Telecommunication
Development Bureau (BDT)

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- Administrations of ITU Member States
- ICT Ministries
- Regulators
- ITU-D Sector Members
- Academia
- Regional Organizations from Europe
- UN Organizations

Subject:　　ITU-EC Regional Forum for Europe on "Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL" and a series of related activities

Dear Sir/Madam,

It is my great pleasure to invite your organization to the **Regional Forum for Europe on "Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL"** that will take place virtually from **23 to 25 March 2021**, and kindly encourage you to engage in a **series of activities** that are being launched in the lead-up to this event with the aim of advancing digital accessibility agenda. **Accessible Europe** is being jointly organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the European Commission (EC). The organisation of this event is supported by the Government of Portugal and is conducted as part of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Accessible Europe and all related activities are held within the framework of the Regional Initiative for Europe on *Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development,* adopted by the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017. This regional initiative aims at bridging the digital divide and equipping all groups of society, including persons with disabilities and other groups of people with specific needs, to take advantage of ICTs, by enabling capacity building and sharing experience on how to design, develop and use accessible ICTs.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are of vital importance for people's empowerment and in promoting accessibility policies to make Europe region a more inclusive society. In this context, the Forum will focus on further promoting the development of ICT accessibility in countries and institutions through cooperation, programmes and projects development, and generate partnerships, and training.

ITU and EC have joined efforts to encourage Governments, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia and other stakeholders to promote ICT accessibility in order to create fair and equal opportunities for all people and support a regional development agenda by treating ICT accessibility for people with specific needs and in particular persons with disabilities, as a cross-cutting development issue.

The organisers of the event are planning an effective integration of all stakeholders in the activities of the programme and request your participation and collaboration to further promote the following initiatives in your communities:

- **ITU Event for Europe - Towards Digitally Accessible Europe**: This special event, which will take place virtually on **3 December 2020**, **10.00-12.00 CET**, is part of ITU's joint efforts with several partner organisations to promote digital accessibility in the European region as well as commemorate the beginning of Accessible Europe 2021. The event is being held in the context of the International Day of Persons with Disability. All stakeholders are invited to join and follow the event. For more information and registration, please consult the event website at https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2020/AE21/PreEvent.aspx.

- **Call for Competition**: With the aim of fostering the innovation ecosystem in ICT accessibility, a "Regional Competition for Europe: Innovative Digital Solutions for an Accessible Europe" is being launched on 15 November 2020, with a deadline for submissions of **15 December 2020**. Shortlisted candidates will be announced on 19 February 2021 and Winners will be announced on 23 March 2021 during "Accessible Europe: ICTs 4 ALL". For interested stakeholders, a **possibility to sponsor** the competition is provided on the website. https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2020/AE21/Regional-Competition.aspx

- **Call for Participation in the Evaluation Committee**: For the purposes of the Regional Competition for Europe, an Evaluation Committee will be formed and interested individuals are invited to apply to be part of it. Deadline for applications is **10 December 2020**.

- **Support to Regional Assessment of Enabling Environments for Ensuring Accessible ICTs for Persons with Disabilities in Europe:** A regional assessment was launched earlier this year targeting 46 countries of the Europe region, aiming at providing all stakeholders with a holistic overview of the current implementation status of ICT accessibility laws, regulations, policies and strategies in the Europe region. I would encourage all Administrations to provide support to this undertaking, in particular by providing information through the questionnaire available at the following website: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2020/AE21/Regional-Assessment.aspx

For more details on Accessible Europe and the series of related activities, we invite you to visit the following website at https://www.itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-21, where practical information on the calls, agenda, registration and other useful links are available and are constantly updated.

Please be informed that there is no participation fee. While captioning facilities will be available for all related events, **international sign language interpretation** can be requested for Accessible Europe event via the online registration form. Information on registration will be provided on the event's webpage shortly.

We trust that you or a representative of your organisation will attend the event to share your experiences and support the dissemination and implementation of best practices in the Europe region. Accessible Europe aims to provide inputs to the future definition of strategies and implementation of policies, regulations and industry codes of conduct to promote reducing the digital divide and the equal inclusion of all people, and in particular persons with disabilities, in the information and knowledge society.

Please note that the outcomes of Accessible Europe 2021 will be submitted to the Study Groups of all three ITU Sectors, namely Radiocommunications, Standardisation and Development.

Mr Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of the ITU Office for Europe (tel: +41 22 730 6065, e-mail: eurregion@itu.int) is at your full disposal for any questions you might have concerning this event.

I look forward to active participation from your Administration / Organisation / Company.

Yours faithfully,

[Original signed]

Doreen Bogdan-Martin
Director