

Evaluation of accessibility built in the System of measures for excellence in destinations

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The World Centre of Excellence for Destinations (CED) was established in 2006, with the support of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and other international partners, to help bring the tourist destinations around the world to excellence. To do this, the CED has developed the System of measures for excellence in destinations (SMED), a diagnostic tool allowing to make recommendations to a destination so that it strengthens its competitive position while respecting the highest standards of sustainability. This tool was developed with the participation of a wide range of destinations in the world, both in respect of the types of destinations (urban, rural, nature, mountain, coastal) and geographical regions (Andorra, Saudi Arabia, Canada, China, Greece, Honduras, India, Mexico, Portugal). The purpose of this paper is to trace the evolution of the SMED from 2006 to 2014, while highlighting the dimensions relating to accessibility for all.

This research is of descriptive qualitative type. The study period 2006-2014 is subdivided into three periods, each being characterized by the contribution of collaborators or partners of the CED in the evolution of the SMED. The first sub-period (2006-2010) will highlight the role played by the World Tourism Organization in the creation of the SMED. The second sub-period (2010-2012) will highlight work with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council to develop internationally recognized benchmarks regarding sustainable development of a destination, including specific accessibility criteria. Finally, the third sub-period (2012-2014) focuses on the creation, in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank and the National Geographic Society, of a portal for destination management organizations (DMOs) and small and medium-sized businesses located on their territory. This portal includes two components: access to knowledge (Geotourism Explorer); and access to markets (Latin America and the Caribbean Explorer).

The study of the evolution of the development of the SMED, from its creation in 2006 to date, helped highlight the dynamic character of the different dimensions of this tool, including those relating to accessibility for all. In addition to the institutional actors, the CED has developed over the years close relations with the academic community, including the Centre de recherche sur le tourisme et le patrimoine (CRTP) de l'École des sciences de gestion, Université du Québec à Montréal (ESG UQAM), member of the WTO/UNWTO knowledge network. Research projects are being developed to better understand the problems and issues related to the evaluation of accessibility for all tourist destinations.