

Conference on the Future of Europe:

A guide
for making your event
more inclusive



Conference
on the **Future**
of **Europe**

Events taking place as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe should focus on citizens' ideas and the active involvement of participants. Even if experts can be consulted to frame the issue or to act as fact-checkers, an event should not be a top-down expert meeting and must be accessible to people who are not familiar with public debates and the topic discussed.

For people from all walks of life to participate, it is **essential that your event is as inclusive as possible**. The more diversity among participants, the better. This helps to gather more ideas that better reflect our societies as a whole, leaving nobody behind. However, many people may not have taken part in such an event before and may not be used to being involved in decision-making.

There are **simple steps you can take before, during and after the event** to make it more inclusive and accessible. Follow these tips and suggestions to help ensure that everyone feels included and safe to participate in your event.

Before the event

If you are an individual or a small group

- See if you can **team up with others** who can help you to reach out to people or help you with resources for the event. These could be local organisations involved in an issue related to the event or that have good contacts within the local community.
- **Identify issues that are important to people** and that they can debate by taking part in this event. What are relevant topics in your local area and how do they relate to the European level?
- **Adapt the time and place** of the event depending on the people you want to reach. If you want to engage young people, it could be after school in a recreational centre or by a sports pitch.
- If you are forced to hold the **event online** due to the current pandemic, try to use it as a chance to reach people from further away, maybe even in another country.
- Try using the **snowball effect** where you concentrate on engaging three people who in turn are instructed to engage three people each.
- Encourage people to host **idea collection events** with their neighbours, friends and family, colleagues and classmates. If your event is online, suggest that participants join your video event together from their classrooms, offices or living rooms. These smaller, more personal group events could even take place before your event so that participants would have already started formulating ideas and have inquired about the needs of the people around them.
- It is important that the **participants are informed of what is expected** of them if they choose to take part in the event. As the event organiser, you need to make sure that the conditions for their participation are presented in a way that is easily understood by anyone and everyone. The more they know about the process, the more likely it is that they will be interested in taking part!

If you are part of an organisation/have more resources available

- **Map out your local community** or network to understand who you could engage easily and who might be harder to reach.
- It could make sense to engage a couple of **key outreach people or organisations** who have more contacts in the public you want to reach. For example, young people who can engage other young people, or civil society organisations who work in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Try to **be where the people you want to reach are**, whether it is on social media, the local town square or schools, for example.
- **Learn the needs of the participants.** For example, in terms of accessibility, try to make sure that the space you are using for the event is easy to get to for people with disabilities as well as for people who lack the resources to travel a long way. If someone has children or dependent relatives to take care of, they might need to leave temporarily during events or need to meet at specific times during the day.
- Consider **issues** that a person who is harder to reach might care about and what would encourage them to give their time to an event like this.

The success of the Conference on the Future of Europe depends on event organisers, like you, making sure that those with disabilities are encouraged and enabled to take part in both in-person and online events.

In-person events

- Be sure that your venue is wheelchair accessible –in terms of the entrance, meeting room and bathrooms. When planning the set-up of your room, ensure that aisles are wide enough for wheelchairs. Ensure there are parking spaces available for wheelchair users.
- Have someone available to assist people and to help escort them around large spaces.
- Provide sign language interpretation.
- Follow the guidelines from the European Disability Forum:
https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2020/12/edf_guide_for_accessible_meetings_1.pdf*

Online events

- Make sure the service you are using to host the virtual event is compatible with assistive technology like screen readers and enables participants to call in by phone. It should allow for computer-based audio listening/speaking and phone-based audio listening/speaking.
- Include detailed, step-by-step directions on how to log in to the event and how to use the platform. Offer training sessions prior to the event.
- Ensure that fonts are easy to read, that text is large enough and that there is a good colour contrast. Avoid jargon, slang, and assumed knowledge to be inclusive of all attendees.
- Follow the guidelines from the European Disability Forum:
<http://edf-feph.org/edfs-electronic-resource-web-accessibility>**

* Document available in English / ** Website available in English

During the event

NB: see also the format suggested in the guide on [how to organise an event](#)

Start by creating a safe environment for fruitful discussions

- A way to create a safe and respectful environment for all participants is to collectively create **event guidelines together**, from the beginning. The guidelines could contain rules on how to behave towards each other, disagree respectfully and take into account everyone's needs and views. They should also explain the role of moderator/s.
- If discussions get too heated or directed at one person, or if other conflicts arise, you can always refer back to the **mutually agreed guidelines**.

Make sure you moderate discussions in an inclusive and accessible way

- The **presence of a professional moderator** can be of great help, as it is a delicate function to perform.
- We recommend distinguishing between the **chair** of the event and the **moderator**, as this person needs to be seen as neutral and independent from the organiser, with the task of making sure that everyone has a say.
- If people have a hard time coming up with ideas, help them out by first asking what issues they have noticed relating to the **topic in their own lives**. Then ask them what solutions there might be to those issues.
- When people are not used to being asked their opinion or to such participatory events, it can take time to come up with concrete suggestions, so **allow them to take their time**.
- If there is time, divide the groups' discussion themes into **sub-topics that are more manageable**. Breaking up the topic gives people more space to think of how these issues impact their lives, and to come up with suggestions and solutions.
- You can also ask people to split into **groups based on topics**. Try to **ensure the groups are diverse**, to make sure that balanced ideas come from each group. During the event, each group's goal is to develop at least one idea that they will present to the whole group. End the session by allowing all the groups to give feedback on each other's ideas.

After the event

- **Inform the participants of how you intend to write the report.** There are two options: (1) the report is drafted by the organisers but sent to all the participants with a deadline for potential comments; (2) the report is drafted right after the meeting with the help of (a small group) of volunteers.
- As a follow-up to the event, **encourage people to read the report on the Conference platform**, to continue the debate by staying in touch through the Conference platform, and to propose new ideas or comment on other people's ideas. Ask them also to spread the word and talk about their experience with family and friends.
- Make sure that reports are written in **clear language** that is understandable to all those who took part in the event, so that they can see their ideas reflected there.
- You can set up a survey to **get feedback on the event from participants**, and include this in your report. Don't forget to include a question on accessibility and inclusivity.