

# how do they do it? efc members share good practice on organising accessible events



disability  
accessibility  
events

EFC DISABILITY  
THEMATIC  
NETWORK

# how do they do it? efc members share good practice on organising accessible events

annex to the zero project  
conference accessibility guidelines

disability  
accessibility  
events

EFC DISABILITY  
THEMATIC  
NETWORK



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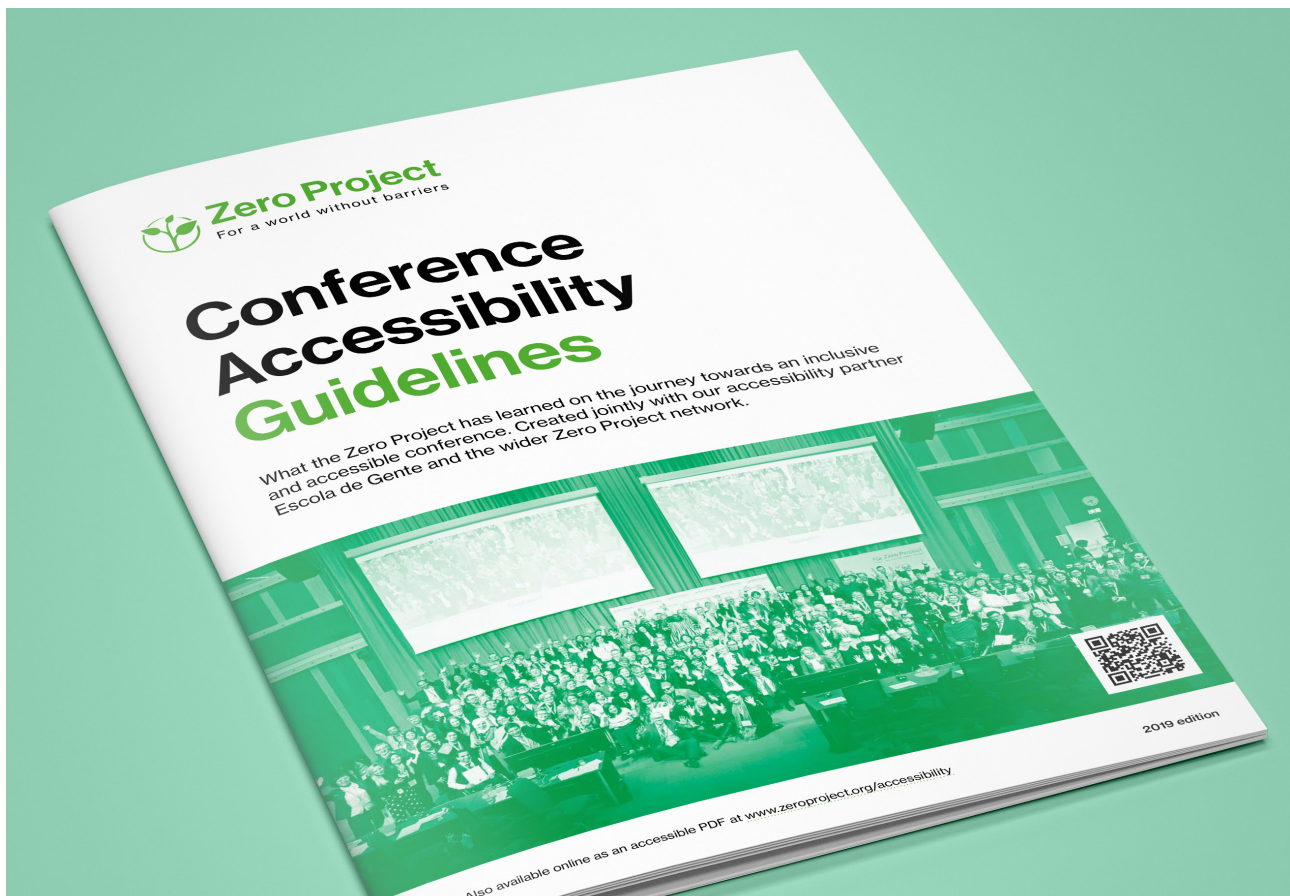
## FOREWORD

By **Michael Fembek**, Chair of the EFC Disability Thematic Network; and Director of the Zero Project, ESSL Foundation

The Essl Foundation has organised the Zero Project Conferences annually now for eight years, since 2013. During this time, the Zero Project and the Conference have grown continuously, as has our expertise in making an international conference accessible and inclusive.

In 2019, we published the [Zero Project Conference Accessibility Guidelines](#) to document our work on conference accessibility, in the hope that by being transparent and sharing our ideas, we would improve our own work in this area and support other organisations looking to do the same. For us, improving the accessibility of our Conference is an ongoing process and we have been pleased to trial new features in recent

years, such as live audio description for videos shown during the Conference, and new formats to increase the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in the conference sessions. Here, for example, we have made more information available ahead of the session, including summaries in easy-to-read formats, graphic facilitation to support communication and additional briefings for session chairs.





# Essl Foundation

Supporting social innovations for a world without barriers

We know we still have work to do, and we can only do this in collaboration with partners across our vast global network.

The European Foundation Centre is one of the world's leading philanthropic infrastructure organisations, and we are glad that the EFC - with its Disability Thematic Network (DTN) - is embarking on this journey as well by publishing this collection of good practices. This collection of good practice examples uses the Zero Project Conference Accessibility Guidelines as a starting point and then takes them further, enhancing the Guidelines with the knowledge and experience of the EFC's DTN members in organising conferences, events and webinars themselves.

Since COVID-19 hit the world in March 2020, the topic of accessible events and gatherings is more important than ever. Most conferences and meetings of all kinds have been re-invented and re-designed. This is an opportunity but also a danger for those with various forms of disabilities. If these new worlds of hybrid and fully virtual meetings - with their new safety and health regulations, and their new websites and video systems - do not take accessibility into account (which, to be realistic, is the more likely case), then this new, digital world might meet the challenges presented by the pandemic, but at the same time it might become more exclusive.

But this does not have to be the case. Many accessibility features are available and affordable. These tools, such as automated captioning of videos, and audio description of pictures in presentations, are now integrated into many digital platforms. The problem is, these tools are not widely known, and therefore not used nearly enough. Let's not waste this opportunity.

We would like to encourage foundations and other conference organisers to read about the experiences of these EFC DTN members, along with the Zero Project's Conference Accessibility Guidelines, then use them, develop them and share their learnings. Taking this journey together to create events and gatherings that can be accessed and used by us all will get us to our destination more quickly, and more meaningfully, than if we go it alone.

If there is one main take away on event accessibility, it is this: It is a journey, not a goal. But you never get anywhere if you do not embark on the journey.



## INTRODUCTION

# Why accessibility matters to EFC members

The contributions shared in this publication by the members of the EFC Disability Thematic Network are meant to complement the Zero Project Conference Accessibility Guidelines with exemplary practical experiences by European funders in organising accessible events.

The importance of ensuring the accessibility of events has become even more urgent

during the time of writing this report, as the COVID-19 pandemic has forced an ac-



celeration in the digital transformation as well as a halt to most physical events. In light of this, while we rethink events as a whole, and we gain experience in organising online events, we can also take the opportunity to reflect on how to ensure these events (both online and offline) are accessible to all.

Since the early phase of the pandemic, 88% of the respondents to the EFC survey [“EFC Members’ Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic”](#) said that they had turned all of their meetings, including large events, into online meetings. Events organising was and will be an important part of the work of EFC members, no matter what their area of work is, as seen for example in the EFC study [“Arts & culture at the core of philanthropy”](#), where “convening” was indicated as one of the main activities performed by respondents in the field of arts & culture. [The numerous prizes](#) that are given every year by EFC members in

many different disciplines and countries in the world are often awarded through a ceremony or large event (including, for example, the Zero Project Award). This is why the contributions in this annex can play an important role in inspiring other EFC members and philanthropic organisations that are considering taking these steps to make their own events more accessible.

Accessibility is a keystone in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda and framework, and, as illustrated in the report [“European philanthropy at the nexus of disability and the SDGs”](#), it is at the heart of the work of the EFC Disability Thematic Network. Ensuring access to all to the important gatherings and events run by the philanthropic sector (often with the aim of discussing and contributing to that same agenda), is one further step in the path to achieving the SDGs for everyone.



ORGANISING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

# Good practice examples by EFC members

**Organising accessible conferences in developing countries – We can do better**

EUROPE FOUNDATION

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**Inclusive exhibitions – Art experiences for all**

FONDAZIONE BANCA DEL MONTE DI LUCCA

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**New forms of accessible communications**

FUNDACIÓN ONCE

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**Organising accessible events**

GENIO

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**Developing an online community and meeting space**

KARUNA FOUNDATION NEPAL

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**Online conferences for all**

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD

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**Setting standards in event accessibility**

SABANCI FOUNDATION

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**Creating arts and culture spaces – Barrier-free**

STIFTUNG DRACHENSEE



# Organising accessible conferences in developing countries – We can do better

EUROPE FOUNDATION

Advocacy

Monitoring

Capacity-building



Europe Foundation, dedicated to strengthening civil society in Georgia, is one of the oldest grantmaking and programme implementing organisations in the country. Our mission is to empower people to effect change for social justice and economic prosperity through hands-on programmes, helping them to improve their communities and their own lives. We employ a demand-driven approach, which allows civil society actors to determine the issues that are of importance to their communities and to develop interventions that will be effective in addressing the identified needs. At the same time, we mobilise communities and interest groups around specific issue areas to create demand for change.

In developing countries such as Georgia, the needs are many, especially for people with disabilities, who have faced social stigmatisation and discrimination for years. While inclusion is high on the agenda for both disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and Europe Foundation, the promotion of conference accessibility has not been a focus of broader advocacy efforts. With Georgia becoming the 143rd country to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)

in 2014, the efforts to create and ensure accessible and inclusive environments gained new impetus, as the Government of Georgia took on the international obligation to make real changes in this area, including through the enactment of laws that ensure the fulfilment of the right to accessibility regarding both physical environment and ICT.

When the needs are many and the resources are scarce, prioritisation of these needs becomes extremely important. Therefore, Europe Foundation believes that learning what the most pressing needs are for people with disabilities must be the first step in devising a long-term, holistic approach towards addressing them.

While conference accessibility may not be listed by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Georgia as their most pressing need, the factors that preclude this demographic from fully participating in the country's social, economic, cultural, and political life are the same ones that create hurdles to conference accessibility. Thus, the efforts funded by Europe Foundation to improve PWD inclusion in community life, such as advocacy for the adoption and implementation of universal design standards, also contribute to improved conference accessibility in a country where even government buildings often lack usable wheelchair ramps and wheelchair accessible bathrooms.

Similarly, Europe Foundation's support to the Union of the Deaf in its campaign to improve the Georgian Sign Language dictionary and to increase the number of qualified sign language interpreters (currently at 36) will go a long way toward enhancing the inclusion of and conference accessibility for Georgia's deaf and hearing-impaired populations. However, such efforts will only lead to more inclusive and accessible conferences if event organisers start to take active steps towards making their meetings more accessible to participants with disabilities.

While fully following the Zero Project Conference Accessibility Guidelines is virtually impossible in countries with many needs and limited resources, event planners should not be deterred from critically

assessing their practices or checklists and identifying concrete steps that can be taken each day to improve access of people with disabilities to the events they organise. At Europe Foundation, we have been engaging our partners and beneficiaries in order to learn more about their experiences when attending various events in Georgia. We have learned a great deal and plan to use this knowledge to improve our own practices as well as to encourage our partner CSOs to do the same. More important, we view the Zero Project Guidelines as a blueprint for what a truly accessible conference should look like and plan to devise a long-term approach that will combine monitoring, advocacy, and capacity-building actions for making events more accessible to people with disabilities.

## Inclusive exhibitions – Art experiences for all

FONDAZIONE BANCA DEL MONTE DI LUCCA

Accessible arts & culture

Accessible exhibition

Inclusive guided tour

Inclusive cultural workshop



At "[Palazzo delle Esposizioni](#)", an exhibition and cultural space owned by the foundation, we organise and host exhibitions that are built around elements of sensory accessibility; inclusive guided tours and visit routes; and accessible work spaces. The aim is to attract visitors with and without disabilities, to experience art in a tactile way.

This inclusion and accessibility project engages all visitors in the following ways:

- ▶ To heighten visitors' experience, the artworks are reproduced with tactile materials such as bread or terracotta or clay, or presented with commonly used objects such as toys.
- ▶ We create relief prints by producing black and white drawings with special microcapsule paper which "explodes" with heat, creating a relief of one millimetre.
- ▶ Illustrative material is translated into Braille and printed for visually impaired people, with suitable character size and format, also accompanied by other materials for easy reading.

- ▶ Captions and signage are made, whenever possible, with character and formatting suitable for visually impaired people.
- ▶ All guided tours are accompanied by an Italian sign language interpreter.
- ▶ We are testing “tactile maps” of the space to maximise usability of the building.

Through tactile language, visitors have a chance to explore the exhibition in the same way they once explored the world as children. By touching the various materials, visitors experience sensations that produce emotions. The dormant senses awaken automatically.

The space becomes, for each visitor, an intimate, private space, in which everyone perceives the stimuli in their own way with a more or less increasing autonomy.

Visitors interact with the materials that vary widely in their characteristics: tactile, olfactory, sound, thermal, hardness, softness, roughness and smoothness.

Visitors can also experience the exhibitions in darkness by wearing a mask provided by the organisers. A guide leads the visitor through this experience. Visitors have said that the experience highlights how the deprivation of one of the senses activates and unveils resources, creative potential and psychomotor skills in the other senses. In this way, the path becomes an awareness of one’s potential. The visitor reorganises his cognitive experiences and rereads the artwork with the pleasure of discovering and understanding, and the desire to communicate with himself, with his own body and with those who guided him on the path.

## New forms of accessible communications

### FUNDACIÓN ONCE

Online communications

Online course

MOOC



The celebration of events has emerged since the last century as a powerful tool for attracting visitors to all parts of the country, and, therefore, for boosting economic and social development in these areas. We are talking about corporate fairs, music festivals, artistic and cultural exhibitions, sports activities and concerts, all of which can be enjoyed both indoors and outdoors.

However, despite the innovation and development these events have achieved on multiple levels, a large number of people still cannot participate due to the non-inclusion of universal accessibility criteria. Without adherence to these, we see significant barriers to the full participation by people with disabilities.

In the design and execution of events such as those mentioned, it is necessary to consider the whole of society in its wide range of circumstances, since not taking into account the needs of the entire population can lead to a loss of a crucial target audience if there are no means for their access and participation. However, accessibility should not be considered as a solution only for people with disabilities but for the whole of society since the lack of accessibility can place anyone (think, for example, of older people or pregnant women) in a situation of disability.

These days many events have moved online, subject to the clear “before” and an “after” in the global crisis caused by the emergence of COVID-19. Overnight, a large part of the EU population has had to live confined to their homes, and all of us, in one way or another, have had to rewrite our daily lives and redesign how we will face the future. During the pandemic, digital events have replaced face-to-face events, thanks to the internet and new technologies. Fundación ONCE has been engaged in efforts to provide guidance on how to keep these online events accessible as well, taking into account any kind of disability, through online tutorials on accessible communications

Throughout these complicated months, Fundación ONCE has launched an initiative of different video tutorials under the title “Accessible communication that brings us closer”, through which we have tried to explain in a simple and friendly way how to take advantage of different online communication platforms that exist today, always keeping in mind the accessibility point of view. All videos are available on [Fundación ONCE’s YouTube channel](#).

The [online training channel](#) of Fundación ONCE at UNED Abierta, launched a couple of years ago in collaboration with the Royal Board on Disability, has republished some of its MOOC Courses during the pandemic and has advanced others. Courses include the “Disability and active legal defense” course which offers basic knowledge about legal activism for the legal defence of the rights of people with disabilities; and courses that address accessibility from different perspectives such as “Mobile phones accessible to all”, “Accessible housing”, or “Accessibility in customer service”, to name a few. This Fundación ONCE training channel for online courses is a reference in terms of accessibility with subtitling of audio-visual materials, interpretation in Spanish sign language, and, in some cases, provision of an easy-to-read format. Additionally the training channel was recognised internationally as an innovative practice in education in the framework of the Zero Project Conference of 2020 held in Vienna.

## Organising accessible events

### GENIO

Accessible exhibition

Accessible venue



The foundation organised an exhibition and reception for 100 stakeholders including government officials, private donors, board members, service providers and service users. A two-storey photography gallery in Dublin city centre was picked as a venue. A key challenge for the event was due to the fact that Dublin is a medieval city with a lot of narrow, cobbled streets and many protected Georgian buildings. Universal accessibility is a challenge for many parts of the city and a lot of venues.

There were a number of key elements that were considered when booking and arranging the venue:

► **Transport**

The venue was in the centre of the city with close proximity to a tram and a number of bus stops. There were two public car parks within the immediate vicinity.

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► **Entrance accessibility**

The door width had to meet wheelchair access requirements and needed to have automatic opening.

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► **Reception**

The built-in venue reception desk was too high for wheelchair users so we used a standard trestle table to welcome guests to ensure universal accessibility.

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► **Elevator**

The venue was laid out over multiple levels. Guests with wheelchairs had to be able to access the different levels by elevator. Some elevators meet the minimum building standards but are still not large enough for large electric wheelchair users. We were provided with measurements by the venue but also double checked with a measuring tape and consulted in advance with one of our guests who uses an electric wheelchair to ensure it would be sufficient.

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► **Toilets**

There had to be an accessible toilet and, similar to the elevator, the bathroom had to be large enough for larger electric wheelchairs not only to access through the doorway but to be able to rotate the chair within the space.

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► **Space for circulating**

There had to be open space for wheelchair users to navigate and turn around. We ensured that floor furniture such as benches and tables were kept to a minimum and did not obstruct wheelchair users from enjoying the event.

► **Catering tables**

As this was a mostly standing event there was very little seating. Therefore, a small number of standard “pod tables” were used for guests to leave drinks and food on. While these are convenient for those who are standing we ensured that there were also a number of lower tables for those using wheelchairs or seated.

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► **Space for time out**

Some of our guests live with dementia, mental health difficulties and intellectual disabilities. As it was going to be a busy, lively event we had to make sure to provide a quiet area where people could sit down and relax if they felt overwhelmed.

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► **Sign language interpreter**

We hired an interpreter to support guests who used sign language, and other guests who did not have sign language skills, to converse and network.

**What went well:** Due to the level of planning and consultation with guests, there were no accessibility issues in the venue on the day. The “time out” space was particularly appreciated by some of our guests.

**Learnings going forward:** While the elevator and toilet were accessible, the measurements were quite tight. In the run up to the event this caused some concerns for a number of guests due to past negative experiences in other venues. Going forward we will try to host accessible events in venues that are on one level rather than multiple levels or at least those that provide extra-large elevators. In addition, one of our guests who arrived in a wheelchair accessible vehicle could not get parking in the nearby car park (accessible spaces were already taken). The venue was able to facilitate parking in the square in front of the venue but this was an exception and not usually available. Going forward, parking with sufficient accessible spaces will be a key consideration.

# Developing an online community and meeting space

KARUNA FOUNDATION NEPAL

Online community

Health workers

Caregivers

Data

## Karuna*foundation*

In early 2020, EnableMe and the Karuna Foundation Nepal started a collaboration to develop a portal for the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Program (DPRP), as developed by Karuna Foundation Nepal. One element of this portal is the development of an online community, first for health workers and second (at a later stage) for all persons with a disability and their caregivers to provide them a platform to meet and exchange information and experiences.

The Karuna Nepal team implemented a user needs assessment among their 165 community health workers (CBRFs) to understand what they would like to learn and gain from this community. Also, it became clear that the following conditions and settings are needed for such an online community:

- ▶ Develop a “light website” (using little internet bandwidth)
- ▶ Focus on internet access in health workers’ offices of the municipalities
- ▶ Major need/interests are: sharing experiences on counselling to parents, physiotherapy, coordination, disability identification, success stories
- ▶ Develop content that is short and easy to understand
- ▶ Focus on developing an “engaging community” (using media such as film, videos, etc.)

- ▶ Learn about and use the 5-issue matrix analysis approach to map the major activities of CBRFs, adding relevant reliable info
- ▶ Develop a good referral system
- ▶ Make it interactive by collecting feedback; make a clear division between roles and responsibilities for using and managing info
- ▶ Use phone calls to connect (WhatsApp and Facebook), use a simple log-in system, and use the Nepali language

Experts informed us on a number of options for using data from this community. We identified the potential use of sharing questions and seeking support from colleagues (“exchange what I know and what others know”). Data will also help to stimulate remote learning (E-learning) and can be used as a referral guide. For the management of Karuna Nepal, data will help to measure how popular certain articles are (“bounce time”) and identify the main interests of CBRFs. Also, data will help to identify what knowledge is missing; how to improve the current training for CBRFs; and how to support these CBRFs. Moreover, it will give a picture on what kinds of problems CBRF districts encounter and therefore help adjust the support by the District Team accordingly.

Others can learn from the steps we are taking for activating the online community of CBRF in Nepal:

- ▶ Making a team responsible for managing and monitoring the platform and letting them learn constantly from feedback of the community
  - ▶ Making the online community part of the formal CBRF training and adding “assignments” and practices with the online community in order to make them acquainted with the platform
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- ▶ Considering connecting people via the platforms they use (i.e. sharing messages via WhatsApp

or Facebook with links to articles and discussions on our platform)

- ▶ Staffing the helpdesk with an experienced CBR worker, who can later on connect the user to the online platform (i.e. with a link via WhatsApp).
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- ▶ Developing a core team of users (and contributors) and finding balance between “lurkers” and active contributors.

We expect to launch the online community by the end of 2020.

## Online conferences for all

### LIGHT FOR THE WORLD

Online conference

Learning and exchange



Light for the World is an international development and disability NGO with offices in 11 countries including Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and South Sudan delivering over 180 projects. Our programmes focus on eye health and disability inclusion and are administered by colleagues on the ground. Once a year, we bring all programme staff together at our international headquarters in Vienna to facilitate exchange and learning. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year will be the first-ever virtual Programme Week. This poses new challenges for the inclusion of our colleagues with disabilities in the conference. Following is some advice on how to achieve this based on our experience:

#### Know your audience

In principle, online conferences are eas-

ier to attend for some participants with disabilities, because travel barriers are dropped. The first step for an inclusive event is then to identify participants with disabilities. This can be integrated into the registration process. All further steps depend on this knowledge.

In the case of our Programme Week, this is an easy step. We will have deaf and hard-of-hearing colleagues as well as colleagues with visual impairments and with physical disabilities participating. We reached out to all of them in advance to gauge their access needs and prepare accordingly. For instance, we learned that our Deaf colleague has a sign language interpreter for the week, so this accommodation is already provided.

#### Choose a Platform

The second step is to choose a suitable online platform. In addition to the general usability, it also needs to be accessible. This includes, among other factors, operability for screen reader software for blind participants, adaptable contrast values and font sizes for partially sighted users and options for captioning to assist hard-of-hearing

persons. The COVID-19 situation has generated a swath of accessibility reviews for different providers on the market.

In the case of our Programme Week, we have settled on Microsoft Teams. Our visually impaired colleagues feel comfortable with the platform. Moreover, the platform provides closed captioning in English. It is an imperfect trial function, but it suffices as an additional tool for hard-of-hearing colleagues as well as for colleagues working in noisy environments.

### Adapt the facilitation

The third crucial step is to adapt the session conduct. At our Programme Week, we rely on internal moderators. They receive training in advance, including on inclusive facilitation. Some of the rules also apply to analogue meetings, while others are specific for virtual meetings.

For instance, we will share all material in accessible formats before the sessions, so that our visually impaired colleagues can read them in advance with their screen readers. We will ensure frequent breaks

between sessions. The facilitators will remind participants to not talk over each other and to identify themselves before each intervention for the benefit of deaf and hard-of-hearing participants. All these steps will advance inclusion, but also improve the sessions for everyone.

### Don't assume. Ask.

Inclusive online conferences can be intimidating. At Light for the World, we have experience in this, so the COVID-19 pandemic has not created new, insurmountable barriers. Still, the virtual Programme Week's sheer size makes a difference and provides an exciting opportunity to learn. For instance, we do not know yet whether the chat function - a major and popular feature of online events - will be accessible for everyone, especially with over 100 participants. Therefore, we will check in regularly with our colleagues with disabilities and adapt conference rules as required.

Don't assume. Ask participants with disabilities and expert organisations - this is the general rule for our inclusive online conference.

## Setting standards in event accessibility

### SABANCI FOUNDATION

Accessible event

Accessible promotion

Accessible venue

Content accessibility



[The Sabancı Foundation Philanthropy Seminar](#) has been held annually since 2007 and convenes an audience of nearly 600

leaders from academia, civil society, business, the public sector and the media to discuss new trends in strategic philanthro-



py. During the last two events organised in 2018 and 2019, we focused on the impact of technology on the independent living of persons with disabilities. In addition to a seminar session, the format of the event was extended to include a foyer area where we showcased technologies for independent living. Although accessibility has been on our agenda for many years, we have improved our measures gradually for the last two years with our focus on the theme of independent living.

For the 2019 event, we aimed to be a benchmark in organising accessible events in Turkey. First we consulted experts in the field and a report on the accessibility of the venue was prepared. We identified the necessary regulations and classified them as short, medium and long-term measures. We also consulted with local and national NGOs working in the field of disability on the content of our event, including the theme and the technologies and models to be presented.

The event was promoted via social media and mailings by using mainly visual materials. All of the photos shared were augmented with alternative text. The videos were also described in the captions briefly. The registration form of the event was accessible and was easily read by screen readers. In the form, we included a question asking about participants' special needs, and we took measures accordingly, such as organising parking lots for wheelchair users.

To ensure physical accessibility, ramps were installed in the foyer area and an elevator was installed to give access to the stage for our panellists with disabilities. In addition, short bistro tables were installed and the registration desk was lowered for wheelchair users. Tactile maps in Braille and with large print were provided for participants with visual impairments.

For the accessibility of the content, a sign language interpreter and simultaneous audio description through headphones were available during the seminar. Partic-

ipants could enjoy a guided tour option in the foyer area, with printed materials in Braille and large print. Additionally, a QR code was included on our printed materials for screen reader users.

Prior to the event, we shared a document including information about accessibility regulations, nearest public transportation options, descriptive address explanation, description of the venue's interior and a contact email address of a staff member from the organisational team.

To evaluate the event, we sent an accessible survey to our participants and scored 4.7 out of 5 for our accessibility regulations. This concrete indication of our success encouraged us to further improve our work. Now, we know that accessibility is an evolving concept and we must continuously improve ourselves. For this reason, it is critical to keep in touch with experts working in the field and incorporate an accessibility lens in all of our processes.

# Creating arts and culture spaces – Barrier-free

STIFTUNG DRACHENSEE\*

Accessible arts & culture

Accessible venue

Inclusive cultural workshop

Stiftung Drachensee



The cultural workshop and studio gallery [“artegrale”](#) in Kiel, Germany, a cultural initiative of Stiftung Drachensee, opened in 2012 in a historic building not far from the state government of Schleswig-Holstein. The artegrale was designed as a space where people with and without disabilities could create and experience art and culture together. Painting courses, exhibitions, workshops, readings, concerts and much more take place at artegrale, which can also be rented as a venue for events.

The studio is barrier-free in a number of ways:

- ▶ The historic building has been adapted to the needs of people with disabilities despite the many challenges posed by Germany’s monument protection regulations. Ramps, accessible toilets and other modifications allows the building to be used as a barrier-free space for a variety of events, while retaining the historic character of the building.
- ▶ Working closely with specialists from Stiftung Drachensee, the artegrale brings down other types of barriers, through low admission prices, information material in plain language, and the use of audio guides, braille and symbols to enhance augmentative and alternative communication.

To ensure equal participation in art and culture for all people, artegrale’s cultural and creative offerings are aimed at people with and without disabilities, immigrants, refugees and people with a socially disadvantaged background, all from the age of six and up. To broaden the popular appeal of the project, the studio’s curator cooperates with many cultural institutions in the city, such as art schools, theatres and public museums. The artegrale also has a voluntary advisory board consisting of members of the Kiel art and cultural scene who strengthen the offerings and are committed to the artegrale’s mission.

A major project in recent years has been a traveling exhibition on the topic of “openness”. The exhibition showed 30 works of art by artists with and without disabilities at various locations in Germany. The exhibition, whose patron was the President of the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament, proved highly popular with the public.

The artegrale is financially supported as a cultural initiative by the non-profit organisation AktionMensch. These funds are organised and coordinated by Stiftung Drachensee. In addition, the artegrale is supported by other donors and many volunteers.

\*Member of the Disability Thematic Network at time of writing.

# Checklist for your accessible event

The following is a checklist based on the “Zero Project Conference Accessibility Guidelines” and on the experience of the foundations that have contributed to this publication. The full publication spells out each point and highlights key elements to consider for each session, plus useful tips for the different steps of the process.

## 1. Plan your conference

- ▶ Select an accessible venue
- ▶ Promote the event in an accessible way and invite people with disabilities to attend
- ▶ Collect details about additional support needs in the accessible registration form
- ▶ Communicate effectively the accessibility of your conference
- ▶ Provide contact details to offer additional support with registration and booking
- ▶ Arrange transfers for participants with limited mobility or other support needs
- ▶ Make additional support available to individual participants during the conference
- ▶ Support the participation of personal assistants
- ▶ Ensure the whole team is ready to support all participants at the conference
- ▶ Help speakers to make their presentations accessible
- ▶ Communicate the content of the conference accessibly and in advance to help participants prepare

## 2. Make your conference communications material accessible

- ▶ Large versions of printed materials
- ▶ Alternative text for images
- ▶ QR codes to provide information in an alternative format
- ▶ Written materials easy to read
- ▶ Accessible electronic documents
- ▶ Accessible video content
- ▶ Accessible information on the website

## 3. Organise the conference venue to orient your participants

- ▶ Accessible registration area
- ▶ Clear signs so that people can navigate independently
- ▶ Tactile flooring
- ▶ Sensory break room

## 4. Plan participatory and inclusive conference sessions

- ▶ Ensure speeches and presentations are accessible
- ▶ Provide captioning for speeches
- ▶ Provide sign language interpretation and/or captioning
- ▶ Provide audio description for video content, as well as subtitles and/or sign language
- ▶ Use graphic facilitation to convey information in an alternative format
- ▶ Make audio induction loops available
- ▶ Provide a live web stream to increase remote access

## 5. Communicate after the conference

- ▶ Make all materials available after the conference
- ▶ Collect participants' feedback and suggestions for improvement through accessible forms

## 6. Specific tips for online events

- ▶ Use accessible platforms or software
- ▶ Provide captioning for speeches
- ▶ Provide sign language interpretation
- ▶ Communicate the content of the conference accessibly and in advance to help participants prepare
- ▶ Provide accessible presentations
- ▶ Think about the length of the event and the different sessions
- ▶ Use a uniform background and pay attention to illumination
- ▶ When speaking to the audience speak in front of the camera slowly, loudly and clearly
- ▶ Describe all images used in the slide presentation and read the relevant text from the screen for people who have difficulty reading or seeing text and visual images; and avoid adding too much text and unnecessary images to slides

# Key recommendations

The learnings surfaced in this publication can inform any organisation that is committed to making their events fully accessible. Following are some key recommendations from the experiences of the EFC members featured in this publication:

- 1** Making events accessible is a journey, not a goal. But you never get anywhere if you do not embark on that journey.
- 2** Accessibility should be designed for, and seen as a benefit to, the whole society, not just those with disabilities. Universal design improves access, and quality of life, for all.
- 3** Accessibility is an evolving concept and it requires constant improvement.
- 4** Don't assume. Ask participants with disabilities and expert organisations what can be done to improve accessibility.
- 5** Event planners should critically assess their practices and identify concrete steps that can be taken each day to improve access for people with disabilities.
- 6** It is important to devise a long-term approach that will combine monitoring, advocacy, and capacity-building actions for making events more accessible to all.

## About the DTN Disability Thematic Network

Since the mid-1990s, EFC member Fundación ONCE has worked with the EFC on an array of projects and programmes revolving around the area of disabilities. The DTN emerged from this engagement and has become more and more active over the years, especially after the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force on 3 May 2008. In 2009 the European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disabilities was created under the DTN to encourage ratification of the Convention. The work of the Consortium has now been merged into the overall activities of the DTN. The network's members have also increased their engagement on a European level with their input into the Disability Policy Agenda - collaborating with an array of stakeholders - and the DTN has focused more on incubating philanthropic organisations' pilot projects that can be scaled up or replicated.

Currently, the DTN facilitates learning from experience and sharing knowledge between peers; acts to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities by adopting a mainstreaming approach; and disseminates results to multiply impact at local, national and European level. Focus areas are building inclusive communities; enabling social equality and justice; and empowering through access to leisure and culture.

### Members of the Disability Thematic Network 2020

- ▶ Essl Foundation MGE gemeinnützige Privatstiftung, Chair
- ▶ Europe Foundation
- ▶ Fondazione Banca del Monte di Lucca
- ▶ Fundación ONCE
- ▶ Genio
- ▶ Light for the World International
- ▶ Pro Victimis Foundation
- ▶ Sabancı Foundation

[www.efc.be/disability](http://www.efc.be/disability)

## About the EFC European Foundation Centre

As a leading platform for philanthropy in Europe, the EFC works to strengthen the sector and make the case for institutional philanthropy as a formidable means of effecting change. We believe institutional philanthropy has a unique, crucial and timely role to play in meeting the critical challenges societies face. Working closely with our members, a dynamic network of strategically-minded philanthropic organisations from more than 30 countries, we:

- **Foster peer-learning** by surfacing the expertise and experience within the sector
- **Enhance collaboration** by connecting people for exchange and joint action
- **Advocate for favourable policy** and regulatory environments for philanthropy
- **Build a solid evidence base** through knowledge and intelligence
- **Raise the visibility** of philanthropy's value and impact

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### Get in touch

Are you an EFC member? If you would like to be connected with the DTN for questions on accessibility matters – including names of experts in your countries – don't hesitate to contact Letizia Manzoni, DTN Coordinator, at [lmanzoni@efc.be](mailto:lmanzoni@efc.be)

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The EFC would like to thank all of those who contributed to this publication:

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# European Foundation Centre 2020

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