ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe (RDF-EUR)

Information and Communication Technologies for Attaining Sustainable Development Goals

Tuesday 26 May 2020 | 11:00 – 15:30 | Remote Meeting

https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2020/RDF/Remote.aspx

CONTRIBUTION BY COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AGENCY/ BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

TITLE: "*Proposal to enable available, affordable and accessible digital information, services and products, through fostering regional implementation on ICT accessibility as a mean to achive digital inclusion of all people and ensure sustainable development".*

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Europe Regional Initiative: EUR3: Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development

Year(s) of implementation: 2020/2021

Background: During COVID-19 crisis, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as other Western Balkan countries, the disadvantaged end-users such as persons with disabilities and older persons, have experienced the harsh consequences caused by the difficulties to reach out to vital digital information, products and services made available by governments in a crisis. Although several temporary regulatory measures enabled access to ICTs in an emergency, COVID-19 pandemic showed the urgency to re-position ICT accessibility and have it included it among as key priorities in governments' agendas to further ensure that digital information, products, and services are made available, affordable and accessible to all, including persons with disabilities.
In response to the recent global challenges that vulnerable groups are facing, it is essential to accelerate the implementation of relevant international conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) and the European Accessibility Act, and in this way, join the call for action by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres from 6 May 2020, in which he, among other things, urges governments to place people with disabilities at the center of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Proposal

Timely implementation of ICT accessibility could be vital for all, including persons with disabilities. Therefore, to meet the regional and global requirements as stated in the CRPD, European Accessibility Act, SGDs, 2030 Agenda, as well as the ITU Strategic Goal no. 2 "Inclusiveness" its target 2.9 ("*Enabling environments, ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICT for persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs, should be established in all countries by 2023"),* activities towards the implementation of ICT accessibility should be intensified and accelerated.

To achieve the set goals, the following regional priorities are proposed:

(a) Strengthen and leverage digital (ICT) accessibility as a priority at country and regional level to ensure that all citizens, including persons with disabilities, can access and benefit from e-government and other public digital information products and services;

(b) Join regional efforts to implement 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs, in particular, SDG10 on reducing inequality, by recognising "ITU Accessible Europe – ICT for ALL" as the Regional multi-stakeholder knowledge development platform in ICT accessibility. The platform supports the efforts by EUR Region countries in the implementation of relevant policies and strategies in line with the UN CRPD, and ITU target 2.9 ("*Enabling environments, ensuring accessible telecommunications/ICT for persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs, should be established in all countries by 2023*");

(c) Leverage regional capacity in ICT accessibility to support policy and decision-makers as well as relevant stakeholders in the implementation process, including face to face, blended and self-paced e-learning training courses, video tutorials on how to develop accessible digital content, programme on web accessibility, and/or by sharing good models and practices;

(d) Encourage regional monitoring of implementation and creation of innovative accessible (ICT) digital solutions and applications for persons with disabilities to support their livelihood and facilitate their independent life.

(e) Foster the implementation of ICT accessibility policies and strategies in the EUR Region by relying on key ITU-D resources relevant to the topic (such as model policies and guidelines, assessments) and by providing advice to ITU members through the Study group on Question 7/1 as a working platform.