The 1st Accessible Europe: ICT for ALL
ICT Accessibility: The Key to Inclusive Communications

Beyond Accessible Europe: Main Takeaways

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Key Messages

- Enabling environment ensures accessible telecommunications/ICT for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries by 2023.

- Primary goal of the digital inclusion is a full implementation of UN CRPD, in particular the ICT accessibility related provisions, as well as ensuring participation of persons with disabilities in all decision making processes, monitoring and development of standards.

- At the EU level, a great breakthrough has been made by several pieces of specific accessibility legislations, as tools for the implementation of the UN CRPD:

- ✓ EU Directive on Web Accessibility and Mobile Applications for all public sector bodies.

- ✓ European Accessibility Act Directive harmonising accessibility requirement throughout the EU internal market.

- Besides, several others pieces of the EU legislation mainstreams accessibility.

Key Messages

- Key steps to achieve ICT accessibility require: national policies and legal frameworks, development of standards, creating accessibility experts, raising awareness, sharing good practices and ensuring implementation.

- Accessible, available and affordable ICTs are key to achieving the social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities and are essential for their independent living.

- All stakeholders are encouraged to engage in the regional and global activities advancing ICT accessibility including:

✓ ITU Regional Initiative for Accessibility for Europe

✓ ITU Digital Inclusion Programme

✓ Ongoing technical standardization in ICT accessibility

✓ Effective application and implementation of the EU accessibility legislation which is available as a model for other countries.

✓ "Accessible Europe" should continue to act as an open, multi-stakeholder platform fostering innovation and regional implementation in line with the UN CRP, thus contributing to achieve the SDGs.

SESSION 1: International, Europe region and European Union vision, targets and actions and key resources to support ICT Accessibility

- The EC has developed a concrete legislation, guidelines and standards that are available to support the implementation process.

- Key EU legislation to ensure accessibility and achieving equality are: European Accessibility Act, Web Accessibility Directive, The Code on Electronic Communications, AVMS Directive, Public Procurement Directives and EU Funds Regulations.

- Key ITU resources (model policies, guidelines, training courses, video tutorials on how to develop accessible digital content, a programme on web accessibility, Study group on Question 7/1 as a working platform) are available to support the stakeholders' implementation of ICT accessibility.

- Implementation requires a pro-active involvement of telecom operators in ICT accessibility.

- Opportunities provided by Gigabit technology as a game changer + 5G should be used.

SESSION 2: Examples of Accessibility Legislation/Regulations/Standards in EU Members States and outside Europe

- There is a multiplicity of ICT accessibility legislation and regulatory frameworks.

- Development of legislation should be more timely to keep a pace with technological innovation.

- Necessary to create and nourish ICT accessibility ecosystems.

- Important to have adequate monitoring of ICT accessibility and measure the impact on persons with disabilities.

- Universal design is a tool to achieve accessibility.

- The industry should be incentivized and involved.

SESSION 3: Stocktaking Implementation of accessibility and assistive technology in Europe

- Assessing and promoting accessible features are key (by inclusion of persons with disabilities).

- Accessibility is relevant in social networks.

- Key elements are feedback from users (persons with disabilities, research/design/engineering/roll out levels).

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool as it becomes more available, accessible and affordable.

- ICT accessibility is essential for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work market, as well as training of IT professionals in accessibility.

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SESSION 4: Web Accessibility; Regulations/Standards/Resources

- Accessible website generate economic and social benefits.

- Measures to ensure compliance with the EU Directive on the Accessibility of Public Sector Websites and Mobile Applications are available, such as: feedback mechanisms, on demand provision, enforcement mechanism, training, awareness raising, stakeholder consultation.

- Important to make the tools that support users visible.

- Two key drivers to achieve accessible website are: raising awareness and creation of capabilities.

- The ITU's National Program "Internet for all", which has a holistic approach ranging from: political buy-in, training in the development of digital content, designing and managing accessible websites, as well as generating in-country expertise and necessary funds to train the end users, pointed out as a good (self-sustainable) practice to implement.

SESSION 5: Audio-visual Media Services, TV and Video Programming

- AVMSD (2018/1808) requires member states to provide accessibility. Obligations include: reporting to NRA, reporting to EC, have accessibility action plan, have a line contact point, make emergency information accessible.

- TV accessibility applies to all forms of TV and video programming.

- The need was expressed to have: a) accessibility icons standardised, b) technical standards for streaming and audio subtitles.

- Strengthening collaborative approach in: a) business benefits of access services, b) creating synergies between the work of ITU/EC.

- AI can be used in "object-based" broadcasting to learn about users viewing habits and tailor hoe programmes are delivered to them based on the requirements.

- Providing subtitles for 100% is feasible.

- Standards do matter only if editorial guidelines require accessible production.

SESSION 6: Procurement of Accessible ICTs and Universal Design

- Public procurement is a powerful instrument in ensuring accessible ICT. Legal framework on Public Procurement with accessible provisions is available in EU.

- Public procurement is a big market.

- Accessibility provisions in public procurement relate to: technical specification, quality assurance standards, award of contracts, public oversights.

- There is a need for meaningful data and monitoring of systematic use of accessibility requirements in procurement.

- Strengthening collaboration at all levels (UN,EU, national) to include decision-makers, politicians, procurement specialists, academia and organisation of persons with disabilities.

SESSION 7: Implementation of Equal Access in Telecom

- The EU Code on Electronic Communications helps shaping the right environment for digital networks and services to be accessible. It promotes connectivity and access, stimulates sustainable competition, drives investments, reinforces internal markets, strengthens consumer rights.

- There is a need to raise further awareness about accessibility features in telecom devices.

- Important to enhance the availability of accessible information about products and services, the features and components.

SESSION 8: Telecom Relay Services: Practical experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

- Important to ensure that persons who are deaf, hard-of- hearing or with speech disabilities have access to telephone relay services with equal functionality.

- Relay service considerations include: network, confidentiality & security, a communication assistant, emergency call outreach, seed of answer, call processes and end user agreement.

- Collaborate with stakeholders including the government and the disability community.

- Collaboration between ITU and EC in the area of the telecom relay services is welcomed.

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SESSION 9: Innovation and good practices in implementing ICT Accessibility products and services for PwD

- Sharing good practices and fostering processes to exchange and engage innovation.

- Innovation, good practices, standards, manuals, toolboxes, competence centres, tools for creating content, platforms, orientation maps, are available to support the implementing ICT accessibility.

- Studies have shown the value of promoting the diversity.

- Develop products and services facilitating cutting-edge mobile and communication technology.