

Title of the project: Smart Tourist Routes for Inclusive Groups

Acronym: S.T.R.I.N.G.

Project duration: 18 months: October 1, 2014 - March 31, 2016

Lead partner/coordinator:

CPD - Consulta perle Persone in Difficoltà ONLUS-Italy (www.cpdconsulta.it)

CPD, the project coordinator, is a local network of stakeholders dedicated to equal opportunity and social inclusion. It operates also in the accessible tourism field, addressing to the touristic operators on two directions: on one hand the work on the territory with a desk of free consulting, on the other hand a promotional circuit at national and international level.

Partners:

Regione Piemonte - Italy (www.regione.piemonte.it)

The government of Regione Piemonte regards accessibility as a priority for developing the tourism sector of the region. As a result, Piedmont is widely recognised and ranked among the most advanced regions in Italy in terms of accessible tourism.

European Foundation Center (EFC) - Belgium (www.efc.be)

Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Torino (Fondazione CRT) - Italy (www.fondazione crt.it)

Fundación ONCE - Spain (www.fundaciononce.es)

Sozopol Foundation - Bulgaria (www.sozopol-foundation.com)

EFC is the leading membership association representing public-benefit foundations at European Level. Fondazione CRT, Fundación ONCE and Sozopol Foundation are nonprofit foundations actively committed in regional development, disability, equal opportunity, social inclusion and cultural heritages;

Akita Tour -Italy (www.akitatour.it)

DenaTravel - Spain (www.denatravel.com)

SozopolTour - Bulgaria

Weitsprung Reisen - Germany (www.weitsprung-reisen.de)

ChrisTravel - Denmark (www.chrstravel.dk)

Accessible Portugal - Portugal (www.accessibleportugal.com)

Tour Operators that are experienced in accessible tourism and that believe in the value and potentials of accessible tourist products.

Where we started

Project STRING (Smart Tourist Routes for Inclusive Groups) is the continuation of the multiannual cooperation of the League of Historical and Accessible Cities – LHAC (www.lhac.eu), which was launched in 2010 within the European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability. From 2010 to 2013, the LHAC invested over 8 million Euros in improving the accessibility of historical towns in Europe. In particular it has developed accessible tourist routes in six historical cities Turin and Lucca in Italy, in Spain Ávila, Sozopol in Bulgaria, Mulhouse in France and Viborg

in Denmark. Therefore, it is a primary objective of Project STRING to better exploit the work that has been done in establishing accessible tourist routes and, in the meantime, to disseminate at a wider level the best practices and know-how in accessible tourism obtained by the LHAC experiences.

The LHAC has developed accessible routes in terms of technical requirements and facilities, however, no effort has been made so far to promote and make use of such routes from a market point of view. Project STRING intends to develop the potential business opportunities.

Short description of the project:

Project STRING is a transnational cooperation initiative to be implemented by 12 partners from 7 different countries. The project aims to create fully accessible thematic itineraries respectively in the Piedmont Region (Italy), in Ávila (Spain) and Sozopol (Bulgaria). These proposals have been designed and built based on a single, shared criterion of accessibility. The method used for the survey was entrusted to a questionnaire with over 115 questions about the usability of facilities and about the tourist activities.

The set of tourist proposals has created a shared data base of accessible "Facilities" in the three destinations. The data base contains technical information of facilities and assets detected in the questionnaire described above. The discovered resources, if combined, make possible different solutions of routes traceable to three topics: Art & Culture, Outdoor Activities and Food & Wine. The project proceeded with a study activity capable of devising a promotion and sale system through a modular box. The result was the creation of STRING Box, with no initial costs but based on the principle of personalization of the trip for the recipient of the box, in close collaboration with the Tour Operator staff. The STRING Box is promoted through an information brochure, published in six languages and explaining the operation. The user involved can find out how to buy one of the tourist proposals and/or give a Gift Card, by contacting the National Tour Operator, covering part or all of the cost of a Tourist Package based on the needs of the user.

Customers, who buy or receive the STRING Box as a gift, can choose their favorite route or combination of routes. Then they contact the Tour Operator (indicated on the package based on the country of residence) to book the trip that suits their needs.

Tour Operators therefore benefit from an innovative and original tool to promote tours and packages accessible to all.

It has been created a web page to facilitate communication among the six countries that will offer the STRING Box, and more generally, the structures and routes identified by the project.

The web page has two purposes:

- 1) Public section that will promote the project and the STRING Box on the Web
- 2) Private section with access to the Data Base of the "facilities" of Piedmont, Ávila and Sozopol useful for Tour Operators to choose the best travel on the basis of the needs / disability of the client.

The project can be summarized in six main phases:

- 1) Accessibility evaluation of Tourist Itineraries using a standard criterion and creation of a common questionnaire.

- 2) Design and implementation of accessible tourist sites and facilities by specialized Tour Operators.
- 3) Creating a data base of shared accessible resources respectively in Piedmont , Ávila and Sozopol
- 4) Tour Operators marketing actions to define the best sales strategies.
- 5) Creation of STRING Box, the public and private web page (for the exclusive use of Tour Operators) and advertising material.
- 6) Launch and promotion of the box.

Project STRING targets:

- 1) To better exploit the experiences and itineraries realized by some of the partners in the framework of the League of Historical and Accessible Cities (LHAC)
- 2) To provide versatile, high-quality and fully accessible tourist products to people with special access needs
- 3) To present accessible tourist products to the customers through easily-accessible channels and in a flexible, adaptable and thus more attractive way
- 4) To disseminate at a wider level the best practices and know-how in accessible tourism obtained by the partners
- 5) To foster concrete cooperation among SMEs (in this case Tour Operators), public administrations, foundations, associations and other stakeholders to improve accessibility and contribute to a better quality of life for all.

Main output of the Project:

- 1) An **international team** of tour operators able to give an answer to tourist demand based on a single, shared criterion of accessibility.
- 2) A **Hand Book** of best practice.
- 3) A **survey** which has 115 questions about the usability of facilities and tourist activities, in general the tourist itineraries.
- 4) A **Data Base** is constantly updated and shared between the Tour Operators through a private web page, which now counts over 30 facilities and activities available in the Piedmont Region (Italy), in Ávila (Spain) and Sozopol (Bulgaria), which combined together provide a different mix of accessible routes.
- 5) A **website** promoting the project and the STRING Box.
- 6) A **Facebook page**.
- 7) The **STRING Box**, with inside promotional Brochures divided by subject (Food & Wine, Art and Culture and outdoor activities) of the territory of Piedmont, Ávila, Sozopol and the **Gift Card**, which will be loaded by contacting the National Tour Operator.
- 8) The **Information Brochure**, which explains the usage of STRING Box.
- 9) The **Project Leaflet**, which explains in broad terms, and promotes the project STRING.
- 10) **3 national events** respectively in Piedmont, and Ávila Sozopol to launch the innovative STRING Box.

Contact:

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