Activities in favor of the people with disabilities

During the last years Sozopol Foundation responded to the call of the international community for improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, in order to provide services to ensure their social inclusion and equal human rights.

In this regard, the Foundation has established the following main tasks:

- creation a favorable environment in the micro-communities and development of opportunities for fulfilling lives of people with disabilities through their active involvement in community events, cultural events, recreational and cultural tourism;

- development and implementation of special tools and aids to overcome the isolation that accompanies the people with disabilities and the difficulties experienced in interaction with and the adaptation to their environment in order to stimulate their active participation in public events;

- change in the public perceptions of the people with disabilities as full citizens by placing them at the center of public attention through their direct participation in cultural life and cultural tourism, through which they can express their due place in modern society.

The Foundation has significant experience in the development and implementation of projects related to providing access to people with disabilities to cultural heritage and natural landmarks, and the appropriate use of EU funds and own resources for this purpose. Examples for this are the implemented and completed projects:
1. Creation and promotion of cultural tourist product in Sozopol through restoration of the southern fortress wall and tower and construction of public tourist infrastructure for people with disabilities in Architectural-historic Reserve The Old Town of Sozopol, funded under Project Development of cultural tourism in Bulgaria – EU PHARE Programme and co-founded by Sozopol Foundation.

The project activities included: provision of access for people with disabilities from the parking in front of the town hall through all alleys in the Town Park, along the Southern panoramic alley, with access to the sea and to the Architectural-Historic Complex Southern Fortress Wall and Tower. The total length of the route is 970 meters. A toilet for people with disabilities has also been built.

The project has been implemented in the period 2003-2004.
Parking to the Municipal Administration building

Approach to the Town Park and the Central Beach of Sozopol

Beginning of the accessible environment in the Town Park of Sozopol

First ramp for people with disabilities to the Central Beach
The Town Park is fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Second ramp for people with disabilities to the Central Beach.
Southern panoramic alley is fully accessible for people with disabilities

The implementation of Phase II of the project is imminent - installation of tactile markings.
Approaches to Architectural-historic Complex Southern Fortress Wall and Tower and to Municipal Ethnographic Museum

Thanks to the activities performed by Sozopol Foundation in partnership with the Municipality of Sozopol all the halls of the Complex and the Municipal Ethnographic Museum are accessible for people with disabilities. The installation of tactile markings has been foreseen.

The project activities included the construction of a lift and a platform, providing access for people with disabilities to all levels of the museum to the Architectural-Historic Complex Southern Fortress Wall and Tower and to the Municipal Ethnographic Museum. The length of the route is 76 meters. The project has been implemented in the period 2010-2011.

The implementation of Phase II of the project is imminent - installation of tactile markings.
3. Project Ancient Sozopol – Saint Ivan Precursor Monastery – Culture through the Centuries, funded under the EEA Financial Mechanism with co-funding from Sozopol Foundation.

Some of the activities under the project included construction of a panoramic passage to the Architectural-Historic Complex Southern Fortress Wall and Tower, in the old town of Sozopol, and a ramp allowing direct access for people with disabilities to the sea. The length of the ramp is 37 meters.

The project has been implemented in the period 2009-2011.
4. Project Provision of accessible environment for people with disabilities from Southern Panoramic Alley to the tourist pier in Sozopol, Funded by Agency for People with Disabilities to Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and co-funded by Sozopol Foundation.

The project activities included the construction of a lift installation for people with disabilities, providing access from the seaside alley to the tourist pier with panoramic views of the sea and Sozopol. The length of the pier is 24 meters. The project has been implemented in the period 2011-2012.

The implementation of Phase II of the project is imminent - installation of tactile markings.
The implementation of these projects has gradually provided infrastructure for people with disabilities to Archaeological Reserve Ancient Town of Apollonia (the old town of Sozopol), enabling the socialization of the sites with and the opportunity for these equal Bulgarian and foreign citizens to visit them and to actually participate in cultural tourism, combined with exercise and recreation.

The total route with granted access for people with disabilities is 1553 meter to January 11, 2013.

In the execution of its objectives Sozopol Foundation provides activities for the extension of the accessible environment for people with specific abilities throughout Archaeological Reserve Ancient Town of Apollonia.
Currently Sozopol Foundation is working on three projects related to provision of access for people with disabilities:

1. **Provision of accessible environment for people with disabilities to the Orthodox Church St. St. Cyril and Methodius**, where the relics of St. John the Baptist are exposed for worship. The relics were found under a project implemented by Sozopol Foundation.

   The installation of tactile markings, necessary for every similar object, is provided under the current project. The length of the route including the implemented ramps is 70 meters. The development of a small guide to the major sites in the Reserve in Braille has also been envisaged.
On 25 June 2011, the relics of St. John the Baptist were transferred to the Church St. Cyril and Methodius with a procession. After laying the relics there the first who worshiped before them were Mr. Boyko Borisov - Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Simeon Dyankov - Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Konstantin Grebenarov - Governor of District Bourgas, Mr. Bozhidar Dimitrov - Director of the National Museum of History followed by thousands of laymen.

Accessible environment in and around the temple to worship the relics has been provided.
2. **Provision of accessible environment for people with disabilities to the Archaeological Museum in the town of Sozopol – Phase II.** Tactile markings will be installed under this project.

Main entrance of the Archaeological Museum in the town of Sozopol

The length of the route from the Church St. Cyril and Methodius to the main and the side entrance of the Museum with the already completed ramp is 74 m.
3. Bulgaria's cultural heritage - past, present, future. Under this project Sozopol Foundation has set up a permanent exhibition at the National Palace of Culture. Models of symbolic cultural properties of Bulgaria are presented.

The National Palace of Culture is an emblematic building for Bulgaria. Ramps and tactile markings are currently manufactured and installed on the access routes to Hall “The Miracles of Bulgaria”. Access to the hall is provided by elevators №3 and №4, on the left from the main entrance of The National Palace of Culture.
All activities of Sozopol Foundation are coordinated with government and municipal authorities of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Agency for People with Disabilities. Regular contact is maintained with many NGOs working in the field, groups of people with disabilities and the civil society. The Foundation works in close cooperation with the regional and municipal authorities in charge of these issues. Sozopol Foundation strictly abides by international law, based on the postulates of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force on 3 May 2008 and the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

We present a map of Bulgaria with five hundred of the most important national cultural properties. Active work has been implemented on many of them in order to be ensured access for people with disabilities. Sozopol Foundation is involved in carrying out activities on some of these sites.