



Tourism for all - Making cities socially sustainable

Smart canes that are embedded with GPS technology to guide blind tourists along a route through an ancient city; 90 and counting historical sites made accessible; “cyber passes” that work with Bluetooth technology to help people with disabilities safely navigate across streets. These are just some of the exciting outcomes of a pioneering project by the League of Historical Accessible Cities to create accessible tourist routes in six cities in Europe.

The concept of quality of life is an essential element in any discussion around making cities sustainable. The League, a project of the EFC Disabilities Thematic Network established in 2010 and involving 11 foundations across 5 countries, aims to improve the quality of life for people in these cities by creating accessible routes through them. In addition to the new technologies being implemented, the projects also work to modify architectural barriers along old city walls; in ancient churches and guildhalls; and along cobblestone streets. Restaurants, hotels and shops lining these routes, which average three kilometres in length, are also involved in the projects so that all tourists can enjoy full services along the way. So far the project has resulted in 90 historical sites and buildings, and 209 other sites, among which are tourist offices and structures, being made accessible.

Over the last century, tourism has become not only a major economic factor in cities but also an instrument of knowledge and personal emancipation. The League turns the spotlight on the concept of accessible tourism in economic, environmental and social terms. This is particularly relevant today as social arguments are often ignored while talking about sustainability, even when ageing and disability are acknowledged as major global demographic changes that need to be dealt with. Accessibility - defined as the absence of architectural, cultural and sensory barriers - is essential to allowing all citizens, including the 80

million who live with disabilities in Europe, to enjoy and benefit from the richness of historical heritage in our European cities.

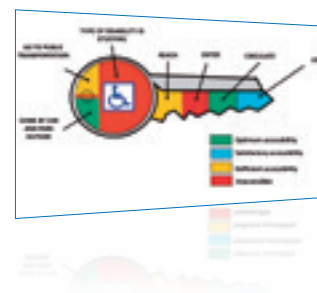
The League employs several key concepts in its work in the six target cities:

- **Building on know-how:** Apart from Lucca and Viborg, which implemented the project from scratch, others have benefited from a head start, such as the partners working in Turin and Ávila.
- **Creative and innovative processes:** Each city in the League has taken its own approach, based on the uniqueness of its culture, landscape, partners and stakeholders.
- **Inspiring methodology:** The creation of a European network that goes beyond the mere exchange of information and acts jointly in several European countries in something as local as urban accessibility brings real added value.
- **Technology solutions:** Collaboration with research centres, universities and private firms made possible the development of new technologies such as smart canes, tactile maps, cyber passes and audio guides.
- **Focus on the beneficiaries:** From the start the League has involved people with disabilities themselves to ensure that the projects really do meet the needs of those it aims to benefit.

www.lhac.eu

Mulhouse, France, located in Alsace, is an industrial town dating back to 803 featuring a colourfully-facaded main square, a Renaissance town hall and the Temple Saint-Etienne with 14th century stained-glass windows.

The League foundation partner in the town is Fondation Réunica. The project, which involves foundations, government, architects, and disability and communications experts, has developed an award-winning assessment tool which can be used to rate the accessibility of museums, shops, hotels and buildings (see illustration). Other outcomes include new street signage, an open data site hosted by the City of Mulhouse listing accessible places of the city, use of Rfid (radio frequency identification) technology along the tourist route, and the development of a methodological guide of accessibility by the city.



“The strength of the project is its global and European dimension, benefiting from the possibility to have a wider view and a mutual share of resources and expertise with other European cities... The overall idea is to make the selected city a laboratory on accessibility that can serve as an example to other cities in France.”

- Éliane Hervé-Bazin, Chief Executive, Réunica Foundation
www.fondationreunica.com

Ávila, Spain is located on the summit of a rocky hill some 118 kilometres from Madrid. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the city is one of the finest surviving examples in Europe of a completely walled medieval town with incredible architecture from that period. Due to its pioneering work to make its medieval walls and other tourist attractions widely accessible, this city won the EU Commission Accessible City Award in 2011.

The League project builds on the excellent work that the city has already done on accessibility, and involves many partners, including Fundación ONCE, ACS Foundation, Via Libre (Fundosa Group), and the City Council of Ávila, among many others. The project incorporates several innovations such as universally-designed audio guides in nine languages; Spanish sign language and the international signing systems; and an adapted screenplay for young audiences. Other innovations include traffic lights with audible alerts and a cyber pass system, which acts as a sound alert system on demand through Bluetooth technology; and a geo-location system to detect accessibility gaps on an interactive map (GISEMAC).

“The key to succeeding in historic cities accessibility is based on the involvement and teamwork of all stakeholders, including municipalities as managers and leaders of the cities, all together with organisations representing people with disabilities. This implication is reflected in a commitment of continuity, which makes accessibility evolve efficiently throughout the years.”

- Jesús Hernández, Director of Accessibility, Fundación ONCE
www.fundaciononce.es



Lucca, Italy lies some 75 kilometres west of Florence and is one of Tuscany's treasured walled cities featuring 4,2 kilometres of walls, parts of which date back to Roman times, and well-preserved towers and bastions. The historic centre houses numerous churches, towers and bell towers, and monumental palazzos of great architectural importance.

The League partner driving the project in Lucca is Fondazione Banca del Monte di Lucca. The foundation asked local authorities and associations representing people with disabilities to join the project from the beginning, as a major project of this kind had not been done before in the city.

One of the most innovative technologies being used in the Lucca project is the “smart” cane, which will be used by residents and tourists with visual impairments along the route (see illustration). It includes an electronic device that communicates with underground sensors. This device also doubles as an audio guide to provide historical information along the route. The cane is being developed in cooperation with a university, a design firm and local craftsmen.

“The League project is a great example of how it is possible to preserve history and improve accessibility through modern technology solutions, thus improving life quality and economic development. Since the beginning, we thought it was impossible to think about a project for improving accessibility without asking people with disabilities... they are our ‘guardian angels’, helping us in focusing on problems and suggesting solutions.”

- Elizabeth Franchini, Executive Secretary and LHAC project coordinator, Banca del Monte di Lucca Foundation
www.fondazionebmlucca.it

The proposed mobility aid system



The project in numbers

8,000,000 euros of total investment
209 accessible sites such as tourist offices and structures
90 accessible sites of historical interest (e.g. museums, monuments, churches)
84 organisations involved
66 accessible urban public spaces (e.g. gardens, parks, squares, markets)
62 accessible public buildings (e.g. libraries, schools, theatres, banks, post offices)
50 NGOs and associations

30 experts in accessibility and urban planning
15 kilometres of accessible tourist routes
14 innovative technological tools implemented (e.g. smart cane, audio guides, cyber passes, tactile maps)
11 foundations
6 historical towns
4 training courses delivered
1 technical accessibility consultancy

Turin, Italy is a major business and cultural centre in northern Italy with more than 2,000 years of heritage such as the baroque, rococo, neo-classical, and Art Nouveau architecture seen in many of the city's public squares, castles, gardens and elegant buildings. Breaking out of its image as primarily an industrial centre due to its housing of the headquarters of Fiat Cars, in recent years Turin has become an increasingly popular tourist destination, with around 240,000 international arrivals each year. The Turin Winter Olympics and Paralympics Games of 2006 brought many investments to make the city more welcoming and more accessible.



Fondazione CRT is a partner in the League project, which has created a 90-minute accessible tourist route in the historic heart of the city. A planned guide for the deaf and information boards that can be read tactilely will be added. Further plans include the creation of specific signage, as well as an advertising campaign on- and offline. The project will also draft guidelines that might facilitate the replication of the project in other locations of Turin, and in other cities in Italy and the world.

"A distinctive feature of the project is the ability to connect and promote local stakeholders active in various fields (promotion, disability, research, and innovation), qualifying Fondazione CRT as a network manager. Furthermore, the project anticipates strategic support which will directly contribute to the dissemination of the value of inclusion, both towards other Italian foundations and society in general, also working on a cultural level."

- Massimo Lapucci, Secretary General, Fondazione CRT
www.fondazioneCRT.it

Viborg, Denmark, which is situated on slopes surrounded by two lakes, was established in 800, and its impressive network of cobblestone streets, narrow footpaths and steep alleys remains almost unchanged since medieval times.



The project in Viborg involves a partnership between the municipality of Viborg and four Danish foundations: Realdania, the Bevica Foundation, The Labour Market Holiday Fund and the Danish Disability Foundation.

A unique aspect of this project team's approach was the use of an architectural competition in two rounds. In the first round, five prequalified, cross-disciplinary teams developed their ideas for making the historical city centre more accessible, while also bringing together the historical and commercial aspects of the city. Two finalists were chosen and subsequently elaborated and clarified their proposals on the basis of the jury's remarks. The winning proposal provides architectural solutions that are discreet - almost invisible - and show great sensitivity to the present historical environment.

"Not only do five different proposals give a wider perspective on how accessibility initiatives can be approached, but they also show that a broad and thorough preliminary analysis leads to a good final product. In this case the winning proposal shows great empathy and insight into the history of the city - and at the same time focuses on accessibility for all."

- Marianne Kofoed, Project Manager, Realdania
www.realdania.org

Sozopol, Bulgaria joins the League

In March 2013 the Bulgarian city of Sozopol became the sixth city in the League. This is one of the oldest towns on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, with evidence of human habitation since the Bronze Age. Early on, the town established itself as a trade and naval centre as shown by the town's symbol, the anchor. Sozopol features ancient icons and magnificent woodcarving iconostases, as well as examples of renaissance architecture.

The project builds on accessibility work such as the restoration of fragments of the fortress wall and towers, and the building of an accessible complex thereto, including a museum collection, a tourist office, a panoramic passage and a pier. The project plans to install tactile markings and ramps, and draft a Braille guide for the main sites in Apollonia, which is designated as an Archaeological Reserve Ancient Town. The League partner here is Sozopol Foundation.

www.sozopol-foundation.com