



Growing the Market in Accessible Tourism (GROWMAT)

TOURISM for ALL event



The project team presented the outcomes of the project at the Delegation of the Basque Country to the EU, on Thursday 7 March 2019.

Partners of GROWMAT



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Event Brussels, Belgium

The GROWMAT Multiplier event “Tourism for ALL” took place on the 7th March at the Delegation of the Basque Country to the EU. It was a great opportunity to gather together representatives from different sectors working with Tourism and Tourism accessibility such as VET schools, EU Institutions and private sector to shed light on the diverse opportunities and challenges linked to Inclusive Tourism.

Marijo Irastorza (CDEA) introduced the GROWMAT project results and stressed the relevance of not only targeting VET Education but aiming at building alliances with different actors such as companies and NGOs in order to improve accessible tourism training for all involved in the sector. Working together is a key factor for moving forward.

Chrystalla Petridou (European Commission, DG-EAC) insisted on the need to see Erasmus+ beyond mobility, as the development of new solutions to problems across Europe. She highlighted two elements of the GROWMAT project: its focus on inclusion of persons with special needs and the cross-sectoral, bringing together educational institutions, businesses and the service market and generating constructive cooperation and partnerships. It is essential to keep supporting VET as it has the capacity to reach learners with very different social backgrounds. Nevertheless, there is still hard work ahead to improve the accessibility of tourism across Europe. But one thing is certain: the commitment to work for creating a stronger Erasmus+ for VET and to increase and enlarge the profile of participants.

Marny Thompson (Age UK) presented the best practices of GROWMAT and explained that one of the main objectives of the project is to assist SMEs who do not have the time and the resources to dedicate to the training of their staff. That is why GROWMAT designed different courses for different markets (tourism businesses, students in the field of tourism and hospitality and anyone else that wishes to raise awareness). The existing gap for older people in the Tourism

market needs to be addressed to achieve accessibility for everyone.

Panagiotis Anastassopoulos (p-consulting) introduced the GROWMAT web app AccAdvisor that will help tourists to rate accessibility services of tourist locations. He also pointed out the paradox of Greece being one of the best touristic destinations, but nevertheless lagging behind on accessibility. Improving the accessibility of the facilities could be a great opportunity in terms of economy, given the fact that elderly people’s “Silver Economy” have the potential to impact positively different markets.

“The lack of accessibility is a cost for the tourism sector”

The panel debate focused on ‘Accessibility tourism: an opportunity for economic growth, the right and well-being of all people’ was moderated by **Peter Hodgson** (EfVET) and offered the opportunity to comprehend better the policy and business perspectives.



Opening the panel, **Girma Anuskeviciute** (European Commission, DG-GROW) presented the European Commission’s activities and support measures in the area of accessible tourism. Accessible tourism generates 400 billion euros in revenue, supporting 9 million jobs and still, only 9% of EU Member States’ touristic services are fully accessible. If appropriate services were put in place, we could see a potential 44% increase in demand per year. How can we achieve this? By improving the skills, the offer and communication and information. She also mentioned some DG GROW initiatives that reward accessible tourism

such as the European Excellence Awards for Accessible Tourism, the Access City Award and the European Capitals of Smart Tourism.

Inmaculada Placencia Porrero (European Commission, DG-EMPL) provided an overview of the work focused on Accessibility and the content of the new legislation. Accessibility should be considered an instrument to ensure equal access for all citizens. The Member States have different approaches in terms of technical resources, legislation and jurisdiction which makes it harder to travel for persons with disabilities given the importance of having a certain degree of predictability.

Last but not least, **Julien Vanlaeys** (Citadines, The Ascott Limited Europe) concluded the dialogue with a business perspective. Even though as a business, they are making efforts and investing in improving the different procedures in terms of accessibility, challenges remain as not all cities are accessible and tourists will inevitably be affected by the infrastructure of the city before getting to the accommodation. Furthermore, staff need to be properly trained in order to confront reality and identify what kind of responses are needed in a sector as rapidly growing as tourism. Peter Hodgson concluded the discussion emphasising the necessity of raising awareness on accessibility and inclusiveness and the importance of reskilling and upskilling employees.

This was a very successful event, with the audience exactly as needed, who had a great interest in the GROWMAT project.

GROWMAT Training Courses

The courses have been held in Spain, Greece, Slovenia, UK (Bridgwater) and Finland. The opinions of students and teachers in general have been very good.

Although the courses originate from the one standard course, the project created two

different (but similar) courses, one directed at students of tourism and hospitality, the other for businesses involved in tourism. Appropriate changes have been made to accommodate the different levels of students and also in Greece, the course has been run only with local businesses; the modular course structure was designed to accommodate the differing needs of the partners. For example, in Finland, they ran the course at Masters Level, which needed to be delivered with a different method.

Multipier Event held in UK December 5



The people who attended the event were the actual target audience – the older people themselves. These older people are interested to learn more and find out what is going on in their locale, or their city.

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www.growmat.eu