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INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION
TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT SECTOR
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    >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Well, it is now 10:00. Good
morning and good afternoon to everyone, depending for where
you are joining from. Welcome to the third and last day of
Accessible Europe 2021. My name is AnaMaria and I'm
representing the ITU office for Europe and I will be your
moderator for the day.
    It has been a very interesting three days here with
Accessible Europe 2021, and I look forward to these last
sessions today, where we will be exploring together more on
the development of ICT accessibility, as well as discussing

during the project laboratory the various initiatives and comments, together with the audience.

Before we start, I would like to give the floor to the technical moderator, who will give us some more instructions on the usage of the platform today. Please go ahead.

>> MODERATOR: Dear participants, my name is Luiza, and I will be the technical moderator. This session is livestreams and it will be archived and made available on the ITU website.

Also, we will be featuring, captioning, international sign language and Portuguese sign language. I would like to remind the audience that we are not in a webinar meeting, which means that you are viewing a normal Zoom meeting. Thank you very much, and have a pleasant event.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much, Luiza and thank you also to the interpreters and the captioners that have joined us today, helping to facilitate this meeting. I now have the pleasure to jump right into the first session on knowledge development for ICT accessibility.

I would like to introduce the moderator and the lead of this session who has also been key to the development of this entire event, sharing her knowledge and expertise with us, Ms. Roxana Widmer Ilescu.

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILESCU: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. So welcome to the ICT accessibility session. This -- it will be a knowledge development session, and as you know, this session, it is on purpose scheduled in the last day of this regional event, because we hope that by following the informative session provided in the first two days, you are already aware of the national regional targets and commitments we look at implementing jointly with you, to build a digitally inclusive region and world.

So in short, I'm quite ambitious in this one-hour time. I want each of you to have a better understanding of the topic, that each of you will learn something new and useful for your personal and professional that involves technology and each of you will add ICT accessibility as the fundamental knowledge, the common knowledge and language we need to learn to ensure that we communicate in an inclusive manner in this digital world we live.

So normally, as some of you are aware, in a face-to-face meeting, we would have this session very interactive, and we want to keep it like this even if we run it virtually.

So invite you all to address whatever question you may have, or whatever additional information you may require and I will be happy to respond to you, to the best of my ability.

With this in mind, I invite you to see our first video tutorial on ICT to jointly summarize what it is ICT accessibility, to whom it serves, and why we need it. The video, please.

Thank you.

(Captioned video).

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILESCU: Thank you. Thank you very much for this video tutorial. I think we all know and have it clear why and what. And I would like to share that we need to strengthen the capacity of all topics for ICT accessibility. We have developed a series of online training which are self-paced, free of charge and multiple language and in accessible format, which will have at your disposal in ITU Academy. So I will go to these trainings in the links in chat.

I also want to mention that these trainings offer the possibility to provide you an ITU certificate at the end of the training, if you validate the knowledge, and I also encourage you to do the first one on how to ensure inclusive digital communication during crisis and emergency situation, not only because we are still facing this COVID crisis, but it's -- it's quite short. I mean, it's very short and in about a half an hour, you can obtain an ITU certificate and by the end of this event, you can also enjoy or have an ITU certificate in a topic of ICT accessibility.

With this in mind, I would like to also ask my colleagues to show the video tutorial of the course that I encourage you to take, and in order to facilitate, then my colleague -- to facilitate how to take this course, my colleague will explain how to do. So the video tutorial, please.

(Captioned video).

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILESCU: Thank you very much for this video tutorial. And now, in order to enable you a more clear perspective on how to achieve this training course and how easy it is, I will invite my colleague Elena to share with you all this knowledge and to guide you on how to achieve these trainings and perhaps even today to have your first ITU certificate in one of the topics of these trainings. So thank you very much, and I will let Elena to

follow on this with you.

>> ELENA STANSKOSKA-CASTILLA: Thank you so much, Roxana. We are so excited to be here. We will go straight to the topic so we don't waste much time. If I can ask our lovely IS moderator to share the page of our ITU Academy so I can quickly guide you through our landing page.

This is the ITU Academy landing page. The Euro address is displayed at the very top. It's academy.ITU.int. And, of course, today I would like to show you how to create your account so I would ask you to click on create account there at the very top.

You will see a new page loading and it's very simple page. It asks you for very basic information. It is for us to understand what are your preferences, and where you come from so we can of course serve to the best of your needs. And so once you fill in this form, of course, you will receive an email with your password and you will be all set and ready to start your courses on the ITU Academy.

So now we'll go back to the presentation, and I will go through several slides so that you can understand a little bit better how to get to the courses of your interest.

So I would like to first start by explaining that the ITU Academy is the ITU online gateway for capacity development activities in the field of ICTs and digital development, and being of course, we also have a lot of knowledge resources which I advise all of you to feel free to explore.

Next slide, please.

As mentioned, in order for you to get to the ITU Academy, and to start a course, you must have an ITU Academy account and as mentioned, you simply click on the dotted in red right there, create account, and you will be able to start your journey through the ITU Academy.

Next slide, please.

Once you are already registered, how to find your courses is just by clicking on the tab that is called training courses, and then the tab called full catalog.

These tabs are very important. We have a lot of different ways to find your courses. This could be by language, it could be by dates. It could be by topic as we have a large amount of topics. And once you find the course of your interest, of course, then you will be navigated to the learning management system.

Next slide, please.

To do that, you must click on my courses tab. You will then be navigated to your dashboard. Our learning management system is based on model, which is open source and also has a large variety of accessibility features. Next slide, please.

You will see it looks like this. This is the interface. Luckily, we have now integrated a couple more languages for the interface of the model that you could change. We have English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese and we're working very hard to add further languages so that you will have more ability to operate within Moodle and explore the different features.

Next slide, please.

And this is, I think, the most important part because there's three amazing courses that we would like you all to explore and you can even start today, as Roxana has mentioned, they are all free courses and they have a variety of languages. All you need to do is click on the button and enroll, which, of course, they are full courses and so you will not be paying anything. You will be right into the course itself.

The best part about these courses is they are open throughout the year and even better, you can start today, come back at a later time. You don't need to finish within your first try. So you have the ability to explore the course and go back if you have something to do and then eventually, of course, once you pass through the course, you will get an auto mated certificate, which you can download from our website.

In case you have any questions, any technical issues, we are always there for you. As you can see on the screen shots, there's the HCBmail@ITU.int for any issues. If you are doing this right, feel free to send us your technical requests, questions in the chat here in Zoom.

Me and my colleague, Guiomar are here to answer your questions or in general to the ITU Academy platform. We are very happy and honored that we are invited today. We are looking forward to the rest of this event.

Thank you very much.

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILESCU: Thank you very much, Elena. And from now, I would like to share that we will further provide an additional knowledge, so there are five video tutorials, which this will be magic for everyone, from policymakers and communicators, to increase their audience to private sector and business and to increase the number

of their clients, to add on end user and to increase their business values.

And what is this?

This is with regard how to build accessible digital content. It means whenever you want to -- let's say you have information or a blog or to chat, or whatever you want to -- to inform worldwide, through digital content, either in your working activities or personal activities, web and social networks, you have to ensure that this is developed and delivered in an accessible format. And in the next half an hour, it will only last 35 minutes, we will go one by one and to show you how to develop this digital content in accessible formats and ensure that everyone has access to your information. The videos, please.

(captioned video).

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILESCU: Continue, please.

(Captioned video).

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILESCU: Ladies and gentlemen, we arrive at the end of this capacity building session, aiming at presenting holistic and useful information about the only inclusive language of the digital world which is digital accessibility.

So we hope that each of you found this session informative for your future professional and personal activities, we encourage you share the ITU resources that you find in the chat and, of course, to raise awareness of importance to ensuring that ICT accessibility is considered in whatever communication we make through digital platforms.

Finally, we thank you for joining ITU efforts to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital world, regardless of age, gender ability and building an inclusive digital region in Europe.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much, Roxana for this great session and thanks to Elena and the other colleagues from the ITU Academy for sharing with us the knowledge around the academy and how we can sign up.

I invite again as Roxana mentioned to all the attendees to take the online course, and become certified and I believe that this is very, very videos that will be available on our website and our YouTube play list. And so if you go to the ITU Accessible Europe website, you can find all the information, as well as the presentation that was shared.

I would like to move directly into our session, which

is the Project Laboratory. This session will be run
differently. We can discuss a little bit more in-depth
initiatives, comments, feedback from our audience. I see
we have a lot of people connected today. I look for an
active discussion.

     How we run this session is as follows. We have
already two presentations that have expressed interest to
present in session. I would invite you to write in the
chat their comments or if they wish to intervene with a
short up to five minutes intervention or they could also
raise their hands.

     , again, I invite everyone to be quite active in this
session. The idea of this session is to share any projects
that you have, any initiatives that you might want feedback
from the group or you might want to be, you know, just
presenting them as a very, very brief intervention.

     So to kick off this session, I will immediately invite
Mr. Carlos Duarte, who is from the University of Lisbon to
present very shortly, three very interesting initiatives.
Carlos, you have the floor, and invite the moderators, the
technical moderators to please share his presentation as
well. Thank you.

     >> CARLOS DUARTE: Thank you, Anna Maria. Hello,
everyone. My name is Carlos Duarte, and I'm a computer
science professor at the University of Lisbon. Today I
would like to introduce you to three recently started
European actions of which I'm proud to be involved and
promote accessibility at different levels.

     Next slide, please. The first one of the actions is
LEAD-ME, the leading platform for citizens, industries,
academia and policy makers in media accessibility. It's a
COST Action that began last October and that will run
through October 2024.

     Today, I will give you just a brief overview of what
we are planning to do, but you can find further details and
contact information at lead-me-cost.eu.

     Next slide, please.

     As any COST action, it fosters collaboration and
knowledge exchange between its member participants. We are
looking to achieve this main goal through a different
means. On the one hand, we want to build a platform to
gather all accessibility information such as outcomes of
EU-funded projects. This platform can then serve as a
place where stakeholders and communities linked to
accessibility will meet. This will enable coordination of

efforts at multiple levels, tracing a roadmap for accessibility across Europe, coordinating policymakers in regulating the established standards for accessibility, like the web accessibility directive for the audiovisual media services directive. And developing the future professional and academic curriculum for accessibility experts across Europe.

Next slide, please.

To achieve these ambitious goals, we are organized in four distinct work groups. Working Group one is tasked with the creation of a platform that will work as a one stop shop for accessibility-related resources. Participants in this Working Group identify resources resulting from EU-funded projects and other sources, and collect them so that they don't perish after the funded projects have.

Working Group two is focused in defining best practices, guidelines and curricula, that should be implemented in order to have a harmonized approach to accessibility education. Participants of this Working Group will collect experience from matured universities and research institutes and expectations of end user representatives and industrial partners.

Next slide, please.

Working Group three aims to promote a set of standards that guarantee a satisfactory level of quality. This will draw from market and industrial standards from results of research being conducted across academic and research institutions, but also taking into account the needs expressed by end user organizations.

Finally, Working Group four looks at the current legislative framework, and input from the other Working Groups to derive the strategic priorities for future directions and priorities for policymakers in media accessibility.

Next slide, please.

LEAD-ME will support the activities of the Working Groups in different ways. For example, we can award grants for short-term scientific missions or participations in ICT conferences. We will also organize two training schools per year, one summer and one winter school. The first one took place last November, organized by the University of Barcelona and the next one will take place in July in Warsaw.

If you are in any way related to accessibility, I'm

quite sure that you are able to contribute to at least one of the LEAD-ME Working Groups. So please, join the members of 27 EU countries already collaborating in LEAD-ME.

Next slide, please.

The second action I want to talk about is WAI-CooP, the Web Accessibility Initiative communities of practice. WAI-CooP is a coordination and support action funded by the EU under the Horizon 2020 Program. It started this January, and it will go on for three years. You will be able to find more details about it at www.w3.org/WAI/about/projects/WAI-CooP/.

Next slide, please.

In WAI-CooP, we are primarily concerned with supporting implementation of international standards for digital accessibility. As you are aware, this is a very timely topic with the different EU Member States entering the monitoring stage defined in the web accessibility directive. In WAI-CooP, we want to facilitate the Member States and other non-EU countries in locating media resources, but we also want to help bridge the gap between what the accessibility research community focuses on, and what are the needs of companies and practitioners that work in the accessibility field.

Finally, it is also our goal to set up a platform for different countries to share what they are doing, so that all can achieve their goals in a more efficient manner.

Next slide, please.

The projects outcomes we'll materialize the work through resources made available to the community. We will develop a list of training and certification offerings. And update the existing wc3 list of evaluation tools and lists of international policies. Next slide, please.

We will organize one research symposia per year, where researchers and practitioners will meet to align their efforts.

Two open meetings will be held per year, supporting the exchange of best practices, among the countries interested in the implementation of accessibility standards, and we will set up supporting mechanisms for Member States like offering help desk supports and setting an FAQ about the implementation of the web accessibility directive.

Next slide, please.

So all the work of the WAI-CooP project is then under the orientation of the W3C processes in.

Particular, the Web Accessibility Initiative, the organization responsible for setting up the web content accessibility guidelines that are the foundation of most international standards on accessibility, including the EU's EN301549 standard for digital accessibility.

The other members in the project's consortium include the European Disability Forum, the Accessibility Foundations, we the University of Lisbon, and Deque Research. We have proven contributions and expertise in the accessibility field.

Let me conclude by saying that as any work done under the auspices of the W3C, my member of the community can contribute. You don't need to be a member of the W3C. So I urge you to look -- I urge you to look for our developments, comment on them whenever you can and mostly benefit from them in your accessibility-related efforts.

Next slide, please.

Okay. The final project I want to tell you about is SONAAR, social networks accessible authoring and this definitely connects to what we have been seeing in the past hour.

So while the two previous projects are more inclined to create supporting mechanisms for the community, this is more of a traditional research-oriented project.

SONAAR is a preparatory action funded by the European Commission that started earlier this year and will end in July of this year. Next slide, please.

SONAAR deals with an ever increasing problem. As you might -- sorry. As you might be aware, user-generated content is large, if not the largest part of the content available on the web.

And social networks are the origin of a large percentage of that content. Think the amount of content that is generated every day by the users of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and many other social networks.

Of course, with the affordability of camera, SmartPhones, images and videos are a large part of that content. Next slide, please.

While the interfaces of social networks are becoming fairly accessible, this user-generated media content is not. You might know that some social networks already have features that are capable of providing automatically text descriptions for content. And talk to someone who has to use them, and they will say it lacks quality.

The primary goal in SONAAR is to demonstrate that it's

possible for the authorizing in social context the.

   We want to explore the mechanisms that make it
possible to explore the accessible media content, both on
mobile and web platforms.

   Next slide, please.

   We want to ensure the authorizing process can be made
accessible, and last but not least, definitely, we want the
users to be engaged in the production of accessible
content, not inaccessible content.

   Next slide, please. So far we have conducted a study
with a survey to which we got 258 answers. 64 of those
from people that reported a disability.

   And we followed it up with 20 detailed interviews.
Seven of our interviewees were blind. Next slide, please.

   This study allowed us to understand some important
pieces of current context. First, most users of social
networks are not even aware they can create accessible
content. Part of them didn't even know what accessible
content is. Part of them knew, but they were unaware of
how to do it in the social networks they use. And, of
course, they can't find any guidance about posting
accessible content in the social networks themselves.

   We also learned that there is still a quite prevalent
stigma associated with disability, with some participants
stating that they could not understand how a blind person
could be interested about what goes on on Instagram, give
than it's mostly an image-based social network. However,
we were quite happy to learn that most users wanted to be
month are inclusive, and wanted to learn how to author
accessible content.

   Next slide, please.

   So these findings inspired our following developments.
So far we created an extension for Google Chrome and an
application for Android phones that targets two social
networks, Twitter and Facebook. In these social networks,
the SONAAR prototypes are able to offer text descriptions
and it's being authored. These suggestions can come from a
variety of sources but the primary one is existing textual
descriptions that have been created by other users,
therefore, looking to improve the quality of suggestions
when compared to automatically generated ones.

   The SONAAR user, when in the presence of an image on a
web page or MOL application screen can request from our
service a textual description for that image.

   In the coming months, we will further develop our

features, and start a new round of testing of our prototypes with end users. So next week, look for SONAAR in the Google PlayStore and in the Chrome Play Store if you would like to try it out.

Next slide, please.

And this is all I wanted to tell you about. I want to thank you for your attention. I really hope you get involved in any of these projects and being of course, if you want to know further details at them, reach out to me at caduarte@campus.ul.pt.

Thank you.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much, Carlos. This is very interesting and if you could also please write your contact details perhaps in the chat, I think this would be useful for everyone to contact you after.

>> CARLOS DUARTE: Sure.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: And also there will be definitely the presentation, it will be available on the website. I see Sergio who also asked this question in the chat. So thank you, Sergio, for that.

We will put this presentation up on the website on the same link that we have been sharing today and in the previous days.

If you have any questions for Carlos, please feel free to type them in the chat. I do not see any questions right now, but we can always come back to them. So no problem. Please feel free to type them, and we will move on to the next presentation from Mr. Robin Weis and Mr. Michael Fembek from the Essl Foundation to present briefly on their initiative. So thank you for the technical moderator that opened the presentation.

I would like also to ask for the spotlight for Michael and Robin and you have the floor. Thank you.

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes, thank you, AnaMaria, it's an honor and a pleasure for the Zero Project to be here with you and to present the aims of the Zero Project. So next slide, please.

I think many of you are aware of our work. We are here for almost ten years now. The Zero Project is a project that has been initiated from the Essl Foundation from Austria, it's an entrepreneurial foundation. It's a well-known family from Austria. We have a clear mission which is the world with zero barriers. We are founded when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was launched in the late 2000s.

So our mission is completely related to the articles of the CRPD and contribute to the implementation of the CRPD, and we have found and developed a very clear approach to do that, which is finding and communicating innovations on the one side and on the same side, this quite clearly related is building communities around innovators and telling the story of innovations because any innovation too make it useful for implementation of the CRPD needs communities. It needs people who will find the innovations interesting. So our process is interconnect these people that select and choose and give us their opinion on innovations, the same people who should use those opinion leaders and the decision-makers using the innovations that we jointly develop.

Robin?

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Yes, so welcome, everyone. And I'm glad to be here as well. And I would like to follow up on some of the comments Michael has said and introduce the zero project with. Next slide, please.

Specifically, I would like to tackle and underline the strengths which we see. As Michael mentioned, we seek innovative practices and policies from all around the world, which are able to remove barriers for persons with disabilities, as envisaged by the UN CRPD. We do that in a four-year cycle. So we have certain thematic focuses which fit in very well with a lot of presentations which we have seen here today.

So throughout the years, we focused on employment, accessibility, independent living, political participation, education, and every year, given its outsized importance, ICT.

Now, in the past seven years, what we have been able to do is source the most innovative policies and practices from all around the world, which have not been highlighted or chosen by us, but by international peer-review board, and we have over 662 innovative policies from over 118 countries, and we would love to send you a link to a publication, which we just released which goes into granular detail on all of those innovative policies and practices. So if you are interested, what kind of policies and practices we found in your country. Stay tuned towards the end of the presentation. I will be posting a link to our almanac presentation, which has embodied what we do at the Zero Project and everything that we have developed over the years.

Next slide.

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes, just to give you some numbers. So we have 6,000 people that have been contributed in the past eight years in one way or another, to the network, and to the selection and the communication of the Zero Project innovations that we jointly discovered and communicated, some 180 plus countries have contributed. We have selected 662 awardees since 2014, and this' a lot more that we could share here, for example, we organized ten Zero Project project conferences already, which are the flagship activities and the last one was completed digital last February.

So next slide.

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: So the question is, of course, why are we here today? Why the ITU? And I think really the main point which we want to drive home today is accessibility and our very big interest in accessibility for this year. So our 2021 awards which will encapsulate all the nominations will be focused on accessibility, and what we really are interested in is finding nominations which are innovative, impactful and scalable. So we want to have an to receive nominations which are centered around accessibility innovation. So a lot of the interesting projects which, for example -- and Mr. Duarte mentioned in the presentation prior, would fall into this category. So the nominations open up May 3rd.

What is left to say is email us. Get in touch with us. I will post our email addresses as well in the chat. We want to hear from you, and we want to share the call for nominations with you, because together, and only to go, even with a 6,000 plus expert network, we miss out on innovative practices and policies and each year we are able to bring on new partners, new stakeholders who are able to outline and showcase us where interesting work is being done in the facility inclusion space. And we would love to get input from you and hear from the nomination call this year.

Next slide.

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes so the search for innovations and the collection process is the back bone of the zero project, but it's not everything that is needed to promote innovations, as we all know. So the need and the ecosystem, the need of a dedicated group of the interested stakeholders are -- that come from very different backgrounds, for example, financial support, but it's also

kind of consultancy, NGOs that want to use it,
international agencies that will want to work with them and
this is why also the ITU is one of our key stakeholders and
we are really glad and honored that we can develop this
partnership.

So what we are doing and what we are -- is also the
mission of the Zero Project is creating those meaningful
communities around innovations, that create value for
everyone involved. So it's also needed for those
communities to work. So the still and we want definitely
to continue working on that is to create some communities,
webinars, online communities, whatever community means in a
broader sense that makes sense for everyone, is bring the
right innovators in and bring also the other stakeholders
in the same so that this community wants to work together,
sees the value in being together, and, of course, the ITU
with -- with everything that comes from our point of view,
with this international and great and organization like
norms and standards is so important for us.

Robin?

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Next slide, please.

And because of the reasons Michael just mentioned, we
have decided to gather joint forces with ITU when it comes
to building an ecosystem up for innovators. At the end of
the day, and especially after the year we had right now,
innovators need more than ever, feedback loops, involvement
with other networks, and mutual support and really
leveraging each other's strengths and that's what we see,
that the ITU's expertise, which you have been seeing --
which has been show cased today and yesterday throughout
the conference, and our global network, you are really
complimentary. So we're really glad and honored that the
ITU is joining forces with us, and we are very happy they
are coming weeks and months to share new details on our new
partnership.

Are next slide.

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes, so to close the presentation,
we want to publication communications that we did in the
past weeks. So if you go back one slide, I would like to
point out the Zero Project almanac. It's the summary of
our work through 2021. The 600 items are in there. It's a
summary all the innovations and all the impact that was
created for and with -- with the innovations. There are
chapters on accessibility, ICT, a lot on ITU cooperations
that we did in the past and we were happy to do.

So you just simply can go to the website, Zero Project.org, and download the almanac. And it's available in a German version and hopefully soon in a Spanish.

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: And I posted the English version.

So it encompasses all the projects we supported over the years, all the people involved. So, you know, with an open source approach, we view this as a resource and also as a teaser and to -- to give you a sneak peek coming in the fall this year, we will internalize all of this information also in the searchable we believe portal and be on the lookout on ZeroProject.org as well.

So on the subject of content, we would like to bring to your attention the brand new video portal which we actually just launched yesterday which encompasses all the content that we generated during our three-day virtual conference this year. So for those of you who are unable to join us, this is a great opportunity to really catch up on some of the ITU sessions which we hosted, but also on the 90 plus hours, such as the World Bank and academia and all the innovators from around the world which have been able to showcase.

I also just posted the URL in the chat, please do visit the video portal. Next slide.

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Thanks. That was all. Thank you again for the opportunity. Here's the contact info for Robin Weis and myself. Thank you very much.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much. Thank you, Michael and Robin. And as I invite you to put all of these contact details in the chat. So I see there's a question from Sergio, when will Zero Project release Portuguese version of the almanac? So maybe Sergio, you are volunteering for this project?

(chuckles).

Michael, do you have any plans on this?

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: As soon as we find a partner, and we definitely would like to work with the Portuguese version. With the Spanish version, we found a great foundation partner, interestingly from Chile, and so they are covering all the Spanish-speaking dimension of the Zero Project. So happy if you know a partner. We are open to any kind of partnerships that see the cause and join the mission of sharing innovations.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: That's great. So Sergio, back to you and we hope you will be sending us a partner by the end of this session so we can make this happen. Thank you

so much for that. And just to build upon this as Michael
and Robin stated, we are joining forces, indeed to launch
an initiative together all about innovation. So I would
like to invite the technical moderator to open the next
presentation and I will just briefly go very, very quick on
this -- on this launch that they are doing here today.

So we will be launching the Accessible Europe
innovation partnership together and if you go to the next
slide, we are looking here at the scope of the partnership
is really around the ecosystem of innovation in
accessibility. So we are really looking here to work
closely with start-ups and SMEs and other relevant
stakeholders to enhance, of course, regional cooperation in
Europe, and engagement in the innovation ecosystem for an
Accessible Europe.

And some of the, let's say fuel for this initiative
will be, of course, the different competitions that we are
hosting, just like Accessible Europe is, together with also
the partnership.

So in the next slide, if you can move. Thank you.
The objective, as I said, it's really to identify and
support normative solutions and support them even further.
So not just during the competition but really create this
ecosystem together, looking into maybe perhaps some sort
of, you know, invention, involvement in different events,
pitching sessions, as well as to disseminate additional
knowledge with regarding to ICT accessibility innovations.

And if you go to the last slide this is just a very,
very broad overview and we will be working with Michael and
Robin in detail to actually look at the activities, but
just broadly as it was mentioned before, some live labs
looking for, you know, giving the opportunity to start ups
and SMEs to do products, testing, and feedback on the
different accessibility products that they are working on.
Working together with the ITU, the EU and on the
standardization and the intellectual property rights,
training and support, creating a match making area, where
we have seen this, and we have a lot of, you know,
different audience here from start-ups and SMEs and they
are always looking to collaborate and be matched together
with a mentoring network. And also providing support to
various start-ups and SMEs are already doing products and
they are making their products more accessible and further
communication and event-related support.

So this is just very, very brief overview ever what we

are planning to do and as Michael and Robin mentioned, we will be letting you know more in detail and communicating on this partnership, on this initiative together, in the coming days, so that we can engage everyone here will in the various activities that we are planning.

And maybe just back to Michael for -- if you wish to just stay a little bit of a brief remark on this?

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes, I think AnaMaria, we are really proud and happy, since this -- I think this can be really fruitful for everyone involved, and we will add a lot of capacity and resources to this cooperation. We have already strong partnership also, with the Ashoka, and we have an industrial, which is called Impact Transfer, where we can transfer some capacities to this partnership. So really, really happy to build on that and looking forward as mentioned. Also the timing is perfect, since we are currently preparing the next on accessibility and ICTs. So I think everything is there for us starting something -- something great.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much, Michael. And indeed, please to everyone that is interested to apply for this call that was shared and, of course, the presentation will be available on the website.

I think there was a question also for Carlos, from Sergio, that we skipped right now, but I can see it here. Carlos, maybe I see that you replied in the chat, but maybe if you can reply for everyone, how we can join your projects and what are the different requirements if you can briefly share and also Carlos, I think you have been invited to be one of the applicants from the presentation of Michael and Robin. So we hope to see you apply there.

>> CARLOS DUARTE: Okay. Yeah. Well, Sergio -- thank you, Sergio, for the question. So as AnaMaria said, the question from Sergio was how can any of you join any of these projects.

So the LEAD-ME COST Action, there's no requirements, anyone can join, as long as you are interested in collaborating in up with of the Working Groups, just get in touch with the Working Group chair, and Working Group leader.

The contact for the different Working Group leaders are available on the project's website, which I posted on the chat. And just express your interest and you will be part of the team immediately.

You can just follow up on news from the project by

subscribing to the mailing list, which you can also find on the project's website.

Regarding the work of WAI-CooP, it is work done under the processes of W3C and so anyone can comment on that, you can search for development on the initiative website and from time to time as any W3C project, there's public calls for comments. So this is, I guess, everyone's major opportunity to shape the work we are doing, to contribute to the work we are doing.

Of course, if you are interested in getting even more involved in that, get in touch with me, or get in touch with possibly everyone has heard about Shadi Abou-Zahra, he's the project coordinator and we can see how to involve you, if you are interested in collaborating more closely with this project.

Finally, for SONAAR, as I said in my presentation, we will be shortly publishing on Google Play Store and Chrome Web Store our prototypes. So this is an opportunity for you to test it out. We will be looking to do some controlled user testing. So if you are interested, also get in touch with us. Look at the westbound site for the announcement far when it will be available. We will be releasing them on -- for a limited number of participants initially, but if you really want to try it out, do let us know and we will make sure that you are one of them.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much, Carlos. This is very clear and, again, please reach out to Carlos if you have any questions. He has put his contact details in the chat.

Now this session is really about the active engagement of the audience. So we have presented here a couple of interesting projects and initiatives, and we have invited you to engage with them. So please do so. And I would like to now open really the floor for anyone who is interested to share what they are doing in this field, and in projects that they are already thinking to launch, that they have launched, and any lessons learned, anything that they are looking perhaps for partnerships or perhaps they want to share with us an idea, and they want to get feedback from the audience. So please, you can just raise your hand and, you know, we will give you the floor. So I'm really looking now at the list of participants and invite everyone.

It is really an open discussion session. We really want to know from you and also if there are any finalists

or winners from the competition, any start-ups and SMEs to join us with perhaps some of the challenges that they might face when creating products or in the ecosystem that they are in.

So, again, the floor is open. So I'm just looking at the list to see if anyone has raised anywhere hand. You can also write in the chat, of course. I will give it a couple of minutes to see if anyone wants to break the ice and share.

I do not see anyone for the moment.

I do not see anyone who would like to take the floor. Oh, I see Sergio. Thank you, Sergio. I see you have been very active throughout this event. Please, you have the floor.

>> SERGIO: Hello. Can you hear me well?

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Yes, we can hear you.

>> SERGIO: This intervention is, one to break the ice so people can follow it and then suppose some questions and ask and know about the project. Yes, I will look at the almanac from Zero. I will take it maybe to our board of directors and see if we can have some kind of partnership there. Maybe we can do something very interesting with Zero. And maybe we can have a Portuguese version of the document for starters. And from there on, let's see what we can do.

But that's -- that's the -- one of the main objectives of this session is to network and create or cocreate, and I think it's a good idea. It doesn't depend me to say or not. I will check with my board of directors and maybe I will get back to Michael or Robin and see if we can work as partners on something.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much. Thanks Sergio, for this and for breaking the ice and also immediately rushing in to concrete steps for implementing the almanac in Portuguese. Maybe Robin wants to say something?

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Absolutely. Please do, Sergio. We look forward to hearing from you. Take the time to digest the almanac. It has a couple of pages. (chuckles)

Yes, get in touch with us. Our email information, LinkedIn information is in the chat. We would be happy to hear from you and perhaps get some nominations from you of the people you have identified doing some innovative work around the world, when it comes to accessibility.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Maybe Robin as I have you here

and the almanac was mentioned. I have looked at it myself
and it's very, very interesting. Perhaps we could also
just talk a little bit more about the nominations. So
maybe to clarify a little bit more for the audience, what
exactly you are looking for and, you know, if there's any
kind of criteria, and what happens really after the
nomination process. I think a lot of people know what you
are doing, but in case we have people who are new and some
of the finalists as well that might be interested to
nominate themselves and Michael, of course, you also.
Thank you.

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Do you want to take the lead?

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes. So there's a clear four-step
process in the nomination. What we are looking at
currently as mentioned is the topic of accessibility, as
defined in the articles of the CRPD. We are looking at
accessibility for the built environment, the
infrastructure, productions and services and ICT.

What we are also looking at are innovations that are
innovative, that have impact and that can be scaled, and we
added a fourth criteria this year, which is the ability and
also the willingness to cooperate, to coordinate. And so
it doesn't help anyone, including us and anyone else. If
there's someone who is great but doesn't want to work in
networks and doesn't want to be part of an ecosystem, then
we decided to formalize this and say we actually need
people would want to communicate and work with us and our
partners.

I think what can be really adherent is an
encouragement to nominate.

What we have seen is the growing impact that we have
because of partners like ITU. So if you are selected. So
in the past we have 450 or 500 nominations and we select
75. So great ones have all the chances and these
organizations, these projects get a lot in the meantime.

With the cooperation with ITU and vice versa, the
nominations from the ITU will be considered by us. You get
the opportunity to work with the ITU. And we work with the
WHO. And so they are creating a list of accessible
technology that should be favored by governments. They
will might also come here and give our innovators a chance
to connect with the WHO. You can connect with governments
and NGOs who may create pilot projects and go from country
A to country B. That's what we are here for.

The chances there and the opportunities are growing by

the year what one who is an awardee gets from taking part. Robin anything to add?

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: What we give as far as input who we decide to nominate, is constructive and valuable feedback. We don't want to put up extremely high barriers. You need to have over X amount of users and whatnot. We want to understand the whole picture, where you are coming from what your funding sources are, and the development of your service project or hardware, were persons with or without disabilities involved? What element does universal design play in your product or service? We want to have a holistic understand and big picture understanding in what you are doing in the nomination. We encourage those who are on the fence. They think, I'm not sure if it will have an impact. Is it that great?

If you are hesitant, please, please, nominate. You will get constructive feedback, even if that feedback is unfortunately, you won't be able to come to the next round. You will get the feedback of perhaps what is missing or input of where to find the missing pieces within the innovation pulse so to say. And then we want to say nominate, nominate, nominate.

We deliberately have, let's say an abstracting accessibility. There's a lot that falls under the accessibility umbrella. We want to capture all innovations small and big, be it from corporations such as Microsoft down, all the way to a small entrepreneur in Myanmar who is working on something interesting. We want to know about it and open up that innovation to our peer-reviewed experts who can then, as Michael mentioned in a four-step process be able to really thoroughly review and vet the innovations which we can stand behind and say this is something that it's worth replicating or taking up elsewhere.

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: A I add one more sentence. When is not normally selected, when it's too early stage. As Robin mentioned, there's a peer review. They will review. They cannot review any of the papers. So we are really looking at the minimum of impact. And so there has to be a product and a service and it has to be somehow used around the market and that are peer reviews. Everyone from the ITU and everyone is an expert who works with us, sees the potential and the ready and can get an idea that it's working, no?

So there's there, if it's a product or a service, if it can be tried or downloaded, please nominate. You have

all the opportunities.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: I will take the opportunity to ask you more questions. I'm getting some chats to me. The question would be, as you are working a lot, I think with also the start-ups and the SMEs that nominate themselves have you seen any challenges that they face that is an overarching theme that comes up again and again. Robin mentioned that the feedback was something that was very important to this community for the products they are creating.

Maybe if you could say a little bit more about this and challenges from your side running such time of program because there may be others who do something similar at the country level or the national level and it will be interesting to learn more from your experience on that.

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes. I think it could be hours of conversations around this. This is such a fantastic and interesting conversation that you are approaching here. But obviously what is on the top of our mind when we do the selection and what we think we are achieving, especially when it comes to I can and when it comes -- ICT and when it comes to technology, there's an enormous amount of creativity and inspiring people to develop something. The problem is that not no innovations exist. They don't know each other and they don't work with each other and people who can really make a change, policymakers, bigger companies, investors.

For them, this is just a jungle and they don't see anyone better than others and normally they rely on their gatekeepers and this is a system that the Zero Project breaks up a little bit. We try to create an objective level of a kind of quality proof that if you pass the Zero Project levels, and among those 75, then the stakeholders know that this has passed some quality checks. There's a certificate, and this is a group of innovators to look at on a worldwide basis.

And this is one thing that I think it's important and this is this kind of type of change we looking at.

The second thought is innovation, it might be it depends on the context of your country. So it's innovation is very context related but innovative for Denmark, might not be relevant for low developing countries and vice versa. And also this context driven quality of innovation, we try to cover by working worldwide, and very to bring in peers from all of those countries and various types of

disabilities, the same as the ITU does, and those some are
thoughts. And hopefully I'm answering some of your
questions.
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much. I don't
know if Robin wants to add anything to this, or we're good?
     >> ROBIN TIM WEIS: I think Michael covered. It's
operating in a tension economy and understanding that
research, especially in the disability inclusion field can
often be cumbersome because of the spectrum of
disabilities, of course is a rich one. So we really want
to collate everything and open it up for everything.
That's essentially the core of what we do. Since we
realized there are many places where you can find very
specific information about innovation in the disability
inclusion space but it's often sectoral and we try to go
beyond regions, beyond individual disabilities and offer
what is out there. So you have a one-stop shop and one
resource. And that's where innovation happens. If you
have a government somewhere that is interested in this and
let's take SONAAR, how can we create a digital economy
where content is more accessible.
     And they individually don't know about SONAAR, but
they have a resource, in this case, Zero Project which they
can access and be aware of that innovation and reach out to
them. Hey, how have you done this? What are the Chrome
extension? That's how we like to approach innovation and
that's why we are glad to have teamed up with you.
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much. I see
that we have a question -- a hand raised for Mitsuji
Matsumoto. You have the floor.
     >> Can you hear me?
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: We cannot hear you very well.
If you can speak up --
     >> Can you hear me?
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Yes, we can hear you very well.
     >> Thank you very much.
     I'm Mitsuji Matsumoto. I'm a participant in the
ITU-D. I question 7, part one. The accessibility. This
time, madam Roxana asked me to join the accessibility in
Europe. She introduced to me, and I joined this
conference, this event.
     And it is a very interesting conversation. I also
belong to the Japanese association accessibility
organization in Japan to discuss broad things.
     In this association, if possible, I would like to

introduce this accessibility Europe event to my
association. Is it possible?
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Yes, of course. Of course. We
would like to know what you are doing with your
association, and any key projects you are doing or any
challenges you have. We would be very interested to know.
     >> So at this moment, this last year, we are not very
active because we cannot meet in the active. It's not
active at this moment, but in future.
     But our association, we discuss about the CRPD issue,
for persons with disabilities and developing the guideline
for the CRPD, guideline for accessibility, and we submitted
ITU-D, study 26 to the accessibility guideline
recommendation to that -- we committed the document to
Study Group 16, ITU-T. And that's the kind of activity
that we discuss about it so our association is gathering a
lot of persons with disabilities. That's communication
with them. We are using the sign languages. So -- but the
interpreter is there. So we -- I think we need some more
expanding of our activities. I would like to introduce
this to my association. Of that is the first challenge, I
think. Thank you.
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you Mr. Matsumoto. We
look forward to working with you and having more of your
colleagues join Accessible Europe and the activities that
are mentioned. Let's keep in touch and continue offline as
well the discussion on this.
     Thank you very much, and thank you for joining us so
late in the evening as well.
     I see also Carlos has his hand up. Carlos, yes,
please.
     >> CARLOS DUARTE: Yes, I would just like to follow-up
on what Michael and Robin were just saying and introducing
SONAAR as an example of what can happen in Zero Project.
     And just using this as an example of how Zero and
LEAD-ME could collaborate. That's one of the things we are
looking for that one-stop shop that you just mentioned.
That's also one of our goals. But we really do not reach
to replicate work that's already being done. So this is
definitely and instance where two projects can come
together and collaborate. We would like to talk to you
about it and we will point to your resources and to ours
because we just want also to collect that kind of
information about accessibility projects and technology
that could foster accessibility. But if you are already

doing, there's no reason for us to replicate. It's just better that we collaborate than replicate.

I wanted to show what kind of collaborations can be made possible through a CO ST Action like LEAD-ME.

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Sounds good, Carlos. Work smarter and not harder.

>> CARLOS DUARTE: Exactly. We will see how we can operationalize this.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you for mentioning this as well because it's very important what was mentioned that everyone should obviously collaborate and try to as Robin said as well, not redo the things but just better them together. It's very interesting.

In session is reaching its goal. We had some interesting discussions about potential partnerships, and I hope that we will make them happen in the coming days and months.

I have a question about the videos. All the videos shown today and throughout the different days, they will be made available on the website. We have a user play list and you can always check the videos there. We have around 30 minutes left for this session. So, again, I would like to invite more contributions from the audience. I see that we have a lot of colleagues from -- representatives of different organizations. I'm happy to invite them on stage and present what they are do. Any projects, any challenges. Any general feedback about the event. Something that you maybe want to see next year or the different partnerships launched and anything you would like to see us do, any of these organizations that presented.

I'm just looking at the list. I see we have the Serbian alliance. Welcome, if you would like to present anything that you are doing your experiences and projects there, please raise your hand.

>> Thank you very much, for inviting me. I can't turn on my camera. I'm listening very carefully and I want to say that I'm absolutely delighted with the conference. I made a lot of notes. Learned a lot and I will try to apply everything that I heard into my country because, of course, we have a lack of digital accessibility.

And also, I will contact all of those persons who presented these wonderful things. So actually, I used this opportunity to learn and I hope during the next conference, the next year, I will be, let's say, junior expert. So maybe I can more than today, I hope.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you so much. And would you just in two sentences a little bit about what you are doing and maybe any projects that you have now, just for the audience, you know to learn more and maybe there might be someone, you know, who would like to be involved or get in touch with you?

>> Well, actually, we founded the organization last year, during the COVID crisis started. We realized how people with disabilities are excluded. Actually, they were in some kind of self-lockdown because they were aware that they couldn't be able to get appropriate care, healthcare, here in Serbia and then we decided to join all of our forces and every organization which has any kind of expertise in accessibility decided to join to a huge alliance. I was a member of parliament, the second person with disabilities in Serbia. And then we decided to push our government and all sectors in Serbia, especially universities, because I also work at the largest public university in the center for students with disabilities and we are trying to push them to make any strategies for removing barriers.

I can ask my colleagues here to contact me as well, because we are waiting for another round of Erasmus program, because we heard the new cycle of Erasmus program will be inclusion, but first, we need partners from Europe.

So actually, also at my university, people do not know don't have enough information about how to design an accessible website and which tools they need to provide.

So actually, we are trying to advocate to -- to any public institution to implement those standards. As my Prime Minister said, we did a great study with ITU, and of course with the expertise of our lovely Ricardo that we had yesterday, the ability to meet with him, and we will do a lot to actually be good examples of -- of developing country who actually want to do a lot. We have huge plans. We will see. I don't want to speak in advance, actually.

But any type of support and connections is very important to us. Any kind of training. So anyone thinks that -- that there is a sense to connect with us, I will be more than available to speak with anybody. So thank you.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much and I invite you to write your contact details in the chat, in case anybody wishes to reach out this was very, very helpful. Thank you so much for sharing and for taking the floor and participating perhaps. I'm looking at the chat,

something that was mentioned a couple of times, obviously,
COVID which we cannot forget. So perhaps maybe going back
to what became now my panelists, Carlos, Robin and Michael.
I don't know if you want to share feedback about how COVID
has impacted or what you have seen that COVID has impacted
in this community and also perhaps in the nominations or
perhaps you have seen some of the nomination projects have
stopped. So anything around it, I would be happy. Anyone
who would want to start, you can go ahead.
     >> MICHAEL FEMBEK: AnaMaria, shall I?
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Very thank you.
     >> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Of course, there's a lot of issues
and challenges coming with it and I think many of them have
been covered but I'm always on the optimistic side and also
there's some positive development, and they don't doubt
working remotely. They would say, I need you in the
office. The barrier is gone. The same technologies that
are here to stay. Education is now done online and in this
general approach of universal design and making all content
learning information accessible and there's no reasonable
doubt that it makes sense and it's there to stay. I think
there's also some mental barriers are gone that might be
something positive coming from COVID, no?
     >> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Carlos, yes?
     >> CARLOS DUARTE: I would like to add to what Michael
has said. It's great that we have really demonstrated that
remote work can happen, that remote learning is happening.
Work will definitely change. I'm a professor at the
university. Our learning has -- our teaching and learning
has already changed a lot. And I'm pretty sure that if and
when this goes away, some of the things that we are doing
currently will stay, and which is good, because they really
showed us that remote learning can do some things better
than on site learning. And others can't.
     I guess the future holds for us kind of a hybrid model
where remote and on-site will be mixed, but for me, one of
the key takeaways, we shouldn't have needed for a pandemic
to make this possible. And a lot of what is now happening
is what disabled communities have been asking for, for a
long time.
     And they have been telling us, yes, this would be
possible to do, if you just committed to it. And
unfortunately, it took a pandemic for it to be possible.
And I think that that's the most negative point. Now we
are in a state where work and learning has become more

accessible.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you, Carlos. And Robin, would you like to add anything?

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Yeah, well, I mean to synthesize what both Michael and Carlos said. It's fortunate and unfortunate. There were stories and quotes from people who discovered working in bed and how great it is and how they felt liberated and the article ended in the second part on the element of saying, well, for a decade, you stigmatized persons with disabilities who were begging you, please let me work from home. Or depending on my condition, let me work from bed. I'm able to do as much even though -- even more than those in the office, but no one listened to them. So that's the unfortunate part.

The fortunate part that in some ways perhaps there's a bit more equity added to the equation. Within all of that, you have to see where are the resources shifting to now that more people work from home. There's less social contact, mental health, of course is an issue which comes up again.

And there's only so much limited resources which society, unfortunately, targets to mental health. So the question is: As mental health, the issue of mental health becomes more prevalent, will more resources be shifted to people without disabilities at the cost of persons with disabilities? Those are all questions, I think, which the future will show and answer.

But that being said, I think it has given us -- especially at the Zero Project, the opportunity to take money and resources into hand to consolidate all the information that we have and to share it with everyone. We are really excited about that, the rollout as mentioned will be fall 202, is where we will have our open search portal where users can save their own search terms, the innovations they found. So really opening up our treasure case of data. Of course, while respecting data privacy, GDPR is important to us.

So we are excited about that and the pandemic is definitely a catalyst for us, and a think for a lot of other foundations and NGOs and DPOs.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you so much. I have a lot of follow-up questions from all of these points, but I see that Sergio has raised his hand and returned to the screen. So Sergio, you have the floor.

>> Okay. Just to add something on Carlos and Robin,

which is the pandemic has brought us a new reality. It's
been said, except for one thing, we also need to know when
to disconnect, because it's very nice to work in bed, but
sometimes you have to sleep in bed. So I just want to have
this point. We are all facing a new reality. This is
reality now. And we are shaping to it, but we need to have
some rules present no to align our professional and
personal lives, and no when you should stop working at home
and go to something else with your kids or with your dog
or -- and then that's also a challenge that the pandemic
has brought up.

And also to raise this thing -- you see back in there?
It's a shame that we are not all together in the presence
in this beautiful city. The weather is like this now. And
it's a shame, but I would like to tell you all that you are
welcome to visit Lisbon when it is possible and to -- we
hope to see you all personally here.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you so much, Sergio.
Indeed I have behind me from the other side. So it would
have been great to go and visit this beautiful place, but
hopefully very, very soon.

What you mentioned is quite important, because of
course, this is at the heart who have COVID brought, a lot
of new challenges, a lot of new opportunities. So it's
good to see all of those sides.

But I would say, the million dollars question and I
keep inviting my audience to please write in the chat and
raise their hand as I get the new panelists joining here.

What I would like to ask the group now, that we are
discussing, do you think that this will stay? So everybody
is talking about in the beginning right, we thought we are
going back to the normal and this is just a temporary
thing. Now err with discussing that perhaps it's okay to
work from home some days and have flexible working hours.

Many say, the human nature has a short-term memory and
quickly we will come back to the office and forget about
these opportunities. What are your thoughts. Are we going
back and what impact does did have on the community we are
talking to today?

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: I think in some ways we will go
back and as you said, people are trained also to forget
quite quickly which is fortunate in many cases, of course
and needed. But I think some changes is definitely here to
stay. When I talked to companies, for example, travel
budgets will not be the same in the next years than they

have been five years before.

Companies see that the need -- the possibility to save on travel, so that's definitely a given.

Same thing with office space. So what I hear and read is that many bigger companies have scaled down their headquarters because they see they don't have to have all the employees -- sorry, I think I was interrupted, also office spaces scaled down and I think this is here to stay because this is -- it's productivity and, yeah. So I would say it's a mix that everything will stay as it is. Things like the two I mentioned, I think those are definitely here to stay.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you so much for that. Carlos, I don't know if you want to share anything on this?

>> CARLOS DUARTE: Yeah, I do agree with my -- I do think that part of it is here to stay. And perhaps doing more of a research-oriented perspective, not from an industry perspective but a researcher perspective this kind of -- well, there's a lot of backlash against online conferences and it's definitely not the same, as an on-site conference because we do miss all the -- the interaction with the other participants that definitely it's not the same when you are doing it online.

On the other side, I do think that after initial period, that the number of attendees to conferences has increased, because it's -- they have become more accessible, in a way, for people to be able to attend. They have become cheaper. They raised -- I did organize one conference in April of last year. So when -- when we were learning yet how to deal with -- with the pandemic. And there's different -- different types of things that you need to consider that the conference that we were and I think was to take place in Taiwan.

And most of the attendees, in fact, are from Europe and -- and the US. So sticking to the conference in Taiwan time, which we did, meant that everyone in Europe was up all through the night, just to attend the conference.

But, yeah, but we did. And it was still an interesting experience.

I guess, we'll probably see this kind of mixed on-site and remote conferences taking place also in the future. Of course, for some -- for projects like LEAD-ME, which is something that really wants to foster collaboration, we -- we are -- we are having challenges like how can we spend the money that the commission has given us, because we

cannot pay for travels because travels are not allowed at the moment.

So this is the kind of challenges that we need to face right now and find different ways. And in that we can promote collaboration that are not just getting someone from one site to another site, so that they can talk to each other.

So we are still very much learning what is the best way to approach all of this.

But I'm confident that it's not going away. We will keep the best stuff, yes.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you so much, Carlos. It's an interesting point that ties with what Michael said about the budgets, right? So it's time to rethink. In the future project that, perhaps the travel budget will be rethought or left more open to also be used for other things given these experiences. And Robin, if you would like to share your thoughts?

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Sure, just to echo what has been said. I think what is also interesting to see as we both go back and don't go back, to see what happens with the spaces to where we don't go back. The office spaces, and other spaces and kind of the question of do we get to repurpose those? Does urban planning change? Because of the pandemic? And what role persons with disability and issues such as universal design will play. I think there's a lot of potential to say we don't need all of this office space. What do we do with it to make it more into community spaces which hopefully then benefit also DPOs and persons with disabilities and that's for the future to show.

I think a lot of cities which have been very service dependent and office space dependent have the potential now to reimagine a more sustainable and also resilient future, but they have to take that opportunity. So it's not going to present itself. It's a certain amount of proactivity and thinking ahead of the curve in order to prevent similar ghost town scenarios in the future, and it will be interesting to see what happens and we'll try to be part of solution, not the problem. So I will see what comes.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you so much. That's very interesting, actually to think about, because we had the session, the panel on COVID, and accessibility, and I think it was yesterday, and it bills a lot on this point, and it's -- it's interesting to see that, indeed, we all have a

similar kind of thinking in the same direction for when it comes to this.

Now, I look at the chat from Pedro, would is a UX researcher. He has sent us a question. Robin, I'm going to pick on you first perhaps because this is linked a little bit to the live labs as well. He says does anyone have good insights on how a UX researcher can partner with organizations that support people with disabilities so that it's easier to get early service/product feedback on new designs? So this is a little bit, Robin, what you mentioned about how to give feedback, right, when you are working on your product. So if you don't mind, I will start with you, and then go back to Michael and Carlos for any -- any experiences on this.

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Sure, in general, I would first look and take a specific use case. So, you know, can is this a product that is predominant for those who are hard of seeing or blind, or hard of hearing. Once you have the specific use case, I think very specific organizations, both national and supernational come to mind, and a lot of them are also noted in the almanac publication. So I encourage Pedro to A, you know, search the PDF with a couple of key terms and reach out to us if there's more specific inquiries, but all of these organizations are happy to have someone who proactively reaches out to them. So I think there shouldn't be the hesitancy, should I reach out or not?

Because it's still an underserved community. I think we need to be aware of that, and there should be more people like Pedro who ask themselves, these -- the right questions on how to get the user feedback, because like every software project, the user feedback is the lifeblood of making this project better. I'm sure that Carlos has a lot more insights into SONAAR and how he's approaching this and the rollout with the browser extension and alpha and beta testing. So I will stop there and have him fill in the details.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Carlos, you have the floor. Thanks, Robin.

>> CARLOS DUARTE: Yes, well, I would like to start by echo what Robin said. Most if not all of these organizations are very happy to get contacted by people, interested in getting their feedback for their products. So just if you know some of these organizations, get in touch with them, or get in touch with any super

organizations in -- in your country that have the contacts of individual organizations. Get in touch with the monitoring agencies that are now well established in each of the EU countries that -- and they for sure will help you get in touch with organizations of people with disabilities. We have contacts with specific ones which we work with more closely in different projects.

But for there is one point I would like to highlight. If it is possible, hire people with disabilities for your development team, okay? And they will in the spot provide you with great feedback about your product, your idea being accessible or not being accessible.

And we would strive to be more inclusive. If this is possible, do hire people with disabilities for your team.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you, Carlos and Michael, if you have any comments on this as well?

>> MICHAEL FEMBEK: Yes, just some adding there's a database where you can see who has already worked on what. Sorry, I think I got interrupted. So there's a European Union database on projects like Erasmus Plus and you can see what organizations have participated in what projects and so that's a concrete way to find NGOs that are working in that field. There's in every country, we have an association of disability service providers and so on. And so the association might be helpful. In every country you have a focal point and monitoring committees and working on the implementation of the CRPD. And people can support you in finding the right partners and kind of underline more than -- than -- it's extremely important. So it's it hits the nail on its head. A lot of things are do on wrong because this is not done in the proper way right from the beginning. And this concept of nothing about us without us is even more true than in starting a design from scratch.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you, Michael from that. I don't know Sergio if you want to add on this question, that's why you have your hand up or a new question?

>> No, no, I just want to say that in Portugal, AMA. I don't know if everyone was present in session seven yesterday, we talked about it. We have a procedure that implies testing with users with real users to have a gold seal and in order to do so, we test with people without special needs but also people with special needs and what we do is we have a short list of NGOs and associations of persons with disabilities that we can provide and just to say that we are starting to set some agreements with these

NGOs to have this list of testers that you can choose, depending on the product that you are testing and just to leave this note. So I see Pedro is from Portugal and he can talk to AMA and we can provide contacts from blind association, from the -- any kind of association of NGOs that will help him testing the solution.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you very much. I see that Pedro has also joined us here. So I don't know, Pedro if we answered your question. I think there were a lot of different suggestions here. I don't know if you want to share something with us from your perspective?

>> I don't know if my audio is getting back to you loud and clear because my site is a bit down today. Yes, yes. I am -- as the UX researcher, many times, I have difficulties getting in a fast way to people with disabilities. So it's -- my question was -- was more into if there is some experience on other researchers or other people and how to get fast access to people with disables, okay?

I have done some projects where we included several personas with different kinds of disability, but it's not that easy. Or at least there's a perception from customers that it's not as easy as it should be, okay?

But thank you for your feedback. Yes, Sergio. Yes, got it.

And all the others. Carlos, thank you.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you so much.

>> ROBIN TIM WEIS: Perhaps two -- two comments or two remarks that just came into mind. There's both -- since, you know, Pedro specifically asked is there a quick way and you might be familiar with this, Pedro, but as far as I know, using Amazon Mechanical Turk, there's a distinction on mechanical Turk to reach persons with disabilities. That's the quick and easy way to reach persons with disabilities. It has its drawbacks and people have their own opinions on Amazon. I will leave it there.

But often, I think also what -- within that equation and within that approach, what people forget is there's also the regional and offline version, and possibility. You know, reaching out to a municipality, reaching out to your city, to your region and finding out about different clubs and associations of persons with disabilities, and that's where I think you often have the serendipitous moments that you can't plan for, but you see how the person interacts with my service. I give no information and I

present them a tablet with braille for the blind or
something else and they are using it in a completely
different way than I designed or the way I thought it would
be used.

That doesn't deliver you the immediate need. I need
50, 100, whatever scope size of participants, but often, I
think that can be sustainable a long-term cooperation with
associations which you can meet in person and the feedback
you get in person is often different than over a Zoom call
or elsewhere.

So I think to think in both terms, both offline and
online, big and small helps in that regard.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you for that, Robin. You
can immediately contact Claudia and you can write to her in
the chat and get in touch. And then you can also share
your contact details here in the chat, and perhaps, you
know, whoever might be interested to discuss with you this
further online can reach out.

Claudia, yes, I see you have raised your hand.
Please, you have the floor.

>> Yes. You are talking about me so. We'll get in
touch. I know Pedro already from our -- our work.

What I want to tell it's that it was very interesting
the training session. And we have some projects relating
to training materials and we -- we would like to see how
can we profit from your training materials if it is
possible to have some partnership to have your materials in
our platforms.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Yes, definitely. I think we
can continue this discussion offline, but I think that's a
very good point to, indeed, put the materials in your
platform or to have some cross-links.

>> Yell, in Portuguese with some adaptations.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Yes, indeed.

>> You think it is possible?

We are going to talk to -- with Roxana, and you
AnaMaria, and with Rati as well. We can continue this
discussion of email or another call that we can set up on
this. That's a great idea. It's exactly what we were
speaking before, to, you know -- reuse what we have created
and put it in each other's platforms, instead of recreating
new things constantly, and going perhaps to the -- like the
same challenges and issues.

So that's great. Thank you so much, Claudia.

>> Thank you. Thank you.

>> ANAMARIA MESHKURTI: Thank you. And thanks for also taking the into are with us here today.

So I think we have come to the end of this session. And definitely, we can keep going, I think for some more time, as I personally have a lot more questions. But we will have to close.

Before we close, Sergio reminded me that we were going to be in Portugal but we were not there. We have Accessible Europe 2022. So this is a little bit of a call for all the countries that are joining us here in the audience to let us know if they would like to host 2022 and hopefully we can meet all together in person, wherever that would be.

I'm not going to pick on colleagues in the chat. I will leave this as an open call for everyone, and I hope that we will get some -- some answers soon and we can, of course, inform everyone where Accessible Europe 2022 will take place.

I have now the pleasure to thank everyone again for joining us today on this session. It was a lot of fun and thanks to Carlos, to Robin, to Michael, to Sergio, Pedro, Claudia, Yuka, everyone who joined us and became our panelists, let's say, for this session, and thank you so much for sharing your experiences as well. It was very interesting personally and I think everyone who wrote also in the chat found this session very interesting.

Again, everything will be available online and please, I really encourage you to reach out to each other, to foster these discussions further to continue the partnerships. And Sergio, lime looking at you for the Portuguese version of the almanac. I really want to see this happen. So pressure on you.

I now have the pleasure to close this session and invite Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder who is the head of the ITU office of Europe to deliver the closing remarks for this great event of three days. Jaroslaw, you have the floor.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much, Ana and dear ladies and gentlemen, it's my great pleasure on behalf of all organizers to congratulate all of you, because this was a great three days of the serious engagement of so many stakeholders. We have recorded the engagement of over 1,600 stakeholders during these three days, including 200 stakeholders would have engaged in the live discussions. This is remarkable. And really thank you very much for being with us, but also for advocating on the Accessible

Europe which is the initiative which we should feel all of us be part of and we should spread the news about this initiative across the whole of our region existing of the -- consisting of the 46 countries.

During these days, we have heard more than 100 individual contributions. It is also a record in comparison to this what we are doing in the past, and this would not happen without engagement of all of you and facilitation of those contributions. We had 70 speakers as well who -- who have engaged.

As we know, we -- one more congratulate to the 15 finalists of the innovation contest and in particular, five winners who we will be accompanying during their journey of the growth and we hope that we will be able at the next round of the Accessible Europe to report back on this, how much they benefited from the curation program.

So we hope that also you will be able to spread this good news about those solutions because this is. Done in order to strengthen our offerings and impact at the -- on the ground for all the persons with disabilities in Europe.

Of course, during this time, we have also launched significant milestone of the regional work on the accessibility, the digital accessibility. The report which you are able to read and to go through, definitely reconfirms that we are on the right track and a lot of other regions are taking at the look at the European example as the reference point. So let's not disappoint others and let's lead by example and let's continue working on those gaps which we have identified in -- in the report.

We have definitely also during these three days, created a lot of partnerships, and today's session was only the demonstration of what could be done and could be continued in the future. And therefore, we hope for the future collaboration, with all of you, and engagement at the level, which we are experiencing today.

This event is only a milestone in our long journey and inclusive environment created for all, including persons with disabilities. And during the these the three days we launched several programs. Those materials are available and free and to all of our community and we would like to see and that also reused and we have colleagues from Portugal who mentioned that they could also be made available in the other languages and to see how to make them available languages.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of our

co-organizers. Without them, we wouldn't have Accessible
Europe if what it has been. It goes to the European
Commission and all those from Portugal. We are looking
forward to the next steps as this event is held within the
framework of the Portuguese presidency at the EU Council
and we hope that with this, we are able. And to not only
learn a lot and create a lot of good cooperation, but
also -- and to elevate the meaning of the accessibility on
the political agenda of the EU countries but also non-EU
countries.
        The number of the high level officials from Portugal,
but also from the other countries have reconfirmed that the
political agendas can accommodate definitely accessibility
requirements and there is a good space to do this in
different countries.
        And thank you very much, for this.
        So just closing, I wanted to reiterate the call which
AnaMaria has just made, the Accessible Europe 2022 is just
around the corner. So we are looking forward to those
stakeholders who are interested in hosting the meeting.
And our strong hope is that we will be meeting
face-to-face. It was mentioned, it's really important also
to get together and to have -- and have other interactions
than only visual. So we count on the countries to join us
in this effort and support and Accessible Europe.
        So dear ladies and gentlemen, with this, I would like
to thank very much for this time spent for today, very
interactive, productive half of the day, but concluding
with the practical approach, this is what we are discussing
during the two last days.
        So we thank you very much for being with us up to the
last moment and we look forward to working with you in the
near future on the follow-up to this collaborations and to
assist any country which would require or need any kind of
the joint work on advancing Accessible Europe. So thank
you very much, and I will wish you pleasant end of day.
Thank you. And good-bye.
        >> Thank you.
        >> Thank you everyone, good-bye.
        >> Bye-bye.
        >> Thank you, Jaroslaw.
        >> Bye, everyone.

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