ACCESSIBLE EUROPE 2019 – CONTRIBUTION

UN-ESCWA

UNITED NATIONS

الاسكوا

ESCWA

Cooperation in Develoing e-Acessibility Policies and Guidelines in the Arab Region

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ACTIVITY COVERAGE

☒ <u>Regional cooperation and stakeholder engagement:</u> 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.

☒ <u>ICT accessibility policies:</u> 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.

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

☒ <u>Web Accessibility:</u> 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.

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

☐ <u>Innovation and Accessibility</u>: 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

ESCWA, as a regional commission of the United Nations, implements a technical cooperation program in partnership with its member states. This program includes providing advisory services to public entities in the Arab region and conducting capacity-building workshops in partnership with these entities. In the field of e-Accessibility, there is a need to develop national policies to identify the vision, objectives and focus areas to enable persons with disability from using technology devices in their daily life and to ensure the surrounding environment deploys technology and innovation efficiently to ease their access. There is also a need to develop national technical guidelines to implement e-Accessibility in government websites, e-services, procured ICT tools and devices, and in media channels and TV. These aspects are directly related to article 9 of UN-CRPD. ESCWA is well positioned to lead such activities, as disability and social inclusion were the object of several reports and publications, produced in the last few years. In addition, ESCWA has been requested by Morocco in 2017 and by Syria in 2019 to provide technical assistance in developing national strategies/action plans for e-Accessibility. In 2017, a capacity-building workshop was implemented in Rabat (Morocco) to highlight best international and regional practices and discuss the appropriate roadmap to develop such an action plan. A national workshop is also planned in Syria in Dec 2019 for the same purpose. Due to the importance of developing national plans for e-Accessibility and to the dire need of having national guidelines covering all aspects of e-Accessibility, it is important to encourage and support Arab countries in developing such initiatives. The expected outcome of such plans and guidelines will be visible on national level: raised awareness among senior policymakers, launch of specific projects/initiatives to improve e-Accessibility, development of world-class government services and websites, and monitoring the progress in achieving the identified objectives/targets. These plans and guidelines, once developed and adopted, will ensure the increase of participation of persons with disability in socio-economic development, therefore increasing national GDPs, improving education and health conditions for persons with disability, and hopefully this will contribute to poverty reduction.

Activity running in:

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

CALL FOR COLLABORATION/COMMITMENT TO FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The suggested cooperation initiative aims to encourage and support Arab counties in developing their national policies and guidelines to enhance e-Accessibility on national level. It will build on the experience of EU countries in developing such policies and guidelines to gain development time and avoid passing thru same challenges and pitfalls. This cooperation will be considered as a direct result of the Valetta Declaration, adopted in April 2019, and in which all participating countries agreed on the creation of the Valetta forum to better support the rights of persons with disability. This cooperation will have a significant impact on daily life of persons with disability, as it will address the access barriers to ICT tools, devices, government websites and e-services to make them accessible by all persons. These guidelines will emphasize on the adoption of universal design concept and will set standards to be respected while any public entity will purchase ICT tools or equipment to ensure its compliance with e-accessibility standards and guidelines. Having succeeded in improving e-Accessibility conditions to its citizens, EU countries, and thru this cooperation initiative, will be able to transfer their knowledge to Arab countries to develop their own policies and standards based on best international practices.

Morocco, National Workshop on e-Accessibility (ESCWA, MoSA, 2017)

ORGANISATION INFORMATION

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