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# ROYAL ROUTE FOR DISABLED TOURISTS

## KRAKOW

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### What are the objectives of the project?

The main goal of the project is to allow everyone living in or visiting Krakow to access its cultural heritage. This is done through a tourist route that is accessible to the disabled, blind and visually impaired. Twelve bronze statues were placed along Krakow's Royal Route (the most popular walking route in the city), depicting the key historical sites. Aural descriptions are also available via mobile phones, providing blind and visually impaired people with a way of 'visiting' the sites.



The second goal is to promote Krakow as a friendly and open city.

The project is aimed at disabled inhabitants of Krakow, including the elderly, children and young adults, tourists, the blind and visually impaired, tourist guides and internet users.

### Timeline

2008-2010 for the concept to realisation. The statues are now a permanent feature of the city.

### Who is responsible for project implementation/delivery?

The initiative is that of Hanna Grabowska-Palecka, a specialist in architecture for the disabled in the University of Technology Krakow. The sculptor is Karol Badya, who was selected from a competition.

### How does the project work?

Initially, a survey was sent to over 100 centres, foundations and associations that work with the disabled to get their input on how to make the most of the interactive statues. The mayor of Krakow set up a consulting team to work with the sculptor and advise on how best to meet the requirements of the disabled, blind and the special character of the protected area that the statues would go in. The team included representatives from associations for the blind and visually impaired, disabled associations, city representatives and artistic bodies.

Nine of the statues stand on granite pedestals and three of them hang from walls. They are accompanied by short descriptions of the sites in both the Latin and Braille alphabets and in both Polish and English. A small figurine is placed with the statues. This allows the participant to determine their location in relation to the site and proportion their scale. All of the pedestals were designed to allow physically disabled users to approach and touch them.

The sculptor created the models bearing in mind how blind and visually impaired people read architectural elements (i.e. with the fingertips). This led to certain modifications in the statues - some architectural details and decorative elements are missing. Other elements may be magnified. Pointed details were omitted for safety reasons.

The statues are designed to tie in with their surroundings. Their final locations were decided upon by the consulting team who took into consideration their conservation and the requirements

dictated by the UNESCO world heritage list. The devices that allow for the transmission of the aural descriptions were fitted in buildings with the owners consent.

An international conference entitled 'Perception of tourist attractions in the public space by the blind and visually impaired' was held to launch the statues. It was attended by both national and international bodies working with people with visual impairments, as well as representatives of the tourist industry. As an opportunity to exchange experiences, it is hoped that more such conferences will take place in the future.

Training sessions for tourist guides were held to teach them how to make the most of the statues and how to facilitate tourists with disabilities. Coaches included the blind and specialists in audio-description and spatial orientation. More of these training sessions will be held in the future.

Although the statues were created mainly for the disabled and visually impaired or the blind, the statues benefit all tourists.

The main measures undertaken involved:

- assessing the Royal Route and deciding on the best positions for the twelve bronze statues;
- making plastic copies of the models for use in exhibitions elsewhere;
- preparing the models descriptions. These were embossed (the descriptive plaques) and recorded (the audio descriptions). The recordings are available on the city's website. They can be downloaded on GSMs equipped with a GPS or Bluetooth. They can also be downloaded at the InfoKrakow network point, near the start of the walk.

## What are the results of the project?

Creating tactile models is of great interest to the blind and visually impaired. The models have highlighted an otherwise neglected sector of the tourism market. As a result of the statues, new services and tourist offers were created to cater for this section of the market. For example, several restaurants now provide menus in Braille, a bank installed aids to help blind people use it and tour companies are now creating blind-friendly packages. A museum in the city has now also a permanent exhibition of architectural details available to the blind and visually impaired.

## Was the project evaluated and were there any follow-up activities?

The Municipality of Krakow plans to extend the initiative to include other historical areas of the city.

Other cities are also interested in the initiative, which if realised, will contribute to preventing social exclusion in those cities too.

## What was the budget and resources allocated to the project?

The initiative is funded through the Malopolska Regional Operational Programme. The total cost for the years 2008-2010 was PLN 1,250,000 (around €300,000), 75% of which was provided through the programme.

## Who is the contact person for the project?

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