Interventions with the development of specific services for improving accessible tourism

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Project Acronym: TOURISM4ALL

Project ID Number: 10047361

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: 4.3

Activity Title: Development of services for the accessible tourism

Partner in Charge: Public institution RERA SD

Partners involved: All partners

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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.   WP4.3 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 acitivities. 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.

The activities of WP4.3 have been concerned on the development of

"services" with the aim of improving the accessibility of the destinations.

In WP4.3 11 project partners have developed 11 interventions in order to improve access to cultural and/or naturalistic sites/paths in thir local areas All of thise proved to be an important factor to facilitate the visit of people with motor or sensory-sensory disabilities with the development of specific services for improving the quality of life, Tourist information and assistance services. A part of these activities have been based on "equipment instalation".

3.   Development of services for the accessible tourism

Data acquired through the collecting of various research results and analisis done has suggested that stakeholder collaboration of all relevant sectors is a must for the development of accessible tourism destinations, but the fragmentation of the hospitality and tourism industry makes delivering high- quality experiences for PwD at the destination level complex and challenging. Effective collaboration amongst stakeholders to enable accessible tourism would require several elements: control and coordination, collaboration and integration, clarity of roles and responsibilities, communication, and focus on access.

The contribution in making tourism more accessible to PwD is a priority for all the stakeholders involved in tourism, including those in the academic community. From the ethical perspective, every person should have the possibility to satisfy the fundamental right to travel. Moreover, accessible tourism has the potential to contribute to the competitiveness of tourism organisations and destinations, representing a valuable opportunity to enhance the wellbeing of the territory and its inhabitants (e.g. by creating new jobs).

The most critical step of the entire process along the suggested path is the first one, that is, deciding to start the process itself. For this purpose, the role of the territory with its public institutions is pivotal. It is important that territorial authorities and destination management organisations where there are available, take a leading role in developing an effective engagement platform around which the commitment of other actors can be motivated. For this purpose, it is important to be convinced that the

suggested solution is feasible (as demonstrated by other tourism locations) and to provide different types of benefits for all participants.

Through the impplementation of the project Tourism4All, a specific intervention has been carried out in order to realize a demonstration action in the camping facilities aimed at the replicability of the actions by these structures, which represent the largest accommodation capacity in the eligible ITA and HR areas.

The actions have been implemented by all project partners except PP6, PP9 and PP 11 in their respective spatial spheres of competence and will involve 3 types of tourist products - coastal-coastal, naturalistic, Urban - and an action concerning demonstration experimentation on the application of solutions to improve camp accessibility. The diversification of destinations will be an added value both in terms of the articulation of the proposed tourist offer and for the demonstrative and transferable value of the pilot action.

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.);

WP4.3: development of services to improve the touristic experience of tourists with disabilities and stimulate accessible tourism (tourist information material for people with disabilities, remote assistance and relief services, tourist card 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.

Due to the corona crisis the implementation of pilot actions reached different progress. Partners PP1, PP5 and PP7 have finished placement of the equipment realization of intervention on the pilot sites. Partners PP2, PP3, PP8 and PP12 started process while the other are facing with problems such as changing of the place of interventions.

Finally, all PPs managed to conclude their pilot actions in compliance with what is stated in the Detailed Evaluation Plan.