

Conference Accessibility Guidelines

What the Zero Project has learned on the journey towards an inclusive and accessible conference. Created jointly with our accessibility partner Escola de Gente and the wider Zero Project network.



Imprint

Author: Friedrich Ruhm
Design: Christoph Almasy
Editing: John Tessitore

Contributions from: Michael Fembek,
Paula Reid, Peter Charles, Wilfried Kainz,
Doris Neuwirth and Emma Heiling.

The photos used in these guidelines are
copyrighted by © Pepo Schuster

For more information about the Zero Project,
visit www.zeroproject.org.

For information or copies, contact:
office@zeroproject.org
Essl Foundation, c/o Haus der Philanthropie,
Schottenring 16, 1010 Vienna, Austria

ISBN 978-3-9504208-5-2

© Essl Foundation, November 2019. All rights
reserved. First published 2019.

For more information on this report, to down-
load further versions, and for more information
on the work of the Zero Project, please visit
www.zeroproject.org.

These guidelines were also developed with
contributions from Alan Thomas, Claudia
Werneck, Pedro Prata and Rosana Fonseca
from our accessibility partner organisation
Escola de Gente.



Content

About the Guidelines from the Zero Project.....	4
Why we support the Guidelines by Escola de Gente	6
1 Preparing for the conference.....	7
1.1 What to look for when selecting an accessible venue.....	7
1.2 Promoting the event and inviting people to attend.....	8
1.3 Collecting details about additional support needs at registration.....	8
1.4 Effectively communicating the accessibility of your conference	8
1.5 Providing contact details to offer additional support with registration and booking.....	10
1.6 Arranging transfers for participants with limited mobility or other support needs	10
1.7 Making additional support available to individual participants during the conference.....	10
1.8 Supporting personal assistants to attend	11
1.9 Ensuring the whole team is ready to support participants at the conference	11
1.10 Supporting speakers to make their presentations accessible.....	11
1.11 Communicating the content of the conference in advance to help participants prepare	12
2 Making written and video material accessible.....	13
2.1 Providing large print versions of printed materials.....	13
2.2 Providing alternative text for images.....	13
2.3 Creating accessible electronic documents.....	13
2.4 Making information on websites accessible	14
2.5 Making written materials easy to read	14
2.6 Using QR codes to provide information in an alternative format	14
2.7 Creating accessible video content.....	15
3 Orientation at the conference venue.....	16
3.1 Creating an accessible registration area.....	16
3.2 Providing clear signage so people can navigate independent	16
3.3 Providing tactile flooring at the conference venue	17
3.4 Offering a sensory break room	17
4 Participatory and inclusive conference sessions	18
4.1 Ensuring speeches and presentations are accessible.....	18
4.2 Captioning speeches	18
4.3 Providing sign language interpretation.....	19
4.4 Audio describing video content.....	20
4.5 Using graphic facilitation to convey information in an alternative format	20
4.6 Making audio induction loops available.....	21
4.7 Providing a live web stream to increase remote access.....	21
5 Communication after the conference	22
5.1 Making materials available after the conference.....	22
5.2 Collecting feedback on the conference	22
Appendix 1: Useful resources	23
Appendix 2: Accessibility features at the Zero Project Conference 2019.....	25
Appendix 3: Preparing your PowerPoint Presentation for the Conference.....	27

About the Guidelines from the Zero Project

For the past six years, the Zero Project has organised the annual Zero Project Conference in the UN Headquarters in Vienna, highlighting innovations that support people with disabilities. Since the first conference, the accessibility of the conference has been a key focus of the Zero Project, and every year we work to improve the features and measures that support the participation of everyone who wishes to attend.

We want to make the Zero Project Conference an example of 'good practice' in terms of conference accessibility. You can see the 30 accessibility features of the 2019 Zero Project Conference in the appendix to these guidelines. We know we still have work to do, and we can only do this in collaboration with partners across our vast global network. This year we have decided to develop a White Paper outlining our experiences of implementing accessibility measures at the Zero Project Conference.

Guidelines and Discussion paper

This White Paper has two parts:

1. A discussion paper (available early 2020) and
2. These practical guidelines, which we hope might help others to implement some of the measures at their own events.

We have developed these guidelines in response to requests we have had from partners who are interested in making their own meetings and conferences more accessible. They are based on what we have learned over the past number of years through implementing new measures and receiving feedback. In order to make this guide as practical as possible, we have concentrated on measures we have

first-hand experience of implementing. We are aware that these guidelines therefore do not cover everything and some measures, such as Braille or communication support for participants who are deafblind, are missing. We are also aware organisations may not be able to implement all these measures at every event, but we hope these guidelines can support organisations to consider new ways to make their events accessible.

We hope that people using these guidelines, or those who have expertise in the areas we have not included, will share their experiences and knowledge with us. We are committed to collecting feedback and using this to improve both accessibility at the Zero Project Conference and future editions of these guidelines, which we hope to update annually.

We are grateful to everyone who commented on a draft version of these guidelines including colleagues from the Institute of Inclusive Education, Ashoka Austria, Fundación Descúbreme, Humanity & Inclusion, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) and the Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement. We have not been able to incorporate all the comments made in to this edition of the guidelines, but will continue to review these

to improve accessibility at the Conference and inform future versions of these guidelines.

Last year, Brazilian NGO Escola de Gente evaluated the accessibility of the 2018 Conference, and their recommendations were key to some of the improvements we trialled for the first time in 2019, which are also included in these guidelines. We thank them for their support, and also for providing the foreword to these guidelines. We are grateful to our numerous other partners who work with us to improve the accessibility of the conference every year, including atempo, Hilfsgemeinschaft der Blinden und Sehschwachen Österreichs, Petra Plicka, AI Media, Patricia Brück, Bernhard Hruska, Speech Code, Audio2 - Datamix, Martin Maier, Zeitgeist and Gudrun Amtmann. We would also like to thank the Conference Management

Services, Security and Safety Services, Buildings Management Services and the Information Technology Services of the United Nations Office at Vienna for their ongoing support for the Conference and their work with us on the accessibility features at the venue.

This work is not just about transparency and sharing ideas with others. It is also an invitation to our worldwide network of partners and organizations to join us on this journey, with the common goal of creating better meetings and conferences for all.

If you want to contribute your expertise, suggest improvements, or share experiences, please contact us at office@zeroproject.org, or visit www.zeroproject.org/accessibility.



Plenary session with captioning and International Sign in the main room at the Zero Project Conference.

Why we support the Guidelines by Escola de Gente

Escola de Gente is very proud of its partnership with the Zero Project. It all began in Vienna in 2014, when our accessible theater group was awarded as one of the most innovative practices in the world regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. Since then, we were awarded two further times - in 2016 for our accessible reading project in partnership with the publishing company WVA, and in 2019 for our initiative to train young people as agents of accessibility in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

In these five years, the Zero Project Conference has opened several new opportunities for us. We gave talks, debated, discovered extremely interesting initiatives, became jurors in the Zero Project Award and launched campaigns against discrimination (To Discriminate is Criminous) and promoting the use of easy language (Talk it Easy). In 2018, the Zero Project invited us to analyze the Conference's architectural, attitudinal and communicational accessibility. Our report led to new accessibility measures at the 2019 Zero Project Conference and the development of these guidelines.

The multi-dimensional provision of accessibility is one of the guarantees of the right to life. Accessibility does not just ensure other rights – it is a clear and fundamental right by itself. There is no sustainability without inclusion. There is

no inclusion without accessibility. There is no sustainability without accessibility.

With these guidelines, the Zero Project consolidates itself as a global innovative platform of inclusive practices. These guidelines draw on the experiences and knowledge of the Essl Foundation, Escola de Gente, along with other partners to ensure more participation for everyone. The guidelines contain a proposal of freedom to all people, because information gives power, and this power gives people the room to develop their lives.

Zero Project is invincible and fearless in constructing bridges between people and organizations who defend inclusion. Therefore, it has the unconditional support of Escola de Gente, a Brazilian NGO created 17 years ago, and that has already reached 500,000 people in 19 countries in the dissemination of this cause.

It is an honour to write the foreword for these guidelines. There is a lot still to be discovered in the field of accessibility. We want plural and non-discriminatory societies, in which persons with disabilities are not an exception, but an intrinsic part. We want inclusive and sustainable societies - also for the humanity with disabilities.

1 Preparing for the conference

The accessibility of a conference is not limited to the duration of the conference itself. Accessibility starts much earlier and should be part of conference planning from the very beginning to ensure it is fully integrated into the conference. Considering accessibility from the beginning can also help reduce costs by avoiding last minute adaptations. Key elements include venue selection and the support and information that you make available to participants before the conference starts.

1.1 What to look for when selecting an accessible venue

Venue selection is a critical part of planning an accessible conference, ensuring that everyone can enter and move around the venue independently and safely. Key factors include the physical accessibility of the venue itself, such as step-free access to all conference areas, as well as its proximity to accessible public transport hubs. For events where many international visitors will be attending, you should also consider the accessibility of broader services that people might require during their stay, such as shopping, leisure, and sightseeing activities, and whether these can be easily reached from the conference venue.

7 key factors when selecting a venue

- Consider the location of the venue and whether there are accessible transport links to the venue, and whether other nearby buildings/services are accessible, e.g. tourist locations and banks.
- Consider all parts of the venue that will be in use and whether each of these is accessible. In addition to speaker podiums and plenary and seminar rooms, also check the accessibility of registration areas including the heights of counters and tables, bathrooms, catering areas, and networking areas, including other venues where

related social events might take place.

- Visit the venue well ahead of your event and speak with staff about all access requirements. Check that the venue allows support animals, such as guide dogs.
- If the venue has a limit on the number of people who can be accommodated, keep in mind that some participants may attend with a personal assistant (see section 1.8).
- If you are unsure about access requirements, contact a local disability partner organization that might be able to offer you advice or support.
- In terms of catering, consider the heights of counters and tables, the type of food that will be served, and how it will be served/eaten.
- A useful checklist for venue specifications can be found in the EDF guide for accessible meetings for all: edf-feph.org/accessible-meetings.



Exhibition area at the Zero Project Conference

1.2 Promoting the event and inviting people to attend

Whether your event is invitation-only or is being promoted more widely to encourage attendance, it is important that communications about it are accessible from the very beginning so that people have access to all the necessary information. It is also important to include the accessibility features that will be available at the conference as early as possible so people know they will be able to participate (see section 1.4).

3 practical tips for promoting your event

- Where appropriate, work with local disability organizations to disseminate information to their networks about the event.
- Provide information about accessibility of the location, venue, conference, etc. ahead of time so people know what measures will be in place to support them (see section 1.4).
- Ensure that all materials are available in a number of different accessible formats, as well as in different languages, if appropriate (see section 2).

1.3 Collecting details about additional support needs at registration

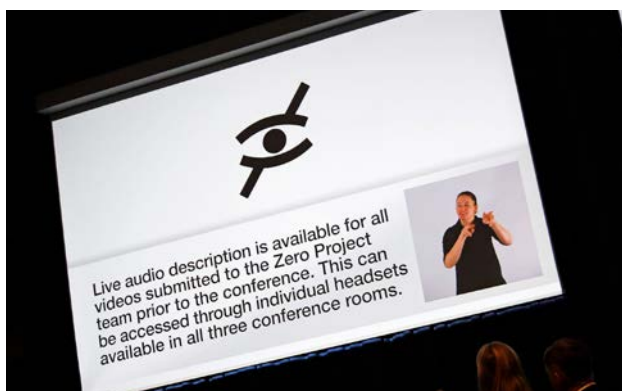
Asking about support needs at the registration stage will help you to plan the conference effectively. For example, asking people if they require sign language interpreters, and which sign language they require, will allow you to ensure the right interpreters are in place at the right place and time. It is important to note that people with additional support needs may come to the event without registering, and that making an event accessible can benefit everybody. This information should therefore be used to support planning, not limit the accessibility features available.

7 ways to make your registration process more effective

- Ensure your registration form is accessible to people using assistive technology. (For more information, see section 2.)
- Always ask for information about support needs regarding transport, personal assistance, interpretation, etc. Do not ask for disabilities.
- In addition to specific questions in the registration form, give participants the opportunity to communicate any additional needs, such as allergies and dietary requirements.
- Specific dietary requirements should be communicated directly to the catering staff, and the participants should be provided with details about how they can access appropriate food prior to their arrival at the conference.
- Make sure the questions and how you store the information complies with data protection guidelines.
- Regularly review the support needs requested by people registering for your event throughout your planning process – for example, review the responses about sign language before finalizing your sign language provision.

1.4 Effectively communicating the accessibility of your conference

If participants with disabilities are not aware that measures are in place to support their travel and their involvement in the conference from beginning to end, they may not consider attending in the first place. Be sure to make all relevant information available to support participants as they plan and prepare for the conference. When communicating this information, for example, via email, website, conference app, etc., be certain the information is available in a way that everyone can use it. (See section 2 for more information on making written and video information accessible.)



Video outlining the accessibility measures at the Zero Project Conference being shown on the opening day of the Conference

7 recommendations for communicating the accessibility of your conference

- Provide a list of hotels with accessible rooms and include detailed information about each hotel, including the number of accessible rooms, what accessibility features the rooms provide, room dimensions, additional services, etc. Local hotels should be able to provide this information, and you may also want to check the accessibility features of the hotels yourself and take photos of the rooms to post online. Some hotels describe themselves as “accessibility friendly,” but this does not mean they are fully accessible, so it is always good to check the details.
- More information on accessible accommodation can be found in the EDF guide for accessible meetings: edf-feph.org/accessible-meetings. Dedicated websites, such as Room Chooser from Austria, provide first-hand experience and detailed information on accessible hotel rooms: <https://roomchooser.com/en>.
- Provide information on accessible public transport, including links to the local public transport provider’s website. These websites, and other official sources of information, such as local travel apps, will generally have information about accessibility, such as what support is available at stations, how to buy tickets in advance, which stations have step-free access, any discounts on tickets, etc. You should indicate which station is closest to the conference venue and how best to reach the venue from the station, including ticket information where appropriate.
- If providing maps of the surrounding area or conference venue, you could provide a detailed written description to support people who cannot view the map, or for whom a detailed description beforehand may reduce anxiety or concern about attending.
- Contact local taxi companies and car services and ask for details about the accessibility of their fleet, and then convey this information – along with contact and booking info – prior to the conference. Not all participants will require adapted or specialist vehicles, but some may require a driver who is confident and able to give them the right support, so this should also be listed. There may even be a specialist company in your area that offers accessible transfers.
- You could also consider providing information on accessible businesses, tourist attractions, and leisure facilities near the conference venue.
- Clearly communicate the various accessibility measures that will be available at the conference and how participants can use them, such as the provision of sign language, tactile flooring, etc. You could create a user guide to the accessibility features at the conference, list the accessibility features on your website, or share a video beforehand. To ensure that this information is accessible to everyone, you may need to make it available in more than one format. (See section 2 for more details on making written and video material accessible.)
- You may also want to have an opening session at the conference which gives an overview of the accessibility measures available.

1.5 Providing contact details to offer additional support with registration and booking

Some participants who have specific requirements may require additional support during registration or with booking hotels or transfers. You should consider providing contact details so that people can request this support from members of the conference team.

3 things to remember when offering support with registration and booking

- Provide an email address and/or a telephone number to be used by people requiring additional support. Email is recommended in the run-up to the event, but it may also be useful to give people a phone number they can call if they require support or advice on the day of travel.
- If providing a telephone number, indicate the times of availability and the time zone and, where relevant, languages spoken.
- If possible, include a phone number that can be contacted via a smartphone (e.g., using WhatsApp). This can help international participants to keep in touch with you once they arrive in the country. It also allows video chats and the sending of images, if necessary.

1.6 Arranging transfers for participants with limited mobility or other support needs

For participants with limited mobility or other support needs, it may be difficult and stressful to navigate an unfamiliar city and a potentially inaccessible public transport system. Consider offering free transfers between key venues to participants with support needs, for example, between the airport and hotel, the hotel and conference venue, the conference venue and any networking events.

3 tips for arranging transport for participants

- Ask participants in the registration form if they will need support with transfers.
- Find a local taxi or minibuss company with accessible vehicles to make the transfers.
- If arranging transfers to/from the airport, be sure to ask participants for their flight information so as to provide assistance and guidance at the scheduled arrival and departure times.

1.7 Making additional support available to individual participants during the conference

Some participants with disabilities may attend with someone who is there to support them for the duration of the conference (a personal assistant), while others might require support on the ground. Consider having team members or volunteers available on request to offer support to individual participants, for example, to help navigate someone with a visual impairment through various areas of the venue.

3 things to consider when offering individual support

- Provide contact details so that people can request support in advance.
- Ask about any additional support needs during the registration process (see section 1.3).
- There should be a clearly designated place where people can go to request support throughout the conference, for example, the registration desk.

1.8 Supporting personal assistants to attend

As mentioned above, some people might bring a personal assistant to support them during the conference, for example, with orientation, moving around the conference venue, or accessing information. Many people with disabilities finance this assistance from their own budgets, and do not receive any outside support. If there is a fee to attend the conference, having free places available for personal assistants could encourage more people to attend.

2 ways to support personal assistants to attend

- Make information available about personal assistants ahead of time so people can decide whether they are able to attend.
- Offer free places for personal assistants and, if possible, consider allocating funds to support attendance in the form of a grant or scholarship, whether partial or full.

1.9 Ensuring the whole team is ready to support participants at the conference

To ensure that anyone who requires support receives the most effective assistance, you should consider briefing staff and volunteers who will be available throughout the conference, including raising awareness with venue staff. For example, letting the venue's security staff know that participants attending may require extra time to get through any security procedures, and informing them of any adjustments they should be aware of, will ensure that everyone has a better experience.

3 recommendations for briefing staff, volunteers and venue staff

- Coordinate a briefing session before the conference and invite all relevant people to participate.

- Ask partners from local disability organizations to help provide the briefing. Even if they are not able to attend, they may be able to offer advice and support.
- A good checklist on how to support people with different support needs can also be found in the EDF Guide: edf-feph.org/accessible-meetings

1.10 Supporting speakers to make their presentations accessible

Presentations are often a key part of conveying information at conferences, and it is important that they are as accessible as possible to ensure that all participants can benefit from them. This is important not only in the conference session itself but also if the presentations are being shared online ahead of or after the conference.

Example briefing for speakers:

- Keep presentations as brief and compact as possible.
- Do not overcrowd slides with text. Make short and concise sentences. Avoid animations or pictures as background to texts.
- If using video materials, these should have captions and an audio description. (See section 2.7 for more information.)
- Provide alternative text for images on slides (see section 2.2).
- Use a large font and make sure that the text contrasts well with the background. Avoid block letters, Italics, and the use of different fonts.
- Use features such as Microsoft PowerPoint's Accessibility Checker to review slides and make necessary improvements.
- You can see an example of the guidelines the Zero Project team sends to presenters in the appendix.

3 suggestions when briefing conference speakers

- Develop clear accessibility guidelines to send to all presenters ahead of the conference, outlining key things they can do to improve the accessibility of their presentation.
- Request presentations ahead of time so they can be shared with the captioning, sign language, graphic facilitation, and audio description teams.
- Consider assigning someone the responsibility of reviewing presentations.

1.11 Communicating the content of the conference in advance to help participants prepare

Some participants might benefit from having the opportunity to review materials ahead of the conference to help them prepare, such as people with intellectual disabilities or who require assistive technology. If possible, try to make presentations, videos, and other information about the sessions available online in an accessible format before the conference. (See section 2 for more information on making materials accessible.)

6 things to consider when communicating content in advance

- Request that presenters at the conference submit speeches, presentations, videos, or any other information related to their presentation ahead of time.
- Videos provided as preparatory material should include captioning and audio description (see section 2.7).
- Consider providing easy-to-read materials to help people review the themes and content of the conference ahead of time (see section 2.5).
- You may want to provide a glossary or list of acronyms to help people familiarize themselves with the conference content beforehand.
- Making conference materials available in a digital format, whether online or on flash drives/USB drives, will allow people to use their own laptops and any assistive technology they require to follow the presentations.
- As far as possible, try to avoid last minute changes to the programme or venue(s) and, ideally, finalize everything at least one week before the event.



Conference participant looking through conference information

2 Making written and video material accessible

In order to ensure that everyone can fully participate in the conference, it is important that information is provided in a way that can be accessed by all. This includes all written and video materials provided both ahead of and at the conference, including graphics (such as maps and charts), the agenda, lists of speakers, exhibitor information, as well as the information listed in section 1.4 above.

Making written information accessible is particularly important for people with visual impairments, who may use assistive technology such as screen-readers to access written information on computers, and for people with intellectual disabilities, who may require less complex language. Video material can be inaccessible for people with visual or hearing impairments if not properly prepared. Making information accessible will not only support participants with disabilities attending the conference but can also benefit others, such as people whose native language is not the conference language. Below, we outline some accessible formats and things to consider when preparing information for the conference.

2.1 Providing large print versions of printed materials

Providing large print materials can greatly support people with visual impairments to access written information.

3 recommendations for large print materials

- Large print text is considered at least 18pts.
- Use a minimum of 1.5 line spacing for all texts; use double spacing when possible.
- Use a sans serif font and avoid capitals.

2.2 Providing alternative text for images

Pictures and graphics in written documents, such as charts and maps, should have alternative text (a written description of the image). A screen-reader can then also read out this description, and ensure conference participants with visual impairments do not miss information included in the image.

2 tips for adding alternative text

- Alternative text can be added in the picture settings of most word processing software, such as Microsoft.
- For images on a website, most website content management systems, such as WordPress, allow alternative text to be added in the media settings.

2.3 Creating accessible electronic documents

If electronic documents are not properly formatted, it can be difficult for screen-readers to navigate them, meaning the information might be read out in the wrong order or be incomplete.

2 ways to create accessible electronic documents

- Some software, such as Microsoft Office, has an accessibility checker function that flags issues with accessibility within the document and suggests ways to address them.
- PDFs can be particularly difficult for screen readers if not properly prepared, and may require specialist software or having a screen-reader compatible version available as an alternative, such as an accessible HTML or Word version.

2.4 Making information on websites accessible

As well as written documents, it is important that all information communicated via a website is accessible.

3 recommendations for accessible websites

- To make websites, apps, and other digital output accessible to everyone, the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) has set international accessibility standards for web design and content.
- These standards include the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and other resources for designers and developers, as well as information for content writers.
- For more detailed information see: [w3.org/WAI](https://www.w3.org/WAI)



Conference participant scans QR code to access information at the Zero Project Conference.

2.5 Making written materials easy to read

Having written information available in less complex language can support more people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to access the information.

4 tips for offering easy-to-read materials

- Easy-to-read materials (sometimes also referred to as easy language, plain language, or accessible language materials) avoid complex language, are formatted in a specific way, and are sometimes supported by images to aid understanding.
- Inclusion Europe has created standards for easy-to-read information, which you can access here: <https://easy-to-read.eu/european-standards/>.
- You could work with a local specialist organization to make your materials available in an easy-to-read format.
- This format also helps visitors who are not fluent in the conference language, e.g., if all sessions take place in English.

2.6 Using QR codes to provide information in an alternative format

A QR code is a machine-readable code containing data that can be read with a smartphone or tablet if the correct software is downloaded and installed. Usually this data points to a website or an app.

2 reasons to consider using QR codes

- QR codes can be used to convert text to audio for people with visual impairments, using text-to-speech technology or audio files once the code is scanned.
- QR codes can also retrieve information without direct Internet access.

2.7 Creating accessible video content

Video content requires additional features to be provided so that it can be accessed by people with visual and/or hearing impairments. This includes both video content you may be creating for the conference and video content that might be used by presenters.

4 ways to make videos accessible

- Video content should include captions (on-screen text of the dialogue and other audio in the video). Captions can be embedded during video production or can be added where the video is being hosted, such as YouTube or Facebook. If the video does not already have captioning, you should consider live captioning when the video is played at the conference. (See section 4.2 for more information.)
- An audio description is a description of what can be seen on the video, which is very helpful for people with visual impairments as it ensures they do not miss important information on screen that is not contained in the dialogue. Audio description can either be recorded as an audio track for a video or provided live at the conference. (See section 4.4 for more details.)
- If developing video content for the conference, consider including sign language within the video. Alternatively, this can be provided live at the conference (see section 4.3).
- Request that all video content be provided ahead of the conference to give you time to share these with the captioning team, audio describers, graphic facilitators, and sign language interpreters.



Conference participants watch a film screening at the Zero Project Conference with captions and audiodescription

3 Orientation at the conference venue

It is important that all participants are supported to navigate the conference venue independently where possible. There are some key things event organisers can do to support this.

3.1 Creating an accessible registration area

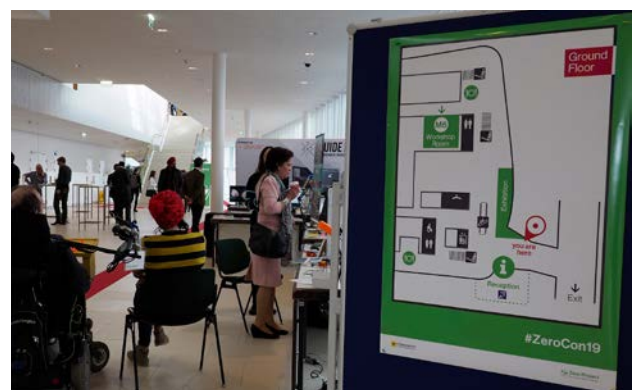
As the registration area is the first contact participants will have with the conference, it is important that this is accessible and welcoming to everyone.

4 criteria for an accessible registration area

- Ensure that the registration area is well lit.
- If there are any tables or counters at the registration area, make sure these are accessible to people in wheelchairs.
- Have printed copies of key information in accessible formats, such as large print or easy-to-read formats, for anyone who requests them (see section 2).
- If there are hearing loops at the venue, or if you are installing them for the conference, ensure the reception area is covered.

3.2 Providing clear signage so people can navigate independent

Having clear signage at multiple points in the venue will help participants to navigate the conference independently. Different areas of the conference, for example catering and exhibition areas, should be clearly marked.



Example of conference signage from the Zero Project Conference

3 things to consider when developing signage

- Clearly sign key conference locations, such as toilets, conference rooms, catering, and exits.
- Use a large black sans serif font and avoid capital letters.
- Pictograms also may support people to navigate through the venue. If there is more than one conference room, a colour coding system for the various rooms may help. However you should bear in mind that some colour combinations might not be suitable for people who are colour-blind.

3.3 Providing tactile flooring at the conference venue

Tactile flooring supports participants with visual impairments who use a white cane to navigate the conference venue. Different textures in the flooring indicate different areas, such as conference rooms, catering areas, and bathrooms.

2 recommendations for tactile flooring

- If tactile flooring is not a permanent feature of the venue, it can be installed by a specialist company for the conference. The conference rooms, exhibition areas, and other key spaces should all be so equipped.
- Remind participants to keep the tactile flooring clear for those who may require it.

Tactile flooring at the
Zero Project Conference

3.4 Offering a sensory break room

At conferences there are often many different activities happening at the same time, often involving large numbers of people and lots of noise, visuals and other stimuli. This can be a challenge, for example for people with hearing impairments, or people with psychosocial disabilities. Having a space where people can get away from the action of the conference can therefore be beneficial.

2 suggestions for designating a sensory break area

- Designate a sensory break area, away from the noise and activity of the conference, available throughout the duration of the conference so people can take a break when needed.
- The sensory break area should be clearly indicated on any conference map and in any information provided about the venue. It should be made clear that this space is to be kept quiet, and not a space for participants to hold meetings.



4 Participatory and inclusive conference sessions

At many conferences, the majority of the content is delivered in presentations, seminars and plenary sessions. This chapter outlines some ways to make these sessions as inclusive as possible.

4.1 Ensuring speeches and presentations are accessible

In addition to the work done ahead of the conference to make the presentations accessible (see section 1.10), more can be done within the individual sessions as well.

4 tips for accessible presentations

- Clearly set speaking time limits and allow enough time for a summary and questions
- Ask speakers to speak clearly and take breaks when speaking. This helps the participants to follow and gives the translators enough time.
- Speakers should use simple language and short sentences, avoiding technical terms and foreign words.

- Ensure presenters cover all the information displayed on the screen and explain graphs or charts so people unable to view or interpret these images can still access the information.

4.2 Captioning speeches

Captioning allows people with hearing impairments to follow spoken words by providing a text version of spoken content, such as speeches, presentations, and videos. Spoken words are converted into subtitles, normally live by an interpreter in real time, and displayed on a screen. Captioning can also be useful for people whose native language is not the conference language.

4 things to remember when arranging captioning

- All videos at the conference should be captioned (see section 2.7).
- For live captioning, you will need a specialist partner in this field, such as a company that does captioning for (live) television broadcasts. Live subtitling is a challenging job, and usually requires two people: one to transcribe as the speaker is talking, and one to check the text. Some captioning teams work remotely via video link, and thus do not need to be physically present at the venue.
- Check with your technical team at the venue



Speaker at the Zero Project Conference with large screen behind him showing live captioning

that there is the correct interface to broadcast the captions on screen. Ensure that the captioning is positioned on screen in a way that everyone in the room can view it. The recommended type is white text on a dark background.

- Preparation is essential, and this time should be budgeted into the total cost of the captioning. You should provide the captioning team with as much content information as possible prior to the conference so as to help them prepare, including any technical terms, names of speakers and organizations, etc., that they should be aware of. This will improve the quality of the captioning.

4.3 Providing sign language interpretation

Much of the information conveyed at conferences is through speech or other audio formats (presentations, keynotes, videos), which can make it difficult for people with hearing impairments to fully participate. There is not one universal sign language, and some countries even have more than one sign language or dialect. If you are hosting an international conference, you might consider offering International Sign (IS).

6 tips for organising sign language interpretation at your event

- Decide which sign language(s) to have available at the conference, based on sign language requirements that are given in the registration form.
- You should consider making qualified sign language interpreters available throughout the conference, including at networking events. Sign language interpreters work in teams so that they can alternate and take breaks in longer sessions, which you may want to consider in terms of scheduling. You may require



Sign language interpreter at the Zero Project Conference

more than one team to cover your event.

- If you are using cameras and screens during the conference, the sign language interpreter should also be visible in a corner of the screen. In addition, consider reserving seats in conference rooms so that people who require sign language can see the interpreter clearly.
- Provide as much information about content to the sign language teams ahead of the conference to help them prepare, and budget for this preparation time. It is also helpful to hire interpreters who have experience in the theme of the conference.
- Talk to the sign language team(s) about any other requirements they have, such as back-drop or lighting, and share these with the technical team at the venue.
- Be aware that the availability of qualified sign language interpreters (and captioning providers) may be limited, and their costs may be a substantial part of your overall conference budget. Plan and book them as early as possible. You could also approach a local organization working with people with hearing impairments for recommendations and/or support.



Man listens to audio description through headphones at the Zero Project Conference

4.4 Audio describing video content

Audio description is an additional audio commentary for video (or other visual media) that describes what can be seen on screen. This ensures that people with visual impairments do not miss out on relevant information or action.

3 recommendations for providing audio description

- Consider providing audio description for video and other media shown at the conference. This can be done either live, or pre-recorded and integrated into an existing video file.
- It is important to work with an organization that is knowledgeable about audio description so it can be done effectively and that the audio description track does not clash with any dialogue in the video, making it difficult to understand. A local organization working with people with visual impairments might be able to provide you with guidance in this area.
- Videos to be played at the event should be shared with the person or team doing the audio description in good time, so they can prepare a script for live audio description or pre-record the track.

4.5 Using graphic facilitation to convey information in an alternative format

Graphic facilitation provides a visual representation of the presentation content and provides an alternative way for people to understand the information. Drawings can accompany a presentation or support an oral summary given by the graphic facilitator at the end of the presentation. Having this visual and oral summary to reinforce the key points of the presentation may be useful for all participants, including people with intellectual disabilities or hearing impairments.

3 suggestions when offering graphic facilitation

- Graphical facilitation needs good preparation. Send the graphic facilitator the speeches, presentations, and videos as far ahead of the event as possible.
- During the sessions the graphic facilitator should be at the front of the room and there should be time in the agenda for him/her to summarize the graphics after each speaker or at the end of the session.
- Consider showing the drawings live on screen at the conference and making them available online after the conference as summaries of the sessions (with alternative text).



Graphic facilitator at the Zero Project Conference



Complete graphic summary of one of the sessions at the Zero Project Conference

4.6 Making audio induction loops available

Hearing loops or audio induction loops are systems that transmit and receive communication signals to allow people using hearing aids or people with cochlear implants to hear more clearly. By transmitting the sound directly to the hearing aid, they amplify the sound and cut out background noise and interference. This can support people with hearing impairments in both one-on-one communication and in larger meetings.

2 ways to provide audio induction loops at your event

- If the conference rooms are not already equipped with hearing loops, mobile hearing loops can be rented and installed separately. These can only transmit sound over a limited area, so seek advice on how many you will need to cover your conference spaces, including reception desks, catering areas, and other key locations.
- You could also consider renting personal hearing loops and making these available on request.

4.7 Providing a live web stream to increase remote access

A live web stream of sessions online can increase participation in a conference by enabling people who are not able to attend in person to view it remotely.

3 tips for providing a live webstream

- Talk to your technical team or the team at the venue to see if a web stream is possible and what the requirements might be.
- Where possible, the web stream should include sign language and captioning.
- The livestream could also be recorded and made available after the conference, either in full or as separate sessions.

5 Communication after the conference

Accessibility does not end once the conference is over. If you are communicating with participants after the conference, for example making presentations available or asking for feedback, it is important that this is also accessible.

5.1 Making materials available after the conference

Many event organizers make presentations, documents, videos, and other materials available after the event, usually online. This can be an important resource for participants who could not attend all the sessions, as well as people unable to attend the event. If you are sharing materials after the conference, it is important that these are accessible to everyone.

2 things to consider when making materials available

- Ensure that any video content shared after the conference has sign language, captioning, and audio description (see section 2.7).
- Make any written materials and documents available in accessible digital formats (see section 2).

5.2 Collecting feedback on the conference

Collecting feedback from participants after the conference, whether a general evaluation or looking specifically at accessibility, will help you in planning future events. It is important to ensure that everyone can take part in this feedback process so that you get a full picture of how well people were able to access the conference.

2 tips for collecting feedback

- Ensure whatever feedback mechanism you use is available in different formats, such as easy-to-read language and large print. If there is an online survey, make sure paper copies are also available at the conference for those who request them.
- You can read more about making written materials accessible in section 2.

Participants in one of the catering areas at the Zero Project Conference



Appendix 1: Useful resources

These are some of the resources that the Zero Project team has come across while developing these guidelines. Please let us know about any additional resources at office@zeroproject.org.

ACM SIGACCESS (Special Interest Group on Accessible Computing) Accessible Conference Guide

ACM SIGACCESS (Special Interest Group on Accessible Computing) supports the international community of researchers and professionals applying computing and information technologies to empower individuals with disabilities and older adults. Their “Accessible Conference Guide” available at: www.sigaccess.org/welcome-to-sigaccess/resources/accessible-conference-guide/

Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (AAATE)

The AAATE is an interdisciplinary non-profit organization devoted to all aspects of assistive technology. Over 250 members from all over Europe and throughout the world currently take part in the AAATE. Visit their website at <https://aaate.net/>

Association of University Disability Centers Presenter Guidelines: Accessibility & Inclusion

The Association of University Disability Centers has developed guidelines for presenters on accessible presentations, including a 60 minute webinar. This can be accessed at <https://www.aucd.org/conference/template/page.cfm?id=50200>

European Disability Forum Guide for Accessible Meetings

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an

independent NGO that represents the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. It has published a guide to accessible meetings for all, available at: <http://www.edf-feph.org/accessible-meetings>

Inclusion Europe’s standards for making information easy-to-read and understand

Inclusion Europe is the European organisation representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families. They have developed guidelines on making written information easy-to-read and understand. These are available at <https://easy-to-read.eu/european-standards/>

ISO Guide for addressing accessibility in standards

ISO is the International Organization for Standardization. They develop and publish International Standards and have developed guidelines on addressing accessibility requirements in standards. These are available at <https://www.iso.org/standard/57385.html>.

Room Chooser

Room Chooser is an Austrian website providing detailed information on accessible hotel rooms in Austria at <https://roomchooser.com/en>.

Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)

The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) develops standards and support materials to help people understand and implement web accessibility. Visit resources at <https://www.w3.org/WAI/>.

Appendix 2:

Accessibility features at the Zero Project Conference 2019

As mentioned in section 1.4, it is important to provide information about accessibility ahead of the conference so that people know what is available. The Zero Project team created this list and a more detailed user guide to communicate the accessibility measures at the Conference.

Based on the measures implemented in previous years, on the recommendations from Escola de Gente, and on the focus on supporting the participation of people with intellectual disabilities, 30 accessibility measures were identified and implemented at the Zero Project Conference this year. You can also find this list on the Zero Project Conference 2019 webpage.

Before the Zero Project Conference

1. Information on the accessibility of hotels and hotel rooms was provided on the Conference website to help people plan their trip.
2. Information on accessible public transfers and taxis was provided on the Conference website, including booking information.
3. Participants could contact the Zero Project team for support in finding accessible rooms or transfers.
4. Participants with limited mobility could request a transfer between the airport and their hotel, and returning to the airport, free of charge.
5. An Accessibility User Guide was developed to provide information about the Confer-

ence accessibility features in advance, and was made available online and as an accessible download (new for 2019).

6. A video with International Sign and captioning gave an overview of the Conference accessibility features (new for 2019).
7. For the first time, an 'Easy to read Guide to the Conference' was produced, including easy to read translations (Level A2 English) of key information (new for 2019).
8. Zero Project staff and volunteers who would be working at UN Headquarters received preparatory briefings to support participants.
9. Throughout the planning process, awareness-raising was carried out with UN security and staff members about accessibility within the UN building.
10. The 2019 Zero Project Report on Independent Living and Political Participation was available as an accessible PDF.

During the Zero Project Conference

11. The accessibility features available in each programme session were marked on the agenda and in the Conference app.

12. Zero Project team members and student volunteers were available to offer additional support to individual participants.
 13. The Zero Project Conference agenda was available as an accessible PDF (new for 2019).
 14. A large print version of the Conference agenda was available at the registration desk (new for 2019).
 15. Speech codes were available to provide information on the agenda and accessible restrooms in an audio format.
 16. Tactile flooring was placed throughout the venue to aid navigation to key areas.
 17. Large print signs and floor plans were placed throughout the venue to support navigation.
 18. All sessions in all three conference rooms had captioning in English.
 19. International Sign interpreters were available in all sessions in the main conference room, and for other sessions on request.
 20. Individual headsets in each conference room offered amplification of speakers on stage.
 21. Portable induction loops were available from the registration desk.
 22. Instructions on creating an accessible presentation were sent to all presenters, and dedicated Zero Project team members reviewed presentations.
 23. Audio descriptions were available for all videos submitted to the Zero Project team ahead of the Conference (new for 2019).
 24. Presenters were requested to include captioning in English for all videos shown during presentations.
 25. All sessions in the main conference room could be viewed remotely via a live web-stream, with International Sign and captioning.
 26. The Zero Project worked with expert partners to trial participatory formats in a number of sessions (new for 2019).
 27. Preparatory materials were available for these participatory sessions, including videos with captioning and audio, as well as in an easy to read version (new for 2019).
 28. Graphic facilitation was available in a number of sessions to provide visual summaries of presentations.
- ## After the Zero Project Conference
29. Accessibility of the Conference was evaluated through feedback from delegates and partners.
 30. Prior to summer 2019, the Zero Project team committed to publishing a paper on accessibility and conference planning.

Appendix 3:

Preparing your PowerPoint Presentation for the Conference

As mentioned in Section 1.11 of these guidelines, these are the instructions the Zero Project team sends to speakers to help them prepare their presentation. This is not an exhaustive list, and all recommendations might not be relevant to all events, but it may be useful to other organisations planning to brief speakers ahead of their event.

Presentation length and number of slides

You will have exactly 9 minutes to present. If you are presenting jointly with another person/organisation you will share the 9 minutes. We suggest a maximum of 10 Powerpoint-Slides including the cover page, all in English language.

The focus of your presentation

Your presentation should focus on (and we also suggest in this order):

- Short background of your organization and project
- The essence of your project
- The innovative aspect
- The impact created
- The success factors, details, examples, anecdotes, “life stories”
- Financing, sustainability, challenges
- The next steps for the project

What you should avoid:

- History of your organization (only when essential to the project)
- General problems related to inaccessibility (The audience know about disability-related problems)
- General statements (about the importance of advocacy, of justice, of human rights etc.)

Use the ‘Notes’ function

Please use the ‘Notes’ function of PowerPoint on every slide. Please write one or two sentences summarizing the content and/or images of each slide. This sentence is used for audio-translation, subtitling and for accessible YouTube videos of the presentation. There is a maximum of 50 words per page! Please do not exceed it.

Use our template

Please use the PowerPoint template that is attached to this email for the cover-page. There is also an example how to draft the notes per page.

Accessibility requirements

To ensure the accessibility of presentations, we require:

- White backgrounds with black text
- Font-sizes of 24pts. or bigger
- Videos with captions (see below)
- Images (photos, graphics etc.) with alternative text

We also recommend:

- A simple structure
- Using PowerPoint's Accessibility Checker

How to use videos

Videos can only be played if they adhere to strict accessibility requirements:

- They must include subtitles in English
- They must be sent to us beforehand – We will arrange for audio description

If you want to show a video, please be aware this comes out of your 9-minute slot. They must be embedded in your presentation.

Other useful information

Session Format: You will be on a podium with a clicker to control the presentation and you will see the presentation on a monitor in front of you.

There will not be a possibility to provide presentations on USB on the day of the Conference.

Support: Our team members are here to support you in drafting and finalizing your presentation. Please contact us with any question you might have.

**For a world
without barriers.**



Conference Accessibility Guidelines at a Glance

CHAPTER 1

Preparing for the conference

PAGE 7

CHAPTER 2

Making written and video material accessible

PAGE 13

CHAPTER 3

Orientation at the conference venue

PAGE 16

CHAPTER 4

Participatory & inclusive conference sessions

PAGE 18

CHAPTER 5

Communication after the Conference

PAGE 22

APPENDIX

Useful Resources

PAGE 23