United Nations University

Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance

ACCESSIBLE ARAB REGION – ICT FOR ALL

Session 2: Empowering people through ICT

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WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines accessibility broadly in Article 9 ("Accessibility"):



Accessibility means ensuring persons with disabilities can access, on an equal basis with others, the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems (ICT), and other facilities and services open or provided to the public, in both urban and rural areas.

UN, CRPD (2025)



WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) defines web accessibility as:



Websites, tools, and technologies ... designed and developed so that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the web — and that they can contribute to the web.

W3C, WCAG (2025)



FOCUS OF UN CRPD AND WCAG DIFFERS

| | LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK FOR ACCESSIBILITY | TECHNICAL AND PRACTICAL STANDARDS FOR DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY |
|----------|---|---|
| SCOPE | Broad: includes web, information, ICT. | Specific: web content, applications, and tools. |
| PURPOSE | Ensure equal rights and participation. | Guide developers/designers to create accessible digital environments. |
| MANDATE? | Binding for ratifying countries. | Voluntary standard, but often legally adopted by governments. |
| FOCUS | Legal and human rights framework for accessibility. | Technical and practical standards for digital accessibility. |



KEY PRINCIPLES OF USABILITY

- Accessibility and good service design goes beyond the technology, graphics and individual solutions. It includes the full user-journey, language use, form, function, look-and-feel and web accessibility.
- Intuitive and user-centric service design and language use makes good business sense, as it facilitates online service use.
- Accessibility and usability facilitate digital inclusion for all, not just persons with disabilities.
- Good service design is not a one-off design-process with user-testing but includes continues improvement of the full user-journey.

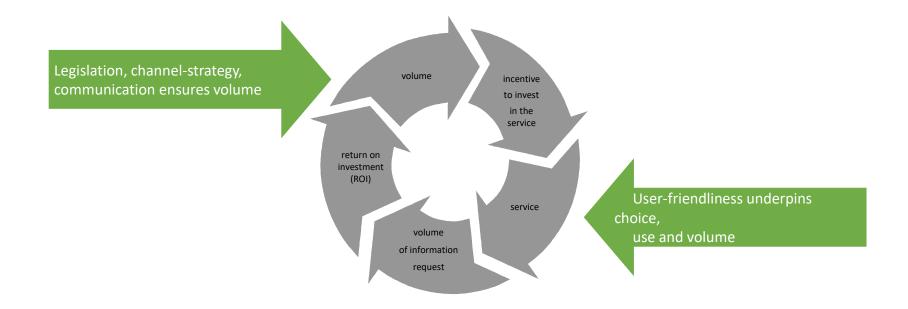


WHY IS ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY AND USABILITY RELEVANT?

- Accessibility is the foundation for good design and ser-friendly online experience to facilitate behavioural change.
- Accessibility and usability improves usage and satisfaction and thus return on investment.
- Importance to align with national and international standards (e.g., the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).
- Accessibility and usability addresses accessibility, inclusivity, and effectiveness of digital offerings.

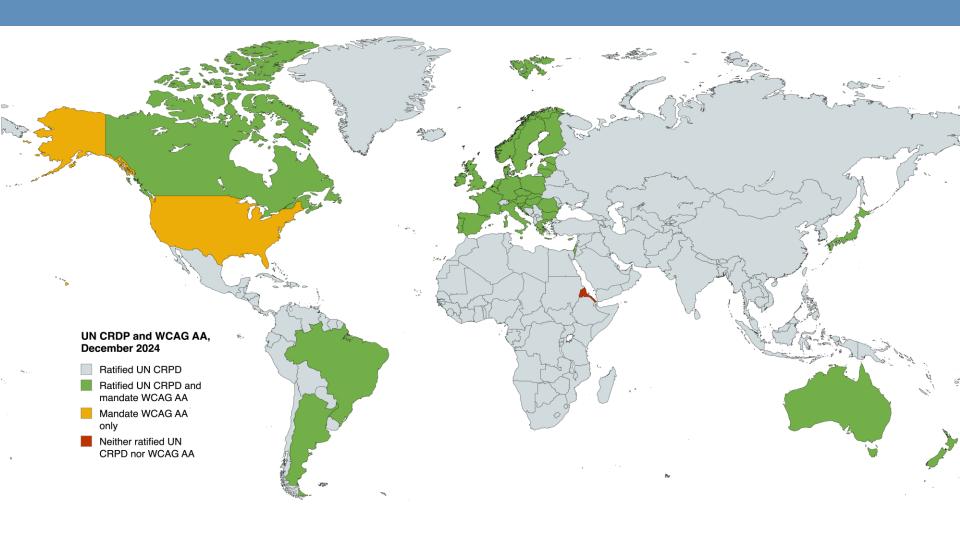


THE INTERVENTION LOGIC





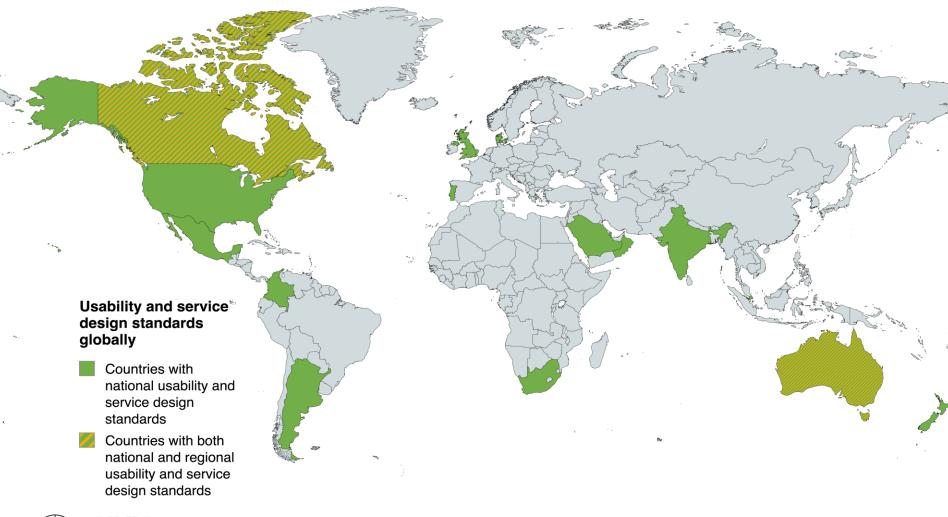
UN CRPD AND W3C WCAG AA





Source: UNU-EGOV (2024)

USABILITY AND SERVICE STANDARDS GLOBALLY





EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL SERVICE DESIGN STANDARDS AND THEIR FOCUS

| | Africa | Americas | | | | Asia | | | | Europe | | | Oceania | | | |
|---------------------|--------|----------|---|---|----------|------|---|---|-------|--------|-------------|---|---------|---|---|---|
| Criteria groups | | * | * | | 3 | | * | * | Newsy | 202B | (:: | + | | | * | |
| Development process | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Language use | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Look-and-feel | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Functionality | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Reuse of components | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Reuse of standards | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Should

apply

Should

apply

Must

partially

apply

Must

apply

Must

apply

Must

apply

Should

apply

Must

apply

Must

apply,

federal

Should

apply

Reuse of data

independence

WCAG 2.0 AA

Monitoring of use and

Minimum

accept criteria

User testing

Examples

Coverage

Toolkit

Must

apply

Must

apply

Device

Must

apply,

federal

Should

apply

Should

apply

Should

apply

FINDINGS: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Majority of countries incorporate recommendations to good design processes innovation, co-design, user-testing, examples, toolkits, usability principles, procurement and continues improvement once operational.
- Majority countries incorporate Nielsen and Shneiderman's principles and WCAG in their usability frameworks, incl. language use, form, function, data reuse, and web accessibility.
- Not all incorporate usability standards within a larger framework focused on digital service delivery.
- Majority incorporates basic usability principles with a focus on checklists and are less comprehensive.
- Complexity of guides and standards seemingly have an adverse effect on impact.
- Denmark and the UK have the detailed approaches to compliance, leading to relatively better outcomes related to improved online service usability, perceived quality and use.



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Questions?

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