

Greece to Improve Its Accessibility

The Greek Ministry of Tourism and National Confederation for Disabled People ESAmE have laid a pact to work together so that individuals living with disabilities can have unlimited access to sport, leisure, recreation and culture life.



According to a co-operation protocol signed by the president of ESAmE Ioannis Vardakastanis and the minister of tourism Olga Kefalogianni, both sides will strive to ensure and implement actions that guarantee accessibility of available infrastructure and services to people with special needs and other groups that might fall under this category.

According to Mrs. Kefalogianni, foreigners with disabilities do not view Greece as a tourist destination since most of the country's services are not user friendly for disabled people. As such, the co-operation protocol is aimed at making Greece's tourism industry more accessible to them.

Mr. Vardakastanis, the president of ESAmE, on his part suggested the development of an information and access guide specifically meant for people living with disabilities. This idea was strongly supported by Mrs. Kefalogianni. As such, the Greek ministry of tourism will take measures to inform professionals within the tourism industry about the benefits of accessible tourism and what they stand to gain.

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According to Ivor Ambrose, the managing director for the European Network-for-Accessible Tourism ENAT, the public sector and tourism related businesses within Greece must have better support and guidance so as to be able to prepare for the ever growing global market of accessible tourism.

He further stated that solid investment in transportation and environment is necessary to improve the accessibility. Targeted marketing, specialized guiding for tourists and more accessible tourism packages for senior citizens, the young, disabled individuals and their families are all needed.

As such, renewing the positive attitude of 'can do' of the Paralympic and Olympic games hosted within the country in 2004 will be the best way to achieve the accessibility legacy started ten years ago and instigating food practices throughout the country. He reiterated that Greece had slowly slipped behind many countries within the Mediterranean region when it comes to accessible tourism.

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