

UDPB GAVE START TO A NEW PROJECT



On 31.10.2018 in city Kurdzhali, the UNION OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN BULGARIA implemented the OPENING CONFERENCE under the project "PATHWAYS OF ACCESSIBLE HERITAGE TOURISM" (ACCESS2HERITAGE), financed by the COOPERATION PROGRAMME INTERREG V-A GREECE – BULGARIA 2014-2020, WHICH GAVE THE OFFICIAL START OF THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES.

The project has pilot character, rich of various activities for different beneficiaries, two years duration and total budget of 1 295 840 €. It is an initiative of the National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece and the Union of Disabled People in Bulgaria. Partners under the project also are: Management Body of Rodopi Mountain-Range National Park (leader), Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia, Municipality Volvi and Technological Educational Institute of Central Macedonia (Department of Business Administration) from Greece; Local Economic Development Agency Razlog, Regional Youth Parliament Association Kurdzhali and Ecoworld Rhodopes Association Smolian from Bulgaria.

The principal objective of this project is to support sustainable tourism relating to natural or cultural heritage in the Cross-Border area and to consolidate the area as an international tourist destination with an increased accessibility via and by means of a series of activities designed to support the tourist project and the spectrum of services that are associated with it.

Some of the project activities are:

- ✓ Inspection of the accessibility of selected tourist sites - historical and natural in the cross-border area of Greece and Bulgaria; a study of good practices in four EU countries on the accessibility of such tourist sites; elaboration of a Strategy and Action Plan for the development of sustainable accessible tourism, related to the natural and cultural heritage in the cross-border region;
- ✓ Consolidation of the area as an international tourist destination with increased accessibility; development of a new brand / branding / tourist product for elderly people and people with disabilities related to the natural and cultural heritage in the cross-

border area; developing an internet-based platform for promotion and in service of providers and consumers.

- ✓ Pilot reconstruction and modernization (including signalization) of tourist sites - natural and cultural to become fully accessible for all disabled people in the municipalities of Kardzhali and Razlog in Bulgaria, the municipalities of Volvi and Mesochori in Greece.
- ✓ Preparation in a multifunctional format of a Guidebook for the provision of tourist services for elderly people and people with disabilities.
- ✓ Conducting of:
 - A series of training seminars across the border area to enhance the knowledge of local authorities and businesses on tourist services for elderly people and people with disabilities.
 - Awareness campaign for raising the conversance about the people with disabilities and their specificity as users of tourist services.
 - The first international conference on the development of accessible tourism in Thessaloniki,
 - Festivals in Razlog (BG) and Mesochori (GR) and exchanging visits of potential tourists with disabilities;
 - Activities for transparency and promotion of the project and its achievements.

The OPENING CONFERENCE was organized and conducted by "European Prosperity" Association as an accessible event in a new way: in real time on line at the "ACCESS2HERITAGE" page in FACEBOOK was possible to follow the event. There was also a sign language translation for the present people with hearing problems.

The Vice Mayor Social Affairs of Kurdzhali Ms. Veselina Tihomirova, the Manager of the project, Chairperson of the Management Body of Rodopi Mountain-Range National Park Mr. Stavros Kechagioglou, the representative of the National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece Mr. Alexandros Mourouzis and Mrs. Shenai Bekir, regional coordinator of the Union of Disabled people in Bulgaria for district Kurdzhali - were the official guests at the event.

Welcoming speeches gave Mrs. Veselina Tihomirova, Mr. Stavros Kechagioglou and on behalf Mr. Krasimir Kotsev, the Chairman of the UDPB – Mrs. Shenai Bekir. The project was presented in details by Mr. Alexandros Mourouzis the other partners presented the programme, the partners and the construction works.

As conclusion, it should be noted that accessibility problems are becoming more and more important for the development of our society and the accessibility to the sites of our cultural and historical heritage, their good infrastructure is indispensable for the development of tourism not only in our country, accents Mr. Kotsev. The Union of Disabled People in Bulgaria is an organization that has long been working in this area, and the "Access2Heritage" project will build unique tools for development of sustainable tourism for the elderly people and people with disabilities, which will be fully applicable to other cross-border areas of the united Europe.