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Report of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics

Addendum 3

Draft UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism

I.   Background

1.   Following the adoption of the UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All by the General Assembly in 2013 (A/RES/637(XX)) as a basic framework for making tourism infrastructure, products and services more accessible, the Secretariat has continued to advance in this area of work and has developed a set of useful guiding principles specifically focusing on the accessibility of information in the tourism sector. While the general Recommendations of 2013 include the principles of Universal Design and call for their application in the physical environment, the transportation system, public facilities and services and also touch upon information and communications channels, the present document focuses exclusively on the provision of accessible information to travellers with disabilities and special needs.

2.   The present draft UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism have been developed in close collaboration with the ONCE Foundation for Cooperation and Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities and the European Network on Accessible Tourism (ENAT).

3.   The full text of the proposed draft Recommendations is annexed to this Addendum.

Please recycle

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Draft UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism

I.   Introduction

1.   Private companies and public sector stakeholders in tourism must deliver accurate, relevant and timely information to its customers, prior to, during and even after the journey. Ensuring **accessible information** is without any doubt a key to communicating successfully with visitors in all of the stages of their journey.

2.   In the 21st century, the Information Society has experienced a breakthrough in instant communication through digital media. With new, mobile technologies, destinations and providers can reach wider audiences and provide tourists with access to larger amounts of information and also personalised content. This information is more agile and allows customers to compare different offers and services, thus providing them with greater autonomy in their decision-making.

3.   However, these new communication systems may exhibit features that reduce access to information for a large number of people, especially those with visual, hearing, mobility or cognitive impairments. Tourist information needs to be designed based on the principles of Universal Design in order to maximise its ease of use by as many people as possible and in varied environmental conditions and situations. This applies equally to print media, graphics and digital communication formats. No one should be excluded from participating in tourism activities because of poorly designed information tools and systems, as this also implies being excluded from the opportunity of living an independent life.

4.   Beyond the aspect of design, there is a persistent lack of information regarding the accessibility of tourism facilities and services. Even when such information is provided, its reliability tends to be questionable at times. Accurate and updated information concerning accessible products, services and facilities should be systematically collected and made available so as to enable customers to proceed with the booking and purchase of the whole itinerary and related services in real time. Customers need to have the full confidence that their selected solution comes with the necessary end-to-end support, assistance and infrastructures in place which actually make it possible for them to travel, without being obliged to approach intermediaries to complete their journey.

5.   Good information design is also good for business. Many studies have revealed that the accessibility and ease-of-use of websites, in terms of navigating content, finding and reading information, can have a decisive effect on 'conversion rates', i.e. more customers making an enquiry or a purchase.

II.   Using this document

6.   The recommendations suggested in this document stem from the general Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All, adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013.

7.   The present specific recommendations are intended to familiarise national tourism administrations, tourism boards, destination management organisations, as well as travel and tourism enterprises with the general principles concerning accessibility criteria in their information provision and the application of different techniques and formats to meet the principles of Universal Design. Tourism stakeholders are advised to read the entire set of recommendations in order to have a complete

overview of the subject and consider undertaking adequate measures within their respective sphere of influence.

III. Guiding principles related to Universal Design of customer information and communication

8.   When designing information and communications materials for tourists it is important to bear in mind how customers will actually find the information that is relevant to them. Four steps can be identified, as follows:

> Step A - Perception: Customers use their eyes, ears or sense of touch to perceive content.
> Step B - Discoverability: Customers find the information they want.
> Step C - Understanding: Customers interpret and understand how to use the content.
> Step D - Use: Customers decide how to use and act on the content that is presented.

9.   In order to meet the requirement of Step A, i.e. perceptible information, designers must take into account the range of customers' abilities, including learning difficulties and/or cognitive, hearing, visual, mobility, and dexterity impairments. For the next steps, B, C and D, it is important to consider the layout, style and content of the information, as described in the following sections.

IV. Delivering information on accessibility

10.   Besides considering how information needs to be presented to be accessible for all visitors, there are important features regarding what kinds of information are required and how it should be delivered.

11.   The following five elements are key to providing accessible information, so as to give tourists confidence in the information they obtain:

> 1)   Include information regarding accessibility of the infrastructures and services where possible or provide a reference where that information can be found;
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> 2)   When providing promotional material or information about services or procedures, provide a point of contact in order to enable the reader to obtain more information, including personalized messages;
>
> 3)   Make sure the information is consistent across all media and channels of communication, including information given online as well as in person by staff, either on site, by telephone or by email;
>
> 4)   It is highly advisable to train information managers in the specific techniques that are indicated in these recommendations and, when procuring websites, ICTs and other related services, to require that technical staff have the required knowledge to deliver accessible services: and
>
> 5)   Make sure the content is up-to-date, given that out-of-date content will undermine the quality of the surrounding information and it may compromise the safety and comfort of visitors.

A.   Printed material

12.   Printed material in tourism focuses on promotion, information about services such as menus or procedures and other contents. It is still very common, despite the extremely rapid growth of the use of

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ICTs in the sector in the last decade. The following recommendations increase the legibility and readability of any document, which benefit the customer's ability to perceive and discover the content that is relevant to them.

(i) Layout

- Present the information in an organized structure, using short sentences or one idea per sentence;
- Use a simple and clear language. Avoid technical language or abbreviations so that the information is easy to understand by a larger number of the intended audience, including people who are not native speakers of the language;
- Justifying text adds extra spaces between words and makes it harder to read, therefore it is preferable to align text with the left margin and set all the text horizontally (depending on the language);
- Avoid splitting words between two lines;
- If text is placed in columns, ensure that there is adequate spacing between the columns;
- Leave enough space between lines as closely spaced text is hard to read; and
- Use white space to separate blocks of information so the information appears clearly and easy to read.

(ii) Fonts

- Use a minimum of 12-point size font, with a recommended size of 14 points.
- Sans-serif fonts have plain endings (like this Arial font style). They do not have the flared extensions, strokes, or other kinds of ornamentation and therefore they are easier to read than serif, decorative, fantasy or cursive fonts.

(iii) Contrast and colour

- Text is much easier to read when there is sufficient contrast between the text and the background. Black text on white or yellow is best; if using white text, the background colour should be dark enough to provide sufficient contrast;
- Contrast is best when using very dark colours together against very light colours;
- A plain background is better than a patterned one. Placing text in front of an image or patterned background makes it more difficult to read; and
- Avoid printing on glossy materials that make the text difficult to read.

(iv) Alternative formats

- Consider developing the printed material in alternative formats such as: Large Print (prepared with a font size that is 16 to 20 points or larger), Braille or audio format;
- Consider providing 'Easy-Reading' material, which is suitable for people with learning difficulties (and also people with limited knowledge of the language);
- Including a QR or BIDI code (quick response bar codes used to provide easy access to information) on printed material allows customers to access the information through different channels, using devices like smartphones or tablets;
- Organisations should be open to work with persons requesting the information to determine their needs and an appropriate format or support within their capacity to provide it; and
- If general information should be provided free of charge, accessible formats should also be free. If an organisation charges people for the information, they shouldn't charge more for the accessible version.

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B.   Digital documents

13.   Digital documents are used to convey a large amount of information in the tourism sector. From any document sent by email, travel brochures or tickets, to downloadable documents in tourism websites, it is important to ensure people know what they are downloading and that the content is usable and accessible.

14.   Besides the recommendations that apply for printed documents, there are some useful recommendations for digital documents. These recommendations also apply to documents made in different formats, including Microsoft Office Documents and Adobe Portable Document Format, among others.

- Apply styles to the text such as heading and titles in order to create a structured document. A good heading structure should follow a logical order such as Heading 1 then Heading 2;
- Where images or pictograms are used, include content in text format. This is crucial for accessibility as it can be transformed into sound through the voice synthesizers in screen readers;
- Use pre-set formats, such as bullet points, numbering and tables to format and structure your document. This makes it easier to navigate;
- Consider not using columns if it isn't necessary. Older screen readers would read the text on the page left to right as if it were linear, causing text to be read out of order;
- Use the images rationally, make them add information to the text. They must be placed in a coherent place avoiding random images that interrupt the flow of the text and make it hard to follow. There should also be some space between the text and the image;
- For images, diagrams or charts, include a written description as alternative text. This allows the images to be accessible by giving a description of what the image is displaying. This is useful when images are unavailable, for example, if the device isn't capable of displaying the image or if the customer has a visual impairment. Alternative text should serve the same purpose and convey the same meaning as the image;
- Instead of using 'Click Here' use, for example, insert the name of the document or subject of the page the hyperlink is linked to;
- Don't use colour alone to convey meaning (for example, highlighting text to show its importance). Use descriptive text or symbols instead; and
- All downloadable documents should have a summary provided in HTML, as well as details on the document's format and file size.

C.   Audio-visual content

15.   Audio-visual content may appear in various forms in tourism sector information. These can include an introductory video to an attraction, an audio or video guide in a museum or illuminated display panels to give announcements in transport vehicles or passenger terminals.

16.   By following these recommendations, an organisation makes sure that it does not exclude information from those who cannot see, hear or play it by providing multimedia instruments that meet the various requirements for perceptible information:

- Provide captions for multimedia, so that it can be understood by all your customers regardless of the volume the multimedia is played at;
- Where captions are not provided, provide transcripts for the multimedia; this can be provided either on the same page or as a link to a transcript on a different page;

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- Consider including a pop-up window in a video with an interpreter or hiring an interpreter at an event;
- Include audio description versions of the video to make it accessible to a blind audience;
- Share the videos in a specific link where they can be watched with other displays. Supply a link to a standalone version;
- Offer different download sizes of digital files. Information on the file size should be included on the page;
- If a large percentage of your target market does not speak the language of the video as a first language, provide content in other languages where applicable; and
- When made for individual use, provide controls to skip, pause or stop the presentation.

D. Websites

17. Internet and Web technology play an extremely important role in tourism as they provide access to a greater number of tourism products and services from different parts of the world, from virtual travel agencies or booking sites to information about tourism facilities.

18. The accessibility of Web content can be achieved by compliance to international standards described in Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.[1]

19. The 12 guidelines suggested below, organized in four principles, should be followed in the development of any web page or web application (including text, images, forms and sounds). Websites should be:

Perceivable: usable regardless of a customer's ability to see, hear or touch
- Provide text alternatives for non-text content.
- Provide captions and other alternatives for multimedia.
- Create content that can be presented in different ways, including by assistive technologies, without losing meaning.
- Make it easier for users to see and hear content.

Operable: usable forms, controls and navigation
- Make all functionality available from a keyboard.
- Give users enough time to read and use content.
- Do not use content that causes seizures.
- Help users navigate and find content.

Understandable: content and interfaces are clear and easy to understand
- Make text readable and understandable.
- Make content appear and operate in predictable ways.
- Help users avoid and correct mistakes.

Robust: content can be used reliably by a wide range of devices
- Maximize compatibility with current and future user tools.

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[1] Web Accessibility Initiative World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Working Group (WCAG WG) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2005, updated in 2012,) available at WCAG 2.0 at http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag

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20.   For each guideline, there are testable success criteria, which are at three levels: A, AA, and AAA. It is recommended to reach level AA in public web pages.

E.   Apps

21.   Tourism apps are software applications running on a mobile device. They have been gradually gaining ground over websites, especially to deliver different mobile services or provide information about transports or destinations. Companies and organisations in general have been quick to distribute their own Apps to offer or advertise their services to the consumer. Some apps provide orientation systems to help the tourist navigate a building or a city, and they are very popular in providing information about content such as exhibits in museums and art galleries.

22   There is no specific national or international law regarding the design of accessible Apps, although there are guidelines for improving customers' experiences when accessing web content from mobile devices[2].

F.   Self-service Terminals and Mobile/Smart Devices

23.   There is a wide range of tourism information that is offered to tourists by means of public access terminals. Public access terminals include information kiosks, ticket vending machines, information displays (e.g. flight information) and point-of-sale customer card payment systems among others.

24.   These terminals allow visitors to carry out some actions like purchasing tickets or check information in an autonomous way 24 hours a day. Beside the guidelines regarding software or other web-based technologies, designers of terminals have to consider several recommendations concerning design and placement in the environment in order to allow a comfortable approach and interaction to the device for everybody. Specific guidance includes the following:

- Terminals must have operable parts and displays at heights and inclination allowing them to be used by people of different heights. They must include a free space in front of and below the terminal to let people in wheelchairs approach.
- Displays must be placed avoiding reflections, solar glare, artificial lighting or street lighting. They should also have a good internal light which does not flash or blink.
- Controls, such as keyboards and card entry systems, must be designed so that they have an adequate size avoiding the use of strength and manoeuvrability. Functional keys must also have raised marks or Braille and good contrast.
- When the device has a touch screen interface it should also include a voice guide that indicates the steps or provide an alternative input system.
- IT terminals must have visual and audible ways to communicate the procedures for use. If there is a voice guidance system, there must also be an induction loop.

G.   Signage

25.   Whenever a tourist is navigating through an unfamiliar environment, signage is a tool that enables them to orientate themselves without help. It is therefore important to design signage in accordance with access requirements in, for example, maps, directories, tactile routes on pavements, information screens and exterior signage. Although there isn't an international standard regarding signage, there

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[2] See Web Accessibility Initiative World Wide Web Consortium, Mobile Accessibility, available at http://www.w3.org/WAI/mobile/

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are some useful recommendations on signage outlined in Module II of the UNWTO *Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Good Practices* from which the following summary is taken:

- Use matt and durable materials making sure it is well lit.
- Use homogenous design of signage in the same environments to facilitate them being perceived by users.
- Consider the size and height of the signage depending on the distance at which they are going to be viewed.
- Make sure the information is provided with enough contrast and adequate   background.
- Use standard pictograms to allow signs to be understood by a large number of tourists.
- Include clear images to explain important information.
- Whenever the signage is placed in an approachable area, make sure there are no obstacles to reach them.
- Consider including alternative formats, such as raised letters and Braille, to help navigation or provide alternative systems of orientation, such as geo-location and smart navigation systems.

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