ITU Workshop on “Making Media Accessible to All: The Options and the Economics”
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The Case for TV Accessibility at DR

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Denmark:
5.5 million people
44,000 km²
Media Accessibility - action on 5 fronts

1. **Intelligibility** (audio & pictures)
2. **Access services**
3. **Meta content** (EPGs, spots)
4. **TV interfaces** (keep it simple)
5. **Communication and awareness**
TV Access services

- Inter- & intra-lingual subtitles
- Visual signing
- Audio Description & spoken subtitles
Audio/spoken subtitles

Interlingual subtitles for programs in a foreign language
Focus on disability
From disability to accessibility

For viewers with visual & cognitive disabilities, dyslexia, weak readers and immigrants
Why? - the case for audio subtitles

In countries that don’t dub but subtitle programmes, some viewers with disabilities...

- Can’t see the subtitles
- Can’t read the subtitles in that language
- Can’t read subtitles fast enough to follow the programme.

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The cost-benefit

- Modest Capex costs (<USD 60,000)
- Modest operating costs per channel
- Small contribution to ratings
- 1,200+ hours of TV on DR1 now “accessible” each year
- Big increase in quality ratings for foreign news items and documentaries
- Still issues with TV-drama and films
The evidence

Business Case for spoken subtitles for TV programmes in foreign languages in Denmark: summary

This proposal recommends the soft launch in May 2012 of spoken subtitles for all TV programmes in foreign languages on DR1, the main TV channel of the public service broadcaster DR in Denmark.

Audience needs [1a, 1b, 1c]

Denmark has 5.6 million inhabitants. TV programmes in foreign languages are usually shown with Danish language subtitles on TV in Denmark. About 10-12% of the population cannot read the Danish language subtitles and do not benefit fully from viewing such programmes. The main target groups are persons who:

- Have cognitive impairments including dyslexia (0.12%)
- Are blind or have serious visual impairments (1.4%)
- Have moderate visual impairments including myopia (5.5%)
- Are weak readers (5.5%)
- Are immigrants or refugees and are thus not native speakers of Danish (9.6%)

The included audience for a given programme on DR1 with spoken subtitles could be 2-3% of the population (in prime-time). As DR1 is a free-to-air TV channel that does not carry advertising, the rationale for offering spoken subtitles is threefold:

1. To provide a better viewing experience for the target groups,
2. To demonstrate the broadcaster’s commitment to public service and
3. To comply with the requirements of the four-year Danish Media Accord which stipulates that such a service should be introduced on a test basis.

Approach [4a]

Foreign language programmes with subtitles can be made accessible to these groups by reading the Danish language subtitles aloud. To watch a programme with spoken subtitles, the viewer chooses “DR1 SYN” from the EPG. The TV picture is the same, but the programme has a different soundtrack. When there are subtitles (and someone in the original soundtrack is speaking in, say, English) the volume is reduced and a Danish voice reads the subtitles aloud. When there is nobody speaking, the viewer hears the original sound track (music and ambient sounds).

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Also for viewers with cognitive impairments
Standards in the Nordic countries and Ireland
Two options for delivering AD

Mixing the audio at source (broadcast mix) and

Mixing the audio in the receiver (receiver mix)

Are both options equally good?
Optional requirement in NorDig spec. for Broadcast mix and Receiver mix

Broadcast mix – works on the main TV receivers

Receiver mix – works on under half of TV receivers

Both distribution methods (supplementary audio) lead to problems for normal audio reception
NorDig specification for AD and spoken subtitles

- NorDig dropping optional requirements
- Mandatory requirements in NorDig spec. v. 2.4 released Jan. 2013
- Supplementary Audio has been completely updated and this functionality will become mandatory from 2014
Communication and awareness

Example: DR website for Accessibility

http://www.dr.dk/OmDR/Tilgaengelighed/Forside.htm
Standard icons for accessibility services

DR and TV2 have agreed to use the same icons and description of TV access services in Denmark.

DR designed new icons that use standard keys to generate them.

Standard icons give flexibility to implement on all platforms.
Standard icons for accessibility services

[=]

[0]

[···]

[<]
Standard icons for accessibility services

[=] Subtitles

[o] Audio subtitles

[···] Audio description

[<] Visual signing
Three take-aways

- Shift the focus from disability to accessibility
- Wherever possible go for mandatory requirements and not the easy route of optional requirements
- Focus on “end to end” solutions to ensure users benefit from accessibility services
Thank you

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www.nordig.org
www.dr.dk/OmDR/Tilgaengelighed/Forside.htm