MAŁOPOLSKA
KULTURA WRAŻLIWA



A DECADE OF ACCESSIBILITY EFFORTS

wydawnictwo mik

A Decade of Accessibility Efforts

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The program

MAŁOPOLSKA. EMPATHETIC CULTURE

Edited by

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Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie
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Introduction

Dear Readers,

Ten years ago, we embarked on a unique and challenging journey. At its destination, we wanted to change the culture of Małopolska. As we celebrate the anniversary of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*, we feel proud. For the past decade, we have consistently helped render institutions and events accessible so that participation in cultural life would not be a privilege but a human right.

As a member of the Board of Małopolska who is responsible for the cultural sector, I would like to state that supporting the process of adapting cultural offerings to the needs of different people, including people with disabilities, is more than just a statutory obligation to us. It is a strategic and long-term plan that has been implemented by the province of Małopolska for the past ten years. Our continued commitment has allowed us to move from individual projects to a systemic model of accessibility management that keeps inspiring people in other regions across the country and beyond its borders. Formerly a project, and now the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* is run by the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków — a cultural institution in the province of Małopolska.

We have become pioneers on a national scale, creating and popularizing solutions that have become a standard all over the country. We have set the direction for changes with regard to accessibility. Already in 2017, two years before the domestic Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs came into effect, the province of Małopolska had recommended that cultural institutions implement *Wytyczne dostępności* [Accessibility Guidelines]. They described measures such as appointing accessibility coordinators, preparing and publishing the Accessibility page on an institution's website, and a number of other solutions that still remain relevant.

Moreover, we have mapped out new paths as far as administrative solutions are concerned, carrying out activities in agreement between the Department of Culture and National Heritage of the Marshal's Office of Małopolska and the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków as well as engaging all cultural institutions in the province of Małopolska as strategic partners of the program.

Thanks to the diverse cultural landscape of Małopolska and the conscious involvement of social actors, we have delved deeper into the nature of participation in culture. We have developed the following model of accessibility implementation: Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship. We are aware that accessibility is not just about installing ramps next to stairs or providing typhlographics. More than anything, it is about showing openness toward others and working on the attitudes of cultural workers.

The reason why the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program has been so successful is that people with special needs have directly participated in curating and conducting activities. One of the key events is Festiwal Kultury Wrażliwej [The Empathetic Culture Festival], at which we show that cultural offerings can be

not just accessible, but also co-created by artists with different needs, including those with disabilities. Such events are becoming an essential part of the cultural landscape in Małopolska.

Building partnerships and alliances lies at the very core of the program. In 2025, we supported the initiative of accessibility coordinators at cultural, academic, and artistic institutions run by the province of Małopolska, the city of Kraków, and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. By using our experience and joining forces, we can jointly build open cultural spaces in Małopolska. We prove that together, thanks to our openness, we can overcome all sorts of barriers.

To celebrate this beautiful anniversary, I would like to express my gratitude to all managers of cultural institutions, accessibility coordinators, cultural figures, and in particular to the employees of the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków. It is due to your determination that Małopolska has become a leader with regard to accessibility. We have more years of work ahead of us. I believe that the experience gained over the last decade will allow us to make culture even more empathetic, inclusive, and quite simply open to everyone.

Iwona Gibas
Member of the Board
of Małopolska

Dear Readers!

It is with great pleasure that we present to you a unique anniversary publication which summarizes a decade (!) of activities conducted as part of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*. This initiative, established in 2016 by the Board of Małopolska and implemented by the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków, has been one of the most important elements of the Polish cultural landscape from the very beginning.

Initially, the program was focused on raising cultural workers' awareness regarding the needs of people with disabilities. Over time, it has evolved in the direction of systemic accessibility design, starting with establishing the role of an accessibility coordinator all the way to defining accessibility as a process integrating the activities of individuals and institutions as opposed to it being something extra on top of other measures.

Despite the passing of time, the program has consistently pursued its main objective: to provide tools and real accessibility to people with different needs, including those with disabilities. By means of continuously supporting coordinators in the cultural institutions of the province of Małopolska, we are jointly transforming the culture of Małopolska into an open space for everyone — regardless of sensory, cognitive, or economic capabilities.

This publication aims to show you how the program operates as a coherent support system. However, you will get to see the human aspect of this path — in the form of memories, anecdotes, and behind-the-scenes stories. The work is complemented by expert-written articles, short statements from people associated with the program, and a set of good practices developed jointly by the community of accessibility coordinators as part of the program.

To us, working on the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program amounts to more than just carrying out tasks and following indicators. We have been through years of meetings, conversations, and — at times — overcoming fears together. This publication was created out of a need to pause for a moment and look back on the path we had walked together.

Therefore, we dedicate it to all accessibility coordinators, to the directors of institutions, to the partners of our program, and to the people that our program has resonated strongly with. It is your daily work, determination, and "empathy in action" that have made Małopolska one of accessibility leaders in Poland. Thank you for your trust, for every open door, and for every time that you have said, "It will work out!" and "Let's try this out!" over the years. Thank you for the determination with which we have overcome the mental trap of anything being "impossible." This book is a record of our shared victories.

The pieces that you are about to read do not simply summarize the past decade. Most of all, they prove that culture can indeed be empathetic. Let these pages inspire you to continue jointly building a world in which everyone feels at home.

Jakub Studziński
Coordinator of the program
Małopolska. Empathetic Culture

About the Program

Małopolska. Empathetic Culture

TOMASZ WŁODARSKI

What Does Empathetic Culture Actually Mean?

Methodology in Action

The Background

My relationship with the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* is personal. The adventure began just a few days after I took up a job at the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków. However, the topic of accessibility had already accompanied me in previous workplaces. For this reason, I could get started on this project with valuable knowledge and experience. Being acquainted with the UK legislation on equality and diversity, having seen measures implemented to benefit people with disabilities at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, having worked in non-governmental organizations for many years — all of this has significantly informed my involvement in the program. Most importantly, however, my story with *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* is an individual experience of finding myself in the right place at the right time. I came across a team of people with similar values who believed that their daily work could really change reality.

I would like to thank Monika Wiejaczka — the current chancellor of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, then deputy director of the Department of Culture and National Heritage

of the Marshal's Office of Małopolska. She initiated these activities — I would like to thank her for the idea of open and accessible culture and for her tenacity and patience in striving for change. Furthermore, I extend my gratitude to Piotr Cypryański and Anna Kurcab (coordinators from the Marshal's Office) as well as to Magdalena Urbańska, with whom we have intensively worked on operational principles, communication, and logistics, all the while inspiring each other to look for new solutions.

I would like to thank the NGOs that have sensitized and helped us understand the needs of people with disabilities better: the Culture Without Barriers Foundation, Fundacja Siódmy Zmysł (the Seventh Sense Foundation), Between the Ears — the Kraków Foundation for Education of Deaf People, the Chance Foundation — We Are Together, and the employees of the school and educational facility complex "Centrum dla Niewidomych i Słabowidzących" (Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired) in Kraków. Credit is also due to people who have personally been involved in sharing their experience and taught us how to move from advocacy to self-advocacy: Angelika Chrapkiewicz-Gądek, Paulina Gul, Natalia Kaczor, Edyta Kozub, Szymon Laciuga, Jakub Studziński, and Robert Więckowski.

I would like to thank the Board of Małopolska for its continuous strategic support that gives cultural institutions the opportunity to open themselves to outside feedback. I would like to thank Marshal Iwona Gibas and Monika Gubała, the Director of the Department of Culture and National Heritage, as well as the employees of the Department. It is owing to their support that we can implement the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* in a sustainable manner based on a long-term agreement, which is quite an exceptional solution considering the standards of public service tasks in the cultural sector.

Finally, I would like to thank all coordinators and employees of the MIC (Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków) who have shaped this program over the years: Dominika Mietelska-Jarecka, Paulina Model, and Paula Cupryan. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of Jakub Studziński, who has accompanied the program since its inception and made a tremendous effort to support its development every day, be it with respect to administration or its very substance.

The Model

On one hand, the guidelines developed under the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program are an innovation in the public sphere, and on the other, they are something rational, natural, and self-explanatory. They are based on the values that have been present at the MIC for years. We believe that culture is created as a result of shared activities, and that creative work — even its most personal kind — is always embedded in the community and originates in a relationship to another human being. For us, accessibility is not just a legal requirement, but a prerequisite for everyone to be able to take full advantage of cultural offerings and participate in their creation. Such a humanistic approach, based on the participation of social actors and self-advocates, had become a part of *Empathetic Culture* much earlier than any statutory regulations came into force. This gave our actions a practical, human touch and allowed us to experiment boldly and learn from our mistakes.

Sensitization and a shift in our own attitudes turned out to be the key factors that brought about lasting change in institutions. This pertained to all employees of cultural institutions: managers and front desk workers alike. Therefore, since we first started implementing the program, all our trainings have been prefaced by empathetic workshops. This is the first step. By means of our own

experience with barriers that remain invisible to us on a daily basis as well as our imagination, we open ourselves to the real presence of another human being.

Having assumed this perspective, we stopped talking about obstacles and started thinking about needs instead. We focused not on disability itself but on the diverse expectations of our audience. Our language evolved very quickly as well. We moved away from medical terminology and started using the term "people with different needs," which expressed our readiness to see eye to eye with another person, at the same time avoiding the statutory term "special needs," as we found it controversial from the perspective of self-advocacy.

Thanks to our cooperation with self-advocacy groups, we discovered that accessibility was a vast field of knowledge that we needed to acquire and reflect on. Having rationally assessed our capabilities, we adopted a strategy of small steps and gradual learning. This often involved the need to explain ourselves and apologize for the fact that we could not do everything "immediately," that implementing certain solutions took time, and that we had to plan them. Such a process always requires you to recognize your own capabilities and consider your environment, to make a decision on the strategy you are going to assume, and to communicate with others transparently based on legitimate terms. That said, we knew that we had to act consistently and that we could not do it on our own, as we could only acquire authentic knowledge about accessibility and accessibility tools by discussing our measures with people who contributed their own experiences to them.

Solutions are always developed in a dialogue. To honor a slogan associated with self-advocates, **"Nothing about us without us,"** we present ways for cultural institutions to operate by coming up with cultural activities as opposed to just providing space.

Therefore, in order to be truly involved in them, you cannot just focus on providing a space for others to carry out their own activities. It is crucial that you create cultural events or offerings together.

This is how the accessibility implementation model adopted in the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program was born and evolved. Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship is still a signpost for events that we organize. If you set out on an accessibility implementation project, you should always think of attitudes first, then gather and share knowledge, and finally embed it in experience and the joint creation of activities with self-advocates.

The Management

Process management is an important part of our accessibility implementation model. When accessibility clashes with the limited resources of an institution, this is where planning comes into play. Spontaneity is valuable, but lasting results are a product of systemic management. It allows you to motivate the people involved and share responsibilities.[1] You should assign responsibilities to a specific person, allow them to cooperate with all team members, and most importantly, give them the opportunity to introduce accessibility in each individual core process and administrative procedure. **In any organization, accessibility is a horizontal value.** It does not happen on the sidelines as one of many activities. On the contrary, each task is planned and implemented with accessibility in mind. This is why we appointed **accessibility integrators** as soon as in 2017, two years before national legal solutions came into effect. These are people

1 We described our management principles in *Poradnik dla sektora kultury w zakresie zapewniania dostępności* [The Cultural Sector Guide to Ensuring Accessibility], prepared for the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage under the guidance of the Culture Without Barriers Foundation in 2021.

who integrate the idea of accessibility into every task carried out in an institution. However, in order to operate effectively, they have to be supported by managers and colleagues.

Although the Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs does not require the cultural sector to appoint an accessibility coordinator, having someone hired in this role is now considered a good practice in the cultural sector, so much so that our industry has the largest group of accessibility coordinators — one which is well-organized, networked, and increasingly active in the area of public space accessibility. This is the result of our cooperation with domestic organizations such as the Culture Without Barriers Foundation. Since 2025, selected accessibility coordinators from the cultural institutions of Małopolska have conducted Małopolskie Spotkania z Kulturą Wrażliwą [**Encounters with Empathetic Culture in Małopolska**] for smaller cultural institutions and organizations located in Małopolska in order to share their experience. Furthermore, it is a good sign that self-advocates are hired as accessibility coordinators increasingly often, which proves that change is underway.

Co-Creation

Accessibility is a process that is always planned in the context of a specific person. This is why it is so important to consider your own environment and to actively engage with your audience, inviting them to co-create your institution's program. Firstly, you need to establish conditions which facilitate the co-creation of cultural offerings. Ensuring free entry and inviting people to explore the space of your institution is not enough. This does not have to happen immediately in all fields of activity. What matters is that the process is clear and understandable. You should not make promises that go beyond your capabilities. Whenever

you face limitations, communicate them openly. Moreover, be straightforward about what you invite people with different needs to do. This way, accessibility becomes a factor that opens up your communication and empowers you to speak about your shortcomings as well.

Being aware of what your own environment needs is a key element of universal design. “Universality” does not stand for “uniform” and “common” solutions for as many needs as possible. What it means is that measures are designed for and with people adjacent to institutions or organizations. Thanks to this approach, accessibility is a response to specific needs and an operational principle of cultural institutions as opposed to a “job done” to meet legal requirements.

Furthermore, knowing your closest environment allows you to respond to the needs that you have to face in implementing accessibility in a specific order. Just as much as your diverse audience, you need to be aware that you will not achieve everything, everywhere, all at once. You need to plan and implement measures gradually, and at the same time stay in contact with those groups that you are unable to respond to here and now by offering them alternative access. This human, mindful look at your environment and your own capacities reveals another feature of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program: patience.

While having to wait does not always inspire enthusiasm, patience makes it possible for you to enjoy lasting change. Patience has many dimensions: from the continuous and systemic support of the Board of Małopolska, through the strategic planning of measures in the program and in each individual institution and organization, all the way to the change that takes place in the culture of organizations, and above all, in the attitudes of people.

The Social Nature of Accessibility

Today, accessibility is inextricably linked with inclusiveness. Inclusion, as a manifested change of consciousness, is supported by means of constructing architectural, digital, and communication spaces accessible to everyone. This is why you should look for simple and effective solutions. They need to be inspired by your understanding of the needs that participants and co-creators of cultural activities have and from the openness to differences that you as employees of cultural institutions exhibit.

The path to openness leads through building a community around cultural institutions. Therefore, as part of accessibility implementation, you should look for community building tools, too. These tools are as diverse as cultural institutions themselves. In our view, our program has the potential to boost the current tendency to make cultural institutions more social. Not just community centers and libraries but also theaters, museums, philharmonics, operas, and art universities build relationships with their social environment nowadays.

We need relationships with others — they are the spark from which culture is created. As we develop the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program, we want to learn how to build and nurture these relationships better and more effectively in order to construct a world in which each and every one of us can feel at home.

TRUE ACCESSIBILITY

is not about removing barriers.
Instead, it consists in building
relationships.

The awareness
that thanks to small changes,
someone can feel welcome
in a cultural institution
is the most rewarding thing to me.

Bogusław Hynek
Centrum Sztuki Mościce (the Mościce Art Center)

“It Would Be a Dream to Get Involved!”:

THREE STORIES OF HOW THE PROGRAM
Małopolska. Empathetic Culture CAME TO LIFE

PARTICIPANTS:
Anna Żórawska,
Robert Więckowski (the Culture Without Barriers Foundation),
Tomasz Włodarski (the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków)

HOST: **Magdalena Urbańska**

MAGDALENA: **I’d like to think back to 2017. Tomasz, a co-founder of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* turns to the Culture Without Barriers Foundation with an offer of cooperation. What was your intention then, Tomek?**

TOMASZ: Honestly, I don’t remember if it was me who reached out to the Foundation. When we started our activities in 2016, they were coordinated by the Department of Culture and National Heritage of the Marshal’s Office of Małopolska. At that time, together with the Between the Ears Foundation, we carried out the first trainings for the directors of cultural institutions in the province of Małopolska. After this event, MIC was invited to plan more activities. Since I come from the third sector myself, it was obvious to me **that we couldn’t do social things without social partners**. We started looking for an organization that would help us plan our activities for 2017 and

imagine what the challenge we were to face would be. The Culture Without Barriers Foundation was the most recognizable social organization dealing with the topic of people with disabilities in the cultural sector, so we met at the Marshal's Office for the first time. Later, we talked at a café about what should happen next in a more relaxed atmosphere.

ROBERT: I don't remember that first meeting at all — neither at the Marshal's Office nor at the café [laughs]. There's one thing I'm sure of, though: we had not come up with the name *Empathetic Culture* yet.

ANNA: I remember how amazed I was when you came up with it. It was such a wow moment.

TOMASZ: At the beginning, our thinking gravitated very strongly toward an open and accessible culture. We had this saying, "Culture sees no difference." And then we realized that it should! It turned out that *Empathetic Culture* was the way.

MAGDALENA: **What was your cooperation going to be based on?**

TOMASZ: I had the impression that we didn't know exactly what the problem was, so it was difficult to start with a strategic action plan. However, we took seriously a slogan which is quite popular nowadays, **"Nothing about us without us,"** which is why we wanted to create a project together with the community that it was supposed to address. We knew we couldn't just go with the top-down approach. In fact, it turned out that our initial plans were wrong at the very first meeting. As a target indicator, we assumed that 300 people would participate in our events. This was when Robert said, "That's not going to work." [laughs]

We understood that we had to change our way of thinking. It was very clear then that **we were talking about people, not numbers**, and that accessibility pertained to specific people. It's still our premise that **we aren't implementing accessibility to meet some legal requirement — although there was no mention of any act of law at that time — but for the change that is taking place in us and in our organizations.** We understood that we had to start with a change in our attitudes. Slowly, gradually. Because even if we create different tools, our actions will not deliver results if our attitudes remain unchanged. It turns out that patience is one of the most interesting effects of *Empathetic Culture*. Although it's difficult to implement due to how many expectations there are.

MAGDALENA: So, you submitted a project with ambitious goals to an NGO with a collaboration offer. What expectations did the Foundation have?

ANNA: From the very beginning, we felt a breath of fresh air coming from Małopolska. We were jealous that you got to combine the uncompromising energy of Monika Wiejaczka, who was at the very top of the local government structure and had a real impact on it, with Tomek's sensibility, and that you thought about accessibility very broadly. I remember those fantastic sessions where trainers ran from one room to another because you trained so many people at once. And how we commuted to those mini-audits, and your **appreciation for every step forward, no matter how small**. Somehow, you managed to split up the work so that you didn't have to do everything at once… I felt that something new was happening, that a new standard was being set.

ROBERT: We had worked under the Culture Without Barriers Foundation for four years at that point. I remember our doubts: will we be able to seize this opportunity? Will the three of us from Warsaw manage to achieve something? On the other hand, we were excited about this project and we would say, **"It would be a dream to get involved!"** We decided to take a risk, go to Kraków, and see what comes out of it.

MAGDALENA: **You've gone through the first few years quite quickly, but I'd like to discuss them a bit longer. You managed to train 600 people in a very short time. How did these trainings really affect accessibility in the region? Who took part in them?**

TOMASZ: Since we wanted to work on changing attitudes, trainings clearly seemed like an indispensable tool. We wanted the participating directors to see for themselves what accessibility was all about. We gave them walking sticks, blindfolds, and instructed them to buy a ticket — their perspective shifted immediately. Apart from directors, we focused on the first points of contact in any institution: concierges and audience service employees. These are essential areas to deal with in order to communicate accessibility and openness right from the entrance of an institution. Do you remember how long we discussed keeping the toilet open as opposed to leaving the key with the concierge? Not only did our trainings provide specific knowledge, but they also showed that it made sense to apply it in practice. At that stage, we had already made some management decisions — we established the function of accessibility integrators, i.e., people who were in charge of coordinating accessibility in an institution.

We organized two visits at each institution: the first one was a consultation to set priorities and recommend solutions, and the second one was meant to summarize the implementation of the

proposed solutions. We handed out certificates to acknowledge these micro-steps. Ania Kurcab, who started working with us on *Empathetic Culture* on behalf of the Marshal's Office back in 2017, supported us in this. And the Accessibility Guidelines that we published in 2017 are still relevant today.

ANNA: It was also great that all this was happening not just in Kraków. In hindsight, we see how important it is not to limit yourself to large cities but to go to smaller towns as well. Because they don't have fewer needs.

TOMASZ: It was natural to us, as the Małopolska Institute of Culture operates in the region and to benefit the region.

MAGDALENA: **Ania, Robert — was it something different to what you had done before as representatives of the Foundation?**

ANNA: We had already had similar experiences with the Culture Department of the City Hall of Warsaw. At the time, we wrote down our dreams in the form of a pilot program in the field of accessibility. It included guidelines regarding audits, equipment, and trainings for institutions. The main difference at the time was a grassroots approach — we were mainly supported by a single employee of the Culture Department. This is why it remains our dream to this day to aim for a higher rank, which is the result of having people involved who manage the entire cultural sector. It was a great asset that you had which facilitated a systemic change in the region on a larger scale. Without it, the idea of accessibility becomes really watered down.

MAGDALENA: **Let's get back to trainings for a moment. Tomek said a little about them from his perspective, but I'd like to ask you about**

them as well, Ania and Robert: what do you remember about these trainings and further measures?

ANNA: The trainings were conducted mainly by Robert and Paulina Gul, as **we wanted people with disabilities to be trained by self-advocates.**

ROBERT: I can hardly describe the magnitude of what we experienced during all of our travels. The first time around, Paula and I left Warsaw on a night bus to make sure that we wouldn't be late. We arrived in Kraków at four in the morning and went for a walk as the town was waking up to life. It was fantastic, but at nine o'clock, when the training was just starting, we were already sleepy [laughs]! And then, the madness began. Most people put a lot of effort into these trainings. I had three-hour modules. Paulina's were an hour and a half long. She conducted them interchangeably with Angelika Chrapkiewicz-Gądek, and we knew that we couldn't extend them, not even a bit, because the schedule would fall apart. **There were 50 people at each workshop!**

The energy was very positive. We traveled a lot around Nowy Targ, Tarnów, Zubrzyca Górna. Nights spent in old cottages, in villas in Zakopane… But there's one more, very important thing: we carried out a review every single time. We were in constant dialogue with each other and with the institutions that hosted us. It was a very meaningful job. I missed it eventually. You know how it is when you have spent a chapter of your life on the road — later, you suddenly realize that something is missing in this stationary life mode.

ANNA: Whenever we see Paulina, we still recall her adventures with Robert during their travels under the *Empathetic Culture* program. It would be interesting to do a stand-up one day about

how a deaf person and a blind person cross the street in some small town [laughs]. I was always jealous of them that they came back so positively stimulated by the experience. I felt unsatisfied in comparison. This energy, when you create something new with new people, is the most beautiful thing.

ROBERT: There's one more crucial thing: this has never happened again anywhere else. There have been similar initiatives, but the scale and determination that we've shown — let me remind you that all institutions reporting to the local government of the province have been covered by this measure! — this is a unique achievement so far.

ANNA: But how did this happen? As the "people at the top," Tomek and Monika **thought horizontally, systemically, not focally**. Yet there's still a common approach where an institution will try to fit into a small grant or find a way to spend the money that's left in the budget by the end of the year. There is no thinking about what to do next, there is no consistency. This consistency is one of your strengths.

TOMASZ: That said, we also understand that different entities have their own limitations. We often talk about our limitations, too. The process which we have managed to complete has always been the product of our enthusiasm and our limitations alike, with the latter resulting from bureaucratic conditions. The Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs, introduced in 2019, paradoxically deprived us of some spontaneity and freedom of choice regarding our ways of working.

ANNA: It's true that the Act has caused important changes on a national scale, but at the same time, it has extinguished some enthusiasm…

TOMASZ: It has also changed the way we work together. To you, it's opened up a new kind of space, as the market demand for accessibility services has increased. In our case, there was the predicament of how to align what we had done up to that point with the new regulations. We had to think about what our relationship to the Act was. At that time, on the scale of the entire province, we were considering not just 25 cultural institutions in Małopolska, but around 212 local government institutions that were obligated to implement the Act. For over a year now, we have conducted the Encounters with Empathetic Culture in Małopolska for them, so maybe we are not rushing this way anymore, but we are expanding our thinking about accessibility. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and the online activities that it brought about resulted in the program expanding beyond the region.

ROBERT: I've recently heard someone say something brilliant: people are divided into those who have a watch and those who have time. The Act is such a watch for tracking accessibility — in it, everything seems to have been measured "from this point up to that point." And at the beginning, when we first started working on *Empathetic Culture*, we had time for everything. Everything was still ahead of us. We could act as we saw fit. And engage in dialogue with the institutions involved in these processes. It was very valuable.

MAGDALENA: What exactly has the Act changed in how accessibility is managed?

ANNA: Previously, we relied on spontaneity. **It was a time when we were doing all this to get the carrot. Later on, we were doing what we could to avoid getting hit with the stick.** Inside institutions, accessibility coordinators felt this very strongly. Some supervisors and

co-workers found that it was enough to meet the requirements of Article 6 of the Act [on minimum accessibility requirements — ed.], so why would they do all the cool things that coordinators had previously suggested?

Many people in charge of institutions blocked the spontaneity shown by coordinators, as they were suddenly given a bland rule that specified the minimum of what they had to do. Unfortunately, oftentimes this is only a shopping list because a lot of things are missing from acts of law. There is nothing there about a people, about training, about building knowledge, about relationships. It isn't explained how to prepare operations in an accessible way. And this is what many institutions aren't aware of; they no longer think about their offerings, they only think about Article 6 and how it prescribes the following: architectural accessibility, information and communications accessibility, and digital accessibility, full stop. The difference between "before" and "after" has unfortunately taken some flexibility and courage in the way we act away from us.

TOMASZ: I'd like to make it clear that we are in a slightly different situation because the province of Małopolska has supported us long-term. We have signed a five-year contract on the implementation of *Empathetic Culture*. This is a thing that anyone wishing to do such programs has to take into account — it's impossible to plan such measures in the span of a single year. It gives us great comfort to know that we can support people implementing accessibility in our institutions gradually, deeply, and patiently. This is the only way we can build real change strategies.

Yet the Act has stirred up some kind of confusion. For example, we have started to wonder whether we should continue using our guidelines if a nationwide certification system could be created. A few doubts have come up, and our focus has shifted to

resolving these doubts and answering emerging questions on the interpretation of the Act. It has shifted away from reinforcing our conviction that accessibility is supposed to be about human beings, not legal provisions.

This has also had a negative effect on the idea of accessibility as a public mission. Because I think we would agree that these ten years of *Empathetic Culture* have shown us that accessibility and openness are at the core of the mission and activity of cultural institutions. We have to learn these things, indeed, but it isn't anything that results from the Act. Our path is as follows: we started out by working on meeting our obligations toward people with disabilities, but to do it better, we have to return to very basic things that we did at MIC a dozen or so years ago. Accessibility is not just about responding to the needs of people with disabilities. It also makes you aware of why you work in the cultural sector to begin with, of the community you work with, and of how this community co-creates institutions nowadays. By the way, the recurring idea of a social cultural institution is nothing new given what we have already done with *Empathetic Culture*.

ROBERT: Indeed, *Empathetic Culture* **was and is focused on the human being; the human being who works in a cultural institution, and on the human being who wants to visit a cultural institution**. Human beings are missing from acts of law. What acts of law do include is equipment: stairs, elevators, induction loops. They include the prescribed door width and accessible websites. Obviously, all this will be used by people, but unfortunately, team activities are forgotten. If the institution doesn't have empathetic employees who want to help and know how to do it, it will not be accessible even if it has the best equipment in the world. This won't work anywhere.

Cultural institutions facilitate human encounters. I'm glad that *Empathetic Culture* exists, and I hope that the people who got to experience our early activities have some of that conviction left in them. It has to be there within you, even if it's only for you to eventually know how to use the equipment prescribed by the Act.

TOMASZ: I'd like to add that this is an eternal dilemma of whether the law or the human matters more, but the law has to be in place, after all. I'm happy that these acts of law have been introduced. My only gripe with them is that they have created a lot of doubt about what to do, and at the same time, they don't convey any motivation to take action.

MAGDALENA: At this stage, is there a prospect of synergy between *Empathetic Culture*, central authorities, and social actors? To what extent can you support and complement each other?

TOMASZ: In my opinion, the human dimension is the most important aspect of our cooperation. Even if we see each other less often now and cooperate less directly, **we still create a community of values and a community of doubts** that accompany our actions all the time. We could probably have more discussions on trying to influence central accessibility solutions.

ANNA: Let's take the liberty of dreaming a little and consider how we can use the power of solutions developed by Małopolska not only on a central level but also in other regions — and encourage their implementation there.

ROBERT: Yes! We have an excellent tool that can be transplanted to other regions in Poland. I believe that when we first started

out, many people had reasons to doubt whether what we were planning was possible. And yet we succeeded. **This synergy between a government entity, an umbrella cultural institution that the MIC is, and social actors has yielded excellent results. And this is a model worth implementing in other regions.**

It's necessary to open up to the regions because **the local aspect of culture is its great asset**. We live locally, so let's remember those that are closest to us because they are the most natural and most frequent beneficiaries of our actions. This is an intuitive approach that lies at the foundation of *Empathetic Culture* and has not lost its relevance, no matter what happens somewhere on a central level.

TOMASZ: To sum up, we will all agree that working on *Empathetic Culture* has not been just a job but also an adventure that brought about experiences which have helped us bond and build a community of values. Our paths have now diverged a little since we operate on a different scale nowadays. We have started to deal with the effects of what we had produced. And it's not that we work in separate fields now — it's just that the field of accessibility has expanded so much.

Thank you that you have participated in this adventure and that we are who we are today thanks to you.

TO ME, **EMPATHETIC CULTURE**

is a way of thinking
about people as being
right at the center
of all of our activities.

It is about being attentive
to different needs,
ways of experiencing things,
and speeds at which
we process the world.

Anna Czajkowska-Sałapat
the Museum of the Holy Father John Paul II
Family Home in Wadowice

JAKUB STUDZIŃSKI

Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship:

The Pillars of *Empathetic Culture* in Małopolska

The program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*, initiated by the Board of Małopolska and implemented since 2016 by the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków, has become a new quality benchmark in how we think about accessibility in the cultural sector. It is based on the belief that accessibility is not only a technical or an architectural issue. Above all, it is a process that "begins and ends with the human being." The operational model developed under the program is based on three pillars: **empathy, knowledge, and allyship**.

PILLAR I: Empathy (Attitude) — Understanding as a Foundation

In the model we have established with *Empathetic Culture*, empathy is not to be identified with pity or sympathy, which characterize the so-called charity model of disability. It is an active, partnership-based attitude of openness toward the other person, their natural capabilities, and individual needs. It is a starting point for all activities in an institution. It includes the following elements:

- **a shift in perspective** — building an empathetic culture begins with being aware of the barriers that are usually invisible to people without experience with disabilities. Empathy allows you to realize that "disability" is not a characteristic assigned

to a person, but the result of this person's encounter with a mismatched environment;

- **being together and jointly learning from mistakes** — the model puts a lot of emphasis on "being together" and accepting that the process of building accessibility involves making mistakes;
- **subjectivity** — to be empathetic is to recognize that any person interacting with culture — regardless of their fitness level or age — has the right to co-create cultural life to an extent equal to others and participate in it on their own terms.

PILLAR II: Knowledge — Tools for Building Accessibility

In addition to empathy, even though it is crucial, specific skills are needed in order to change how an institution operates. Knowledge, i.e., applying specific tools and preparing cultural workers to implement real changes, is the second pillar of our model. It consists of:

- **training, workshops, and publications** — the program provides tools to those working in cultural institutions through numerous publications and workshops. The aforementioned knowledge covers both legal aspects (accessibility in the legal system) and practical solutions applied as accessibility tools such as audio description, simple language, text which is easy to read and understand (ETR), Polish Sign Language, or quiet rooms;
- **networking and sharing experiences** — a key element is for accessibility coordinators to meet regularly at annual conventions and to organize projects such as the Encounters with Empathetic Culture in Małopolska, Forum Kultury Wrażliwej [the Empathetic Culture Forum], and Festiwal

Kultury Wrażliwej [the Empathetic Culture Festival], the objective of which is to share good practices;

- **strategic planning** — knowledge translates into specific strategic plans that allow institutions to implement changes in a systemic rather than in an incidental manner.

PILLAR III: Allyship (Action) — The Practice of Co-creation

The last and most engaging element of the model is allyship. This is the stage at which attitudes (empathy) and tools (knowledge) turn into coordinated action involving people with different needs, e.g., those with disabilities, as well as self-advocates.

It is worth mentioning that at the beginning of the program, we called this pillar "advocacy" instead of "allyship." We acted mainly "for their benefit," we saw ourselves as spokespersons for people with different needs, including those with disabilities. We talked about them; we created and designed things for them. We have gone through a long and conscious process of turning from an "advocate" to an "ally."

- **Co-creation:** We do not design anything "for" people with different needs, including those with disabilities, but "with them." They are experts with respect to their own capabilities and needs as well as allies to institutions which are in the process of change.
- **"To share space"** is a golden rule and one of the key messages of *Empathetic Culture*. In practice, allyship means giving a voice and real agency to people from different social groups. It means building infrastructure and an events or exhibitions program together.
- **Everyday allyship** — people who work in cultural institutions actively co-create them with different people, ensuring that cultural spaces are safe and welcoming for everyone.

The Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship model has made accessibility in the cultural institutions of Małopolska a continuous process as opposed to a ticked off statutory requirement. Thanks to the program having been co-created by people with different needs, including those with disabilities, we feel that we have managed to trigger real changes in the legal and social systems, to make Małopolska more empathetic, hospitable, and open to everyone's needs.

On the tenth anniversary of the program, empathetic culture is becoming a standard. The model developed with *Empathetic Culture* shows that real change occurs when professional knowledge and specific alliances are based on an authentic, empathetic attitude toward others. "To share space" is not just to make a building accessible — it is to invite others to create a culture in which everyone feels at home.

JAKUB STUDZIŃSKI

There Is More to It Than Space:

Five Accessibility Areas According to the Accessible Culture Model

For years now, we have built accessibility under the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* based on the following triad: Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship. This was cemented by the Accessible Culture Model (ACM). It was developed by the Culture Without Barriers Foundation, the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON), the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and Institut für Bildung und Kultur e.V. together with Kompetenzzentrum für Kulturelle Bildung im Alter und inklusive Kultur (as part of the Operational Program Knowledge Education Development 2014-2020).

Tomasz Włodarski (a co-founder of the program, then the deputy director and now the current director of the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków) joined the process of creating the ACM as part of a broad team of experts. One of the things achieved thanks to his presence was that the systemic arrangement of accessibility areas became infused with empathy toward others. This way, the model did not just organize standards; most importantly, it legitimized the humanistic perspective of the program. We believe that human beings and their needs are always at the core of our efforts.

1. Accessibility Area: SEEING

If we were to describe the essence of this area, we would say: there is more to it than meets the eye! As it pertains to eyesight, accessibility is the process of reducing "visual exclusion" in the cultural sector. For a long time, it was assumed that cultural institutions such as museums or theaters were places where the sense of sight was indispensable to be able to understand the message. The modern model of accessibility reverses this perspective: seeing is not the only way to understand such a work of art. The idea is that all important information — the color of gallery walls, the facial expressions of a performer, the way to the emergency exit, etc. — should be communicated in a way accessible to people for whom eyesight is not their dominant sense. It is a design method in which all the senses create an picture of reality.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THESE SOLUTIONS?

- **People with visual disabilities:** blind and visually impaired (people suffering from glaucoma, a cataract, macular degeneration).
- **Seniors:** people whose visual field may narrow with age and who may experience a loss of visual acuity.
- **People who use their eyesight in difficult conditions:** people who use screens in strong sunlight or visit exhibitions in very poorly lit exhibition halls.
- **People with color blindness**, for whom it is crucial to distinguish information not only by color but also by contrast or texture.

SUPPORT TOOLS IN PRACTICE:

- **audio description (AD):** it is not just a description — it is the art of translating an image into language. In film or theater,

AD fills in the gaps between lines of dialogue and describes what is happening. At a museum, it allows you to "see" the composition of a painting through headphones or with the help of a guide;

- **typhlographics and mock-ups:** tactile maps of buildings allow you to see the space in which you are located "with your hands." Tactile mock-ups of buildings, sculptures, or architectural details provide an opportunity for contact with a form which is not accessible in any other way;
- **WCAG standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) and screen readers:** institutions' websites have to be compatible with programs such as NVDA or JAWS which read content aloud;
- **high contrast and appropriate typography:** the use of sans-serif typefaces, sufficient spacing, and contrast (e.g., yellow text on a navy-blue background) significantly improves the comfort of people who may need visual accessibility solutions.

Did you know that audio description is popular with... drivers and cooks? It allows them to „watch" TV series or movies in a form similar to a radio show if they cannot look at the screen. Typhlographics, on the other hand, are a brilliant educational tool for children who remember the shapes and proportions of objects much better by touching them.

2. Accessibility Area: HEARING

If we were to describe the essence of this area, we would say: we want freedom of choice between sound and silence! Hearing accessibility is not just a matter of "volume." First and foremost, its point is to make sure that the message conveyed is clear and to recognize sign language as a full-fledged means of expression. Sound carries not just content but also emotions. If the recipient cannot hear it in the traditional sense, then the institution has to provide another linguistic (sign language), visual (subtitles, pictograms), and/or technological solution (induction loops). Furthermore, hearing accessibility entails ensuring good indoor acoustics so that reverb does not distort speech.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THESE SOLUTIONS?

- **The Deaf**[2]**:** people who communicate in Polish Sign Language (PSL) and for whom Polish is often a second language.
- **The Deaf and the hard of hearing:** those who use hearing aids and cochlear implants that require a signal without interference from the environment.
- **People who suffer from so-called hidden hearing loss:** those who hear sounds but have a problem picking them up (e.g., in a crowd).
- **Society:** we are increasingly accustomed to living and working in places where access to sounds is usually hindered (e.g., on public transportation).

2 The Deaf (capitalized) are a linguistic and cultural minority whose first language is the national sign language.

SUPPORT TOOLS IN PRACTICE:

- **induction loop:** a system that transmits sound from the speaker's microphone directly to the hearing aid, thereby eliminating background noise (scraping chairs, coughing);
- **extended subtitles:** these are different from regular subtitles in that they describe sounds (e.g., [disturbing music], [door slamming]), which allows you to get the full picture of a given scene;
- **sign language interpreting:** it allows sign language users to track transmitted content in real time and receive it properly, also due to the "human factor" — the interpreter's individual linguistic sense and language expression;
- **hearing aid systems such as FM systems:** portable devices that work well when guiding groups around acoustically inaccessible galleries or in open-air spaces — the guide talks into the microphone and the participants hear them clearly in their own headphones.

The Deaf can "feel" music through vibration. Increasingly often, modern concerts offer backpacks and vibrating (haptic) vests that convert low tones into physical impulses, allowing you to literally feel the bass on your own skin.

3. Accessibility Area: MOVING AROUND

If we were to describe the essence of this area, we would say: a space needs to feel inviting! This area is often associated with wheelchair ramps or driveways, but in fact, it is a philosophy of designing spaces in such a way so that no one has to ask for help when entering them. Accessibility — as it pertains to mobility — measures how smooth it feels to move around. It consists in eliminating thresholds, heavy doors, ticket counters which are too high, or pathways in the building which are too narrow. It is a design method that respects the user's energy (regardless of disability!) — no one should ever have to give up on the opportunity to interact with culture simply because it is too difficult to get to the toilet or to another floor.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THESE SOLUTIONS?

- **People who use wheelchairs to move around,** both manual and electric ones.
- **People with limited mobility:** people who use walking frames and crutches or carry heavy luggage as well as people with joint or heart conditions.
- **Parents/caregivers with strollers** who often face the same barriers as people with disabilities.
- **People with temporary disabilities,** e.g., someone with a sprained ankle or a broken arm.
- **People of short stature and children** who cannot reach a counter or an elevator button located at the standard height.
- **People of tall stature** who have to bend down due to the standard height of passages, counters, or buttons in an elevator.
- **Society:** it is composed of people with different perceptions, different bodies, and divergent psychophysical capabilities.

SUPPORT TOOLS IN PRACTICE:

- **elevators and platforms:** key to getting from one level to another, equipped with Braille buttons as well as visual and vocal messages;
- **mobile ramps and rails:** they enable you to quickly provide accessible solutions in places where elevators cannot be installed, especially in the case of historic buildings;
- **lowered counters:** ticket office or cloakroom counters should be placed in a way that creates comfortable conditions to have a conversation and make a payment from a seated position;
- **handles and handrails:** they are needed not just in toilets but also along long corridors in order to provide support to people who get tired faster;
- **seats:** fixed seats such as a sofa and/or light, portable chairs which visitors can take with them and set up in places that they want to enjoy longer and rest while they are doing it.

There is a phenomenon called the "curb cut effect." When the United States began to lower curbs for veterans in wheelchairs on a large scale, it turned out that absolutely everyone benefited from it: people traveling with wheeled suitcases, couriers with freight carts, cyclists... Architectural accessibility improves the comfort of society as a whole.

4. Accessibility Area: UNDERSTANDING

If we were to describe the essence of this area, we would say: some barriers cannot be seen! Cognitive accessibility is one of the least appreciated and most important areas. Culture may be obscure at times — it uses difficult words and complicated metaphors and assumes that people who take advantage of cultural offerings "know something already." The area of understanding proposes that all content, even the most abstract kind, should be explained simply. Its objective is to ensure that instructions are logical and that getting around a building does not feel like solving a puzzle. It is meant to build bridges between complicated art with its content and the audience with different intellectual abilities.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THESE SOLUTIONS?

- **People with intellectual disabilities** who need specifics and clearly structured information.
- **Neurodivergent people (including people on the autism spectrum and/or those with ADHD):** such people appreciate literal communication and predictable messages.
- **People who have difficulty remembering things or concentrating** (e.g., due to Alzheimer's disease).
- **Foreigners** for whom the Polish language is a barrier and simple communication is helpful.
- **People under stress:** each of us loses some of our cognitive abilities in a new and unfamiliar place — in such cases, simple information is crucial.

SUPPORT TOOLS IN PRACTICE:

- **text which is easy to read and understand (ETR):** a form of text (e.g., containing short sentences and no difficult words) and writing (e.g., large font size, flush left alignment) which is consulted with experts with intellectual disabilities and often complemented by photos and/or pictograms;
- **simple language:** the standard of writing text "for regular people" — for instance, by avoiding jargon and complex sentences;
- **pictograms:** a coherent system of icons that guides you "by the hand" — from the entrance, over to the cash register, and then to the toilet without you having to read any signposts;
- **pre-visit guides:** publications (often in PDF format) that say: "This is the entrance to our building," "Here, you will meet a gentleman wearing a uniform," "Here, it can get loud." They can often tame the fear of a new place.

Studies show that
texts written in simple language are read faster
and memorized better even by highly educated people
and experts. No one feels offended by understanding
the message on the first read, while complicated texts
irritate most readers.

5. Accessibility Area: FEELING

If we were to describe the essence of this area, we would say: the senses need a safe space! The last area pertains to how the human body and nervous system react to the environment. Cultural spaces may be overstimulating — due to loud multimedia, intense, changing lights, overwhelming smells, or crowds. Sensory accessibility shows how to manage these stimuli skillfully. Its aim is to establish conditions in which a person with high sensory sensitivity does not feel attacked by the environment. Another goal is to guarantee mental comfort and predictability of the event.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THESE SOLUTIONS?

- **Neurodivergent people (including those on the autism spectrum and/or those with ADHD)** who may experience sensory overload when faced with an excessive number of stimuli.
- **People with a sensory processing disorder** who are sensitive to specific sounds, lights, or textures.
- **People with social anxiety** for whom a large crowd is an insurmountable barrier.
- **People who suffer from migraines or photosensitive epilepsy** who need to avoid flashing lights.
- **Anyone who feels overstimulated:** all of us as society, workers, students, pupils, caregivers, parents, people who live in a constant rush and turn to culture for a break from everyday life.

SUPPORT TOOLS IN PRACTICE:

- **quiet hours:** designated visiting hours, when multimedia is turned off, lights are dim, and visitors are asked for silence;

- **quiet rooms:** small, cozy rooms with soft seats and subdued wall colors where you can “reset”;
- **sensory baskets:** kits containing silencing headphones, anti-stress balls, and sensory textures, most commonly available in quiet rooms;
- **information on forthcoming stimuli:** clear messages located before the entrance, such as: “It’s dark in this room,” “The exhibition smells of paint to an intense degree,” “We use stroboscopic effects”;
- trigger warnings **about sensitive content:** clear messages describing what sensitive content will be shown, e.g., during an exhibition or in a film, and how to react: “In this part of the exhibition, you may experience feelings of anxiety. If you don’t want to, choose an alternative route,” „The film contains scenes involving alcohol or violence. If you need support, please call/e-mail …”;
- **sensory-friendly shows:** cinema screenings where the light does not go out completely and the sound is quieter.

Noise-cancelling headphones,
once associated only with construction
sites or people on the autism spectrum, are becoming a hit
in big cities as a tool to fight „acoustic smog.” Cultural
institutions that offer them are seen as places of well-being,
not just culture and education.

TABLE 1. A table showing the premise of the Accessible Culture Model in simplified form ↘

ACCESSIBILITY AREA	MAIN OBJECTIVE:
Seeing 	Translating visual information with other senses in mind
Hearing 	Eliminating sound barriers and being able to hear sounds in silence
Moving around 	Freedom of movement
Understanding 	Clarity and simplicity of the message
Feeling 	Sensory safety

KEY TOOLS SELECTED:	WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS?
• audio description, • typhlographics, • the Braille alphabet, • high contrast	• people with visual disabilities — blind, visually impaired, • older people (seniors)
• induction loop, • sign language (in Poland's case — Polish Sign Language), • extended subtitles, • hearing aid systems such as the FM system	• the Deaf and the hard of hearing, • people staying in a noisy environment, • people staying in an environment where silence is required
• elevators, • ramps, • lowered counters, • seats, • wide passages	• people with mobility disabilities — those who move around in a wheelchair, with crutches, with prosthetics, • caregivers with kids, • people of different stature — short and tall stature
• text which is easy to read and understand (ETR), • simple language, • pictograms, • pre-visit guides	• people with intellectual disabilities, • people from linguistic and cultural minorities, • foreigners
• quiet hours, • quiet zones, • noise-cancelling headphones	• neurodivergent people (including those on the autism spectrum, those with ADHD), • people who get overstimulated quickly

JAKUB STUDZIŃSKI

Origins: The Guidelines of Empathetic Culture *as the Foundation of Accessibility Policy*

The Pre-Act Perspective

Introduction

In 2016, when the Board of Małopolska initiated the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* in cooperation with the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków, no one could imagine that this local project would become a laboratory of solutions that would inspire others outside the region just a few years later. The program was born out of a simple but very important observation: cultural institutions want to be accessible, but they do not know how to do it in a systemic manner.

The answer was written into **the Accessibility Guidelines of 2017 and 2019** — documents that no longer treat accessibility as an "extra element" or a form of support "for the less fortunate disabled people." Instead of the charity model, Małopolska proposed a model based on human rights and modern management standards. Today, looking back on the past decade since the program commenced, it is clear that the guidelines developed in Małopolska have become an inspiration for the most significant acts of law, including the Accessibility Act of 2019, the Accessible Culture Model, and the *Cultural Sector Guide to Ensuring Accessibility* of 2021.

The Accessibility Guidelines of 2017 and 2019 were developed by self-advocates with specific types of disability (hearing, visual, mobility, and intellectual disability) in cooperation with the representatives of the Department of Culture and National Heritage of the Marshal's Office of Małopolska and the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków. The process was supervised by the following people: Monika Wiejaczka, Deputy Director of the Department of Culture and National Heritage, Tomasz Włodarski, Deputy Director of the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków, and Anna Kurcab, Member of the Local Culture Promotion Team of the Department of Culture and National Heritage.

The 2017 and 2019 Accessibility Guidelines: From a Diagnosis to a Certification

The guidelines developed in the program were not a theoretical list but a practical set of tools. At that time, their design was based on four areas of disability (visual, hearing, mobility, and intellectual disability) as well as two key recommendations.

INFORMATIVE FOUNDATION: The Accessibility Declaration (2017)

Even before the provisions on digital accessibility entered into force, the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* had introduced a requirement to publish **an accessibility declaration**.

- **The accessibility principle:** the guidelines required the declaration to be written in plain language and translated into Polish Sign Language, to describe barriers, and to contain direct contact data (for texting/e-mails/phone calls) to the person responsible for accessibility in the organization (at the time, this was the role of an accessibility integrator).
- **The digital standard:** the 2017 guidelines consistently complied with the AA-level WCAG 2.0 standard, which was a rarity in the cultural sector at the time. Including alternative texts and avoiding "empty" links such as "click here" has become a norm, thereby forcing regional institutions to modernize their websites.

Sensory and Architectural Accessibility

The 2017 guidelines defined the parameters of physical accessibility and put emphasis on some details which are decisive for independence:

- **contrast and typhlographics:** parameters for marking stairs, glass obstacles, and price lists have all been introduced. Providing typhlographics and tactile replicas of objects has become a standard;
- **barrier-free communication:** ours was the first program to introduce a Polish Sign Language interpreting service (after making an appointment in advance) and recommend the installation of induction loops — first at ticket offices, and later in workshop rooms and lecture halls — in cultural institutions on such a scale.

Did you know that Cricoteka (the Center for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków) had set accessibility standards long before it became a norm? The building, which was opened in 2014, met the architectural requirements of the time, but it was the work of accessibility coordinators — Olga Curzydło and Barbara Pasterak — that allowed the institution to develop full accessibility standards. Thanks to their involvement, people with different needs, including those with disabilities, not only started to take advantage of the institution's offerings but also to actually co-create them!

The 2019 Guidelines: Intellectual Accessibility

The second edition of the guidelines, published in 2019, broadened the perspective on accessibility by including intellectual disability and neurodiversity. It was then that quiet rooms and materials easy to read and understand (ETR) began to appear in the institutions of Małopolska. It was the moment of transition from technical accessibility to cognitive accessibility.

The Experiences of Małopolska as a Contribution to Shaping the Solutions Included in the Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs (2019)

We believe that the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* has had some influence on the Polish legal system. In 2019, when the Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs was being developed, the *Empathetic Culture* team was actively involved in consulting its draft.

The Role of an Accessibility Coordinator

It was Małopolska that systemically tested the role of an accessibility coordinator for the first time. The 2017 guidelines defined this role in detail not as that of someone "responsible for ramps or elevators functioning as they should" but as that of the leader of social change within the institution who is supported by the management and has a real impact on the budget. This governance model was written into Article 14 of the 2019 Act, which imposed the obligation to appoint such a person in all public entities.

At the beginning of the program, the people responsible for implementing, building, and coordinating accessibility in cultural institutions were referred to as integrators, not coordinators. Their goal was to build bridges (to connect, be an intermediary) between cultural institutions and the communities of people with disabilities.

The Certification and Reporting System

The accessibility certificates granted by the province of Małopolska were the prototype for the accessibility status reporting mechanism which is common nowadays. Małopolska has shown that an external audit (performed by self-advocates on behalf of the MIC and non-governmental organizations promoting accessibility for people with different needs, including those with disabilities) combined with the institution's own self-assessment is an effective method of motivating the public sector.

The certification process had an extraordinarily human dimension. The certification coordinators at the time — Anna Kurcab (representing the province of Małopolska, 2017–2020), Dominika Mietelska-Jarecka (MIC, 2017–2019), and later Paulina Model (MIC, 2019–2020) — traveled around the region together with a team of self-advocates representing various disability areas (visual, hearing, mobility, and intellectual disability). Together, they visited all cultural institutions in Małopolska to see how accessible they actually were. Following a positive verification, accessibility certificates regarding specific disability areas were handed out during the Empathetic Culture Forum. They were a symbol of hard team work as well.

The Accessible Culture Model (2021)

In 2021, the National Center for Culture, the Culture Without Barriers Foundation, the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON), the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and Institut für Bildung und Kultur e.V. together with Kompetenzzentrum für Kulturelle Bildung im Alter und inklusive Kultur presented a nationwide Accessible Culture Model. The analysis of this document (published in Polish as *Model dostępnej kultury* — ed.) clearly indicates that it was inspired by the experiences of Małopolska.

- **It applied the humanistic approach, considering people and their individual needs.** The national model adopted a principle that was very important in Małopolska: accessibility is

a creative process, not a technical one. The concept that people with different needs, including those with disabilities, should co-create cultural offerings as opposed to just being in the audience has its roots in the guidelines, publications, and activities developed in Małopolska.

- **A standard within the sector:** the program has shown that cultural institutions (often located in historic buildings) need a different approach than government offices. The national model continues this line of thinking, focusing on flexibility and alternative accessibility which Małopolska promoted as far back as 2016.

Tomasz Włodarski, then Deputy Director of the MIC, participated in the development of the Accessible Culture Model and, along with Paula Cupryan, contributed to *Poradnik dla sektora kultury w zakresie zapewniania dostępności* [The Cultural Sector Guide to Ensuring Accessibility] published by the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy in 2021.

The sensory path developed by Anna Czajkowska-Sałapat, the accessibility coordinator from the Museum of the Holy Father John Paul II Family Home in Wadowice, was included in the Accessible Culture Model as an example of good practices (you can read more about it on page 131).

The Guidelines as a Tool for Adapting Regional Policy

The program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* was not just a set of rules and recommendations — it was a new opportunity and a new standard in the implementation of cultural policy.

- **Financing**

Thanks to the guidelines, the Marshal's Office of Małopolska could introduce accessibility criteria to apply in grant competitions to acquire funding for cultural activities. Entities applying for public funding were obligated to prove how their projects implemented the accessibility standards based on *Empathetic Culture*. This created a market for accessibility services (e.g., Polish Sign Language interpreting, audio description, ETR texts) and improved the quality of events throughout the region.

- **Networking and international recognition**

The guidelines have become an important reference point for projects of international significance, such as: COME-IN! (Interreg Central Europe), **Europe Beyond Access**, or **OpenRegioCulture**. The EPSA 2019 (European Public Sector Award) given to the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* cemented the developed model as one of the top three public sector initiatives in Europe. The guidelines from Małopolska were recognized as a tool for establishing an empathetic culture in Europe as opposed to providing "boring regulations."

Thanks to, among other things, the Act of 2019 and the measures pioneered by the *Empathetic Culture* program, Poland has developed the function of an accessibility coordinator on the scale of Central Europe, thus setting a precedent by taking a systemic approach to this role. In many countries of the West, accessibility is scattered or outsourced, while our model puts emphasis on "the leader within the institution."

Although it is 2026, appointing a specific person as an accessibility leader or coordinator in every cultural institution is still not a standard in many European countries. During the international exchange of experiences under the OpenRegioCulture project, the Polish staff building model — initiated, for instance, by *Empathetic Culture* and adopted as a model by the Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs — was recognized by the Interreg Europe community as one of very good accessibility implementation practices in the regions. This proves that our solutions have the potential to set the direction of change in Europe.

Heritage and the Future: Towards a Strategy for 2030

Today, we treat the guidelines of 2017 and 2019 as historical documents that formed the foundation of accessibility policy. The two strategic plans developed under the *Empathetic Culture* program for the years 2022–2025 and 2026–2030 go much further.

- **From the guidelines to the culture that embodies them:** today, we no longer ask whether to provide a ramp or driveway for wheelchairs but how to co-create culture. We promote an inclusive approach, in which institutions are ready to host experts and artists with different needs, including those with disabilities, as the creators of cultural and educational offerings on equal terms.

- **Małopolska as a knowledge leader:** thanks to the developed standards, Małopolska has become an important place for obtaining knowledge, skills, and accessibility tools.

The strategic plan for the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* for the years 2022–2025 was developed in cooperation with a Recommendation Group, which included the representatives of the Department of Culture and National Heritage, eight non-governmental organizations, 23 cultural institutions of the province of Małopolska as well as self-advocates and experts involved in the program to an equal extent. It was decided that the strategic plan for the years 2026–2030 would continue the previous one and would be based on the most current values and systemic approaches to the program.

Summary

The 2017 and 2019 guidelines of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program were a practical tool that influenced the cultural sector, as it was the first program that dared recognize **accessibility as a process that began with the human being**.

The contribution of *Empathetic Culture* to national legislation (the Act of 2019) and systemic models (the Accessible Culture Model or *The Cultural Sector Guide...* published in 2021) proves that wise, empathetic regional policies based on allyship can change standards across the country.

For years now, the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* has shown that culture is a human right. It is not just a program — it is a long-term mission which is seen as a process and aims to make cultural institutions inclusive places where everyone feels welcome and treated with dignity.

The Foundations of *Empathetic Culture*

The strategic approach of the program is based on four pillars which set the direction of cultural development in the region:

1. **the agency of people with different needs, including** those with disabilities — each participant co-creates cultural life on equal terms;
2. **openness to differences** — building a community that accepts diversity and fights stereotypes;
3. **the social nature of cultural institutions** — transforming institutions into partners to local communities, acting on the principle of co-creation;
4. **the accessibility of public space** — the holistic removal of architectural, digital, and information and communications barriers.

The Evolution of Attitudes — From the Charity Model to the Humanistic Model

Between 2023 and 2025, the program focused on changing social attitudes. It cut itself off from the unsuitable charity model based on pity in favor of the **human rights model**. Culture was no longer seen as a product delivered "to" people with different needs, including those with disabilities, and started to be created "with" them. The concept of a *creative case for disability* was introduced, recognizing people with different needs, including those with disabilities, as artists and creators. This change even affected the language used — judgmental terms disappeared from price lists, communication channels, and institutions' websites and were replaced by inclusive communication.

Toward the Future — Systemic Accessibility for the Year 2030

The new strategic plan for the years 2026-2030 is a further step toward system-based development. Thanks to a long-term agreement between

the province of Małopolska and the Małopolska Institute of Culture, the program has gained a stable development framework until the end of 2030. The main objectives for the coming years include:

- **more professionalized ways of working:** seeking opportunities to expand real and systemic support for accessibility coordinators regarding the implementation of accessibility measures;
- **digital and communication accessibility**: seeking opportunities to make the implementation of WCAG standards more uniform, building a regional database of Polish Sign Language interpreters;
- **finances:** seeking opportunities to standardize how accessibility costs are written into financial plans and subsidy applications for the funding of accessibility measures;
- **common standards:** attempts to develop uniform, accessible forms and internal communication tools.

Creating Culture Together

The strength of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program consists in collaboration. Our strategies have been developed through a participatory process. It is thanks to this joint effort that Małopolska is becoming a region where accessibility is not merely a legal requirement but a natural element of everyday life.

I am most inspired by the
POWER OF CO-CREATION.

It is when people with disabilities
go from being just audience members
to being our extraordinary guides
that I feel like my job
truly makes sense.

Katarzyna Mazur
the Home Army Museum in Kraków

Timeline

The events directly related to the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* are marked in black, significant external events are marked in navy blue.

2016

- The Assembly of Małopolska passes a resolution commencing the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* project and decides that it will be implemented by the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków.
- Twenty-two cultural institutions in the province of Małopolska are involved in the project.

2017

- A permanent team of experts is established and pilot activities to increase accessibility in cultural institutions of Małopolska are carried out.
- The first edition of the Empathetic Culture Forum.
- The first edition of the Accessibility Certification Program addressed to cultural institutions.
- The Małopolska Science Center COGITEON in Kraków joins the project as the 23rd cultural institution in Małopolska.
- The development of Accessibility Guidelines, which will be updated in the following years.

2018

- The accessibility program *Dostępność plus* is adopted and implemented.
- The project *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* receives the regional award Lodołamacze 2018 (Icebreakers 2018) in the category "Accessible Public Institution."

2019

- The Act on the Digital Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications.
- The Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs.
- The project *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* receives the European Public Sector Award (EPSA) and the EPSA Best Practice Certificate in a competition conducted under the name "New solutions to complex challenges. A public sector which is citizen-centric, sustainable, and fit for the future" organized by the European Union.
- The development of Accessibility Guidelines (part 2).

2020

- Project activities start to take place online (training webinars).

2021

- *Poradnik dla sektora kultury w zakresie zapewniania dostępności* [The Cultural Sector Guide to Ensuring Accessibility] is published.

2022

- A strategy for the project is developed, and its pillars are defined as follows: Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship.

2023

- *Model dostępnej kultury* [The Accessible Culture Model] is published.
- The project *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* receives an award at Krakowskie Dni Integracji (the Kraków Integration Days) — an annual event organized by Kraków-based universities — in recognition of the measures to improve accessibility and benefit people with different needs, including those with disabilities.
- The first edition of the grant competition for NGOs.

- The commencement of the Encounters with Empathetic Culture for local government institutions in the region.
- The first edition of the Empathetic Culture Festival where accessible Małopolska is celebrated.
- The accessibility coordinators from the cultural institutions of Małopolska hold their first convention.
- The Remembrance Museum of Land of Oświęcim Residents joins the project as the 24th cultural institution in Małopolska.

2024

- The project *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* is transformed into a long-term program of the province of Małopolska.
- The Roma History and Culture Center in Oświęcim joins the program as the 25th cultural institution in Małopolska.

2025

- The European Accessibility Act (EAA).
- The Polish Accessibility Act (PAD).
- The program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* is recognized as one of the best practices in accessibility management and accessibility implementation by Interreg OpenRegioCulture.
- The province of Małopolska and the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków sign a five-year agreement on the implementation of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*.
- The Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków and 24 cultural institutions of Małopolska sign a several-year agreement on the implementation of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program.

2026

- Ten years of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture program*.
- The anniversary edition of the Empathetic Culture Forum.

The Art of Openness

GOOD PRACTICES

JAKUB STUDZIŃSKI

Experiencing Understanding:

Sensitization Workshops as a Way of Inspiring Empathy

Since the beginning of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*, sensitization workshops (sometimes referred to as empathetic, sensitizing, or experiential) have been one of the main practical measures within the program. The program operates based on the following three-pillar model: Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship.

Accessibility is inextricable from humans. They make their working space open to people with different needs, including those with disabilities. Genuine accessibility does not start once ramps or induction loops are installed, but once a change in thinking and perspective has taken place — in other words, it starts with the human being. Of course, accessibility tools are necessary, but it is people who create a space where everyone can feel invited.

Therefore, in order to organize the subject of accessibility and the needs of people with different needs in particular areas — seeing, hearing, moving around, understanding, and feeling — we carry out sensitization workshops. The workshops aim at experiencing the needs of people facing various barriers in an unadapted environment first-hand. What does this process look like in practice?

PILLAR I: Empathy — Firsthand Experience

It all starts with a change of perspective. As it pertains to empathetic culture, empathy does not mean pity or sympathy (which characterize the charity approach). Above all, it means understanding the perspective of another person. We believe that nothing will be able to build this understanding in a way that is as effective as the experience of "being in the shoes" of people with different needs, including those with disabilities.

As the project commenced, we trained over 620 people who worked in the cultural institutions of Małopolska within two weeks. Paulina Gul and Robert Więckowski from the Culture Without Barriers Foundation supported us in our training efforts.

The most important principle to follow while developing sensitization workshops is that they need to be created and conducted jointly with self-advocates, i.e., people with different needs, including those with disabilities in particular accessibility areas. These people face challenges related to functioning in poorly designed spaces every day, they have expert knowledge, and — most importantly — experience.

Combining practice with everyday life experiences is crucial, as it allows participants to confront reality. Training participants have the opportunity to get to know the everyday life of self-advocates first-hand and to experience the barriers that prevent people with different needs, including those with disabilities, from realizing their full potential on a daily basis.



PHOTO 1. Robert Więckowski during sensitization workshops for the participants of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* project in 2017. The experience of moving around a space as a blind person. Photo: J. Martini-Kielan



PHOTO 2. Paulina Gul during sensitization workshops for the participants of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* project in 2017. Learning Polish Sign Language. Photo: J. Martini-Kielan

During sensitization workshops, participants are equipped with wheelchairs, goggles simulating various visual impairments, white canes, earplugs, and noise-cancelling headphones. This way, they experience the space of their own institution. It is a space that is either well or poorly designed. Usually, what is familiar suddenly becomes a challenge. A tall curb, a floor without a tactile strip, a heavy door, very quiet announcements, an elevator without a voice announcer, or the lack of appropriate space markings become obstacles — barriers that are very difficult to overcome. The clash with reality, with an environment that is hostile and inaccessible, evokes strong feelings. Most often those of confusion, helplessness, and frustration. Usually, there is one very important conclusion from such workshops: **it is not disability that is the main barrier but a poorly designed environment!**

It should be emphasized that we do not focus only on noticing barriers in the immediate environment, i.e., in a cultural institution as a workplace. The workshops are also aimed at changing attitudes toward people with different needs, including those with disabilities, and making cultural workers more sensitized to how people with different needs perceive the environment. There have been situations in which the space in question was very well designed, but people and their attitude toward diverse cultural audiences turned out to be a barrier.

PILLAR II: Knowledge — The Essential Basis

Experiencing limitations first-hand during a simulation makes its participants feel the need to act, to make things change. However, empathy may be insufficient if it is not accompanied by specific knowledge. Therefore, the second part of our sensitization workshops consists in equipping the participants with knowledge and practical tools.



PHOTO 3. The participants of our sensitization workshops could personally experience a poorly designed environment. Photo: J. Martini-Kielan

In our sensitization workshops, we usually pass on knowledge of the following areas:

- **behavioral rules (savoir-vivre):** how do you behave properly and naturally toward people with different needs, including those with disabilities? How can you communicate with people with different disabilities in an inclusive manner? How can you offer support or help (so as not to intimidate or deprive someone of their independence)? How do you react if someone needs this help or support, and what do you do if they can cope without it?
- **Legal aspects and accessibility standards:** introducing the participants to accessibility regulations currently in force in Poland. Getting the participants acquainted with the guidelines on architectural, digital, and information and communications accessibility as well as with good practices in the field of broadly understood accessibility and inclusiveness.
- **Practical solutions:** creating texts which are easy to read and understand (ETR), the basics of audio description or Polish Sign Language, and the rules of organizing accessible events.

Thanks to the acquired knowledge, the empathy inspired in the first part of the workshop translates into professionalism. The participants gain self-confidence — as they know and understand how to act effectively and safely.

PILLAR III: Allyship — A Proactive Attitude

Someone who has encountered barriers first-hand and gained practical knowledge of how to overcome them may be ready to turn into a conscious ally. Being an ally is primarily about

a proactive attitude, which usually manifests itself in the following actions:

- implementing real changes in your institution — from moving furniture that blocks a passage to strategic accessibility planning at the stage of program design or writing grant applications;
- responding to discrimination and exclusion in your professional environment;
- giving a voice to experts with different needs, including those with disabilities, and creating educational and cultural offerings with them, not just for them.

To be an ally, you should most importantly realize that accessibility is a process in which we learn from our mistakes. That said, we never stop striving to implement it. Furthermore, you should be aware of the social character of cultural institutions, the need to co-create a program, to invite people to come over, to be open to everyone, and to be able to say "sorry" whenever it is necessary.

Summary: Sensitization Workshops as a Good Tool of Change

The sensitization workshops conducted as part of *Empathetic Culture*, based on the Empathy — Knowledge — Allyship model, present the process of becoming an accessible institution as a journey. It starts with recognizing and experiencing emotions and a physical collision with barriers (empathy), requires its participants to organize or obtain information and skills (knowledge), and eventually turns into everyday responsible conduct (allyship).

1. **Acknowledging that accessibility begins with the human being:** the first step is to realize that barriers are not only present in the environment but also in human attitudes and projections.
2. **Inviting self-advocates to collaborate:** workshops must be planned and co-hosted by self-advocates who live with different needs on a daily basis (e.g., with sensory or motor disabilities). They render the process authentic.
3. **Confronting your own space:** workshop participants are given simulation equipment (wheelchairs, white canes, goggles simulating visual impairments, noise-cancelling headphones) and set off to move around the space of their own institution.
4. **Recognizing barriers and emotions:** workshop participants face challenges personally. They analyze the emotions triggered in them: astonishment, curiosity, confusion, helplessness, frustration.
5. **Drawing a key conclusion:** jointly reaching the awareness that an improperly designed environment or participants' own mental barriers are an obstacle, not disability itself.
6. **Building an essential basis:** moving from empathy to professionalism. Getting acquainted with savoir-vivre, legal aspects, practical solutions, and good practices.
7. **Moving on to action:** turning acquired empathy and knowledge into daily proactive attitudes.
8. **Accepting accessibility as a continuous process:** adopting an ally attitude in which participants understand that accessibility is a journey. They learn from their mistakes, invite experts with disabilities to collaborate, and know how to say "sorry" when something does not work out.

MAGDALENA URBAŃSKA

Accessibility Starts with a Click:

How to Design the Accessibility Page of a Website

Introduction

A website is the most important tool for cultural institutions to promote and communicate. In this day and age, we appreciate the role of social media as a broad and immediate communication channel, but institutional websites are more than just a business card. They are an essential transmitter — a tool that facilitates and strengthens your contact with the audience. Almost a decade ago, as we were working on an accessibility communication plan under the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program, we developed a solution to reinforce the role of the website in this area; at the time, our approach may have seemed conservative. However, today it is clear that the Accessibility page — mandatory for the institutions in Małopolska that work with our program — has become an effective good practice. That said, it still calls for wider recognition and consistent implementation.

The purpose of creating an Accessibility page is to gather all information about the accessibility of a given institution in one place. This direction has proven to be right. Increasingly often, the limited usefulness of accessibility declarations is brought up, as they are primarily formal and official in nature and less concerned with responding to the real needs of users (although they contain important

information). Studies have recently confirmed this.[3] Nevertheless, accessibility declarations remain a statutory requirement (according to the Digital Accessibility Act), which is why they are widely published on websites. In practice, they may be treated as evidence of compliance with this legal obligation, which may create the impression of a given institution as being open and inclusive. Therefore, a return to the original solution proposed by *Empathetic Culture* and to recommending the Accessibility page more broadly may be worth considering. The Accessibility page does not contradict the declaration — it can complement and develop it. Moreover, its existence has more positive effects than it might initially seem. But first things first.

What Should the Accessibility Page Contain?

The Accessibility page is a separate section of an institution's website where all information regarding its accessibility is gathered and organized. It is very important that you call it "Accessibility." In the past, some institutions have given this section their own names such as "Museum/Theater/Opera Without Barriers." However, as blind people have suggested, the name should always stay the same. If the name is standardized, people who use screen readers can quickly find the page by using a search engine.

The order of paragraphs and information provided — with the correct structure of headings, as is the case on each accessible

3 "Raport końcowy z badania potrzeb użytkowników stron internetowych i aplikacji mobilnych podmiotów publicznych w obszarze dostępności cyfrowej tych stron/aplikacji" [The Final Study Report on the Needs of Users of Website and Mobile Applications Developed by Public Sector Entities with Respect to the Digital Accessibility of These Websites/Applications], Gov.pl, accessed August 8, 2026, https://www.gov.pl/web/dostepnosc-cyfrowa/raport-koncowy-z-badania-potrzeb-uzytkownikow-stron-internetowych-i-aplikacji-mobilnych-podmiotow-publicznych-w-obszarze-dostepnosci-cyfrowej-tych-stronaplikacji

page — should reflect the real experience of a person visiting an institution, especially that of a person with a disability (further referred to as PWD). The content layout can guide the user step by step: starting with the information about how to reach the building and its surroundings, moving on to the entrance, and finally to some specific information which is relevant to the visit, e.g., the accessibility of toilets. In principle, the page should contain a short introduction — like any good description. A few sentences about the institution and its (approach to) accessibility enable the user to embed detailed information in a broader context and present accessibility as not just a formal addition, but a real expression of care for the institution's audience.

Contact

When I teach people about accessible promotion, I often find myself saying: **if you do not know what to write — or if your institution does not have extensive accessibility tools yet — provide your contact information.** It is a lot, really. As we started working on *Empathetic Culture*, the first step we took was to pick out a person responsible for coordinating accessibility in the institution, that is, practically speaking — the first point of contact. There was a reason for it.

Direct contact allows you to ask for details, clear up any doubts, and create a sense of security. It also shows the institution as open. But most importantly, it makes the user realize that there is a specific person behind the organization: an open, ready-to-talk host. The contact information should be full and unambiguous, with the first and last names, an e-mail address, and a telephone number (which you can both call and send a text message to). You may also consider adding a photo. A photograph breaks the ice, reduces inhibitions related to reaching out to someone first, and makes it easier to write or call someone.

W sprawach ogólnych można się z nami skontaktować, pisząc na adres: instytut@mik.krakow.pl lub dzwoniąc pod numer: 12 422 18 44.

Formularz wniosku o zapewnienie dostępności: **Formularz Google**.



Koordynatorem dostępności w MIK-u jest Jakub Studziński. Można napisać do niego na adres: studzinski@mik.krakow.pl lub skontaktować się z nim, dzwoniąc czy wysyłając SMS na numer telefonu +48 535 290 144. Koordynator jest również tłumaczem polskiego języka migowego (PJM) i w razie potrzeby takiego kontaktu pozostaje do dyspozycji pod telefonem z kamerką i możliwością wideorozmowy (numer jak wyżej).

Nasza siedziba znajduje się w Parku Decjusza w Krakowie, pod adresem: ul. 28 Lipca 1943 17C, 32-233 Kraków. Można do nas dojechać autobusami linii:

MIK – KONTAKT I DOJAZD

BUDYNEK

Dostępność w obszarze WIDZENIA

Dostępność w obszarze SŁYSZENIA

Dostępność w obszarze PORUSZANIA SIĘ

Dostępność w obszarze CZUCIA i ROZUMIENIA

PHOTO 4. A part of the Accessibility page on the website of the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków

Arrival

Describe exactly how to reach the institution — both by car and by public transport (bus, tram). Identify the nearest stops and landmarks in the surrounding area. Once you have done this, check the route in practice: follow it as a visitor of your institution would, but with a notebook in hand. Pay attention to potential obstacles: uneven surfaces, tall curbs, pedestrian signals which do not emit sounds, narrow passages, or steep driveways. Think about what can be difficult to a blind person, a parent/caregiver with a child in a stroller, to a person with an intellectual disability, or to someone who moves around in a wheelchair. Write it down. Based on these observations, prepare a detailed, clear description of how to access the building from each stop.

If your institution employs assistants and they are able to provide support, be sure to include this information here.

Entrance/Surroundings

Describe the path from the parking spot for PWD all the way to the ticket office or service point. Indicate whether such a parking spot is available, where it is located, and how to reach the building from there with the least amount of hassle.

Then describe the entrance: how the door opens (whether it is automatic, heavy, revolving), whether there is a threshold in it, whether the entrance is well marked, and whether a blind person may encounter obstacles along the way. Furthermore, explain where the ticket office is located, how to reach it, and at what height the counter is placed. Include all information that may be relevant from the visitor's perspective.

It is worth providing photos with captions. Thanks to them, a person with a mobility disability can check in advance what the way to the entrance and the space inside the building

look like. Photographs are also helpful to people with different needs, including those who need a greater sense of security and predictability when navigating a space.

Visiting the Institution

In Poland, *Empathetic Culture* has raised an important issue: the fact that a PWD can easily enter an institution does not mean that it is actually accessible to them. Accessibility does not end at the doorstep of a building. In addition to individual events marked as "accessible," inclusiveness should be a consistent expression of hospitality. This means, among other things, clear markings and intuitive navigation, architectural accessibility of individual spaces, as well as specific tools which provide assistance to visitors — such as tactile mock-ups, audio guides, video guides, materials in various formats, or solutions conducive to sensory regulation (e.g., a quiet room or designated quiet hours).

In this section, it is worth collecting all information that may be useful to people with different needs before they visit your institution. You should also be clear whether assistance is available, and if it is, then under what conditions.



PHOTO 5. A part of the Accessibility page on the website of the Juliusz Słowacki Theater in Kraków

Price List

Accessibility has many dimensions. One of them, which is often overlooked, is economic accessibility. For many people, a visit to a cultural institution is a real financial burden, so communicating prices transparently is crucial. It is worth using the page to clearly indicate not just ticket prices and discounts for PWD and those accompanying them but also whether and when admission is free of charge. Perhaps some of this information can already be found in another section of the website, e.g., where opening hours are listed. Do not be afraid to repeat it! The purpose of the Accessibility page is to gather all relevant information in one place — even if it is scattered in other parts of the website or in other communication channels that the institution uses.

The Program

In the years 2016-2017, when we first started working on the project *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*, we did not assume that in the future we would talk about the cultural program having to be fully accessible to the greatest possible extent (or even in its entirety!). Back then, our ambition was to gradually make accessible events a part of cultural programs. Therefore, that part of the website was supposed to include information about events addressed to PWD (or open to them).

Today, this section can still be used to present a permanent program for people with different needs, including those with disabilities, but also to explain how accessible events are indicated. If the program uses graphic symbols to provide information on the type of accessibility (e.g., audio description, Polish Sign Language, subtitles), it is worth describing them briefly here before referring the reader to the full program.

Evacuation

The obligation to consider the needs of people with different security needs arises directly from the Act on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs (further referred to as AoA). Describe the safety procedures taking into account the needs of PWD. It is worth mentioning whether the building has appropriate escape routes, escape chairs, alarm systems (both acoustic and visual), and whether the staff is trained to provide support.

ETR Text and Text Translated into Polish Sign Language

In addition, the Accessibility page is the right place to fulfill the obligations arising from the AoA in terms of information and communications accessibility, including by providing information in a format that is easy to read and understand (ETR). In this form, you can briefly describe what the institution does, what offerings are available, and how you can visit it.

Although the point of the website is to offer the simplest (least mediated) access to information, ETR text may be published under a separate, clearly marked link. If such materials already exist, you should redirect the reader to them from the Accessibility page — same goes for the accessibility declaration. Alongside ETR text, you need to provide information in Polish Sign Language as well. The material should be thoughtful and as visually legible as possible, e.g., in the form of a video recording which shows the building, space, or elements of the program.

With regard to *Empathetic Culture*, one of the key principles is to work with self-advocates, including those with disabilities. They are the ones who know their needs best. If your institution's program has not been accessible so far, you might want to treat preparing ETR and Polish Sign Language materials as an opportunity to establish cooperation with local organizations and experts. These materials

should not only be prepared by specialists but also consulted with self-advocates. Perhaps this is a great time to take the first step toward a lasting partnership with future event participants?

Accessibility Declaration

According to the Digital Accessibility Act, the accessibility declaration should be easily reachable from each page of the website — usually as a separate tab in the menu or a link in the footer. Since it is published on the institution's website anyway, you might want to place a clearly marked redirecting link to this document on the Accessibility page, which is how you can organize all key information in one place.

If there is anything else at the institution that may be useful to visitors — write about it. You can add this information to an existing section or create a new one. The suggested arrangement is the most common one, but it does not have to be exactly replicated — the page should primarily respond to the specific needs of a given institution and its audience.

Why Is an Accessibility Page Needed?

Nowadays, an Accessibility page is no longer surprising. However, suggesting its introduction was anything but obvious ten years ago. That said, it reflects the idea of the program well: it meets the needs of the audience, facilitates its contact with the institution, and turns accessibility into something natural as opposed to an addition to the institution's operations.

For PWD, such a page really makes a difference. A person with a mobility disability, such as a wheelchair user, can immediately check whether they will get to a concert and what the entrance looks like. A person with a visual disability can receive the information about the space of an institution or accessible

materials, such as audio description, prior to their visit. Accessibility information should not have to be sought after — it should be "at your fingertips." Furthermore, this is an element of how you build your institution's image: communicate openness, promote practicing hospitality, and show that you want your institution to be inclusive.

For people starting out as accessibility coordinators, the page can be a practical tool to organize knowledge about the institution's resources. Its creation quickly reveals shortcomings, as it makes you ask yourselves: do we provide ETR text? Do we have assistants? It may be useful to talk about who would be willing to help create the Accessibility page and the accessibility policy described in it. Is there a need for initial contact training? Is it worth working with local organizations? In this sense, the page helps you plan your next steps. This is an important experience we have had with *Empathetic Culture* — accessibility is a process that is developed step by step by consistently increasing the institution's openness.

To me, the Accessibility page has a symbolic dimension, too — it reflects the idea of the program well. It is not a direct result of a legal obligation, but in practice, it puts the audience right in the center of attention. Furthermore, it is a measure that does not generate costs at the beginning. Most of all, it requires work, attentiveness, and readiness to take a close look at your own institution. It organizes the discourse around accessibility, revealing its various dimensions — architectural, digital, financial, and program-related aspects — and lets you see where barriers still exist. It shows that accessibility is not a narrow topic but an attitude that different audiences benefit from — not just PWD.

As more and more people are questioning the usefulness of the accessibility declaration as a communication tool, the

Accessibility page is becoming a specific answer to this issue. Not as a formal document but as a transparent invitation to visit an institution. Therefore, it is worth treating it as a consistently implemented and developed standard as opposed to simply a good practice.

The Accessibility Page — Some Important Rules

- **Fixed name:** always use the term **"accessibility."** Avoid creative slogans such as "institution without barriers" — a uniform name makes it easier for people with different needs, including those with disabilities, to navigate the website using screen readers.
- **Logical order:** the information layout should reflect the path that the visitor is actually going to follow (starting with instructions on how to get to the institution, moving on to the entrance, and finishing with a guide on how to move around inside).
- **Practical addition:** the page does not replace an official accessibility declaration but develops it and explains its meaning in a clear and understandable way.

The Accessibility Page — A Step-by-Step Guide

Consider this as a checklist of what needs to be implemented:

1. **Introduction:** a short introduction which provides information about the institution, its accessibility, and its hospitality.
2. **Contact:** name the person responsible for ensuring accessibility, list their e-mail address and their phone number (make sure to include texting as an option). You might want to add a photo of them as well.
3. **Arrival:** a practical description of how to get to the institution by car and by means of public transportation, including

directions on how to get there from the nearest stops. Note: try out the route yourselves with a notebook in hand! Pay attention to any potential barriers.

4. **The entrance and its surroundings:** a description of the way from the parking lot (including the parking spot reserved for PWD) to the ticket office. Remember to mention the door type, thresholds, and the height of the ticket counter. It is worth adding some photos of this space.
5. **Visiting:** some information about what makes it easier to interact with culture. List all accessible tools.
6. **Price list:** clear information about ticket prices, discounts for PWD and their companions, and days with free admission.
7. **Program:** a description of accessibility icons used in the program (e.g., "PSL" for Polish Sign Language, "AD" for audio description) and information about events addressed to people with different needs, including those with disabilities, or fully accessible events.
8. **Evacuation:** safety procedures which take people with special needs into account.
9. **ETR text and a video in PSL:** information about the institution written as text which is easy to read and understand and an alternative version in Polish Sign Language. All materials must be consulted with self-advocates.
10. **The accessibility declaration:** a link to a legally required formal document with a digital accessibility statement.

DANIEL LACHOR

The Common Denominator:

Museum as a Space of Shared Experience

Modern museums are much more than just silent vaults of knowledge in which historical artifacts rest behind thick glass panes. Most of all, they are vibrant institutions that invite local communities to take action and in turn become a meeting place for diverse ideas and audience groups.

Our educational function remains unchanged — we continue to teach people how to interact with art, show history from many perspectives, and engage in dialogue by means of objects that represent the fascinating stories of humanity. Of course, our primary goal is still to protect, collect, and organize heritage. At the same time, however, we sensitize people to beauty and provide them with an opportunity of cognitive contact with a work of art.

Obviously, this gives rise to the following question: can all these traditional tasks be reconciled with the modern expectations of visitors? Can we engage in authentic interaction and achieve our goals and at the same time fully respect the individual needs of every person who steps over the doorstep of our institution? At the Museum of Nowy Sącz Land, we have proven that it is possible and that working on accessibility is a process that enriches everyone for over ten years now.

Who Do We Design Our Measures For?

As we set out to create an accessible program for a museum, we strive to facilitate the understanding of difficult topics while respecting the diversity of our audience. On this path, we constantly find ourselves facing dilemmas, and **one of the most common questions is: who is our program addressed to?**

My answer has remained the same for years: to everyone. Instead of splitting audiences into rigid categories or labeling them based on age or degree of fitness, it is better to assume that everyone should be able to take advantage of the solutions that we have come up with. This requires us to think about what barriers event participants may face. The best diagnostic tool is simply a conversation — engaging in direct contact with self-advocates, i.e., the representatives of different communities.

As people working in the cultural sector, we must focus on interactivity and comfort, and universality should be the main signpost guiding us along the way. At the preparation stage, I try to see things from many perspectives, think of the future, and analyze different scenarios. Of course, I am aware that it is not always possible to satisfy every need here and now. When it is the case, we simply draw conclusions from it to react faster and better as we embark on our next project.

Modern Education Toolkit

Years of practice have cemented my belief that there is no "magic" method or just one universal teaching tool in museum education. Each audience group needs something different, but they all have one thing in common: without interactive elements that attract attention and trigger emotions, our cognitive goal will simply be out of reach.

As I design events, I use solutions based on movement, senses, and personal experience. Our proven methods include:

- **interactive workshops:** they activate participants on many levels — manually, intellectually, and socially. Not only do they help cement knowledge, but they also let you "touch" it in a practical way and develop creativity;
- **drama activities:** role-playing involves your imagination and emotions. It is a phenomenal way to present historical figures. Thanks to drama activities, participants instantly remember characters and dates because they become part of their own lived experience;
- **exploration:** instead of handing knowledge to anyone on a silver platter, we encourage you to explore, experiment, and investigate topics yourself. This builds commitment and renders acquired knowledge particularly durable.

Alongside these methods, you have to take appropriate measures as well:

- **sensory materials:** we use sounds, exhibit copies, or special smells. It allows you to concentrate thanks to the variety of stimuli and activates the senses;
- **modern technologies:** they facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, engage eyesight, hearing, and touch, and build a bridge between history and modernity;
- **adapted space:** this is the foundation of all other things. Eliminating architectural barriers, installing proper lighting, or setting up quiet zones — these are necessary conditions for everyone to feel safe.

Co-Creation: The Key to True Knowledge

To me, one of the most valuable professional experiences is finding ways to bring history closer to people. I have found that **the best teaching aids are created when we directly involve people with different needs, including those with disabilities, in their creation.**

In recent years, we have created dozens of extraordinary materials in cooperation with our visitors with different needs, including people with disabilities. These materials have included exhibit copies, tactile aids, and even typhlographic boards designed by visually impaired people. We have discovered that the aids co-created by people with disabilities are universal and legible for everyone — young kids, students, and seniors alike.

Why is this the case? It is because the creators of these aids (having gained expertise through experience) know perfectly well what material texture, weight, or color contrast will work best to facilitate cognitive processes. Although such handicraft copies are not always as sturdy as factory-made ones, they possess a priceless quality: authenticity. They combine the artistic sensibility of people with disabilities with their life knowledge. Moreover, the very process of involving them in creating an exhibition is a wonderful form of therapy through art and a way to include them in the social life of your museum. This is the greatest success that we can achieve together.



PHOTO 6. Making a copy of architectural details by hand allows you to experience the exhibition with multiple senses. Photo: D. Lachor, the Museum of Nowy Sącz Land

History Enclosed in a Jar, or a Sensual Journey Through Time

To revive the past, we often refer to very simple associations that effectively activate memory. As we introduce the work of old painters, sculptors, weavers, and engravers, we intensify experiences by engaging the senses of smell and hearing:

- **fragrances:** we store chemicals historically used to create oil paintings, chips of various wood types, or crushed materials from which works of art were created in ordinary jars;
- **sounds:** we reproduce the buzz present in old workshops and characteristic noises of different tools, which is how we build the illusion of a bustling historical interior.

These simple, economical solutions are a great foundation for universal education design. We often believe that accessibility requires complex technologies and the ability to "crush a wall with your head." Meanwhile, the best answers are at your fingertips.

We Are Building a Future for Ourselves

Universal design is not just a professional obligation — it is an expression of empathy. Sometimes, you might want to pause and think: "What would we expect if we were trying to understand a difficult subject at an exhibition?" In a few or a dozen years, we may need support and accessible solutions ourselves. With this in mind, we will have more courage to choose simple, human methods that successfully remove access barriers with respect to culture and art. A museum is a space for everyone — without exceptions.

Highs and Lows: The Right to Design Mistakes

Perfectionism is a shadow that accompanies every person walking along a professional path that they are passionate about. As cultural

workers, we plan, create, and carefully design the educational world around us. In the process, we often arrive at the reassuring certainty that what we have just invented is perfect, well-considered from every angle, and 100% accessible.

However, we have to realize that not everything always works out entirely. As I have mentioned earlier: there are as many expectations, possibilities, and needs as there are recipients of cultural programs. It is not always possible to create a solution that perfectly fulfills its function and turns out to be a flawless tool facilitating access to culture.

A Clash with Reality

Life verifies the viability of our ideas — even the most refined ones. A brilliant concept for teaching aid may turn out to be unhelpful in the face of reality — for instance, the material used may turn out to be too fragile and unable to survive the very first encounter with enthusiastic event participants.

I have experienced this first-hand. Back in the day, I used to prepare materials for architecture classes with great care. For a long time, I wondered how to explain what stuccowork actually was to a group with different needs. How was I supposed to describe and show these beautiful, intricate details gracing the tenement houses of Nowy Sącz in a fully accessible and tangible way?

Finally, I came up with what I thought was a brilliant idea. We created special matrices that participants were supposed to press self-hardening mass against, thus creating their own copies of stucco decorations seen on local historic buildings. The goal was extremely noble and multidimensional:

- **sensory education:** the ability to touch a copy and learn about the shapes of architectural elements;

- **urban topography:** learning to navigate space not by using addresses but by memorizing details (e.g., indicating that a house decorated with characteristic toadstools is located in a particular street);
- **creating souvenirs:** a typically playful method of learning by doing, which was to be concluded by creating a hand-made cast to solidify acquired knowledge.

A Scratch on a Perfect Plan

Unfortunately, reality brutally defeated my enthusiasm, and the material itself was to blame. It turned out that the material used to create matrices absolutely did not cope with the task. As I write these words, I do not mean wear and tear after an extended period of use — the matrices failed the very first time they were used.

Poorly chosen material and the lack of consideration for different pressing power in the hands of our participants meant that most molds simply crumbled and cracked during classes. Obviously, such a situation is a source of great stress for the educator and a painfully blatant scratch on a perfectly prepared original plan.

We Do Not Have to Be Champions in Everything

This workshop adventure immediately made me think of a well-known slogan: there are as many needs and possibilities as there are recipients. Sometimes these possibilities consist in the physical force that someone uses to explore the world which we (as designers) have not anticipated.

However, it is not worth getting discouraged. We will not become engineers, material technologists, and jacks of all trades. We are entitled to make mistakes sometimes, to wrongly assess a situation, and to learn from it for the future.

To finish off this story about the highs and lows of museum work, I wish all of us **room to make mistakes, time to consider them calmly after we have made them, and above all, that we allow ourselves to be human beings as opposed to infallible perfectionists.**

ANNA REJOWSKA

Is It Possible to Rest in a Cultural Institution?

The *Caring Movement* Project in Practice

The project *Troskliwy ruch — laboratorium odpoczywania* [Caring Movement — Relaxation Laboratory] was carried out in Cricoteka in 2025. It consisted of three rounds of workshops for adults which were accessible to a wide audience. Each of them included five meetings held once a week in the same group, with each round conducted by a different artist — a self-advocate or an ally of people with disabilities. Katarzyna Żeglicka, Patrycja Jarosińska, and Zofia Noworól-Ostrowska were some of the hosts.

The workshops were built around the topics of rest and care, and the participants were invited to search for ways to take a breather, calm down, and relax together. The meetings were supposed to be an excuse to find space to take care of yourself and your needs and to learn simple methods of how to (self-) soothe and relax.

The project premise was based on the conviction that cultural institutions were not just a place to interact with art, but also to meet, be together, and care for each other. The need to work on these topics was confirmed by consecutive projects proposed by cultural institutions and organizations across the country.

One-day workshops carried out by Katarzyna Żeglicka, entitled *Wrażliwe ciało. (nie)Dostępny ruch* [Sensitive Body. (in) Accessible Movement], held in Cricoteka as part of the 2024 Empathetic Culture Festival, directly inspired the creation of *Caring Movement*. Their positive reception became an impulse to draft an entire program.

It would not have been possible to carry out the project without the support that the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* had built in the region for the past ten years. The program offers training, creates a cooperation network between institutions and among accessibility coordinators, connects the creative community (in particular, artists with different needs, including those with disabilities) with event producers, and finally, it supports teams in drawing attention to diversity. This makes it easier to build projects based on attentiveness, safety, and actual consideration for the needs of participants.

While working on *Caring Movement*, I wanted to plan a work process in which each person could feel safe and comfortable. I assumed that the workshops would focus on what was closest to us — sensitive bodies, free movement, and community. I wanted us to focus on the process of working together: searching, testing things out. Already at the design stage, I assumed that project activities would be summed up in *Narzędziownik do odpoczywania* [The Resting Toolkit] — a booklet containing simple exercises to perform on your own.



PHOTO 7. Workshops on caring movement and rest. Photo: M. Rymarz, the Center for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków (Cricoteka)

Invitation to Collaborate

Having defined the topic of the workshops and their main premises, it was time to invite others to collaborate. Therefore, I reached out to the artists with whom Cricoteka had already collaborated on various projects. I knew that the topics of rest and relaxation resonated with them, I knew the tools they employed in workshops, and I was sure that they could create a space open to action.

I wanted the hosts to feel free and the workshops to have their unique touch, so at the beginning, I only specified the topic and the timeline. We clarified the details at the stages that followed, taking into account the needs pointed out to us by participants — both in our recruitment forms and as the workshop rounds took place.

I invited some experts to collaborate with us as well. Jakub Studziński served as a project accessibility consultant and PSL (Polish Sign Language) interpreter during Patrycja Jarosińska's workshops. Natalia Kaczor looked into the booklet design with respect to the needs of visually impaired people. I invited Anna Grajewska — an evaluator and soon-to-be publication contributor — to work with us as well. Together, we planned meetings with workshop participants and the evaluation of selected relaxation exercises as well as the entire project.

Teamwork

The success of the project depended not only on external cooperation but also on the involvement of the institution's team. I consulted our ideas with people in charge of education in Cricoteka on a daily basis at all stages of work. These people included Justyna Dronia, Małgorzata Raczkowska, and Anna Bargiel. I developed communication measures and promotional activities together with Małgorzata Kmita-Fugiel, Zofia Mikołajska, and

Andrea Nikolov (who came up with the visual identification of the project). Aleksandra Treder, who worked with the audience, supervised the recruitment of participants alongside me, and we were supported by the administration department in all technical matters.

Another premise of *Caring Movement* was to involve assistants. Along with educators, we provided assistance on the way to the workshops and back, support for all of their duration, and live audio description. Together with the hosts and assistants, we ensured the comfort and well-being of both us and the participants. Sometimes simple actions were enough to take care of someone or yourself, e.g., giving someone a glass of water, turning on air conditioning, announcing a break, or adjusting lighting.

Open Call for the Project

We addressed the series of workshops to groups as diverse as possible. We wanted the invitation to reach people of different ages and needs.

About three to four weeks before the start of each round, we announced an open call for participants. The information was published on our social media channels and the institution's website, distributed via a newsletter, and forwarded to people and groups potentially interested in participating in the project.

The messages also included accessibility information: the description of architectural accessibility, a link to the Accessibility page on our website, and the contact data of the project coordinator. A simple application form collected information about people's needs, motivations, and expectations from the workshops. There was also an option to indicate specific forms of support needed — including assistance on the way to and from the workshops, live audio description, noise-cancelling headphones, or PSL interpreting. Admission was determined by the order in which applications were submitted.

The responses allowed us to plan assistance and allowed the hosts to prepare workshops tailored to the individual needs and preferences of the participants.

Open Formula and Movement

The workshops were based on an open formula to allow people with different motor capabilities to participate. The workshop groups included visually impaired people, PSL users, seniors, people in a mental health crisis, and refugees.

Together with the hosts, we remained open to modifications and ready to react to whatever happened during the meetings. Flexibility was also interwoven into the structure of our workshops thanks to the use of dance and movement. We treated the practice of dance as a democratic form of expression which is open to different ways of movement. Each person could dance the way they wanted, participate more or less actively in the exercises, or withdraw from performing tasks which made them feel uncomfortable. The form of the workshops, their length, and the number of breaks were adjusted to the needs of the participants every time.

Furthermore, it was important for us to jointly set up the rules to follow at the beginning of the meetings. Having people report their needs on an ongoing basis proved particularly valuable and allowed us to modify the action plan as we went along and make it more realistic if necessary.

Working in such diverse groups was an opportunity to increase our attentiveness to others and at the same time a chance to look for new action methods and techniques. Sometimes we had to find simple solutions: change the lighting, provide an alternative seat (chairs, cushions, mats), bring an additional blanket, open the door, or put a fan inside. At other times, more involvement was needed — for instance, by describing activities on an ongoing basis to make sure that they were accessible to everyone.



PHOTO 8. The participants of workshops on caring movement under the guidance of Zofia Ostrowska-Noworól. Photo: M. Rymarz, the Center for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków (Cricoteka)

One of the biggest challenges was to work with Polish Sign Language — which is strongly based on visuals — and its audio description addressed to visually impaired people. We looked for solutions together with the assistants and participants — having obtained the consent of workshop participants, we used touch as a tool to show hand shapes and movements used in PSL signs and made the group realize how important audio description was. It was a process of constantly trying things out and experimenting.

Caring Movement was a space to play and be carefree as well — to search for what made us happy and gave us energy. During Katarzyna Żeglicka's workshops, we constructed "spots of relaxation" — small bases and hiding places made of mats, blankets, and cushions. We built them together or separately. Thanks to this, we remembered how fun it was to build something simple and later to just lie on soft blankets and cushions.

Evaluation and the Booklet

The primary aim of *Caring Movement* was to rest and get to know some simple tools and ways of how to (self-)soothe and relax. I wanted to include some of the exercises tested during the workshops in a widely available booklet. I wanted people to try them out. Therefore, during the workshop, participants were given two exercises to test on their own at home. An evaluator who conducted a discussion about the experience was invited to one of the meetings

in each round. The remarks that we had gathered helped us modify the instructions and adjust them to actual needs. The exercise instructions that we reformulated together became a part of *The Resting Toolkit*.

Our work on the booklet was coordinated by Justyna Droń. We invited Ewelina Długosz-Wójcik, Anna Grajewska, Jakub Studziński, Katarzyna Żeglicka, Patrycja Jarosińska, and Zofia Noworól-Ostrowska to co-author the publication.

It was divided into a theoretical and practical part. The first one answers the question why it is worth working on the topics of care, rest, and relaxation, and thus describes the premise of the project. What complements this part is a conversation about art, rest, and mental health with psychotherapist Ewelina Długosz-Wójcik.

The practical part opens with a text by Jakub Studziński, which is a collection of tips on how to make workshops inclusive. The publication later includes some exercises prepared by Katarzyna Żeglicka, Patrycja Jarosińska, and Zofia Noworól-Ostrowska. You can do them anytime, anywhere, and modify them according to your preferences. The instructions on how to perform exercises in the booklet are provided in written and audio-visual form.

More information on the project (in Polish):

https://cricoteka.pl/pl/troskliwy-ruch-laboratorium-odpoczywania-2025-podsumowanie-projektu/

How to Organize Inclusive Workshops in a Cultural Institution?

The experience that we gained with the *Caring Movement* project proves that creating spaces of care and relaxation requires careful planning, while it is often based on simple solutions. If you work on similar projects, you might want to remember the following steps:

1. **Get to know people's needs before you start**

   Use a simple recruitment form to ask about specific methods of support, such as assistance, audio description, PSL interpreting, or noise-cancelling headphones. Knowing people's needs allows you to design your classes better.

2. **Make sure to gather an interdisciplinary team**

   Work with experts: self-advocates, allies, evaluators, PSL interpreters, and accessibility consultants.

3. **Communicate accessibility**

   Provide clear information on accessibility as soon as you announce the event.

4. **Stay flexible in the workshop**

   Observe the group and react on an ongoing basis. Small changes may significantly improve the comfort of work.

5. **Give people a choice**

   Create a space in which each person can participate in classes on their own terms. Withdrawing from an exercise is just as important as actively taking part in it.

6. **Evaluate and try out solutions in practice**

   Talk to the participants and modify the tools so that they actually work for them.

7. **Pass on what you have learned**

   Summarize your project with some useful and publicly available material (e.g., a catalog of good practices, a booklet with exercises) that others will be able to use on their own.

WHAT MATTERS TO ME THE MOST

is seeing people and their reactions to events in which they can participate — a smile, a tear, a moment of pause or amazement.

It is building relationships with the participants of our events and with our partners.

It is creating an open, kind, and empathetic team.

Agata Balcerowska-Całka
the Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz Theater in Zakopane

ANNA CZAJKOWSKA-SAŁAPAT

A Multi-Sensory World:

Designing Sensory Tours and Their Significance

Accessibility at the Museum of the Holy Father John Paul II Family Home in Wadowice did not start with a project or a statutory obligation — it started with the following question: "Who are we there for, really?" From the beginning, we saw the place that told the story of John Paul II's life as a space of encounter: of people, experiences, and sensibilities. Over time, we have noticed that not everyone can participate in such encounters on equal terms. This was the first and most important lesson for us: the realization that openness called for specific measures.

Ten years ago, we became part of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program. Back in those days, accessibility was understood primarily as the removal of barriers. We focused on architectural and technological solutions, on adaptations that allowed people with disabilities to see the exhibition safely and comfortably. At that stage, we responded to specific needs, learned in practice, gained experience, and discovered that accessibility was not a list of amenities but a way of thinking about the audience and the institution's own responsibility.

My personal journey toward accessibility started at the same time. Ten years ago, as an accessibility integrator in the *Empathetic Culture* program, I was practically a beginner. I was learning the language of accessibility, getting to know the needs of people with various disabilities, participating in trainings and meetings, and at the same time confronting my own ignorance and typical thought patterns. Over the

years, accessibility has ceased to be a task for me to implement and has become a process in which I am involved at all times — a space for me to meet people with different needs who teach me to be considerate and humble. At times, it may be a difficult and demanding path, but it gives me great satisfaction and a sense of purpose.

Everyone's Home

One of the most significant experiences for us was when we implemented a grant project entitled *Dom dla każdego. Sensoryczna ścieżka zwiedzania i warsztaty dla osób ze szczególnymi potrzebami w Muzeum Dom Rodzinny Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II w Wadowicach* [Everyone's Home. The Sensory Tour and Workshops for People with Special Needs at the Museum of the Holy Father John Paul II Family Home in Wadowice] as part of the project *Kultura bez barier* [Culture Without Barriers] led by the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON). We started it in September 2022, and our activities were finalized in the middle of 2023.

At the starting point, we asked ourselves a simple yet very demanding question: how do we make our museum a space where everyone can feel good? Based on our previous experiences, we were looking for solutions that would allow people with special needs to learn about the history of John Paul II in a way that they would find comfortable and effective, especially those who needed accessible solutions with respect to seeing, feeling, and understanding. Therefore, we decided to move ahead with an undertaking that would impact both the exhibition space and the way our team worked.

The Sensory Tour

Our sensory tour includes nearly 60 additional exhibition items which allow you to learn history through touch, smell, and sound. The idea was not to "add" more elements to the exhibition but to create

a coherent way of sightseeing — one that would allow people with different needs to construct their own experience of the museum step by step.

The tour was designed to lead visitors from one exhibition space to another using simple and legible sensory markings: hand, nose, and ear symbols. They indicated spots where you could stay longer, touch objects, experience smells, or listen to recordings. Thanks to this measure, viewing an exhibition becomes more intuitive and calm. It does not require haste or cause an information overload. On the contrary, it allows you to focus on the experience.

At many points of the exhibition, there are items that can be held in hand. What we wanted the most was for them to be original exhibits from the first decades of the 20th century. For instance, visitors can touch a pre-war school slate; find out how heavy an old coal-powered iron is; see how many small things can fit into a silver-plated purse from a century ago or discover what kids played with in the 1920s and 1930s. In the kitchen of the apartment that the Wojtyła family used to live in, you can smell spices characteristic of the interwar period — scents that may have accompanied the Wojtyła family in their everyday life.

During one of the first tests, it turned out that one of the fragrances prepared for the kitchen part was… definitely too intense. For some participants, it was nothing short of overwhelming. This experience reminded us how important it was to be mindful of sensory details — sometimes less is more.

To give visitors the opportunity to see and touch a purse identical to the original one (which belonged to John Paul II's mother Emilia), I went to an antique shop on the other side of Poland to buy exactly the same model!

A special part of the tour is devoted to memorabilia from John Paul II's pilgrimages. These include a feather headdress from Papua New Guinea, a Fulani hat from West Africa, a poncho from Peru, and jewelry from Zambia. For many visitors, the moment when they get to see, touch, and feel them is unique — suddenly, remote regions of the world cease to be just a story. Texture, weight, and temperature make all these things come to life. Out of all additional objects, the only copy is a beautiful hat with ostrich feathers which was reconstructed based on an archival photograph from 1917. In it, the future pope's mother can be seen in such a hat.

During one of the first sensory tours, its participants touched the feather headdress from Papua New Guinea with great caution. After a moment of silence, someone smiled and said: "I thought it was going to be rough, and it's as soft as fluff." Such moments show you just how much touch can change the way we learn about reality.



PHOTO 9. The aforementioned purse which belonged to Emilia, John Paul II's mother. Photo: M. Trzepaczka/the Museum of the Holy Father John Paul II Family Home in Wadowice



PHOTO 10. The feather headdress from Papua New Guinea. It is soft indeed... Photo: M. Trzepaczka/the Museum of the Holy Father John Paul II Family Home in Wadowice

That said, the sensory tour is not limited to additional exhibits. Creating tools that helped our visitors navigate the space of the museum was just as important. Therefore, we prepared floor plans for all floors in typhlographic form with descriptions in Braille. Visitors can also use a guide developed as text which is easy to read and understand (ETR) as well as its audio version available in audio guides and in the mobile app. Furthermore, we provide noise-cancelling headphones and magnifying sheets for reading.

Our work with the museum team was an equally important element of the preparation stage. We decided that before any new solutions arrive at the exhibition, all employees — including educators and service staff alike — would take part in a training session on accessibility and communication with people with different needs, including those with disabilities. The training was prepared especially for our museum in cooperation with a self-advocacy non-governmental organization and became an important starting point for the measures that followed.

We also paid close attention to the design and procurement stages. Every solution — from typhlographic boards all the way to path markings — was proven to meet applicable accessibility standards. We did not just want them to meet formal requirements. Above all, we wanted them to actually be useful.

The key factor that helped was that we did not come up with those solutions on our own. From the very beginning, we invited people with different needs and self-advocates — the people that we dedicated our measures to — to work with us. We consulted them regarding selected exhibits intended for touching and asked which of

them would be the most interesting and cognitively valuable. While creating the audio version of our sensory tour, we discussed the selection of sounds together so that they would not be too intense or disturbing (at this point, I would like to thank the people who helped create our sensory tour).

After completing these preparations, we invited the first focus groups. Participants could calmly complete the entire sensory tour, check out the exhibits, and share their comments. Many small changes — concerning even the height of some elements or the way consecutive spots were marked — were introduced thanks to these conversations.

Working on the sensory tour was a lesson of humility for us as well. For instance, it once seemed obvious to us that some elements would be easy to find — until we tried to do it together with visually impaired people. At that moment, it turned out that even details such as material texture or the direction in which someone's hand moves may be very significant.

In addition to the sensory tour, accessible educational activities were another important element of the venture — therefore, we prepared *Workshops Without Barriers* addressed mainly to neurodivergent people and people with intellectual disabilities. The script was developed by an experienced educator who specialized in working with people with different needs. Under her supervision, museum educators prepared to conduct the workshops, improving their

working methods and practicing their practical application in the process.

Including the sensory tour and workshops as permanent offerings of our institution — through a formal decision of our director — was a special moment for us. That step had a symbolic meaning for us: accessibility was no longer a project and became a part of the museum's identity.

The first tactile exhibit that our visitors encounter is the school slate from a hundred years ago that I have mentioned before. To us, this is a telling sign. It reminds us that as far as accessibility is concerned, we are still students — we learn, make mistakes, look for better solutions. Most importantly, however, we remain open to learning and ready to continuously develop our understanding of accessibility.

Here and Now

Today, accessibility is one of the criteria to consider when we plan our activities. We take it into account as we come up with ideas for the program, prepare our budget, organize space and events. We invest in training our team, care about the manner in which we communicate, and develop tools to support people with different needs — also as far as their sense of security is concerned. What started with individual solutions became an element of organizational culture and a shared responsibility of the entire team.

The tenth anniversary of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* is an opportunity to reflect on it and express gratitude. Over the years, the language that we use to talk about the audience has changed, the cultural sector has grown more aware of issues, and accessibility has become a topic of shared responsibility. We continue to follow this path — both on an institutional and on a personal level. Nowadays, we know that accessibility is

an attitude — a way of thinking about the other person and the role that cultural institutions should play in society.

How to Design a Sensory Tour of a Museum?

1. **Start with people — not with exhibits**

   The most important step is to talk to the people that a particular offering will be addressed to. Invite self-advocates to collaborate. Their experience will help you understand their needs and avoid solutions that seem good from the perspective of the designer but do not work in practice.

2. **Get the team of your institution ready to act.**

   It is worth starting the process by training the entire team — not just the educators or the customer service staff but all people employed by your institution. Communication skills and savoir-vivre toward people with different needs will serve as the foundation for measures that follow. In addition, knowledge reduces anxiety levels and makes employees feel more confident.

3. **Determine which elements of the exhibition can be "given away to the senses"**

   Creating a sensory tour is not just about adding a few objects to touch. It is worth considering which chapters of the story that the museum tells can be conveyed through different senses:

- **touch** — original objects or their copies;
- **hearing** — audio recordings, audio description, ambient sounds;
- **smell** — elements that recreate the atmosphere of an era or a place;

- **taste** — products to try that recreate the atmosphere of an era or a place (if obtainable);
- **sight** — text, exposed objects.

4. **Consult users and test solutions**

The prototypes of tactile exhibits, typhlographic boards, or ETR texts should be handed over to future users for review. Tests involving people with different needs enable you to make corrections even before the tour becomes available to visitors.

5. **Make sure you have a consistent labeling system**

The tour should be clearly marked. Simple symbols that provide information on the possibilities of exploring an exhibit, e.g., through touch, smell, and hearing, are helpful in this respect. Thanks to this solution, visitors can easily find sensory elements in the exhibition space.

6. **Think about orientation and information**

It is worth preparing materials which enable an independent tour of a museum, such as:

- floor plans in the form of typhlographics with descriptions in Braille;
- guides written in a way which is easy to read and understand (ETR);
- audio guides or apps with an audio version of exhibited content.

7. **Complete the tour with educational activities**

Sensory workshops can deepen the experience of a museum visit. Activities based on working with the senses, carried out in a calm pace and based on a clear structure, are especially helpful for neurodivergent people.

8. **Clarify formal and organizational issues**

At the stage of procurement and selecting solutions, you might want to make sure that they comply with the standards regarding accessibility and durability of materials. It is equally important to offer new solutions on a permanent basis so that they do not remain just an element of your institution's project.

9. **Remember that accessibility is a process**

A sensory tour is never a closed project. It is worth gathering visitors' opinions, observing the way in which they use the solutions provided, and introducing further improvements.

WHY DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

Because the smile and gratitude
of those who participate
in our workshops, museum classes,
meetings, etc.,

is the greatest proof
that what we do makes others
feel happy and important,
and their reaction is
an incentive to keep on going.

Anita Bury
The Remembrance Museum
of Land of Oświęcim Residents

ANNA REJOWSKA

The Stage Belongs to Everyone:

On Participatory Measures in Theater and Performance

Participatory stage activities require a change in working methods and a change in thinking about what a stage production is and who its co-creator is. The following set of guidelines for the production of open theatrical plays and stage performances has been based on the experience gathered in the Center for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków (Cricoteka) in recent years. These aspects do not constitute a complete and universal model of work. Rather, they make up a set of practical tips that can support the process of conceptualizing stage activities.

Go for Participation

Invite self-advocates to collaborate. Look for artists in your environment — perhaps there are some people that you would like to work on a project with or with whom you have already worked. Consider working with organizations, foundations, or existing groups.

Think about how to build a team: it might be through individual invitations, open calls, or cooperation with an existing group.

Determine the remuneration for everyone involved in the project (including assistants and consultants) or make sure that their work can be performed in another form of employment in the institution/organization (e.g., within nine-to-five working hours).

Start your collaboration by having a discussion and defining topics, ways, and rules of working. Consider whether you will work on the basis of an already finished text/script or create the structure of your play or performance as you go. Specify what tools and resources you need and whether they are available at the institution or need to be obtained outside of it.

Focus on the Work Process

The work process plays a key role in participatory projects. It is not just their result that matters. Therefore, plan it so that it can take place in comfortable conditions. Give the people you work with time so that they can get to know each other, identify their needs and capabilities. Consider the fact that people work at different speeds: some will jump swiftly into the process, others will need more time. Plan not just your work, but also times when you can rest and have meals together.

Establish and communicate the rules and schedule of work, but do not hesitate to make changes as you go. Stay flexible. Routine provides a sense of security, but it is equally important to respond to the current needs of the team (e.g., the need to take a break, air the rehearsal room, prepare warm tea, or finish work early).

Make use of the situations that transpire in the work process — maybe they will be the most insightful and creative?

Work in a Diverse Team

Build a team of people who are skilled in different fields: production, technology, education, promotion, and art. Make sure to include assistants, consultants, and accessibility coordinators in this group.

Tell them about the artistic concept, the areas in which you work, and why the engagement of each person involved in the process is so important. Remember that having a producer on board

is just as important as hiring a technical specialist or someone to provide live audio description.

Assign tasks and responsibilities within the team in a transparent manner. Define the ways and forms of communication that you will employ (e.g., team meetings on specific dates, e-mail summaries, or rules of live communication). Make sure that the flow of information is smooth and that mutual support is there — different competencies within the team should complement each other.

Communicate Directly

Clear and direct communication is the foundation of a secure work process. When you first start working together, gather the entire team and draw up a contract in which you will list the most important rules of cooperation.

Communicate the schedule, how the work will be structured, and how the tasks will be divided.

Remind them that they can express their needs anytime. Respond to emerging tensions. Remember that emotions, disagreements, and conflicting interests may arise in the process — they require consideration and a quick reaction.

Build an Event Around Specific People

In your event team, think about what each of you would like to show on stage (e.g., specific content or emotions) and what tools you can use to make it happen (e.g., words, movement, singing, sound).

Assume that someone's onstage presence and how it affects others is more important than them just playing a role. Treat the different experiences of creators as an asset in the project — think about how you can benefit from them together. Assume that each participant in the process is an expert in their field and that you can learn from each other. Leave everyone room for improvisation and creative freedom.

Treat Different Perceptions as Creative Tools

Make use of a variety of experiences and try to respond to different needs. Try to work not just with eyesight or hearing, but also with the senses of touch or smell. Together with self-advocates, consider whether sign language can become a dramatic element and whether audio description should be available only on headphones or perhaps become an integral part of the whole thing.

Prepare for the Unexpected

Accept that you cannot predict and plan everything in the open process of working on an event. Remember that uncertainty is a part of the process, and that some moments of ignorance are needed as well. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know," to ask, to look for solutions. Provide an option of extra assistance, such as consulting a specialist, reaching out for psychological support, or organizing supervision.

Ensure Accessibility

It is best if accessibility is planned and embedded in the operating structure from the very beginning. Think about who may be in the audience at your event and how to make them feel comfortable as they witness it. Take advantage of accessible tools: audio description, PSL interpreting, live subtitles, a *touch tour*, or an induction loop. Communicate accessibility or its lack in the event descriptions on your website, on your social media channels, and at the event venue. Take advantage of an accessibility coordinator's support as well as self-advocates' knowledge and experience.

Remember that some needs are mutually exclusive and you will not be able to plan events that suit everyone.



PHOTO 11. Multidimensional communication (interpreting from/into PSL, audio description) and experiencing each other's presence at Cricoteka. Photo: M. Rymarz, the Center for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków (Cricoteka).

Celebrate Success

Every premiere or performance that follows is a reason to rejoice and appreciate the work you do together. Celebrate every achievement, even the smallest one.

Remember that open participatory events require an inclusive, mindful work process — both on an artistic level and in terms of production. The way that you work with a team, make decisions, and respond to the needs of others has a direct impact on the shape and significance of the event.

To me, **EMPATHETIC CULTURE**

stands for applied openness,
empathy, and diversity.

To be able to change my perspective,
notice differences, acknowledge diversity,
and see the broad spectrum of
people's experiences is something
that greatly inspires and motivates me
in my day-to-day work.

Marek Isztok
the Roma History and Culture Center
in Oświęcim

Accessibility Discussions

EXPERT OPINIONS

MAGDALENA STOROŻENKO-POLAK

A Change of Perspective:

Universal Design — Some Challenges and Deficiencies with Regard to Inclusion

Introduction

Contemporary Polish design and architecture suffer from a deficit of imagination hidden under the cloak of rigorous compliance with regulations. In this case, universal design has become an exercise in geometry and logistics as opposed to the art of creating spaces that serve human beings. If you focus on constantly following the accessibility checklist and meeting the requirements of your next grant application and subsidy, it is easy to forget who you are doing this for. What happens is that designers envisage a mythical person with a disability and then create "amenities" for them. They tick off more and more bullet points on the list and forget that universal design is something for everyone. In my opinion, the problem starts already at the stage of education and mentality; we design a world for bodies that are copies of ourselves — with most of us being fit, strong, and predictable.[4] In the eyes of an architect, this makes any difference a "technical issue" as opposed to a natural part of human experience. In Poland, accessibility has become a matter of regulations and legal compliance, not one of experience and understanding.

4 Ruth Morrow, "Architectural assumptions and environmental discrimination: the case for more inclusive design in schools of architecture," in: *Changing Architectural Education*, ed. David Nicol, Simon Pilling (Taylor & Francis Group, 2000), 36–41.



PHOTO 12. A warning surface — truncated domes glued to the pavement in front of the stairs. Gray dots on a gray background. Can you see them? In the grant application checklist, this item has been ticked off. Do they do their job? No one thought about it. Photo: M. Storożenko-Polak

Universal Design? Accessibility Is Still a Project "Add-On"

In training sessions, workshops, or lectures, I ask my audience what they think of when they hear the word "accessibility." The most common responses include elevator, ramp, wheelchair, accessible toilet, and a parking spot for people with disabilities. Reducing accessibility to the width of a door or a ramp strips architecture and design of a humanistic dimension.[5] Disability is treated as a system error, an error that needs to be corrected with a ramp, an elevator, a door-opening button.

In Poland, this has been very visible in recent years: there are new facilities that formally comply with the requirements and may even be nominated for accessibility awards. But when you visit such places, you do not feel invited there.

Universal Design — A Thought Trap

Many of us assume that universal design applies exclusively to new buildings, and that only rational improvements are worth discussing as far as existing buildings are concerned. This is really the case, albeit to some extent. However, the principles of universal design apply to designing rational improvements as well. Meanwhile, such thinking exempts the designer from searching for systemic solutions, e.g., in historical structures, and reduces their role to installing inclined platform lifts which often do not work anyway. Accessibility should be seen as an opportunity to use the space of existing buildings in novel ways, not just as a "quick fix."

5 David Gissen, *The Architecture of Disability. Buildings, Cities, and Landscapes beyond Access* (University of Minnesota Press, 2023), 7–18, 147–151.



PHOTOS 13 AND 14. A footbridge in the water playground of Park Jaworek in Tychy. The footbridge is steep (in some spots, it is an angle of approx. 19 degrees, which is a grade exceeding 30%). Magdalena Truchan will not be able to use such a footbridge. I wonder why the project was nominated for the Lider Dostępności (Accessibility Leader) award in 2025. Photo: M. Storożenko-Polak

WEJŚCIE TYLKO W OBUWIU!
KÓŁKA NIE WCHODZĄ

After all, meeting statutory requirements is not all that we are capable of but an absolute minimum.

The goal of people with disabilities is not just to become a part of practical reality, but to change it.[6] These words define the essence of universal design (later referred to as UD). Recently, the biggest failure in the field of inclusion has consisted in the belief that UD is simply "better accessibility." Not in the slightest. **True UD is not an attempt to draw people with disabilities into a world designed by people who are fit — it is about letting them co-create this world from scratch.**

The Mutable Nature of the Body as a Universal Design Method

I believe that disability should cease to be seen as a "technical problem" to be solved. It should become a research tool included in UD methodology — a unique way of navigating spaces.

What does this mean in practice? **It means that fatigue, a different speed of movement, or sensory diversity are not treated as limitations to consider in a building, but rather as creative parameters.** If we perceive disability as a design method, UD is no longer a search for compromise. Instead, it turns into an interaction with the diverse nature of human existence. "Athletic" architecture gives way to relational architecture.

For years now, we have been fascinated by the legacy of modernist architecture. Of course, many premises of modernism are worth practicing. That said, some of this legacy rules out complete inclusion. When Le Corbusier, one of the architects of modernism, created the Modulor, he based it on the body of an "ideal" (fit) man.

6 Ibid.

I believe that it is this school of thought that causes any kind of diversity to be seen as wrong.

UD requires textbooks to be rewritten. We have to stop revering buildings that (in their "pure form") marginalize weakness, old age, or illness. It is time for an architecture theory that celebrates the mutable nature of the body as an integral part of life as opposed to treating it as an aesthetic obstacle.

Finnegan Shannon's projects, such as *Sit If You Agree*, are the missing link in how UD is understood in Poland. They show that UD is not just a ramp — it is a culture of rest.

In his *Sit If You Agree* project, Finnegan Shannon creates benches with telling messages, for instance: "Museum visits are hard on my body. Rest here if you agree," or "I prefer staying to going. Sit if you agree." In my opinion, this is a well-aimed attack on "vitalistic" modernism, as David Gissen also points out. Modern spaces force us to either move or stand constantly.

In Poland, we think of fatigue as a design parameter way too rarely. Finnegan proves that providing a place where you can rest is an act of solidarity, not a "weakness" of the project.



PHOTO 15. "I prefer stillness to movement. Sit if you agree." Finnegan Shannon, *Do you want us here or not* (Pinacoteca Agnelli, 2024–present), work commissioned and produced by Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin 2024. Execution: Attitudine Forma. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano, Courtesy of Finnegan Shannon and Deborah Schamoni

Challenges

In recent years, we have certainly seen a real legal and financial change in Poland, but it has not always been followed by a change in mentality. What stands in the way of actual inclusion?

1. Architects are afraid of inspections, so they rigidly stick to guidelines and dimensions and forget about functionality. They do not understand what specific solutions are for. This results in such nonsense as raised tactile indicators at a height of six feet (which cannot be reached).

2. Such designs are made for people with disabilities, not with them. Without taking their perspective into account, i.e., analyzing their everyday movements and micro difficulties, inclusion remains theoretical.

3. Fragmented thinking — focusing on an elevator and a dedicated parking spot makes us ignore everything around us: spatial information, materials, contrasts, acoustics, or our intuition and understanding of how our spaces are and can be used.



PHOTO 16. Signposts and wayfinding markings in Braille at the Polish History Museum in Warsaw. Tactile indicators are located at a height of more than six feet. Design by WXCA. Photo: PLACES Foundation

Time for a Change of Perspective

In Poland, real UD will begin once architects have stopped asking what slope a wheelchair ramp should have and instead start asking **how they can make everyone feel invited and appreciated in a given space regardless of their capabilities**.

Accessibility is not an extra feature of architecture; it is its very foundation. As long as we only see elevators and toilets, we will be stuck building apartment-like mechanical machines. True inclusion begins where rules end and where imagination, respect, and acknowledging diversity begin.

The Principles of Universal Design

1. ### Fair use (equality)

   The project must be attractive and accessible to everyone.

- **What it means in practice:** an automatic door, no stairs needed to reach the main entrance. Events need to be universally accessible as well, with live interpreting from/into PSL (Polish Sign Language), subtitles, and assistance available whenever needed.

2. ### Flexibility of use

   The project takes into account a wide range of users' preferences and speeds.

- **What it means in practice:** the program of a cultural institution includes audio description, PSL, and interactive stands at different heights — both for children and for people in a seated position.

3. ### Simple and intuitive use

   The project must not require a manual.

- **What it means in practice:** pictograms instead of specialized language. Avoid messages such as, “You will find the key to the toilet in room 20” — if a space requires you to ask for a key to reach it, it means failure. Accessible toilets should be accessible; not on demand or upon requesting a key.

4. **Readability of information (multisensory form)**

   The channels of communication — pertaining to vision, touch, and hearing — need to be connected effectively.

   - **What it means in practice:** high contrast and sound-based substitutes for visual information. Placing a typhlographic next to a picture is essential, not optional.

5. **Tolerance for errors**

   Minimize the effects of accidental actions.

   - **What it means in practice:** glass walls need to be marked with stripes at eye level. The edges of the first and last stair need to be clearly visible to prevent tripping.

6. **Little physical effort**

   Using the features of the building is comfortable and causes minimal fatigue.

   - **What it means in practice:** doors open automatically. In the case of long communication routes, opportunities to rest need to be provided.

7. **Adequate space and dimensions**

   Provide room for maneuver regardless of posture or mobility.

   - **What it means in practice:** room for maneuver, activity spaces in the restroom, lowered ticket office counters (2.3–3 ft).

8. Perception of equality (according to Konrad Kaletsch)

Minimizing the stigma.

- **What it means in practice:** a ramp should be aesthetically integrated into the building so that it is its asset, not an embarrassing addition. The user should not have to feel "different" due to the way in which they use the building.

Universal Design as Radical Hospitality

We need to stop talking about "accessibility" as if it was a prosthetic glued to a building. It is time to start talking about UD as a form of radical hospitality. Real inclusion in Poland will not happen in local government buildings while the ramp slope there is being checked. It will happen in our heads and on our design boards, if:

1. **we understand that universality is the realization that an individual's needs are common needs.** Each of us, regardless of our fitness level, gets tired, overstimulated, or needs a moment of rest. The right to rest and a place to sit are not an "extra feature for the weak," but a foundation of the human condition.

2. **we accept the diversity of bodies as a design norm.** Instead of sticking to the rigid "ideal user" pattern, we have to assume that our bodies are dynamic, mutable, and diverse. UD is design for an individual who is real, at times tired, and at times disabled as they change with age.

3. **we stop treating design as a service dedicated "to others."** UD is a process that we "go through together." It turns away from a condescending model in which a fit architect designs "amenities" for people with disabilities. It turns to the

> practice of mutable bodies in which we jointly build the world in such a way that no one there feels like a guest but an actual host.

UD is a promise that no space will judge us or test our fitness. It results in architecture that invites you to stay somewhere longer instead of resisting you — no matter how your body moves or how your senses function.

A Guide to Building Accessibility in the Spirit of Universal Design Principles

UD is not a set of dimensions to "tick off" in a subsidy application. It is a strategy through which a space stops feeling exclusive and starts feeling inviting.

Change the Definition: Universal Design Is Not Just New Buildings

Let us break with the myth that UD only applies to new investments and that "rational improvement" is a good enough approach to old ones. UD methodology should always be employed, even if we are working with a historic building.

- **Error:** installing a stair climber which requires a key and service to be involved because "it is just an existing building."
- **What should you do instead?** Look for systemic solutions (e.g., changing the terrain profile, new zero-entry door to the building) which can open a new, proud chapter of the building's history.



PHOTO 17. Museo Arqueológico Nacional (National Archaeological Museum) in Madrid following its reconstruction. The main entrance has been moved to ground level. Photo: Frade Arquitectos



PHOTO 18. Museo Arqueológico Nacional (National Archaeological Museum) in Madrid. Instead of battling the monumental staircase, the architects (Frade Arquitectos) created a new main entrance located on ground level. This solution ensures full equality for all visitors without interfering with the historic 19th-century facade of the palace. Photo: Frade Arquitectos

Design for “Your Future Self”

Designing anything “for people with disabilities” as an unfamiliar group is a simple path to stigmatization. Design for yourself: for the time when you have reached late adulthood, in case you break a leg, or if you ever have to push a heavy wheelchair or stroller.

- The main entrance must be accessible to everyone.
- Provide the same means of use to everyone (identical if possible; equivalent if not). Do not overuse the “it is impossible” argument. If the only accessible entrance is located at the back of the building behind the garbage cans, it is not accessibility — this is segregation.

Intuition Instead of Instruction

The building should not require an instruction manual.

- At the design stage, use architecture for navigation — guide the user to their destination while avoiding unnecessary cognitive effort.

A Multisensory Approach: The World Is Not Just an Image

- Remember about touch, hearing, and spatial intuition as well.
- Spatial information has to be accessible through various channels. Steps with contrasting edges, a clear floor texture indicating a change of direction, good acoustics to eliminate reverb — these are the foundations of inclusion, not any “additions.”

How to Implement Universal Design in Practice? (A Mental Checklist)

Instead of asking, "Is this compliant?", ask yourself the following questions.

1. Can someone who needs accessibility with respect to mobility go all the way from the stop/parking lot to a chair in the office/an auditorium seat without asking anyone for help?
2. Does the proposed solution put the user on the spot as a "problem," or does it allow them to use the building discreetly and independently?
3. Have I asked someone who uses this building differently than I do for their opinion?
4. Will this button/platform work in two years? (Passive architecture, such as land leveling instead of installing an elevator, is always more universal than technology.)

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The way I see it, **EMPATHETIC CULTURE**

stands for the spirit of community
and invaluable support
that I receive from the people
involved in creating accessible
culture and science.

Magdalena Parysz
the Małopolska Science Center COGITEON
in Kraków

BARBARA PASTERAK

A Diversity Lesson:

What Inclusive Education Really Is

For me, inclusiveness with regard to education is mostly about how you perceive others. Instead of seeing someone as an "average" child or adult who has to meet certain standards, we assume that each of us can perceive reality differently from the very beginning. We allow ourselves to be surprised by this encounter, and from this surprise, we draw strength that opens us to new solutions.

Of course, such an approach calls for courage, enormous attentiveness, and often for flexibility. After all, we left the world where an educator simply "communicated" knowledge long ago. True education takes place within a relationship — in a meeting, in a living flow of energy, and in mutual exchange. Moreover, it is important to note that knowledge itself is not always the point.

Education in a "Slow" Rhythm — Seeing Eye to Eye Instead of Ticking Off Boxes

Mirek Bury, a museum educator from the Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków, points out that for education to be truly inclusive, we must respect the perceptive capabilities of people participating in culture. We do not have to go through the entire program at all costs. What is more important is that the whole experience is just positive and pleasant.

“There are times when you can say: ‘Let’s stop here, we may come back to this at some point.’ Such education is peaceful; it follows a different rhythm. It doesn’t consist in mechanically ticking off boxes,” says Mirek.

Such a situation demands a lot from the person in charge. We need focus, a stronger presence, and sensitivity to the group’s needs. It is worth remembering that there is no single universal method which you should apply — even the best tool may not work at a specific moment.

Flexibility as a Work Tool

Agnieszka Kolanowska, an educator associated with the Center for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków (Cricoteka) often uses theatrical methods in her work. She makes it clear that the key to success is carefully observing and listening to individual needs. Before her workshops, she always prepares a whole range of exercises, and then patiently tests which of them the group “gets into” with the greatest energy.

This is particularly crucial in longer educational processes. Then, we check what helps us calm down, what builds our team spirit, and what raises our energy level. **“If I see something isn’t working, I just don’t go back to it. Or I try it out much later to see if there has been any change in the group,”** Agnieszka explains.

A Partnership Based on Trust

Caregivers not informing us about their kids’ diagnoses or certificates frequently poses a challenge to us. Oftentimes, it is out of fear of exclusion — parents are afraid that the information about their child’s needs will block them from participating in classes, especially those organized in a daycare setting, such as day camps.

Our role is to educate people that fulfilling the needs of others is not a problem. On the contrary, it is conducive to better preparation.

It is important to send clear messages: **"We are ready for challenges, but we need your partnership."** Such communication should be present already in the event's description:

- an indication whether the space is accessible and what sensory challenges might arise;
- a list of aids such as noise-cancelling headphones, a resting area, or an induction loop;
- information about accessible support, such as audio description, typhlographics, or assistance.

Thanks to this, a teacher who arrives with a class which includes neurodivergent kids or kids with a hearing impairment knows that they can expect specific solutions to be there (such as squishies or a properly adapted room).

Multi-Level Design — The Layers of Accessibility

Alternatively, you can adopt a strategy according to which different needs will simply come up on their own and design classes in a universal manner right away. A metaphor with layers is helpful in this context. Just as we put on multiple layers of clothing in winter, universal design involves preparing "layers" that can be freely added or removed.

1. **Barrier-free space:** we remove obstacles to make participants feel safe in a room instead of constantly admonishing them.
2. **Accessible materials:** we create presentations without "walls of text" so as not to overstimulate anyone, and we facilitate audio description.
3. **Mobility:** we plan seating so that it can easily be moved depending on the lighting.
4. **Senses:** even a squishy ball handed to someone during a welcome round helps to relieve tension and ease participants into a new situation.

Secret Cabinets and Responding to Needs

Without a sense of security, there will be no lasting change. Building trust requires kindness. Another thing that helps is the regularity of contact, e.g., going back to the same spot, having the same person conduct a workshop, sometimes keeping the same topic, albeit with some new aspects. This is emphasized by Mirek Bury, who also brings up the importance **of preparing a broader range of support to be able to respond to specific needs as** soon **as they come up**.

For example, at the permanent exhibition of the Ethnographic Museum in Kraków, there are specific space markers:

- **green circles:** everyone is invited to touch the object;
- **orange circles:** workshop materials that expand the context provided;
- **secret cabinets:** cabinets that the educators take specific objects out of in response to individual sensory challenges. It is a surprising moment that breathes new life into the group but also leaves no room for regrets that they may have missed out on something in case there is not enough time for the cabinets.

Contrary to this particular museum, not everyone has access to an extensive resource of tactile copies and original artifacts. However, practice shows that we can think differently about the levels of attention engagement and that it is good to have a few options up your sleeve.

Entry Thresholds and Inclusive Language

In inclusive education, it is crucial to remember about different learning styles, too. Unless the meeting is addressed to experts, it should have a low entry threshold. Avoid intimidating phrases such as “as we all know.” They discourage your audience from asking questions.

It is better to assume that reminding people of a date or the rules regarding the use of tools is completely natural. At the same time, it is worth engaging different senses all at once: written text should be read aloud, and — if possible — something to touch should be included as well. This way, we show that we care about visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners as well as people who are hard of hearing or neurodivergent individuals.

Creating Without Perfectionism

Consciously lowering expectations is another supportive practice. Already at the outset, it is worth saying: **"Everyone gets as much out of our classes as they need."** Our goal is not for everyone to end up with identical knowledge or a perfect work of handicraft. In creative activities, the person conducting a workshop may want to replace drawing comparisons with appreciating uniqueness.

Agnieszka Kolanowska shows how to make use of these diverse means of expression. A simple exercise, such as showing the underwater world by using a handkerchief, allows you to gauge the energy of each participant. Everyone can do it their own way, and that is the most beautiful thing about it. I see enormous potential in looking for character traits in the artwork produced by kids and adults: maybe this slightly crooked house is just sleeping, and the one with a hole in it has great air conditioning? I firmly believe that the goal of cultural education is to convince people that diversity is our forte and something that enriches us. We are not machines manufacturing identical objects using the same standardized matrices.

The world would be infinitely boring if we were all the same.

For me, education is about nurturing diversity.

JAKUB STUDZIŃSKI

Together, Not Past Each Other:

The Essence of Allyship in the Cultural Sector

An anniversary is a moment to look back on the past not just to summarize achievements but also to understand what a long way we have come. As far as building accessibility under the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* is concerned, the most important change has occurred in terms of mentality and organizational culture, not in terms of infrastructure. As part of this change, we have transitioned from the attitude of advocacy — understood as acting on behalf of someone and from the position of an expert or a spokesperson — to allyship, i.e., consciously working together hand in hand and acknowledging the agency and needs of all people participating in educational, artistic, and cultural life.

We should honestly admit that in the early stages of the program, we operated in the paradigm of advocacy, which was a natural and even necessary stage. At that time, we acted primarily "for others" as advocates for people with different needs, including those with disabilities, and we built the foundations of empathy in place of uncertainty or missing awareness and tools. We talked about excluded groups, created a program for them, and designed with them in mind. From today's perspective, however, we see that advocacy carries the risk of perpetuating a paternalistic perspective, in which institutions still "know better" what their audiences need — even if the intentions behind that approach are significant

and needed. If an institution transitions to allyship, it abandons the "omniscient" approach in favor of the "learner" model. This is where the social character of the institution comes into play as well.

The Dictionary of Change: Three Key Concepts

In order to fully understand the evolution from the model of acting "for others" to the model of acting "with others," we need to reflect on and look at the roles which determine how the process of opening up cultural institutions is carried out:

1. **an advocate** is a person who speaks on behalf of a group to which they usually do not belong (e.g., a museum employee who has no experience living with a disability fighting for stair climbers to be installed). Advocacy is important at the beginning of the process, i.e., when excluded groups are yet to access decision makers (personally, systemically). However, it carries the risk of paternalism — making decisions "for someone" in good faith.
2. **a self-advocate** is a person belonging to a specific social group who speaks on their own behalf. They are an expert through experience. Self-advocates know their needs and barriers better than any external consultant. They should be the ones to set the course of change. In response to their presence, the role of an ally is born.
3. **an ally** is a person who is aware of their privilege (whether it is about decision-making, having access to the budget, or being able to make an impact on the program) and uses it strategically to support self-advocates. An ally does not speak "for" others or put themselves in the center of attention. Instead, they intentionally give away space, tools, and platforms so that people with different needs, including those with disabilities, can speak for themselves. Allyship

is also about actively supporting the fight for equal rights and accessibility without stealing the spotlight from self-advocates.

The Golden Rule: "Share Space!"

The program is based on the co-creation method. We do not design anything "for" people with different needs, including those with disabilities, but "with" them. They are experts with respect to their own capabilities and become allies of institutions in the process of change.

The slogan "Share space!" has become one of the key rules of *Empathetic Culture*. In practice, this means inviting people to use their voice and make a real contribution. The point is not to provide access to workshop rooms or meeting places. It is not the point to conduct superficial consulting either (in many organizations, it only serves to legitimize decisions made beforehand — this is called tokenism). Allyship consists in inviting self-advocates to jointly build an events program or co-create an exhibition from the conceptualization stage. An ally is a person who can and is able to create a safe framework for cooperation, and then, to trust the knowledge of the people that they have invited to collaborate even if it means that the original event plans or even the institution itself have to be rebuilt.

To notice the difference between advocacy and allyship, think of daily work on cultural programs — for instance, of a new exhibition being created. In the old model, curators and educators worked together on a concept for months on end, and at the very end, they commissioned audio description or invited people with disabilities to a test visit, treating them as "end customers." In the allyship model, people with different needs, including those with disabilities, are members of the project team at the initial planning stage. They make decisions regarding the sightseeing tour, architecture, or the

selection of objects. Such a change might be emotionally difficult, though. It requires us, cultural workers, to leave our comfort zone. Furthermore, to be an ally is to come to terms with the possibility that our pre-prepared, original idea will be criticized and reconstructed as a result (if it does not fully meet people's actual needs). Institutions must give themselves the right to make mistakes provided that they learn from them together with self-advocates.

Did you know that the tour of the Home Army Museum in Kraków is conducted by self-advocating guides? Through cooperation with the social welfare association "Gaudium et Spes" in Kraków, a group of its clients got to know the nooks and crannies of the institution for many weeks. Each of them chose their favorite exhibit and thoroughly examined its history. Today, as many as six of them act as independent guides and passionately tell visitors about their museum objects of choice.

However, such a partnership has to have a structural dimension as well. More often than not, inclusion in the cultural sector is based on a charity approach. We invite people from excluded groups to take part in consultations expecting them to share their important experiences and tell us how to act free of charge as part of the "social mission." True allyship does not agree with this approach. It requires us to realize that the knowledge of barriers and accessibility

is highly specialized, unique expertise. As allies, we must ensure that experts by virtue of their experience are fairly compensated for their work at applicable market rates and ultimately employed by our institutions. Inclusiveness is not a charitable approach but a professional standard.

This topic is discussed further in Katarzyna Żeglicka's article "Samorzecznictwo i sojusznictwo — wspólna sprawa" [Self-Advocacy and Allyship — A Common Cause]. In *(Współ) tworzenie w instytucjach kultury. Partnerstwo, samorzecznictwo i sojusznictwo* [Co-Creation in Cultural Institutions. Partnership, Self-Advocacy, and Allyship] (the Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2024), 24–34.

The Everyday Allyship Checklist

Allyship is not a one-off project, but a daily practice of museum, library, and community center workers. How can we verify that our actions are those of allies? Here is a quick checklist for every person working in the cultural sector.

- **Do I ask instead of assuming?** Do I consult the people who will be affected by the solutions being prepared to know what they think about them, or do I rely on my own ideas about their needs?
- **Do I give them a voice?** Are self-advocates included in the discussion panel, project team, or museum council? Do we still talk about "them" within our circle?

- **Am I ready to change plans?** If people with different needs, including those with disabilities, point out mistakes in my project, will I able to change it, or will I defend my vision?
- **Do I react to exclusion?** Do I react if I hear someone use inappropriate language or notice barriers, even if no person with different needs, such as a person with a disability, is around?
- **Do I care about compensating people decently for their work?** Do I treat the knowledge of self-advocates as legitimate expertise and care about compensating them fairly for it without expecting them to teach free of charge?
- **Do I understand my role?** Do I remember that my job as an ally in my institution is not to "fix" people but to consistently remove economic, environmental, architectural, and information barriers to ensure that everyone has access to culture?

If a cultural institution transitions from advocacy to allyship, it proves that it has matured. At this point, cultural space becomes truly shared, safe, and hospitable — not because we decided that it should be the case in an office meeting, but because we have strived for it together.

OLGA MICHALIK

The Essence of Accessibility:

The Self-Education of an Accessibility Coordinator

The Pioneers of Accessibility

The role of an accessibility coordinator in a cultural institution has evolved immensely between 2016 and 2026. Everything has changed: applicable laws, cultural workers' awareness and experience, as well as access to knowledge in this field.

The reality in which the job of an accessibility coordinator was created and the first people were appointed to do it was characterized by construction guidelines that focused on architectural accessibility on one hand and systemic forms of support with respect to the healthcare, rehabilitation, or employment of people with disabilities on the other, including the subsidies granted by the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (later referred to as PFRON). They seemed distant and difficult to translate into the daily practice of museums, theaters, or libraries to a considerable extent, all the while people with disabilities still visited cultural institutions to participate in events, often regardless of existing difficulties and insufficient adaptations. At the same time, people who engaged in accessibility measures more than a decade ago had very few guides and examples of accessible activities to follow, and they mostly had to look for them abroad. In Poland, one of the first measures in this field was the program *Małopolska*.

Empathetic Culture, which proposed that accessible measures should be standardized and introduced the obligation to appoint an accessibility coordinator in cultural institutions. Initially, this solution was implemented only in the local government institutions of Małopolska. For a long time, other regions in the country did not follow suit.

In the accessible culture model constructed at that time, the first accessibility coordinators[7] often acted in spite of physical barriers present in buildings, those embedded in institutions' programs, and mental ones which resulted from societal beliefs.

Who Is an Accessibility Coordinator?

As the practice of Polish cultural institutions shows, anyone working in an institution can be an accessibility coordinator provided that they possess or have acquired the competencies required to recognize the needs of the audience — and they vary depending on whether we are talking about museum goers, audiences at theaters or film screenings, or people who visit community centers. According to statistics[8], tasks related to coordinating accessibility in the cultural sector are performed by people working in the administration, education, and audience service departments as well as people responsible for the institution's website or promotion and marketing. In some cases, such tasks are performed by managers

7 The definition and obligation to appoint an accessibility coordinator in Poland arise from the Act of 19 July 2019 on Ensuring Accessibility to People with Special Needs.

8 "Raport z badań: Wdrażanie dostępności w publicznych instytucjach kultury w Polsce" [Study Report: The Implementation of Accessibility in Public Cultural Institutions in Poland], Instytut Kultury Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, accessed October 19, 2026, https://kultura.uj.edu.pl/documents/18091666/136701319/Wdra%C5%BCanie+dost%C4%99pno%C5%9Bci+w+publicznych+instytucjach+kultury+w+Polsce/8855e40a-9849-4030-8352-e0d9debaa35e.

(this happens more often in small and medium-sized institutions). That said, regardless of the professional area that a particular person represents, coordinating accessibility in a cultural institution requires them to cooperate with other employees, demonstrate organizational skills, and be knowledgeable about accessibility. The knowledge required includes the areas listed below.

AREA I: Regulations

Legal provisions pertaining to the obligation of public entities to ensure accessibility to people with special needs and related laws. Knowing concepts such as accessibility, accessibility areas, the needs of people with different needs (including those with disabilities), universal design, rational improvements, alternative accessibility, and assistant is required.

AREA II: Recognizing Needs and Knowing Solutions Needed to Ensure an Accessible Visit to A Cultural Institution

The knowledge related to ensuring accessibility to the audience throughout their entire visit to a cultural institution. The ability to recognize needs and implement solutions that increase and ensure digital, architectural, social, and economic accessibility as well as accessibility with respect to information and communication.

AREA III: Knowledge and Tools Required to Make Cultural Offerings Accessible and Adapt Solutions to the Needs of an Institution

The knowledge of tools used to make an institution's program accessible in all aspects in a way which guarantees that people with different needs, including those with disabilities, can exercise independence and agency. These are solutions that meet the needs to access and understand works of culture and art, including

audio description, subtitles, Polish Sign Language interpreting, text which is easy to read and understand (ETR), written and graphic content presented in a legible manner.

AREA IV: Co-Creating Cultural/Educational and Artistic Offerings and Events

The ability to use participatory and inclusive methods in the process of drafting the institution's program. This pertains to the knowledge of how to actively involve people with different needs, including those with disabilities (and self-advocates) as contributors as opposed to passive recipients. These activities consist in building partnerships with the community and non-governmental organizations, running consultations, and creating accessible workshop rooms and artistic spaces that enable the effective participation of various social groups.

AREA V: Rules and Standards for Implementing WCAG Guidelines to Ensure the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications and Making Digital Content Created by Institutions Accessible

The knowledge of accessibility standards that apply to the websites of cultural institutions as well as the ways of making digital resources created by institutions accessible to everyone: alternative text, audio description, video subtitles, videos translated into Polish Sign Language, text which is easy to read and understand (ETR), pre-visit guides.

AREA VI: Team Management

The theoretical and practical knowledge related to cross-functional collaboration with the aim of implementing accessibility in cultural institutions, appointing accessibility teams, preparing internal

documentation, and introducing information about accessible materials into inventories and catalogs.

The aforementioned list of skills clearly indicates that the role of an accessibility coordinator requires comprehensive and interdisciplinary knowledge. Moreover, it proves that already acquired information should be updated and developed in the context of legal regulations changing or new technologies emerging over time. From the perspective of those who coordinated accessibility more than a decade ago, to gather and organize these areas of work alone often required many months of learning, including learning through trial and error, as well as acting based on intuition or implementing solutions from other sectors.

Over time, the projects which coordinators initially carried out on their own turned into a cooperation with educational institutions for people with special needs (special and integrated schools) and organizations supporting people with disabilities (foundations, occupational therapy workshops, nursing homes). Both national and EU funding competitions increasingly imposed formal requirements on cultural institutions, obligating them to implement co-financed projects with partners, which strongly encouraged formalized cooperation across different sectors.

Concurrently and independently, another process was taking place. It provided the foundation for how accessibility was going to be implemented in museums, community centers, and art institutions. The employees of cultural institutions started contacting self-advocates, asking them questions, sharing their doubts with them, and consulting them regarding the solutions being implemented — which was an idea that they came up with themselves. They talked to people with disabilities, seniors who visited particular institutions, and experts who offered professional consulting regarding the needs of people with disabilities.

Both of the above cooperation models, which were based on the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience, gave birth to the first Polish solutions that ensured accessibility and increased the involvement of people with disabilities in the co-creation of the cultural sector. As the solutions were being implemented, more good practices developed and institutions discovered that modifying the program to accommodate the needs of the audience yielded the best results. As an inclusive cultural program was coming to life, the age, disability, or mental condition of the audience no longer mattered, and their needs related to their participation in the event and their perception of art became more significant.

Initiatives happening simultaneously in various fields of cooperation across sectors brought about some systemic and comprehensive solutions.

Such initiatives included **collaboration between non-governmental organizations and cultural institutions**, which resulted in accessibility training for museum workers initiated by the National Institute for Museums in Warsaw together with the Culture Without Barriers Foundation and other independent experts and self-advocates.

Measures at the local government level, such as the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program implemented by the Małopolska Institute of Culture, represented another type of collaboration. The program facilitated networking and introduced standards and certifications in the field of accessibility implementation in the museums, theaters, music institutions, art centers, and community centers of Małopolska.

Regional partnerships between cultural institutions and local entities providing support to people with disabilities constituted another very important operating area as far as ensuring access

to culture was concerned, even though such initiatives were dispersed and non-institutionalized in nature. The impact of these local initiatives is yet to be measured and sufficiently identified. In addition, some of them had been carried out in a time before access to the Internet became as widespread as it is now and prior to social media gaining popularity.

Self-Education, or Where and How You Can Acquire Knowledge

Such experiences and initiatives, which come to life independently in different environments and sectors, enable us to distinguish several tried-and-true forms of acquiring and transferring knowledge as well as building support networks and exchanging good practices regarding the accessibility of culture and art. These are:

- websites and knowledge repositories,
- studies, recommendations, and lists of good practices,
- conferences and seminars,
- guides and toolkits,
- support and cooperation networks.

Websites and Knowledge Repositories

Currently, several repositories of knowledge regarding accessibility are operating successfully, particularly those pertaining to the accessibility of culture. Most of these websites have been created as part of multi-year projects and programs in the field of accessibility. They include:

- the website of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*, run by the Małopolska Institute of Culture and the Marshal's Office of Małopolska, where you can find a collection of articles, webinar recordings, and publications dedicated to

good practices, accessibility, and inclusive culture: https://kulturawrazliwa.pl/blog/wiedza/;

- resources related to the training project called Warszawska Akademia Dostępności **(The Warsaw Academy of Accessibility)**, whose aim was to support accessibility coordinators, primarily those working in city government offices and organizational entities located in Warsaw but also those from all over Poland, e.g., by organizing courses, consultations, and webinars: https://www.youtube.com/c/warszawskaakademiadostepnosci;
- materials from the project called *Uniwersalne projektowanie kultury — dostępność w instytucjach kultury* (The Universal Design of Culture — Accessibility in Cultural Institutions) implemented by the National Center for Culture and the PFRON, the purpose of which is to increase the accessibility of cultural institutions to people with disabilities and seniors. The project is based on the Accessible Culture Model and offers training and grants for the implementation of accessibility standards in cultural institutions: https://nck.pl/szkolenia-i-rozwoj/projektowanie-uniwersalne-kultury.

Studies, Recommendations, and Good Practice Catalogs

They have been developed as part of publicly funded projects such as the program *Kultura dostępna* [Accessible Culture]. Individual scholarships for researchers awarded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage are included as well. Below, some good practice catalogs are listed:

- **the publication** *Animacja + Włączanie* [Engagement + Inclusion] of the National Center for Culture, which discusses multiple social/educational/inclusive projects for people with

disabilities, those in a mental health crisis, and those with a refugee or migration background. It was presented at the 12th edition of Ogólnopolska Giełda Projektów (National Project Exchange): https://sklep.nck.pl/pl/p/Animacja-Wlaczanie-PDF/999;

- the publications **of the Association of Creative Initiatives "ę" which present many good practices and inspirations as far as activities for older audiences and seniors are concerned**: https://e.org.pl/strefa-wiedzy/.

Conferences and Seminars

Accessibility in culture and art has become a topic of educational and scientific seminars. Some entities in Poland have also developed the formula of annual conferences addressing different topics related to the inclusion of groups at risk of exclusion from culture and art. They include:

- **Muzeoterapia (Museum Therapy)** — an annual scientific conference on the therapeutic role of museums, organized by the National Museum in Kielce: https://mnki.pl/pl/muzeoterapia;
- **Forum bez Barier (Forum Without Barriers)** — it is organized by the ZAMEK Culture Center in Poznań and addressed to cinema workers, cultural institutions, and film communities: https://ps.ckzamek.pl/podstrony/10786-forum-bez-barier/.

There Are Many Publications Worth Recommending, Including:

- *Włącznik 2.0* [Inclusion Guide 2.0] — a comprehensive publication by Fundacja Integracja (the Integration Foundation). The guide provides guidelines and

recommendations on universal design and making space accessible to people with different needs, including those with disabilities: https://integracja.org/wlacznik/;

- *Model dostępnej kultury* [The Accessible Culture Model] — it presents a model of providing access to culture as well as some instructions and good practices from cultural institutions in Poland. Published as part of the project *Kultura bez barier* (Culture Without Barriers) implemented by, among others, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Culture Without Barriers Foundation, and Kubia: https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/model-dostepnej-kultury-dostepny-dla-wszystkich-instytucji-kultury;
- *Poradnik. Odbiorca kultury w kryzysie zdrowia psychicznego* [A Guide on How to Treat Audience Members in a Mental Health Crisis] — it was created as part of a project carried out by Fundacja Katarynka on behalf of the accessibility department of the Wrocław Town Hall called Wrocław bez Barier (Wrocław Without Barriers): https://www.funduszeunijne.gov.pl/media/119679/PoradnikOdbiorcakultury.pdf;
- *Standardy tekstu łatwego do czytania i zrozumienia. Rekomendacje dla języka polskiego* [ETR Standards: Polish Language Recommendations] — a publication by the Polish Association for People with Intellectual Disability as part of the Project Communication Center for Persons with Disabilities: https://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/publikacja-opracowania-standardow-tekstu-latwego-do-czytania-i-zrozumienia-etr/;
- *Kino bez barier* [Cinema Without Barriers] and *Narzędziownik kina dostępnego* [The Accessible Cinema Toolkit] — they

present a complete overview of tools for making films accessible to people with disabilities:

- https://nck.pl/badania/raporty/kino-bez-barier--edycja-polska-raport-z-badan,
- https://ckzamek.pl/artykuly/11571-narzedziownik-kina-dostepnego/.

Support and Cooperation Networks

Mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences is another very important factor which improves the skills of accessibility coordinators. Cooperation groups or networks are usually informal or temporary in nature; they are set up to perform a shared task, as was the case with the project *Paszport do sztuki* (The Art Passport), in which the museums and galleries of Warsaw cooperated to provide an events program for teenagers on the autism spectrum. **Krakowska Sieć Dostępności Kultury** (the Kraków Accessible Culture Network — KSDK) is a formalized group of accessibility coordinators established as a grassroots initiative of accessibility coordinators in the cultural, artistic, and scientific institutions of Kraków.

This article does not list all information sources and inspirations that can be used by people involved in implementing accessibility in cultural institutions. Instead, it focuses on those resources and forms of acquiring knowledge which are available free of charge and does not mention any of the paid courses and postgraduate study programs carried out by several academic institutions in Poland. Its purpose is to organize the areas that any accessibility coordinator needs to have the knowledge of, regardless of whether they are just starting out or already have experience in this field and need to organize the knowledge that they have acquired in a systemic way.

About the Authors

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She is a graduate of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, where she studied journalism and social communication. In addition, she graduated from the Cultural Educators School of the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków and obtained a postgraduate degree in the field of accessibility coordination and auditing from AGH University in Kraków.

Since 2015, she has been associated with the Museum of the Holy Father John Paul II Family Home in Wadowice, where she works as an accessibility coordinator.

She practices accessibility in culture — she has actively participated in the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* since 2017 and implemented numerous initiatives to include people with different needs, including those with disabilities, in cultural life. She is fascinated by the culture of the Deaf. Currently, she is learning Polish Sign Language and incessantly looking for new ways of communicating with audiences with different needs and building bridges between them and the world of culture.

In her personal life, she is a wife and a mother with an affinity for hiking and meeting people.

DANIEL LACHOR

By education, he is an artist, an educational therapist, and a teacher. He graduated from the Jan Matejko Secondary School of Fine Arts in Nowy Wiśnicz, where he specialized in textile art. He obtained a degree in arts education from the Public Vocational College (PWSZ) in Nowy Sącz (currently known as Akademia Nauk Stosowanych — the Academy of Applied Sciences); he has completed his graduation project in the sculpture workshop of Prof. Andrzej Szarek, PhD. He has a postgraduate degree from the Institute of Textile and Interior

Decoration of the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź, where he studied interior design, styling, and decoration.

He combines his creative activities with his work as an educator and accessibility coordinator at the Museum of Nowy Sącz Land, where he organizes museum and educational events for kids, seniors, and adults. He has written many scripts of sensitizing workshops, therapy sessions, and art therapy classes for people with disabilities.

Furthermore, he works as a teacher at Pałac Młodzieży (the Youth Culture Center) in Nowy Sącz, where he conducts three workshops of his own: in sculpture, textiles, and ceramics, respectively. In his creative work, he combines various techniques of artistic expression. He creates tapestries, unique fabrics, artistic installations, and macramé designs. In his work, he employs basic weaving techniques as well as original methods of fiber weaving. In his artwork, he reflects on the place that textile art occupies with respect to contemporary art and on its sensory qualities used in therapeutic activities for people with different needs, including those with disabilities.

OLGA MICHALIK

She is a museum specialist as well as an art historian and expert in sustainable development and the implementation of social activities in cultural institutions. She has worked with museums, art centers, and art institutions for eighteen years now. As a tutor involved in the projects *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* and *Projektowanie uniwersalne kultury* (The Universal Design of Culture), she supports cultural institutions in implementing accessibility for people with different needs, including those with disabilities, creating accessibility teams,

and acquiring practical skills through training. She is a two-time holder of the scholarship awarded by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. She is also an author of several publications on how cultural institutions can open themselves up to their environment: *Inkluzywne muzea* [Inclusive Museums], *Budowanie partnerstw* [Building Partnerships], and *Odbiorca kultury w kryzysie zdrowia psychicznego* [An Audience Member in a Mental Health Crisis].

BARBARA PASTERAK

She is a theater teacher, a curator of artistic programs, an educator, a trainer, and an accessibility leader. She graduated from Jagiellonian University in Kraków with a degree in Polish philology with a major in culture studies. She has coordinated and carried out activities that bring contemporary art and theater activities closer to people with different needs. She deals with the audio description of art and theater performances. In addition, she co-authored the publications *Sztuka różnorodności w edukacji kulturowej* [The Art of Diversity in Cultural Education] and *Inclusive CultuRRRe*. Between 2016 and 2022, she created educational programs and coordinated accessibility at Cricoteka. Currently, she works at Ośrodek Kultury Norwida (the Norwid Culture Center), where she co-creates Nowohuckie Laboratorium Dziedzictwa (the Nowa Huta Heritage Laboratory). She works with the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków, the Zbigniew Raszewski Theater Institute, and the Faculty of Industrial Design of the Academy of Fine Arts, among other institutions. She won the first Kraków-based edition of the Culture Animator of the Year competition for the implementation of projects involving people with different needs, among other achievements.

ANNA REJOWSKA

She coordinates accessibility and the performance program at the Center for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków (Cricoteka). She represents the institution in the Kraków Accessible Culture Network (KSDK). She graduated from Jagiellonian University with a degree in ethnology and cultural anthropology. She is a member of the "Dobrze" Food Coop. She produced the plays *Lekcja anatomii — rekonfiguracja* [Anatomy Lesson — Reconfiguration] (2023), *Dziś są moje urodziny — poszukiwania* [Today is My Birthday — Explorations] (2024-2025), *Hold onto Dance* (2025), and *Hold onto the Wind* (2025). She works with allies and self-advocates, with whom she has developed artistic and educational activities, including "Youth Learning Through Arts" (2022) as part of the Erasmus+ program, "The Wildergrown" (2023 and 2024), "Język (z) ciała" [Body(-Based) Language] (2024). She created the concept of open movement workshops *Troskliwy ruch — laboratorium odpoczywania* [Caring Movement — Relaxation Laboratory] (2025).

MAGDALENA STOROŻENKO-POLAK

She is a Master of Engineering and an architect specializing in universal design and architectural accessibility. Since 2019, she has served as the chair of PLACES Foundation with which she organizes the Universal Design Festival UNIfest.

Since 2024, she has worked at the Institute for Regional Development Foundation (FIRR) where she is responsible for accessibility training, architectural accessibility, and implementing accessible investments. Furthermore, she performs accessibility audits of public buildings, prepares reports, and provides consulting on the elimination of barriers. As far as her education is concerned, she studied at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University

of Technology and completed a postgraduate study program in the field of accessibility coordination and auditing at AGH University.

Currently, she continues her education at the Doctoral School of the Kraków University of Technology, where she investigates accessibility in small towns. Her doctoral thesis is focused on accessibility inventory and public spaces in the context of local architectural identity.

In her public speeches and academic publications, she deals with issues such as *accessibility washing*, which is a term for apparent inclusiveness, as well as conflicts between monument protection and the needs of people with disabilities. She points out that true accessibility requires empathy and a conscious approach to design, whereas compliance with regulations is just the starting point. Furthermore, she analyzes the role of architectural education and promotes a co-design approach, i.e., directly involving people with disabilities in the design process.

She also conducts educational workshops on accessibility for audience groups as diverse as architecture students, public officials, and children. Her interests include carpentry, the culture of the Deaf, and the accessibility of historic buildings.

JAKUB STUDZIŃSKI

He is a historian, museum specialist, main specialist for cultural education, an accessibility coordinator at the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków, and the coordinator of the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program. He is an expert Polish Sign Language teacher and interpreter, a guide to the cultural institutions of Kraków, and a cultural animator. He deals with issues related to inclusiveness in the cultural sector by encouraging openness and hospitality toward the needs of people with different needs, including those with

disabilities. With this goal in mind, he educates and supports people, talks to them, raises their awareness, and participates in relevant activities. He is the creator and producer of the Empathetic Culture Festival and the Encounters with Empathetic Culture in Małopolska. He is one of the coordinators of the Kraków Accessible Culture Network (KSDK).

MAGDALENA URBAŃSKA

She is a theater and film expert with a PhD in art studies. Furthermore, she works as a cultural manager, marketing and PR specialist, cultural educator, and cultural events producer. She deals with the accessibility of cultural institutions. She is the author of the project and publication entitled *Zrozumieć język, pokazać sztukę. O komunikacji włączającej w instytucjach kultury (i nie tylko)* [Understanding Language, Exhibiting Art: Inclusive Communication in Cultural Institutions and Elsewhere]. She is a teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and has been a part of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* for ten years now.

ROBERT WIĘCKOWSKI

He serves as the board vice-president of the Culture Without Barriers Foundation. He is a journalist and literary scholar. Since 2009, he has worked as a consultant regarding audio description scripts for audiovisual works and artworks as well as conducted workshops on providing service to visually impaired audiences at cultural and local government institutions. From 2016 to 2021, he was involved in multiple measures carried out under the *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* program. He has written and contributed to scientific articles and guides on adapting cultural institutions'

programs to the needs of audiences with disabilities, especially those with visual disabilities (e.g., *Model dostępnej kultury* [The Accessible Culture Model], *Zasady tworzenia audiodeskrypcji do dzieł audiowizualnych i dzieł plastycznych* [The Principles of Creating Audio Description for Audiovisual Works and Artworks], *Widz z niepełnosprawnością w muzeum* [A Person with a Disability at a Museum]). He conducts classes on creating accessible programs in cultural institutions and on translation theory, for instance at AGH University in Kraków. In recent years, he has been involved especially in projects related to creating music for everyone, e.g., Rock'AD'Roll, which he initiated himself. He is a member of the Social Council for People with Disabilities, which advises the mayor of the capital city of Warsaw on the topic of people with disabilities.

TOMASZ WŁODARSKI

He is the director of the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków. He used to work for a local government body in Cambridgeshire (UK), where he was involved in measures promoting equality and diversity. In Poland, he has co-organized and run a non-governmental organization offering legal advice in the public interest, in matters pertaining to civil society, and on environmental issues. At MIC, he supports strategic planning, international cooperation, and accessibility projects. For instance, he co-developed the program of the project *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture*. He values common sense and rationality.

ANNA ŻÓRAWSKA

She is the board president and co-founder of the Culture Without Barriers Foundation, the organizer and producer of the Culture

Without Barriers Festival, and an expert on accessible events. She provides training in information and communications accessibility and on accessible events. She has co-authored accessibility documents for the capital city of Warsaw, for instance on topics such as the accessibility of events, information and communications accessibility, and accessibility in the implementation of public tasks. She has also worked as a consultant regarding strategic documents for urban policies. She has initiated Sieć Liderów i Liderek Dostępności (The Network of Accessibility Leaders) and the digital product “Tu Możesz” [Here, You Can], which is a database of places and events with an induction loop. Moreover, she has conducted an interview series entitled *UsłyszAni* as well as initiated and hosted the so-called Kawowania — the coffee meetings of people dealing with accessibility and the recipients of accessibility measures. She is a member of the Accessibility Council of the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, where she leads the accessible cinema group. Finally, she is involved in the initiative Film dla Wszystkich (Film for All).

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED
AS PART OF OR WITH THE PARTICIPATION
OF THE PROGRAM

Małopolska. Empathetic Culture

Pasterak, Barbara, Włodarski, Tomasz. *Sztuka różnorodności w edukacji kulturowej* [The Art of Diversity in Culture Education]. Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2022.

Zatrudnianie osób z niepełnosprawnościami w sektorze kultury [Hiring People with Disabilities in the Cultural Sector], edited by Jakub Studziński. Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2022.

Pasterak, Barbara, Studziński, Jakub. *Inkluzywna kultuRRRa – o instytucjach kultury jeszcze bardziej otwartych* [Inclusive CultuRRRe: On Even More Openness in Cultural Institutions]. Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2023.

(Współ)tworzenie w instytucjach kultury. Partnerstwo, samorzecznictwo i sojusznictwo [(Co-)Creation in Cultural Institutions: Partnership, Self-Advocacy, and Allyship], edited by Jakub Studziński. Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2024.

Zielonka-Mitura, Agnieszka. *Sztuka wdrażania. Budowanie i koordynowanie dostępności w instytucjach kultury w małych miejscowościach* [The Art of Implementation: Accessibility Measures in Cultural Institutions of Small Towns and Villages]. Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2025.

Urbańska, Magdalena. *Zrozumieć język. Pokazać sztukę. O włączającej komunikacji w instytucjach kultury (i nie tylko)* [Understanding Language, Exhibiting Art: Inclusive Communication in Cultural Institutions and Elsewhere]. Ogarnę to! Magdalena Urbańska, 2026.

Jak dobrze zamówić audiodeskrypcję? Praktyczne wskazówki [How to Successfully Order Audio Description: A Practical Guide], edited by Paula Cupryan, Paulina Model. Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2020.

Jak dobrze zamówić tłumaczenie na PJM? Praktyczne wskazówki [How to Successfully Order a Translation into Polish Sign Language: A Practical Guide], edited by Paula Cupryan. Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie, 2021.

All publications released as part of the program *Małopolska. Empathetic Culture* are available at kulturawrazliwa.pl.

Polska Izba Rzemiosła Dostępnościowego (The Polish Chamber of Accessibility Craft) has created the most comprehensive free database of publications related to accessibility, inclusiveness, diversity, and accessibility standards. It is called “Biblioteka Liderów Dostępności” (The Library of Polish Accessibility Leaders) and can be found at the following address: biblio.irdpl.pl.

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