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LESSONS LEARNED FROM A STUDY TRIP TO

SPAIN

20 - 23 FEBRUARY 2019







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AVILA, SPAIN

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE SINCE 1985

WON THE FIRST EU ACCESS CITY AWARD IN 2010



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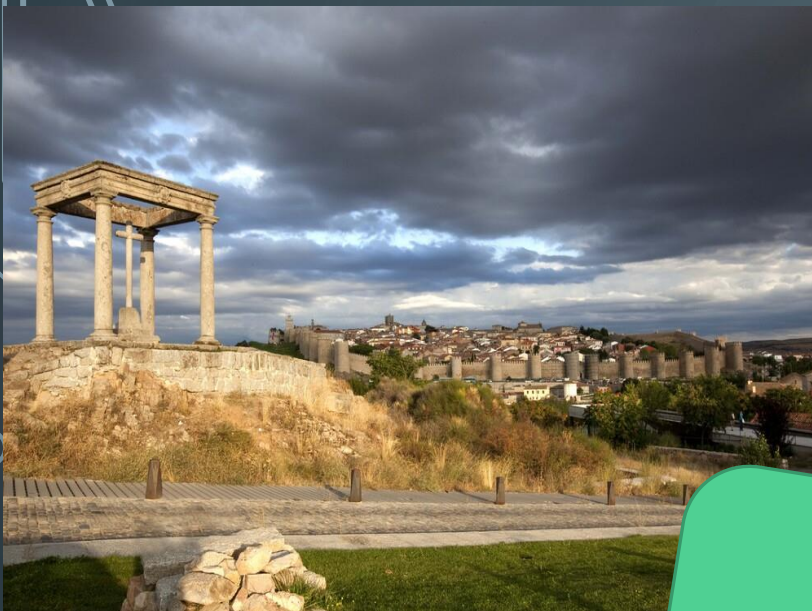
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City
of Avila

City of Avila

Avila is one of the leading accessible tourist destinations in Spain. Much work has been carried out in recent years to build an inclusive offer in which everyone can live and enjoy life in the town with equal opportunities. Accessibility and inclusion have become the Town Hall's motto and has helped the walled town become a reference thanks to the work that has been carried out on options for accessibility, as shown by the many awards that have been received, including the CERMI, the Queen Sofía Award and the declaration of the town as a European Access in 2011.



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Since the 1960s, the first representative associations of persons with disability were created in Spain. These entities have been characterized by their increasing active participation in the design and management of resources and services derived from the successive advances on social policies related to disability.

On 14 October 2011, the Spanish Council of Ministers approved the Spanish Disability Strategy 2012-2020 with the aim of providing a framework and guidance for all disability policies developed in Spain.

The strategy is based on principles such as non-discrimination, equal treatment before the law and equal opportunities, independent living, standardization, universal accessibility, design for all, civil dialogue, mainstreaming disability policies, participation or public accountability, and others. Its main objective of the document is, as stated by the Government, to ensure that all people with disabilities have all rights as the other in their society and that they benefit from their contribution to the economy and social life. The document defines strategies that are divided into measures and actions focused primarily on the labor market, education, poverty and social exclusion.

https://sid-inico.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO26112/Estrategia2012_2020.pdf



There are several laws in place in Spain, designed to provide support and protection to those with disabilities.

These include the 1982 Social Integration for Disabled People Act, the 2003 Non Discrimination Act and the 2007 Equal Opportunities Act.

Employers who hire those with disabilities have access to a range of grants and other funding. These grants are for adapting the work place and there are reductions available in social security contributions for those who meet the criteria, although the amounts differ depending upon the level of disability of the worker. There are also minimum length contracts as part of the activities for reaching the qualifying criteria.

There are a series of Special Employment Centres in Spain. There are almost 700,000 people working in these centres and get the opportunity to work for mainstream companies as subcontractors. This system allows disabled people to spend more time in non-sheltered employment and encourage them to make the move on a more permanent basis. The centres get bonuses on their social security contributions and many of those that work there find positions in the public sector.



The Accessible Tourism in Spain

Spain is becoming increasingly prepared for accessible tourism – tourism for all. Enormous efforts are being made to eliminate barriers and providing access to cultural and natural resources, creating standards for transport as well as building and urban planning. There are numerous monuments, museums, nature areas, accommodations and restaurants in Spain offering services and activities that are partially or completely accessible for travelers with wheelchairs or some other disability.

<https://www.spain.info/en/discover-spain/culture-accessible-to-everyone-spain/>

Meanwhile, the European Commission has recognised the good practices of several destinations with the Access City Awards. These cities include Ávila, in Castilla y León; Pamplona, in Navarre; and Lugo and Vigo, in Galicia. Avila's city wall is an outstanding example - its most recent refurbishment includes access points for people with reduced mobility. In fact, Avila was highlighted as an example of accessibility at the International Congress on Tourism For All, organised in Spain by the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT).



Spain is unquestionably one of the best examples, because government takes positive steps to make certain its cities are accessible by all, no matter their physical disabilities.

Spain is amongst the only few countries to ensure easy accessibility to all or any its cultural sites. This not only a vague claim since the country has taken tremendous initiative to make sure the routes leading up to its tourist interest points are wheelchair friendly which is not blocked by barriers.

The country has also introduced new transport standards and urban planning rules to do this target.

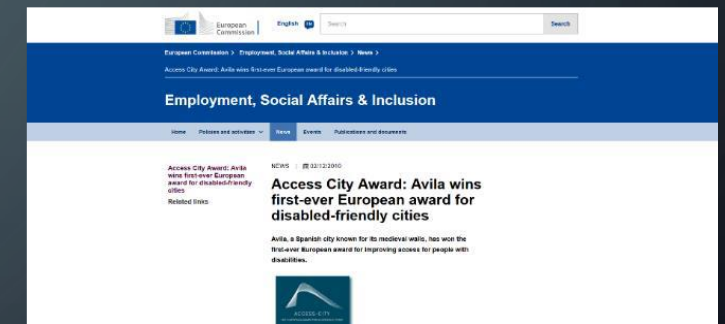
Although all Spanish cities are part of this national change, Avila has won the first-ever European award for improving access for people with disabilities - EU Access City Award in 2010 and two the cities Pamplona and Bilbao received a special mention in the Access City Awards 2013 for their innovative approach towards accessible tourism.

Avila, the city with EU Access City Award

Avila has won the first-ever European award for improving access for people with disabilities - EU Access City Award in 2010 (<https://ec.europa.eu/>). The annual honor aims to award efforts to improve accessibility in the urban environment and to foster equal participation of people with disabilities.

The Commission praised Avila's plan, developed since 2002, to improve accessibility to public buildings and to give incentives for private initiatives. The City authority has also developed accessible tourism facilities and improved job opportunities for people with disabilities – working directly with disabled and elderly people's organizations.

The European jury selected Avila because of its comprehensive plan, the high level of political commitment, the progress achieved so far, and the effective involvement of people with disabilities in the process.



Policy for Accessibility in Avila Avila has been implementing since 2002 a long-term plan to make the city more disabled-friendly. It involves improving accessibility to public buildings and creating incentives for private initiatives, while also developing accessible tourist facilities and job opportunities for the disabled. Persons with disabilities are included in the planning process.

Avila's access management includes accessibility improvements in the city span different categories, taking into consideration various forms of disability, including immobility, blindness and mental illness. The city attempts to “abolish physical and architectural barriers” in public buildings, despite and because of its cultural heritage and its wealth of historic sites.



With its medieval architecture and many narrow and cobblestone streets, accessibility-related adjustments are relatively difficult in Avila. A need for creative thinking in finding solutions to this challenge, as historic sites should not be damaged in the alteration process. One of the improvements include special lifts and ramps, which have been installed at the famous medieval city walls, so that wheelchair-bound visitors can get to the top. Being able to access the wall for the first time is a "very emotional moment" for these people, many of whom have never been on top of the wall before, although they have lived here their whole life.

In its improvement decisions, the city works together with local organizations representing the interests of disabled people, such as ONCE, Spain's national organization for the blind. Without this cooperation, they would not have achieved so much. May be Avila is by no means a "perfect" city yet, but that it determines to continue its accessibility development project. The Avila City government have coined a Practice Guide for the planning, design and marketing of accessible routes in historical urban environments .



Ávila is a member of the **League of Historical and Accessible Cities** (LHAC), a project established by the European Foundation Centre.

The main aim of the League of Historical and Accessible Cities is to improve the accessibility of historical towns promoting, at the same time, sustainable tourism development and the protection of cultural heritage.

Europe's historical cities, museums, ancient buildings, monuments and townscapes are renowned worldwide for their beauty, diversity and historical significance. Millions of people visit them every year but many others feel unwelcome due to physical barriers and inadequate services that can prevent people with sensory or physical disabilities from accessing them.



<http://www.lhac.eu/?i=accessible-cities.en.cities.18>



Launched in 2010, the League of Historical and Accessible Cities (LHAC) is a pilot project focusing on improving the accessibility of historical towns while at the same time promoting the development of sustainable tourism and the protection of cultural heritage. To date, 6 accessible tourist routes have been created in 6 different cities across Europe - Avila - Spain, Sodopol - Bulgaria, Viborg - Denmark, Mulhouse - France, Lucca - Italy and Torino - Italy.

The main goal of the project is not only to allow people with disabilities and their families to take full enjoyment from leisure and cultural activities, but also to stimulate tourism among the 80 million people with disabilities living in Europe. From this point of view the project is therefore expected to contribute to the cities' long-term cultural and social development. Improved access to a city's cultural heritage makes it more dynamic and attractive to its residents and tourists and thereby increases its economic profit and growth.



Accessible Avila

Avila is one of the leading accessible tourist destinations in Spain. As a tourist attraction, it is especially known for its well-preserved medieval city walls and many heritage sites, which have been carefully adapted to make them accessible for visitors with disabilities. One of the many changes, Avila's city wall is unquestionably worth mentioning as access points were constructed to assist quick access for people with movement disabilities. This change is not just on an accessibility of famous monuments and attractions because the several restaurants, nature parks, museums and hotels are also getting ready to make this happen. In addition to working to create spaces and routes that can be easily travelled by individuals with disabilities, Spain in addition has introduced several guided tours and specialized services.

The Ávila City Access Guide (in Spanish) is well designed to help the people with disabilities who have chosen to visit Avila and is available here:

https://www.accessibletourism.org/resources/avila_access_guide.pdf

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Visited sites in Avila

During the stay in Avila and Spain, the project team members visited the following sites:

- **Avila Main Square (Plaza Mercado Chico)** and the surrounding medieval streets, most of all are accessible for people with disabilities. The pedestrian walking zone and vehicles' zone are at one level, division by special groundings.
- **Basilica de San Vicente**, dating from 11 century - completely accessibility for people with different disabilities.
- **Conference Exhibition Centre Lienzo Norte** – modern building and cultural centre for various events and exhibitions.
- **Visitors Reception Centre in Avila** – a modern centre, providing information and services to people with all kind of discrepancies, including blind, deaf, mentally and physically disabled people.

Visited sites in Avila

During the stay in Avila and Spain, the project team members visited the following sites:

- Avila City **Hall** premises, renovated accessible historical building, hosting the mayor and city hall administration.
- **Palacio De Los Verdugo**, newly renovated accessible historical building, hosting part of the municipal administration, incl. the team working in the field of accessible city environment.
- **Palacio De Los Superunada**, newly renovated accessible historical building, hosting art collection of Guido Caprotti, Italian spent his life in Avila.
- **San Juan Church**, possessing accessibility adjustments — example of the preservation of the historical building.
- **House of Santa Teresa**, Museum of St. Teresa possessing accessibility adjustments — example of the preservation of the historical building.

Visited sites in Avila

During the stay in Avila and Spain, the project team members visited the following sites:

- **Day Care Centre for people with a mental disability**, providing the most modern technologies for cares and tuition of mentally disabled and experience sharing with NPO “PRONISA” Avila, managing the institution.
- **City Walls**, unique completely preserved medieval defense construction, accessible for walks along 1700 m, through 4 entrance points, one - suitable for the disabled.
- **House of Las Carnicerías**, one of the oldest buildings in the city – example for well renovated to accessible site.
- **Cathedral de San Salvador of Avila** and its Cardinal Museum – accessible for people with disabilities, providing audio information in several languages.
- **Four Posts**, the place where you can enjoy the magnificent beauty of the City Walls.



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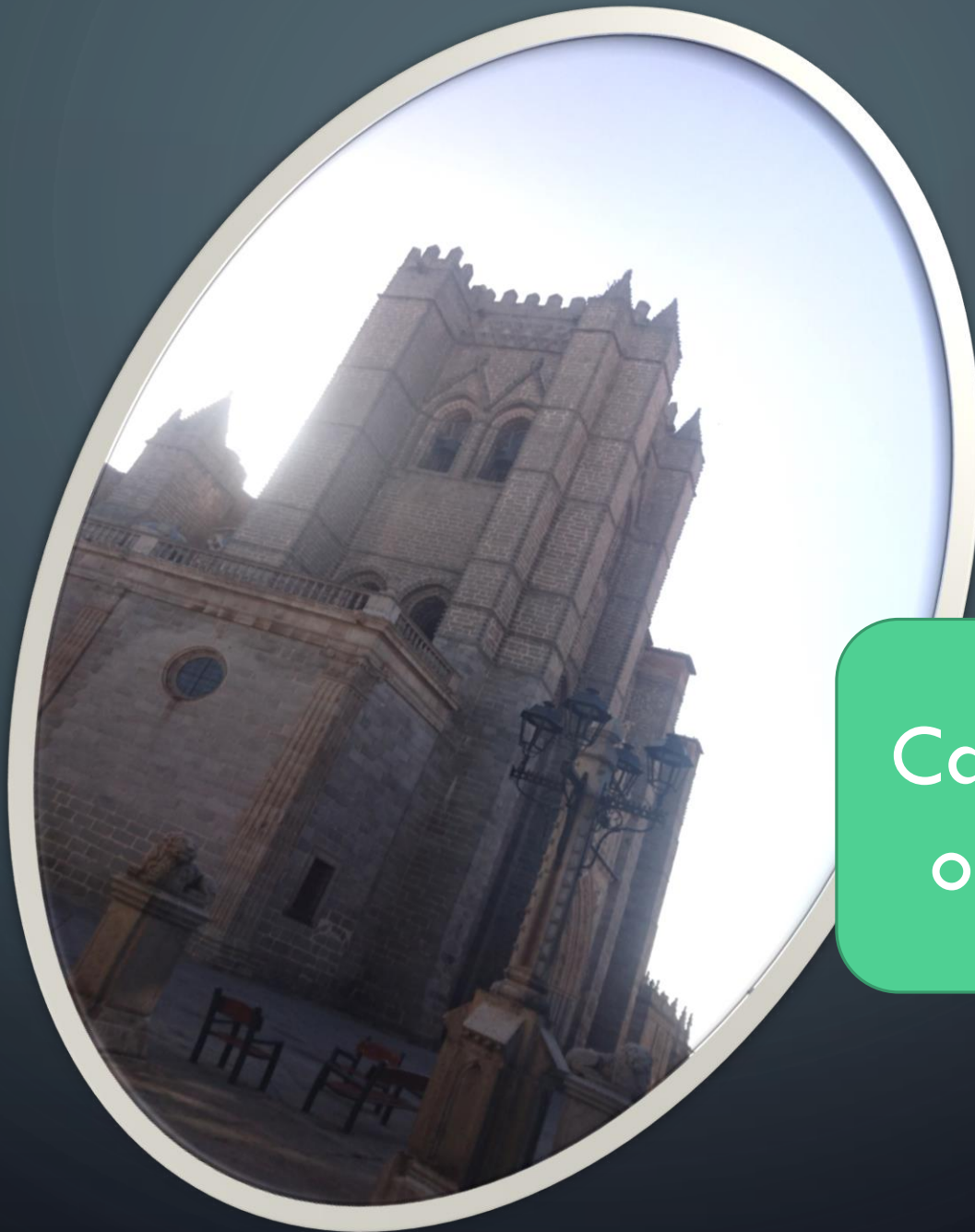


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Avila Main Square
(Plaza Mercado
Chico)



Avila Main Square
(Plaza Mercado
Chico)



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Cathedral
of Avila

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Cathedral
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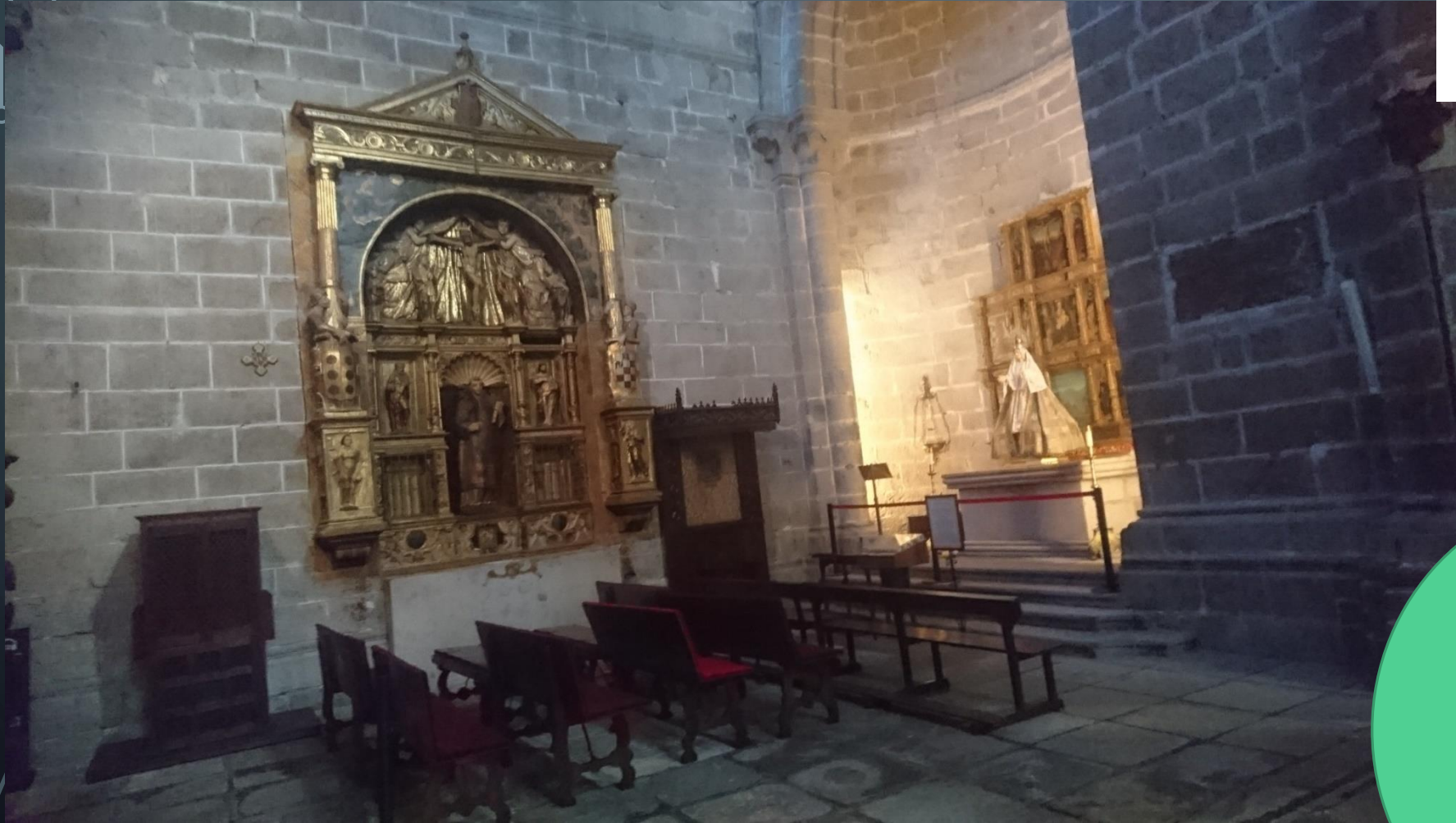


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Cathedral
of Avila



San Juan
Church

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Basilica de
San Vicente



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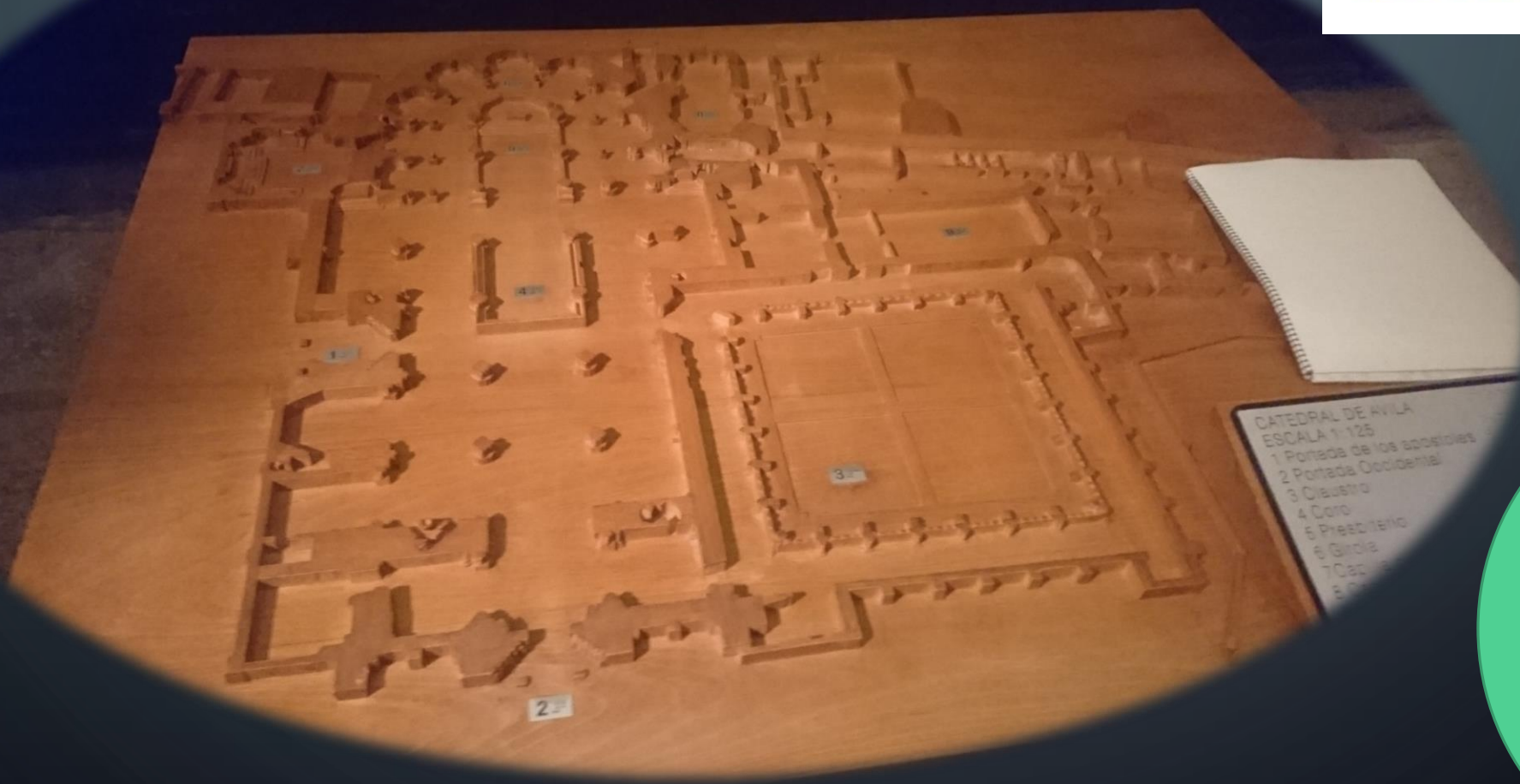
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House of Santa
Teresa, Museum
of St. Teresa

CENTRO DE RECEPCIÓN DE VISITANTES



Visitors
Centre in
Avila



Visitors
Centre in
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Visitors Centre
in Avila



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Visitors
Centre in
Avila



Day Care
Centre for
people with a
mental
disability

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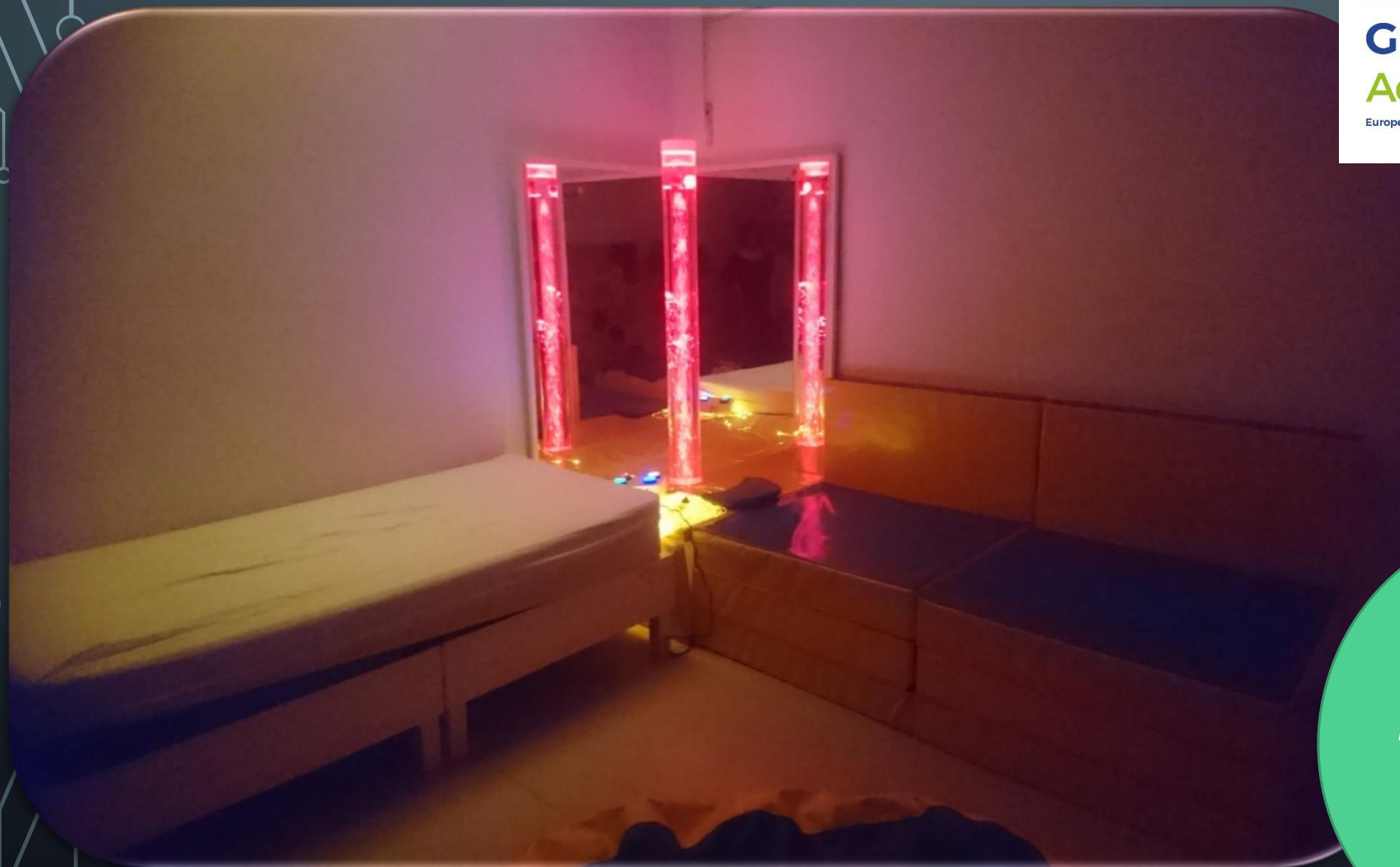
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Visitors Centre
in Avila





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Conference
Exhibition Centre
Lienzo Norte



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Conference
Exhibition Centre
Lienzo Norte



Conference
Exhibition
Centre Lienzo
Norte



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Palacio De Los
Verdugo

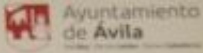


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Palacio
De Los
Verdugo



Estadística
Registro General
Oficina de Atención a la Ciudadanía
Aseos
Secretaría / Matrimonios Civiles

**Salón de Plenos
Alcaldía**

Secretaría General / Contratación
Recursos Humanos
Grupos Políticos



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Palacio De Los
Superunada



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Palacio De
Los
Superunada



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Palacio De Los
Superunada



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Avila
City Walls



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Avila
City Walls



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Avila
Spain



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Avila
Spain



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Avila City
Hall



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Avila
City Hall



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Avila
City Hall



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Conference
Exhibition Centre
Lienzo Norte



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Conference
Exhibition Centre
Lienzo Norte

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Transport
Avila
Spain

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Transport
Avila
Spain

Lessons Learnt

- All study visits can be defined as unforgettable and valuable for each participant.

Study visit in Spain

There is no other historical city, so well organizes to be friendly to the people with disabilities, to ensure for them as much as possible so they could enjoy the medieval rich heritage. That is why it is the first winner of the EU Access City Award in 2010.

Here you can see the successes and the results of a long lasting work (for about 15 years) to make the city accessible for all. Even small, the Avila administration has developed and applies substantial policies for accessibility, as well as for the disabled people. They have created a Practice Guide for the planning, design and marketing of accessible routes in historical urban environments, a book which could be useful for any expert or interested party.



**Meeting
with the Mayor of Avila
Mr. Jose Lius Rivas Hernandoy
at the Avila City Hall**

Study visit in Spain

Furthermore, here in Avila, can be observed thoughtfully made renovations to reach the modern accessibility requirements, preciously preserving the historical heritage. In the Day Care Centre, can be seen the most modern technologies for cares and tuition of mentally disabled people.

The obtained knowledge and know-how, the shared experience with the colleagues from the Avila city government and NGO “PRONISIMA” has granted priceless and useful information for the Bulgarian and Greek project experts.



In the Visitors Reception
Centre in Avila, Spain

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<http://www.greece-bulgaria.eu/>