



**Telecommunication
Development Bureau (BDT)**

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Geneva, 26 July 2019

- Administrations of ITU Member States
- ICT Ministries
- Regulators
- ITU-D Sector Members
- Academia
- Regional Organizations from Europe
- UN Organizations

**Subject: ITU-EC Forum for Europe "Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL", 4-6 December 2019,
St. Julian's, Malta**

Dear Sir/Madam,

It is my great pleasure to invite your organization to participate in the **Regional Forum for Europe on "Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL"** that will take place in St. Julian's, Malta from 4 to 6 December 2019. This regional event for Europe is being jointly organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and European Commission (EC), and is hosted by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Person with Disability & Active Ageing (PSDAA) of the Government of Malta.

The event is held back to back with the annual conference on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) organised on 3 December 2019 by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) and Premju Soċjetà Ġusta, a yearly award event organised by PSDAA held on 6 December 2019 to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations who are supporting a disability rights-based culture in Malta.

Accessible Europe is held within the framework of the Regional Initiative for Europe on *Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development* adopted by the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017. This regional initiative aims at bridging the digital divide and equipping all groups of society, including PwD and other groups of people with specific needs, to take advantage of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), by enabling capacity building and sharing experience on how to design, develop and use accessible ICTs.

ICTs are of vital importance for people's empowerment and in promoting accessibility policies to make Europe region a more inclusive society. In this context, the Forum will focus on further promoting the development of ICT accessibility in countries and institutions through cooperation, programmes and projects development, and generate partnerships, and training.

ITU and EC have joined efforts to encourage Governments, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia and other stakeholders to promote ICT accessibility in order to create fair and equal opportunities for all people and support a regional development agenda by treating ICT accessibility for people with specific needs and in particular PwD, as a cross-cutting development issue.

The organisers of the event are planning an effective integration of stakeholders in the activities of the programme and request your collaboration to further promote the following initiatives in your communities:

- **Call for Contribution:** With the aim of advancing the accessibility agenda across Europe, we would kindly request you to provide contributions about current and future activities relating to ICT Accessibility. This information will be displayed, within a week of your submission, on the Accessible Europe website as a means of building an information dissemination platform. Submission is open on the Accessible Europe website (see below) and will close on **15 November 2019**.
- **Call for Competition:** With the aim of fostering the innovation ecosystem in ICT accessibility, a “Regional Competition for Europe: Innovative Digital Solutions for an Accessible Europe” will be launched on 1 August 2019, with a deadline for submissions on **30 September 2019**. Shortlisted candidates will be selected on 1 November 2019 and Winners will be announced on 4 December 2019 during “Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL”. For interested stakeholders, a **possibility to sponsor** the competition is provided on the website.
- **Call for Participation in the Evaluation Committee:** For the purposes of the Regional Competition for Europe, an Evaluation Committee will be formed and interested individuals are invited to apply to be part of it. Deadline for applications is **5 September 2019**.

For more details, we invite you to visit the event website at <http://itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-19>, where practical information on the calls, agenda, registration and other useful links are available and are constantly updated.

Please be informed that there is no participation fee. While captioning facilities will be available, **international sign language interpretation** can be requested via the online registration form with the **deadline of 18 October 2019**. **Registration** for the event will be available on Accessible Europe 2019 event website from 1 August to **24 November 2019**. PSDAA will be facilitating applications requiring **Schengen visa** for participants that have registered by **18 October 2019**.

We trust that you or a representative of your organization will attend the event to share your experiences and support the dissemination and implementation of best practices in the Europe aiming at contributing for the future definition of strategies and implementation of policies, regulations and industry codes of conduct to promote reducing the digital divide and the equal inclusion of these groups of people, and in particular PwD, in the information and knowledge society.

Please note that the outcomes of Accessible Europe 2019 will be submitted to the Study Groups of all three ITU Sectors, namely Radiocommunications, Standardisation and Development.

The following focal points are at your disposal should you require any further information.

- Mr Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of the ITU Office for Europe (email: EURregion@itu.int, phone: +41 22 730 5467)
- Ms Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (email: Inmaculada.Placencia-Porrero@ec.europa.eu, +32 2 2990239).
- Mr Joseph Cini, Chief Executive Officer, Aġenzija Sapport, the National Agency providing services for persons with disability and their family in Malta (email : joseph.b.cini@gov.mt, phone: +356 2256 8298)

I look forward to active participation from your Administration / Organization / Company.

Yours faithfully,

[Original signed]

Doreen Bogdan-Martin
Director