

ITUEvents

Accessible Europe

ICT 4 ALL - 2019

4 - 6 December 2019
St Julian's, Malta

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Organized within the framework of the ITU Regional Initiative for Europe on accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development

ICT ACCESSIBILITY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WEB ACCESSIBILITY TV AND VIDEO PROGRAMMING ACCESSIBLE PROCUREMENT UNIVERSAL DESIGN INNOVATION & EMERGING ISSUES GOOD PRACTICES



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OUTCOME REPORT

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In addition, ITU would like to express their gratitude to **panel moderators** (Mr. Jaroslav Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe; Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, European Commission; Prof. Alexei Dingli, Associate Professor - Artificial Intelligence, Faculty of Information & Communication Technology, University of Malta; Stanley Debono, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for ICT Accessibility (FITA), Malta; Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, Senior Programme Officer, Digital Inclusion Division for Telecommunication; David Wood, Co-Chair IRG-AVA - Intersector Rapporteur Group Audiovisual Media Accessibility, ITU; Simao Campos, Counsellor, ITU-T SG16, ITU; Andrea Saks, JCA-AHF Chairman, ITU) who provided relevant material for this report.

Evaluators of the **Regional Competition for Accessible Europe** (Alireza Darvishy from Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Dominique Archambault from AAATE; Gion Linder from SWISS TXT; Joseph Cinifrom Agenzija Sapport; Mark Wheatley from European Union of the Deaf (EUD); Michael Fembek from Zero Project, Essl Foundation; Ricard López from the European Deafblind Network (EDbN)) provided expert advice to identify winners and runner-ups. In this context, Agenzija Sapport, Malta, and ZeroProject, Germany, provided special support for the Regional Competition for Accessible Europe.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The second edition of “[Accessible Europe: ICT 4 All](#)” was held from 4 to 6 December 2019 in St. Julian’s, Malta. It was jointly organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the European Commission (EC). The conference was hosted by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Persons with Disability & Active Ageing (PSDAA) of Malta in continuation of successful work of the [2018 edition held in Vienna, Austria](#)¹.

The workshop was conducted by the ITU Office for Europe, within the context of the European Regional Initiative approved by WTDC-17 on “Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development”, that supports regional cooperation and engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the development of ICT accessibility, raising awareness and promoting relevant guidelines, including exchanging knowledge and sharing good practices on ICT accessibility products and services for persons with disabilities and specific needs. The workshop was also supported by the ITU-D Digital Inclusion Division, ITU-T SG16 (Multimedia) and ITU-R SG6 (Broadcasting service).

The event provided an opportunity to address the key challenges in the ICT accessibility landscape in Europe with relevant European and International stakeholders, covering regulatory and policy frameworks as well as emerging trends in a variety of ICT accessibility related fields including [Artificial Intelligence](#)², Universal Design, [Procurement & Standards](#)³, and [Audiovisual Media Services](#)⁴, for which three background papers have been elaborated.

Key topics covered by the workshop included:

- Session 1: International, Europe region and European Union vision. Targets, actions and key resources to support in ICT Accessibility ;
- Session 2: Enabling environment for Accessible Europe. Concrete role of Regulation and its enforcement;
- Session 3: Artificial Intelligence for Accessibility;
- Session 4: Fostering European digital innovation ecosystem for assistive technologies;
- Session 5: Accessibility in Education;
- Session 6: Advancing Implementation of Web Accessibility Across Europe;
- Session 7: Future of Accessible Audiovisual media services, TV and video programming;
- Session 8: Universal Design, Procurement and Standards;
- Session 9: Telecom relay services: Practical experiences, challenges and opportunities in Europe;
- Session 10: Knowledge Development for ICT Accessibility;
- Session 11: Partnership for Accessible Europe.

¹ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2018/AE/AccessibleEurope.aspx>

² https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Documents/Events/2019/Accessible%20Europe/1008_AI%20and%20ICT%20Accessibility_we_bEA3_Final.pdf

³ https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Documents/Events/2019/Accessible%20Europe/1008_ICT%20Accessibility%20standards%20procurement%20FINAL.pdf

⁴ https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Documents/Events/2019/Accessible%20Europe/191107_AVMS%20Accessibility%20in%20Europe%20%28Final%20edition%29.pdf

The main outcomes of the workshop are outlined in this report, structured by presenting the key points from each session.

2. PARTICIPATION

The workshop targeted all stakeholders involved in the development ICT accessibility in Europe and outside Europe. These stakeholders included ICT policy makers, National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs), broadcasting authorities, NGOs, European disability associations, industry, research institutions and academia, representing both ITU Members and non-Members. Over 45 eminent speakers presented and discussed in the session. Details of the agenda and speakers are available [here](#).

Over 240 participants from more than 30 countries took part in the conference including high-level representatives of national regulators from the ITU Europe region, the Maltese Government, the European Commission, the UN CRPD Committee and the European Disability Forum.



Figure 1: Group photo with speakers and participants of the workshop

2.1 Programme Committee

- Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe, ITU;
- Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, DG for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, European Commission;
- Joseph Cini, Director, Projects & Estate Management, Aгенzija Sapport, Government of Malta;
- Lena Lattion, Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe, ITU;
- Rosheen Awotar-Mauree, Programme Officer, ITU Office for Europe, ITU;
- Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, Senior Programme Officer, Digital Inclusion Division, ITU;
- Simao Campos, Counsellor, ITU-T SG16, ITU;
- Alistair De Gaetano, Coordinator, Office for Disability Issues, Government of Malta;
- Rosalie Vella Piscopo Manager – Strategic Marketing & International Relations.

2.2 Exhibition

Throughout the three days, participants could benefit from a number of exhibitions about the latest technologies in field of ICT accessibility. Exhibitors included Signly, Rogervoice, ShowMeText, Waymap, BeMyEyes, BrainControl, VR Therapies, NITICS, CuARdian Angel.



Figures 2-9: Solutions presented by local and international exhibitors

2.3 Awards Ceremony

As part of the final phase of the Regional Competition for Accessible Europe, [Nominated Candidates](#)⁵ identified by the [Evaluation Committee](#)⁶ meeting held in Geneva on 24 and 25 October were invited on stage for a 3-minute pitching. Presentations are available [here](#).

Following the pitching session, all Nominated Candidates received a recognition for the achievement within the context of the Regional Competition for Accessible Europe. Furthermore, the winners for each category were announced and awarded with trophies, respectively for:

- Category 1: Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing: **Signly**
- Category 2: Persons with visual impairments: **Waymap**
- Category 3: Persons with speech impairments: **IrisGo**
- Category 4: Persons with cognitive and intellectual disabilities: **VR Therapies**
- Category 5: Persons with physical disabilities: **Mirrorable**



Figures 10: Winners and Runner ups of the Regional Competition for Accessible Europe

⁵ https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Documents/Events/2019/Accessible%20Europe/%28final%29%20Accessible%20Europe_Regional%20Competition_Nominated%20Projects%20%28final%29.pdf

⁶ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2019/AE/Evaluation-Committee.aspx>

2.4 Project Laboratory

An interactive Project Laboratory was organized to seek feedback from stakeholders involved in making Europe more accessible, in line with the Regional Initiative for Europe on Accessibility. Many points were raised and will greatly help to make the next edition of Accessible Europe even more fruitful. In addition, the ITU-Zero Project Curation Programme on “Strengthening the ICT-centric Innovation Ecosystem for Accessible Europe” was presented for feedback.

A [presentation](#) was given and proceedings for the session are available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTh1NOevpaY>

3. DOCUMENTATION

The workshop was paperless. Relevant documentation, including the agenda, **presentations recordings and a background industry paper** were made available on the event webpage: <https://www.itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-19>

The workshop was supported with captioning facility and the raw caption text is available on the event page. **Photos** of the event can be consulted at [here](#)⁷. **Video recordings** of the workshop as well as this outcome report are also made available at the above named event webpage via Agenzija Sapport channels: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPyQRwzawSkB_GvGhDLI4Rg

In addition, more than 12 high-level expert video **interviews** were conducted by the Ministry of Family Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity of the Government of Malta and are made available [here](#).

4. OPENING ADDRESS AND SETTING THE CONTEXT

Opening Ceremony Addresses

In his opening speech, **Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis**, Parliamentary Secretary for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, Government of Malta said: *“we should never forget those groups to whom accessibility does not only mean having an easier life. For persons with disabilities and older persons in particular, accessibility means the difference between participating actively in society, and not being able to participate at all.”* The Parliamentary Secretary added: *“we have brought together the best minds, from Europe and beyond, under one roof to build upon the efforts of the ITU and the European Commission, in the field of accessible information and communication technology”*.

Following high-level speech from the political ranks, **Ms. Ruth Sciberras**, Chief Executive Officer, Agenzija Sapport, Government of Malta intervened, thanking all international stakeholders that made their way to Malta. Ms Sciberras reiterated that Accessible Europe is an opportunity to advance the accessibility agenda, making Europe a hub for innovation in ICT Accessibility and that Agenzija Sapport is investing a number of initiatives in this regard.

Then **Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder**, Head of Regional Office for Europe, ITU, greeted all participants remarking the importance of Accessible Europe as a platform to advance the Regional Initiative on *“Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development”*, that is driven by the ITU Office for Europe and the European Commission. Mr. Ponder also remarked

⁷ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itupictures/albums/72157712189402226>

the importance of this event in the wider context of achievement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 10 on reducing inequalities.

Welcome Remarks

Mr. Lászlo Lovaszy, Committee Member, UN CRPD, highlighted the importance that Accessible Europe is covering all the topics surrounding ICT accessibility, from policy to innovation to regulation. 13 years since its finalization, the CRPD is beginning to understand that new solutions are emerging that no one could foresee, with examples of assistive avatars and robots. Governments have the responsibility to foster innovators but also to provide the people with the means to access this technology. Mr. Lovaszy finally remarked that more efforts are needed in research and innovation with attention to diversity in technology.

Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, DG for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, European Commission, thanked the host Malta and ITU for work done in the preparation of the forum and remarked the importance of Accessible Europe as a place to share best practices and ideas to advance the accessibility agenda in the region. Ms. Placencia-Porrero stated that the European Commission has put together a set of policy instruments, including legislation, standards development, funding opportunities, research programmes that must be used better. The EU Accessibility act is already in transposition and this is important as it raises attention across all sectors of the economy, but legislation cannot solve all problems and training and other policies such as training in accessibility are also key to improve the current situation. Finally, Ms. Placencia-Porrero highlighted that the EU is currently evaluating the outcomes of the last Accessibility Strategy and is looking forward to input from Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality.

Mr. Alejandro Moledo, Policy Coordinator, European Disability Forum (EDF), said that EDF is glad to be representing and contributing to the European Union legal framework. As done with setting standards for data protection, now the EU needs to go in the same direction with accessibility. Mr Moledo also remarked that best practices on Universal Design Principles are including persons with disabilities in the design process. Finally, Mr. Moledo highlighted that accessibility isn't only beneficial for persons with disabilities but for all society.

Keynote Address

Ms. Jutta Treviranus, Director, Inclusive Research Design Centre, OCAD University gave a brilliant keynote address that was very much appreciated by all participants. We warmly recommend consulting Ms. Treviranus' intervention in full at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYZPhFmVclo> at 1:10:50.

5. CONFERENCE SESSIONS

SESSION 1: INTERNATIONAL, EUROPE REGION AND EUROPEAN UNION VISION. TARGETS, ACTIONS AND KEY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT IN ICT ACCESSIBILITY

Focus: The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the accessibility of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs); ITU actions and challenges; European Commission actions and regional challenges; Implementation and Facilitation.

Moderator: Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe, ITU.

Speakers: Presentation 1, Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA); [Presentation 2](#), Mr. László Lovaszy, Committee Member, UN CRPD; [Presentation 3](#): Mrs. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, Senior Programme Officer, Digital Inclusion Division for Telecommunication, ITU; [Presentation 4](#): Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, DG for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, European Commission; [Presentation 5](#): Mr. Oliver Scicluna, Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta.

Key points

- 90% of countries (180) globally have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and therefore they committed to create a legislative framework for accessibility.
- UNDESA published the 2018 Action Document with guidelines to adopt national ICT Accessibility policies and regulations, involve persons with disabilities in all stages of development, involve industry and improve data on ICT Accessibility.
- A thorough legislation that sets the rules for accessibility needs to have obligations as well as incentives and rewards for top performers. A strong enforcement mechanism is also important. In this context the participation of private, public sectors and consumers is crucial.
- In preparing the EU legislative framework, the national approaches were very fragmented. This was addressed by the European Union by setting obligations on economic operators, to public authorities, in public procurement and when using EU funds. In this way products and services are appropriately covered.
- While legislation is essential, it is not sufficient and must be complemented by other policies such as for example in standards, such as the EN 301 549, that has been recently revised consistently with WCAG 2.1. Moreover, Mandate 473 provides the procedures to ensure that economic actors understand how to deliver accessibility as well as Mandate 420 on accessibility requirements for the Built Environment that is in the process of being revised.
- For most people with disabilities technology makes things possible but this is not mainstream nor affordable or available. Many families find themselves in difficulty to afford technologies thus hindering the chances to ensure Digital Inclusion.
- Since the CRPD was created in Malta it has been pushing to advance national legislation consistently with article 9 and 21 to ensure that access to digital information is granted to persons with disabilities. However, local challenges still include, lack of resources, costly devices, financial schemes not fit for purpose, lack of human resources to meet demand as well as skills and knowledge in field of ICT accessibility.
- In general, technology should be human-centered and assistive technologies must therefore complement human capabilities, not substitute. Must rely on social and clear moral values aside

from legislation on marketing, development, procurement, and ultimate consumption of accessible ICT.

- Affordability remains a strong barrier that must be addressed by steering industry leaders to developing one stream of technology affordable to all, instead of accessible and non-accessible technology.

SESSION 2: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ACCESSIBLE EUROPE. THE CONCRETE ROLE OF REGULATION AND ITS ENFORCEMENT

Focus: Practical examples of implementing EU legislation related to Accessibility with European Country Case Studies; Future EU regulatory landscape for ICT Accessibility.

Moderator: Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, DG for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, European Commission

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, DG for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, European Commission; [Presentation 2](#), Therese Hourigan, End-User Working Group Co-Chair, BEREC; [Presentation 3](#), Ms. Elena Munoz, Head of the Web Accessibility Observatory - Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service, Spain; [Presentation 4](#), Mr. Nikola Ivanovic, Advisor to the Director, Agency for Electronic Media, Montenegro; [Presentation 5](#), Mr. Alejandro Moledo, Policy Coordinator, European Disability Forum.

Key points

- According to ITU, availability of additional measure regarding accessible terminal equipment, software, and online information is spreading across the continent with 41 countries having some type of additional measures implemented for enhanced accessibility for all.
- ITU is providing training, specialized technical assistance and guidelines to partner states on how to implement accessibility policies and legal frameworks, including the “ITU-G3ict Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report”, the “Web Accessibility – The Cornerstone of an Inclusive Digital Society” and the “Internet for @ll: National Programme in Web Accessibility” self-paced online training courses
- The European Accessibility Act is expected to become a key driver to implement ICT Accessibility in the EU region, introducing new methods of boosting customer empowerment in the world of ICT customer services and complaints.
- Spain has been implementing web accessibility initiatives since 2009 to help public administrations through cooperation and collaboration between the different levels and diverse bodies of Spanish administrations. Monitoring, help & training and awareness raising tools are also in place as they are key to maintain and improve accessibility in the long term.
- In Montenegro, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities prohibits discrimination. With regard to accessibility of media content availability there is a need for stronger cooperation and communication between different institutions as well as implementing more programs and policies at the state level.
- There are EU funds available for ICT Accessibility projects and more will certainly be available within the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Accessible ICTs are a mix of available Equipment, Equality Equity but Affordability remains the biggest barriers for many people in need of Accessible ICTs.

SESSION 3: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Focus: Innovative approaches, projects and implementation of Accessibility solutions that use AI, including concrete examples of innovative applications.

Moderator: Prof. Alexiei Dingli, Associate Professor - Artificial Intelligence, Faculty of Information & Communication Technology, University of Malta.

Background & Setting the Context: [Presentation](#), Ms. E.A. Draffan, ITU Consultant, ITU

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Mr. Klaus Höckner, Vice President, Hilfsgemeinschaft der Blinden und Sehschwachen Österreichs; [Presentation 2](#), Mr. Alejandro Moledo, Policy Coordinator, European Disability Forum; Presentation 3, Mr. Johan Keetalaar, Public Policy Manager, Facebook, Presentation 4, Dr. Claudia Borg, Lecturer – Artificial Intelligence, Faculty of Information & Communication Technology, University of Malta, Presentation, Bio

Key points

- EU strategy on AI: boosts AI uptake, tackles socio-economic changes, & ensure adequate ethical and legal framework. Moreover, in December 2018 the EC published a Coordinated Plan on AI, calling on Member States to develop national AI strategies by mid-2019. For ICT accessibility AI can offer many opportunities such as AI for accessible content, translation, subtitling, and clarity of complex information.
- Emerging technologies may pose some significant risks: discrimination and bias in AI (running on pre-created data sets), poor accessibility and usability of user interfaces, privacy & security, affordability and lack of digital skills needed.
- Overall, the future looks bright and there are various exciting technologies such as VR for people with mobility impairment, Human Language Technologies to allow people to control machines, etc.
- Emerging technologies involve a trade-off between benefits vs risks. Before deploying a technology in a given setting, it is critical to be sure it is safe using it. Risk of emerging technologies: discrimination & bias, poor accessibility & usability, interoperability with assistive technologies, privacy, affordability, lack of digital skills for end-users
- The European Commission promotes a “human-centric” approach to AI and “ethics by-design principles”, highlighting the need for having people with different abilities involved when creating new AI technologies. Computer Scientists must be challenges and engineers questioned, tech companies should be encouraged to adopt a universal design approach, policymakers should embed accessibility requirements in procurement tools and researchers should be encouraged to address the impact of emerging tech in persons with disabilities.
- Facebook is working on making continuous strides with regards to increased accessibility including real-time captioning on videos. Moreover, Facebook is creating new devices to enhance mobility and ease of access and use. Finally, Facebook is working on facial recognition and automatic alt text software as well as new ways to add to videos and photos.
- There is difficulty in creating accessible content with languages like Maltese. A first prototype for speech recognition of Maltese is being developed, but presents many challenges due to lack of data, particularly speech data which is annotated and aligned.

SESSION 4: FOSTERING EUROPEAN DIGITAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Focus: Examples of impactful emerging assistive technologies and their application across Europe, including concrete examples of successful digital assistive technologies and services; funding opportunities for innovative products and services for PwDs.

Moderator: Mr. Stanley Debono, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for ICT Accessibility (FITA), Malta

Background & Setting the Context: [Presentation](#), Ms. Teuta Bakalli, MITA (Malta Information Technology Agency) Innovation Hub, Malta

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Ms. Gudrun Stock, Deputy Head of Unit, Accessibility, Multilingualism, and Safer Internet, European Commission; [Presentation 2](#), Mr. Dominique Archambault, Board Member, AAATE; [Presentation 3](#), Mr. Renzo Andrich, President, EASTIN; [Presentation 4](#), Mr. Christoph Jo Muller, Board President, BEH - Bundesfachverband Elektronische Hilfsmittel e.V..

Key points

- Within the Research and Innovation Action (RIA) funding stream there are €7 mln for digital assistive technologies. The [call for proposals](#) will be open until 22 April 2020. Moreover, the European Union has established the Digital Accessibility Observatory (DAO) with €1.5 mln funding through the Coordination and Support Action (CSA).
- To foster an European ecosystem for assistive technologies It is key to know what accessible and assistive technology already exists and sharing information about projects other organizations worldwide are working on.
- In this regards, the EASTIN platform is a valuable resource for Assistive Technology and disability organizations worldwide, as it provides valuable aggregated data from one competent organization in each country.
- Innovation, collaboration and synergy are key enablers to accelerate and make the most of funding opportunities. Only with successful stories, can more money that is critical to go to market, be made available.
- Partner organizations different countries participating in innovation projects must seek to address differences between welfare systems, legal frameworks and other regional or national discrepancies.
- AAATE has launched the Bologna Declaration, calling for several actions within the assistive technologies domain.
- It is important to train engineers and computer scientists of tomorrow through adequate university courses. For example, the University of Paris 8 offers a Master in Technology and Disabilities.
- It must be ensured that a new Assistive Technology product is ready to be taken to the marketplace only once it has been thoroughly tested and validated by relevant users. In this regard, the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) has invested in incubation innovation with 16-week mentor-driven program to transform teams with ideas into tech companies.
- The Digital AT Industry Association DATEurope will be launched in March 2020 This will enable to pool digital technology for all, uniting DAT industries in Europe.

SESSION 5: ACCESSIBILITY IN EDUCATION

Focus: Examples of ICT accessibility projects in learning and education; accessible books and accessible publishing.

Moderator: Ms. Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, European Commission

Background & Setting the Context: Presentation, Mr. Ricardo Garcia, ITU Consultant, ITU

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Mr. David Zanoletty, Chief of Accessible Technology Department, Fundación ONCE; [Presentation 2](#), Mr. Svatoslav Ondra, Professor, Masaryk University, [Presentation 3](#); Ms. Cristina Mussinelli, President, Fondazione LIA, [Presentation 4](#); Ms. Sharon Borg & Ms. May Agius, Senior Assistive Technology Consultants, Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU), Agenzija Sapport, Malta.

Key points

- Multiple challenges are faced by students with disabilities such as inaccessible online services, lack of information regarding support, long duration of time in accommodating special needs, and the right to confidentiality.
- Mainstreaming the process of determining, producing and delivering the right accessible digital document to a student is often a lengthy, costly and complex process that needs to be addressed by academic institutions. This would include production and distribution of courseware in accessible formats, building repository of re-usable & shareable books in different accessible digital formats.
- Having to learn how to create accessible digital documents is often perceived by faculty members as an added burden. It is therefore key to build and promote life-long ICT accessibility learning programs among students, faculty and publishers.
- Building a repository of re-usable accessible digital textbooks that could be shared cross-border (under the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty) could benefit larger numbers of students with disabilities in different countries and generate huge cost savings.
- Fundación Once developing series of tools for teaching on accessibility. This includes MOOCs in both English and Spanish on accessible digital documents, accessibility in the public procurement of ICT, human-computer interaction, design for all and assistive technologies, mobile phone accessibility for all, accessible housing, and accessibility in customer service.
- Real accessibility for us is not getting as good as we expected it to years ago; it is important to continue striving towards continued accessibility in education in order to create equality between students. Services must include regular contact with teachers as well as assistive technologies on the spot.
- Promote books and reading in all its forms and spread a culture of accessibility through consulting and training involving all actors of the supply-chain.
- Every actor should contribute to accessible publications including content creators, digital distributors, books in print catalogues, digital libraries, as well as reading solutions. Only through an inclusive process, best practices and standards in the field of accessible publication can be implemented.
- Incorporating challenges such as under-resourced languages like Maltese, needing procurement and technology implementation to move at a quicker rate for children to more properly benefit, as becoming industry leaders in policy development and implementation

SESSION 6: ADVANCING IMPLEMENTATION OF WEB ACCESSIBILITY ACROSS EUROPE

Focus: Practical examples from governments and private sector in providing accessible websites. Stocktaking, best practices, and challenges.

Moderator: [Presentation](#), Mrs. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, Senior Programme Officer, Digital Inclusion Division for Telecommunication, ITU

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Ms. Gudrun Stock, Deputy Head of Unit, Accessibility, Multilingualism, and Safer Internet, European Commission; [Presentation 2](#), Mr. Shadi Abou-Zahra, Accessibility Strategy and Technology Specialist, Web Accessibility Initiative, World Wide Web Consortium; [Presentation 3](#), Mr. Joseph Seychell, Manager – ICT and Technologies, Malta Communications Authority & Mr. Stanley Debono, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for ICT Accessibility (FITA), Malta; [Presentation 4](#), Mr. Stein Erik Skotkjerra, Head of Accessibility Relations, Siteimprove; [Presentation 5](#), Mr. Ricardo Garcia

Key points

- The Web Accessibility Directive supports implementation of web accessibility on the ground, increasing digital inclusion and ensuring accessibility of websites and mobile apps. Its main elements are harmonizing market, creating benefits for users, and monitoring & enforcement.
- September 2019 was the deadline for Member states to transpose into national law. In 2020 monitoring will begin with feedback on results to help public sector bodies, creating a framework offering opportunities for industry to develop new accessible tools and services.
- Web accessibility makes the web easier to use for a wider audience and not just persons with disabilities. Challenges include lack of awareness by web owners, developers, and general public; website made accessible, but not content; captioning for non-English languages, interpretation assessments.
- At the national level, the Malta Communications Authority is handling all 3 facets of Web Accessibility Directive: monitoring, reporting, and enforcement, thus being the focal point for implementation of enforcement of the Directive.
- W3C working on awareness raising, training, and capacity building. In this regard, there is a need to include accessibility into existing coursework and modules to streamline accessibility.
- ITU offers online training on web accessibility with three modules focusing on different aspects of web accessibility: tools for development, implementation, and technical skills for designing and developing accessible websites
- Site Improve, helps over 7,000 customers make their sites more accessible to Persons with disabilities.
- Innovation happens when we solve difficult problems with limited resources. Companies must create a minimal, viable product of value, thus more digital building blocks are needed for startups to take advantage of increased access to assistive technologies in the creation of their products as opposed to retrofitting accessibility later on.

SESSION 7: FUTURE OF ACCESSIBLE AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA SERVICES, TV AND VIDEO PROGRAMMING

Focus: Broadcasters, Content producers; Emerging technologies; Consumers perspective; Implementation in Europe.

Moderator: [Presentation](#), Mr. David Wood, Co-Chair IRG-AVA - Intersector Rapporteur Group Audiovisual Media Accessibility, ITU

Background and Setting the Context: [Presentation](#), Mr. Dusan Caf, ITU Consultant, ITU

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Mr. Andy Quested, Chair ITU-R Working Party 6C, BBC; [Presentation 2](#), Mr. Gion Linder, Head of SWISS TXT AG & Chairman of the EBU Access Services Experts, EBU; [Presentation 3](#), Dr. Bernard Busuttill, Director – Investigations, Compliance & Enforcement, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), Malta; [Presentation 4](#), Ms. Pilar Orero, Professor, University of Barcelona

Key points

- Barrier-free access to audiovisual services has been recognized as a fundamental human right established under UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, thus necessitating the use of subtitling, audio subtitling, audio description, and signed programs.
- The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) establishes the right of persons with an impairment and of the elderly to participate and be integrated in the social and cultural life through the provision of accessible audiovisual media services.
- Collaborative efforts can help to solve these challenges through a mix of cross-platform solutions, capacity building, as well as tailoring international policies and standards to national contexts.
- If the audience for accessibility services are part of the process of their design and development, the services that result will be more useful. All those who are concerned with standards of accessibility services should be invited to have a continuous dialogue with bodies that represent their audience.
- Cost-efficiency measures in accessibility service production may need to be sacrificed, if there are greater overall social benefits with ‘home produced’ services, or they may not be possible for reasons of scale.
- People must be made fully aware of the accessibility services that are available, it will help to gain maximum value from them. The Commission should be invited to ask all European content providers to regularly inform all the local entities that could benefit the services available.
- Seeing the provision of what are now called ‘access services’ as just one element of media content services that can be ‘personalised’, may help to encourage their wider inclusion and use a personalisation ‘Profile’ approach may even be appropriate. Invite the ITU, ISO and UN and other bodies to consider updating their texts, and their perceptions.

SESSION 8: UNIVERSAL DESIGN, PROCUREMENT AND STANDARDS

Focus: National strategies on universal design regulation and use cases on procurement; use of standards in this context.

Moderator: Mr. Simao Campos, Counsellor, ITU-T SG16, ITU

Background and Setting the Context: [Presentation](#), Mr. Donal Rice, ITU Consultant, ITU

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Mr. Roberto Scano, UNINFO ICT Accessibility Expert; [Presentation 2](#), Ms. Mia Ahlgren, Policy Officer, Swedish Disabilities Rights Federation; [Presentation 3](#), Mr. Joel Snyder, Director of Audio Description Project, American Council of the Blind.

Key points

- Public Procurement of ICTs can be a key driver to accessible products and services but raising awareness is even more important.
- Audio description is an example for universal design as it works at best only when it is part of the process from the design stage of the product that needs to be produced.
- Procurement laws must contain specifications of liability because sometimes it is very hard to understand where and to whom complaint and this is achieved with provisions for contract management
- The existing standards and regulations in Europe cover many aspects, what is missing is the internalization of Universal Design principles within organizations themselves, in their DNA. That way, accessible is naturally included in all design steps. EN 17161 is a step in that direction.
- Universal design should be included from inception of products and services. For audio-visual content, such as movies, this means that accessibility requirements should already be included in the script writing phase.

SESSION 9: TELECOM RELAY SERVICES: PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN EUROPE

Focus: Telecommunications relay services are essential telecom services that enable persons who have hearing or speech disabilities and who otherwise would be unable to engage in voice telecommunications, to make voice telephone calls to other persons, using four common types of relay services: text relay; video relay; captioned telephone service relay; and speech-to-speech relay.

Moderator: Ms. Andrea Saks, JCA-AHF Chairman, ITU

Background and Setting the Context: [Presentation](#), Mr. Ruoting Chang, Counsellor, ITU-R SG 6, ITU

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Mrs. Therese Hourigan, End-User Working Group Co-Chair, BEREC; [Presentation 2](#), Mr. Masahito Kawamori, ITU-T Q26/16 Rapporteur, Keio University; [Presentation 3](#), Mr. Mark Wheatley, President, European Union of the Deaf; [Presentation 4](#), Mr. Michael Debattista, 112mt app Focus Group, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), Malta

Key points

- ITU Resolutions establish that access to media is a right and set a roadmap to raise awareness and mainstream telecommunication/ICT accessibility standards and to develop programmes that enable developing countries to introduce services that allow persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs to utilize telecommunication/ICT services effectively.
- Telephone Relay Service (TRS) is the only way for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people to make voice telephone calls, and an essential part of Accessible telecommunication for an inclusive society.
- In Telecommunication Relay Services, Video Relay Services (VRS) and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) are especially important for Deaf signers. European deaf citizens are equipped with ICT devices that support access to text- or video-based TRS, though they are not always able to use the service of their choice.
- Functional Equivalency in TRS, especially access to an Emergency call (112), is essential and is a service that is currently available in Malta.

- CA (Communication Assistant) who mediates “Voice” is an important part of TRS, to guarantee “accuracy” and enhance the quality of the service.

SESSION 10: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT FOR ICT ACCESSIBILITY

Focus: Participants will be offered a high-level recap session taking stock of the key topics and relevant discussion points of the conference. The session will facilitate the preparation of those participants wishing to take the test for Certification to be held the following day.

Coordinators: Mrs. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, Senior Programme Officer, Digital Inclusion Division for Telecommunication, ITU; Mr. Ricardo Garcia, ITU Consultant, ITU.

With the aim of building a common stock of knowledge among stakeholders in the field of ICT accessibility in Europe, a recap training on the key outcomes of Sessions 1 to 9 was given to the audience. Based on this knowledge, the training was followed by a multiple choice test session on “Fundamentals of ICT Accessibility”. More than 70 participants from 17 countries successfully passed the test which, notably, was taken by a majority of women and by participants from 17 countries. Upon validation of the evaluation committee, an ITU Certification on “Fundamentals of ICT Accessibility” was sent to successful candidates in electronic form via email.

SESSION 11: PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESSIBLE EUROPE

Focus: Existing and new partnerships to address current gaps and challenges in making Europe more accessible; Identification of concrete regional, sub-regional and national projects advancing implementation of the ITU Regional Initiative; Setting up of Twinning Programmes; Discussion on other actions planned or proposed for 2020-2022. This session will set the framework for discussing new partnerships in the Project Laboratory to be held the following day.

Moderator: Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of Regional Office for Europe, ITU

Speakers: [Presentation 1](#), Mr. Mohamed Nawar Alawa, Regional Advisor, Technology for Development Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); [Presentation 2](#), Mr. Michael Fembek, Director, Zero project, Essl Foundation; Presentation 3, Ms. Francesca Cesa Bianchi, Vice President for Institutional Relations, G3ict; [Presentation 4](#), Ms. Sabine Lobnig, Deputy Director of Communications & Regulations, Mobile & Wireless Forum; [Presentation 5](#), Mr. Jorge Fernandes, Digital Transformation Directorate of Administrative Modernization Agency, Portugal

Key points

- The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is advising member states in a number of ICT related areas including that of e-accessibility. In this regards, only few states have policies of standards for ICT accessibility and there is scope for more work in the region.
- In April 2019, the Valetta Declaration was signed in Malta during the first joint meeting of the Arab-European intergovernmental disability network, in cooperation with ESCWA and the League of Arab States (LAS). Another initiative is the IGED, the Inter-sessional Group of Experts on Disability, created in 2016 to discuss policy challenges related to the implementation of CRPD.

- ZeroProject is building partnerships by creating ecosystems of innovators in ICT, incentives for innovators and incentives for partners, deploying a well-established network in the region.
- The Mobile & Wireless Forum (MWF), an international non-profit association of telecommunications equipment manufacturers, highlighted the Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative (GARI) that provides information on the accessibility features within mobile phones and to help consumers identify devices that supported those features.
- GARI comprises 25 major telecommunications equipment manufacturers and has developed multiple partnerships with relevant partners. It is currently available in 19 languages and is used by 9 regulatory authorities, including ¼ of telecom regulators in the EU, the FCC in the US and IFT in Mexico.
- The host of Accessible Europe 2020 provided an encompassing review of ICT accessibility activity in Portugal in the past 20 years, providing relevant examples in regards to work done with ATMs/Vending/Tickets Machines, e-Payments, e-Books, Digital Television and Web & Apps.

CLOSING CEREMONY

The Second Edition of Accessible Europe was closed by Mr Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Officer for Europe, ITU and Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis, Parliamentary Secretary for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing of the Government of Malta. After the addresses, ITU announced that the third edition of Accessible Europe will be hosted in Portugal in December 2020 by the Secretary of State for Innovation and Administrative Modernization (from the Ministry of State Modernization and Public Administration) and the Secretary of State for Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities (from Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity).

The Closing Ceremony also saw the intervention of Ms Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality, who delivered her first public speech since taking office. Ms Dalli said "Accessibility of ICT for persons with disabilities is not a marginal issue, it touches the basis of our democracy and the fairness and openness of our society." She added, "let us exploit the potential of the European Accessibility Act and other EU tools, legislation, policy and funding to scale up efforts to make digital products and services more accessible to persons with disabilities."

6. WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

Among other objectives, Accessible Europe seeks to become a focal point in Europe region and a platform to disseminate knowledge of the relevant activities that stakeholders, whether Member States, academic institutions or NGOs, are carrying out.

In line with what envisaged by the ITU Regional Initiative for Europe on “Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development”, organizers offered the opportunity to stakeholders to describe their work in the field of ICT accessibility, characterizing the main area of engagement, and calling upon the community for action on particular issues.

All contributions are listed below.

LOGO	PARTNER	CONTRIBUTION
	<p>European Commission</p>	<p><i>"An European Ecosystem for ICT Accessibility"</i></p>
	<p>Aġenzija Sapport</p>	<p><i>"Malta's National Service Provider for Persons with Disability"</i></p>

 <p>UNITED NATIONS الاتصال ESCWA</p>	<p>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia</p>	<p><i>"Cooperation in Developing e-Accessibility Policies and Guidelines in the Arab Region"</i></p>
 <p>MALTA COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY</p>	<p>Malta Communications Authority</p>	<p><i><u>"Regulatory Framework for the Web Accessibility Directive"</u></i></p>
 <p>Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility</p>	<p>Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA)</p>	<p><i>ICT Accessibility Consultancy, Training and Assessments</i></p>
	<p>Office for Electronic Communications, Poland</p>	<p><i><u>"UKE's Accessibility Policy"</u></i></p>

	<p>Office for Electronic Communications, Poland</p>	<p>"UKE's website: digital accessibility"</p>
	<p>European Broadcasting Union</p>	<p>"Activity 1: Eurovox"</p>
	<p>European Broadcasting Union</p>	<p>"Activity 2: Experts group in broadcasting access-services & their survey"</p>
	<p>European Broadcasting Union</p>	<p>"Activity 3 - The ASBU study of accessibility for broadcasting"</p>
	<p>European Deafblind Network</p>	<p>"Organization for deafblind people, their families and professionals of the sector"</p>

	<p>Fundación ONCE</p>	<p><i>"Massive Open Online Courses on Universal Accessibility"</i></p>
	<p>Centre for Excellence in Universal Design at the National Disability Authority</p>	<p><i>"Overview of Activities"</i></p>
	<p>University of Malta</p>	<p><i>"Olly Speaks – An Innovative Therapeutic Device Supporting Children with Developmental Language Disorders"</i></p>
	<p>Universidad Carlos III de Madrid - SoftLab</p>	<p><i>"Cloud-based subtitling system"</i></p>

	<p>Oslo Metropolitan University</p>	<p><i>"Social Innovation for Universal Design"</i></p>
 <p>UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE FACULTÉ DE TRADUCTION ET D'INTERPRÉTATION</p>	<p>University of Geneva, Department of Translation Technology (TIM), Faculty of Translation and Interpreting</p>	<p><i>"Innovation in Multilingual Digital Accessibility"</i></p>
 <p>Univerza v Mariboru Fakulteta za elektrotehniko, računalništvo in informatiko</p>	<p>University of Maribor Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences</p>	<p><i>"E-Accessibility for Deaf and Hard of Hearing"</i></p>
	<p>University of Southampton</p>	<p>"Higher Education"</p>

	<p>David Banes Access and Inclusion Services</p>	<p><i>"Mapping the Digital Assistive Technology Ecosystem in Europe"</i></p>
	<p>Audio Description Associates, LLC / Audio Description Project of the American Council of the Blind (USA)</p>	<p><i>"Audio Description: Access To Media For People Who Are Blind"</i></p>
	<p>Global Universal Design Commission Europe</p>	<p><i>"Social Innovation for Universal Design"</i></p>
	<p>Mobilhealth</p>	<p><i><u>"Integrated Telehealth App"</u></i></p>