



OPEN DOORS PROJECT | 2026

TOURISM 360°

Building Accessibility in European Tourism

 Italy

 Poland

 Portugal



Funded by
the European Union

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Erasmus+ Programme | Key Action KA210-VET



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Partner Organisations



Forma.Lab

Forma.Lab s.r.l. – Italy
(Project Coordinator)
Italy



Polish Farm Advisory

Polish Farm Advisory and Training
Centre Natalia Truszkowska
Poland



CRESAÇOR

Cooperativa Regional de Economia
Solidária, CRL
Portugal (Azores)

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Making travelling in Europe more accessible for all – European Disability Forum @AzoresforAll/CRESAÇOR

The **Open Doors: Building Accessibility in Europe** project (2025-1-IT01-KA210-VET-000356329), funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, aims to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of tourism services in Italy, Portugal (Azores) and Poland, by training 90 tourism operators (hoteliers, tour guides, travel agencies, etc.) and raising awareness among local communities of the importance of universal hospitality.

Taking a holistic approach, based on the knowledge and experience of local stakeholders, the project aims to develop a training programme for tour operators, focusing on building skills in accessibility, as well as creating local and transnational networks that promote greater inclusion of people with disabilities in the tourism sector.

In this context, we present the report **"Open Doors – Tourism 360°"** as the result of a consultation process with civil society organisations, tour operators and institutional stakeholders operating in the territories covered by the project – Portugal/Azores, Italy and Poland.

Core Premise: Tourism is a universal and social right, directly linked to the right to access travel and leisure. Accessibility and inclusion in tourism are crucial issues for contemporary society, seeking to promote the full and equal participation of all people, regardless of their abilities.

Accessibility and inclusion in tourism are essential instruments for building a more equal society. By removing physical and social barriers, and by promoting the appreciation of the diversity that exists amongst people, tourist destinations can become more welcoming and enriching for all their visitors.



Experience inclusion in many different way. @AzoresforAll/CRESAÇOR

Consultation Process

The consultation process took place during **February and March 2026** and was implemented by the partner organisations across the three countries. A total of **15 sessions** were held, involving **67 participants** representing civil society organisations, tourism operators and political/institutional stakeholders.

Stakeholder Type	Focus Area
Civil Society	Rights, real barriers and human impact
Tourism Operators	Implementation, market and capacity building
Institutional Stakeholders	Strategic focus, regulation and governance

Analysis of the Initial and Final Questionnaires

Dimension	Initial Questionnaire	Final Questionnaire
Responses	PT: 14 / IT: 18 / PL: 15	PT: 20 / IT: 23 / PL: 15
Participant profile	NGOs, tourism operators, public authorities (greater heterogeneity in Italy)	Continued diversity and sustained interest in engagement
Prior knowledge	Predominantly medium to high (higher in Poland and Italy)	Increased perception of knowledge following sessions
Main expectations	Knowledge sharing, identification of local needs, concrete solutions	Expectations largely met or exceeded ("Yes" or "Fully")
Priority themes	Sector challenges, local needs, training, future opportunities	Accessible infrastructure, stakeholder cooperation, public policies
Decision-making	Moderate level (mainly at intermediate levels)	Increased sense of being valued and heard
Expected contribution	Sharing practical, technical and institutional experience	Consultancy, implementation, accessibility assessment

The consultation process revealed that although accessibility and inclusion are increasingly recognised in tourism policies, significant challenges remain in translating these principles into practical and coherent solutions. Accessibility is not integrated across the tourism value chain, resulting in fragmented experiences, structural barriers and unequal access to leisure and tourism services.

PROBLEM 1

Lack of effective implementation of accessibility policies

- Inconsistent application of standards
- Accessibility treated as legal requirement
- Lack of monitoring and enforcement

PROBLEM 2

Physical and infrastructural barriers

- Historic buildings poorly adapted
- Lack of accessible transport
- Inaccessible beaches, trails, accommodation

PROBLEM 3

Lack of accessible and reliable information

- Incomplete or non-existent information
- Lack of standardisation of data
- Low digital accessibility

PROBLEM 4

Training and awareness deficit

- Lack of practical training
- Limited awareness of accessibility
- Difficulties serving diverse audiences

PROBLEM 5

Fragmentation and lack of coordination

- Isolated initiatives (Italy)
- Lack of integration between policies (Poland)
- Cooperation is often not institutionalised (Portugal)

PROBLEM 6

Financial and structural constraints

- Difficulty securing investment (SMEs)
- Complex access to funding (Poland)
- High adaptation costs (PT and IT)

PROBLEM 7

Attitudinal and cultural barriers

- Stigmatisation and infantilisation
- Lack of awareness of inclusion
- Low recognition as a universal right

PROBLEM 8

Lack of integration into tourism strategy

- Not integrated into sustainability policies
- Not considered a competitiveness factor
- Lack of long-term strategic vision

The consultation process highlights that accessibility in tourism is not merely a social issue, but a **central strategic factor** for the sustainable, competitive and inclusive development of territories.

Firstly, the lack of integration of accessibility directly undermines the competitiveness of tourist destinations, limiting their ability to attract new market segments and to respond to demographic trends, such as an ageing population and the growing demand for inclusive tourism.

All three partners converge on the idea that impact should be understood from a **systemic perspective** rather than an individual one. Accessibility depends on an ecosystem of interconnected actors — tourism operators, public authorities, civil society and the wider community.

Key Strategic Contributions

Strategic Area	Impact
Quality of Life	Improved quality of life for residents through more inclusive infrastructure and services
Social Equality	Reduction of social inequalities by ensuring universal access to leisure and tourism
Economic Enhancement	Economic enhancement of territories through diversification of tourism offerings
Sustainability	Strengthening of sustainability and destination certification
Competitiveness	Market diversification and enhanced competitiveness of destinations

Investing in accessible tourism is simultaneously an investment in **social inclusion, innovation, competitiveness and sustainability**, requiring an integrated, collaborative and results-oriented approach.

The mitigation of the identified challenges requires an **integrated, practical and collaborative approach** to the development of accessible tourism. The following should be considered priorities:

1 Training and Capacity-Building

- Mandatory training linked to funding (Portugal)
- Development of modular, practical training pathways (Italy)
- Capacity-building in inclusive communication and customer service (Poland)

2 Development of Practical and Applicable Tools

- Technical support services and specialised guidance (Portugal)
- Development of guides, case studies and replicable micro-solutions (Italy)
- Creation of checklists, platforms and standardised information (Poland)

3 Strengthening Coordination and Cooperation

- Creation of technical structures and greater institutional coordination (Portugal)
- Establishment of stable cooperation mechanisms (Italy)
- Promotion of partnerships between public, private and civil society (Poland)

4 Improving Information and Visibility of Accessibility

- Updating and mapping accessible resources (Portugal)
- Promoting clear, user-friendly information for visitors (Italy)
- Standardisation and transparency of information on digital platforms (Poland)

5 Integration of Accessibility into Policies and Funding

- Mandatory inclusion in regional programmes and public funding schemes (Portugal)
- Integration as a cross-cutting quality standard (Italy)
- Incorporation into tourism development policies and access to funding (Poland)

6 Promotion of Practical, Gradual and Replicable Solutions

- Monitoring and continuous improvement (Portugal)
- Pilot projects and small-scale interventions (Italy)
- Simplified financial support and progressive solutions (Poland)

The consultation process conducted in Portugal (Azores), Italy and Poland identified a set of convergent good practices that support the development of accessible and inclusive tourism. These practices highlight the importance of a structured, collaborative and implementation-oriented approach.

Portugal (Azores)

- Progressive adaptation of tourism infrastructure, particularly in accommodation and transports, demonstrating a gradual and realistic approach to accessibility implementation;
- Provision of joëlette equipment for trails, enabling access to natural areas for people with reduced mobility (Azores For All / CRESAÇOR initiative);
- Development of inclusive tourism products, such as adapted transport solutions (e.g. inclusive mini-train routes);
- Cooperation between tourism professionals (e.g. guides and drivers), improving service coordination and user experience;
- Personalisation of tourism experiences, particularly in maritime activities, adapting services to individual needs;
- Partnerships with social organisations, ensuring a more inclusive and user-centred approach;
- Implementation of evacuation and emergency that explicitly include people with disabilities as a inclusive safety management.

Italy (Sicily)

- Development of tactile and Braille-based tools, improving accessibility in cultural and tourism environments;
- Creation of adapted cultural routes and guided experiences, tailored to diverse user needs;
- Use of digital tools and accessible communication, supporting planning and navigation;
- Provision of guided assistance and personalised support services;
- Implementation of awareness-raising actions, including school-based initiatives;
- Small-scale service adjustments, demonstrating that accessibility can be improved through low-cost, practical interventions.

Poland

- Improvement of accessibility information, with a focus on clearer and more detailed communication in digital platforms;
- Development of standardised accessibility indicators and certification approaches, supporting transparency and consistency across tourism services and destinations;
- Implementation of training programmes for tourism professionals, focused on inclusive communication and service provision;
- Strengthening of partnerships between public institutions, businesses and civil society, promoting coordinated action;
- Integration of accessibility into tourism development policies, ensuring a structural and long-term approach;
- Creation of practical tools, such as self-assessment checklists and guidelines for operators;
- Promotion of accessible funding mechanisms, particularly for SMEs.

United Nations 2030 Agenda

This report is aligned with the United Nations 2030 Agenda, contributing directly and indirectly to several Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability in tourism is an unavoidable path, increasingly embraced by stakeholders across the sector on a global scale.

The practice of accessible tourism directly impacts the sustainability of destinations. By designing tourism products and services that are accessible to all, destinations can optimise the use of resources and create environments that serve both visitors and local communities.

The table below establishes the correlation between each SDG and its contribution to accessible tourism.

SDG	Contribution to Accessible Tourism
SDG 4 – Quality Education	Training and capacity-building for tourism professionals in inclusive practices
SDG 8 – Decent Work	Promoting inclusive employment and sustainable economic growth in tourism
SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities	Ensuring universal access to leisure and tourism regardless of ability
SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities	Developing inclusive, accessible and sustainable urban tourism infrastructure
SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption	Promoting sustainable and responsible tourism practices across the value chain
SDG 17 – Partnerships	Strengthening multi-stakeholder cooperation for accessible tourism development

Based on the above, it can be concluded that accessible tourism is no longer a complementary dimension, but rather a **strategic pillar** for the sustainable, inclusive and competitive development of destinations.

Despite progress at the policy level and growing awareness, structural challenges common to all three contexts persist – namely the fragmentation of initiatives, the gap between legislation and implementation, the lack of specialised training, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders in the tourism sector.

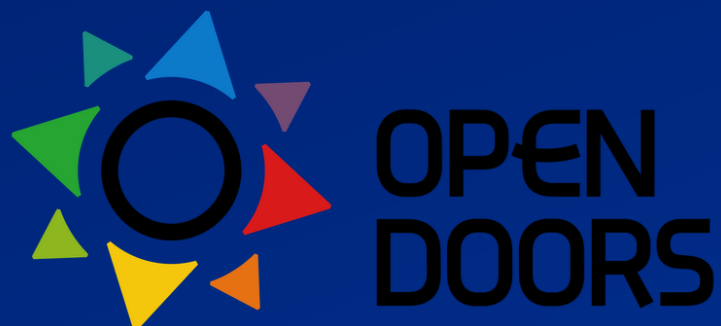
Partners' contributions show that relevant solutions, practices and experiences already exist, although they are often scattered and insufficiently systematised. The main challenge lies not so much in the absence of responses, but in their **integration, scalability and consistent application**.

"The consultation carried out in Portugal/Azores, Italy and Poland confirms that the path towards truly accessible tourism requires structural and cultural change, based on the alignment of knowledge, action and cooperation."

There is clear consensus that the approach should be based on:

- Capacity-building and practical training for tourism professionals;
- The development of operational and replicable tools;
- The strengthening of cooperation among stakeholders;
- The application of the current law in terms of accessibility;
- The integration of accessibility into public policies and funding.

The **Open Doors – Building Accessibility in European Tourism** project positions itself as a catalyst for this transformation, with the potential to convert diagnoses into concrete, sustainable and transferable solutions at the European level.



Open Doors – Tourism 360°

Building Accessibility in European Tourism

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