

Tips for an accessible event

For the municipality of Rotterdam, I, Marianne Dijkshoorn, founder of Welcome Accessibility & Events, advised on accessibility for people with different types of disabilities at the Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift Grand Départ Rotterdam 2024. You may get some tips from this summary for events in your city.

Number of people with disabilities

In the Netherlands, 1 in 5 people have a disability that requires accessibility facilities daily. These are people with a physical, hearing, visual or cognitive disability. People with disabilities generally want to remain as independent as possible and do not want extra attention, but they sometimes need this. This number is increasing rapidly due to the ageing population and the consequences of Covid.

Communicate in advance via the website.

Accessibility starts with communication in advance. If people with disabilities do not know what accessibility facilities have been arranged, they will be less likely to come because they have often experienced inaccessible situations.

It would be nice if the information about accessibility were on one page. This could be an accessibility page under the frequently asked questions. People with disabilities actively look for a page about accessibility after the program is announced.

An accessibility page requires information about where people with disabilities can attend the event, how they can get an equivalent experience, and where and which facilities, such as accessible toilets, can be found.

Equal experience at events

You go to an event to experience the program. You usually do this together with a group of people, such as your partner, family members, and/or friends. The people who come along for fun often support those with disabilities with small things such as holding a door open, getting a drink, and helping to put on a coat.

You generally don't come to an event for the facilities but for the program and the experience. Therefore, more accessibility is required than just a wheelchair-accessible toilet and a barrier-free zone. To offer an equivalent experience, there are many options at events, such as an accessible platform, low stimulus space, audio description, and subtitles on live screens.

Exitability in the event of an emergency

If you give people access to a location or event, you also have to consider leaving in case of an emergency—the so-called exitability. In the event of an emergency, people with disabilities need more than wheelchair-accessible escape routes to a safe place, which varies per emergency.

As an organizer, you are partly responsible for the safety of visitors. It is good to describe people with visual, hearing, cognitive and physical disabilities in a safety plan.



Tips on where to begin

1. Read up on accessibility at events; for example, through the book: ['Make Your Event Accessible for Everyone'](#)
2. Always have events tested by someone with knowledge of accessibility at events.
3. Consciously look for suppliers with accessible products. Not all rentable accessible products are truly accessible. For example, some wheelchair-accessible toilets in circulation do not fit a wheelchair. For inspiration, see: <https://geenbeperkingmeer.nl/brochure/>

