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New Tourist Guide Training to Benefit Tourists with Disabilities

Enjoying travel and tourism is not always easy for people with intellectual and learning difficulties and their families. In response to this challenge, FEG - the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, and a group of partners from the tourism and disability sectors has started a training initiative, "T-Guide", to train official qualified tourist guides in the skills that can help them give this group of tourists a better experience and understanding of Europe's cultural and historical sites.

The internet-based training will be offered free of charge to tourist guides and will help them adjust their guiding to the needs of this target group. The course will be tested by creating a trial tourist itinerary for intellectually disabled visitors and the overall training will provide a framework for training and skills assessment at EU level. This should result in a wider range of guided tours for visitors in European countries and lead to new job opportunities for tourist guides and for the tourism industry.

Organisations of people with disabilities and their families will be involved in developing the learning programmes and tools for professionals, ensuring that the training will meet the needs of these visitors.

Behind the T-Guide training course is a group of nine organisations supported by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme, "Leonardo Da Vinci". The lead partner is the Polish University Społeczna Akademia Nauk, Lodz.

On behalf of the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (FEG), the Executive Officer & FEG European Tourist Guide Trainer, Efi Kalamboukidou states: "The T-Guide project is a great opportunity for us, the qualified tourist guides across Europe, to develop new skills in guiding people with intellectual disability and learning difficulties to the cultural and natural heritage of the countries we are qualified to guide in. It is always a challenge to try something new in our work as guides, to explore more fields of employment and innovation and at the same time to follow the guidelines of the established CEN European Standard EN15565:2008 for the training of tourist guides in Europe. I'm certain it will be a very interesting and fruitful project co-operation, as many esteemed partners are involved in it".

Mr. Ivor Ambrose, Managing Director of ENAT, The European Network for Accessible Tourism, one of the T-Guide partners, notes: "We are witnessing a re-orientation of the tourism sector with more attention being paid to 'Accessible Tourism for All', which aims to deliver safe, comfortable and enjoyable tourism experiences for the entire tourism market, including people with disabilities, seniors

and others with specific access requirements. We expect that the T-Guide training will improve Tourist Guides' professional skills and give them a better understanding of visitors' needs; this will make a great contribution to the quality of the tourism offer at the destinations where they work."

Gunta Anca, President of The Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations, and partner in the project adds: "In Latvia, a country that was part of the Soviet Union for many years, until recently, people with disabilities could not even dream about the possibilities to travel. Their destinies were – to live at home, and maybe sometimes to have some work, to earn some money to survive. To have leisure time activities - not even speaking about tourism – was not supposed to happen. Now everything has changed - opened up a huge opportunity to travel for all - but our country still does not have knowledge enough to offer equal opportunities for people with different kinds of disabilities. Quite many things have been done already for wheelchair users and blind people so access is provided for them in touristic attractions. Unfortunately we are not aware enough about special problems of accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities. We are really pleased to be involved in this project, as we hope that together with our partners from different EU countries we will be able to find new and interesting solutions for this group of people – to making their trips interesting and easy to understand."

Carolin Gosch, of Lebenshilfe GUV, Austria, another partner adds: "The Lebenshilfe GUV has been working for many years on the aim to support people with intellectual disabilities in participating in social life. Inclusion means for us that people with intellectual disabilities can also participate in leisure, education and culture. From our perspectives, T-GUIDE is an excellent project for the tourism sector and tourist guides to raise awareness on the needs of people with intellectual disabilities and to enable people with intellectual disabilities to participate in this interesting and exciting part of life."

The Consortium

The T-GUIDE consortium is made up of nine organisations, including small enterprises, non-governmental organisations, vocational and educational training providers, foundations and European networks. The partners have come together to establish the first internationally recognised curriculum for tourist guiding of persons with learning difficulties.

Austria		LEBENSILFEGUV www.lebenshilfe-guv.at
Belgium		European Network for Accessible Tourism asbl. www.accessibletourism.org
France		European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations www.feg-touristguides.org
Italy		ASIS - Consorzio Cooperative Sociali www.consorzioasis.it
Latvia		The Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations

www.sustento.lv

Poland



Społeczna Akademia Nauk w Łodzi
www.swspiz.pl

Spain



Fundación Pública Andaluza El
Legado Andalusí
www.legadoandalusi.es

Spain



Instituto de Formación Integral, S.L.U.
www.ifi.com.es

United
Kingdom



Minster Development Centre Ltd.
www.minsterdevelopmentcentre.co.uk

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http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.enat_projects_and_good_practices.1431

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