



TRAINING REPORT

Executive Training Programme

Role of ICTs in the Development of Inclusive Society for Persons with Disabilities

Podgorica (Montenegro), 16 November 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Executive Training on the Role of ICTs in the Development of Inclusive Society for Persons with Disabilities was held in Podgorica, Montenegro, on 16 November 2017. The executive training was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in cooperation with the UN Mission in Montenegro and Regulatory authority for electronic communications (EKIP) within the framework of the ITU Regional Initiative for Europe on **Ensuring access to telecommunications/ICTs, in particular for persons with disabilities.**

The aim of the Executive Training was to build capacity and support stakeholders in their efforts to make ICT/TV/Video programming accessible to Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in line with ITU standards and guidelines thereby deepening understanding and developing knowledge of core areas of accessible ICT/TV/Video programming for Persons with Disabilities.

The one-day (1) training consisted of five (5) sessions that outlined the possibilities to create the ICT ecosystem (mobile communications, the web, TV/video programming) accessible for Persons with Disabilities, as well as related areas such as the importance of public procurement and advocacy efforts. Based on previous assessment missions by ITU-D Regional Initiative for Europe, the training was devised to respond to national circumstances in Montenegro to develop inclusive society for Persons with Disabilities.

EXPECTED RESULT: Deepened knowledge of ITU standards, recommendations, and guidelines to plan and implement future activities in the area of ICT accessibility by PWD in Montenegro; understanding roles and responsibilities in the creating an accessible ICT ecosystem, including the role of PWD in the policy making processes and ensuring accessible TV/video programming/mobile communications/web sites (public and private); deepening understanding of importance of public procurement in creating accessible ecosystem for all; understanding the importance of advocacy/raising awareness; as well as education about accessibility technology trends and ensuring their implementation.

2. PARTICIPATION

The Executive training was aimed at senior staff members of relevant governmental institutions, national regulatory authorities, ICT industry representatives, audiovisual media, content producers, service providers, academia and civil society who are key stakeholders in implementing accessible ICTs in developing inclusive society. Thirty (30) participants, representatives of governmental institutions, regulatory authority, industry and civil society, took active participation in the training.

3. PRESENTATION

Expert-led presentations, case studies and practical demonstration of how to implement accessible ICTs thus contributing to the development of inclusive society for persons with disabilities. On completion of the training, the powerpoint presentations, which were produced in a national language, were sent to all participants by e-mails, in particular, to enable the persons with disabilities to read them in an accessible format.

4. DOCUMENTATION

Relevant documentation, including the Agenda, Presentations and Reference Materials were made available on the event web page <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/default.aspx>. Additional reusable training material was provided by the workshop facilitators.



5. OPENING CEREMONY



Welcome by host:

H.E. Fiona McCluney, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Montenegro.

Opening address:

Ms. Amela Odobasic, ITU-D SG1 Vice-Chair, Co-Rapporteur of ITU-D SG Q7/1, Head of Public Affairs, Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

H.E. McCluney extended a warm welcome to the UN House and expressed the support by the UN mission in Montenegro to the efforts ITU-D is in empowering its member states, calling for the active participation of all stakeholder in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, it was stressed that the 2030 Agenda is, above all, inclusive plan, that focus on empowering marginalised groups, persons with disabilities being one of them. The regional partnership was highly commended and encouraged, as a crucial precondition for achieving the SDGs.

6. TRAINING SESSION AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

The introduction was dedicated to setting the scene. The statement of the situation dealt with: National circumstances/challenges/Why accessibility of ICT Ecosystem matters? / Accessibility for all: Who is the user? / Importance of promotion ICTs in the development of inclusive society.



It was stated that Montenegro ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009 and that its provisions are included in the legal and regulatory framework. However, due to its partial implementation, persons with disabilities are still encountering challenges, such as lack of adequate conditions, inaccessibility, and discrimination, which make them socially isolated and powerless to take an active role in their life.

SESSION 1

The session one (1) addressed **ICT Accessibility policy and regulatory framework** and dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Guidelines and recommendations in implementing necessary changes; Roles and responsibilities of policy makers; Roles and responsibilities of national regulatory authorities; Regulatory models of accessible ICTs; Key considerations for policymakers in overcoming existing challenges and implementing the policies.

The session, based on [Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report](#), represented international standards and principles as well as good practices, particularly focusing on national and regional circumstances with the aim to gain insight in the compliance of national legal and regulatory framework in line with the CRPD. The session was conducted interactively to extract key learnings from the individual findings. The current legal and legislative framework, Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro, and the Law on Electronic Communications were two key framework policies that were discussed to attain deeper knowledge on whether any further improvement is required.

Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

The discussion revealed that although the legal framework and regulatory measures make reference to accessible ICTs for PWD and are in line with international standards and principles that guarantee rights of persons with disabilities to accessible ICTs as prescribed by the CRPD, the implementation is not sufficient. Persons with disabilities are identified as one of the categories of service users and special benefits regarding choices, prices, conditions, and accesses of using, as well as the quality of electronic - communication services are provided by this regulation. Challenges are most obvious in the area of accessible TV/video programming. Although Montenegro switched over to digital terrestrial broadcasting, the advantages are not available to the persons with disabilities due to lack of financial and human resources of its Public Service Broadcaster to produce accessible programmes.



SESSION 2

The session two (2) was dedicated to **Television and video programming accessibility framework** and dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Policies for accessible television and video programming; Television/video programming accessibility requirements for service providers; Television/video programming accessible services (subtitling/captioning, audio description and sign language)?; Technological solutions, funding and representation and portrayal of persons with disabilities in TV/Video programming.

The session consisted of two parts – presentation of standards and principles in line with ITU-D policy document [Making TV Accessible](#) and a practical demonstration delivered by the expert from NGO “ProForma MediaWorks” from Serbia. The participants agreed that the implementation of TV accessibility tools through cost-effective software (DivXLand Media Subtitler and Subtitler Edit) is of good quality and relatively easy to use.



Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

Considering that the main criteria for measuring the progress in this area are the availability of sign language, subtitling, and audio description, in Montenegro, accessible TV/video programming is at a low level. The progress has not been made in spite the fact that Montenegro switched over to digital terrestrial broadcasting in 2015 due to lack of resources (financial, technical, human) of its public service broadcaster (Television of Montenegro) to produce accessible content. The Radio of Montenegro broadcast programmes on the topics related to persons with disabilities up to 1 hour once in 15 days.

SESSION 3

During the session three (3) **Mobile communication accessibility policy framework**, developed in line with [Making mobile phones and services accessible](#), was discussed. It dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Ensuring accessible mobile phones and services; Accessibility features on mobile phones; Mobile applications, trends, and requirements; Key policy considerations to be taken into account in ensuring mobile accessibility.

The discussion resulted in concluding that in Montenegro, like any other country, persons with disabilities can enjoy the advantages that converged ICTs can offer them via the mobile phones. In particular, the fruitful discussion took place between the participants from the civil society and telecommunication operators. It was agreed that telecommunication operators should invest more efforts in not only making products available but raising awareness about their availability is equally crucial as training the staff that sell them on how to demonstrate these features and communicates with persons with disabilities.



Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

Although the participants agreed that the government of Montenegro and NRAs took necessary steps to include the provisions in the legal and regulatory framework, it was emphasized that further steps should be taken to regularly assess the affordability of services for persons with disabilities such as connection fees, tariffs, assistive technologies as well as a public access to telephony and data/Internet. A key challenge for persons with disabilities in Montenegro is to identify, try out and purchase assistive technologies.



SESSION 4

The session four (4) was about **Policy approaches to web accessibility** which dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Policy approaches to ensure web accessibility; Criteria to be applied in web accessibility; Way forward to ensure accessibility of public websites.

The participants, who are persons with disabilities, confirmed that they have not difficulty in accessing the websites of most of the governmental institutions. However, it was proposed that telecom operators put more effort in increasing the accessibility of their websites, also emphasizing that increasing the accessibility of websites of private entities would contribute to the development of inclusive society.

Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

The discussion resulted in the evident need for additional training in the area of web accessibility to undertake a complete audit of e-Accessibility of e-Government services and provide transparent access to the results.

Furthermore, it was agreed that a plan should be developed, in consultation with NGOs, to implement web accessibility over a period fully. The plan is likely to include both practical support, including the technical skills and resources (such as guidelines) needed by ministries as well as possible measures if, after the agreed period, the services are not improved.

SESSION 5

During the session five (5), the participants were introduced to the **Accessible ICT Public Procurement**.

The presentation answered the following questions: Why Public Procurement matters in ensuring accessible ICTs?; What are the key stages of accessible ICT Public Procurement?; What are the roles and responsibilities of policy makers, regulators and service providers?

It was stressed that the public procurement is defined as one of the most flexible and far-reaching legislative instruments available to obtain goods, works, and services to meet the needs of the government as it carries out its responsibilities to its citizens.

Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

Public procurement policy, legislation, and regulation should be updated in consultation with all relevant stakeholders to incorporate accessibility as a principle in public procurement. In overcoming the challenges, the ITU online training on public procurement of accessible ICT products and services was proposed as a capacity building opportunity that would help all stakeholders involved in accessible ICT solutions and services.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The one-day workshop resulted in a set of conclusions which were drawn through an interactive discussion with the participants. The participants unanimously expressed the need for a more efficient implementation of fostered obligations, policies, standards and guidelines with the aim to create a fully inclusive society, accessible to all. It was concluded that activities in all areas of accessible ICTs should be continued in line with timelines that are to be defined in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities.

The representatives of NRA expressed their intention to become actively involved in the work of ITU-D SG1 Q7 in the forthcoming study period.



In particular, the participants welcomed the efforts to further strengthen regional cooperation on the topic as a result of the efforts by ITU European Regional Initiative 3 on ensuring access to telecommunications/ICT, in particular for persons with disabilities.

Actions agreed upon:

- The participants agreed that sharing good practices and case studies through regional cooperation can contribute to increasing the implementation of national ICT accessibility policies and strategies.
- It was also agreed that it would be necessary to create a roadmap of requirements that national policymakers should incorporate in their respective legislation as legally binding.
- The need was expressed to provide ICT accessibility training to all stakeholders.
- The participants agreed that further actions by ITU-D might include:
 - Organisation of national/regional training/s;
 - Implementation of regional events, in particular, implementation of the annual event “Accessible Europe.”
 - Capacity building on how to implement and monitor the results of the implementation of accessible ICT/TV/video programming.

Feedback

A feedback questionnaire was distributed, and responses reflected that all of participants (30) found all sessions useful. The topics of interest were ranked as follows: accessible TV/video programming (including a practical demonstration), legal and regulatory framework, web accessibility, mobile communications and public procurement. When asked which topics should be addressed in the next training, the participants stated that all topics should be included in the next the training cycle, with a special, emphasize on and adding the topics such as: accessible ICTs in education, assistive technologies and universal design, education of PWD on how to use accessible ICTs, raising awareness/promotion/advocacy trainings and accessibility of cultural events.