



PYLON ONE

INSPYRE

Inclusive Paths: Youth-Led Accessible Exploration in Thessaloniki

Implementation & Community Engagement

Project No: 2024-1-EL02-ESC30-SOL-000235532

www.inspyre-project.eu



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INTRODUCTION

After months of preparation, research, and collaborative planning, the project now begins to move into real-world implementation.

It is at this stage that INSPYRE truly connects with the community, transforming ideas and strategies into concrete, visible actions. The activities carried out during this phase not only test the tools and methods developed earlier, but also demonstrate the value of participation, inclusion, and co-creation in shaping more accessible urban environments.

By engaging directly with residents, volunteers, and people with disabilities, this phase ensures that the project is grounded in real experiences and that accessibility solutions are both practical and sustainable.



PURPOSE

The purpose of this phase is to bring INSPYRE out into the community and start turning planning into action. It introduces the project's tools such as the e-Handbook to the public, making knowledge accessible to everyone. Through interactive activities and shared experiences, communities are actively engaged in shaping inclusive urban spaces. This stage also serves as a testing ground, where methods and routes can be refined based on participant feedback. Most importantly, it strengthens awareness, empathy, and a sense of ownership, ensuring that accessibility is recognized as a collective responsibility.

KEY ACTIVITIES IN FOCUS

INSPYRE emphasizes bringing tools, knowledge, and practices into action. The launch of the INSPYRE e-Handbook marks the first public presentation of the project's main resource, providing a practical guide for accessibility planning. To complement this, introductory walking activities allow participants to experience urban challenges first-hand and reflect on real accessibility needs.

Alongside these walks, awareness talks and knowledge-sharing sessions help spread understanding of accessibility issues across the community, empowering both citizens and decision-makers. Finally, preliminary tests with volunteers and people with disabilities ensure that the approaches developed are realistic, usable, and grounded in lived experience, making inclusivity a tangible outcome rather than just a concept.



THE INSPYRE E-HANDBOOK

- Explains accessible urban planning in detail, introduces the principles of inclusivity, universal design, and barrier-free mobility in a way that is understandable for both experts and everyday citizens.
- Provides step-by-step guidance, offers practical methods to identify physical, sensory, and social barriers in the city, along with structured approaches to addressing them effectively.
- Serves as a professional and community resource, designed for urban planners, architects, policymakers, volunteers, and people with disabilities, ensuring everyone has a role in creating accessible cities.
- Combines theory with practice, includes real-life examples, tools, and exercises that transform accessibility knowledge into actionable solutions.
- Empowers local communities, enables residents to participate in shaping safer, more inclusive neighborhoods and fosters a shared sense of responsibility for urban mobility.



EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF THE E-HANDBOOK

- First public release of INSPYRE’s main tool, marks a milestone in making accessibility knowledge openly available to citizens, professionals, and decision-makers.
- Promotes learning-by-doing through practical examples, encourages participants to move beyond theory by applying methods directly in real urban environments.
- Serves as a bridge between research and application, translates academic insights and community feedback into tangible, ready-to-use strategies for inclusive mobility.



- Designed for accessibility in format, easy to use, visually clear, and available digitally to ensure it reaches a wide range of audiences, including people with disabilities and non-specialists.
- Strengthens community empowerment, equips local groups with tools and knowledge to actively co-create barrier-free spaces in their own neighborhoods.

INTRODUCTORY WALKING ACTIVITY

- Hands-on exploration of the city environment, participants actively move through urban spaces, experiencing accessibility first-hand instead of only discussing it in theory.
- Identification of real barriers, highlights obstacles such as uneven pavements, broken sidewalks, confusing or absent signage, steep curbs, or inaccessible public transport options.





- Promotes shared awareness by engaging different groups together, from citizens to planners, the activity fosters empathy, understanding, and recognition of everyday challenges faced by people with disabilities.
- Encourages collective responsibility, demonstrates that accessibility is not just a technical issue but a community-wide priority that requires joint action and cooperation.
- Provides immediate feedback for planning, observations gathered during the walk directly inform the refinement of INSPYRE's accessible routes and tools.



VALUE OF WALKING ACTIVITIES

- Encourages direct engagement with urban spaces, participants experience the city as it truly is, noticing both opportunities and challenges that may be overlooked in traditional planning approaches.
- Promotes empathy by seeing through the lens of people with disabilities, walking side by side fosters understanding of daily struggles such as navigating stairs, uneven pavements, or inaccessible transport.





- Generates practical, first-hand observations, creates a rich pool of real-world data that reflects lived experiences and can be directly integrated into urban design improvements.
- Transforms awareness into action, participants are not just observers but contributors, shaping the direction of accessibility solutions through their feedback.
- Strengthens collaboration between stakeholders, walking together builds connections among residents, professionals, and policymakers, reinforcing the shared goal of inclusive mobility.



AWARENESS TALKS

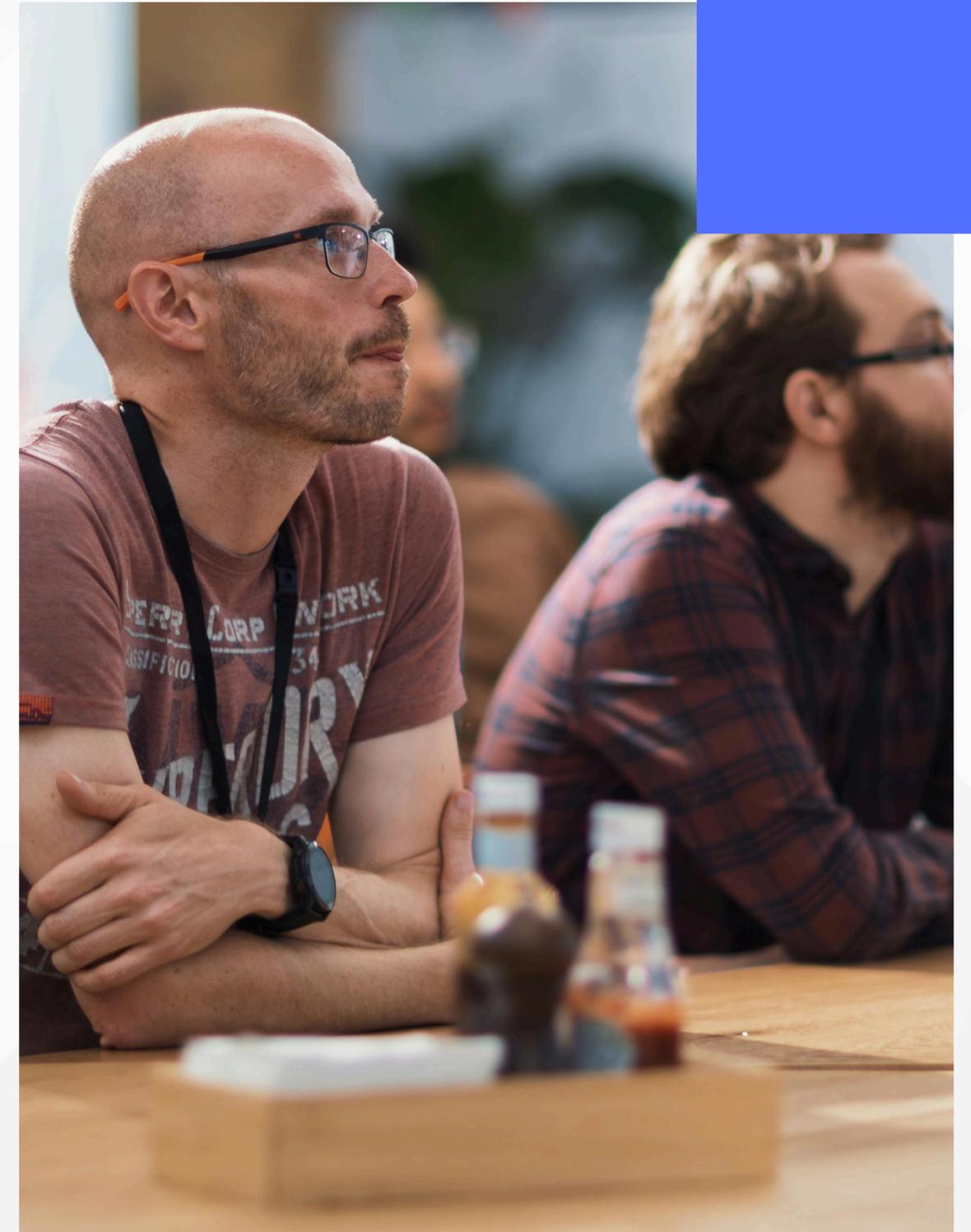
- Interactive sessions with diverse stakeholders, community groups, city officials, volunteers, and participants come together to discuss accessibility issues in urban spaces.
- Raise awareness of barriers in urban mobility, highlight both visible and hidden challenges, including physical, sensory, and social obstacles that limit independence.
- Share best practices and strategies, provide guidance on inclusive design, urban planning solutions, and participatory methods that have proven effective.

- Foster a culture of empathy and inclusion, encourage participants to consider accessibility as a shared responsibility, promoting understanding, respect, and proactive engagement.
- Encourage knowledge exchange and collaboration, these talks build networks between professionals and community members, creating lasting partnerships for inclusive urban development.



AWARENESS IN ACTION

- Real-life stories from participants personalize accessibility issues, hearing firsthand experiences makes abstract barriers tangible and relatable, highlighting the human impact of urban design decisions.
- Conversations generate policy-oriented insights, discussions between community members, volunteers, and officials provide practical ideas that can influence planning, regulations, and city-wide accessibility strategies.
- Strengthens community-wide dialogue on inclusivity, encourages ongoing conversations that extend beyond the sessions, fostering a culture of awareness, advocacy, and collaborative problem-solving.



- Bridges the gap between experience and action, insights gathered in these discussions feed directly into the planning and refinement of accessible routes and tools.
- Empowers participants to become advocates, sharing personal experiences instills confidence and a sense of responsibility for improving urban accessibility.

PRELIMINARY TESTING

- Engages volunteers and people with disabilities, brings together diverse participants to evaluate accessibility solutions, ensuring multiple perspectives are considered.
- Tests walking routes and accessibility tools in real-world conditions, allows participants to navigate the routes and use tools like the e-Handbook under actual urban conditions, highlighting both successes and challenges.
- Provides practical validation before wider rollout, ensures that routes, tools, and methods are functional, safe, and user-friendly before implementation at a larger scale.



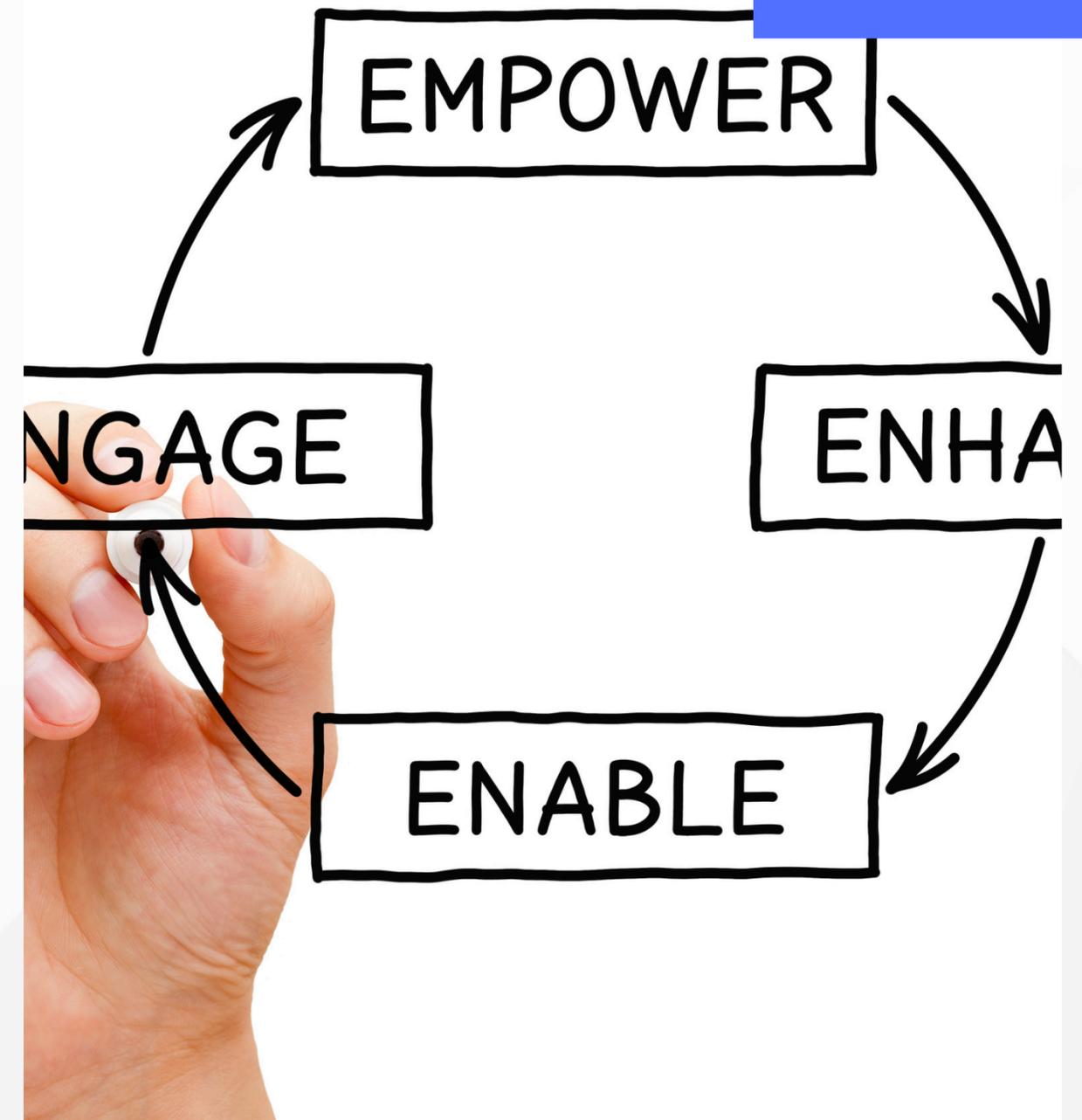
- Collects feedback for continuous improvement, observations, suggestions, and experiences from participants are systematically recorded to refine paths and methods.
- Supports evidence-based decision making, testing transforms theoretical plans into actionable, practical solutions for inclusive urban mobility.

TESTING PROCESS

- Participants walk pre-identified routes, structured walks allow systematic evaluation of accessibility, ensuring each segment of the urban path is assessed.
- Barriers are documented and mapped, physical, sensory, and transportation obstacles are carefully recorded, creating a visual and data-driven map of challenges.



- Feedback is collected through surveys and discussions, participants share their experiences, observations, and suggestions, providing qualitative and quantitative input.
- Adjustments are made based on real experiences, the team refines routes, tools, and methods, ensuring solutions are practical, safe, and user-centered.
- Supports iterative co-creation, the process emphasizes continuous improvement, with participant input driving tangible changes to urban accessibility strategies.





ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

- Serve as allies and facilitators, assist project staff in organizing and guiding activities, ensuring smooth participation and engagement.
- Provide support to people with disabilities, offer practical help during walks and tests, ensuring safety, comfort, and confidence for all participants.



- Gain first-hand understanding of accessibility challenges, through direct involvement, volunteers develop empathy and insight into the barriers faced by people with disabilities in urban environments.
- Act as advocates and awareness multipliers, share their experiences, insights, and lessons learned within their own communities, helping to broaden the impact of INSPYRE.
- Contribute to co-creation and iterative improvement, their observations and feedback help refine walking routes, tools, and methods, strengthening the project's outcomes.



ROLE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Play a central role in testing and validating solutions, their active participation ensures that walking routes, accessibility tools, and methods are practical and effective.
- Provide crucial insights from lived experience, highlight barriers and challenges that professionals or planners might not anticipate, adding depth and authenticity to the design process.
- Ensure the project remains genuinely inclusive and user-centered, their involvement keeps the focus on real needs, guaranteeing that solutions benefit the people they are intended to serve.

- Contribute to co-creation and decision-making, by sharing feedback, suggestions, and firsthand experiences, they help refine paths and tools iteratively.
- Empower themselves and others, participation reinforces a sense of agency, demonstrating that people with disabilities can actively shape urban environments and accessibility initiatives.



EDUCATIONAL VALUE: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Develops communication and facilitation skills, participants learn how to guide discussions, interact with diverse groups, and effectively share knowledge.
- Provides exposure to inclusive design practices, hands-on engagement demonstrates how accessibility principles are applied in real urban environments.
- Offers a practical view of co-creation, learners experience the process of working collaboratively with community members, volunteers, and people with disabilities to design solutions.



- Builds ownership and empowerment, participants gain confidence, seeing their contributions directly impact accessibility initiatives and city planning.
- Encourages reflective learning, engagement fosters critical thinking about social inclusion, empathy, and the role of participatory planning in urban development.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

- Varying levels of accessibility awareness among participants, differences in knowledge and experience required careful explanation and tailored guidance to ensure everyone could engage effectively.
- Time and coordination difficulties for group activities, scheduling walks, tests, and sessions with diverse participants presented logistical challenges that needed flexible planning.



- Technical challenges in using digital tools during fieldwork, some participants faced difficulties navigating mobile apps, e-Handbook features, or GIS tools, requiring additional support and training.
- Environmental constraints, unforeseen factors such as weather conditions, construction, or busy streets occasionally impacted planned routes and activities.
- Managing diverse needs simultaneously, balancing safety, accessibility, and engagement for participants with different abilities demanded constant attention and adaptability.



SOLUTIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS

- Provided orientation sessions before activities, ensured participants understood the goals, methods, and tools, preparing them to engage effectively and confidently.
- Developed flexible schedules and adaptable routes, allowed adjustments to accommodate diverse participant needs, unexpected environmental conditions, and logistical challenges.
- Offered training on digital tools and simplified data collection methods, equipped participants with the skills to use mobile apps, GIS technology, and the e-Handbook effectively, reducing technical barriers.



- Maintained continuous feedback loops, regularly incorporated participant suggestions to refine routes, tools, and engagement strategies in real time.
- Fostered an inclusive, supportive environment, solutions emphasized safety, collaboration, and empowerment, ensuring all participants could contribute meaningfully.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Hands-on participation transforms understanding of accessibility issues, direct experience in urban environments helps participants and planners truly grasp the challenges faced by people with disabilities.
- Community engagement fosters collaboration and ownership, working together strengthens relationships, encourages shared responsibility, and ensures solutions are grounded in real needs.



- Testing with real users ensures solutions are practical and sustainable, involving volunteers and people with disabilities validates the routes and tools, making them effective and adaptable for long-term use.
- Co-creation leads to more effective outcomes, iterative feedback from participants improves design decisions and increases the likelihood of successful implementation.
- Inclusive participation builds empathy and advocacy, participants become ambassadors for accessibility, spreading awareness and encouraging inclusive practices in their communities.



CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

INSPYRE has moved from planning into active implementation, a major step toward more inclusive urban environments. Tools like the e-Handbook are now publicly available, offering practical guidance for identifying barriers and co-creating solutions. Activities such as walking sessions, awareness talks, and testing are underway, engaging people with disabilities, volunteers, and residents in hands-on learning.

Next, the project will expand community involvement, gather feedback to refine solutions, and prepare for full-scale implementation of accessible paths. Lessons from testing will guide sustainable, user-centered improvements.

By prioritizing participation, inclusivity, and evidence-based action, INSPYRE strengthens community ownership while improving mobility for people with disabilities. It also offers a replicable model for inclusive city planning, proving that collaboration and engagement can drive lasting change in public spaces.



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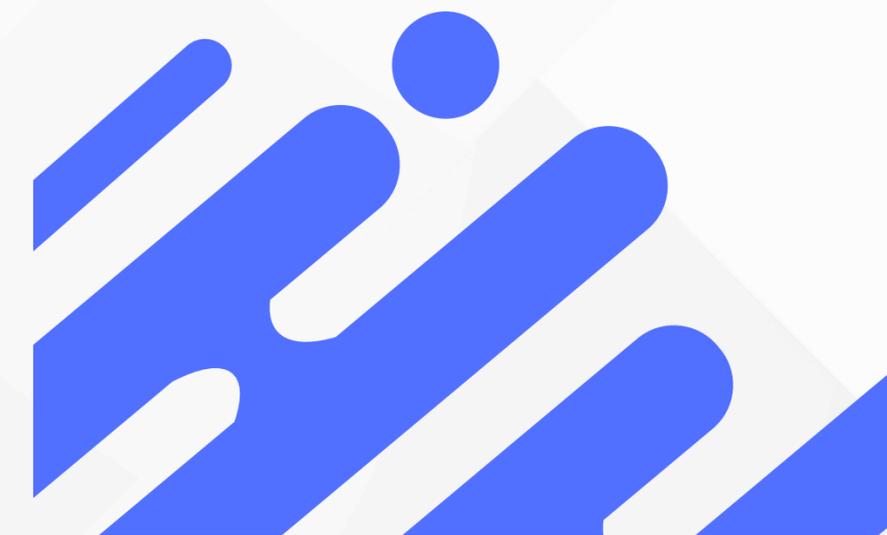
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