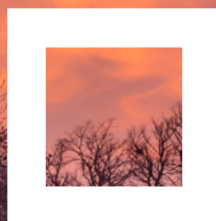




European
Commission



ACCESS CITY AWARD NETWORK

*EU accessible cities
for inclusive tourism*

2nd network meeting

Breda, the Netherlands

20 September 2019



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EU accessible cities for inclusive tourism

2nd network meeting

Breda, the Netherlands

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This briefing was prepared by Dr. Magdi BIRTHA, Rapporteur of the 2nd ACA network meeting, researcher at the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.

On 20 September 2019, representatives from 17 winning cities of the **Access City Award (ACA)** met in Breda, the Netherlands to exchange best practices and provide mutual inspiration on accessible tourism, to improve inclusion for persons with disabilities and older people.



Since 2011, the ACA recognises and celebrates the willingness, ability and efforts of European cities to become more accessible and inclusive and ensure that everybody – regardless of age, mobility or ability – has equal access to all the resources and opportunities cities offer. In the ACA 2019, the city of **Breda** won the 1st prize ahead of 4 other shortlisted cities (**Evreux**, France; **Gdynia**, Poland; **Kaposvar**, Hungary; **Vigo**, Spain).

The first annual meeting of the Access City Award network was held in 2018 in the city of **Lyon**, winner of the ACA 2018. In 2019, representatives of all the winning cities (including the winners for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, as well as special mentions) for the Access City Award (ACA) were invited for a one-day event to discuss accessibility in Breda, the winner of ACA 2019. This year's theme was **accessible tourism**. This briefing summarizes the main remarks and recommendations made by speakers and participants during the event.

In his introduction, **Mr Paul Depla**, the Mayor of Breda emphasised that the Access City Award received by Breda last year has been a daily reminder ever since about the importance of continuing efforts to make the city accessible for its inhabitants and tourists. The topic of the second ACA network meeting, inclusive tourism is key for the economy of cities, especially in times when small local businesses decrease, and tourism could compensate for that. Breda is engaged in developing new, smart tools for tourists to make visits to Breda more accessible for all.

Ms Marianne van der Sloot, Vice-Governor of the **Province of Noord-Brabant** explained how the administration of the Noord-Brabant Province promotes good practices and the exchange of knowledge on the inclusion of persons with disabilities through accessibility and other measures to foster full participation in society. Ms van der Sloot underlined that *“As governments it is our responsibility to be game changers and ensure inclusion, so people don't feel isolated.”*

Ms. Inmaculada Placencia Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion unit, **DG EMPL, European Commission** highlighted that the new European Commission will bring renewed attention and new opportunities to disability policies at EU level. The European Commission is committed to a coherent implementation of accessibility across the EU to ensure that persons with disabilities can move, study and work freely. In November 2019, the 10th Access City Award ceremony will take place in Brussels, to which almost 50 cities applied. Equal access to rights and creating a barrier-free Europe thus remain key principles at EU, national and local levels.

Mr Wilbert Willems, Chairman of the **platform “Breda for everyone, hospitable and accessible”** presented the composition and work of the platform, including the local government, businesses, education centres and NGOs representing persons with disabilities. By 2030, the platform wants to achieve that all persons with disabilities living in the city or coming here as tourists would enjoy the same opportunities as others. Their slogan is: *‘If it's good for persons with disabilities, it's good for everyone, if it's good for persons with disabilities it's good for your business’*



Panel 1: Accessibility and hospitality for an inclusive tourism

Speakers:

- **Ms. Inmaculada Placencia Porrero**, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion unit, DG EMPL, European Commission
- **Mr. Federico Poitier**, Director of External Affairs and Partnerships, Pineda foundation/World Enabled
- **Mr. Simon Marquina**, Accessibility Department Manager, City of Toulouse
- **Ms. Maartje van Boekel**, Dutch Local Governments Association, Programme leader "Everyone takes part!"



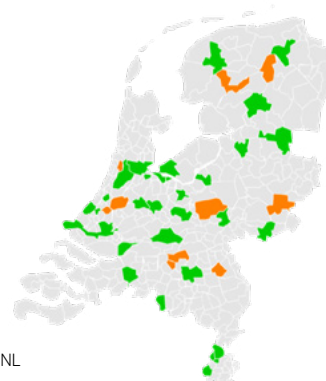
Ms. Placencia Porrero provided a detailed overview of the instruments available at EU level to promote accessibility, mostly with an internal market focus, covering ICT (e.g. Audio-Visual Media Services Directive), transportation (e.g. Regulation on Passenger Rights) and public procurement (Public Procurement Directives). There are also accessibility obligations for countries when using EU funds (e.g. Structural Funds regulations). The European Accessibility Act covers a broad range of products (e.g. self-service terminals, e-readers etc.) and services (e.g. consumer banking services, e-commerce services etc.) circulating on the EU internal market that oblige economic operators to follow accessibility standards. While decision makers are increasingly aware of accessibility, more effort should be made to ensure prioritising accessibility provisions in from the beginning.

Mr. Poitier presented the work of **World Enabled** and their important mission to ensure that the voices and rights of persons with disabilities actively shape urban development at all levels and inequality is combatted through universally accessible environments. They collaborate extensively with city planners and local governments as part of the '**Cities for all – Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities**' initiative. Their firm believe is that a smart city should be a fully inclusive city, therefore, it is important to mainstream accessibility for innovation. Multinational companies can put financial tools in place to move towards a disability inclusive urban agenda that will contribute to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Marquina described the comprehensive disability policy

of **Toulouse** (France) that aims to transform the city for the benefit of all citizens through universal accessibility, which is in place since the 2005 law on the equal rights, participation and citizenship of persons with disabilities. Toulouse experiences a very dynamic demographic growth (+15 000 inhabitants per year) and as part of living up to their obligation to make the city accessible for all, €51 million has been allocated for the accessibility of public equipment between 2017 and 2025. Beyond making the public transport system fully accessible, cultural, sports and leisure activities are also adapted for people with special needs. Mr Marquina mentioned that cities can also play an important role as employer of persons with disabilities and they are responsible for raising the awareness of the general public about inclusion and accessibility.

Ms. van Boekel shared how the 'Everyone takes part' initiative brings together over 25 municipalities in the Netherlands, who are frontrunners in implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). While every municipality takes a different approach towards creating an inclusive environment (e.g. Breda started with tourism, Amsterdam focused more on communication), they all put in place important measures to move towards a more accessible community. Members of the initiative signed a manifest to express their commitment towards making new policies with the involvement of persons with disabilities. The initiative provides an important platform of exchanging experiences and learning from each other, as well as inspiring other cities.



Frontrunner cities
on accessibility in NL

Panel 2: Accessibility of cultural heritage and leisure activities

Speakers:

- **Mr. Ivor Ambrose**, Expert on European Accessible Tourism Policies and Initiatives
- **Ms. Katerina Papamichail**, Architect and Expert on Universal Design, European Network for Accessible Tourism
- **Mr. Jørgen tryk Hansen**, Architect & Project Manager, City of Viborg
- **Mr. Marcel van den Muijsenberg**, Independent advisor, Foundation "Breda Equal"



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Mr. Ambrose provided a comprehensive overview of European Commission activities and support measures in the area of accessible tourism for all, including for persons with disabilities. Accessible tourism is a very important part of the European tourism policy and making tourism more accessible is not only a social responsibility, but there is also a compelling business case. As he highlighted:

‘While accessible tourism generates about €400 billion revenues per annum, equivalent to 3% of the total EU GDP, only 9% of touristic services are accessible in the EU. The lack of accessibility is a cost for the tourism industry.’

DG GROW of the European Commission aims at increasing accessibility in tourism through several actions, raising awareness about the growing importance of the “special needs” market segment and raising the business opportunity profile of “accessible tourism” as it can boost competitiveness. More concretely, the European Commission already co-financed over 18 projects, related to accessible tourism. The [European Disability Card](#), [PANTOU](#) the European Online Registry of accredited accessible suppliers and the [European Capital of Smart Tourism](#) are good examples of EU initiatives promoting accessible tourism and sharing information about accessible facilities.

Ms. Papamichail presented the work of the [European Network for Accessible Tourism](#) (ENAT), an NGO founded in 2006 that promotes good practices in accessible tourism for all. Providing persons with disabilities with equal access to culture, leisure and sport is in line with Article 30 of the UNCRPD which requires States Parties to ensure physical access, access to information and alternative ways of experiencing cultural sites. Ms. Papamichail argued that accessibility is not a threat to the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, because in most cases a successful solution for physical access can be found while maintaining the authenticity and cultural value of the monument. Most importantly, it is everyone’s right to enjoy cultural heritage, so political commitment is needed to invest in that. There are many good examples to show the feasibility of making cultural heritage accessible for all, such as the stairlift at the Acropolis in Athens, or the Prado’s initiative to use 3D printing techniques to reproduce paintings.



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Mr. Hansen was involved in making the medieval city of **Viborg** in Denmark more accessible, by developing new solutions on how to make the historical centre accessible for all without damaging its authenticity. Physical solutions, such as new levelled pavements, levelled resting platforms, guiding lines and tactile pavements are almost invisible solutions, using existing materials in the cityscape, which are beneficial for residents and visitors with and without disabilities. The new, coherent network of accessible solutions are communicated through new signs and city models, as well as through the application 'Spot Viborg' that offers three accessible itineraries in the city. The project has been developed and realized in collaboration with persons with disabilities and other local experts.

Mr. van den Muijsenberg is part of a local activist group that provides advice to cultural event organisers on how to make

their venues and programmes more accessible for persons with disabilities. Breda Barst is an important local music festival where they carry out test runs before the event to point to issues that can be improved. That includes for example, placing a ramp over the cable tray, providing wide enough entrances, or extra-large toilets that are accessible for wheelchair users. Many of these adjustments do not even cost a lot of money but allow persons with disabilities and their families to participate in the event.

Finally, **Mr. Paul Clark**, Manager of the Access City Award Network provided some information about the work and recent activities of the network, such as the **Para Games** that the city of Breda hosted in June 2019 involving participants from 16 countries competing in 15 activities over 4 days.

Site visits

Four sites visits were offered by the City of Breda and the platform "Breda for everyone, hospitable and accessible" to show participants concrete solutions on improving accessibility:

- Organised by 'Breda Gelijk', the platform for persons with disabilities and their caregivers, a tour visited various **historical sites in the city centre of Breda** that were made accessible. The aim was to show concrete improvements, such as how to make cobble stone streets accessible for all;
- Accessible public transport system for persons with disabilities and older people in the Breda region was presented, including the **Breda train station**, as well as introduction of 'shared taxis' and the 'Valys' transportation system that offers transport for people with reduced mobility;
- An accessible forest path ('vlonderpad') in 'Het Mastbos', the local forest of Breda, was built by persons with disabilities to improve access to the forest for all. Participants also visited 'Athletics club Sprint', a fully accessible sports ground with demonstration of various accessible sports by sportsmen and women with disabilities;
- **Efteling**, one of the largest amusement parks in Europe (<https://www.efteling.com/nl>) put measures in place to make the park more accessible, including the attractions 'Symbolica' and 'Droomvlucht'.



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