

Accessibility of cultural events and communication

Checklist
Equal Oulu2026 -project

This file is part of the Equal Oulu2026 project's **Guide to Promoting Diversity in Cultural Services**. You can access the full guide at <https://www.ouka.fi/en/guide-promoting-diversity-cultural-services>



Introduction

Accessible cultural services take into account the different needs and individual ways of acting and doing of different people. This way, participants can choose which services to use. Information is easily available, and everyone has the opportunity to access information to participate as creators or participants.

Participation is enjoyable when customer service is equal, and the service approach is open to diverse customers and audiences.

Accessibility should be considered when planning events and communications. Good planning involves assessing the current situation, defining objectives, selecting concrete measures, deciding on the responsible persons and the timetable for implementation, and allocating the necessary resources in the budget. This ensures that the plan is not just a plan but can be implemented.

To be considered in the budget

- ✓ accessibility assessment and user testing of online services
- ✓ accessibility information in communication
- ✓ accessibility mapping
- ✓ accessibility upgrades to premises, including staff facilities
- ✓ compensation for experience experts
- ✓ interpretation: sign language, print interpretation, audio description, interlingual interpretation
- ✓ investments such as induction loops, portable ramps
- ✓ necessary assistive devices
- ✓ staff training
- ✓ subtitles for performances
- ✓ subtitling of recordings and videos
- ✓ the equality plan and its measures
- ✓ translations (language versions, plain language)

Social accessibility 1/3

- Culture is more socially accessible when social barriers to participation are actively lowered.
- Examples of working towards social accessibility include autism-friendly guidelines that open up the service path to anyone who needs more detailed information in advance about the event or service (e.g., a social story).
- Culture Buddies are a way to support participation in events. For many people, going to a cultural event alone can be difficult. A volunteer culture buddy can accompany a person to the event, book tickets, assist them to the venue and share the experience.

Social accessibility 2/3

Examples of Culture Buddy activities

- [Kulttuuripassi – Suomussalmi \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Kulttuurikaveri – Nivala \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Kulttuurikummi – Oulu \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Kulttuurikaveri – Oulainen \(in Finnish\)](#)

Social accessibility 3/3

Social barriers can also be tackled by taking these into account:

- ✓ getting information about the service in a way and language that suits the user
- ✓ staff have the skills to meet people's different needs
- ✓ diversity in terms of cultural content provided
- ✓ mobility is supported both on-site and in terms of distances
- ✓ provision of childcare

Financial accessibility

The following measures help ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate, regardless of their wealth.

- tiered pricing for different user groups
- free admission for an assistant or interpreter of a person with disabilities
- the possibility of using the [Kaikukortti Card](#)
- free event or free admission days
- communicating that people are welcome as they are

Physical accessibility, or accessibility of the built environment

In an accessible built environment, it is easy to hear, see, move, perceive space and find what you are looking for. Accessibility serves all spaces, services and user groups. You can start with small improvements. Even in protected buildings and sites, solutions can be found.

Sometimes services that are considered accessible are not accessible at all. An event or service can be made more equal, for example by carrying out an accessibility assessment or an accessibility survey. An accessibility tour can also be carried out with an expert by experience.

Promote accessibility with:

- ✓ accessibility aids to be borrowed
- ✓ accessibility information
- ✓ accessible parking spaces
- ✓ accessible service points
- ✓ accessible toilets
- ✓ adequate, non-dazzling lighting
- ✓ barrier-free entrance and access to indoor areas
- ✓ clear and adequate signage
- ✓ coat racks also at low level
- ✓ gender-neutral toilets
- ✓ good acoustics
- ✓ handrails on stairs
- ✓ induction loop and audibility map
- ✓ quiet space or rest room
- ✓ raised grandstands for open-air events
- ✓ ramps for crossing thresholds
- ✓ rest areas
- ✓ sound beacon
- ✓ tactile signage, relief map
- ✓ the layout of the exhibition texts and the arrangement of the works
- ✓ wheelchair spaces in different places in the auditorium or grandstand

Remember also the facilities for performers and staff!

Possibilities to use different senses

Cultural services that take into account different disabilities or impairments can be provided by

- tactile copies in collections of objects of daily use
- specially commissioned copies
- tactile tours
- captioning, in-language subtitling
- subtitling as an artistic solution
- induction loop
- sign language content
- interpretation to sign language

It is recommended to ask native speakers of sign language to be the creators of sign language content.

Supporting understanding

Understanding is supported by having many levels of information available. This means general and in-depth information.

- use clear, general language
- provide information in plain language
- answer the questions what, who, where, when, why
- provide opportunities to learn in different ways: listening, watching, experimenting

Regional accessibility

Distances are a barrier to participation for many. Therefore

- take your event or activity on tour
- go where the people are
- hold pop-up events in different locations and outside your own premises
- bring the public to you
- enable remote participation

Accessibility of communication - checklist

Accessibility of communication - checklist

To ensure that everyone's cultural rights are realized, we want to reach the people who are missing out. In this way, we support everyone's ability to participate. A clear layout, clear language, language options, targeted communication and information on accessibility all contribute to successful communication.

Clear layout - accessible graphic design

- clear and simple layout
- large enough font size
- clear, familiar and plain typeface
- alignment of the text to the left
- sufficient darkness contrast between text and background
- no text on top of an image
- information is not conveyed only in colour

Clear language

- Prefer the active form and direct word order
- Avoid or explain difficult words
- Use the most common inflections
- Include only one important thing in a sentence
- Prefer simple sentence structure
- Structure the text and use subheadings
- Support your message with images
- Learn the principles of plain/simple language
- Provide information in different languages
- Have the text read by someone who is not familiar with the topic
- Read your own text out loud to reveal the difficult parts
- You can also order your text in plain language from elsewhere

Targeting communication

- Communicate in multiple channels
- Communicate with minority groups
- Consider diversity in illustrations
- Review and complete mailing lists to cover minority groups
- Plan and test communication with target group

Information about accessibility

Information about accessibility of events supports participation. With this information, it is possible to assess whether and how participation is possible.

- Create an accessibility section on the website
- Explain in words and illustrate with symbols or pictures
- Explore accessibility criteria
- Include the details of a contact person to ask for more information
- Describe the service, activity or facility, not the users or participants

Accessibility of web services 1/2

It is useful to include the accessibility of an online service from the design stage.

- Design a coherent and logical service
- Include accessibility and usability requirements in calls for tenders and contracts
- Have an expert assess the accessibility of the service
- Website accessibility test User testing is also a good way to ensure accessibility

Accessibility of web services 2/2

An online service must be discoverable, understandable and reliable.

- adequate darkness contrasts
- all functions must be accessible from the keyboard
- all similar functions are marked in the same way
- the web service must work with different assistive technologies

A checklist for updating your website

- Mark the headings as headings and define their hierarchy correctly.
- Mark lists as lists.
- Link clearly: tell where the link goes.
- Label images with alt texts, i.e., alternative texts
 - Alt text concisely describes the relevant content of the image, it is not a caption
- Use subtitles or closed captioning in videos.
- Avoid attachments. Provide an HTML webpage rather than a PDF file.
- Ask for feedback on the website
- Train and familiarize new employees

Accessibility on social media

- Write an alternative text for the image, i.e., describe the image briefly
- Note diversity in images
- Text and describe videos
- Add #tags at the end of the text
- Use emojis in moderation
- If the hashtag consists of several words, start a new word with a capital letter: for example #ArtBelongsToEveryone (but closed compound words with a lowercase letter: #teamwork)
- Remember other accessibility basics: share accessibility information on Facebook events, for example, remember the different language options and use clear language.

In a story:

- Ensure good contrast between text and background
- Subtitle the speech
- The most accessible story is a video where the same thing is in speech/sound and text.

Accessibility on social media

Words construct reality and are part of exercising power

- How do you address and name people or things?
- What words are chosen?

Familiarize yourself with the vocabularies made by experts

- Study the communication of relevant organizations, e.g., disability organizations
- You can also ask the organizations or the person themselves

Accessibility on social media

Remember the person:

- Let's not reduce a person to a single characteristic
- "Visually impaired" vs "visually impaired people/individuals/artists".
- "Poor" or "poor people" vs. "people experiencing poverty"

What kind of images do the expressions create?

- For example, who is the expert, actor or the one exercising power? Who is the subject of power or action?

Accessibility and equality are often quite specific issues

- Explain what is meant by a term in this particular context
- Details can be important: don't bypass things with high-level expressions

More information and useful sources

- [Requirements of the Act on the Provision of Digital Services](#)
- [Accessibility guides, Culture for All -service](#)
- [The Finnish Centre for Easy Language](#)

Thank you!

This document is based on materials from the [Culture for All](#) –service.

