

A Greek EcoMuseum for all

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TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE INTERPRETATION OF VIKOS-AOOS GLOBAL GEOPARK BY THE PROJECT "LISTEN-TOUCH-FEEL" A PROJECT OF ZAGORI ECOMUSEUM

The notion of cultural accessibility has a central role in integrated heritage management policies and especially in the management of UNESCO nominated sites. Within this framework the Zagori Ecomuseum implemented the educational pilot project "Listen-Touch-Feel", aimed at engaging people with special needs, especially the visually impaired, with the natural and cultural heritage in the Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark.

EcoMuseum Zagori one of the major socially driven and local development social enterprises in the Epirus region, operates in compliance with UNESCO's cultural policies by implementing awareness raising and capacity building community-led programmes, in the cultural landscape of Zagori including the Vikos-Aoos Geopark.

The main idea was to design an innovative programme for a sensitive and socially marginalized group such as the visually impaired, by combining technological with interactive visual methods such as 3D printing technology and soundscape walks. More specifically, traditional historic stone bridges, cultural landmarks in the Geopark were scaled down to 3D printed models along with their surrounding landscape, such as the Noutsos- Kokkoris Bridge built in 1750, for interpretation by touch and recorded soundscapes.

The educational programme's originality lies in the enhanced personal experience of an educational walk in the in-situ monuments of the Geopark, with interactive methods that improve the spatial perception of visually impaired people through touch and hearing.

METHODOLOGY

The interpretive walk's combines personal experience with a 3D representation of the route's geomorphology and an audio description with audio stimuli which is designed for small groups.

The project was implemented in three stages.

Stage_1, Capacity Building and Training

Informational seminars were held online to inform the wider public regarding the new technological possibilities for visually impaired people to access cultural landscapes and products at all educational levels by using programmes from open-source or commercial technologies and bodies.

Stage _2. On-site implementation

The groups took part in explanatory walks in nature within the cultural landscape of the Geopark, including an interpretive sound recorded tour on a path that is part of the area's natural and cultural heritage. Apart from the personal landscape experience through the interpretive walks, the 3D depiction of the stone bridges and route's geomorphology enabled contact with the monuments and the landscape through touch, as is done with works of art.

Stage_3.

In the final part of the project, all the routes were accompanied by an audio description (narration of the visual content) and audio stimuli from the soundscape collection, to create a virtual enhanced tour.

THE SOUNDSCAPE WALK EXPERIENCE

The project utilized the soundscape methodology as a tool to enhance the lack of vision in blind people through acoustics. Even more, the groups were encouraged to experiment in finding solutions to create ecologically balanced soundscapes in which the human community and its sound environment are in harmony, according to the principles of acoustic ecology. The expected result was the diffusion of technological possibilities for the services of visually impaired people, with as much participation as possible from beneficiaries such as directly concerned blind people, trainers, and educators.

