



Accessibility in Tourism Experiences



Learning Objectives

The aim of this session is to explore the concept of accessible tourism and how it is applied in the tourism context from an SME perspective.

Keywords: Accessibility, accessible tourism, diversity

Key Words



Equality relates to ensuring that everyone can access the same opportunities.

Diversity means valuing the differences between people and their identifying characteristics.

Accessibility is all about removing barriers (whether physical, digital, relating to information and content, or attitudinal) to promote positive and equal experiences for all.

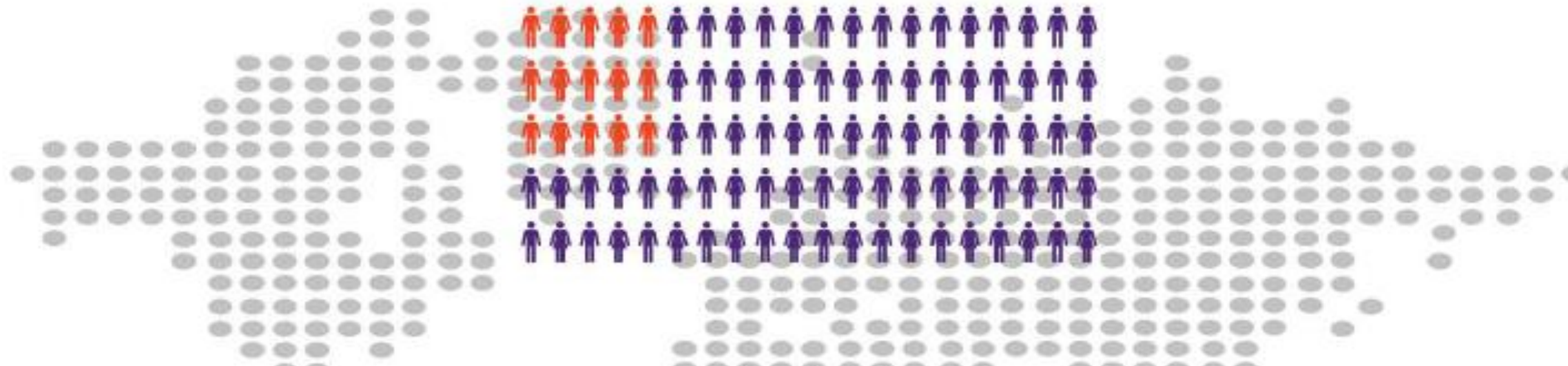
Accessibility (big picture)

Accessibility traditionally refers to the consideration of all types of people in the physical environment, such as in the design and implementation of the built environment. Accessibility is understood as spaces and environments that are suitable for all people, as easy to use services or goods, and as timely and easily understandable access to information. *Notice, also the digital environment.

Accessibility enables all people to participate smoothly in society: in work, hobbies, culture and education. Implementing accessibility is about mindset and attitude – not special arrangements.

15%

An estimated 15% of the world's population have a disability.



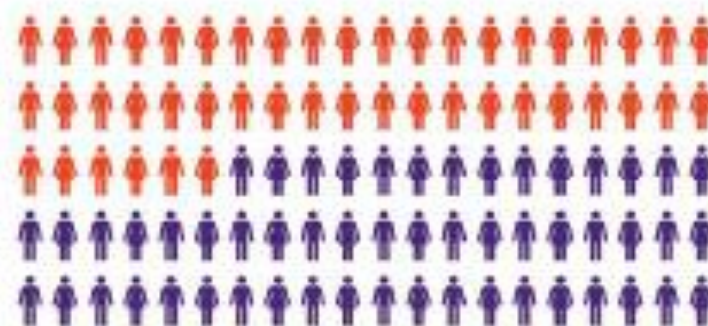
1 in 5

One in five women is likely to experience disability during her life.



46%

46% of persons aged 60 years and over have a disability.



1 in 10

One in ten children is a child with a disability.



Global population of persons with disabilities (IASC Guidelines, 2019, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action)

European Perspective

The European Union estimates a potential market of **80 million travelers with accessibility needs**, increasing to 130 million when including their companions.

96% of travelers with disabilities travel with companion and plan longer stays (source: Universal accessibility Observatory of Tourism in Spain)

Travelers with reduced mobility and their companions spent 30 % more than average tourist. These travelers are loyal and act as promoters of destinations and recommending them in social channels and networks. (MMGy Travel Intelligence Data)

Investing in accessibility in tourism is not only the right ethical choice but the right business choice as well.

Mr Enrique Ruiz de Lera
Head of Marketing,
Turespana

Transition Pathway for Tourism

The accessibility requirements in the European Accessibility Act¹³⁰ can contribute to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness

Topic 25: Enhancing accessible tourism services

Topic 25: Enhancing accessible tourism services	Raising awareness of the importance of accessibility in tourism Improving the supply and visibility of accessible tourism services Applying EU rules on accessible public procurement	National, regional and local authorities Destination management organisations Tourism industry, SMEs Organisations of persons with disabilities	Increased offer and online access to information on accessible tourism services
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Tourism strategies should pay close attention to: Inclusiveness and accessibility, including for persons with disabilities

Spain - a forerunner in Accessible Tourism



Spain enforces strong accessibility legislation and standards across tourism infrastructure—covering transport, accommodation, monuments, beaches, and digital services.

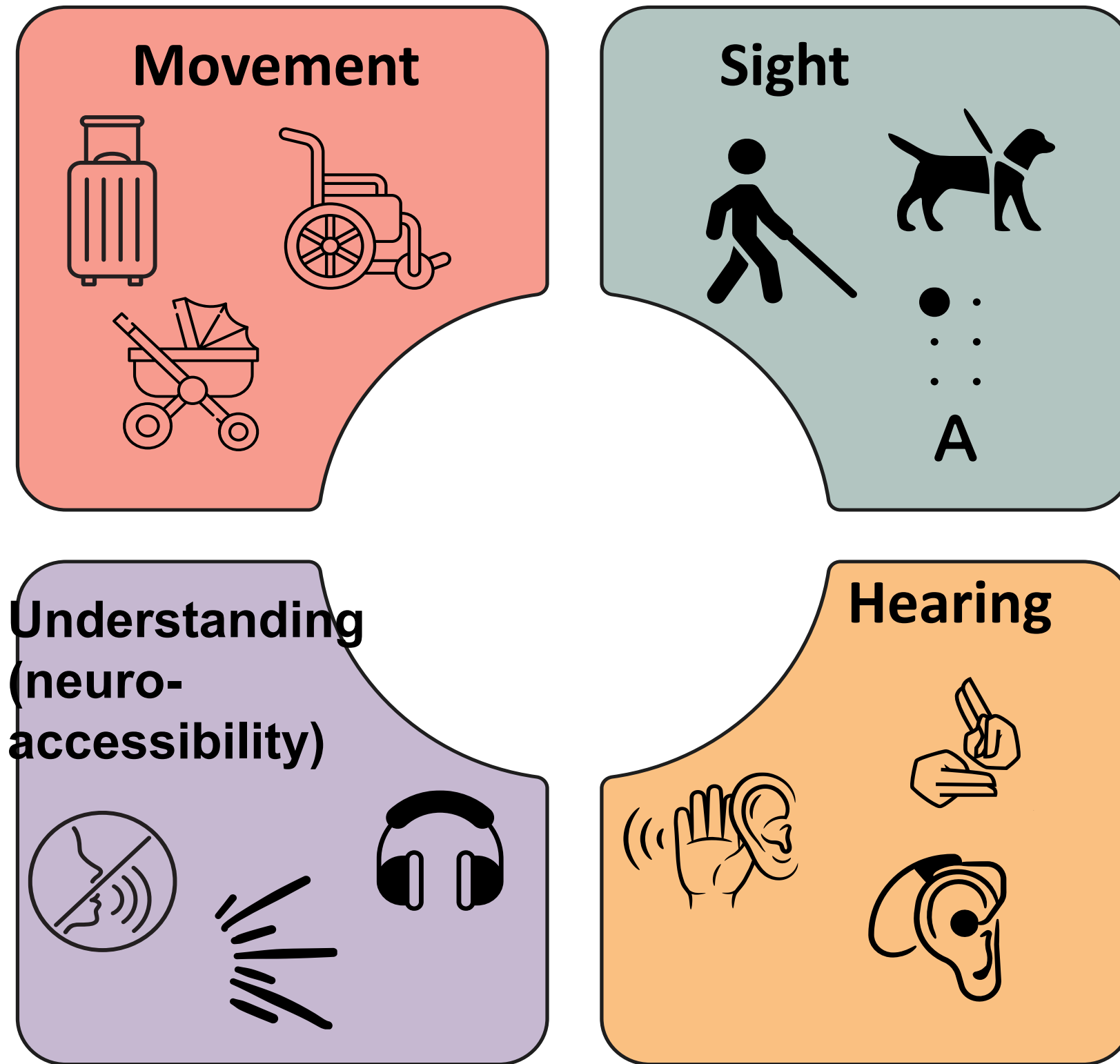
Turespaña's "Spain for All" initiative reinforces the country's ambition to become a benchmark for inclusive tourism.

TUR4all, backed by Fundación ONCE and the Ministry of Tourism, audits over 6,000 services against the UNE-ISO 21902 universal design framework.

Spain has certified over 600 adapted beaches—equipped with walkways, amphibious chairs, support staff, and is accredited with Blue Flag and national accessibility quality seals.



Accessibility Dimensions



Accessible Tourism



Accessible tourism is tourism that is accessible to all and caters to the needs of customers, including those with special needs.

Everyone should have equal opportunities to travel independently, enjoy experiences, and access the services they need and want in an accessible manner.

Accessibility therefore refers mainly to physical things such as the built environment, but also accessibility refers to intangible things such as information, digital accessibility of websites, attitudes, and service communication.

Accessible Tourism Check

Two things are true of access and inclusion:

1. No one solution will perfectly cater for every individual's access requirements; the term 'fully accessible' is misleading as it does not exist and cannot be achieved.
1. We all have a role to play in ensuring the built environment, social interactions and our websites and social media channels are as accessible and inclusive as possible



Communication



Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines

Disability-inclusive communications

will help to fulfill the promise of ‘leaving no one behind’, a key component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Inclusive communications allow persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in all spheres of society.



Interacting respectfully - best practices

Do

- **Do** ask persons with disabilities directly what their accessibility preferences are.
- **Do** treat all adults as adults.
- **Do** speak directly to the person, not to their sign interpreter, personal assistant, etc.
- **Do** ask questions when you are unsure of what to do.
- **Do** wait for persons with disabilities to ask for assistance. If they ask, follow their instructions.
- **Do** verbally greet and identify yourself before extending your hand to greet a person who is blind or has low vision. Use the same courtesy when entering or leaving a room or saying good-bye when ending a conversation. Do not just walk away when talking to a person who is blind or has low vision.
- **Do** ask persons who are blind or have low vision if they would like to take your arm or elbow. Do not simply take their arm.
- **Do** provide information in advance, as much as possible, about programme agendas, schedules, interview questions, meeting materials, etc. Make them available in accessible formats.

Target group



Functional capacity and limitations



Some functional limitations are permanent, and some are temporary. For example:

- A person using a wheelchair
- A person using a walker
- A person with a visual impairment
- A person with a hearing impairment
- A person using crutches
- A family with young children
- A person with autism
- A person with dementia



**Did you recognize yourself in the previous list?
If not, it's still good to acknowledge that each of us has
special needs at some point in our lives.**





People with Accessibility Needs

- When there is one person in a group with accessibility needs, the whole group will choose the destination or services based on that.
- Wants to experience same things on their holiday than everybody else
- Loyal customers



“We want to experience exactly the same things than everybody else, preferably with no special treatment or fuss.” Guest



Environmental requirements for a person using a mobility aid

For example

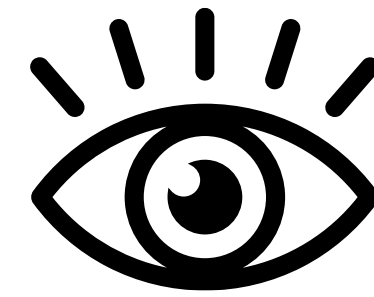
- Threshold-free
- Alternative routes, for example stairs
- Space requirements, routes, corridors, toilets and washing facilities
- Accessibility
- Reachability from a wheelchair
- Rollator users often have poor balance and weak muscle strength
- The door must not be heavy and must open sufficiently
- Maintenance (snow and ice)



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John - Visually impaired



Visually impaired people are defined as blind and visually impaired people

A visually impaired person can function safely and independently when:

- Paths are clear
- Lighting is good
- Signs are clear and continuous

Requirements for the environment of a visually impaired person:

- Contrasts
- Tapes in the stairs
- Guided materials, tactile
- Voice control, e.g. in an elevator
- Tactile signs



Sandra - Hearing impaired



Hearing impaired means a person who has been diagnosed with hearing loss of various causes or degrees – from mild hearing loss to complete deafness.

A good listening environment takes into account:

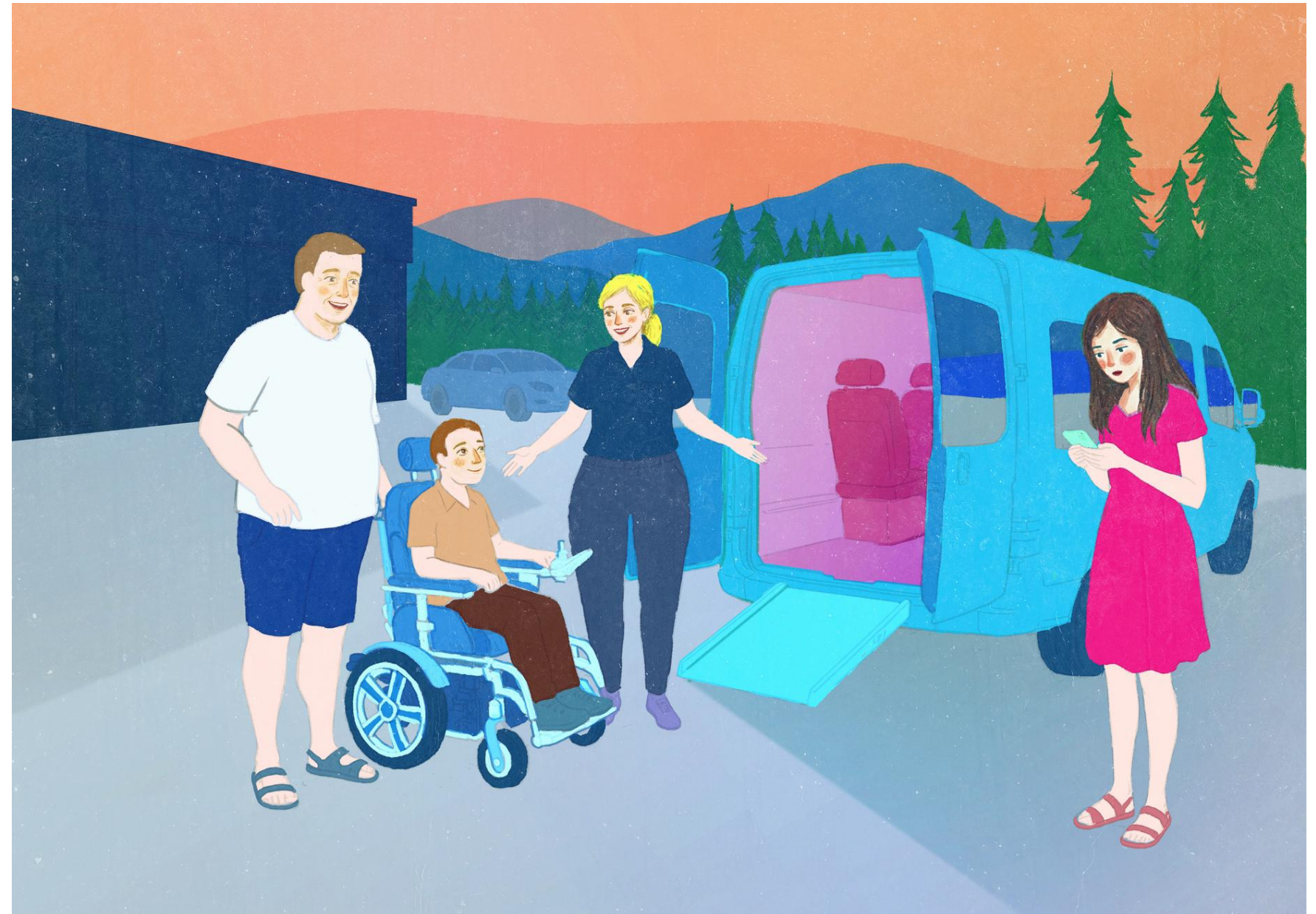
- Induction loop (fixed or mobile, so-called service point model)
- Acoustics
- Lighting
- Unobstructed views
- Visual alarm system



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Where to start



5 Steps Towards More Accessible Services

1. Examine your own **attitudes**. Do you genuinely want to welcome everyone?
2. Map the **current situation** either with the help of an accessibility expert or using accessibility checklists
3. The next time you build something new or do a major renovation, **consider accessibility** during the design / planning phase.
4. Think about what **changes** you can make to the current situation? For example buildings like a hotel or B&B.
5. Make sure that the company's **website is accessible** and that up-to-date accessibility information can be found there. Make sure the personnel is able to answer questions.

Accessibility Information

Providing accessibility information before the travel on website, social media and customer service desk.



Experience Design

During the travel, providing audio tours and large print versions of exhibit information at museums are a great way of removing content barriers for people who are blind or partially sighted.



Assistive devices

Providing assistive devices or aid such as wheelchair, hearing protectors or hearing loop. This does not always require owning them but building a network where you can rent them.



**Providing accessibility information
is the most effective way, and also
cost effective, to improve
accessibility in a tourism company -
already today.**





**Don't worry about being 'fully accessible' for all
– it's not possible.**



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Summary

First, providing accessibility information is the most effective way, and also cost effective, to improve accessibility in a tourism company.

Second, don't worry about being 'fully accessible' for all – it's not possible.

Third, built a network in which you have service providers from other sectors who can help you designing accessible services, encounter people with disabilities and with who you can work together with (healthcare, physiotherapists, local and regional organizations and associations)



Sources

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Activity I: Building a Network for Accessible Tourism

Design a plan for creating a local, regional, and national network to support accessible tourism.

Your plan should:

- Identify key stakeholders from public sector, private businesses, and third-sector organizations.
- Define roles and responsibilities for each actor.
- Suggest mechanisms for collaboration (e.g., regular meetings, shared platforms, joint projects).
- Outline steps to ensure inclusivity and sustainability in the network.
- Prepare a short proposal describing how this network will improve accessibility and inclusivity in tourism.



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