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## Accessibility of Tourist Offer in Republic of Croatia to People with Disabilities

Marina GREGORIC

Polytechnic of Medimurje in Cakovec, Croatia

[mgregoric5@gmail.com](mailto:mgregoric5@gmail.com)

Tatiana V. SKRYL

Plekhanov University of Economics, Russian Federation

[t\\_skryl@mail.ru](mailto:t_skryl@mail.ru)

Katarina DRK

Polytechnic of Medimurje in Cakovec, Croatia

[kati.drk@gmail.com](mailto:kati.drk@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

The aim of the research paper is to identify the need of adaptation of tourist facilities to people with disabilities in Republic of Croatia as a tourist destination. Tourists and travellers with disabilities want to be equal members of our community and enjoy all tourist facilities just like other healthy people, although they are often restricted due to the inadequacy of tourist facilities. The paper analyses different tourist offers, amenities and infrastructure in order to assess its level of adaptation to people with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia. Research methods carried in this paper are historical, analysis, synthesis and empirical research conducted as a quantitative data analysis of a questionnaire distributed to people with disabilities on the sample of 200 disabled people from Croatia. The results of the research indicate that significant improvement should be implemented regarding suitable tourist offer in order to satisfy needs of tourists with different types of physical disabilities in Republic of Croatia. Based on the research results authors provide numerous recommendations to be implemented in Croatian tourist sites.

**Keywords:** tourism; people with disabilities; adaptation of facilities; Republic of Croatia

**JEL Classification:** O18; R12; I38; M31; Z32.

### Introduction

Due to the inaccessibility of tourist facilities in the Republic of Croatia, people with disabilities often feel unwanted. The Republic of Croatia has been recognized as the top tourist destination, but from the viewpoint of people with disabilities it is considered unregulated. Access to the sea or the pool is still the problem, and almost everywhere access to wellness, sports facilities, boat excursions etc. is also creates lots of challenges. In Croatia, the legal position of persons with disabilities is governed by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Act on the Suppression of Discrimination and the Law on the Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities, while the possibility of recruiting these persons is regulated by the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities. People with disabilities as tourism beneficiaries are a great tourist potential that needs to be taken advantage of. Still, much more effort has to be invested regarding the usage of offers in tourism to enable people with disabilities to enjoy the same extent as people without disabilities, which includes construction

works, access ramps for people with mobility problems, and implementation of tactile maps to help blind people to experience all the charms of tourism.

### **Research problem**

The subject of this paper is the research of tourism offer that is adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia. The problem of this topic is insufficient compliance of regulations at national and international levels.

### **Research objectives**

The objectives of the research paper are to determine whether the tourist facilities in the Republic of Croatia are adapted to the disabled tourists. The goal is to find out about the motivations for traveling between people with disabilities, to which destinations they travel, whether they are satisfied with the offer and customization of the content and the type of accommodation they use. The paper also aims to identify specific tourist destinations and attractions prepared and designed to accommodate and service tourists with different types of physical disabilities.

### **Research methodology**

The methods used in this research are historical method, analysis and synthesis, generalization method and questionnaire distributed to associations of persons with disabilities throughout the Republic of Croatia. The results of the research are suitable for improving the tourist offer. The research was conducted from 15 April 2018 to 25 June 2018. The questionnaire was made in the form of an online survey, and the link was distributed through the social network of Facebook and the e-mail addresses of different associations and associations of people with disabilities. The survey was also conducted with personal contact with people with disabilities due to their poorly developed information literacy. The survey contains a total of 32 open type questions of possible multiple responses and linear scales.

### **Research contribution**

This paper provides information about a tourist offer customized to people with disabilities. The findings of this paper can contribute to implementation of new strategies for tourism development in Croatian tourist regions, hotels, sites and amenities. It can contribute to tourist development and to creation of new tour packages for disabled tourists not only from domestic but also from international tourist markets.

## **1. Literature Review**

According to Vukonic and Cavlek (2001), health tourism can be defined as a temporary change in the permanent residence of an individual to a certain favorable climate or bathing place for health prevention, treatment and rehabilitation." A tourist is a volunteer, temporary traveler who travels in expectation of satisfaction that can provide him with novelties and changes experienced on a relatively long and unheard-of two-way journey" (Cohen 1974, 25). Health tourism becomes the main motive for tourism trends. The development of medical and treatment methods and natural healing factors have become a motive for the tourist trends of today (Andreff 2009, 150). Health protection is now seen as a concern for personal health. Thus, people with disabilities usually participate in tourism as users of health tourism, which represents their most important tourist movement (Oborin, Osipov and Skryl 2018, 1768). "The level of health culture not only determines the quantity of tourist movements, but also its spatial dimensions and temporal distribution and the size of accommodation capacities, and the way of using natural and other healing factors" (Geic 2011, 235). According to Kusen, health tourism is a type of complex economic activity in which an important place is occupied by the expert, controlled use of natural medicinal factors, physical medicine procedures, and programmed physical activities for the purpose of maintaining and improving the physical, mental and spiritual health of tourists and improving the quality of their lives. "Health is not just the absence of disease and exhaustion, but also general physical, mental and social well-being" (Kusen 2002, 128). The destination system management involves numerous activities and functions that interconnect and complement each other, such as planning, organizing and guiding (Petric 2011). The global tourist is more experienced and more selective: he is better educated and informed, with higher expectations, eager experience with an excess of atmosphere, adventure and emotions (Mura and Kajzar 2018, 1351). In the destination tourist sees the possibility of escape from the reality, relaxation and charging of batteries. Together with ecology and health, security and wellbeing become more and more important for tourist (Moutinho 2005).

## 2. Methodology

According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization (UN World Tourism Organization 2005), people with a particular form of disability are persons who may suffer certain restrictions or have special needs during the journey that are manifested when consuming a type of service such as accommodation or some other tourist service. It primarily refers to people with physical, sensory, intellectual or other medical conditions who require special care. Persons with disabilities need to ensure the availability of infrastructure and adequate access to all attractions. Without meeting the need for accessibility to persons with disabilities, the possibility of enjoying a tourist product and offering tourist destinations will be limited (Bogoviz and sur 2019). By the term "tourism accessible to everyone" it is understood that tourist experiences can be fully enjoyed by all persons regardless of their difficulties and possible physical or mental disability. In 1996, the European Disability Forum, an independent governmental association, was established, representing the interests of Europeans with special needs. The association follows European initiatives and laws to promote the rights of people with disabilities. In the field of Europe tourism accessible to all, it deals with the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT). It is a non-profit organization whose goal is to lead in the field of research, promotion and practice of tourism accessible to everyone. The mission of ENAT is to make European tourist destinations, products and services available to all travelers and promote tourism accessible to everyone around the world "(Slivar and Golja 2016). It is evident that the market for people with disabilities is continually on the rise, but Europe and the world have still not adapted to it. There is still plenty of room for improving the services of people with disabilities. The overall success of the adjustment requires investment and good co-operation at the local and national levels. Unfortunately, there is no program in Croatia to promote the development of tourism of special interests. Therefore, all responsibility and adaptation initiatives fall on the very enterprises and destinations that the new market segment for people with disabilities should plan." In Croatia, as of March 14, 2017, there are 511,850 people with disabilities, of which 307934 are men (60%) and 203916 are women (40%), and thus persons with disabilities make up about 11.9% of the total population of the Republic of Croatia. The largest number of persons with disabilities has their residence in the City of Zagreb and the Split-Dalmatia County "(HZJZ, Report on persons with disabilities in 2017, 5).

### 2.1. Necessary Infrastructure to Ensure Accessibility for Persons with Reduced Mobility

"Accessibility is the result of the application of technical solutions in the design and construction of buildings that ensure unobstructed access, movement, stay and work in these buildings at the same level by persons with disabilities and reduced mobility; As well as other persons "(Ordinance on ensuring accessibility of buildings to persons with disabilities and reduced mobility, 2013).

Under the term of an affordable building, part of the building or equipment is a building, part of a building or equipment that ensures the fulfilment of mandatory accessibility elements prescribed by the regulations on ensuring accessibility of buildings to persons with Disabilities and reduced mobility.

Tourist agencies need to work on the creation of appropriate and customized tourist arrangements that will cover the packages of services required for persons with disabilities. The agencies must create and offer packages that will have the appropriate type of accommodation capacity adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities, should include appropriate trips that do not require too much effort so that people with disabilities can Participate in the same, and in particular it is essential to provide adequate means of transport, which constitute the basis of mobility, persons with disabilities. Also, at the national level, it is necessary to educate tourist guides on the needs of people with disabilities.

### 2.2. The Condition of the Tourist Offers of Accessible Tourism to Persons with Disabilities

In order to make the tourist offer of a country accessible to persons with disabilities, the possibility of obtaining information for all persons should be balanced at national level and measures to ensure availability and access to the tourist offer should be taken. So, in museums and galleries it is necessary to achieve the effects that every person, regardless of his disability, can experience some performance. Full accessibility is reflected in different segments.

Croatia can take advantage of the potential of accessible tourism in order to improve the tourist offer. For example, hotels with certain orthopedic aids could be considered accessible or at least partially accessible. The Problem is transportation too. There are no low floor buses or trains or taxis for people with disabilities, which usually makes an offer of a tourist destination in the world.

As regards the offer of customized tourism in the Republic of Croatia, national regulations require that persons with reduced mobility should ensure smooth access and movement, but most facilities still contain

obstacles in the facilities themselves and in their immediate Near. Thus, people with disabilities often encounter a non-adapted height of the thresholds in accommodation units, non-customized beds, bathrooms, and often the problem is serving food served through the so-called "Buffet", which Often people with disabilities are unable to approach.

It is necessary to systematically invest in market research in order to obtain a picture of the needs of potential tourists. It is also necessary to market research in order to obtain information for the adoption of quality and necessary business decisions.

It is a systematic investment in tourist infrastructure so that people with disabilities can be equally able to enjoy all the activities that the destination offers.

As for excursions and vacations, unfortunately, one-day excursions are prevalent, while several days of excursions and vacations for persons with disabilities are rare, and they take place mostly in the organization of associations of persons with disabilities who want to provide their members with adequate rest because State does not yet have a solution to this problem. Often people with disabilities have the only type of vacation and excursions they experience through departures on health rehabilitation, which can be traced through the prism of social and health tourism.

Facilities designed to accommodate people with disabilities are often the only hostels and resorts, such as the Red Cross Resort, city-owned children's resorts and trade unions whose primary goal is to accommodate children and families.

In the Republic of Croatia There are many people with disabilities. According to the type of disability, people with damage to the locomotor system are the most represented, followed by persons with mental disorders, while the third place is occupied by persons with impaired organs (most often organs for movement)

Table 1. Types of disabilities at people with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia

Types of disabilities	Total number	Percentage of total number
Disability of the locomotor system	152.005	29,2
Mental disorder	126.277	24,3
Disability of other organs	120.934	23,2
Central nervous system disorder	95.295	18,3
Mental retardation	22.353	4,3
Visual impairment	17.979	3,5
Speech disorder	16.389	3,1
Hearing impairment	13.206	2,5
Peripheral nervous system disorder	12.262	2,4
Inherited anomalies	152.005	29,2

Source: Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy

For people with disabilities, deciding about travel is not as simple as for other people without disabilities. Namely, a person with disabilities before the journey must study where he is going, if there is a personalized approach to the person with disabilities, he must carefully choose where to settle, what he can visit and what he can experience. For example, the descent of steep stairs to beautiful bays is an impossible mission for wheelchair people. For wheelchair users and entering the sea is a problem if there is no access ramp. Despite the, there are still more beaches that have accessible strollers to enter the sea. In addition to the insured and appropriate approach to the sea, the beach must have a toilet adapted for persons with disabilities, shower, dressing room and sundeck of a certain size. The "Building law" was adopted a part of which "the Ordinance on accessibility of buildings to persons with disabilities and reduced mobility" in which the ramp and access to the beach must look, what the toilet and everything else must look like. Unfortunately, in practice, all places with the blue flag do not meet these legal frameworks. (Source: <https://www.mojevrijeme.hr/magazin/2017/07/10-plaza-za-osobe-s-invaliditetom/>). As for the financing of construction and adaptation of the beaches for people with disabilities, the cities and municipalities on the initiative of civil society associations equip the beaches. The analysis of hotel offers that have adapted content for the reception of Persons with disabilities shows the interest and good will of entrepreneurs to provide accommodation for people with disabilities. Such capacities can also accommodate those guests who need customized architectural approaches and use of all hotel facilities. Hotels and resorts increasingly invest in capacities that will make people with disabilities feel comfortable and free from barriers with a moving ramp, lift, adequate lighting, and access to the parking space.

"Ensuring accessibility achieves an additional level of attractiveness of the destination, the facility for people with disabilities, while giving the hotel an advantage over competition. In order to increase the number of



people with disabilities in tourist trends, it is necessary to work to better inform the hotel staff about the importance of accessibility, because the accessibility of facilities is a major factor for deciding on a destination visit for a person with disabilities" (Westcott 2004).

### 2.3. Financing of Adapted Tourism from the State, Regional and Local Budgets

"Funding from the national, regional and local budgets should also be highlighted as a possibility of financing infrastructure and innovative projects in the field of social tourism. Financing from the State budget is carried out through the call of public calls within the jurisdiction of the respective ministries, whose portfolio partially covers the area of social tourism, which is why this document is recognized as important stakeholders Development of social tourism, and as such can play a role in conducting promotional campaigns and involving users of social tourism. It is also possible to have public private partnerships that would help solve the problem of the availability of public facilities (beaches, squares, promenades, etc.) that make up an integral whole with tourist accommodation. Finally, one of the ways of financing can be co-financing of proposed project proposals by local and regional self-government units" (National program for Development of social tourism 2014, 32). The European Social Fund (ESF) (2014.0 – 2020) is one of the five European structural and investment Funds (ESIF), which is the main objective of economic and social cohesion, namely raising the level of living standards and reducing disparities in the development of European Regions and countries, the European Social Fund regularly calls public invitations for investors to adapt to the space of movement and use of persons with disabilities. In addition to the ESF funds, potential beneficiaries can take advantage of the incentives and benefits of national ministries and donors to improve the services and space on which they are provided to persons with disabilities. "Just the EU funds should be one of the main ways of financing different projects of social tourism development, which creates the possibility of creating new jobs and extending the tourist season. Taking into account examples of good practice from European countries, social tourism activities are successfully taking place in the off-season periods which directly affect the extension of the tourist season" (<http://www.mint.hr/>).

## 3. Case Study

### 3.1. SWOT Analysis of Social Tourism in the Republic of Croatia

In the following table authors present the SWOT analysis of tourism related to people with disabilities.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of social tourism in the Republic of Croatia

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <p>Existence of will and desire to develop this form of tourism.</p> <p>Experience of potential development stakeholders in dealing with social tourism.</p> <p>Established and well-organized social organizations.</p> <p>Existence of a series of objects in state ownership that can be converted to the needs of social tourism.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <p>Inadequate and unsuitable accommodation capacities.</p> <p>Undefined legal regulation.</p> <p>Administrative obstacles in organizing travel and catering services.</p> <p>Lack of subventions for this form of tourism.</p> <p>The absence of a common sales-communication channel.</p> <p>Insufficient cooperation between potential development stakeholders.</p> <p>Lack of quality education programs.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <p>An increase in awareness of social tourism in the EU.</p> <p>The economic situation in the EU and the Republic of Croatia that affects to the increase of potential beneficiaries of social tourism.</p> <p>The possibility of using EU funds.</p> <p>The possibility of opening new jobs.</p> <p>Extension of the tourist season.</p> <p>Socioeconomic revitalization of passive regions.</p> <p>Opportunity for employment of socially vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, economically rescinded persons, etc.).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THREATS</b></p> <p>Some EU countries have exceptionally high level of development of this form of tourism.</p> <p>Misunderstanding of local communities for development of social tourism.</p> <p>Misunderstanding between users of social tourism and other groups of visitors.</p> <p>Possible failures to meet expectations of target group of tourists.</p>

Source: Authors personal insight based on data from Ministry of Tourism (Republic of Croatia)

There are several state-owned facilities that can be reconverted for social tourism purposes. It is necessary to emphasize the weakness of health tourism, which manifests itself through the absence of a common sales-communication channel that combines the overall offer of social tourism in Croatia, which is the result of insufficient cooperation between tourist Organization (National Program for Development of Social tourism 2014).

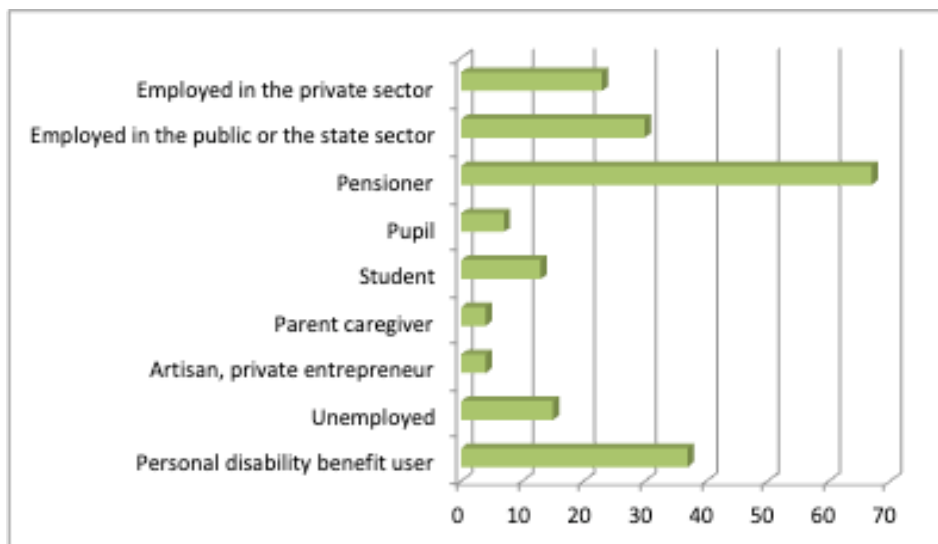
#### 4. Results and Discussion

Empirical research was carried out by using a quantitative data collection with a structured questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was filled in by people with disabilities with the purpose of identifying the satisfaction with tourist offer adapted for people with disabilities in Republic of Croatia. The poll is carried out with the aim of researching the satisfaction of people with disabilities with the current state in tourism. The research shows which problems do people with disabilities encounter in tourism. The poll was conducted on social network Facebook and via e-mail. The questionnaire has 32 questions. On the sample of 200 respondents, there are more women (62%) in comparison with men (38 per cent). Different age groups have been included in the poll. The biggest part of respondents are those between the ages of 31 to 40 (29%), then between 51 and 63 years of age (23%), followed by the ones aged 41 to 50 (21%), then those between 19 and 30 years of age (20%), and the smallest portion are those who are up to 18 years old or 64 or older.

The largest number of respondents comes from Međimurje county (19%), then from Zagreb county (12%) and the ones from Zagreb, Primorsko-goranska county and Split-Dalmatia county (8%). Those are followed by those from Bjelovar-Bilogora county (6%), and with 5% there are respondents from Istria, Krapina-Zagorje county, Koprivnica-Križevci county and Osijek-Baranja county. A smaller number of people have taken a poll from other counties.

The poll has been taken by 44% of single people, 40% of married people, 15% of people living in cohabitation and 1% of widowed people. The most people who have taken the poll live in a four-person household (38%), than are those living in three-person households(28%), followed by people who live in a two-person household, and the smallest number of people live alone or with five or six members of their household. The largest number of respondents were pensioners, then people with personal disability pay (social support), followed by those working in public or state sector, unemployed people, students, and a small number were pupils, craftsmen (artisan and private entrepreneur) and parents of children with disabilities (parents' caregivers).

Figure 1. Work Activity

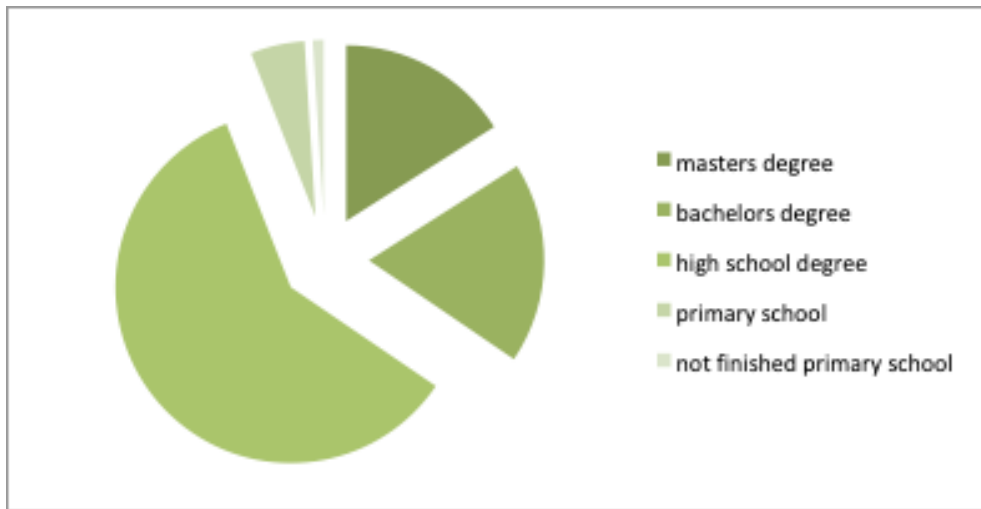


Source: Authors personal insight

Regarding income per person in a household, 80 respondents have answered that their income is between 1001 to 2000 Croatian kuna, 61 ranges from 2001 to 4000 Croatian kuna, 27 have an income above 5001 and 13 earn less than 1000 Croatian kuna.

Most of the respondents have a high school degree (60%) and are followed by a bachelor's degree (18%), then master's degree (16%), while 55% of people have finished primary school and only 1% have not finished primary school (unskilled workers).

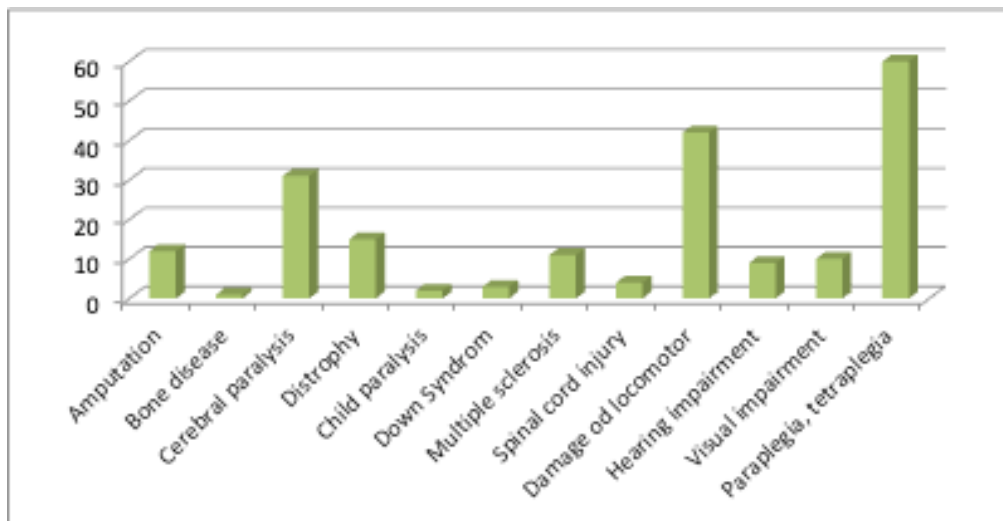
Figure 2. Level of Education



Source: Authors personal insight

The questionnaire was answered by 200 people, and according to the type of disability, the majority of the respondents suffer from paraplegia and tetraplegia (60 people), followed by those with damage of locomotor organs (42 people), cerebral palsy (31 people), people suffering from dystrophy and similar diseases (15), people with multiple sclerosis (11), and those visually impaired, with hearing impairment, spinal injuries, Down syndrome, polio and people with bone disease.

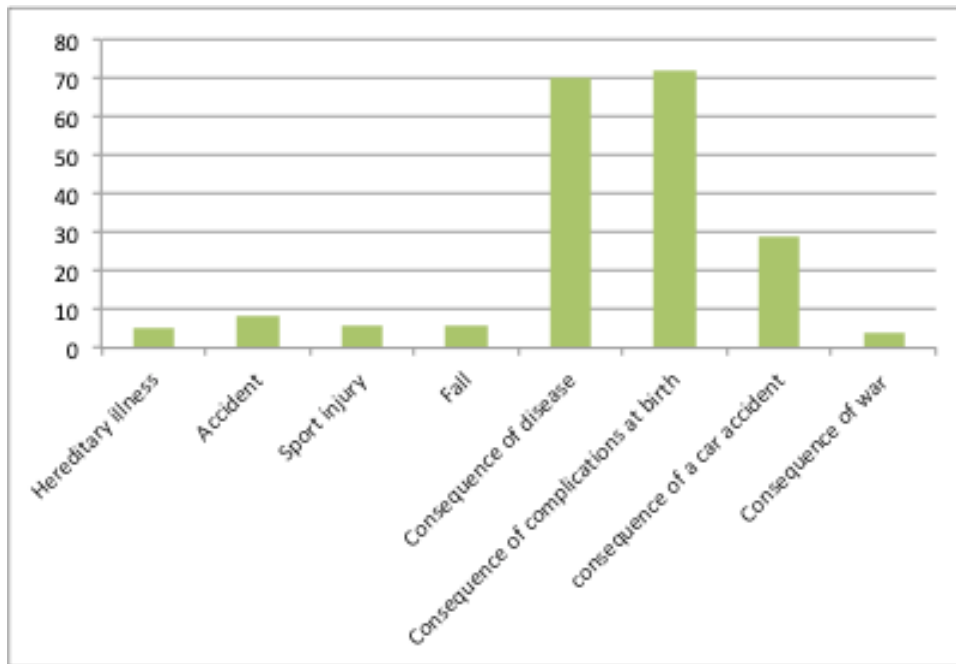
Figure 3. Type of disability



Source: Authors personal insight

The largest number of people say that their disability is a consequence of complications at birth (72), or a consequence of disease (70), followed by people who say that their disability is a consequence of car accidents (29) or other accidents (8). The other causes are falls, hereditary illnesses and consequences of war.

Figure 3. The main cause of disability

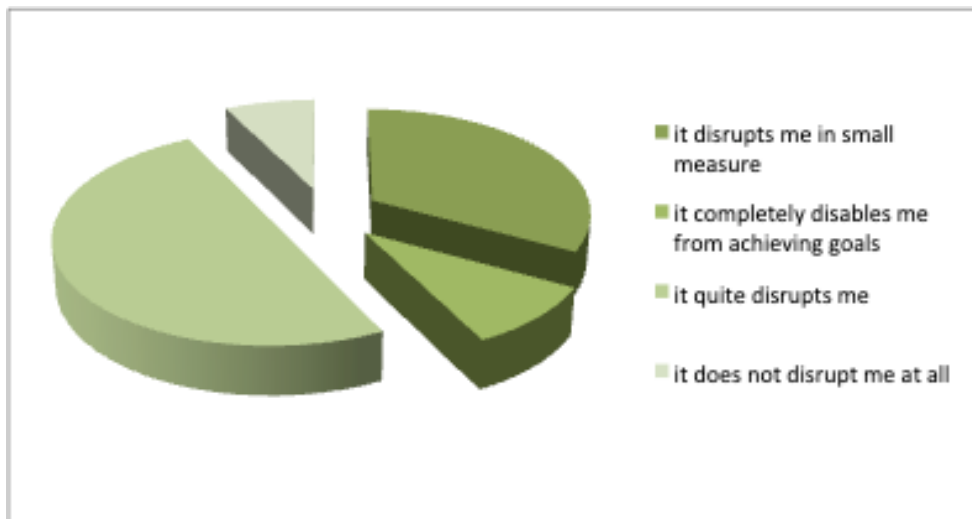


Source: Authors personal insight

Most respondents hold the rate of disability from 91 to 100% (67%), followed by 71 to 90% of disability (16%), 51 to 70% of disability (8%). A smaller number of respondents has a percentage of disability up to 30%.

Out of 200 respondents, 50% agree that disability disrupts them in travel planning, 33% of them state that their disability disrupts them a bit, 9% state that their disability completely disables them from achieving their goals, and only 8% claim that their disability does not disrupt them at all while travelling.

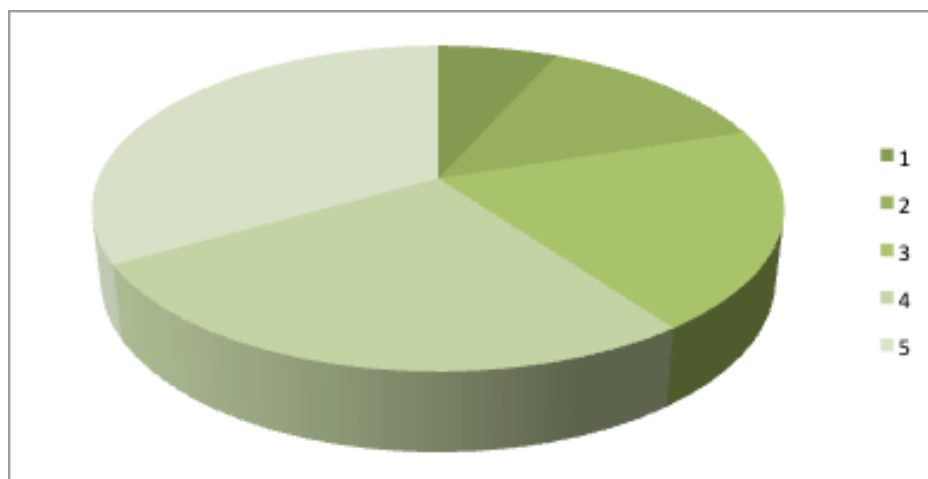
Figure 4. To what extent does your disability disrupt you in travel planning?



Source: Authors personal insight

Out of 200 respondents, 33% of them believe that the state does not care enough for people with disabilities (grade 1), grade 2 is given to state care for people with disabilities by 27%, grade 3 is given by 20%, while only a smaller number has given grade 4 or 5.

Figure 5. Assessment of the state care for people with disabilities



Source: Authors personal insight

Their satisfaction with care given by organizations of civil society is graded with 3 (33%), 28% grade it with 2, while 14% grade it with 1, 13% with grade 4 and only 7% would grade it with 5.

The satisfaction level with the ability of free and secure movement/travel and the accessibility of public amenities (public transport, sound traffic lights, ramps and so on) is graded by 40% of the respondents as a grade 1 (not satisfied at all), 27% with high level of dissatisfaction by giving grade 2; 24% give grade 3, while grades 4 and 5 are given by an extremely small number of respondents.

When asked how often they travel on vacation to tourist destination during the year, 46% of respondents have answered only once a year, 24% do not travel at all, while 19% travel twice a year and 11% three or more times a year.

People with disabilities do not travel because the largest obstacles they face are architectural obstacles (71 answers), lack of finances (66 answers), 20 respondents state that there are no obstacles which would prevent them from travelling, 17 respondents state that their disabilities are preventing them from travelling, 12 are troubled by unsuitability of beaches, 8 are bothered with the lack of custom public transport, 6 do not have a wish to travel and avoid doing so because of that. The majority respondents travel mostly by car (69%), 14% do not travel, 7% travel by bus, while 4% travel by custom vans or planes, and only 2% travel by train.

When asked how they organize a travel for people with disabilities, 68% answered that they organize their travel individually, 12% do not travel, 11% only travels when meeting people from organizations that they belong to, and 9% organize their travel with the help of a tourist agency.

Majority of respondents (68%) search for information regarding travel by themselves, without any help, 21% claim that tourist agencies do not offer enough information about offer adapted to their needs, while 11% receive enough information from tourist agencies.

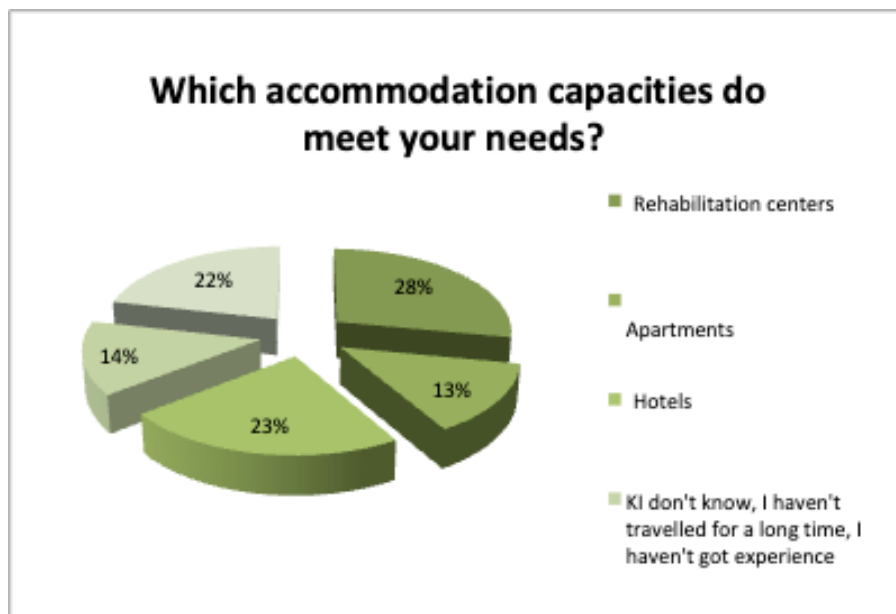
The most common motivation for travelling of people with disabilities is need for relaxation/rest (76 answers), 48 are interested in learning about new places, 33 travel for rehabilitation, 13 travel for health tourism, 10 travel for rest, recreation and fun, 9 travel mostly for fun, 6 people do not travel, while 5 people travel for recreation only.

The largest number of respondents travel to Istria and Northern Adriatic (65 answers), followed by Middle Adriatic/Dalmatia (52 answers), 30 travel to Central Croatia, 12 travel to South Adriatic, 11 have stated that they do not travel, 8 travel to Eastern Croatia, 4 think that Croatia is not suitable for travelling when in a wheel chair, 4 people travel to all of the mentioned places and 3 of them travel across the Adriatic.

Most respondents stay in apartments (98), in hotels (40), rehabilitation centers (34), 14 people do not travel, 10 stay with relatives and friends, 4 stay in all the places mentioned above.

When it comes to the most suitable places to accommodate people with disabilities, 28% of them choose rehabilitation centers, then hotels (23%), 13% apartments, and 14% of cannot answer the question because they have not travelled for a longer period.

Figure 5. Type of accommodation capacities that meet the needs of disabled



Source: Authors personal insight

By analyzing the answers to a question What do you find the most important for the destination to satisfy your needs as a person with disabilities, it can be concluded that people with disabilities state that providing access (architectural solutions) is the most important thing, followed by custom public transport, custom beaches with free deckchairs because people with disabilities are having trouble with getting up from the ground, and it is easier to do it from a deckchair. They also mention solutions for blind and visually impaired people, as well as educating employers, discounts on tickets due to low incomes of people with disabilities.

Respondents suggest that Croatia, based on the Hungarian model, should in cooperation with hotels activate vouchers for people with disabilities which would give them and their families a discount for tourist services up to 50%, because it would make it easier for them to use tourist services.

Satisfaction of people with disabilities with adjusted tourist accommodation is: 39% grade it with 3, 29% with 2, 17% with 4, 14% with 1 and only 1% grade their satisfaction with 5.

Majority, (73%) are very satisfied with accessibility and adjustment of tourist accommodation, 64% have given them grade 3, 35% have given 1, 26% have given grade 2 and only 2% of have given grade 5.

By analyzing the answers to the question Which obstacles do you encounter in tourist destinations, we can conclude that the biggest problem that people with disabilities face in tourist destinations are nonconformity/no adjustment and unavailability of services and architectural obstacles, followed by the lack of understanding from tourist workers, as well as their unkindness.

By analyzing the answers to the question connected to giving suggestions for improving access to tourist attractions for people with disabilities, authors come to the following conclusion; it is necessary to educate tour guides for work with people with disabilities, reduce architectural obstacles, introduce more tactile tracks, enabling people to go to the beach with their guide dogs, include more volunteers and similar things that will offer them appropriate service delivery.

By analyzing positive and negative examples of adjustment of tourist accommodation in Croatia, author can distinguish the following: the good example are the beaches which have accessibility, spa, wellness and rehabilitation centers. Unfortunately, this question did not get a lot of answers because people mostly think that everything is still not accessible enough. The respondents are satisfied with airlines where they can register as a wheelchair traveler.

Key factors of accessibility are easy access to entrances and exits of hotels, lifts, the height of the reception desk, easy access to a restaurant, a reserved parking space, a certain bed size, as well as obligatory education of employees. The needs of people with disabilities differ from one person to the other, depending on the type of disability. The needs of people with reduced mobility are very different from the needs of deaf or hearing-impaired people or the blind for whom it is necessary to ensure the accessibility of information in Braille or in some audio format.

According to the responses, examples of good practice are cave Vrelo in Fuzine, freshwater aquarium in Karlovac, and castle Luznica near Zapresic that can be visited in a wheelchair and has ramps, a lift and a toilet for people with disabilities.

As a bad example they consider Plitvice lakes, some of the hotels in the Adriatic, serving food „buffet “style, nonconformity/no adjustment of accommodation, churches and museums.

By analyzing positive and negative examples of accessibility of tourist accommodation in the EU, the following conclusion can be given; respondents consider Germany as a country with well-designed ramps and tactile boards for the blind as well as Vancouver as a good example of orderliness of tourist accommodation. Respondents agree that other countries have paid more attention to that than Croatia. They find Toledo, Berlin and Sweden as excellent examples of accessible tourism for people with disabilities. The research was carried out on the sample of 200 respondents that represent a small number in relation to all the people with disabilities living in Croatia. The aggravating circumstance of the research is that the poll was distributed on Facebook and via e-mail, and not all the people with disabilities use them. The previous may be considered as a limitation of the research.

Data acquired during the research, as well as the interpretation of conducted survey show the low adaptation of the Croatian tourist offer to persons with disabilities, as well as the dissatisfaction of the disabled persons with the proposed offer. Croatia has a great potential and it is recognized as a tourist destination all around the world. It has a rich variety of cultural-historic heritage, it is well connected with important European transport corridors but in order to become competitive in the field of tourism adapted to people with disabilities, Croatia still must work hard and invest in accessibility. The Republic of Croatia must be promoted as a destination opened for all tourists, regardless of the difficulties they may have. Tourist agencies must make tourist plans for people with disabilities. It is true that people with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia have low incomes so they cannot afford a vacation in hotels, so it is necessary to invest in hostels and apartments and adapt them to all market demands. The laws need to be changed, research and analysis should be done. Those who violate laws and regulations, especially those who discriminate against people with disabilities, should be sanctioned by considering them as undesirable tourists.

If people with disabilities do not find accommodation that allows them easy access and unhindered travel, they will not stay at that destination. For example, a small number of hotels offer the complete accessibility concept that includes the adaptability of entry, elevators, table height, non-threshold rooms, custom bathrooms and showers and the like. It is extremely important to make efforts and educate tourist workers to remove stereotypes about people with disabilities and to educate people working for disabled people because they have specific needs, just like every tourist wants to enjoy in tourism and meet their tourist needs.

Staff who is well - educated will achieve the quality of the tourist service that the guest will appreciate and will make them come back. In addition, an object or destination that recognizes a person with disabilities and their needs becomes a hotel that has created a positive image of itself as an object ready to accommodate people with disabilities.

There is room for progress and change, especially nowadays, when we witness new initiatives in tourism for people with disabilities, such as increasingly adapting facilities and public spaces, as well as educating tourists employees about disability management.

Progress in the cooperation between non-governmental organizations, ministries and the tourism sector in the promotion of tourism for people with disabilities is also visible.

## Conclusion

Tourism, as well as other sectors of the economy, must follow world trends in supply and demand for services to meet the needs of every tourist, regardless of his health. Adapting to the needs of individual users will become a fundamental policy of all economic entities of our economy, whether they are directly involved in tourism or not.

People with disabilities may and want to participate equally in social activities and remove the attitudes of others towards them. People with disabilities are often faced with limited selections of tourist destinations. In countries where the importance of accessible tourism is recognized, workforce training for people with disabilities is being worked out.

In order to ensure long-term changes, appropriate plans and knowledge to manage tourist destinations are needed. The tourism development perspective tailored to the needs of each individual depends on the ability of the public sector to manage tourism in the best possible way, by taking the methods that will enable them greater economic benefits and profits while at the same time adapting to the requirements of market competition. The tourism development perspective customized to the needs of each individual depends on the ability of the public

sector to manage tourism in the best possible way, by taking the methods that will enable them greater economic benefits and profits while at the same time adapting to the requirements of market competition. It is necessary to focus on new forms of tourism that are more appropriate to the needs of people with any kind of difficulty. In order to ensure a custom-made tourism for people with disabilities, it would be necessary to encourage the cooperation of health institutions, tourist communities, family farms, small business owners, apartment renters, who would offer a shared supply of resources to people with disabilities.

In addition to the physical barriers, it is necessary to work on removing the so-called mental barriers and educate tourist staff on people with disabilities, because although having specific needs with regard to the type of disability, people with disabilities want, like every other customer in tourism, their tourist needs to be met. Educated staff raises the quality of service and the satisfaction of the guest, and satisfied guest is the one who always returns. Besides, a tourist facility that takes care of people with disabilities and their needs creates a positive image of society, especially recently, when we witness new initiatives in tourism for people with disabilities.

Through these researches, the academic community also could deepen the awareness of people with disabilities and their position in society.

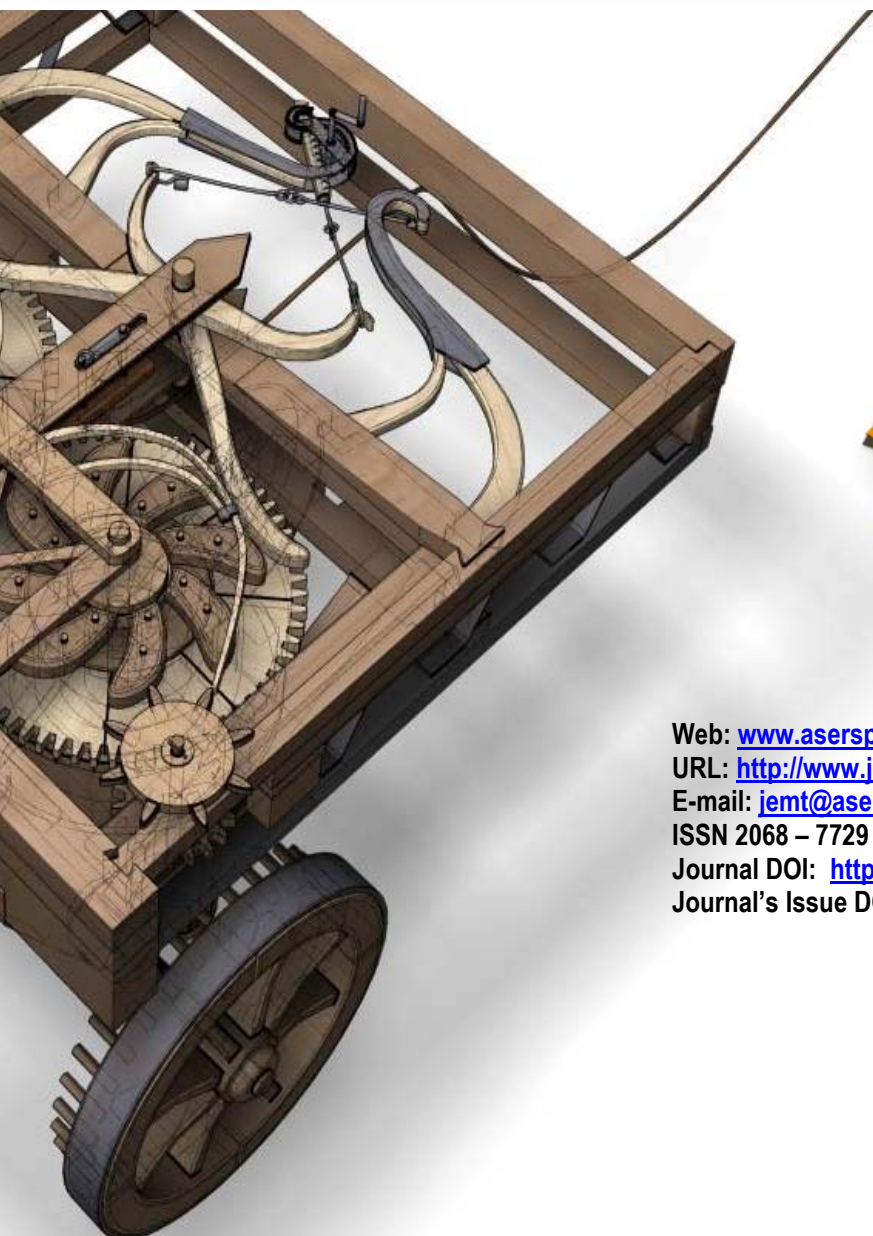
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