

CHARTER FOR ACCESSIBLE TOURISM OFFER

In the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions titled “Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe”, declared that:

«Crossborder initiatives have also been set up in recent years, such as (...) pilgrimage routes (...). The Commission considers that a number of these initiatives would benefit from recognition and from a European seal of legitimacy which would guarantee their transnational character.»

The Lisbon Treaty, as regards as a constitutional draft for the European Union, assumes as fundamental values:

«respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail»

(art. 1 bis)

In this area, the Commission itself promoted the programme «Tourism and accessibility for all» (during the period 2014-2015), enhancing the development and implementation of tourist services meeting universal design criteria.

In 2017, within the COSME programme for enterprise competitiveness and small and medium size businesses, the “SABER project”, communicated with the brand *Open Up Routes*, was developed.

This project had as its objectives:

«To improve awareness, skills and training of both public and private tourism service providers in order to remove physical and environmental barriers and to have people with permanent/temporary impairment enjoy their travelling experience;

To develop a diversified transnational tourism offer; based on the “Tourism for All” principle and on a “slow tourism” model, valorizing the tangible and intangible heritage existing along pilgrimage routes of EU relevance;

To establish and enhance the cooperation among public/private tourism service providers at local, regional and transnational level, in order to improve the overall quality of the tourism offer, in all segments of the tourism supply chain, and transform each destination in an “accessible environment”;

To increase the competitiveness of local service providers and stimulate the creation of new services for different segments of the tourism market;

To develop a transnational communication and brand strategy in order to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the tourism product as a travel experience addressed to all people, not only to people with disabilities.»

With this aim, we held round tables with representatives from the public administration, branch organisations, private initiatives and entities representing disabled persons.

As a result of these meetings a set of minimums were agreed upon and gathered in a memorandum as framework guidelines for the European Pilgrimage Routes.

Considering the fact that all pilgrimages goes through mountains, rural and urban zones and including the density of monumental milieu, the increased level of accessibility ought to be coherent with the preservation of nature and the criteria for intervention on historic and artistic heritage.

Thus, according to the values of the European Union, assuming the Message of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics on Accessible Tourism, and taking responsibility for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the *persons and entities signing this document back and adhere to the following:*

CHARTER FOR ACCESSIBLE TOURISM OFFER

Article 1. General principles

The Way, as well as infrastructures, installations, equipment, services and activities linked to it, will be undertaken, designed, built and operated in accordance with criteria of inclusion and universality, in order to make them accessible by foot, in localisation, in comprehension and in orientation for all persons with independence of their personal characteristics.

Article 2. Design criteria

In general, parameters of design and functionality as defined by the legislation of every state or territory, according to the applicable powers, will be applied.

Article 3. Validation criteria

The adoption of a normalised model, permitting the certification of environs, installations and services according to a range of approved parameters shall be considered good practice.

Article 4. Scope of application

- a) The itinerary, its routing, platform and signage system.
- b) Facilities for information, transport, lodging, catering and, generally, any service linked to the Way.
- c) Promotion of exemplarity through the Catalogue of Good Practices.

Article 5. Accessibility of the itinerary / route

- a) Management and maintenance of the routing shall be in line with the respect for the environment and the integration of human activity in a natural environment.
- b) Signalling will be done using an approved iconographic system resulting universally perceptible and understandable, including tactile identification and comprehension.
- c) The route should be maintained in good operating order, free of obstacles and undergrowth so as to be passable when using aid products.

- d) In stretches of special difficulty, an alternative route should be suggested, indicating distance of the substituting stretch and point of return to the original route.

Article 6. Accessibility in facilities and services

- a) Infrastructures and vehicles of the public transport system, independent of ownership, will be accessible in movement, apprehension, comprehension and orientation.
- b) Buildings and installations hosting pilgrim services will be located in spots communicated by pedestrian paths accessible with the Way.
- c) Buildings and installations hosting pilgrim services will be signalled with an approved iconographic system resulting universally perceptible and understandable, including tactile identification and comprehension. The use of this signalling system in an installation implies the adherence to the principles of this CHARTER.
- d) The entrance to Buildings and installations hosting pilgrim services should be accessible through the same entrance for all persons and in a manner so that they can enter autonomously and without the need for help in using the fixed accessibility resources or those carried individually.
- e) The provision of activities, resources and services contained and operated in every installation shall be accessible for all persons in autonomous manner and without the need for help in using the fixed accessibility resources or those carried individually.

Article 7. Exemplarity of Good Practices

- a) Support services for the pilgrim will be promoted should they be public, private, third sector or mixed initiatives.
- b) We will boost the training in sign language and international sign language to promote a sufficient competence among people with tasks attending the public in order to equal these languages with oral language in order to evaluate and qualify the provision of services.
- c) We will boost the use of new technologies in all areas where they can be of use.
- d) The communication of lessons learned and successful experiences between the organisations with activities linked to the Way, both of those of the actual route as well as those observed in other routes.



- e) We will acknowledge, communicate and disseminate the good practices of environments and installations within the scope of all the European Pilgrimage Ways adhering to this Charter.

ANNEX 1

STATE OF THE MATTER

Weaknesses

- Legislation and interventions focused on physical accessibility resources at the expense of solutions for hearing, visual and cognitive accessibility.
- Ignorance of the what for's when it comes to accessibility resources among the sectors of design, management, operation and supervision of environments and installations.
- Difficulty or impossibility of proposing a valid alternative itinerary in environments with rugged terrain, cultural heritage buildings and already constructed installations.
- Scarce implementation of sign language, magnetic induction, subtitled videos in points of attention to the public and spaces for communication, sign guides with information on installations and contents.
- Scarce implementation signing in contour, text in Braille, scale models for touching, typhlo-technical resources for environment interpretation and audio guides with audio description for blind and visually impaired persons.
- Scarce implementation of a uniform signage system, simplified communication and information written as validated simple reading.

Strengths

- Upholding of the Way as a destination of pilgrimage and tourism consolidated by tradition.
- A brand vision backed by the UNESCO and the principal tourism and culture organisations at a global level.
- The existence of state, territorial and municipal legislation in order to develop accessible environments and services.
- Drafting and implementation of municipal, provincial and autonomic accessibility plans.
- Reference to legislation in other sectors, among others, tourism and accessibility legislation.
- Growing business and commercial structures driven and managed by people settled in the area and linked to the territory.
- A sense of identity and belonging among the communities and habitants where the Way passes.
- Backing from the public administrations of the development and excellence through legislation, inspection and promotion of the best practices.
- Drawing attention to senior citizens and people with disabilities as a habitual and normalised target group for pilgrimage routes.

- The final sensation of a unique experience for virtually the whole group of persons who travel the Way, thus acting as influencers in their group of reference.

Threats

- Fatigue in the private sector due to the necessity to adapt installations and processes to the legislative evolution of the sector.
- The perception of accessibility as an added cost, sprung from to the necessity to undertake corrections and reforms due to not having considered this factor from the start of the project.
- Deterioration of the route and signage due to lack of conservation and acts of vandalism.
- Same level intersections of the Way and roads for vehicle traffic presenting risks for pilgrims and vehicles.
- Concentration of the flow of pilgrimage, on the French Way, during the summer generating an excess demand.
- Deterioration of the landscape by various agents – industrial planning, uncontrolled urbanisation, wildfires, climactic change, loss of sustainability.

Opportunities

- Understanding of accessibility as a parameter for the improvement of the quality of tourism.
- Increase of the demand for accessible installations, products and services through increased socialisation of persons with disability and the longer lifespan of elderly people.
- The existence or normalisation with regard to accessibility with the possibility of according certification.
- Upholding and increase of the demand for the pilgrimage ways as tourist destinations and environment for activities
- Periodical incentive to undertake the Way due to the pull effect of the cycle of St. James' years (every six, five, six and eleven years).
- The verification of the target group as a non-seasonal type of client permitting the upholding of a level of economically viable activity during the whole year.

ANNEX 2

GOOD PRACTICES

- **HOMOGENOUS AND CERTIFIED SIGN SYSTEM**
Sign system used in airports and train stations, universal in the European Union and most countries of the world.
- **SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA SIGN GUIDE WITH SIGN LANGUAGE AND SUBTITLES**
App developed by the GVAM in a Project funded by the Fundación Orange which permits downloading and operation in mobile appliances in order to have a sign guide of Santiago de Compostela in the users own telephone.
- **"PARQUE ARQUEOLÓGICO DA ARTE RUPESTRE DE CAMPO LAMEIRO"**
The museum has two areas: the interpretation centre and petroglyphs in the open-air. The interpretation centre has been designed according to universal accessibility criteria, including resources for mobility and proximity as well as tactile and comprehension aid resources.
- **SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AIRPORT BUS**
The vehicle has a visual and acoustic stop notification system.
- **CASA FANDÍN, RIBADEO**
Tourist lodging planned and developed in order to have full accessibility for persons with reduced mobility in all rooms – not only the legally required minimum.
- **CABANAS DO BARRANCO, OUTES**
Lodging of «tree-housel» type: The expansion of the lodges in 2017 consisted of six units, of which five are accessible. The transit of the pedestrian itinerary to the lodges is by means of gangways, which are signposted in a perceptible and comprehensible fashion.
- **MUNICIPALITY OF TREVİ NEL LAZIO (ST.BENEDICT WAY)**
After the field test carried out during the Saber project the Municipality decided to renovate a public building in order to make it accessible for pilgrims along the St.Benedict Way
- **B&B FEBINN, MANDELA (ST.BENEDICT WAY)**
The b&b has been completely restored in order to make it accessible for all PMR pilgrims.