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SITE

Output 1.1

Strategy for the implementation of more inclusive communication and for the improvement of wayfinding systems and public spaces in accordance with the principles of the Universal Design

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction

SITE (Shaping Inclusive Tourist Experiences) is a project aimed at promoting accessible tourism within the Interreg Italy–Croatia 2021–2027 cross-border cooperation programme.

The growing elderly population, combined with the increasing demand for accessible tourism, highlights the importance of this initiative. The project seeks not only to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, but also to ensure a more comfortable and inclusive travel experience for senior citizens, families with young children and the general population including the ones with special needs. This is pursued through the implementation of Universal Design (UD) principles, which aim to create environments, products and services that can be used by all people, regardless of age, ability or disability.

The main objective of the project is to reduce both physical and digital access barriers by developing a series of coordinated activities aimed at improving the accessibility of public and tourist spaces. These activities include, for example, enhancing the usability of websites by making textual and visual content more accessible to diverse audiences, and developing more intuitive wayfinding systems for key public locations such as airports, museums, historic city centres and waterfronts. By addressing accessibility from both a physical and digital perspective, SITE aims to contribute to the creation of tourism environments that are welcoming and usable for everyone from a public authorities point of view.

The project actions carried out so far have targeted public authorities responsible for managing spaces and services. Their goal is to support these actors in making informed decisions on how and when to intervene in order to improve accessibility in both the short and long term, in line with the principles of Universal Design. In this perspective, UD should not be considered a final outcome, but rather a continuous process based on awareness-raising, training, real-world testing and the analysis of actual user needs.

UD can be defined as the design and composition of environments so that they can be accessed, understood and used, to the greatest extent possible, by all people regardless of age, size, ability or disability. By taking into account the diversity of users throughout the design process, UD contributes to the creation of environments, services and IT solutions that meet the needs of a wide range of people, eliminating barriers and making spaces easier and safer to use. This approach is based on the principle that environments should be designed to be usable by everyone without the need for adaptation or specialised solutions, recognising that when design works for the most diverse users, everyone benefits (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2024).

To operationalise the concept of UD, seven guiding principles have been developed, offering practical criteria to inform inclusive design decisions (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2024):

- **Equitable use** – the design is useful and accessible to people with diverse abilities.
- **Flexibility in use** – the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Simple and intuitive use** – the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience or knowledge.
- **Perceptible information** – the design communicates necessary information effectively to the user.
- **Tolerance for error** – the design minimises risks and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- **Low physical effort** – the design can be used efficiently and comfortably with minimal fatigue.
- **Size and space for approach and use** – appropriate space is provided for access, reach and use regardless of body size or mobility.

It is important to acknowledge that achieving full accessibility cannot happen overnight. Transformation requires time, resources and a well-structured action plan. For this reason, data collection, identification of critical issues and the development of appropriate solutions represent essential steps in the process. Once these elements have been defined, it becomes necessary to prioritise interventions by considering both the urgency of needs and the technical and economic feasibility of the proposed actions.

Defining priorities is not always straightforward. To support this process, the SITE project has developed **practical tools** and **shared methodologies**, while also promoting continuous dialogue among project partners. This collaborative approach has led to the development of an **integrated and concrete strategy** designed to guide decision-makers in the progressive adoption of inclusive and universally accessible solutions.

The strategy aims to:

- highlight the current demand for Universal Design solutions within the tourism sector, demonstrating how this approach can expand opportunities for travel for all and generate positive economic impacts;
- propose concrete measures to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of tourism destinations, ensuring that citizens and visitors can enjoy travel experiences easily and independently;
- serve as a practical guide for policy makers, technicians and stakeholders in coordinating efforts and implementing inclusive tourism systems, in line with the European Union’s commitment to a more accessible tourism sector.

The SITE project was developed to address the existing awareness gap regarding the impact that service design and communication choices can have—positively or negatively—on the accessibility of spaces, services and information. The initiative therefore combines training and awareness-raising activities for those involved in the management of tourism spaces and services with the provision of tools and methodologies to assess accessibility and identify areas for improvement in line with the principles of Universal Design.

The strategy is presented in two complementary documents, **Part A** and **Part B**, which should be read and considered together.

Part A (chapter 1 - 7) focuses on the strategic and conceptual framework of the SITE project. It outlines the context of accessible tourism within the Italy–Croatia cross-border area, presents the principles of UD as a guiding approach, and describes the methodological framework developed to support public authorities and their local stakeholders in improving accessibility in tourism destinations.

Part B (chapter 8 - 13) translates this framework into more operational guidance. It presents the practical tools, recommendations and implementation pathways developed within the SITE project to support decision-makers, technicians and stakeholders in planning and prioritising accessibility interventions in tourism environments.

Together, the two documents provide both the strategic vision and the practical guidance needed to support the progressive adoption of inclusive and universally accessible tourism systems.

This document examines the theme of accessible tourism from an integrated perspective, linking the European policy and strategic framework with operational challenges and emerging opportunities at the regional level, in order to contribute to the definition of more inclusive, sustainable, and competitive tourism development models.

In this regard, *Chapter 1* introduces the reference context by analysing the main challenges and the European policy framework for accessible tourism. *Chapter 2* explores the conceptual shift from “accessible tourism” to the broader notion of “tourism for all”, illustrating the principles of Universal Design and their relevance for the planning and management of tourism physical and digital systems. *Chapter 3* presents a state-of-play analysis in the Interreg Italy–Croatia Programme area, highlighting current challenges, gaps, and development opportunities. Building on this, *Chapter 4* examines the main target groups and the known and partly unexplored demand for accessibility in tourism, considering direct and indirect beneficiaries, market dynamics, and the societal impact associated with the adoption of inclusive solutions. *Chapter 5* provides a review of existing solutions and best practices at the European and international levels, complemented by

evidence from the Living Catalogue developed within the framework of the project. *Chapter 6* describes the SITE methods and tools, including assessment and analysis tools, co-design and stakeholder engagement approaches, as well as training, awareness-raising, monitoring, and feedback tools. *Chapter 7* identifies the key strategic areas for enhancing accessibility, in line with the SITE Strategy and its related recommendations.

Part A - Strategic and Methodological Framework

1. Context, challenges and policy framework for accessible tourism in Europe

The tourism industry is undergoing a period of rapid expansion across Europe and represents a significant driver of employment and economic growth for many countries in the region. The sector provides employment for approximately 17 million people and contributes around 10% to the European Union's gross domestic product. However, European tourism also faces a number of important challenges, including the need to continuously innovate and improve the quality and inclusiveness of tourism services.

In this context, accessible tourism represents one of the key challenges for the sector. Accessibility is not merely a matter of convenience, but a fundamental right that enables individuals with disabilities or special needs to exercise their freedom of movement and participate fully in social and cultural life. As emphasised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), access to tourism, together with accessible information and built environments, is essential for people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of society.

Over the past two decades, the European Union has progressively integrated the concept of accessible tourism into its policy framework. Between 2001 and 2015, several initiatives were launched to promote data collection, protect the rights of persons with disabilities, develop dedicated strategies and studies, and reward best practices aimed at making tourism more inclusive and sustainable. Building on these earlier commitments, the **EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030** further strengthens the Union's dedication to accessible tourism by promoting equal access to travel, leisure and cultural experiences across all Member States. The strategy emphasises the importance of removing both physical and digital barriers while fostering a more inclusive and participatory society.

Despite this progress, the concept of "accessible tourism" has often focused primarily on specific groups, such as people with mobility, visual, hearing or cognitive impairments, as well as older adults. More recently, however, a broader and more inclusive perspective has emerged, commonly referred to as **"tourism for all"**. This approach recognises that accessibility should be considered throughout the entire tourism experience, including accessible environments, products and services, accessible destinations, and accessible information. Beneficiaries therefore extend beyond people with disabilities to include senior citizens, families with young children and, more generally, the wider population. Moreover, it is increasingly acknowledged that anyone may experience temporary limitations or situational barriers, making accessibility relevant for all users.

The growing focus on accessible tourism has also been reflected in a range of European policy initiatives and programmes aimed at improving the quality of tourism services and enhancing the overall potential of the sector. Since the early 2000s, the European Union has promoted several initiatives that have contributed to strengthening accessibility in tourism, as summarised in the table below.

Year	Initiative	Link
2001	**Working together for the future of European tourism,** Commission communication to the council, the european parliament, the economic and social committee and the committee of the regions	link
2004	**Improving information on accessible tourism for disabled people,** European Commission	link
2010	**European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion**	link
2010	**Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,** European Commission	link
2010-2020	**European Disability Strategy 2010-2020**	link
2010	**Access City Award,** European Commission	link
2014	**Skills Requirements in Accessible Tourism;** **Market demand and Economic Impact of Accessible Tourism (with projections to 2020);** **Mapping the Supply and performance Check of Accessible Tourism Services in Europe**	link link link
2021-2030	**European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030**	link

Tab. 1 Initiatives promoted by EU to enhance accessibility in tourism

In recent years, the promotion of accessible tourism has also been supported through numerous EU-funded projects aimed at fostering cooperation between countries and regions. Many European territories have developed initiatives and pilot projects designed to improve accessibility in tourism destinations, often through the exchange of knowledge, the development of innovative tools, and the testing of new approaches.

Evidence of this growing commitment can also be observed within the Interreg programmes. Data available from the keep.eu portal indicate that a large number of Interreg projects funded since 2000 have addressed themes related to tourism (5545 projects), cultural heritage and the arts (5195 projects). Among these, 244 projects focused

on social inclusion and equal opportunities, highlighting the increasing relevance of accessibility within tourism development policies.

This perspective is further reinforced by broader international frameworks, including the EU strategy for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and the **Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which underline the economic potential of accessibility measures alongside their social benefits.

In addition to institutional initiatives, several organisations advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities and special needs have contributed to advancing accessible tourism by developing practical tools and resources. These efforts include the production of detailed information, guidelines and recommendation systems designed to support the accessibility of tourism services and destinations. Collaboration among organisations working in different areas of disability and accessible tourism has also led to the publication of technical manuals and collections of good practices aimed at supporting stakeholders in the implementation of accessible tourism solutions (World Tourism Organization, 2016).

Further details on this section are provided in Deliverable *D1.2.1 – Market Research on Universal Design in Tourism*. In this evolving context, the concept of accessibility in tourism is increasingly shifting towards a broader and more inclusive perspective. This transition, together with the growing relevance of Universal Design principles, is explored in the following chapter.

2. Accessible tourism and Universal Design

As highlighted in Deliverable *D1.2.3 - Report on the Results of Past Projects*, it is important to clarify several terminological aspects that characterise the context in which the SITE project operates. In particular, it is useful to define what is meant by "accessible tourism", as the meaning of the term "accessibility" has evolved significantly over time, gradually expanding to encompass a broader range of needs, users and contexts.

2.1 From "accessible tourism" to "tourism for all"

Although the concept of accessibility has evolved significantly over the years, its practical interpretation—particularly within the tourism sector—often remains relatively limited. The term "accessible tourism" is still frequently associated with the adaptation of environments and services to meet the needs of people with disabilities. This perspective tends to frame accessibility as a niche or a list of specialised requirements rather than as a systemic quality of tourism systems.

Such an interpretation can limit the way inclusiveness is addressed by tourism stakeholders. In many cases, efforts to promote more inclusive tourism models focus primarily on compliance-driven accessibility measures targeting specific user groups, rather than adopting broader design approaches capable of benefiting the entire population. As a consequence, the potential of more comprehensive frameworks—such as Universal Design, which promotes environments, services and experiences that can be used by all people regardless of age, ability or condition—often remains underexploited.

One example of a universal solution – which therefore does not address the accessibility issues faced by a single, specific category of users – is the installation of lifts or platform lifts, which enable anyone (including wheelchair users, older people, and families with children and pushchairs) to bridge a gap in level.

Clarifying this distinction is therefore essential in order to understand how the prevailing use of the term "accessible tourism" may inadvertently constrain innovation and market development, despite the broader social and economic benefits that could result from the adoption of a more universal approach.

2.2 Universal Design principles and their relevance for tourism systems

Within tourism systems, the principles of Universal Design can be operationalised as methodological tools to support the assessment and progressive improvement of accessibility and inclusiveness across destinations. Moving beyond their traditional

interpretation as purely design-oriented recommendations, these principles can also serve as structured reference criteria for evaluating how places, services, infrastructures and communication tools respond to the needs of a diverse range of users throughout the tourism experience.

From a governance and management perspective, UD principles can therefore be translated into practical checklists or analytical frameworks that enable tourism stakeholders— especially public authorities and service providers —to identify existing barriers, usability gaps and critical issues affecting different user groups. This process facilitates a shared understanding of accessibility challenges and supports evidence-based decision-making when planning improvement actions.

When integrated into participatory assessment processes, these principles can also provide a common language for stakeholder's engagement, enabling co-design activities aimed at prioritising interventions and aligning accessibility improvements with local needs and operational constraints. In this way, UD becomes not only a design approach, but also a strategic planning and monitoring tool supporting the transition towards more inclusive tourism systems.

This approach is currently being tested within the SITE project, where UD principles are applied as guiding criteria to assess the current level of accessibility of services and places, inform co-design processes, and support the development of context-specific improvement pathways.

The Seven Principles of Universal Design

Principle 1 – Equitable Use
Key question: Can all users, regardless of their abilities, use the space equally?
Evaluation criteria: The environment should provide the same means of use for everyone. For example, ramps should be available alongside stairs, and signage should include both visual and tactile elements (such as braille). The design should avoid stigmatising users with specific needs.

Principle 2 – Flexibility in Use
Key question: Does the environment accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and abilities?
Evaluation criteria: The space should offer different ways to interact with and use it. Examples include adjustable seating in public spaces, different types of workstations, or alternative navigation methods such as visual, auditory and tactile cues.

Principle 3 – Simple and Intuitive Use
Key question: Is the environment easy to understand and use for all users, regardless of

their experience, knowledge, language skills or concentration levels?
Evaluation criteria: The design should minimise complexity by providing clear instructions and avoiding unnecessary steps. Information should be easy to follow for all users.

Principle 4 – Perceptible Information
Key question: Is information communicated effectively to all users, regardless of sensory abilities?
Evaluation criteria: Information should be presented in multiple formats (e.g. visual, auditory and tactile) so that it can be perceived by users with different sensory abilities. Signage, alarms and other communicative elements should therefore be easily perceivable.

Principle 5 – Tolerance for Error
Key question: Does the design minimise hazards and adverse consequences for all users?
Evaluation criteria: The environment should be designed to reduce the risk of accidents or errors, for example through warning systems or fail-safe mechanisms.

Principle 6 – Low Physical Effort
Key question: Can the environment be used efficiently and comfortably with minimal physical effort?
Evaluation criteria: Design elements should require little or no force to operate. Actions such as pushing, pulling or turning should be minimised, and spaces should be designed to reduce fatigue and strain, particularly for users with limited strength or mobility.

Principle 7 – Size and Space for Approach and Use
Key question: Does the environment provide adequate space for use regardless of the user's body size, posture or mobility?
Evaluation criteria: Spaces should allow users to approach, reach and interact with objects or devices whether they are sitting, standing or using mobility aids. Pathways and doors should be wide enough for wheelchairs, and interactive elements should be accessible to people of different heights and abilities.

Adopting the principles of UD brings several benefits to tourism systems. These include:

- greater inclusion of visitors within tourism experiences and services;
- higher quality services for a wider range of users;
- safer environments, services and infrastructures;
- more sustainable environments, services and solutions;
- reduced need for costly adaptations or redesign interventions;
- improved long-term economic returns.

For this reason, understanding—through data and systematic assessment—how to effectively implement measures that improve accessibility in tourism environments is

essential. Enhancing accessibility not only benefits people with disabilities or specific needs, but also expands tourism opportunities for a broader range of visitors, ultimately improving the overall quality of the tourism experience and generating positive economic impacts for destinations.

3. State of play in the Interreg Italy-Croatia Region

Several challenges still affect the development of accessible tourism in the Italy–Croatia cross-border region. These include uneven enforcement of accessibility standards, gaps in technical requirements, limitations in existing infrastructure, and insufficient availability of accessible information in multiple formats.

At the European level, the European Disability Strategy 2021–2030 provides a comprehensive framework to promote accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities across the European Union. The Strategy defines guidelines and objectives that Member States can implement to improve accessibility and support the implementation of the European Accessibility Act. Within this framework, Universal Design is promoted as an approach that encourages the creation of environments, products and services usable by everyone—including persons with disabilities—without the need for adaptation.

Globally, an estimated 1.3 billion people—around 16% of the world's population—live with a significant permanent or temporary disability. This number is expected to increase due to longer life expectancy and the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Persons with disabilities represent a highly diverse group, and factors such as age, gender, socio-economic conditions and cultural background influence both their life experiences and their health needs. In general, people with disabilities face greater limitations in everyday functioning than the rest of the population (WHO, 2023).

According to the World Health Organization, persons with disabilities often experience stigma, discrimination, poverty and exclusion from education and employment. In addition, they encounter significant barriers when accessing transport systems, which are reported to be up to 15 times more difficult to use compared to people without disabilities.

In Italy, data collected by the ISTAT indicate that more than 21% of the population—approximately 12.6 million people—experience limitations in their usual activities. The prevalence of disability is strongly linked to ageing: the demographic group most affected is the elderly population, with the average age of people experiencing severe limitations in daily activities reaching 67.1 years (ISTAT, 2022).

Tourism data also highlight the relevance of accessibility needs within the travel market. In 2021, tourists with special needs accounted for 37.8% of total travellers in Italy, including families with children, elderly travellers, and people with motor or sensory disabilities (ENIT, 2023). In the same year, about 18% of Italian accommodation facilities reported hosting guests with disabilities, a share that increases to 29.7% among hotel establishments (ENIT, 2023).

In Croatia, according to the Croatian Institute of Public Health, there were 586,153 persons with disabilities in 2021, representing approximately 14.4% of the total population. Among them, 45% are of working age (20–64 years), while 44% belong to the 65+ age group. Children with disabilities represent around 11% of the total population with disabilities.

Travel behaviour also differs significantly between people with and without disabilities. Research shows that persons with disabilities tend to travel less frequently and often experience more difficulties during trips. Around 25% of travellers with disabilities report difficulties during trips, compared with about 10% of travellers without disabilities (UK Government, 2017).

Demographic trends further reinforce the importance of accessibility in tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization, by 2050 one in six people worldwide will be over the age of 65, with Europe and North America expected to reach one in four. More than 46% of people over 60 already live with some form of disability. This trend highlights the growing economic potential of accessible tourism, as many travellers with disabilities travel accompanied by two or three additional people. Within the European Union, the potential market related to accessible tourism is estimated at over 80 million people, rising to around 130 million when elderly travellers and accompanying persons are included.

Recent tourism data further confirm this trend. Based on global tourism data for 2023, at least 257 million tourists—approximately one in five travellers—have specific accessibility requirements when travelling. These needs concern several aspects of the tourism experience, including transportation, accommodation, attractions and experiences, customer service, and accessible information about tourism services (ENAT, 2024).

3.1 Current challenges, gaps and opportunities

Despite the growing policy attention to accessibility and the increasing recognition of its social and economic benefits, several structural challenges still affect the development of accessible tourism in the Italy–Croatia cross-border area.

One of the main challenges concerns the heterogeneity of accessibility standards and their implementation across territories. Although both Italy and Croatia have adopted regulatory frameworks addressing accessibility in the built environment and public services, the

practical enforcement of these standards remains uneven. Differences in technical requirements, monitoring mechanisms and implementation capacities often result in fragmented accessibility conditions across tourism destinations.

Another important issue relates to existing tourism infrastructure is that many tourism facilities and urban environments were developed before accessibility requirements became a central element of planning policies. Historic city centres, cultural heritage sites and waterfront areas—key tourism assets in the Italy–Croatia region—often present structural constraints that make accessibility improvements technically complex and expensive and require carefully designed interventions.

Accessibility challenges are not limited to the physical environment. Information and communication accessibility remain crucial aspects of the tourism experience. Many tourism services still lack accessible websites, clear and readable information, or communication formats suitable for users with different sensory or cognitive needs. These barriers can significantly limit the ability of visitors to feel safe when independently planning and enjoy their travel experience.

At the same time, the data presented in this chapter highlight several important opportunities for tourism systems in the region. Demographic trends—particularly population ageing and the increasing number of travellers with specific access requirements—indicate the rapid growth of this important market segment. Accessible tourism therefore represents not only a matter of social inclusion but also a strategic opportunity for destinations aiming to diversify their tourism offer and strengthen their competitiveness.

Moreover, the increasing availability of European policy frameworks, funding programmes and cross-border cooperation initiatives—such as Interreg projects—creates favourable conditions for testing innovative approaches and developing shared methodologies to improve accessibility in tourism destinations.

In this context, adopting integrated approaches based on Universal Design principles can help destinations address accessibility challenges in a more systematic and forward-looking way. Rather than focusing only on isolated accessibility measures, this perspective encourages the progressive transformation of tourism systems by considering accessibility as a transversal quality of environments, services and experiences.

The SITE project builds on this approach by developing tools, methodologies and participatory processes designed to support stakeholders in identifying accessibility gaps, prioritising interventions and progressively improving the inclusiveness of tourism destinations in the Italy–Croatia area.

4. Target groups and demand for Universal Design in tourism

As highlighted in Deliverable *D1.2.1 – Market Research on Universal Design in Tourism*, understanding the demand for UD in tourism requires a clear identification of the target groups whose needs shape accessibility and inclusivity requirements across the sector. Universal Design is not limited to a specific niche market; rather, it responds to the diverse and evolving characteristics of the travelling population. Demographic changes, increased awareness of rights and inclusion, and shifting consumer expectations are redefining what quality tourism services mean today.

Designing tourism products and services according to UD principles enables destinations, operators, and service providers to address a broad spectrum of users, enhancing overall quality, competitiveness, and sustainability. Importantly: accessibility should not be perceived as a specialised or marginal intervention, but as a strategic approach that benefits a wide range of travellers, improving usability, safety, comfort, and overall experience for all.

The main target groups that particularly drive the demand for UD in tourism include:

- **People with disabilities and impairments**, who represent a substantial and growing demographic cluster within the tourism sector. This group includes individuals with mobility issues, sensory impairments, cognitive disabilities, and other conditions that can affect their travel experience. Implementing Universal Design in tourism ensures that facilities, services, and environments are accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities.
- **Elderly**. The elderly population is rapidly increasing worldwide. By 2050, it is expected that one out of six people will be over the age of 65. This demographic cluster is particularly important for the tourism industry as older adults often have the time and resources to travel. Universal Design caters to the needs of older adults by ensuring that travel environments are safe, comfortable, and accessible.
- **Families with children** are a significant segment of the tourism market. Traveling with children, especially the youngest ones, present unique challenges that can be alleviated through Universal Design. Universal Design enhances the travel experience for families by creating environments that are safe, convenient, and enjoyable for both children and parents.
- **People with food allergies and special dietary requirements** represent an important and often overlooked demographic cluster in the tourism sector. This group includes individuals who must adhere to specific dietary restrictions due to allergies, intolerances, or health conditions. Implementing Universal Design in the

context of food services within tourism ensures that dietary needs are met safely and inclusively.

In addition to these categories, there are many others that also benefit from Universal Design. The primary goal of UD is to anticipate and accommodate the diverse needs of all potential users, ensuring that accessibility and inclusivity extend beyond the conventional demographics. By adopting a proactive approach, UD not only enhances the experience for individuals with specific needs but also fosters an environment where everyone can enjoy tourism equally. This holistic perspective emphasizes that every traveler, regardless of age, ability, or circumstance, deserves access to quality experiences that are safe, comfortable, and enjoyable.

5. Existing solutions and good practices

This section analyses relevant European and international best practices together with key insights derived from the project's Living Catalogue, with the purpose of identifying transferable approaches, methodologies, and design solutions that can inform the implementation of SITE actions. The review of existing initiatives enables the project to build on consolidated practices, avoid duplication of efforts, and adapt proven solutions to the specific context of the pilot areas.

By examining how similar challenges have been addressed in different geographical and operational contexts, the section highlights lessons learned, enabling factors, and potential limitations of previous interventions. The insights from the Living Catalogue further complement this analysis by providing a curated collection of practices and references that reflect the thematic priorities and objectives of the project. Together, these elements support knowledge transfer and ensure that the proposed interventions are grounded in evidence-based and practice-informed approaches.

5.1 Review of European and international experiences

As also reported in Chapter 1. "Context, challenges, and policy framework for accessible tourism in Europe", at European level, accessible tourism has progressively evolved from a niche policy concern into a strategic priority linked to fundamental rights, social inclusion, and economic competitiveness. The European Union frames accessibility not only as a matter of social justice, but also as a driver of quality, sustainability, and innovation within the tourism ecosystem.

A key policy reference is the European Commission's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, which establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure full participation of persons with disabilities in society. The Strategy promotes accessibility across multiple sectors, including transport, the built environment, digital services, and tourism. It emphasises the need for harmonised standards, improved implementation of EU legislation, and stronger cooperation between Member States and stakeholders.

One of the flagship initiatives under this Strategy is AccessibleEU, also known as the European Accessibility Resource Centre. AccessibleEU acts as a knowledge hub supporting the implementation of EU accessibility policies. It provides training, technical guidance, good practice examples, and networking opportunities for public authorities, businesses, and civil society organisations. In the tourism context, AccessibleEU contributes to disseminating practical solutions and fostering a shared understanding of Universal Design principles across destinations and service providers.

At international level, cooperation with actors such as UN Tourism further strengthens the exchange of global good practices and policy dialogue on inclusive tourism development, reinforcing the alignment between European and international accessibility agendas.

Beyond strategic frameworks, the European Union supports accessible tourism through a range of funding instruments within the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and *NextGenerationEU*. While no single programme is exclusively dedicated to accessible tourism, several funding streams can support related initiatives, including:

- Single Market Programme (successor to COSME), supporting competitiveness and sustainability of tourism SMEs;
- Erasmus+, financing training, skills development, and capacity building relevant to inclusive tourism services;
- European Social Fund Plus, promoting social inclusion, employment, and accessibility-related initiatives;
- Interreg, fostering cross-border and transnational cooperation projects, including those focused on accessible destinations and inclusive regional development.

In addition to financial support, the EU promotes visibility and recognition of good practices. The *Access City Award*, for example, rewards European cities that have made outstanding efforts to become more accessible for persons with disabilities. Although not tourism-specific, the Award has significant implications for urban tourism, as accessibility improvements in transport, public spaces, and information services directly enhance the visitor experience.

Overall, the European approach demonstrates a growing and structured commitment to accessible tourism. Through strategic frameworks, knowledge-sharing initiatives, funding instruments, and recognition mechanisms, the EU promotes accessibility as a cross-cutting principle that strengthens both social inclusion and the long-term competitiveness of the tourism sector.

5.2 Insights from the Living Catalogue

The Living Catalogue represents a core knowledge-building activity developed throughout the entire duration of the project. Although the related deliverable *D 1.2.4 - Living catalogue of theories, practices and past projects' results from UD perspective* will be formally submitted at the end of the project, the Catalogue has been conceived and continuously updated from the very beginning. Its “living” nature reflects its dynamic and evolving character: rather than being a static repository of examples, it has functioned as an ongoing process of collection, reflection, validation, and refinement.

The Living Catalogue was designed as a structured compilation of existing solutions, practices, tools, and approaches related to Universal Design and accessible tourism. It brings together European and international experiences, policy references, operational models, and practical interventions that demonstrate how accessibility can be effectively integrated into tourism services, infrastructures, governance, and visitor experience design.

More than a simple database, the Catalogue has served as a strategic support instrument for the PILOT actions. By mapping existing situations during the initial visits and co-design phases project partners were able to identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities for improvement. The Living Catalogue provided inspiration, benchmarks, and concrete references that supported the definition of tailored improvement projects within each pilot context.

Its added value lies in three main dimensions:

- Knowledge consolidation – Systematising dispersed experiences and making them comparable and transferable.
- Practical orientation – Highlighting solutions that can be realistically adapted to different territorial and organisational contexts.
- Capacity building – Supporting stakeholders in understanding accessibility not as a compliance obligation, but as a quality and innovation driver.

The continuous updating of the Catalogue has allowed it to incorporate lessons learned from the project itself, ensuring that insights generated during the pilot phase could feed back into the broader body of knowledge. In this sense, the Living Catalogue represents both an analytical tool and a legacy output: a resource designed to remain relevant beyond the project's lifecycle and to support future initiatives in accessible and inclusive tourism.

6. SITE methods and tools

The SITE setting approach is based on the premise that a tourist destination should be universally welcoming. This is achieved by focusing on three key moments that characterise a tourist experience: the search for information before departure, the ability to orient oneself once at the destination, and the possibility of enjoying public spaces and services.

In order to test and improve the hospitality system of tourist destinations, tools were implemented to assess their compliance with the seven principles of UD. These principles can be applied to evaluate existing texts and designs, guide the design process, and train both designers and users about the characteristics of more usable products and environments.

Two parallel strands of analysis were carried out in each of the three pilot locations to test methods and tools. On the one hand, an assessment of the readability and accessibility of selected informational texts was conducted; on the other hand, open and built public spaces were analysed to evaluate their compliance with Universal Design principles. In both cases, the local partners identified the specific texts and spaces to be examined, thereby defining the priority areas for intervention. The work on textual analysis is described in *Sections 6.3.1 Evaluating text readability* and *6.3.2 Evaluating websites accessibility*, while the spatial assessment is detailed in *Section 6.3.3 Evaluating open and built spaces.*

While the work on texts was carried out through online discussions between local partners and language experts, initial study visits were organised in each location to analyse the selected spaces. These visits made it possible to identify critical issues, verify compliance with UD principles, and co-design improvement solutions. These solutions are intended to be integrated into the redevelopment work already planned by the administrations of the three locations, with the aim of increasing compliance with UD principles. This will be verified during a second visit to each location (not yet carried out at the time of writing).

The **SITE workflow on texts** (Fig. 1) is structured as follows:

- ➔ Texts readability
    - Texts selection
    - Texts simplification

- ➔ Websites accessibility
    - Websites assessment
    - Improvements suggestions

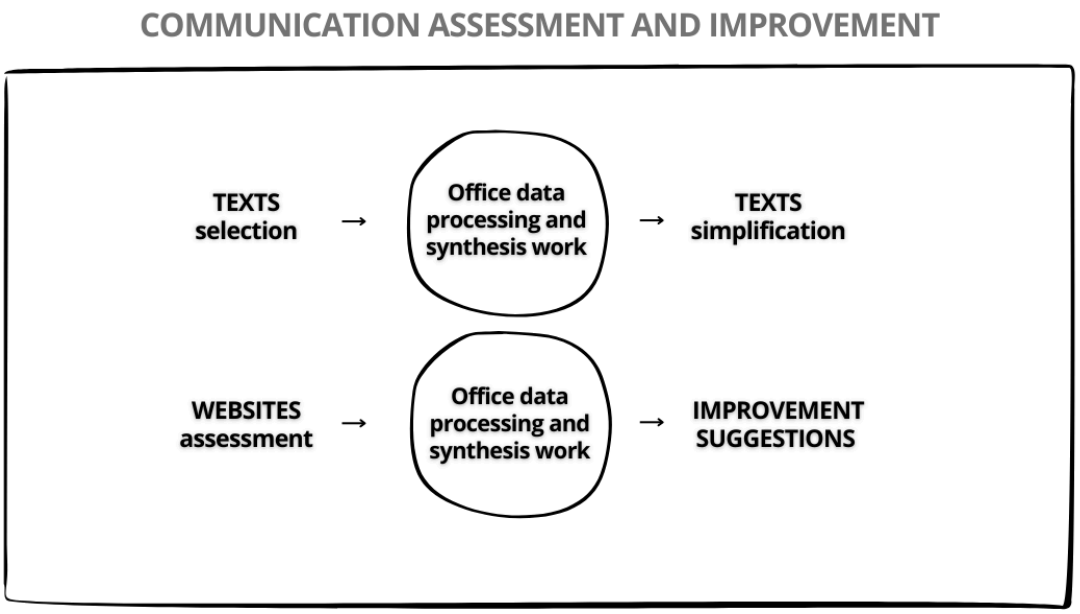


Fig. 1 - SITE workflow on texts

The **SITE workflow on built and open spaces** (Fig. 2) is structured as follows:

➔ **First visit**
- Identification of barriers and critical issues
- Verification of adherence to UD principles
- Co-design of interventions and initiatives to maximise the tourism experience for all through shared pathways

➔ **Office data processing and synthesis work**
- Requirement framework

➔ **Interventions**

➔ **Second visit**
- verification of adherence to UD principles following redevelopment interventions

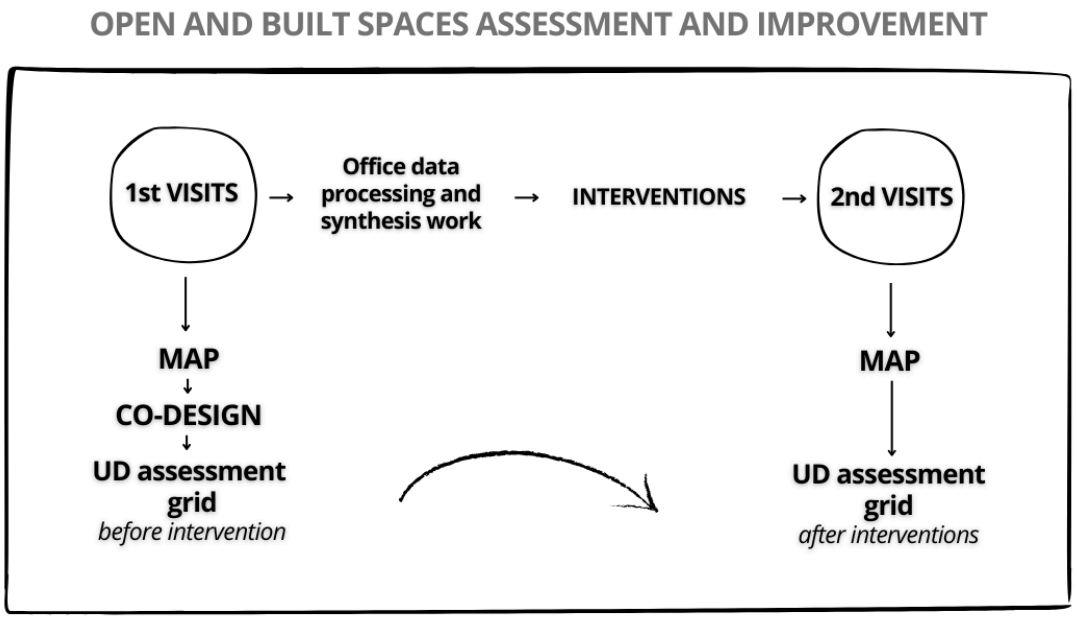


Fig. 2 - SITE workflow on built and open spaces

At the end of first visits, the Local Partner will know more about the criticalities of the identified spaces through participated mapping activities; will define room for improvement thanks to completed UD assessment grids; will collect a number of useful elements for the implementation of the planned interventions to improve the state of the art through co-designing processes.

At the end of second visits, the Local Partner will be able to verify the effective improvement of the spaces by re-filling the assessment grids; focusing on and involving all stakeholders throughout the process can reduce social exclusion and provide useful guidance for the creation of more inclusive spaces.

To follow all the steps, the SITE partnership developed and applied various interconnected tools, closely linked to specific and consecutive objectives.

Across all phases of the SITE workflow, training and awareness-raising are integrated as continuous and cross-cutting components, delivered through diverse tools and methodologies to strengthen knowledge, foster cultural changes on local entrepreneurs and residents, and ensure long-term impact especially in social sustainability of tourism impact.

6.1 Training and awareness-raising

The UD approach, grounded in the principle that environments, products, and services should be usable by all individuals regardless of their specific characteristics or abilities,

seeks to ensure equitable participation in social life and to foster meaningful contributions to the collective experience.

Scholars widely acknowledge that UD represents the design paradigm most likely to influence societal attitudes, as it foregrounds values such as democracy, equity, and active citizenship. Despite this recognition, the degree of UD adoption in service design practice remains marginal. This is in stark contrast with the expanding body of academic research, and the growing number of contributions emerging from international fora such as the International Conference on Universal Design, which reached its seventh edition in 2023. Limited and slow uptake may be explained, in part, by the difficulty of achieving immediate and tangible outcomes. Furthermore, the gradual development of accessible cities and environments is attributable not only to cultural determinants but also to educational factors, including prevailing perceptions and social recognition of disability.

As UD must be understood as a dynamic process rather than a finite outcome, its effective mainstreaming requires awareness-raising and capacity-building among all relevant stakeholders, each of whom can contribute—albeit incrementally—to systemic change.

This chapter presents the dissemination strategies adopted within SITE, where UD serves as the conceptual and operational framework for the creation of environments that are accessible, usable, and comprehensible to the widest possible range of users. The seven UD principles provide the methodological foundation for research activities, the evaluation of accessibility in selected pilot sites, and the co-design of innovative solutions to promote more inclusive tourist destinations. One of the project's first objectives was to establish a common knowledge base among partners, which was pursued through a series of targeted actions.

It should be noted that Output 2.1 – *Training on Universal Design* provides a detailed description of all the steps related to the training and awareness-raising activities carried out during the initial visits.

6.1.1 Training sessions

One of the key elements of the SITE project concerns training and awareness-raising activities on UD, intended as real tools for knowledge transfer and cultural change. The Seven UD Principles are the common thread running through research activities, accessibility assessments, and the co-design of innovative solutions in the identified pilot locations. Considering that one of the main objectives of the project is to involve and raise awareness among the partnership, local stakeholders, and tourism service providers, who are mainly "non-experts," a multi-level training and dissemination strategy has been chosen for the entire duration of the project, which can be easily replicated in the future:

- **UD pills**. Each first visit is structured not only as an opportunity to observe practices in the pilot locations, but also as a training opportunity. Short pills on UD and the application of the seven principles are introduced as practical and immediately applicable ideas.
- **Internal training sessions**. Dedicated to the partnership, aimed at consolidating a common language. The discipline of UD is still little known (especially in the tourism sector): training sessions are essential to provide a theoretical framework, present practical examples of application, and fully understand the potential of its adoption.
- **External training sessions**. Aimed at local actors and other stakeholders outside the partnership, these are essential for strengthening common capacities, promoting strategic alignment, and maximizing the impact of Interreg projects.
- **Thematic and interactive webinars.** Organized to engage a target audience from other European countries, these demonstrate the project's ability to generate a transnational community of practice.

6.1.2 Dissemination initiatives

- **Initiatives aimed at reaching a wider audience**. These events play an important role because they promote the dissemination of results, raise collective awareness, and help generate a lasting impact beyond the circle of professionals. One example is the event held during the 14th edition of Trieste NEXT, a scientific research festival, entitled “Travel storytelling: for tourism that includes, inspires, and connects.”
- **Hackathon**. The Inclusive Tourism for Everyone hackathon is aimed at university students from different disciplines and was created to encourage creative cross-pollination between architects, computer scientists, tourism management students, and communication designers. The goal of the hackathon is to co-create solutions (digital and otherwise) to real problems related to the accessibility of tourist destinations together with people with special needs.
- **Constant communication and social media outreach.** Through the publication of posts and videos that describe the activities and highlight specific issues related to the project, this activity is also of fundamental importance in making the content accessible to a wide and diverse audience.

These actions fully comply with European programming guidelines, which emphasize that projects must generate capacity building, disseminate knowledge, and promote cultural changes that go beyond the boundaries of the project partnership. In this perspective, training and dissemination are not ancillary activities, but central elements of sustainability and capitalization of results. SITE has chosen to invest heavily in this area, interpreting UD not only as a set of technical rules, but as a cultural and collective process. The commitment to training and communication makes the project a testing ground that helps

to fill the gaps in academic and professional training, while strengthening the capacity of local communities and partners to implement inclusive and innovative interventions.

6.2 Stakeholder engagement and participatory processes

Assessing adherence to UD principles requires more than technical verification. It involves evaluating whether spaces, products and services are genuinely accessible and usable by all people, regardless of age, size, ability or disability. For this reason, the design and assessment process must be interdisciplinary, context-sensitive and inclusive of diverse user perspectives.

Within this framework, two macro-categories of evaluators can be identified: **professional experts** and **user-experts**. These groups often approach design quality from different, sometimes divergent, perspectives.

Professional experts—such as architects, engineers, planners and designers—possess specialised knowledge related to building regulations, accessibility standards, procurement processes and technical solutions. Their role is essential in ensuring regulatory compliance, functional feasibility, structural safety and integration within broader planning systems. They contribute precision, methodological rigour and technical problem-solving capacity. However, technical expertise alone cannot fully capture the lived experience of navigating environments that may contain physical, sensory or cognitive barriers. User-experts—namely people with disabilities or diverse abilities—bring direct and embodied knowledge of how spaces affect everyday life. Their perspective is grounded in lived experience and provides insights that cannot be derived solely from technical criteria. Their contribution is crucial for several reasons:

- They identify subtle or overlooked barriers, such as poorly positioned handles, inadequate ramp slopes, confusing signage or inaccessible seating.
- They provide insight into the emotional and psychological dimensions of design, including autonomy, dignity and perceived safety.
- They contribute practical, experience-based suggestions that can inspire innovative and context-sensitive solutions.

When technical and lived-experience perspectives are combined, the assessment process becomes more comprehensive. The resulting design solutions are not only compliant with accessibility standards, but also meaningful and functional in real-life conditions. This integrated approach helps prevent design oversights, reduces the risk of future corrective interventions and strengthens long-term inclusivity.

Involving both professional experts and user-experts therefore ensures that accessibility is addressed with precision, practicality and empathy, transforming compliance-based design into genuinely inclusive environments.

Building on this conceptual framework, stakeholder engagement was systematically embedded in all on-site activities carried out within the SITE project. During the first visits to the selected open and built spaces in each pilot context, local stakeholders were actively involved in the mapping and assessment phases. Participants included:

- Technical staff from local municipalities
- Urban planners and designers
- Communication officers
- Tourism professionals and destination management experts
- Representatives of civil society organisations
- User groups, including persons with disabilities and other relevant community members

These visits were structured to allow joint observation, shared reflection and collective identification of criticalities. Rather than separating technical analysis from user experience, SITE deliberately created mixed working groups, enabling dialogue between professional expertise and lived experience from the earliest stages of evaluation. The participatory site visits served multiple purposes:

- To validate technical observations through real-life experience;
- To surface barriers that might not emerge from document-based analysis;
- To foster mutual understanding between institutional actors and users;
- To build local ownership of the process from the outset.

Facilitated discussion moments were integrated into each visit, ensuring that observations were not limited to individual impressions but were collectively interpreted in relation to Universal Design principles.

Through this approach, stakeholder engagement was not treated as a consultation phase occurring after technical analysis, but as a foundational component of the assessment process itself.

6.3 Assessment and analysis tools

The assessment and analysis tools developed within the SITE project are designed to support a structured understanding of how texts, digital environments and physical spaces respond to UD principles. The specific materials to be analysed — including texts, websites and spaces — were jointly identified and agreed upon by local partners, based on their relevance for tourism promotion and user experience. Consequently, the tools were

adapted and applied in relation to the characteristics of the selected contents, ensuring a context-sensitive and flexible approach.

6.3.1 Evaluating texts readability

Each local partner has selected a range of texts used to promote and wayfind tourists along their local areas, including both printed materials and digital content. These texts have undergone a professional simplification process aimed at improving their readability and accessibility.

The simplification of the texts required careful calibration of multiple factors, including lexical, morphological and syntactic elements, in order to achieve the desired communicative function. For example, in informative expository texts, which are typically rich in content, simplification involves reducing morphosyntactic complexity and favouring more linear and explicit syntactic structures, thereby reducing the cognitive effort required of the reader. Generally speaking, the production and simplification of texts are not immediate processes. To avoid excessive simplification or trivialisation, it is important to consider the overall structure and function of the text, addressing not only vocabulary and sentence length, but also morphology, syntax and communicative intent.

6.3.2 Evaluating websites accessibility

Each local partner selected the website primarily used for the promotion of their destination or services. These websites were subject to a professional assessment aimed at evaluating their overall level of accessibility, with particular reference to usability, navigability and compliance with accessibility principles.

The technical verification was carried out in accordance with the harmonised European standard EN 301 549 v. 3.2.1, which incorporates the success criteria of WCAG 2.2 for web accessibility. The analysis was conducted by an accessibility expert with extensive experience, who identified non-compliance issues related to the four core accessibility principles: perceivability, operability, understandability and robustness. The report summarises the main critical issues identified and provides an overall assessment of the accessibility level of the analysed websites. It should be noted that this technical verification focuses on compliance with accessibility requirements rather than on user experience evaluation. The analysis combined automated tools with manual assessment, as required by WCAG 2.2, and included verification of all accessible functionalities based on the available access levels.

6.3.3 Evaluating open and built spaces

SITE project adopts a set of tailored assessment tools designed to be straightforward and accessible. Simple checklists and guided questionnaires enable extensive mapping

activities aimed at identifying both qualitative and quantitative critical issues. This dual approach supports the collection of measurable data while also capturing experiential and perception-based insights.
To ensure inclusiveness and broad participation, the tools are available in both digital and paper formats. This choice accommodates participants' preferences and prevents exclusion related to the digital divide, thereby aligning the assessment process itself with UD principles.
To assess whether a public open space meets UD principles, there is a need to evaluate each of the seven principles through observation, user testing, and feedback from a wide range of individuals. Successful adherence to UD principles results in spaces that are welcoming, intuitive, and usable by everyone, regardless of their abilities. One method is to try to answer a series of questions.
As mentioned above, in order to analyze critical issues and co-design improvement solutions in line with UD principles, SITE partnership has decided to organize first study visits to the Pilots. During each first site visit, the evaluation process was guided by three main goals:

- **Goal A – Mapping the current situation**
  To analyse and document the existing conditions of selected open and built spaces previously identified in collaboration with the local partner.
  See 6.3.3.1 Tools to detect criticalities

- **Goal B – Identifying critical issues through a Universal Design (UD) perspective**
  To assess spatial, functional and perceptual barriers by applying Universal Design principles as an interpretative and analytical framework.
  See 6.3.3.2 UD assessment tool

- **Goal C – Co-designing improvement solutions**
  To define potential strategies and design directions in dialogue with local stakeholders, translating identified criticalities into structured requirements.
  See 6.3.3.3 Co-design

To address these goals, three interconnected tools were developed and applied; a description follows.

6.3.3.1 Tools to detect criticalities

These tools were designed to systematically map the current spatial and functional conditions of the selected areas. They support the identification of physical, sensory and cognitive barriers affecting accessibility and usability. The mapping phase integrates direct observation, photographic documentation and spatial annotation.

The method for conducting the mapping is inspired by the *Customer Journey Map*, which involves all participants, accompanying them in the exploration of a space or path. Participants are asked to complete tasks and to answer a series of questions, noting whether there are aspects that might influence the experience. Each participant is provided with a map of the area to be explored, a list of tasks to be completed and questions to be answered. It is remarked that the general accessibility of a - open or built - space is defined by the accessibility of each of its components: completing the tasks will allow participants to investigate the accessibility of these components, so that a comprehensive overview can be reconstructed.

The tasks will be planned according to the type of areas to be mapped; an example of exhaustive listed in volume Universal Design New York (Levine, 2003) 'Essential design elements of a universal city':

- Circulation Systems
- Entering and Exiting
- Wayfinding
- Parking and Passenger Loading Zones
- Seating
- Obtaining Products and Services
- Using Public Amenities
- Cultural Facilities
- Public Assembly and Entertainment Facilities
- Participant Sports and Recreation Facilities
- Temporary Lodging
- Workplace Facilities
- Human Service Facilities
- Renovations and Addition

The following is an example of a task to explore an open area (i.e. a green area). The design element chosen is the 'entering / exiting'. The questions posed to participants, which are very simple, are intended to bring out the main critical issues that will then be explored later with specific evaluation grids, through a group analysis. The table contains the following information:

- goal *(map the current situation)*
- mapped area *(green area)*

- analyzed element *(entering / exiting)*
- Task *(Reach the entrances / exits and sign them into the map)*
- a list of very simple questions inviting observation of the area, with YES/NO answers;
- a space for additional notes.

GOAL A To map the current situation	**Space mapped** **Green Area**	**Design Element** **ENTERING / EXITING**
Task 1 **Reach the entrances / exits and sign them into the map**		
a) Is there at least one entrance/exit?	yes	no
b) Are there more than one entrance/exit?	yes	no
c) Are they easy to detect?	yes	no
d) Are they easily usable?	yes	no
e) Are there any obstacles? If yes, please sign them into the map	yes	no
Notes		

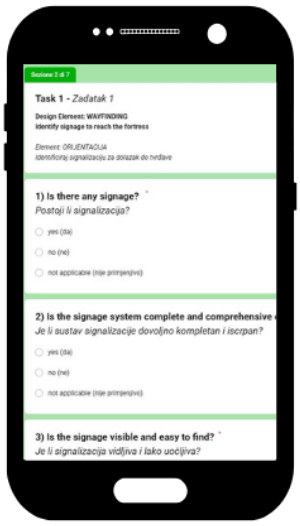


Fig. 3 - An extract of the tool used to map criticalities, paper and digital format

6.3.3.2 UD assessment Tool

The UD Assessment Tool translates the critical issues identified during the mapping and analysis phase into a structured evaluative framework grounded in the seven principles of UD. Within the SITE project, the tool functions not only as a checklist to verify barriers, but as a shared analytical instrument to interpret spatial conditions through a common conceptual lens and to prioritise improvement actions.

The tool is structured as a collective evaluation matrix (e.g. Excel-based) designed to be used during facilitated sessions with project partners and local stakeholders. It links each identified spatial element or critical point to relevant Universal Design principles and assesses the degree of alignment through structured evaluative statements.

For each critical point, positively formulated statements are defined to verify compliance with the principles. The evaluation is conducted through a standardised scoring system (Yes / No / N/A), where negative responses are further differentiated according to the feasibility and timeframe of potential improvements. This differentiation supports prioritisation by distinguishing between issues that can be addressed in the short term, those requiring medium to long-term interventions, and those constrained by structural limitations.

The tool therefore moves beyond a descriptive assessment and becomes a decision-support instrument that informs the implementation phase. By integrating spatial analysis, principle-based evaluation, and improvement feasibility, it enables transparent discussion and shared decision-making among stakeholders.

Importantly, the tool is designed to be reapplied at the end of the intervention phase to verify whether the implemented actions have improved compliance with Universal Design principles and to measure progress over time.

	UD PRINCIPLES	QUESTION FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE UD PRINCIPLE	SCORE		NOTES
ELEMENT	**Equitable use**	Are the same terms of use assured for all users?	YES		
		Do they offer privacy, safety and/or security to all users?	NO		
		Is the design appealing to all users?	N/A		
	Flexibility in use	Do they offer a choice of different methods of use?	NO		
		Are they suitable for right- or left-handed access and use?	NO		
		Are they able to adapt to the user's time?	NO		
	Simple and intuitive use	Are unnecessary complexities eliminated?			
		Are they consistent with users' expectations and intuition, regardless of experience, knowledge, or language skills?			
		Is the information organised according to their relevance?			
	Perceptible information	Is the necessary information efficiently communicated?			
		Is the readability of essential information optimised?			
		Is the information compatible with a variety of techniques and devices used by people with sensory limitations?			
	Tolerance for errors	Are the dangers and negative consequences of accidental and unintended actions minimised ?			
		Are risk prevention directions given?			
		Are warnings provided about avoidable dangers and errors?			
	Low physical effort	Do they allow a neutral body position to be maintained?			
		Are reasonable efforts required?			
		Do they minimise physical effort?			
	Size and space for approach and use	Do they provide a clear visual line to the important elements for any sitting or standing user?			
		Are all components easily accessible?			
		Do they provide adequate space for the presence of caregivers or the use of assistive devices?			

Fig. 4 - UD Assessment Tool

6.3.3.3 Co-Design

The third tool translates the results of the analysis into actionable design requirements. Developed as a co-design instrument, it supports dialogue with local partners and stakeholders and structures improvement proposals into strategic and operational recommendations, aligned with the SITE methodology.

Although the overall structure of the three tools remains consistent across all pilot areas, each set of instruments was specifically tailored to the spatial characteristics of the sites selected in advance with the local partners. The tools were therefore custom-built for each visit, ensuring contextual relevance while maintaining methodological coherence at project level.

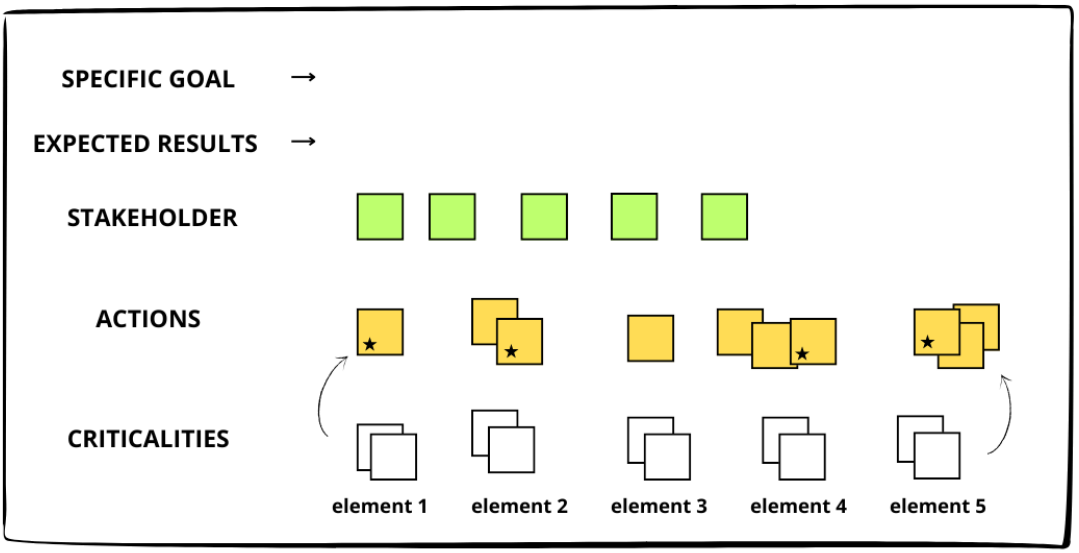


Fig. 5 - Co-design board layout

6.4 Systematisation tools

The systematisation tools developed within the SITE project aim to organise and consolidate the information collected during the assessment and analysis phases. The results of these processes have been structured and reported in dedicated project deliverables, clearly documenting methodologies, findings and outputs. This approach supports transparency, facilitates knowledge transfer and ensures the replicability and scalability of the methods and results across different contexts.

6.4.1 Texts

A specific deliverable *D 2.2.1 – Improvement Strategies for Pilots' Communication, Action Report, Translations, and Post Evaluation* contains all the final simplified versions of the materials collected, together with their translations into the project languages: Croatian,

English and Italian. Croatian Sign Language (HZJ) and Italian Sign Language (LIS) versions are also provided in video format as annexes.

6.4.2 Websites

A specific deliverable *D 2.1.1 - Transnational Report on Pilot Significant Texts Comprehensibility and Website Accessibility* collects the results of the professional accessibility analyses carried out on the selected websites. The document is structured into sections describing the verification methodology, the conclusions and recommendations for each analysed website, notes on the structure of the final reports with post-compliance recommendations, and general information on accessibility.

The detailed analytical results and operational recommendations for addressing identified issues are provided in individual technical sheets.

6.4.3 Open and built spaces

This work focused on systematising the evidence gathered on site and translating it into clear recommendations and design indications to support local partners in the implementation of planned investments.

The process involved the consolidation of critical issues, contextual constraints, and emerging priorities identified during the first project phase. These elements were organised and interpreted in relation to the technical framework of each pilot site, ensuring coherence with the overall objectives of improving accessibility, usability, and wayfinding systems in line with Universal Design principles.

The outcome of this exercise is a structured set of requirements and suggestions intended to guide decision-making and investment allocation. In this sense, the section functions as a practical reference tool that supports partners in refining interventions, aligning actions with identified needs, and ensuring consistency between observed challenges and proposed solutions.

As specified for the analysis tools, the specific goal is also reported here:

- **Goal D – Structuring and consolidating actionable requirements**
  To systematise the results of mapping, UD assessment and co-design activities into a coherent and transferable set of strategic and operational requirements, prioritising feasible improvements and linking them to implementation pathways.
  See 6.4.3.1 Requirement framework

To address this goal, a specific tool was developed and applied; a description follows.

6.4.3.1 Requirement framework

The requirement framework provides the operational and design guidance supporting the implementation of UD principles within the pilot areas. It translates the critical issues identified during site visits and co-design activities into structured recommendations and actionable requirements.

The framework is organized into two complementary sets of tables:

- The first set outlines the critical issues detected during the assessment phase and highlights selected good practices observed in the pilot areas. It provides an overview of contextual challenges alongside positive references that can inform further improvements.
- The second set presents requirements and recommendations aimed at improving compliance with Universal Design principles in relation to the most critical gaps identified. It includes only the issues corresponding to situations that can be addressed through targeted and feasible interventions, while excluding structural or complex challenges requiring major infrastructural or long-term planning actions.

Through this structured approach, the framework ensures transparency in the assessment process and provides clear operational guidance for implementation, supporting consistency across pilot sites while preserving contextual adaptability.

Further details on the requirement framework are provided in deliverable *D3.2.1 – Pilot actions for implementation of co-designed solutions*.

6.5 Monitoring and feedback tools

Monitoring and feedback activities represent a fundamental component of the SITE methodology. Beyond the implementation of methods and tools, particular attention has been given to verifying whether the proposed contents — both methodological and operational — have been effectively understood and internalised by participants.

After each relevant activity (site visits, co-design sessions, workshops and training moments), a structured reflection phase was introduced with two main objectives:

- to assess the clarity and accessibility of the methods and tools presented;
- to evaluate the extent to which the proposed approaches could be realistically transferred into the participants' future professional practice.

Special attention was paid to the language used throughout the activities. Given the interdisciplinary and international nature of the partnership, the adoption of clear, non-technical and inclusive terminology was considered essential to ensure shared understanding. Monitoring therefore also aimed to verify whether the conceptual framework — particularly with reference to Universal Design principles — was communicated in an accessible and operational manner.

Another key aspect concerned the applicability and long-term impact of the knowledge acquired. Feedback activities explored whether participants considered the SITE methods and tools adaptable to their specific institutional contexts and whether they envisaged integrating them into future planning, design or policy-making processes within their respective fields of competence.

To systematically collect this information, the SITE partnership developed and managed structured questionnaires to be filled after selected activities. These feedback tools included both closed and open-ended questions, allowing for quantitative assessment as well as qualitative insights. The questionnaires and their results can be found in Output 2.1 - *Training on Universal Design*.

These results contribute to:

- refining the methodological framework (where necessary);
- improving communication strategies;
- strengthening the replicability and sustainability of the SITE approach beyond the project's duration.

Through this iterative monitoring process, SITE ensures that its strategy is not only implemented, but continuously evaluated and adjusted in relation to stakeholder understanding, engagement and future application potential.

7. Key strategic areas for enhancing accessibility

This chapter builds on the strategic and methodological framework developed within the SITE project, which views accessibility not as a matter of physical adaptation alone but as an integrated approach combining spatial design, communication practices, governance models and participatory processes. Within this perspective, accessibility in tourism as a systemic and multi-dimensional

process, supported by Universal Design principles, stakeholder engagement and co-design methods.

Similar approaches can be observed in other INTERREG projects, such as the Interreg Danube Region project DANOVA NEXT, which developed the Strategy for Accessible Transport in the Danube Region. This strategy follows a comparable direction, focusing on improving accessibility in transport services and environments for persons with disabilities, with particular attention on user involvement and inclusive approaches. While operating in different contexts, both projects reflect a shared understanding of accessibility as a comprehensive and integrated process.

7.1 Overview of strategic areas addressed by SITE

In line with this perspective, SITE identifies three key strategic areas for enhancing accessibility:

- **Basic considerations regarding inclusion strategies**
- **Universally designed texts and information**
- **Universally designed built and open spaces**

These areas reflect the multidimensional nature of accessibility "for all", and are conceived as interconnected domains rather than separate sectors of intervention.

7.1.1 Basic Considerations Regarding Inclusion Strategies

Accessibility strategies must be grounded in a clear and shared understanding of inclusion. In the SITE approach, inclusion is not conceived as a corrective measure targeting specific vulnerable groups, but as a proactive design principle that aims to ensure usability, autonomy and dignity for the widest possible range of users.

SITE recognises that effective inclusion strategies require:

- the **direct involvement of end users**, including persons with disabilities, in assessment and co-design phases;
- the adoption of **participatory and co-creative methods**, enabling local stakeholders to actively contribute to identifying barriers and solutions;
- a shift from a compliance-based approach to a **quality-oriented accessibility culture**, where accessibility becomes an integral component of planning and investment processes.

Inclusion strategies therefore operate at multiple levels: institutional, spatial, communicative and procedural. They require coordination between technical staff, decision-makers and users, as well as the integration of accessibility considerations from the earliest stages of planning.

Within SITE, inclusion is embedded in the methodology itself: through structured site visits, co-design sessions and feedback tools, accessibility is treated as a shared responsibility and a collective learning process.

For a more comprehensive overview, see also *Output 3.1 - Creating inclusive and welcoming tourist destinations - solution for tourism decision-makers* on the development of benchmarks that can be adopted by other tourist sites within and outside the program area (delivery period at the end of SITE project).

7.1.2 Universally Designed Texts and Information

Accessibility is not only a spatial issue but also a communicative one. Information systems, written materials, signage and digital contents play a decisive role in enabling independent mobility and access to services.

SITE adopts the principles of Universal Design in the development and dissemination of texts and information, promoting:

- clarity and simplicity of language;
- coherent structure and logical organisation of content;
- readability in terms of typography, contrast and layout;
- multimodal communication where possible (visual, textual, symbolic).

Particular attention is given to the avoidance of unnecessarily technical terminology and to the translation of complex regulatory or design concepts into accessible language. This aspect proved especially relevant in transnational and interdisciplinary contexts, where differences in professional background and linguistic frameworks may generate misunderstandings.

By improving the accessibility of texts and information, SITE supports not only persons with disabilities but also a broader range of users, including elderly people, non-native speakers and individuals with temporary impairments.

7.1.3 Universally Designed Built and Open Spaces

The third strategic area concerns the physical dimension of accessibility in built and open spaces related to mobility and public services.

In line with Universal Design principles, SITE promotes spatial solutions that:

- eliminate physical barriers wherever possible;
- ensure continuity and coherence of accessible routes;
- enhance orientation through spatial legibility and environmental cues;
- support comfort, safety and autonomy for diverse users.

Rather than focusing exclusively on minimum regulatory compliance, SITE encourages a performance-based and user-centred approach. Spatial interventions are assessed not only in terms of technical conformity, but also in relation to real user experience.

Open spaces, transition areas and service environments are considered equally relevant components of the accessibility chain. A discontinuity in any segment — whether a pathway, entrance, information point or waiting area — may compromise the overall accessibility of the system.

For this reason, SITE integrates spatial evaluation tools, co-design processes and post-intervention monitoring to ensure that investments contribute to a coherent and inclusive accessibility framework.

Part B - Operational Strategy and Implementation Guidelines for Partners

8. How to read and use the strategy

While the present framework has been primarily developed to support the SITE pilot partners in the adoption and implementation of the Strategy, the proposed approach may also serve as a reference model for other public authorities, institutions and organisations interested in applying Universal Design principles within tourism policies, services and environments. For this reason, the term “partners” used throughout this document should be understood as referring both to the SITE pilot partners and, where relevant, to potential future adopters of the Strategy.

8.1 Purpose of the Strategy

The SITE Strategy provides a **shared framework** to support public authorities and private entities in progressively improving the accessibility of texts, spaces and services along the tourism value chain, in accordance with UD principles.

It is designed to:

- reduce physical and digital access barriers;
- support informed and consistent decision-making;
- guide both short-term actions and long-term transformation processes;
- ensure that accessibility is addressed as a systemic and continuous process, rather than as a one-off intervention.

The strategy does not prescribe a single technical solution, but defines **principles, processes, and priorities** that can be adapted to different contexts.

8.2 Target Audience

The strategy is addressed to a wide range of actors involved in the planning, management, and delivery of tourism-related spaces and services. Depending on the role of the users, it supports:

- **policy-makers**, in setting priorities and allocating resources;
- **technical staff**, in planning, implementing and monitoring interventions;
- **service designers and consultants**, in translating UD principles into concrete solutions;
- **destination and service managers and operators**, in improving everyday practices and service delivery;
- **local stakeholders** involved in regeneration or redevelopment processes.

The structure and language of the strategy allow for **different levels of engagement**, depending on the user's role and responsibilities.

8.3 How to Read the Strategy

The SITE Strategy can be read and used in different ways, depending on the needs and perspective of the user:

- **Sequential reading,** to gain an overall understanding of the strategy logic, objectives and methodological framework;
- **Thematic reading**, focusing on specific domains such as texts, wayfinding, public spaces;
- **Process-based reading**, following the step-by-step cycle from baseline assessment to evaluation;
- **Role-based reading**, identifying actions and responsibilities relevant to specific actors.

Each section is designed to be self-contained while remaining interconnected, allowing for flexible and targeted consultation.

8.4 How to use the strategy

The strategy functions as:

- **a decision-support tool,** guiding when and how to intervene;
- **a planning framework**, aligning projects and investments with UD principles;
- **a common reference**, ensuring coherence among actions and stakeholders;
- **a capacity-building instrument**, supporting awareness-raising, training and organisational learning.

It can be applied both independently of public works (e.g. through training activities, text simplification, and digital accessibility measures, or in conjunction with redevelopment, renovation or infrastructure projects.

8.5 Multiple Reading Keys

To further enhance usability, the strategy can be interpreted through three complementary lenses:

- **By *Actors.*** Each actor can identify their specific role in the accessibility process, the actions for which they are responsible, how their decisions interact with those of

other actors. This perspective supports coordination, clarity of roles and accountability.

- **By *Actions.*** The strategy is structured around **concrete activities** (including training, assessment, co-design, implementation, evaluation), **practical tools** developed within the SITE project, **phased interventions** aligned with activities timelines. This perspective supports operational planning and the effective organisation of actions over time
- **By *Objectives and Impact.*** Each action is explicitly linked to Universal Design principles, short-, medium- and long-term objectives, expected improvements in usability, inclusiveness and overall user experience. This perspective supports impact-oriented decision-making, ensuring that actions are coherent with strategic goals and produce measurable benefits.

8.6 Scalability and Contextualisation

The SITE Strategy is:

- **scalable**, depending on available resources and scope of intervention;
- **context-sensitive**, adaptable to different types of sites (such as urban centres, museums, waterfronts, transport hubs);
- **incremental**, allowing prioritisation based on urgency, feasibility and potential impact.

Full accessibility is not assumed as an immediate outcome, but rather as the result of a **continuous improvement process** supported by data collection, evaluation and active stakeholder engagement.

8.7 How to implement the strategy

Implementation follows a **progressive and iterative approach**, articulated through:

- four strategic recommendations;
- a structured operational cycle (ranging from Step 0 to Step 4);
- continuous feedback and review mechanisms.

UD is understood as a **long-term process**, requiring time, prioritisation, testing, and ongoing adjustment in response to emerging needs and contextual conditions.

9. The four strategic recommendations

Awareness-raising and training on Universal Design

To develop knowledge, skills and awareness of Universal Design principles among all actors involved in the management, design and delivery of tourism services, spaces and communication. This recommendation includes not only training activities for staff, but also awareness-raising and participatory initiatives involving relevant stakeholders, when appropriate. It aims to foster a shared understanding and common language, enabling informed decision-making and supporting the effective application of inclusive design approaches.

Analysis of the existing situation and co-design of improvements

To assess the current level of accessibility of texts, digital environments, services and physical spaces, and to identify priorities for improvement. This recommendation includes the co-design of solutions with relevant stakeholders and end-users, ensuring that interventions are grounded in real needs and contextual conditions. It also encompasses the definition of priorities, urgency criteria and implementation pathways, supporting structured decision-making and collaborative planning.

Implementation of improvement measures

To translate co-designed solutions into concrete interventions across texts, images (i.e. symbols, icons), services and physical environments, ensuring their integration into operational, managerial and financial planning processes. This recommendation focuses on the practical application of Universal Design principles, supporting consistency across interventions and ensuring feasibility, scalability and alignment with strategic objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation of improvement measures

To assess the effectiveness of implemented interventions over time and to support continuous improvement. This recommendation includes the systematic collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, involving users, staff and stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation activities are used to refine ongoing actions, inform future interventions and ensure the long-term sustainability of improvements

10. Operational Guidelines and Implementation Steps

The operational steps presented in this chapter translate the four strategic recommendations outlined in Chapter 2 into a structured implementation process. While the recommendations define key areas of action, the steps describe how these can be operationalised in practice.
Step #0 represents a preliminary phase that supports all subsequent actions, while Steps #1–#4 correspond to and further detail the strategic recommendations.

Step #0 – Context mapping and baseline assessment

- **Objectives**
    - Collect evidence on how current texts, images, spaces and services respond to UD principles.
    - Identify existing competencies and gaps among staff and relevant local stakeholders.
- **Activities**
    - Desk analysis and on-site assessment of texts, images, spaces and services.
    - Interviews and surveys targeting internal teams and stakeholders.
- **Outputs**
    - Mapping of UD competencies.
    - Identification of key strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

Step #1 – Awareness-raising and training on UD

- **Objectives**
    - To implement an awareness-raising plan tailored to the needs identified during the initial assessment, which in specific cases may require the development of a training programme for staff.
    - Extend training and awareness-raising activities, where relevant, to local stakeholders involved in specific projects, fostering a shared understanding and common language.
- **Activities**
    - Awareness-raising and information campaigns.

- Training workshops on UD principles and applications.
- Participatory sessions involving internal staff and external stakeholders.
- Introduction, and use of **SITE tools** (see Section 5).

- **Outputs**
  - Awareness-raising plan and outreach materials.
  - Training plan, which includes, for example, the organization of training seminars.
  - Pre- and post-training evaluation of knowledge and skills.

Step #2 – Analysis of the existing situation and co-design of improvements

- **Objectives**
  - Analyse the existing situation and/or current solutions applied to texts, spaces and services in relation to Universal Design (UD) principles and the specific contextual characteristics of each site.
  - Co-design improvements to enhance accessibility and inclusiveness across texts, images, spaces and services.
  - Define shared priorities, objectives and urgency criteria for intervention together with relevant stakeholders.
- **Activities**
  - Analysis of existing conditions, solutions, and practices related to accessibility of texts, images, spaces, and services.
  - Co-design workshops involving internal teams, users, and relevant stakeholders.
  - Application of **SITE tools** to support collaborative design processes.
  - Prioritisation of actions based on shared criteria.
- **Outputs**
  - Integrated analysis report of existing situation/solutions and identified improvement needs.
  - Co-designed action plans with defined priorities, responsibilities, and timelines.
  - Context-specific guidelines adapted to each site.

Step #3 – Implementation of improvement measures

- **Objectives**
    - Translate co-designed plans into concrete interventions on texts, images, spaces and services.
    - Include planned interventions into strategic and financial documents.
    - Ensure that UD principles are consistently applied during implementation.
- **Activities**
    - Implementation of planned improvements.
    - Ongoing technical support using **SITE tools**.
    - Monitoring of implementation quality.
- **Outputs**
    - Documentation of implemented measures.
    - Preliminary assessment of implementation outcomes.
    - Schedule a continuous improvement starting from Step #2, or Step #0 if the staff and stakeholder change.

Step #4 – Monitoring and evaluation of improvement measures

- **Objectives**
    - Assess whether implemented interventions have effectively improved accessibility and compliance with UD principles.
    - Collect feedback from users, staff and stakeholders to inform future actions.
- **Activities**
    - Post-intervention evaluation using **SITE tools.**
    - Collection of qualitative and quantitative feedback.
    - Review and refinement of strategies and processes.
- **Outputs**
    - Evaluation report.
    - Recommendations for future projects and continuous improvement.

11. How to apply the strategy: methods and tools

The SITE Strategy becomes operational through a structured set of methods and tools designed to support partners in translating UD principles into concrete actions. This chapter presents the methodological and technical instruments that enable implementation across different domains of intervention, namely:

- written communication (texts and images)
- digital environments (websites)
- open and built spaces

The SITE methodology combines two complementary dimensions:

- **Expert-based analytical tools**, applied to texts, images and websites through structured evaluation processes conducted by specialists;
- **Participatory and field-based tools**, primarily applied in the analysis and co-design of open and built spaces.

The difference lies not in their relevance, but in their operational context. Field-based tools require direct observation, stakeholder engagement and collective discussion. Office-based tools rely on technical expertise, established accessibility standards and analytical grids applied to selected materials.

For texts, images and websites, the assessment process has to be conducted through structured expert review of selected materials. Although developed in an office-based setting, these tools remain replicable and can be adapted by anyone wishing to apply similar evaluation processes in their own contexts. For open and built spaces, SITE developed and tested a sequence of interconnected tools applied directly in pilot contexts. These tools emphasise mapping, assessment and co-design.

The adoption of tools cannot be separated from a general effort to promote a culture of UD and inclusion, which involves training and awareness-raising processes.

While the SITE Strategy addresses all these domains in an integrated manner, its practical application does not require partners to implement all tools and areas of intervention simultaneously. The selection and adaptation of methods and tools should be context-sensitive, taking into account local priorities, available resources, institutional capacities and specific conditions, while maintaining coherence with the overall principles of Universal Design.

11.1 Awareness-raising and training on UD: methods to spread knowledge

The effective implementation of the SITE Strategy depends not only on technical tools, but also on the activation of knowledge, awareness and shared responsibility. Knowledge-spreading methods constitute a foundational component of the strategy because UD requires conceptual understanding, cultural alignment, interdisciplinary dialogue, and institutional commitment.

At least two complementary approaches are recommended:

- Awareness-raising and training
- Stakeholder engagement and participatory processes

11.1.1 Awareness raising and Training

Awareness-raising aim to:

- Highlighting the social and ethical dimensions of inclusion
- Addressing unconscious biases
- Promoting empathy towards diverse user experiences

Training activities complements awareness-raising by:

- Introduce Universal Design principles
- Clarify their application across physical, textual and digital environments
- Build a shared vocabulary among professionals
- Strengthen institutional capacity to apply the SITE tools

To activate effective awareness and training moments, partners should:

- Identify **target groups**, such as:
    - Technical staff
    - Communication officers
    - Urban planners and service designers
    - Policy-makers and destination managers
    - Front-office personnel
    - Service providers
- Define **awareness and learning objectives**, aligned with their roles and responsibilities.

- Combine **theoretical and practical components**, including:
    - Introduction to Universal Design principles
    - Case studies and best practices
    - Application exercises using SITE tools
    - Reflection sessions on real local challenges
- Encourage **interdisciplinary participation**, avoiding silo-based training.

- Provide **supporting materials**, such as guidelines, summaries, checklists or references to the Living Catalogue of best practices.

To set up training programmes for internal staff, it is strongly recommended to involve professionals with demonstrated expertise in:

- Universal Design
- Accessibility standards
- Inclusive communication

11.1.2 Stakeholder engagement and participatory processes

Participation actively involves stakeholders in identifying problems and defining solutions. Stakeholder engagement ensures that interventions respond to real needs rather than assumed ones. To activate meaningful engagement processes, partners should:

- Map **relevant stakeholders**, including:
    - Public authorities
    - Technical departments
    - Civil society organisations
    - User groups (including persons with disabilities, older people, foreign people, families, etc.)
    - Service providers and private actors
- Define **clear objectives** for each participatory moment (consultation, validation, co-creation, prioritisation).
- Create **accessible and inclusive settings**, ensuring:
    - Physical accessibility of venues
    - Clear and readable materials
    - Multi-sensory communication when necessary
    - Adequate time for discussion
- Use **structured facilitation tools**, such as:

    - Visual boards
    - Mapping exercises
    - Voting systems (e.g. stickers for prioritisation)
    - Moderated group discussions
- Document **outcomes systematically**, linking them to assessment results and strategic goals.

Co-design reveals invisible barriers, brings forward experiential knowledge, reduces resistance to change and enhances feasibility by aligning expectations among stakeholders; however, participatory processes require professional facilitation, and it is strongly recommended to involve experts in participatory design, group facilitation, conflict management and inclusive communication, as skilled facilitators ensure balanced participation, clear documentation, respectful dialogue and alignment with Universal Design principles, preventing engagement from remaining merely symbolic rather than truly transformative.

11.2 Analysis of the existing situation and co-design of improvements: analysis tools

The tools presented in this section should be considered as a set of complementary options to be applied according to the specific context and type of intervention. It is not necessary to address all dimensions (texts, images, digital information and spatial environments) simultaneously; however, their combined application can enhance overall accessibility and improve the level of inclusiveness and quality of the visitor experience. Users are therefore encouraged to consult the relevant subsections based on the specific domain they intend to improve.

11.2.1 Evaluating texts readability

The contents presented in the following section were developed with the contribution of accessibility experts and are further detailed in the relevant project deliverables, where the methodological approach and assessment results are documented in greater depth. Texts accessibility means making sure that everyone, including people with cognitive or linguistic disabilities, can read and understand the content of a text. To write a text with high readability it is important to pay attention to different aspects, both lexical and syntactic, and try to write using a language as simple as possible. Some general aspects to consider when writing an easy-to-read text (Orletti 2021) are:

- Follow the same syntactic structure of the spoken language, write sentences with the same word order you would use if you were speaking.
- Favour the active form of the verbs in their infinitive form, avoid using the passive forms whenever possible.

- Always state the subject at the beginning of the sentence, making sure it is explicit and the first element to be introduced.
- Avoid complex syntactic structures, like the use of subordinates or unnecessary adverbs.
- Choose a simple language, try to avoid specific terms and, if needed, describe them.

How to write easy-to-read texts

When writing a text with high readability, or rewriting a text to simplify it, it is important to act both on a lexical and on a syntactic level.

Lexicon

The lexicon chosen to write a high readability text should be easy and common. The use of the following terms should be avoided or strongly limited:

- *Uncommon terms.* A lesser used word will be known and understood by fewer people.
- *Ancient terms.* If there is a more common term to express the same idea, more frequently used in common language, try to favour it over an ancient term that is rarely used anymore.
- *Technical terms.* In some cases it might be necessary to maintain the technical term of a specific process or tool, especially in museums and exhibitions. When needed they must not be avoided but rather paired with images or explanations of the meaning, one the side in brackets or at the bottom of the page in the footnotes. If the text is meant to be delivered in a digital format, it is advised to use hyperlinks for these explanations.
- *Noun derived from verbs.* The verbs should always be favoured over their nominalised counterpart, and verbs should be expressed in their infinitive form.

Syntax

Sentence structure should always be poor and easy to understand. The use of the following structures should be avoided or strongly limited:

- *Complex sentences containing several subordinate clauses.* A simple structure builds a simple and easy-to-read sentence.
- *Relative sentences especially object relative clauses.* Relative clauses are harder to read because their elements are presented in an unconventional position, therefore the reader needs a higher effort to understand them.
- *Passive sentences* and all sentences containing several pronominal dependencies pronominalised references also require a major effort to be understood, the

referent of a pronoun should be repeated more often, even when they might seem superfluous. Passive clauses present the same word order issue of relative sentences. Furthermore

- *Implicit sentences* or sentences with implicit elements. All elements necessary to fully access and understand the content of a text should be explicitly stated in every sentence.

How to evaluate texts readability

There are useful tools online to evaluate text readability, like the Gulpease index and the READ-IT index. Both of these tools were studied and developed to work with Italian. A useful and free tool to evaluate text readability in English is the WordStats Readability Checker.

- Gulpease index

The Gulpease index was developed by Lucisano and Piemontese (1988). It takes into account two variables: the length of the word and the length of the sentence with respect to the total number of letters. Since derivatives are usually long words and complex structures containing subordinate and relative clauses, this index is a useful tool for assessing the readability of a text. However the Gulpease index does not deal with the syntactic structure of the sentence itself, therefore to be highly efficient, the Gulpease index should always be paired with a careful analysis of the syntactic structures used in the analysed text.

- READ-IT index

The READ-IT index was developed by Dell'Orletta, Montemagni and Venturi (2011) it is more precise because it takes into account both the lexical and syntactic features of a text.

11.2.2 Evaluating websites accessibility

Website accessibility means making sure that everyone, including people with disabilities, can use and understand a website. Disabilities can include vision problems, hearing loss, physical disabilities, or cognitive challenges like learning difficulties.
The goal is to allow everyone to:

- See and read the content
- Navigate the site easily
- Interact with buttons, forms, and menus
- Understand all the information, no matter how they access it

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 provide rules to ensure websites are usable by everyone. These guidelines are important for making websites fair and inclusive.

Four principles of accessibility

WCAG 2.1 is based on four key principles, often remembered by the acronym *POUR*:

P: Perceivable

All users should be able to perceive the information on a website.

- *Text Alternatives*: Provide text descriptions for images (alt text), videos, and audio. The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that all non-text content is also available in text. "Text" refers to electronic text, not an image of text. Electronic text has the unique advantage that it is presentation neutral. That is, it can be rendered visually, auditorily, tactilely, or by any combination. As a result, information rendered in electronic text can be presented in whatever form best meets the needs of the user. It can also be easily enlarged, spoken aloud so that it is easier for people with reading disabilities to understand, or rendered in whatever tactile form best meets the needs of a user.
- *Time-Based Media*: Provide captions or transcripts for videos and audio files. To make it easy for authors to quickly determine which success criteria apply to their content, the type of media each success criterion applies to is included in its short name. For audio-only or video-only media, you only need to apply the success criteria that say " audio-only" or " video-only" in their short names. If your media is not audio-only or video-only, then all the rest of the success criteria apply. Media can also be live or prerecorded. Each of the success criterion short names clearly tells you if the success criterion applies to live or prerecorded media.
- *Adaptable*: Content should be easy to change in size, colour, or contrast for those with vision problems. The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that all information is available in a form that can be perceived by all users, for example, spoken aloud, or presented in a simpler visual layout. If all of the information is available in a form that can be determined by software, then it can be presented to users in different ways (visually, audibly, tactilely etc.). If information is embedded in a particular presentation in such a way that the structure and information cannot be programmatically determined by the assistive technology, then it cannot be rendered in other formats as needed by the user.
- *Distinguishable*: Make it easier for users to see and hear content including separating foreground from background. While some guidelines are focused on making information available in a form that can be presented in alternate formats, this guideline is concerned with making the default presentation as easy to perceive as possible to people with disabilities. The primary focus is on making it easier for users to separate foreground information from the background. For visual presentations this involves making sure that information presented on top of a

background contrasts sufficiently with the background. For audio presentations this involves making sure that foreground sounds are sufficiently louder than the background sounds. Individuals with visual and hearing disabilities have much greater difficulty separating foreground and background information.

O: Operable

Users must be able to operate the interface, whether they use a mouse, keyboard, or other devices.

- *Keyboard Accessible*: Ensure users can navigate with just a keyboard. If all functionality can be achieved using the keyboard, it can be accomplished by keyboard users, by speech input (which creates keyboard input), by mouse (using on-screen keyboards), and by a wide variety of assistive technologies that create simulated keystrokes as their output. No other input form has this flexibility or is universally supported and operable by people with different disabilities, as long as the keyboard input is not time-dependent.
- *Enough Time*: Give users enough time to read and use the content (no automatic timeouts). Many users who have disabilities need more time to complete tasks than the majority of users: they may take longer to physically respond, they may take longer to read things, they may have low vision and take longer to find things or to read them, or they may be accessing content through an assistive technology that requires more time. This guideline focuses on ensuring that users are able to complete the tasks required by the content with their own individual response times. The primary approaches deal with eliminating time constraints or providing users enough additional time to allow them to complete their tasks. Exceptions are provided for those cases where this is not possible.
- *Seizures and Physical Reactions*: Avoid flashing content that may cause seizures. Some people with seizure disorders can have a seizure triggered by flashing visual content. Most people are unaware that they have this disorder until it strikes. In 1997, a cartoon on television in Japan sent over 700 children to the hospital, including about 500 who had seizures. Warnings do not work well because they are often missed, especially by children who may in fact not be able to read them.
- *Navigable*: Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are. The intent of this guideline is to help users find the content they need and allow them to keep track of their location. These tasks are often more difficult for people with disabilities. For finding, navigation, and orientation, it is important that the user can find out what the current location is. For navigation, information about the possible destinations needs to be available. Screen readers convert content to synthetic speech which, because it is audio, must be presented in linear order. Some Success Criteria in this guideline explain what provisions need to be taken to ensure that screen reader users can successfully navigate the content. Others allow users

to more easily recognize navigation bars and page headers and to bypass this repeated content. Unusual user interface features or behaviours may confuse people with cognitive disabilities.

- *Input Modalities*: Make it easier for users to operate functionality through various inputs beyond the keyboard. People operating pointer input devices may not be able to carry out timed or complex gestures. Examples are drag-and-drop gestures and on touch screens, swiping gestures, split taps, or long presses. This Guideline does not discourage the provision of complex and timed gestures by authors. However, where they are used, an alternative method of input should be provided to enable users with motor impairments to interact with content via single untimed pointer gestures.

U: Understandable

The content should be easy to understand for all users.

- *Readable*: Use clear, simple language. The intent of this guideline is to allow text content to be read by users and by assistive technology, and to ensure that information necessary for understanding it is available.
- *Predictable*: Keep navigation menus and pages consistent throughout the site. The intent of this Guideline is to help users with disabilities by presenting content in a predictable order from Web page to Web page and by making the behaviour of functional and interactive components predictable. It is difficult for some users to form an overview of the Web page: screen readers present content as a one-dimensional stream of synthetic speech that makes it difficult to understand spatial relationships. Users with cognitive limitations may become confused if components appear in different places on different pages.
- *Input Assistance*: Provide instructions and error messages when users are filling out forms. Everyone makes mistakes. However, people with some disabilities have more difficulty creating error-free input. In addition, it may be harder for them to detect that they have made an error. Typical error indication methods may not be obvious to them because of a limited field of view, limited colour perception, or use of assistive technology. This guideline seeks to reduce the number of serious or irreversible errors that are made, increase the likelihood that all errors will be noticed by the user, and help users understand what they should do to correct an error.

R: Robust

Websites should work across various browsers, devices, and assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers.

- *Compatible*: Ensure the site's code works with current and future tools. The purpose of this guideline is to support compatibility with current and future user agents, especially assistive technologies (AT).

How to check if a website is accessible

For a long time, accessibility was an afterthought. But that's misguided for a few reasons. First, people with disabilities aren't a small percentage of users—15 percent of the world's population experience some form of disability, according to the U.N. One in ten visitors of your website will have some disability. Second, accessible design ultimately creates a better experience for all user groups—not only for people with disabilities—because everyone benefits from inclusive design. Accessible design shouldn't be an afterthought; it's really a baseline requirement.

If you don't prioritise accessibility, you could also lose customers (they'll choose better-designed products, obviously). You could also get sued. Lawsuits over digital accessibility for people with disabilities have been rising in recent years. As the Wall Street Journal mentioned, U.S. lawsuits alleging that digital products were inaccessible to people with disabilities rose 64% in the first half of 2021 from a year earlier.

There are two types of accessibility testing practices—automated and manual. Most organisations will benefit from a hybrid testing model—when both automated and manual testing is used, one type of testing complements the other. For example, you can run automated tests first and rely on the results of that testing when you are doing manual testing.

- **Automated tools testing.** When you conduct automated testing, you use online tools or browser-based extensions to scan your website and identify common accessibility issues. Here are a few popular examples of automated testing tools, which can be good for detecting significant accessibility problems:
  - WAVE: a free tool that highlights accessibility errors.
  - Google Lighthouse. Built into Chrome, it checks your site's accessibility.
  - AXE Accessibility Tool: A browser extension to find accessibility problems.
  - Colour contrast Analyzer: Any product available that can conform to WCAG 2.1, for checking conformance of colour contrast ratio between foreground and background.
- **Manual Testing.** Manual accessibility testing means conducting human analysis for your website. Manual accessibility testing can help you identify problems that only humans can track. For example, it's hard for automated testing to detect if the animated block of text movestoo fast, preventing users from reading it. Manual testing is typically included in the quality assurance checklist, a list of actions that QA specialists complete to ensure that the product they will release on the market doesn't have severe issues. Most of the time, the testing is conducted by QA specialists during the product acceptance phase of the design process (end of a

release cycle, before sending a product on the market). Some manual testing that can be done are:

- Keyboard Navigation: Try navigating the website using only your keyboard (without a mouse). Can you easily access all elements, like links, buttons, and forms? Did you reach them in a logical order?
- Zooming In/Out: Can you zoom in up to 200% without losing content or functionality?
- Screen resizing: Can you resize the screen and website adapt itself (responsive design)?
- Screen Reader: Use a screen reader like NVDA or VoiceOver. Does it read the content properly, including alt text for images? Does it read all "visibility hidden" content that guide blind users in website structure and interaction (WAI-ARIA)?

- **Check Common Issues**

  - Colour Contrast: Is the text readable against its background? Use contrast checker tools.
  - Correct colour usage: Is colour used as the only mode for explaining some information? (e.g. the red text means that has been removed)?
  - Headings: Are headings organised in the right way, respecting order (h1, h2, ...) and are consistent?
  - Images: Are all images tagged with descriptive alt text or marked as decorative if not important?
  - Keyboard navigation: Is it possible to navigate (and activate) all contents with the keyboard and the current position (focus) is visible?
  - Links and Buttons: Are they descriptive and easy to activate?
  - Form Labels: Are input fields properly labelled so screen readers can announce them?
  - Moving, Flashing, or Blinking Content: Is possible to block animations (e.g. carousels)?
  - Multimedia management: Can users interact with video / audio players, using them with keyboard, understanding them with screen reader, and having alternatives for media (e.g. captions or audio-descriptions)?
  - Page title: Every webpage has a specific page title?

11.2.3 Evaluating open and built spaces

Examples of the operational tools developed and applied within the SITE project for the evaluation of open and built spaces are included in the Annexes as reference material.

11.2.3.1 Tools to detect criticalities

The mapping tool proposed below, tested during the initial SITE visits and included in the **ANNEXES**, is not a fixed checklist, but a structured methodological framework that can be adapted to different spatial, cultural and functional contexts. Its purpose is to generate a systematic and comparable reading of the current situation, while remaining flexible enough to respond to the specific characteristics of each site.

It should be considered as recommended references rather than mandatory instruments. Partners are not required to develop or replicate these tools independently and may adopt alternative digital or analogue solutions, provided that they enable a systematic identification and mapping of barriers and critical issues in relation to the seven UD principles.

1. **Define the scope of the mapping.** Before drafting tasks and questions, clearly identify:
    - The type of space (open public space, transport hub, cultural facility, administrative building, green area, etc.)
    - The scale of analysis (single building, route, district, network of spaces)
    - The target users to be involved (older persons, people with disabilities, families with children, migrants, tourists, etc.)
    - The main functions of the space
2. **Select the design elements to be investigated.** Starting from the reference categories (e.g. circulation systems, entering/exiting, wayfinding, seating, public amenities, etc.), partners should:
    - Select only the elements relevant to the specific site
    - Add context-specific elements if necessary (e.g. waterfront access, heritage constraints, seasonal use, security checkpoints)
3. **Define tasks.** Tasks translate spatial components into experiential actions. Each task should:
    - Be concrete and action-oriented (e.g. “Reach the main entrance from the nearest bus stop”)
    - Reflect a realistic user need
    - Correspond to one design element
    - Be feasible during the on-site visit
4. **Formulate guiding questions.** Questions should:
    - Be simple and observational
    - Avoid technical language

- Encourage attention to physical, sensory and cognitive aspects
- Be answerable with YES/NO/NA (not applicable)
- Include space for qualitative comments and short notes

They should explore aspects such as visibility and legibility, physical accessibility, orientation and clarity, perceived safety, comfort, autonomy

5. **Provide documentation tools**. Each participant should be equipped with:
   - A printed or digital map of the area
   - The task sheet
   - Space for notes
   - Optionally, a camera or smartphone for photographic documentation
6. **Ensure comparability across contexts.** While tools are adaptable, a minimum shared structure should be maintained across partners:
   - Same overall goal (mapping current conditions)
   - Clear link between task and design element
   - Documentation of barriers (physical, sensory, cognitive)
   - Structured recording format

Important methodological note. The mapping tool is inspired by the logic of the Customer Journey Map, but shifts the focus from service interaction to spatial experience. The accessibility of a space is understood as the cumulative accessibility of its components. Therefore, completing individual tasks enables the reconstruction of an overall accessibility profile of the area. The tool can be prepared for printed or digital delivery.

11.2.3.2 UD assessment tool

The assessment tool developed and presented within the SITE project (and included in the annexes) translates the issues identified during the mapping phase into a structured analytical framework based on the seven principles of UD. Its purpose is not merely to confirm the presence of barriers, but to interpret them through a shared conceptual lens and to prioritise potential improvements.

The tool is designed as a collective evaluation matrix (e.g. Excel-based), to be projected and completed during a facilitated group session.

It should be considered as recommended references rather than mandatory instruments. Partners are not required to develop or replicate these tools independently and may adopt alternative digital or analogue solutions, provided that they allow for a systematic assessment of how the analysed elements respond to the seven Universal Design

principles. Any selected tool should also enable the recording of results before and after interventions, in order to support comparison and evaluation of improvements over time.

1. **Define the structure of the matrix.** The matrix should be structured around three core dimensions:
    - Spatial element or critical point (identified during Goal A)
    - Universal Design principle(s) involved
        - Equitable Use
        - Flexibility in Use
        - Simple and Intuitive Use
        - Perceptible Information
        - Tolerance for Error
        - Low Physical Effort
        - Size and Space for Approach and Use
    - Evaluation outcome and improvement potential
2. **Translate criticalities into evaluative statements**. For each critical point identified during the mapping phase, formulate a clear evaluative statement. For each principle, formulate a number of more specific questions related to that principle in order to more easily verify compliance (e.g. three questions for each principle). Example structure:
    - "The entrance allows independent access for users with reduced mobility."
    - "Wayfinding information is perceivable through multiple sensory channels."
    - "Seating areas provide adequate space for different body types and assistive devices."

    Statements should be formulated positively (so that YES means compliance/alignment), be clear and non-technical, refer to observable conditions.
3. **Define the scoring system**. The recommended scoring system ensures comparability across contexts:
    - YES – The principle is adequately respected
    - NO – The principle is not respected
    - N/A – Not applicable in this context

    To make the evaluation more strategic, the "NO" response is further differentiated using colour-coding:
    - Yellow – Improvement possible in the short term / limited resources required

- Orange – Improvement possible in the medium–long term / significant resources required
- Red – Improvement unlikely or not feasible within a reasonable timeframe due to objective constraints

This colour differentiation transforms the tool from a descriptive checklist into a prioritisation instrument. Partners may adapt the colour system or the terminology used for feasibility levels. However, the distinction between short-term, long-term and structurally constrained barriers should be maintained.

4. **Organise the collective assessment session**. The tool should be completed collectively to encourage multi-perspective interpretation, to reduce individual bias, and to stimulate negotiation and shared understanding. To structure the session effectively:
    - Appoint at least one facilitator
    - Project the Excel matrix in real time
    - Display the mapped critical points on a large printed or digital map
    - Encourage discussion before assigning scores

    The facilitator's role is to ensure that discussions remain anchored to UD principles, to prevent purely subjective judgements, and to support convergence towards shared evaluation.

5. **Ensure adaptability while maintaining coherence**. Some points can be adapted:
    - The number of evaluated elements
    - The wording of evaluative statements
    - The level of detail (building-scale vs. district-scale)
    - The grouping of UD principles

    However, the following elements should remain consistent across all pilot contexts:

    - Reference to UD principles
    - Use of structured scoring
    - Explicit indication of improvement feasibility
    - Collective completion of the tool

Important methodological note. This tool will be recompiled at the end of the interventions to verify whether they have been able to improve the adherence of the analysed elements to the UD, and to what extent.

11.2.3.3 Co-design

The Co-design panel is the third and final tool of the SITE methodology (and included in the annexes). It translates analytical findings into structured design requirements and strategic directions. Unlike the previous tools, which focus on observation and evaluation, this instrument activates a generative process, transforming identified criticalities into shared and actionable proposals.

The tool is designed as a visual and participatory co-design board, to be completed collectively during a facilitated session.

It should be considered as recommended references rather than mandatory approaches. Partners are not required to replicate these methods and may adopt alternative digital or analogue formats, provided that they ensure an inclusive, participatory and well-facilitated process. Any chosen approach should enable shared discussion, collective prioritisation and the active involvement of relevant stakeholders in the definition of improvement measures.

- **Prepare the Co-design board**. The tool should be prepared as a large physical board (printed or drawn on a flipchart/wall), structured along two axes:
    - **Vertical axis** (left column – fixed headings)

      a) Specific Goals
      b) Expected Results
      c) Stakeholders to Involve
      d) Actions
      e) Criticalities

      The first two sections (Specific Goals and Expected Results) define the strategic direction and are written directly on the board. The last three sections (Stakeholders, Actions, Criticalities) are completed using Post-it notes, allowing flexibility, reorganization and clustering.

    - **Horizontal axis** (top row – spatial elements)

      Across the top of the board, the spatial elements identified during the mapping phase (Goal A) should be listed horizontally (e.g. entrance, circulation, wayfinding, seating, services, etc.). This ensures that proposals remain clearly connected to previously identified criticalities and prevents the discussion from becoming abstract or disconnected from spatial evidence.

- **Define the strategic direction**. The session begins by collectively defining:

- **Specific goals**: broad improvement intentions linked to inclusivity, accessibility and UD. Examples:
    - Improve autonomous access to public buildings.
    - Strengthen multi-sensory wayfinding systems.
    - Increase perceived safety in open spaces.
- **Expected results**. For each goal, participants define the tangible outcomes that should be achieved. Expected results should:
    - Describe observable changes
    - Be user-centred
    - Clarify what success would look like
    - This phase ensures alignment before moving into operational discussion

- **Reconnect with identified criticalities.** Before generating solutions, the facilitator **should** briefly revisit:
    - The mapped elements
    - The prioritised barriers (especially those marked yellow/orange/red in Goal B)

  Participants are then invited to write the most relevant criticalities on Post-it notes and place them in the corresponding column (under the relevant spatial element). This step ensures that the co-design process remains evidence-based.

- **Identify stakeholders to involve**. For each element or goal, participants reflect on:
    - Who needs to be involved to enable change?
    - Who is affected?
    - Who has decision-making power?
    - Who has technical expertise?
    - Who represents user perspectives?

  Stakeholders may include: Municipal departments, technical offices, accessibility experts, civil society organisations, user groups, private operators. Post-its allow multiple stakeholders to be associated with different elements. This step shifts the discussion from “what should change” to “who makes change possible.”

- **Define actions**. Actions translate goals into operational directions. They may include:

- Design interventions
- Policy adjustments
- Communication improvements
- Temporary solutions
- Pilot projects
- Training activities

Each action should be clearly connected to a specific element, should respond to an identified criticality, should be realistically framed (short-term / medium-term / long-term). Post-its allow actions to be moved, grouped or reformulated during discussion.

- **Prioritisation through collective voting.** Once actions have been identified and positioned on the board, a prioritisation phase should be conducted. This step allows participants to collectively identify which actions are considered most urgent, feasible, or strategically impactful.
  Each participant is provided with a limited number of stickers (e.g. 3–5 dots), which they can place on the Post-it notes corresponding to the actions they consider priority interventions. Participants may:
  - Distribute their stickers across different actions
  - Assign multiple stickers to one action if they consider it particularly relevant

  The number of stickers should be defined in advance to encourage selective decision-making rather than consensus on everything.

  The sticker-based voting method:
  - Makes preferences visible
  - Encourages individual responsibility within the collective process
  - Reveals convergences and divergences
  - Helps distinguish between desirable actions and priority actions

  Importantly, the outcome should not be interpreted as a rigid ranking, but as an indicator of collective perception.

- **Interpreting the results.** After voting:
  - Actions with the highest number of stickers can be identified as short-term priorities.
  - Actions with moderate support may represent medium-term objectives.

- Actions with limited support should not be discarded automatically, but reconsidered in relation to feasibility, cost, or stakeholder responsibility.

In the final structured synthesis:

- Priority actions should be clearly marked (e.g. high / medium / exploratory).
- Their associated stakeholders should be specified.
- Where possible, indicative timeframes (short / medium / long term) should be suggested.

The voting phase transforms the co-design session from a brainstorming exercise into a strategic decision-making moment, strengthening ownership and increasing the likelihood of implementation.

- **From board to structured output**. After the session:
  - The board should be documented (photographs + transcription).
  - Post-its should be systematised into a structured requirement list.
  - Recurrent themes should be identified.
  - Actions should be organised according to priority and feasibility.

The final output of this phase is not the board itself, but a coherent set of:

- Strategic goals
- Defined expected results
- Identified responsible stakeholders
- Prioritised actions
- Clearly linked criticalities.

11.3 Implementation of improvement measures: systematization tools

Systematisation tools support in organising, consolidating and documenting the results of assessment and analysis activities. It is necessary to ensure that all collected data, observations and outputs are structured in a clear and consistent way, in order to:

- make results understandable and usable
- support internal and external communication

- enable comparison across contexts
- ensure replicability and scalability of the approach

All outputs should be compiled into structured documents, clearly presenting:

- the methodology applied
- the materials analysed
- the results obtained
- the recommendations developed

This phase is essential to transform analytical work into actionable and transferable knowledge.

11.3.1 Texts

Partners should collect and systematise all revised and simplified texts produced during the project. For each text, it is recommended to:

- Provide the original version and the simplified version
- Ensure consistency with inclusive and accessible language principles
- Include translations into relevant project or local languages

Where possible, partners should also:

- Integrate alternative accessible formats (e.g. sign language videos, audio versions)
- Ensure that content is understandable for diverse user groups

All materials should be compiled into a structured document or repository, allowing easy consultation and reuse.

11.3.2 Websites

Partners should document the results of accessibility assessments carried out on selected websites. The systematisation should include:

- A description of the evaluation methodology used
- A summary of key findings for each website

- Identification of main accessibility barriers
- Clear and actionable recommendations for improvement

It is recommended to:

- Structure the document by website and/or by type of issue
- Provide detailed technical sheets for each analysed website
- Include post-assessment recommendations aligned with accessibility standards

Where applicable, partners should also include:

- General guidance on website accessibility
- References to relevant standards and best practices

The objective is to produce a clear and usable reference that supports both immediate improvements and longer-term digital accessibility strategies.

11.3.3 Open and built spaces

11.3.3.1 Requirement Framework (office-based synthesis tool)

Following the on-site application of the three operational tools (Mapping, UD Assessment and Co-design), a structured Requirement Framework is developed as a consolidated output. While the first three tools are applied collectively during fieldwork and participatory sessions, the Requirement Framework is compiled in a second phase, primarily office-based. It represents the synthetic and strategic elaboration of all previously collected materials.

The Requirement Framework:

- Systematises the criticalities identified during the mapping phase
- Highlights the elements evaluated negatively under the UD Assessment tool, with particular focus on the “NO – yellow” and “NO – orange” categories (i.e. feasible improvements)
- Integrates the outcomes of the co-design sessions
- Connects identified actions with relevant references of good/best practices that may be known to the partners.

This tool ensures that:

- Evidence collected during participatory activities is not dispersed

- Feasible improvements are clearly distinguished from structural constraints
- Strategic priorities are translated into structured and transferable requirements
- The SITE methodology produces actionable and documentable outputs

The Requirement Framework constitutes the operational backbone of the SITE Strategy, bridging participatory processes and implementation-oriented planning.

11.4 Monitoring and evaluation of improvement measures: feedback activities and tools

Monitoring and feedback mechanisms are an integral component of the SITE Strategy. They ensure that implementation is not limited to the application of methods and tools, but includes a structured verification of understanding, usability and long-term integration. Monitoring activities aim to:

- Assess the clarity and accessibility of the methods and tools applied
- Verify participants' understanding of Universal Design principles
- Evaluate the perceived applicability of the proposed approaches
- Identify obstacles to implementation in specific institutional contexts
- Strengthen the strategy's transferability and long-term sustainability

Feedback moments should be integrated systematically after key activities, including:

- Training and awareness-raising sessions
- Site visits and mapping activities
- Co-design workshops
- Implementation milestones
- Evaluation phases

Special attention should be given to the accessibility of the language used, ensuring that terminology remains clear, inclusive and non-technical whenever possible. Monitoring and feedback can be structured through:

- Questionnaires (including both closed and open-ended questions)
- Short reflection forms at the end of activities
- Facilitated group debriefing sessions
- Follow-up interviews or surveys

- Internal review meetings

Combining quantitative and qualitative inputs is recommended in order to capture both measurable trends and nuanced insights. The monitoring framework should be proportionate to the scale of implementation, ensuring feasibility while maintaining methodological rigour.

12. Continuous Improvement Cycle

The SITE Strategy is designed as an iterative and adaptive system rather than a linear sequence of activities. Its effectiveness relies on the continuous interaction between implementation, monitoring, reflection, and redesign processes.

The results generated through the monitoring and evaluation phase do not represent a final endpoint, but rather as inputs for further cycles of activity. In this sense, evaluation contributes directly to the revision of planning, training, and co-design processes. Each implementation cycle may generate evidence and insights that activate a new phase of improvement, which can be structured as follows:

- **Evaluation outcomes (Step #4)** inform the identification of new needs and priorities
- **Training activities (Step #1)** are updated to address identified knowledge gaps
- **Assessment processes (Step #2 tools)** are refined based on contextual feedback and emerging barriers
- **Co-design activities (Step #2)** are reactivated to adjust or redesign interventions
- **Implementation actions (Step #3)** are progressively improved and adapted over time

This cyclical structure ensures that the SITE Strategy remains responsive to context and open to adjustment over time. .

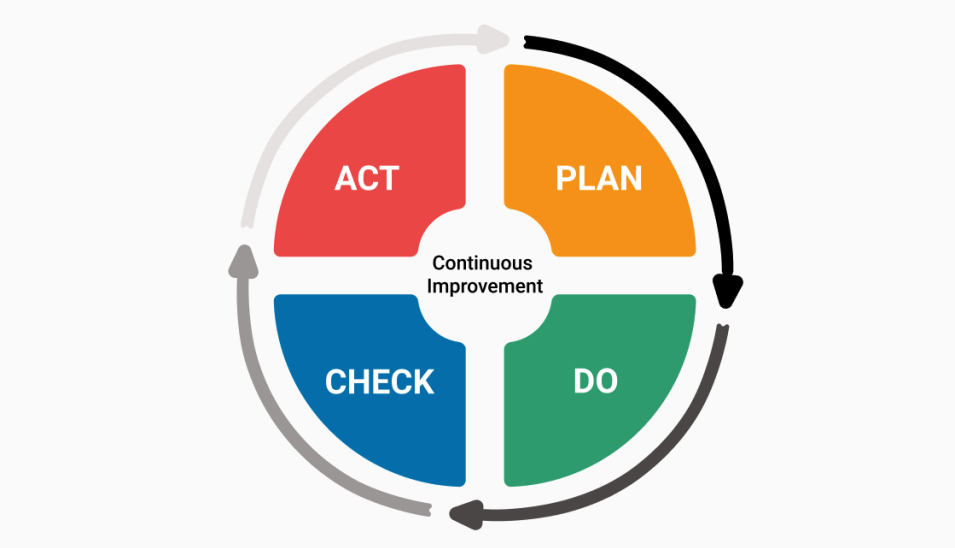
Monitoring and feedback are not treated as external or final control mechanisms, but as integral components of each phase of the methodology. Feedback can be collected through training and awareness sessions, field-based assessments and mapping activities, co-design workshops, implementation processes, and final evaluation activities. The integration of qualitative and quantitative feedback allows for a multi-layered understanding of both user experience and operational performance.

Through the continuous integration of monitoring results, the SITE Strategy also supports an adaptive learning process at local and organisational levels, enabling progressive strengthening of Universal Design competencies, refinement of tools and methodologies, improvement of stakeholder collaboration practices, adjustment of interventions to changing contextual conditions. In this way, the strategy evolves over time, ensuring that accessibility and inclusion are not treated as static targets, but as continuously improving outcomes.

Within this framework, the Continuous Improvement Cycle represents a core principle of the SITE Strategy. It ensures that:

- inclusivity is treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention
- evaluation directly informs planning and implementation
- methodological tools remain flexible and context-responsive
- learning is embedded within institutional and operational practices

As a result, the SITE Strategy establishes a dynamic system in which reflection, evaluation and adjustment are embedded within all phases, ensuring long-term sustainability and progressive enhancement of Universal Design application.



13. Strategy Adoption, Implementation and Monitoring Framework

To ensure the long-term sustainability and operational uptake of the SITE Strategy beyond the project duration, partners commit to progressively integrating the Strategy recommendations into local policies, planning tools and operational practices. The implementation pathway is structured into sequential steps corresponding to the four strategic recommendations developed within the SITE framework. The proposed timeline defines realistic and measurable short-, medium- and long-term actions supporting the gradual adoption of Universal Design principles.

13.1 Context mapping and baseline assessment. Preparatory phase supporting all recommendations (within 6 months after project closure – by February 2027)

For the SITE pilot partners, the project activities already provided an initial evidence base through site visits, assessments, co-design activities and stakeholder engagement processes. These activities enabled the identification of critical issues, opportunities and preliminary priorities for intervention.

For organisations and institutions adopting the SITE Strategy beyond the project partnership, an initial preparatory phase is recommended in order to define implementation capacities and operational conditions.

Objectives

- Identify internal competencies and staff to be involved in the implementation process;
- Assess available financial and organisational resources;
- Identify relevant planning and programming instruments supporting implementation;
- Define realistic priorities, timelines and governance responsibilities.

Expected actions

Partners and adopting organisations are encouraged to:

- identify internal departments, offices and staff responsible for implementation;
- map relevant stakeholders and external actors to be involved;
- identify available budgets and potential funding opportunities;

- review existing strategic, operational and sectoral planning instruments;
- define coordination mechanisms and implementation responsibilities.

Expected outcomes

- Internal mapping of competencies and responsibilities completed;
- Identification of implementation capacities, resource needs and funding opportunities;
- Initial definition of governance and coordination mechanisms;
- Identification of planning tools and operational pathways supporting implementation.

Outputs

- Institutional and operational mapping;
- Identification of implementation capacities and resource needs;
- Definition of feasible implementation pathways aligned with local priorities and available resources.

This preparatory step supports the effective and realistic implementation of the SITE Strategy by ensuring coherence between objectives, institutional capacities and available resources.

13.2 Short-term actions (within 6 months after project closure – by February 2027)

Objective

Raise awareness and initiate the wider adoption of Universal Design principles, in line with Step #1.

Expected actions

Partners should implement awareness-raising campaign targeted at general public (dissemination of key information on how Universal Design can make their every-day life easier) along with targeted educational campaign for tourism stakeholders (on how to adopt Universal Design principles in their segment of tourism offer). In designing this campaign will be used already prepared materials from SITE project (training materials, general data, guidelines for decision-makers, etc.).

Expected outcomes

- Increased awareness of accessibility and inclusion issues;

- Initial operational uptake of the SITE methodology;
- Activation of local stakeholder engagement processes.

13.3 Medium-term actions (within 12 months after project closure – by June 2027)

Objective

Integrate SITE strategy into planning and programming instruments.

Expected actions

Partners should incorporate elements of accessibility and Universal Design into at least one local strategic or operational instrument, such as:

- strategic development plans;
- plans for promotion and/or development of tourism offer and products;
- public works programmes and adjacent procurement procedures;
- PEBA or accessibility plans;
- Communication, informing and digital accessibility guidelines;
- wayfinding or public space improvement programmes.

The integration may include one or more of the following:

- stronger emphasis on accessibility elements in spatial interventions;
- performing mapping of accessibility of existing state before making precise plans for new investments and improvements
- incorporating easy language and accessible communication in the development of new communication materials (not necessarily only in the field of tourism);
- website accessibility improvements (especially for public sector institutions);
- focusing on inclusive signage and wayfinding systems in (re)developing wayfinding infrastructure of the destination.

Expected outcomes

- Institutional adoption of SITE principles;
- Integration of accessibility objectives into local planning and governance tools;
- Increased coherence between investments and inclusive tourism strategies.

13.4 Long-term actions (within 24 months after project closure – by June 2028)

Objective

Implement concrete accessibility improvement actions in line with Step #2 and Step #3. These actions should ensure the practical application of Universal Design principles, supporting consistency across interventions as well as feasibility, scalability and alignment with local strategic objectives.

Expected actions

Partners should complete at least one intervention comprising elements of accessibility and Universal Design adoption in line with the SITE framework and methodology. It can be focused on one of the following areas (non-exhaustive list):

- physical accessibility improvements in public spaces;
- assistance to private sector stakeholders in completing their tourism investments with emphasis on increased accessibility;
- implementation of inclusive wayfinding systems;
- website accessibility upgrades;
- simplification and accessibility enhancement of communication materials and services.

Interventions should be prioritised according to local needs, urgency criteria, operational feasibility and available resources identified during the previous implementation phases.

Expected outcomes

- Tangible improvement of accessibility conditions;
- Increased usability of tourism environments and services;
- Strengthened visibility of inclusive tourism policies at local level;
- Progressive integration of Universal Design principles into local operational practices.

13.5 Monitoring and update cycle (within 36 months after project closure)

Objective

Ensure continuity, monitoring and progressive improvement of the Strategy, in line with Step #4.

Expected actions

Partners are encouraged to assign individual or department within organisational structure responsible for:

- monitoring implemented actions and their impacts;
- collecting feedback from users and stakeholders;
- reviewing and update planning tools where necessary;
- identifying additional priorities and future investments.

Expected outcomes

- Continuous improvement of accessibility policies;
- Long-term sustainability of SITE results;
- Consolidation of inclusive governance practices.