



# DANCING

## Enhancing Cultural Participation of Persons with Disabilities

### A Toolkit for Cultural Organisations



Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities  
and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union  
Law: Exploring New Paths (DANCING)

Delia Ferri & Elodie Makhoul

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**Corresponding Author:** Prof. Delia Ferri, School of Law and Criminology/ALL Institute, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland ([Delia.Ferri@mu.ie](mailto:Delia.Ferri@mu.ie)).

Orcid: [orcid.org/0000-0002-8193-5881](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8193-5881) 

**Cover Page Image:** Monique Dior Jarrett (Stopgap Dance Company) performing 'Lived Fiction' by Photographer Chris Parkes (Courtesy of Stopgap Dance Company -Used with permission).

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*'...The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even but a millimeter the way people look at reality, then you can change it.'*

James Baldwin

# FOREWORD

by Pádraig Naughton  
Executive Director of  
Arts & Disability Ireland

This Toolkit for cultural professionals and organisations across the European Union (EU) is a very welcomed and valuable resource to support an inclusive and accessible cultural sector. Informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), this Toolkit sets a high bar in terms of ambition. This standard is so high particularly when considering that Article 30 CRPD recognises the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life and enjoy access to a wide range of cultural materials, activities and places for cultural performances or services as well as enjoy access to monuments and heritage sites. Further, this Article mandates States Parties to ‘take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilise their creative, artistic and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit, but also for the enrichment of society’. Coincidentally, the publication of this Toolkit marks my 20th year as Executive Director of the national development and resource organisation Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI). My primary reason for taking on the position was, ‘I wanted to make a difference’ to the future of artists and audiences with disabilities like myself in ‘my own country’. For over a decade previous to that, I had a studio practice in tactile architectural ceramics and landscape drawing. As a visually impaired visual artist with a BDes from the National College of Art & Design, I was rather rare in the Ireland of the 1990s. While creatively, many wonderful opportunities came

about through my practice, I remember that period in my life as incredibly frustrating. Although, it seemed everyone wanted my opinion, there were very few, if any, paid opportunities to play my part in implementing my vision. Consequently, I moved to Exeter where I became Artistic Director of Equata, the Disability Arts Development Agency for South West England. At that time, immigration was the crucial link to me acquiring the skills and credibility to be taken seriously as a leader in the field of arts and disability, eventually, hastening my return to Ireland. Thankfully, much has changed in the intervening decades.

In sharing my own career trajectory, I want to draw particular attention to where I think this Toolkit underpinned by the CRPD can have the greatest impact. Indeed, I believe this Toolkit can assist cultural organisations in transforming their ethos, and ensure that not only people with disabilities and their organisations are consulted about the continued expansion of an inclusive and accessible cultural environment going forward, but that artists and cultural professionals with disabilities are contributing to and leading that change. To this end, this Toolkit aims to encourage and support cultural professionals and cultural organisations across the EU to embrace inclusivity and accessibility and move beyond good intentions to meaningful change.

# 1 ABOUT THE DANCING PROJECT

## 1.1 What Is the DANCING Project?

The project '[Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths \(DANCING\)](#)' explores the right of persons with disabilities to take part in cultural life as an essential aspect of enhancing cultural diversity in the European Union (EU).

DANCING commenced on 1 September 2020 and is due to be completed on 31 August 2025. The project is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and is based at Maynooth University (MU) under Professor Delia Ferri as a Principal Investigator (PI). It is divided into four complementary and partially overlapping Work Packages (WPs). Three of them correspond to the key objectives of the project, and the fourth one is a cross-cutting WP that focuses on translating the research into practical tools that can effect societal change (Tools for Change). This report is an output of WP4, and it is mainly informed by the research carried out within WP1.

On the whole, DANCING deploys interdisciplinary approaches to produce ground-breaking knowledge intended to challenge the cultural exclusion often faced by people with disabilities, contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and culturally diverse European society.

Methodologically, DANCING combines legal, empirical, and arts-based research to achieve three main objectives:

- **Identifying** and categorising barriers to and facilitators of cultural participation experienced by people with disabilities and how they affect the wider cultural domain (Experiential Objective).
- **Providing** a normative exploration of how the EU has used and can use its competence to combat discrimination, its supporting competence on cultural matters, and its wide internal market powers, to ensure the accessibility of cultural activities, to promote disability identities, while achieving cultural diversity (Normative Objective).
- **Advancing** the understanding of the legal concept of cultural diversity, which stems from the intersection of different sources of law, and, in the final phase of the project, will articulate a new theorisation of the promotion of cultural diversity within the EU legal order (Theoretical Objective).



## 1.2 What Are the Key Tenets of the DANCING Project that Inform this Toolkit?

DANCING is informed by the principles and rights set out in the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#). It is underpinned by the human rights model of disability and values of **empowerment, respect for diversity and participation**.

The DANCING project:

- embraces the concept of disability laid out in [Article 1\(2\) CRPD](#), which recognises that 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’;
- embraces the view explained by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee, 2018, para. 9) that ‘disability is a social construct’ and ‘is one of several layers of identity’.

In line with the above tenets and the CRPD, this Toolkit uses ‘people first language’ (i.e. persons/ people with disabilities), and in accordance with the principles of dignity, equality, accessibility, and participation.<sup>1</sup> ‘People first language’ is not used by everyone, nor is it

wording with which everyone identifies or agrees. However, it captures the broad range of people who could be interested and involved in the project, and aligns with legal language used in international and EU law.

Furthermore, DANCING:

- Acknowledges the current comprehensive definitions of culture and the cultural domain that connect to cultural rights ([UNESCO, 2009](#)), but deliberately focuses on arts practices and heritage as forms of cultural expression ([Caust, 2019](#)). This focus links to the definition of Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS) included in EU law (particularly in [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818 establishing the Creative Europe Programme](#)) discussed later on in this Toolkit.
- Looks at the right to participate in culture in a comprehensive way with reference to its twofold individual dimension and its collective aspect ([Romainville, 2015](#); [Chow, 2018](#)). The twofold individual dimension encompasses the right to access cultural activities, goods and services, i.e. the right to cultural consumption, and the right to active involvement in culture, which includes the engagement in the creation of cultural goods, services and activities. The collective aspect entails the right of cultural communities to be recognised and protect-

ed as well as to enjoy and make use of their cultural heritage and cultural expressions.

- Recognises that each cultural organisation presents its own set of characteristics, and therefore needs to tailor its own practices to efficiently implement and ensure the best experience to people with disabilities. This Toolkit does not intend to replace specialised and tailored consultancy, but aims to support cultural organisations in taking steps towards improving accessibility and inclusivity.

<sup>1</sup> In line with the language used by European Union of the Deaf and other organisations, this Toolkit uses the term ‘Deaf people/persons’ but acknowledges that this term is not used by everyone, nor is it a wording which everyone identifies with or agrees with.



# 2 ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

## 2.1 Who Is this Toolkit For?

This Toolkit is for cultural professionals and cultural organisations who play a crucial role in preserving traditions, fostering creativity, and shaping the cultural identity of societies overall, and who wish to participate in and contribute to a more inclusive and accessible cultural environment for people with disabilities, both as an audience and as active and involved cultural professionals.

We define relevant concepts referred to in this Toolkit below. Our definitions take into account [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818 establishing the Creative Europe Programme](#).

### ▪ Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS)

CCS encompasses all sectors carrying out activities based on cultural, artistic and other creative expressions, such as activities related to the development, creation, production, dissemination and preservation of goods and services embodying such expressions. The CCS include architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual (such as film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, literature, performing arts, books and publishing, radio, and visual arts, publishing, media, and entertainment.

### ▪ Cultural Organisations

A cultural organisation is any organisation, body, venue, studio, festival or educational institution operating in the CCS, whether their activities are 'market- or non-market-oriented, whatever the type of structure that carries them out, and irrespective of how that structure is financed'. This includes all bodies related to archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design, festivals, music, literature, performing arts, publishing, radio and visual arts.

### ▪ Cultural Professionals

Cultural professionals are people working within a cultural institution and contributing to the preservation, promotion, and dissemination of cultural goods, services and heritage; 'creators' such as artists; as well as curators, museum professionals, archivists and conservators of cultural heritage, cultural managers and event organisers, educators in the arts and culture, film directors and theatre producers, art historians and critics.



## 2.2 What Research Informs this Toolkit?

This Toolkit aims to present recommendations and guidelines arising from the DANCING project that are relevant to people working in CCS and cultural organisations. The Toolkit will support them in effecting and enhancing accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities. This Toolkit is supplemented by a **Resource List hosted on the [DANCING project website](#)** which highlights relevant projects, initiatives, reports and other resources produced by other projects or organisations advancing cultural participation of people with disabilities.

This Toolkit helps cultural professionals and cultural organisations to:

**Explore** to what extent their organisation and cultural activities carried out are accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities.

**Recognise** gaps, shortcomings and excluding practices.

**Identify** and understand tools and practices that make organisations and cultural activities more accessible and inclusive.

**Develop** their own disability policy.

This Toolkit is informed by the findings of WP1 of the DANCING project. WP1 identified barriers to and facilitators of cultural participation of people with disabilities. Within the remit of WP1, alongside extensive literature reviews, we carried out 41 interviews with and administered 23 written questionnaires (as an alternative to interviews) to representatives of national Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs), national organisations of Deaf people, and national organisations that work on disability and arts from 28 countries (27 EU countries plus the UK) with representatives of at least two organisations from each EU country and the UK. We also carried out a set of 10 interviews aimed to understand to what extent the lack of accessibility and lack of recognition of disability identities affects the cultural domain as a whole in the EU ([Urzel Francil, 2025](#)). Interviewees included representatives from umbrella organisations of cultural producers, artists, and cultural industries active at the European level. Data gathered through interviews was then complemented by data collected in two focus groups, whose participants were people promoting accessibility in arts organisations as well as engaging in European projects on arts and disability. Data collection methods and archiving are detailed in the report on 'Qualitative Data Collection and Archiving of the DANCING Project' ([Ferri, McDonough and Palladino, 2024](#)).

We also conducted arts-based research which revolved around the collaboration with the inclusive dance company Stopgap Dance Company (Stopgap). Such collaboration involved the creation, development and performance by Stopgap of an inclusive piece of choreography entitled 'Lived Fiction', which treated accessibility measures for audiences and performers as an intrinsic part of the creative process ([Ferri and Leahy, 2024](#)).

On the whole, and among other findings which are discussed in other DANCING outputs and academic findings, WP1 suggests that **accessibility and inclusion should be embedded at all organisational levels in the CCS and in all cultural activities from the outset.**

# 3 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT: CULTURAL PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## 3.1 Recognising Existing Barriers Faced by People with Disabilities

According to the former Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([Devandas-Aguilar, 2019](#)), neither awareness-raising programmes nor the generalisation of anti-discrimination measures alone will suffice for disability to be embraced as part of human diversity. Disability studies scholarship centres on how culture can challenge the devaluations of people with disabilities more generally in societies ([Jakubowicz and Meekosha, 2003](#); [Sandahl, 2018](#)). This is also consistent with the DANCING project find-

ings, which highlight that people with disabilities engaging in the arts and cultural life, as performers and producers but also as audiences, could challenge how disability is understood in societies, contributing to greater equality, and greater expressions of diversity ([Leahy and Ferri, 2023a](#)). However, challenges relating to the cultural participation of people with disabilities remain numerous ([Leahy and Ferri, 2022, 2023b, Ferri and Leahy, 2025](#)). Overall, research conducted within DANCING suggests that there are five key areas in which barriers continue to operate:

### Key Barrier Areas to Accessible and Inclusive Cultural Participation

Lack of Effective Laws and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insufficient or poorly enforced laws and cultural policies fail to involve people with disabilities, limiting their access to cultural venues and content.</li> <li>▪ Lack of consequences for non-compliance.</li> <li>▪ The burden of legal action typically falls on individuals with disabilities, making enforcement costly and discouraging.</li> </ul>
Inadequate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of funding for cultural organisations hampers the development of accessible services with costs underestimated by funding bodies.</li> <li>▪ Transport costs and other participation expenses, even for free events, often lack adequate support.</li> </ul>
Negative Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Negative attitudes, ableism, and ignorance are major barriers, influencing more obstacles to cultural participation.</li> <li>▪ Creative work by people with disabilities is often undervalued, viewed through a therapeutic lens rather than as legitimate artistic expression.</li> </ul>



## Key Barrier Areas to Accessible and Inclusive Cultural Participation

Lack of Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical inaccessibility of venues (e.g., steep ramps, inaccessible backstage areas) and non-inclusive cultural content (no captioning, no audio-description etc).</li> <li>Accessibility improvements are often fragmented, project-based, and not embedded in mainstream practices.</li> </ul>
Lack of Consultation and Involvement of People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People with disabilities are rarely consulted meaningfully or considered in leadership roles, with engagement often occurring after decisions are made.</li> <li>Employment opportunities for people with disabilities in cultural organisations are limited, partly due to structural and attitudinal barriers.</li> </ul>

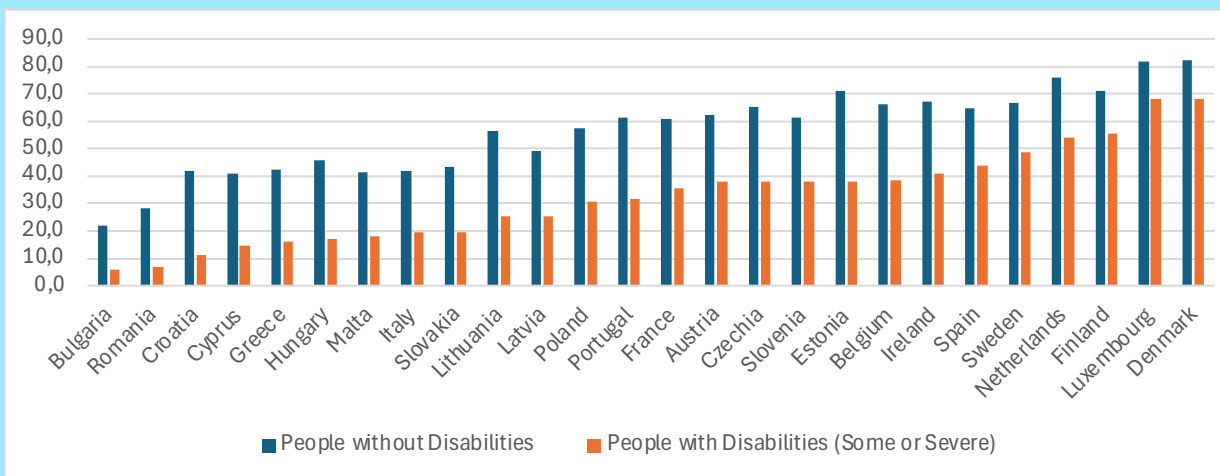


Figure 1: Cultural Attendance EU-27, 2022, People (age 16+) with and without Disabilities

**Source:** Eurostat online database, ilc\_scp37, last update: 22 August 2024, [https://doi.org/10.2908/ILC\\_SCP37](https://doi.org/10.2908/ILC_SCP37)

**Note:** Figure 1 relates to people living in private households over 16 who attended a cultural event at least once in the previous 12 months; in this context 'cultural event' means attending the cinema, attending live performance (theatre, concert, ballet) or visiting cultural sites. Data on cultural participation is not available for Germany for 2022.

## 3.2 Data on Cultural Participation by People with Disabilities

To date, there has been a dearth of quantitative data on the cultural participation of people with disabilities. Research ([Arts & Disability Ireland, 2017](#)) suggest that some of the main barriers to access to culture for people with disabilities, in Ireland at least, are related to the lack of accessibility of venues and transport options to get to destination, general lack of support, health issues, and cost of activities. Recent data from EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) made available by Eurostat, shine a light on the lower rate of cultural participation among people with some level of activity limitation and/or disability, compared to the overall population (aged 16 and over) across all EU countries ([Eurostat, 2024](#)).

### Findings of the EU-SILC Data

In addition to a lower rate of cultural participation among people with disabilities compared with the overall population across all EU countries, the EU-SILC data show that in countries with higher overall cultural participation rates, the participation rate among people with disabilities was also higher – considering attendance at a cultural activity at least once in the previous 12 months ([Eurostat, 2024](#)). In the EU in 2022, cultural participation rates greater than 50% among people with disabilities aged 16 and over were observed in Denmark (68.3%), Luxembourg (67.9%),

Finland (55.4%), and the Netherlands (55.4%). At the other end of the scale were Bulgaria (6.1%), Romania (7.1%), Croatia (11.3%), and Cyprus (14.7%). See Figure 1, which illustrates the large gaps between participation rates amongst the two groups in many countries. The Eurostat survey looked at three types of cultural activity, namely, attending the cinema, attending live performances, and visiting cultural sites. Of the three activities analysed, visiting cultural sites was most frequently practiced by people with disabilities (most popular in 19 EU member states), followed by attending live performances (most popular in 5 member states) followed by going to the cinema (most popular in 3 member states with visiting cultural sites and going to the cinema having the same participation rate in Ireland). Regarding gender issues, in 19 EU countries, the percentage of women with disabilities participating in cultural activities was higher than that of men ([Eurostat, 2024](#)) with the exception of a few southern EU countries (Greece, Spain, Italy, Malta, and Slovenia), as well as in Luxembourg and Sweden. In 13 out of 26 EU countries with available data, however, the difference in cultural participation rates between women and men did not exceed 2 percentage points, indicating that sex was not a key variable in influencing cultural participation among people with disabilities ([Eurostat, 2024](#)).

### Cultural Professionals with Disabilities

Rates of participation as cultural professionals by people with disabilities are not encompassed within the EU-SILC data, and there is very limited relevant data ([Jongerius et al., 2020](#)). Some research suggests that rates of participation for artists and professionals with disabilities are particularly low ([Arts Council England, 2017](#)). There have, however, been studies that focused on the performing arts sector, notably within the framework of [Europe Beyond Access](#), a large-scale cooperation project funded by the EU's Creative Europe programme ([European Parliament and Council, 2018](#)). It found that more than half of survey respondents rated their knowledge of work by artists with disabilities as poor or very poor, and 48% of respondents were not confident in the accessibility of their artistic programmes for artists with disabilities ([British Council, 2023](#)).

# 4 TOOLS FOR CHANGE

## 4.1 Why Should Cultural Organisations Be More Accessible and Inclusive to Persons with Disabilities?

Creating an inclusive and accessible cultural environment is an essential obligation of States Parties under the CRPD. However, besides aligning with the CRPD, and the human rights model of disability, there are **three key motivating factors** relevant for cultural organisations.

Strategic Motive	Reputational Motive	Legal Compliance Motive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Including persons with disabilities as cultural professionals in organisations <b>increases diversity</b> and expertise and enhances the ability to undertake more inclusive and diverse cultural activities.</li><li>▪ Including persons with disabilities as audiences through accessible cultural offers <b>enhances the success</b> (and potentially the income) of organisations. It also enables the identification of new opportunities which arise from a more diversified audience.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Using the accessible cultural materials/content produced by an organisation (reports, videos, exhibitions etc.) can shed light and promote the organisation, contributing towards making the organisation a leader and <b>trendsetter in the field</b>.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Accessibility <b>reduces the risks of penalties or disputes</b> arising from lack of compliance. There are increasing accessibility obligations that are relevant to cultural organisations in force in the EU, including the European Accessibility Act which will become fully effective in June 2025.</li></ul>

## Dealing with Resistance and Barriers

"ACCESSIBILITY IS EXPENSIVE"

The cost of accessibility depends on the scope, tools and approaches that are chosen. Embedding accessibility from the start of a project, or of an initiative, can facilitate the process and reduce the overall cost and workload.

"WE DON'T HAVE THE BUDGET"

Organisations need to anticipate the interests of people with disabilities by embedding accessibility in existing budget and business plan which can help manage accessibility costs better. Furthermore, as highlighted in the DANCING Resource List, many funding options, both nationally-led and EU-led, exist to support the better inclusion of people with disabilities in cultural activities.

"WE ARE UNSURE HOW TO START"

Consulting and working directly and systematically with disability-led organisations and advocates enables arts organisations to best identify and address accessibility requirements. Furthermore, creating feedback channels can offer audiences and professionals with disabilities opportunities to share input and ideas on improving accessibility.

"ACCESSIBILITY IS COMPLEX"

Accessibility is complex but can be achieved through different techniques, solutions and tools, including digital technology. It is important to involve people with disabilities from the very start to best pilot accessibility solutions and learn from existing good practices to address challenges.

"LACK OF DEMAND FOR ACCESSIBILITY"

Accessibility can help reach audiences with disabilities who may not have engaged with cultural organisations, contribute to building an inclusive, future-proof, and socially responsible organisation. Additionally, such improvements benefit a wide range of people, not just those with disabilities (parents with strollers, older people etc.).

## 4.2 Recommendations

The following list of recommendations is aimed to support cultural organisation in addressing and countering barriers faced by persons with disabilities in culture.

### INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN CULTURAL ORGANISATION

Ensure the inclusion and equal participation of people with disabilities by integrating people with disabilities in different positions in cultural organisations.

### INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Commit to the inclusion of input and influence by people with disabilities at all stages of decision-making processes in a timely manner so that they can genuinely participate in decisions. This should include advisory/supervisory boards and committees or stable consultative bodies that are involved on a routine basis in decision-making processes.

### INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

Consider and value people with disabilities for employment as artists, performers, and other roles existing in cultural organisations, and as an audience/consumers such as for example, by including free companion tickets.

### INCLUSIVE POLICIES

Embed clear inclusivity and accessibility-focused policies benefiting people with disabilities in documen-

tation, official policies and organisational planning documents (such as strategic plans and audience development plans) directly drafted and amended by the people affected.

### AWARENESS RAISING

Collaborate with other bodies to promote the importance of accessibility in cultural participation by engaging with institutions that train relevant cultural professionals to help them become more inclusive of people with disabilities and more informed about the barriers they face.

### PERIODIC AUDITING AND CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

Conduct frequent audits and reviews relating to the accessibility of infrastructures, cultural content, websites and communication channels to ensure correct policy application and to better understand and address remaining challenges.

Include persons with disabilities in all these audits and reviews.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Develop thorough staff training on accessibility, inclusion and disability awareness to a wide range of staff with the help of OPDs, while also building capacity and upskilling key staff on a permanent basis to ensure the respect and better implementation of measures.

### FUNDING

Ensure that accessibility is embedded in your budget and that organisations specifically address accessibility and disability inclusion when applying for funding opportunities.

### INCLUSIVE CULTURAL CONTENT

Promote inclusive cultural content by collaborating with artists with disabilities and ensuring diverse representation in programming, including exhibitions, performances, and workshops.

### DATA COLLECTION

Collect data on disability inclusion, on accessibility and on disability representation within your organisation and within your audience and stakeholders.

### PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY OF CULTURAL BUILDINGS/VENUES/HERITAGE SITES

Ensure all spaces are wheelchair accessible, provide tactile, Braille, and visually clear signage, offer inclusive seating, ensure assistive devices like hearing loops, and use adaptable sound and lighting systems to meet diverse accessibility requirements. Ensure availability of sign language translators and experts in Malossi language.

### EXPANSION OF ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

Consider physical and sensory accessibility beyond exhibition areas such as food services, backstage areas, and giftshops with merchandise covering diverse needs. Improve accessibility by providing distinct ac-



cessible bathroom for men and women rather than a single facility for all individuals with disabilities.

#### INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND CONTENT ACCESSIBILITY

Ensure your website, social media, and materials meet accessibility standards, provide clear and alternative formats (audio, Braille, captions, Easy-to-Read), offer accessible content (audio description, touch tours), include accessible language, and accommodate specific services (e.g., sign language interpreters) upon request.

#### RELAXED EVENTS/PERFORMANCES/EXHIBITION TIMES

Organise Relaxed Events with flexible entry and exit, adjusted sound and lighting, clear signage, and a welcoming environment. Provide quiet spaces, clear pre-event information, and accommodate individual preferences (e.g., sensory supports). Ensure staff are trained to assist, creating an inclusive atmosphere where people with disabilities feel comfortable and respected.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

Seek out and partner with OPDs to create and develop accessible opportunities centring the interests of people with disabilities.

### 4.3 Deploying a New Disability Policy

Ensuring the successful deployment of a disability policy focused on accessibility and inclusion consists of various steps to consider and apply appropriately throughout the whole process.

#### 1. Plan a New Disability Policy

- **Clarify the scope:** Ensure the policy is relevant to all stakeholders and contractors and addresses relevant concerns.
- **Identify relevant existing policies** to avoid duplication and ensure consistency.
- **Build trust with stakeholders** by prioritising a transparent, inclusive process with feedback to help build confidence and achievable goals before the deployment of a new policy.
- **Define internal processes:**
  - Clarify timelines, internal processes, budget needs, and deadlines for the policy deployment.
  - Establish a credible process to involve persons with disabilities and relevant stakeholders during consultation, development, drafting, and implementation phases.
  - Plan resources for the process itself and for the deployment of the policy, and for accessible formats (e.g., easy-to-read, Braille, video etc.).

#### 2. Engage Organisations of People with Disabilities

- **Contact OPDs** early to allow time for them to consider and respond to requests as well as to identify the demands to best shape new policies.
- **Ensure the involvement of a diverse range of OPDs** in the process, considering their areas of focus and intersectional approaches (e.g., intellectual disabilities, women/non-binary individuals, young people, migrants, LGBTQI+ members with disabilities).
- **Embed OPDs' views** in the process to be truly inclusive.

#### 3. Deploy the Policy

- **Consultation:**
  - Establish initial consultations with:
    - Persons with disabilities working in the organisation
    - OPDs
    - Stakeholders
  - Utilise working groups, advisory groups, or committees with clear terms of reference for ongoing input.
- **Draft the Policy Document:**
  - Embed input from the Consultation process and include at least one round of further consultation.
  - Provide information in a timely manner to allow participants adequate time for review and response.
  - Ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

#### ▪ **Draft the Implementation Plan:**

- Develop an Implementation plan to avoid the policy remaining a theory only.
- Identify staff members at all levels that should be involved in the participation process.

#### ▪ **Set Objectives:**

- Establish short, medium, and long-term targets for the policy to achieve its goals.
- Provide adequate training and raise awareness around the policy to ensure staff are prepared.

### 4. Implement the Policy

#### ▪ **Monitor Impact:**

- Ensure the policy leads to meaningful actions by allocating sufficient time, resources, and personnel for implementation.
- Track progress and regularly assess the implementation of the policy, notably with the help of OPDs.
- Ensure data collection to check the efficacy of the policy.

Some examples that can help you deploy your policy:

[Outdoor Arts Festivals And Events: Access Guide](#)

[The Inclusive Co-Creative Ensemble](#)

[Crash Ensemble Access Policy](#)

... and more on the DANCING Resource List!

## 4.4 Checklist for Cultural Organisations

The following checklist aims to provide cultural organisations with a better understanding of the requirements necessary to ensure an effective disability policy.

### Organisational Commitment

- Have you embedded accessibility and inclusion as core values in your organisational policies and practices?
- Are accessibility and inclusion principles explicitly mentioned in your strategic and operational plans?
- Do you have an inclusion strategy/policy? Is it informed by a human rights-centred approach, aligned with the principles of the CRPD?
- Do you have clear accountability mechanisms for accessibility and inclusion initiatives?

### Decision-Making

- Are people with disabilities involved in your organisation at all levels of decision-making, including governance, advisory boards, and committees?
- If not, in what capacity and at what levels are persons with disabilities involved?
- What type of involvement is provided?
- Have you introduced mechanisms to improve and ensure involvement at all relevant levels?
- Have you consulted OPDs and actively involved them in the planning and implementation of initiatives?

### Staff Awareness and Training

- Have staff members undergone disability awareness training?
- Is there a plan to provide ongoing training to staff on accessibility awareness and disability inclusion in the future?

### Engagement and Consultation

- Have you planned how to (continuously) involve people with disabilities at all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation?
- Is there a process to consult with stakeholders early, ensuring their inputs can influence decisions?
- Do you have mechanisms for continuous feedback by stakeholders, in particular performers and professionals as well as audiences with disabilities?
- Do you have mechanisms for providing clear feedback to stakeholders about how their inputs were used?

### Accessibility of Infrastructure and Services

- Are your facilities and venues universally accessible for people with disabilities?
- Do you provide content in accessible formats? Do you use tools such as captioning, sign language interpretation and more to enhance participation by default?
- Are digital platforms, websites, and online booking systems fully accessible and compliant with relevant accessibility legislation and standards?

### Planning and Resource Allocation

- Have you allocated sufficient resources (budget, time, and staff) to implement accessibility measures effectively?
- Is there a plan in place to provide accessible information (e.g., easy-to-read, Braille, captioned videos) for all communication materials?
- Have you mapped out clear timelines for implementing accessibility measures and ensured adequate time for adjustments?
- Have you considered external funding options both at a national and EU level? (See fundings presented in the DANCING Resource List.)

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- Do you have systems in place to monitor the implementation of accessibility measures?
- Are OPDs included in setting the indicators of evaluation and monitoring?
- Have you planned regular reviews and evaluations to identify gaps or biases in your processes?
- Have you conducted accessibility audits for both physical spaces and digital platforms?

## 4.5 Disability Policy for Cultural Organisations: What to Include?

To ensure an effective disability policy, cultural organisations should make sure to include in the values and principles they wish to uphold, their goals, the scope of the policy, precise areas of focus they wish to address, and legal standards they need to comply with.

### Values and Principles

**Inclusion and Equality** Promote equal opportunities and access for people with disabilities, eliminating barriers in participation as both audience members and professionals.

**Dignity and Respect** Recognise the rights, worth, and unique contributions of individuals with disabilities, ensuring respectful interactions.

**Universal Accessibility** Commit to creating environments, experiences, and content accessible to all, adopting universal design principles.

**Diversity** Celebrate and represent disability as part of cultural and creative diversity.

**Empowerment** Support autonomy and self-determination of individuals with disabilities, fostering agency in their cultural engagement and professional contributions.

### Goals

**Accessibility** Ensure all facilities, content, events, and digital platforms are accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities.

**Representation** Promote the visibility and participation of performers, professionals, and audiences with disabilities across all activities.

**Advocacy** Champion disability inclusion and accessibility as integral components of the organisation's mission and values.

**Training and Awareness** Ensure regular training on disability accessibility for staff and develop dedicated awareness raising strategies and campaigns.

### Scope

**Audience Inclusion** Address accessibility in venues, events, exhibitions, and digital platforms to ensure an equitable experience for all audience members.

**Professional Inclusion** Commit to equitable hiring practices, workplace accommodations, and opportunities for career development for individuals with disabilities.

**Inclusive Cultural Content** Ensure programming, events, and exhibitions include diverse stories, perspectives, and contributions from individuals with disabilities.

**Partnerships and Collaboration** Partner with disability-led organisations, advocacy groups, and artists to develop inclusive practices and content.

**Feedback Mechanisms** Implement channels for indi-

viduals with disabilities to provide input, feedback, and complaints regarding accessibility and inclusion efforts.

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## Key Areas of Focus

**Physical Accessibility** Ensure facilities (e.g., entrances, seating, back-stage areas, restrooms) are barrier-free.

**Digital Accessibility** Guarantee websites, social media, and ticketing platforms meet relevant accessibility standards (e.g. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines – WCAG standards).

**Program Design** Design programming and events that are inclusive, such as relaxed performances, sign language interpretation, and touch tours.

**Inclusive Hiring Practices** Recruit and retain employees with disabilities, providing reasonable accommodations and equitable career opportunities.

**Community Engagement** Build relationships with disability-centred communities to understand and address their interests.

**Monitoring and Evaluation** Regularly assess and update policies and practices to maintain and improve accessibility and inclusion.

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## Relevant Regulatory Frameworks

**Human Rights Frameworks** Align with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

**National and Local Laws** Comply with local and national anti-discrimination, and accessibility laws pertaining to the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities.

**Ethical Standards** Uphold inclusive ethical standards as part of a broader commitment to equality and diversity.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

By prioritising accessibility and inclusion, cultural organisations can reflect the inherent diversity of society, and reimagine the cultural landscape to fully involve people with disabilities as audience and artists or cultural professionals. This Toolkit aims to provide cultural organisations with useful tools to commence their 'inclusion journey'.

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