

Accessible Europe: ICT for ALL

ICT Accessibility: The Key to Inclusive Communications

Beyond Accessible Europe: Main Takeaways

Amela Odošić

ITU Consultant on ICT Accessibility

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Key Messages

- Enabling environment ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICT for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries by 2023.
- At the EU level, a great breakthrough has been made by several pieces of legislations, a tool for implementation of the UN CRPD. A big step towards creating accessible society in Europe:
 - ✓ EU Directive on Web Accessibility and Mobile Applications for all public sector bodies.
 - ✓ European Accessibility Act Directive harmonising accessibility requirement throughout the EU internal market.
 - ✓ EU Public Procurement Directives requiring accessible procurement
- EU funds related regulations requiring accessibility (i.e. EU structural funds)
- Primary goal in digital inclusion is a full implementation of UN CRPD, in particular the ICT accessibility related provisions, and ensure participation of persons with disabilities in all decision making processes, monitoring and development of standards.

Key messages

- ICT accessibility can remove barriers that persons with disabilities are facing.
- ICT products and services should be accessible and affordable.
- Accessible ICTs are key to social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities and essential for their independent living.
- Key steps to achieve ICT accessibility require: national policies and legal frameworks, development of standards, creating accessibility experts, raising awareness, sharing good practices and ensuring implementation.
- All stakeholders are encouraged to engage in the regional and global activities advancing ICT accessibility including:
 - ✓ ITU Regional Initiative for Accessibility for Europe
 - ✓ ITU Digital Inclusion Programme
 - ✓ Ongoing technical standardization in ICT accessibility
 - ✓ Effective application and implementation of EU accessibility legislation which is available as a model for other countries.
 - ✓ “Accessible Europe” should continue acting as an open, multi-stakeholder platform involving all relevant stakeholders to avoid possible duplications and foster innovation and regional implementation in line with the UN CRPD contributing to achieve the SDGs.

SESSION 1: International, Europe region and European Union vision, targets and actions and key resources to support ICT Accessibility

- The EC has in place concrete legislation, guidelines and standards that are available to support the implementation process.
- Advancing with key legislation to ensure accessibility and achieving equality: European Accessibility Act, Web Accessibility Directive, The Electronic Communication Code, AVMS Directive, Public Procurement Directives and EU Funds Regulations.
- Leveraging available ICT accessibility standards.
- Key ITU resources (guidelines, model policies, training courses, video tutorials on how to develop accessible digital content, programme on web accessibility, working platform through study group on Question 7) are available to support stakeholders implementation of ICT accessibility.
- Implementation requires a pro-active involvement of telecom operators in ICT Accessibility.
- Use opportunities provided by Gigabit technology as a game changer soon + 5G.

SESSION 2: Examples of Accessibility Legislation/Regulations/Standards in EU Members States and outside Europe

- A multiplicity of ICT accessibility legislation and regulatory frameworks.
- Development of legislation should be more timely to keep a pace with technological innovation.
- Create and nourish ICT accessibility ecosystems.
- Importance of adequate monitoring of ICT accessibility and measure impact on persons with disabilities.
- Use of universal design to achieve accessibility.
- Incentivise the industry.

SESSION 3: Stocktaking Implementation of accessibility and assistive technology in Europe

- Assessing and promoting accessible features are key (by inclusion of persons with disabilities).
- Accessibility is relevant in social networks.
- Key elements are feedback from users (persons with disabilities) (research/design/engineering/roll out levels).
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is powerful tool as it becomes more available, accessible and affordable.
- ICT accessibility essential for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work market.
- Training of IT professionals in accessibility is essential.

SESSION 4: Web Accessibility; Regulations/Standards/Resources

- Accessible website generate economic and social benefits.
- Measures to ensure compliance with EU Directive on the Accessibility of Public Sector Websites and Mobile Applications are available, such as: **feedback** mechanisms, on demand provision, enforcement mechanism, training, awareness raising, stakeholder consultation.
- Making tools that support users visible.
- Two drivers to achieve accessible website are: a) creation of capabilities and b) awareness.
- ITU's National Program "Internet for all" pointed out as a good practice that include not only the creation of capabilities but also political buy-in.

SESSION 5: Audio-visual Media Services, TV and Video Programming

- AVMSD (2018/1808) requires member states that service providers provide accessibility. Obligations include: reporting to NRA, reporting to EC, have accessibility action plan, have a line contact point, make emergency information accessible.
- TV accessibility applies to all forms of TV and video programming.
- The need was expressed to have: a) accessibility icons standardised, b) technical standards for streaming and audio subtitles.
- Strengthening collaborative approach in: a) business benefits of access services, b) create synergies between the work of ITU/EC.
- AI can be used in “object-based” broadcasting to learn about users viewing habits and tailor how programmes are delivered to them based on the requirements.
- Providing subtitles for 100% and audio described >20% of programmes is feasible.
- Standards do matter only if editorial guidelines require accessible production.

SESSION 6: Procurement of Accessible ICTs and Universal Design

- Public procurement is a big market.
- Public procurement is a powerful instrument in ensuring accessible ICT. Legal framework on Public Procurement with accessible provisions is available in EU.
- Accessibility provisions relate to: technical specification, quality assurance standards, award of contracts, public oversights).
- Need for meaningful data and monitoring of systematic use of accessibility requirements in procurement.
- Strengthening collaboration at all levels (UN, EU, national) to include decision-makers, politicians, procurement specialists, academia and organisation of persons with disabilities.

SESSION 7: Implementation of Equal Access in Telecom

- EU Code on Electronic Communications helps shaping the right environment for digital networks and services to be accessible (promotes connectivity and access, stimulates sustainable competition, drive investments, reinforce internal markets, strengthen consumer rights).
- There is a need to raise further awareness about accessibility features in telecom devices.
- Enhance availability of accessible information about products and services, the features and components.

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SESSION 8: Telecom Relay Services: Practical experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

- Important to ensure that persons with hearing or speech disabilities have access to telephone relay services with equal functionality.
- Collaborate with stakeholders including the government and the disability community.
- Relay service considerations include: network, confidentiality & security, a communication assistant, emergency call outreach, seed of answer, call processes and end user agreement.

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SESSION 9: Innovation and good practices in implementing ICT Accessibility products and services for PwD

- Sharing good practices and fostering processes to exchange and engage innovation.
- Innovative practices in ICT accessibility including standards, manuals, toolboxes, competence centres, co-creating content, platforms, orientation map.
- Studies have shown the value of promoting the diversity.
- Develop products and services facilitating cutting edge mobile and communication technology.

Accessible Europe

