Ref.:   BDT/EUR

Geneva, 29 September 2023

- Administrations of ITU Member States
- Regulators
- ITU Sector Members
- Academia
- Regional and International Organizations from Europe

Subject: **ITU-EC Regional Forum for Europe "Accessible Europe: ICT 4 All", 13-14 December 2023, Madrid, Spain**

Dear Sir/Madam,

It is our great pleasure to invite you to participate in the upcoming **Regional Forum for Europe "Accessible Europe: ICT 4 ALL"**, to be held on **13-14 December 2023** in **Madrid, Spain**, and encourage you to take part in a series of activities scheduled in the lead-up to this event, all designed to advance the digital accessibility agenda. **Accessible Europe 2023** is jointly organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the European Commission (EC) and is co-organised by the AccessibleEU Resource Centre. It is supported by the Government of Spain, hosted by Fundación ONCE, and conducted as part of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Accessible Europe is held within the framework of the ITU Regional Initiative for Europe "EUR 3: Digital inclusion and skills development," defined and adopted by the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) 2022, jointly with the Resolution WTDC 58 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) *Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs*.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are integral in fostering inclusive environments and strengthening accessibility. ICT accessibility requirements, standards, and universal design principles should be integrated from the conception stage in the development of ICT products, services, and applications. In celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, marked annually on December 3rd, **Accessible Europe** will leverage regional capacity on the topic of ICT and digital accessibility and enable interactive discussions to share good practices. Given the potential that new and emerging technologies hold in enhancing digital accessibility features, special focus will be accorded to the role of artificial intelligence and the metaverse.

In this context, ITU and EC are joining forces to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the region, such as Governments, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia, and other ICT Accessibility actors. This collaboration aims to promote ICT accessibility, thereby creating fair and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and support regional development.

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

- **Pitching Competition - Call for Innovative Digital Solutions for an Accessible Europe:** With the aim of fostering the regional innovation ecosystem in ICT accessibility, "Pitching competition: Call for Innovative Digital Solutions for an Accessible Europe" is launched in the run-up to the Forum. Accessible Europe 2023 will feature a pitching session by eligible practitioners who will have the opportunity to showcase their innovative digital solutions that enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Attendees will be invited to participate in a public vote to recognise the most impactful solutions presented.
  - Submissions for the pitching competition are currently open and will close on **25 October 2023**. You may submit your solution at the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AccessibleEurope2023

- **Call for Contributions:** In an effort to advance the digital accessibility agenda throughout Europe, the Forum offers stakeholders an opportunity to deepen their commitment to digital accessibility through a call for written contributions. Facilitated through the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition and building upon its success, this call offers involved stakeholders an avenue to articulate their commitments, priorities or initiatives, either by reinforcing pledges previously made or by establishing new pledges tailored to address specific country or regional needs within Europe. Overall, it will provide an ecosystem mapping of involved stakeholders to support collaborative efforts.
  - Submissions for contributions are currently open and will close on **30 November 2023**. We kindly invite those interested to fill out the contribution template and send it via email to **EURregion@itu.int.**

For more details, we invite you to visit the Forum website at itu.int/go/Accessible-Europe-23, where practical information on the calls, agenda and other useful links are available and are constantly updated.

The Forum will be conducted in English, and all documentation will be provided in English. **For this Forum, human real-time captioning and international sign-language (IS) interpretation will be provided. For further specific accessibility accommodations, please contact EURregion@itu.int by 15 October 2023. Please note that the provision of any additional accommodation is subject to the availability of resources and funding.**

We trust that you or a representative of your organization will attend the Forum to share your experiences and support the dissemination and implementation of good practices in Europe on ICT accessibility. Your participation will contribute to efforts to bridge the digital divide and promote more inclusive societies. Should you have **any interest in contributing as a panellist at the Forum, we kindly invite you to reach out** to the contact details below.

Should this be of interest to you, or if you have any other queries, please contact Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of the ITU Office for Europe (email: EURregion@itu.int, phone: +41 22 730 5467).

We look forward to your active participation in this Forum.

Yours faithfully,

Jaroslaw K. Ponder
Head of the ITU Office for Europe

Annex I

DRAFT AGENDA
PRE-FORUM SKILLS-BUILDING WORKSHOP

Exact timing of the sessions is subject to change

WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2023 (CET/GMT+1)

9:00 – 9:30	ONSITE WELCOMING
9:30 – 10:30	**Strengthen knowledge on ICT/digital accessibility to build an inclusive digital society, economy and environment in Europe Region** "Fundamentals of ICT Accessibility: Key concepts and work approach to build an inclusive digital society for ALL" *This executive training session will enhance participants' understanding of the critical role that ICT /digital accessibility plays in creating an inclusive digital society, economy, and ecosystem by providing information on: global and regional trends and how these influence people's digital inclusion, clarify terminologies such as: access, affordability, accessibility, accessible technology and assistive technologies; and indicate what and how to do to ensure that digital products and services are accessible to all end users, including those with disabilities. Resuming with guidelines, tools and resources to be used the session is designed to empower participants to the Accessible Europe – ICT for all, to engage actively in the event's various sessions, maximizing the benefits of their participation.*

ACCESSIBLE EUROPE – DAY 1

WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2023 (CET/GMT+1)

10:30 – 10:45	WELCOMING COFFEE
10:45 – 11:30	**Opening Ceremony** *This session will mark the event's inauguration, featuring speeches that will underscore the conference's themes. It will bring together distinguished figures to share forthcoming insights, setting an anticipatory tone for valuable discussions throughout the event.*
11:30 – 11:45	GROUP PHOTO
11:45 – 12:30	**Session 1: Navigating the European Regulatory Landscape for Accessibility: Priorities, Good Practices, and Challenges** *This session will aim at reviewing the implementation of the European Accessibility Act within EU member states, while encouraging dialogue on digital accessibility standards across the broader Europe Region. It will discuss*

	challenges, share good practices, and take stock of priorities identified throughout the Europe Region, for EU and non-EU countries.
12:30 – 14:00	LUNCH BREAK
14:00 – 14:05	**Special Message**
14:05 – 14:55	**Session 2: A UN Approach to Digital Accessibility: Principles, Challenges, And Opportunities** *This session will focus on UN efforts, policies and innovations to create a digitally inclusive society. It will explore strategies that embody the principles of inclusivity, equality, and universal access, and highlight the work of various UN agencies and bodies in these areas. Additionally, it will delve into the challenges faced in implementing these principles, offering insights into opportunities for continued collaboration and growth.*
14:55 – 15:00	**Special Message**
15:00 – 15:30	COFFEE BREAK
15:30 – 17:00	**Pitching Session & Public Vote: Innovative Digital Solutions for an Accessible Europe** *This session will explore the crucial role of ICT innovation in enhancing accessibility across Europe. The highlight of the session will be a pitching session where various companies will showcase their pioneering digital accessibility solutions. The session will culminate in a public vote, where attendees will select the initiative, they find most impactful.*
18:00 – 19:00	**Social Event & Announcement of Winners** *This session will bring together participants for a social event to celebrate innovation and collaboration in the field of ICT and digital accessibility. This will be followed by the announcement and handing of awards for the pitching session winners, recognizing the efforts and progress in the field.*
19:00 – 19:30	COCKTAIL

ACCESSIBLE EUROPE – DAY 2

THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2023 (CET/GMT+1)

10:00 – 10:05	WELCOME & SUMMARY OF THE FIRST DAY
10:05 – 11:15	**Session 3: State of Web Accessibility: Realities and Good Practices** *This session will focus on the current state of web accessibility, examining both the challenges and successful practices shaping the landscape. It will bring together a multidisciplinary panel to discuss where gaps in accessibility remain, and what good practices can be replicated for broader impact.*

11:15 – 11:30	COFFEE BREAK
11:30 – 12:30	**Session 4: Universal Design of Technology for Digital Accessibility** *This session will focus on the principles of universal design as a cornerstone for creating technologies accessible to all. It will delve into establishing enabling environments and setting standards while conducting a thorough analysis of existing guidelines aimed at enhancing digital accessibility.*
12:30 – 14:00	LUNCH BREAK
14:00 – 14:55	**Session 5: AI and Emerging Technologies in Improving Digital Accessibility** *This session will delve into the transformative power of AI in enhancing access to digital platforms and services for all. It will explore innovative AI-driven tools and methodologies that can break down barriers and encompass ethical considerations to ensure that the potential of AI is harnessed responsibly.*
14:55 – 15:45	**Session 6: Accessibility in the Metaverse: Crafting Inclusive Virtual Worlds** *This session will explore the intersection of the Metaverse and digital accessibility, focusing on the unique opportunities and challenges that arise in crafting virtual worlds that are truly inclusive. It will discuss innovative strategies and collaborative efforts needed to ensure the Metaverse provides enriching virtual experiences for all.*
15:45 – 16:15	COFFEE BREAK
16:15 – 17:00	CLOSING OF ACCESSIBLE EUROPE 2023 *This session will mark the conclusion of Accessible Europe 2023. It will encapsulate the key achievements and insights gained throughout the conference, emphasizing the collective strides made in enhancing digital accessibility within the region.*