

RURACTIVE OPEN CALL - CHALLENGE 15

Title of the challenge	Accessibility in nature-based and cultural tourism for people living with disabilities
Dynamo (pilot location)	Zagori, Greece
RDD (Rural Development Driver) <i>addressed by the challenge</i>	Nature-based and cultural tourism
Overall context description and specific context to be addressed by the challenge	<p>Zagori, in Greece, is renowned for its stunning landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and traditional stone villages. However, accessibility for people living with visual impairment remains a significant challenge, particularly in the context of nature-based and cultural tourism. The region's rugged terrain limits the ability of visually impaired visitors to fully experience its natural wonders, such as the Vikos Gorge, stone bridges and historical sites. Current attractions often lack essential features such as tactile pathways, Braille signage, and audio guides, which can help navigate and appreciate the surroundings. As the tourism industry increasingly emphasises inclusivity, there is an urgent need to develop strategies and solutions that enhance accessibility for visually impaired visitors. By addressing these challenges, Zagori can become a more inclusive destination, fostering an environment where individuals living with visual impairments can engage meaningfully with its natural beauty and cultural richness. This challenge seeks innovative approaches to create accessible experiences that respect and celebrate diversity, ultimately enriching the tourism experience for all visitors while promoting the sustainability of the region.</p>
Scope of the Challenge	<p>The challenge focuses on enhancing accessibility for visually impaired individuals in nature-based and cultural tourism within Zagori in Greece. Specifically, it aims to address the lack of inclusive activities that cater to the needs of visually impaired tourists, which prevents them from fully experiencing the area's natural and cultural offerings. The geographic scope is confined to the Zagori region, particularly its natural landscapes, traditional villages, and tourist attractions. The primary target population is visually impaired individuals, including tourists and potential visitors,</p>

	<p>while also considering the needs of accompanying family members, friends, and caregivers to ensure a fully inclusive experience. Applicants must work within the existing infrastructure, proposing enhancements or new developments that can be realistically integrated into the current tourism framework, while ensuring that solutions are feasible and sustainable. Moreover, it is essential that any proposed solutions align with the local culture and values, promoting a sense of community ownership and acceptance to foster a welcoming environment for all visitors.</p>
Solution requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance accessibility for visually impaired individuals in nature-based and cultural tourism in the Zagori region. • Implementation of sensory experiences, such as guided tours that engage other senses (touch, sound, smell), and are equipped with textured surfaces, audio cues, storytelling and braille markers to facilitate safe and enjoyable exploration of the region, to enrich the experience for visually impaired tourists. • Integration with existing infrastructure: proposals should include solutions that can be integrated into the existing tourism framework without significant alterations to the landscape, maintaining the region's cultural and natural integrity. • Solutions should be environmentally sustainable and economically viable, ensuring they can be maintained over time with minimal resource expenditure. <p>The solution should be easy to use and intuitive, low-cost, ensure open access, and utilise open data sources.</p>
Specific objectives and expected outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility for visually impaired individuals in nature-based and cultural tourism by implementing inclusive infrastructure and technologies. • Foster a positive experience for visually impaired tourists by providing informative and engaging resources tailored to their needs. • Increased involvement of local businesses and tourism operators in supporting accessible tourism initiatives, leading to collaborative efforts and shared resources. • Greater awareness among local stakeholders and community members about the importance of accessibility in tourism, fostering a more inclusive atmosphere for all visitors.

Available resources

- Existing pathways, trails, and tourist sites that can be modified or enhanced for improved accessibility for visually impaired individuals.
- Collaboration opportunities with local organisations, including disability advocacy groups and tourism boards, to facilitate knowledge sharing and support for accessibility initiatives.
- Existing pilot projects or initiatives focused on accessibility that can serve as models or starting points for new solutions.