



Opening Heritage and Archeological Sites for People with Special Needs

Accessibility – guidebook for beginners

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Chapter 1

How to train people working in cultural institutions?

‘It all starts with the people’

In details, things can be a bit different. In general, things should be as equal as possible. A visually impaired visitor has the right to visit any museum or art gallery on an equal footing with a person without disability.

This statement does not merely belong to the realm of dreams. It is a recapitulation of the international law that advocates for the needs of people with disabilities; it is a loose and incomplete paraphrase of Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention sets out the path but, of course, does not specify how to pursue it. This is the task for those working at each cultural institution: it is they who know best what barriers they have to overcome to make their museum or art gallery as accessible as possible.

Each impairment forces them to face different challenges. As for visual impairment, they need to deliver necessary information in a way that allows the low sighted or blind viewer not only to learn something, but also to experience something, to unleash their emotions, even if for one moment. To achieve this goal, one may use audio description, grant an opportunity to touch the original exhibits, prepare tactile graphics, models or copies.

Any of these ideas is great. An art gallery or a museum which is technically accessible and equipped with various aids will always please visitors with disabilities. However, this is not the most important thing.

The thing that is much more important is the preparation of the staff. Accessibility of cultural institutions starts with people and, to be honest, ends with them. It is people who are the most important factor, because it is them who the viewers with disabilities meet in the first place when they go to a museum or an art gallery. It is the employees of cultural institutions who have to make accessible a given event or space. They have to send out an invitation or information. And it is they who will be asked for support in getting to the ticket office, to the cloak room or to the exhibition. It is these people who need to know how to support a person with a specific disability who comes to the museum. Their knowledge should be strengthened by their willingness to encounter such visitors. Such a willingness and readiness to make direct contact with people with disabilities cannot be overestimated. When the employees of a museum or art gallery are open to this contact, the institution inevitably opens up.

This idea is particularly poignant when it comes to visitors with visual impairments. Blindness or visual impairment will not prevent the exploration of a cultural space if and when there is a sighted person who is willing and ready to share their knowledge and time. Anyone who has vision, wants, and knows how to do it will be an excellent guide for the blind and low sighted in any cultural institution. Opening up museums or art galleries to the needs of visually impaired people should therefore start

with trainings and workshops for the whole staff of a given institution. Nobody should be left out: security staff, people selling tickets, people working in the cloakroom or guarding the exhibition are just as important as educators and guides. Each and every one of them can at some point become the representation of the institution, the representation through which a blind or low sighted person will perceive a given museum or art gallery.

It goes without saying the workshops and trainings should be adapted to the specific needs of individual staff members, but the ideal situation is one in which everyone has basic knowledge. And once trained, open-minded people work in a museum or art gallery, they will make sure that the visually impaired visitors feel just as everyone else who visits the exhibition. It is this experience of ordinariness that is the essence of all endeavours at achieving culture without barriers.

Chapter 2

Glossary of key terms

1. Accessible multimedia

Multimedia are conceived as audio files, videos, animations, photo galleries. The accessibility level is set by the WCAG 2.0 standard and includes: text alternative for audio files (transcription) and for graphic files and photos (alternative text, description); subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing as well as audio description for video files. Another form of making video files accessible is providing their interpretation into Sign Language used by Deaf people in a particular country, and creating subtitles for films recorded in a Sign Language.

2. Accessible toilet

A toilet for people with reduced mobility, close to the place of the event, inside the building or set up for an event outside, positioned so as to be accessible on level ground, without barriers or stairs, with adequate space inside that allows for wheelchair manoeuvres, and provided with adequate facilities and handrails.

3. Accessible website

A barrier-free website accessible for persons with disabilities set up in accordance with WCAG 2.0 which, in Poland, is specified under the Annex 4 of the National Interoperability Framework Regulation. Web accessibility has been legally-binding since 2012. In accordance with the law, all websites of entities performing public tasks must be accessible.

Ensuring accessibility level currently means that the European standard EN 301 549 V1.1.2 (2015-04) is met. The European standard encompasses the WCAG 2.0 AA standard. It can be downloaded free of charge from the ETSI website (in English).

The WCAG has recently been updated to version 2.1 and takes into account, among other things, the needs of low-sighted people related to browsing the Internet, but no legislation in Europe yet refers to this standard.

4. Assistive hearing systems

Technical devices such as FM systems and audio induction loops that improve the hearing aid users' speech comprehension.

5. Audio Description (AD)

According to the media laws, it is a verbal description of the image and visual content of an audio-visual show, intended for the visually impaired, placed within a show or distributed simultaneously with it. This definition does not include audio description of works of art or events. In this context, AD is a verbal description of visual content intended for people with visual impairments. In such a scenario, the audio description may be delivered "live", by a person accompanying a person with visual impairment or made available in the form of a sound file (the file is downloaded from a website, uploaded on the audio guide, or available in any other way that is accessible for a person with visual impairment).

6. Braille alphabet

A system of signs (not a language) designed by Louis Braille to be used by the blind. Each sign is a combination of embossed six dots, the size of which is standardised according to the specifications of Marburg Medium recommended by the European Commission. Braille characters should not be increased or decreased. Both make the text illegible. The individual letters, numbers and characters in the Braille system are a combination of dots in a six-dots system.

Braille takes up more space than standard text due to the size of characters and the need to use special characters denoting such things as capital letters, digits, etc. The A4 page has 25 lines of 40 characters each. Preparing the text for Braille printing requires expertise.

7. Easy-to-read text

A strongly simplified form of text message for easier understanding, prepared mainly for people with intellectual disabilities. However, they are not the only recipients of texts that are easy to read. These texts may also be helpful for some persons with autism, foreigners, persons with limited resources of new vocabulary or persons with reading difficulties, as well as for deaf sign language users for whom Polish is not the first language.

The process of producing easy-to-read texts should involve the persons to whom the communication is addressed. Additional elements of the messages prepared in accordance with the principles of easy-to-read text are the illustrations. This supports the text comprehension.

Detailed principles for easy-to-read text are laid down in Easy-to-read: Inclusion Europe¹. This document defines, among other things, the choice of vocabulary, the way sentences are formulated, the type and size of font used, the composition of text on the website, the use of photographs,

¹ Easy-to-read: Inclusion Europe, <http://easy-to-read.eu/pl/european-standards/>, available in the Polish language version http://psoni.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Informacja-dla-wszystkich-internet_0.pdf

illustrations and symbols. The most important principles include using words that are easy to understand: the same words to describe the same things, using examples from everyday life, forgoing metaphors, borrowings, abbreviations, large numbers, using short, affirmative sentences, preferably in the active voice; ordering information in a way that is easy to understand (new sentence in a new line, without moving words, sub-sections, headings); without background graphics or elements that make it difficult to read, appropriate contrast, in sans-serif font (e.g., in the case of a new sentence in a new line, without transferring words, sub-sections, headings). Arial, Tahoma, Verdana), at least 14 points, standard (e.g. without excessively enlarging or shortening the spaces between characters).

Easy-to-read text is not the same as plain language, used in public communication and achieved by the process of simplifying text. In the case of the latter, the text should be prepared in such a way that its content is accessible (understandable) for the so-called mass audience (the average citizen). Changes include vocabulary, sentence and syntax structure, and text composition. They are designed to ensure rapid access to the information contained therein. They are introduced on the basis of a list of guidelines and in consultation with the author. Simplification of the text does not concern its substantive content.

One of the parameters for checking the accessibility of texts at the lexical and syntactic level is the fog index. It specifies the number of years of education required to understand the text. It takes into account the length of sentences and the percentage of long (potentially difficult) words - in Polish four-syllable words. You can check it online at logios.pl, jasnopis.pl. When simplifying text, potentially difficult words are removed (with no loss of meaning), or replaced by more popular synonyms. The most important information is highlighted in bold.

8. Induction loop

A hearing aid system that can be installed in rooms, service points or for individual use. It transmits sound from the source to a hearing aid equipped with a tele coil. It significantly improves speech intelligibility. The requirements for audio induction loop systems are specified in the PN-EN 60118-4 standard.

9. Large print

Specially-prepared and formatted text for visually impaired people, printed in much larger (16-18+) sans-serif font (e.g. Arial, Tahoma, Verdana), with additional formatting making the document clear and legible, e.g.: Arial, Tahoma, Verdana: 1.25 cm leading, alignment of the text to the left, presentation of the material in compact blocks, layout of the text without columns, specified line length of about 40 characters, use of contrasting colours.

10. Person with a disability

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD): "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". This definition is broader than the definition of a person with disabilities used in Polish law. Pursuant to the Act on Occupational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons (Journal of Laws of 2011, No. 127, item 721, as amended), the definition of a disabled person reads: "Disabled persons are persons whose physical, mental or mental state permanently or periodically hinders, restricts or prevents them from fulfilling their social roles, and in particular limits their ability to perform paid job".

11. Pre-guide

A script containing a description of how to use a given space or event.

It presents step by step description of everything that will happen from the beginning to the end of the event. It begins with information about arriving at the event venue, e.g. entrance to the building, purchase of tickets, cloak room, toilets, evacuation routes, description of the exhibition. It should contain all the most important organizational information that can be helpful. The content of the guide should be prepared in accordance with the principles of easy-to-read texts and accompanied by photographs.

12. Quiet space

A room friendly for people hypersensitive to sensory stimuli (e.g. crowd, noise, light, temperature), whose task is to provide the possibility of rest and tranquillity, e.g. for a person with autism. Too many stimuli can cause excessive excitement, distraction or anxiety. It is recommended to designate a separate room (a separate space), adequately soundproofed and gently illuminated. It is recommended to equip the place with noise-cancelling headphones. It is important that each member of the staff knows where the quiet space is and is able to show the shortest way to it.

13. Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (Closed captions – CC)

Subtitles that are a text-based transcript of dialogues or narrations, supplemented with character identification and descriptions of important sound effects and music. The number of lines of text on the screen, the time of their display, the rules for their arrangement, a set of fonts and colours are regulated by standards, guidelines for preparing subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing.

14. Tactile graphics

Graphic depiction and representation of reality using scale, proportions and generalisation, accessible by touch and sight for the blind and low sighted. Tactile graphics allow blind and visually impaired people to get to know, understand and reconstruct reality. Reading them requires appropriate skills and practice from the viewers.

15. Universal design

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), universal design "means 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. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed".

16. WCAG 2.0

WCAG, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, is a document that defines and describes guidelines for the accessibility of web content. This document was developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and sets out principles for creating online content that is accessible to all users, regardless of age, disability, wealth, hardware or software used. The four most important WCAG principles are: perceivable, operable, understandable and robust.

These guidelines are further subdivided into three levels of A, AA and AAA accessibility. Their latest revision is WCAG version 2.1. W3C documents do not have any legal force in themselves, but are the substantive basis of European and international standards - currently in WCAG version 2.0.

Chapter 3

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Accessibility for people with visual impairments

1.1 How to prepare tactile materials?

Tactile materials can be prepared by yourself, or they can be commissioned from an external company. In the first case, we will probably produce a low-budget copy of an exhibit using paper, glue or plasticine, in the second case we can go for a 3D model or permanent tactile graphics made out of plastic. If you decide to work on your own, keep in mind that tactile materials must be, in the first place, functional, so when preparing a copy of an image or a sculpture, focus on the most important elements, such as facial contours, but not necessarily reflect all the wrinkles. Tactile materials must be relatively durable, so a superglue adhesive, for example, will do better than soft plastic. And finally: tactile materials must be scaled, while preparing a copy we should remember to reduce or increase proportionally the elements and the distance between individual details.

Tactile graphics are two-dimensional graphics on which the most important elements of the work of art are marked with embossed materials; care must be taken to ensure that the proportions of the work of art are maintained. Tactile graphics can be produced by yourself using a tactile graphic film or by outsourcing their preparation to an external company. The preparation of the first tactile graphic is most expensive, so if you already order them, it is worth considering getting more copies.

Spatial models are often used to present urban spaces and buildings of institutions; they are a collection of three-dimensional original copies of the objects located in a given area. The model is usually made by companies specialized in this process.

3D models are three-dimensional copies of original exhibits. They are created for large or very small objects, which cannot be perceived by touching the original, e.g. buildings, large monuments or miniature works. 3D models will also work well as copies of objects that simply must not be touched, such as really fragile or extremely valuable sculptures. 3D models are very popular among the visually impaired viewers, but the creation of such objects is usually associated with relatively high costs, or requires time and manual skills. One of the cheapest versions of 3D models are prints from three-dimensional printers, and the costs are reduced the most when you have your own 3D printer. As in the case of tactile graphics, the first copy demands a rendering of the original object and is always the most expensive, and each subsequent copy is much cheaper.

1.2 What is better for a visually impaired person: individual visit aided with an audio-guide and tactile ground surface indicators or a visit with a guide?

Visiting the exhibition with an audio guide and the use of the tactile ground surface indicators is quite a comfortable situation and gives the visually impaired person the opportunity to go through the exhibition independently. However, the ground indicators must be prepared in such a way that it is clear at what point one should listen to the description of a particular exhibit if the descriptions contained in the audio guide are not automatically activated near the individual works of art. The combination of audio guide and tactile walking surface indicators is therefore a satisfying solution, but the possibility to meet a competent guide who can assist blind people is always a more desirable situation, guaranteeing a more complete tour of the exhibition.

1.3 What types of objects accessible by touch are enjoyed most by visually impaired people: the original works of art, tactile graphics or 3D models of the exhibit?

Invariably, every visually impaired person emphasises that the most desirable object to touch is the original one. If this option is allowed in the cultural institution, latex gloves should be used. They are thinner than fabric and have no seams on the fingertips. They allow one to feel the convex elements of the object better and get to know it better, while protecting the original against dirt or adverse chemical contamination, which could happen if you touch the exhibits with your bare hands.

The second place on the list of preferences is occupied by spatial models, and the third by tactile graphics. The latter, however, are the cheapest and fastest in preparation. Nonetheless, it is always preferable to make the tactile form of the exhibit accessible via tactile graphics than to give up tactile representation of the object altogether.

It should be kept in mind that touch alone is not enough for a visually impaired person to get to know the object. There is still a need for audio description and only a combination of these two sources of information gives a visually impaired person an opportunity to get to know a work of art.

1.4 Museum guide versus a blind person's assistant: who (and how) supports people with visual impairments during their visit to a cultural institution?

If several persons with visual impairments are present at the exhibition, it is convenient to provide an assistant for each visitor with visual impairments. The assistant will not only help them move around the building and exhibition, but will also be able to describe the objects they are touching. In this case, the museum guide can focus solely on guiding the whole group. Remember to give some time to "see" the objects because blind and low sighted people are not able to listen to the guide's comments and the assistant's audio description simultaneously.

1.5 How to guarantee enough time for the visit that includes audio description and touching the exhibits?

Each visit with audio description and touching of the exhibits is longer than a traditional visit to the exhibition. Describing and making available to touch one object can take up to several minutes, and the whole tour should not be longer than the standard tour of the exhibition. During the traditional one and a half hour visit to the exhibition it is possible to show only a few objects to the blind and low sighted, which does not mean that the visit will be considered unattractive by these visitors.

1.6 What should be the duration of an audio description for a single object?

Research conducted among people with visual impairments indicate that the length of an audio description for a single object should not exceed 3-4 minutes. This means that if you write an AD script, the text should not be longer than 3600 - 4000 characters.

1.7 How to prepare information accessible to people with visual impairments on social media?

Information on social media will be accessible to blind and low sighted people if all audio-visual materials (photos, videos) are accompanied by an audio description. The basic description of the photo should be concise and should take 2 - 3 sentences. In case of photos and graphics – the description can be put in a form of alternative text – accessible only for people that use voiceover programs.

1.8 Can visually impaired people participate in regular guided tours together with people without disabilities?

Yes, if they want to. People with visual impairments should be aware, however, that during such a visit audio description will not be available and there will be no possibility for touching the exhibits. On the other hand, people without disabilities can always take part in guided tours prepared for people with visual impairments. They must remember, however, that during such a visit, audio descriptions will be presented, and blind and low sighted people will be allowed to touch some exhibits.

2. Accessibility for people with hearing loss

2.1 What's the difference between "Deaf" and "deaf"? What terms should be used to talk about a deaf person?

The word “Deaf” denotes a member of a specific linguistic minority - a person for whom sign language is the primary and/or preferred way of communication. The Deaf are people who are completely deaf, hard of hearing or Children of Deaf Adults (CODA). A person's sense of identity plays an important role here, and the type and depth of hearing loss are irrelevant. However, it is unlikely that people with acquired deafness will identify with this community. The term refers to culture, as opposed to the more medicalised term “deaf”.

Deaf people, like other cultural groups, have their own language, traditions, customs, institutions and a sense of identity, on which a common identity is based: the so-called Deaf Culture. For the Deaf, spoken language of their country is most often the second, foreign language and the knowledge of it is very diverse among the Deaf.

A hard-of-hearing person may have a congenital or acquired hearing loss. Most people in this group communicate verbally and use devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM systems, audio induction loops.

Be careful! Never use the term “deaf-mute” or any variation of it that exists in your language! It was used in the past as a term that denoted the Deaf, but nowadays it is an insult to the Deaf community who uses Sign Language to communicate.

2.2 Do D/deaf people read lips?

No. Deaf people don't read lips, they do the lip reading. You may read books, articles, etc. When we read, we presume that we understand everything and that everything is clear. However, when lip reading, it is extremely difficult to achieve 100% identification of all the spoken words. People with hearing loss often understand the message by knowing the context of the utterance/situation. This form of communication is in most cases based on intuition.

Lip reading is very difficult. There may be a number of factors in a conversation that make it difficult to perceive content:

- bad lighting;
- facial hair;
- unnaturally loud/slow speech: D/deaf persons learn to lip read in natural conditions, so when the conversation partner starts to articulate too much, they distort the message;
- eating, chewing gum, smoking a cigarette in the middle of a conversation;
- shaking head, covering the mouth with a hand, turning around.

2.3 How do I know which type of communication a person with hearing loss prefers?

By means of observation or by looking at what means of communication is imposed by the conversation partner. By observing people's behaviour, you can see whether they are looking at their conversation partner's mouth or whether they are using sign language. Sometimes a deaf person speaks very unclearly, but prefers to speak, and this should be respected. As a last resort, when you are unable to understand the message, you may ask a deaf person to write the message down on a piece of paper or on a smartphone.

If you are not sure how a person communicates, simply ask that person. The question may seem awkward, but in fact it will create a friendly atmosphere and give a sense of confidence to both sides.

2.4 How to work with a sign language interpreter?

A sign language interpreter is not an assistant or a caregiver of a deaf person. The purpose of employing an interpreter is to enable communication between a person who does not know sign language and a D/deaf person. In order to perform their job as good as possible, they must not be involved in any activities other than interpreting.

Sign language interpreters must observe their ethics code, which includes, among other things:

- The right outfit: clothes contrasting to the skin tone, so that their hands can be seen clearly against the background;
- Impartiality: the interpreter is not allowed to speak on behalf of either side, their task is to convey what both sides want to say to each other;
- Confidentiality: interpreters, like doctors or lawyers, cannot talk to third persons about their clients.

For cultural events or public speeches interpretation, it is important to prepare the interpreter for the assignment in advance. Provide the interpreter with all the materials and information relevant to the event.

As for the interpretation assignments that last more than one hour, at least two interpreters should be hired. This guarantees high quality of interpretation during the entire event.

2.5 Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, closed captions, subtitles, transcription: what do these terms mean?

Subtitles are a text representation of dialogues that appear in a film or during a theatre play. Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (closed captions) differ from these in the following ways:

- The main characters are assigned specific colours, so that you can see who is speaking at any time, even when the actors are standing back and their lips are not visible, and when it is dark on the screen so the actors are invisible;
- Closed captions contain information about sounds in the film/play: the information is in the form of signs e.g. notes symbols (music) or text e.g. “sinister music”;
- if the character is not visible and their voice is heard from afar, or in the form of narration, the text is also subtitled.

Transcription is a text record of dialogues from a film/play in the form of a text file, without an image. It is most often used for radio broadcasts, podcasts, or television shows that cannot be subtitled.

2.6 Does it make sense to prepare a guide in a sign language for an exhibition, e.g. to be used on a tablet or as a mobile app?

If the exhibition is permanent, it is worth to consider preparing a guide in a sign language, which will allow D/deaf people to visit it on their own at any time. Instead of purchasing a large number of tablets or audio guides with PSL video track for renting, it is better to have 1-2 devices for renting and assume that many more will watch films in sign language available on the institution's website or a YouTube channel.

Important! Recordings with the interpretation of the exhibition guide into sign language should be in its original speed, not slowed down or accelerated. The interpreter should be visible from the waist upwards and occupy at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the frame.

The recorded guide in sign language will not substitute for a living person. The latter can answer questions or provide additional information about the exhibition and the institution. Therefore, it is recommended to organize cyclical guided tours around the exhibition with a sign language interpreter.

As for temporary exhibitions, the most sensible solution to make the exhibition accessible to Deaf people is to organize regular meetings at the exhibition with a sign language interpreter or guided tours given by a deaf person who is a native of the specific sign language. Such events can then be interpreted into a spoken language, so that people who do not know sign language can also participate in the tour. A Deaf guide, due to their knowledge of the Deaf Culture, is able to convey information in a more attractive and accessible way.

It is becoming a more and more common practice to employ Deaf people in cultural institutions so that it is these people who create an offer accessible to their group and raise awareness among people without disabilities about the Deaf Culture and sign language.

2.7 What should I pay attention to during the guided tour / workshops with the Deaf and hard-of-hearing?

People with hearing loss use different forms of communication aids. For the Deaf, it is necessary to provide a sign language interpreter. For the hard-of-hearing, it is more important to provide an audio induction loop and guarantee good acoustics, good visibility of the person interpreting the facilitator at the guided tour or workshop. If there are different forms of access services within the institution, these should be presented to the customer. The important thing is that they can choose for themselves what's best. The best solution is to combine all available options.

When organizing a guided tour for a mixed group, including people without disabilities, it is worth remembering that the smaller the group, the more comfortable it is to follow the presentation. D/deaf people need to see the interpreter, so the latter cannot be dwarfed by a crowd of people. The same goes for the hard-of-hearing: the larger the group, the more noise and hence the risk that they will not get the message.

Another thing to remember when dealing with both groups is to separate the presentation of the exhibit from stories related to it. Deaf people either look at the interpreter / lip read or look at the object. If the guide shows certain elements of the exhibition and at the same time tells the story about them, the participants lose bits of the narrative. The solution is to give the information first and then give time to see the objects in question.

Both for workshops and guided tours, all important information should be given at the beginning. It is therefore recommended to present a short plan of the event at the beginning. Later, when the participants move around the exhibition or are in the throes of work, it is much harder to attract attention and be sure that the information has reached all those concerned.

If you organize workshops, participants should stand in a circle or sit at tables arranged in a U or square plan. Only then can everyone see each other and communicate freely. A long table with chairs on both sides does not give an opportunity for such communication, because the first person cannot see the last one.

Good lighting is very important, even crucial. If there is a large window in the room through which light comes in, neither the guide nor the interpreter should stand in front of it, as their faces and hands will be very dark against such a background.

Guides and interpreters must always face a strong, bright source of light (daylight or a bright screen). If there is a spotlight and the rest of the space sinks in the darkness, the interpreter and the guide should remain in the spotlight.

2.8 How do I promote events accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing people?

When planning the publicity of an event accessible to D/deaf people, it is necessary to take into account the specificity of the event, for whom it is dedicated. If this is a workshop with sign language interpreting addressed to young people, for example, it is worth contacting a school with d/Deaf students. Another form should be used for an open event, in which case it is advisable to contact organisations that work with d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing people. Spreading the information on social media is very important, because deaf people actively use such forms of communication. Facebook allows you to upload videos, which makes it very easy for D/deaf people to communicate by means of the so-called vlogs: information, announcements or comments in sign language.

The institution that organises an event accessible to the D/deaf should ensure proper communication from the very beginning, i.e. prepare a short film in sign language with an invitation to participate in the event. It should not be longer than 3 minutes. You can invite an interpreter to produce it, but a much better result is yielded when it is a Deaf person who signs in such a video. That is why it is recommended to establish cooperation with an active person that is known within the D/deaf community, who will encourage others to participate in the event.

When preparing a film in sign language, you should also prepare subtitles for it so that people who have little knowledge of sign language or are learning the language can also understand the message.

Posters are another form of communication. The poster can be hung in places most often visited by D/deaf people, such as their organizations, clubs, schools, etc. It should contain specific information: What? When? Where? For how much? It should also specify contact information of the organizers: mobile phone with the option of texting and/or e-mail address. It should also contain a graphic that illustrates the event, e.g. for painting workshops: a photo of an easel; for exhibition in the museum: a photo of the exhibition.

And what about the hard-of-hearing? They will mainly benefit from text information and subtitles for promotional films. The hard-of-hearing do not form a separate community as much as the D/deaf do, so it can be difficult to "find" this group. The elderly, who also need subtitles because of their hearing loss, are also a sizeable group.

3. Accessibility for people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

3.1 How to prepare well for the visit of people on the autism spectrum at the cultural institution?

Persons on the autism spectrum are a group with different needs. Most of them react distinctly to sensory stimuli. The specificity of the group makes it necessary to think carefully about

the organization of each event and consider which situations may be difficult for the visitors with autism.

It is recommended to start by asking our visitors what their needs are. Do they use alternative and augmentative forms of communication (AAC), do they need time to familiarize themselves with the space offered by the institution or time for rest before starting the guided tour.

During the workshops, it is valuable to have an event plan and all kinds of visual aids.

The following will assist persons on the autism spectrum:

- openness and flexibility of the people who handle the event;
- reduction of the number of sensory stimuli, e.g. light intensity or sound volume;
- materials describing the organisation of the event;
- quiet space;
- indication of hours when there are few visitors at the institution.

3.2 A person with Autism Spectrum Disorder, a person on the autism spectrum or a person with Asperger's syndrome? What do these terms mean? Which ones to use?

Autism is currently the most common developmental disorder in children. Its symptoms manifest themselves in early childhood and accompany people throughout their entire life. Autism causes difficulties in terms of social skills and communication, and results in tendencies for schematic and repetitive behaviours or specific interests. Every person with ASD is completely different.

Asperger's syndrome is a complex developmental disorder that falls within the ASD. People with Asperger's syndrome have the greatest difficulties in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relations.

Concerning correct wording: the most popular demand in the community of people with different disabilities is to use “person-first language”, which states the person first, and their disability second (i.e. a person with Down Syndrome, a person with visual impairment, etc.). However, among the autistic community it is becoming more popular to use “identity-first language”, which specifies that the autistic identity is inseparable from the person. So, some people might prefer to identify themselves as an “autistic person” rather than a “person with autism”. If you are not sure how to call someone – ask them which form they prefer.

3.3 What is a pre-guide and is it necessary?

The task of the pre-guide is to prepare a person with autism to visit a new place. It takes the form of a brochure containing the description of the use of a given space, event. It gives a step-by-step presentation of everything that will happen, from the beginning to the end of the event. It begins with information about arriving at the event site, e.g. entrance to the building, purchase of tickets, cloak

room, toilets, evacuation routes, description of the exposition. It should contain all the most important organizational information that can be helpful.

For those who are attending the workshops, a brochure would be helpful, by introducing them to the organization of the workshop. Such brochure is prepared in a similar way to the pre-guide.

3.4 Which events are suitable for persons on the autism spectrum?

Autistic people want to participate in cultural life, develop their passions and interests, just like their peers. More and more often, workshops or dedicated events are organized in which the needs of people on the autism spectrum are taken into account.

Chapter 4 Good practices

1. Important things:

- Trained and open-minded staff. All technical amenities do not replace contact with another person. Openness and willingness to share the knowledge was the most valuable thing for us during our study visits. Therefore, of the greatest importance are the trained employees/volunteers.

It is recommended to produce guided tour scripts available for the staff. Thanks to this, the exhibition guides have an opportunity to talk about the presented objects in an appropriate way. Equipped with such a script, the guide knows how and where to use the audio description technique, how to help a person with hearing impairment to get the information they are looking for, and how to support a visually impaired person in moving around the exhibition, providing valuable tips to help them orient themselves in space.

Knowledge gained during training should be shared with the whole team. It is recommended to organize internal trainings, during which the staff share their experiences, as well as write scripts together and submit proposals for making the institution more accessible.

- Accessibility coordinator. This is the first-line contact person for people with disabilities who want to visit any institution. It is worth making sure that such a coordinator can be reached easily. This person will know how to respond to the needs of the audience and what to offer them.
- Accessible website. It is a very important platform for every institution. A person with a disability who wants to visit the institution usually starts their journey on the Internet. They are looking for the necessary information there. It is worth taking care of a clear structure, thanks to which it will be easy to move around the website. An accessibility tab on the homepage is a must-have. It provides detailed information about the facilities for persons with a specific disability, including information about tactile ground surface indicators, thresholds, elevators and ramps, precise instructions on how to get to the museum by public transport or by a private car, as well as how to get to the ticket office. The site will also serve to inform about the permanent exhibition and organized events. Describe all forms of accessible materials. Thanks to this, the visitor will know what they can use and what to ask the staff for, e.g. tactile graphics, audio description, descriptions in Braille, sign language interpreter, etc. If an assistant or interpreter is available, this should also be indicated in this section.

- New technologies. All solutions using new technologies are welcome. However, it is important to ensure that they are tested by the users themselves. This is how pieces of hardware/software should be chosen. If you decide to create an application, it should be available on both Android and iOS devices.
- Architectural adaptations. You may consider fitting a museum with a tactile ground surface indicators to help visually impaired people to move around the exhibition space on their own.
- Good security system. It should give the opportunity to get very close to a work of art to see it from a short distance, and it should only get activated when there is a real danger to the artwork.

2. What to keep in mind when organizing visits for the groups of visually impaired persons?

- Identify your visitors: the low sighted, the congenitally blind or those who have lost their sight. Such knowledge will allow you to choose the right tools and content. If it is not possible to collect such information, the visit should be prepared as if only blind people were in the group.
- The features of a well-prepared tour are conciseness and specificity. It is worthwhile to pick up a specific narrative to be presented to the visitors. Accumulation of a lot of diverse information can be a problem in reception. The possibility of touching the original exhibits is also of a great value.
- When you want the group to stop for a while, find a quiet space.
- There shouldn't be more than 15 people in a group. A group of visually impaired viewers will always include their sighted guides.
- When something noisy (car, ambulance) appears, stop the narrative and resume it when the noise stops.
- The guide should check from time to time whether the participants follow the presented description. Each of us has different experiences, especially people that were born blind might understand the descriptions in a completely different way.
- If the tour takes place in a dark space, you can use a strong source of light to highlight the presented exhibits.

2.1 Tactile graphics and audio description

- Words and touch: blind people appreciate the most those guided tours that offer audio description together with a possibility of touching the original exhibits or their copies or tactile graphics. Such elements will always make it easier to grasp the content.
- Any tactile aids must be supported by a description that explains what the visitors are touching. Descriptions in Braille can be used for providing explanations, but not all people with visual impairments can read Braille. The best thing to do is to provide the support of an assistant.
- When discussing large exhibits, buildings or elements of scenography, it is recommended to prepare smaller versions of them. This makes it easier for blind people to learn how do these objects look like.
- When the visitors touch the exhibit, they focus on it, so they are not able to focus on what the guide is saying. First, describe the exhibit, tell its story, and then give time to touch it. When touching, a blind person needs somebody to tell them what they are touching.
- Surgical silicone gloves are the best choice when touching the original exhibits. Material gloves make it impossible to know exactly how the touched surface looks like.
- During the presentation of the tactile model, the audience with visual impairments should be directed to landmarks placed on it.
- If the exhibition is permanently equipped with facilities for the visually impaired, it is recommended to invest in tactile ground surface lines leading to the specific objects.
- The workshop is an important and extremely useful element of presenting content to people with visual impairments. By working independently, such visitors have the opportunity to become more familiar with the topic and better understand the discussed issues.

3. What to keep in mind when organizing a tour for groups of persons with hearing loss?

- Sign language interpreter. It is essential to ensure the presence of a sign language interpreter during the visit. If the group that comes to the guided tour does not have its own interpreter, a sign language interpreter must be hired. It is worth building your own database of interpreters so that you can always provide such service to your visitors. It is good practice to establish cooperation with people from the deaf community: they are wonderful interpreters.

- Size of the group. For the convenience of the visitors, the group should consist of a maximum of 15 people.
- FM system. Acoustics, as well as the sounds generated by visitors, may have an impact on what the people with hearing loss can hear. Use an FM system that amplifies the sound so that those with hearing loss do not lose the words of the guide.
- During the guided tour, the guide should always wait for the whole group to come together and only then start talking. The words of the guide can be supported by gestures. The guide should draw attention to themselves whenever they start talking, e.g. after moving to the next room.
- The guide should always face the source of light.
- The guide and the interpreter are one and the same. The interpreter must always stand next to the guide and the group must be placed in a semicircle opposite the guide. This way, in addition to looking at the interpreter, the participants have the opportunity to lip read what the guide is saying. This setting is also the most suitable for discussion.
- During the guided tour, no one should pass in front of the sign language interpreter, because then the communication between the interpreter and the visitors is interrupted and the visitors lose the message.
- When the guide is showing something, and talking at the same time, it is difficult for audiences with hearing loss to focus on both activities. It is impossible to see the exhibit and look at the interpreter at the same time. That is why time should be given to see the exhibit first and then for the guide to speak.
- Films presented in the original language should be subtitled in the same language. Such subtitles can be placed above the English subtitles.
- A precise and clear message is the best one, without specialist vocabulary. If it is necessary to employ such vocabulary for the guided tour, then the new concepts should be spelled out and the participants should be asked if they know the word. It is also essential to explain its meaning.
- More practice, less theory. It is easier to understand theory and new concepts through examples and exercises.
- The guide should support his explanation with visual aids illustrating the discussed issues.

- When visiting the interior, additional aids, such as photographs, can be used to indicate the specific item that is being discussed.
- The dark background at the exposition interferes with the reception of sign language interpretation. While visiting with a group of deaf people, the brightness at the exhibition should be increased.
- The guide should not disappear from the view of d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors.
- Deaf people do not need to touch the exhibits, it is enough that they can see them thoroughly. Unless it is something very valuable, and they can gain additional information by touching it.
- During the workshop, while the participants are performing the task, it is difficult to focus on the conversation. Work in sequences so that there is time for performing tasks and discussion.
- The exhibition should be enriched with visual materials, such as films in sign language, texts. This will allow visitors with hearing loss to visit the exhibitions on their own.

4. What mistakes should be avoided?

- If the visitors are adult, the message must be age-appropriate. People with disabilities must not be infantilised.
- The guide should use their natural way of expressing themselves during the guided tour for the visually impaired visitors, there is no need to avoid such phrases as "we will see" or "take a look", even if the viewers are blind.
- Pay attention to linguistic accuracy. Correct vocabulary should be used, e.g. "for people with disabilities", not "for the impaired/disabled people", not "in Braille language", but "in Braille code" or "in Braille alphabet".
- When preparing accessible materials, it is always necessary to consult them with people from the target group.
- If a blind person wants to use the exhibits on their own, the touch screens must be made accessible. If the activation of a screen requires a card, make sure the person knows where to place the card in order to activate the screen.

- What supports a group of people with one disability does not always work with another group, e.g. blind people do not necessarily have to take an elevator, they can climb the stairs.
- When moving between the rooms, especially on stairs or in corridors, do not continue talking. Deaf and the hard-of-hearing need to focus on the way and cannot look at the interpreter at the same time.

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Source:

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