EQUALITY & SPORT

HOSTING INCLUSIVE EVENTS

Accessibility Guidelines for ENGSO events

Objective: guidelines to help event planners organise and coordinate the elements and activities necessary in creating events that take place in a welcoming environment for everyone

ENGSO

EWS

Introduction

This document presents guidelines to complement the bid books for the Annual General Assembly, the European Sports Platform and the European Youth and Sport Platform, as well as other ENGSO-sanctioned events. Its aim is to help event planners organise and coordinate the elements and activities necessary in creating events that take place in a welcoming environment for everyone, and that foster an atmosphere that is enriching, impactful, and inclusive for all participants.

Hosting inclusive events requires taking a holistic approach to event planning, making sure that all elements of the event are held to the same high standards. These elements are:

- **Communication**
- **Accessibility of venue & space**
- **Planning**
- **Animation**
- **Evaluation**

They are discussed in the following sections of this document.

It's important to note that while fulfilling all accessibility requirements is not set in stone, it is highly recommended. Creativity plays a key role in adapting the environment to be more accessible. Members organising ENGSO-sanctioned events are offered support in executing the accessibility requirements. Based on feedback on the accessibility guidelines from the organisers of ENGSO-sanctioned events, updates will be added annually as needed.

The earlier in the planning stage you use these guidelines, the easier it is to meet accessibility standards. This process not only serves as a valuable learning experience for organisers to improve future events but also for participants, who will appreciate the effort taken to ensure accessibility.

At the end of this document, you will find a checklist summarising the key aspects of planning and hosting accessible and inclusive events.

Communication

We ask that the promotional mediums that you choose to convey the message about the ENGSO reflect the potential diversity of the people attending the event and, where possible, are accessible to people with disabilities.

Images and videos

Make sure that your imagery and representation in marketing materials reflects the inclusivity of the event – this ensures that people can see themselves in the promotional materials and feel that the event is for them. Make sure that diversity is a factor when selecting images and videos for promotion of the event.

Avoid stereotypical portrayals of people making sure that your messaging is anti-discriminatory.

Images should have 'alt text' which describes the image, and videos should include subtitles/captions for people with visual impairments.

Tips for writing alt-text for people with visual impairments:

- Keep it simple: Descriptions don't need to be longer than a sentence or two. Don't include 'image of' or 'photograph of'.
- Convey the content: A good tip is to write alt text as if you are describing the image to a friend over the phone.
- Be specific: Include elements such as colour if they are necessary for understanding the image.
- Share humour: Descriptive text doesn't have to be overly formal and should try to communicate what is amusing.
- Include text: If the image has text, include it in the description or write 'more information in post/below.'
- Don't forget about alt text: If the platform doesn't support alt text, give a description in the action.

- Decorative Pictures: Logos and decorative images don't require detailed descriptions and can be left as 'Decorative Image.'

Social media

Most social media platforms are designed to be inclusive, with some being more accessible to people who are blind or partially sighted than others. You should check accessibility settings/best practices for each channel and keep up to date with the latest features. Here is a list of general guidelines to follow to make sure you are being inclusive:

- Write in plain language: Avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms.
- Don't overuse caps: Writing in caps can be difficult to read and is often misinterpreted by screen readers.
- Use camel case for hashtags. Capitalise the first letter of each word to make hashtags more legible and screen reader friendly.
- Put hashtags and mentions at the end: Be mindful of how hashtags or mentions can disrupt copy.
- Use descriptive call-to-actions: Avoid 'click here." Try '*sign up*', '*Try it for free*', or '*follow the link to subscribe*'.
- Limit emoji use: Emojis are read aloud by assistive tech. If you use the clapping hands emoji between every word for emphasis, screen reader users will hear "clapping hands" after each word. This is true for any emoji. This will be distracting, annoying, and disorienting. The message you're trying to emphasise will likely be lost. Before using any emoji, look up how it translates to text.

Use alternative text: Provide descriptions for images and videos. When no alt-text fields are available, give a description in your caption. They are often formatted: Image description: [description in brackets].

Language

Make sure that your use of language is clear, adapted, and inclusive in all communications to make all attendees feel valued and respected.

Text & Font

Make sure that you use easy-to-read sans-serif fonts, such as Opens Sans or Tahoma, and text size can be adapted to user browser settings for use with an accessibility widget. Text should be able to be enlarged up to 200% of the original display size without affecting or impeding reading accessibility. Where text size cannot be adapted, font size should be a minimum of size 14pt.

All texts should be also available in screen readable option (word version)

- Always make sure colour contrast is clear.
- Keep writing horizontal, not put on an angle, to ensure legibility.

Avoid putting writing over images (unless it is high contrast).

Document Layout

- Document should be left aligned where possible.
- Ensure text is unjustified (that is, the edges of the lines are not all in line but vary depending on the length of words.) Justified text creates uneven spacing between words, which can make it difficult to read.
- Utilise Styles on Word when possible, (i.e. Titles, Headings, Subtitles) this makes navigation easier for those using screen readers.
- Try to limit the use of tables in a document where possible.
- If using a table, create them in Excel first and import into your document. Excel is more accessible for screen readers than a basic Word table.
- If creating an Excel document, try to refrain from using different tabs as these do not show up on screen readers.

Ensure all presentations/documents are sent to participants, beforehand, to ensure a full understanding of content is available. Some visually impaired participants may not be able to read the documentation or presentations on the day. Accessible formats:

- Accessible PDF documents (PDF Accessibility Wizard)
- Accessible Word/Plain Text documents
- Audio files

- Easy Read
- Large print
- Braille and Moon
- Telephone
- Digital (e-newsletters, email, social media etc.)

Venue & Facilities Accessibility

Choose an accessible venue with features such as ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. Ensure it meets the needs of individuals with disabilities. Think about venue safety measures for attendees, such as well-lit and obstacle-free parking areas, and locations that are safe for everyone.

Venues

Some important structural considerations must be taken into account when selecting a venue to ensure that the meeting will be accessible to individuals with disabilities. The most important are to make sure that:

- passageways are even, hard-surfaced, not slippery and sufficiently wide
- parking places are close by and accessible parking places are clearly signed, and at least 3600 mm wide
- transport drop off is located near an accessible entrance
- the entrance is covered, well illuminated and easy to find
- there are no floor level differences and if there are, that a ramp or elevator is available in addition to any stairs, or that an alternative accessible route has been clearly signalled

- the gradient of any ramp is at most 8% indoors, and 5% outdoors, and the ramp is at least 1000 mm wide, with handrails
- stairs are easy to use and have handrails on both sides
- the size of the elevator must be at least 1200 mm x 2300 mm and the doorway at least 1000 mm
- elevators must have elevator control panels in braille
- lighting is sufficient and without glare
- doors, walls, furniture, and fittings have enough contrast to be distinguishable from their background
- doors are easy to open and doorways are at least 900 mm wide; 1000 mm wide for sports facilities

Facilities

Make sure that the facilities are accessible and gender-neutral where necessary. Facilities includes main room seating, restrooms (including portable restrooms), and concessions and refreshment areas, break out rooms.

The meeting and accommodation venues should be aware and agreed with the European law about Guide Dogs: https://www.euroblind.org/convention/article-9/

Ensure that there are facilities available for breastfeeding parents and baby-changing facilities.

Toilets and changing rooms

The venue must have accessible toilets and changing rooms that are gender-neutral. For large events, several accessible, gender-neutral toilets are necessary. If portable toilets are used, some of these must be accessible and gender-neutral.

Gender neutral facilities must be provided and clearly labelled. This can mean signalling the facilities that are in the room (urinals, closed toilets, open showers, separate cubicles etc). In case the facilities already have signals gender oriented, some new label in paper showing

facilities in the room can be printed and put on top of the entrance door. They can be easily removed at the end of the event.

Sensory/Safe Space

Provide quiet spaces that enable participants to momentarily isolate if or when necessary. Participants and/or support staff may need time to rest and recuperate from noise and crowds.

Layout of Spaces

In designing the room layout, considerations should be made for participants with disabilities, in particular:

- make sure that there is enough space between tables and chairs for wheelchair users to navigate a path and that all mobility hazards (cables and wires for example) are clearly marked and secured;
- the stage should be accessible via a ramp and should not be too high to reach for a wheelchair user;
- refreshment tables should be provided for wheelchairs users and set at an accessible height;
- cloakroom facilities should be accessible to wheelchair users – coat hooks for example
- where sign-in or active registration procedures are required, a desk should be set at a height that is accessible for wheelchairs
- lighting should be clear
- signs and signalling should be adapted and clear and set at an accessible height for wheelchair users

Materials

Where possible, a functional audio induction loop system should be provided and marked with the induction loop symbol.

Roving microphones should be made available to make it possible for participants with disabilities to avoid unnecessary movement in the room(s). All participants should be encouraged to use microphones.

Name tags should be printed with large, clear text and include pronouns.

Provide information about food and its contents so that everyone can choose suitable **o**ptions

Planning

Pre-planning & Registration

By pre-planning we mean the activities that are ahead of the event itself, in particular registration.

Important factors to take into consideration are:

- Offer a space in the registration process to enter preferred names and pronoun choices.
- Ensure that pronouns and preferred names are used on registration badges if they are used.
- Ensure that any ID card processing aspect of the form references preferred data and not required data such as names and pronouns.
- Offer a custom information space in the registration process where participants can list specific needs such as support staff requirements or medical needs and details for a contact person for any follow-up with questions.
- Offer a space in the registration process where people with disabilities to indicate what kind of disability they have
  o (visual/hearing impairment/physical)
  o wheelchair User (Yes or No)
  o Are you travelling with a guide dog (Yes or No)
- Be transparent and provide references and links to any policies that will be enforced.
- Offer facilitated payment options and outreach opportunities.
- Offer links to a variety of accommodation options to cover all budgets, and share the number of accessible rooms available at each option.

- Set up a participant forum for organising ride-sharing and possible shared housing options.
- Provide local transport and access details such as accessible taxi companies, public transport, accessible entrances, reserved parking bays.
- If transportation is provided to all participants, this must include wheelchair accessible transportation.
- If activities require leaving the venue, check that pavements and road crossings are accessible for wheelchair users, and provide optional transport if it involves walking a long distance or if accessibility is poor on the route.
- Provide information for support animal consideration, such as nearby and on-site dog toileting facilities, water outlets, animal-friendly accommodation, and transport.
- If meals or beverages are provided, ask about allergies and dietary restrictions.

On-site Planning & Animation

On site planning

Presenters should be briefed to ensure that they describe anything visual on slides, e.g. photos.

Where possible, slides should be shared in advance with participants prior to a session so participants who need to (such as people with visual impairments, dyslexia, etc) can familiarise themselves.

If parallel or break out activities are planned, make sure that there is enough time allowed for participants with disabilities to switch rooms, and allow extra time for bathroom breaks.

Ensure that your staff are properly trained on inclusivity issues. They should be prepared to ensure that the meeting takes place in an atmosphere of zero tolerance for sexist, racist, or

homophobic comments or actions. Ensure all venue staff are aware of any disabled participants that may need assistance, for example visually impaired attendees.

Event organisers and assistants should be clearly distinguishable from guests, by wearing special clothing or badges to make it easy to find someone in the event of a medical or other urgency.

A safeguarding officer should be designated to deal with any issues that may arise.

All safety procedures should also consider those with mobility challenges.

Up-to-date and easily accessible first aid equipment.

Animation

In the way the meeting is presented care should be taken to:

- offer diversity in the selection of speakers, the composition of panels and round tables.
- ensure that presentation or speaking times are equitable and moderators should be ready to limit speakers who overrun their time or who try to dominate the conversation.
- facilitators should be sufficiently trained in values of non-discrimination and respect these values in the discussions and able to intervene if and when necessary
- an initial reminder of safeguarding values and officers and request for interventions and exchanges to take place in a safe and non- aggressive atmosphere

Evaluation

Feedback on your event is important to be able to continuously improve, and effective ways of doing this include creating channels for participants and spectators to provide feedback on their experiences, including aspects relating to inclusivity. This could include surveys,

comment cards, or online feedback forms. If the form consists of closed questions, there should be a space for 'other comments'.

Official post-event evaluation enables an assessment of how well the event achieved its inclusion goals and gather feedback for future improvements.

CHECKLIST

1. Communication

- Use inclusive language and avoid jargon or slang.
- Ensure promotional materials reflect diversity (images, videos).
- Add alt text to images and captions to videos.
- Write in plain language, avoid using caps, and follow accessibility guidelines for social media.
- Use accessible fonts and layouts (sans-serif fonts, minimum size 14pt).
- Ensure colour contrast is clear.
- Provide materials in multiple formats (accessible PDFs, large print, etc.).

2. Venue & Facilities

- Ensure the venue is fully accessible (ramps, elevators, wide passageways).
- Have accessible restrooms and gender-neutral facilities.
- Provide sensory-friendly spaces (quiet rooms).
- Arrange the layout to accommodate wheelchair users (accessible stage, tables, etc.).
- Ensure guide dog-friendly facilities.
- Provide breastfeeding and baby-changing facilities.

3. Planning & Registration

- Offer space for preferred names and pronouns on registration forms.
- Include options to list disabilities or accessibility needs (visual, hearing, wheelchair use).
- Provide details for accessible transport and accommodation options.
- Ensure ID processing respects participants' data privacy.
- Allow dietary restrictions to be submitted in advance.

4. On-Site Management

- Ensure presenters are briefed to describe visual content.
- Share slides with participants in advance, if possible.
- Train staff on inclusivity and accessibility.
- Ensure staff are distinguishable for emergencies.
- Designate a safeguarding officer.

5. Event Animation

- Ensure diversity in speakers and panels.
- Moderators should manage speaking times and encourage respectful dialogue.
- Remind participants of safeguarding values and ensure a non-aggressive atmosphere.

6. Evaluation

- Collect feedback from participants (surveys, comment cards, online forms).
- Include inclusivity-related questions.
- Use feedback for post-event evaluation and improvement.

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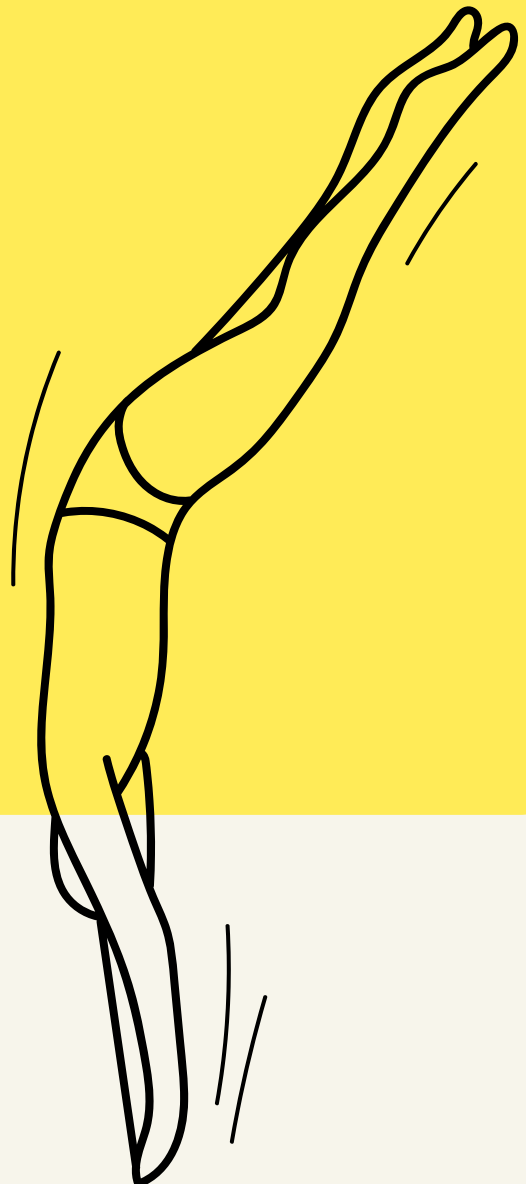
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