



TRAINING REPORT

Executive Training Programme

Role of ICTs in the Development of Inclusive Society for Persons with Disabilities

Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), 5 December 2017

Submitted on 13 Decembe



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Executive Training on the Role of ICTs in the Development of Inclusive Society for Persons with Disabilities was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 5 December 2017. The executive training was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in cooperation with the UN Team in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) within the framework of the ITU Regional Initiative for Europe on **Ensuring access to telecommunications/ICTs, in particular for persons with disabilities.**

The aim of the executive training was to build capacity and support stakeholders in their efforts to make ICT/TV/Video programming accessible to Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in line with ITU standards and guidelines thereby deepening understanding and developing knowledge of core areas of accessible ICT/TV/Video programming for Persons with Disabilities.

The one-day (1) executive training consisted of five (5) sessions that outlined the possibilities to create the ICT ecosystem (mobile communications, the web, TV/video programming) accessible for Persons with Disabilities, as well as related areas such as the importance of public procurement and advocacy efforts. Based on previous assessment missions by ITU-D Regional Initiative for Europe, the training was devised to respond to the national circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop inclusive society for Persons with Disabilities.

EXPECTED RESULT: Deepened knowledge of ITU standards, recommendations, and guidelines to plan and implement future activities in the area of ICT accessibility by Persons with Disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina; understanding roles and responsibilities in creating an accessible ICT ecosystem, including the role of Persons with Disabilities in the policy making processes and ensuring accessible TV/video programming/mobile communications/web sites (public and private) as well as deepening understanding of the importance of public procurement in creating an accessible ecosystem for all; understanding the importance of advocacy/raising awareness; education about accessibility technology trends and ensuring their implementation.

2. PARTICIPATION

The training was aimed at senior staff members of relevant governmental institutions, national regulatory authorities, ICT industry representatives, audiovisual media, content producers, service providers, academia and civil society who are key stakeholders in implementing accessible ICTs in developing inclusive society. Twenty (20) participants, representatives of governmental institutions, regulatory authority, industry and civil society, took active participation in the training.

3. PRESENTATION

Expert-led presentations, case studies and practical demonstration of how to implement accessible ICTs and contribute to the development of inclusive society for Persons with Disabilities. On completion of the training, the powerpoint presentations, which were produced in national language, were sent to all participants by e-mails, in particular, to enable the persons with disabilities to read them in an accessible format.

4. DOCUMENTATION



Relevant documentation, including the Agenda, Presentations and Reference Materials were made available on the event web page <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/default.aspx>.

5. OPENING CEREMONY



Welcome by host:

Mr. Armin Sirčo, UNDP Senior programme coordinator and Social inclusion and democratic governance Sector leader

Opening address:

Ms. Amela Odobasic, ITU-D SG1 Vice-Chair, Co-Rapporteur of ITU-D SG Q7/1, Head of Public Affairs, Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Armin Sirčo welcomed the participants and conveyed the utmost support by the UN mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the ITU-D efforts in providing capacity building on accessible ICTs. Mr. Sirčo reminded that the UNDP, together with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) implemented the project on Empowering Marginalised Groups in e-Governance which laid the milestone in the development of inclusive society in nine countries in the region, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering that the project ended in 2014, the ITU-D Regional Initiative for Europe decision to provide the executive training is seen as a continuation of the project and most importantly in ensuring further implementation of its objectives and deliverables.



6. TRAINING SESSION AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

The introduction was dedicated to setting the scene, which commenced by presenting the major achievements of the UNDP project on Empowering Marginalised Groups in e-Governance by Ms. Nera Monir-Diva, UNDP Gender Specialist. The UNDP presentation was followed by the statement of the situation which dealt with: National circumstances/challenges/Why accessibility of ICT Ecosystem matters?/ Accessibility for all: Who is the user?/ Importance of promotion ICTs in the development of inclusive society.

It was stressed that although plans and strategies exist at the state level for the development of the information society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the level of e-governance services remains limited, mainly due to the political fragmentation of the country. Certain objectives of ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities are achieved through regional initiatives (e-SEE). However, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has not adopted the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities which would envisage measures and corresponding Action Plan of activities, despite the fact that it ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010.





SESSION 1

The session 1 addressed **ICT Accessibility policy and regulatory framework** and dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Guidelines and recommendations in implementing necessary changes; Roles and responsibilities of policy makers; Roles and responsibilities of national regulatory authorities; Regulatory models of accessible ICTs; Key considerations for policymakers in overcoming existing challenges and implementing the policies.

The session consisted of a presentation, based on [Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report](#), presented international standards and principles as well as good practices, particularly focusing on national and regional circumstances with the aim to gain insight in the compliance of national legal and regulatory framework in line with the CRPD. The session was conducted interactively to extract key learnings from the individual findings. The session analysed and discussed the key policy documents, Telecommunications Sector Policy and Law on Communications, as well as regulatory rules and regulations in light of international frameworks as outlined in the Model ICT Accessibility Report.

Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

The discussion revealed that both the legal and regulatory framework that is implemented by the NRA identifies the persons with disabilities as service users who should be granted special benefits regarding choices, prices, conditions, and accesses of using ICTs on a non-discriminatory basis. The Law stipulates the obligation of providing special benefits for persons with disabilities enabling them to have adequate access to publicly available telephone services and their use, including access to services, pay phones, telephone directory and service information.

Accessible television and video programming were identified as a key challenge, although the provisions were incorporated in existing legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The regulatory framework is harmonized with EU Directive on Audio Visual Media Services, but the provision is not obligatory.



SESSION 2

The session two (2) was dedicated to **Television and video programming accessibility framework** and dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Policies for accessible television and video programming; Television/video programming accessibility requirements for service providers; Television/video programming accessible services (subtitling/captioning, audio description and sign language)?; Technological solutions, funding and representation and portrayal of persons with disabilities in TV/Video programming.

The session consisted of two parts – presentation of standards and principles in line with ITU-D policy document [Making TV Accessible](#) and a practical demonstration delivered by the expert from NGO “ProForma MediaWorks” from Serbia. The participants agreed that the implementation of TV accessibility tools through cost-effective software (DivXLand Media Subtitler and Subtitler Edit) is legal, of good quality and relatively easy to use.





Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

The discussion revolved around the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has not switched from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting despite the internationally set deadline, which could help to overcome the challenge of accessible TV/video programming. It was agreed that the implementation of television access services calls for strengthening collaboration and the development of a transparent consultation mechanism between all relevant stakeholders. Also, it was stressed that the European Broadcast Union (EBU), which already contributes with regular surveys of access service provision across Europe, should be a strategic partner to understand better the needs of broadcasters and the challenges they face in providing accessible services at a regional level.



Session 3

During the session three (3) **Mobile communication accessibility policy framework**, developed in line with [Making mobile phones and services accessible](#) was discussed. It dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Ensuring accessible mobile phones and services; Accessibility features on mobile phones; Mobile applications, trends, and requirements; Key policy considerations to be taken into account in ensuring mobile accessibility.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, persons with disabilities can enjoy the advantages that converged ICTs can offer them via the mobile phones. More specific activities could be implemented through the implementation of Universal Services, but the initiative is put on hold by inactivity of policymakers to bring a decision on Universal Service as well as a corresponding Universal Service Fund.

Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

The participants agreed that a key challenge for people with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to identify, try out and purchase assistive technologies. There are no centres that allow people to view assistive technologies. As a result, persons with disabilities face the difficulty of finding out where to purchase them. There is little awareness about the first regional database of assistive technologies compiled through the project that was implemented by the UNDP.



Affordability was highlighted as an effective mechanism to improve mobile accessibility. It was proposed that concrete steps in improving mobile accessibility could include creating data only package, a text-only and data only package, which lowers cost service for people who are not using the voice services. The dominant mobile operators, on a voluntary basis, offer some bonuses such as free SMS or bonuses of free minutes for persons with disabilities. They also offer training for their staff members in learning the sign language, enabling them to communicate directly with persons with hearing disabilities.

Session 4

The session 4 was about **Policy approaches to web accessibility** which dealt with: National circumstances/challenges; Policy approaches to ensure web accessibility; Criteria to be applied in web accessibility; Way forward to ensure accessibility of public websites.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is no legal provision that obliges that government websites are made accessible for persons with disabilities. Although plans and strategies exist at the State level for the development of the information society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the level of e-governance services remains limited overall due to the political fragmentation of the country. At present, there is no national Strategy in place to ensure a consistent implementation of ICT accessibility. Despite that, some 20 websites of state institutions are made accessible to PWD. However, there is no reliable data on the accessibility of other e-services in line with international standards. There is a need for an assessment to be carried out in this regard.

Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

The discussion indicated that there is little knowledge of web accessibility features among the government's institutions, PWD, and even the industry. In spite of 85% of Internet penetration, PWD in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot fully read website content, use web services or interact with a website in any way. It was reiterated that Improving the accessibility of government website content is not necessarily expensive, but is based more on the political will to do it. The participants agreed that additional training in the area of web accessibility is needed to undertake a complete audit of e-Accessibility of e-Government services and provide transparent access to the results.

Session 5

During the session 5, the participants were introduced to the **Accessible ICT Public Procurement**.

The presentation answered the following questions: Why Public Procurement matters in ensuring accessible ICTs?; What are the key stages of accessible ICT Public Procurement?; What are the roles and responsibilities of policy makers, regulators and service providers?

It was stressed that the public procurement is defined as one of the most flexible and far-reaching legislative instruments available to obtain goods, works, and services to meet the needs of the government as it carries out its responsibilities to its citizens.

Discussion points and Challenges Revealed

Most of the participants stressed that they were not familiar with the role of public procurement policy in ensuring accessible ICTs. It was evident that little or no attention was paid to this issue and legal framework should be updated in consultation with relevant stakeholders to incorporate accessibility as a principle in public procurement. The need to have training on the topic was stressed by almost all of the participants, in particular by the representatives of government's institutions.



7. Conclusions

The one-day workshop resulted in a set of conclusions which were drawn through an interactive discussion with the participants. The participants unanimously expressed the need for a more efficient implementation of fostered obligations, policies, standards and guidelines with the aim to create a fully inclusive society, accessible to all. It was concluded that activities in all areas of accessible ICTs should be continued in line with timelines that are to be defined in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities.

Following the signing of the Stabilisation and Accession Agreement (SAA) between the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which entered into force on 1 June 2015, new responsibilities were brought upon BiH authorities. In that respect, it was concluded that the NRA, being recognized as a driving force in ensuring accessible ICTs for PWD, should join efforts with the Directorate of European Integrations in Bosnia and Herzegovina to advocate for the implementation of international obligations, standards, and principles of accessible ICTs to encourage development of inclusive society for persons with disabilities

In particular, the participants welcomed the efforts to further strengthen regional cooperation on the topic as a result of the efforts by ITU European Regional Initiative 3 on ensuring access to telecommunications/ICT, in particular for persons with disabilities.

Actions agreed upon:

- The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina should adopt a Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities.
- The European Broadcast Union (EBU) is identified as a strategic partner to understand better the needs of Public Service Broadcasters and the challenges they face in providing accessible services at a national/regional level.
- The participants agreed that sharing good practices and case studies through regional cooperation can contribute to increasing the implementation of national ICT accessibility policies and strategies.
- The need was expressed to provide ICT accessibility training to all stakeholders (policymaker, NRA, industry and civil society).
- The participants agreed that further actions by ITU-D might include:
 - Organisation of national/regional training on how to implement and monitor the results of the implementation of accessible ICT/TV/video programming
 - Facilitation of regional events, in particular implementation of an annual event “Accessible Europe”
 - Continuation of support to the Member States and Sector Members to identify commercial and governmental best practices relating to accessible telecommunications/ICT.

Feedback

A feedback questionnaire was distributed. Out of 20 participants, 17 responded, and they all found the training useful. The topics of interest were ranked as follows: accessible of TV/video programming (including a practical



demonstration), legal and regulatory framework, web accessibility, mobile communications and public procurement. When asked which topics should be addressed in the next training, the participants stated that all topics should be included in the next the training cycle, with a special, emphasize on: good practices, accessible assistive technologies, empowering industry to implement accessible ICTs, accessible non-linear and linear media education of PWD on how to use accessible ICTs, raising awareness/promotion/advocacy training, accessibility of cultural events and accessible ICTs in education.