



Disability Inclusion Task Team



# Hosting Accessible Online Meetings

## Rationale

Persons with disabilities are the largest minority group in the world, representing an estimated 16 percent of the world's population, or approximately 1.3 billion people. About 80 percent are of working age. They are a diverse, heterogeneous population that face discrimination and barriers that makes it more challenging for them to access equal opportunities.

Mainstreaming disability inclusion means a consistent and systematic approach to disability inclusion in all areas of operations and programming. With the increased use of hybrid or online meetings, the accessibility of persons with disabilities to online meetings is something that should be ensured. For this reason, this checklist has been prepared to easily guide accessibility and disability inclusion efforts in our daily work. This checklist provides a guidance regarding steps on how to organize accessible online meetings.

## Key terminology and definitions

**Accessibility:** The degree to which both the built environment and information can be used or accessed by as wide a group of people as possible. Accessibility is a precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. Without access to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication, including

information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, persons with disabilities would not have equal opportunities for participation in their respective societies<sup>1</sup>.

**Assistive technology:** Any information and communications technology, product, device, equipment, and related service used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with specific needs or disabilities<sup>2</sup>.

**Inclusive Design:** Design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference<sup>3</sup>.

**Persons with disabilities:** Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others<sup>4</sup>.

**Reasonable accommodation:** Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> General Comment No. 2 - Article 9: Accessibility.

<sup>2</sup> ICT & Digital Accessibility for the BOS, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> [What is inclusive design?](#), Inclusive Design Research Center, OCAD University.

<sup>4</sup> CRPD, Article 1 – Purpose.

<sup>5</sup> CRPD, Article 2 – Definitions.



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**Universal design:** The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design<sup>6</sup>.

## Standards and Actions Around Implementing Each Thematic Issue

### Steps to Follow Regarding Invitation and Registration

- ✓ If event registration is required, make sure to check the accessibility of registration form before sharing.
- ✓ Make sure to check the accessibility of agenda before sharing.
- ✓ Consult with persons with diverse disabilities on the topics and their role during the event
- ✓ Include in the registration form which accessibility services will be provided by a meeting organizer regardless of individual requests and which services and accommodation could be provided responding to individual requests.
- ✓ Ask persons with disabilities on the preferred platform.
- ✓ Ask if Sign Language Interpretation is required.

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<sup>6</sup> CRPD, Article 2 – Definitions.



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Ask if any accessibility arrangements are required in advance.

## Steps to Follow Before Organizing an Online Meeting

- ✓ Secure sufficient time to prepare for the event.
- ✓ If possible, send the meeting presentation in advance to the meeting attendees.
- ✓ Make sure form fields, links, and buttons are textually and correctly labeled.
- ✓ Do not use color coding as the only method of content or error identification in your registration form.
- ✓ Ensure to choose a self-explanatory event name as this is what will be displayed or read by screen readers.
- ✓ If using an interactive sharing platform (slideo, Nero, ETC) always provide an alternative method of interaction to screen reader users as these might not be very accessible.
- ✓ Assign an accessibility or reasonable accommodation focal person to address accessibility-related issues and to assist with procuring reasonable accommodations in advance. (Sign language interpreters and professional captioners).
- ✓ Allocate resources to cover reasonable accommodation requests. For example International Sign Language interpretation can cost USD 600 per day per person, and 2 to 3



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interpreters might be needed depending on the length of the meeting.

- ✓ Contact the presenters to make sure how they would like to be introduced. (Using the appropriate pronouns).
- ✓ Start your online meetings a few minutes in advance to give time for attendees to adjust their assistive technology and ask any questions before the meeting starts.
- ✓ Sign Language Interpretation should be considered from the beginning as it has an impact on the participation of persons with hearing disabilities.
- ✓ Add sign language in the official national language of the country or the language of the main target audience of the video (for example, if the video is targeting Syrian refugee in Türkiye, then sign language interpretation should be in Arabic sign language).
- ✓ Translate (if needed), share the script and agenda with the sign language interpreter's in advance to get familiar with the content.

### **What to do while organizing MS Teams Meeting? (Checklist for Organizers)**

- ✓ Turn on recording and transcription.
- ✓ Turn on live captions.



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- ✓ Mute notifications.
- ✓ Turn together mode on.
- ✓ Spotlight the speakers and sign language interpreters, if present (Organizer or a presenter can choose up to seven people's video feeds (including their own) to highlight for everyone else).
- ✓ Enable the "fit to frame" option for sign language interpreters.
- ✓ Announce accessibility options with the housekeeping tips at the start of the meeting.
- ✓ Set and identify a fixed mechanism for participants to comment or answer questions.
- ✓ Inform participants to blur their background or choose a unified background for all the attendees, with a dark mode or high contrast turned on.

### **What to do while attending an MS Teams? (Checklist for attendees)**

- ✓ Turn off your video.
- ✓ Pin participants video.
- ✓ Mute notifications.



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- ✓ Turn off incoming video.
- ✓ If your video is on, blur the background.
- ✓ When answering a question or commenting, always say your name if it was not said by the presenter, and always end your speech with “over to...” followed by the presenter’s name.

### **What to do while presenting an MS Teams Meeting? (Checklist for presenters)**

- ✓ Provide verbal descriptions for visual content.
- ✓ Slow down your pace when speaking to give time for sign language interpreters to translate.
- ✓ Read aloud any chat messages or comments for attendees or in the Q-and-A box.
- ✓ Describe yourself and your surroundings if possible.
- ✓ Sit directly facing the camera with your face clearly illuminated and a light source coming from in front of you.

### **What to do while organizing Zoom Cloud Meetings?**

- ✓ Enable automatic live captions or enable the closed captions features.
- ✓ Third-party captioning using REST API.



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- ✓ Spotlight sign language interpreters.
- ✓ Manually create breakout rooms to ensure the sign language interpreters are in the same breakout room as persons who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- ✓ Slow down your pace when speaking.
- ✓ Enable "always show meeting controls."
- ✓ Enable "mute participants upon enter."
- ✓ Send the Zoom keyboard shortcuts to users ahead of the meeting.
- ✓ Describe verbally any displayed visual content.
- ✓ Provide instructions on how participants can ask questions.
- ✓ Send any comments, links, or resources posted in the chat by email as well.
- ✓ Limit the use of the zoom polling feature.
- ✓ Read aloud annotations.
- ✓ Ensure to record the session and share the recording by email afterward.





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- ✓ Directly face the camera with your face and lips well-lit and clearly visible.

## Steps to Follow After an Online Meeting

- ✓ Make sure all follow-up emails, resources and websites are accessible.
- ✓ Provide follow-up contact information for attendees.
- ✓ Provide any notes, slides, or materials distributed at the meeting in digital form to attendees.
- ✓ Survey attendees about their experience. Record any feedback on accessibility problems.

## Useful resources, links, and guidance on disability inclusion

- [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy - Putting Words into Action, UNSSC Blueline Course \(only available for UN staff\)](#)
- [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [UN Training Package on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines](#)

## Useful resources, links, guidance on accessible online meetings



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- [ESCAP Internal Guideline on Accessible Conferences and Meetings](#)