

Wallonia: tools and partnerships to develop accessible tourism

Presentation abstract

The administration of Walloon tourism, the CGT (Commissariat général au Tourisme), and non-profit association Access-i will show how, thanks to the setting up of a public sector/non-profit partnership, a policy of accessibility awareness was developed in Wallonia, the French-speaking southern region of Belgium (16.844 km²).

In 2014, the Walloon government, in its Declaration of Regional Policy, put accessibility among its priority issues, based on the finding that close to 40% of the population was affected by a reduction in mobility and that aging would only increase that figure in the years to come.

In the tourism sector, information that could be useful to people with special needs when it comes to transport, accommodation and tourist attractions is not widely available and restricts the mobility of people concerned who are therefore unable to fully enjoy the tourism offer in Wallonia.

In 2014, the CGT, in partnership with the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs, decided to act!



ACCESS ▶ i
www.access-i.be

They decided to provide strategic support and financial aid to non-profit Access-i (created in 2010), in order to allow the association to create a specific Access-i certification, based on accessibility guidelines approved by the Walloon government.

This certification comes with the Access-i icon, which uses a simple colour code to inform 7 categories of person with specific needs of an attraction, venue or accommodation's level of accessibility.

Since 2014, this certification has been used to determine the level of accessibility of public buildings, tourist attractions and sights, and events. Over time its use is becoming more widespread and

includes the development of tourism products, the organisation of Heritage Days, festivals, etc.

Access-i was also entrusted with the responsibility of informing and raising the awareness of tourism operators, with the aim of progressively increasing the accessible tourism offer.

This partnership between tourism administration and Access-i has just been reinforced by the Walloon Government, as part of a Walloon investment plan. Access-i will assist the sector when establishments decide what type of renovations to envisage to improve their accessibility.

A constructive collaboration has been built between the institutions and non-profit Access-i to professionalise the sector, improve the accessible offer and provide users with specific needs a definitive answer to the question "is this tourism offer accessible to me?".

Lead speaker : Nadine Verheye

Organisation : Ministry of Tourism of Wallonia

City (Country) : Namur (Belgium)

Biography : Nadine Verheye works for the Administration of Walloon tourism (Commissariat général au Tourisme), and is the reference person in Wallonia for Tourism for All.



She has been in charge of touristic projects (family hotels, meeting & incentive, nature and adventure tourism) for 30 years now.

For nearly two years she has been entrusted with a new function within the Administration, namely developing concepts and projects for an easier access of insecure populations and persons with special needs to tourism in Wallonia. She is therefore in constant contact with the local associations and the institutional stakeholders, with the purpose of creating appropriate and concrete partnerships.

2nd speaker : Aurélie Charlier

Organisation : Access-I asbl

City (Country) : Namur (Belgium)