#TGEUAccessFails – D/Deaf and Disabled Trans People Demand More From TGEU

article, intersectionality

On Sunday 1st July at the 7th European Transgender Council during the closing plenary, there was an intervention by D/deaf and disabled trans people at the 7th European Transgender Council after serious accessibility failures. The hashtag #TGEUAccessFails was used on Twitter to document some of these.

List of demands read out in the video

1. “Disabled Black and People of Colour had to chose between accessing BPOC only spaces and disabled people only spaces.
2. Registration form asked for any access needs and yet these were not provided or acknowledged.
3. No verbal description of visual materials such as hand gestures.
4. That is not an accessible slope, it has been renamed The Wall or The Mountain.
5. Public transport is not accessible and no information was provided or alternative given.
6. People turned up in their hotel room and that was the first they found out they were sharing….. a double bed.
7. Pre conference communication was poor, often with no responses or confirmation causing high anxiety.
8. Two wheelchair users had to re-arrange the furniture in their room as the room was not suitable for their needs.
9. A person was told they were not allowed to share a room with a specific person, i.e. someone they knew, causing high anxiety.
10. Venue and accommodation was not close enough.
11. No clear signage.
12. No quiet space. The designated quiet space was in the main hall, next to the childcare area – this is not quiet.
13. An individual was told their request wasn’t an access need, and was labelled as classist.
14. Complete lack of travel information around the city.
15. The one scheduled break, except lunch was taken away due to poor time management.
16. Inconsistent information – the text only programme contained useful information that wasn’t available anywhere else.
17. The only reason the Saturday night venue was accessible, was because it was changed, after we asked for people to check. The original venue wasn’t accessible.
18. The original Saturday night venue was not a trans only space causing high anxiety.
19. Food was not clearly labelled to cater for allergies.
20. Although requested, dietary requirements were not provided until a participant volunteered to provided a fellow participant with what they needed.
21. Met with really shit attitudes when asking for needs to be met, e.g. ‘I don’t know,’ ‘it’s not my responsibility,’ ‘I can’t do anything about that.’
22. A participant got to the point of feeling suicidal due to the complete lack of accessibility.
23. Social spaces were too noisy with no quieter option available.
24. The speech to text on the screen was too slow, too fast, non existent, too small, different to what was being said.
25. The quiet space offered felt too hot and close and was not a space that people were able to relax at all.
26. The policy pre meeting did not provide accessible food.

27. People were made to feel their access needs weren't valid or that they weren't disabled enough by TGEU in emails before the conference started.
28. The Black and People of Colour pre conference space was not accessible, including being up a steep flight of stairs.
29. An individual specifically asked for support around access needs prior to the opening plenary, was told that was all fine and then the request was ignored.
30. Facilitators don't seem to be briefed on any access needs, not even basic ones.
31. Workshops being held in social spaces creates an inaccessible environment.
32. No access to water. Water bottles weren't possible for a umber of people to open by themselves.
33. Not all people are able to do the hand signals, such as clicking fingers.
34. Clicking fingers can cause anxiety and pain around noise sensitivity.
35. The furniture in many rooms were heavy and not moveable.
36. TGEU responded to our request for some of our basic access needs to be met. Individuals found this wasn't followed through or was still inaccessible. For example: Timings were not stuck to; People were unable to get taxis booked after a promise for support; The quiet space moved around and was a long way away and was hot.
37. People had to queue for an hour in the blazing sun, with nowhere to sit and rest to get dinner on Friday.
38. Agreed facilitation rules were not always followed in workshops where call out culture and recognition of privilege including ableism.
39. A disabled person who wanted to attend was given one day's notice that they had a scholarship. Organising special assistance when travelling is almost impossible to do without notice.
40. A participant had to spend their own money which was equal to one months rent in order to be able to participate in the council – having to make it accessible for the self.

TGEU and the host organisation has once again failed to provide reasonable and adequate access for D/deaf and disabled people at the council. This is in spite of, and made more painful by the fact that they spent considerable money and the significant energy of 10 D/deaf and disabled people to stop this from happening. TGEU published a comprehensive report which sets out the practical steps necessary to plan an accessible event and yet here we are. For the 7th time since the formation of TGEU D/deaf and disabled people have been caused to feel excluded, angry, upset, frustrated, exhausted and been unable to fully participate. Again we have had to expend labour, practical and emotional to try and improve things and draw attention to these failings.

I [Lee Gale] want to finish with this statement:

'Engagement with LGBTIQ organisations is just as important for D/deaf and disabled trans people as for everyone else, and they are currently missing out on valuable experiences within the trans community. D/deaf and disabled trans people should not have to choose which parts of themselves to forgo, and they deserve to be represented by LGBTIQ organisations who value all aspects of their identities, not just the parts that they find easiest to accommodate.'

This is a statement from TGEUs own report on disability, "Oppression Squared"

Watch the video on Facebook

Download the transcript

#tgeuAccessFails **on Twitter**