

## **Accessibility of the Portuguese Destination: strategy and best practices**

*Nuno Fazenda, Turismo de Portugal, IP, Lisboa, Portugal (presenter)*

*João Cotrim de Figueiredo, Turismo de Portugal, IP, Lisboa, Portugal*

*Teresa Ferreira, Turismo de Portugal, IP, Lisboa, Portugal*

*Helena Ribeiro, Turismo de Portugal, IP, Lisboa, Portugal*

The quality of Portugal as a tourist destination has been recognized worldwide. This is demonstrated by the data relating to tourism performance in 2013, with more than 40 million overnight stays, 14,400 million guests in hotels, an income of 9,200 million Euros from tourism and a positive balance of 6,100 million Euros between inbound and outbound tourism. There have been very positive developments in the foreign market demand, a trend that is continuing in 2014.

As is systematically revealed from the results of annual surveys on tourist satisfaction, this international recognition of Portugal as a tourist destination is based significantly on the reception and hospitality offered to tourists. It is in the reinforcement of these inherent values in Portugal that the approach 'Accessibility – Tourism for all' fits. This approach not only reinforces these values but also differentiates and diversifies offering, and captures new market sectors.

Also, the most recent data from the European Union show a growing importance in the sector of people with special needs. Tourist flows corresponding to this sector in the EU (data 2012) totalled approximately 783 million trips within the EU. A growth to about 862 million trips is expected in 2020, the equivalent to an average growth rate of 1.2% per year. The gross value directly from accessible tourism in the EU in 2012 was approximately 352 billion Euros; taking into account the multiplier effect, the gross total amounted to about 786 billion Euros.

Considering this background, the National Tourism Strategy states "make Portugal an accessible destination for all" as a strategic action. It encourages the mobilization of public and private agents, with the objective of increasing, in all the value chain, tourist access and enjoyment for all.

The identified areas to work on are: the structuring of the accessible tourism offering, making information available and the tourist recognition of Portugal as an accessible place for all. The favored methods for this include: institutional partnerships between several governmental areas, promotion of networks between private tourism agents enabling new service offers, production of technical tools that facilitate the qualification of tourism agents, and the spread of best practices through demonstrations. Concrete examples of already achieved outcomes will be presented. The work has already started and is still in development. The identified challenges include organization and providing information about the accessible tourism offering; the acquisition and monitoring of demand flows; the continuous awareness of both public and private tourism agents for the potential growth and positioning of an accessible tourist destination for all.