My name is Mia Larsdotter and I am talking to you today from my home in southern Sweden.

I belong to a group called Begripsam. We are a group of people with a broad range of experiences of cognitive disabilities. Some have difficulty to read or write, some have intellectual difficulties with for example understanding abstract concepts or to attain or keep attention. Some of us, like me, find it difficult when there are too many perceptive inputs at the same time; like noise, lights or interactive nonverbal communication. The aim of this group is to highlight cognitive accessibility or barriers for participation in society.

Especially in a digital online environment.

We not only want to tell you to remove the barriers for participation – we want to participate ourselves in the process of changing society to the better for all.

In doing so we are active in the international ISO standard group TC 173 WG 10 for making new Basic principles and general guidelines on Cognitive accessibility for the design of all products and services.

For me personally this participation is made possible through attending the meetings by online connection from my home.

Communication can actually be quite difficult for me in a face-to-face situation. But there is little to nothing in my voice that implies an impairment.

I speak several languages and I am a professional writer. I am trained in the field of assistive technology and rehabilitation medicine.

Due to back problems I can't sit in a traditional conference setting for very long, but when I connect online from my home, or other place fit for my need, I can focus on what I do best – and do it in a way that reduces any difficulties. Language in itself is for me personally seldom the barrier for my participation in a rather qualified task as this; to produce international standards for design.

For the members in our group it is important to have the possibility to adjust technical settings for sound or on-screen presentation while attending online. Some use voice over or synthetic speech devices or other assistive technology. Also

network services, software and microphones etc. need to be used in an accessible way.

BUT – technology and physical setting is not the only barrier. Actually – a lot of usable technology already exists.

What we need to improve is the awareness of peoples different conditions to be able to participate and that it is often the human factor that implies if a situation is accessible and can be used by everyone.

WE ALSO need to raise awareness of meeting structures, discipline of speaking order, assistive alternative communication and the importance of intermediating people, like interpreters. Not only interpreting between national languages / sign languages but also clarifying or assisting in the understanding of abstract concepts.

Our strong conviction is that those are things, though necessary for us, they would benefit anyone and everyone's participation.

There is a great big need for more research but also awareness of existing knowledge on actual user experience. We want to share our experience with you and we want to be actively involved in society together with you at an organizational level also.

Not just be able to be there, but to be active.

For that to be possible for more people – you have to let us in of course but also give us some room to act.

Thank you very much for letting me be part of this today and letting me participate in a way that enhances my possibilities to be active.

And I hope to be able see ya'll in future cooperation

Mia Larsdotter