

## Making a small community accessible

### Presentation abstract

#### A small community

Erlauf is a small community in Lower Austria, near the Danube river, which has 1.200 inhabitants only. Erlauf is famous for being the very place, where in the night of May 8th to May 9th, 1945 the Soviet General Dmitri Dritschkin and the US General Stanley Reinhart met and officially ended the fightings of World War II in Europe with a handshake.

#### A place of remembrance

Already in 1965 Erlauf's culture of remembrance – including the fate of the local Jewish community during the Nazi regime – started to come to life with a memorial plaque at the municipality building.

In 1995 commemorative art installations in the main square were created by the famous Soviet and US artists Oleg Komov and Jenny Holzer.

In 2015 the new museum „ERLAUF ERINNERT“ was opened, funded and supported by the Lower Austrian government and the department of culture.

Every year in May the community celebrates the „ERLAUF Peace Days“ with art and music projects and many community activities, attracting visitors from near and far.

#### Small budgets AND accessibility – a contradiction?

Despite its small size and the resulting small budgets and few human resources, the community council has always been determined to make their historic and cultural heritage accessible for all:

- First the museum, community roads and the municipality building were made accessible for wheel chair users.
- In 2016 the community council started off with providing audio info for visually impaired people. 7 NFC Audio Info points give all visitors access to detailed information on the art installations, the museum and the historic events of Erlauf. A total of 3 hours of Audio Info is available in German and English – offline, 24/7 and free of charge for all.

#### Using smart technologies

As audio recordings and the provision of a fast, robust and free wifi network were economically not feasible for such a small community, the community council scouted out a low-cost alternative to provide audible information both for visually impaired and seeing visitors. On the platforms of ENAT and GARI the perfect solution was found:

The award-winning TTS technology SpeechCode allows destinations to create audio files themselves. The texts are simply entered online into the Speech Generator. The content then gets stored either in a printable Speech Code or in an NFC Speech Tag, which can be presented directly at the points of interest, in- and outdoors. There is no energy source nor network connection required. Each Code and NFC Tag can store up to 30 minutes of audio info (approx. 5 pages A4).

The visitors transfer the content to their smartphone with the free app „speechcode“ in Universal Design. The text is immediately shown on the display, is read out aloud and gets automatically stored in the app. The data transfer works fully offline to guarantee access always and everywhere, the protection of data privacy and cost-free use for all visitors – no roaming fees.

## Information for all

As the annual SpeechCode license fees allow the unlimited production of speech files at almost no extra costs, the community council plans to use it more and further improve the access to information – enhancing the experience of people with and without disabilities.

From 2018 onwards the accessibility projects with SpeechCode are:

- Additional audio info points along hiking trails, at view points and in the museum.
- Adding audiodescriptive texts to all audio info points.
- Using Speech Links to provide audio format for texts on the community and museum websites.
- Supply all audio info points with text in easy language for people with cognitive impairments.

## Conclusion

If a small community cannot afford to provide f.ex. tactile guiding systems, audible traffic lights, high-tech navigation systems, beacons or sign language videos, they still can make significant improvements in accessibility. The biggest challenges are to find affordable and smart solutions and to find the human resources for managing the projects.

Still the market for accessible offers - especially if not limited to wheelchair users only – has a great potential for small communities like Erlauf.

## **Lead speaker :** Barbara Operschall

**Organisation :** SpeechCode GmbH

**City (Country) :** Vienna(Austria)

**Biography :** Barbara is a hospitality marketing veteran, who held senior positions with Accor, Marriott and Best Western. As CEO of Best Western Central Europe she managed 70+ hotels in 8 countries in their hotel and destination marketing activities. Looking for more social aspects in her professional life, SpeechCode – Information for All – was the perfect match. Barbara combines her tourism marketing expertise with her excellent accessibility network to assist destinations with accessibility of information, story-telling and marketing of their accessible offers.

## **2nd speaker :** Franz Engelmaier

**Organisation :** Peace Community Erlauf

**City (Country) :** Erlauf (Austria)

**Biography :** Born in Erlauf, Franz Engelmaier is mayor of the peace community Erlauf since 2009. Despite running his own IT business, Franz is tirelessly working for the community in various projects to improve housing and infrastructure for citizens and visitors alike. To complement the museum, the community archives shall also be made available to the public. Increasing the awareness and accessibility of Erlauf and its important message of remembrance is a top priority for Franz and the other members of the community council.



World Summit on Accessible Tourism

# Destinations for All

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