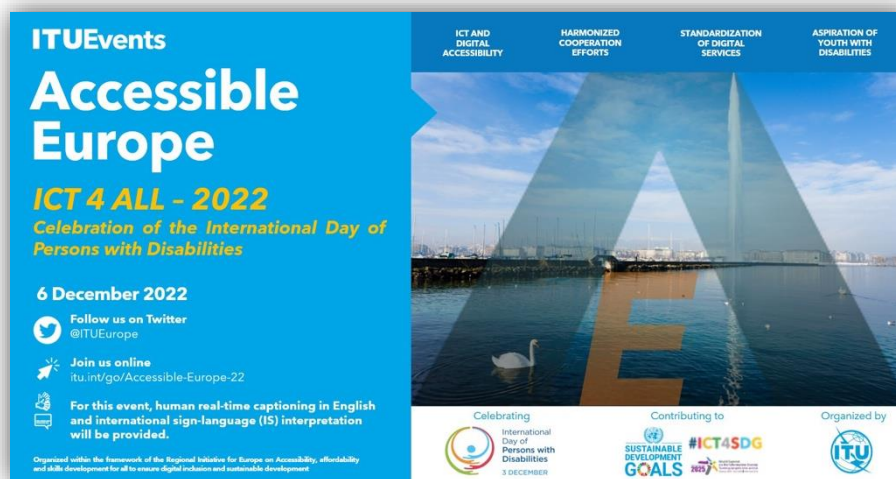




OUTCOME REPORT



Accessible Europe: ICT for ALL

"Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities" – Draft

6th December 2022

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International Telecommunication Union

Version 1.1

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ITU would also like to thank the speakers for their contributions during Session I, which was moderated by **Ms. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu**, Senior Coordinator for Digital Inclusion at ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau; **Ms. Rosemary Kayess**, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; **Ms. Inmaculada Placencia Porrero**, Senior Expert for Disability and Inclusion at the European Commission; **Ms. Amela Odobašić**, Director of Broadcasting at the Communications Regulatory Agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Co-rapporteur for ITU-D Study Question 7/1 (Study Period 2022-2025); and **Mr. Alejandro Moledo**, Deputy Director and Head of Policy at the European Disability Forum.

Moreover, ITU would like to express their gratitude to the panelists for their interventions during Session II, which was moderated by **Ms. Kaoru Mizuno**, Programme Coordinator at the Study Groups Department of ITU Telecommunication Standardization Bureau; **Ms. Lidia Best**, Accessibility Expert and President of the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People; **Ms. Susanna Laurin**, Representative to the EU for G3ict, Chief Research and Innovation Officer for Funka, and Chair of the ETSI/CEN/CENELEC Joint Working Group on eAccessibility; **Ms. Chiara Giovannini**, Senior Manager for Policy and Innovation (Accessibility) and Deputy Secretary General of the European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation (ANEC); and **Ms. Gamze Sofuoğlu**, Master Lead Brand Manager at Turkcell.

Furthermore, ITU would like to extend their thanks to the panelists for their interventions during Session III, which was moderated by **Ms. Ecmel Aysu Sürmen**, Digital Inclusion Consultant at ITU Office for Europe and Regional Focal Point for the ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Envoy; **Mr./Ms. Timothy Rowies**, Rapporteur on Mainstreaming Disability Issues of the Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth and Former President of the

European Union of the Deaf Youth; **Ms./Mx. Ivana Recmanová**, Disability Activist, Writer, Translator and Communication Advisor for LGBT+ and neurodivergent people at A-Komunita; **Dr. Miro Griffiths**, Scholar in Disability Studies at the School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds; and **Mr. Jack Kavanagh**, Pharmacist, Speaker, Non-Exec Director at Only Human Podcast and “Breaking Boundaries” Documentary.

Finally, ITU thanks all those who made this Special Event for Europe possible: to **Mr. Jaroslav Ponder**, Head of ITU Office for Europe, for delivering his opening remarks; to **Ms. Sarah Delporte** and **Mr. Elind Sulmina**, Project Officers at ITU Office for Europe, for their invaluable contributions to the organization; to **Ms. Katherine Fitzgerald**, Administrative Assistant, for the continuous organizational and technical support, and to **Ms. Ecmel Aysu Sürmen**, Digital Inclusion Consultant at ITU Office for Europe, for the organization and facilitation of this event, as well as the elaboration of this report.

INTRODUCTION

The special event for Europe “**Accessible Europe: ICT 4 All – Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities**” was held virtually on December 6, 2022. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) organized and conducted the celebratory gathering to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

This event has been organized within the framework of ITU Europe’s Regional Initiative 3, “Accessibility, affordability, and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development.” This regional initiative aims to bridge the digital divide and equip all groups of society, including people with disabilities and other groups of people with specific needs, to take advantage of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by enabling capacity building in digital skills. It was adopted at the 2017 ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17), and as one of the region's top priorities, it has been serving as the guiding principle for the organization of all Accessible Europe events.

With this special event, the Accessible Europe initiative has reached its 4th edition. Since 2018, this initiative has included regional events, policy guidance, capacity building programs, and competitions in an effort to promote the development of accessibility in countries and institutions across Europe. Through these efforts, Accessible Europe has been seeking to engage all stakeholders and encourage cooperation in order to make the European region a more inclusive society.

The 2022 edition of Accessible Europe was a special event held in honor of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which is celebrated annually on December 3. This day is an important opportunity to advocate for the continued improvement of the lives of people with disabilities, and the event focused on the importance of collaboration in creating an accessible digital society within the European region. It emphasized the need for a harmonized approach to ICT and digital accessibility, as well as standardizing digital tools and services, in order to ensure that people with disabilities can fully participate in the digital world. Additionally, in line with the conclusion of the European Year of Youth, a special youth session was held to hear the perspectives of young people with disabilities on what a more accessible Europe would look like.

Accessible Europe 2022 consisted of the following sessions:

- *Session I:* Towards a harmonized approach of ICT/digital accessibility: From international framework to implementation of an inclusive environment in Europe;
- *Session II:* Standardization of digital tools and services;
- *Session III:* The future of ICT and digital accessibility: What does youth aspire?.

The outcomes of Accessible Europe are detailed in this report, which outlines the key points that were discussed during each session. The report provides an overview of the main ideas and conclusions from the event, and presents the results in a structured manner.

PARTICIPATION AND DOCUMENTATION

The Accessible Europe event was open to general public, mainly targeting people working in the disability field, experts, and representative organizations. Seventeen (17) eminent speakers discussed during the sessions. Details about the agenda and speakers can be found on [the event's website](#). 68 participants registered to the event and the event was live webcasted. Participants included representatives of administrations from Member States of the ITU Europe region, private sector, academia, and more.

The event was held virtually. Relevant documentation was made available in electronic form on [the event's website](#). The event was supported with live human captioning in English, International Sign interpretation, and the caption text was made available on the event page. **Video recording** of the event, as well as this **outcome report**, are also made available on [the website](#).

ITUEvents

Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL
Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

International Day of Persons with Disabilities
3 DECEMBER

Meet the Speakers

6 December 2022, 14:00 - 16:30 (CET), Virtual

Follow us on Twitter: @ITUEurope Visit our webpage: itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-22 Register: itu.int/net/CRM/js/sr/C-00012072

Figure 1 - Virtual Group Photo

WELCOMING REMARKS



Figure 2. Welcoming Remarks

Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe

Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder welcomed attendees and emphasized the importance of creating an accessible digital society for all in Europe and beyond. He noted that disability is a part of being human, and that an estimated 1.3 billion people worldwide experience significant disability. In the European Union alone, over 87 million people have some form of disability. Mr. Ponder emphasized the role of digital technologies in enabling people with disabilities to fully participate in society. ITU places great importance on advancing digital inclusion for people with disabilities at the global, regional, and national levels, and aims to close digital divides and establish enabling environments for accessible ICT.

He also mentioned the recent ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022, where the strategic importance of digital inclusion was reaffirmed as part of the ITU Strategic Goals, which are focused on universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation. Through the efforts of its three sectors, the ITU will work to close digital divides in the use of ICTs for all people, including persons with disabilities. This will involve establishing enabling environments, strategies, policies, and practices to ensure accessible ICTs for people with disabilities, developing international technical standards, and fostering innovation in this area.

Mr. Ponder also mentioned the ITU regional initiative on accessibility, affordability, and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development. This initiative provides a framework for advancing digital inclusion at the regional and national levels.

Mr. Ponder thanked the various stakeholders who have been working on this initiative, including the European Commission, the governments of Portugal, the Czech Republic, Austria, Malta, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the Zero Project. He emphasized the importance of making Accessible Europe a platform for learning, exchanging, partnering, inspiring, and driving innovation and the provision of technical assistance to countries.

Finally, Mr. Ponder invited all stakeholders who are not yet part of this initiative to join forces and support the accessibility agenda at the regional and national levels across Europe. He noted that each European country has its own unique challenges and opportunities when it comes to digital inclusion for people with disabilities. By working together, he said, we can ensure that no one is left behind in the digital world.

H.E. Petr Očko, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic

H.E. Petr Očko began his remarks by thanking the ITU for organizing the event and emphasizing the importance of using new technologies to improve the lives of people with disabilities. His Excellency then highlighted the significance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, emphasizing the need to create conditions that allow people with disabilities to use their potential to enrich society.

Moving on, His Excellency emphasized the importance of focusing on abilities, rather than disabilities, and the value of diversity in European society. He discussed the existing regulations on accessibility in Europe, as well as the benefits of innovations for people with disabilities. In addition, he emphasized the need for a common approach based on cooperation and best practices in the digitalization of society.

Furthermore, His Excellency emphasized the importance of involving people with disabilities in guiding the digitalization process, specifically highlighting the need to empower young people to seize opportunities and participate in change. Finally, he concluded his remarks by wishing attendees a successful meeting and a fruitful discussion.

Mr. Jaroslav Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe

Jaroslav Ponder thanked the Czech Republic and Minister Očko for their contribution to the discussion on digitalization and accessibility at the meeting of the communication administrations of the 27 EU Member States, which is being led by the Czech Republic. He emphasized the importance of ensuring digital accessibility throughout the region and praised the Czech presidency for inspiring others on the path towards integration with the European Union.

EVENT SESSIONS

SESSION I: TOWARDS A HARMONIZED APPROACH OF ICT/DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY: FROM INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK TO IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT IN EUROPE

ITUEvents
Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL
Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Session I
**Towards a harmonized approach of ICT/digital accessibility:
From international framework to implementation of an inclusive environment in Europe**

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Roxana Widmer-Iliescu Senior Coordinator Digital Inclusion ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau Moderator | Rosemary Kayess Lawyer & Chairperson UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | Inmaculada Placencia Porrero Senior Expert (Disability and Inclusion) European Commission | Amela Odobašić Co-rapporteur for ITU-D Study Question 7/1 & Director of Broadcasting Communications Regulatory Agency - Bosnia and Herzegovina | Alejandro Moledo Deputy Director & Head of Policy European Disability Forum |
|---|--|---|--|---|

6 December 2022, 14:00 - 16:30 (CET), Virtual

Follow us on Twitter: @ITUEurope Visit our webpage: itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-22 Register: itu.int/net/CRM/js/sr/C-00012072

Figure 3. Session 1

Focus: International and regional approaches towards digital accessibility in the Europe region from the perspective of different stakeholders and experts; the UN and EU framework on the accessibility of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs); representative and national perspectives.

Moderator: **Ms. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu**, Senior Coordinator - Digital Inclusion, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU.

Speakers: **Ms. Rosemary Kayess**, Chairperson, United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; **Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero**, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, DG for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, European Commission; **Ms. Amela Odošić**, Director of Broadcasting, Communications Regulatory Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina & Co-rapporteur for ITU-D Study Question 7/1 (Study Period 2022-2025); **Mr. Alejandro Moledo**, Deputy Director and Head of Policy, European Disability Forum.

Key points

United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ms. Rosemary Kayess

- Rapid technological advancement and change can either break the social isolation and exclusion that people with disabilities experience, or it can entrench inequality and discrimination. It is therefore important to ensure that all individuals, including those with disabilities, have equal access to technology.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognize the right of everyone to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Specifically, UDHR Article 27 states that everyone has the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, while ICESCR Article 15 requires recognition of the right of everyone to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications.
- Although the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) does not explicitly incorporate the language of the UDHR and ICESCR, it does not limit the right of people with disabilities to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress. The preamble to the CRPD makes clear that everyone is entitled to all human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind, and the purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities.

- The CRPD recognizes the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress through its significant focus on technology as a facilitator of the realization of all other Convention rights, such as the right to live independently and be included in the community, the right to freedom of expression and opinion and access to information, the right to employment, education, and health, and equality before the law. People with disabilities have a right to the benefits of digital technology, which is necessary for the full realization of their rights.
- The CRPD has cross-cutting articles that inform and provide guidance on how to interpret and implement the Convention. These articles should be considered when taking action to progress the rights of people with disabilities and are not implemented in isolation.
- The CRPD requires that technology be accessible, affordable, and adhere to the principles of universal design, and also facilitate the achievement of rights of persons with disabilities. For example, technology can facilitate freedom of expression and opinion and access to information (CRPD Article 21) through the use of smart devices, accessible websites, screen readers, voice recognition technology, automated captioning, and sign language interpretation. The use of this technology enables people with disabilities to participate in political and public life and form their own organizations (CRPD Article 29).
- The legal standard of non-discrimination prohibits discrimination on the basis of impairment and requires all digital and ICT technology to be accessible to people with disabilities. It is not just about assistive technology, but all technology must be inclusive and responsive to the needs of people with disabilities so that everyone can benefit from it.
- Technology plays a major role in facilitating communication and transactions in everyday life and can help people with disabilities participate in education, employment, access to justice, and live independently in the community. However, for this to be possible, digital technology must be based on principles of universal design and include the expertise of people with disabilities in the design, development, and end product.

Q (to Ms. Odobašić): “Can you share with us your experience regarding the transposition of European Accessibility Act and directives in practice to implement ICT accessibility at the national level?”

Communications Regulatory Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms. Amela Odobašić

- Europe as a whole has made significant progress in ensuring ICT accessibility, but some regions, including the Western Balkans and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are falling behind in implementation. However, progress is being made.
- The EU legislation framework, including the Digital Accessibility Act and the Directive on Audiovisual Media Services, applies not only to EU member states but also to non-EU countries, such as the Western Balkans. This is beneficial for developing countries, as it encourages their governments to align their own legislative frameworks with EU provisions.
- The EU's Directive on Audiovisual Media Services includes provisions on accessibility, specifically Article 7.
 - This requires TV channels, video demand platforms, and other services to make their content progressively more accessible to people with disabilities, including through the use of subtitles, audio description, sign language interpretation, and spoken subtitles.
 - Article 7 also allows users to file complaints about media accessibility and receive more information through designated contact points in each country.
 - It also requires EU member countries to report on their progress in increasing accessibility to the European Commission.
 - Non-EU member countries, such as Bosnia Herzegovina, are required to align their legal frameworks with the Directive and prioritize accessibility in their rules and regulations. Bosnia and Herzegovina has drafted amended rules and regulations and conducted two rounds of public consultation, with the goal of enforcing the provisions on accessibility as of January of the following year.

Q (to Ms. Placencia-Porrero): “We know the EU has a quite comprehensive accessibility legislation. Could you please let us know what is in now in the pipeline in terms of implementation?”

European Commission, Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero

- The European Commission is currently reviewing the national transposition of EU directives on accessibility by Member States, with a focus on ensuring that all provisions of the European Accessibility Act are included in national legislation. This review process involves two checks:
 - First, the Commission checks that the legislation is complete, meaning that all provisions of the Act are included in national law. This check is typically completed within six months.
 - Second, the Commission performs a correctness check, which involves verifying that the provisions of the Act have been accurately translated into national law and that all of the Act's obligations are correctly conveyed. This check ensures that the legislation is being implemented effectively.
- The European Commission has set a deadline of June 28th for Member States to transpose EU directives on accessibility into national legislation. Only three out of 27 Member States of the European Union have submitted their national transposition of EU directives on accessibility by the June 28th deadline.
- The Commission has launched infringement procedures against 24 Member States that have not met their obligations to transpose the directives into national law. These procedures are intended to ensure that the Member States come into compliance with their obligations.
- In addition to reviewing national legislation, the Commission is also working to develop harmonized standards in the area of ICT accessibility. This includes revising three existing standards (E301509, Sign for All, and the built environment) and developing three new standards. The new standards will cover emergency communications, support services (such as Helpdesks and call centers), and the accessibility requirements set out in the EU's Directive on Audiovisual Media Services.
 - One of the new standards being developed by the Commission relates to emergency communications and will address the need for accessible real-time text and video in addition to voice. This will ensure that people with disabilities

have access to emergency communication services and can communicate effectively with public authorities.

- The Commission is consulting with stakeholders and authorities to ensure that the standards being developed reflect the needs and concerns of all relevant parties. This includes engaging with people with disabilities and their representative organizations, as well as industry and other stakeholders.
- The Commission recognizes that there are challenges in implementing accessibility legislation, including the need to make products and services accessible and to raise awareness and build competent human resources in this area.
- To address these challenges, the Commission is launching an initiative called "Accessible EU," which will create a resource center with activities in all Member States to support the implementation of accessibility requirements. The initiative will focus on raising awareness, creating a community of practice, sharing knowledge and good practices, and building the necessary human resources to implement accessibility.

Q (to Mr. Moledo): “What has been the approach taken and the work carried out by the European disability movement in the development of EU harmonised legislation on ICT accessibility?”

European Disability Forum, Mr. Alejandro Moledo

- The European Disability Forum (EDF) has been actively involved in shaping policies on accessible technologies, which play a crucial role in the lives of people with disabilities. Accessible technologies must meet three criteria: they must be available, affordable, and accessible in order to support the full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.
- In the past, soft approaches to accessibility, such as voluntary commitments and guidelines, have not been effective in ensuring the widespread availability of accessible technologies. Many of the most accessible technologies have been made so through legislation.
- The adoption of the European Accessibility Act and other disability-specific legislation in Europe, such as the Web Directive and standards for accessible ICT and the built

environment, represents a strong legal framework for accessibility in the field of ICT. This legislation aims to ensure that mainstream technologies are accessible to people with disabilities and support their full participation in society.

- The EDF is taking a twin track approach to addressing accessibility, including advocating for the implementation of disability-specific legislation, such as the European Accessibility Act, and mainstreaming accessibility in sectorial legislation. This means that the EDF is working to ensure that accessibility is considered in all relevant policies and laws, not just those that are specifically focused on disability.
- The EDF is advocating for the inclusion of accessibility requirements in various digital policies and legislation, such as the European electronic communications code, the digital ID regulation, and the artificial intelligence act.
- The EDF recommends using the requirements outlined in the European Accessibility Act as a common approach to ensuring accessibility in these different policy areas. This will provide legal certainty on what accessibility means in practice and help companies and public organizations understand how to implement it. The European Accessibility Act sets out specific requirements for the accessibility of ICT products and services, as well as requirements for the provision of accessible information and communication services.
- Standards, such as EN301509 in Europe and WCAG and US Section 508, can be used as tools to demonstrate compliance with accessibility legislation. These standards provide detailed guidance on how to design and develop accessible ICT products and services, and can help organizations ensure that they meet the requirements set out in accessibility legislation.
- Harmonization of accessibility policies should not be an excuse to prevent progress, but rather a means to ensure an adequate level of accessibility. The EDF encourages companies and public organizations to go beyond the legal requirements and innovate in order to further improve accessibility. This could involve developing new technologies or approaches that address the specific needs of people with disabilities in new and innovative ways.

Q (to all): “What would be your main advice to policy and decision makers from the EU to advance the implementation? What is a predicted time frame to ensure that all citizen in EU region will have access to digital information, products, and services, in an equal and equitable manner, which is our final goal for all?”

- **European Commission, Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero:** To advance the implementation of accessible digital information, products, and services in the EU, it is important to prioritize implementation and enforcement efforts. This includes reinforcing enforcement rules to ensure that legislation and policies are effectively implemented. The full applicability of relevant legislation is expected in 2,5 years; hence June 2025, which may constitute a significant milestone.
- **Communications Regulatory Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms. Amela Odošić:** 2030 may be a more feasible target for the implementation of accessible digital information, products, and services in developing countries in Europe. To help these countries meet deadlines, providing training and capacity building opportunities is important. These opportunities can be offered by organizations such as ITU-D.
- **European Disability Forum, Mr. Alejandro Moledo:** The key to implementing and enforcing legislation related to accessibility for persons with disabilities is to bring together all relevant stakeholders and right holders to discuss and agree on a clear roadmap for implementation. The importance of political will in making this happen is also noted. It is recommended that all stakeholders and right holders remain in the same room until an agreement is reached and a clear roadmap for implementation is established. The goal is for significant improvements to be made in the lives of persons with disabilities by 2025.

SESSION II: STANDARDIZATION OF DIGITAL TOOLS AND SERVICES

The image is a promotional banner for a virtual session. At the top, it features the ITU logo and the text 'ITU Events' in a blue bar. Below this, the main title 'Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL' is displayed in large blue letters, with the subtitle 'Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities' underneath. A purple box indicates 'Session II' and the topic 'Standardization of digital tools and services'. The central part of the banner shows five video thumbnails of the speakers: Kaoru Mizuno (Moderator), Lidia Best, Susanna Laurin, Chiara Giovannini, and Gamze Sofuoğlu. Each speaker's name and role are listed below their respective thumbnail. At the bottom, the date and time '6 December 2022, 14:00 - 16:30 (CET), Virtual' are provided, along with social media links for Twitter (@ITUEurope), a website link (itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-22), and a registration link (itu.int/net/CRM/js/sr/C-00012072).

ITU Events
Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL
Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Session II
Standardization of digital tools and services

Kaoru Mizuno
Representative
ITU Telecommunication Standardization Bureau
Moderator

Lidia Best
Accessibility Expert & President
European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

Susanna Laurin
Chief Research and Innovation Officer (Funka) & Representative to the EU (G3ict)
Funka & G3ict (The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs)

Chiara Giovannini
Senior Manager, Policy & Innovation (Accessibility) & Deputy Secretary General
European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation (ANEC)

Gamze Sofuoğlu
Master Lead Brand Manager & Product Manager (Mobile applications and accessibility solutions for persons with disabilities)
Turkcell, digital operator

6 December 2022, 14:00 - 16:30 (CET), Virtual

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Figure 4. Session 2

Focus: Standardization of digital tools and services from the perspective of different stakeholders and experts; Challenges faced in achieving standardization-related goals; The most pressing issue in achieving an inclusive society through accessibility technology.

Moderator: Ms. Kaoru Mizuno, Programme Coordinator at the Study Groups Department of ITU Telecommunication Standardization Bureau.

Interactive Discussion: **Ms. Lidia Best**, Accessibility Expert and President, European Federation of Hard of Hearing People; **Ms. Susanna Laurin**, Representative to the EU for G3ict, Chief Research and Innovation Officer for Funka & Chair, ETSI/CEN/CENELEC Joint Working Group on eAccessibility; **Ms. Chiara Giovannini**, Senior Manager for Policy and Innovation – Accessibility & Deputy Secretary General, European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation (ANEC); and **Ms. Gamze Sofuoğlu**, Master Lead Brand Manager, Turkcell.

Key points

Q (to all): “Explain the roles and activities being taken within your organization in terms of standardization and legislation to ensure accessibility of technology for persons with disabilities. What are the challenges that you have experienced in accomplishing your goals?”

- **European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, Ms. Lidia Best**
 - The European Federation of Hard of Hearing People has focused on monitoring accessibility across European Member States. This has included publishing two state subtitling reports, one in 2011 and another in 2015, which examine the current state from the perspective of hard of hearing individuals.
 - The organization has also been actively involved at ITU in the development of standards; e.g. remote captioning, as they recognize that many captioning services do not fully meet the quality and user experience standards that are necessary for hard of hearing individuals to fully benefit from digital technologies.
 - The organization has also been involved in the development of global standards for accessible telehealth. This is particularly important given the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **G3ict, Funka & ETSI/CEN/CENELEC Joint Working Group on eAccessibility, Ms. Susanna Laurin**
 - The ETSI/CEN/CENELEC joint working group, of which the Ms. Laurin is the Chair, coordinates the work of the EN on the Web Accessibility Directive and other standards for the Accessibility Act.
 - As the representative to the EU for G3ict and the International Association of Accessibility Professionals, standards are a key focus. These organizations are member-based, and their members are involved in standardization work.
 - Funka, the disability consultancy Ms. Laurin works, has been involved in ensuring the implementation of standards for over 20 years in different countries, including at the EU level. The consultancy website has also served as a test bed for W3C standards, including the WCAG disability guidelines, in all their different versions.
 - The focus is on ensuring that the standardization process is as accessible as possible and that the views of end users are represented, as well as those of organizations and policymakers.

- One of the biggest challenges with standardization is ensuring its success, which requires balancing the views of all stakeholders and making the process as accessible as possible.
- **European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation, Chiara Giovannini**
 - ANEC has been working to mainstream standards for the accessibility of products and services since 1999, with the goal of making as many products as possible accessible to all citizens and consumers.
 - Since 2003, ANEC has advocated for European legislation and standards on web accessibility in partnership with the disability movement, recognizing the importance of ensuring that all citizens and consumers have access to relevant information.
 - As technology evolves and there is a need for accessibility across a variety of platforms and products and services, ANEC has joined forces with the disability movement again to advocate for the European Accessibility Act through the use of standards.
 - ANEC plans to soon begin work on new or revised standards for e-accessibility and accessibility of support services related to products and services, as well as other kinds of nondigital accessibility standards.
 - Standards can also be used by public authorities as a tool for market surveillance to ensure that products and services are as accessible as they should be.
- **Turkcell, Ms. Gamze Sofuoğlu**
 - Turkcell has a history of contributing to standards and regulations for disabled people.
 - Turkcell has a division within a governmental organization that serves over 200,000 customers and has responsibilities, such as setting up a visual call center for deaf people and providing location-based services for disabled people using feature phones. However, Turkcell has provided such services for disabled people even before these standards were in place.

- Turkcell's efforts for accessibility and disability inclusion are not limited to standards and regulations. The company has a multi-faceted approach, including making accessibility more visible within the organization, enhancing the accessibility of existing products and solutions, and removing social barriers through technology.
- Examples of these efforts include providing audio description technology for blind people for the past five years, including audio descriptions for over 400 popular movies, as well as developing a new application for deaf people and an education platform for children with autism.
- Turkcell's overall goal is to promote an equal and accessible life for everyone.

Q (to all): “What kind of technical standards do you think will be needed to support the implementation of technologies to ensure future accessibility for persons with disabilities?”

- **European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, Ms. Lidia Best**
 - Hard of hearing people need the support of all stakeholders to expand the remote captioning standard, which has only been available in English since 2016, to other languages.
 - There is a need for standards for automated speech to text captioning that are recognized by the industry, users, and the ITU, in order to address false claims of the accuracy and quality of captioning. These standards should be freely available to users to advocate for better access at the national level.
 - The inclusion of assistive listening devices and their accessibility within building infrastructure is also important for hard of hearing people.
- **G3ict, Funka & ETSI/CEN/CENELEC Joint Working Group on e-Accessibility, Ms. Susanna Laurin**
 - The standardization request or mandate for the European Accessibility Act includes updating three EN standards and producing two reports. These updates and reports will be connected to the legislation and will be used to ensure that all standards for accessibility are effective.
 - One important aspect of these standards is cognitive accessibility, which refers to the ability of products, services, and environments to be used by people with cognitive impairments or disabilities. Currently, the focus of accessibility

standards is mainly on technical aspects, such as making sure websites are compatible with screen readers or that products have buttons that are easy to press. However, there is a need to also consider the cognitive accessibility of these products, services, and environments to ensure that they are usable for all people.

- Another topic that is being discussed is real-time text, which refers to the ability to transmit text in real-time, such as through a messaging app or during a live video call. There is ongoing debate about the best way to implement real-time text in a way that is accessible to all users.
- In the next five years, there is also a need to start working on standards for emerging technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and extended reality. These technologies are becoming more mainstream and will be used in a variety of contexts, making it important to consider the accessibility of these technologies for all users. While there is already work being done on these technologies at the ISO and W3C level, it is important to also address them at the EU level to ensure that all users have access to these emerging technologies.
- **European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation, Chiara Giovannini**
 - The accessibility of products, services, and environments for people with learning disabilities, including dementia and other cognitive impairments, is a new area of focus that requires attention.
 - At the European level, it is important to focus on standards that are linked to accessibility. However, there is currently a lack of identification and functional needs for people with learning disabilities.
 - In 2012, efforts were made to develop recommendations for the design and development of devices and applications, such as mobile phones and smartphones, to make them more accessible for people with cognitive disabilities.

- Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and virtual and augmented reality, can either be obstacles or tools for increasing accessibility for people with cognitive disabilities. For example, artificial intelligence systems can be used to create user interfaces that are easier to use, while virtual and augmented reality can be used for education and to recreate sensory information in a virtual world. However, it is important to ensure that these technologies are used in an accessible manner.
- Smart environments, including smart cities and smart phones, are sectors where accessibility requirements are needed because they connect people and devices and require accessible interfaces. If implemented properly, these technologies can be useful tools for independent living.
- **Turkcell, Ms. Gamze Sofuoğlu**
 - The previous panelists have highlighted the increasing popularity of the Metaverse.
 - The speaker, as a blind individual, is particularly excited about the potential for the Metaverse to be accessible and beneficial for people with disabilities.
 - The speaker is interested in exploring how a blind person might be able to fully utilize the features and capabilities of the Metaverse.
 - The speaker hopes that the ongoing development of the Metaverse will continue to prioritize and accommodate the needs of disabled users.
 - The speaker expresses enthusiasm about the potential for the Metaverse to positively impact the lives of disabled individuals.

Q (to all): What do you wish to highlight as the most important issue to achieve an inclusive society through accessibility technology for persons with disabilities?"

- **European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, Ms. Lidia Best**
 - The ITU has emphasized the importance of ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to meaningfully participate in discussions and decision-making processes.
 - However, it is often the case that consultations and other participation opportunities are not adequately accessible for persons with disabilities. It is important to ensure that accessibility accommodations, such as assistive

devices and captioning, are provided in order to allow individuals with disabilities to fully engage in these events.

- In addition to accessibility considerations, it is also crucial to provide mentorship and enabling opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This can include exposing them to different areas of work and providing guidance and support as they participate in discussions and decision-making processes. Providing mentorship and enabling opportunities can help to ensure that individuals with disabilities are able to meaningfully contribute to discussions and decision-making processes.
- **G3ict, Funka & ETSI/CEN/CENELEC Joint Working Group on eAccessibility, Ms. Susanna Laurin**
 - Participation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in standardization and product development is essential in order to create effective and inclusive solutions.
 - There are many resources available to help individuals understand and use standards, but it is important to make sure that these resources are more widely known and utilized.
 - If standards were more consistently incorporated into the processes of developing products and services, it could lead to a more inclusive society overall.
 - The untapped resource of standards has the potential to contribute significantly to the goal of an inclusive society. By making sure that standards are more widely known and utilized, it may be possible to create more inclusive products and services that meet the needs of all individuals.
- **European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation, Chiara Giovannini**
 - Access to products and services is a fundamental right for all consumers, regardless of age or ability. If access is restricted or unavailable, it can be considered discrimination.

- In order to ensure that all consumers can use mainstream products and services, it is important to incorporate accessibility into their design. Standards can be used to guide the creation of inclusive and accessible products and services.
- The participation of people with disabilities in the decision-making process is crucial for ensuring that the needs and perspectives of this group are considered. Mainstreaming accessibility and the use of standards can also help to ensure that products and services are inclusive and accessible for all users.
- **Turkcell, Ms. Gamze Sofuoğlu**
 - In developing countries, accessibility and disability inclusion can be emotionally charged topics due to societal hierarchies and the way in which companies view them as a form of social responsibility.
 - However, accessibility is a fundamental human right and it is necessary to provide equal and accessible solutions for persons with disabilities in order to truly address these issues.
 - While technical and regulatory challenges can be addressed, there must also be a shift in perspective towards disability and accessibility in order to truly create inclusive and accessible experiences for all.

SESSION III: THE FUTURE OF ICT AND DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY: WHAT DOES YOUTH ASPIRE?

ITUEvents
Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL
 Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Session III
The future of ICT and digital accessibility: What does youth aspire?

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|--|--|--|---|--|
|  Ecmel Aysu Sürmen Regional Focal Point (GC-EUR) & Digital Inclusion Consultant ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Envoy & ITU Europe Office Moderator |  Timothy Rowies Rapporteur on Mainstreaming Disability Issues (CoE) & Former President (EUDY) Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth & European Union of the Deaf Youth |  Ivana Recmanová Disability Activist, Writer, Translator & Communication Advisor for LGBT+ and neurodivergent people A-komunita |  Dr. Miro Griffiths Disability Activist & Scholar in Disability Studies University of Leeds |  Jack Kavanagh Pharmacist, Speaker, Facilitator & Host "Only Human" Podcast & "Breaking Boundaries" Documentary |
|--|--|--|---|--|

6 December 2022, 14:00 - 16:30 (CET), Virtual

Follow us on Twitter: @ITUEurope | Visit our webpage: itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-22 | Register: itu.int/net/CRM/js/sr/C-00012072

Figure 5. Session 3

Focus: The most pressing issues in ICT and digital accessibility for young people with disabilities; Youth vision for a more Accessible Europe; Unique challenges faced by youth with disabilities.

Moderator: **Ms. Ecmel Aysu Sürmen**, Digital Inclusion Consultant, ITU Office for Europe & Regional Focal Point, ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Envoy.

Panel Discussion: **Mr./Mx. Timothy Rowies**, Rapporteur on Mainstreaming Disability Issues, Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth & Former President, European Union of the Deaf Youth; **Ms./Mx. Ivana Recmanová**, Disability Activist, Writer, Translator and Communication Advisor, A-Komunita; **Dr. Miro Griffiths**, Scholar in Disability Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds; **Mr. Jack Kavanagh**, Pharmacist, Speaker, Non-Exec Director, Only Human Podcast & “Breaking Boundaries” Documentary.

Key points

Q (to all): “What do you think are the most pressing issues in ICT and digital accessibility especially for young people with disabilities? What would you envision for a more Accessible Europe?”

- **Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth, Mr./Mx. Timothy Rowies**
 - The Council of Europe is an organization that includes 46 Member States, and the issue of accessibility and disability inclusion is complex and varied among these countries.
 - There have been efforts to establish standardization and legal requirements related to accessibility at the European Union level, but there is still progress to be made and new developments to consider, such as the impact of social media on accessibility.
 - One challenge is the lack of implementation of the European Accessibility Act and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards, which can result in a lack of accessibility for certain disability communities, such as the deaf community that uses sign language.

- It is important to focus on providing information that is accessible and understandable to persons with disabilities, rather than solely relying on technology, as technology can sometimes condense or omit important details.
- It is crucial to involve persons with disabilities in the creation process to ensure that accessibility is not an afterthought and to avoid mistakes that have been made in the past.
- There may also be issues with the quality and trustworthiness of information provided to persons with disabilities, which can impact their ability to create and disseminate their own information. This can be particularly problematic for those who are not professionals in social media or journalism and may not have the skills or resources to verify the accuracy of the information they receive.
- **A-Komunita, Ms./Mx. Ivana Recmanová**
 - Neurodivergent individuals, such as those with autism or co-occurring disabilities, may not have visible or detectable disabilities, leading to miscommunication and misunderstandings.
 - The internet can be a useful tool for neurodivergent individuals to connect with others and communicate, but it was not designed with the needs of neurodivergent individuals in mind.
 - This can lead to difficulties navigating the internet, such as the lack of content warnings or clear markings for sarcasm or irony in written communication.
 - The lack of these features can make it difficult for neurodivergent individuals to access certain material on the internet and may trigger past traumas or other conditions.
 - It is important to consider the needs of neurodivergent individuals and incorporate appropriate accommodations when designing internet resources and communication tools.
- **University of Leeds, Dr. Miro Griffiths**
 - Technology can be used to increase oppression and marginalization of persons with disabilities and raise questions about which values and lives are valued in society.

- It is important to consider how technology can be used to improve and enhance opportunities for inclusion and accessibility, rather than just increasing productivity or forcing persons with disabilities to fit into certain expectations or environments.
- During the pandemic, technology has opened up new opportunities for access to community spaces, education, and places of work, but it is important to ensure that persons with disabilities are not only included for the purpose of improving productivity or achieving specific outcomes.
- Persons with disabilities should be involved in the design and development of new technologies and have a voice in the discussions about how these technologies are used.
- It is important to allow technology to open up new ways of being and existing, rather than just intensifying societal expectations of productivity and value.
- Ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to participate in technology and communities on their own terms is crucial for promoting inclusion and accessibility.
- **Only Human Podcast & “Breaking Boundaries” Documentary, Mr. Jack Kavanagh**
 - The speaker is an individual who acquired a spinal cord injury at the age of 20 and has since experienced the positive impact of technology on their life. Specifically, the use of digital technology and the Internet of Things has allowed for greater flexibility in terms of work and education, and has facilitated broader participation in international projects.
 - The speaker believes that the use of universal design principles, which consider the full range of physical, sensory, and neurodiversity, can result in the development of more inclusive technologies for everyone.
 - There are significant disparities in access to technologies across the European region, and it is important to address these inequalities in order to ensure that technology can facilitate and level the playing field for all individuals.
 - Designing technologies with diverse individuals in mind can lead to more inclusive designs that benefit everyone. Additionally, the speaker highlights

the need to consider the democratization of technology access and ensure that it is available to all individuals in order to truly facilitate and enable human functioning.

Q (to Mr./Mx. Rowies): As a rapporteur on mainstreaming disability issues and an expert with lived experience, would you like to emphasize more your experience specifically related to the accessibility of information and communication technologies (ICT) for deaf and hard of hearing individuals?

Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth, Mr./Mx. Timothy Rowies

- There are laws in place that aim to promote equality and inclusion for disabled and marginalized communities, but these laws are often not enforced and depend on the goodwill of individuals and institutions.
- Inclusion means ensuring equal accessibility and opportunities for all, including people from diverse genders, races, and ethnicities, as well as persons with disabilities.
- Accessibility for deaf individuals, such as sign language interpretation and subtitles, is important in everyday life and emergency situations like calling 112. However, many European countries do not have 112 services available in sign language, making it difficult for deaf individuals to access emergency help or assist others in need.
- Projects and innovations aimed at improving accessibility for persons with disabilities have been developed, but are not always implemented or widely available. It is important to involve persons with disabilities in the development of these technologies to ensure they meet the needs and perspectives of the community.
- During emergencies, deaf individuals were left out of the information loop and had to rely on volunteers and other sources for interpretation, which led to misinformation and a lack of timely information.
- The "nothing about us without us" principle emphasizes the importance of involving persons with disabilities in decision-making processes and ensuring that accessibility measures benefit everyone, not just persons with disabilities.

Q (to Ms./Mx. Recmanová): As a communication advisor, what important steps would you recommend to ensure that the digital environment is more accessible and inclusive for all?

A-Komunita, Ms./Mx. Ivana Recmanová

- There is a need for better representation of neurodivergent individuals in telecommunications and decision-making institutions related to the internet and online regulation. This representation should involve holding leadership positions and taking into account the needs and opinions of neurodivergent individuals.
- Neurodivergent individuals have diverse backgrounds, abilities, and skills, and should not be treated as interchangeable when considering their participation in decision-making bodies. It is important to consider the specific knowledge and expertise of individual neurodivergent individuals when selecting them for leadership roles, rather than viewing all neurodivergent individuals as having the same skills and expertise. Overall, it is important to recognize the individuality and diversity within the neurodivergent community and to actively include and support these individuals in decision-making processes.

Q (to Dr. Griffiths): What have you found to be most successful in engaging young people with disabilities in activism? How might ICT accessibility play a role in this regard?

University of Leeds, Dr. Miro Griffiths

- The speaker's research focuses on how and why persons with disabilities engage in resistance practices, such as protesting and campaigning. Technologies can provide new opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in these efforts, including through political participation and the sharing of personal stories.
- Many social justice movements, including the climate change movement, do not prioritize or centralize the needs of persons with disabilities. Technologies can be used to bridge and intersect these movements and prioritize accessibility and participation for all.
- While technologies have the potential to improve aspects of functioning for persons with disabilities, it is important to also address the existing conditions and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the present.

- The prioritization and development of technologies should consider the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities, and ensure that persons with disabilities are included in decision-making processes.
- The relationship between purchasing power and technology is important to consider when thinking about accessibility for persons with disabilities, as financial barriers can limit access to technology.
- Collaboration and partnerships between persons with disabilities and organizations, as well as the wider community, can help to advance the inclusion and accessibility of technologies for persons with disabilities.

Q (to Mr. Kavanagh): How has your experience shaped your work to help foster inclusive digital environments? Could you elaborate further on your journey, and how it connects to ICT accessibility?

Only Human Podcast & “Breaking Boundaries” Documentary, Mr. Jack Kavanagh

- In Ireland, access to assistive technologies has been an important factor in enabling individuals with disabilities to fully participate in society. These technologies can help to level the playing field and allow individuals to engage with others and reengage following changes in functional abilities.
- Timeliness is a crucial aspect of assistive technology provision, as the needs of individuals with disabilities can change rapidly over the course of their lives. This is particularly true for younger individuals, whose functional capacity may be changing rapidly and who may require technologies that meet their evolving needs in terms of physical, learning, and communication abilities.
- A global report on assistive technologies found that digital technologies, in particular, have a nine-fold benefit on societal impact and quality of life for individuals when provided in a timely manner. This highlights the importance of timely access to assistive technologies in order to maximize their benefits.
- The Internet of Things (IoT) and interconnected assistive technologies hold great potential for the future, especially in supporting individuals with disabilities as they transition into adulthood. Providing timely access to these technologies can help to ensure that individuals are able to fully participate in society and live fulfilling lives.

CLOSING REMARKS

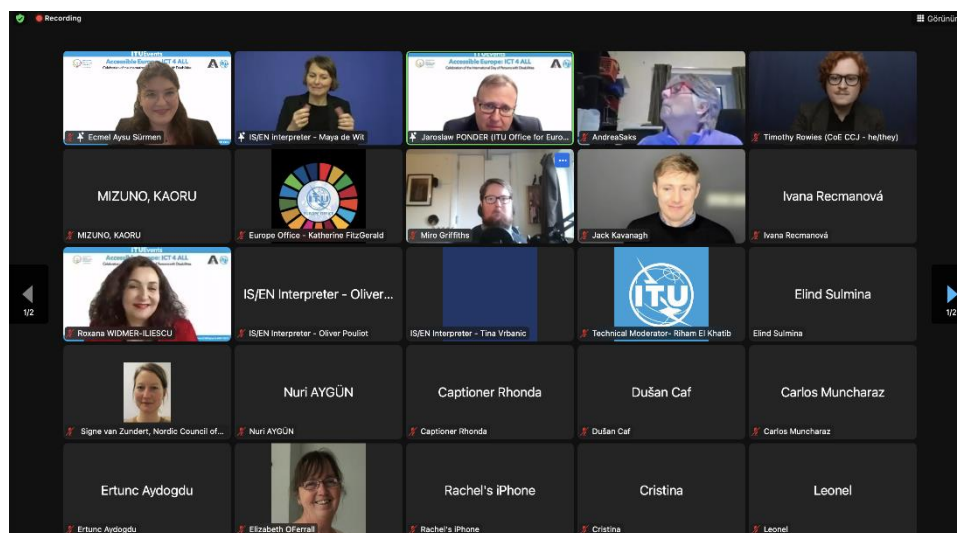


Figure 6. Session 4

Concluding remark from Mr. Jaroslav K. Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe, ITU

Mr. Jaroslav Ponder thanked all participants in the Accessible Europe event for their contributions and for exploring the importance of a harmonized approach to ensuring the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the digital world. He emphasized the progress that has been made in Europe towards an accessible digital society, and expressed confidence that with combined efforts, an even more accessible Europe can be created. He stated that this can be achieved by continuing to work together to ensure that all persons with disabilities have the same access to digital opportunities and services as everyone else, and by ensuring that digital tools and services are designed with accessibility in mind, so that everyone has an equal chance to benefit from the digital world.

Mr. Ponder announced that the Accessible Europe initiative will continue to engage all countries and stakeholders across Europe to foster an enabling environment through regional events, policy guidance, capacity building programs, and regional competitions to identify innovative accessible solutions. He encouraged all participants to continue their efforts towards an accessible digital Europe and beyond, and to take a closer look at the work of the

ITU on accessibility and its programs in the development, telecommunication, and standardization sector. He also called on youth to pledge their commitment to the digital accessibility cause and make their commitments visible.

Mr. Ponder thanked his team, the captioners and sign language interpreters for their hard work. He declared the event finished and the new cycle of the ITU regional initiative for Europe on Accessible Europe as officially kicked off.

VIDEO CONTRIBUTIONS

In addition to the esteemed speakers who participated live at the Accessible Europe event, participants also benefited from three informative videos, which can be viewed below:

1. [ICT/digital accessibility: The key to achieving a digitally inclusive world \(English captioned\)](#)
2. [How ITU supports accessible ICTs for persons with disabilities](#)
3. [Generation Connect – Europe Youth Group Declaration](#)