ACCESSIBLE EUROPE 2019 – CONTRIBUTION

David Banes Access and Inclusion Services

Mapping the Digital Assistive Technology Ecosystem in Europe

ACTIVITY COVERAGE

☒ Regional cooperation and stakeholder engagement: the activity strengthens and supports regional cooperation and the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, in line with the European Accessibility act, in the development and implementation of ICT accessibility policies and solutions in the European region.

☐ ICT accessibility policies: raising awareness and/or promoting relevant guidelines on public policies, including exchanging knowledge and sharing best practices on ICT accessibility. This may include the development of standards.

☐ Public procurement with accessibility features: promoting regional and in-country deliver of public procurement as a tool to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities and specific needs.

☐ Web Accessibility: developing regional and in country capacity through web accessibility features and/or training to ensure that websites and related services are available and accessible to all citizens.

☐ Media Services Accessibility: raising awareness about accessibility possibilities of TV and video streaming on digital platforms, and promoting the implementation of appropriate solutions.

☒ Innovation and Accessibility: promoting the development of regional and in-country capacity building on programming for all, including persons with disabilities and specific needs. This may include embedding "accessible by design" in the product's innovation/development process.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT/RECENT ACTIVITIES

The AT Ecosystem model was developed from a review of practice in establishing assistive and accessible technology services in Europe and the Middle East. The model sought to identify the key components that needed to be in place in order for assistive and accessible technologies to be appropriately developed, distributed and used within a country or community. In most cases the AT's investigated and benchmarked were digital and increasingly refkected a shift from PC's to mobile and portable devices.

The AT ecosytem maps effectively onto the 5P's developed by the World Health Orgainsation and comprised 8 core areas of activity that are required to build a healthy infrastructure for the implementation of assistive technologies. These elements include Awareness, Advice and information, Assessment, Provison, Training, Support, Research or development and Accessible content. Since 2016 the models has been used to benchmark practice, undertake a gap analysis and identify a roadmap for development in countries from across different parts of the world ranging from Pakistan to Kenya and UAE to Tunisia. The model has also been used to shape services developed within Europe by provate companies and not for profits.

In each setting, any current practice in each domain is identified thorugh a combination of desk research and surveys that are validated through stakeholder interviews. The data is compared to a range of global practices to suggest a national gap aanalysis and as a result an action plan that seeks to build upon strengths and seeks to address and gaps and challenges within the country. By applying the framework consistently across countries and settings, it is possible to identify areas of shared priority that can be addressed in common, and areas of strength and weakness within a region where resources and materials could be shared and distributed, localised and translated to accelerate progress collectively. In Europe this is made more complex by the diversity of language and the different resoources made available. However the model seeks to recognise the influence of language, geography, economics and legacy in defing actions, and the importance of licencing in encouraging and sustaining co-operation.

The model can be further refined to suggest the specific roles that public, private and not for profit organisations can play, but does not seek to transplant practice from one setting to another, practice that works within one setting may not be effective elsewhere, and different communities may use more or less formal approaches to provision. Analysis of the diversity of approaches can be valuable as demographics and capacity vary within a country.

Whilst the AT ecosystem model can be applied across ages and contexts, the focus can also be narrowed to address a specific set of needs (such as vision or mobility) or settings such as education, employment or independent living. The same structure has also been used by solution developers to analyse the receptiveness of an environment to effectively implement and distribute a product within an emerging market.

Articles and features that discuss one or more aspects of the AT ecosystem include:-
https://g3ict.org/blogs/if-you-build-it-then-what-happens-awareness-in-the-at-ecosystem

http://www.e-accessibilitytoolkit.org/toolkit/promoting_assistive_technologies

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335436909_Pervasive_and_Emerging_Technologies_and_Consumer_Motivation

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335731915_The_Potential_Evolution_of_Universal_Design_for_Learning_UDL_Through_the_Lens_of_Technology_Innovation

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324679605_Introducing_an_AT_Passport_A_Key_to_Managing_Transitions_Across_the_Lifespan

Activity running in: *[tick all that apply]*

☐ 2016 or before   ☒ 2017   ☒ 2018   ☒ 2019   ☐ 2020   ☐ 2021   ☐ 2022   ☐ 2023

CALL FOR COLLABORATION/COMMITMENT TO FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Provision of assistive technologies varies from country to country and setting to setting across Europe. This diversity may realte to muliple factors including language, culture, demographics and legacy. Prior attempts to investigate the diversity of the european marketplace have focussed on policy initiatives or access to products. Examples might include the DARE index from G3ICT https://g3ict.org/digital-accessibility-rights-evaluation-index/ which examines policy across countries. Studies have not sought to identify the readiness, receptiveness and capacity of individual countries, or the region to support equity of access acrosss age, disability and geography. A thorough review of effective practice, would provide european benchmarks of good practice, and further more would suggest resources and approaches developed and implemented in one setting that could be made available within other countries for localisation, customisation and use.

Such a review should also seek to draw upon the outcomes of european commission funded projects and link the outcomes into the framework and draw links and progression between outputs and resources.

By integrating information of the readiness of a country to implement assistive technology, identifying the resources and approached that have been effective we can also create a repository of resources that can be used by member states freely and openly.

At the heart of such an approach is the use of open licenced resources to faciliate localisation and customisation, these would include open source software and open licenced hardware designs along with creative commons and open educational resources to support awareness and training activities.

We are seeking to establish an initiave that would seek to measure and monitor the receptiveness of european states to implement assistive and accessible products, and to assist in the creation of national roadmaps to support national ecosystems within a regional framework. The aniticipated framework would establish or draw upon national speical interest groups from across public, private and not for profit sectors to gather information, identify gaps and distribute and curate materials and resources for use within the network. As a practical outcome a curated repository of resources linked to each of the dmain areas, and archiving outcomes of national, regional and internation al resources would be established under open licence to promote amd accelerate the widepsread use of digital assistive technologies.

ORGANISATION INFORMATION

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