



PLANNING OF INCLUSIVE EVENTS



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1 INTRODUCTION

Inclusion and diversity is one of the horizontal priorities of the [Erasmus+ programme](#). As highlighted in the [Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#), “European Union (...) programmes should provide opportunities that are accessible for all.” This commitment aligns with international and European frameworks, such as the United Nations [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (Article 9) and the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) (Article 26). Both highlight the right of persons with disabilities to access information, as well as the right for social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community on equal basis with others.

Many barriers and difficulties are internal and may not be immediately noticeable. Some of them are not easily categorised, making it difficult to provide specific guidelines (e.g., specific health conditions or sound and light sensitivity). That’s why it’s important to individually check with each participant about their needs to ensure their comfort during the event!

Participants with fewer opportunities are in the focus of this priority, which means that activities designed by organisations implementing Erasmus+ projects should be inclusive and accessible to all. Some of the barriers faced by these participants include disabilities, health problems, barriers linked to education and training systems, cultural differences, social barriers, economic barriers, barriers linked to discrimination and geographical barriers etc. For the purpose of this tool, we are primarily focusing on individuals with disabilities, as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 1). The aim is to provide guidelines for organising inclusive events, but also to raise awareness and sensitivity of organisations towards persons with disabilities. While the UN Convention offers a definition of persons with disabilities and impairments, it is also important to consider other barriers listed in the [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#) to make your event more inclusive.

Inspiration for this publication was drawn from various resources, such as the [European Disability Forum’s Guide for Accessible Meetings for All](#), [UNICEF’s Accessibility Toolkit](#) and the [Guide for Making Your Event More Inclusive](#).

To organise inclusive events, it is not necessary to implement every recommendation provided in this tool. You can start by introducing those that align with your event’s objectives and audience, before gradually incorporating additional recommendations as resources and capacity allow. We do hope, however, that you will find the recommendations presented in this useful!

Valuable insights into other dimensions of inclusive event organisation can also be found in the [Inclusion Meter](#), a tool developed by [JINT](#) (Belgian agency implementing the Erasmus+ programme in Flanders), as well as in the [Inclusive Communication Manual](#), developed by the [Erasmus Student Network](#).

2 BEFORE THE EVENT

Registration

- use online registration forms that are accessible and compatible with assistive technologies (for example, Microsoft or Google Forms)
- include an open-answer field in the registration form for participants to communicate specific needs or difficulties (e.g., dietary needs, transportation requirements, interpretation services, accessible parking etc.)

Programme

- make sure breaks are at least 15 minutes long
- individual sessions should not last longer than 90 minutes
- if there is an evening programme, make sure that 8 hours of rest is still possible
- plan sufficient time for discussion, questions and interpretation

Materials and digital content

- add descriptive alternative text to images, charts and other visual elements to make content accessible for screen readers
- use accessible fonts, appropriate font sizes and good contrast ratios between text and background colours for easy reading
- avoid relying solely on colour to convey information and maintain sufficient contrast for readability
- maintain a consistent design and layout across documents, presentations, websites and social media platforms for user predictability
- use descriptive link text and ensure links are easily distinguishable for screen reader users.
- organise content logically with clear headings and subheadings in documents and presentations

For more information on accessibility of materials and websites, check the digital accessibility package developed as part of the [VIVID:T](#) project and the [guidelines for written and media content](#) developed by [SALTO Inclusion and Diversity \(Education and Training\)](#).

2

BEFORE THE EVENT

Persons who are blind or with low vision

- o ensure that provided materials are in an appropriate format by consulting participants to determine the formats that best suit their needs (e.g., large print, Braille, electronic format etc.)

Persons with intellectual challenges

- o make sure information is easy to understand by referring to [Information for all - European standards for making information easy to read and understand](#), guidelines developed by [Inclusion Europe](#)

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- o provide transcripts for audio content and captions for videos to accommodate persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

Venue

- o ensure clear signage throughout the venue indicating the locations of toilets, doors, refreshments, exits and similar facilities (using text, symbols, Braille, etc.)
- o signs should be written in accessible fonts, like font Arial, Tahoma, Calibri, Helvetica, Verdana, Times New Roman etc.
- o provide seating during coffee breaks and lunches for individuals who cannot stand for an extended period
- o whenever possible, go to the venue before the event and check if it is accessible

Persons with psychosocial challenges *

Persons with psychosocial challenges should have the option to bring a personal assistant, as having familiar emotional support can significantly ease challenging situations. Additionally, strive to ensure that the venue includes a quiet room where people can retreat to relax and unwind.

*** Psychosocial challenges refer to difficulties and stressors that arise from the interrelation between psychological and social factors. They include struggles and conflicts regarding mental, emotional and social health.**

2 BEFORE THE EVENT

Persons who are blind or with low vision

- o ensure in advance that the corridors and the conference rooms are free from any obstacles
- o If there are glass doors in the venue, affix marks to the glass to alert individuals with low vision
- o check whether lift command systems have audio signals that indicate the direction and current floor, along with Braille-marked buttons

Persons with reduced mobility

- o ensure wheelchair-accessible toilets on each floor
- o check accessibility of nearby public transport, as well as routes from the parking to the entrance
- o arrange tables in a way that they are accessible to wheelchair users
- o if there are stairs at the entrance, make sure there is a ramp or elevator available, preferably with handrails
- o if the venue features revolving doors, make sure that regular entrance doors are also available

Persons with intellectual challenges

- o ensure that signs for toilets, refreshments, and exits are in clear and simple language, accompanied by pictograms

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- o check whether lifts have light signals that indicate which lift has arrived, as well as the floor and the direction of the lift (up or down)



3 DURING THE EVENT

Speakers

- o inform speakers about the accessibility needs of the participants
- o advise speakers to talk directly into the microphone and speak as slowly and clearly as possible
- o microphones should have a height adjustable stand
- o all speakers, including presenters and people asking questions, should use microphones

In the conference room

- o stick to the schedule
- o minimise distractions, such as background noise or music
- o ensure someone is available at arrival and departure, along with a help desk during longer events, to welcome and guide participants to the conference room and exit if necessary
- o inform security guards and venue staff about the needs of individual participants
- o address the person with a disability first and then the accompanying person (personal assistant or sign language interpreter)
- o offer assistance, but wait until the offer is accepted before acting on it

Persons who are blind or with low vision

- o ensure that persons who are blind or with low vision are seated in the front rows, surrounded by as few obstacles as possible, preferably at the beginning or end of the row
- o speak first and introduce yourself and others clearly, explaining their positions in relation to the person
- o begin a conversation by stating the person's name so that they know you are addressing them.
- o before shaking hands, inform that you are about to do so

Read more about [how to guide a person who is blind or with low vision](#) in this publication developed by [Vision Ireland](#).

3 DURING THE EVENT

Persons with reduced mobility

- o ensure that there is enough space between rows and in the aisles
- o maintain clear aisles by avoiding tripping hazards, such as loose cables or personal belongings, and securely tape extension cords to the floor
- o pay attention to the height of doorsteps and offer help to open the doors and get over the steps
- o reserve seating in the front or middle of the venue in the beginning or the end of the row for people who use wheelchairs
- o offer help to open the doors and to get over the steps

Persons with intellectual challenges

- o if necessary, accompany the person to their destination
- o provide your name and telephone number in writing
- o provide information in person's mother tongue
- o if necessary, offer additional assistance

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- o if using screen captioning, ensure the screen is adequately positioned and sized
- o make sure that lighting and seating arrangements facilitate clear visibility for individuals who lip-read or rely on sign language interpreters
- o confirm that sign language interpreters can hear the speaker clearly
- o seat persons who are deaf or hard of hearing in the front rows



4 AFTER THE EVENT

After the event, the journey towards inclusivity continues. By actively seeking and valuing input on the event's accessibility, you not only empower participants but also pave the way for ongoing improvements.

- ask for feedback on the accessibility of the event (for example, accessibility of documents, venue, content etc.)
- provide multiple evaluation methods that are accessible to previously determined needs of the participants
- if event resources are shared, make sure that they are in accessible formats
- outline a plan for analysing the feedback received and implementing changes based on the suggestions provided
- prepare a report on the event's inclusivity measures and their impact
- consider organising a reflection session with the organising team to discuss what worked well in terms of inclusivity and areas for improvement
- acknowledge and celebrate individuals or groups who contributed significantly to the event's inclusivity



IMPRINT

Publisher: [Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes](#)

Editing and proofreading: Ljubica Petrović Baronica

Authors: Petra Habulin, Lorena Barić, Josip Luša

Design and Illustrations: [Kiosk studio](#)

Zagreb, March 2024

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

