

ICT accessibility assessment for the Europe region



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Executive summary

The [International Telecommunication Union](#) (ITU) information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility assessment for the Europe region has been launched as part of the [ITU Office for Europe](#) accessibility initiatives. Its aim is to assess countries' commitments to ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, in terms of general legislation and regulations, and their capacity to meet those commitments, in terms of policies and institutional frameworks. The ICT accessibility commitments arise from the United Nations (UN) [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UNCRPD), the European Union (EU) accessibility legislation, where applicable, the [ITU strategic goals](#), and the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

The ICT accessibility assessment was launched in the midst of the [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) pandemic, which has reinforced the importance of ICT accessibility. It has been designed to provide ITU members and stakeholders from the ITU Europe region with a holistic view of ICT accessibility requirements and of the implementation status of ICT accessibility laws, regulations, policies and institutional frameworks. It also serves to provide advice to policy-makers and stakeholders throughout the region in the form of good practices and recommendations. Most European countries have adopted strong general equality and non-discrimination laws. Their implementation, however, varies across the region. Most have signed and ratified the UNCRPD and the majority also its Optional Protocol. As ITU Member States, they have endorsed the [ITU Connect 2030 Agenda](#) and [high-level strategic goals](#), agreeing that, by 2023, enabling environments ensuring accessible ICTs for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries. Pursuant to the UNCRPD and in line with the Connect 2030 Agenda, they have started identifying and eliminating obstacles and barriers to accessibility, notably to information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services. The Europe region ICT accessibility assessment will serve as a tool for the ITU Office for Europe to launch targeted ICT accessibility programmes for the Member States. ITU Member States can use the assessment as a tool in their efforts to take the necessary steps in establishing the enabling environments required to ensure accessible telecommunications/ICTs for all people regardless of age, gender, ability or location. The assessment will also serve as input for shaping the [Accessible Europe 2021](#) programme; for ICT accessibility discussions under the presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2021; and for the preparatory process for the upcoming ITU [World Telecommunication Development Conference](#) (WTDC-21).

Chapter 1. Introduction

Europe is a global leader in information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility. The European Union (EU) has set a forward-looking ICT accessibility framework, with four directives, covering (i) websites of public bodies, (ii) audiovisual media services, (iii) electronic communications, and (iv) products and services.

Most of the countries across the region have adopted strong general equality and non-discrimination laws. Apart from EU Member States and non-EU members of the European Economic Area (EEA) (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), many other European countries are also committed to following EU accessibility rules as handed down by the aforementioned four directives, among them five candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). However, the level of transposition and especially implementation of EU rules varies across the region.

The ITU Office for Europe launched an investigative project to assess ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities in the region, countries' commitments in terms of general legislation and regulations, and their capacity to meet those commitments in terms of policies and institutional frameworks.

This report thus reviews ICT accessibility in the ITU Europe region,¹ assesses commitments and implementation and summarizes the current state of ICT accessibility across the region. It presents the ITU priorities, strategic plans, goals and objectives in this domain, as endorsed by its Member States, who have agreed that enabling environments ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries by 2023.

The report provides an overview of international and EU legal requirements with regard to ICT accessibility. It also offers an extensive review of good practices from ITU Member States in the broad area of ICT accessibility. Further to these good practices, recommendations and guidelines for stakeholders are presented, which can serve as a valuable tool for ITU Member States and all stakeholders in the creation of enabling environments for accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities.

¹ The ITU Europe region consists of 46 Member States: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Vatican City State, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

Chapter 2. Summary of ITU Europe region ICT accessibility assessment

2.1 ITU framework

The ITU mission is to connect the world and bring the benefits of ICTs to all the world's people, ensuring that everyone has access to affordable and accessible ICTs. The COVID-19 pandemic² has demonstrated the power and the promise of ICTs as never before. ICTs have helped people around the world to stay connected, keep working and learning, and support each other during the pandemic.

Given that around 15 per cent of the world's population, or an estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities, accessibility of ICTs has become more relevant and necessary than ever. ICT accessibility thus constitutes an ITU priority, as reflected in its strategic documents. Moreover, ITU Member States have agreed that enabling environments ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities be established in all countries by 2023 ([ITU Strategic Goal 2 - Inclusiveness, Target 2.9](#)).

The ITU Office for Europe, within the framework of its regional initiative on accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development, launched an investigative project to assess ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities in Europe, countries' commitments and their capacity to meet those commitments.

The assessments covered the ITU Europe region, comprising 46 countries. Data were collected in Q4 2020 through questionnaires and desktop research. Feedback was provided by 25 ITU Member States.³ Other sources included the Body of European Regulators of Electronic Communications (BEREC), the European Commission, EU law, the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and ITU Member States local sources.

2.2 ITU Member State commitments

ITU Member States in the Europe region have made significant progress towards ITU Target 2.9 to establish enabling environments ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities in all countries by 2023:

- **UNCRPD:** ⁴ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is an international human rights treaty representing a framework for accessibility, freedom of expression, opinion and access to information, communication, education

² COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2.

³ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, Vatican City State.

⁴ United Nations (UN) (2006). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol adopted on 13 December 2006 at United Nations headquarters in New York and opened for signature on 30 March 2007. Document A/RES/61/106. ([HTML](#)).

and several other fields. It requires States party (i.e. States and State entities)⁵ to take all appropriate measures to provide persons with disabilities with the same information and at the same time as persons without disabilities and in the form of communication they choose. It has been signed by 45 countries from the ITU Europe region and ratified by 44 of them (all but Liechtenstein and Vatican City State).

- **UNCRPD Optional Protocol:** The Optional Protocol is a legal instrument related to the UNCRPD that addresses issues which the Convention does not cover or does not cover sufficiently. The countries that ratify the UNCRPD do not necessarily have to ratify the Optional Protocol. It has been signed by 43 and ratified by 29 of the 46 countries.
- **Marrakesh Treaty:** The Marrakesh Treaty is also an international human rights treaty, representing an instrument at the service of the UNCRPD.⁶ It provides the ratifying countries with the necessary mechanisms to allow exceptions and limitations to the rights of production, distribution and availability of information in accessible formats, nationally and internationally. It has been signed by 20 and ratified by six of the 46 countries.
- **Anti-discrimination and equality law:** The majority of countries have adopted anti-discrimination and equality laws and implemented the provisions of the UNCRPD in national law, ensuring non-discrimination and equality for persons with disabilities. Definitions of disability, however, vary across national legislations and still often stem from the context of social-security legislation rather than anti-discrimination law. There are also different methods identified across the countries for the implementation or transposition of international or EU law.
- **Recognition of sign language:** According to ITU data, sign language is recognized by 23 countries, of which three have recognized national sign languages in their constitutions. Other countries have passed laws that make direct or indirect reference to sign languages and/or sign-language users.
- **Website accessibility:** A total of 41 countries have adopted or plan to adopt web accessibility laws or statutory requirements. Among these, the 27 EU Member States have transposed the EU Web Accessibility Directive and the three EEA countries and Switzerland are also expected to do so,⁷ although they are seeking longer transition periods. The five EU candidate countries are also expected to transpose the EU Accessibility Directive and several other countries also closely follow the EU law. Israel is the only country that requires private-sector organizations to provide accessible web pages as well.
- **Electronic communications:** The majority of countries have adopted laws or regulations specifying requirements to be met by providers of publicly available electronic communications services to ensure that end users with disabilities have access to electronic communications services, benefit from the choice of services available to most end users, are provided with universal services and enjoy access to emergency services through the single European emergency number 112.⁸ ITU has focused on broadband Internet access, access to emergency services and relay and total conversation services:⁹
 - **Affordable adequate broadband Internet access:** Only a few European countries provide for a minimum broadband speed in national law: Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In these countries,

⁵ State entities encompass local and national governments, government agencies and government corporations.

⁶ World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (2014). The Marrakesh Treaty, signed in Marrakesh on 27 June 2013, came into force on 30 September 2016 ([HTML](#)). The treaty makes the production and international transfer of specially-adapted books for people with blindness or visual impairments easier. It does this by establishing a set of limitations and exceptions to traditional copyright law.

⁷ These four countries - Switzerland and the three EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) - are members of the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA).

⁸ 'Emergency service' means a service that provides immediate and rapid assistance in situations where there is, in particular, a direct risk to life or limb, to individual or public health or safety, to private or public property or to the environment, in accordance with national law.

⁹ 'Total conversation service' means a multimedia real-time conversation service that provides bidirectional symmetric real-time transfer of motion video, real-time text and voice between users in two or more locations.

the minimum speeds defined vary from 1 to 10 Mbit/s for download speeds and from 512 kbit/s to 1 Mbit/s for upload speeds, while several countries have not defined the minimum upload speeds.

- **Emergency services:** Access to emergency services via SMS for persons with disabilities is provided in 22 EU Member States, the United Kingdom, the three EEA countries and Switzerland. In most countries, such access is provided through the single European emergency number 112, while in some countries it is provided through alternative numbers. According to the ITU survey, in 12 countries emergency services are accessible through an application; in some countries, access through applications is offered regionally. In 10 countries, emergency services are available through telecommunication relay services (TRS), i.e. text or video relay services.
- **Text and/or video relay services:** In 10 countries, there are text and/or video relay services available for the deaf and hard of hearing. Video relay service (VRS) is usually not available 24/7, which is a serious limitation. In several countries, there are also video remote-interpreting services available.
- **Audiovisual media services:** Media service providers may be required by law to make their programmes accessible. The requirements may be detailed by law or by national regulatory authorities (NRAs) or bodies, for example through media service licences. The requirements may apply to all media service providers or only to the public service media (PSM) organizations. Instead of defining clear requirements, some countries merely encourage media service providers under their jurisdiction to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to persons with disabilities, in particular a visual or hearing impairment. How the transmission of radio and television broadcast channels and related complementary services, in particular accessibility services, are regulated is also important in order to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities and data supporting connected television services and electronic programme guides (EPGs). This is usually defined by must-carry obligations. A summary of ITU findings:
 - **Subtitles:** In 27 countries, media service providers (i.e. broadcasters) are required to provide subtitles. In 21 of them, the requirements apply to all media service providers, while in the other six the requirements apply only to PSM organizations.
 - **Live subtitles:** In at least 21 countries, media service providers provide live subtitles.
 - **Audio subtitles:** In at least 10 countries, media service providers provide spoken subtitles.
 - **Audio description:** In 17 countries, media service providers are required to provide audio description. In 11 of them, the requirements apply to all media service providers, while in the other six the requirements apply only to PSM organizations.
 - **Signing:** In 24 countries, media service providers are required to provide signed programmes. In 13 of them, the requirements apply to all media service providers, while in the other 11 the requirements apply only to PSM organizations.
 - **Live signing:** In at least 23 countries, media service providers provide live signing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 40 out of the 46 Europe region countries have been providing sign-language access to COVID-19 public broadcasts, such as national press conferences or news broadcasts.
 - **Website accessibility:** In 10 countries, PSM organizations are required to make their websites accessible to persons with disabilities.
 - **Must-carry obligation:** More than half of the countries confirmed they have a must-carry obligation enshrined in law and also define accessibility requirements for

the transmission of specified radio and television broadcast channels and related complementary services.

- **Public procurement of ICT products and services:** ITU estimates that over 30 countries have enshrined in law functional accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services, following the adoption of the European public procurement directives in 2014. Some of the non-EU/EEA countries have also reported the application of these requirements in national procurement laws.
- **Accessibility requirements for products and services:** ITU estimates that around one third of the countries regulate specific aspects of accessibility requirements for products and services as foreseen in the European Accessibility Act. There is a lot of room for improvement in this area.
- **Accessibility requirements for ICT accessibility in education:** ITU estimates that more than half of the countries have laws and regulations in place defining accessibility requirements for ICT services and content procured, developed, maintained, made available and used in public and/or private education institutions by administrators, teachers, students and staff.

2.3 ITU Member State implementation capacity

All the Europe region countries are committed to ICT accessibility. However, the level of commitment varies across the region. While some countries prescribe only general or minimum requirements in their legal and regulatory frameworks, others set ambitious and forward-looking goals and objectives. The ability to meet commitments also varies among the countries.

The majority of EU countries have policies in place to enhance the availability and accessibility of information and communications, as well as of ICT products and services, to ensure that persons with disabilities are afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions and enjoy the same services as persons without disabilities in an equally effective and equally integrated manner. The scope of policies varies among the countries, so ITU can serve as a platform for sharing good practices.

Most of the countries have policies in place to facilitate and promote accessibility of websites and mobile applications. Here, EU law has exerted a big impact, as almost all countries are following the EU role model. The Web Accessibility Directive has highlighted the importance of organizational alignment with policies and strategies, as well as the importance of monitoring and reporting for successful implementation of commitments.

Strong commitments have been found in the following policy areas:

- Development, promulgation, enforcement and monitoring of the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of ICT products and services provided to the public, including through the Internet.
- Facilitating the use of sign languages and Braille in official interactions. Augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice for persons with disabilities are also gaining importance, such as closed captions, offline captions and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, communication access real-time translation (CART), and others.
- Through the implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive, EU countries are developing and providing role-based ICT accessibility training for stakeholders. Non-EU countries are also developing such training.

- Countries are also organizing campaigns and other activities to raise awareness on ICT accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities, an aspect which has been recognized by ITU as an important inhibitor for effective policy implementation.

The implementation process should be strengthened in the following areas:

- Promotion of the design, development, production and distribution of accessible ICTs and ICT systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.
- Promotion of universal design of ICT products and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design, including assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.
- Facilitation and promotion of the engagement and participation of persons with disabilities, and representative organizations of persons with disabilities, as appropriate, in the design of accessible and inclusive e-government services.
- Employing teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, as well as in digital accessibility, including captioning, electronic document accessibility and web accessibility; training professionals and staff who work at all levels of education on ICT accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities.
- Promotion of the adoption of ICT accessibility in education, including role-based ICT accessibility training courses for administrators, teachers and staff in education institutions, and including ICT accessibility content in higher-education curricula.
- Undertaking or promoting research and development in respect of universally designed ICT products, services and equipment.
- Promoting the use of emerging technologies (artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), big data, cloud computing) by private- and public-sector stakeholders in order to drive innovation in the design and development of accessible and inclusive ICT products and services.

Several countries have established dedicated financial schemes to support the provision of accessible information and communications, as well as of ICT products and services, for persons with disabilities. Such schemes, targeted at persons with disabilities, are very important for the empowerment of persons with disabilities, enabling them to purchase equipment which will allow them to lead a more independent life.

Organizational alignment with policies and strategies is one of the key factors for effective and successful implementation of such policies and strategies. In most of the countries, responsibilities for ICT accessibility matters are split among different bodies, such as ministerial departments, national regulatory authorities or bodies in charge of electronic communications or audiovisual media services. Rarely are there dedicated agencies dealing with ICT accessibility across sectors. With the implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive, EU Member States have been required to designate a government body to perform the monitoring and reporting functions, and a body responsible for enforcement. This is good practice also for other accessibility areas.

ITU estimates that most of the European countries have established one or more focal points and/or coordination mechanisms to secure implementation of the UNCRPD and facilitate related action. Such focal points and/or coordination mechanisms usually include representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities. Moreover, formal procedures of engagement and liaison with organizations of persons with disabilities in consultation processes related to the UNCRPD have also been established. Separate focal points and/or coordination mechanisms may be established in relation to implementation of the ICT accessibility legislation.

Regarding independent mechanisms to promote, protect, enforce and monitor the implementation of ICT accessibility laws, regulations, policies and strategies, the majority of countries have established national regulatory authorities or bodies for electronic communications and audiovisual media services. EU countries have also designated bodies to perform the monitoring and reporting functions in regard to website accessibility. There is, however, a lack of such mechanisms for ICT accessibility in other areas (such as accessibility of products and services, and public procurement of ICT products and services).

There is also a lack of independent monitoring processes involving the participation of civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, for the implementation of ICT accessibility laws, regulations and policies. National associations or councils may not have the capacities, knowledge and financial means to run independent monitoring processes. However, a few good practices have been reported by Member States with the establishment of proper independent monitoring frameworks and the involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities.

Chapter 3. ITU ICT accessibility framework

ITU has set digital inclusion and accessibility as one of its top priorities in its strategic plan for the period 2020-2023,¹⁰ ensuring that technology serves humanity and the planet. In pursuing its role in facilitating progress towards the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹¹ ITU focuses on how technological advances will contribute to accelerating achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related targets by 2030.

All Member States of the United Nations are committed to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Moreover, they recognize telecommunications/ICTs as a key enabler to accelerate social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development, while the spread of ICT and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies.

At the Plenipotentiary Conference in Dubai in 2018, the ITU Member States endorsed the ITU Connect 2030 Agenda¹² and high-level strategic goals. They agreed that, by 2023, enabling environments ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries (Goal 2, Target 2.9).¹³

Accessibility has also been identified in the Buenos Aires Action Plan for 2018-2021¹⁴ as one of the five priority initiatives for the Europe region.¹⁵ The regional initiatives provide a roadmap for ITU to follow in the coming years and plot a way forward for all stakeholders for the development ICTs, in agreement with governments.

Regional Initiative EUR 3 (Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development)¹⁶ was prepared in line with ITU Resolutions 58 (Rev.

¹⁰ ITU (2018). Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the strategic plan for the Union for 2020-2023. Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 29 October – 16 November 2018. ([PDF](#)).

¹¹ UN (2015). United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted on 25 September 2015. Document A/RES/70/1. ([HTML](#)).

¹² ITU (2018). Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT, including broadband, for sustainable development. Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 29 October – 16 November 2018. ([PDF](#)).

¹³ Op. cit. (note 10), § 1.5.

¹⁴ ITU (2017). WTDC-17 Final Report, Part C: Buenos Aires Action Plan. World Telecommunication Development Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 9-20 October 2017. ([PDF](#)).

¹⁵ ITU. (2017). Europe regional initiatives, Buenos Aires Action Plan 2018-2021. ([PDF](#))

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 34-45.

Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC ¹⁷ and 175 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference¹⁸ on ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.

- Resolution 58 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) calls upon Member States and Sector Members to take all necessary measures to promote and provide accessibility of ICT products and services.
- Resolution 175 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) mandates ITU: (a) to make ITU an accessible organization for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, including age-related disabilities, and (b) to promote ICT accessibility and access to ICTs for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.

The ICT accessibility survey for the Europe region has been launched as part of the ITU Regional Initiative on accessibility. One of its expected outcomes is to review the implementation of national commitments in the area of ICT accessibility arising from the UNCRPD, EU accessibility legislation, where applicable, ITU strategic goals and SDGs.

It has been designed to provide ITU members and stakeholders from the entire region with a holistic view of the current implementation status in respect of ICT accessibility laws, regulations, policies and strategies. It also aims to identify and promote good practices throughout the region and among all stakeholders.

Based on the results of the ICT accessibility assessment survey, ITU intends to provide advice to policy-makers and stakeholders throughout the region in the form of good practices and recommendations, and to support ITU member efforts in ensuring that information and communications, as well as ICT products and services, are available and widely accessible to all citizens, and notably persons with disabilities, including intellectual, learning or cognitive disabilities, and without any discrimination based on gender, age or any other grounds. The results will be used to identify regional ICT accessibility needs, and serve as a tool for directing targeted technical assistance to the countries in need, especially in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe.

At a policy level, the Europe region ICT accessibility assessment will contribute to the ITU strategic plan for 2020-2023, to Connect 2030 – An agenda to connect all to a better world¹⁹ and to the ITU strategic goal on inclusiveness, in particular, Target 2.9: By 2023, enabling environments ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries. It will also serve as input for shaping the Accessible Europe 2021 programme,²⁰ for ICT accessibility discussions under the presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2021 and for the preparatory process for the upcoming WTDC in 2021.

The ICT accessibility assessment comes at a timely moment in regard to implementation of the EU accessibility legislation. The survey has been prepared in line with the accessibility requirements of the EU digital accessibility legislation and the four EU directives that define ICT accessibility: accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies;

¹⁷ ITU (2017). WTDC-17 Resolution 58 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs. World Telecommunication Development Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 9-20 October 2017. ([PDF](#)).

¹⁸ ITU (2018). Resolution 175 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs. Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 29 October – 16 November 2018. ([PDF](#)).

¹⁹ ITU. Connect 2030 – An agenda to connect all to a better world. ([HTML](#))

²⁰ ITU. Accessible Europe 2021. ([HTML](#))

accessibility of audiovisual media services; accessibility of electronic communications; and accessibility requirements for ICT products and services (still to be transposed).

The ICT accessibility assessment is also timely in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹ Availability and affordability of accessible telecommunication/ICT services has never been as crucial as today. Social and physical distancing, self-isolation and quarantine measures due to COVID-19 have greatly increased the demand for accessible telecommunications and Internet access services, which enable people to stay connected with their loved ones and continue to effectively participate in the community.

Lack of accessible and affordable telecommunications and Internet access services, however, means that many persons with disabilities, including, but not limited to, deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind and deafblind persons or persons with speech disabilities, are not able to connect with others, which can lead to mental health problems due to isolation and loneliness.²² Moreover, lack of equivalent access to emergency communications²³ has been especially alarming as it puts the lives of many persons with disabilities at great risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the need for reliable information on the disease and on the emergency measures taken by governments and authorities. Therefore, accessibility of audiovisual media services is of the utmost importance in times of emergency.

ITU is committed to supporting Member States and stakeholders in their efforts to implement ICT accessibility. It provides a framework and resources to ensure digital inclusion for all people, including persons with disabilities (see **Annex 3** to this report).

²¹ World Health Organization (WHO) (2020). WHO announces COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, 12 March 2020. ([HTML](#)).

²² European Disability Forum (2020). EDF Webinar: European Electronic Communications Code - Ensuring accessibility of telecom services for persons with disabilities, 22 April 2020 ([HTML](#)).

²³ 'Emergency communication' means communication by means of interpersonal communications services between an end user and the public-safety answering point (PSAP) with the goal to request and receive emergency relief from emergency services.

Chapter 4. The ICT assessment framework

4.1 The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The legal framework for ICT accessibility is primarily defined by the international human rights framework for the protection of rights of persons with disabilities, established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This is the first legally binding instrument with comprehensive protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, which sets out legally binding obligations on States to promote, protect and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities.²⁴

The notion of equality in international law has changed over the past decades and there has been a conceptual shift from formal equality to substantive equality that has an impact on the duties of States party. The obligation to provide accessibility is an essential part of the new duty to respect, protect and fulfil equality rights. Accessibility should therefore be considered in the context of the right to access from the specific perspective of disability. The right to access for persons with disabilities is ensured through strict implementation of accessibility standards.²⁵

As emphasized by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, accessibility is a general principle, a separate right in Article 9 of the UNCRPD as well as a precondition and a means to achieve *de facto* equality for all persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society.²⁶ In particular, without access to information and communication, including information and communication technologies and systems, and to products or services provided to the public, persons with disabilities would not have equal opportunities for participation in their respective societies. For persons with disabilities to effectively participate in the community, States parties must therefore address accessibility of information and communication services, which must be available and usable for all persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

ICT accessibility requirements in the UNCRPD are defined by Articles 9 (Accessibility) and 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information).

Article 9 sets out requirements and standards of accessibility for States party, which include States and State entities. It is a general obligation and applies to all relevant provisions in the UNCRPD. In accordance with Article 9, States have been required to take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to information

²⁴ ITU (2019). Caf, Dušan. Future of accessible audiovisual media services, TV and video programming, Accessible Europe 2019 Background Paper, October 2019, p. 24, § 5.1. ([PDF](#)).

²⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2014). General comment No. 2 (2014), Article 9: Accessibility. Document CRPD/C/GC/2, 22 May 2014, para. 14. ([HTML](#)).

²⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2018). General comment No. 6 (2018), on equality and non-discrimination. Document CRPD/C/GC/6, 26 April 2018, para. 40. ([HTML](#)).

and communications, including information and communication technologies and systems, including:

- to promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communication technologies and systems, including the Internet (Art. 9, para. 2 (g));
- to promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible ICTs and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost (Art. 9, para. 2 (h)).

Moreover, the States parties have been required to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas, including:

- to develop, promulgate and monitor the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public (Art. 9, para. 2 (a));
- to provide training for stakeholders on accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities (Art. 9, para. 2 (c));
- to promote appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information (Art. 9, para. 2 (f)).

The scope of Article 9 is not only legally binding for States party, but also implicates private actors, by requiring States party:²⁷

- to ensure that private entities that offer facilities and services which are open or provided to the public take into account all aspects of accessibility for persons with disabilities (Art. 9, para. 2 (b)).

In other words, although the UNCRPD is not directly legally binding on private actors (as only States can be bound by international treaties), it obligates States party to ensure that private actors that are open to the general public and over whom they have control act in a manner consistent with the goals and obligations of Article 9. The duty to observe accessibility standards applies equally to the public and private sectors.²⁸

In relation to ICT accessibility, it is important to emphasize that accessibility and reasonable accommodation²⁹ are two distinct concepts of equality laws and policies.³⁰

- Accessibility duties relate to groups and must be implemented gradually but unconditionally.³¹
- Reasonable accommodation duties, on the other hand, are individualized, apply immediately to all rights and may be limited by disproportionality.³²

As the gradual realization of accessibility of information and communication services may take time, reasonable accommodation may be used as a means to provide access to an individual in the meantime, as it is an immediate duty.³³

²⁷ Op. Cit. (note 24), Appendix E.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ 'Reasonable accommodation' means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. (UNCRPD, Art. 2).

³⁰ Op. Cit. (note 26), para. 41.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Op. Cit. (note 24), Appendix E.

Articles 9 and 21 intersect on the issue of information and communication.³⁴ Article 9 imposes a duty on States party to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access services open to or provided to the public on an equal basis with others, while Article 21 provides that States parties “shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice”.³⁵

Article 21 describes in detail how the accessibility of information and communications can be ensured in practice. It sets out a number of measures for States party to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, including by:³⁶

- providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost (Art. 21 (a));
- accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions (Art. 21 (b));
- urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities (Art. 21 (c));
- encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities (Art. 21 (d)).

The UNCRPD has been ratified or acceded to by 44 of the 46 ITU Europe region Member States (as at November 2020).³⁷ Not all of them, though, have ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD (for more details, see also **Annex 1** to this report).³⁸

4.2 EU accessibility legislation

The ITU Europe region ICT accessibility survey has focused on the EU secondary legislation³⁹ and the four EU directives defining ICT accessibility:

- Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies (Web Accessibility Directive).⁴⁰
- Directive (EU) 2018/1808 amending Directive (EU) 2010/13 on audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive).⁴¹

³⁴ ‘Communication’ includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology. (UNCRPD, Art. 2)

³⁵ Op. Cit. (note 24), Appendix E.

³⁶ The word ‘including’ implies that the right to freedom of expression and opinion could also be achieved by other measures.

³⁷ The two ITU Europe region Member States that have not ratified or acceded to the CRPD are Luxembourg and Vatican.

³⁸ The 17 ITU Europe region Member States that have not ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD are: Albania, Andorra, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Lichtenstein, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, San Marino, Switzerland and Vatican.

³⁹ The EU primary accessibility legislation and mixed competences of the European Commission and the EU Member States with regard to accessibility and the CRPD are described in more detail in ITU (2019). Op. Cit. (note 24), § 5.2. (PDF).

⁴⁰ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 327, 2 December 2016, pp. 1-15. (HTML).

⁴¹ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 303, 28 November 2018, pp. 69-92. (HTML, consolidated text: HTML).

- Directive (EU) 2018/1972 on establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC).⁴²
- Directive (EU) 2019/882 on the accessibility requirements for products and services, also known as the European Accessibility Act.⁴³

In addition, EU public procurement directives require that accessibility criteria for persons with disabilities or design for all users be included in the technical specifications for all public procurement the subject of which is intended for use by persons, whether the general public or staff of the contracting authority, except in duly justified cases.

All these directives apply to EU Member States and to members of the EEA, which include Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

4.2.1 Accessibility of public-sector websites and mobile applications

Accessibility scope

Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies – the Web Accessibility Directive – lays down the rules requiring Member States to ensure that websites, independently of the device used for access thereto, and mobile applications of public-sector bodies meet the stipulated accessibility requirements. It aims to make public-sector websites and mobile applications more accessible, and to harmonize varying standards within the EU, reducing barriers for developers of accessibility-related products and services.

EU Member States must ensure that websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies are ‘more accessible’, particularly for persons with disabilities, by making them ‘perceivable, operable, understandable and robust’.

The harmonized European standard EN 301 549, V2.1.2 (2018-08)^{44, 45} (based on and in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA)⁴⁶ provides presumption of conformity with the accessibility requirements of the directive.

Public-sector bodies must regularly provide a detailed, comprehensive and clear accessibility statement on how their websites and mobile applications comply with the accessibility requirements, including:⁴⁷

- an explanation for any inaccessible elements, and information on accessible alternatives;
- a description of how a user may report any failure to comply with the directive and request information that is excluded from the scope of the directive;

⁴² European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 321, 17 December 2018, pp. 36-214. ([HTML](#)).

⁴³ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 151, 7 June 2019, pp. 70-115. ([HTML](#)).

⁴⁴ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 327, 21 December 2018, pp. 84-86. Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/2048 of 20 December 2018 on the harmonized standard for websites and mobile applications drafted in support of Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council. ([HTML](#)).

⁴⁵ European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) (2018). Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services (ETSI Standard EN 301 549 V2.1.2 (2018-08)). ([PDF](#)).

⁴⁶ World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) (2018). W3C Recommendation 05: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, 5 June 2018. ([HTML](#)).

⁴⁷ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 256, 12 October 2018, pp. 103-107. Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1523 of 11 October 2018 establishing a model accessibility statement in accordance with Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies. ([HTML](#)).

- a link to a complaint mechanism if the response is inadequate.
- EU Member States must also:
- facilitate the application of the accessibility requirements to other type of websites and mobile applications covered by existing national laws;
- facilitate training programmes on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications;
- raise awareness of the accessibility requirements;
- share best practices, facilitated by the European Commission;
- ensure the availability of an adequate and effective enforcement procedure.

Member States may maintain or introduce measures in conformity with EU law which go beyond the minimum requirements for accessibility of websites and mobile applications established by the directive (Art. 2). This means that the directive lays down minimum accessibility requirements, but individual Member States may also adopt more far-reaching regulations.

Exclusion from the scope

The Web Accessibility Directive provides for exceptions to compliance with the accessibility requirements for the following websites and mobile applications:

- websites and mobile applications of public service broadcasters and their subsidiaries, and of other bodies or their subsidiaries fulfilling a public service broadcasting remit (Art. 1, para. 3 (a));
- websites and mobile applications of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that do not provide services that are essential to the public, or services that specifically address the needs of, or are meant for, persons with disabilities (Art. 1, para. 3 (b));
- in addition, Member States may exclude websites and mobile applications of schools, kindergartens or nurseries, except for the content thereof relating to essential online administrative functions (Art. 1, para. 5).

The directive does not apply to the following content (Art. 1, para. 4 (a)-(h)), although Member States can decide not to adopt all of these exclusions:

- office file formats published before 23 September 2018, unless such content is needed for active administrative processes relating to the tasks performed by the public-sector body concerned;
- pre-recorded time-based media published before 23 September 2020;
- live time-based media (i.e. live streaming of audio and video);
- online maps and mapping services, as long as essential information is provided in an accessible digital manner for maps intended for navigational use;
- third-party content that is neither funded nor developed by, nor under the control of, the public-sector body concerned;
- reproductions of items in heritage collections that cannot be made fully accessible;
- content of extranets and intranets, intended for a closed group of people, published before 23 September 2019, until they have a major update;
- content of websites and mobile applications qualifying as archives, published before 23 September 2019, if their content is not needed for administrative processes.

Monitoring

EU Member States must verify compliance of websites and mobile applications with the accessibility requirements in accordance with Commission implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1524,⁴⁸ which establishes a methodology for monitoring the conformity of websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies with the accessibility requirements laid down in Article 4 of Directive (EU) 2016/2102.

The monitoring methodology includes (Art. 8, para. 3):

- the periodicity of the monitoring and sampling arrangements of the websites and mobile applications that are to be subject to monitoring;
- at website level, the sampling of webpages, of the content on those pages and of the content of mobile apps;
- at mobile application level, the content to be tested, taking into account the moment of the initial release of the application and of subsequent functionality updates;
- a description of the way to determine compliance or non-compliance with the accessibility requirements;
- where deficiencies are identified, a mechanism to help public-sector bodies correct them; and
- arrangements for automatic, manual and usability tests, in combination with the sampling settings, in a way which is compatible with the periodicity of the monitoring and reporting.

Reporting

EU Member States must report to the European Commission in accordance with Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1524, which also establishes the arrangements for reporting on the outcome of the monitoring, including the measurement data (Art. 8, para. 4).

By 23 December 2021, and every three years thereafter, EU Member States must submit to the Commission a report on the outcome of the monitoring, including the measurement data, and on the use of the enforcement procedure.

In relation to the additional measures adopted pursuant to Article 7, the first report shall also cover the following:

- a description of the mechanisms set up by Member States for consulting with relevant stakeholders on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications;
- procedures to make public any developments in accessibility policy relating to websites and mobile applications;
- experiences and findings from the implementation of the rules on conformity with the accessibility requirements; and
- information on training and awareness-raising activities.

The content of all the reports will be made public in an accessible format.

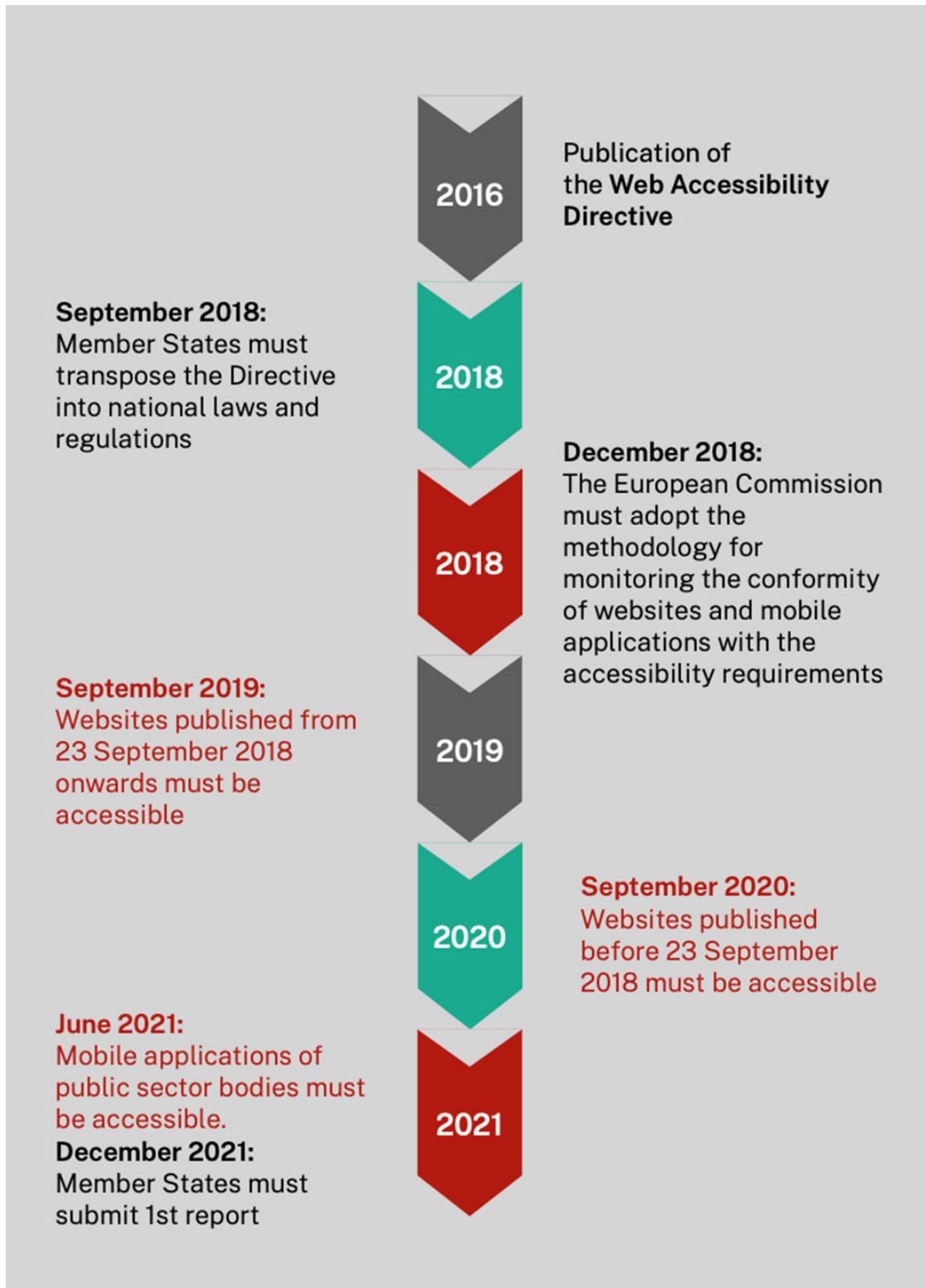
⁴⁸ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 256, 12 October 2018, pp. 108-116. Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1524 of 11 October 2018 establishing a monitoring methodology and the arrangements for reporting by Member States in accordance with Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies. ([HTML](#)).

Table 1: Timeline of Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies

2 December 2016	Publication of Directive (EU) 2016/2102 in the Official Journal.
By 23 September 2018	EU Member States have to incorporate Directive (EU) 2016/2102 into national law, i.e. they have to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the directive.
By 23 September 2018	EU Member States must inform the European Commission of the body designated to perform the monitoring and reporting functions, and of the body responsible for the enforcement of Directive (EU) 2016/2102.
12 October 2018	Publication of Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1523 in the Official Journal, establishing a model accessibility statement.
12 October 2018	Publication of Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1524 in the Official Journal, establishing a monitoring methodology (for monitoring the conformity of websites and mobile applications with the accessibility requirements) and the arrangements for reporting by Member States.
21 December 2018	Publication of Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/2048 in the Official Journal, containing the reference to the harmonized standard for websites and mobile applications drafted in support of Directive (EU) 2016/2102.
From 23 September 2019	Websites of public-sector bodies published from 23 September 2018 onwards must be accessible.
From 23 September 2020	Websites of public-sector bodies published before 23 September 2018 must be accessible. Pre-recorded time-based media must be accessible.
From 23 June 2021	Mobile applications of public-sector bodies must be accessible.
By 23 June 2022	The European Commission must carry out a review of the application of Directive (EU) 2016/2102, taking into account the Member States reports on the outcome of their monitoring and enforcement; as well as the technological advances that could make accessibility easier for some types of content excluded from the scope of the directive.

For an overview of accessibility measures with regard to accessibility of public-sector websites and mobile applications, see **Annex 4** to this report.

Figure 1: Timeline of the publication of Directive (EU) 2016/2102



Source: European Union

4.2.2 Accessibility of audiovisual media services

Accessibility scope

Directive 2010/13/EU amended by Directive (EU) 2018/1808/EU - the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) - aims to create and ensure the proper functioning of a single EU market for audiovisual media services (AVMS), while contributing to the promotion of cultural diversity and providing an adequate level of consumer and child protection.

The AVMSD governs EU-wide coordination of national legislations on all audiovisual media, both traditional TV broadcasts and on-demand audiovisual media services, in the area of accessibility for persons with disabilities.⁴⁹

The amended and updated AVMSD, as part of the digital single market strategy, strengthens accessibility requirements for audiovisual content.⁵⁰ Ensuring the accessibility of audiovisual content is an essential requirement in the context of the commitments undertaken under the UNCRPD. The right of persons with disabilities and of older persons to participate and be integrated in social and cultural life is inextricably linked to the provision of accessible AVMS.

EU Member States must ensure, without undue delay, that services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction are made continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities, in particular those with a visual or hearing impairment.

Accessibility of AVMS is provided through proportionate measures, taking into account the practical and unavoidable constraints that could prevent full accessibility, such as programmes or events broadcast in real time (Art. 7, para. 1; and preambular para. 22). The means to achieve the accessibility of AVMS include, but are not limited to (preambular para. 23):

- sign language;
- subtitling;
- spoken subtitles;
- audio description; and
- easily understandable menu navigation.

Member States must also ensure that emergency information, including public communications and announcements in natural disaster situations, that is made available to the public through audiovisual media services, is provided in a manner which is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Exclusion from the scope

The AVMSD does not cover features or services providing access to AVMS, nor does it cover accessibility features of EPGs. Therefore, the AVMSD is without prejudice to EU law, which aims to harmonize the accessibility of services providing access to AVMS, such as websites, online applications and EPGs, or the provision of information on accessibility and in accessible formats.

⁴⁹ Other areas of coordination include general principles, incitement to hatred, principles of jurisdiction, major events, promotion and distribution of European works, commercial communications and protection of minors.

⁵⁰ Other amendments aim to extend certain audiovisual rules to video-sharing platforms as well as to audiovisual content shared on certain social media services; introduce flexibility on restrictions applicable to TV; strengthen the promotion of European content; protect children and tackle hate speech more effectively; and reinforce the independence of NRAs.

Information and complaint handling

Each Member State must designate a single, easily accessible, including by persons with disabilities, and publicly available online point of contact for providing information and receiving complaints regarding any accessibility issues referred to in Article 7 of the AVMSD.

National regulatory authorities or bodies

The AVMSD confers new duties on national regulatory authorities or bodies in the field of AVMS with regard to accessibility. It also reinforces the independence of NRAs, for which Member States must ensure that:

- the competences and powers of NRAs, as well as the ways of making them accountable, are clearly defined in law;
- NRAs have adequate financial and human resources and enforcement powers to carry out their functions effectively and to contribute to the work of the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA);
- NRAs exercise their powers impartially and transparently and in accordance with the objectives of the AVMSD, in particular media pluralism, cultural and linguistic diversity, consumer protection, accessibility, non-discrimination, the proper functioning of the internal market and the promotion of fair competition.

The amended AVMSD provides ERGA with new powers to exchange experience and best practices on the application of the regulatory framework for AVMS, including on accessibility.

Reporting

In order to measure the progress that media service providers have made in making their services progressively accessible to persons with visual or hearing disabilities, Member States must require media service providers established on their territory to report to them on a regular basis on the implementation of accessibility measures.

Member States must also encourage media service providers to develop accessibility action plans for continuously and progressively making their services more accessible to persons with disabilities. Any such action plan must be communicated to national regulatory authorities or bodies.

By 19 December 2022, and every three years thereafter, Member States must report to the European Commission on the implementation of accessibility measures.

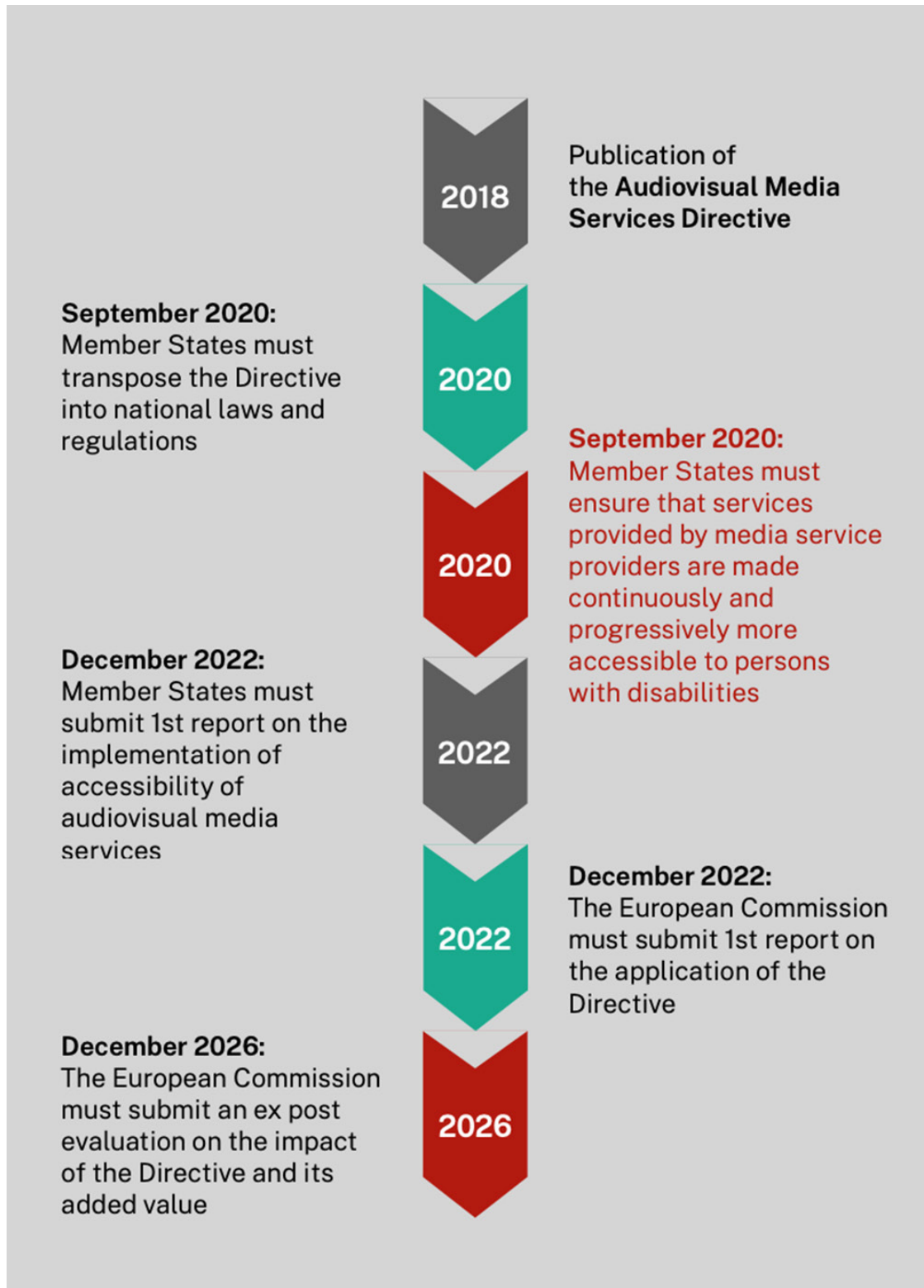
By 19 December 2022 at the latest, and every three years thereafter, the Commission must submit to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the European Economic and Social Committee a report on the application of the AVMSD.

Table 2: Timeline of the publication of Directive (EU) 2018/1808 amending Directive (EU) 2010/13 on audiovisual media services

28 November 2018	Publication of Directive (EU) 2018/1808 in the Official Journal.
By 19 September 2020	EU Member States have to incorporate the amendments introduced by Directive (EU) 2018/1808 into national law, i.e. they have to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the directive.
From 19 September 2020	Member States must ensure that services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction are made continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities through proportionate measures.
By 19 December 2022	Deadline for the first report of the EU Member States to the European Commission on the implementation of accessibility of audiovisual media services to persons with disabilities. The Member States must report every three years thereafter.
By 19 December 2022	Deadline for the first report of the European Commission to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the European Economic and Social Committee on the application of the directive. The Commission must report every three years thereafter.
By 19 December 2026	Deadline for an <i>ex-post</i> evaluation by the European Commission on the impact of Directive (EU) 2018/1808 and its added value, accompanied where appropriate by proposals for its review. The evaluation must be submitted to the European Parliament and the Council.

For an overview of accessibility measures with regard to accessibility of audiovisual media services, see **Annex 5** to this report.

Figure 2: Timeline of the publication of Directive (EU) 2018/1808



Source: European Union

4.2.3 Accessibility of electronic communications

Accessibility scope

Directive (EU) 2018/1972 on establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC) establishes a harmonized framework for the regulation of electronic communications networks, electronic communications services, associated facilities and associated services, and certain aspects of terminal equipment. It lays down tasks of NRAs and, where applicable, of other competent authorities, and establishes a set of procedures to ensure harmonized application of the regulatory framework throughout the EU.

The EECC aims, among others, to ensure the provision of good-quality, affordable, publicly available electronic communications services to end users throughout the EU. It aims to ensure that persons with disabilities have equivalent access to electronic communications services as enjoyed by other end users.

Key accessibility-related requirements

- Affordable universal service (Art. 84):
 - Member States must ensure that all consumers in their territories have access at an affordable price to an adequate broadband Internet access service and to voice communications services at the quality specified in their territories, at a fixed location (Art. 84, para. 1).
 - Member States may also ensure the affordability of the aforementioned services that are not provided at a fixed location where they consider this to be necessary to ensure consumers' full social and economic participation in society (Art. 84, para. 2).
 - Member States may, in light of national conditions and the minimum bandwidth enjoyed by the majority of consumers within the territory of that Member State and taking into account the report of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) on best practice, define the adequate broadband Internet access service with a view to ensuring the bandwidth necessary for social and economic participation in society. The adequate broadband Internet access service must be capable of delivering the bandwidth necessary for supporting at least the minimum set of services as set out in Annex V to the EECC, including e-mail, basic training and education online tools, social media and instant messaging, calls and video calls, etc. (Art. 84, para. 3, first subpara.).
 - BEREC has already drawn up a report on Member State best practices to support the defining of adequate broadband Internet access service, after consulting stakeholders and in close cooperation with the European Commission.⁵¹ The report shall be updated regularly to reflect technological advances and changes in consumer usage patterns (Art. 84, para. 3, second subpara.).
 - Member States may extend the measures of Article 84 to end users that are microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises and not-for-profit organizations (Art. 84, para. 5).

⁵¹ Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) (2020). Report on Member States' best practices to support the defining of adequate broadband Internet access service. Document BoR (20) 99, 11 June 2020. ([HTML](#)).

- Provision of affordable universal service (Art. 85):
 - NRAs, in coordination with other competent authorities, must monitor the evolution and level of retail prices of the broadband Internet access service and voice communications services (as referred to in Art. 84, para. 1) available on the market, in particular in relation to national prices and national consumer income (Art. 85, para. 1).
 - When Member States establish that retail prices for broadband Internet access service and voice communications services are not affordable, because consumers with low income or special social needs (including persons with disabilities) are prevented from accessing such services, they must take measures to ensure affordability of these services for such consumers at least at a fixed location (Art. 85, para. 2, first subpara.; and preambular para. 219).
 - Member States may ensure that support is provided to such consumers for communication purposes or require providers of such services to offer to those consumers tariff options or packages different from those provided under normal commercial conditions, or both. For that purpose, Member States may require such providers to apply common tariffs, including geographic averaging, throughout the territory (Art. 85, para. 2, second subpara.).
 - Member States may decide to impose the obligation to offer those specific tariff options or packages only on designated undertakings. In this case, Member States must ensure that all consumers with low income or special social needs (including persons with disabilities) benefit from a choice of undertakings offering tariff options addressing their needs, unless ensuring such choice is impossible or would create an excessive additional organizational or financial burden (Art. 85, para. 2, third subpara.; and preambular para. 219). Options for persons with disabilities with low income to access special tariffs are already available in several EU Member States.
 - Member States must ensure that appropriate support is provided to consumers with disabilities. They must also ensure that other specific measures are taken to ensure that related terminal equipment (this could include, for example, accessible smartphones or other accessible equipment, such as tablets, capable of calling, notebooks or computers), and specific equipment (this could include, for example, assistive technologies) and specific services that enhance equivalent access (e.g. total conversation services and relay services), are available and affordable to persons with disabilities (Art. 85, para. 4).
- Availability of universal service (Art. 86):
 - Where a Member State establishes that the availability at a fixed location of an adequate broadband Internet access service and of voice communications services cannot be ensured under normal commercial circumstances or through other potential public policy tools in its national territory or different parts thereof, it may impose appropriate universal service obligations to meet all reasonable requests by end users for accessing those services in the relevant parts of its territory (Art. 86, para. 1).
- Status of the existing universal service (Art. 87):
 - Member States may continue to ensure the availability or affordability of other services than adequate broadband Internet access service and voice communications services at a fixed location that were in force on 20 December 2018, if the need for such services is established in light of national circumstances. These services include the provision of

public payphones to the general public, and directories and directory enquiry services (Art. 87, para.1, first subpara.; and preambular para. 235).

- Missing-children and child-helpline hotlines (Art. 96):
 - Member States must ensure that end users have access free of charge to a service operating a hotline to report cases of missing children. The hotline must be available on the number '116000' (Art. 96, para. 1).
 - Member States must ensure that end users with disabilities are able to access services provided under the number '116000' to the greatest extent possible, including while travelling in other Member States (Art. 96, para. 2).
 - In parallel with the missing-children hotline number '116000', many Member States also ensure that children have access to a child-friendly service operating a helpline that helps children in need of care and protection through the use of the number '116111' (preambular para. 253).
 - Member States and the European Commission must ensure that end users are adequately informed of the existence and use of services provided under the numbers '116000' and, where appropriate, '116111' (Art. 96, para. 4).
- Non-discrimination (Art. 99):
 - Providers of electronic communications networks or services must not apply any different requirements or general conditions of access to, or use of, networks or services to end users, for reasons related to the end-user nationality, place of residence or place of establishment, unless such different treatment is objectively justified (Art. 99, single para.).
- Fundamental rights safeguard (Art. 100):
 - National measures regarding end-user access to, or use of, services and applications through electronic communications networks must respect the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁵² and general principles of EU law (Art. 100, para. 1).
 - Any measure regarding end-user access to, or use of, services and applications through electronic communications networks that limit the exercise of the rights or freedoms recognized by the abovementioned Charter may be imposed only if it is provided for by law and respects those rights or freedoms, is proportionate, necessary, and genuinely meets general-interest objectives recognized by EU law or the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others (Art. 100, para. 2).
- Level of harmonization (Art. 101):
 - Member States must not maintain or introduce in their national law end-user protection provisions diverging from Articles 102 to 115, including more, or less, stringent provisions to ensure a different level of protection, unless exceptions are provided in the provisions on end-user rights (Art. 101, para. 1).
- Information requirements for contracts (Art. 102):
 - Providers of publicly available electronic communications services must provide information about the services offered, in a clear and comprehensible manner

⁵² European Union. Official Journal. OJ C 202, 7 June 2016, pp. 389-405. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. ([HTML](#)).

on a durable medium or in an easily downloadable document. Upon request, the information must be provided in an accessible format for end users with disabilities in accordance with EU law harmonizing accessibility requirements for products and services (Art. 102, para. 1).

- Information must also be provided to end users that are microenterprises or small enterprises or not-for-profit organizations, unless they have explicitly agreed to waive all or parts of those provisions (Art. 102, para. 2).
- Providers of publicly available electronic communications services must provide consumers with a concise and easily readable contract summary. That summary shall identify the main elements of the information requirements, including the extent to which the products and services are designed for end users with disabilities (Art. 102, para. 3).
- Transparency, comparison of offers and publication of information (Art. 103):
 - Competent authorities, in coordination, where relevant, with NRAs, must ensure that end users are informed about the services provided, and that providers of Internet access services or publicly available interpersonal communications services publish and regularly update information, such as contact details, description of services offered and dispute resolution mechanisms, in a clear, comprehensive, machine-readable manner and in an accessible format for end users with disabilities (Art. 103, para. 1).
 - The authorities must also ensure that end users have access free of charge to at least one independent comparison tool which enables them to compare and evaluate different Internet access services and publicly available number-based interpersonal communications services, and, where applicable, publicly available number-independent interpersonal communications services, with regard to (a) prices and tariffs of services provided, and (b) the quality-of-service performance (Art. 103, para. 2).
 - The comparison tools must meet several conditions, including the use of plain and unambiguous language and the provision of accurate and up-to-date information to end users (Art. 103, para. 3).
- Quality of service related to Internet access services and publicly available interpersonal communications services (Art. 104):
 - NRAs, in coordination with other competent authorities, may require providers of Internet access services and of publicly available interpersonal communications services to publish comprehensive, comparable, reliable, user-friendly and up-to-date information for end users on the quality of their services, and on measures taken to ensure equivalence in access for end users with disabilities. They may also require providers of publicly available interpersonal communication services to inform consumers if the quality of the services they provide depends on any external factors, such as control of signal transmission or network connectivity (Art. 104, para. 1; and preambular para. 271).
 - BEREC, after consulting stakeholders, and in close cooperation with the European Commission, has already adopted guidelines detailing the relevant quality-of-service parameters, including parameters relevant for end users with disabilities, the applicable

measurement methods, the content and format of publication of the information, and quality-certification mechanisms (Art. 104, para. 2, second subpara.).⁵³

- Availability of services (Art. 108):
 - Member States must take all necessary measures to ensure the fullest possible availability of voice communications services and Internet access services provided over public electronic communications networks in the event of catastrophic network breakdown or in cases of *force majeure*. Member States must ensure that providers of voice communications services take all necessary measures to ensure uninterrupted access to emergency services and uninterrupted transmission of public warnings.
- Emergency communications and the single European emergency number (Art. 109):
 - Member States must ensure that providers of number-based interpersonal communications services, where those services allow end users to originate calls to a number in a national or international numbering plan, provide access to the emergency services through emergency communications free of charge and without having to use any means of payment, by using the single European emergency number 112 and any national emergency number specified by Member States (Art. 109, para. 1).
 - Member States must ensure that providers of publicly available number-based interpersonal communications services, where those services allow end users to originate calls to a number in a national or international numbering plan, provide access to emergency services through emergency communications to the most appropriate public-safety answering point (PSAP) (Art. 109, para. 2).
 - Member States must ensure that access for end users with disabilities to emergency services is available through emergency communications and is equivalent to that enjoyed by other end users, in accordance with EU law harmonizing accessibility requirements for products and services (i.e. the European Accessibility Act). The European Commission and NRAs or other competent authorities must take appropriate measures to ensure that, whilst travelling in another Member State, end users with disabilities can access emergency services on an equivalent basis with other end users, where feasible without any pre-registration (Art. 109, para. 5).
 - Member States must ensure that end users are adequately informed about the existence and the use of the single European emergency number 112, as well as its accessibility features, including through initiatives specifically targeting persons travelling between Member States and end users with disabilities. That information shall be provided in accessible formats, addressing different types of disabilities (Art. 109, para. 7).
 - In order to ensure effective access to emergency services through emergency communications to the single European emergency number 112 in the Member States, the European Commission shall, after consulting BEREC, adopt delegated acts on the measures necessary to ensure the compatibility, interoperability, quality, reliability and continuity of emergency communications in the EU with regard to caller location information solutions, access for end users with disabilities and routing to the most appropriate PSAP. The first such delegated act is to be adopted by 21 December 2022 (Art. 109, para. 8).

⁵³ BEREC (2020). Guidelines detailing quality of service parameters. Document BoR (20) 53, 6 March 2020. ([HTML](#)).

- Equivalent access and choice for end users with disabilities (Art. 111):
 - Member States must ensure that the competent authorities specify requirements to be met by providers of publicly available electronic communications services to ensure that end users with disabilities: (a) have access to electronic communications services, including the related contractual information, equivalent to that enjoyed by the majority of end users; and (b) benefit from the choice of undertakings and services available to the majority of end users (Art. 111, para. 1).
 - In taking these measures, Member States must encourage compliance with the relevant standards or specifications laid down in accordance with the provisions of Article 39 on standardization (Art. 111, para. 2).
- Public warning systems (Art. 110):
 - By 21 June 2022, Member States must ensure that, when public warning systems regarding imminent or developing major emergencies and disasters are in place, public warnings are transmitted by providers of mobile number-based interpersonal communications services to the end users concerned (Art. 110, para 1).
 - In addition, Member States may determine that public warnings be transmitted through publicly available electronic communications services other than mobile number-based interpersonal communications services, and other than broadcasting services, or through a mobile application relying on an Internet access service, provided that the effectiveness of the public warning system is equivalent in terms of coverage and capacity to reach end users, including those only temporarily present in the area concerned, taking utmost account of BEREC guidelines (Art. 110, para. 2, first subpara.).
 - BEREC has already adopted the guidelines on how to assess whether the effectiveness of public warning systems is equivalent to the effectiveness of public warning systems based on mobile number-based interpersonal communications services (Art. 110, para. 2, second subpara.).⁵⁴
- 'Must-carry' obligations (Art. 114):
 - Member States may impose reasonable 'must-carry' obligations for the transmission of specified radio and television broadcast channels and related complementary services, in particular accessibility services to enable appropriate access for end-users with disabilities and data supporting connected television services and EPGs, on undertakings under their jurisdiction providing electronic communications networks and services used for the distribution of radio or television broadcast channels to the public, where a significant number of end users of such networks and services use them as their principal means to receive radio and television broadcast channels. Member States may impose such obligations only where they are necessary to meet general-interest objectives, which must be clearly defined. The obligations must be proportionate and transparent (Art. 114, para. 1).

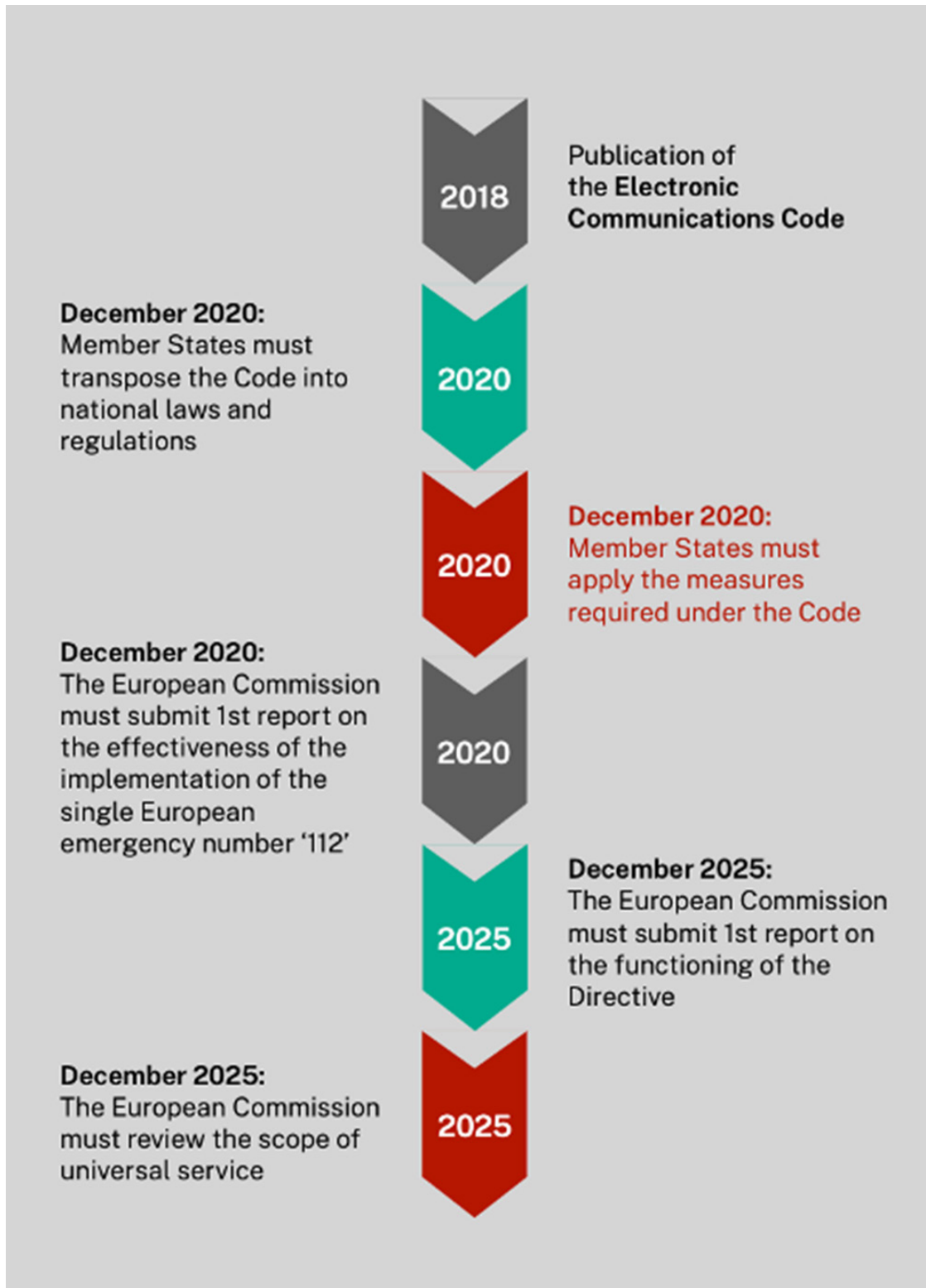
⁵⁴ BEREC (2020). Guidelines on how to assess the effectiveness of public warning systems transmitted by different means. Document BoR (20) 115, 12 June 2020. ([HTML](#)).

Table 3: Timeline of Directive (EU) 2018/1972 on establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC)

17 December 2018	Publication of Directive (EU) 2018/1972 in the Official Journal.
By 21 December 2020	EU Member States have to incorporate Directive (EU) 2018/1972 into national law, i.e. they have to adopt and publish the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the directive.
From 21 December 2020	Member States must apply the measures required under Directive (EU) 2018/1972 as from this date.
By 21 December 2020	Deadline for the first report by the European Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council on the effectiveness of the implementation of the single European emergency number 112. This reporting must be carried out every two years thereafter.
By 21 December 2021	BEREC shall monitor market and technological developments regarding the different types of electronic communications services and shall publish an opinion on such developments and on their impact on the application of Title III (End-user rights) of Part III (Services) of the EECC.
By June 2022	EU Member States must ensure that, when public warning systems regarding imminent or developing major emergencies and disasters are in place, public warnings are transmitted by providers of mobile number-based interpersonal communications services to the end users concerned (or through equivalent public warning systems).
By 21 December 2025	Deadline for the report by the European Commission on the functioning of Directive (EU) 2018/1972 to the European Parliament and to the Council. This reporting must be carried out every five years thereafter.
By 21 December 2025	Deadline for the review by the European Commission of the scope of universal service, in particular with a view to proposing to the European Parliament and to the Council that the scope be changed or redefined. This review must be carried out every five years thereafter.

For an overview of accessibility measures with regard to accessibility of accessibility of electronic communications, see **Annex 6** to this report.

Figure 3: Timeline of the publication of Directive (EU) 2018/1972



4.2.4 Accessibility of products and services

Accessibility scope

Directive (EU) 2019/882 on the accessibility requirements for products and services – the European Accessibility Act – aims to improve the proper functioning of the internal EU market by approximating the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States as regards accessibility requirements for certain products and services by, in particular, eliminating and preventing barriers to the free movement of products and services arising from divergent accessibility requirements in the Member States (preamble para. 1). It also aims to bring benefits to businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, to persons with disabilities and to older persons.

The directive applies to the following products and services:

- Products placed on the market after 28 June 2025 (Art. 2, para. 1):
 - consumer general-purpose computer hardware systems and operating systems for those hardware systems (i.e. computers, notebooks, tablets, and their operating systems, such as, for example, Windows or OS X);
 - payment terminals;
 - self-service terminals related to the services covered by the directive (i.e. automated teller machines (ATMs), ticketing machines, check-in machines and interactive self-service terminals providing information, excluding terminals installed as integrated parts of transport vehicles, aircraft, ships or rolling stock);
 - consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capability, used for electronic communications services (i.e. smartphones and other equipment, such as tablets, capable of calling);
 - consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capability, used for accessing audiovisual media services (i.e. smart TVs);
 - e-readers.
- Services provided to consumers after 28 June 2025 (Art. 2, para. 2):
 - electronic communications services (i.e. telephony services);
 - services providing access to audiovisual media services (e.g. websites or applications of media service providers, such as providers of TV broadcasting or on-demand audiovisual media services);
 - the following elements of air, bus, rail and waterborne passenger transport services (except urban, suburban and regional services for which only the elements under the fifth item apply):
 - websites;
 - mobile device-based services, including mobile applications;
 - electronic tickets and electronic ticketing services;
 - delivery of transport service information, including real-time travel information;
 - interactive self-service terminals, except those installed as integrated parts of vehicles, aircraft, ships or rolling stock;
 - consumer banking services;

- e-books and dedicated software;
- e-commerce services (i.e. services provided at a distance, through websites and mobile device-based services by electronic means and at the individual request of a consumer with a view to concluding a consumer contract).
- Answering emergency communications to the single European emergency number 112 (Art. 2, para. 3).

Exclusion from the scope

The directive does not apply to the following content of websites and mobile applications (Art. 2, para. 4):

- pre-recorded time-based media published before 28 June 2025;
- office file formats published before 28 June 2025;
- online maps and mapping services, if essential information is provided in an accessible digital manner for maps intended for navigational use;
- third-party content that is neither funded, developed by or under the control of the economic operator concerned;
- content of websites and mobile applications qualifying as archives, meaning that they only contain content that is not updated or edited after 28 June 2025.

The directive also contains exemptions from complying with the accessibility requirements for microenterprises providing services, as well as for urban and suburban transport services and regional transport services.

Accessibility requirements

Member States must ensure that economic operators only place on the market products and only provide services that comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Annex I to the directive, to the extent that these do not result in fundamental alteration or impose a disproportionate burden on operators (Art. 4, para. 1).

- Products must:
 - be designed and produced to maximize their use by people with disabilities;
 - comply with detailed rules on information and instructions, user interface and functionality design, support services and packaging.
- Services must:
 - provide information about the service, its accessibility features and facilities;
 - make websites and mobile devices easily accessible;
 - support systems, such as helpdesks, call centres and training, to provide information on accessibility;
 - apply practices, policies and procedures to address the needs of persons with disabilities: specific rules apply to different services (electronic communications, audiovisual, air, bus, rail, water and urban transport, consumer banking, e-books, e-commerce and the answering of communications to the emergency phone number 112).
- EU countries may decide to require that the built environment in which services are provided complies with accessibility requirements.

Table 4: Scope of accessibility requirements (Directive (EU) 2019/882)

Scope	Accessibility requirements
All products	Annex I - Section I (General accessibility requirements + specific requirements for each product)
All products, except for self-service terminals and payment terminals	Annex I - Section II (General requirements for products for individual use)
All services, except for urban, suburban and regional transport services	Annex I - Section III (General requirements)
All services	Annex I - Section IV (Specific requirements for each service)
Centres receiving and handling 112 emergency calls	Annex I - Section V
Examples of how to fulfil the accessibility requirements	Annex II

The directive also requires the following:

- Manufacturers must:
 - design and manufacture products in accordance with the directive, taking into account any subsequent changes in the harmonized standards;
 - draw up the necessary technical documentation, carry out the conformity assessment procedure and keep the information for five years;
 - provide clear identification on their products and their own contact details;
 - accompany the product with easily understood instructions and safety information;
 - affix the CE marking, where compliance of a product with the applicable accessibility requirements of the directive has been demonstrated.
- Importers must:
 - ensure the product has passed the conformity assessment procedure, has the necessary technical documentation, including instructions in a language users can easily understand, and bears the CE marking;
 - refuse to place on the market a product they believe does not meet the accessibility requirements, and inform the manufacturer and market-surveillance authorities.
- Service providers must:
 - design and provide services in accordance with the directive;
 - make available to the public written and oral information easily accessible to people with disabilities on the service they offer and how this meets the accessibility requirements;
 - ensure procedures are in place to ensure continued compliance with the accessibility requirements and take into account any changes.
- Manufacturers, importers and distributors must act immediately if they discover the product no longer complies with the legislation.

EU Member States must:

- ensure that all products and services covered by the directive comply with its accessibility requirements;
- on request, supply the public with information on how companies implement the requirements;
- implement and update procedures to:
 - check the compliance of services with the directive
 - follow up complaints or reports on non-compliance
 - verify that the company has remedied the failing;
- provide ways, including legal action, to ensure compliance and enforce penalties for any breach of the law.

The European Commission may:

- adopt delegated and implementing acts to amend technical aspects of the directive;
- request European standardization organizations to draft harmonized standards on accessibility requirements;
- adopt technical specifications under certain conditions.

Furthermore, the European Commission establishes a working group of representatives of market-surveillance authorities, authorities responsible for compliance of services and relevant stakeholders, including disability organizations, to:

- promote exchange of information and best practice
- foster cooperation between authorities and stakeholders
- provide advice.

Reporting

By 28 June 2030, and every five years thereafter, the European Commission must submit to the European Parliament, to the Council, to the European Economic and Social Committee and to the Committee of the Regions a report on the application of the directive.

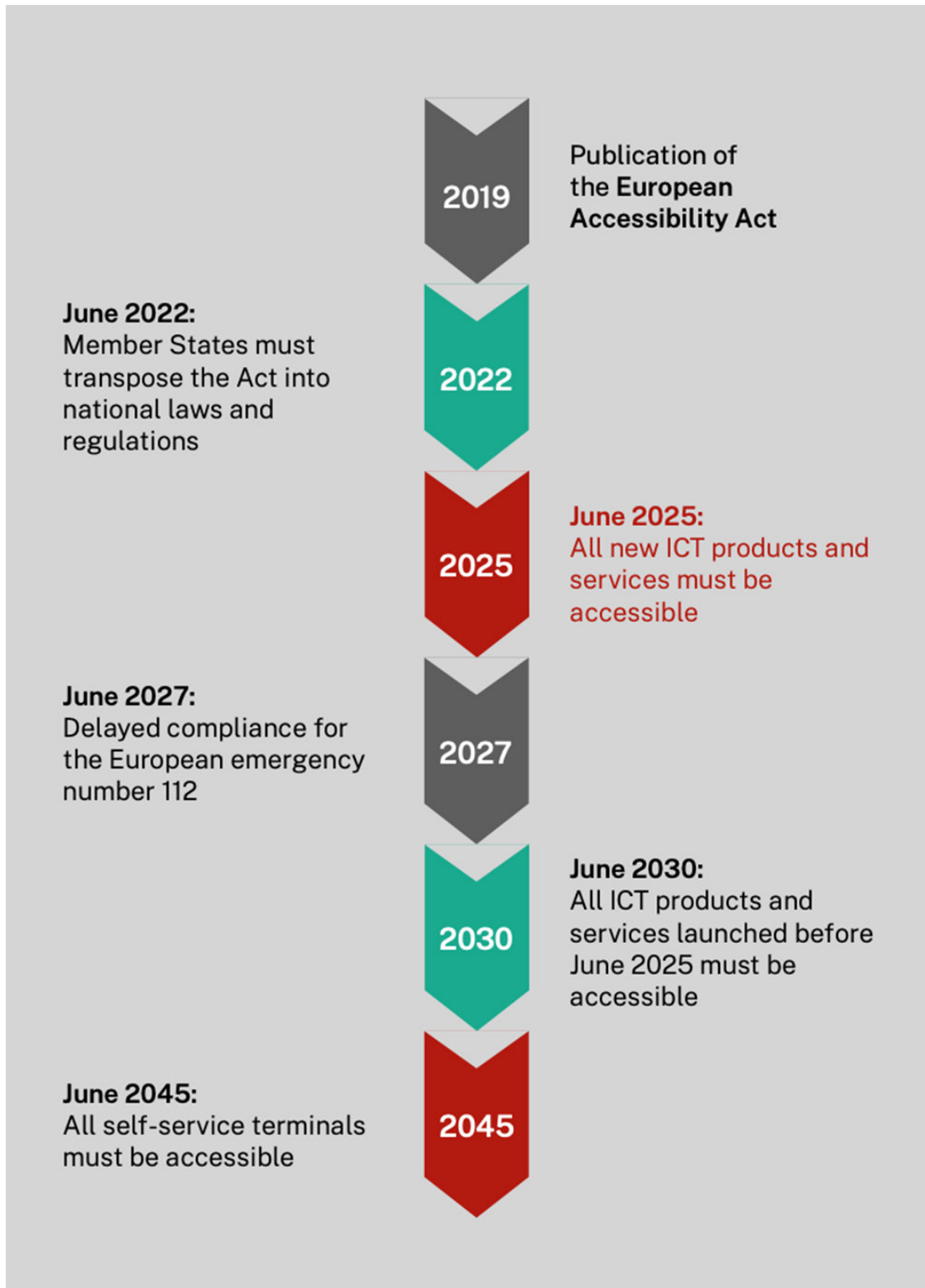
Member States must communicate in due time to the Commission all the information necessary for the Commission to draw up such reports.

Table 5: Timeline of Directive (EU) 2019/882 on the accessibility requirements for products and services – the European Accessibility Act

7 June 2019	Publication of Directive (EU) 2019/882 in the Official Journal.
By 28 June 2022	EU Member States have to incorporate the amendments introduced by Directive (EU) 2019/882 into national law, i.e. they have to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the directive.
From 28 June 2025	All new ICT products and services must be accessible.
By 28 June 2027	Delayed compliance for the European emergency number 112.
By 28 June 2030	Service contracts agreed before 28 June 2025 may continue without alteration until they expire, but no longer than five years from that date. Service providers whose products were already lawfully used by them to provide similar services before 28 June 2025 may continue to provide their services until 28 June 2030.
By 27 June 2045	Allow self-service terminals to operate until the end of their economically useful life, but no longer than 20 years after their entry into use.

For an overview of accessibility measures with regard to accessibility of products and services, see **Annex 7** to this report.

Figure 4: Timeline of the publication of Directive (EU) 2019/882



Source: European Union

Chapter 5. ICT accessibility in Europe

The ICT accessibility assessment for the Europe region has been launched as part of the ITU Office for Europe accessibility initiatives. It was carried out through desktop research and questionnaires, which were sent to national contact points in the 46 ITU Member States in the Europe region,⁵⁵ of which 27 are EU Member States. Responses were collected between October and November 2020. A total of 25 responses were received. The desktop research covered a comprehensive review of international and European law laying down ICT accessibility requirements, States party reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the implementation of the UNCRPD, EBU reports on PSM access services in the EBU member organizations and relevant BEREC reports covering equivalent access to electronic communications services, universal service and must-carry obligations. National sources were also used to complement or verify information collected.

The aim of the ITU Europe region ICT accessibility assessment was to assess:

- country commitments to ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities; and
- country capacity to meet their commitments.

The ICT accessibility commitments are reflected in countries' general legislation and regulations. They arise from international and national equality and anti-discrimination law, the UNCRPD, the EU accessibility legislation, where applicable, the ITU strategic goals, the UN SDGs, and specific laws regulating accessibility of information and communications, audiovisual media services as well as ICT products and services.

The country capacity to meet commitments is reflected in their policies and institutional frameworks.

5.1 Country commitments

5.1.1 Constitutional articles, laws or regulations defining the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring non-discrimination and equality for persons with disabilities

Almost all European countries have - directly or indirectly - enshrined fundamental principles concerning the rights of persons with disabilities in their constitutions. In general, constitutions of European countries:

- guarantee equality of all before the law;
- guarantee equal human rights and fundamental freedoms; and
- prohibit discrimination on any grounds, including disability.

Most of the European countries have adopted specific laws and regulations prescribing the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring non-discrimination and equality. When such laws prohibit discrimination in a broad sense, such as in access to and supply of goods and services available to the public, they are a cornerstone legislation for accessibility of ICTs.

⁵⁵ For the list of the 46 countries of the ITU Europe region, see note 1.

Almost all European countries have signed and ratified the UNCRPD and its Optional Protocol. The UNCRPD has been signed by 45 countries from the ITU Europe region and ratified by 44 of them (all but Liechtenstein and Vatican City State), while the Optional Protocol has been signed by 43 and ratified by 29 of the 46 countries (see **Annex 1** to this report). Several European countries have also adopted specific laws and regulations for the implementation of the provisions of the UNCRPD in national laws, ensuring non-discrimination and equality for persons with disabilities. Definitions of disability, however, vary across national legislations and still often stem from the context of social-security legislation rather than anti-discrimination law.⁵⁶ There are also different methods identified across the countries for the implementation or transposition of international or EU law.

The Marrakesh Treaty, which is also an international human rights treaty, has been signed by 20 of the 46 countries and ratified by six of them (see **Annex 2** to this report). It is an instrument at the service of the UNCRPD, and provides the ratifying countries with the necessary mechanisms to allow exceptions and limitations to the rights of production, distribution and availability of information in accessible formats, nationally and internationally.

5.1.2 Laws or regulations ensuring that information intended for the general public, such as, for example, website content and electronic documents, is provided to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost

Most of the European countries have adopted laws and regulations ensuring that information intended for the general public, such as website content and electronic documents, is provided to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost. However, progress in the provision of accessibility of information for persons with disabilities is not as smooth as reported.

The EU Member States had until September 2018 to transpose the Web Accessibility Directive (EU) 2016/2102 into national laws and regulations. All websites of public bodies should have been accessible since September 2020. Persons with disabilities, especially those with vision or hearing impairments, may have difficulty accessing websites and mobile applications of public bodies. The aim of the Web Accessibility Directive is to improve access to these information tools for persons with disabilities. Member States may exclude from the application of the directive websites and mobile applications of schools, kindergartens or nurseries, except for the content thereof relating to essential online administrative functions, which most of the EU Member States have done.

Implementation of the web accessibility legislation across the EU has not been satisfactory. Throughout 2019, the European Commission actively pursued ongoing infringement procedures against 19 Member States for their failure to implement the Web Accessibility Directive and eventually closed cases against 12 Member States. The seven cases that remained

⁵⁶ European Commission - Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (2019). A comparative analysis of non-discrimination law in Europe 2019 - The 28 EU Member States, Albania, North Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey compared. Prepared by Chopin, Isabelle and Germaine, Catharina for the European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, December 2019. ([PDF](#))

open at the end of 2019⁵⁷ were successfully closed in 2020. By 23 September 2020 all Member States had communicated national transposition measures.⁵⁸ As part of the implementation, the EU Member States must ensure the availability of adequate and effective monitoring and enforcement procedures.⁵⁹

In the ITU Europe region, 41 countries have adopted or plan to adopt web accessibility laws or statutory requirements. Among them, the 27 EU Member States have transposed the EU Web Accessibility Directive, and the three EEA countries and Switzerland⁶⁰ are also expected to do so, although they are seeking longer transition periods. The five EU candidate countries are also expected to transpose the EU Web Accessibility Directive, and several other countries closely follow the EU law. Israel is the only country that requires private-sector organizations to provide accessible webpages as well.

Spain sets accessibility requirements for all public-sector bodies

In Spain, [Royal Decree 1112/2018](#) on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications in the public sector defines accessibility obligations for all public-sector websites and mobile applications, “*from the national administration, regional and local governments, courts of law and constitutional bodies to the services managed by public-sector bodies, including hospitals, schools, universities, public libraries, etc.*”

In the Summary for Obligated Entities, the accessibility requirements are explained in more detail, and apply to:

- websites and applications for mobile devices that receive public funding for their design or maintenance;
- websites and applications for mobile devices, linked to the provision of public services, of entities and companies that are in charge, either by concession or through other contractual means, of managing public services, especially those pertaining to education, health, culture, sports and social services, i.e. hospitals, schools, universities, public libraries, etc.
- websites and applications for mobile devices of private educational, training and university centres supported, totally or partially, by public funds.

Access to websites and mobile applications for the deaf in Slovenia

Slovenia enacted legislation which goes beyond the scope of the EU Web Accessibility Directive. Although the directive requires websites and online applications to conform to WCAG 2.1 level AA, Slovenia took the implementation a step further by requiring that all online administrative procedures of public bodies be available in sign language, which is a WCAG AAA requirement. On the other hand, it did not broaden the coverage to schools, kindergartens or nurseries, except, as foreseen by the directive, for content relating to essential online administrative functions which is provided by the central e-government services.

⁵⁷ European Commission (2020). Monitoring the application of European Union law. 2019 Annual Report, Brussels, 31 July 2020. ([PDF](#)).

⁵⁸ National transposition measures communicated by the Member States concerning the Web Accessibility Directive. ([HTML](#)).

⁵⁹ The European Commission provides a list of Member States' bodies in charge of monitoring, reporting and enforcement of the Web Accessibility Directive. ([HTML](#)).

⁶⁰ These four countries - Switzerland and the three EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) - are members of EFTA.

5.1.3 Laws or regulations specifying accessibility requirements to be met by providers of publicly available electronic communications services

The majority of European countries have adopted laws or regulations specifying requirements to be met by providers of publicly available electronic communications services to ensure that end users with disabilities have access to electronic communications services, benefit from the choice of services available to most end users, are provided with universal service and enjoy access to emergency services through the single European emergency number 112.

However, these requirements are divergent across Europe and countries have taken different approaches to addressing equivalence of access to electronic communications services for end users with disabilities.

In some countries, NRAs have imposed obligations on universal service providers to ensure equivalence of access and affordability for a specific set of services, while other NRAs have adopted a different approach and imposed obligations on all service providers to ensure that end users with disabilities:

- (a) have access to electronic communications services equivalent to that enjoyed by the majority of end users; and
- (b) benefit from the choice of service providers and services available to the majority of end users.

Several European countries, especially those that offer text and video relay services, have taken measures that go far beyond the universal service requirements. Other countries may follow suit and put a stronger focus on the provision of equivalence of access, especially in the EU, where the EECC requires that Member States ensure equivalent access for persons with disabilities.

NRAs across Europe have different competences, in the light of differing national circumstances, which makes the implementation of equivalence of access laws and regulations more difficult. In the EU, the situation will be improved by the implementation of the EECC, which is required to be transposed by 21 December 2020, so the corresponding measures apply with effect from that date.

In terms of equivalence of access to electronic communications services for end users with disabilities, ITU has focused on broadband Internet access, access to emergency services and total conversion services:

Affordable adequate broadband Internet access

Only a few European countries provide for a minimum broadband speed in national law: Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In these countries, the minimum speeds defined vary from 1 to 10 Mbit/s for download speeds and 512 kbit/s to 1 Mbit/s for upload speeds, while several countries have not defined the minimum upload speeds.

These nine countries have introduced a broadband universal service obligation under the legislative framework provided for in Directive 2002/22/EC (as amended by Directive 2009/136/EC)⁶¹ and in line with the provisions on so-called functional Internet access.⁶²

⁶¹ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 337, 18 December 2009, pp. 11-36. ([HTML](#)).

⁶² Article 4(2) of Directive 2009/136/EC and Directive 2002/22/EC.

Emergency services – European emergency number 112

The effective application of rules concerning the Europe-wide emergency number 112 ensures safe and effective access to emergency services for end users, including persons with disabilities. Most of the European countries provide some kind of access to emergency services (such as 112) for end users with disabilities. Access can be provided with accessible alternatives – by other means than voice – such as SMS, e-mail, fax, applications, text relay or video relay services.

Accessible alternatives are supported by most of the European countries. The deaf and hard of hearing may be required to register in order to gain access to accessible alternatives. In 2019, the European Commission launched infringement proceedings against five EU Member States because they had failed to ensure equivalent access for users with disabilities, as required by the rules on the European emergency number 112.

According to the ITU survey, access to emergency services for persons with disabilities is provided via:

- **SMS:** In 22 of 27 EU Member States, the United Kingdom, the three EEA countries and Switzerland. Where SMS access is supported, some countries request additional fees to access the services. In most countries, the access is provided through the single European emergency number 112, whereas in a few countries it is provided through alternative numbers.
- **Application:** In 12 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Ukraine). In some countries, access through applications is offered regionally.
- **Text or video relay services:** In 10 countries.

Text and/or video relay services

In 10 European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), there are text and/or video relay services available for the deaf and hard of hearing. VRS is available in six countries (Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland). These services are usually not available 24/7. In several countries, there are also video remote-interpreting services available, which are provided as a web service or through an application.

Other measures

- **Affordability and equivalence of access to electronic communications service:** The European countries take different approaches. Most of them have implemented measures to ensure the affordability of services and/or terminal equipment or availability of electronic communication service providers with accessible services.

In rare instances, measures are implemented requiring service providers to make available accessibility statements setting out an approach and policy for providing accessible services and information to end users with disabilities.

In several EU countries, there are also additional measures in place to ensure accessible commercial and billing information, complaints procedures and information regarding contracts, switching contracts and notification of modifications.

- **Choice of electronic communications services and service providers:** For equivalence of access, choice between service providers and services is also important. Providers of electronic communications services across Europe try to respond to the needs of persons

with disabilities with special offers, but in terms of equivalent access end users with disabilities usually do not have a proper choice of services/bundles or service providers. Moreover, specific requirements for the availability of multiple accessible services/bundles have been implemented only by a few European countries.

- **Terminal equipment and software applications:** In several European countries, there are measures in place with regard to the availability of accessible terminal equipment as well as accessible software applications in the national language(s). Additionally, some countries provide testing facilities to test compatibility of terminal equipment. A few countries also provide additional measures, such as minimum requirements for accessible equipment.

Video relay service in Switzerland

Switzerland launched VRS in December 2018. It was a long path to the inclusion of the service into the telecommunication law. The telephone relay service for communication between deaf and hearing persons in Switzerland was first launched back in 1985, using special text telephones. In 1988, the new foundation "Procom" (which means "for communication") took over responsibility for this service. Financing was secured through the national social-security system.

With the liberalization of the telecommunication market in 1998, the basic telephone services were mandated by the government, including 24/7 text relay services in three national languages (German, French and Italian). Financing was transferred to the telephone companies.

With technological advancements, new technologies have been introduced since 2000 (such as SMS, e mail, chat, apps) which have simplified text communication and reduced the number of calls through relay services. Broadband Internet using webcams has enabled visual communication in sign language – the natural language of the deaf, which considerably improved communication for many deaf persons.

As the inclusion of VRS was rejected in the 2008 revision of the telecommunication law, Procom launched a pilot project that was operational between 2011 and 2017 in three languages to prove the value and validity of the service. VRS was finally incorporated in the 2016 revision of the telecommunication law, and has been mandatory since 2018. Procom provides the following relay services, which are accessible in three spoken languages (German, French and Italian) and the three corresponding sign languages:

- VRS (video relay): from 08:00 to 21:00 on weekdays, and from 10:00 to 17:00 on weekends
- TRS (text relay): 24/7
- SMS (SMS relay): 24/7

Equivalent access to emergency communications in Ukraine

The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging for the deaf and hard of hearing. However, it has also been a catalyst in enhancing their rights. In response to the pandemic, the Ukrainian Government put in place a 24/7 remote-interpreting service, affirming its leadership in providing accessible emergency communications to the deaf. The government has also launched the mobile application '101', which complements traditional services and enables communication between the State Emergency Service of Ukraine and the community, providing citizens, including persons with disabilities, with the necessary information and assistance.

Broadcasting of public warnings in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, public service broadcasters are required to broadcast public warnings transmitted in the event of emergency to end users. This requirement is part of public broadcasting system licences and applies in the case of war, natural disasters or other situations that may pose a risk to the health and lives of citizens, security of the country, public order and peace.

Public service broadcasters must publish official announcements free of charge at the request of the competent authority. Such a request has to be submitted in writing and shall contain information that proves its authenticity and legal basis. Public service broadcasters must publish this information in a form that is accessible to persons with disabilities or developmental difficulties.

5.1.4 Laws or regulations requiring media service providers to make their audiovisual media services (i.e. television broadcasting and on-demand audiovisual media services) and related complementary services (in particular accessibility services to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities and data supporting connected television services and EPGs) continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities through proportionate measures

Almost all of the countries that responded to the ITU survey indicated that they have laws and regulations in place requiring that audiovisual media service providers make their services continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities through proportionate measures.

The demand for accessible audiovisual media services (AVMS) continues to grow, especially since they are increasingly required by regional and national legislation and regulations. Yet requirements for equitable access to AVMS are not easily implemented. In the EU, Member States are behind with the transposition of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) into national legislation. Only four Member States - Denmark, Hungary, Netherlands and Sweden - notified transposition measures to the European Commission and declared their notification complete in time, while 23 Member States missed the deadline of 19 September 2020.

There are big differences across Europe in terms of legal requirements. On the one hand, there are very progressive countries with ambitious accessibility requirements enshrined in their laws and with regulatory authorities or bodies entrusted with broad responsibilities in this regard. On the other, there are countries with weak legal and regulatory requirements. Not all countries have obligatory requirements in place to provide:

- subtitling (pre-prepared and live)
- audio subtitling
- audio description
- signing
- accessible online content and services.

The ITU findings may be summarized as follows:⁶³

- *Subtitles*: In 27 countries, media service providers (i.e. broadcasters) are required to provide subtitles. In 21 countries, the requirements apply to all media service providers, while in six countries the requirements apply only to the PSM organizations.
- *Live subtitles*: In at least 21 countries, media service providers provide live subtitles.
- *Audio subtitles*: In at least 10 countries, media service providers provide spoken subtitles.
- *Audio description*: In 17 countries, media service providers are required to provide audio description. In 11 countries, the requirements apply to all media service providers, while in six countries the requirements apply only to the PSM organizations.
- *Signing*: In 24 countries, media service providers are required to provide signed programmes. In 13 countries, the requirements apply to all media service providers, while in 11 countries the requirements apply only to the PSM organizations.
- *Live signing*: In at least 23 countries, media service providers provide live signing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 40 of the 46 Europe region countries have provided sign-language access to COVID-19 public broadcasts, such as national press conferences or news broadcasts.⁶⁴

Among the countries that do mandate access services, not all require their media service providers to meet obligatory goals for the proportion of content being accessible, to develop accessibility action plans in respect of continuously and progressively making their services more accessible to persons with disabilities, or to report regularly to national regulatory authorities or bodies.

Usually, there are also different accessibility requirements in place for public service and private media service providers, respectively. The same applies for broadcast access services and on-demand programme services.

Regulatory requirements and regulatory responsibilities with regard to accessibility of conditional access systems and other facilities, including EPGs, are also often unclear.

A number of examples of good practices are presented below that go beyond the minimum requirements imposed by the AVSMD.

⁶³ Based on ITU ICT Accessibility assessment and EBU PSM Access Services Survey.

⁶⁴ World Federation of the Deaf (2020). Countries with sign-language access to COVID-19 public broadcasts ([PDF](#)).

Broadcasting and on-demand access services in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a role model for accessibility of audiovisual media services. The statutory rules for broadcast services are different from those for on-demand services. Under the [Communications Act 2003](#), broadcast television channels are required to make a certain proportion of their programmes accessible. Obligations for broadcast channels are prescribed by the [Code on television access services](#).

For on-demand (including catch-up) programme services (ODPS), there has been no legal requirement to provide access services. However, the [Digital Economy Act 2017](#) paves the way for the government to draft regulations to improve the accessibility of these services as well. The national regulatory authority [Ofcom](#) is responsible for preparing recommendations in this regard and providing information to the government.

The broadcast accessibility provisions in the Communications Act 2003 set targets for the proportion of programming that must be accompanied by subtitles, signing and audio description. The act also includes criteria for Ofcom to determine whether individual programmes or services as a whole should be exempt or be subject to with reduced requirements. The act defines the 10-year targets as follows: 80 per cent for subtitling, 5 per cent for signing and 10 per cent for audio description. Different targets apply to channels with smaller audience shares.

The extent to which broadcast television channels and ODPS carried access services (i.e. subtitles, audio description and/or signing) in 2019 is shown in the Ofcom report: [Television and on-demand programme services: Access services report - January to December 2019](#).

Broadcasting access services in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessibility regulations are different for the public broadcasting media and for other, both public and commercial, audiovisual media services.

For public broadcasting services, accessibility requirements are defined in public broadcasting system licences, issued by the [Communications Regulatory Agency \(CRA\)](#). Licences are renewed every five years.

Public service broadcasters must broadcast on a weekly basis information, cultural, educational, entertainment, feature and documentary programmes with access services which include subtitling, signing and audio description. At least one news programme per day in prime time must be signed.

The proportion of programming that must be accessible in the first year from the issuance of the licence, with effect from 1 September 2020, is a minimum of 10 per cent of the total broadcast programming.

Public service broadcasters are required to gradually and continuously increase this proportion, with the aim of achieving a minimum of 25 per cent of such programming by the licence expiry date.

By 1 September 2020, public service broadcasters must devise and submit to the CRA for approval five-year action plans for the purpose of fulfilling this obligation. Once the action plan is approved, it becomes an integral part of the licence terms and conditions. Public service broadcasters must adjust their programming in accordance with the approved action plan and inform the CRA thereof in a timely manner.

Other audiovisual media service providers must actively seek to make their services accessible to persons with visual impairments. Revised rules have been planned in order to harmonize the national legislation with the revised AVMSD (Directive (EU) 2018/1808). Stricter rules, similar to those for public broadcasters, are envisaged.

Broadcasting access services in Israel

The accessibility of television broadcasting is regulated by the Television Broadcasting Law (Subtitles and Signing) 5765-2005. It replaces the 1992 Deaf Persons Relief Law and places broader responsibilities and restrictions on broadcasters in order to enhance, to the fullest extent possible, accessibility of television broadcasts for persons with disabilities. The Television Broadcasting Law (Subtitles and Signing) applies to all broadcasting providers in Israel, i.e. to both the public and private sectors.

Since 2015, 100 per cent of all programmes in Hebrew and Arabic have to include real-time captioning or sign language; up to 5 per cent can include sign language without captioning. In addition, at least 5 per cent of prime-time programmes, at least one daily evening newscast, at least one daily children's programme and all emergency announcements must include sign-language interpretation. Television franchisees are required to advertise the times and dates of broadcasts accompanied by sign language and captioning.

5.1.5 Laws or regulations encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their web-based information and services accessible to persons with disabilities, including, for example, content published on social media platforms

In most of the European countries, there are no laws or regulations requiring or encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their web-based information and services accessible to persons with disabilities. According to ITU findings, in only 10 countries are the PSM organizations required to make their websites accessible to persons with disabilities.

Neither the Web Accessibility Directive nor the AVMSD cover accessibility of websites of mass media. Despite this, several broadcasters and news portals provide information in a form that is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Accessibility of Vatican News

[Vatican News](#), which is an official Vatican news agency, is a convergent information system offering radio, television and web-based audiovisual media services. In 2017, it introduced accessibility requirements for the design of new websites and information services, starting with the main news site.

Following its strategy of improving the accessibility of information, the official Vatican news agency has recently introduced voice-reader functionalities on the news website. Recent versions of its mobile applications also have built-in voice controls.

Vatican News, which is also a video broadcaster, has recently started a project to distribute dedicated satellite and web channels with signed programmes. The project is being developed in close cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities and is going to provide real-time video streaming with Italian Sign Language (LIS) translation for all official events in the first phase, American Sign Language (ASL) translation in the second phase and, eventually, International Sign Language (ISL) translation in the third phase.

5.1.6 Laws or regulations imposing reasonable 'must-carry' obligations for the transmission of specified radio and television broadcast channels and related complementary services, in particular accessibility services to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities and data supporting connected television services and EPGs, on undertakings providing electronic communications networks and services used for the distribution of radio or television broadcast channels to the public, where a significant number of end users of such networks and services use them as their principal means to receive radio and television broadcast channels

More than half of the countries confirmed that they had must-carry obligations enshrined in law and also prescribed accessibility requirements for the transmission of specified radio and television broadcast channels and related complementary services.

Some of the countries, such as Slovenia, have only laid down must-carry obligations for the transmission of radio and television broadcast channels (The [Mass Media Act](#), Art. 112), whereby public channels must be transmitted without charge. In others, such as Finland, the [Information Society Code](#) (Section 227) specifically states that an electronic communications network operator providing a network service in a cable-television network has an obligation to transmit public service television and ancillary and supplementary services and radio programmes without charge. Others, such as Malta, have additionally prescribed specific accessibility requirements for ancillary and supplementary services.

Must-carry obligations in Malta

In Malta, the legal basis for imposing must-carry obligations is laid down in Regulation 49 of the [Electronic Communications Networks and Services \(General\) Regulations \(2011\)](#) (Subsidiary Legislation L 399.28 of the Laws of Malta).

The [Malta Communications Authority](#) (MCA) may impose reasonable must-carry obligations for the transmission of specified radio and television broadcast channels and complementary services, particularly accessibility services to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities, on undertakings providing electronic communications networks used for the distribution of radio or television broadcast channels to the public where a significant number of end users of such networks use them as the principal means to receive radio and television broadcasts. Such obligations may only be imposed where they are necessary to meet clearly defined general-interest objectives and must be proportionate and transparent.

In accordance with the Regulations, in 2011 MCA published the [Guidelines on must-carry obligations](#), which provided the framework for determining how must-carry obligations should be imposed on a pay-TV operator.

As stated in the guidelines, when imposing must-carry obligations on providers of the respective networks used for television and radio distribution services a designated TV operator is required to:

- reserve part of the network capacity for the retransmission of general-interest TV channels;
 - transmit complementary services, particularly accessibility services to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities; and
 - ensure that the transmission and picture quality of the general-interest TV channels is of an appreciable and comparable quality to that of the initial (free-to-air) transmission.
- In accordance with Regulation 49 of the regulations, the must-carry obligations include complementary services, particularly accessibility services to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities. MCA requires the operator to retransmit, alongside the respective general-interest TV channel:
- teletext and EPG services, where applicable; and
 - accessibility services, as defined by the Broadcasting Authority from time to time and applicable to the general-interest TV channels.

5.1.7 Laws or regulations defining functional accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services

ITU estimates that over 30 countries in the Europe region have enshrined in law functional accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services, following the adoption of the European public procurement directives in 2014. Some of the non-EU/EEA countries have also reported the application of these requirements in national procurement laws. Although countries may not have specific ICT accessibility provisions, general accessibility provisions may also apply to ICT products and services.

There are significant variations in national accessibility requirements across Europe, which differ in terms of both coverage and level of detail. Owing to those differences, additional costs are incurred in the development and marketing of accessible products and services for each national market, which discourages individual professionals, SMEs and microenterprises in particular from entering into business ventures outside their own domestic markets. In any case, the European public procurement directives, in Art. 42 para. 1 of the Public Procurement

Directive (EU) 2014/24⁶⁵ and Art. 60 para. 1 of the Utilities Directive (EU) 2014/25,⁶⁶ specify that accessibility requirements must be included in technical specifications where the procurement is intended for use by natural persons, whether the general public or staff of the contracting authority or the contacting entity (i.e. the public buyer).

Furthermore, the Public Procurement Directive requires that, where mandatory accessibility requirements are adopted by a legal act of the Union, technical specifications are, as far as accessibility for persons with disabilities or design for all users are concerned, to be established by reference thereto. The European Accessibility Act contains mandatory accessibility requirements for products and services.

Even though the European standard on accessibility requirements for ICT products and services EN 301 549 was published back in 2014,⁶⁷ European countries still rarely refer to it in their procurement legislations. This standard may be used by public authorities and other public-sector bodies during procurement, to ensure that ICT products and services, including websites, software and digital devices, are more accessible and can thus be used by persons with a wide range of abilities.

Accessibility requirements for public procurement in Bulgaria

Among the criteria for awarding procurement contracts, the [Public Procurement Act](#) defines 'measure of quality', which includes accessibility. Although the act does not specify accessibility criteria in more detail, the contracting authority should, in drawing up technical specifications, take into account criteria of accessibility for persons with disabilities or design for all users (i.e. universal design). It is expected that these criteria be applied for procurement the result of which is intended for use by natural persons, whether the general public or the staff of the contracting authority. However, the Act does not refer to the European harmonized standard on accessibility requirements for ICT products and services EN 301 549.

5.1.8 Laws and regulations defining accessibility requirements for products and services

ITU estimates that around one third of the European countries regulate specific aspects of accessibility requirements for products and services as foreseen in the European Accessibility Act. There is a lot of room for improvement.

⁶⁵ European Union. Official Journal. OJ L 94, 28 March 2014, pp. 65-242. ([HTML](#)).

⁶⁶ European Union Official Journal. OJ L 94, 28 March 2014, pp. 243-374. ([HTML](#)).

⁶⁷ ETSI (2014). New European Standard on accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services. Sophia Antipolis, 19 February 2014. ([HTML](#)).

Accessibility of banking services in Hungary

In 2016, the Ministry of National Economy issued Decree 22/2016 (VI.29) on the Rules prescribing access for persons with disability to financial services under equal opportunities. The decree was published under the scope of Government Decree 1653/2015 (IX.14) on the implementation action plan of the National Disability Programme for the period of 2015-2018.

The decree, generally, provides for the obligation for service providers (including banks) to ensure equal treatment of their customers with disabilities. Pursuant to the decree, banks are required to elaborate a strategy promoting equal access to financial services and, as an integral part thereof, a regulation (rules of procedure for surveying customer demands; service organization based on the results of such survey; internal institutional training for bank administrators). They are further obliged to provide information on their websites (clearly visible and easily accessible), in the form of a service map that indicates the services offered and the ways to access them (broken down by bank branch, accompanied by contact details of every branch).

In its Recommendation 4/2017 (III.13) on the treatment of customers with disabilities, the Hungarian Central Bank identified general principles in relation to the rights and equal accessibility of persons with disabilities. The recommendation also sets out expectations and suggestions vis-à-vis the financial institutions in terms of the accessibility provided to customers with disabilities. It proactively enhances and supports the realization of rights of persons with disabilities in regard to the accessibility of financial services.

5.1.9 Laws and regulations defining accessibility requirements for ICT services and content procured, developed, maintained, made available and used in public and/or private education institutions by administrators, teachers, students and staff, including: websites; video and audio content; electronic documents; desktop, mobile and cloud-based applications; content and learning management systems; e-learning courses; e-mail and calendars; library resources; computers and peripherals; information kiosks, telephones, digital signs and other electronic equipment; and classroom technologies

ITU estimates that more than half of the European countries have laws and regulations in place to provide for accessible education. Accessibility in education is often achieved through reasonable accommodation, especially in higher education, which means individual accessibility adjustments per student. It should be noted, however, that accessibility and reasonable accommodation are two distinct concepts. While accessibility is related to groups, reasonable accommodation is related to individuals. The duty to provide accessibility is an *ex-ante* duty, which means that States parties (i.e. Member States and their entities)⁶⁸ have the duty to provide accessibility before receiving an individual request to enter or use a place or service.

With regard to accessibility of websites, in most countries websites of schools (both primary and secondary), kindergartens or nurseries are not required to be accessible. Only essential online administrative functions are mandated to be accessible. In Spain, however, accessibility provisions (Royal Decree 1112/2018 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies) apply to websites and mobile applications of universities, high schools, schools and kindergartens. Moreover, the provisions are also binding for private educational, training and university centres supported, totally or partially, by public funds.

⁶⁸ State entities encompass local and national governments, government agencies and government corporations.

In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth ensures access for children with disabilities to information in print and electronic media. The information and content of all subjects taught in public schools (in primary and secondary education) are accessed through special technological equipment provided where needed, such as communication devices, closed-circuit TVs and other equipment to enlarge letters, special keyboards, special software and other technological aids.

In Hungary, in accordance with Act XXVI of 1998 on the Rights and Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities have a right to participate in early development and care, pre-school education, school education and training, developmental training, vocational training, adult education and higher education. Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education states that the national education development plan must specify the manner in which the conditions of equal access to education are implemented. Public education institutions have to provide easy-to-install and easy-to-use software in the Hungarian language on Internet-connected computers accessible for children and pupils, for the sake of protecting their harmonious psychological, physical and intellectual development. The directive on education of children and pupils with special educational needs also defines accessibility requirements for the physical environment in education of children and pupils with special educational needs, including specially-designed ICT tools.

In Slovenia, in accordance with the [Placement of Children with Special Needs Act](#), schools that implement special education programmes for children with special educational needs and institutions that implement education programmes for the deaf and hard of hearing, the blind and visually impaired and children with physical disabilities are provided with all the technology they need, such as ICT, electro-acoustic and other equipment, for the successful implementation of educational programmes.

ICT accessibility in education in Lithuania

The [Law on Education](#) of Lithuania (Art. 34, para 3) stipulates that accessibility of education must be ensured by adapting the school environment, by providing psychological, special-pedagogical, special and social-pedagogical assistance, by supplying technical aids at schools and special teaching aids, and also in other ways prescribed in law. Evaluation of learning achievements of learners with special educational needs must be appropriately adapted (Art. 38, para. 3).

The [Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Lithuania on the action plan for the implementation of ICTs in general education and vocational training for 2014-2016](#) presents long-term development directions for the implementation of ICTs in general education and vocational training, setting out goals, objectives and measures, expected results of the action plan and principles governing the implementation of activities.

It emphasizes the importance of ensuring equal opportunities in terms of high-quality technological and information literacy and access to modern ICT tools. Special attention must be paid to students with special educational needs, i.e. their adaptation in the social environment and their full integration into the information society by providing them and schools with special ICT teaching and learning aids.

5.1.10 Laws or regulations to facilitate the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions (e.g. closed captions, offline captions and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, communication access real-time translation (CART), etc.)

The UNCRPD stipulates (Art. 21, para 1 (e)) that countries should recognize (and promote the use of) sign languages. Only a few European countries have recognized sign languages in their constitutions as mother-tongue languages of deaf citizens. However, almost all countries have laws or regulations in place to facilitate the use of sign language(s). Even countries that recognize national sign languages in their constitutions may have enacted implementation laws, such as Finland ([Sign Language Act \(359/2015\)](#)).

Finland and Portugal were the first European countries to constitutionally recognize national sign languages, joined later by Austria. Several other countries have passed laws that refer directly or indirectly to sign languages and/or sign-language users, including Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

Slovenia is the next country that plans to recognize the national sign language in its constitution. It adopted the act regulating the use of Slovenian sign language in 2002. In 2019, the government went a step further by endorsing the proposal to recognize the Slovenian Sign Language as an official language in the constitution, which enjoys broad support. The national assembly launched the legislative procedure in 2019 and the constitutional amendment is expected to be adopted in 2021.

In Israel, the [Equal Rights for People with Disabilities \(Service Accessibility Adjustments\) Regulations 5773-2013](#) define a wide array of situations in which accessible means, modes and formats can be requested and obtained by persons with disabilities, including closed captioning, CART, sign language, braille, simple language, etc.

Recognition of sign language and use of Braille in Cyprus

In 2006, the Cypriot Sign Language (CSL) was recognized by Law 66(I) 2006 as a language on an equal footing with Greek. However, oral methods have traditionally been followed for the education of deaf and hearing-impaired children in Cyprus. Nowadays, most with a few exceptions, children attending general primary and secondary schools are orally educated.

Nonetheless, for children for whom CSL is their first language, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth undertakes to employ qualified sign interpreters. In training seminars organized by the ministry, a sign-language interpreter is provided wherever necessary.

Interpreter services are provided at all school activities, such as counselling, school trips, social events, school performances, etc. At the School for the Deaf, sign-language interpreters are employed to serve the needs of children who are pupils there. The school currently operates as an educational and counselling centre.

The School for the Blind prepares texts in Braille and provides them to all children with visual disabilities who attend public schools. It also offers courses to teach the Braille writing system to children and adults with visual disabilities. The school also houses a small "library" of books in oral form. Additionally, it educates children and adults on any specific device or electronic means that can provide access to information. For example, it provides closed-circuit TVs, makes use of the online service "Robobraille" or equipment called "Sara" or "Pearl". The specific devices or electronic media enable the direct conversion of printed text into spoken text, thereby giving access to a wide range of books, magazines and newspapers.

Moreover, the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities provides financial assistance to the Cyprus Federation of the Deaf, which is responsible for the management of sign-language interpreters. Similarly, the Cyprus Organization of the Blind is subsidized to employ social assistants and to implement a programme "Digital Libraries and Braille Libraries".

5.2 Country capacity to implement

All European countries are committed to ICT accessibility, but the level of commitment varies across the region. While some countries prescribe only general or minimum requirements in their legal and regulatory frameworks, others set ambitious and forward-looking goals and objectives. The ability to meet commitments also varies among the countries.

5.2.1 Policies and strategies

The majority of European countries have general national disability policies, strategies and/or action plans for the promotion of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. These plans may also address ICT accessibility, some of them very comprehensively. Countries may also address ICT accessibility in national digital policies, strategies and/or action plans, some of them covering a wide scope of issues.

Some countries had adopted forward-looking policies and had laid down accessibility requirements long before the Web Accessibility Directive came into force. One of the frontrunners in the area of ICT accessibility is Malta. Its national policy, adopted in 2014, covers a broad spectrum of accessibility issues and imposes accessibility requirements also on the private sector.

Malta's national policy for the rights of persons with disability

Malta has adopted the [National Policy on the rights of persons with disabilities](#) which attempts to address various key areas, including accessibility and access to information, with the ultimate goal not only of improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and their families, but also of ensuring that all people are treated equally.

The national policy recognizes that accessibility is vital for independent living of persons with disabilities, taking into consideration all impairments. The policy addresses the following categories of accessibility:

- a) Physical accessibility. This relates, inter alia, to commercial buildings, public transport, kerbs, school and hospital entrances, government and other public-sector departments, ministries and service providers.
- b) Informational accessibility. This refers to all sources providing information, namely books, Internet and other forms of electronic and non-electronic sources.
- c) Communication accessibility. This includes all media sources through which persons with disability can communicate, including emergency services.

In accordance with the national policy, the government must promote, implement and review standards and guidelines for universal design in the built environment as well as in relation to information and communication accessibility. It must also recognize and promote sign language and Braille signage as recognized alternative language formats.

Malta has adopted favourable legislation to ensure that public and commercial entities guarantee that facilities, goods and/or services are accessible to persons with disabilities - at no extra cost to persons with disabilities and/or to people accompanying them, and without having to segregate persons with disabilities and/or adversely affect their dignity in any way whatsoever.

In addition, persons with disabilities have a choice and freedom to access assistive equipment of good standard corresponding to their own needs and preferences. Support is also given to make such equipment easily available and manageable.

A number of measures have been taken to support accessibility and access to information, among which:

- Educating stakeholders in the professions, such as architects, engineers and IT professionals, by providing them with training focusing on accessibility issues and strategic and targeted disability awareness. The curriculum for higher-education and tertiary qualification leading to such professions should incorporate compulsory study units.
- Adopting adequate legislation and sanctions that govern physical, informational and communication accessibility, and updating enforcement processes.
- Ensuring by legislation that persons with disabilities receive the same level of services as people with no disability. In addition, contracts and other documents should be made available in various accessible formats.
- Promoting accessible communication technologies and encouraging the refinement of existing ICTs.
- Incentives and initiatives to train persons with disabilities to master equipment that facilitates better physical, informational and communication accessibility.
- Incentives and initiatives to train persons with disabilities to learn sign language, Braille and alternative communication techniques.
- Implementing regulations to monitor prices of accessible equipment, services and other kinds of assistive support and ensure fair prices.
- Ensuring user-friendly procedures for the procurement of assistive equipment.
- Providing access to emergency services for persons with disabilities through readily accessible technologies.

- Making available educational and other informational material – including informational material produced by government departments, agencies and authorities – in a wide range of accessible and on-demand formats, in accordance with the individual’s preference and needs, ranging from electronic formats to simplified formats, easy-to-read (and accompanied with pictures) formats and Braille formats, among others.
- Incentives to ensure that public transport is made fully accessible and user-friendly by mainstreaming public transport vehicles accessible to persons with physical and sensory impairments; electronic announcement systems to help visually-impaired commuters keep track of their destination; terminals and pick-up points with electronic displays containing information concerning schedules of bus routes and fees in easy-to-access formats; electronic devices that announce the arrival of public transport at terminals for persons with visual impairments to ensure that such persons can use transport autonomously; easy-to-use ticket vending machines, with information displayed visually and orally.
- Providing tickets with information in large fonts and in Braille, to enable persons with a visual impairment to read the information on the ticket unassisted.
- Accompanying all services with pictures and symbols to help persons with intellectual disabilities to access this information easily and independently.
- Providing broadcast programmes with sign language and subtitles.

Most of the countries have policies in place to facilitate and promote accessibility of websites and mobile applications. Here, the EU law has had a significant impact, as almost all countries are following the EU role model. The Web Accessibility Directive has highlighted the importance of organizational alignment with policies and strategies, as well as the importance of monitoring and reporting for successful implementation of commitments.

Strong commitments have been found in the following policy areas:

- Development, promulgation, enforcement and monitoring of the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of ICT products and services provided to the public, including through the internet.
- Facilitating the use of sign languages and Braille in official interactions. Augmentative and alternative communication and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice for persons with disabilities are also gaining importance, such as closed captions, offline captions and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, CART, etc.
- Through the implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive, EU countries are developing and providing role-based ICT accessibility training for stakeholders. Non-EU countries are also developing such training.
- Countries are also organizing campaigns and other activities for raising awareness on ICT accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities, an aspect which has been recognized by ITU as an important inhibitor for effective policy implementation.

The implementation process should be strengthened in the following areas:

- Promotion of the design, development, production and distribution of accessible ICTs and ICT systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.
- Promotion of universal design of ICT products and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design, including assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

- Facilitation and promotion of the engagement and participation of persons with disabilities, and representative organizations of persons with disabilities, as appropriate, in the design of accessible and inclusive e-government services.
- Employing teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, as well as in digital accessibility, including captioning, electronic document accessibility and web accessibility; and training professionals and staff who work at all levels of education on ICT accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities.
- Promotion of the adoption of ICT accessibility in education, including role-based ICT accessibility training courses for administrators, teachers and staff in education institutions, and including ICT accessibility content in higher-education curricula.
- Undertaking or promoting research and development in respect of universally designed ICT products, services and equipment.
- Promoting the use of emerging technologies (AI, IoT, big data, cloud computing) by private- and public-sector stakeholders in order to drive innovation in the design and development of accessible and inclusive ICT products and services.

5.2.2 Financial schemes to support the provision of accessible information and communications, as well as of ICT products and services, for persons with disabilities

Several countries have established dedicated financial schemes to support the provision of accessible information and communications, as well as of ICT products and services, for persons with disabilities. Such schemes, targeted at persons with disabilities, are very important for the empowerment of persons with disabilities, enabling them to purchase equipment which would allow them to lead a more independent life.

ITU has identified five countries that could serve as good-practice models in respect of providing financial assistance schemes to support the provision of accessible information and communications, as well as of ICT products and services, for persons with disabilities. These are:

- Cyprus - [Financial assistance scheme for the provision of technical means, instruments and other aids](#)
- Israel - [Financial aid for persons with disabilities](#)
- Malta - [Empowerment Scheme which aims to provide financial support and guidance to persons with disability.](#)
- Portugal - [Decree-Law No. 93/2009 on the system of awarding support products to persons with disabilities and persons with temporary disabilities](#) (in Portuguese)
- Slovenia - [Technical aids and vehicle adaptations for persons with disabilities](#) (in Slovenian).

Additional financial support schemes can be provided as part of universal service, covered by the EECC.

5.2.3 Designated government entity or department of a government agency for matters of ICT accessibility

Organizational alignment with policies and strategies is one of the key factors for the effective and successful implementation of such policies and strategies. In most of the countries, responsibilities for ICT accessibility matters are split among different bodies, such as ministerial departments, national regulatory authorities or bodies in charge of electronic communications or audiovisual media services. Rarely are there dedicated agencies dealing with ICT accessibility across sectors. With the implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive, EU Member States

have been required to designate a government body to perform the monitoring and reporting functions, and a body responsible for the enforcement. This is good practice also for other accessibility areas.

Most of the countries reported their NRAs or bodies designated to perform the monitoring and reporting functions under the Web Accessibility Directive. Both types of entities do have a role in ICT accessibility; however, rarely do countries have designated entities covering broad areas of ICT accessibility. ITU has identified four countries that could serve as good examples in the area of ICT accessibility in terms of their designated government entities or agencies:

- Croatia - [Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society](#) (in Croatian)
- Denmark - [Agency for Digitization](#)
- Malta - [Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility](#) (FITA)
- Portugal - [Administrative Modernization Agency](#) (AMA);
- Sweden - [Agency for Digital Government](#) (DIGG).

5.2.4 Established or designated coordination mechanism within government to facilitate ICT accessibility across different sectors and at different levels

ITU estimates that most of the European countries have established one or more focal points and/or coordination mechanisms within government to secure implementation of the UNCRPD and facilitate related action. Such focal points and/or coordination mechanisms usually include representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities. Moreover, formal procedures of engagement and liaison with organizations of persons with disabilities in consultation processes related to the UNCRPD have also been established.

In some countries, coordination mechanisms are established at the government level and led by prime ministers. In others, coordination is conducted at the ministerial level. The government- or ministerial-level bodies may also have expert or advisory councils. Separate focal points and/or coordination mechanisms may be established in relation to implementation of the ICT accessibility legislation. Sometimes, NRAs may serve as focal points.

Focal points and coordination mechanisms are in line with the UNCRPD, which stipulates (Art. 4, para. 3) that States parties shall closely consult with persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the development and implementation of legislation and policies aimed at implementing the UNCRPD, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities. Moreover, in order to ensure proper implementation of the UNCRPD and related legislation, in particular implementation of the rules on conformity with accessibility requirements, it is of the utmost importance for States party to consult with persons with disabilities and other relevant stakeholders – including organizations representing the interests of older persons, social partners, industry and civil society – on a regular basis. In legislative preparatory work, consultations at expert level are also recommended.

ITU has identified a number of good practices in terms of mechanisms to secure implementation of the UNCRPD and facilitate related action.

The Finnish Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Finnish [Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (VANE) has been established as the national coordinating mechanism for implementation of the UNCRPD.

The Board operates under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. It promotes implementation of the UNCRPD and takes into account the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of government. It prepares an action programme for its term of office, defining the national objectives for implementation of the UNCRPD, the measures promoting UNCRPD implementation and the follow-up measures.

The Board operates as a coordination mechanism in accordance with Article 33 of the UNCRPD (National implementation and monitoring). It designates, from among its members, a representative of persons with disabilities to act as the focal point for the activities referred to in Article 33.

The Advisory Board consists of representatives of ministries, persons with disabilities and their families, labour-market organizations and researchers, as well as representatives from regional and local governments. It comprises a Chair, a Vice-Chair and a maximum of 16 members. The Board also has a Secretary-General and a Planning Officer. The government appoints the VANE for four years at a time.

Finland has also established [Municipal Disability Councils](#) (MDC), which are collaboration forums for associations of persons with disabilities, the authorities and decision-makers. The role of MDCs is to influence municipal planning, decision-making and monitoring in all areas of local government. A municipal disability council may initiate actions as well as giving statements and opinions. The objective is that persons with disabilities be able to exercise their rights.

Persons with disabilities as well as their families and organizations must be adequately represented, so that the viewpoints of persons with disabilities are taken into account when preparing and making decisions.

MDCs participate in all local government planning and decision-making. Effective collaboration between a municipality and its disability council benefits both parties. It is important that representatives of different branches of local government be represented in the MDC or be invited when necessary. In that way, the MDC expertise can be channelled to support everyone in the municipality who makes decisions that affect persons with disabilities. When collaboration works well, information flows seamlessly in both directions: The disability councils actively raise identified issues. Municipal bodies, for their part, benefit from MDC expertise.

Several municipalities have drawn up their own disability policy programmes. The programme functions as a pathfinder for disability policy in the municipality. It also commits the various parties to improving the position of persons with disabilities in the municipality. The principles of the UNCRPD create a foundation for disability policy programmes at municipal level, too.

The Czech Government Board for Persons with Disabilities

In the Czech Republic, the [Government Board for Persons with Disabilities](#) was established in 1991 as the government disability advisory body.

The Government Board consists of representatives of the government and ministries and representatives of associations of persons with disabilities and their employers. It cooperates with the public administration authorities as well as with NGOs.

The main task of the Board is to highlight problems faced by persons with disabilities that are within the competence of different ministries. The Government Board also prepares opinions and recommendations on disability-related materials submitted to the government for consideration, and monitors the implementation of the [National Plan for the promotion of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities](#). Its work is governed by the Board [Statutes](#).

Soon after its establishment, the Government Board prepared the first national disability action plan. Over the years, the plan has been updated several times and approved by the government. This placed the Czech Republic among countries with a supportive environment for persons with disabilities.

The Council of Persons with Disabilities of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina has established the [Council of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CPDBH), composed of 20 members - half of them drawn from representatives of all levels of the government (both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BDBH)), and the other half from the representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities at the entity and BDBH levels. The aim of the Council is to improve mechanisms for protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities and coordination between institutions at the State level.

5.2.5 One or more independent regulatory authorities or other independent mechanisms designated to promote, protect, enforce and monitor implementation of ICT accessibility laws, regulations, policies and strategies

With regard to independent mechanisms to promote, protect, enforce and monitor the implementation of ICT accessibility laws, regulations, policies and strategies, the majority of countries have established national regulatory authorities or bodies for electronic communications and audiovisual media services:

- NRAs in the area of electronic communications
- NRAs or bodies in the area of audiovisual media services.

EU countries have also designated bodies to perform the monitoring and reporting functions in regard to implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive:

- [Member States' bodies in charge of monitoring, reporting and enforcement of the Web Accessibility Directive](#).

There is, however, a lack of such mechanisms in regard to ICT accessibility in other areas (such as accessibility of products and services, and public procurement of ICT products and services).

5.2.6 Independent monitoring process established with the participation of civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, for the implementation of ICT accessibility laws, regulations and policies

Most of the European countries have established frameworks to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the UNCRPD. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the implementation of the UNCRPD has adopted the [Guidelines on independent monitoring frameworks](#). Such frameworks should include one or more independent mechanisms that are established and operate in accordance with the [Paris Principles](#), i.e. they are autonomous from the government, their independence is guaranteed by a statute or constitution, they are plural and they have adequate resources and adequate powers of investigation. Civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, must also be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process.

There is still a lack of adequate monitoring mechanisms to ensure the practical implementation of accessibility standards and relevant legislation, especially with regard to the implementation of ICT accessibility laws, regulations and policies. In certain countries, such monitoring mechanisms are still established at local or regional levels, where they lack the technical knowledge and resources. Even at the national level, a lack of knowledge and resources may hinder the effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms. Moreover, civil society, such as national associations or councils, rarely have the knowledge, capacities and financial means to participate fully in independent processes for ensuring access to information and communication.

ITU has identified a number of good practices in establishing independent monitoring frameworks for implementation of the provisions of the UNCRPD. Several Member States have established independent monitoring frameworks, by engaging their human-rights and/or equality bodies that operate in accordance with the Paris Principles. They also include civil-society organizations in the monitoring frameworks. Organizations of persons with disabilities have emphasized that they need access to information and adequate data, including disaggregated data, to assist their monitoring activities. Moreover, they may need more resources and proper training to support their full participation in monitoring mechanisms, especially in relation to issues such as access to information and communication.

Ombudsman for persons with disabilities in Croatia

In 2007, Croatia established the Office of the Ombudsman for persons with disabilities (OOPD). The OOPD was established with the [Disability Ombudsman Act](#). The Ombudsman is appointed by the Croatian Parliament

The OOPD is an independent body whose main task is monitoring, promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. It thus constitutes a mechanism for protecting the human rights of persons with disabilities, which the latter may contact directly and through which they may advocate their rights and influence decisions that affect their lives. The Ombudsman for persons with disabilities has the right to access facilities and obtain information on the care provided for persons with disabilities who reside, work or are temporarily or permanently placed with natural and legal persons and other legal entities on the basis of special regulations. The Ombudsman submits an annual report for adoption by the Croatian Parliament.

Organizations of persons with disabilities are also involved in the independent monitoring framework. They submit their report on the implementation of the UNCRPD to the Parliament.

Commission for equal rights of persons with disabilities in Israel

The [Equal Rights Commission](#) was established in 2000, pursuant to the [Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law 5758-1998](#). The object of this law is to protect the dignity and liberty of persons with disabilities, to enshrine their right to equal and active participation in society in all major spheres of life and, furthermore, to provide an appropriate response to their special needs, in such a manner as to enable them to live their lives with maximum independence, in privacy and with dignity, realizing their potential to the full.

There are 1.4 million people with disabilities living in Israel, and they constitute more than one fifth of the adult population. More than 450 thousand have a severe disability. They are often discriminated against because of their disability, and their social and economic situation is poorer than that of the overall population.

The Equal Rights Commission was tasked with promoting implementation of the UNCRPD, supervising its implementation and other functions deriving from the UNCRPD. Other key functions of the Commission are as follows:

- The Commission enforces the accessibility regulations. It engages professional supervisors, nationwide, in the areas of service accessibility and accessibility of buildings, infrastructure and surroundings. The supervisors operate “in the field”, examining the actual accessibility situation in various areas, according to professional criteria, and request those so obligated to rectify the issues identified. Legal proceedings are initiated, as necessary.
- The Commission works to prevent discrimination and to promote the integration of people with disabilities into Israeli society as citizens with equal rights and obligations in various spheres of life. These include employment, housing, education, legal capacity and guardianship, social security, culture and leisure. In order to achieve these goals, the Commission creates partnerships with relevant parties in all sectors – government, local authorities, the private sector and civil society.
- The Commission works to promote policies relating to the rights of people with disabilities, besides providing solutions to individuals. This includes professional counselling, legal responses to public inquiries, supervision, filing of indictments and civil suits, promoting and initiating legislation, monitoring and promoting the UNCRPD, organizing conferences and seminars, distributing and editing information materials and books, collecting data and information, and more.

The Commission is headed by the Commissioner for equal rights for persons with disabilities, and has three main units: Accessibility, Legal department and Community inclusion.

The Commission has an Advisory Committee that includes representatives of NGOs, experts, jurists and representatives of the public. Most members of the Advisory Committee are persons with disabilities.

Chapter 6. Implementing ICT accessibility

The implementation of ICT accessibility is a complex challenge. Countries have to establish solid and forward-looking legal and regulatory accessibility frameworks. This is not an easy task, even for countries that follow and implement the EU law. EU directives require only minimum harmonization, and it is up to individual countries to establish more ambitious legal and regulatory requirements.

Countries' legal and regulatory frameworks define their accessibility commitments. The ICT accessibility assessment has revealed significant differences among countries – while some define minimum requirements, others set ambitious and forward-looking goals and objectives.

The biggest differentiator is effectiveness of implementation, which depends on countries' capacity to meet commitments. Their policies, strategies and plans need to be aligned with their commitments, and with their legal and regulatory frameworks, to facilitate implementation.

The effectiveness of implementation also depends on leadership commitment to ICT accessibility and digital inclusion, organizational alignment with policies and strategies, stakeholder involvement, an engaging environment and a performance culture.

The major inhibitor for successful implementation is lack of awareness among all stakeholders about the importance of ICT accessibility, developments, innovations and trends. Therefore, ICT accessibility or digital inclusion strategies should take into account regional, national and local events that offer an important means of sharing information and experience on the implementation of commitments, developments, innovations and good practices. Stakeholders will also gain a better understanding of the importance of digital inclusion if they can learn, through examples and storytelling, about the impact of ICT accessibility on economic and social development.

ITU, together with its partners, promotes the implementation of forward-looking accessibility legislation and regulations. It provides a platform for all stakeholders to collaborate in defining accessibility standards. Through its regional initiatives, and related regional knowledge-development platforms which encompass regional events in ICT accessibility, such as "[Accessible Europe – ICT for ALL](#)", ITU contributes to exchange of information, awareness-raising and sharing of good practices. It promotes innovative digital solutions that play a vital role in the empowerment of persons with disabilities and are an important enabler for their inclusion in the society. Countries across the region can draw on an array of ITU accessibility tools and resources, and tailor international policies, standards and good practices from other countries to fit their respective national circumstances.

The capacity to meet commitments critically depends on skills. Education and training are key enablers for capacity development. ICT accessibility skills need to be improved through education and training. All key stakeholders need to be involved in capacity development, and synergies have to be established in order to achieve the greatest impact. Professionals in all areas should understand what accessible ICTs are, and how they can contribute to digital

inclusion from their field of influence. It is also important to improve ICT accessibility skills, so that accessible ICTs can be used more effectively.

Monitoring and reporting are an essential part of the implementation of ICT accessibility. Policies and regulations should include monitoring mechanisms to measure the progress of the implementation of commitments and action plans at all levels, with clearly defined reporting processes. Enforcement mechanisms are also key.

Governments, the private sector, academia, organizations of persons with disabilities, as well as other stakeholders and interested parties play an important role in ensuring that countries meet their commitments and international obligations are respected, so as to achieve digitally inclusive communities. Their engagement is key in ensuring the development and deployment of ICTs that are affordable and accessible for everyone.

With this in mind, recommended actions to be carried out by the different stakeholders to implement ICT accessibility are set forth below:

Governments and policy-makers

- Establish solid and forward-looking legal and regulatory frameworks for ICT accessibility, ensuring equitable access to information, communications and ICT products and services. This is a global commitment and human right.
- Consult with representative organizations of persons with disabilities and all other relevant stakeholders, but also with those that are not members of national-level unions, and involve them in the process of developing accessibility laws, regulations, policies, strategies and action plans.
- Recognize national sign languages in legislation to guarantee linguistic rights for all deaf persons. Accept and facilitate the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions.
- Provide guidelines for various sectors and situations in which accessible means, modes and formats can be requested and obtained by persons with disabilities, including closed captioning, real-time translation (CART), sign language, Braille, simple language, etc.
- Develop ICT accessibility policies, strategies and action plans, and align organizational structures and processes for effective implementation, by following good practices tailored to national circumstances.
- Provide equitable access to information by making websites and mobile applications of all public-sector bodies accessible, including those providing services partially or fully financed by public funds.
- Gradually extend the requirements for equitable access to information to the private sector, including the mass media and providers of information over the Internet.
- Provide digital services that are affordable, secure and accessible to all, regardless of their skills, abilities and economic means.
- Define accessibility requirements and targets for audiovisual media services and require service providers to prepare accessibility action plans and regularly report on their implementation to national regulatory authorities or bodies.
- Ensure affordable and equitable access to electronic communications services, including by providing relay services and/or total conversation services.
- Ensure equitable access to emergency services.
- Promote the creation of a market for accessible ICTs through mandatory ICT accessibility procurement policies and harmonized standards, together with an enforcement mechanism.

- Increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by using accessible ICT products and services.
- Ensure equitable access to education and skills through accessible ICTs.
- Develop accessibility curricula to be incorporated in all levels of education, and provide ICT accessibility training for teachers.
- Provide ICT accessibility training for bodies and businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in cooperation with academia, including on accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities.
- Provide support to persons with disabilities so that they can improve ICT accessibility skills and use accessible ICTs.
- Foster economic and social development for all.
- Establish an observatory of national accessibility developments and promote good practices.

Industry

- Develop accessible ICTs, products, information environments and services in accordance with the principles of universal design and international and harmonized standards.
- Participate in developing international and European ICT accessibility standards.
- Create an accessible and inclusive workplace.
- Foster inclusion through corporate social responsibility.
- Increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by using and providing accessible products and services.
- Involve persons with disabilities in all phases of the development of accessible ICT products and services, including design, development, testing and deployment of accessible digital technologies, to ensure they meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the technology sector and facilitate the development of technologies with accessible design.

Academia

- Develop accessible learning environments for students with disabilities.
- Develop ICT accessibility curricula for university courses and for training of professionals, such as designers, developers or testers in government, industry and other stakeholders.
- Create capabilities among designers and developers to design and develop accessible ICT products and services.

Organizations of persons with disabilities

- Work with governments to ensure that proper legal and regulatory commitments, including effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, are in place.
- Work with governments to ensure that international laws and human rights, including access to ICTs, are respected and protected.
- Create awareness about digital inclusion and ICT accessibility.
- Empower members through the acquisition of competences for learning and active participation in digital society.

Audiovisual media service providers

- Provide accessible broadcast television and catch-up or on-demand services with access services, which include subtitling, audio subtitling, audio description, signing and accessible online content and services.
- Develop accessibility action plans with clear targets and timelines, and regularly publish reports on implementation of the action plans and the provision of access services.

- Cooperate with other audiovisual media service providers in the provision of access services and find synergies.

Electronic communications service providers and network operators

- Provide affordable and equitable access to electronic communications services for all, including by providing relay services and/or total conversation services.
- Provide equitable access to emergency services.
- Develop affordable packages that include broadband access services.
- Provide choice of packages for persons with disabilities.
- Provide (re)transmission, alongside the respective general-interest TV channels, of complementary services, particularly accessibility services, to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Various abbreviations and acronyms are used through the document. The main ones are listed here for ease of reference.

Abbreviation/acronym	Meaning
AI	artificial intelligence
AVMS	audiovisual media services
AVMSD	Audiovisual Media Services Directive
BDT	ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau
BEREC	Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications
CART	communication access real-time translation
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
EDF	European Disability Forum
EEA	European Economic Area
EECC	European Electronic Communications Code
EFTA	European Free Trade Agreement
EPG	electronic programme guide
ERGA	European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services
ETSI	European Telecommunications Standards Institute
EU	European Union
IAAP	International Association of Accessibility Professionals
ICT	information and communication technology
IoT	Internet of Things
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
ITU-D	ITU Telecommunication Development Sector
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRA	national regulatory authority
ODPS	on-demand programme services
PSAP	public-safety answering point
PSM	public service media
RA	ITU Radiocommunication Assembly

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Abbreviation/acronym	Meaning
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMEs	small and medium enterprises
TRS	telecommunication relay service
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDIS	UN Disability Inclusion Strategy
VRS	video relay service
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTDC	World Telecommunication Development Conference
WTSA	World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly

Annexes

Annex 1: UNCPRD ratification status

This annex shows the status of signature and formal confirmation, accession or ratification in respect of the UNCPRD for Member States in the ITU Europe region.

Country	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities New York, 13 December 2006		Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities New York, 13 December 2006	
	Signature	Formal confirmation (c) Accession (a) Ratification	Signature	Formal confirmation (c) Accession (a) Ratification
Albania	22 Dec 2009	11 Feb 2013		
Andorra	27 Apr 2007	11 Mar 2014		
Austria	30 Mar 2007	26 Sep 2008	30 Mar 2007	26 Sep 2008
Belgium	30 Mar 2007	2 Jul 2009	30 Mar 2007	2 Jul 2009
Bosnia and Herzegovina	29 Jul 2009	12 Mar 2010	29 Jul 2009	12 Mar 2010
Bulgaria	27 Sep 2007	22 Mar 2012	18 Dec 2008	
Croatia	30 Mar 2007	15 Aug 2007	30 Mar 2007	15 Aug 2007
Cyprus	30 Mar 2007	27 Jun 2011	30 Mar 2007	27 Jun 2011
Czech Republic	30 Mar 2007	28 Sep 2009	30 Mar 2007	
Denmark	30 Mar 2007	24 Jul 2009		23 Sep 2014 (a)
Estonia	25 Sep 2007	30 May 2012		30 May 2012 (a)
Finland	30 Mar 2007	11 May 2016	30 Mar 2007	11 May 2016
France	30 Mar 2007	18 Feb 2010	23 Sep 2008	18 Feb 2010
Georgia	10 Jul 2009	13 Mar 2014	10 Jul 2009	
Germany	30 Mar 2007	24 Feb 2009	30 Mar 2007	24 Feb 2009
Greece	30 Mar 2007	31 May 2012	27 Sep 2010	31 May 2012
Hungary	30 Mar 2007	20 Jul 2007	30 Mar 2007	20 Jul 2007
Iceland	30 Mar 2007	23 Sep 2016	30 Mar 2007	
Ireland	30 Mar 2007	20 Mar 2018		
Israel	30 Mar 2007	28 Sep 2012		
Italy	30 Mar 2007	15 May 2009	30 Mar 2007	15 May 2009
Latvia	18 Jul 2008	1 Mar 2010	22 Jan 2010	31 Aug 2010
Liechtenstein	8 Sep 2020			
Lithuania	30 Mar 2007	18 Aug 2010	30 Mar 2007	18 Aug 2010
Luxembourg	30 Mar 2007	26 Sep 2011	30 Mar 2007	26 Sep 2011
Malta	30 Mar 2007	10 Oct 2012	30 Mar 2007	10 Oct 2012
Moldova	30 Mar 2007	21 Sep 2010	27 Sep 2018	
Monaco	23 Sep 2009	19 Sep 2017	27 Jun 2019	27 Jun 2019

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Country	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities New York, 13 December 2006		Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities New York, 13 December 2006	
	Signature	Formal confirmation (c) Accession (a) Ratification	Signature	Formal confirmation (c) Accession (a) Ratification
Montenegro	27 Sep 2007	2 Nov 2009	27 Sep 2007	2 Nov 2009
Netherlands	30 Mar 2007	14 Jun 2016		
North Macedonia	30 Mar 2007	29 Dec 2011	29 Jul 2009	29 Dec 2011
Norway	30 Mar 2007	3 Jun 2013		
Poland	30 Mar 2007	25 Sep 2012		
Portugal	30 Mar 2007	23 Sep 2009	30 Mar 2007	23 Sep 2009
Romania	26 Sep 2007	31 Jan 2011	25 Sep 2008	
San Marino	30 Mar 2007	22 Feb 2008		
Serbia	17 Dec 2007	31 Jul 2009	17 Dec 2007	31 Jul 2009
Slovakia	26 Sep 2007	26 May 2010	26 Sep 2007	26 May 2010
Slovenia	30 Mar 2007	24 Apr 2008	30 Mar 2007	24 Apr 2008
Spain	30 Mar 2007	3 Dec 2007	30 Mar 2007	3 Dec 2007
Sweden	30 Mar 2007	15 Dec 2008	30 Mar 2007	15 Dec 2008
Switzerland		15 Apr 2014 (a)		
Turkey	30 Mar 2007	28 Sep 2009	28 Sep 2009	26 Mar 2015
Ukraine	24 Sep 2008	4 Feb 2010	24 Sep 2008	4 Feb 2010
United Kingdom	30 Mar 2007	8 Jun 2009	26 Feb 2009	7 Aug 2009
Vatican City State				

For reservations regarding the UNCRPD see the Convention status page. ([HTML](#)).

For reservations regarding the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD see the Protocol status page. ([HTML](#)).

Annex 2: Marrakesh Treaty ratification status

This annex shows the status of signature and formal confirmation, accession or ratification in respect of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

Country	Signature	Instrument	In Force
Albania			
Andorra			
Austria	25 Jun 2014		
Belgium	25 Jun 2014		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	28 June 2013		
Bulgaria			
Croatia			
Cyprus	28 Jun 2013		
Czech Republic	24 Jun 2014		
Denmark	28 Jun 2013		
Estonia			
Finland	20 Jun 2014		
France	30 Apr 2014		
Georgia			
Germany	20 Jun 2014		
Greece	30 Apr 2014		
Hungary			
Iceland			
Ireland	20 Jun 2014		
Israel		Accession: 21 Mar 2016	30 Sep 2016
Italy			
Latvia			
Liechtenstein			
Lithuania	27 Sep 2013		
Luxembourg	28 Jun 2013		
Malta			

(continued)

Country	Signature	Instrument	In Force
Moldova	28 Jun 2013	Ratification: 19 Feb 2018	19 May 2018
Monaco			
Montenegro			
Netherlands			
North Macedonia			
Norway	20 Jun 2014		
Poland	24 Jun 2014		
Portugal			
Romania			
San Marino		Accession: 2 Jun 2020	2 Sep 2020
Serbia		Accession: 24 Feb 2020	24 May 2020
Slovakia			
Slovenia	16 May 2014		
Spain			
Sweden			
Switzerland	28 Jun 2013	Ratification: 11 Feb 2020	11 May 2020
Turkey	1 Nov 2013		
Ukraine			
United Kingdom	28 June 2013	Ratification: 1 Oct 2020	.1 Jan 2021
Vatican City State			

For the latest WIPO Marrakesh Treaty ratification status see the Contracting Parties webpage. ([HTML](#)).

Annex 3: ITU framework and resources to support Member State and stakeholder efforts to implement ICT accessibility

A3.1 ICT accessibility framework towards ensuring digital inclusion for all people including persons with disabilities

ITU resolutions, regional and global commitments

- [ITU Strategic Goal 2](#) (Inclusiveness: Bridge the digital divide): Focuses on global telecommunication/ICT inclusiveness, fostering telecommunication/ICT access, accessibility, affordability and use in all countries and regions and for all peoples, including women and girls, youth and marginal and vulnerable populations, people from lower socio-economic groups, indigenous peoples, older persons and persons with disabilities.
- [ITU Target 2.9](#): “By 2023, enabling environments ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries”.
- [Resolution 175 \(Rev. Dubai, 2018\)](#) of the Plenipotentiary Conference: Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.
- [Resolution 58 \(Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017\)](#) of WTDC: Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.
- [Resolution 70 \(Rev. Hammamet, 2016\)](#) of WTSA: Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- [Resolution ITU-R 67-1 \(Rev. Sharm-el-Sheikh, 2019\) of RA](#): Telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.
- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UNCRPD)
- [European Accessibility Act](#) (EAA).
- [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) (UNDIS): UN Secretary-General’s [report on the implementation](#) of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

COVID-19 response and recovery

- [ITU Guidelines on how to ensure that digital information, services and products are accessible by all people, including persons with disabilities, during COVID-19](#) (2020).
- [UN Policy Brief - A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19](#) (2020)
- [UN-DESA - COVID-19 Outbreak and Persons with Disabilities](#).

A3.2 ITU resources

The work of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) on ICT accessibility supports the advancement of the global disability-inclusive agenda and the development of inclusive digital communities. It does this through raising awareness, building capacity and providing policy and strategy advice to ITU members. BDT is also facilitating joint work platforms such as study groups and regional Accessible ICT for ALL knowledge-development forums enabling stakeholders to share good practices and engage in national and regional digital accessibility implementation.

One of the key BDT resources is a Toolkit and self-assessment for ICT accessibility implementation – Towards building inclusive digital communities.

This resource was developed by ITU and provides all stakeholders and other interested parties with the information needed to guarantee that everyone addresses the necessary policy-making,

regulatory and strategic implementation components from their respective fields for ICT accessibility implementation.

This ITU tool is accompanied by a spreadsheet document that will allow users to run the self-evaluation, obtain relevant guidelines and recommendations tailored to their level of implementation and print out their results in order to monitor improvements.

The results of the self-evaluation are based entirely on responses to targeted questions, and responsibility for the results of this self-evaluation lies with the Member State or other stakeholder implementing it. As much information as possible should be provided to obtain the most accurate and valuable recommendations.

Countries are encouraged to use this resource to monitor the implementation of ICT accessibility and to share the assessment results with ITU in order to contribute to regional and global monitoring of ICT accessibility implementation.

ITU thematic reports and papers, toolkits and assessments

- [ITU Guidelines on how to ensure that digital information, services and products are accessible by all people, including persons with disabilities during COVID-19](#) (2020)
- [Toolkit and Global Standard for safe listening devices and systems](#) (2019)
- [Artificial intelligence and information and communication technology accessibility](#) (2019)
- [Standards in the procurement of accessible products and services](#) (2019)
- [Future of accessible audiovisual media services, TV and video programming](#) (2019)
- [Report on Question 7/1: Access to telecommunication/ICT services by persons with disabilities and with specific needs](#) (2017)
- [Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report](#) (2014)
- [Universal service fund and digital inclusion for all](#) (2013)
- [Making mobile phones and services accessible for persons with disabilities](#) (2012)
- [Making television accessible](#) (2011)

ITU-T guidelines and standards

- [ITU-T FSTP-ACC-RCS \(2019\)](#): Overview of remote captioning services
- [ITU-T F.921 \(08/2018\)](#): Audio-based indoor and outdoor network navigation system for persons with vision impairment
- [ITU-T FSTP-CONF-F921 \(2018\)](#): Compliance of audio-based navigation system for persons with vision impairment
- [ITU-T F.930 \(03/2018\)](#): Multimedia telecommunication relay services
- [ITU-T F.791 \(08/2018\)](#): Accessibility terms and definitions
- [ITU-T FSTP-UMAA \(2016\)](#): Use cases for assisting persons with disabilities using mobile application
- [ITU-T FSTP-AM \(2015\)](#): Guidelines for accessible meetings
- [ITU-T FSTP-ACC-RemPart \(2015\)](#): Guidelines for supporting remote participation in meetings for all
- [ITU-T H.702 \(11/2015\)](#): Accessibility profiles for IPTV systems
- [ITU-T H-series Supplement 17 | ISO/IEC Guide 71 \(2014\)](#): Guide for addressing accessibility in standards
- [The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework](#) (2013)
- [ITU-T FSTP-TACL \(2006\)](#): Telecommunications Accessibility Checklist.

ITU online self-paced training courses, video tutorials and national knowledge-development programme

- [ICT Accessibility: The key to inclusive communication](#) (self-paced online course)
- [Web Accessibility - The cornerstone of an inclusive digital society](#) (self-paced online course)
- [Public procurement of accessible ICT products and services](#) (online course on demand)
- [Internet for @!l: The ITU-D national programme in web accessibility](#)
- [Creation and remediation of accessible digital documents](#) (video tutorials).

Additional ITU related training courses and programmes

- [Audio-based indoor and outdoor network navigation system for persons with vision impairment](#) (training course on ITU-T F.921)

Working and networking platforms, meetings and events

- [Accessible Americas – ICTs for ALL 2020](#), virtual, 25 - 27 November 2020
- [ITU-D Study Group 1 plenary and rapporteur groups](#), 21 September - 2 October 2020, multicountry (e-meeting)
- WSIS Session: UN collaborative efforts towards SDGs, CRPD and UNDIS implementation in Digital Accessibility, 16 July 2020
- [Public Webinar on digital accessibility during COVID-19](#), 24 June 2020
- [ITU-D study groups – Reflections on COVID-19](#), 27 May - 29 July 2020, multicountry (e-meeting)
- [ITU-D Question 7/1: Access to telecommunication/ICT services by persons with disabilities and with specific needs](#) (2017-2021 study period)
- [ITU-D Study Group 1 rapporteur group e-meetings](#), 21 September - 2 October 2020, multicountry (e-meeting)
- [Third meeting of ITU-D Study Group 1](#) (2018-2021 study period), 17 - 21 February 2020, Geneva, Switzerland
- [ITU-D Study Group 1 rapporteur group meetings](#), 23 September - 4 October 2019, Geneva, Switzerland
- [Second meeting of ITU-D Study Group 1](#) (2018-2021 study period), 18 - 22 March 2019, Geneva, Switzerland
- [ITU-D Study Group 1 rapporteur group meetings](#), 17 - 28 September 2018, Geneva, Switzerland
- [First meeting of ITU-D Study Group 1](#) (2018-2021 study period), 30 April - 4 May 2018, Geneva, Switzerland
- [Reports and guidelines for ITU-D Study Group 1 Questions](#) (for the 2014-2017 study period)
- [Report on Question 7/1: Access to telecommunication/ICT services by persons with disabilities and with specific needs](#) (2017)

Additional ITU work and networking platforms, meetings and events related to ICT accessibility

- [ITU-T Question 24/16: Human factors for intelligent user interfaces and services](#)
- [ITU-T Question 26/16: Accessibility to multimedia systems and services](#)
- [Joint Coordination Activity on accessibility and human factors \(JCA-AHF\)](#)
- [Inter-Sector Rapporteur Group on audiovisual media accessibility \(IRG-AVA\)](#)
- [ITU-R wireless technological development to improve PwD accessibility and reduce the overall digital disabilities divide](#)
- [ITU-R Question 145/6: Systems for enabling access to broadcast and cooperative media for persons with disabilities.](#)

Accessible Europe ICT for ALL events

- [Accessible Europe - ICT for ALL 2021](#), virtual, Portugal
- [Accessible Europe - ICT for ALL 2019](#), St Julian's, Malta
- [Accessible Europe - ICT for ALL 2018](#), Vienna, Austria

Other relevant meetings and events

- [WSIS Forum 2021](#)
- [WSIS Forum 2020](#) (ICT Accessibility Track)
- [13th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the UNCRPD](#)
- [M-Enabling Summit 2020](#) - 14 - 16 September 2020
- [ITU Webinar: Digital accessibility during COVID-19 and recovery period: An imperative to ensure inclusive societies in the digital world](#) (24 June 2020).

Annex 4: Accessibility measures overview – Accessibility of public-sector websites and mobile applications

Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies – the Web Accessibility Directive – sets 23 September 2020 as the date by which all public-sector websites across the EU should have been accessible for persons with disabilities.

The Web Accessibility Directive aims to increase digital inclusion by ensuring that the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies are more accessible to users, in particular to persons with disabilities, and to improve the functioning of the internal market by establishing common accessibility requirements for websites and mobile apps all over Europe.

Although the EU Web Accessibility Directive applies to public-sector websites and mobile applications, it will have an impact on private organizations as well. Organizations that regularly do business with or provide products or services that impact on public-facing government websites and mobile applications may need to comply.

The impact on the public sector:

- implementation of accessibility requirements;
- responding to user feedback;
- awareness of accessibility;
- providing training;
- monitoring and improving the accessibility of websites and mobile applications.

Benefits for persons with disabilities:

- accessible public services;
- accessibility statement that explains which content is accessible and where to turn in case of problems;
- possibility to flag accessibility issues and ask for accessible alternatives.

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	What is covered?	Who must do it?	How to comply?	Exceptions
23 September 2018	Incorporate the directive into national laws. Submit the text of the implemented provisions to the Commission. Designate and inform the Commission of the designated bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the enforcement of the directive; • Responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the directive. 		EU Member States		
12 October 2018	Publication of the decisions establishing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model accessibility statement; • Monitoring methodology; • Reporting requirements. 		European Commission		
21 December 2018	Publication of the decision on accessibility requirements by adopting the harmonized standard for websites and mobile applications (EN 301 549 V2.1.2).		European Commission		

(continued)

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	What is covered?	Who must do it?	How to comply?	Exceptions
23 September 2019	Make websites accessible	All websites published on or after 23 September 2018	<p>State, regional or local authorities.</p> <p>Bodies governed by public law.</p> <p>Associations formed by one (or more) such authorities or one (or more) such bodies governed by public law, if those associations are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character.</p>	<p>Meet WCAG 2.1, level AA.</p> <p>Provide an accessibility statement.</p> <p>Set up a feedback mechanism to enable any person to notify you of any failures to comply with the accessibility requirements or ask you to provide accessible alternatives.</p>	<p>Office file formats published before 23 September 2018.</p> <p>Live video or audio or other time-based media.</p> <p>Online maps and mapping services, as long as essential information is provided in an accessible digital form for maps intended for navigational use.</p> <p>Third-party content that is neither funded nor developed by, nor under the control of, the public-sector body concerned.</p> <p>Reproductions of items in heritage collections that cannot be made fully accessible.</p> <p>Extranets and intranets - websites that are only available for a closed group of people and not to the general public, published before 23 September 2019, until they undergo a substantial revamp</p> <p>Archives - content of websites and mobile applications that contain content that is neither needed for active administrative processes nor updated or edited after 23 September 2019.</p>

(continued)

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	What is covered?	Who must do it?	How to comply?	Exceptions
23 September 2020	Make websites accessible	All websites published before 23 September 2018	State, regional or local authorities. Bodies governed by public law. Associations formed by one (or more) such authorities or one (or more) such bodies governed by public law, if those associations are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character.	Meet WCAG 2.1, level AA. Provide an accessibility statement . Set up a feedback mechanism to enable any person to notify you of any failures to comply with the accessibility requirements or ask you to provide accessible alternatives.	Pre-recorded video or audio or other time-based media published before 23 September 2020. Live video or audio or other time-based media. Online maps and mapping services, as long as essential information is provided in an accessible digital form for maps intended for navigational use. Third-party content that is neither funded nor developed by, nor under the control of, the public-sector body concerned. Reproductions of items in heritage collections that cannot be made fully accessible.

(continued)

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	What is covered?	Who must do it?	How to comply?	Exceptions
23 June 2021	Make mobile applications accessible	Mobile applications	<p>State, regional or local authorities.</p> <p>Bodies governed by public law.</p> <p>Associations formed by one (or more) such authorities or one (or more) such bodies governed by public law, if those associations are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character.</p>	<p>Meet WCAG 2.1, level AA.</p> <p>Provide an accessibility statement.</p> <p>Set up a feedback mechanism to enable any person to notify you of any failures to comply with the accessibility requirements or ask you to provide accessible alternatives.</p>	
23 December, 2021	<p>Submit the first report to the Commission on the outcome of monitoring on the conformity of the websites and mobile applications with accessibility requirements, including the measurement data, and including information on the use of enforcement procedures.</p> <p>Reports must be submitted every three years thereafter.</p>		All Member States		
23 June 2022	Review of application of the directive, taking into account the Member State reports on the outcome of their monitoring and enforcement.		European Commission		

Annex 5: Accessibility measures overview – Accessibility of audiovisual media services

Directive (EU) 2018/1808 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services – the Audiovisual Media Services Directive – aims to implement the right of persons with disabilities and older persons to participate and be integrated in social and cultural life.

In accordance with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, Member States should, without undue delay, ensure that media service providers under their jurisdiction actively seek to make content accessible to persons with disabilities, in particular those with a visual or hearing impairment. Accessibility requirements should be met through a progressive and continuous process, while taking into account the practical and unavoidable constraints that may prevent full accessibility, such as programmes or events broadcast in real time. In order to measure the progress that media service providers have made in making their services progressively accessible to people with visual or hearing disabilities, Member States should require media service providers established on their territory to report to them on a regular basis. They must also designate an online point of contact to provide information and receive complaints regarding accessibility issues. Public emergency information provided through audiovisual media services, for example in natural disaster situations, must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Benefits for persons with disabilities:

- continuously and progressively more accessible audiovisual media services;
- accessibility requirements for both television broadcasting and video on demand;
- accessibility provided through at least sign language, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, spoken subtitles and audio description.

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	Who must do it?
19 September 2020	<p>Incorporate the directive into national laws.</p> <p>Submit the text of the implemented provisions to the Commission.</p> <p>Implement the measures.</p> <p>Designate a single, easily accessible, including by persons with disabilities, and publicly available online point of contact for providing information and receiving complaints regarding any accessibility issues in relation to audiovisual media services.</p> <p>Ensure that services provided by media service providers under State jurisdiction are made continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Ensure that media service providers report on a regular basis to the national regulatory authorities or bodies on the implementation of accessibility measures.</p> <p>Encourage media service providers to develop accessibility action plans and communicate them to the national regulatory authorities or bodies.</p> <p>Ensure that emergency information, including public communications and announcements in natural disaster situations, that is made available to the public through audiovisual media services is provided in a form which is accessible to persons with disabilities.</p>	EU Member States
19 September 2020	<p>Make services continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Develop accessibility action plans and communicate them to the national regulatory authorities or bodies.</p> <p>Report on a regular basis to the national regulatory authorities or bodies on implementation of the measures to make audiovisual media services continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities.</p>	Media service providers
19 December 2022 (every 3 years thereafter)	<p>Submit the first report to the Commission on the implementation of accessibility of audiovisual media services to persons with disabilities.</p>	EU Member States
19 December 2022 (every 3 years thereafter)	<p>Submit the first report to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the European Economic and Social Committee on the application of the directive.</p>	European Commission
19 December 2026	<p>Submit an ex-post evaluation to the European Parliament and the Council on the impact of the directive and its added value, accompanied, where appropriate, by proposals for its review.</p>	European Commission

Annex 6: Accessibility measures overview - Accessibility of electronic communications

Directive (EU) 2018/1972 establishes the European Electronic Communications Code.

Benefits for persons with disabilities:

- equivalent services for users with disabilities;
- affordable access to specialized facilities for persons with disabilities to use these services;
- alternative channels to reach emergency services (such as real-time text, SMS or emergency applications) should be available.

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	Who must do it?
<p>21 December 2020</p>	<p>Incorporate the directive into national laws.</p> <p>Communicate the text of the implemented provisions to the Commission.</p> <p>Ensure affordable universal service, including adequate broadband access.</p> <p>Ensure that appropriate support is provided to consumers with disabilities and other specific measures are taken to ensure that related terminal and specific equipment as well as specific services that enhance equivalent access (such as total conversation services and relay services) are available and affordable to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Ensure equivalent and free-of-charge access to a service operating a '116000' hotline to report cases of missing children, and a child helpline, so that end users with disabilities are able to access this service to the greatest extent possible, including while travelling in other Member States. If applicable, the same applies for the helpline that helps children in need of care and protection through the use of the '116111' number.</p> <p>Ensure non-discrimination and safeguard fundamental rights in respect of electronic communications service providers or with regard to end-user access to, or use of, services and applications.</p>	<p>EU Member States</p>
<p>21 December 2020</p>	<p>Provide information requirements for contracts in accessible formats for end users with disabilities.</p> <p>Provide consumers with a concise and easily readable contract summary with the main elements of the information requirements, including the extent to which the products and services are designed for end users with disabilities.</p> <p>Provide appropriate support to persons with disabilities and take other specific measures to ensure the provision of accessible and affordable terminal and specific equipment.</p> <p>Provide choice (in terms of services and packages) for end users with disabilities and equivalent access to electronic communications services.</p> <p>When transmitting radio and television broadcast channels for which must-carry rules apply, provide related complementary services, in particular accessibility services to enable appropriate access for end users with disabilities and data supporting connected television services and EPGs.</p>	<p>Electronic communications service providers</p>
<p>21 December 2020 (every 3 years thereafter)</p>	<p>Submit the first report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the effectiveness of the implementation of the single European emergency number '112'.</p>	<p>European Commission</p>

(continued)

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	Who must do it?
21 June 2022	Ensure that, when public warning systems regarding imminent or developing major emergencies and disasters are in place, public warnings are transmitted by providers of mobile number-based interpersonal communications services to the end users concerned (or through equivalent public warning systems).	EU Member States
21 December 2025 (every five years thereafter)	Submit the first report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the functioning of the directive. Review the scope of universal service, in particular with a view to proposing to the European Parliament and to the Council that the scope be changed or redefined.	European Commission

Annex 7: Accessibility measures overview - Accessibility of products and services

Directive (EU) 2019/882 on the accessibility requirements for products and services – the European Accessibility Act – is a directive that aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services, by removing barriers created by divergent rules in Member States.

Businesses will benefit from:

- common rules on accessibility in the EU leading to cost reductions;
- easier cross-border trading;
- more market opportunities for their accessible products and services.

Persons with disabilities and older persons will benefit from:

- more accessible products and services in the market;
- accessible products and services at more competitive prices;
- fewer barriers when accessing transport, education and the open labour market;
- more jobs available where accessibility expertise is needed.

Products and services covered

The European Accessibility Act covers products and services that have been identified as being most important for persons with disabilities while being most likely to have diverging accessibility requirements across EU countries.

The Commission consulted stakeholders and experts on accessibility and took into account the obligations deriving from the UNCRPD. These products and services include:

- computers and operating systems;
- ATMs, ticketing and check-in machines;
- smartphones;
- TV equipment related to digital television services;
- telephony services and related equipment;
- access to audiovisual media services such as television broadcast and related consumer equipment;
- services related to air, bus, rail and waterborne passenger transport;
- banking services;
- e-books;
- e-commerce.

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	Who must do it?
28 June 2021	Request one or more European standardization organizations to draft harmonized standards for the product accessibility requirements set out in Annex I to the directive.	European Commission
28 June 2022	Incorporate the directive into national laws. Communicate the text of the implemented provisions to the Commission.	EU Member States
28 June 2024	Adopt delegated acts to supplement Annex I by further specifying the accessibility requirements that, by their very nature, cannot produce their intended effect unless they are further specified in binding legal acts of the Union, such as requirements related to interoperability. Simultaneously notify the delegated acts to the European Parliament and to the Council. Adopt implementing acts establishing technical specifications that meet the accessibility requirements of the directive.	European Commission
28 June 2025	Union safeguard procedure In case of objections raised against a measure taken by a Member State, or where reasonable evidence suggests that a national measure is contrary to Union law, without delay enter into consultation with the Member States and the relevant economic operator or operators and evaluate the national measure. On the basis of the results of that evaluation, decide whether the national measure is justified or not.	European Commission
28 June 2025	Application of measures Ensure that products placed on the market comply with accessibility requirements set out in Sections I and II of Annex I to the directive. Ensure that self-service terminals comply with accessibility requirements set out in Section I of Annex I to the directive, with the exception of self-service terminals used for the provision of services before 28 June 2025, which may continue to be used in the provision of similar services until the end of their economically useful life, but no longer than 20 years after their entry into use. Ensure that services provided to consumers comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive, except for urban and suburban transport services and regional transport services, which must comply with the requirements set out in Section IV, with the exception of service contracts agreed before 28 June 2025, in which case the contracts may continue without alteration until they expire, but no longer than until five years from that date. Microenterprises are exempt from complying with these accessibility requirements. Optionally, ensure that the built environment used by clients of services covered by the directive complies with the accessibility requirements set out in Annex III, in order to maximize use of those services by persons with disabilities. Provide guidelines and tools to microenterprises to facilitate the application of the national measures transposing the directive. Develop these tools in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Inform economic operators of the indicative examples, contained in Annex II, of possible solutions that contribute to meeting the accessibility requirements in Annex I. Ensure that answering of emergency communications to the single European emergency number '112' complies with the specific accessibility requirements set out in Section V of Annex I to the directive in the manner best suited to the national organization of emergency systems, unless the deadline for the application of measures is extended, not later than 28 June 2027. Do not impede the market availability of products or the provision of services that comply with this directive. Market surveillance Carry out market surveillance of products, when the economic operator has relied on fundamental alteration and disproportionate burden: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• check that the assessment of the fundamental alteration and disproportionate burden has been conducted by the economic operator;• review the assessment and its results, including correct use of the criteria set out in Annex VI to the directive;• check compliance with the applicable accessibility requirements. Make sure that information held by market-surveillance authorities concerning the compliance of economic operators with the applicable accessibility requirements of the directive and the assessment of the fundamental alteration and disproportionate burden is made available to consumers upon request and in an accessible format.	EU Member States

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Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	Who must do it?
	<p>Compliance of services</p> <p>Establish, implement and periodically update adequate procedures in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check the compliance of services with the requirements of the directive, including the assessment of the fundamental alteration and disproportionate burden; • follow up complaints or reports on issues relating to non-compliance of services with the accessibility requirements; • verify that the economic operator has taken the necessary corrective action. <p>Provide a procedure at national level for dealing with products not complying with the applicable accessibility requirements.</p> <p>Enforcement</p> <p>Ensure that adequate and effective means exist to ensure compliance with the directive.</p>	
<p>28 June 2025</p>	<p>Products and services</p> <p>When placing consumer general-purpose computer hardware systems and operating systems for those hardware systems on the market, ensure that the products have been designed and manufactured in accordance with the applicable accessibility requirements as set out in Sections I and II of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>When placing self-service terminals on the market, ensure that the products have been designed and manufactured in accordance with the applicable accessibility requirements set out in Section I of Annex I to the directive,</p> <p>When providing self-service terminals, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • payment terminals; • automated teller machines; • ticketing machines; • check-in machines; • interactive self-service terminals providing information, <p>ensure that they comply with accessibility requirements set out in Section I of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>Ensure that consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capability used for electronic communications services has been designed and manufactured in accordance with the applicable accessibility requirements set out in Sections I and II of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>Ensure that consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capability used for audiovisual media services has been designed and manufactured in accordance with the applicable accessibility requirements set out in Sections I and II of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>Ensure that e-readers have been designed and manufactured in accordance with the applicable accessibility requirements set out in Section I and II of Annex I of the Directive.</p> <p>Ensure that electronic communications services (provided to consumers) comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>Ensure that services providing access to audiovisual media services comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>In passenger transport services, ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • websites; • mobile device-based services, including mobile applications; • electronic tickets and electronic ticketing services; • delivery of transport service information, including real-time travel information; • interactive self-service terminals located within the territory of the Union, except those installed as integrated parts of vehicles, aircraft, ships and rolling stock used in the provision of any part of such passenger transport services, <p>comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive, except for urban and suburban transport services and regional transport services, which must comply with the requirements set out in Section IV.</p> <p>Ensure that consumer banking services comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>Ensure that e-books and dedicated software comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive.</p> <p>Ensure that e-commerce services comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive.</p>	<p>Industry</p>

(continued)

Deadline /Milestone	Action(s)	Who must do it?
	<p>Manufacturers</p> <p>Draw up the technical documentation in accordance with Annex IV to the directive and carry out the conformity assessment procedure set out in that Annex or have it carried out.</p> <p>Where compliance of a product with the applicable accessibility requirements has been demonstrated by that procedure, manufacturers shall draw up an EU declaration of conformity and affix the CE marking.</p> <p>Ensure that procedures are in place for series production to remain in conformity with this directive.</p> <p>Ensure that the address at which the manufacturer can be contacted is indicated on the product or, where that is not possible, on its packaging or in a document accompanying the product, indicating a single point at which the manufacturer can be contacted, and that the contact details are in a language which can be easily understood by end users and market-surveillance authorities.</p> <p>Ensure that the product is accompanied by instructions and safety information in a language which can be easily understood by consumers and other end users, as determined by the Member State concerned. Such instructions and information, as well as any labelling, must be clear, understandable and intelligible.</p> <p>Importers</p> <p>Ensure that only compliant products are placed on the market.</p> <p>Before placing a product on the market, ensure that the conformity assessment procedure set out in Annex IV has been carried out by the manufacturer.</p> <p>Ensure that the manufacturer has drawn up the technical documentation required by that Annex, that the product bears the CE marking and is accompanied by the required documents and that the manufacturer has complied with other requirements set forth by the directive.</p> <p>Ensure that the address at which the importer can be contacted is indicated on the product or, where that is not possible, on its packaging or in a document accompanying the product, and that the contact details are in a language which can be easily understood by end users and market-surveillance authorities.</p> <p>Distributors</p> <p>When making a product available on the market, act with due care in relation to the requirements of the directive.</p> <p>Before making a product available on the market, verify that the product bears the CE marking, that it is accompanied by the required documents and by instructions and safety information in a language which can be easily understood by consumers and other end users in the Member State in which the product is to be made available on the market and that the manufacturer and the importer have complied with the requirements set forth by the directive.</p>	
28 June 2027	If the deadline was extended, ensure that answering of emergency communications to the single European emergency number '112' complies with the specific accessibility requirements set out in Section V of Annex I to the directive in the manner best suited to the national organization of emergency systems.	EU Member States
28 June 2030	For service contracts agreed before 28 June 2025, which may continue without alteration until they expire, but no longer than until five years from that date, ensure that services provided to consumers comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Sections III and IV of Annex I to the directive, except for urban and suburban transport services and regional transport services, which must comply with the requirements set out in Section IV.	Industry
28 June 2030 (and every five years thereafter)	Communicate to the Commission all the information necessary for the Commission to draw up reports.	EU Member States
28 June 2030 (and every five years thereafter)	Submit a report on the application of the directive to the European Parliament, to the Council, to the European Economic and Social Committee and to the Committee of the Regions.	European Commission
27 June 2045	For self-service terminals lawfully used for the provision of services before 28 June 2025, which may continue to be used in the provision of similar services until the end of their economically useful life, but no longer than 20 years after their entry into use, ensure that they comply with the accessibility requirements set out in Section I of Annex I to the directive	Industry

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