURISM4ALL project aims to develop and promote a wide cross-border network of accessible tourist destinations, including natural and cultural sites and urban spaces and beaches, in order to reduce tourist seasonality and promote social inclusion through the exchange of good practice, evaluation methods and joint services to promote tourism for the benefit of people with reduced mobility and people with special needs, such as people with disabilities and the elderly.

The project envisages action to improve accessibility in ten areas with natural or cultural heritage sites and in one demonstration activity involving campsite accommodation. This diverse range of areas is added value in terms of knowledge sharing and means outputs can be transferred to a wide variety of similar contexts; it will also mean that a cross border brochure of accessible tourism featuring a host of destinations can be promoted more effectively.

The aim is to encourage other entities to replicate good examples and adopt policies that support and promote the development of affordable tourism. This will further valorise natural and cultural heritage, improve local management of tourism strategies and ensure the sustainability of implemented activities and more effectively promote tourism products and services in the area covered by cross-border cooperation (in cooperation with tourism service providers), with the goal of increasing tourist traffic.

It goes without saying that tourism is the main source of income for millions of people in Europe and the world. It is, however, much more than one of the economic branches because it connects people, 'erases' borders by strengthening understanding between people and cultures, and thus contributes to their unity. When talking about the sustainability of tourism, it means preserving and enriching cultural and natural heritage of our world community, strengthening the contribution of this dynamic industry to economic development and job creation, improving local development by investing in infrastructure for tourism development. For all these and many other reasons, tourism deserves care and attention, as well as political support. As can be seen in practice, tourism has taken a leading role in the Currently, the prospects and needs of tourism in Europe and around the world are huge and challenging with increasing competition from outside, increasing consumer needs for more specialized tourism and the need for more successful practices that respect environmental issues.

Developing pilot and demonstration actions that improve the accessibility of tourism destinations, add value to natural and cultural heritage, and make skills and governance part of a system in each destination is the focus of the WP4 of the project, and it will provide guidance on how to measure performance and the delivery profile of project partners implementing activities of the mentioned work package.

2. WP4.2 overview

The following overview elaborates the preparation for implementation and the realization of pilot actions improving the tourism destination accessibility. One of the main aims of the project was to monitor the implementation of pilot actions for each partner involved in WP4 and to follow up progress made in each stage of the implementation.

The previous reports included detailed planning of the intervention aimed at improving the accessibility of cultural and natural heritage of the touristic destinations.

Regarding the intervention plans elaborated in WP4.1, the pilot actions to migrate the accessibility of sites and cultural or naturalistic routes to tourist destinations have been activated. It was realised through the purchase of equipment for the removal of barriers to motor disabilities, cognitive or sensory ones. The following have been procured:

- platforms, walkways and mobile benches,
- signage (visually impaired, brainy, etc.)
- caravans and sanitary devices,
- remote communication devices,
- ICT devices for visual / vocal information points (as totems with information in LIS and audio),

The PP7 (Croatian camping association) has realized two demonstration venues where they have set to "mobile homes". These sites have been further used for training acitivties. All of the installed devices are being managed locally directly by ach project partner or Associated Bodies such as regional tourist info points, healthcare compnies all based on signed and developed partnerships in the previous phases of the projec implementation. All of the procured equipment has been linked to cultural and touristic activities and as such are not commercial activities. Instead, they are offered for free and as such are used in the frame of cultural and

natural conservation and promotion activities making it accessible to general public free of charge.

3. Pilot implementation and monitoring

The A4.2 (Improvement of destination accessibility) has been realised through the purchase of equipment for creating the preconditions of strengthening the concept of Accessible tourism in the pilot area. The phases of the implementation of these sub-activities were as follows:

- Realisation of a public procurement in order to find and procure the adequate equipment necessary for the completion of the pilot phase of the project implementation has been successfully implemented by all partners involved in the interventions.
- Some project partners were obliged to acquire special permissions for the placement of the equipment which will be purchased, and for the realisation of the selected pilot. These activities have partially been realized through signing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the involved parties
- After finalization of the procurement procedures, the equipment has been put to place and was available for the public.

The A4.2 (Development of services for the accessible tourism) has included 11 specific interventions for the creation of special services all with the aim of improvement of the accessible tourism concept which covered the following:

• Geo-referenced maps with information on the accessibility of the routes

• Informative and remote assistance app (i.e. LIS video, accessible sections for visually impaired people, etc.)

• Development of accessible sections of tourist information and health care websites

• Virtual tours (VR, 360° views) of non-accessible sites

- Development of information materials on food ingredients (product categorization / dishes / typical menus with information on intolerances, allergies and other forms of dietary regimes)

- Development of "tourist card" with incentives for the disabled, elderly people, etc.

All project partners after the completion of the pilot activities have provided information about eventual problems which they have faced during implementation or deviations in relation to the initial planned schedule.

4.   Conclusion

The Pilot actions which are the main focus of the implementation of the WP4 have been implemented with the involvement and support of local partners. This cooperation has great significance because it has set the grounds for strengthening long-term governance for the management of accessible tourism. Each of the project partners identified the specific pilot action to realize in WP4 with a cross-border complementarity approach based on concerted themes (coastal-seaside tourism, urban cultural tourism, nature tourism) and has successfully implemented all the connecting activities.

Through WP4, experimental and demonstration pilot actions have been implemented to improve the accessibility of specific tourist destinations through:

WP4.2: Adoption of corrections to improve the usability of destinations by purchasing "soft" equipment (pedestrians and walkways, signposts, trolleys, remote communication devices, etc.);

During the implementation of the pilot activities mentioned the partners need to clearly define the sites and pathways of the chosen pilot site, identify the barriers that could prevent from the implementation of the pilot action and prepare a risk-prevention plan stating activities which would help to bypass the possible occurrences.