

Checklist

For arranging accessible conferences



HANDISAM

Swedish Agency for Disability
Policy Coordination

Title: Checklist for arranging accessible conferences
Handisam, Swedish Agency for Disability Policy Coordination
Handisam Series: A 2009:2
ISBN number: 978-91-976601-6-7

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At accessible conferences everyone can participate and contribute, irrespective of their level of disability

One person in five living in Sweden has some form of disability. The disability can take the form of, for instance, reduced mobility, reading and writing difficulties, impaired sight, impaired hearing or disabilities resulting from psychological ill-health.

When arranging a conference there is much which can be done to ensure that everyone can participate and contribute. Among other things, this means choosing conference premises that are accessible and which can be used by people who use wheelchairs.

It is also important to avoid strongly-smelling flowers or perfumes which can cause allergic reactions. Speakers too need to be informed of the importance of describing pictures and reading texts during Power-Point presentations.

Advice and tips can be found on the following pages on:

- Choosing conference premises Page 4
- Writing conference invitations Page 6
- Planning conference programmes Page 7
- Other points to think about Page 8

Further information regarding words in the text marked with **bold type** can be found on page 9.

Choosing conference premises

The entrance

A good starting-point is that all the participants shall be able to enter the conference premises through the same entrance.

- There is a place within 25 metres of the entrance where vehicles transporting disabled people and taxis can stop.
- There are reserved parking bays within 25 metres of the entrance for disabled people.
- The footpath** to the entrance is passable for people using wheelchairs.
- Possible steps up to the entrance are complemented with a suitable **ramp**.
- The entrance door has a free **passageway** of at least 80 centimetres.
- The door opening does not have a threshold – or the threshold is no more than 25 millimetres high and inclined.
- The door is equipped with an **automatic door opener**.
- The designated smoking area (if there is one) is at least 15 metres from the entrance.

Indoors

All of the participants and speakers must be able to make their way to all of the facilities to be used during the conference, for instance, group rooms, restaurants and toilets.

- Participants can make their way through the premises without using stairs or steps.
- Lifts (if there are any) are at least 1,1 x 1,4 metres. The lift door is placed on the short side.
- The area in front of the lift is at least 1,5 x 1,5 metres.
- Doors which have to be passed through have a free **passageway** of at least 80 centimetres.
- The doors have **automatic door openers**.
- The doors have no thresholds. Possible thresholds are no more than 25 millimetres high and inclined.
- There are **toilets** which can also be used by people in electric wheelchairs.
- The soap in the toilets is unperfumed.

- Large **glass surfaces** are clearly marked.
- Stairs** are marked so that they can be seen by people with impaired sight.
- All stairs have handrails.

Conference rooms

Everyone must be able to address an audience and participate as a member of the audience. Make sure that there is uniform lighting which does not dazzle and that the room is suitable for people with asthma, allergies or other types of hypersensitivity.

- The **podium** can be easily reached by people using wheelchairs.
- People with disabilities can use the **conference equipment**.
- There is a **listening loop** or **IR system** which works both in the conference room and on the podium.
- There are **portable microphones**.
- There are **places for participants who use wheelchairs**.
- The premises do not have wall-to-wall carpeting, are free from scented, flowering plants and other things that can cause allergies or create problems to people with hypersensitivity.
- Speakers and possible sign language interpreters can be **spotlighted** – if the lights have to be turned off during a film screening, for instance.

Group rooms

Accessibility to group rooms shall be as good as it is for the conference centre as a whole.

- There are **audio systems** to enable people with hearing impairments to participate – or such equipment is readily available if needed.
- The group rooms are **furnished** in a way which enables people using wheelchairs to participate.

Hotel rooms

When overnight accommodation is required at a conference a good starting point is that all participants can stay at the same hotel.

- There are hotel rooms which are accessible for people with disabilities.

Writing conference invitations

An accessibility perspective should be an integral part of meeting and conference planning. It is also important to make plans in good time.

- The invitation asks participants if they need a sign language interpreter, audio description or audio equipment.
- The invitation asks the participants if they have any special dietary needs.
- The invitation asks the participants if they need the conference documentation in another format, such as, in digital form on a USB or easily-read Swedish.
- The invitation informs the participants that they should avoid perfume and other scented products.
- The invitation contains detailed travelling instructions on how to get to the conference centre.

Planning conference programmes

Accessibility is affected by how a conference is arranged. Breaks between programme activities are important because the audience and interpreters can need a rest.

- The programme is arranged with breaks at suitable times, the standard time being about every 45 minutes.

Other points to think about

It is also important to involve the speakers and that they know the demands placed on them so that all participants will benefit equally from the conference.

- The speakers are informed about the importance of holding the **programme times**.
- The speakers are informed about the importance of speaking into the microphone, speaking clearly, describing all pictures and reading the words on their **Power-Point presentations**.
- The conference participants are informed about the contents of the **food and drink** – and alternatives are available.
- The speakers are informed that perfume and after-shave should not be used.
- The conference participants will be given information in an alternative format when other documentation is being distributed – if it has been requested in the registration form.
- Interpreters** are available if necessary.
- Whenever a written manuscript exists, it is made available to the interpreter in advance.

Explanations and further information

Audio systems. These include systems such as induction loop listening systems, FM systems and IR systems.

Automatic door openers. Automatic door openers shall be in use if doors are heavy or have door closers. If doors are not equipped with automatic door openers, staff to open the doors are needed.

Conference equipment. If disabled people are to use the equipment, this means, for instance, that it must be within the reach of people who use wheelchairs. Preferably, the rostrum can be raised or lowered.

Portable microphones. Portable microphones are needed so that people with impaired hearing can hear comments made by members of the audience.

Food and drink. If food and drink is to be served, it is important that participants have an opportunity, in advance, to request an alternative if needed. Conference participants should know at mealtimes exactly what their food contains.

Footpath. For a footpath to be accessible for people who use wheelchairs it must be hard, without edges or other irregularities, without steps and steep slopes. A maximum gradient of 1:12 (for max. 6 metres) can be accepted, but a gradient should be max 1:20.

Furnishing. There should be enough room to enable a person using a wheelchair to swing in and sit closely to the table. This means a free area of about 1,5 x 1,5 metres. Under the table there should be a free height of 68 centimetres, a width of 80 centimetres and a depth of about 60 centimetres.

Glass surfaces. It is important to mark large glass surfaces which could otherwise be mistaken for openings and where there is a risk that people might walk into them. The markings should be made at two levels.

Induction loops and IR systems. Induction loops and IR systems make it possible to wirelessly transmit sound from, for example, a microphone to a hearing aid. Induction loops involve placing a thin cable around those people who shall communicate. An IR system transmits sound from microphones to hearing aids with the help of infra-red light. It is important that the equipment is checked regularly.

Interpreting. Oral presentations and recorded information presented orally need to be interpreted by sign language interpreters. Films need to be interpreted by audio description and sign language interpreters if they do not have subtitles.

Passageways. Passageways should ideally be at least a few centimetres wider than 80 centimetres. The correct measurement is taken when the door is open 90 degrees. A rotating door must be complemented with a normal door which is not kept locked.

Places for participants who use wheelchairs. These places shall have the same equipment as other places. Participants should be able to sit with the person(s) they came to the conference with.

Podium. People who use wheelchairs shall be able to be speakers and give talks, and be able to sit as members of panels. If the podium is raised, a ramp or lift device will be needed. No one should need to take a long detour to get up onto the podium.

Power-Point presentations. It is necessary to describe the pictures and read the words on Power-Point presentations if everyone is to have the same opportunity to understand the presentation.

Programme times. Arrangers should make sure that programme times are held. This is most important since many disabled people need to plan their transport arrangements to and from the event and also because medication is often linked to food.

Ramp. The ramp must not be too steep or too long. The gradient should not exceed 1:12. This means that a ramp which is 6 metres long should have a height difference no greater than 50 centimetres. With greater height differences, the ramp shall be divided up into shorter ramp sections with intermediary resting levels. In front of the door there shall be a level, hard surface with enough room for a wheelchair when the door is opened.

Spotlighting. It is important that deaf people can see the sign language interpreter and the speaker when the lights are off.

Stairs. The first and last steps on stairs shall be marked in a colour which contrasts in lightness with the surrounding floor.

Toilets. The area of a toilet must be at least 2,2 x 2,2 metres if it is to be used by a person using an electric wheelchair – with 90 centimetres of free space on both sides of the toilet seat.

The 'Checklist for arranging accessible conferences' is produced by Handisam.

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