SESSION 3 – EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF SMART TOURISM, FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

Moderator: Marco Pizzio

Speakers: Francesco Tresso, Laura García, Peter Horsten, Francesco Bortolluzzi

The session "European Capitals of Smart Tourism, Focus on Accessibility" brought together representatives from four leading European cities—Turin, Benidorm, Breda, and Venice—each demonstrating how accessibility and smart governance can reinforce one another in shaping sustainable, inclusive destinations. Moderated by **Marco Pizzio, of AISM, Italy**, the discussion highlighted the importance of integrated planning, data management, and stakeholder collaboration in achieving long-term accessibility goals.

Francesco Tresso, representing the City of Turin, outlined the municipality's "Plan for Accessibility," which integrates data mapping, citizen participation, and artificial intelligence to identify and address urban barriers. Turin's multidisciplinary approach involves accessibility managers across departments, ensuring coordination between mobility, green spaces, and event management. The city has completed extensive surveys of pedestrian routes using digital tools and remote sensing and is developing AI-assisted prioritisation for barrier removal.

Laura García, from Benidorm, showcased the Spanish city's transformation into one of Europe's most accessible coastal destinations. Through the Benidorm for All initiative, the city developed a comprehensive accessibility plan encompassing mobility, beach access, and inclusive services. Benidorm now features 10 kilometres of pedestrian zones, 100% accessible public transport, and fully adapted beach areas with amphibious wheelchairs, cranes, and medical support available year-round. The programme recorded over 18,500 users in 2024 and has earned national and international recognition, including Spain's Best Accessible Destination Award. García stressed that accessibility is embedded in governance and urban design, supported by real-time data monitoring systems that analyse mobility patterns while respecting privacy.

Peter Horsten, from Breda (Netherlands), presented the city's long-standing commitment to co-creation, encapsulated in its guiding principle: "Nothing about us without us." Breda's accessibility journey began with citizen-led audits and evolved into a city-wide governance model integrating entrepreneurs, NGOs, and academic

institutions. Key projects include the Better Accessible Breda app, mapping real-time accessibility information, and the ArtIs Project, improving access to toilets and public spaces. Breda's investment in inclusive events, training for hospitality providers, and accessibility design guidelines has made it a benchmark for urban inclusion.

Finally, **Francesco Bortolluzzi, representing the City of Venice**, described the distinctive challenges of accessibility in a city built on water and bridges. The municipality has installed permanent ramps on key bridges, ensured accessible transport stops, and developed multisensory information points such as Forte Marghera, featuring tactile models, braille materials, and video mapping. Bortoluzzi emphasised the need for innovative solutions—such as AI tools and digital mapping—to overcome the city's structural limitations while enhancing visitor experiences.

The session concluded that accessibility within smart tourism requires systemic thinking, combining digital innovation, physical adaptation, and civic participation to ensure that every city becomes a welcoming environment for all.

Watch Session 3 on YouTube. (run time 1:34:21)