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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Partner country

Republic of North Macedonia

## Contracting authority

Project ALTERTRIP, Association of persons with physical disabilities of Bitola, Demir Hisar and Resen - MOBILNOST Bitola

## Country background

Republic of North Macedonia is a country in Southeast Europe. It gained independence in 1991 as one of the successor states of Yugoslavia. North Macedonia is a landlocked with total area of 25,713 km2. It lies between latitudes 40° and 43° N, and mostly between longitudes 20° and 23° E (a small area lies east of 23°). North Macedonia has some 748 km of boundaries, shared with Serbia (62 km) to the north, Kosovo (159) to the northwest, Bulgaria (148 km) to the east, Greece (228 km) to the south, and Albania (151 km) to the west. It constitutes approximately the northern third of the larger geographical region of Macedonia. Skopje, the capital and largest city, is home to a quarter of the country's 2.08 million population. The majority of the residents are ethnic Macedonians, a South Slavic people. Albanians form a significant minority at around 25%, followed by Turks, Romani, Serbs, Bosniaks, and Aromanians.

Map

Description automatically generatedProject ALTERTRIP will be implemented in Pelagonia Statistical Region. The Pelagonia Statistical Region is one of eight statistical regions of North Macedonia. It is located in southwestern part of the country along the eponymous plain. It borders Greece and Albania. Internally, it borders the Southwestern and Vardar statistical regions.

Pelagonia statistical region is divided into 9 municipalities: Bitola, Demir Hisar, Dolneni, Krivogaštani, Kruševo, Mogila, Novaci, Prilep, Resen

Project ALTERTRIP will be managed from Bitola, located in the Pelagonia Statistical Region. Bitola is a municipality in the southern part of North Macedonia. Bitola is also the name of the city where the municipal seat is found. The population of the municipality is 105,644 according to the last national census in 2002. The majority in the municipality is represented by the Macedonians - 94,538, followed by the Albanians - 4,219, Romani - 2,619, Turks - 1,866, Bosniaks - 21, Serbs - 550, Vlachs - 1,271. A further 560 citizens declare other ethnicities.

## Current situation in the sector

Tourism today is an extremely important social phenomenon that mobilizes millions of people around the world, especially in Europe, constituting not only a driver of economic development but also a critical element in improving knowledge, communication and the degree of relationship and respect between citizens of different countries. Within the European social model, tourism can be seen as a social good that should be available to all citizens, without the exclusion of any group of people, regardless of their personal, social, economic or other life circumstances.

One of the key areas where the tourism sector in Europe can increase its offerings of sustainable and higher quality products and services, with greater value for customers, is by making tourism offers and services "accessible for all". This objective, when pursued effectively by destinations and businesses, can improve not only the national but mostly the regional and local tourism sector’s competitiveness and lead to increased market share. In particular, the provision of accessible tourism products and services opens up the market to the growing numbers of older visitors, disabled persons, people with long-term health conditions and families.

In parallel to the demand for Accessible Tourism, it was calculated that the market size in Europe was around 780 milion trips in 2012. Yet the demand far outweighs the present market supply, creating opportunity for “early adopters”, relative to the inbound tourism market.

Looking at the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, accessibility, participation and equality are three of the eight priority areas for the EU. Those three areas aim to make goods and services accessible to people with disabilities, allow them to enjoy all benefits of an EU citizenship, combat discrimination and promote equal opportunities. Making constant improvements in these areas will enable full and effective participation. This signals the political imperative of businesses enabling disabled citizens in the EU to participate fully in tourism, thereby allowing them to exercise their rights to choose travel destinations, without hindrance.

Through the analysis of the needs expressed by tourists with disabilities and access requirements, there is a clear and growing demand for accessible tourism products and services. This fact is confirmed by a growing awareness on the part of some tourism operators who are providing some of the new offers to cater for the demand coming from seniors and the segment of people with disabilities.

"Accessibility", aside from the dimension of physical access, also encompasses the dimension of functionality, communication and it is related directly to autonomy and safety. The CB area combines favourable natural resources, climate conditions, and cultural assets providing opportunities for sustainable development of tourism, with respect to the environment.

However, accessibility problems create difficulties for tourists with disabilities to enjoy equal benefits and services.

Touristic services are not well organized for groups with special interests, while joint efforts to create attractive itineraries and common branding are missing. Touristic facilities and their management need to be improved substantially. Access to tourist sites needs to be extended together with the development of the new forms of tourism products. Even though tourism is a growing sector in the Pelagonia region of North Macedonia, the area itself is not promoted as a popular tourism destination. On the other hand, there is an untapped potential and underestimation of niche tourism prospects, such as tourism for people with disabilities etc. Such potential is significantly correlated with the urgent need to use opportunities that the cross-border region has to present. Although some important steps have been taken in recent years concerning legal and institutional framework, much remains to be done for making a destination truly accessible, attractive to national and international customers who today still prefer destinations most tested from the accessibility point of view. The actions taken by the central government and local / regional authorities are usually not part of a strategic plan to improve services for people with disabilities, as potential consumers of the tourism product, but are mostly confined only to few private initiatives.

# OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

## Overall objective

The overall objective of the project ALTERTRIP of which this contract will be a part is as follows:

To motivate transformation of a Cross-border Region between North Macedonia and Greece (CB area) into an accessible and inclusive tourist destination and support the sustainable development of heritage tourism in the CB area. There as contributing to the development of a CB Partnership, with the involvement and participation of the various agents of the tourist value chain that provide quality services to tourists with special needs.

The project aims to:

* exchange and import know-how and good practices related to the improvement of the accessibility of cultural and natural heritage structures
* improve the accessibility and visit ability of selected cultural and natural heritage assets in the CB area
* improve the capacity of authorities responsible for the management of cultural and natural heritage assets, and of professionals from the tourist field (guides, travel and event agents, transportation services) in better addressing the needs of senior and accessible tourism (capacity building activities)
* develop a platform at which all disabled and elderly visitors would be able to design their trip to the CB area and be able through this platform (G.I.S.) to accomplish all the arrangements for their vacation trip.
* collect data related to the accessibility and friendliness to disabled and elderly visitors of key cultural and natural assets of the CB area (field studies)
* improve the visibility of cultural and natural heritage assets that are accessible and friendly to all, through electronic and physical media, campaigns, etc. and by producing an informative guide for all visitors with useful information for the elderly and the disabled (branding & promotion);
* conduct a joint strategic planning study towards branding the CB area as an international tourist destination for elderly and disabled, of high quality at low to medium cost

The projects' outputs are clearly linked between project’s objectives. The proposed intervention focuses on the competence gap on accessible tourism among SMEs in the tourism sector by offering a comprehensive training in the fields of accessible tourism, innovation and sustainable development of natural and cultural heritage areas.

The main desired outputs of ALTER TRIP are:

* Training of all stakeholders on issues such as offering services to persons with disabilities
* Pilot Studies for the development of "accessibility" at selected heritage attractions on both sides, including light structural interventions (e.g. placement of ramps, printed guides in braille etc).
* An Accessible Web Portal will be developed for communication and networking reasons, and also will serve as a tool platform where all potential disabled and elderly visitors would be able to design their trip to the CB area.
* At least 3 best practices of accessible tourism will be implemented in CB area.
* A participation to an International Tourism Fare
* An Accessibility Guide, which shall provide useful instructions for the stakeholders as regards the accessibility of infrastructure and their services
* A Guide for the actions relevant to information, publicity, and promotion of accessibility, and of the overall project
* Creation of a network among all stakeholders who shall communicate and continuously provide feedback to the digital platform
* Creation of new jobs

The main benefit resulting from project’s implementation is twofold: On the one hand improve attractiveness of the touristic product by creating a diversified all-season product in CB area focusing on the comparative advantages of rural areas attracting persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility in general and their families.

In parallel, the above will facilitate the partnership to address the competence gap on accessible tourism among SMEs in the tourism sector by offering a comprehensive training in the fields of accessible tourism, innovation and sustainable development of natural and cultural heritage areas, support entrepreneurship and increase the skills together with the public sector can develop further the project idea with enormous benefits for all, providing the relevant added value to the area.

The project ALTERTRIP is funded by the grant of the European Union and national funds of participating countries through Interreg IPA Programme “Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014 – 2020”. The project ALTERTRIP is implemented by three partners: Business and Exhibition Researches and Development Institute (IEE), Thessaloniki, Greece; Ministry of Interior, Sector Macedonia & Thrace, Thessaloniki, Greece; Association of persons with physical disabilities of Bitola, Demir Hisar and Resen - MOBILNOST Bitola, North Macedonia.

## Purpose

The purpose of this contract is as follows:

Development of Methodology plan. Selection of best ICT practices for accessible tourism to be adopted, adapted, and transferred in North Macedonia. An analysis of the best ICT tools for people with disabilities, used in tourism in the world, should be made. Based on those experiences, the most appropriate tool to be implemented in the Pelagonija region, should be proposed.

## Results to be achieved by the contractor

The Methodology plan should specify methodology on which bases in the later phase of the ALTERTRIP project ICT tools will be developed and/or ICT based projects about accessible tourism will be implemented in the Pelagonia region.

Specifically, the contractor should achieve following results:

* Provide overview of the current state about existence of ICT tools or ICT related projects for accessible tourism implemented in North Macedonia.
* Provide list with short description of best innovative ICT tools and ICT projects (best ICT practices) for accessible tourism implemented worldwide for different categories of persons with disabilities (persons with physical disabilities, blind, deaf, etc.).
* Propose two ICT practices related to accessible tourism to be implemented in Pelagonia region. One ICT tool (software/ hardware) to be developed and one ICT demonstration project(s) to be implemented in the ALTERTRIP project.
* Provide cost-benefit analysis for these selected two ICT practices.
* Prepare methodology for implementation of these selected two ICT practices.
* Prepare of Terms of References for publishing calls for implementation of the selected two ICT practices in the frame of ALTERTRIP project..

# ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

## Assumptions underlying the project

Capacity of the ALTERTRIP project manager and technical staff is adequate to cooperate with the external experts.

## Risks

Low level of communication and understanding between ALTERTRIP project manager and technical staff and external experts.

# SCOPE OF THE WORK

## General

### Description of the assignment

External Expert for Preparation of a Methodology plan. The methodology plan should provide detailed explanation and description of what can be implemented as two pilot ICT projects for accessible tourism in the Pelagonia region. The plan should consist of steps and procedures that the developer of the pilot projects needs to undertake as well as content related to the best practices on the topic of ICT tolls and projects for accessible tourism.

### Geographical area to be covered

Pelagonia Statistical Region, Republic of North Macedonia/ Global – Internet/www

### Target groups

* CSOs of the persons with disabilities/ Persons with disabilities.
* National and local authorities responsible for development of tourism and for social welfare of persons with disabilities.
* Managers of tourist facilities (hotels, restaurants, museums, cultural facilities, sport facilities, tourist sites etc.).
* Tourist agencies, tour operators.

## Specific work

The methodology plan should be based on desk research. Specifically, it should consist of:

* Introductory part about general topics on ICT for persons with disabilities.
* Introductory elaboration of role of ICT for development of accessible tourism and provision of accessible tourist services.
* Overview of the existence of ICT tools or ICT related projects for accessible tourism implemented in North Macedonia.
* Overview of best innovative ICT tools and ICT projects (best ICT practices) for accessible tourism implemented worldwide for different categories of persons with disabilities (persons with physical disabilities, blind, deaf, etc.).
* Analysis of transferability of these best ICT practices to local conditions in Pelagonia region.
* Proposal for two ICT practices related to accessible tourism to be implemented in Pelagonia region. One ICT tool (software/ hardware) to be developed and one ICT demonstration project(s) to be implemented.
* Cost-benefit analysis of the selected two ICT practices related to accessible tourism to be implemented in Pelagonia region/ North Macedonia. What budget is needed such tolls to be transferred/ implemented locally in Pelagonia region/ North Macedonia. What are local benefits of implementation of such tools/projects, how many people will be affected.
* Step-by-step elaboration of the methodology for implementation of these practices.
* Preparation of Terms of References for publishing calls for implementation of the selected two ICT accessible tourism projects/tools in the framework of ALTERTRIP project.

## Project management

### Responsible body

Project Manager of ALTERTRIP Project

### Management structure

N/A

### Facilities to be provided by the contracting authority and/or other parties

N/A

# LOGISTICS AND TIMING

## Location

Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia

## Start date & period of implementation of tasks

The intended start date is 22nd December 2021 and the period of implementation of the contract will be 45 days.

# REQUIREMENTS

## Staff

Note that civil servants and other staff of the public administration of the partner country, or of international/regional organisations based in the country, shall only be approved to work as experts if well justified. The justification should be submitted with the tender and shall include information on the added value the expert will bring as well as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

### Key experts

**Lot 1 - Key expert/ Team leader**

Qualifications and skills

Higher Education – at least Bachelor degree (Master or PhD are preferable) in areas of ICT or engineering. In absence of formal education at least 10 years work experience in ICT sector.

General professional experience

At least 5 years (preferable 10 years) relevant work experience related to ICT.

Specific professional experience

At least 1 (preferable 3) realized projects related to ICT services for persons with disabilities.

The contractor(s) can involve number of non-key experts in the realization of the assignment. Their names and CVs are not needed to be provided in the tender dossier, but rather their role and task the realization of the assignment.

## Office accommodation

Office accommodation for the experts working on the contract is to be provided by the contractor.

## Facilities to be provided by the contractor

N/A

## Equipment

**No** equipment is to be purchased on behalf of the contracting authority as part of this service contract or transferred to the contracting authority at the end of this contract.

# REPORTS

## Reporting requirements

The contractor will submit the following reports in English in electronic format:

**Draft Final Report**

Draft final report shall be submitted no later than 10 days before the end of the period of implementation of tasks according to section 5.2.

As annex to the Draft Final Report, the draft Methodology plan - Selection of best ICT practices for accessible tourism to be adopted, adapted, and transferred in North Macedonia, should be provided in Macedonian. Translation of the Methodology plan into English will be responsibility of the Contracting Authority.

**Final Report**

Final report with the same specifications as the draft final report, incorporating any comments received from the parties on the draft report. The deadline for sending the final report is 10 days after receipt of comments on the draft final report.

As annex to the Final Report, the Methodology plan - Selection of best ICT practices for accessible tourism to be adopted, adapted, and transferred in North Macedonia., should be provided in Macedonian. Translation of the Methodology plan into English will be responsibility of the Contracting Authority

## Submission and approval of reports

The reports referred to above must be submitted to the project manager. The project manager is responsible for approving the reports.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## Definition of indicators

Delivered Methodology plan. Selection of best ICT practices for accessible tourism to be adopted, adapted, and transferred in North Macedonia.

## Special requirements

N/A