ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY
V9.0 – 30/11/24

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1. Objectives of the Accessibility Strategy of DANCING

The purpose of this strategy is to maximise the extent to which people with disabilities can participate in the communications and activities of DANCING.

All members of the DANCING Team will abide by this Strategy and endeavour to implement it.

2. Context of this Strategy

This project is informed by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Accessibility is one of the general principles included in Article 3 CRPD, and it is spelled out in Article 9 as well as in other substantive provisions of the Convention, including Article 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information).

Accessibility has also become a key tenet in current European disability policy because it is conceived of as a pre-condition for people to access and enjoy their rights.

The former European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 stated that its objective was "to progress towards ensuring that all persons with disabilities in Europe have equal opportunities, equal access to participate in society and economy." The new strategy, which is called the 'Union of Equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030', advances that objective further, and considers accessibility an enabler of rights. Furthermore, the EU has approved legislation related to accessibility, including the Web Accessibility Directive and the European Accessibility Act. Both those directives have been implemented at the national level.

The project also abides by Maynooth University Equality and Diversity Policy, and all relevant MU policies.

3. Implementation Plan

Hilary Hooks in her capacity as project manager of the DANCING project will be the person responsible for implementing accessibility within the project, under the oversight and direction of the P.I., Prof. Delia Ferri. Ms. Hooks will review the project documents already created to ensure that they conform to the guidelines, consulting with authors for revisions where necessary.

Ms Hooks will be entrusted with the task of reviewing and revising the accessibility strategy where necessary and every six months. She will gather internal and external feedback on improving accessibility and implement change where feasible.

Project staff will acquire awareness of accessibility issues and, where necessary, attend [equality, diversity, and inclusion training courses](#) at Maynooth University, or [Microsoft Accessibility Video Training.](#)

4. Accessibility Guidelines

Over-arching accessibility guidelines for DANCING:

- Accessibility will be considered at every step of the project.
- Sufficient resources for accessibility have been included in the budget.
- Persons with disabilities and/or accessibility experts will be involved in the process.

The guidelines below apply to:

- The project documents stored in the Teams folder,
- Information provision/ communications including website, Twitter, and emails,
- Facilities and physical access for meetings, interviews, focus groups and performances, and
- Project events and meetings.

4.1. Printed Documents and Promotional Materials.

Printed materials must be fully accessible. Every electronic document will have a format accessible to screen-reader. Easy to Read translations will also be prepared for major documents. Accessibility features will be used and an accessibility check will be run.

All documents published on the website of the project will include the following:

- The Word Accessibility Checker (file-info-check for issues – check accessibility) will be used.
- Documents will have a clear structure with heading styles, using short, specific, and clear heading text.
- They will include a table of contents for documents over ten pages.
- Alternative (alt) text will be provided for images, graphs, embedded objects etc. and decorative images (not conveying information) will be marked as such.
- Accessible (meaningful) file names will be used.
- Accessible tables without split/ merged cells or nested tables will be used.
- Hyperlinks that use natural language and that are not generic (e.g., click here) will be used.
- Use fonts that are easy to read i.e., sans serif fonts (e.g., Calibri, Arial, Helvetica, and Tahoma, NOT Times New Roman).
- Use 12-point font as a minimum size with clear colour contrast.
- For lists, use pre-set styles rather than just using tabs and if sub-lists are created, a hierarchical structure will be used.
- Use bold and italics sparingly.
- Use a minimum of 1.5 line spacing.
- Use formats that allow users to adapt the presentation to meet their needs, such as word processing, HTML, or EPUB.
- Some participants will need print material in alternative formats such as large print and braille. If you give participants accessible digital material in advance, then you usually don't need to provide these alternative print formats.

4.2.   Presentations

When using PowerPoint:

1. Use the PowerPoint Accessibility Checker (file-info-check for issues – check accessibility).

2. Use templates and pre-set layouts where possible (see Design Tab), and/or the [DANCING slides template document](#) in which all the accessibility features are set up.

3. Give each slide a title (Home-Layout-Title Slide).

4. Use text and images to convey information; do not rely on colour only.

5. [Alternative (alt) text](#) will be provided for images, graphs, tables etc., and decorative images (not conveying information) will be marked as such.

6. Confirm the reading order of the objects by using the selection pane (home - Editing group - Select - Selection Pane).

7. Each slide should use plain language in a Sans Serif font with no more than six lines of text per slide.

8. Avoid using more than two different fonts, and do not use italics or all caps, but instead bold for emphasis.

9. Add good contrast between the text and slide background so that people with low vision can read the slide.

4.3.   Emails

Images in email signature will have 'alt text' attribute (go to signatures, click on image, then right click, picture, then alt text).

The team will also endeavour to:

1. Use the [Outlook Accessibility Checker](#) prior to sending emails externally.

2. [Alternative (alt) text](#) will be provided for images, graphs, embedded objects etc. and decorative images (not conveying information) will be marked as such.

3. Ensure that the text settings are accessible:

- Use [accessible font format](#) e.g. black/ navy text on white background with Arial/ Calibri.

- Use sufficient contrast for text and background colours - [accessible font colour](#).

- Use font size 12 or larger.

- Ensure sufficient white space between sentences and paragraphs.

- Ensure that colour is not the only means of conveying information. For example, add an underline to colour-coded hyperlink text so that people who are colour-blind know that the text is linked even if they cannot see the colour. For headings, consider adding bold or using a larger font.

4. Make the structure of emails easier for screen-readers:

- [Add meaningful hyperlink text](#) and ScreenTips. For example, instead of linking to the text [Click here](#), include the full title of the destination page.

- Use built-in [headings and styles](#).

- Use ordered or bulleted lists to present information.

- Use tables with a simple structure only – no nested tables; [use table headers.](#)

4.4.   Online Content and Promotional Material

The website has been developed with accessibility in mind from the outset. The site conforms to [WCAG 2.1.](#) level AA or AAA. In developing online material:

- Digital documents and information will be made accessible before being finalised and made public.

- Regular consultations with experts in accessibility will be held.

- The language used and activities will be in line with the CRPD.

The following features will be included where possible:

- [Alternative (alt) text](#) will be provided for images, graphs, embedded objects etc. and decorative images (not conveying information) will be marked as such.

- Using sufficient colour contrast in the design using e.g., [WebAIM contrast checker](#).

- Site should be designed to support simple navigation and logical site structure.

- No animation/ allow the option to turn off animation.

- Proper use of headings to communicate the organisation of the content on the page.

- Multiple versions of text content to be available including audio, sign language and easy-to-read. Videos should be accompanied by audio description in the case where visual content in web video provides important content that is not available through the audio alone. Content will be provided in multiple languages where possible.

- Digital images should be resizable.

Online documents with links on the site will be saved in an accessible format (see documents section above).

An invitation to notify the project team of any accessibility issues or improvements we might make will be displayed. We will offer the possibility to send content in sign language via contact us form.

The website will be checked using the following methods:

- The site will be audited using a website accessibility tool e.g., the WAVE on a six-monthly basis.

- The mouse will be unplugged, and the site navigated using only the keyboard to interact with all controls, links, and menus (arrow keys, tab, enter and shift tab).

- High contrast mode will be turned on through systems settings and the site navigated.

- The images will be turned off through browser settings to ensure that links still function, and that content still makes sense.

- CSS will be turned off using disable-HTML to ensure that the site is still easy to read and to navigate.

- The video files will be captioned.

- The site will be tested by a panel of users who have insight into accessibility issues.

The previous points apply to social media content as well as the project website, where possible.

4.5.   Online Meetings and Events

4.5.1. Prior to the Meeting/ Event

1. Send an email requesting whether the attendee has any accessibility needs and/or reasonable accommodation.

2. Online platforms are not fully accessible for blind facilitators, although can be for blind participants.

3. Choose the best online platform for the event:

   - Desktop versions tend to be less accessible than using mobile versions for blind users.

   - Both Teams and Zoom have the following accessibility features: Signing deaf participants can be made visible, sign language interpreter can be made visible, captions can be added and screen reader compatibility.

   - Microsoft Teams is the preferred platform for MU, however, it is accessible for signing deaf users and sign language interpreters only if it is a small group of four or less. Live captions are only available in English.

   - For larger meetings, use Zoom which works well for hard of hearing people if captioning is provided. Zoom also works well for blind participants using screen readers (except for the chat box function).

4. When using a sign language interpreter, ask them to recommend the best settings for the platform.

5. Provide at least two methods to join the meeting, such as a dial-in number along with the link to the virtual meeting.

6. Design and share an accessible meeting agenda ahead of the meeting.

7. Share presentation materials with participants, sign language interpreters and captionists ahead of the meeting.

8. Carry out audio/video/visual checks with IT staff, facilitators, presenters, captionists, and sign language interpreters prior to the webinar. Allow sufficient time to work out the technical details.

4.5.2. During the Meeting

1. Share what accessible services are being provided and how to access the services when the meeting begins including captions, which are turned on by individual participants rather than the meeting organiser.

2. Participants should say their names prior to each time speaking, to include blind people and those who have low vision.

3. Be aware that the raise-hand function does not consistently work for screen readers. As an alternative, for a participant who would like to speak can unmute themselves and say their name and then wait for the host to give them the floor.

4. The facilitator should periodically read out the comments and questions in the chat box to include those who are using screen reader.

5. Be aware that there will be a slight delay in sign language interpretation, and a much longer delay for interpretation for persons with deafblindness.

4.5.3. After the meeting

1. Share captioning transcripts after the meeting if requested.

2. Reach out to attendees after the meeting to get feedback.

3. Ensure that the feedback received is implemented for further meetings.

4.6. In-person Meetings and Events

4.6.1. Prior to the Meeting/ Event

1. Send an email requesting whether the attendee has any accessibility needs and/or reasonable accommodation. The email should include:

- Contact information,
- Request for dietary restrictions (if relevant),
- Request for interpreting services or assistive listening devices,
- Request for accessible parking or seating,

- An open question asking about other accommodations that will help ensure full participation,

- Preferred pronouns, and

- Indication that where travel arrangements and overnight accommodation are required for an attendee, these will be provided for personal assistants.

2. A few days prior to the meeting/ event communicate with attendees who have expressed accessibility needs regarding (where applicable):

- The use of flash photography, flashing images, use of fog machines etc. during the meeting/ event,

- What technology platform and what accessibility features within the platform will be used,

- What special accommodations will be provided e.g., interpreting services, and

- Optional parts of the event, including off-site social activities, that may not be fully accessible.

3. Special accommodations to plan for may include:

- Sign language interpretation is to be provided for the duration of the event. The sign language interpreter is to be displayed on at least ⅙ of the screen where used. The quality of image input to the interpreter is to be kept on a level that prevents visible distortion such as blurring or freezing.

- Automatic captioning is to be provided when required.

- Interpretation breaks are to be scheduled to allow time for interpretation, questions, and clarifications. Schedule a short discussion between the organizer and the interpreter beforehand to ensure that the meeting runs smoothly. Breaks should last at least 20 minutes and should be taken approximately every 90 minutes, or as requested by the interpreter.

- Where the speaker is talking in a language other than English, simultaneous translation into English is to be provided.

- Audio descriptions and/or simultaneous translations in English during events and videos are to be provided.

- speakers should give a brief description of what they look like prior to speaking and describe pertinent visual information when there is someone present with a visual impairment.
- There is to be access to an accessible toilet.
- There is to be access to an emergency exit.
- The venue must provide ramp and/or lift access where relevant.
- Accessible parking nearby or other accessible transportation is to be considered.
- There is to be sufficient seating and personal space within the room to allow for electric wheelchairs, canes, walkers, and service animals where applicable.
- Individuals' needs should be respected by being open and flexible around other accessibility issues. For example, someone might need to take breaks at set times for insulin injections. Someone with a physical disability who cannot take notes might need to record the session.

The venue will always be checked for accessibility in advance of the event to ensure that equipment (lifts, microphones etc.) is working.

4.6.2. During the Meeting

- Speak clearly (ideally facing forward without covering your mouth).
- Avoid acronyms and colloquialisms as much as possible.
- When addressing someone specifically, ask for his/her/their name and pronouns to confirm.
- Specify when you are finished speaking.
- For interpreters, always look at and address the participating attendee.
- Explain and describe graphics and pictures for blind people and those who have low vision.
- Avoid jargon, idioms, and acronyms.
- Reach out to attendees to see how things are going, and to ensure that they are comfortable, informed, and able to fully participate.

4.6.3. After the meeting

- Reach out to attendees after the meeting to get feedback.

- Ensure that the feedback received is implemented for further meetings.