



HOW TO ORGANISE ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

Handbook on accessible meetings at the
United Nations Headquarters

Photo credit: UN DESA



Permanent Mission of Finland
to the United Nations



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ORGANIZE ACCESSIBLE MEETINGS?

Disability-accessible meetings ensure participation of persons with disabilities to the work of the UN. In disability-accessible meetings all stakeholders from delegates, Secretariat staff to civil society can work together on a wide range of topics. Once accessibility and reasonable accommodation are in place, all processes and meetings can better benefit from the contributions of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

This booklet is for everyone to use as a checklist when organizing a meeting at the UNHQ to make sure that we fulfil our part of leaving no one behind and ensure participation of persons with disabilities.

WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

Accessibility applies to providing solutions to groups and it means creating e.g. spaces, goods, products, activities or information in a way they are usable for persons with disabilities and that they ensure their effective and equal access to those. This might mean for example having text captions in meetings or having wheelchair ramps in buildings.

Accessibility is a right in itself but also a prerequisite to enjoy other human rights.

WHAT IS REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?

Reasonable accommodation applies to individuals and it means ensuring accessibility, modification and adjustments for an individual with a disability in a particular situation. This might mean for example having personal equipment you need for working in an office. Reasonable accommodation does not place an undue burden on the entity involved.

HOW TO MAKE SURE ACCESSIBILITY HAPPENS IN MEETINGS?

CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO REMEMBER!

Consult persons with disabilities and their representative organizations

- Remember to consult persons with disabilities throughout the process from planning, implementation to review. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are the best experts on different aspects of accessibility! Prepare for different types of disabilities as no one solutions fits all.

Make sure the registration system is accessible

- If a website is used for registration make sure the system is fully accessible for screen reader users. Survey Monkey for example supports this function.
- Registration should include a section for open-ended responses and not only a checklist for various accommodation requests. An accessibility contact person with an email and phone number should be included in the registration.

Remember to ask if reasonable accommodation is needed and provide a solution for individuals if the answer is "yes"

- This could mean providing materials in accessible format such as Braille, preparing for service animals and their needs such as relief breaks, support personnel's access or other individually tailored accommodations
- Allow more time for presenters and speakers with disabilities especially for blind and partially sighted presenters reading Braille, deaf and hard of hearing persons using sign language interpreters and persons with speech disabilities

Provide materials in advance for accessibility

- For example use word format (not PDF) to ensure screen reader accessibility or provide the materials in an easy read version (or easy to understand format) and see if other accessibility measures can be done

Choose an accessible space for the meeting (both in-person and virtual)

- Organize the meetings in buildings and rooms which are step-free, there is a possibility to manoeuvre mobility devices, space for service animals and accessible restrooms.
- Organize a walk-through before the event to see all routes where participants need to go are accessible
- Have signs, personnel or technical guidance to assist people find the right places, for example to show where elevators are situated.
- Ensure online platforms are fully accessible and do not create additional barriers in participation (Zoom is currently the most accessible platform)

Plan for support personnel

- Make sure personal assistants, sign language interpreters and captioners are not counted as participants if the number of participants to the event is limited. Without support personnel, participation of persons with disabilities is not always possible.
- Reserve space and seating also for support personnel in the venue of the event.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST, NOR A LIST OF MINIMUM STANDARDS.

Rather, it is meant to start a process of analysis for inclusive work among Member States, as a complement to the standards that UNDIS and the JIU have provided for DGACM.

You can read more about accessibility and reasonable accommodation measures for inclusion in UN Conferences:

The UN Accessibility Centre services are listed [at this link](#).

More on [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) on Level AAA can be found here.