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Information and Communication Technologies for Attaining SDGs

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CONTRIBUTION BY Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications / Republic of Serbia

TITLE: ICT Accessible for all

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Europe Regional Initiative: ☒ EUR3: Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development

Year(s) of implementation: ☒ 2018 ☒ 2019 ☒ 2020 ☐ 2021

Background

According to estimates of the World Health Organization in Serbia live about 800.000 people with disabilities. Access to information and communications is a precondition for the freedom of thought and expression of persons with disabilities, guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19, paragraph 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 12 of the International Telecommunications Rules (Dubai, 2012) provides for the right of persons with disabilities to access international telecommunication services, taking into account the relevant recommendations of the International Telecommunication Union of ITU. The provisions of this article may serve as a basis for strengthening the national legislation of the Contracting Parties.

The World Disability Report (2011) of the World Health Organization and the World Bank highlights that the built environment, transport systems, information and communications are often inaccessible to persons with disabilities.

Accessibility is a prerequisite for independent living and full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society. Without access to physical environment, transport, information and communications, including information and communication technologies and systems, as well as other services and facilities open to or intended for the public, persons with disabilities would not have equal opportunities to participate in the society in which they live. Accessibility should be viewed in the context of equality and non-discrimination. Additionally, accessibility can also be viewed as part of an investment in society and an integral part of the effort for sustainable development.



The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations dealt with the issue of accessibility of information and communication through General Comment 2 and the examination of individual reports on the implementation of the Convention. In its Concluding Observations, the Committee recommended that Serbia take measures to increase the accessibility of information and communications.

Proposal

Summary:

Development of a society and economic growth in each country leads to the need for use of the new ICT by citizens at their workplace as well as in other every-day settings and situations. Many services increasingly become available exclusively through the use of new technologies. Therefore the development and enhancement of digital skills becomes a vital necessity. When looking at the demographic structure of users of new ICT, it becomes obvious that persons with disabilities face significant challenges and barriers in this field. The use of internet, mobile applications and different services of online e-administration by persons with disabilities is restricted due to inaccessible ICT and low digital skills of these persons. Modern society has to take effective measures to remove the barriers to ICT for persons with disabilities and increase their digital skills in order to ensure their inclusion and equal participation of those persons in their communities.

Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications is competent for strategy of development of ICT as well development of informatics society. It intends to, in cooperation with the National Organisation of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia NOOIS, contribute to the process of full inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society through series of informative, educational, promotional and advocacy activities in the field of ICT.

Requirements:

Building upon this national and international experiences, the series of challenges related to the improving accessibility of ICT product and services for PWDs in Serbia, have been identified that require further investigation, promotion of examples of case-studies and assistance from experts and DPOs. In particular, focus should be given to:

- Promotion of the relevantn EU documents in the field of accessibility of ICT products and services for PWDs, including European Accessibility Act
- Awareness- raising and competence development on ICT accessibility through empowerment and skills development of persons with disabilities in this field
- Exchange of information and sharing of examples of good practice on accessibility of ICT product and services for persons with disabilities through organisation of a regional conference
- Development of online training on use of the new software
- Advocacy for including development of digital skills of persons with disabilities and implementation of mandatory ICT accessibility in the Strategy of Digital Skills that is being drafted

Objective:

Empowering people with disabilities through improving ICT accessibility product and services for persons with disabilities and strengthening the capacity of institutions and stakeholders, as well as

sensitizing citizens with disabilities for full and active participation in the context of equality and non-discrimination.

Expected Results:

- Continuing the process of inclusion of persons with disabilities into socio- economic life of Serbia, bearing in mind the necessity of mainstreaming disability in all relevant policies, including those pertaining to the development of ICT.
- National Organisation of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia NOOIS is informed about all relevant documents of EU and UN on accessible ICT, as well as development of digital skills of citizens, thus becoming empowered for advocacy in this area on behalf of its' members.
- Sharing of examples of good practice from the region shall enable more efficient inclusion of persons with disabilities in the field of ICT.
- Creating educational programs for persons with disabilities on web portals for development of digital skills would enable them to gain practical knowledge and skills.

