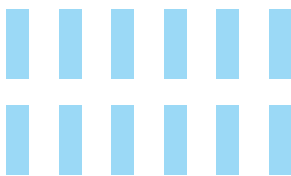


ORGANIZING INCLUSIVE EVENTS:

Suggested checklist for
accessible meetings in
the context of the OSCE





INTRODUCTION

Everyone has a right to participate in society in an equal manner. This is why promoting accessibility is important. Accessible meetings enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in OSCE events. This also leads to more inclusive processes and meetings benefitting from the contributions of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Accessible meetings can further contribute to fostering civil society engagement with OSCE participating States and structures. States have an obligation to ensure accessibility also according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD article 9).

This checklist was created by the 2025 Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship in consultation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), ODIHR's Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities, OSCE Conference Services and Abilis Foundation, to assist OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, and OSCE structures in planning and organising accessible and inclusive events to facilitate participation of persons with disabilities.

The checklist **is not intended as an exhaustive list, nor as a list of minimum standards**. It is instead meant to inspire different actors to start a process of analysing how their work and meetings can be more inclusive, sometimes even with little or no extra cost or effort.



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WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

Accessibility is a mechanism for inclusion. Accessibility means having equal access to the physical environment, to transportation, and to the means of communication and information, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public. Accessibility applies to identifying and eliminating obstacles and barriers to accessibility as well as providing solutions by 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. Due to the diverse nature of disability, there is no one solution that fits all.

WHAT ARE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS?

Reasonable accommodations mean necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments for an individual with a disability in a particular situation. This might mean for example having personal assistive device equipment needed for working in an office. Reasonable accommodations do not place an undue burden on the entity involved.



KEY ASPECTS TO REMEMBER WHEN ORGANIZING ACCESSIBLE MEETINGS

- ★ **Consult persons with disabilities and their respective organizations** in all stages: from planning to implementation. Collect feedback and suggestions for improvements related to accessibility during and after the event.
- ★ **Invite speakers and participants with disabilities and their representative organisations to meetings.**
- ★ **Make sure there is budget for reasonable accommodations when planning for events.**
- ★ **Ensure accessible meeting invitations and registration.**

The invitation and pre-event information messages should include **all relevant details on the meeting venue's accessibility**, for invitees to have sufficient information to decide whether they wish to attend, and what arrangements they need to make to attend (e.g. booking an assistant). Invitations should be sent with enough time to arrange accessible travel.

Make sure websites used for event information and registration of participants support digital platform accessibility features and are in line with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines standards (WCAG). For example, prioritize providers that support screen reader users.

- ★ **Ask whether reasonable accommodations are needed, and if so, proactively develop an appropriate solution.**

Add a field to the registration form where participants can freely describe their accessibility needs for the event. Contact details for a focal point for reasonable accommodation needs can be provided in advance.

If a participant informs you about something they need to be able to fully participate, contact them to ensure that you have a shared understanding of the required arrangements. This could include preparing for service animals and their needs, access for support personnel or other individually tailored accommodations, preferably of their choice. If the participants must pay a fee to attend, do not collect the fee from any assistants or interpreters accompanying the participants. Make sure support personnel have reserved seats in the event venue.

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

Event spaces should be accessible with a wheelchair or other mobility aid, including arrival, parking, entrance, meeting and break room layouts, seating set-up and restrooms. Accessible transport to the venue should be provided when needed. Take into account for example accessibility ramps, step-free access, lifts, doorways 90 cm or wider, non-slip surfaces, accessible emergency exits, and height-adjustable microphones.

Include designated areas for sign language interpreters, CART providers and support personnel. If interpretation is provided (sign language, speech-to-text or interpretation into another language), speakers should be instructed to speak at a calm pace and articulate clearly.

Reserve seats for participants with disabilities. Communicate to the venue accessibility expectations and advise on appropriate, inclusive wording for all signage and directions.

Bad lighting and unnecessary background noise can make concentrating difficult for people with sensory sensitivities. The space should also have a minimal echo and a calm colour scheme, and it should be as odourless as possible. Seating arrangements should be planned with consideration for wheelchair accessibility and the needs of those who lip-read.

If food is served at a buffet, notify the participants of this ahead of the event. If the event has standing tables, make sure one or more lower tables are available for wheelchair users. A sign can be placed on the table, for example stating: “You are welcome to take a seat; however, we kindly ask that priority be given to those who need it for accessibility or health reasons”.

★ **Provide accessible technology and information materials ahead of, during, and after meetings**

Make sure that all speakers use a microphone during the event, including during Q&A. This is not only important for people with a hearing impairment, but it also improves the experience of everyone else. Inform presenters on how to make slides and visual aids accessible. Screen-displayed text should be easy to read from a distance, using high contrast and a clear, easy-to-read font. Depending on the nature and publicity of the meeting, technology-based solutions could be provided. For example, a CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) provider could be used to instantaneously translate all speech in the meeting to text – either onsite on screens or online through devices. Hearing aid users may benefit from induction loop systems installed in meeting rooms.

All documents should be in digital format and should follow standard guidance on accessibility and allow use of accessibility features such as screen reader. Additionally, materials could be provided in an easy-to-read version, with enlarged font size and in braille. Ask whether the participant needs materials in advance in an electronic format for their interpreter or other reasons. Alt-text for pictures should be included in digital documents. Videos should include audio descriptions and captions. Physical documents such as business cards and information notes can include braille writing.



In online meetings, use digital platforms that support or provide accessibility technologies, such as CART and sign language interpretation. Avoid bad lighting and background noise also in online meetings.

★ **Ensure accessibility information is shared with both participants and meeting organisers**

Include details in meeting materials to inform participants about available accessibility options.

Brief all meeting organisers and support staff (e.g. catering, security) on accessibility arrangements.



The content of this checklist has been informed by the internal accessibility guide of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and by [the Handbook on How to organise accessible events at the UN Headquarters](#), co-published by the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN and the International Disability Alliance.

