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Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains network ② (EMbleMatic ②)

Second Transnational Meeting

14th and 15th November 2022 – Gosol, Catalonia, Spain

Minutes of the European Lab #2

DAY 2 – 15th November 2022 – European emblematic lab #2 “Accessibility and mobility”

1. Introduction of the session : accessibility

Accessibility is a concept that is important for touristic activities. It concerns both indoor and outdoor activities. The presentation of good practices on the topic is a way to give inspiration to other and to share common challenges regarding this topic.

The concept of accessibility => See powerpoint presentation

Speaker: Bianca Foix, expert on tourism and accessibility

Accessibility is for everyone and not only people with reduced mobility.

Accessibility gathers a lot of different ideas. It affects all type of public: children, families, elderly... and is a way to take in count physical and mental disabilities.

In the field of tourism, there is an increasing need to consider accessibility in the designing of a site / a destination.

There are several types of disabilities:

- Physical disability: it hinders or prevent the mobility of movement of the body, or part of the body, in the basic activities of daily life, including disabilities of organic origin.
- Visual disability: it implies a partial decrease or total lack of the ability to see.
- Hearing disability: it implies a partial or total lack of the ability to perceive acoustic forms.
- Communication, cognitive, psychic, intellectual disability, and mental disorder: it impacts the socialization or the behavior of people in places and situations.

How to act to improve accessibility for all?

- a. Train people and make them available for disabled persons
- b. Work on the communication on medias, social networks, website and share information about the accessibility of a place

Nowadays, a lot of tools are available to improve the accessibility: new technologies, innovations... But the central issue is also to train tourism stakeholders on how to relate to people with disabilities.

In general, a lot of actions can be undertaken to improve it, in different



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context:

- Accommodation and restaurants: waiting seats, table at reception to attend chair height...
- Culture: seats or areas reserved to people with a reduced mobility, visits, or workshops specific to different disabilities, use of QR code, audio description...
- Nature tourism: short routes with seated stops, route will braille panels and relief books...

2. Let's discover 3 concrete experiences

Accessibility experiences in Museu del Cement Asland de Castellar n'Hug

Speakers: Anna Molina & Anna Garcia

The old Asland cement factory was in operation from 1904 to 1975. Since 2002, the place was transformed into a museum and was awarded the title of cultural site of national interest. The visit of the site allows the public to understand the set of archaeological remains, from the 20th century, and to discover what was a modernist industrial complex at that time.

In 2022, the museum took a set of measures to improve the accessibility of the place. It included:

- Audiovisual accessibility measures, to discover the space of the visitable itinerary through a virtual visit,
- Information on the museum website, relative to the accessibility of the site,
- Development of different solutions and services: magnetic loops, rest areas all along the visit tour, reserved areas for people with reduced mobility or easy reading booklet and braille information panels.

In 2023, the museum planned to improve their accessibility plan. To define these measures, the museum was supported by the local tourism organization, which helps them design their accessibility plan. Through some workshops, they could have access to personalized action plan and recommendations to improve the site's accessibility.

These transformations have been supported by the Berguedà agency, which support companies which want to improve their accessibility. Supporting activities: training, advices by experts in the drafting of their action plan on accessibility...

Tactile maps and signs for visually impaired visitors

Speaker: Mikrou Georgios, industrial designer

The project "Mind the Map" was designed to make archaeological places accessible to disabled. It combines research, studies, design, and manufacturing of tactile maps.

The idea through the project was to make the maps more accessible to all. It was made through different steps:

Step 1. Draft drawings

Step 2. 3D modelling

Step 3. Diffusion of the final product



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In general, the maps are made with three main features : experiential features, tactile features and audio features. However, each application and map depends on the needs of the constructor. The idea is then to constantly adapt the ideas to the context in which it will be developed (QR codes, durable or nonporous materials...).

The “Mind the Map” project benefited to several projects in different fields:

- In Kaveirio, Lemnios, the technology was used to improve the accessibility through the creation of a topographic map.
- In the University of Ioannina, the idea was to make the university accessible to people with visual disabilities. The university’s map was made in 1998. They mapped the university a second time and developed an interactive map showing the location of the buildings, thanks to a color code. They also gave flyers and information to students, to get them to know they were developing the map.
- In Souriza, Lavreotike, they developed a tactile map of the area showing all the routes available and installed informative signs on the routes.

As a conclusion, the different features of the “Mind the Map” project can be used in different environments, with the purpose to improve the overall site’s accessibility.

Can autism hike ?

Speaker: Samara Eirini, Professional Educator for special education needs

Include autistic persons in hike or outdoor activities implies to have a certain knowledge and understanding of the disorder.

What is autism?

Autism is a severe and diversified neurological development disorder which affects behavior. It causes different patterns (short attention span, impulsiveness, lack of coordination...) in the behavior and in the communication of the person (delayed speech, trouble expressing emotions...).

Methodology to go hiking with autistic persons

- Before hiking : organize preparatory activities and asking information about the specificities of the person (exchanges with parents, educators), what he/she likes or dislikes.
- Planning the hike : it should be in small groups of four or five persons. For the groups with severe or multiple disabilities, there is a need for one mountain guide and a one to one expert. For groups of Asperger, it could be one mountain guide and one expert.
- Design a mindful trail : explain the trail to the autistic person before it began (how long it is, if there are climbs...).
- Take some equipment’s : trail snacks, notebook, cards, favorite items, recorder, picture symbols...

How to prevent meltdowns?

Sometimes, autistic persons can have an intense response to an overwhelming



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situation and then a loss of control expressed verbally or physically. It can be caused by:

- Anxiety (bugs, water, cliffs...)
- Change in routine
- Communication difficulties

To prevent it, you should know about the antecedent of the person. You should take time to :

- Talk with the person about the trail,
- Use activities that calm the person and use picture symbol to explain some changes,
- Offer visual support, written information or modifying your verbal communication for example.

Pay attention to not rush the autistic person getting to the end of the trail. You can also use some rewards all along the trail, making clear what behavior you are rewarding.

Why to hike with autistic persons?

Hiking and organizing outdoor activities is a way to:

- Learn and have new experiences
- Explore nature
- Develop sensory skills or physical capacities
- Improve the social skills of the person

To sum up:

- ⇒ Accessibility is a part of sustainable tourism very often under-considered
- ⇒ A lot of simple actions could be implemented in favor of accessibility, easy to implement and not expensive (small investments). Need to be anticipated.
- ⇒ There is a need to raise awareness among tourism stakeholders about disabilities and how to deal with it
- ⇒ Training is important to learn about disabilities, issues related to accessibility and consequently to improve the access of touristic sites
- ⇒ Communication is necessary to inform people of what they could access when discovering a touristic site / a natural site
- ⇒ To answer the issue of accessibility, it needs a collective commitment engaging local authorities (supporting policies), companies (development of solutions) and cultural/natural sites (to make some investments, to apply policies)