Welcoming and safe for everyone!
Useful tips for an accessible fair stand

Frankfurter Buchmesse welcomes all interested professionals and readers. People of all ages with a wide variety of native and second languages, people who are either temporarily or long-term dependent on a wheelchair or rely on a hearing aid, parents with children, those blind or partially sighted, neurodivergent people – the list goes on.

Your exhibition stand should enable visitors to access and use it without assistance, regardless of their physical or sensory abilities. Offering special solutions only when needed should only be considered in exceptional cases. After all, only a stand accessible without the need for rearrangements and detours will be inviting and friendly.

Those without special needs also benefit from an accessible stand. Information is easier to understand and products are easier to reach. It also reduces the risk of accidents amid the hustle and bustle of the fair.

The following tips are designed to help you make your stand welcoming for everyone:

First steps

- Start by analysing the layout of your stand. **Identify potential barriers** such as steps, narrow passages, poor lighting or products or information that are difficult to reach.
- Use **feedback from people with disabilities** or accessibility experts to identify potential problems.
- Some improvements can be made without much effort. Others may require more time and resources.
- Generally speaking: **every measure to remove barriers is a step towards a more inviting and accessible stand.**

Spatial design and furniture

Entrances and walkways

- **Avoid steps and thresholds.** Not only people in wheelchairs, with walking aids or pushchairs will benefit from this – during a busy fair, anyone could miss a step and trip up.

  A ground-level stand without an elevated floor structure invites everyone and encourages to simply take a look. Additionally, it may reduce costs.
- If an elevation is an unavoidable part of the design, try **bevelling the edge of the stand towards the aisle**. Please ensure that the slope is as gentle as possible, as otherwise the bevelled edge may stay an insurmountable obstacle for people with limited mobility and the risk of tripping will remain.

- If you cannot or do not want to do without steps, please mark them clearly with full-length **contrasting stripes**. Provide step-free access to the stand by means of one or several ramps of sufficient width (usable width of at least 1.2 m) with level manoeuvring areas at the ends (1.5 m x 1.5 m, see also DIN 18040-1).
- Make sure you provide the ramp(s) in a prominent position (e.g. next to the reception); nobody wants to be shown to the far corner to gain access to your stand.

Available space

- Create **sufficient space** so that all visitors can move around your stand easily. To allow wheelchairs to pass through without difficulty, passageways should be at least 1.2 m wide and manoeuvring spaces of at least 1.5 m x 1.5 m (DIN 18040-1).
- **Seating** is also important, especially for older people or people with walking aids, see also the section on 'Furniture' below.
- **Tables and shelves** with wheelchair access will allow people with reduced mobility to place books down and browse through them.

Furniture

- Not everybody can use bar-type high tables, so do make sure you offer a sufficient number of **low, wheelchair accessible tables**.
- **Information counters** are often only designed with standing visitors in mind. A lower counter (approx. 85 cm) allows shorter visitors or those in wheelchairs to have a pleasant conversation. This is even more important at handover counters such as cash desks, headphone dispensers etc.
- When **positioning the information counter**, make sure that accessibility is not compromised further - for example, if it is too close to a step at the stand edge.
- Different **seating options**, soft or hard, with or without back or arm rests, will cater for different needs when it comes to sitting in comfort. People with physical disabilities, and most older people, rely on arm rests for standing up. Benches or low stools will make it tricky for them to get up.

Flooring

- **Avoid deep pile carpeting**, as this is almost impossible to negotiate with a wheelchair.

Lighting

- Ensure that the lighting on the stand is **sufficiently bright but not dazzling**.

Noise levels

- Minimise loud background noise (e. g. from coffee machines) and offer **quiet meeting areas**.
- Dense fabrics such as felt used as wall covering or as a 'room divider', or thicker carpet such as velour, help to reduce background noise. Plants can also be useful in this regard.

Presentation of products and information

Objects for handling

- All products that may be picked up for closer inspection, as well as touchscreens or information material to take away, should be presented at **a maximum height of 85 cm**. The best way to organise bookshelves is to arrange several copies of the same title vertically so everyone can reach them with ease.
- **Low furniture placed in front of shelves can make it difficult** or even impossible to reach products. People in wheelchairs, for example, cannot always lean forward far enough.

Wall graphics and monitors

- **Information texts on walls** should be printed at a height of between 90 and 160 cm so that they are easy to read for both standing and seated visitors.
- A maximum height of 190 cm is recommended for **pictures and pictograms**.
- When designing the graphics of information, ensure **good legibility**: we recommend a reduced choice of colours with maximum contrast (DIN 32975), for example black/white or red/white, as well as a font without serifs with a normal line width (see also DIN 1450).
- Use **screens** with adjustable contrast and font size.
- Use **plain language and images** to make information more accessible.

Stand stages

If you are planning presentations or readings to an audience at your stand and are setting up a separate area for this purpose, you should also ensure accessibility there:

- **Lecterns** should be wheelchair accessible and height-adjustable.
- The stage should offer **step-free access** for its speakers. If there is no space for a permanently installed ramp, a mobile ramp could be set up quickly if required.
- **Seating for the audience** should – at least partially – have backrests, because not everyone can sit on a stool for long periods of time.
- Wheelchairs are often only given space at the edge of the audience section. **Suitably wide and appropriately marked gaps in the rows** will signal that people in wheelchairs are really welcome.
- People with impaired auditory abilities often find it easier to follow the event if they can look the speakers in the face and on the lips. **Staggered rows of chairs** and a raised stage will be helpful in this context; alternatively, seats in the front row could be reserved accordingly.

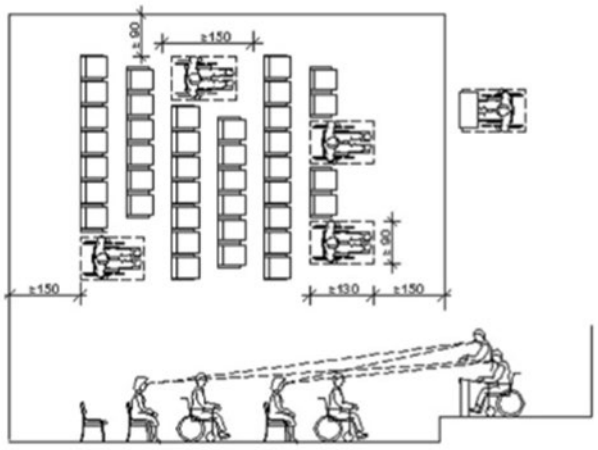

Image source: https://nullbarriere.de/din18040-1-versammlungsstaetten.htm

- Also check **technical solutions to support people with hearing impairments** (e.g. induction loops or Bluetooth transmission for people with hearing aids). Headphones to suppress background noise are also useful and comfortable for visitors in general.
- **Sign language interpretation** will make your event accessible for deaf people.
- **Captioners** who translate the spoken word live into written text not only help people with hearing impairments but also those in the audience with different native languages.

Briefing your staff

Prepare your stand team for interacting with people with special needs.

- Firstly, **all relevant information should be available**, for example the route to accessible toilets and lifts.
- Despite all efforts, however, barriers can also arise spontaneously at the stand, which can be removed with **attention and flexibility** - or at the very least help to do so.
- The most important thing is to **communicate with those affected as equals**. If you are unsure whether and what help a person requires, you will not be able to provide appropriate support and can quickly come across as overbearing.

The information in this document is based on the results of the scientific project 'FBM for All', which Frankfurter Buchmesse carried out together with the Urban Health Games research group at TU Darmstadt (Department of Architecture). It also incorporates feedback from participants at Frankfurter Buchmesse as well as research and experience gained as part of the work of the FBM focus group 'Removing Barriers'.

For more information on accessibility at Frankfurter Buchmesse, see https://www.buchmesse.de/en/about-us/accessibility.