

A roadmap towards inclusive destinations
“Tourism for all – Inclusive hotels” an initiative by the Athens – Attica and Argosaronic Hotel Association

Anastasia Kalou, Athens – Attica and Argosaronic Hotel Association, Athens, Greece (presenter)

The purpose of this presentation is to illustrate the methodology used and disseminate the knowledge acquired during the course of our work on the Athens-Attica and Argosaronic Hotel Association’s initiative “Tourism for All - Inclusive Hotels”, launched in January 2014.

The Athens-Attica and Argosaronic Hotel Association is the professional body of hoteliers operating in the Athens, Attica and Argosaronic region representing hotels varying from 1 to 5 stars.

Given the importance and growth potential of the accessible tourism market, the fact that it is underserved by member hotels, and with member hotels experiencing a 36,4% loss in revenues (Revpar) over the last 6 years because of the Greek economic crisis, the Association undertakes this initiative in order for its members to open their hotels to the accessible tourism market and gain a significant competitive advantage which may add to their sustainability.

The initiative “Tourism for All - Inclusive Hotels” takes a holistic approach and addresses barriers to access throughout the Tourism Service Chain rather than just focusing on hotel accessibility which is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one to attract the accessible tourism market.

The initiative focuses on the following axes: accommodation, destination, promotion and considers physical and non-physical aspects along each axis.

On the first axis, hotels are access audited in terms of their build environment, their facilities and services and recommendations are made. Also access awareness training workshops for staff, and tips on how hotels can better promote their inclusive services to the accessible tourist market are provided.

On the second axis reliable access information regarding restaurants, museums, archaeological sites, cultural activities, shopping, walks or short excursions within the region, and means of transportation is collected and forms the basis to put together inclusive multisensory experiences for disabled travelers and their parties.

On the third axis Athens, Attica and the Argosaronic is promoted as an inclusive destination through fam trips and all the appropriate channels in order for this information to specifically reach the accessible tourist market.

Finally the way the initiative has progressed so far reveals that hoteliers avoid to address access issues because of a lack of understanding of the needs and requirements of disabled tourists and the accessible tourist market and that too often the cost and the difficulty of all necessary steps towards inclusivity are exaggerated.