



## HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ENGAGE IN AND LEAD COMMUNITY- BASED TOURISM INITIATIVES EXPLOITING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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# EYSET

## Empower Youth organizations through Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism

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## HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ENGAGE IN AND LEAD COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM INITIATIVES EXPLOITING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship and self-employment can be valuable and viable options for young people with disabilities looking to enter the job market on their terms. As there is evidence that more young people with disabilities are oriented towards self-employment, studies from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) suggest that people with disabilities are as likely to be self-employed as people without disabilities, and these numbers are higher in southern European countries like Greece or Italy<sup>1</sup>. The fields in which self-employed people with disabilities tend to concentrate are among the three most highly skilled occupational categories which include jobs such as engineering and IT professionals, health and social care professionals, marketing professionals, and many others, according to UK findings<sup>2</sup>.

The tendencies are similar for social entrepreneurship, as an alternative to self-employment. The concept of social entrepreneurship can be particularly compelling for young people with disabilities as it does not only offer the opportunity to create meaningful change in the world, but it also provides a way to pursue financial independence, self-determination, and an opportunity for a more flexible working life. Therefore, in recent years, there has been a growing movement of young people with disabilities who are using social entrepreneurship to make a difference in their life, their communities, and beyond. From developing innovative assistive technologies to launching businesses that employ people with disabilities, these young entrepreneurs are breaking down barriers and creating a more inclusive society. While there is limited data on social enterprises built by young people with disabilities specifically, there are examples of entrepreneurs with disabilities (EWD) and youth with disabilities-led social enterprises that create innovative solutions to address various issues<sup>3 4</sup>.

Community-based tourism initiatives are a new entrepreneurial alternative for young people with disabilities to engage with their communities and promote social entrepreneurship. By leveraging their unique experiences and perspectives, young people with disabilities can create businesses that not only benefit themselves but also contribute to the economic and social development of their communities. Community-based tourism (CBT) allows to explore circular economy and can play a significant role in achieving sustainable development goals. CBT initiatives have been shown to contribute to human and social development, which is an essential aspect of sustainability<sup>5</sup>. By ensuring that communities are the direct beneficiaries of tourism activities, CBT can help promote economic growth and reduce poverty. Additionally, CBT can help preserve cultural heritage and promote environmental conservation.

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<sup>1</sup> IED (2021), <https://ied.eu/project-updates/projects/it-in-touch/entrepreneurship-for-persons-with-disabilities/>

<sup>2</sup> IPSE (2019), <https://www.ipse.co.uk/static/uploaded/45b9457f-6244-43e5-b500f2ca9fd1a69.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Successful examples of SEs built by young people with disabilities: <https://blog.google/outreach-initiatives/entrepreneurs/16-founders-disabilities-using-technology-good/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rouzbehpirouz.com/5-successful-female-entrepreneurs-who-also-happen-to-be-disabled/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://traveltomorrow.com/the-strategic-connections-of-community-based-tourism-and-sustainable-development-goals/>



Community -Based Tourism. Source<sup>6</sup>: UNDP, (2022)

Community-based tourism initiatives, as all the forms of tourism should be accessible to all people. Accessibility for all tourism facilities, products, and services is a central part of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. Also, accessibility is not only about human rights but also is a business opportunity for destinations and companies to embrace all visitors and enhance their revenues<sup>7</sup>. In this context, community-based tourism initiatives built by young people with disabilities can directly contribute to accessible tourism. Based on their experiences young people with disabilities can suggest improvements, and make every endeavour to ensure that tourist destinations, products, and services are accessible to all.

The development of successful accessible CBTs requires strategic partnership with academic research and private sector initiatives, along with the support of the local government and the community. Young people with disabilities can build and engage in community-based initiatives following some strategic steps like; seek resources, and support from organizations that focus on disability inclusion or the respective governmental institutions, get involved in community activities, volunteering opportunities that align with the initiative's goal or participate in community integration programs that provide opportunities for learning, working, and playing alongside others, with the aim to engage with other members of the community and to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives.

Starting an accessible community-based tourism initiative is for sure the first and the main step, but sustaining and scaling the initiatives in the future is as much important, therefore CBTs need careful planning, and management, targeted marketing, regular monitoring, local communities' involvement in decision-making processes, capacity building programs for locals, equitable distribution of benefits among stakeholders and most importantly they require continuous socio-technical innovation<sup>8</sup> to be sustainable and successful in the long term. In this regard, it is necessary to support young potential entrepreneurs with disabilities who have skills, abilities, and the willingness to start successful community-based initiatives, with the right resources and assets to translate their entrepreneurial ideas into actual, viable successful social businesses.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.undp.org/thailand/blog/community-based-tourism-empowering-local-champions-sustainable-tourism-thailand>

<sup>7</sup> UNWTO, <https://www.unwto.org/accessibility>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/Publications/2009/12/Handbook-on-Community-Based-Tourism-How-to-Develop-and-Sustain-CBT-December-2009/09\\_twg\\_developCBT.pdf](https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/Publications/2009/12/Handbook-on-Community-Based-Tourism-How-to-Develop-and-Sustain-CBT-December-2009/09_twg_developCBT.pdf)