

Best Practices in Tourism

Accessible tourism



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ACCESSIBLE TOURISM – EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Accessible Wawel – The Wawel Royal Castle as a Model of Inclusive Tourism
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	POLAND
THEMATIC AREA	Accessibility <i>(architectural, sensory, communication, and information accessibility)</i>
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>“Accessible Wawel” is a comprehensive program implemented by the Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków, aimed at making one of Poland’s most important cultural institutions accessible to all visitor groups, regardless of physical, sensory, communication, or cognitive limitations. The activities include architectural adaptations, technological solutions, informational and educational measures, as well as ongoing cooperation with non-governmental organizations and accessibility experts.</p> <p>WHO IMPLEMENTED IT AND WHY:</p> <p>The project is implemented by the Wawel Royal Castle – State Art Collections, in cooperation with the Seventh Sense Foundation (Fundacja Siódmy Zmysł) and other organizations supporting people with disabilities.</p> <p>The objectives were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure equal access to national cultural heritage, ▪ eliminate barriers to participation in cultural offerings, ▪ promote the idea of the museum as an inclusive, open, and welcoming space, ▪ implement lasting solutions rather than symbolic or temporary measures. <p>WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:</p> <p>Communication and Information Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotional videos in Polish Sign Language (PJM) and videos with audio description, presenting the history and attractions of Wawel. ▪ An information campaign conducted through tourist information points, public transport systems, and social media. ▪ The book “<i>How the Shoemaker Defeated the Dragon</i>”, featuring Braille text and tactile-adapted illustrations. ▪ Induction loops installed at ticket counters. ▪ Free, real-time online access to a Polish Sign Language interpreter. ▪ Installation of Totupoint orientation markers across the Wawel Hill area.

	<p>Architectural Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Installation of lifts and platforms enabling visitors with mobility impairments to access the courtyard and selected exhibition areas. ▪ Accessible toilets for persons with disabilities. ▪ Educational routes with tactile elements enabling perception through touch. <p>Sensory Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ From March 2025, the introduction of “quiet hours”—on the first and last Wednesday of each month—dedicated to visitors with sensory sensitivities (e.g. people on the autism spectrum or with sensory processing disorders). <p>WHAT RESULTS / EFFECTS WERE ACHIEVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An increase in visits to Wawel by people with disabilities. ▪ Positive evaluation of the project by expert communities and users—including blind and Deaf visitors, people with mobility impairments, and their caregivers. ▪ A strong example of effective cooperation between a public institution and social organizations. ▪ Development of museum staff competencies in accessibility, empathy, and alternative communication methods. ▪ Continuous presence of the project in public debate on cultural accessibility in Poland. ▪ The Wawel Royal Castle has become a national model of accessibility for other museums and cultural institutions.
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Currently, the “Accessible Wawel” project is not formally linked to a single, specific international certification; however, it implements standards aligned with internationally recognized accessibility guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) – in the area of digital accessibility (captioned multimedia, audio descriptions, Polish Sign Language – PJM). ▪ European architectural accessibility standards, including European Commission recommendations on “Design for All” and inclusive public space design. ▪ Guidelines of the Culture Without Barriers Foundation and the Seventh Sense Foundation, organizations specializing in cultural accessibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required competencies and engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training of staff in alternative and augmentative communication (AAC). ▪ Knowledge of sign language or use of Polish Sign Language (PJM) interpreter services. ▪ Understanding the needs of people with different types of disabilities and adapting cultural offerings accordingly. ▪ Ability to design inclusive educational experiences. ▪ Interinstitutional and project-based cooperation with NGOs. <p>EFFECTS OF QUALITY STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION-RELATED ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of a coherent museum accessibility system that can be replicated in other cultural institutions. ▪ Increased trust and loyalty among groups previously excluded from cultural participation. ▪ Readiness to apply in the future for international labels and awards (e.g. Culture for All, Access City Award). <p>WHY IS IT WORTH TRANSFERRING THIS PRACTICE TO OTHER MARKETS?</p> <p>“Accessible Wawel” is a model of comprehensive accessibility that integrates infrastructural, informational, sensory, and educational elements. Its key strengths include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ modularity – solutions can be implemented in stages, ▪ low cost of selected solutions (e.g. Totupoint, online sign language interpreters), ▪ strong cooperation with experts and NGOs, ▪ significant social and reputational impact. <p>The model can be transferred to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ other museums and castles in Poland (e.g. Malbork Castle, Książ Castle, National Museum in Warsaw), ▪ cultural heritage sites in Central and Eastern Europe facing accessibility challenges (e.g. Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania), ▪ public cultural institutions worldwide seeking to open their offerings to new audience groups, such as Deaf and blind people, individuals with intellectual disabilities, or those on the autism spectrum.
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>Source: Wawel Royal Castle – <i>Accessible Wawel Programme</i> Partner: Seventh Sense Foundation https://wawel.krakow.pl</p>



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NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Warsaw Uprising Museum – Multidimensional Accessibility in a Space of Memory
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	POLAND
THEMATIC AREA	Accessibility <i>(architectural, sensory, communication, and information accessibility)</i>
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The Warsaw Uprising Museum implements an integrated accessibility model that addresses the needs of people with various types of disabilities—including mobility, visual, hearing impairments, and those on the autism spectrum. Thanks to well-developed infrastructure and a highly competent staff, the institution offers inclusive, safe, and emotionally engaging visits, which is particularly important given the sensitive historical nature of the exhibition content.</p> <p>WHO IMPLEMENTED IT AND WHY:</p> <p>The measures were implemented by the Warsaw Uprising Museum as part of its public mission and social responsibility. The objectives were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure equal access to historical and educational content, ▪ increase inclusiveness within cultural institutions, ▪ responsibly design a space of memory that takes into account diverse visitor needs—physical, sensory, and emotional. <p>WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:</p> <p>Architectural Accessibility and Mobility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-site wheelchair loan service. ▪ Accessibility for strollers and visitors with reduced mobility through dedicated visitor routes. ▪ Accessible parking spaces located at the main entrance and within the museum’s internal parking area. ▪ Adapted restroom facilities. <p>Information and Sensory Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Induction loop systems for visitors with hearing impairments. ▪ Guided tours with Polish Sign Language (PJM) interpreters. ▪ Multimedia exhibitions adapted for visitors who are Deaf or blind—captioned films, subtitles for video materials, and audio descriptions. ▪ An audio navigation path for visitors with visual impairments, facilitating movement and spatial perception within the exhibition.

	<p>Accessibility for Visitors on the Autism Spectrum and with Sensory Sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exhibition guidelines providing information about crowded or noisy areas. ▪ Staff training focused on supporting visitors with ASD and other special needs. <p>Human Resources and Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular training for staff and guides in inclusive communication and working with visitors with disabilities. ▪ Guided tours adapted to group needs, including the option to design individualized educational pathways. <p>WHAT RESULTS / EFFECTS WERE ACHIEVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The museum is regularly visited by people with disabilities—both individual visitors and organized groups (e.g. students, seniors, individuals on the autism spectrum). ▪ Positive reception of the initiatives, including high evaluations from expert organizations such as the Culture Without Barriers Foundation. ▪ Increased trust and interest from caregivers and educational institutions seeking safe and accessible cultural spaces. ▪ Development of an accessibility model that combines respect for difficult historical content with a modern, visitor-centered approach. ▪ Continuous expansion of accessibility solutions and ongoing cooperation with disability advocacy communities.
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>At present, the Warsaw Uprising Museum does not hold a single, formal international accessibility certification (such as the Access City Award or Culture for All). However, it implements measures aligned with good practices, sector standards, and national recommendations.</p> <p>In particular, the following are applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WCAG 2.1 guidelines (with regard to digital accessibility and multimedia). ▪ Recommendations of the Culture Without Barriers Foundation and other organizations working toward social inclusion. ▪ Service standards for persons with disabilities issued by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and NIMOZ (National Institute for Museums and Public Collections).

	<p>REQUIRED COMPETENCIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff training in Polish Sign Language (PJM), alternative communication methods, and working with people on the autism spectrum (ASD). ▪ Knowledge of designing accessible exhibitions and educational spaces. ▪ Ability to integrate modern technologies (multimedia, audio description, VR) with the needs of users with specific access requirements. <p>EFFECTS OF QUALITY STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION-RELATED ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthening the museum’s position as a socially sensitive and accessible institution. ▪ Increased readiness for further development toward obtaining formal accessibility certifications and awards. ▪ Building a public image of the museum as a place for everyone, regardless of barriers. <p>WHY IS IT WORTH TRANSFERRING THIS PRACTICE TO OTHER MARKETS?</p> <p>The Warsaw Uprising Museum demonstrates that an institution presenting difficult, painful, and emotionally charged history can simultaneously be an open, welcoming space with world-class accessibility.</p> <p>This model is worth implementing where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ historical, narrative, and multimedia museums operate, ▪ exhibitions may be sensory-intensive or emotionally demanding, ▪ institutions seek to build a social relationship with visitors rather than merely “deliver knowledge.” <p>Possible applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Narrative and multimedia museums in Central and Eastern Europe, e.g. the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, Holocaust Museum in Romania, Czech History Museum. ▪ Educational centers and participatory museums for children and youth, which require differentiated sensory approaches. ▪ Martyrology museums and memorial sites aiming to become more open to people with disabilities and their caregivers.
SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE	<p>Website of the Warsaw Uprising Museum https://www.1944.pl</p>



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NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Beaches in Gdańsk – A Model of Accessibility in Public Recreational Spaces
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	POLAND
THEMATIC AREA	Accessibility – public space, leisure tourism, coastal recreation
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The City of Gdańsk has implemented a comprehensive accessibility model on selected municipal beaches, enabling people with disabilities, seniors, families with children, and individuals with reduced mobility to enjoy equal access to seaside recreation. The measures combine infrastructural, informational, and support solutions, creating open, functional, and aesthetically pleasing recreational spaces.</p> <p>WHO IMPLEMENTED IT AND WHY:</p> <p>The initiative was carried out by the City of Gdańsk in cooperation with municipal units (including the Gdańsk Sports Centre and Gdańsk Social Infrastructure) as well as non-governmental organizations working for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The objectives were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure access to seaside recreation for everyone, • create inclusive public spaces, • promote socially responsible tourism in a coastal city, • implement universal design standards in recreational infrastructure. <p>WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:</p> <p>Beach Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach boardwalks with a width of 1.8 m, allowing safe movement for wheelchair users, with built-in passing and maneuvering areas. • Benches with backrests and armrests installed along the boardwalks, adapted to the needs of people with limited mobility. • Beach changing cabins with a minimum entrance width of 90 cm, equipped with seating and grab rails. <p>Mobility and Bathing Support Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphibious wheelchairs – specialized beach-and-water wheelchairs for people with disabilities, enabling entry into the sea with the assistance of a lifeguard or assistant. <p>Information and Sensory Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information boards with high contrast, clear typography, and descriptions in Braille. • Accessibility information provided in Braille, including on waste

	<p>segregation bins.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple and intuitive wayfinding system directing users to facilities such as boardwalks, benches, changing cabins, and lifeguard stations. <p>WHAT RESULTS / EFFECTS WERE ACHIEVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of people with disabilities and seniors actively using Gdańsk’s beaches. • Positive reception from residents and tourists—the beaches are considered among the most accessible in Poland. • Alignment with Gdańsk’s strategy as an open, friendly, and modern city committed to social inclusion in all areas of life. • A shift in design awareness—municipal infrastructure units are applying accessibility principles in subsequent recreational investments. • Establishment of a new standard for accessible coastal infrastructure in Poland.
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Although the described measures are not formally certified by an international organization (e.g. Access City Award, Blue Flag for Accessibility), they are implemented in line with universal design guidelines and meet many criteria for so-called “barrier-free beaches.”</p> <p>In particular, the following were taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations of the Polish Association of the Blind and environmental organizations regarding signage and visual communication. • Barrier-free design standards (Regulation of the Minister of Infrastructure on technical requirements for buildings). • Cooperation with organizations supporting people with disabilities and reduced mobility. <p>REQUIRED COMPETENCIES AND RESOURCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designers experienced in universal design (urban planning and recreation). • Training for beach staff and lifeguards in assisting people with disabilities. • Ability to combine aesthetics with functionality and material durability. <p>WHY IS IT WORTH TRANSFERRING THIS PRACTICE TO OTHER MARKETS? The Gdańsk beach model is an excellent example of the practical implementation of the “city for all” principle—accessible, functional, aesthetically pleasing, and fully responsive to the needs of diverse users.</p> <p>Potential areas of implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polish seaside and lakeside resorts: Świnoujście, Ustka, Mielno, Mrągowo—where seasonal tourism generates heavy traffic and can become

	<p>more inclusive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European coastal cities, e.g. Warnemünde (Germany), Kotor (Montenegro), Split (Croatia)—where better integration of people with disabilities into tourist flows is needed. • Beach revitalization areas in post-industrial cities—e.g. urban beaches in Rotterdam, Glasgow, or Gdynia.
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>Official City of Gdańsk portal – <i>“Gdańsk beaches accessible for everyone”</i> https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/Gdanskie-plaze-dostepne-dla-wszystkich,a,245946</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Trail of the Eagle’s Nests – Accessibility Tailored to Cultural Heritage
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	POLAND
THEMATIC AREA	Accessibility
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The Trail of the Eagle’s Nests is one of the most valuable and scenic historical–landscape routes in Poland, stretching across the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland and connecting medieval castle ruins and reconstructed fortresses. Although the natural terrain—numerous hills, rock formations, and remains of defensive structures—creates inherent accessibility barriers, in recent years a series of measures have been implemented to make this heritage more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.</p> <p>WHO IMPLEMENTED IT AND WHY:</p> <p>Accessibility initiatives along the Trail of the Eagle’s Nests have been implemented by multiple stakeholders, including landscape and national parks (such as the Silesian Voivodeship Landscape Parks Complex and Ojców National Park), local government authorities, managers of tourist sites (e.g. Rabsztyn Castle), and developers of mobile tourism applications.</p> <p>These actions have been coordinated, among others, within the project “Protected Area, Accessible Area”, developed in response to the growing need for inclusion in access to cultural and natural heritage—particularly in environmentally and historically valuable areas.</p> <p>WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:</p> <p>As part of accessibility enhancement measures, a sensory educational path “The Zone of the Senses” was created in the Eagle’s Nests Landscape Park. The path is hardened, equipped with a tactile map and touch-based information boards, and designed for people who are blind, partially sighted, or have special sensory needs.</p> <p>In Ojców National Park, induction loop systems were installed at ticket and educational points, along with audio descriptions for exhibitions at Ojców Castle. A viewing platform with a ramp was also built at the pond near the educational center, allowing wheelchair users to explore aquatic ecosystems.</p> <p>A particularly advanced example of accessibility is Rabsztyn Castle, where numerous solutions have been introduced for visitors with different types of disabilities. The site offers a stair-climbing device, wheelchairs, and white canes for blind visitors. The castle space includes tactile (typhlographic) boards with Braille descriptions, an audio guide with audio description, and the “Rabsztyn Castle” mobile application, which enables guided tours in Polish Sign Language (PJM). Parking areas, entrances, and the customer service</p>

	<p>point have also been adapted.</p> <p>Additionally, mobile applications supporting spatial and cognitive orientation have been introduced along the trail, such as the “Eagle’s Nests Landscape Park” app, featuring audio descriptions and maps that facilitate navigation for people with visual impairments.</p> <p>WHAT RESULTS / EFFECTS WERE ACHIEVED:</p> <p>The implemented measures have significantly improved accessibility not only at individual sites but across the entire trail as a coherent and diverse tourist route. As a result, people with disabilities can actively participate in cultural and nature-based tourism.</p> <p>There has also been an increase in organized groups—such as inclusive schools, senior groups, foundations, and care institutions—choosing the Trail of the Eagle’s Nests as an educational and recreational destination.</p> <p>The practice is fully scalable and can be implemented in other regions with similar historical, landscape, and structural characteristics. It successfully combines heritage revitalization and conservation with universal design in tourism spaces, offering inspiration for managers of thematic routes, landscape parks, castles, and open-air museums.</p>
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>The accessibility measures implemented along the Trail of the Eagle’s Nests are part of the project “Protected Area, Accessible Area”, carried out under the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development 2014–2020, Priority Axis IV – <i>Social Innovation and Transnational Cooperation</i>, Measure 4.3.</p> <p>The project aimed to develop a framework model of an accessible national and landscape park, which can serve as a benchmark for future tourism investments in Poland and across Europe.</p> <p>The initiative included the implementation of specific solutions (infrastructural, technological, and informational), as well as training programs to build accessibility-related competencies among staff managing protected areas. This resulted in a long-term impact—not only improving physical accessibility but also strengthening management capacities and social awareness regarding inclusive tourism.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://orlegniazda.pl https://zamekrabsztyn.pl</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Breda – A City Accessible to All
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	NETHERLANDS
THEMATIC AREA	Accessible Tourism / Urban Accessibility
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>Breda, a city located in the southern part of the Netherlands, has for many years focused on socially sustainable development, placing particular emphasis on inclusive spatial planning and the removal of barriers for people with disabilities. City authorities recognized that investing in accessibility is not only a response to the needs of specific social groups, but also a real improvement in the quality of life for the entire local community—residents, tourists, and older people alike. Breda’s actions represent a model implementation of the universal design principle, taking into account the diversity of users of urban and tourism spaces.</p> <p>PURPOSE AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS (HOW WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?):</p> <p>The project was implemented in stages and covered all districts of the city. Actions were carried out in a spirit of cross-sector cooperation, notably within the initiative “Breda voor Iedereen” (Breda for Everyone), which brings together non-governmental organizations, entrepreneurs, urban planning experts, architects, and representatives of public institutions. The main objective was to make urban space, public transport, public buildings, and services accessible physically, informationally, and digitally.</p> <p>WHAT RESULTS / EFFECTS WERE ACHIEVED:</p> <p>Urban infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All districts were equipped with curb ramps and tactile guiding lines for people who are blind or partially sighted. ▪ Historic cobbled streets were modernized—the surface was adapted to the needs of wheelchair users while preserving the city’s heritage character. <p>Public transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The entire fleet of city buses was adapted for passengers with disabilities, and drivers received specialized training in assisting passengers with special needs. <p>Buildings and public space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All public buildings, including historic churches and administrative offices, were equipped with ramps, elevators, accessible toilets, and clear signage. ▪ New investments are designed in accordance with the “design for all” principle. <p>Education and social awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city regularly organizes training sessions and workshops for public

	<p>administration staff and the private sector, increasing awareness of accessibility and empathy toward people with disabilities.</p> <p>Social and sports activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Events such as ParaGamesBreda and the European Para Sports Championships attract both athletes and spectators, promoting an active and inclusive lifestyle. <p>Digital accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The city ensured that all websites and mobile applications comply with international WCAG guidelines, enabling people with disabilities to freely use digital public services.
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>In 2019, Breda was awarded the prestigious European Access City Award, granted by the European Commission to cities demonstrating exceptional commitment and innovation in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The award recognizes a holistic approach that integrates social, spatial, digital, and cultural policies into a coherent strategy for an inclusive city. This distinction strengthened Breda’s position as a European leader in urban and tourism accessibility.</p> <p>Significance for skills development (What did the staff learn?):</p> <p>Thanks to the implementation of a comprehensive accessibility program, administrative, design, and operational staff in Breda developed and strengthened competencies in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ universal design, ▪ customer service for people with special needs, ▪ management of inclusive urban spaces, ▪ planning digital services in compliance with accessibility principles. <p>The city actively cooperates with other European cities (through partner city networks and EU programs), sharing experience and inspiring the implementation of similar solutions. As a result, Breda has become a benchmark of good practice in accessibility not only in the Netherlands, but across Europe.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission – Access City Award 2019 https://ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward • Access City Award 2019 – Breda profile (PDF) <p>Additional sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Official City of Breda website – accessibility and “Breda voor Iedereen” project https://www.breda.nl/breda-voor-iedereen ▪ Media coverage and reports on the award and city practices: – Euronews: Breda wins Access City Award

– *Cities Today: Accessibility in Breda*

▪ European Commission reports and publications on urban accessibility:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1137&langId=en>



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NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Lousã – A Model of an Accessible Tourist City
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	PORTUGAL
THEMATIC AREA	Accessible Tourism
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The city of Lousã, picturesquely located at the foothills of the Serra da Lousã mountains, is known for its natural assets, historical heritage, and local culture. Observing the underrepresentation of people with disabilities among tourists, as well as growing social expectations and European standards, the city authorities decided to implement a comprehensive project aimed at improving the accessibility of tourist spaces.</p> <p>In 2010, a detailed assessment of existing infrastructure was launched, covering streets, public buildings, tourist attractions, hotels, and transport. Identifying physical, informational, and organizational barriers became the starting point for developing a local accessibility strategy, designed to transform not only physical space but also social awareness and staff competencies.</p> <p>PURPOSE AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS (HOW WAS IT CARRIED OUT?):</p> <p>The main objective of the programme was to enable all tourists—regardless of age, level of ability, or sensory needs—to fully enjoy the attractions of Lousã. The accessibility strategy was implemented in several stages and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ redevelopment of public spaces, including sidewalks, stairs, entrances, and access routes to attractions, incorporating ramps, elevators, and handrails, ▪ adaptation of hotels, restaurants, and tourist information centres to the needs of people with reduced mobility, ▪ introduction of pictograms and sensory signage, tactile maps, and information in alternative formats (e.g. Braille and easy-to-read language), ▪ training for tourism sector staff in customer service for people with special needs and alternative communication methods. <p>A key element of the process was the involvement of the local community, NGOs, and municipal authorities, which enabled effective identification of barriers and co-creation of solutions.</p> <p>WHAT RESULTS / EFFECTS WERE ACHIEVED:</p> <p>The implementation of the strategy proved successful—Lousã became the first city in Portugal to receive the international ATDCP accessibility certification, significantly increasing its tourist attractiveness. Key outcomes include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an increase in the number of tourists with disabilities and senior visitors independently and safely visiting Lousã, ▪ improved quality of life for the local community—new solutions also benefit older residents, families with children, and people with temporary mobility limitations, ▪ increased engagement of tourism entrepreneurs, who recognized the market value of accessibility and incorporated it into their business strategies, ▪ development of a long-term inclusive tourism development plan, including digital and environmental aspects, ▪ a positive image of Lousã as a city “for everyone,” inspiring other Portuguese municipalities and destinations.
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>In 2011, Lousã received the prestigious international Accessible Tourism Destination Certification Programme (ATDCP) certificate, awarded by the Belgian organization Toegankelijkheidsbureau (TGB). It was the first city in Portugal to receive this distinction, granted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a systematic approach to identifying and removing barriers, ▪ cross-sector cooperation in designing accessible solutions, ▪ implementation of universal design standards, ▪ engagement of residents and tourists in planning spaces that are friendly to all. <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (WHAT DID THE STAFF LEARN?):</p> <p>The process of implementing accessibility in Lousã significantly enhanced the competencies of both public administration staff and private tourism operators. The most important outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a better understanding of the needs of people with disabilities in the context of services, spaces, and communication, ▪ development of skills in designing inclusive tourism services, ▪ ability to conduct social dialogue and cross-sector cooperation, ▪ participation in European cooperation networks and sharing experiences with other cities. <p>Thanks to its courage, coherent vision, and consistent action, Lousã has become a benchmark of good practice in accessible tourism not only in Portugal, but across the European Union.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>1. Toegankelijkheidsbureau (TGB) – Belgium Organization awarding the ATDCP certificate to the Municipality of Lousã https://www.accessibletourismdestination.org</p>

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Official press release – Certificate Award Ceremony (2011)
City of Lousã (Portuguese):
https://www.lousa.pt/pages/788?news_id=3243. City of Lousã – Official municipal website
Accessibility projects and implementation strategy:
https://www.cm-lousa.pt4. European and international reports on accessible tourism<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ UNWTO – <i>Accessible Tourism for All</i>
https://www.unwto.org/accessibility▪ European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) – case study:
https://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.case-studies.19495. Academic publication (ENAT)
“Lousã – An example of best practices in Accessible Tourism” – case study published within ENAT and TGB projects (available via Google Scholar or ResearchGate).
https://www.accessibletourismdestination.org |
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NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Sheraton Sopot Hotel – Accessibility as a Premium Standard
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	POLAND
THEMATIC AREA	Accessibility
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The Sheraton Sopot Hotel, located directly next to the Sopot Pier, is an example of a luxury hotel property that has implemented accessibility solutions in a comprehensive and systematic manner. The practice involves ensuring that guests with disabilities—mobility, sensory, and cognitive—can access the full range of hotel services on equal terms with other guests.</p> <p>WHO IMPLEMENTED IT AND WHY:</p> <p>These measures were implemented by Marriott International, the owner of the Sheraton brand, as part of its global standards for sustainable and inclusive hotel management. The implementation of accessibility in Sopot resulted from the need to respond to growing legal, market, and social expectations, as well as from the belief that hospitality should be universal.</p> <p>WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:</p> <p>Among the infrastructure solutions introduced are dedicated parking spaces, wide step-free circulation routes, elevators serving all levels, and adapted guest rooms equipped with amenities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ non-slip grab rails and support handles in bathrooms, ▪ roll-in showers with seating and adjustable showerheads, ▪ lowered electrical sockets, peepholes, locks, and door handles for ease of use, ▪ visual and audible alarm systems adapted to the needs of guests with various disabilities, ▪ Braille signage and tactile pictograms in common areas. <p>The hotel also offers visual evacuation alarms and self-closing doors, while guest rooms are equipped with special alarm clocks and alert systems for Deaf and hard-of-hearing guests.</p> <p>Hotel staff have undergone training in serving guests with special needs, including persons with disabilities and individuals on the autism spectrum. As a result, guests benefit not only from appropriate technical conditions but also from empathetic and professional service.</p>

	<p>An additional advantage is the full accessibility of the wellness and SPA center—an uncommon feature in facilities of this type. Guests with limited mobility also have access to a swimming pool equipped with appropriate approaches and technical aids.</p> <p>WHAT RESULTS / EFFECTS WERE ACHIEVED:</p> <p>The implementation of this accessibility model enabled the hotel to expand its customer base and build a brand image that is open to diversity. It also responds to the needs of senior guests, families with young children, and people with temporary disabilities (e.g. post-injury).</p> <p>Importantly, this practice can be easily transferred to other hotel properties—regardless of their size—because it is based on universal design principles. Adapting spaces to the needs of guests with disabilities does not require compromising service quality, as demonstrated by the Sheraton Sopot example.</p>
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Although there is no publicly available information on national-level certification, the Sheraton Sopot Hotel operates in line with Marriott International’s global standards, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the Global Sustainability and Social Impact Platform (including accessibility policies), ▪ compliance with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements across Marriott properties worldwide, ▪ actions aligned with ESG principles and hospitality industry accessibility guidelines. <p>In addition, Marriott is subject to internal and external audits verifying compliance with accessibility requirements and may be considered a model example of universal design implementation at a global hotel network level.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/gdhsi-sheraton-sopot-hotel/overview/ https://serve360.marriott.com (platform CSR Marriott)</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	ILUNION Hotels Network – Comprehensive Accessibility in the Hospitality Sector
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	SPAIN
THEMATIC AREA	Accessibility
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>ILUNION Hotels is a Spanish hotel chain that has become a European leader in accessibility and social inclusion in tourism. The practice consists of implementing comprehensive architectural, digital, and organizational solutions that enable people with different types of disabilities—mobility, sensory, and cognitive—to enjoy a comfortable stay across the network’s facilities.</p> <p>WHO IMPLEMENTED IT AND WHY:</p> <p>All hotels offer rooms designed specifically for wheelchair users, featuring wide entrances, ample maneuvering space, automatic doors, visual and acoustic systems, and wardrobes with foldable hangers. Bathrooms are equipped with step-free walk-in showers, grab rails, alarm systems, and even full-body dryers—features that remain rare even in hotels advertised as accessible.</p> <p>WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:</p> <p>ILUNION also ensured digital accessibility—the website allows users to adjust the interface according to the needs of guests with visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments, enabling independent booking. Informational signage in hotels is available in Braille and tactile formats, and staff members are trained to assist guests with special access needs.</p> <p>Special recognition should also be given to the employment model—ILUNION is one of the few hotel chains in Europe that employs a significant number of people with disabilities, promoting an inclusive business model and emphasizing that accessibility is not only about infrastructure, but also about organizational culture.</p>
LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION	<p>LINKAGE WITH CERTIFICATION</p> <p>ILUNION also ensured digital accessibility—the website allows users to adjust the interface according to the needs of guests with visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments, enabling independent booking. Informational signage in hotels is available in Braille and tactile formats, and staff members are trained to assist guests with special access needs.</p> <p>Special recognition should also be given to the employment model—ILUNION is</p>

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SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE	https://www.ilunionhotels.co.uk

