SESSION 16 – GOOD PRACTISES: ACCESSIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Moderator: Laurel Van Horn

Speakers: Brunella Manzardo, Helena Ribeiro, Katerina Papamichail, Leonardo Porcelloni

The session "Good Practises: Accessible Cultural Heritage" brought together experts from museums, tourism boards, academia, and standardisation bodies to explore innovative models for making cultural heritage inclusive and sustainable. Moderated by **Laurel Van Horn, Director of Programs, Open Doors Organization, USA**, the discussion emphasised the balance between preservation and accessibility, showing how technological innovation, co-design, and international standards are transforming access to cultural heritage.

Brunella Manzardo, Accessibility Manager at the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art (Italy), presented twenty years of research and practise dedicated to multisensory access and inclusive education. Her work has led to pioneering projects for blind, visually impaired, and deaf visitors, including tactile maps, guided tours led by deaf and blind educators, and the first Italian Sign Language Dictionary of Contemporary Art, now used as a reference by other institutions. She stressed that true accessibility comes from collaboration and mutual learning between professionals and visitors.

Helena Ribeiro, from Tourism of Portugal, introduced the national process for adopting the ISO 21902 standard (Accessible Tourism for All), explaining how Portugal translated and implemented it into a national certification framework. She illustrated the All for All Programme, which provides training for auditors, supports businesses through funding, and ensures consistent criteria across the tourism chain. Ribeiro underlined that certification must evolve as a dynamic process involving continuous improvement, not a one-time compliance effort.

Katerina Papamichail, an architect and ENAT board member, presented the new ISO 5727 standard on Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment for Immovable Cultural Heritage. She highlighted its methodology for integrating accessibility and conservation values, with case studies from the Acropolis of Athens and Akershus Castle in Norway, demonstrating how reversible design and user consultation can enhance access without compromising authenticity.

Finally, **Leonardo Porcelloni, researcher at the University of Genoa**, presented a European study on accessibility within the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes programme, analysing 49 transnational routes. He identified the absence of common accessibility standards and the need for coordinated governance, proposing the development of measurable indicators and best practise sharing across networks.

The session concluded with a shared conviction that accessibility and cultural preservation must evolve together, ensuring that heritage sites become living, inclusive spaces where history and participation coexist harmoniously.

Watch Session 16 on YouTube. (run time 1:34:54)