

Analysis and Assessment of Existing Accessible Tourist Services and Facilities in the Pelagonia region



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Introduction

Thoughts on Accessibility:

"People are not disabled, cities are ..."

"Each person is an expert on his own needs. We need to provide objective, personal information, in order for tourists to choose which facility is accessible to them."

"Investment costs are misunderstood and exaggerated, while access is seen mainly as a 'problem' rather than a golden opportunity."

In the United Nations Agenda 2030 for sustainable development it is required (that):

"We should not leave anyone behind!"

Accessibility for all to tourism facilities, products and services should be the focus of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. Accessibility is not only about human rights. It is also a business opportunity for destinations and companies to accommodate all visitors and improve their revenues.

Persons with disabilities may have physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities. Some of them may have disabilities from birth, or acquired in childhood or later in life. The disability may have an impact on their ability to participate smoothly in society, or the disability may have a major impact on their ability to work and require support and assistance.

If we look around, only a few stairs are a huge obstacle, not only for people who use a wheelchair, but also for the elderly, for the injured, for pregnant women, for mothers with a small child in a stroller, for small children. In order for these persons to gain full inclusion in all pores of society and have full freedom of movement, obstacles must be overcome. This can be achieved if the adopted legal regulations for construction and by-laws are respected, with campaigns to raise public awareness, with mutual understanding and empathy, that is, with respect for dignity and the right to freedom of life. Accessibility is usually analyzed from the aspect of steep stairs at the entrances, in the buildings, between floors, lack of ramps, platforms and elevators to bridge the height barriers, accessible toilets, sound and light signaling, etc.

- **Concepts in international frameworks**

Accessible tourism for all

A form of tourism that enables people with specific access requirements, including mobility, sight, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and fairly and with dignity. This is made possible through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments, all of which require a collaborative process between stakeholders.

Disability

Disability is the result of the interaction between persons with disabilities and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an

equal basis with others. Understanding disability as an interaction means that it is a social construct, not an attribute of the person.

Persons with disabilities. Any person whose full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others in travel, accommodation and other tourism services is hindered by barriers in the environment in which they find themselves, as well as by barriers of attitudes.

Tactile tiling

A system of textured ground surface indicators on footpaths, stairs and station platforms to assist people who are blind or visually impaired. They provide a distinctive surface pattern, noticeable underfoot or with canes, that warn people of their approach to streets and dangerous areas.



Universal Design

The design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. It promotes a shift towards user-centered design by following a holistic approach and aiming to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. It is a concept that extends beyond issues of simple accessibility to buildings for people with disabilities and should become an integrated part of policies and planning in all aspects of society.

Accessibility, "the usability of a product, service, environment, or facility by individuals with the widest range of abilities".

Accessibility needs, (to be able to use their assistive products or assistive technology to interact with all system functionality; for the system not to interfere with their assistive products or assistive technology.)

Visiting cultural heritage is a human right. *Cultural heritage means tangible and intangible assets that, as an expression or testimony of human creativity in the past and present or as joint works of man and nature, due to their archaeological, ethnological, historical, artistic, architectural, urban, environmental, technical , sociological and other scientific or cultural values, properties, contents or functions, have cultural and historical significance and for their protection and use are under a legal regime according to law. According to its properties, cultural heritage can be: immovable, movable and spiritual. Real estate: Monuments, memorial units and cultural landscapes; Movable: Archaeological objects, ethnological objects, historical objects, artistic objects, technical objects, archival material, library goods, cinematographic goods, phonographic goods; Spiritual: Folklore goods, language, toponyms. Cultural heritage according to its meaning can be: of exceptional and other cultural and historical significance. Of exceptional importance is any good that has the highest national significance and universal values for humanity and its history, culture, art, science or technological progress; Of other cultural and historical importance is any good that has great significance for national history, culture, art, science or technological development. Movable cultural heritage is under the direct protection of the state and is kept in specially built and designated facilities: museums, galleries, libraries, while immovable cultural heritage is kept in protected regions and reserved archaeological zones.

The general impression is that the cultural heritage in our country is inaccessible to people with disabilities, regardless of the fact that in the Law on the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of the Republic of North Macedonia in Article 114, point 3, it is stated that: "The Administration can by decision order the taking of special measures for ensuring accessibility of cultural heritage for persons with disabilities".

*

UNWTO, the ONCE Foundation and ENAT state in their strategic documents: "Accessibility for all refers to the quality of service, innovation and comfort for all tourists, new sources of income and new customers with disabilities, the elderly and families with young children, among many other individuals, with specific accessibility requirements. By adopting the principles of universal design in the development of the environment and services, the tourism sector can fulfill its moral responsibility, in many countries, as well as its legal obligations to cater for those with specific requirements, making tourism for all a reality.

* ENAT is an association of companies, tourist boards, municipalities, disability organizations, researchers and individuals working to improve access to travel and tourism.



The most significant recommendations are noted in the Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All, adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013.

UNESCO, within the areas of its mandate, contributes to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), particularly related to Article 9 on accessibility; Article 21 on freedom of expression and access to information; Article 24 on education; Article 30 for participation in cultural life, recreation, free time and sports; as

well as Article 31 on international cooperation. In addition, in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO was involved in the UN Inter-Agency Support Group for the CRPD and the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

- For the analysis and assessment:

The creation of this estimate refers to the current state of existing services and conditions in the Pelagonia region carried out on the ground, in accordance with the goal of the Alter Trip Project, which clearly expresses the motivation for the cross-border region between Republic of North Macedonia and Greece to grow into an accessible and inclusive tourist destination and support of the development of tourism in the Region, by providing quality services for people with disabilities, through knowledge and exchange of experience and improving accessibility to natural and cultural heritage. In that direction, the creation of a quality touristic and sustainable product intended for persons with disabilities is of great importance for the development of tourism in the region, improving the quality of life of these persons.

According to the task of the Agreement, the assessment was made on employees and managers in tourist facilities, i.e. accommodation facilities, catering facilities, museums and other cultural institutions, tourist sites and some sports locations, non-governmental organizations and representatives of local authorities who are responsible for the development of tourism, for social protection and of course the well-being of persons with disabilities, religious facilities, etc.

This assessment is mostly based on research of a certain number of field facilities, e-mails, interviews, questionnaires, live chats and telephone conversations.

Particularly important for this assessment were the questionnaires made according to the activity, i.e. one questionnaire for institutions and one for catering facilities, which was carried out according to the proposal of the partners from Greece, and both questionnaires were approved by the partner in the Alter Trip project – Mobilnost Bitola.

The results of the research were processed and analyzed, after which it was ascertained whether the managers and employees in the facilities are familiar with the legal regulation, whether the legal regulation has been implemented, with a field check, or if they have been implemented, and whether they have been implemented correctly.

With the research, answers were obtained to the questions of what is the current situation with the implementation of the legal regulation on accessibility for people with disabilities in the Pelagonia region as a pilot region, and what is the situation with provided specific, special tourist services for people with disabilities.

The desired result of the Alter Trip Project is the development and improvement of the condition of certain attractions, especially those of cultural heritage in the two border regions, including light interventions, such as ramps, moving ramps, walking Braille materials, etc. in the direction of improving accessibility, affordability and inclusion.

Methodology

- The methodology by which the assessment was carried out:

According to guidelines from the first Study – guidelines for tourism stakeholders regarding legal requirements for providing accessible tourist services, facilities and capacities.

The guidelines address five categories of disability.

A Category, Disabled persons who are partially dependent on a wheelchair, B Category - Persons with walking disabilities who need a wheelchair permanently, C Category - Blind or visually impaired persons, D Category - Deaf or visually impaired persons, and E Category, which combined categories B, C and D.

In the entrance section, amenities are provided for people with disabilities, including wheelchairs, an obligation that must be fulfilled by new buildings built after 2006, with a capacity of 100 or more apartments, for blocks and units. There should be special aids in common rooms and sanitary areas, namely: ramps, automatic doors, handrails, electrical switches at a lower height.

Regarding the existence of rooms for people with disabilities, in tourist apartments and residences, an obligation only for new facilities, built after 2006, in blocks and units, that is, in facilities with a capacity of 100 apartments, to have at least one suite, on every hundred apartments thereafter, plus at least one more apartment.

In the assessment, particular emphasis was placed on checking the following elements with prescribed dimensions: Elements of accessibility to overcome height differences. For the need to overcome height differences in the space in which people with disabilities and reduced mobility move as elements of accessibility are: ramps, stairs, elevators, vertical lifting platform and obliquely lifting collapsible platform. (Do they have such elements and are the dimensions compatible)

An observation was also made of elements of accessibility for independent movement in public traffic for persons with wheelchairs and persons with reduced mobility, such as: stand and platform, parking space, public pedestrian area, traffic light, pedestrian crossing, pedestrian island and intersection. (Are there such elements and are the dimensions compatible)

In terms of occupancy of these facilities in relation to:

Cafe-bar, cafe and restaurant with at least 80 seats (or 100 m²), for the entrance area, communications, toilets and the special provisions that were listed specifically for these facilities above, Disco-club and night-club with an area of at least 400 m², for the entrance space, communications, toilets.

In a coffee bar, cafe and restaurant with less than 80 seats, disco club and night club with an area of less than 400 m², accessibility should be ensured to overcome height differences and they should have an accessible WC. If in those facilities it is mandatory to provide only 1 WC for women and men, then it should be performed as accessible. In case of reconstruction of those objects, a deviation from the elements of accessibility can be determined, solely because the existing conditions of the object do not allow it or the conditions for accessibility from the public area to the object do not allow it. Tourist information center, for the entrance area and communications, tourist community office with an area of at least 200 m², for the entrance area and communications, travel agency with an area of at least 200 m², for the entrance area and communications; Free standing reception, for the entrance area and notice board; Nautical tourism facilities, for entrance area, communications, toilets, bathroom or shower room and notice board; Hotel with at least 25 rooms with toilets, for entrance area, communications, bathrooms or, shower room plus toilets, provisions for rooms, such as and the bulletin board; Hotel with at least

25 rooms with shared sanitary units, for the entrance area, communications, bathrooms, or shower room plus toilets, provisions for the rooms, as well as the bulletin board; Hostel with at least 25 rooms with shared sanitary units, for the entrance space, the communications, the toilets, the bathrooms or the shower room, provisions for the room and notice board, tourist settlement with at least 25 apartments, for the entrance area, communications, provisions for the apartment and notice board; Camp for at least 500 guests, for the entrance area, communications, the bathroom or a shower-cabin, a kitchen, and a bulletin board, a restaurant next to a main and regional road, for the entrance area, communications and toilets; a hotel with a special designation - a motel along main and regional roads, for the entrance area, communications and toilets, commercial and catering facilities within gas stations, for the entrance area, communications and toilets.

Objects for cultural purposes such as the University Library, for the entrance area, communications, toilets, desk, notice board and orientation plan for movement; Cultural center, for the entrance area, communications, toilets, desk, notice board and orientation plan for movement;

Convention center, for the entrance area, communications, toilets, place in the auditorium, inductive node or transmission loop, bulletin board and orientation plan of movement; Museum, gallery, exhibition space with an area of at least 300 m², for the entrance area, communications, toilets, desk and bulletin board;

Cinema, theater and concert hall with at least 100 seats for the audience, etc., for the entrance area, communications, toilets, place in the auditorium, inductive junction or transmission ring and bulletin board.

For a museum, gallery, exhibition space with an area of less than 300 m², cinema, theater and concert hall with less than 100 seats in the auditorium, accessibility should be ensured to overcome height differences and they should have an accessible WC. If in those facilities, it is mandatory to provide only 1 WC for women and men, then it should be performed as accessible. In case of reconstruction of those objects, a deviation from the elements of accessibility can be determined, solely because the existing conditions of the object do not allow it or the conditions for accessibility from the public area to the object do not allow it.

As part of the assessment, some traffic facilities were also observed, which were near attractions, such as bus station, railway station, parking lots, footpaths, squares, public pedestrian area, park, sports ground, sports hall, ZOO, religious buildings, etc., and in accordance with the regulations for urban planning, the general rules for the accessibility of buildings, sidewalks and pedestrian areas, parking lots, ramps, etc.

1. According to received data on accommodation facilities and caterers from the municipalities of Bitola, Demir Hisar, Dolneni, Krivogashtani, Krushevo, Mogila, Novaci, Prilep and Resen.
2. According to the analysis of strategic documents for the Pelagonia region, Center for the Development of the Pelagonia Region, Municipalities in the Pelagonia Region, promotional materials, websites of stakeholders, etc.
3. According to available data from the Ministry of Economy.
 - A. Sub-strategy for the development of cultural tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia;
 - B. Sub-strategy for the development of active tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia;
 - C. Register of categorized catering facilities;
 - D. Program for the development of tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021 of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and others.
4. According to data from the State Statistics Office.
5. According to meetings with tourism stakeholders.
6. According to meetings with non-governmental organizations and associations of persons with disabilities.
7. According to questionnaires for tourism stakeholders and institutions:
 - for catering facilities;
 - for institutions.
8. According to field research (measurement, photography, inspection and interviews).
9. According to international experience of the expert in accessibility assessments and comparison with international good examples.

According to the rich experience with accessibility training within the Balkan Museum Network, as well as the practical work in the region, it can be concluded that it is the most

difficult to implement interventions to achieve accessibility in buildings that are older and also cultural monuments. In that case, especially in the Balkans, the most attention is paid to enabling the multisensory experience rather than the experience of physical presence in certain attractions. For that purpose, a large number of attractions such as localities, museums, galleries, create various online programs, or services near those attractions. We see a number of examples where attractions prepare content such as videos in sign language for the hearing and speech impaired, tactile exhibitions with pictures and copies for tactile experience, for the visually impaired, various workshops related to the theme of the attraction itself.

During the analysis of good international practices, exceptionally good examples were noted where the emphasis was placed on accessible tourism, i.e. tourism for all. Spain, Great Britain, Italy, etc., stand out in particular. It is interesting that more and more tour operators and travel agencies organize special tours for people with disabilities with pre-mapped points, that is, attractions and tourist-catering services that make a complete tourist product intended for people with different types of disabilities.

As mentioned above, there are often barriers that prevent individuals from fully participating in society. Since accessibility does not only refer to people in wheelchairs but to all types of disabilities, we must think about each tourist as an individual and welcome everyone in appropriate conditions.

An excellent example of motivation for cities is the World Trade Organization (WTO) which, since 2014, has been organizing annual world conferences on accessible tourism, starting from San Marino.

The conference provided an opportunity for destinations in Europe to present examples of good practices and share strategies.

Three key areas:

1. Accessibility to cultural heritage sites;
2. Policy frameworks and strategic actions to make accessible tourism a reality;

3. Smart technologies for improving the accessibility of tourist infrastructure, facilities and services.

Bordeaux (France) and Valencia (Spain) have been selected as the winners of the European Capital of Smart Tourism EU 2022 competition, following a meeting of the European Jury in Brussels on 26 October 2021. (European Capitals of Smart Tourism for their excellence as tourist destinations in accessibility, sustainability, digitalization and cultural heritage and creativity)

Good practices:

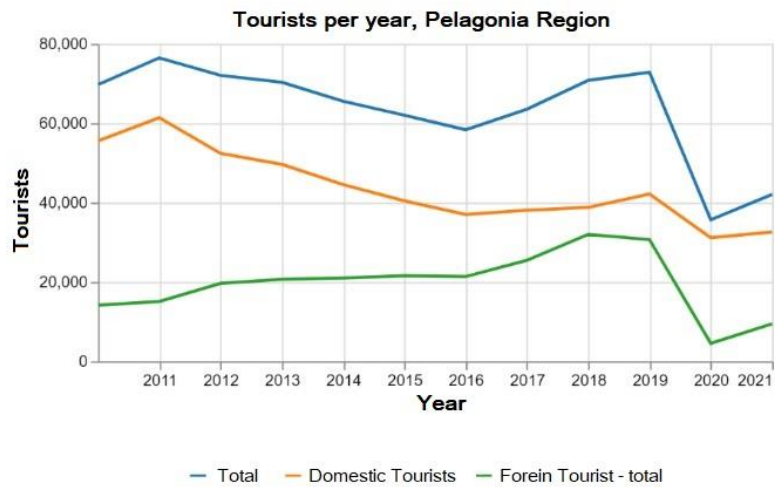
Sicily per tutti, Accessible Salzburg, Turismo de Portugal, Accessible Croatia, Sozopol Foundation, Visit England, San Marino for All, Village for All, etc. The V4A Inside application facilitates the collection and processing of accessible tourism data. By making accurate information available to users, travelers with disabilities can independently choose destinations, services and facilities that suit their needs. By providing tourism service providers with information on how to implement accessibility, the application helps to improve the quality of the tourism offer of destinations, create commercial opportunities and generate employment for people with disabilities)

It must always be kept in mind that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls on member states, through Article 30, to recognize the right of persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in cultural life, recreational, sports and leisure activities, including tourism.

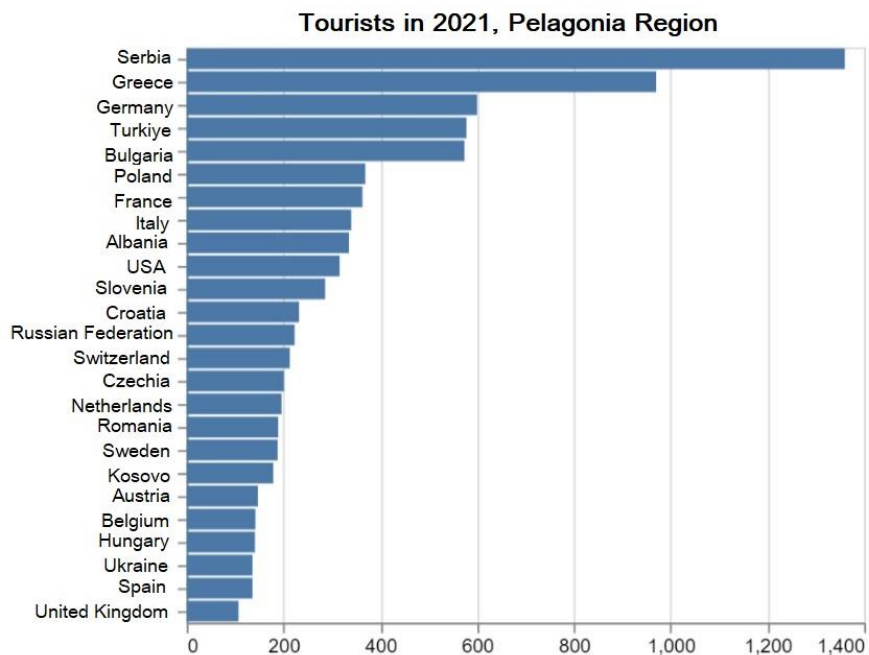
***The UNWTO Framework Convention on Ethics in Tourism emphasizes in Article 2 its aim to promote responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. Article 10 calls on member states to encourage and facilitate tourism for persons with disabilities. A very important document is the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 ISO 21902:2021.**

In the review of promotional materials, websites, etc., for the cities in the Pelagonia region, as well as the facilities in them, no information related to persons with disabilities was observed.

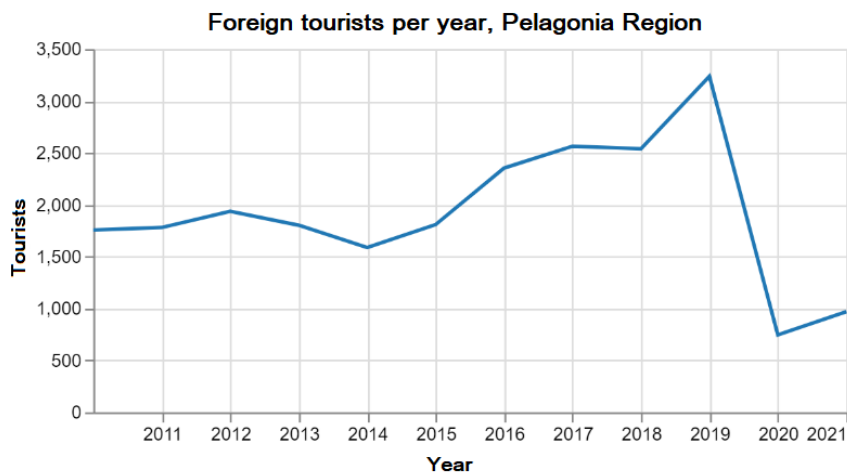
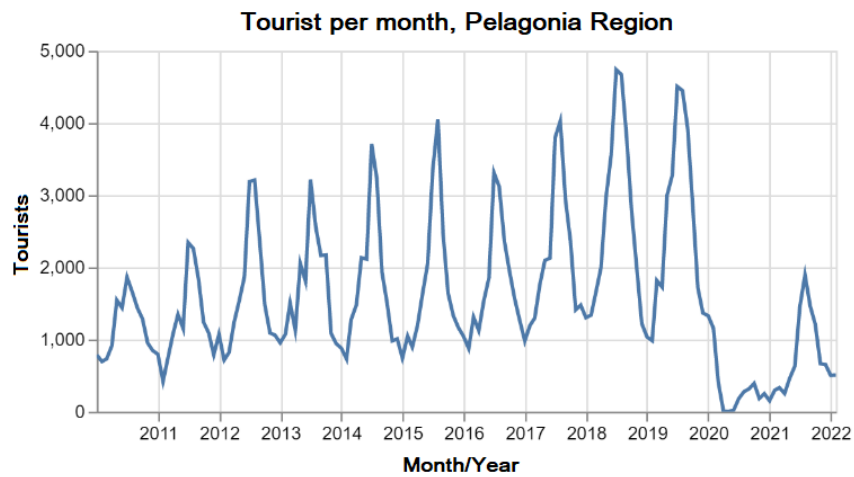
- Analyzing the data from the State Statistics Office, the following situation can be ascertained:



According to the analysis of the arrival of tourists in the Pelagonia region, there is a noticeable and expected drop in the number of tourists in the last two years with the Covid 19 crisis. However, from the end of 2021 and 2022, an increase is observed.



The table shows the countries from which the most arrivals of tourists in the Pelagonia region are recorded, from where it is noted that Greece is in second place, right behind Serbia.



— Greece

In the table, for arrivals of foreign tourists, a constant number of tourists from Greece in the Pelagonia region is noticeable, with a slight increase, until the crisis with Covid 19, so that this year an increase in numbers can be observed again.

Let's hope that the number of tourists from Greece will increase and reach the number of 2019.

According to data from the State Statistics Office, for 2021, the average number of overnight stays is 3.29 days, which is a topic for consideration, in the direction of increasing it.

In the strategic documents for the development of the Pelagonia region, the development of tourism is placed, where a huge potential is recognized, due to the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage.

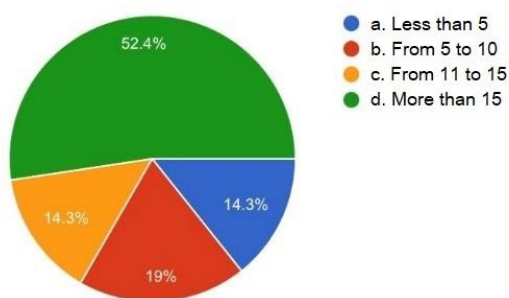
In the vision of the Pelagonia Planning Region, it is clearly emphasized that the Pelagonia region is a competitive and desirable destination for living and tourism, with a perspective for young people, good social inclusion, a clean environment and a European future. And in the mission, Balanced development of the Pelagonian region that provides a decent quality of life and equal opportunities for all citizens by valorizing existing potentials, strengthening the capacities of human resources, using renewable energy sources, modernizing education, using innovative technologies, networking and utilization of available funds. In strategic goal 2 it is indicated - Encouraging social, educational, cultural and health inclusion and in Priority 2.1: Improvement of capacities and conditions in education, social and healthcare: In 2.1.4. Improvement of physical accessibility in public facilities and public transport for persons with disabilities, 2.1.5. Opening and support of day care centers for people from vulnerable categories. The result is Improved physical accessibility in public facilities and public intercity and city transport for people with disabilities; and an indicator expressed in: Number of ramps/elevators in public facilities and public transport for persons with developmental disabilities; number of established and supported day care centers for vulnerable categories (elderly, frail persons, persons with disabilities); 2.3.5. And with the aim of conducting cultural events and inclusion of vulnerable groups; 2.1.4. Improving physical accessibility in public facilities and public transport for persons with disabilities; 2.2.6 Increasing the population's awareness of acceptance and inclusion of vulnerable groups; 2.3.5 Conducting cultural events and inclusion of vulnerable groups; 3.3.7 Increasing the safety, security, responsibility of the population with emphasis on minors and other road users - Installation of appropriate infrastructure for vulnerable categories of citizens (ramps, sound signals, light signals).

Results from the research:

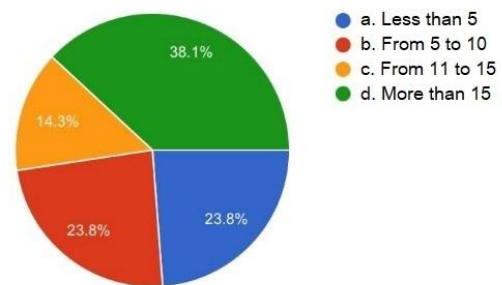
In which Regional Unit / Municipality is the business located?

Bitola 66.7%, Demir Hisar 14.3, Krushevo 4.8%, Novaci 4.8%, Prilep 4.8%, Resen 4.8%

How many employees does the business have?



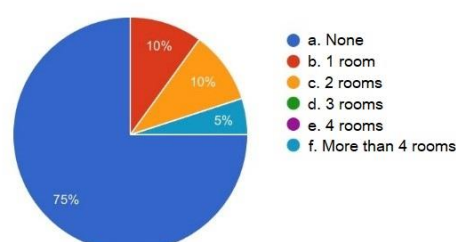
How many years has the business been operating?



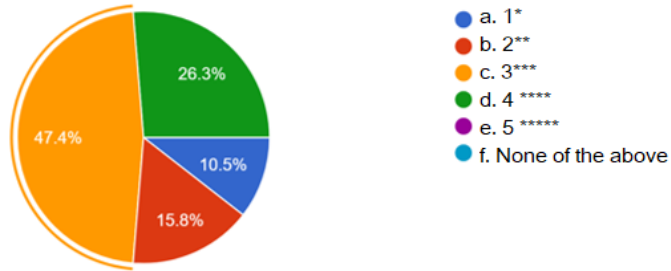
Most of the business units in the tourism-hospitality sector have more than 15 employees and have existed for more than 15 years, which means that these are relatively large capacities. A large part of the facilities represent a combination of accommodation facilities and food and beverages, and most of the researched facilities are accommodation facilities. In terms of the number of rooms, accommodation facilities with 10 to 20 rooms are the most represented.

The number of facilities that have rooms for people with disabilities is worrisome, that is, 75% declared that they do not have them, even though they are large accommodation facilities.

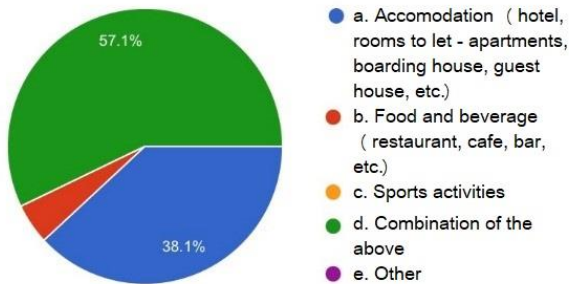
How many rooms for disabled people does the accommodation have?



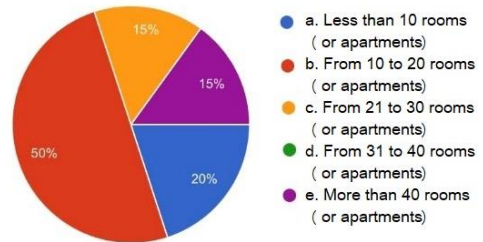
To which category does the accomodation belong?



To which category does the business belong?

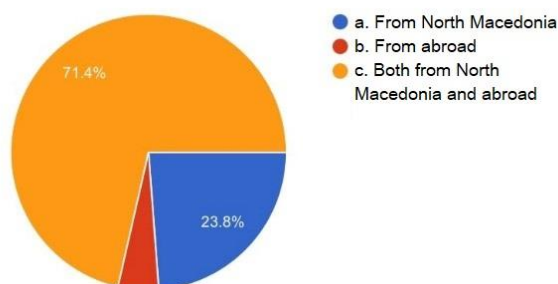


What is the capacity of the accomodation?



In terms of tourist arrivals, 71% declared that they receive tourists from abroad and from Republic of North Macedonia, and 23% that they mostly have tourists from Republic of North Macedonia.

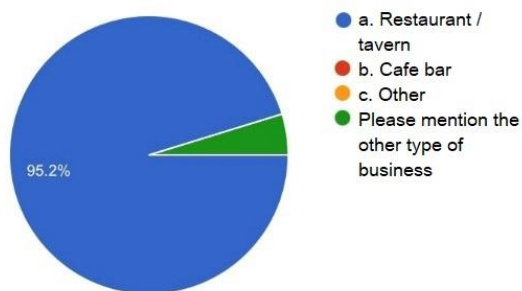
Where do the main customers of the business come from?



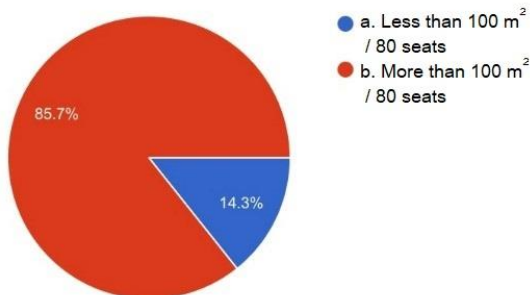
At the restaurants, a certain awareness of accessibility, that is, the movement of wheelchairs through the building itself, has been observed. Some of the restaurants pointed out that they have experience with organizing events right in their facilities, for which they also showed photos.

FOOD & BEVERAGE

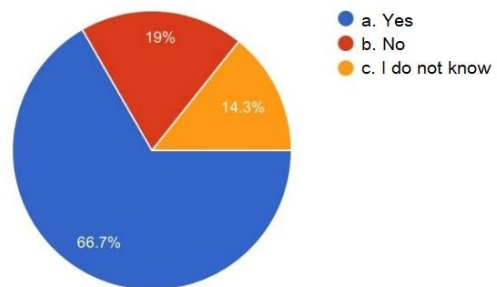
To which specific category of food and beverage sector does the business belong?



How many square meters is the business (total interior space) ?



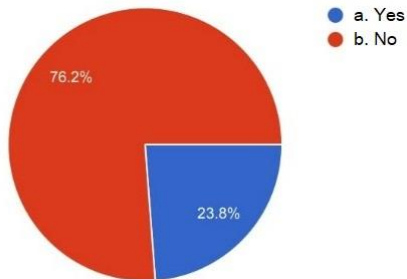
Did you take into account the accessibility of people with disabilities and reduced mobility (eg. the elderly) when placing the table seats in the business?



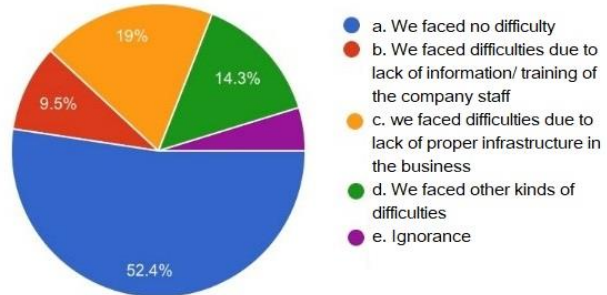
Most of them do not organize sports events, although they serve a certain number of people with disabilities.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES

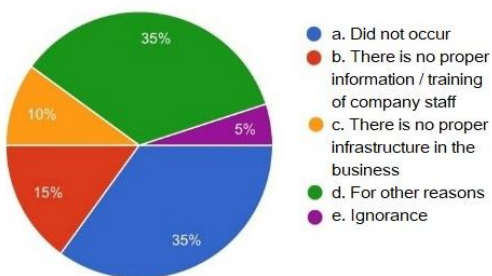
Have you ever organized sports activities or excursions for people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg. the elderly) ?



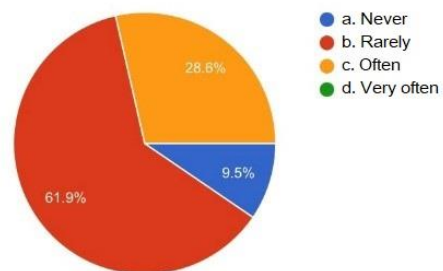
If so, what difficulties did you face?



If not, why have you never organized sports activities or excursions for people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg. the elderly) ?

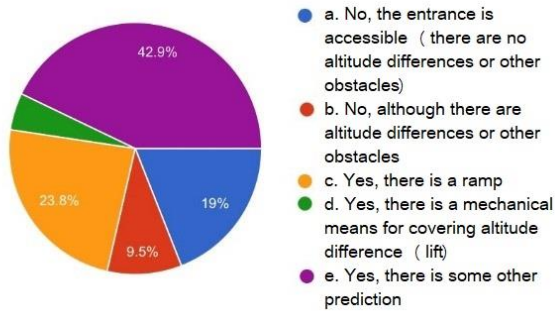


How often does the business serve people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg. the elderly) ?

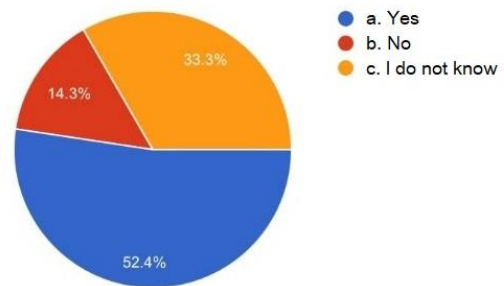


At the entrances of the facilities themselves, certain accessible entrances are noted, but they are not according to the standards everywhere. Half of the respondents believe that a person with a wheelchair can move freely in their capacity.

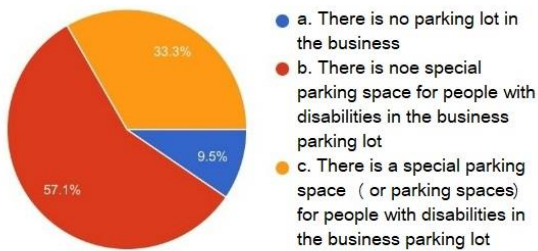
Is there a special provision for the accessibility of people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg. the elderly) at the entrance of your business?



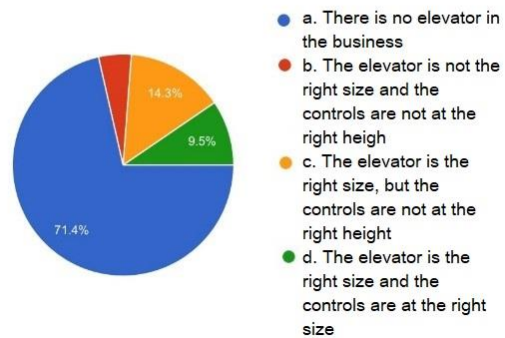
Do you think that a wheelchair can move freely inside the business?



Is there a special parking space (or parking spaces) for people with disabilities in the parking lot?

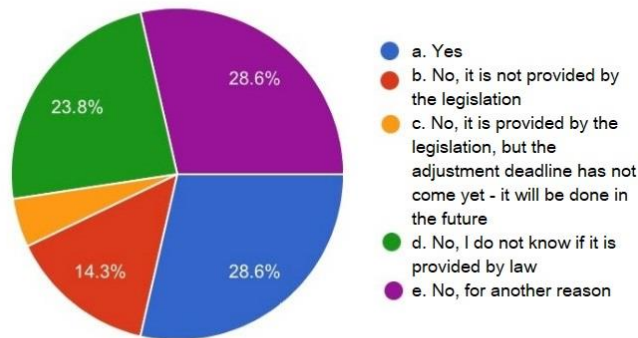


The elevator is accessible for people with disabilities (suitable size for wheelchair and controls outside and inside the cabin are at a suitable height: 0.90 - 1.20 m from the ground)



At some facilities, there is no parking at all, and at those that have parking, the parking spaces for people with disabilities are not marked. When it comes to elevators for people with disabilities, most of the facilities do not have an elevator, and even those that do, are not built according to standards.

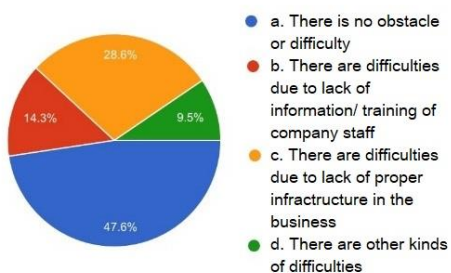
Is there a toilet for people with disabilities in the business?



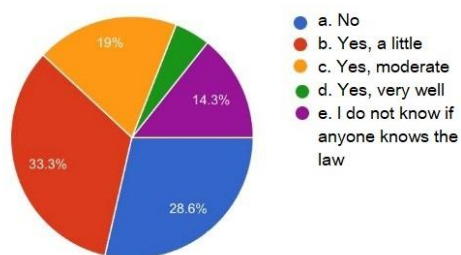
It is interesting the fact that a large part of the employees declared that they have a toilet for people with disabilities, but with an insight into the situation on the ground, this turned out to be incorrect. Others are not even aware of the legal obligation for that type of toilet.

In terms of the difficulties they face in serving people with reduced mobility, the answers are surprising that they have no difficulties, in 47%, and 14% have difficulties due to a lack of information. In a conversation with some of the employees in the facilities, small steps are mentioned that they implement to reduce the difficulties, but this is not enough for them. A small number of employees are aware or not at all aware of the legal obligations regarding accessibility.

What are the difficulties you face when serving people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg. the elderly) ?

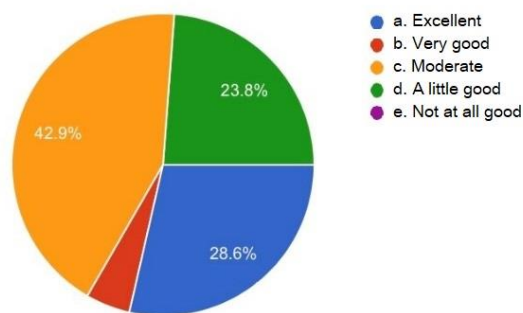


Are you or any other employee (or the owner) aware of the accessibility legislation for people with disabilities and reduced mobility?

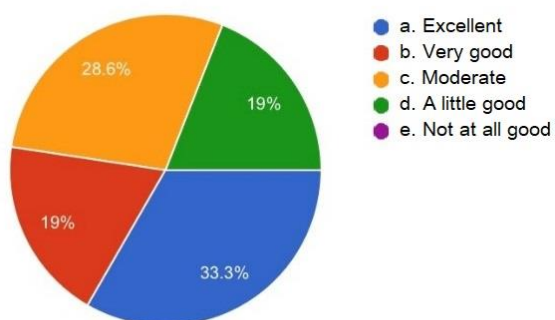


In the section that refers to the knowledge of the staff, different answers were obtained, starting from the opinion that their knowledge is moderate, with 42%, and none of them said that they do not have knowledge or that they do not have good experience. Even half of the respondents consider that they have an excellent and moderately positive experience with services for persons with disabilities.

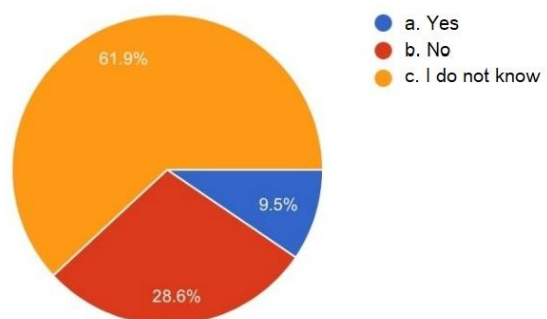
STAFF TRAINING IN SERVICING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
 How would you rate the knowledge of the staff regarding the management of people with disabilities or reduced mobility?



How would you rate the experience of the staff in managing people with disabilities or reduced mobility?

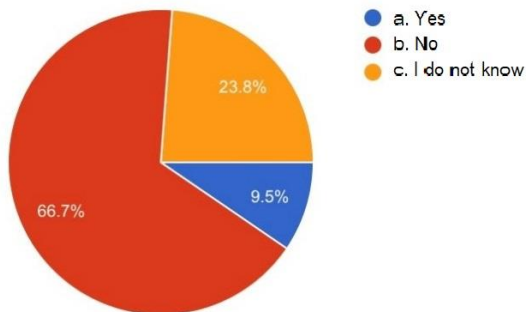


Is the business website user-friendly for the disabled (WCAG 2.0 protocol) ?

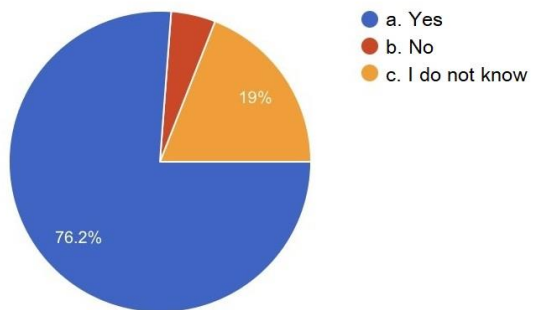


The websites of the facilities are inaccessible, which was also shown in the research, i.e. the ignorance of the standards for easy use by persons with disabilities.

Have you or any other employee (or the owner) attended a seminar or other educational / informational activity on accessibility for people with disabilities or reduced mobility?

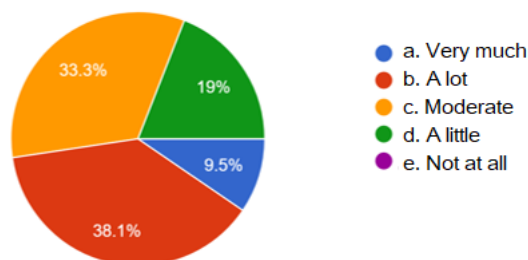


Do you or any other employee (or the owner) want to attend a seminar or other educational / informational activity on the accessibility of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in the future?



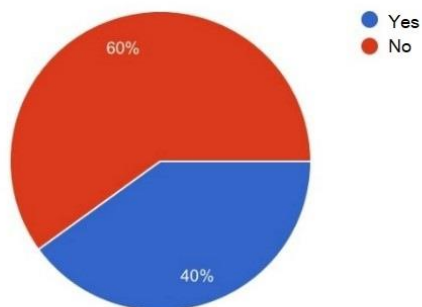
A very important point in the research is the fact that the employees in the facilities express a desire for training, a seminar, training for accessibility because most of them have not attended this type of training at all. It is also significant that a large part of the respondents express a desire to invest in their facilities, to make them more accessible for people with disabilities.

Would you like to invest money in the business to make it more accessible to people with disabilities or reduced mobility?

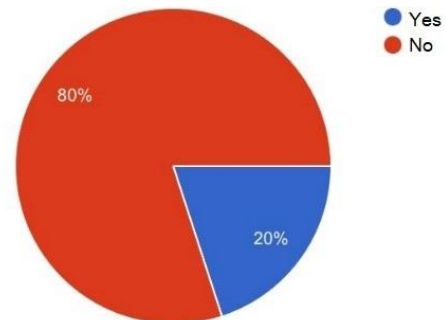


Results of the second questionnaire:

Do you have any information about international standards and legal requirements regarding persons with disabilities?



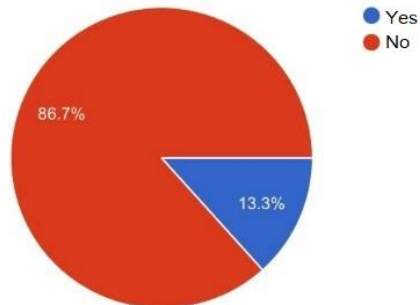
Have you implemented some of the mentioned standards in the scope of your work?



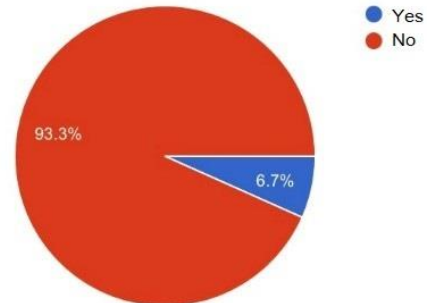
Regarding the results of the questionnaire on the accessibility of institutions, (which represents only a part of the investigated subjects), answers were received which, in combination with the interviews, meetings and field visits, gave a picture of what the situation is, that is, an assessment of the performance was carried out of the existing accessible services and capacities of the institutions. Namely, most of the institutions have not implemented accessibility standards and most of them have no information about them. Some of them only have an access ramp, up to a certain level of the building, some have a ramp without implemented standard dimensions, and some have no access at all. There are few institutions in the region that have provided accessible services for persons with disabilities or implemented legal obligations.

Regarding the issue of a special program dedicated to visitors, also a very small percentage of institutions, ie 13.3% declared that they have a special program. A small percentage have cooperation with people with disabilities as well as with special schools. These are mostly programs of a recreational nature, and two museums are dedicated not only to physical accessibility to the object, but also a program for visitors. For visually impaired people, a tactile experience (through tactile copies, tactile pictures and braille) and audio narrations, videos in sign language, is available in the Museum in Bitola.

Do you have a special program for the visitors with disabilities?



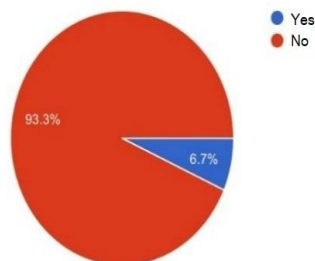
Is your content adjusted for persons with hearing or speech impairment?



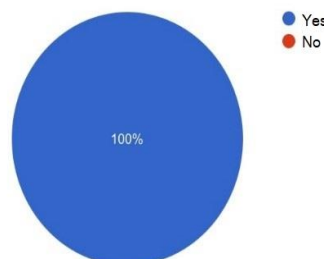
Unfortunately, almost no institution is completely accessible to people with hearing, speech and voice impairment, although in some institutions it is possible for a small part of their contents. E.g. recently, the Theater from Bitola prepared a play in sign language.

In the institutions, an extremely small number of employees who are trained to work with people with disabilities has been observed, and at the same time, a huge interest has been shown by managers and employees for better information, as well as the implementation of laws and standards in order to enable accessibility.

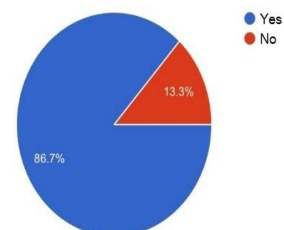
Are your employees trained to work with persons with disabilities?



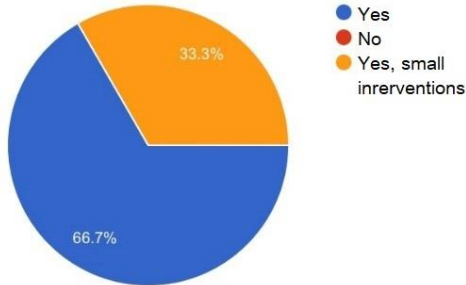
Would you like to get more information about services for persons with disabilities, according to legal obligations and standards?



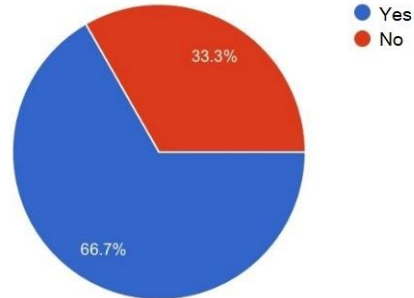
Is there any interest from the manager and the employees for better information about implementation of the law and the standards regarding accessibility?



Are you prepared to make interventions in favor of persons with disabilities?



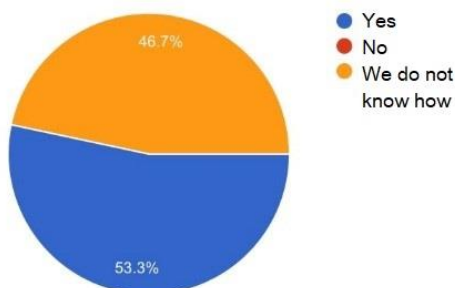
Do you have visits from persons with disabilities?



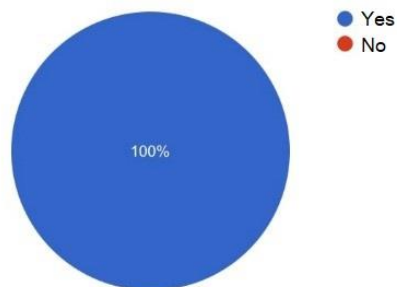
Most of the managers of the institutions are ready to make interventions in the space or in the contents, in order to make them more accessible for people with disabilities. It was concluded that sometimes they depend on financial resources, but for any change, a good intention is also needed. Most of them declared that they have visits from people with disabilities.

Rarely any institution has an accessible website or publishes in the media, social networks, etc. about its activities related to work with persons with disabilities.

Would you implement Universal Design in the next period?



Would you like to be recognized as an accessible and socially responsible institution in the future?



Although the situation on the ground is not good, it is noteworthy that 100% of the respondents declared that in the future they would like to be recognized as an accessible and socially responsible company. Of course, it is of great importance to implement a universal design that would make them accessible to people with different types of disabilities.

General remarks about some municipalities from the field visit:

A general assessment was also made of the streets, sidewalks, parks, where minimal intervention in terms of accessibility was observed, that is, it can be concluded that the condition is not good. The traffic lights do not have sound signaling, there are a large number of unmarked obstacles in the movement. The bus stations are partially accessible, as is the train station in Bitola, which has a ramp, but access to the platforms is difficult.

Notes on Krushevo

The brightest point in Krushevo in terms of accessibility is the Toshe Proeski Memorial Museum, which is a new building and therefore all laws and regulations are respected and implemented. A large number of large hotels are partially accessible, that is, some of their contents are accessible. Some of them are. In the last few years, Krushevo has seen growth in tourism, especially in adventure and cultural tourism. The very position and configuration of the city is quite specific and can be said to be inaccessible. A number of attractions such as museums and galleries are inaccessible. Accommodation facilities in private houses are inaccessible due to their specific interiors (narrow entrances, steep stairs...).

Some of the facilities are declared as accessible facilities, but it turned out on the spot that they are not. Recommended for recreation is the lake, which has paths for movement, and outdoor recreation facilities have been placed near it. The cable car, which is in the city, has a lot of stairs and is therefore unsuitable for people with physical disabilities. The Mechkin

Kamen (Bear's Stone) monument, which is an attraction from a historical point of view, is accessible by car or bus. The streets are mostly cobbled, and only a small number of restaurants have accessible ramps.

Notes on Prilep

In Prilep, cultural tourism mostly dominates due to the large number of unique churches, monasteries, museums and galleries, which are very little or partially accessible. Accommodation facilities are also partially accessible, that is, there are very few hotels that can be recommended for restaurant services but not for accommodation. Museums and galleries are partially accessible, that is, to a certain degree/level. Example: The museum in Prilep is only accessible with a ramp only up to the first level, the Tobacco Museum is not accessible at all, etc.

Notes on Bitola

Bitola is the largest city in the region and thus offers more opportunities for people with disabilities. Some of the most famous attractions such as the Archaeological Site of Heraclea and the Museum are partially accessible. Namely, as of last year, the location has an elevator and a ramp to the theater, that is, the auditorium. The Museum provides accessibility with a crawler, elevator and multi-sensory programs for various disabilities. Pelister is accessible by road, but the accommodation facilities are not accessible for people with physical disabilities. Other cultural institutions, such as the Theater, the Cultural Center, the Magaza, the Officers' Home... have architectural barriers. The new Manaki Cinema has a trolley path to the theater itself. None of the attractions in Bitola have adapted toilets for people with disabilities according to legal regulations.

Notes on Demir Hisar

In Demir Hisar, which is quite a picturesque area, you can take a walk and visit some important churches, monasteries, the Memorial Museum in the village Smilevo, but some of them are still not accessible due to architectural barriers, i.e. stairs. There are very few accommodation facilities and restaurants, which are also not accessible.

Notes on Resen

There are several attractions in the city itself, such as the Saray (with an accessible ramp to the first level) and the Memorial House of Tatarchevi (with steep stairs inside), and in the surrounding areas along Lake Prespa there are several inaccessible natural attractions. The entire coast has several points of interest but also with little or no accessibility. The beaches, which are in an unenviable position due to the retreat of the water, are also inaccessible. Some of the restaurants and the few accommodation facilities are partially accessible and do not have adapted toilets.

Notes on Dolneni, Krivogashtani, Mogila, Novaci

In these four municipalities, no accommodation facilities are registered, smaller catering facilities are registered, although it can be said that some of them have certain attractions. In recent years, traditional lunches have been organized in a family atmosphere, especially in Mariovo, in the village of Zovich, where there is satisfactory accessibility.

Conclusions and recommendations:

Conclusions and recommendations from the analysis and assessment of the existing available tourist services and facilities in the Pelagonian region for the current situation with the implementation of the legal requirements for accessibility of persons with disabilities in the Pelagonia region as a pilot region, and the current situation in the Pelagonia region as a pilot region, with provision of specific tourist services for persons with disabilities.

- Almost all managers, employees and owners have not implemented legal requirements for providing specific tourist services, that is, a small number of employees are aware or are not at all aware of the legal obligations regarding accessibility;

- Almost all accommodation facilities do not have rooms for accommodating people with disabilities (with the exception of a few hotels that usually have one room each);

- At the entrances of the buildings themselves, there are certain accessible entrances, but they are not everywhere according to the standards, despite the fact that inside there is space for movement with a wheelchair;
- Most of the facilities do not have an elevator, even in some that do, there are deviations from the prescribed dimensions;
- At restaurants, a certain awareness of accessibility has been observed, that is, the movement of wheelchairs through the building itself is enabled;
- Most of them do not organize sports events even though they are attended by a certain number of people with disabilities;
- Some facilities do not have parking at all, and in those that have parking, parking spaces for persons with disabilities are not marked or are very rare;
- Almost all facilities do not have a toilet and do not know about the legal obligation;
- In a conversation with some of the facilities, small steps are mentioned that they implement to reduce the difficulties, but this is not enough for them;
- The websites of the facilities are inaccessible, which was also shown in the research, i.e. the ignorance of the standards for ease of use by persons with disabilities and rarely does any institution publish in the media, social networks, etc. about its activities related to work with persons with disabilities.
- The employees in the facilities express a desire for training, seminars, accessibility training because most of them have never attended this type of training. It is also significant that a large part of the respondents express a desire to invest in their facilities, to make them more accessible for people with disabilities.
- According to the questionnaire on the accessibility of institutions, interviews, meetings and field visits gave a picture of what the situation is, that is, an assessment of the performance of the existing access services and capacities of the institutions was carried out. Namely, most of the institutions have not implemented accessibility standards, and most of them have no information about them. Some of them only have an access ramp,

up to a certain level, some have a ramp with no standard dimensions implemented, and some have no access at all. There are few institutions in the region that have provided accessible services for persons with disabilities or implemented legal obligations;

- Regarding a special program dedicated to visitors, also a very small percentage of institutions have it and a small percentage have cooperation with persons with disabilities as well as with special schools. These are mostly programs of a recreational nature, and two museums are dedicated not only to physical accessibility to the object, but also a program for visitors. For the visually impaired, a tactile experience (through tactile copies, tactile images and braille) and audio narrations, videos in sign language, is provided in the museum in Bitola, and excellent physical accessibility in the Toshe Proeski Memorial Museum;

- Almost no institution is completely accessible for people with hearing, speech and voice impairment, although in some institutions it is possible for a small part of their contents.

Example: The theater from Bitola has a play in sign language.

- In the institutions, an extremely small number of employees who are trained to work with people with disabilities has been observed, and at the same time, great interest has been shown by managers and employees for better information, as well as the implementation of laws and standards in order to enable accessibility;

- Most of the heads of the institutions are ready to make interventions in the space or in the contents, in order to make them more accessible for people with disabilities;

- Tourist agencies do not have experience in organizing tours intended for people with disabilities, but they cite the poor state of cultural and natural attractions, that is, the inaccessible infrastructure, as the reason. From the information received, there is no Tourist Information Center functioning in any municipality;

- Although the situation on the ground is not good, it is noteworthy that 100% of the respondents declared that in the future they would like to be recognized as an accessible and socially responsible institution.

Recommendations:

- To organize trainings for employees in tourist facilities and institutions on the subject of accessibility with an emphasis on legal obligations;
- To follow European and good practices for accessible tourism from all over the World;
- To make a connection with the Greek partners in the direction of improving cross-border accessible tourism and to create a common accessible route, competitive in international frameworks;
- To encourage travel agencies and tour operators to network with agencies working on accessible tourism;
- To motivate the capacities to become accessible, that is to show the benefit for their businesses;
- To insist on the implementation of universal design in all facilities, which would achieve accessibility for people with different types of disabilities;
- To implement innovative technologies for accessibility, safety in the travel of persons with disabilities;
- The most important thing, in addition to consulting experts on accessibility, is to contact the Associations of persons with disabilities in the following actions and activities according to their motto "Nothing for us - without us"!
- Annex 1 - Photos
- Annex 2 - Questionnaires
- Annex 3 - References

***The assessment was made in March, April and May, June 2022. The photos were taken with a personal mobile phone in order to show the current situation on the ground up close.**



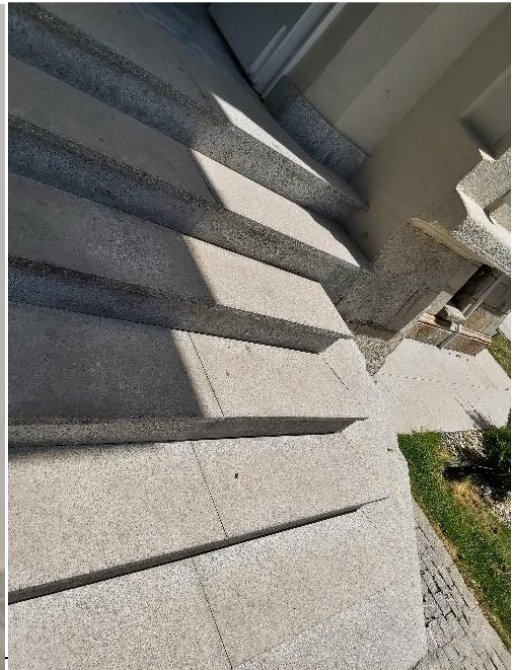
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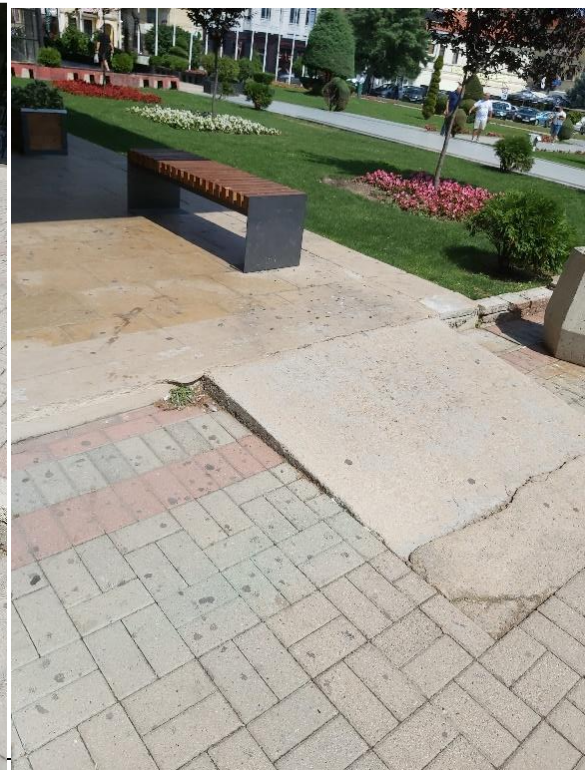
Irena Ruzhin, PhD

ANNEX 1

Photographies

BITOLA



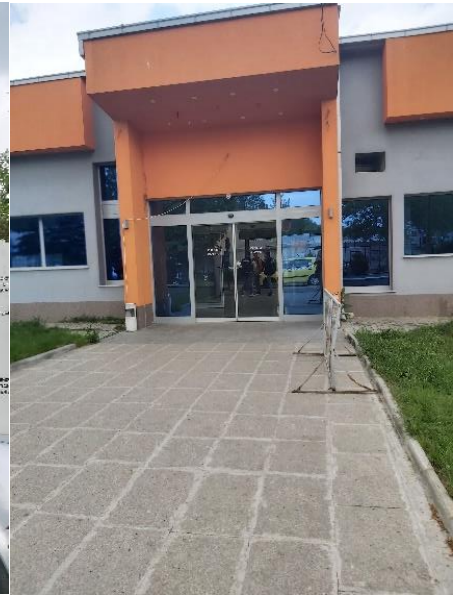


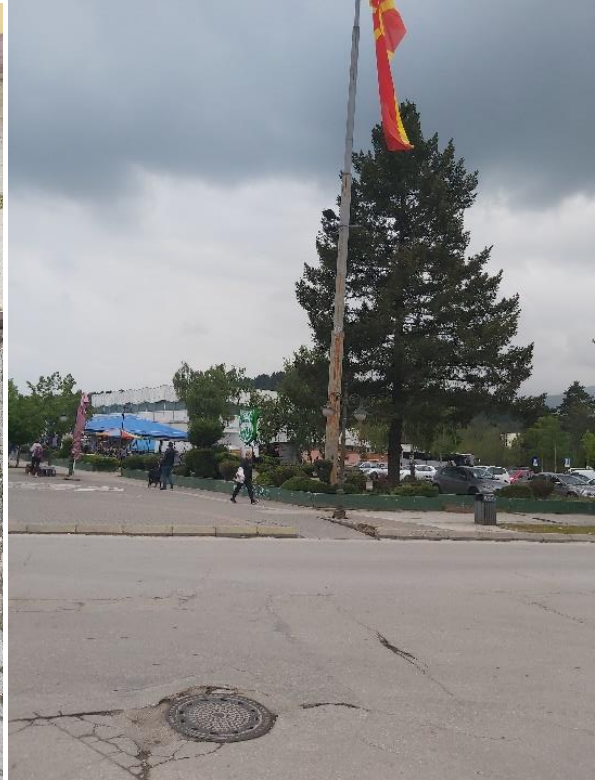


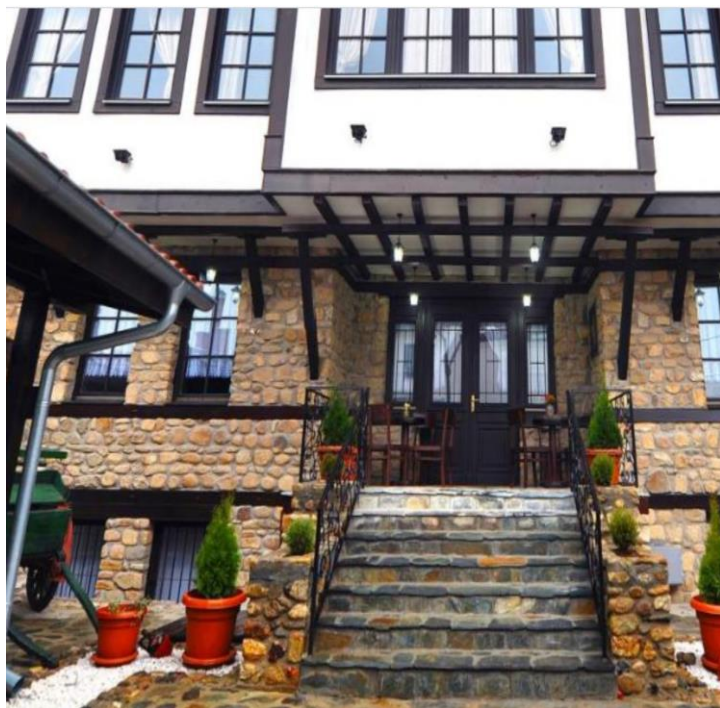


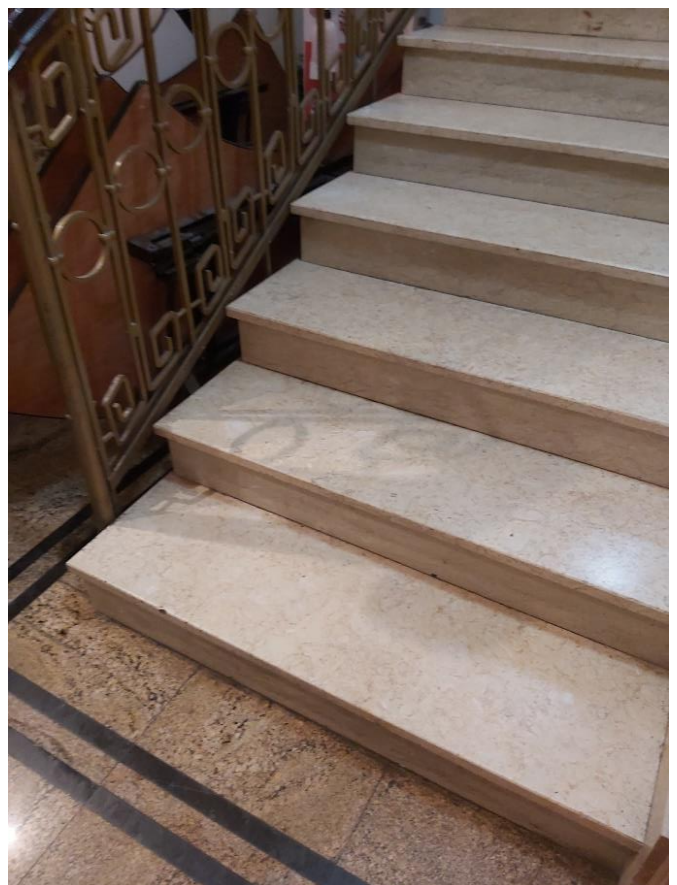








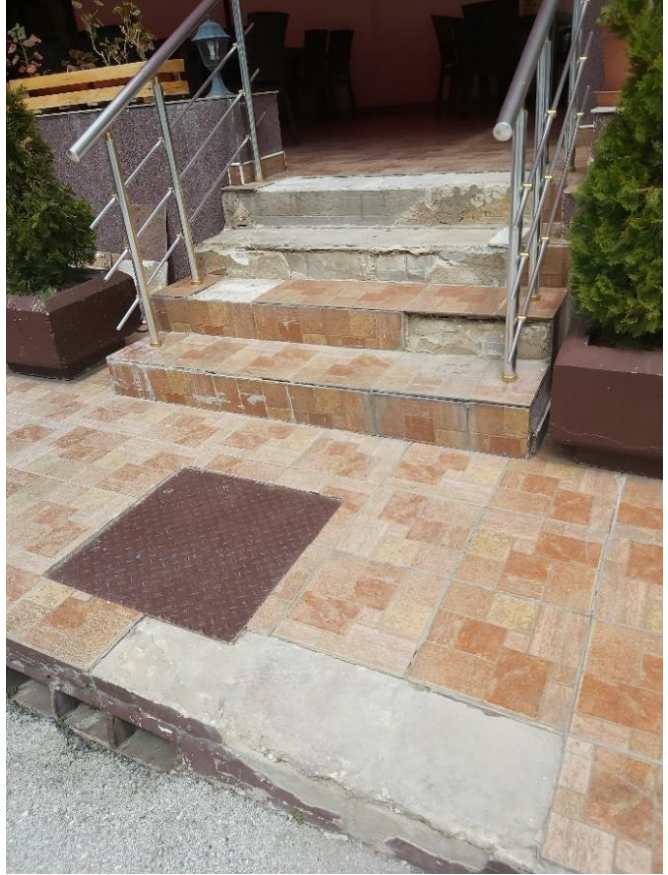


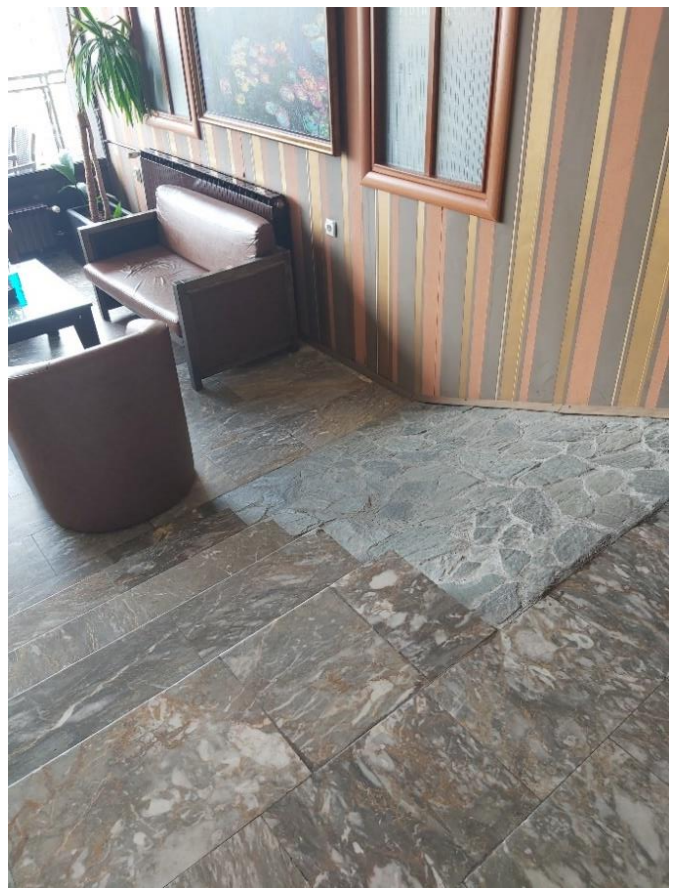


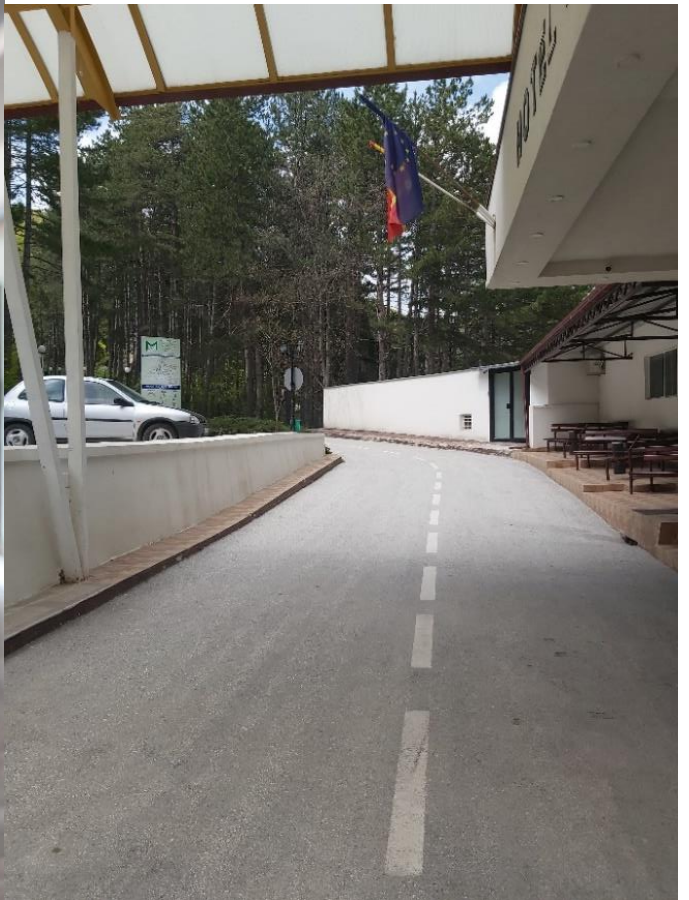


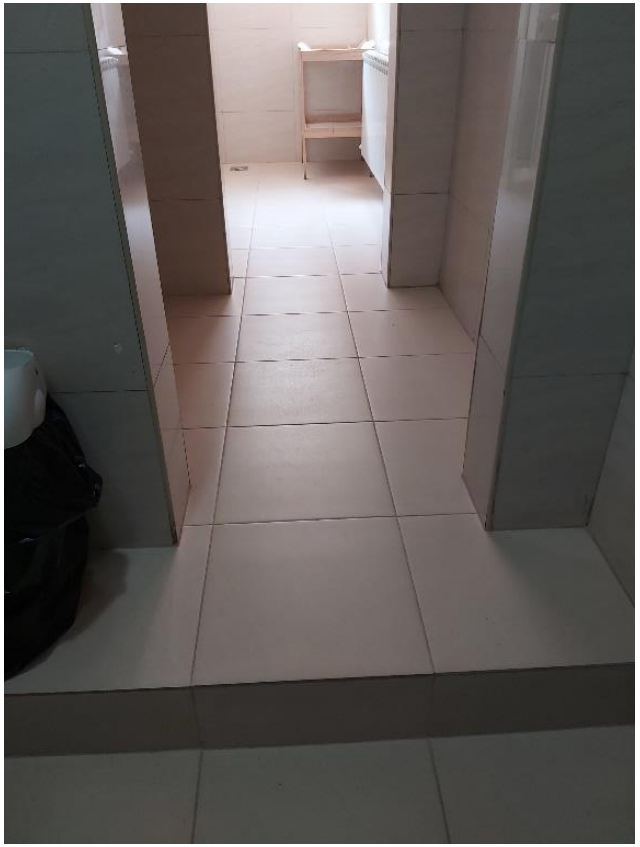


KRUSHEVO





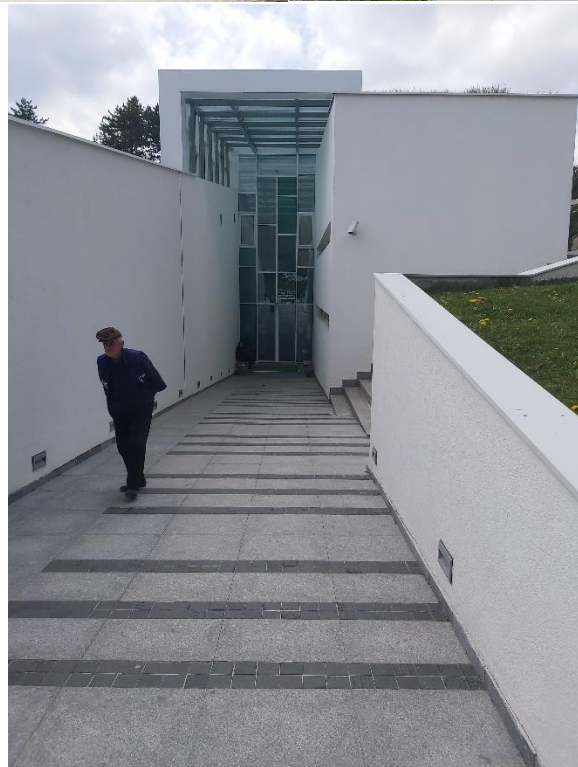
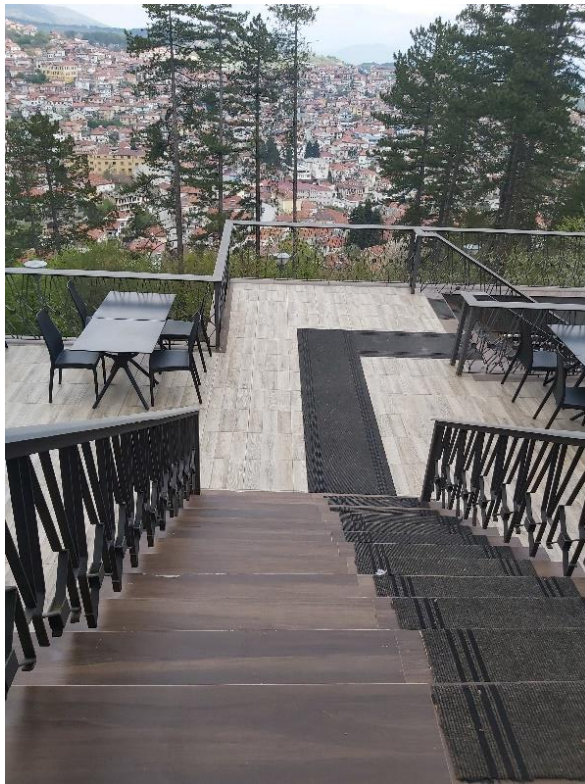












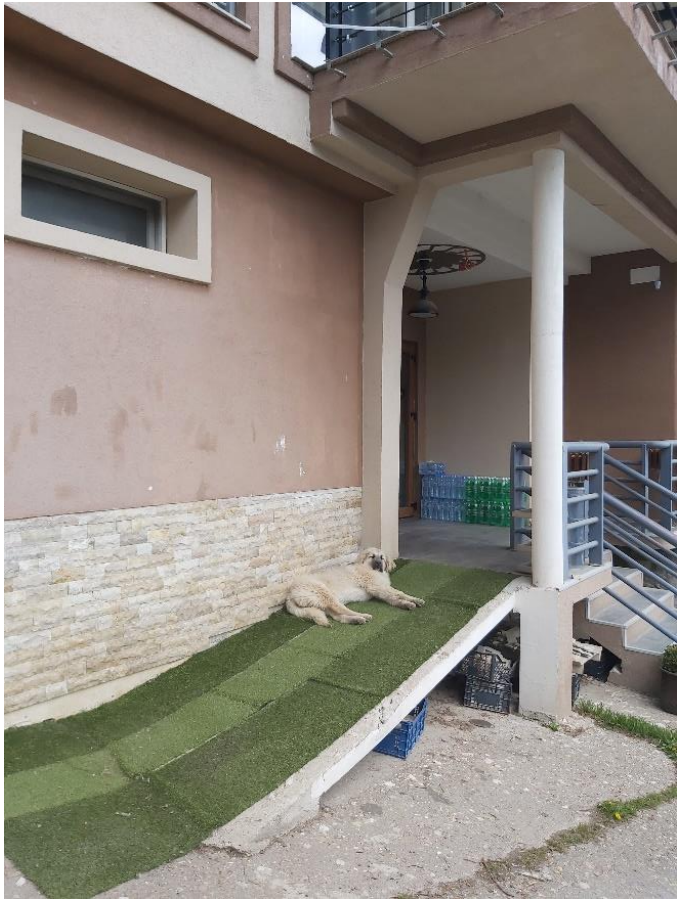


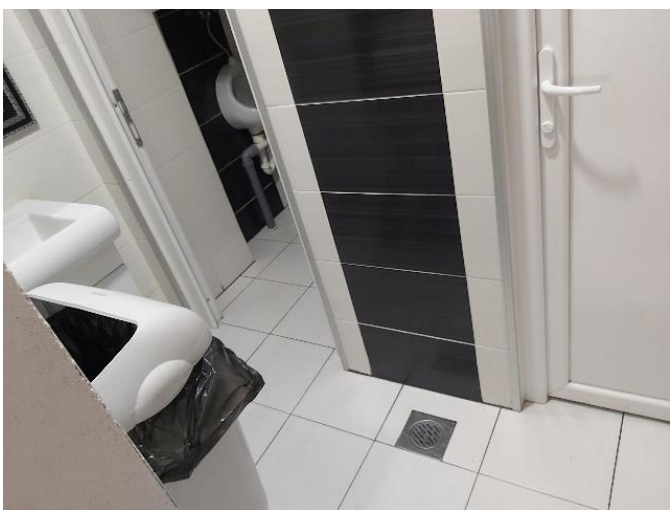
























DEMIR HISAR



PRILEP























RESEN / PRESPA











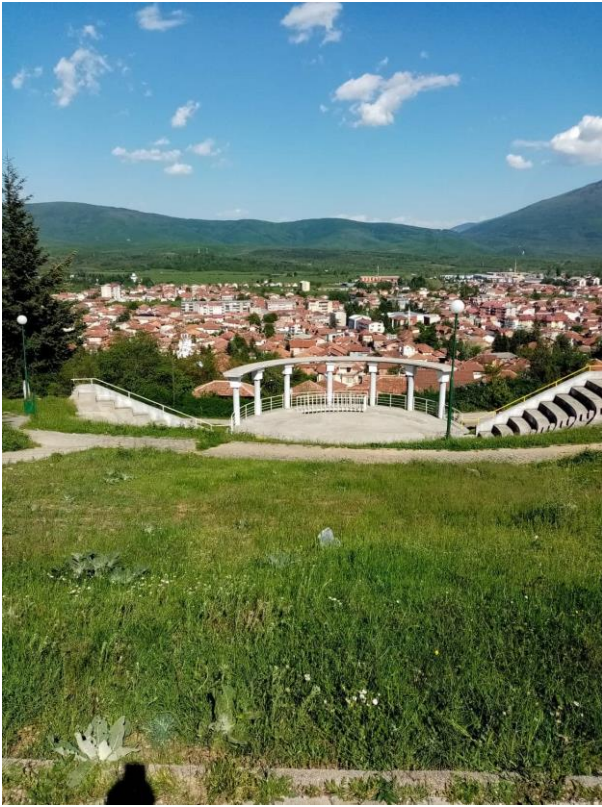


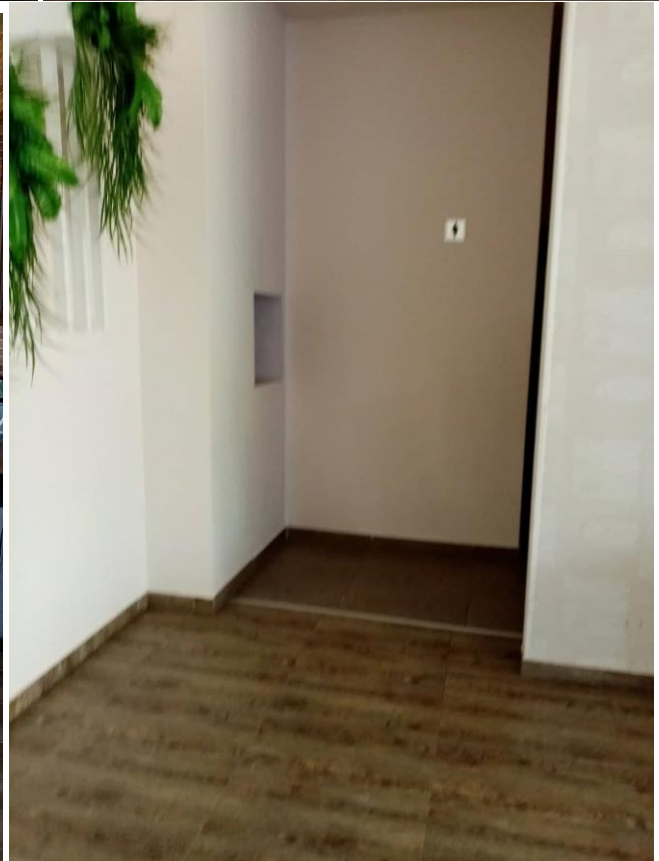
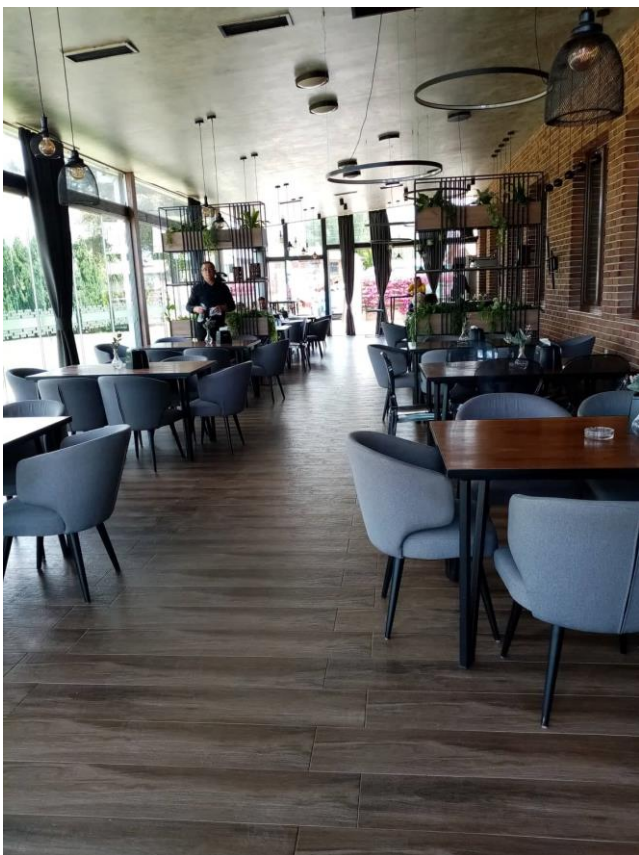


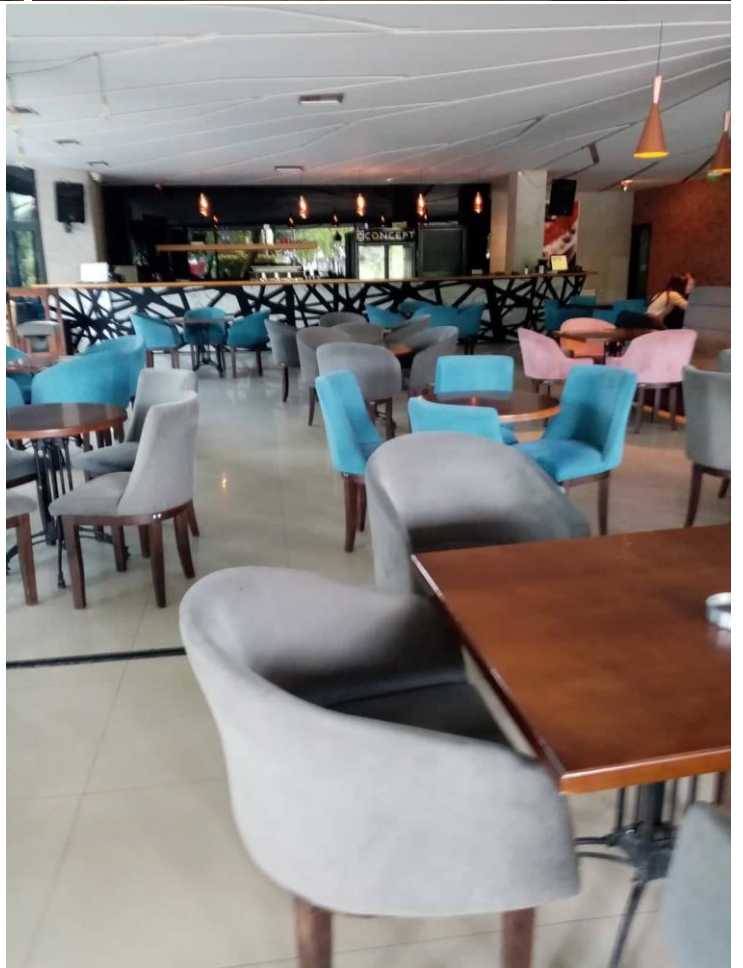
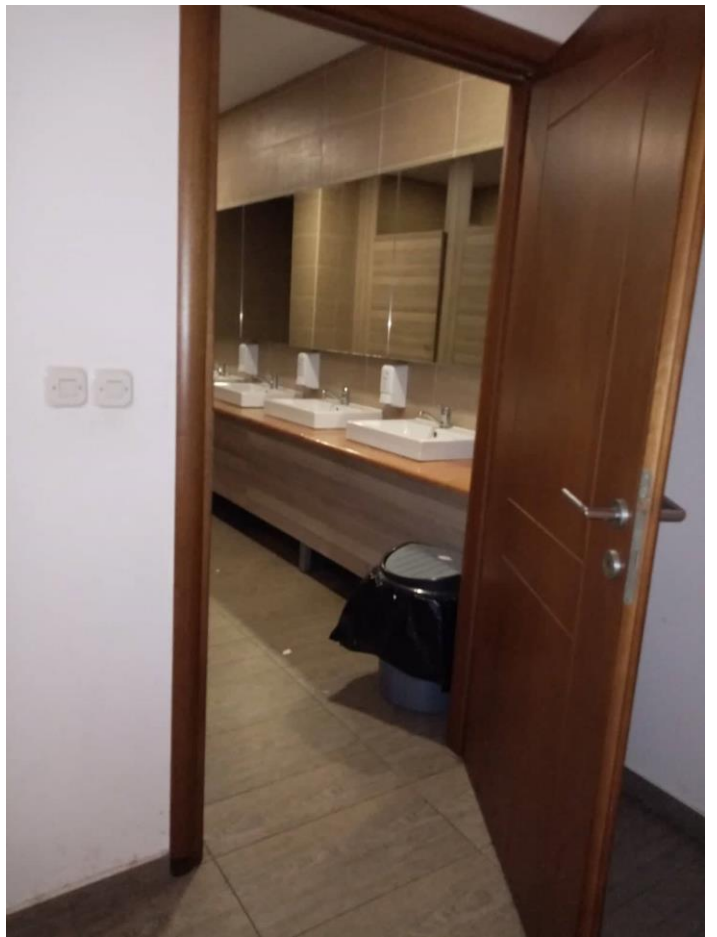


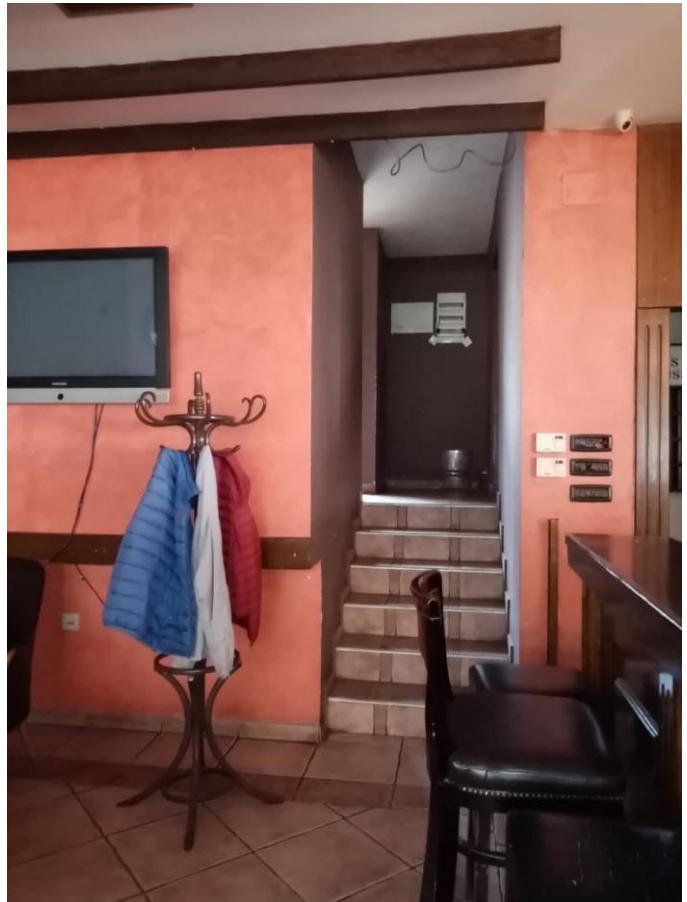


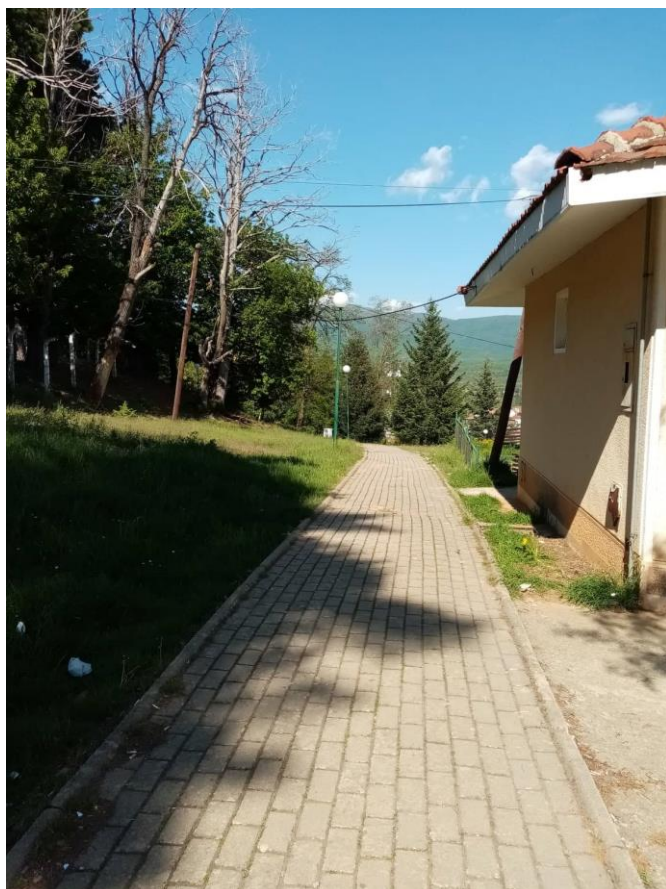
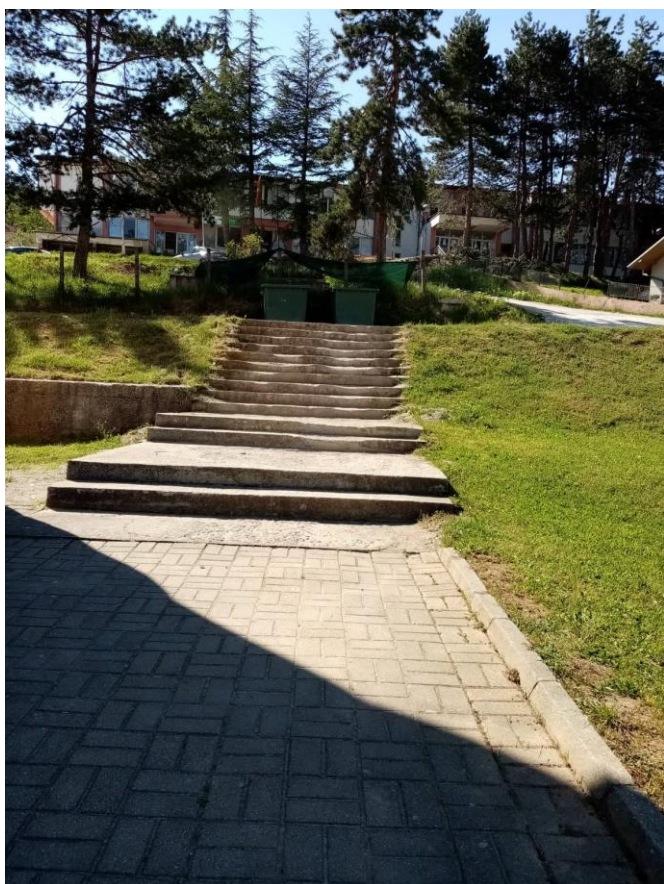


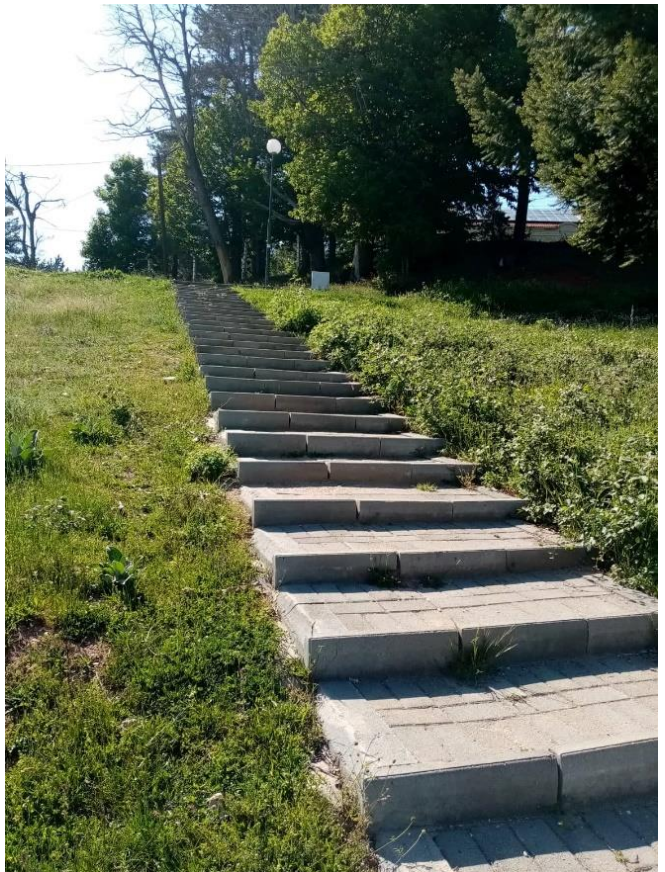
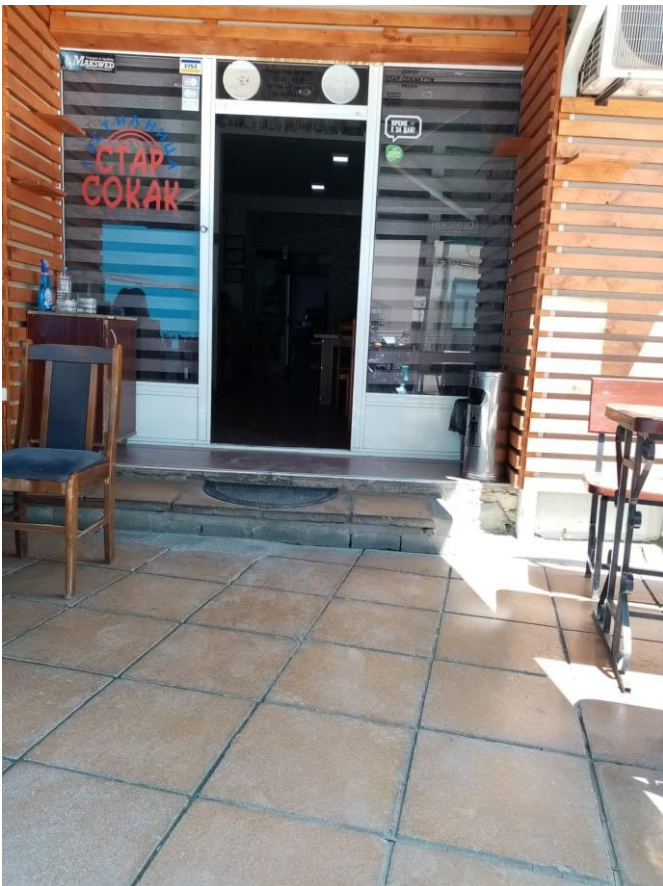
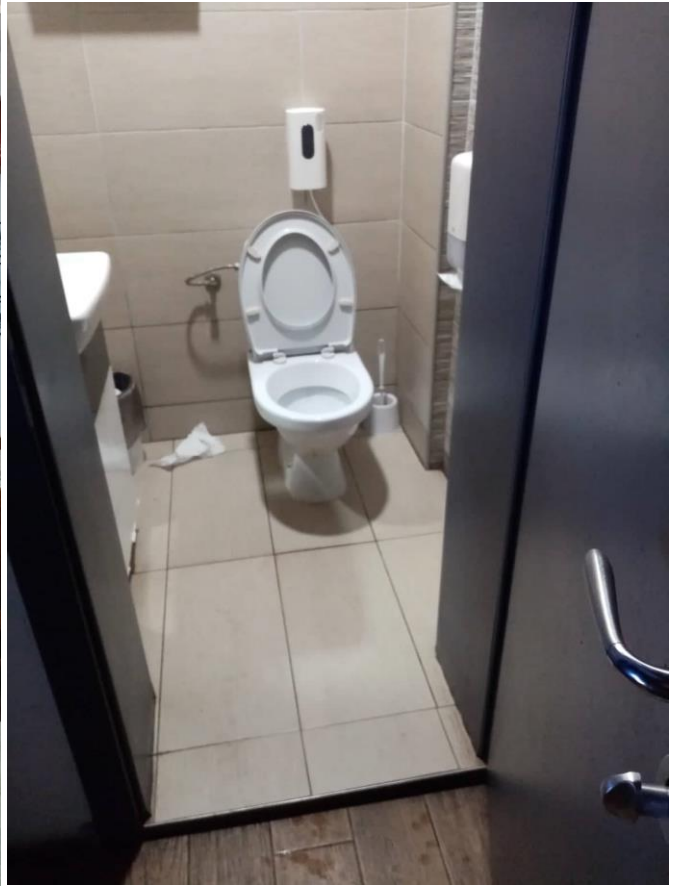


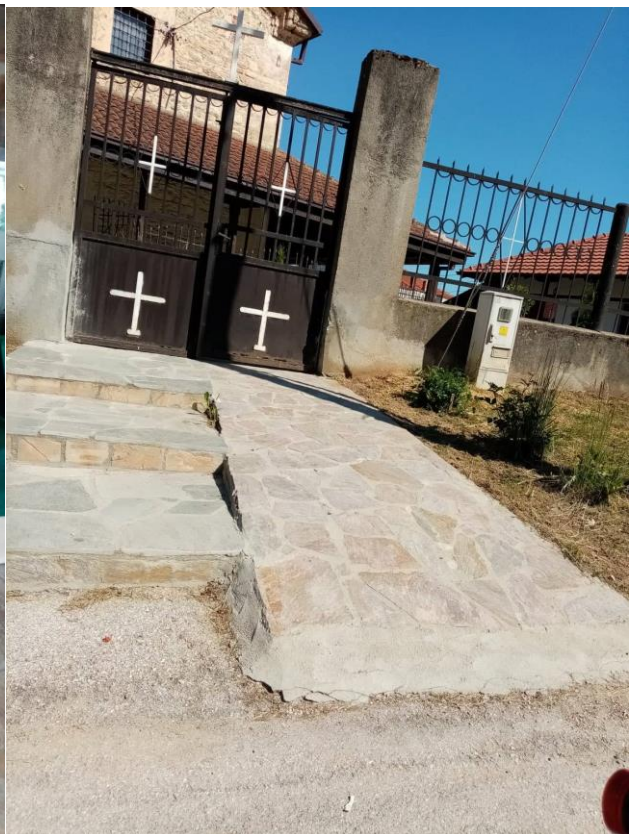
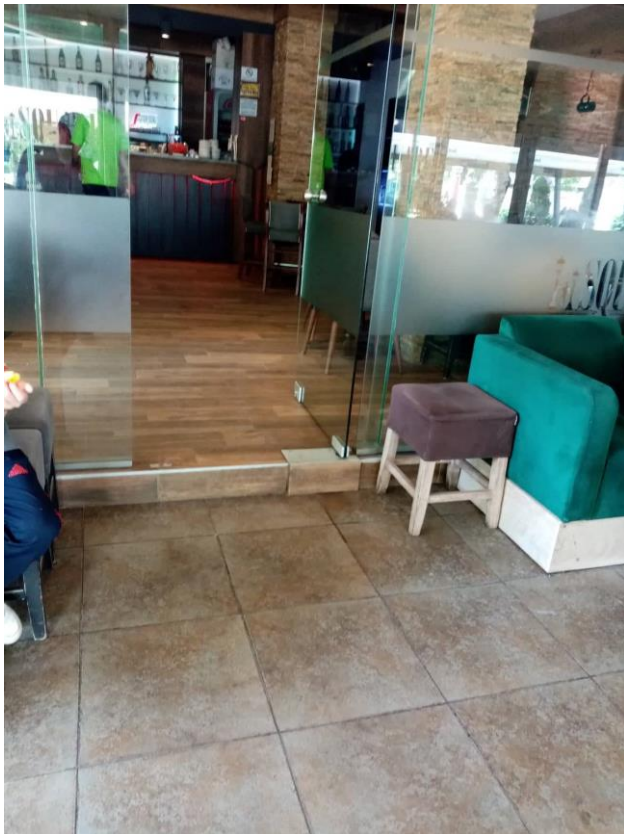


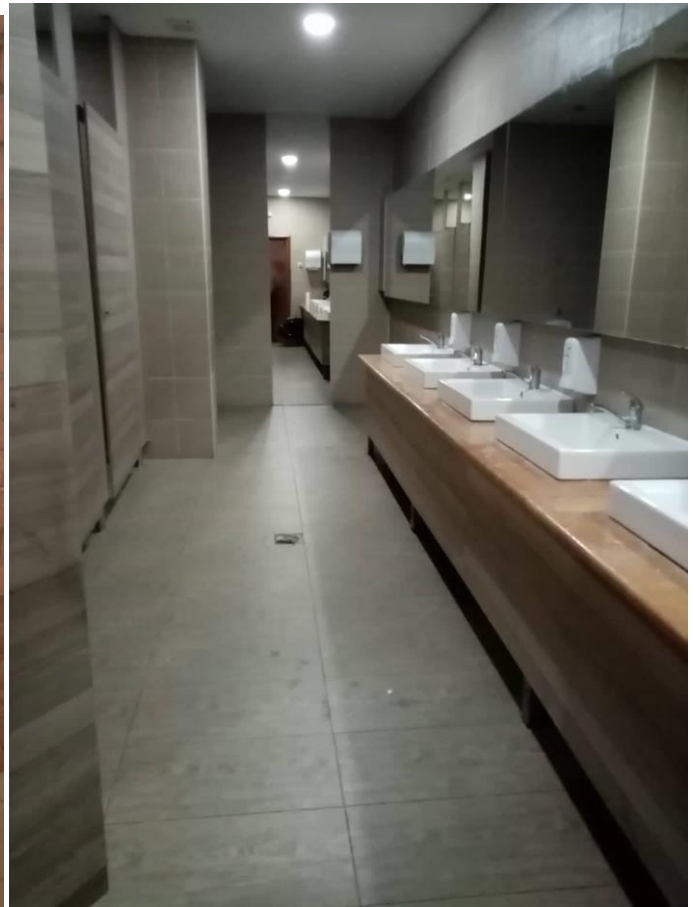
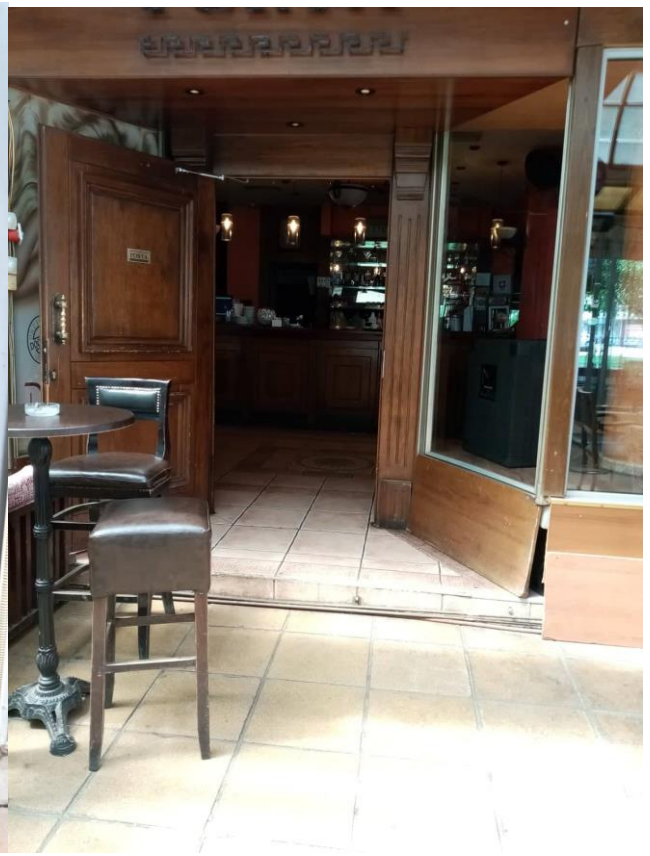












ANNEX 2 - Questionnaires



Анкета за проценка на потешкотиите и пречките за обезбедување на пристапни услуги за посетители со попреченост

Целта на ова истражување е проценка на изведбата на постоечките пристапни услуги и капацитети на институциите во пограничниот регион на Грција-Северна Македонија во рамките на проектот „Алтернативно туристичко искуство – Алтернативно патување“, со акроним „АЛТЕР ТРИП“, финансиран од ИНТЕРРЕГ ИПА Програмата за прекугранична соработка „Грција-Република Северна Македонија 2014-2020“, партнер- Здружението на лица со телесен инвалидитет на Битола, Демир Хисар и Ресен – МОБИЛНОСТ БИТОЛА, Битола

Do you have any information about international standards and legal requirements regarding persons with disabilities? (UN, EU, ISO standards, guidelines, rulebooks...)

 Yes
 No
[Add option](#)

or

[Add "Other"](#)

Required

Do you have any information regarding the legal obligations and standards regarding disability in North Macedonia?

*

 Yes
 No

Have you implemented some of the mentioned standards during your work?

*

 Yes

No

If you answered yes, please mention which ones:

Short-answer text

Have you provided physical accessibility for persons with disabilities?

*

Parking/

Lift/

Ramp/

Accessible pa

Handrails/

Accessible to

Other urban e

None of the a

Do you have special program for visitors with disabilities?

Yes

No

If you have special program, please explain.

Long-answer text

Is your content adjusted for persons with visual impairment?

*

Yes

No

If you have, please explain how is the content adjusted for persons with visual impairment:

*

Braille/

Tactile maps/

Tactile image

Tactile object

Appropriate c

None of the a

Is your content adjusted for persons with hearing, speech and voice impairment?

*

Yes

No

Please explain in what way is your content adjusted:

*

Audio guide/

Videos in sign

Inclusive prog

Trained staff &

App/

QR codes

None of the a

Are your employees trained to work with persons with disabilities?

*

Yes

No

Would you like to get more information about services for persons with disabilities, according to legal obligations and standards?

*

Yes

No

Is there interest from the manager and the employees for better information about the implementation of the laws and standards regarding accessibility?

*

Yes

No

Are you prepared to make interventions in favor of persons with disabilities?

*

Yes

No

Yes, small inte

Do you have visitors with disabilities?

*

Yes

No

Do you share information about your work with persons with disabilities?

*

Accessible w

In the media

Social network

We do not share

Would you implement Universal Design in the next period?

*

Yes

No

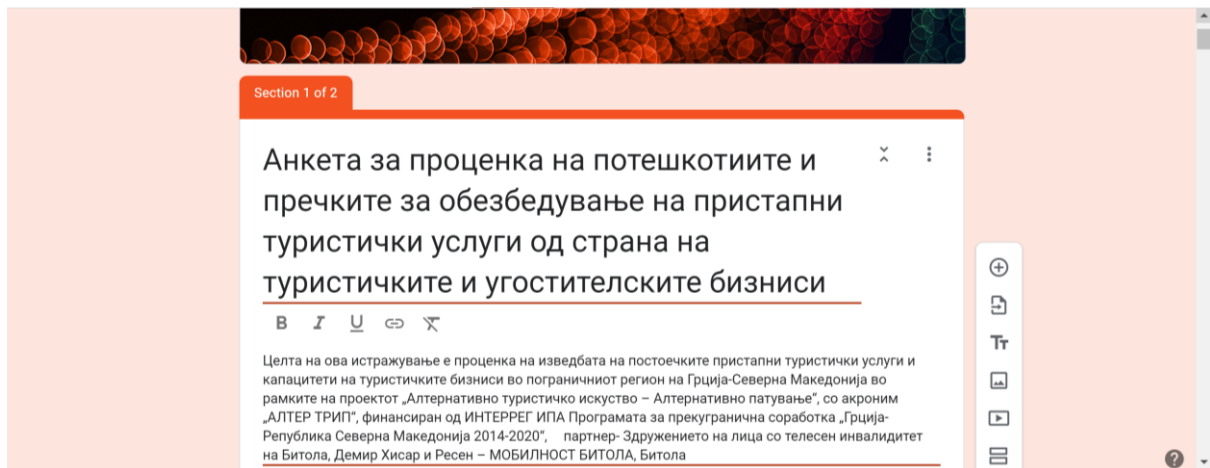
We don't know

Do you want to be recognized as an accessible and socially responsible institution in the future?

*

Yes

No



In which Regional Unit / Municipality is the business located?

Checkboxes

Bitola
Demir Hisar
Dolneni
Krivogashtani
Krushevo
Mogila
Novaci
Prilep
Resen

Add option

or

[Add "Other"](#)

Required

How many employees does the business have?

*

a. Less than 5
b. From 5 to 10
c. From 11 to 50
d. More than 50

How many years has the business been operating?

*

- a. Less than 5
- b. From 5 to 10
- c. From 11 to 20
- d. More than 20

Where do the main customers of the business come from?

*

- a. From North
- b. From abroad
- c. Both from local and abroad
- d. Other

To which category does the business belong?

*

- a. Accommodation
- b. Food & beverage
- c. Sports activities
- d. Combination
- e. Other

ACCOMMODATION

To which category does the accommodation belong?

- a. 1 *
- b. 2 **
- c. 3 ***
- d. 4 ****
- e. 5 *****
- f. To none

What is the capacity of the accommodation?

- a. less than 10
- b. 10 to 20 rooms
- c. 21 to 30 rooms
- d. 31 to 40 rooms
- e. More than 40

How many rooms for disabled people does the accommodation have?

- a. None
- b. 1 room
- c. 2 rooms
- d. 3 rooms
- e. 4 rooms
- f. More than 4

FOOD & BEVERAGE

To which specific category of food and beverage sector does the business belong?

- a. Restaurant
- b. Cafe bar
- c. Other
- Please mention

How many square meters is the business (total interior space)?
(Note: over 100sqm / 80 seats obligation for disabled toilets)

*

- a. Less than 100
- b. More than 100

Did you take into account the accessibility of people with disabilities and reduced mobility (eg the elderly) when placing the table seats in the business?

*

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Have you ever organized sports activities or excursions for people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg the elderly)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If so, what difficulties did you face? (you can choose as many answers as you like)

*

- a. We faced r
- b. We faced c
- c. We faced d
- d. We faced c

If not, why have you never organized sports activities or excursions for people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg the elderly)? (you can choose as many answers as you like)

- a. Did not occur
- b. There is no
- c. There is no
- d. For other reasons

After section 1

Continue to next section

Section 2 of 2

ACCESSIBILITY – DISABLED SERVICES

Description (optional)

How often does the business serve people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg the elderly)?

*

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Often
- d. Very often

Is there a special provision for the accessibility of people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg the elderly) at the entrance of the business?

*

- a. No, the entrance is not accessible
- b. No, although there are some measures
- c. Yes, there is a ramp
- d. Yes, there is a ramp and a lift
- e. Yes, there is a ramp and a lift

Do you think that a wheelchair can move freely inside the business?

*

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

Is there a special parking space (or parking spaces) for people with disabilities in the business parking lot?

*

- a. There is no
- b. There is no
- c. There is a s

The elevator is accessible for people with disabilities (suitable size for wheelchair and controls outside and inside the cabin are at a suitable height: 0.90 - 1.20 m from the ground)

*

- a. There is no
- b. The elevatc
- c. The elevatc
- d. The elevatc

Is there a toilet for people with disabilities in the business?

*

- a. Yes
- b. No, it is not
- c. No, it is pro
- d. No, I do not
- e. No, for ano

What are the difficulties you face when serving people with disabilities or reduced mobility (eg the elderly) (you can choose as many answers as you like)

*

- a. There is no
- b. There are c
- c. There are c
- d. There are c

Please mention other types of difficulties:

Short-answer text

Are you or any other employee (or the owner) aware of the accessibility legislation for people with disabilities and reduced mobility?

- a. No
- b. Yes, a little
- c. Yes, moder
- d. Yes, very w
- e. I do not kno

Is the business website user-friendly for the disabled (wcag 2.0 protocol)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

STAFF TRAINING IN SERVICING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

How would you rate the knowledge of the staff regarding the management of people with disabilities or reduced mobility?

*

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Moderate
- d. A little good
- e. Not at all good

How would you rate the experience of the staff in managing people with disabilities or reduced mobility?

*

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Moderate
- d. A little good
- e. Not at all good

Have you or any other employee (or the owner) attended a seminar or other educational / informational activity on accessibility for people with disabilities and reduced mobility?

*

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

Do you or any other employee (or the owner) want to attend a seminar or other educational / informational activity on the accessibility of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in the future?

*

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

Would you like to invest money in the business to make it more accessible to people with disabilities or reduced mobility?

*

? Very much

b. A lot

c. Moderate

d. A little

e. Not at all

Annex 3

Useful Links:

1. <https://www.unwto.org/>
2. www.predif.org
3. www.diversci.eu
4. <http://portalinvalidnosti.net>
5. <https://www.disabled-world.com>
6. <https://www.accessibletourism.org/>
7. <https://www.disabled-world.com>
8. [ISO - Accessibility for all](#)
9. [ISO - Developing sustainably](#)
10. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>
11. [Persons with disabilities - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)
12. <https://www.age-platform.eu/policy-work/news/new-eu-strategy-promotes-rights-people-disabilities>
13. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=hr>
14. <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>
15. <https://learning.abilityadvisor.eu/>
16. <https://www.edf-feph.org/>
17. <https://vlada.mk/KoordinativnoTelo/PravaNaLicaSoPoprechenost>
18. <https://www.nsiom.org.mk/konvencija>
19. <https://tourismmacedonia.gov.mk>
20. <https://www.accessibletourism.org/>
21. http://www.europewithoutbarriers.eu/download/6_Igor-Stefanovic.pdf

22. <https://pantou.org/>
23. <https://www.unwto.org/form/acces>
24. <http://accessitpro.eu/>
25. <https://www.iso.org/standard/52329.html>
26. <https://www.iso.org/standard/55038.html>
27. <https://www.iso.org/standard/58086.html>
28. <https://www.iso.org/standard/72126.html>
29. <https://www.iso.org/standard/76106.html>
30. <https://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/FINALNA%20Revidirana%20Nacionalna%20Strategija.pdf>
31. <https://economy.gov.mk/>
32. <https://pelagonijaregion.mk/>
33. <https://www.healthrights.mk>
34. <https://www.atsvip.eu>
35. <https://economy.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/20.11.2019>