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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Partner country

Republic of North Macedonia

## Contracting authority

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

## Country background

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

Map

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

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

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

## Current situation in the sector

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

## Overall objective

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

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

The project aims to:

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

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

The main desired outputs of ALTER TRIP are:

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

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

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

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

## Purpose

The purpose of this contract are as follows:

Organization of two info days in CBC area in North Macedonia. Organization of a trip to Thessaloniki, and Organization of an event in Bitola.

## Results to be achieved by the contractor

Two info days in CBC area in the Republic of North Macedonia are organized.

Two trips to Thessaloniki for participation on a workshop is organized.

An event - workshop in Bitola is organized.

# ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

## Assumptions underlying the project

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

There is enough interest among local stakeholders to participate on the training

## Risks

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

# SCOPE OF THE WORK

## General

### Description of the assignment

Assignment is composed of:

1. Organization of two info days in CBC area in the Republic of North Macedonia.
2. Organization of two trips to Thessaloniki, and
3. Organization of an event in Bitola.

### Geographical area to be covered

Pelagonia Statistical Region, Republic of North Macedonia.

Thessaloniki, Greece

### Target groups

Managers of tourist facilities (hotels, restaurants, museums, cultural facilities, sport facilities, tourist sites etc.).

Tourist agencies, tour operators.

National and local authorities responsible for development of tourism and for social welfare of persons with disabilities.

CSO of the persons with disabilities.

## Specific work

**1) Organization of 2 info days in CBC area in the Republic of North Macedonia. Every info day will be a one day event (~ 8 hours).**

**Event 1**

* Transport of 20 persons from Bitola to Prilep
* Catering for 40 participants in Prilep
* Renting the venue for info-day in Prilep.
* Providing technical support: audio and video equipment, photographing the event, etc.

**Event 2**

* Transport of 20 persons from Bitola to Resen
* Catering for 40 participants in Resen
* Renting the venue for info-day in Resen.
* Providing technical support: audio and video equipment, photographing the event, etc.

**2) Organization of two trips to Thessaloniki. It will be two days trip.**

* Transport Bitola – Thessaloniki – Bitola for 20 persons x 2
* Accommodation in Thessaloniki for 20 persons x 2
* Catering in Thessaloniki for 20 persons (dinner, breakfast, lunch) x2

**3) Organization of an event in Bitola.**

* Rent of the venue
* Catering for 40 persons (lunch)
* Photographing the event and preparation of photo report
* Rent of audio and video equipment
* Folders with print outs from presentations + printing and binding a manual (50 copies X 70 pages B/W)

## Project management

### Responsible body

Project Manager of ALTERTRIP Project

### Management structure

N/A

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

N/A

# LOGISTICS AND TIMING

## Location

Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia

## Start date & period of implementation of tasks

The intended start date is 1th March 2021 and the period of implementation of the contract will be **four months**.

# REQUIREMENTS

## Staff

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

### Key experts

**N/A**

## Office accommodation

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

## Facilities to be provided by the contractor

N/A

## Equipment

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

# REPORTS

## Reporting requirements

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

**Report** of maximum 10 pages (main text, excluding annexes) to be produced **no later than 10 days** after realized two info days in CBC area in North Macedonia.

**Report** of maximum 10 pages (main text, excluding annexes) to be produced **no later than 10 days** after realized first trip to Thessaloniki.

**Report** of maximum 10 pages (main text, excluding annexes) to be produced **no later than 10 days** after realized second trip to Thessaloniki.

**Report** of maximum 10 pages (main text, excluding annexes) to be produced **no later than 10 days** after organized event (workshop) in Bitola.

## Submission and approval of reports

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

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## Definition of indicators

1. Report form two info days

2. Reports from trips to Thessaloniki.

3. Report from the event (workshop) in Bitola

## Special requirements

N/A