

MANUAL FOR THE ACCESS OF BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE TO CULTURAL EVENTS

Braille text representing the title of the manual.



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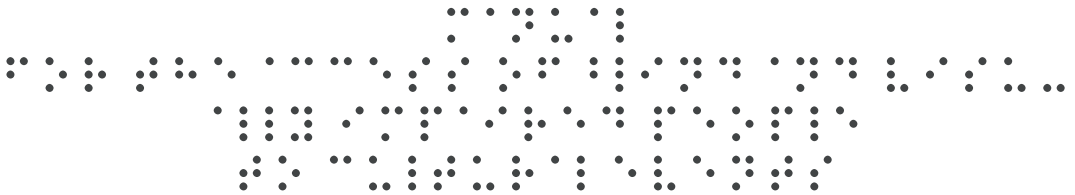


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Foreword

Accessibility in cultural institutions is essential to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their physical, mental, or social abilities, can experience and participate in culture. Everyone has the right to experience and enjoy art, but not everyone can participate in artistic and cultural events due to disabilities. For example, blind and visually impaired individuals cannot appreciate paintings in galleries, follow theatrical performances in theaters, or watch movies in cinemas and on television without audio descriptions.

In this context, accessibility means creating the necessary conditions and adaptations to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, have equal access to cultural experiences. This includes audio descriptions for artworks, theatrical performances, and films, as well as other possible adaptations to support people with disabilities. Only in this way can we ensure that culture is truly inclusive and accessible to all.

Equal access to culture is essential for a fairer and more integrated society. Here are some reasons why it is so important:

- **Equality and Social Justice:** All individuals should have the opportunity to experience culture equally because accessibility ensures that no group is excluded from the cultural experience. It also promotes inclusion, serving as a tool to break down barriers that may exclude this segment of society from full participation in cultural events.
- **Personal Development and Education:** Cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, and theaters play an important role in the education and personal development of individuals, so full accessibility ensures that everyone has the opportunity to learn, develop creativity, and benefit from cultural wealth.
- **Social Inclusion:** Cultural institutions that are accessible to all contribute to a more inclusive and united society. They provide spaces where people from different backgrounds can meet, interact, and share experiences.
- **Audience Expansion:** Institutions that invest in accessibility often attract a wider and more diverse audience. This not only increases attendance and support for these institutions but also promotes civic engagement, enriching the cultural experience for all participants.
- **Awareness and Sensitivity:** Institutions that engage in accessible practices help raise awareness and sensitivity to the diverse needs of individuals in society. This can foster a more understanding and caring culture.

About ARTPOLIS

The Center for Art and Community

Artpolis is a non-governmental organization that, through culture, art, education, and social dialogue, influences communication and positive transformation of coexistence in the community. Founded in 2004, Artpolis's vision is to create a society based on feminist values in the Western Balkans region. The mission of Artpolis is to build the cultural power of women and youth to become the inspiration and influence for societal change. The values of Artpolis are feminism, gender equality, justice, peace, education, empowerment, emancipation, humanism, and loyalty.

Artpolis is easily identified as one of the unique organizations that uses theater and other artistic forms to affirm, advocate, educate, and promote women's rights, human rights, the rights of marginalized groups, gender equality, communication with multi-ethnic communities, peacebuilding, and the empowerment of women and youth. This artistic activism makes Artpolis unique, closer to citizens, and builds sincere and stronger relationships in joint communication with the community, gaining their support. What distinguishes Artpolis from other non-governmental organizations is its high-level creative and educational collaboration with youth, support for minority communities, inclusivity, diversity of women in power, raising a voice against violence, and active and massive participation supported by the community.

1. Purpose of the Manual

This manual aims to provide guidance to help blind and visually impaired individuals navigate and access various cultural institutions and events in Kosovo. By implementing these guidelines, cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations involved in various cultural issues will enhance accessibility and ensure equal participation and engagement for this community in cultural events.

In this way, social equality will be ensured, personal development will be achieved, and the education of blind and visually impaired individuals will be promoted. The main goal is to ensure greater inclusion of blind and visually impaired individuals in the arts and culture sector through this manual, expanding the audience and, not only that, but also raising awareness and sensitivity towards this group. In addition to expanding the audience, the aim is to provide opportunities for this group to showcase their artistic talents, which are numerous, and to engage in artistic activities according to their capacities.

Target Audience

This manual is designed for use by:

- Cultural and Artistic Festivals
- Non-Governmental Organizations Involved in Cultural and Artistic Issues
- Cultural Institutions Operating in Kosovo
- Organizations that Work with People with Disabilities
- Resource Centers for Education and Counseling in Kosovo
- Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals.

2. General overview and analysis of the current situation of the blind and visually impaired community

Definition

Visual impairment refers to difficulty in orientation and challenges in reading. “Anyone who has difficulty reading or has difficulty orienting with the help of vision has visual impairment. Most people may perceive colors and objects poorly or have a very limited field of vision. Others have difficulty when it is dark or when bright sunlight shines intensely.”

“Visual impairment occurs when a specific condition of the eye affects the visual system and its visual functions, resulting in severe consequences for the individual throughout their life. The main causes of visual impairment and blindness globally are refractive errors and cataracts.”

According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, in the publication of June 2024, approximately 1,849 (the number varies month to month and year to year) people are registered in the blind persons’ scheme. However, the Kosovo Association of the Blind suggests that the number of blind and visually impaired individuals...

Challenges and Barriers to Accessibility

The challenges faced by this category in daily life in our country are numerous and vary, including social, environmental, and technological factors.

Limited access to streets and public squares – lack of tactile paving, inability to use public transport, challenges in the education sector due to the lack of Braille educational materials and tools, employment, limited social interaction, restrictions in accessing healthcare services (lack of adequate signage and audio descriptions), and stigma and stereotyping. All these are barriers that prevent the engagement and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in daily activities, including cultural and artistic ones.

Access to various cultural events and institutions for people with disabilities in Kosovo is quite limited. This is evidenced by research conducted as part of the “Guideline for Access to Cultural Heritage Sites for People with Disabilities,” funded by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (MKRS). In response to the question “What is the reason you have never visited a cultural heritage site? (e.g., museum, tower, castle, or archaeological site),” respondents answered as follows:

52.9% - I did not have information about the cultural heritage site.

47.1% - I do not have transport to reach the site.

35.3% - I do not know how to enter the site.

29.4% - I do not know how to visit the floors of the site .

23.5% - I do not have an assistant to help me.

23.5% - Exhibits are not accessible.

Regarding accessibility for blind and visually impaired individuals to cultural and artistic events, there are no accessible elements in our country; we are talking about fundamental elements that serve for the access, use, and orientation of blind individuals. This is due to unsuitable infrastructure, lack of signage, lack of voice guides, absence of materials in Braille, and audio descriptions. The latter refers to:

1. *Artistic programs and other materials that are not available in Braille, either in print or audio. This includes books, brochures, and informational materials distributed in theaters, museums, cinemas, and festivals.*
2. *Audio descriptions of artistic performances, such as films and theater productions, that would allow blind and visually impaired individuals to understand and enjoy these events.*

Addressing these barriers is essential to ensure that individuals in this category can participate in and enjoy cultural and artistic events equally. However, if in time, and why not now, Administrative Instruction No. 33/2007 ON TECHNICAL CONDITIONS OF BUILDINGS FOR ACCESS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES were a priority for state institutions and was taken seriously and implemented in all its aspects, many of the barriers faced by communities of people with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired, would have been eliminated or minimized. Through the full implementation of this instruction, equal access to public

institutions and cultural events would be guaranteed, significantly improving the quality of life and active participation of this community in society. Implementing the standards set for infrastructure and physical access is crucial to ensuring an inclusive environment where all citizens could participate in public and cultural life without discrimination or obstacles.

3. Legal Framework for Equal Access for Persons with Disabilities in Kosovo

In Kosovo, domestic legislation clearly prohibits discrimination based on disability. According to the latest report from the Ombudsperson, although there are specific laws governing the issues of persons with disabilities, a comprehensive, harmonized law that addresses all groups of these individuals is still lacking.

However, the legal framework and strategic documents related to the rights of persons with disabilities are harmonized with international documents, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), adopted by the United Nations in 2006, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union from 2000.

At the State Level

1. Law No. 04/L-092 on Persons with Visual Impairments regulates the legal status of visually impaired persons in the Republic of Kosovo. Article 11, paragraph 1 of this law specifies that, “Visually impaired persons are provided with information in braille, raised print, enlarged text, and audio for all public signage, official public information, literature, textbooks, and books at all school levels in collaboration with the Kosovo Association of the Blind.” Meanwhile, Article 12, paragraph 3 of the same law emphasizes that “The government, in its function of rehabilitation and recreation for the blind, supports their cultural activities and ensures their free participation in cultural and sports events.” And Article 15, paragraph 1 highlights that “Responsible institutions for the approval of infrastructure projects and territorial regulation do not approve any project for roads and public spaces unless the necessary and possible adaptations for blind persons are taken into account.”

2. Law on Protection from Discrimination defines the various forms of discrimination. In “Article 4, it is clearly stated that the failure to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, in line with their specific needs, constitutes discrimination, except where this would impose an undue burden on the person required to provide it, and this does not conflict with current legislation, taking into account factors such as the use of available public resources, participation in social and public life, and ensuring access to workplaces and appropriate working conditions.”
3. The National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2013-2023 is an important document that aims to improve access and equality for persons with disabilities in Kosovo. The strategy emphasizes the importance of universal access, ensuring that products, services, environments, and communities are accessible and usable by everyone without the need for special modifications. In Strategic Objective No. 5, the focus is placed on creating equal conditions for access, information, communication, and participation, as well as establishing a unified data system for persons with disabilities. This objective aims to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to the physical environment, transportation, information, and information technology. This document is a significant step toward improving the lives of persons with disabilities in Kosovo and fulfilling their rights based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Regarding the challenges of access to cultural and artistic events, this strategy can help address existing barriers and promote greater accessibility for all, including the blind and visually impaired.
4. The Cultural Heritage Protection Strategy 2017-2027, under Objective 5, emphasizes the importance of education, training, and active participation in the protection of cultural heritage for all citizens. Although it does not directly refer to the specific barriers faced by persons with disabilities, the strategy mentions improving “access for all” as a universal right. This inclusion of the concept of access for all implies that concrete steps should be taken to ensure that even persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to experience and protect cultural heritage. This is particularly important for improving Kosovo’s image, not only domestically but also internationally.

At the International Level

1. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes in Article 30 that it “recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in the cultural life of their country and will take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:
 - (a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in all accessible formats.
 - (b) Enjoy access to television programs, films, theaters, and other cultural activities in accessible formats.
 - (c) Enjoy access to cultural institutions and services, such as theaters, museums, cinemas, libraries, and tourism services, and, as much as possible, access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.”

Last year, although Kosovo had the opportunity to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into its Constitution, this was not done. Its ratification was postponed until Kosovo becomes a full member of the United Nations.

4. Recommendations for equal and inclusive opportunities

In Kosovo, although several initiatives have been undertaken and there have been collaborations between the Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired of Kosovo and the National Museum of Kosovo, the Museum in Gjakova, and the Museum in Mitrovica, regarding accessibility to information for the community in these public institutions, efforts have been made to describe some of the exhibits (the most important exhibits in the museum) in tactile maps for visitors from this community. However, despite these important steps, the lack of physical accessibility in these institutions represents a significant barrier to fully utilizing these resources by the community.

Meanwhile, the National Library of Kosovo “Pjetër Bogdani” has already created the infrastructural conditions for the section of society made up of persons with disabilities. As for the community of the blind and visually impaired, it has a designated cabinet. The special cabinet for the blind and visually impaired is an important step toward improving accessibility and opportunities for the community to access educational and cultural materials and resources.

Accessibility is a primary and crucial aspect, both in general and in specific terms, which must be considered and acted upon if we are to implement the principle of inclusion. If practical measures are taken, we will have more inclusive and accessible cultural and artistic institutions for all citizens, ensuring that every individual can fully enjoy cultural and artistic life.

Moreover, we are also witnesses to the fact that one of the barriers to equal opportunities is the lack of access to cultural and artistic events, because in theaters, cinemas, and festivals in Kosovo, there is a lack of adequate signals, audio descriptions, and programs in Braille, making it very difficult for blind people to participate and experience these activities. However, to ensure full and equal infrastructural and informational access, careful planning is required, and the following special measures must be taken:

4.1 Spaces:

Spaces in buildings need to be easy to reach and provide easy access to help blind and visually impaired individuals orient themselves more easily and independently.

Guidance:

It is necessary to use spaces or make necessary interventions in spaces so that they are suitable for blind and visually impaired individuals. For this purpose, the following conditions must be met:

- **Wide Spaces for Movement:** Spaces should have wide corridors and areas to allow free and safe movement.
- **Obstacle-Free Spaces:** Ensure that spaces are free of obstacles that may hinder movement.
- **Automatic Doors with Clear and Accessible Buttons:** Doors equipped with large, bright buttons placed at an appropriate height to be easily reachable.



Photo 1. Inclusive spatial orientation for recreation / ©www.archdaily.com obstacles that may hinder movement



Photo 2. The combination of material and acoustic features to assist blind people /©www.cavagnero.com»



Photo 3. Floor with tactile paths near the entrance/exit

4.2 Clear Entrance and Exit Routes:

- **Tactile Paths:** Raised tiles, strips, or textured paths that assist blind and visually impaired individuals in independently navigating toward doorways.
- **Visible Signs and Signals:** Clear and visible signage to guide visually impaired individuals.
- **Elevators:** Ensure elevators provide easy access to all floors of a building, with clearly marked control panels and audio options for navigation.

To enhance accessibility and usability, it is important to implement these guidelines in all public and private spaces, including theaters, cinemas, museums, and other cultural and educational venue

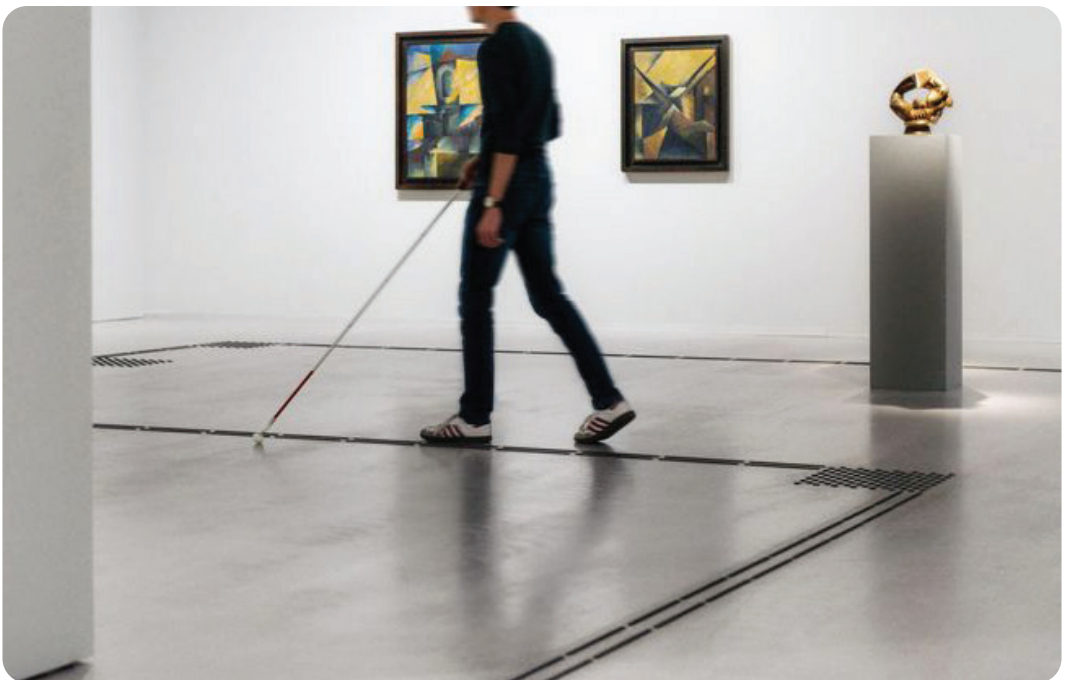


Foto 4. Inclusive Museum / <https://berlinischegalerie.de/en/berlinische-galerie/the-museum>

4.3 Clear Signage for Orientation

Guidance: Interior spaces in buildings should have clear orientation signage. For example:

- Signage should include large, high-contrast signs with simple and bold text, along with universal symbols indicating locations such as “Entrance” and “Exit.”
- These signs should be positioned at eye level.
- Signs should include Braille for those who are completely blind. Braille and high-contrast signs serve the same function.

Example:

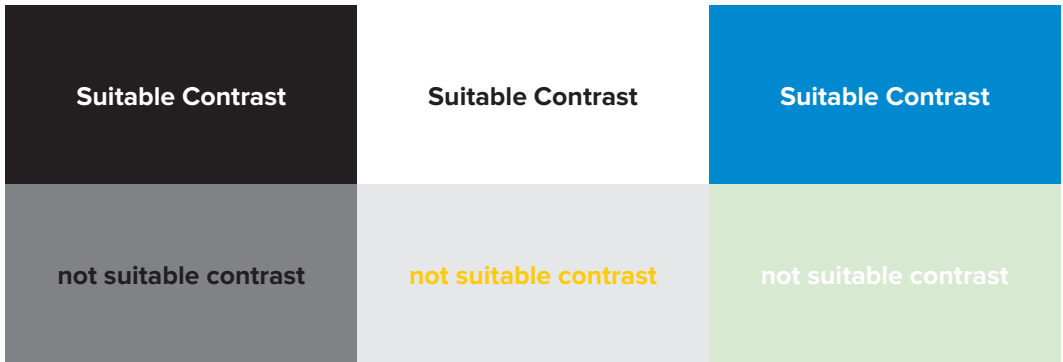


Photo 5. Example of how the text should look for the visually impaired

Benefits of Clear Signage for Orientation:

1. Increased Accessibility:

- Clear and readable signage makes buildings more accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities.

2. Easier Navigation:

- Eye-level, high-contrast signs help all visitors orient themselves easily.

3. Enhanced Safety:

- Clear and readable signage improves safety in emergencies, making exits and entrances easily identifiable.

4. Social Inclusion:

- The use of Braille in signage promotes the social inclusion of blind individuals, ensuring they have the same level of information as everyone else.

Implementation Tips:

- *Select durable and easy-to-maintain materials for signage.*
- *Consider using appropriate lighting to ensure signage is visible even in low-light conditions.*
- *Engage design professionals and accessibility experts to ensure that signage is effective and complies with the latest accessibility standards*

Implementing clear orientation signage is an important step toward creating an accessible and inclusive environment for everyone.

4.4 Voice Guide

Guidance: The voice guide is an extremely useful tool for directing people through spaces within buildings. If interventions are allowed and feasible, it is recommended to install voice guides. These guides can assist in the following ways:

- **Visitor Orientation:** Voice guides can provide clear and accurate directions to guide people to their desired destinations within the space. This may include information on direction, distance, and any obstacles that may be encountered along the way.
- **Detailed Information:** Voice guides can provide detailed information about the facilities and services offered, helping visitors have a more complete and enjoyable experience.
- **Ease of Use:** These guides are typically simple to use and can be activated by touch or voice command, making them accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities.
- **Increased Safety:** By accurately and clearly guiding people, voice guides can contribute to a safer environment, reducing the likelihood of getting lost or having accidents within large or complex spaces. These systems can be particularly useful in museums, theaters, cinemas, shopping centers, airports, and any other place where accurate orientation is important for a good visitor experience.

4.5 Accessible Seating

Guidance: In the organization of cultural and artistic events, it is always important to consider that blind and visually impaired individuals should be accommodated in areas where seating is easily accessible. These areas should be located near the entrance to facilitate easier entry and exit. For cultural events with an organized program, dedicated spaces should be assigned for individuals with disabilities.

4.6 Audio Description of Various Cultural Events

Guidance: To provide blind and visually impaired individuals with equal opportunities to experience various cultural and artistic events, it is necessary to offer the service of audio description.

Audio description enables blind and visually impaired individuals to follow cultural or sporting events such as festivals, films, theater, art, football, etc. This form of communication uses voice to describe visual elements, including environments, clothing, and facial expressions. The interpreter selects what is visible and important to the event to describe.

Audio description can also be applied in art galleries. The audio descriptions should be detailed, verbally describing visual elements, context, and the artist's intent. This can be done through guided tours or by offering audio guides available at the event.



Photo 6. The visually impaired and low-vision audience experience a theatrical performance through live audio description at the International Theatre Festival of Nepal 2022.

4.7 Enlarged Fonts

It is very important that cultural and artistic actors in Kosovo, including festivals, non-governmental organizations, and institutions, consider the needs of all citizens and take initiatives to ensure that artistic programs and accompanying materials for cultural and artistic events are accessible to everyone.

Guidance: This refers to text printed in a larger font size compared to standard text. The use of a larger font can make reading easier for those with visual impairments or other reading difficulties, such as when offering an event program.

Example: The FemArt Festival, in its eleventh edition, has taken a step forward regarding accessibility in materials for blind and visually impaired individuals, presenting the program of the 11th edition of the Festival in Braille and large font (font size 20) and has also prepared a guide for internal needs of the Festival to create accessibility and inclusion in artistic programs and other materials, it is important for festivals, non-governmental organizations, and institutions to build relationships and collaborate with the Associations of the Blind and Visually Impaired in Kosovo, as well as with the Intermunicipal Association of the Blind in Peja, and the Resource Center for Learning and Counseling (special education school) “Xheladin Deda” in Peja.

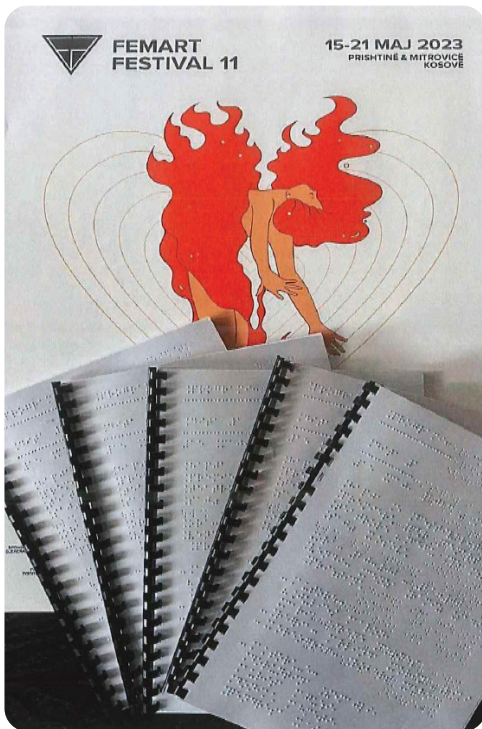


Photo 7: Program of the 11th edition of the FemArt Festival (2023) presented in Braille and large font (font size 20).

This approach helps ensure the inclusion of these groups in cultural and artistic activities, providing them with equal opportunities to participate and contribute to cultural life.

4.8 Tactile Exhibitions

Creating conditions for organizing Tactile Exhibitions in museums and galleries in Kosovo is an important step towards including the community of blind and visually impaired individuals in cultural and artistic activities.

What are tactile exhibitions?

Guideline: Tactile exhibitions are realized by incorporating tactile replicas or models of specific artworks. The replicas should be safe and easily accessible, allowing participants to touch and explore the textures, shapes, and other physical aspects of the art. These exhibitions offer the opportunity for blind and visually impaired individuals to participate in collective or personal exhibitions and appreciate art through other senses.



Photo 8: Visitors are able to feel the works of Pieter Brueghel and Leonardo da Vinci.
Source: Valentin Häüy-Brussels.

4.9 Accessible Website

Ensuring access to information about cultural and artistic activities for blind and visually impaired individuals is crucial for their inclusion in the cultural life of Kosovo. Creating accessible websites is an important step in this direction.

Guideline:

The website should be navigable using only a keyboard, with a logical tab order and clear focus indicators. It should also include audio descriptions for videos. Text should have high contrast with the background and allow for text size adjustments for individuals who are partially blind.

Example:

An accessible website is the one from the Kosovo Disability Forum, www.kdf-ks.org.

Cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, and digital service providers in Kosovo should collaborate to ensure that information about cultural and artistic activities is accessible to all citizens, including blind and visually impaired individuals. This will help create a more inclusive and equitable cultural environment for everyone.

4.10 Quiet Space (Rest Area)

Guideline:

Designating a quiet or rest area within a cultural event (concert, festival, or longer performance) is essential for participants with sensory sensitivities who may need a break from potential overstimulation. This space should be calm and accessible, offering a retreat from the bustling environment.

Foto 9. Quiet space at Diverse Festival, UK / <https://www.diverseuk.org/sensory-calm-space/>



4.11 Assistance and Support Services

To improve access for blind and visually impaired individuals to cultural and artistic events in Kosovo, the provision of assistance and support services is essential.

Guidance:

Personal Assistants

- Availability of Personal Assistants:
 - Cultural and artistic institutions must ensure that visually impaired individuals have access to personal assistants during events.
 - These assistants can help with orientation in event spaces, explaining visual details, and navigating other necessary services.

Staff Training

The staff of institutions must be trained to assist and respond to the needs of blind and visually impaired individuals. The training should include:

- Understanding the challenges faced by blind and visually impaired individuals.
- The ability to communicate clearly and respectfully.
- The use of assistive technologies and other support resources.
- Familiarity with protocols for emergency situations involving blind and visually impaired individuals.

The implementation of these measures will help create a more accessible and inclusive environment for all participants in cultural and artistic events.

4.12 Appropriate Technology

Improving the experience of blind and visually impaired visitors at cultural and artistic events in Kosovo can be achieved using assistive technological tools.

Guidelines:

Audio Description Devices

Description: These devices provide detailed descriptions of events, exhibitions, or performances using audio.

Usage Instructions:

- **Preparation of Materials:** Event organizers should create well-prepared audio descriptions for each piece of work, including details about the art, artists, and historical context.
- **Easy Accessibility:** Devices should be easily accessible to visitors, offering them at the entrance or through dedicated applications.
- **Staff Training:** Staff should be trained to assist visitors in using the devices and to ensure that they have an enjoyable experience.



“Photo 10. A gallery visitor using the Discovery Stylus at Butler Gallery, Kilkenny.”

2. Smartphone Applications

Description: Smartphone applications can offer personalized content, audio descriptions, and guidance for visitors.

Usage Instructions:

- **Creation of Applications:** Organizers should develop applications that provide options for audio descriptions, as well as interactive maps to help orient visitors.
- **Integration with Assistive Technology:** Applications should be compatible with other technologies such as screen readers, to ensure access for those with special needs.
- **Regular Updates:** Keep applications updated with new content and information about events, as well as improvements in functionality.

4.13 Tactile Maps

Description: Tactile maps are an excellent tool to help visitors understand physical spaces and locations at an event.

Usage Instructions:

- **Creation of Tactile Maps:** Maps should include simple and clear symbols to represent key locations and facilities within the space.
- **Strategic Placement:** Ensure that maps are placed in easily accessible locations, such as at the entrance and at various points throughout the event.
- **Staff Training:** Staff should be trained to assist visitors in interpreting the maps and providing necessary information.



“Photo 11. A child using the tactile map/linear classifier.”

4.14 Augmented Reality (AR) Technology

Description: Augmented reality can provide interactive experiences that help visitors explore events in a more engaging way.

Usage Instructions:

- **Development of AR Applications:** Create applications that use AR to provide additional information and descriptions about the art and performances.
- **Integration with Accessibility:** Ensure that AR applications are compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers.
- **Creation of Unique Experiences:** Offer AR content designed to engage visitors and help them better understand the artwork.

The use of these assistive technologies can help create a more open and inclusive environment for blind and visually impaired visitors. Event organizers should commit to meeting the needs of all visitors, creating a rich and accessible cultural experience for everyone.

5. Summary of recommendations for target groups

Recommendations	Target Groups
Accessible Spaces	Cultural institutions in general, various festivals
Clear Entrance and Exit Paths	Cultural institutions in general, various festivals
Clear Directions for Orientation	Cultural institutions in general, various festivals
Audio Guide	Galleries, Theaters, Various Festivals
Accessible Seating	Theaters, Various Festivals
Audio Description of Various Cultural Events	Theaters, Galleries, Various Cultural Festivals
Enlarged Letters	Galleries, Festivals, Theaters
Tactile Exhibitions	Galleries
Accessible Websites	Cultural Institutions in General, Festivals
Quiet Spaces (Rest Areas)	Festivals, Cultural Institutions in General
Assistance and Support Services	Festivals & Theaters
Suitable Technology	Cultural Institutions in General, Festivals
Tactile Maps	Galleries, Festivals
Augmented Reality (AR) Technology	Theaters, Museum, Festivals

6. Successful Examples from the Region and the World

Various countries in the region have taken different initiatives regarding accessibility for blind and visually impaired individuals at cultural events. Below are some of the listed examples from which we, as a country, can draw inspiration and follow their example:

- **National Museum of Slovenia:** It is gradually updating its permanent historical and art collections at Metelkova with elements that make exhibitions more accessible to blind and visually impaired visitors. The exhibition of Rudolf Cvetko, which presented the country's first Olympian, was showcased with copies that visitors could touch and feel, along with Braille legends.
- **National Museum of Serbia and the Museum of Natural Sciences:** They organize tactile exhibitions for blind individuals. Accessibility was one of the criteria for the projects presented at the European Heritage Days in Belgrade, and from 2005 to 2007, an expert with disabilities was a member of the organizing committee of the European Heritage Days in Belgrade.
- **National Theatre in England:** It has created the Accessibility Scheme, which allows people with hearing issues, disabilities, and neurodivergent individuals to register to reserve their and their companions' seats. Additionally, they have designed an assisted performance program using various devices that enable people with disabilities to experience the performances.
- **In Slovakia,** besides the Culture Program for People with Disabilities, the Ministry of Culture also has other programs that subsidize and facilitate cultural access for the blind—specifically, the subsidy program for Cultural Activities in Public Knowledge Depositories, Libraries, and the sub-programs of Library Activities and the Cultural Vouchers subsidy program, which may include special schools (e.g., schools for blind children and youth, blind artists or those with disabilities presenting their programs). The Audiovisual Fund subsidy system supports audio commentary and subtitles for audiovisual works.

- **The National Gallery in Prague** offers blind and visually impaired visitors a VR experience that allows them to “touch” three of the world’s greatest sculptural masterpieces. With haptic gloves, blind and visually impaired visitors can explore tactile VR copies of the Head of Nefertiti, Venus de Milo, and Michelangelo’s David, allowing them to experience these works of art for the first time.
- **“The Color I Touch”** is an educational program for blind children organized by Istanbul Modern. The program consists of expert-led exhibition tours, seminars, and audio-described film screenings to introduce children to art and give them an opportunity to explore and interpret it. “The Color I Touch” is offered for free to blind children.
- **The Tactile Museum in Athens:** The aim of the Tactile Museum in Athens, created by the Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece, was to find a way for blind and visually impaired people to enjoy ancient Greek art. All the pieces in the museum are replicas of originals found in other museums across the country, and all pieces can be experienced by touch.
- **In Sweden, Riksteatern Crea** has been producing performing arts in sign language, by and for deaf artists and sign language artists, as well as deaf cultural artists, since the 1970s. Their current production of *A Doll’s House*, with a cast of 3 deaf actors and 1 hearing actor, uses Swedish sign language as the primary language.
- **Relaxed performances:** Also known as “Relaxed Performances” or “Sensory-Friendly Performances”. Relaxed performances were originally designed to make shows more accessible to people with disabilities under the usual rules of theater etiquette. The principles of these performances are clarity, understandable information, and a relaxed approach to quiet movements and noise from the audience.

- **The Social Model of Disability:** According to the Social Model, disability is viewed as a social construct created by barriers that can be changed and eliminated, providing a dynamic and positive model that identifies the causes of exclusion and inequality and proposes a solution. It is up to society to make the changes, not the person with a disability; for individuals and organizations to understand and then make the necessary adjustments to stop the marginalization and exclusion of people whose bodies and minds do not conform to society's idea of what is normative and acceptable.

Conclusion

By intertwining these elements, this handbook can serve as a practical and empowering resource, ensuring that individuals with visual impairments and blindness can participate in and enjoy cultural events. Using this handbook, the goal is to fulfill legal requirements for inclusivity and promote the opportunity for all citizens, without distinction, to be part of art and culture. Another important goal is that, by applying the recommendations in this manual, the Republic of Kosovo will serve as a model of inclusiveness in cultural events, becoming an example for other countries that do not yet have such a model. This handbook will be a guide for planning various events such as festivals, theatrical performances, exhibitions, etc. Furthermore, the use and implementation of this manual will promote awareness of the right to participate in cultural events for everyone, including people with disabilities. Participation in these events enriches the mind and soul, and the experience of cultural and artistic works should be accessible to everyone, everywhere, and always.

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Links:

1. [Who is Visually Impaired?](#)
2. [WHO Fact Sheets: Blindness and Visual Impairment](#)
3. [10 Accessible Art and Museum Experiences](#)
4. [Making Museums Accessible to Visually Impaired Visitors](#)
5. [10 Great Examples of Architecture for the Blind Around the World](#)
6. [Who is Visually Impaired?](#)
7. [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Albanian](#)
8. [Tactile Tour Art Exhibition for Blind and Visually Impaired in Brussels](#)

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