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Accessible tourism for all and its contribution to sustainable development: experience of the European Union

Introduction

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism promotes the right of all people to equality in access to contemplate the resources of the planet, which, in turn, is the main postulate of the concept of accessible tourism for all [17]. Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable development policy. It is both a human rights imperative, as well as an exceptional business opportunity. Accessibility is a basis feature of the built environment. It allows people to participate in social and economic activities for which the built environment has been created [6]. The concept of accessibility is used primarily in the interests of people with limited mobility, which includes seniors, people with disabilities and temporary health problems or chronic diseases, as well as accompanying children in wheelchairs. These categories are defined by the new State Building Codes “Inclusiveness of buildings and structures”, which entered into force in Ukraine on April 1, 2019, while in other countries these groups also include children under 7 years old, people with non-standard body sizes and weights, and some others. In the field of tourism, the following types of accessibility should be considered: physical accessibility (creation of a barrier-free environment in buildings, structures, transport); communication and information accessibility (including accessibility of websites, information products, signage, a multiplicity of communication methods, etc.), as well as accessibility of services (awareness of staff on disability, communication methods and services for people with various types of disabilities, various age groups, etc.) [7]. Accessibility is one of the signs of a “smart city”. Implementing innovative solutions based on the principles of universal design, the “smart city” is turning into a “smart city for all” [14]. City to become accessible must have accessible website, accessible transportation, accessible accommodation facilities, accessible catering services, accessible program offers, accessible local information, safe environment, professional service providers and staff [26]. The accessibility of tourism space from the geographical perspective was once understood in terms of accessible transportation, as the possibility of getting to

the destination via a means of transport, and as the transportation links, hiking trails and ski lifts enabling a tourist to go on excursions within the selected tourist region to specific places. Geographers also noted the meaning of accessibility represented by the concept of hospitable space, identifying hospitable tourism space as that which is attractive, accessible, safe and friendly [25].

A good design is an important condition for accessibility. People refer to this kind of design with terms such as “Design for all” or “Universal Design”. Ron Mace has defined Universal Design as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” [15]. Universal design means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design [16]. This designing concept includes 7 principles: 1) equitable use (the design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities); 2) flexibility in use (the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities); 3) simple and intuitive use (use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level); 4) perceptible information (the design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities); 5) tolerance for error (the design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions); 6) low physical effort (the design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue); 7) size and space for approach and use (appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user’s body size, posture, or mobility). Universal design, in addition to ensuring the rights of people with limited mobility, creates conditions for gender equality. So, the concept of universal design emphasizes creating the same conditions that are convenient for all users, without impersonating some of them. Whereas the concept of accessibility applies only to people with limited mobility and focuses mainly on issues of physical access to transport, buildings and structures, as well as access to information. According to universal design, accessibility must be introduced from the beginning, taking into account the design, instead of waiting to improve it once products and services have been created [6].

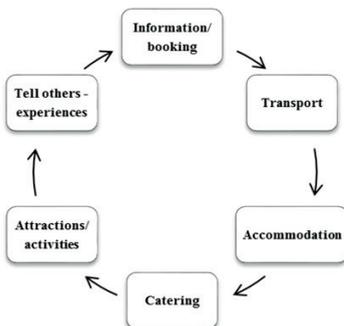


Fig. 1. Structure of tourism chain

In the modern literature the concepts of “inclusive tourism”, “social tourism”, “sustainable tourism”, and “accessible tourism” are also used, and often all these concepts are identified, which is wrong. Inclusive or social tourism are concepts that incorporate the rights of underprivileged people, often including disabled people, to enjoy their holidays [3]. Sustainable tourism is involved in the protection of environmental and cultural resources and the wellbeing of communities [23]. As defined by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, accessible tourism for all means that any tourism product should be designed irrespective of age, gender and ability and with no additional costs for customers with disabilities and specific access requirements [19]. Accessible tourism for all takes into account the full human life cycle and the fact that anyone, depending on their physical condition (which can change) and the particular stage of family life they are in, can benefit from certain types of facilities. Problems of restricted access to tourism space (due to physical, technical, social, information-based, economic barriers) affect many social groups which include: people with a temporary or permanent disability, seniors, families with young children, those at risk of social exclusion (e.g., immigrant families, the poor, ethnic or religious minorities) [25]. Accessible tourism for all requires a joined up approach across the tourism supply chain (i.e. transport, accommodation, leisure activities, hospitality, destinations) to ensure a positive tourism experience (Figure 1). Seniors and people with disabilities can obtain the greatest benefit from accessible tourism for all, as they face the greatest obstacles through an inaccessible environment. However, people of different ages and with different opportunities can benefit from accessible tourism for everyone. The target group of accessible tourism for all is not limited only to tourists, but also includes tourism workers and creates employment opportunities for people with disabilities [7].

Accessible tourism for all significantly contributes to the achievement most of sustainable development goals (SDG), in particular, SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) [20].

Methodology and methods

In general, qualitative methodology is mainly used in tourism. For study of accessible tourism for all a review of relevant, existing academic research as well as statistics, legislation, manuals and reports is essential, providing a wider overview of the matter under study and identifying the need for further research. The study of accessible tourism for all in the EU should use publications and data of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the European Commission (EC), Eurostat, the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), etc., and widely apply the method of analyzing documents, in particular, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Law on Accessibility, etc. In order to justify the aging of the population and increase the number of people with disabilities in the EU as important prerequisites for the development of accessible tourism for all, various statistical data, in particular, Eurostat

should be analyzed. To carry out a spatial analysis of accessible tourism for all in the EU data of the EC Award cities and cartographic method can be used. The Access City Award, co-founded by the EC in conjunction with the European Disability Forum, is one of the measures foreseen in the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020, aimed at creating a Europe without barriers for people with disabilities [10]. It identifies the cities that today are leaders in overcoming the barriers in Europe. The award is given to the city: noticeably improved accessibility in the main aspects of urban life: built-up environment and public space; transport and related infrastructure; information and communication technologies; public facilities and services; strives for continuous improvement of accessibility on an ongoing basis; can serve as a role model for best practices in other European cities. Thus, the competition covers the accessibility in the daily life of city residents and, to a certain extent, the accessibility of tourism offers [8]. The study also can be based on a quantitative and qualitative survey among five different types of stakeholders, developing five different types of questionnaires. The different types of stakeholders are the following [13]: 1) accommodation providers, including owners or managers of hotels, hostels, caravan parks, cruise companies, etc.; 2) airports managers, including managers who work for the airport owner or managers from companies that are contracted to manage passengers and ground handling operations; 3) destination and attraction managers, including managers of city tourism marketing offices, museums, sports venues, leisure and amusement parks, national parks, heritage sites, etc.; 4) access experts; 5) visitors with access needs.

The UNWTO recommendations indicate the appropriate measures in order to ensure that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including computer systems and information and communications technology, and other services and facilities open to the public or for public use, in urban areas as well as rural and coastal zones [22]. Consider these recommendations in detail.

National, regional and local tourism authorities should develop accessible tourism development strategies. It is necessary to ensure that tourism facilities or accommodation facilities located in regions where there is no accessible transport, an appropriate environment and communication with other tourism facilities, are not advertised as accessible.

Travel literature and other promotional materials should contain clear information about the accessibility of services and amenities, preferably using international characters that are easy to understand. Information for people with disabilities should, wherever possible, be included in general information materials. Promotional materials should include information on how to contact the organization through accessible means of communication, and whether it is possible to receive promotional materials in an alternative format. In places where tourists are welcomed, a list of all support services for tourists with disabilities should be available. Booking systems should be accessible so that any tourist can use them independently. For this, sites, booking systems should be developed in accordance with the “Guide to the accessibility of web content” [18]. The main idea is to make the Web more accessible to all users

regardless of the circumstances and devices involved when it is time to access to information. Based on this idea, a page will be accessible both for a person with disability and for any other person under external circumstances that hinder their access to information (in case of external noises, in situations where our visual and hearing attention is no longer available, and so on).

Key indicators of the accessibility of the urban environment and architecture include: parking spaces, including specially equipped and designated parking lots for people with mobility impairment, boarding/disembarking of tourists to/from transport; information and communication system, including the use of sign language, Braille, the presentation of text in large print, the use of pictograms and symbols, visual and sound announcements, etc., the possibility of free horizontal movement (due to the standard width of doorways, corridors, no thresholds, accessibility tactile, visual and sound elements of accessibility for people with visual impairments), vertical movement (elevators, stairs, ramps are equipped in accordance with the norms), sanitary facilities of general uses, the price (do not provide greater value to ensure the accessibility of facilities services).

Passenger transport, including rental cars, buses, taxis, trams, funiculars, trains, ferries and cruise ships should be designed to be safe, comfortable and equally accessible to all. When providing information to passengers before and during the trip, it is necessary to take into account the needs of people with hearing and visual impairments: for them, information should be presented in audio and visual format; in particular, pedestrian crossings should be equipped with traffic lights with visual and audible warning.

Accommodation facilities should have at their disposal a sufficient number of rooms equipped for people with disabilities. The design of all devices and mechanisms must comply with the principles of universal design. In accommodation establishments, they must receive visitors with guide dogs and provide them with everything necessary. Near the accommodation establishments there should be a sufficient number of restaurants, cafes and bars with accessible conditions, which include accessibility to the premises, furniture design taking into account the needs of people with reduced mobility and strollers, a lowered counter, a Braille menu or is available in an alternative format (located on website or mobile application is available for screen access programs), accessible toilets, etc. The menu must include dishes for people with food restrictions (lactose intolerance, gluten, etc.), or beliefs (for example, vegetarianism). Conference rooms should be equipped with special places or zones for accommodating guests using wheelchairs, headphones for audio-descriptive commenting on the use or amplification of sound, induction loops for people using hearing aids. It must be ensured that audiovisual information can be supplemented by audio description, subtitles or sign language translation if necessary.

Museum owners or administrators must ensure that the property is accessible to visitors with disabilities, including via lifts and ramps where necessary. Information should be provided in both visual and audio format. Visitor staff must receive the necessary training to serve visitors with disabilities. A rental service for strollers or other equipment should be provided for visitors with reduced mobility.

Results

The main prerequisites for the development of accessible tourism for all, in particular, in the EU now and in the future will be (Figure 2): existing accessibility legislation and standards at the global, European and national levels, population ageing and increase in the number of people with disabilities.

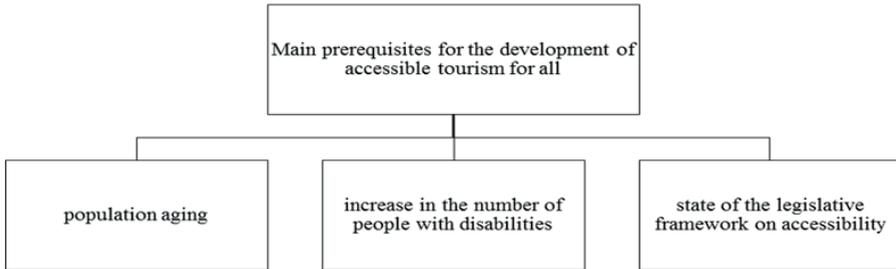


Fig. 2. Main prerequisites for the development of accessible tourism for all in the EU

Seniors are motivated to travel by different motives: visiting relatives, getting cultural or gastronomic experience, they are interested in cruise ship trips, coastal holidays, participation in sporting events or ethnic holidays. They tend to spend more while traveling and stay longer. Baby boomers who were born in 1946-1964 are the dominant travelers in the world. They are becoming more and more adventurous in the choice of travel, in search of new experiences and active types of recreation. Another type of traveler of old age is a flashpecker – a man with a “shining backpack”. The flashpecker is not faced with the task of various cost savings, but the main principles – freedom of movement and maximum experience – remains unchanged [4]. By the end of 2025, the share of such citizens is estimated to increase to almost 35% (Figure 3). The largest share of seniors was observed in the population structure of Italy, Greece, Germany, Portugal, Bulgaria and Finland [11]. Tourists with disabilities make travel decisions based on the opinions of their friends and rely less on special offers aimed at them. Travel agencies’ online offers and printed brochures influence their decision on the same level. France and the UK have the most people with disabilities in the EU [12].

In recent years the rights of people with disabilities to travel and to participate in tourism, leisure, sport and other activities away from home have been strengthened in a number of areas by legislation and regulations at international, European and national levels (Figure 4). Any decision on communication, transport, construction, training, public contracts or rights of persons affects directly or indirectly to the tourism industry in one way or another.

The main documents regulating accessibility issues at the global and European levels are for examples United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, etc. UNWTO includes the concept of accessibility in its current programme of “competitiveness and trade in tourist services”. Accessibility is considered by the UNWTO, as a factor included in the

concept of quality, together with the concept of safety, hygiene, authenticity and harmonization of tourism with the environment.

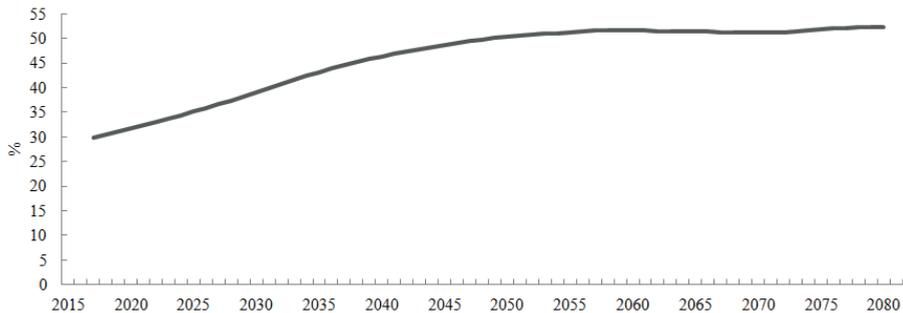


Fig. 3. Forecast of the demographic burden of an aging population (65 years and older) on the working age (15-64 years) in the EU [11]

Regulatory acts that are applied at the European level with specific requirements for accessibility of services for persons with disabilities include [13]: European Regulation on the Rights and Obligations of Railway Passengers; European Regulation on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities Traveling by Air; EU Maritime Safety Directive; European Lift Directive, etc. Making Europe accessible to people with disabilities is a key part of the EU's overall disability strategy for 2010-2020. This Strategy provides an EU-wide framework for action on disability and accessibility to complement and support Member States. On November 8, 2018, the European Parliament and the Council tentatively agreed with the EC proposal for a European accessibility law. This law will cover the following products and services [9]: computers and operating systems; ATMs phones and smartphones; television equipment related to digital television services; audiovisual media services; services related to air, bus, rail and water passenger transport; banking services; eBooks; e-commerce. So, the Law will establish pan-European functional requirements for the accessibility of the listed products and services, however, we note that tourism facilities are not represented here at all, and tourism services – only indirectly. The current lack of common accessibility standards, including tourism, in the EU can be considered a consequence of its historical development, when countries and regions continue to exercise their sovereignty in this area, based on the legal principle of subsidiarity.

The impetus for accessible tourism for all from the EU was the preparation of the EC Guidelines for the tourism industry under the title “For Accessible Europe, for Tourists with Disabilities” (1996) and the adoption of the Regulation of the European Socio-Economic Committee entitled “For accessible and socially sustainable tourism for all” [6].

The following accessibility tools for tourists are present at the national level in the EU countries [13]: national laws on non-discrimination of persons with disabilities; national or community accessibility standards; national standards for the accessibility of tourism facilities; regional legislation and/or accessibility standards for tourism facilities; a national or regional information accessibility system (and labeling) for

tourism facilities managed by government agencies; labeling scheme managed at the regional or national level by private tourism organizations; participation of national representatives (authorities, manufacturers or consumers) in the work according to international accessibility standards. We give two examples according to which the Standards relating to the rights of people with disabilities, accessibility and design for all can directly affect the tourism industry. One type of regulation is centralized, as in the case of the United Kingdom, where there is only one law – the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities, which equally regulates the actions of travel providers in terms of accessibility and design for everyone throughout the country. Another example is decentralized regulation, as in the case of Spain, where each autonomous region sets its own laws to regulate tourism and accessibility. In practice, this means different levels of accessibility in the tourism industry of each of these regions [6].

Global level	European level	National level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; • Global Code of Ethics for Tourism • etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Regulation on the Rights and Obligations of Railway Passengers; • European Regulation on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities Traveling by Air; • EU Maritime Safety Directive; • European Lift Directive; • European Accessibility Law; • etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national laws on non-discrimination of persons with disabilities; • national or community accessibility standards; • national standards for the accessibility of tourism facilities; • regional legislation and / or accessibility standards for tourism facilities; • a national or regional information accessibility system (and labeling) for tourism facilities managed by government agencies; • etc.

Fig. 4. Legislation on accessibility in the EU

On the way to integration into the European and world communities, Ukraine ratified a number of international legal acts that had a certain impact on the formation of national state policy and practice to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, the introduction of principles of accessibility in various spheres of life of persons with disabilities. Most of these acts are transformed into national legislation. A wide range of actions in relation to persons with disabilities is determined by the Law of Ukraine “On the Basics of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities”. In addition, with the aim of regulating the legal status of certain groups of persons with disabilities and ensuring accessibility principles, the following have been adopted [1]: Laws of Ukraine: “On Social Services”, “On the Regulation of Urban Planning Activities”, “On Access to Public Information”, “On Protection of Rights consumers”, “On Transport”, “On Amending Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Strengthening Responsibility and Improving State Regulation in the Sphere of Urban Development”; Decrees of the President of Ukraine; Decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. It is important that a number of documents have also been adopted aimed at involving representatives of public organizations of people with disabilities in the preparation and adoption of decisions that affect their lives.

In April 2018, the Ukrainian government approved three new State Building Codes – “Planning and development of territories”, “Streets and roads”, “Buildings and structures. Educational institutions”. All buildings and structures in Ukraine, as well as the necessary infrastructure, must be designed with accessibility elements. The introduction of these standards is a significant step towards creating a real barrier-free environment in Ukraine and one of the priority requirements in connection with the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Association Agreement with the EU. However, the problem of the lack of standards for the accessibility of tourism facilities and services in Ukraine remains relevant. In this context, it is important to study the experience of individual EU countries where such standards exist.

EU is the main tourist destination in the world. Five EU member states (France, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, and Germany) belong to the top 10 countries of the world upon arrival of tourists. The EU population is ageing. Taking into account the whole population, the number of seniors – represented by the 65+ age group – is above 88 million, which means that every 5th person belongs to this demographic group [26]. It is forecast that 35% of the population in developed countries will be at least 60 years old in 2050. This demographic containing a greater proportion of seniors, unlike past generations, is seeking an active and adventurous experience for their post work lives, and tourism is seen as an important component of their quest for life experiences. With the ageing of the baby boomer generation and their accompanying burden of disease, future disability rates are expected to increase [2]. Senior citizens and people with disabilities together represent a demographic group with significant economic importance within the EU [26]. The general demand for accessibility in Europe alone exceeded 120 million people in 2005, more than 27% of the European population at the time. It is estimated that by the end of 2025 this demand will reach an approximated 160 million people [2]. The accessible tourism market in the EU is estimated at approximately 12% of the tourism market [24]. It includes tourists with varying levels of accessibility requirements who have been poorly served by the tourism industry. An analysis of the accessible tourism market size shows that 70% of the population demanding accessibility have both the financial as well as the physical capabilities to travel, generating potential revenues of €88.6 billion by 2025 [2]. Accessible tourism’s direct economic impact was approximately €352 billion in 2012, while its overall contribution, given indirect and sub-contracted amounts, is estimated at €800 billion. This represents around 3% of the EU28’s GDP. The accessible tourism market directly provided 4 million jobs, with multiplier effects creating a total of 9 million jobs in the EU [21]. Europe is very urbanized: four out of five EU residents live in cities and towns that are the main centers of accessible tourism for everyone in the EU. European cities play an important role in ensuring adequate access for both citizens and tourists of all ages and capacities. Many European cities are working to build their reputation as accessible, liveable cities that offer hospitality to all visitors.

Most of the accessible cities in 2011-2018 were located in France (4), Germany (4) and Sweden (3). With 23 of the most accessible cities, only 5 are state capitals. At the same time, the city of Ljubljana in Slovenia was twice marked by the EC as one of the most accessible. It is interesting that among the 23 most accessible cities in the EU, six are known for sea resorts, because they are located on the sea coast. In addition to the cities that took first, second and third places, there are also cities with “special notes”. For example, the city of Budapest in 2015 received an award for work in the field of transport; the city of Bilbao (Spain) in 2013 – for work in the field of information and communication; Talla (Ireland) in 2013 – for work in the field of public institutions and services; the city of Viborg (Denmark) in 2018 – for coordinating the historical heritage and the hilly landscape with accessible infrastructure, etc. The city of Toulouse in 2016, in addition to the third place, was noted as a “smart city”.

Ljubljana is the finalist of the EU Access City Award for the year 2018 (2nd prize) and 2015 (3rd prize), where it was recognized as an accessible city, actively developing accessibility and with strong commitment both on political and operational levels. Accessibility is integrated in overall city policy and work [8].

Tourism destination management. Open days – meetings with the mayor every month to listen to people’s suggestions for improvement, including accessibility issues. Direct involvement of older and disabled people in city policy-making through mayoral advisory bodies, which offer advice on priorities for access improvements both to the city authorities and to private sector providers. Action plans for improving accessibility with clear deadlines and concrete objectives. Improvements of accessibility are combined with sustainability issues (Ljubljana as named European Green Capital in 2016) [5].

Tourist information. A city map of accessible locations is available. A city center information point has been in place specializing in information for visitors over 65 and those with a disability.

Transport. All the city’s buses are low floor with space for wheelchair users, almost all with boarding ramps and with audible and visual on-board announcements. The main railway station is equipped with elevators, with support from trained staff for access to platforms. Travel is free for disabled residents and their careers. A system of unique identification cards means that assistance can be provided quickly if needed during a journey. A demand responsive service, which users can call when they want it, is available for those who need door-to-door transport.

Accommodation. Many hotels in Ljubljana are convenient and friendly for persons with reduced mobility and disabled people. They offer easy access for wheelchairs, wheelchair accessible rooms and bathrooms.

Cultural establishments and destinations. Sign language in theatres, tactile exhibits and maps (for example of the castle), adapted videos, multisensory guiding and easy-to-use information. Access to the castle, one of the most visited tourist sites in both Ljubljana and Slovenia, is provided via a funicular railway and a tourist train equipped with a ramp. A tactile model of the castle is also available for visually

impaired people. In addition to many new footbridges over the river, the “Mesarski most” (Butcher’s bridge) provides wheelchair access to boats.

Public Buildings. Slovenian laws regulate the presence of accessible services. Thanks to this, parking spaces for disabled are generally available. The city’s public toilets are free of charge and currently 10 out of 19 are accessible.

Staff. There is a wide range of initiatives to promote both open and sheltered employment opportunities. One example of social entrepreneurship is the restaurant “Druga Violina” (Second Violin) in the old city center where people with intellectual disabilities participate in a real work environment. Course about accessible tourism is available for restaurateurs, hotel staff and travel guides.

Conclusions

Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable development policy. Accessible tourism for all significantly contributes to the achievement most of sustainable development goals. Accessible tourism for all means that any travel product must be designed with different customers in mind, and be accessible regardless of their age, gender, disabilities or restrictions, without any additional costs for them. Accessibility should be integrated into all links of the tourism chain: booking, providing information, transportation, accommodation, meals, accessibility of historical monuments and excursions, accordingly trained personnel and the like. In contrast to the concept of accessibility, which applies only to people with limited mobility and focuses mainly on issues of physical access to transport, buildings and structures, as well as access to information, the concept of universal design emphasizes the creation of the same conditions that are convenient for all users, without impersonating some of them. The study of accessible tourism for all in the EU should use publications and data of the World Tourism Organization, the European Commission, Eurostat, the European Network for Accessible Tourism, etc., and widely apply the method of analyzing documents, in particular, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Law on Accessibility, etc. Seniors and people with disabilities can obtain the greatest benefit from accessible tourism for all. Together they represent a demographic group with significant economic importance within the EU. The main prerequisites for the development of accessible tourism for all, in particular, in the EU are existing accessibility legislation and standards at the global, European and national levels, population ageing and increase in the number of people with disabilities. For Ukraine, it is important to study the experience of individual EU countries, where there are standards for the accessibility of tourism facilities and services. Many European cities are working to build their reputation as accessible, liveable cities that offer hospitality to all visitors. Most of these cities are located in France, Germany and Sweden.

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