

Tool: Accessible meetings or events

Objective: to organise meetings and events that are accessible to persons with disabilities

Expected result: persons with disabilities can access and participate in meetings and events organised

Guiding principles:

- Outreach and accessibility
- Preparation:
 - preparing the venue
 - how people will get to the event
 - how people will be able to participate in the event
 - how people can access support services and facilities

People with disabilities are experts in accessibility; a local DPO can help you in the planning of an accessible meeting

Outreach – How you identify and invite the disability community

- ☞ See 'who is who' for how to identify the relevant disability stakeholders
- ☞ Invite disability stakeholders in the same manner as other civil society stakeholders
- ☞ Offer hard copy and electronic invitation letters/flyers in alternative formats (e.g. Braille, text only versions, voice streams)
- ☞ If you promote your event on a web site, check if is accessible and compatible with the range of assistive hardware and software that people with disabilities use to access electronic information.
- ☞ Use plain and appropriate language in your promotional material when communicating information to people with disabilities. For example, talk about 'accessible toilets and parking' rather than 'disabled toilet or parking', talk about 'access for people with disabilities' rather than 'disabled access', talk about 'people who use wheelchairs' rather than 'people confined to wheelchairs', talk about 'a person who is blind' rather than 'a person who suffers blindness'.
- ☞ Indicate accessibility compliance of the venue in your announcements/invitation letters.
- ☞ Make contact with each invitee to enquire as to whether they have any accessibility requirements; allow the participant to define what they need to fully participate in the meeting

How barriers to participation are removed

- ☞ Accessibility refers to both the physical structures and the communication methods
- ☞ Thinking through accessibility is a process that benefits everyone- older people, pregnant women, people from different language groups or from different educational backgrounds, or children
- ☞ In your written material use a large font size in a clear sans serif style such as Arial and use a good contrast for text and background.

Preparing the venue for this meeting

Visit the venue in advance and check on accessibility features in situ. Take a checklist with you.

Is your building physically accessible, including the toilets, corridors and eating area for people with disabilities? (see tool / checklist for physical access)

If not, consider

- ☞ Making adaptations/ such as temporary ramps. This can be done easily for just one or two steps. But be aware of security.
- ☞ Finding another venue/ such as a place where people with disabilities more frequently meet
- ☞ Identify and list accessible accommodation available in the vicinity of the venue.

How people will get to the event

It may be impossible to get to the event by public transport; consider reimbursing taxi costs or organising transport with the advice/ assistance of a local DPO

Provide information on the venue, details of how to get there, what support will be available, including reimbursement if applicable

Have someone stand by the entrance at the time for the event, to direct people to where they need to go and offer assistance as required.

How people will be able to participate in the event

Ensure that you get information from invitees as to their accessibility requirements, and as to whether they come with a personal assistant (can be already asked from the registration form).

People with hearing impairment or Deaf people may require sign translation. This needs to be organised and budgeted for. Contact the local DPO for details.

People who are blind or visually impaired may wish to have background materials in Braille, large print or audio form. This also need to be arranged in advance and budgeted for.

Speakers should be given guidelines to improve their communication (e.g. accessible PowerPoint presentations); this will make the meeting more accessible for everyone:

- ☞ Speak slowly and clearly
- ☞ Allow translators time to translate

The rooms should be arranged to allow for wheelchairs to pass through, and to have no objects that could obstruct or trip people up.

If speakers are wheelchair users the top table should be a table, not a high lectern.

Ensure the timetable of the event is suited to all participants.

Conference proceedings are to be available in alternative formats.

In case a webpage or links to the event or venue are created eAccessibility has to be ensured.

How people can access support services

Support services which can be made available must be planned for and clearly explained in advance

Bathrooms must be accessible.

Eating areas should also be accessible.

Resting areas where people meet informally must be free from obstructions.

Side meeting rooms must be accessible.

For further reading on accessible meetings or events see:

[Creating Accessible Events](#)

([http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/dscwr/assets/main/guidelines/documents/pdf/creatingaccessibleevents\(id_164_ver_1.0.1\).pdf](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/dscwr/assets/main/guidelines/documents/pdf/creatingaccessibleevents(id_164_ver_1.0.1).pdf))

[Accessible Events: A Good Practice Guide for staff organising events in Higher Education](#)

(<http://new.techdis.ac.uk/resources/files/accessibleevents.pdf>)