SESSION 20 – GOOD PRACTISES: ACCESS TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Moderator: Mathieu Angelo

Speakers: Alessia Del Bianco Rizzardo, Johann Durand, Katerina Papamichail, Maud Dupuis, Cinzia Zugolaro and Gaia Galeotti

The session “Good Practises: Access to the Natural Environment” showcased innovative projects from across Europe that integrate accessibility, environmental sustainability, and community engagement within natural settings. Moderated by **Mathieu Angelo of CAWaB, Belgium**, the discussion explored how inclusive design can coexist with ecological preservation and local development.

Alessia Del Bianco Rizzardo, representing PromoTurismo Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), presented the regional initiative Una Regione per Tutti (“A Region for All”), developed in partnership with disability associations since 2015. The programme combines accessibility mapping, infrastructure upgrades, and community co-design, resulting in more than 700 newly mapped and certified sites, from coastal areas to mountain resorts. Projects such as A-mare il Mare (“Love the Sea”) have enhanced beach accessibility through adaptive equipment, training for lifeguards, and awareness events. The next challenge, she noted, is to extend accessibility to mountain areas with year-round opportunities.

Johann Durand, International Director of the Blue Flag programme at the Foundation for Environmental Education (Denmark), described how environmental certification schemes can promote universal access while protecting ecosystems. He emphasised that sustainability and inclusion must advance together, highlighting Blue Flag’s collaboration with ENAT to update accessibility criteria across 50 countries.

Katerina Papamichail, architect and ENAT co-founder (Greece), presented the national programme Beaches for Everyone, which has created over 600 accessible beaches across Greece. Funded through European and national resources, the initiative deploys innovative technologies such as SEATRAC and SeaAccess—solar-powered ramps enabling independent sea entry for wheelchair users—alongside accessible pathways, signage, and facilities. The programme, she noted, provides a competitive advantage for destinations and redefines accessibility as an element of quality tourism.

Maud Dupuis, representing Polymorphe Design from France, shared the Palace of King Oak Trail project, demonstrating how forest environments can be made inclusive while respecting ecological balance. Her detailed case study illustrated how careful designs - such as limited-impact paths, tactile maps, and inclusive interpretation—can preserve biodiversity while opening nature to everyone.

Finally, **Gaia Galeotti, for Università del Piemonte Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi per l'Economia e l'Impresa, (Italy)**, introduced LIBERVIE, an Italy–Switzerland cross-border initiative promoting accessible cultural and natural itineraries through co-design, digital mapping, and multisensory interpretation. By integrating literature, heritage, and nature, the project bridges tangible and intangible accessibility.

The session concluded with a shared vision: ensuring that access to nature is a universal right, achieved through dialogue between environmental stewardship, technology, and human-centred design.

Watch Session 20 on YouTube. (run time 1:13:49)