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| PLENARY MEETING | **Document WTDC-17/41-E** |
|  | **25 September 2017** |
|  | **Original: English** |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| PROPOSAL FOR REVISION OF THE SCOPE OF WORK OF SG Q7/1 IN THE STUDY PERIOD (2018-2021) |
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| **Priority area:** - Study Group Questions**Summary:**Proposal for revision of the scope of work in the future work (2018-2021) of SG Q7/1 **”**Access to telecommunications/ICT services by persons with disabilities and with specific needs” refers to including the topic of aging population,thus redefining the name of the SG Q7/1 into **“ICT** **Accessibility for persons with disabilities, including age-related disabilities”.**  Globally [1 billion people worldwide currently live with some form of disability](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2011/disabilities_20110609/en/). The number of older persons is expected to grow to more than 2 billion by 2050, the majority of which will live in less developed regions, while over 1 billion youth are in danger of hearing loss due to their unsafe listening habits. It means that the number of persons affected by a form of disability could affect half of the world’s population in the next 30 years, all of whom require accessible information and communication technologies (ICT).**Expected results:**The Study Group Question 7/1 aims to support the implementation of ICT accessibility good practices and policies, services and solutions, as well as the related capacity building that can be used by ITU Membership to ensure inclusion of PWD and age-related disabilities as a prerequisite for an inclusive society.**References:**[BDT Digital Inclusion Resources, Training and Guidelines on ICT accessibility for PWD](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Persons-with-Disabilities/Pages/Resources.aspx), [Draft Final Report SG Q 7/1](https://www.itu.int/md/D14-SG01-C-0418/en) |

# Introduction

In the next study period (2018-2021), the topic of the aging population should be incorporated into the future work of SG Q7/1, thus enlarging the scope of work and redefining the name of the Q7/1 accordingly as **“ICT** **Accessibility for persons with disabilities, including age-related disabilities.”** Based on the statistics, the aging population is increasing, and ICT accessibility services can be used for solving the problems of aging and disability, the decline of physical and cognitive abilities due to aging is hindering ICT utilization and improvement of accessibility is necessary.

Furthermore, it is crucial that, in the next study period, SG Q7/1 objectives focus on “implementation” in line with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and with ITU Goal number 2 “Inclusiveness” Target 2.5.B: *“Enabling environments are ensuring accessible telecommunication / ICT for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries by 2020”.*

During the study period (2014-2017), an impressive number of case studies, good practices, and policies,as well as capacity building opportunities were developed and available to the Members (as outlined in the Draft Final Report for SGQuestion 7/1). However, bearing in mind that the focus of the next study period should be on implementation, it is crucial to outline all steps of the implementation cycle. The implementation cycle includes reaching out to governments to build political will as a cornerstone for the development of ICT policies and strategies, creating a roadmap of minimum requirements to ensure implementation of accessible ICT policies and services, providing training available to all stakeholders, including policymakers. Besides, it is crucial to strengthen regional co-operation through ITU regional initiatives and events as well as ensure monitoring of the results of the implementation of accessible ICT policies, practices, and technological solutions.

STUDY GROUP 1

**MOD** BIH/41/1

QUESTION 7/1

Access to telecommunication/ICT services
by persons with disabilities and with specific needs

# 1 Statement of the situation or problem

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one billion persons in the world live with some type of disability. According to WHO, about 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in low‑income countries. Disability appears in different forms and degrees, regarding physical, sensitive or mental aspects. Also, increasing life expectancy results in elder persons having reduced capabilities. Thus, it is likely that the number of persons with disabilities will continue to rise.

The inclusion in society of persons with disabilities is a policy of Member States. The objective of such policy is to bring about the necessary conditions for persons with disabilities to enjoy the same opportunities in life as the rest of the population. The disabilities policy has evolved, and is not limited to basic healthcare, education of children with disabilities and rehabilitation of persons who have suffered disability during adulthood. The implementation of the disabilities policy has made urban infrastructure accessible, and has improved health and rehabilitation services for this group. Moreover, the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination are common policies of Member States.

With respect to telecommunications, at the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Istanbul, 2002) Member States resolved, by Resolution 20 (Rev. Istanbul, 2002), that access to technologies, facilities and telecommunication services must be provided on a non‑discriminatory basis.

Telecommunications/ICTs have been acknowledged as essential for social, cultural, economic, political and democratic development as well as exercising several fundamental rights. Within the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), both the Declaration of Principles and the Tunis Commitment emphasized the immense impact that telecommunications/ICTs have in almost every aspect of life and that they are considered an instrument for productivity, economic growth, employment generation, good government and dialogue between persons and nations.

WSIS acknowledged that special attention should be given to the needs of elder persons and persons with disabilities.

In recognition of the accessibility to telecommunications/ICT by persons with disabilities, the ITU Council approved the theme "Connecting people with disabilities: Telecommunications/ICT opportunities for all" for the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (17May) in 2008.

On 13 December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The CRPD was opened for signature on 30 March 2007 and, as of 16 February 2009, 137 countries had signed it, while 81 had signed the Optional Protocol. Of these, 48 had ratified the Convention and 28 the Optional Protocol. The CRPD establishes basic principles, and also a State's obligations to ensure equal access to telecommunications/ICTs, including Internet, by persons with disabilities.

There is a lack of specific legal provisions governing telecommunication/ICT accessibility. Certain countries have anti-discriminatory laws or telecommunication laws. Some have legal provisions from a medical standpoint which considers disability as a "defect" rather than addressing disability with emphasis on ability and integration. Legal provisions should be available to turn good accessibility provisions into reality.

It is also pertinent to mention that broadband access and usage are highly dependent on literacy and ICT literacy as well. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that 774 million people (around 11 per cent of world population) aged 15 and above worldwide are illiterate, i.e. they cannot read or write; and two-thirds of them, i.e. 493 million, are women. Among them, 52 per cent live in South and West Asia and 22 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.

Several issues encountered by both disability groups and illiterate groups of people have common solutions.

## 1.1 Accessibility standards

Accessibility standards are essential in order to make it possible for equipment and services to be usable by the broadest range of persons, interoperable and provide the required quality services. ITU‑T has prepared several Recommendations and documents that provide information on a wide range of accessibility standards.

It is also important to consider stakeholder participation where persons with disabilities should be involved in the process of elaborating legal/regulatory provisions, public policy and standards.

It would also be important to consider assistive technologies to be used by persons with various types of disabilities. These assistive technologies should aim to overcome or reduce the gap between standard telecommunications/ICTs generally available and those which address the needs of persons with disabilities.

## 1.2 Information and statistics

It is also important to gather information and data addressing many important issues relating to accessibility to telecommunications/ICT by persons with disabilities. Therefore, a methodology should be developed to assist the information-gathering process.

# 2 Question or issue for study

Analyse policies and strategies to promote, develop and implement the most advanced technological solutions to enable equal access to telecommunications/ICTs by persons with disabilities to that enjoyed by the rest of the population.

# 3 Expected output

It is proposed that the Question for study should result in a report that will enable Member States, especially developing and least developed countries (LDCs), to design policies and execute strategies for promoting and implementing services and solutions which provide access to telecommunications/ICTs by persons with disabilities and with specific needs, and for people with difficulties mastering reading and writing. Furthermore, the report will help Member States and Sector Members identify commercial best practices relating to telecommunications/ICT that should apply in relation to persons with disabilities.

The report should contain the regulatory policies necessary for ensuring accessibility to telecommunications/ICT for persons with disabilities, including, but not limited to:

a) the principles to be applied by service providers and equipment manufacturers (i.e. equal access, accessibility/compatible devices);

b) a recommendation on the desirable access to telecommunications/ICT;

c) suggested schemes for the implementation of policies and strategies;

d) an economic cost evaluation and a comparison of the available technological solutions;

e) a recommendation on commercial best practices applied by service providers for overcoming the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in accessing telecommunications/ICT.

f) Share the Members’ good practices and case studies on how to create political will as a cornerstone in implementing national ICT accessibility policies and strategies.

g) Create a roadmap of minimum requirements that national policymakers should incorporate in their respective legislation as legally binding, to support the implementation of accessible ICT policies and services*.*

h) Provide ICT accessibility training to all stakeholders, including policymakers, to engage all national and/or regional stakeholders and share good practices and success stories on how to implement ICT accessibility, policies, regulatory frameworks, and services.

i) Use BDT products and services available to the Members, to empower national stakeholders, in particular, in providing the training on web accessibility (accessible content and accessible websites) with the aim to ensure that public governments are accessible to ALL.

j) Support the Members in the implementation of ICT accessibility by strengthening ITU regional initiatives and events in ICT accessibility, sharing good practices and adapting them to the national/regional contexts.

k) Ensure follow-up and monitoring of the results of the implementation of ICT accessibility policies, practices, and technological solutions to empower all stakeholders in creating an inclusive environment for PwD worldwide.

# 4 Timing

These activities should be included in the programme of activities of ITU‑D Study Group 1 for the period 2014-2018, as a new Question.

4.1 Mid-term report is expected by 2016.

4.2 Final report is expected by 2017.

# 5 Proposers/sponsors

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# 6 Sources of input

The following stakeholders are encouraged to supply information for the Question: Member States, Sector Members, relevant international and regional organizations, public and private institutions and civil-society organizations involved in the design of policies and advocacy for the development of technological solutions to alleviate the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in accessing telecommunications/ICT.

# 7 Target audience

| Target audience | Developed countries | Developing countries[[1]](#footnote-1)1 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Telecom policy-makers | Interested | Very interested |
| Telecom regulators | Interested | Very interested |
| Service providers/operators | Interested | Very interested |
| Manufacturers | Interested | Interested |

a) Target audience

The result of the study will serve Member States, and particularly administrations of developing countries and LDCs, to design policies and to execute strategies and actions for implementing technological solutions that improve accessibility to telecommunications/ICT by persons with disabilities. Moreover, it will enable Sector Members and service providers located in those countries to design and apply proven and successful commercial practices to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and facilitate their access to telecommunications/ICT.

b) Proposed methods for implementation of the results

Authorities from Member States could consider designing policies and strategies to implement the most suitable technological solutions in the light of the characteristics of their populations and countries. In this respect, there could be short-term, medium‑term and long-term action plans so as to permit implementation in phases.

The report should also be useful for administrations of Member States, Sector Members and service providers to encourage the adoption of commercial practices applicable to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and with specific needs.

# 8 Proposed methods of handling the Question or issue

a) How?

1) Within a study group:

– Question (over a multi-year study period) ☑

2) Within regular BDT activity (indicate which programmes,
activities, projects, etc., will be involved in the work of the
study Question)

– Programme: digital inclusion ☑

– Projects □

– Expert consultants □

– Regional offices □

3) In other ways – describe (e.g. regional, within other
organizations with expertise, jointly with other
organizations, etc.) To be defined in the work plan. □

b) Why?

The Question will be addressed within ITU-D Study Group 1, in close cooperation with ITU‑T Study Group 16 (Question 26/16).

# 9 Coordination and collaboration

Coordination is recommended with relevant international organizations, and with service providers that have adopted best practices to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and facilitate their access to telecommunications/ICT.

# 10 BDT programme link

To be defined in the work plan.

# 11 Other relevant information

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1. 1 These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)