Accessibility and affordability of telecommunications/ICT products for Persons with Disabilities to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable social and economic development

Regional initiative – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro

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UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- (CRPD- Article 9)To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to **ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others . . . to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems** . . .

- These measures, which shall include the identification and **elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility**, shall apply to . . . Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.

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Overcoming challenges in developing countries in Europe region

- Most developing countries in the Europe region have low level of implementation of ICT accessibility. Legal and regulatory frameworks are put in place, but often not implemented.

- European Disability Strategy and European Accessibility Act are to ensure accessibility to goods and services, including public services for PwD. ITU Members commitment to progress in this area is a recognition of their engagement to enable ALL citizens to fully participate in society and economy.

Regional Initiative – key to digital, social and economic inclusion

- Recognising ITU-D support to the Members to promote ICT Accessibility through its Regional Initiatives, as well as considering the requirements of the European Accessibility Act, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro submit a proposal for continuation of work through a Regional Initiative on "*Accessibility and affordability of telecommunications/ICT products and services with special attention to persons with disabilities to ensure their digital inclusion and sustainable social and economic development.*"

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Objectives

- Strengthen and support regional cooperation and engagement of all relevant stakeholders in line with European Accessibility Act, development, and implementation of ICT accessibility policies and solutions in the Europe region.

- Raise awareness and promote relevant guidelines on public policies, including exchanging knowledge and sharing good practices on ICT accessibility products and services for PwD through regional and sub-regional meetings and workshops, including an annual regional regional conference "*Accessible Europe – Information and Communication for ALL*".

Objectives

- Develop regional and in-country capacity though relevant web accessibility training to ensure that government websites/ and related services are available and accessible to All citizens, including the PwD.

- Develop regional and in-country capacity to promote and deliver to all stakeholders that are involved, training courses in ICT Accessibility including the training on public procurement as a tool to improve inclusion of PwD in education, employment, economic and social life.

Objectives

- Develop regional and in-country capacity to promote and deliver to all stakeholders that are involved, training courses in ICT Accessibility including the training on public procurement as a tool to improve inclusion of PwD in education, employment, economic and social life.

- Encourage regional cooperation between research centers and academia in speech technologies (TTS, Text-Speech, for everyone who can listen, Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Speech-Text for everyone who can read). Improving these technologies can help to overcome disabilities.

Objectives

- Raise awareness about accessibility possibilities of TV and video programming in digital platforms and implement available solutions.

- Encourage implementation and related measurement progress of regional/national ICT activities and projects aiming to eliminate disparities in the use and access to ICTs of public institutions websites and government education programs, services and information.

Final comments – Food for thought

- Collaboration is crucial for promoting ICT accessibility including PwD, governments, operators, manufacturers, universities and all related stakeholders: "*Nothing about us without us*".

- ICTs should be considered as a tool for education and employment of PwD as well as an enabler for social and economic development and independent living.

Final comments – Food for thought

- Capabilities within end users enable them to use the available accessibility functionalities so they can benefit from web accessibility, equipment and applications.

- Governments should develop ICT Accessibility National Plans on ICT Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, as well as make their web sites accessible.

- Sharing successful experiences among the countries is beneficial for PwD.

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Thank you!

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