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DATIS

**JOINT STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES
FOR IMPROVING DIGITAL
ACCESSIBILITY IN TOURISM
IN THE ITALY-SLOVENIA
CROSS-BORDER AREA**

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1. Purpose of the document

This document presents a joint strategy for improving digital accessibility in tourism in the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area, prepared within the DATIS project. In terms of content, the document combines Activities D 1.2.2 – Joint preparation of a strategy to improve digital accessibility in the tourism sector and D 1.2.3 – Strategy and guidelines for improving digital accessibility in the tourism sector in the cross-border area.

The strategy is based on the results of research, analytical and participatory work carried out within the DATIS project. It includes the findings of a cross-border survey on the user habits and experiences of people with disabilities, the results of an analysis of the digital accessibility of 100 tourism websites from Slovenia and Italy, and the findings of qualitative interviews with stakeholders who, in practice, are involved in organising tourist visits, excursions and trips for users with different forms of impairment.

The document is intended for tourism providers, cultural institutions, destination management organisations, public institutions and other stakeholders in the cross-border area. Its purpose is to provide a common strategic framework that supports a better understanding of digital accessibility and the planning of concrete improvements in tourism provision.

The basic premise of the strategy is that the tourist experience begins before the user arrives at the physical location. The user first searches for information, checks the offer, plans the visit, compares options, makes a reservation or contacts the provider. If this first point of contact is not accessible, understandable and usable, the user may already be excluded at the planning stage.

The strategy therefore treats digital accessibility as an integral part of the overall tourist experience. Digital accessibility is connected with physical and communication accessibility, since users need clear information about the space, the service, communication, support, limitations and the actual conditions of the visit in order to make independent decisions.

Particular emphasis is placed on people with disabilities, especially blind and partially sighted users and people with cognitive, neurological, psychosocial and communication impairments, as well as the older population. For these groups of users, reliable, understandable and accessible information is often decisive in enabling them to assess independently whether a particular tourism service is suitable, safe and usable for them.

Accessible tourism is an approach that, by removing physical, digital and communication barriers, creates social conditions for participation, recognition, independence and equality in practice. It is based on the understanding that barriers in tourism often arise from the way spaces, information, services, communication and expectations are designed. Accessibility is therefore an integral part of responsible, inclusive and high-quality tourism.

The document translates the findings of the project into strategic objectives, practical guidelines for tourism providers, short-term and long-term measures, and examples of good practice in Europe that can be transferred to the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area.

2. DATIS Project Challenges

The DATIS project was designed as a response to a shared challenge in the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area: improving digital accessibility and social inclusion in the tourism sector for people with disabilities and the older population. The project is based on the finding that the tourism potential of the cross-border area is not fully accessible to all users, particularly because of insufficient digital information, inadequate accessibility of websites and applications, and limited awareness among tourism providers of the barriers users encounter when accessing information, communication and services.

An important starting point of the project was the understanding that the tourist experience begins before arrival at the location. Users first search for information about the offer on websites, in applications, digital guides, online forms, maps, multimedia content and other digital channels. If these sources are not accessible, understandable and usable, barriers may already arise at the stage of planning the visit.

The DATIS project therefore treated digital accessibility as an integral part of the overall tourist experience. Accessible digital information enables users to check the offer before the visit, understand the conditions of access, assess whether the service is suitable for them, contact the provider and make an informed decision.

The project was based on a multidisciplinary and participatory approach. It involved partners from various fields, including tourism, research, digital accessibility, social inclusion and work with people with disabilities. The active involvement of people with disabilities was particularly important, as they were not treated merely as end users, but as holders of experience, knowledge and feedback.

The project included research, analytical, educational and pilot activities. It involved a survey on the travel experiences of people with disabilities and the barriers they encounter when planning tourist visits, an analysis of the digital accessibility of tourism providers, the development of digital tools, training for tourism providers, and pilot activities in cultural and tourism environments in Italy and Slovenia.

The cross-border dimension of the project was essential, as the Slovenian and Italian tourism areas face similar challenges. Users of tourism services often cross linguistic, organisational and administrative borders, which makes comparable, clear and reliable information on accessibility essential on both sides of the border.

The strategy is therefore designed as a joint document for the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area. It is intended to support tourism providers, cultural institutions, destination management organisations, public institutions and other stakeholders who wish to improve digital accessibility, strengthen user trust and develop more inclusive tourism services.

3. Adopted Methodological starting points

The strategy is based on three interconnected methodological sources: a cross-border survey on user habits and experiences, an analysis of the digital accessibility of tourism websites, and qualitative interviews with stakeholders from practice. Together, these three sources enable a comprehensive understanding of digital accessibility in tourism, as they connect user experiences, an expert review of websites and the practical knowledge of people involved in organising accessible tourist visits.

The first source is the cross-border survey on the tourism habits and experiences of people with disabilities. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into the travel habits, expectations, experiences and barriers encountered by the target user groups when planning and carrying out tourist visits in the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area. The survey focused in particular on people with cognitive or mental impairments, on blind and partially sighted users and on elderly people (over 65 y.o.).

The questionnaire was prepared and tested in cooperation with the University of Trieste, Coop Mosaico and the Union of Associations of the Blind and Partially Sighted of Slovenia. It included several thematic sections, including basic information, travel expectations, travel planning, access to online information, the travel experience, and users' suggestions and recommendations.

The second source is the analysis of the digital accessibility of 100 tourism websites from Slovenia and Italy. The analysis included different types of tourism providers, including accommodation providers, wineries, restaurants, cultural institutions, natural parks and one municipality. The purpose of the analysis was to assess the extent to which the websites of tourism providers are accessible to people with disabilities, the older population and users of assistive technologies.

The third source consists of qualitative interviews with stakeholders and experts who have practical experience in organising visits, excursions and trips for people with different forms of impairment. The purpose of the interviews was to deepen the understanding of how digital information is used in the actual planning of accessible tourism experiences, which information is essential for users and organisers, and where barriers most often arise in practice.

The interviews provided insight into the organisational and implementation aspects of accessible tourism. This perspective complements direct user experiences, as it shows which information enables reliable planning of a visit, how the actual situation on site is verified, what role communication with the provider plays, and why general statements about accessibility are often insufficient.

The methodological starting point of the strategy was the connection between physical, digital and communication accessibility. The DATIS project assumed that these levels cannot be treated separately within the tourist experience. Users must first have access

to accessible and understandable digital information, followed by the possibility of clear communication with the provider and, upon arrival at the location, the actual usability of the space, service or digital tools on site.

The combination of the three methodological sources ensures that the strategy is based not only on a technical review of websites, but also on user experiences, the practical circumstances of planning visits and the challenges of the tourism sector. The strategic objectives, guidelines and measures are therefore designed as a connection between data, user experiences, identified barriers, expert analysis and feasible improvements in practice.

4. Key findings

The Strategy for Improving Digital Accessibility in Tourism in the Italy–Slovenia Cross-Border Area is based on the findings of three interconnected sources: a cross-border survey on the user habits and experiences of people with disabilities, an analysis of the digital accessibility of 100 tourism websites, and qualitative interviews with stakeholders who are involved in practice in organising visits, excursions and trips for people with different forms of impairment.

The common finding of all three sources is that accessible tourism is based on accessible, reliable and understandable digital information. For users, the tourist experience does not begin only at the physical location, but already at the moment when they start searching for information, comparing the offer, checking access conditions, planning their journey, booking a service or contacting the provider. If this first step is not accessible, the user cannot make an informed decision independently.

The findings of the DATIS project therefore confirm the basic premise of the strategy: digital accessibility is not a separate technical add-on, but an essential condition for equality, independence, dignity and the inclusion of people with disabilities, the older population and other users with impairments.

4.1 Findings of the cross-border survey on user habits and experiences

The cross-border survey on the tourism habits and experiences of people with disabilities showed that, for the project's target groups, travel is not merely a leisure activity, but an important factor in well-being, independence, social inclusion and quality of life. The survey focused on people with different disabilities, with a particular emphasis on people with cognitive or mental impairments, on blind and partially sighted users and on elderly people. The questionnaires for these two groups were prepared by the University of Trieste (DiSPeS) in cooperation with Coop Mosaico and ZDSSS.

An important methodological and substantive finding of the survey was that user experiences and access barriers must be understood as diverse and multi-layered. People with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. Blind and partially sighted users encounter different barriers in accessing information than deaf and hard-of-hearing users, users with cognitive or psychosocial impairments, people with mobility impairments or the older population. The strategy is therefore based on the principle that digital accessibility cannot be limited to a single group or to a single type of impairment.

The survey showed that accessible information available in advance is essential for planning a tourist experience. Users must have access to information that enables them to assess whether a service is accessible, understandable, usable and safe for them. In this context, it is not sufficient for a provider to state in general terms that a service is “accessible”. Concrete information is required on the accessibility of paths, spaces,

communication, digital content, the possibility of using assistive technologies, language accessibility, staff support and any limitations.

This is particularly important for blind and partially sighted users and for people with cognitive, neurological, psychosocial or communication impairments. For these groups, unclear or inaccessible information can cause uncertainty, dependence on other people, cancellation of a visit or a negative user experience. Accessible information is a condition for empowerment and independent decision-making.

The survey also confirmed the importance of involving people with disabilities in the design of solutions. The DATIS project was based on a participatory approach in which people with disabilities were not treated merely as recipients of services, but as holders of experience and knowledge. Their involvement was important in designing the questionnaires, understanding user experiences and access barriers, interpreting the results and testing solutions in practice.

4.2 Findings of the digital accessibility analysis of 100 tourism providers

The analysis of the digital accessibility of 100 tourism websites from Slovenia and Italy showed that digital accessibility in the tourism sector is still insufficiently and unevenly developed. The analysis included accommodation providers, wineries, restaurants, cultural institutions, natural parks and one municipality. Its purpose was to assess the extent to which the websites of tourism providers are accessible to people with disabilities, the older population and users of assistive technologies.

The results show that digital accessibility in the tourism sector is often not planned systematically. On many websites, individual elements were implemented appropriately, while other key elements were missing or poorly implemented. This indicates that accessibility often occurs partially or incidentally, rather than as the result of conscious, comprehensive and user-oriented planning.

The most common barriers were related to missing or inappropriate image descriptions, lack of captions in videos, poor keyboard usability, poor contrast, the absence of website maps, missing skip links to the main content, inappropriate heading structure and reduced accessibility of forms. These barriers directly affect users' ability to find information, understand the offer, make a booking, contact the provider or prepare for a visit.

At the same time, the analysis showed that many providers already have certain technical foundations in place, such as responsiveness for mobile devices or basic language labelling of pages. However, such elements alone do not yet ensure actual usability for people with disabilities. The key issue is the gap between individual technical solutions and the overall user experience.

An important strategic finding is that many improvements are not necessarily technically demanding or financially burdensome. Basic measures include adding image descriptions, improving contrast, ensuring keyboard access, adding captions to videos

and introducing navigation aids such as a website map and a skip link to the main content.

Digital accessibility in tourism is part of hospitality, quality and the responsibility of the provider. For users, an inaccessible website means closed access to the offer, even when the physical service itself is of high quality. Inclusive tourism begins online, as digital information is often the first condition for a visit, a booking and trust.

4.3 Findings of qualitative interviews with stakeholders

The qualitative interviews with stakeholders further deepened the understanding of how digital information is used in the actual planning of visits, excursions and trips for people with different forms of impairment. The interviews were conducted with professionals in the sector who have practical experience in organizing tourism and cultural experiences. A total of ten interviews were conducted, five on the Italian side and five on the Slovenian side.

The information provided by people who, in practice, organise visits, excursions or trips for people with disabilities is important because they have insight into the entire process of planning an accessible tourist experience. Their experiences show where difficulties most often arise in practice: which information is missing from websites, which information is too general, what needs to be checked additionally by phone or email, when a general statement that an offer is “accessible” is not sufficient, and why digital information often does not enable a reliable decision.

These stakeholders do not speak on behalf of people with disabilities, but complement their user perspective with an organisational and implementation perspective. People with disabilities are best placed to explain how they experience barriers, what obstructs their independence and where the system excludes them. Organisers, in turn, show which information is essential for an accessible visit to be planned and carried out in practice: from arrival, orientation, communication and support to booking, timing, safety and the possibility of using the service independently.

The interviews showed that websites, portals and applications are generally the first source of information, but are almost never sufficient on their own. The final decision often requires direct contact with the provider, additional checks, phone or email communication and sometimes even a preliminary visit to the location. This means that digital information often does not create sufficient trust for an independent decision when it is too general, incomplete or insufficiently connected with actual circumstances of use.

A particularly important finding of the interviews was that accessibility in tourism is often understood too narrowly. On websites and in tourism information, it is often limited to physical elements such as ramps, lifts, toilets or access for wheelchair users. This overlooks the barriers encountered by people with sensory, cognitive, communication, relational, psychosocial, neurological or behavioural impairments. Such a narrow

understanding does not reflect the actual diversity of user circumstances, experiences and barriers in the online planning of a tourist experience.

The interviews also showed that the usability of a website is not only a question of simple navigation. A website becomes truly usable for the user only when it enables a reliable decision. It may be technically easy to use, yet still unusable for planning an accessible visit if it does not contain concrete, verifiable and relevant information. The key distinction is therefore between information that is merely published on a website and information that is sufficiently precise, understandable and useful in practice for independent decision-making.

The emotional dimension of accessibility was also important. Unclear, unreliable or incomplete information causes uncertainty, caution, stress or frustration, while clear and verifiable information increases the feeling of control, trust and safety. Accessibility is therefore not only a technical or informational category, but also affects the emotional experience of the user or the organiser of the visit.

The qualitative interviews thus confirmed that digital accessibility functions as part of a broader organisational chain. A website is often the first step, but it must be connected with other elements: clear contact information, responsive staff, the possibility of additional explanation, accurate information on physical accessibility, digital content on site and communication support. The strategy therefore treats digital accessibility as a complete system of information, decision-making, communication and user experience, enabling user's greater independence, safety and participation in tourism under conditions of equality.

4.4 Importance of importance of a systemic approach

The common finding of all analyses is that digital accessibility in tourism requires a systemic approach. Individual technical corrections are important, while a systemic approach ensures that providers understand their purpose, usefulness and impact on the actual user experience.

The low level of awareness in the tourism sector and in wider society is reflected in the fact that information on accessibility is often incomplete, too general or designed from the perspective of an average user. Accessibility is still understood as a special adaptation for particular groups, rather than as part of a high-quality and professional tourism offer.

The strategy therefore promotes a change in the understanding of accessibility. Accessibility must be understood as a connection between physical, digital and communication accessibility; as the user's right to clear and reliable information; as a condition for independence and equality; and as part of the hospitality, quality and responsibility of the tourism sector.

A key strategic emphasis is that people with disabilities and the older population must be involved in the development, testing and evaluation of digital tourism solutions. Without

their involvement, it is not possible to establish reliably whether solutions are genuinely accessible, understandable and usable in practice. The participatory approach is therefore not an addition to the strategy, but its foundation.

On the basis of these findings, the strategy must guide tourism providers towards ensuring accessible websites, clear information on accessibility, multi-channel communication, verifiable data, digital content compatible with assistive technologies, and continuous cooperation with users with impairments. In this way, digital tourism can become a tool for inclusion and independent decision-making.

5. Strategic objectives

The strategic objectives are based on the key findings of the DATIS project: digital accessibility in tourism is often insufficiently planned, information on accessibility is too general or unverifiable, and tourism providers often understand accessibility too narrowly, mainly as a question of physical access. The strategy therefore defines objectives that connect technical compliance, actual usability, user experience, awareness-raising in the sector and cross-border cooperation.

5.1 From formal compliance to actual user accessibility

The objective of the strategy is to encourage tourism providers to understand digital accessibility as a process of ensuring actual usability, independence and user trust. Standards and legislation set the basic level, but they cannot fully capture the diversity of user experiences, habits, circumstances of use and the concrete situations in which individuals access information, communication and services.

A website may formally meet certain technical requirements, yet still fail to enable the user to reliably understand the offer, check the conditions of access, assess whether the service is suitable for them or independently decide whether to visit. Standards define how digital content should be made technically accessible, but they cannot by themselves ensure that information is sufficiently clear, concrete, verifiable, useful and connected with the actual tourist experience.

A high-quality tourism offer must therefore go beyond minimum compliance and include verified solutions designed on the basis of user experiences, habits and circumstances of use. Actual accessibility is achieved when technical compliance enables the user to understand, trust, plan independently and use the service under conditions of equality.

5.2 Ensuring clear, concrete and verifiable information on accessibility

One of the central objectives of the strategy is to improve the quality of information on the accessibility of tourism services. Users must have access to concrete and verifiable information on what is accessible, for whom, under what conditions and at which points of the user journey.

This includes information on physical access, orientation, use of space, digital content, communication with the provider, available forms of support, access to multimedia content, use of assistive technologies and possible limitations. Such information enables users to assess independently whether a particular service is suitable, safe and feasible for them.

The strategy therefore encourages tourism providers to prepare information on accessibility in a clear, understandable and structured way, and in a form that can be used by different groups of users. Particular attention should be paid to blind and partially sighted users, people with cognitive, neurological, psychosocial and communication impairments, and the older population, as the quality of advance information is often decisive for these groups when planning a visit independently.

5.3 Connecting physical, digital and communication accessibility

The strategy is based on the principle that physical, digital and communication accessibility are connected parts of the same user experience. Digital information enables the user to plan; physical accessibility enables the actual use of a space or service; and communication accessibility enables understanding, orientation, contact with the provider and participation in the experience.

If one of these elements is absent, the entire tourist experience may be limited. A physically accessible facility that does not provide clear information online remains uncertain for the user before the visit. A well-presented digital offer that is not supported by appropriate communication or actual usability on site does not create trust. Communication with the provider also cannot replace the absence of basic accessible information if the user has to check every detail separately.

The objective of the strategy is therefore to promote a comprehensive approach in which tourism providers plan accessibility as a connection between online information, communication, the physical environment, digital tools on site and the user experience.

5.4 Involving people with disabilities and the older population in the development, testing and improvement of solutions

One of the fundamental objectives of the strategy is to involve people with disabilities and the older population in the development, testing and improvement of digital solutions in tourism. A reliable assessment of accessibility requires the involvement of people who actually use digital content, tourism services and assistive technologies.

People with disabilities are holders of experience, knowledge and feedback. Their involvement helps identify barriers that technical reviews often fail to detect and shows whether solutions are genuinely understandable, usable and reliable in practice. The DATIS project was based on a participatory approach, with the active involvement of end users with disabilities in different phases of the project.

The strategy therefore encourages tourism providers to involve people with disabilities and the older population in the preparation of content, website reviews, testing of digital tools, assessment of accessibility information and design of improvements. This is the way to develop solutions that are not merely formally correct, but verified, useful and meaningful in real-life circumstances.

5.5 Increasing awareness and knowledge in the tourism sector

The objective of the strategy is to increase awareness in the tourism sector of the importance of digital accessibility. The project findings show that accessibility in tourism is often not understood as an integral part of a high-quality offer, but as a special adaptation for a limited group of users. As a result, information on accessibility is often incomplete, too general or prepared without an understanding of actual user experiences and accessibility barriers.

Tourism providers need a better understanding of how people with disabilities and the older population use digital information, how they plan visits, which barriers arise when using websites and why clear information is a condition for independence. Awareness-raising must therefore go beyond the general message that accessibility is important and show providers the concrete connection between accessibility, hospitality, trust, service quality and business success.

The strategy promotes training, practical manuals, workshops, examples of good practice and cooperation with users. The purpose of these activities is to support providers in understanding accessibility as part of professional practice, rather than as a subsequent correction or additional obligation.

5.6 Developing a common cross-border approach to digital accessibility in tourism

The DATIS project showed that the Slovenian and Italian tourism areas face similar challenges in the field of digital accessibility. The website analysis and interviews with stakeholders show that the difficulties are often comparable: information is too general, accessibility is understood too narrowly, and users often have to seek additional explanations in order to make a reliable decision.

The objective of the strategy is therefore to develop a common cross-border approach based on knowledge exchange, comparison of experiences, use of common recommendations and cooperation between tourism, cultural, social, professional and user organisations. The cross-border approach is also important because users of tourism services do not necessarily think within administrative borders. They travel, search for information and use services across a wider area, and therefore need comparable quality of information and a similar level of trust on both sides of the border.

The strategy promotes the development of common starting points for accessible digital information, coordinated awareness-raising among providers, joint training and further cooperation between organisations working in the fields of tourism, culture, digital accessibility and the rights of people with disabilities.

5.7 Strengthening users' trust, independence and equality in planning tourist experiences

The ultimate objective of the strategy is to strengthen users' trust, independence and equality when planning and using tourism services. Accessible digital information enables users to check the offer themselves, understand the conditions of access, assess the suitability of the service and make an informed decision. This reduces dependence on other people, additional checks or subsequent explanations.

For people with disabilities and the older population, this means more than simply easier use of a website. It means the possibility of entering a tourist experience under conditions comparable to those of other users: with greater control, greater safety, more self-confidence and a greater ability to decide independently.

In the strategy, digital accessibility is therefore treated as a means of empowerment, as it contributes to inclusive tourism in which all users have access to the information they need for equal, dignified and independent participation.

6. Guidelines for tourism providers

The guidelines for tourism providers are based on the findings of the DATIS project and are intended for practical use in the tourism sector. They help tourism providers understand how digital accessibility affects the actual user experience, independent decision-making, trust and the possibility of participating in tourism under conditions that enable social equality.

Accessibility must be understood as a condition for enabling social equality, independence and dignity in tourism, not as an additional or optional adaptation. The guidelines therefore connect digital, communication and physical accessibility and consider the experiences of people with disabilities, the older population and other users with impairments who encounter barriers when planning or carrying out a tourist experience.

6.1 Accessibility as a key aspect of the user journey

Tourism providers should understand accessibility as part of the entire user journey. For the user, the tourist experience begins before the visit: when searching for information, comparing the offer, checking access conditions, making a reservation, planning transport, communicating with the provider and preparing for the visit.

For many people with disabilities and members of the older population, barriers already appear at this initial stage. If the website is not accessible, if information is unclear or if the provider does not enable reliable contact, the user cannot independently assess whether the visit is feasible, safe and meaningful for them. Accessibility is therefore important not only upon arrival at the location, but already at the moment when the user first comes into contact with digital information about the offer.

The provider should therefore review the entire user journey: how the user finds the website, how they understand the offer, whether they can use the website with a screen reader or keyboard, whether they can enlarge the text, whether photographs are described, whether videos are captioned, whether information on physical accessibility is sufficiently concrete, whether booking can be completed without unnecessary barriers, and whether accessible communication channels exist.

An accessible tourist experience is created when information, digital tools, communication, staff and the physical environment are connected into a whole that is understandable and reliable for the user. Providers should therefore plan accessibility from the first item of information through to the end of the visit and the user's feedback.

6.2 Different user groups and common access barriers

Tourism providers should start from the fact that people with disabilities, the older population and other users with impairments are not a homogeneous group. Each user has their own habits, abilities, assistive technologies, expectations and circumstances of use. Nevertheless, some accessibility difficulties can be addressed through universal, well-considered and verified solutions.

Accessibility means planning information, digital tools, communication and services in such a way that they can be used by as wide a range of people as possible. Good solutions are clear, adaptable, tested with users and usable in different circumstances.

6.2.1 Blind and partially sighted users

Blind and partially sighted users often depend heavily on properly structured digital content when accessing tourism information. For blind users, it is essential that websites, booking procedures and mobile applications are compatible with screen readers and can be used with a keyboard. It is also important for solutions to be adapted to different devices, as users often switch between a computer, smartphone and tablet.

Basic conditions include a clear page structure, meaningful headings, properly labelled buttons and other elements, appropriate image descriptions, accessible forms and a logical content sequence. Visual content, such as photographs, videos or representations of space, must include appropriate text descriptions or audio descriptions when it is important for understanding the offer or planning the visit.

For partially sighted users, good contrast, legible fonts, appropriate text size, the possibility of enlarging content, a clear visual hierarchy, sufficient spacing between elements, and the avoidance of flashing or rapidly moving content are particularly important. Even minor technical errors, which sighted users may barely notice, can completely prevent blind and partially sighted users from accessing information.

When visiting a cultural institution, accommodation facility, natural attraction or other tourist site, clear orientation information is also important, including information on tactile or audio guidance, signs, lighting conditions and safe movement through the space.

6.2.2 Deaf and hard-of-hearing users

For deaf and hard-of-hearing users, information in sign language or in written, visual and permanently available form is essential. Tourism information must be available in clear written form, visually well organised and understandable. A telephone call must not be the only way to obtain key information, as such a solution may exclude some users already at the stage of planning the visit.

Videos should have captions, and key instructions should always also be available as text. This includes information on bookings, timetables, changes, rules of visit, safety instructions, confirmations and possible limitations. In tourism, cultural and transport environments, accessibility improves when information is not provided only through audio announcements or speech, but also in visible, written and permanently available form.

Where possible, providers should also provide information in sign language, particularly for key presentation, safety or interpretative content. Staff training in respectful and clear communication with deaf and hard-of-hearing users is also important.

6.2.3 People with cognitive, intellectual, neurological or communication impairments

For people with cognitive, intellectual, neurological or communication impairments, simplicity, predictability and clarity throughout the entire tourist journey are particularly important. For them, digital accessibility means short and understandable texts, intuitive navigation, a consistent page structure, clear instructions and a reduced cognitive load.

Complex websites, unclear booking procedures and overloaded interfaces can cause confusion, uncertainty, anxiety or abandonment of the process. Calmer page design, guided steps, simple instructions, visual support, simplified maps and advance explanations of what the user can expect during the visit are therefore important.

It is useful for providers to state in advance information on noise, crowds, waiting times, changes to the programme, access rules, the possibility of withdrawal and available quiet spaces. Such information helps the user prepare for the visit, reduce uncertainty and decide more easily.

6.2.4 People experiencing mental health and social difficulties

People with psychosocial impairments or mental health difficulties may encounter less visible but very important barriers. Key factors may include sensory overload, a chaotic environment, organisational uncertainty, difficult-to-manage waiting times, sudden demands, unclear rules, unexpected changes or the feeling that it is not possible to ask for help without stigma.

An accessible tourist experience for this group requires a friendly and predictable environment, clear information, the possibility of contact without judgement and flexible ways of communicating. It is important for the provider to explain in advance how the visit will take place, which spaces are available, whether quiet spaces exist, where the exits are and whom the user can contact.

The tone of communication is particularly important. It must be respectful and free from patronising attitudes or stigma. Staff must be able to listen, respond calmly and offer

support without pressure. For this group, accessibility also includes creating an environment that is emotionally safe, understandable and predictable.

6.2.5 People with mobility impairments

For people with mobility impairments, a physically accessible environment and accurate digital information about that environment are essential. It is not enough for a provider to state that a space is accessible. Users must have access to concrete and reliable information about entrances, lifts, ramps, toilets, spatial layout, parking spaces, routes, passage widths, seating and service points.

Information must be detailed enough for users to assess independently whether the service will actually be usable for them. A general label such as “accessible” is not sufficient if it is unclear what it refers to: an accessible entrance, accessible toilets, parking options, use of a lift, passability of routes or access to all parts of the service.

Booking systems must be usable without time pressure, overly small buttons or complicated steps. Providers should also ensure communication channels that allow users to check access conditions in advance and receive a reliable answer.

6.2.6 The older population

The older population is an important target group of the DATIS project and should not be treated as a uniform group. Many older users encounter sensory, mobility, cognitive or digital barriers, even when they do not formally identify as people with disabilities.

They often benefit from the same solutions as other users: larger text, better contrast, simpler navigation, a clear structure, easier booking procedures and clearer information. A sense of safety, predictability, the possibility of human support and easily accessible contact details are also important.

Accessibility for the older population should be understood as part of universal and inclusive design, not as a special niche adaptation. Since ageing often brings a combination of several forms of impairment, solutions for older users generally also improve the experience for many other groups.

6.2.7 Common barriers and common conditions for accessibility

Although users encounter different barriers, some circumstances recur across several groups. Reliable information before the visit, digital content that can be perceived, understood and used, clear and respectful communication in several forms, and an honest description of physical accessibility are essential for independent visit planning. It is also important that staff know how to recognise access barriers and respond to them appropriately.

Providers therefore do not need to create completely separate solutions for every group. What is essential is that information, services and communication are designed clearly, flexibly, verifiably and usefully enough to support different users in different circumstances. This is precisely the value of universal solutions: they do not start from the assumption that all users are the same, but from the understanding that well-planned accessibility can respond to very different circumstances of use.

6.3 Connecting digital, communication and physical accessibility

Tourism providers should treat accessibility as a connected system that enables users to have an independent, understandable and dignified tourist experience. Digital, communication and physical accessibility are closely connected. If one of these levels is not ensured, the entire user experience may be limited or prevented.

Digital accessibility means that websites, mobile applications, booking systems, online forms, videos, multimedia content, digital maps, QR codes and other digital tools are designed so that they can also be used by people with disabilities, the older population and users of assistive technologies. Digital accessibility is often the first entry point into the tourism offer, as the user first searches for information, compares options, checks access conditions and plans the visit.

Communication accessibility means that information is clear, understandable, respectful and available in several forms. This includes clear text, the possibility of communication through different channels, captions, easy-to-read information, visual support, written confirmations, information in sign language where possible, and staff who know how to communicate with different users.

Physical accessibility means that the user can reach the space, move through it safely, use the services and orientate themselves in the environment. It includes entrances, routes, ramps, lifts, toilets, seating, signs, lighting, parking spaces, passage widths and other spatial elements. It is equally important that information on physical accessibility is published in advance, clear and reliable.

These three levels must be planned together. A physically accessible space helps the user most when information about it is clearly published before the visit. An accessible website is not sufficient if information is unclear, if the provider does not respond through accessible communication channels or if the user finds on arrival that physical accessibility has been described too generally. Likewise, friendly staff communication cannot replace the lack of basic accessible information if the user has to check every detail separately.

Tourism providers should therefore plan accessibility according to the principle of a connected user journey. For each service, they should check whether the user can find information, perceive and understand it, trust it, make a booking, contact the provider, reach the location and use the service as independently as possible.

Connecting digital, communication and physical accessibility is particularly important in the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area, where users need comparable, reliable and understandable information from different providers, in different languages and in different cultural and organisational environments. The aim is not only to remove individual barriers, but to create a tourism environment in which information, communication and services are sufficiently clear, verified and connected to enable social equality in practice.

6.4 Four principles of accessible tourism information and services

When preparing accessible tourism information and services, providers should follow four basic principles: perceivability, understandability, usability, and compatibility or robustness. These principles come from the field of digital accessibility, but they can also be meaningfully applied to the broader planning of the tourist experience: from searching for information and booking to arrival, use of the service and communication on site.

6.4.1 Perceivability

Information must be presented in such a way that users can perceive it. This means that information must not be available in only one form, for example only as an image, only as sound, only as a colour indication or only as a spoken explanation. Users must have the possibility to perceive content in a way that corresponds to their circumstances of use and the technologies they use.

In practice, this means that images must have appropriate descriptions, videos must have captions or audio descriptions, text must have sufficient contrast, fonts must be legible and content must be clearly structured. Important information must not be conveyed only by colour or by a visual sign without a text explanation. This is important for blind and partially sighted users, deaf and hard-of-hearing users, the older population and all those who use information in different circumstances or on different devices.

Perceivability is the first condition of accessibility: if users cannot perceive information, they cannot understand it, trust it or use it when making decisions.

6.4.2 Understandability

Information and procedures must be understandable. Tourism information often includes many details: description of the service, location, opening hours, rules, prices, booking, access, limitations, contact details and instructions for the visit. If this information is written in a complicated, scattered or unclear way, users cannot reliably assess whether the service is suitable for them.

Understandability means using clear language, short and logical sentences, a consistent structure, predictable navigation and clear instructions. It is particularly important for people with cognitive, neurological, psychosocial or communication impairments, the

older population, users who do not know the local language, and all those who find themselves in a stressful or time-limited situation.

Providers should therefore prepare information in such a way that users understand what the service includes, how the visit takes place, what they must do before arrival, what they can expect on site, where possible limitations are and whom they can contact for additional explanations.

6.4.3 Usability

Accessible information must also be practically usable. It is not enough for information to be published or for a website to appear easy to use at first glance. Usability means that users can actually do something with the information: plan a visit, make a booking, check access conditions, contact the provider, reach the location and use the service.

For digital content, this means clear navigation, accessible forms, keyboard use, sufficiently large clickable areas, enough time to complete procedures, clear error messages and understandable confirmations. In the tourist experience, usability means that information enables the user to make a reliable decision, not just gain a general impression.

A website may be visually attractive and technically modern, yet still unusable for a person with a disability if it does not contain concrete information on access, support, communication, the space and possible limitations. Usability is therefore always assessed from the perspective of the actual user situation.

6.4.4 Compatibility and robustness

Digital content must work with different devices, browsers, assistive technologies and modes of use. Users may search for information on a computer, phone or tablet; they may use a screen reader, magnification, keyboard, voice control or other assistive technologies. An accessible solution must be reliable enough to work in different technical circumstances.

Compatibility means that content is properly structured, elements have appropriate labels, forms are understandable even without visual cues, navigation is logical and content adapts correctly to different screen sizes. Robustness means that the solution is not dependent on a single device, a single setting or a single mode of use.

This is particularly important in tourism, because users often search for information in real-life circumstances: while travelling, abroad, on a phone, in a crowd, with a poor connection, with enlarged text or with the use of assistive technology. An accessible digital solution must therefore remain usable even outside ideal conditions.

6.4.5 Applying the principles in tourism practice

Providers should apply these four principles at all digital and communication points of their offer: on the website, in booking systems, online forms, PDF documents, videos, social media posts, digital maps, QR codes, mobile content, on-site information and communication with users.

The questions a provider should ask are simple:

- Can the user perceive the information?
- Can they understand it?
- Can they use it for a decision or action?
- Does the content work with the devices and assistive technologies used by the user?

If the answer to any of these questions is negative, the information is not accessible enough. The purpose of these principles is to help providers design their information and services so that they can be used by as wide a range of people as possible.

6.5 Guidelines for digital accessibility

Digital accessibility is the first condition for users to be able to begin planning a visit independently. A website, mobile application, booking system, online form, PDF document, video, digital map or QR code is not only an informative addition, but often the user's first contact with the tourism offer.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide tourism providers with clear and practical guidance on arranging the accessibility of their websites, online forms, booking procedures and other digital content, so that users can find, perceive, understand and use them independently when planning a visit.

6.5.1 Website structure and navigation

The provider should ensure:

- a clear and logical website structure,
- meaningful headings and subheadings,
- descriptive page titles,
- clear main navigation,
- consistent layout of content across all pages,
- quick access to information on accessibility,
- a website map or other orientation support where the website is extensive.

The user must be able to understand quickly where they are, what the website offers and how they can reach key information.

Practical check:

- Can the user quickly find information on accessibility?
- Is the website understandable even without prior knowledge of the provider?
- Are the headings clear enough for the user to understand the structure of the page?
- Is important information not hidden only in PDF documents or images?

6.5.2 Keyboard use and assistive technologies

The provider should ensure that the website, forms and booking procedures can also be used without a mouse. This includes:

- use of all functions with a keyboard,
- a logical order of movement through the page,
- clearly visible focus when navigating with a keyboard,
- correctly labelled buttons, links, menus and forms,
- compatibility with screen readers,
- the possibility of using the website on a computer, phone and tablet.

This is particularly important for blind and partially sighted users, people with mobility impairments and all users who use assistive technologies. For blind and partially sighted users, compatibility with screen readers, keyboard use, correct page structure, meaningful headings, labelled buttons and accessible forms are especially important.

Practical check:

- Can the user move through the page using only the Tab key?
- Is the focus position always visible on the page?
- Can the user submit a form without using a mouse?
- Does the screen reader correctly read buttons, links and fields?
- Are icons and buttons labelled in an understandable way?

6.5.3 Forms and booking procedures

The provider should ensure that forms and booking paths are short, clear and accessible. This includes:

- clearly labelled fields,
- understandable instructions,
- visibly marked mandatory fields,
- clear error messages,
- instructions on how to correct an error,

- a confirmation message after submitting the form,
- enough time to complete the procedure,
- sufficiently large clickable areas,
- the possibility of asking for additional clarification on accessibility.

Practical check:

- Does the user understand what they need to enter?
- Is it clear which fields are mandatory?
- Does the form explain what is wrong if an error occurs?
- Does the user receive an understandable confirmation?
- Can users with impairments ask additional questions before making a booking?

6.5.4 Images, videos and multimedia

The provider should ensure that visual and audio content is not the only carrier of information. This includes:

- meaningful descriptions of important photographs,
- descriptions of photographs of rooms, entrances, routes, toilets, parking spaces, halls and exhibition spaces,
- captions in videos,
- a text summary of videos,
- audio description of important visual information where needed,
- avoiding automatic playback of sound or video,
- the possibility of stopping moving content.

Multiple forms of access to content enable users to understand information even when they cannot see images, cannot hear sound or use content with assistive technology.

Practical check:

- Does the photograph tell the user something important for deciding whether to visit?
- Does such a photograph have a description?
- Does the video contain speech?
- Does the video have captions?
- Can the user understand the content even if they cannot see the image or hear the sound?

6.5.5 Readability, contrast and display adaptability

The provider should ensure that content is visually clear and adaptable. This includes:

- sufficient contrast between text and background,
- legible fonts,
- a sufficiently large basic text size,
- the possibility of enlarging text,
- sufficient spacing between elements,
- a clear visual hierarchy,
- avoiding flashing, distracting or rapidly moving content.

This benefits partially sighted users, the older population, people with dyslexia, users with migraines, people with neurological impairments and all those who use a website in less favourable conditions, for example on a phone or in strong light.

Practical check:

- Is the text legible even when enlarged?
- Does the content remain clear when enlarged?
- Are important elements sufficiently contrasted?
- Does the page avoid flashing or unnecessary sensory overload?
- Is the layout calm and predictable?

6.5.6 Accessible documents

The provider should ensure that documents are also accessible. This includes:

- accessible price lists,
- accessible menus,
- accessible programmes,
- accessible instructions,
- accessible catalogues,
- accessible maps or their text alternatives,
- accessible rules of visit.

Documents should not be published only as scanned images of text. Where possible, the provider should also publish the content of a PDF document in HTML format directly on the website.

Practical check:

- Can the user select and copy text in the document?
- Does the document read correctly with a screen reader?
- Does the document have headings and a correct structure?
- Do images in the document include descriptions?
- Is the most important content also accessible directly on the website?

6.5.7 QR codes, digital maps and on-site content

The provider should use QR codes and digital tools on site thoughtfully. This includes:

- QR codes at an accessible height,
- sufficiently large QR codes,
- good contrast,
- a clear indication of what the QR code opens,
- accessible online content to which the QR code leads,
- text alternatives for digital maps,
- instructions that are understandable even without sight or precise mouse use,
- regular checking that links still work.

Practical check:

- Can the user find the QR code?
- Can they scan it independently?
- Do they know what it will open?
- Is the content that opens accessible?
- Is there an alternative for users who cannot use the QR code?

6.5.8 Regular checking of digital content

Digital accessibility is not a one-off task. Every new post, photograph, video, form, PDF document, event, booking option or digital functionality must be prepared accessibly.

The provider should regularly check:

- the website,
- forms,
- booking paths,
- documents,
- photographs,
- videos,
- social media posts,
- QR codes,
- contact details,
- information on accessibility.

6.6 Guidelines for communication accessibility

Communication accessibility means that information is provided clearly, respectfully, understandably and in forms that can be used by different users. In tourism, communication includes website texts, email, forms, phone calls, booking

confirmations, safety instructions, signs, social media posts and direct communication between staff and visitors.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide tourism providers with clear and practical guidance for preparing accessible, understandable and timely information that enables users to plan a visit reliably and with less uncertainty.

6.6.1 Clear and concrete information

The provider should use clear, respectful and concrete language. Instead of general statements, the provider should use concrete information.

Unsuitable:

“The facility is accessible for disabled people.”

More suitable:

“The main entrance has no steps. The door is 90 cm wide. Accessible toilets are on the ground floor, 15 metres from the entrance. A lift provides access to the first floor. There are two steps leading to the outdoor terrace, so the terrace is not accessible to all users.”

The provider should describe:

- what is accessible,
- what is not accessible,
- for whom the solution is suitable,
- where limitations exist,
- whom the user can contact for additional questions,
- whether the information has been verified and when it was last updated.

6.6.2 Multiple communication channels

A telephone call must not be the only way to obtain information. The provider should enable at least two different contact options:

- email,
- online form,
- written messages,
- a contact person for accessibility questions,
- a clear response time,
- written confirmations of agreements.

This is important for deaf and hard-of-hearing users, people with communication impairments, people with psychosocial impairments, the older population and everyone who understands or checks information more easily in written form.

Practical check:

- Is an email address published on the website in addition to a phone number?
- Does the user know whom they can contact about accessibility?
- Does the provider respond with clear and concrete information?
- Does the user receive written confirmation of key agreements after a conversation?

6.6.3 Written confirmations and instructions

Key information should always also be available in written form. This includes:

- booking confirmations,
- changes to dates or times,
- arrival instructions,
- parking information,
- rules of visit,
- safety instructions,
- information on accompanying persons,
- information on accessible entrances,
- information on limitations,
- contact for assistance.

Practical check:

- Does the user receive a clear confirmation after booking?
- Does the confirmation message include information on access?
- Are programme changes communicated in time?
- Are the instructions understandable also to a user who does not know the provider?

6.6.4 Understandable language and predictability

The provider should prepare information in a way that is also understandable to users who use information more easily when it is clear, structured and predictable. This includes:

- short sentences,
- a logical sequence of information,
- clear step-by-step instructions,
- avoiding unnecessary foreign words and technical expressions,
- an explanation of how the visit will take place,
- an explanation of how long it will last,
- information on crowds, noise, waiting, changes and rules,
- information on the possibility of a break or withdrawal.

For people with cognitive, neurological, psychosocial or communication impairments, predictability, clarity, reduced cognitive load and calm communication are particularly important.

6.6.5 Accessibility for deaf and hard-of-hearing users

The provider should ensure that key information does not depend only on sound. This includes:

- captions in videos,
- written safety instructions,
- written information on changes,
- visual signs,
- the possibility of communication through written channels,
- information in sign language where possible,
- clear written confirmations of bookings and agreements.

Practical check:

- Are videos captioned?
- Are important notices also available in written form?
- Can the user avoid a phone call?
- Are on-site instructions visible and understandable?

6.6.6 Respectful communication without stigmatisation

Staff should communicate calmly, respectfully and without a patronising attitude. This means that they should:

- ask the user what form of support would suit them,
- not assume what form of support is appropriate,
- not speak on behalf of the user,
- not address the accompanying person if they can speak with the user,
- not use expressions that present the person as a burden or a problem,
- offer help without imposing it,
- acknowledge when they do not know information and check it.

For people with psychosocial impairments or mental health difficulties, it is particularly important that communication is calm, respectful, non-patronising and emotionally safe.

6.6.7 Staff training

The provider should train staff in understanding the different barriers users encounter when accessing information, communication or services. Staff should know how to:

- listen to the user,
- ask a respectful question,
- give a clear answer,
- check information,
- explain limitations of the service,
- offer help without imposing it,
- direct the user to the right contact person,
- respond calmly in unexpected situations.

Practical recommendations for providers also include staff training in inclusive communication and support for users with different forms of impairment.

6.6.8 Checking communication accessibility

The provider should regularly check:

- whether information is clear,
- whether contact details are visible,
- whether several communication channels exist,
- whether responses to users are concrete,
- whether key information is written down,
- whether instructions are understandable,
- whether staff can answer questions about accessibility,
- whether users receive information in time.

Communication accessibility is achieved when the user can understand, check, save and use information when making their decision.

7. Short-term measures

Short-term measures are the first practical steps that tourism providers can begin implementing immediately or within a shorter period of time. They are aimed at removing the most obvious barriers, improving the quality of information and establishing the basic conditions for more independent visit planning.

Short-term measures are important because even smaller changes can significantly improve the user experience. Clearer information, more accessible forms, better image descriptions, captions, visible contact details and staff with basic training can give users greater trust, less uncertainty and more independence when making decisions.

7.1 Review of existing information

The first step is to review the information that the provider already publishes on the website, in documents, on social media, in booking systems, in email confirmations and through other communication channels.

The provider should check:

- whether information on accessibility is published at all,
- whether it is sufficiently concrete,
- whether it is understandable to different users,
- whether it is up to date,
- whether it is accessible with screen readers,
- whether it is accessible without a mouse,
- whether key information is hidden only in PDF documents, images or promotional texts,
- whether the user can quickly find a contact for additional questions.

Priority result: the provider prepares a short list of existing information, missing information and content that needs to be corrected.

7.2 Supplementing information on accessibility

The provider should clearly publish information on the accessibility of their offer on the website. The information should be concrete, verifiable and useful for planning a visit. It should include information on:

- access to the building or site,
- entrances,
- parking spaces,
- internal routes,

- lifts,
- ramps,
- toilets,
- seating,
- orientation within the space,
- communication with staff,
- available forms of support,
- limitations,
- temporary changes,
- contact for additional questions.

Instead of a general statement such as:

“The building is accessible.”

the provider should state, for example:

“The main entrance has no steps. Accessible toilets are on the ground floor. A lift leads to the exhibition space on the first floor. The outdoor path to the viewpoint is gravel and steep in some sections. For additional information on access, you can contact us by email.”

Priority result: the user can independently assess whether the visit is feasible, safe and suitable for them.

7.3 Arranging the basic structure of the website

The provider should check whether the website is clear, logical and predictable.

Particular attention should be paid to:

- page titles,
- headings and subheadings,
- main navigation,
- descriptive links,
- button labelling,
- access to contact details,
- access to information on accessibility,
- clarity of content,
- usability of the website on mobile devices.

Information on accessibility should be available from the main navigation or from a clearly marked place on the website. Users should not have to search for it among general descriptions, news items or promotional content.

Priority result: the user quickly finds key information, including when using a screen reader, text enlargement, keyboard or mobile phone.

7.4 Labelling links, buttons and forms

Links, buttons and forms must be labelled in such a way that the user understands what will happen when they click or select them.

Unsuitable examples include:

- “click here”,
- “more”,
- “read”,
- “open”,
- unlabelled icons,
- buttons without a clear label.

More suitable examples include:

- “Read more about access to the museum”,
- “Download the price list in an accessible format”,
- “Send a question about accessibility”,
- “Book a guided tour”,
- “Open the map of the accessible route”.

In forms, input fields, mandatory information, errors and submission confirmations must be clearly labelled.

Priority result: the user understands which element they are using, what they need to enter and what action they are carrying out.

7.5 Adding image descriptions

Important images must have appropriate descriptions. This applies in particular to images that help the user understand the space, access, service or course of the visit.

The following should be described in particular:

- entrance,
- route to the building or site,
- parking area,
- toilets,
- room,
- exhibition space,
- hall,
- ramp,

- lift,
- map,
- spatial layout,
- possible barriers.

Poor description:

“Image of the building”

Better description:

“The main entrance to the museum has no steps. The path in front of the entrance is paved, and the door opens manually.”

Priority result: blind and partially sighted users obtain information that is important for planning the visit.

7.6 Captions and text alternatives for videos

Videos presenting the offer, instructions, routes, events or services should have captions. Where a video is important for understanding the space or the service, it should also include a short text summary.

The provider should ensure:

- captions for key videos,
- a text summary of the content,
- a description of important visual information,
- the possibility to pause, replay and control the video,
- that the video does not start automatically without the possibility of control.

Priority result: information is also accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing users, blind and partially sighted users, and users who cannot follow video content in the usual way.

7.7 Arranging contact channels

The telephone must not be the only way to obtain information on accessibility. The provider should enable several ways of communicating. The website should clearly provide:

- email address,
- phone number,
- online form, where available,
- contact person or service for accessibility questions,
- expected response time,
- possibility of written confirmation of key information.

Priority result: the user can ask a question in a way that suits them and receive a clear, verifiable answer.

7.8 Basic staff training

Staff must know the basic information on the accessibility of the offer. This applies to staff who receive bookings, answer questions, manage the website, prepare content, lead tours or are in direct contact with visitors.

Staff should know how to:

- answer basic questions about access,
- check information when they are not sure,
- address the user respectfully,
- offer help without imposing it,
- explain limitations,
- provide written confirmation of information,
- direct the user to the right contact person.

Priority result: the user receives consistent, clear and respectful information regardless of whom they communicate with.

7.9 First check with users

The provider should check basic information and digital content with users or with organisations of people with disabilities.

The check should answer the following questions:

- Can the user quickly find information on accessibility?
- Is the information sufficiently concrete?
- Is it understandable?

- Can the user complete a booking?
- Can the user contact the provider?
- Does the information correspond to the actual situation?
- Which barriers arise when using the website or service?

Priority result: the provider obtains concrete feedback and uses it for quick improvements.

7.10 Appointing a responsible person

The provider should appoint a person or team responsible for information on accessibility.

This person should monitor:

- website updates,
- changes in the physical space,
- responses to users,
- feedback,
- new posts,
- documents,
- photographs,
- videos,
- booking procedures,
- temporary limitations.

Priority result: accessibility does not depend on a random initiative, but has a clear responsibility.

7.11 Priority order of short-term measures

Where the provider cannot implement all measures at the same time, they should first arrange:

- publication of clear information on accessibility,
- contact channels,
- the most obvious barriers on the website,
- accessible forms and bookings,
- descriptions of important images,
- captions for key videos,
- written confirmations and instructions,
- basic staff training,
- checking information with users,
- appointment of a responsible person.

The short-term objective is a reliable start to the systematic improvement of accessibility. The first step is to remove barriers that prevent users from obtaining information, understanding the offer, making contact or deciding whether to visit.

8. Long-term measures

Long-term measures are intended to make accessibility a permanent part of managing the tourism offer. This is not only about individual corrections to a website or the supplementation of information, but about integrating accessibility into the planning, development, implementation, checking and improvement of services.

Successful long-term accessibility is based on clear responsibilities, regular checking, training, cooperation with users, the inclusion of accessibility in the procurement of new solutions, and the connection between digital, communication and physical accessibility.

8.1 Integrating accessibility into the regular management of the offer

The provider should integrate accessibility into regular planning and management procedures. Accessibility should be considered when:

- redesigning the website,
- selecting external contractors,
- preparing new content,
- introducing booking systems,
- preparing events,
- renovating spaces,
- marking routes,
- publishing photographs and videos,
- communicating with users,
- training staff.

The provider should define responsibilities, procedures for updating information and basic internal rules for publishing new content.

Priority result: accessibility becomes part of the provider's regular operation.

8.2 Accessibility as a condition when commissioning new digital solutions

When commissioning a new website, mobile application, booking system, digital map, online form or other digital tool, accessibility must be included from the beginning. Tenders, contracts or agreements with contractors should define requirements relating to:

- keyboard use,
- compatibility with screen readers,

- accessible forms,
- correct page structure,
- contrast and readability,
- captions,
- image descriptions,
- accessible documents,
- mobile use,
- testing with users,
- correction of identified errors.

Priority result: the provider avoids expensive and time-consuming subsequent corrections because accessibility is included in development from the beginning.

8.3 Regular checking of digital content and services

Accessibility can deteriorate with every new publication, website change or introduction of a new function. The provider should therefore establish regular checking. They should regularly check:

- key pages of the website,
- information on accessibility,
- booking procedures,
- online forms,
- PDF documents,
- photographs,
- videos,
- QR codes,
- social media posts,
- links,
- contact details.

Checking should be carried out when major website changes are made, when a new service is introduced, when spaces are renovated, and whenever a change affects the user journey.

Priority result: accessibility is maintained after updates.

8.4 Involving people with disabilities and the older population in testing

The provider should involve people with disabilities and the older population in the development, checking and improvement of solutions. Involvement should include:

- website review,
- booking testing,
- checking forms,

- checking information on physical accessibility,
- assessing the understandability of instructions,
- checking communication channels,
- testing the user journey on site,
- collecting feedback after the visit.

User involvement must lead to concrete improvements. Feedback should be documented, considered and used in further development.

Priority result: the provider identifies barriers that a technical review or internal assessment often does not detect.

8.5 Continuous staff training

Knowledge about accessibility must be part of the continuous professional development of staff. Training should include:

- website editors,
- marketing staff,
- booking staff,
- receptionists and information staff,
- guides,
- technical staff,
- management,
- external collaborators when they prepare content or services for the provider.

Training content should include:

- basic understanding of disability and functional impairment,
- the importance of clear information,
- the use of several communication channels,
- preparation of accessible digital content,
- respectful communication,
- responding to users' questions,
- handling changes or limitations.

Priority result: accessibility becomes part of the organisation's knowledge.

8.6 Connecting physical improvements with digital information

Every physical improvement must also be accompanied by appropriate digital and communication information. When spaces change, the provider must update:

- the website,
- photographs,
- access descriptions,
- information on toilets,
- information on entrances and routes,
- booking instructions,
- confirmation messages,
- on-site signs,
- information for staff.

The same applies to temporary limitations. If a lift is not working, if a route is closed, if renovation work is taking place or if an accessible entrance has been temporarily moved, users must be informed in advance.

Priority result: the information users receive before the visit corresponds to the actual situation on site.

8.7 System for collecting and handling feedback

The provider should establish a clear way of collecting feedback on accessibility. Users should be able to report:

- that information was not clear,
- that booking was not accessible,
- that the description of physical accessibility did not correspond to the actual situation,
- that communication was not appropriate,
- that they encountered a barrier on site,
- that they have a suggestion for improvement.

The provider should review feedback regularly and use it for improvements.

Priority result: user experiences become a source of continuous improvement.

8.8 Monitoring effects and basic indicators

The provider should monitor whether accessibility measures actually lead to improvements. They can monitor:

- the number of updated items of information on accessibility,
- the number of accessible documents,
- the number of videos with captions,
- the number of staff included in training,
- the number of website checks,
- the number of user tests,
- response time to accessibility questions,
- the number of feedback responses received and addressed,
- the number of barriers removed.

Indicators should be simple and useful. Their purpose is to monitor progress and define the next improvements.

Priority result: the provider can monitor progress and plan further measures.

8.9 Cross-border cooperation and exchange of good practices

The long-term development of accessibility in tourism requires cooperation between providers, tourism organisations, municipalities, cultural institutions, experts, educational institutions and organisations of people with disabilities. In the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area, it is particularly important to ensure:

- coordination of basic information on accessibility,
- use of comparable descriptions,
- exchange of good practices,
- joint training,
- cooperation in testing solutions,
- connection of digital tools,
- multilingual information,
- involvement of user organisations from both sides of the border.

Priority result: users receive comparable and reliable information from different providers and in different languages.

8.10 Accessibility as part of the quality and sustainability of tourism

In the long term, accessibility must become part of how the quality of the tourism offer is understood. It affects hospitality, safety, trust, user satisfaction and the possibility of independent participation in tourism.

Accessible solutions benefit a wider range of people: people with disabilities, the older population, families with children, foreign visitors, people with temporary injuries and everyone who benefits from clear information, predictable procedures and usable services. Long-term measures are successful when accessibility is no longer understood as an individual correction, but as a permanent way of planning, implementing and improving the tourism offer.

Priority result: accessibility becomes an integral part of high-quality, inclusive and socially responsible tourism.

9. Examples of good practice in Europe and their transferability

Good practices in accessible tourism show how cities, regions, countries, European projects, public-private partnerships and private providers can develop accessible services, infrastructure, digital tools and communication. They are important because they present different feasible models: city strategies, certification schemes, online platforms, accessible tourist routes, hotel standards, multilingual information, user involvement and staff training.

A common feature of good practices is that they do not understand accessibility as an individual adaptation, but as part of the quality, hospitality, trust and long-term development of the tourism offer. Successful solutions generally connect physical, digital and communication accessibility and enable users to plan and use tourism services more independently.

9.1 City strategies for accessible tourism

City strategies for accessible tourism show that accessibility is effective when it is not limited to a single facility, but is included in the broader planning of the city, public space, transport, cultural institutions, information points and tourism promotion.

Barcelona is an example of a city that develops accessibility as part of its tourism identity. Measures include accessible museums, hotels without architectural barriers, accessible beaches, adapted guided tours and the use of sign language in certain tourism content. Public transport is also an important part of city accessibility, as accessible buses and other forms of mobility enable users to actually use the tourism offer.

Milan is an example of a city that has connected accessibility with urban infrastructure, public transport and cultural attractions. Arrangements for access to stations, lifts, ramps, public spaces and cultural sites show that accessible tourism does not depend only on individual tourism providers, but on the entire urban environment.

Transferable into practice:

- accessibility should be included in the planning of the destination as a whole,
- information on accessible routes, public transport, cultural institutions and services must be connected,
- tourism information must enable the user to plan the entire visit, not only an individual service,
- accessibility of public space, transport and the tourism offer must be addressed together.

9.2 National and regional programmes

National and regional programmes show the importance of common criteria, verified information, labels, certificates and publicly available data on accessibility. Such systems enable users to compare the offer more easily and provide tourism providers with clearer starting points for improvements.

Tourism & Handicap in France is a certification scheme that labels tourist facilities and services according to accessibility for different groups of users: people with mobility, visual, hearing and cognitive impairments. The label enables users to identify more quickly which offer is accessible and suitable for their circumstances of use.

VisitFlanders in Belgium uses a system of accessibility labels for accommodation, museums and visitor centres. In addition to labels, it also provides users with an accessibility search tool, information sheets and brochures with information on accessible facilities and routes.

Una Regione per Tutti, or FVG for All, in Friuli Venezia Giulia is based on the systematic checking of the accessibility of tourist locations. The data include concrete information, such as door widths, ramps, tactile signs and other access elements. Information in easy-to-understand form and videos in Italian Sign Language are also an important part of the initiative.

All for All in Portugal places accessibility as part of the national tourism direction. The programme encourages tourism providers to adapt their spaces, services and communication to a wider range of users and to understand accessibility as part of a high-quality offer and a competitive advantage.

Transferable into practice:

- common criteria for describing accessibility should be developed,
- information must be verified, comparable and understandable,
- general labels are not enough; users need concrete data,
- labels and certificates are useful only if they are based on clear criteria and regular checking,
- information must cover different user groups, not only mobility impairments.

9.3 European projects and digital platforms

European projects and digital platforms show how accessibility can be supported through digital tools, shared databases, cross-border cooperation and user involvement.

Pantou is an online directory of accessible tourism services that enables users to search for accommodation, restaurants, transport, guided tours and other services. Its value lies in bringing information together in one place and making travel planning easier for users.

STRING is an example of a European project that developed accessible tourist routes in several countries. The project shows that accessibility must be addressed along the entire tourism chain: from transport and routes to accommodation, attractions and the inclusion of the offer in regular tourism products.

AccessibleEU supports the exchange of knowledge, expert resources and good practices at European level. Such networks are important because they enable knowledge transfer between countries, sectors and organisations.

SITE – Shaping Inclusive Tourist Experiences is a project of the Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme that develops inclusive tourist experiences using the principles of universal design. The project is aimed at developing a more inclusive tourism ecosystem that considers people with disabilities, families and the older population. It is particularly important because it connects accessibility with sustainable tourism, social inclusion, innovation and destination development. The project includes pilot activities, training and the preparation of practical tools, such as a catalogue of universal design theories and practices, manuals and assessment instruments. The solutions are aimed at improving the accessibility of communication, orientation and public spaces, and are designed so that they can also be transferred to other tourism environments.

Transferable into practice:

- use of universal design principles in the planning of tourism services,
- connecting accessibility with public space, orientation and communication,
- development of practical tools for providers and destinations,
- inclusion of training and pilot activities,
- use of ICT to reduce architectural, sensory and communication barriers,
- cross-border cooperation between tourism, research organisations, higher education institutions and non-governmental organisations.

9.4 Public-private partnerships and industry initiatives

Public-private partnerships and industry initiatives show that accessibility can also be successful as part of a business model, quality standards and long-term service management.

TUR4all is an online platform and mobile application that provides users with standardised information on the accessibility of hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions and activities. The multilingual nature of the platform is also important, as is the possibility for users to share experiences and reviews.

Scandic Hotels is an example of a hotel chain that has developed its own accessibility standard. The standard includes numerous criteria related to the physical environment,

rooms, signs, communication, safety and services. Accessibility is integrated into the operation of the entire chain, not only into individual facilities.

ILUNION Hotels in Spain connects accessibility with universal design, staff training and the employment of people with disabilities. The example shows that accessibility is not only a technical or spatial issue, but also part of organisational culture and social inclusion.

Transferable into practice:

- accessibility must be included in the provider's internal standards,
- staff must be trained in respectful and clear communication,
- information on accessibility must be standardised and regularly checked,
- user experiences are an important source of improvements,
- accessibility can become part of the recognition and quality of a brand.

9.5 Common features of good practices

The examples presented show the following common features of successful solutions:

- accessibility is included in strategic planning,
- information on accessibility is clear, concrete and verifiable,
- digital tools support independent visit planning,
- physical, digital and communication accessibility are connected,
- users participate in the planning and testing of solutions,
- staff are trained,
- information is multilingual and available in several forms,
- labelling and certification systems are based on verified data,
- accessibility is regularly updated and improved,
- solutions are included in the regular tourism offer, not in separate or exceptional programmes.

9.6 Transferability to the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area

In the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area, solutions are needed that are comparable, multilingual, verifiable and usable for different types of tourism providers. Examples of good practice show that it is particularly important to develop a common way of describing accessibility, connect providers and user organisations, and provide information that enables users to make independent decisions.

For tourism providers, destinations, municipalities, museums, accommodation providers and tourism organisations, the following elements are particularly transferable:

- a common structure for information on accessibility,
- clearly marked pages with information on accessibility,
- verified data on physical access,

- accessible digital forms and bookings,
- multilingual information,
- easy-to-understand information,
- captions and sign language for key content,
- cooperation with people with disabilities,
- regular staff training,
- inclusion of accessibility in destination promotion,
- collection and use of user feedback.

Good practice is transferable when the provider does not understand it as the copying of a foreign model, but as a starting point for their own improvement. It is important that each provider identifies which elements they can introduce according to their size, type of service, existing digital solutions, physical conditions and the users for whom the offer is intended.

10. Conclusion

The Strategy and Guidelines for Improving Digital Accessibility in Tourism in the Italy–Slovenia Cross-Border Area are based on the findings of the DATIS project, which showed that accessibility in tourism is a question of the usability, understandability and reliability of information, as well as users' ability to make independent decisions.

Accessibility must be understood as a connected system of digital, communication and physical conditions. Users can use the tourism offer confidently and independently when they can find, understand, check, trust and use information when planning a visit. Reliable decision-making is based on concrete, verifiable, up-to-date and useful information on the accessibility of the offer.

The strategy emphasises that accessibility is an ongoing process. It requires planning, checking, cooperation with people with disabilities and the older population, staff training, regular updating of digital content and connections between tourism providers, destinations, public institutions, professional organisations and users.

The strategy and guidelines are connected with other results of the DATIS project, in particular training for tourism providers, the development of the digital platform, the database of information on accessibility and pilot activities. Together, these results provide a practical basis for further improving the digital, communication and physical accessibility of tourism provision in the Italy–Slovenia cross-border area.

The long-term objective is a tourism area in which accessibility is an integral part of a high-quality, responsible, inclusive and sustainable tourism offer. Such an approach enables user's greater independence, dignity, trust and equality in practice.

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