

Accessible Europe: ICT 4 All AW-EU-02

Strengthen Knowledge on ICT/digital accessibility to build an inclusive digital society, economy, and environment in Europe region

>> Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Good morning to everyone at this event that the European Commission organized Accessible Europe. This is a big day for all of our community. We're very much grateful to answer and for hosting us today. We're very much inspired by the idea of having this event used as the possibility and opportunity for sharing the newest updates on the capacity offering and your attention for the development and more details. Before we are diving into Accessible Europe activities and discussions. Therefore we have today -- we are very much privileged by being joined by Roxana who is leading and the accessible at ITU as well as the representative from the European Commission who has provided us with a powerful messages with the different developments from the European Commission and the level of European Union. This is very important for us. Of course, this event is held within the Spanish residencies. This is why we are here enjoying not only the great spirit of the Spanish ambience, but also the leadership of this country within the EU for six months with accessibility with this event. Also it is put on the agenda, the political agenda, of the European states. Welcome on the stage our colleagues Roxana Widmer-Iliescu. The floor is yours.

(Applause)

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILIESCU: Good morning, everyone. Thank you. Are you hearing me? Okay. So first of all, thank you so much for joining us today. We would like, together, to learn to speak the same language. If some of you are still interested to understand why accessibility is important, let's try to delve into and see this together. I'm Roxana Widmer from ITU. For those individuals that are impaired with us or online, I'm a woman with brown air and brown eyes, a dress with a green jacket and black strad hers. I have 25 years of experience in digital accessibility. A little bit to wake up everyone today. Before going farther, let's see why accessibility is important. It is important, because if I speak in Spanish, maybe people won't understand.

It is also about accessibility. And in the digital space, we want everyone to be included, that everyone understand.

What we are talking. With this, I would ask colleagues to put the presentation.

So colleagues, if we can put up rob the first slides. Yes, we'll talk about what the ITU accessibility and key concepts and work approach to build together an inclusive digital world for all. So we all know about the forced revolution.

We know about the fact that the world is actually shifting from offline to online. So are human rights. To learn, to work, to access health services, and this can be the same for everyone. So everyone should have the right to communicate equally, but also equitably. We'll get back to this. As we're doing offline. Now let's talk a little bit about the global megatrends. So what are the global megatrends that affect our daily life? We'll talk about technology that we know already. And here you can see from the last 15 years how the rise of technology was actually going from a barely -- a little bit more than 10%, to over 70%. This would affect concretely -- affect as we discuss the digital services and application. The education system, the labor market, the health sector, the government in general. Everything that we receive every single day how this affect us if we cannot access the services? And I just want to remind you what was happening during COVID. During COVID, we saw the importance of the accessibility for our kids in the education system, for our parents to have access to vital information about vaccination, about medication, about how to behave. No one was actually prepared to communicate in a digital space. So to conclude, if they are in a digital format, we can be assured that

everyone can benefit from the power of technology. Now how many of us have more than 30 years? Okay. What I'm telling you now, it is all about us. So the second global megatrend, which is truly, truly important is the aging population. In the next three decades only, this is tomorrow. Truly this is tomorrow. Two-thirds of the world population will be age 60 and above. Okay? So I put for your consideration a little bit -- the figures with regards to every single region in the world. You'll see that EU actually will go beyond two-thirds of the population. We can arrive by 40%. This is enormous. Why? Because that means also age-related disabilities. With the age and I truly hope that everyone will have the previous age, because it is a privilege. We hear less -- we -- our vision is reduced. Our mobility and so on. So I want you to take a look from your country, where are you coming, and see which is the prediction? So with this in mind, let's see the third global megatrends that affects our communication in the digital space. It is organization. It is not a secret anymore that everyone from the rural area to city to learn and work. And in Europe, again, we'll have two-thirds of the population in the area. What does it mean? It means that if this city -- the smart cities as we call it -- are not digitally accessible, what will happen? They might need a ticket to go to the bus and arrive to a specific point. I have to check it with my mobile phone. If I'm blind, or if I'm old and don't know how to use it, what will I do? I will walk. Or I will renounce to travel. Keep in mind whatever would be smart should be designed from the beginning of the design stage with accessibility requirements in mind. Accessibility is actually for all of us. It is not an issue for the specific person. It is for all of us. As I've told, all of us are getting old. All of us can appear in life and have a disability condition. For a short term or for a longer term. And this disability condition shouldn't actually be an impairment for us to continue our life. To learn. To work. To communication with other loved ones. And the artificial intelligence and metaverse, the young participants here perhaps we're very passionate about. We're all passionate about to see what's happened. This is not anymore a dream. It is a reality. Artificial intelligence is here. The metaverse is here. And the good news is that accessibility, it is a compulsory requirement in the metaverse space. And this is very good. Because that means this digital space is actually enabled for everyone. Okay. You said what really means to this. The metaverse is a mass iteration of the Internet. A single share immersive, persistent, 3D digital space. Who experiments in the metaverse? Well, good. Good. How it was. Yeah. Me too. I was very reluctant actually. Very reluctant. But let me tell you that after doing this experience, I changed my mind. Why? I don't like mountains. And I live in Switzerland. My husband is Swiss. He loves mountains. Family problem. Most of our weekends are in the mountains. (Laughter)

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILIESCU: And I have to face it. I hate precipice. I hate. I cannot. I just feel all my stomach. You know? Very bad. Almost vomiting. Now this is a personal problem. It is not very difficult. But I can live with it. And I use metaverse to see if I can overcome this fear. Guess what? It was awesome. Because I will sit in the room like you. Everyone here. With my glasses. In Mon Blanc. Me actually. I would have never dreamed. I had the problem to look around to the very beginning. Then I say hello, I'm here sitting, you know, in a very safe environment. Come on. You can do it. Yes. I did it. And I was thinking that many person with this type of hereness or other can use the technology to overcome. To ensure that they are more confident in their environment. That they increase their health-related issue. And also for fun. Perhaps not all of us will have the possibility to visit Prada. No? But with the metaverse, we can walk into it. We can admire all of

this. So I think we also have to see the developments how artificial intelligence and metaverse can be human-centered. First. And how they can increase our daily life, our education, and social economic development as a person. Now to say a little bit more about artificial intelligence, I don't know if some of you are aware, that ITU is leading the artificial intelligence for good global summit. And last year in June, we had the possibility to walk into and see concretely next to us robots. Humanoids. It is scary. At least for me. I was not very comfortable with. But it is impressive. So here I would just for you, Nadine, a humanoid social robot that's modeled by a professional magnet. It is one of the most advanced robots. It looks like actually the professor. Well, -- which is the relationship between artificial intelligence and accessibility that we want to talk today. Personally, I believe that artificial intelligence, it is the hope. It is the hope to increase digital accessibility features. It is a hope to reduce cost of assistive technologies and to make this more affordable and perhaps to be tailored to each of us based off our specific needs requirement and personal revolution. People are evolving. The young of today are the old tomorrow. So this type of technology should shape our future. It is based on our own needs by the technology. It is actually the purpose of technology. Why we should speak about technology, if technology doesn't serve each of us to increase our daily life. To help us evolve in the society. So I would just put an amendment here. It is close for the measure and policies. I have to commend, perhaps most of you know, that last weekend Europe already announced progress. And the commitment to ensure a careful regulation on artificial intelligence. So I think Europe is leading this topic. Congrats. And, of course, nothing can be done with the support of only one stakeholders. We'll need to collaborate. Academic member, public, private, NGOs, we all have our role to play. And we all have our role in making. This is very important. In making in our days when we decide shifting to a complete different dimension of technology, which is metaverse and artificial intelligence. How we want to serve us as humans. The technology that we are embracing. Well, the commitment to accessibility. We committed globally with the country and all of the member states to ensure that everyone without any discrimination of age, gender, ability to use the technology, socioeconomic development, or geographic location are equally and equitably served by technology and empowered by technology. We also have resolution in our world telecommunication conference which runs every four years and also in the conferences every four years in which everybody gets together to decide what it will be in the next four years. I think perhaps in the future this will be our thinking. Because technology is advancing so quick. Four years is so long. Anyway, we have also initiatives like Europe 3 is thanks to the original initiative that we created Accessible Europe events like this one to get together and understand what each and every one of us can do to advance the world to be a better place for all of us. And, of course, we also have strategic goals and commitments to close the digital divide and use telecommunications in all countries and for all people, including women and girls, youth, indigenous people, or the person with disabilities and another person with specific needs. You'll know about sustainable development goals. I just want to pay attention to the goal number 10. Which is reduce inequalities. All type of inequalities. So CRPD. CRPD, the beauty is that almost all countries in the world over 193 countries as for the United Nation, we have 193 that ratify the convention. We know the world really and all policy and decision makers said yes. We recognize that person with disabilities have the same rights that person without disabilities. And we'll make all of the efforts to ensure that every article of the convention is respected. In all countries

in the world. So as a conclusion, the world is committed to promote and ensure and protect the full and equal employment of all human rights and freedoms by all persons with disabilities. So up to here, is there any particular questions? Would anyone like to make a comment? Well, if not, let's try to speak a little bit more in depth. What does it mean for Digital Accessibility that we hear about? Access. Affordability. Digital accessibility. Accessible technology. It is too much. But as we discussed at the beginning, we all have to speak the same language, you know, exactly what we mean by every definition if we really want to make this world inclusive for all. So the why we should do this, we'll explain in a very short video. Which I'll ask the colleagues, if possible, to put it for. The video first.

[video playing]

>> Everyone is different. We live, work, play, and interact in our own individual ways. Many of our experiences have been influenced by our senses and our situations. In the online world, this means how we see, hear, move, and think can vary greatly. That thing you just did on that app, someone does that in a completely different way. When you are planning your next digital creation, think about your audience's preferences and how varied those experiences may be. Don't cut someone out because you haven't prepared for the way they might interact with your creation. First of all, make it easy. This is what being inclusive is about. Making sure that everyone gets to do what they want to in a way that suits them. Here are a few things to keep in mind. Some people may have 20/20 vision. But some might find it blurry or see colors differently. Some folks might need to bump up a lot to read it. Some people may not be able to see it at all. We'll listen to content read aloud to them by a screenreader. So make sure you have enough contrast, let your text really pop. Use a bigger font, make it easy to see and easy to change when needed. And coded correctly so it makes sense when a screen reader reads it aloud. If you are using sound, not everyone will hear it. Some will want to turn it off. Make sure you are providing an equivalent way to get the message across, like a transcript, captions, or sign language. We all move differently. Some of us can use a mouse or swap on the touch screen. Not all people navigate in the same way. Some people use the keyboard to go through everything literally on the page. Others might use the head stick or eye tracking machine to perform the same action. Some will need more time to get things done. For some people, it might hurt to move. Make it easy to get around your creation. You should be able to use a keyboard as well as a mouse to perform any action. Not everyone will understand things easily or in the same way. Every brain is wired differently. Some people process information faster or slower than others. Some people understand information better when they hear it compared to when they see it. Others may find it difficult simply because your language is not their language. Some people just might need more time to process information and act on it. Don't rush them. Write your content so it is simple and clear. Make it as obvious as you can. As creators of digital experiences, our mission is to make sure our users can do what they need to do. We're all different. We should respect those differences in ourselves and in our other. So plan for their success. Be inclusive. That thing that you are creating that you want them to use, build it to help them be awesome. They will love you for it.

[video ends]

>> So we're all different. We should -- well, now, let's see which are the three main building blocks. Which are the three main building blocks on digital -- to achieve digital inclusive societies. And digital inclusion for all. So if I would like to retain only one slide for all of this presentation today, it is this slide. We cannot do anything without access. But what does it mean

access? Access to connectivity, access to Internet, but access is the very first pillar is not enough. You cannot put people's fingers in a plug and say I'm connected. So then after we haven't placed the access and connectivity, we have to ensure affordability. The affordability is paying the Internet services and access and also for the equipment that fits my personal needs to be able to access the digital information and to communicate in this digital space. And finally the key. The accessibility. And the accessibility actually it is the key that we're all discussing and will encompass others which I would like to share. First of all, it is adoption of the policies and strategies. We definitely need to have low policy standards and a framework that defines accessibility and what we mean with the words and who are the beneficiaries of the accessibility that we can put it through the universe in the licenses that we are as government adopting. Then we have to talk about accessibility ICTs. What is accessibility ICTs? And I just want to ask you: is equality enough? And another slide that's very dear to my heart is this one. We all talk about equality. We want to be equal. We're not equal. We're all different. We're all limited edition or even unique. We cannot be equal. Equity is the key world. Every single time when you want to use equality, please think if equality is enough. Because in the case of the technology, the equity aspect is only given by the technology. It is a smart technology that can equally and equitably be used by a young person, by an old person, by a person with hearing impairment or visual impairment. If this type of technology that provides the additional element of equity. So accessible ICTs are the equipment that are embedded. Equality and equity, which one we call smart technology. To be even more clear, accessible ICTs are the ICT that can be used by the people with the widest range of characteristics and capability with or without a disability to access and navigating the digital space. The beauty of this accessible ICTs is they are compatible with assistive technology. Which is the difference between accessible and assistive technology? The difference is that assistive technology are the ICTs used exclusively by the person to access the digital space. These are the person with disability to navigate this. If you want to make the difference, just put yourself this question. Is this an accessible technology or assistive technology? However to build an inclusive digital world, we need both. Equally need accessible ICT and assistive technology to include everyone in the digital space. Finally, why it is so important. To ensure that accessible ICTs are available for the reason that we just discussed before. Looking in the next three decades, the UN population is predicted to have two billion people with disabilities in the next three decades. We have two billion people age 60 and above. Age-related disabled. Then we have people who can use the accessible feature like the migrants who knows to speak perhaps, but don't know how to write. The same accessibility feature like the blind people. We also for those of you who are not aware, we also have over one billion -- billion -- young people with the risk of hearing loss because of the inappropriate use of the devices. Therefore IT is working with WHO to solve this issue. Mass over mass about six billion or nine billion predicted by 2050. Again two-thirds of the world population will need accessible ICT. If this is not an incentive for those of you who are in private sector to ensure whatever you are doing, product, services, application should be digitally accessible to have more end users. Increase your business values. This is something that you have to keep in mind. Because this is the business of the future. So finally accessibility also should be learned. So we also have to learn how to use it. Because we can have Internet access. We can have our device. We can have everything. If we don't know how to use this and even more for ITU, it is a difference between learning the appropriate technology. We use the technology

in our daily life to facilitate our activities, our work, our communication. This is what we want to target. So digital skills are the basic competences. Digital ICT ability are advanced for effective and versatile use of technology. But digital appropriation is what we call integrating digital technology into our daily life and adopting it to personal, cultural, and social needs. So with this in mind, we also have to have a work approach. For the work approach, in making this inclusive digital society for all, we have to have it very clear that after putting the base of the digital accessibility and an environment which is technologically digital accessible for all, we also have to consider the specific needs of everyone. Because the way that you are dressed is a specific needs for children in school to use the technology is not the same that we do with our parents. And it is not the same that we do with person with disabilities. Okay. So what we put here is work approach that I have to say this is done after 20-25 years of work. Like everyone also at the beginning working silo. But we realize that's time to break the silence. And to have an inclusive policy and intersectional approach. Why intersectionality, it is so important. Because, because in which silo you'll put an indigenous women with disability? In which one? So only if in your work, you have the holistic approach, whatever you are doing for women, for person with disabilities, person with disabilities are also in the area are also old women. Okay. Think holistically. Because only like this you can identify the problems people have in accessing the digital environment and digital societies. To conclude, digital accessibility for all. The ICT accessibility, it is the real in the digital space. Think from the design, develop, and deploy whatever products, services, and application that we are doing in a digital, accessible format. Be human centered. And include the specific needs from the perspective of intersectionality. Include everyone, regardless of age, gender, ability, location. We all evolve. Don't think in silos. Think in a holistic way to leave no one behind in the digital world. And the video please.

[video playing]

>> ICT, digital accessibility. The key to achieving a digitally inclusive world. We're living in an interconnected world. ICTs are an important part of our daily lives. While millions of people connect to world, retain information, and receive information by products and services and socialize, many others are being left behind. Digital inclusion is a foundation upon which digital communities to bridge the digital gap. ICT accessibility is the key enabler. As they ensure access for everyone in the physical environment, ICT accessibility facilitates the entrainment of digital accessment for all. All people regardless of gender, age, mobility, or location benefit on the equal and equitable basis from the opportunities offered by ICTs. Accessible ICTs are devices with embedded accessibility features. For example, smartphones. But accessible equipment is not enough for everyone to understand information. And be able to interact. To guarantee action by all people, regardless of their specific capabilities, needs, and circumstances, digital content, as well as any service provided in the digital platforms must also comply with the accessibility guidelines and related standards. For example, in a noisy space, the person can communicate through a chat. Just as a person with a hearing disability. A visually impaired person will send voice messages, just as a person caring for a baby does or someone that cannot use their hands to write. A migrant or person who does not master a language can access important information if it is provided in easy to read or intuitive formats. Which will serve a person with cognitive disability. Three building blocks are needed to achieve digital includes for all. Access and digital infrastructure to ensure digital connectivity is in place. Affordability so that users can afford

Internet access and buy devices to connect. Accessibility of ICT which is key to fulfilling digital inclusiveness. For all people. It encompassing all ICT regulations and standards. Development of accessibility ICT including devices, products and services, appropriate and digital knowledge skills by all end users. Building inclusive digital communities is everyone's responsibility. Only through collective efforts will we successfully build the digitally inclusive world that we want. Join ITU's work in ICT digital accessibility. For more information, please visit our web site and resources. www.itu.net. These are all at your disposal in the most important information. We have all of the training resources, video tutorials, guidelines and background papers, and we also have tool kits that can show you concretely and step-by-step what to do. With this, I thank you for your attention. We will follow with more concrete and let's say local-centered for Europe some accessibility developments from my colleague, from European Commission, Inmaculada. Thank you so much for your attention.

(Applause)

>> INMACULADA PLACENCIA PORRERO: Dear colleagues, let me start by saying that I would -- the slides please. Dear, colleagues, let me start by saying I would have loved to be there with you today. But unfortunately, I'm not able to join you in person. I would like to start also thanking ITU for the core organization with the European Commission of this important event. Also I would like to thank ITU for the possibility to allow me to address all of you through this video. The aim of my presentation is going to be to provide you with some highlights of the recent development and state of play on accessibility, policy, and legislation. ITU has a wide set of accessibility legislation. From others we have technical requirements. For example, in communications or also the visual media services. What about the electronic signatures? We also have got legislation that requires that when using certain fonts, accessibility will be respected. Also public procurement legislation required to buy accessible. Those pieces are legislation are already applicable. This means that member states have -- they have to use funds in an accessible -- by accessible by public administrations. We have a horizon value legislation that all web sites have to be accessibility. That's also applicable. It has already entered and gone through the cycle of the first reporting from the member states implementation. Now today I'm going to focus on the situation of the European accessibility act. The European accessibility act is directive that requires that certain products and services are placed in the market only when they are accessible. At the same time, it requires that when buying accessible public administration or when using public procurement, those products and services that the directive are both complying with the requirements. It also allows the possibility of youth in the same requirement for certain features that all that products in the scope have. What are those products? Well, we're talking about general purpose computers, self-service terminals, including all payment terminals, terminal equipment used for electronic communications, telecommunications, and for visual media services. It also requires that everything will be accessible. When it comes to the service -- used to access the services. Air, train, and transport services like electronic services and ticketing and real-time information and so forth, it also concerns -- and communication for accessibility to build in mind. The key conditions concern the second setback requirement in Europe and having an enforcement mechanism that requires -- for public authorities and the possibility to go. The directive also allows a possibility in developing the standards that would provide performty. To that end we have issued mandate 587 which is currently being implemented. Several new standards will be developed for non-digital

information, answering emergency communications, and support services. There's also three existing standards. The standard on ICT accessibility, the standard on the sign for all, and the standard on the built environment will also be revised. What is the state like? The directive is in the process of being transformed. It expires in 2022. The commission issued infringement procedures to member states that have not finalized or adequately done the transition. The application date is -- it is really becoming very urgent to finish the transition period, and to start implementing it. By June '25, only accessible products will be allowed in the EU market. The standards that I mentioned before are being developed. And I urge all of you that are competent and have no accessibility and have an interest on accessibility to participate in those -- in that development of those standards. To support the process of implementation, accessibility, the European Commission launched the accessible -- it will provide training and will provide one-stop-shop for information and support the development of accessibility. As you've seen, we have quite a wide number of measures given accessibility has into the European disability strategy and the accessibility place to implement the UN convention. I ensure the digital elements that I mentioned today will be further disguised and elaborated. I wish you a really fruitful discussion at the conference that you'll enjoy in the coming days and focusing on how to improve accessibility in Europe. Thank you for joining us.

>> ROXANA WIDMER-ILIESCU: With this in mind, join me in give a round of applause to Inma. Thank you for your attention and joining us this important in the capacity-building session. Thank you.

(Applause)

>> Thank you for both joining us today. Even as the video contribution. Now we have the welcoming coffee prepared for you in the room that you can see right here. We would invite you for a quick, very quick coffee session. Then we'll come back here for our opening session. Please. Thank you.

(Coffee break)

h

Accessible Europe: ICT 4 All AW-EU-02

Opening remarks

>> Hello, everyone. Hello, everyone. Hello. Can you ask you to get seated? Hello, everyone. Can I have everyone seated please?

Hello, everyone. Good morning, again. Good morning to all of our distinguished guests. It is with great honor and enthusiasm that I welcome you to the fifth edition of the Accessible Europe ICT 4 All forum. We bring together policymakers and advocates dedicated to making technology accessible to all. We're extremely honored to have very distinguished speakers on site here with us. Her excellency, Maria Gonzalez Veracruz, her excellency, Maria Rosa Martinez Rodriguez, and we have Mr. Miguel Carballeda Pineiro, and Mr. Hernandez, and finally Ms. Ana Pelaez. I would like to invite them here in the front for a photo. I would like to ask you to stand up whenever you are on your seat, so we get a nice group picture together.

>> We would like to request for the accessible here for a picture.

>> Thank you very much for the presence of our distinguished speakers here today. Before starting their onsite contributions, we would like to have two special addresses. First of all, we will have Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, from ITU. He has a special video message prepared for us. We will start with his special address.

[video playing]

[music]

>> Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to address

you at Accessible Europe. I would like to thank the European Commission for joining forces with us today. And for hosting us. I also want to thank the Spanish government for making this part of the Spanish precedence of the council of the EU as well as the Accessible EU for the collaboration. The World Health Organization estimates that 1.3 billion people experience a disability. This means one in six people request special consideration for technology and policy.

In Europe, we are taking action. The original initiative for Europe and the skills development as well as the IT agenda, inclusiveness, represents one of five co-areas. Align to European legislations, such as the European Accessible Act, and web directive. The web assessment for Europe identifies where we can do better, especially in policy, organization, and implementation across member states. Such assessment create opportunities for technical assistance. The event series in Europe and Americas are the major platform to discuss ICT accessibility. They have progress, collaboration, share good practices, and digital innovation. We at the ITU Telecommunications Development Bureau work to promote the development of tools and guidelines to mainstream ICT accessibility and support member states in developing the strategies. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, the society must be inclusive. No one should be left behind. Let us continue to make sure everyone is empowered for a powerful digital future. Thank you.

(Applause)

>> Thank you very much. Now we have a special address from the European Commission. To introduce the video message that we have, I would like to invite to the stage Ms. Maria from the Madrid to introduce our next special address. Please.

>> Good morning to everyone. I have the honor and the pleasure to introduce to you a video statement that Ms. Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality would like to address with you. She would have loved to be here with you today. It was not possible. Be reassured her heart and mind with here. Without any more adieu, please commissioner.

>> Welcome to the fifth edition of Accessible Europe: ICT 4 All. It is one of the corner stones of the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities. At this forum you'll discuss fundamental topic. The insights and solutions shared will inspire innovation and will contribute to facilitating the equal participation for persons with disabilities and the digital transition. The rights to participate fully in all areas of life includes the rights to use and reap the benefits of technological products and services, including information and communication technologies. Not only is accessibility a pre-condition for the enjoyment of these rights by persons with disabilities, but accessibility benefits everyone. With an aging population in Europe, accessibility ensures that older people who may have multiple age-related conditions limiting their movement, are not left behind. In the EU, a lot has already been accomplished in term of legislation and standards. The European accessibility Act will apply from 2025. They have to ensure that certain digital products and services are only placed on the EU market if they comply with accessibility requirements.

Further targeted action is needed to prepare for its application. However the commission has opened infringement against all EU countries since they have not transposed all of the act into the legislation. The European commission remains eager to support member states, industry, and public stakeholders for preparing for the full application from June 2025. One of the flagship initiatives of the strategy is the creation of accessibility EU officially launched in July. It is a resource center of European commission, provided through a service lead by the onset and one-stop-shop for accessibility. I congratulate them for the achievement in past few months. Accessible EU engages in all key areas

including information and communication technologies. Among other initiatives, it created an online library where material is regularly uploaded. Many events and workshops have been organized, creating a real community of practice. Accessibility EU has participated in standardization project supporting the implementation of the European legislation on accessibility. As the digital era flourishes, the necessity of accessibility becomes more and more evident. We are committed to deliver on the challenge of ensuring that our accessibility policies, legislation, and standards are implemented. We count on your support.

I wish you productive discussions during the forum.

(Applause)

>> Thank you very much. We're immensely grateful for Dr. Zavazava and Ms. Dalli's opening contributions to the event. Now it is my pleasure to acknowledge the presence of our distinguished speakers. I would like to invite her excellency, Maria Gonzalez, Veracruz, Secretary of the State for Telecommunications and Digital Infrastructure for Spain. Please.

>> Good morning. We -- it is two secretaries of the state here together. We were very excited in this first event to be all together. We have had experiences together. We've been able to create many things. With your permission, I'll start with commitment. I'm sure with the new center of state of social rights and my possibility for the signature of telecommunications, we have a commitment of intensifying digital policies in terms of social inclusion in the term that we'll start in the next months and years. Yeah. That's the first commitment that I want to acquire with you. Dear Miguel, President of Social Group ONCE, thank you for everybody that you do on a daily basis. I love and truly admire all of the good things he contributed to the country. It is a great pleasure to be in the opening session of this event. We've been working on this for months with the EU. We're excited that we're holding it during the presidency of the EU Council. The task for policies that strengthen ICT's policies is empowerment. In general for the whole society and people with disabilities. For us it is a goal that we share with you all. We have to make it key in terms of equality and autonomy. Yesterday we were at an AI forum. They said AI is like the bicycle. You have the bicycle. You go faster and you get there beforehand. What happens if we are enabled to have the bike or guarantee it with equal conditions? The gap of the inequality will be exponential compared to the ones that we've been able to know previously. This is why I think that this forum is parliament and the commitment to require from all of the organizations and institutions, of course, from the ITU to the Government of Spain, of course, from the secretary of state that I head and chair that belongs to the ministry is the first time for the ministry of transformation. That's good news for what we are sharing. For the next measures that have to be taken. It is empowerment to close the digital gap and minimize these digital gaps in every single aspect. This is why I want to say, I want to note that I feel very proud of being between the mural and digital areas. No matter where you live in Spain, you can have speed broadband. It is quite convenient. If you were born in Madrid or Moothia, it is possible there's different things because of the where you were born. This is one of the digital agendas, and we have closing the gap. The goal is that citizens as a whole is access the different networks and digital infrastructure. We must be able often making the grade. So we want to keep on working with all of the European partners with ITU so that the goals that are said by Europe by the commission in the digital decade until 2030 that's among others to accomplish the connectivity for every citizen come true. They are for the whole population. This is why I would like to highlight that among all of the policies that we're developing, I would like to have very good news. That's the AI regulation that was passed

last week in the framework of the commission with the leadership of Spain. Europe is leading citizens protection in terms of AI, because it entails many risks and challenges and our national strategy of AI has included all of the needs and all of the best majority of all of the needs. It includes a national plan of protection for vulnerable groups of people with special attention for people with disabilities that have many things. For example, algorithm. But it puts people in the middle. Digitalization based on the European values and access for everybody. To me it is a great honor to close the event of the Spanish presidency with you all here in the Accessible Europe ICT. I would like to say at the different meetings, casual and formal meetings, we've had the ITU with the initiative with the secretary general, Doreen, and that's empowerment to keep on deep diving into the digitalization process from a humanistic point of view. They want to focus on the approach much more focused on people who want to strongly call an unequal society before removing the digital transformation at EU level and boost the economy that creates, we're accomplishing it by the way. The technology for many years has been considered as something spooky, if you want. For example, only with AI. Some years ago, we were speaking part of the disruption around technology. Today Spain has 20% of GDP of its colony based on digital economy. After the 25% of the decision that's created -- 25% of the jobs have to do with science, technology, AI, and I think that we have to convey that good news too. I have to spread the accessibility of ICT Technologies to people with disabilities. I just want to convey a message of power, alliance, and collective hope. And in terms of institutions that are made and the world conference of telecommunications development from last year, we took the initiative of promoting people with disabilities and specific needs. We are seeing visible resorts. This is where we want to highlight. I haven't taken time only to account. But now we're working in Dubai. We're doing many important things. Many good things are being done. I'm sure it will speed up and spreading the participation of women. I would like to highlight the role that ITU has. I think that everyone that believes in the needs of empowering half of the population would believe in all of this contributing all of the talent. I wish the day is very fruitful. I congratulate Harzlof and his team. Thank you for the host and enjoy this moment. You've worked a lot. Thank you.

>> We have the privilege of having the Secretary of Digital Infrastructure, and Social Events for this Accessibility. Now Maria Martinez Rodriguez, Secretary of State for Social Rights.

>> Good morning. I would like to thank in order to move on for people with disability. I would like to thank the European Commission and, of course, the can be international Telecommunications Uniform inviting us to be here at the forum. As I was saying focus on the right to accessibility for people with disability. It is one of the key aspects to keep on building more fair and more inclusive society. If you'll allow me, I would like to show our pride. Because the European center of accessibility is being lead from Spain. We would like to access for having such an important candidacy. Because it is great accessment for the power that our country has. We're focused on digital accessibility, not just the world that we will in, it will be more important in the years to come. We're all aware of how deep the transformations are because of the digital and technology development how our life is changing because of the digital revolution. Technology is here in every aspect of our daily lives. This is where accessibility conditions the access and fact of enjoying basic rights, like, for example, health, employment, and leisure. Many inequalities that we have in the society are re-produced in the access of technology in the digital world. The access and use of technology is conditioned by gender, income level,

disability, or the place where people live. This is something that can be -- that can happen or that can work. We need public policies that guarantee that with all of the speed of process and digital changes, nobody set aside or the ones that do not have the full protection in access or rights, they can't be second tier citizens. We can't afford that. This can't happen. We have to articulate the public policies that guarantee the right for every person, especially the ones that have a disadvantage situation, like, for example, people with disabilities. It is our task and our obligation that they are fully protected in the digital era. I would like to focus on what the Spanish government has done. The commitment that's been shown in the reinforcement of right for people with disability. Last term we launched different reforms. More specifically in the last half of the year during the presidency of the EU council. We've worked for a Europe where people with disabilities can circle freely. The European card of disability. In Europe where they can vote for the representatives and for feminist Europe that respects bodies and lives of women and girls with disabilities with -- in order to ban forced specialization. I would like to think our accomplishments are relevant. They can improve for people with disabilities. First and foremost, today in Spain cognitive disability has been considered and enacted as being legally developed. We're one of the few countries that has transposed the accessibility requirements of product and services that's been completed with a royal degree that widens the interdimension of the coverage that the directive has. We would like to, -- we have to add about the alphabet system in Braille. There are two plans that have to be highlighted. The plan in Spain where we've devoted 200 million viewers. Access to citizen is a mobile app that allows people to access emergency services like 112. The universal accessibility the basic condition for people with disabilities to enjoy every single right. And it will be a goal that we will focus and that we will work from this coalition government that's been just renewed. As it can be otherwise, hand in hand with the -- people with disabilities will develop public policies that foster accessibility and depend by signs, civil dialogue, and sustainability. It is undeniable that we are in a context of multiple prizes, challenges, and transformations. This makes the uncertainty in front of the future that's not very clear can generate a little bit of fear or pessimism. From the Secretary.

of State of Social Rights, we want to do this by reinforcing social rights with public policies that contribute and create a more inclusive and sustainable society. Only this way we'll be able to decrease the democracies and people that live in the democracy.

>> It is opening huge opportunities to advance as a society. That's very important that we address in the specific way the risks. The secondary of state talks about humanist. This is a line that we should follow to work. It is centric. It has human rights at the center and core of it. Address the breaches and gaps. It does not mean a break or it is hindering so that people with disabilities enjoy the rights. It has to be opportunities. Platforms and forums like this are a very good opportunity to show cast show positive technology could be and also alert on the risks and certain measures that have to be there translation into public policies from the ministry of human social right consumption and it is in the 2030. You can work together in creating new advances that will allow us to achieve the full conclusion of people with disabilities and extending the rights which is the baseline of every single policy and the full recognition of people in the society. Thank you so much.

>> Please Mr. Carballeda.

>> Good morning. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you to all of the people that are online. With us. So thank you, everybody, that's been

participating. Thank you to the ones that are going to participate also. Thank you very much for 2D International Director of the union of telecommunications and the two secretaries of state that spoke before. I want to wish you luck, Maria. To you, the first one, because you were here. And because we want your responsibility at the Secretary of State on the digital world for how our country works. Bare in mind every single person and among this every single person to the bike. We want our own bike. We want the right to have one. That's what we request for. We wish you the best of luck the President is wishing you that. This is not a tiny thing. Maria Rosa too. She's here once again. We were waiting for her. And we are very faithful with her and this new Secretary of State. In the social world. From the ministry of social rights and agenda 2013. I want to thank also for your presence and for you've been doing in this new political stage. Apart from the members of the different teams due to ministries. So today 85 years ago, the author was born. Today, a morning like today, in a country that didn't look very much like this one. Because the war was about to end. Imagine how the streets wear. The huge hole in the streets. Hunger. Misery. And now we're here. Us talking about accessibility. The moment is here. Now we have a Europe that we didn't have before. It is meant to be united. I wish we were more united. I mean it. Sometimes we forget there's still a war going on very close in Europe. The war is going to continue deducing that people with disabilities. This people were dubbed to a new life. Our life, the people that we feel European, people that want a united Europe, a common Europe, a social common, that we live with a disability our life will be a bit better. Spain has been lucky enough that Europe has commissioned this matter of accessibility and Spain has been lucky. Spain is the country of the onset. If not, things wouldn't be like that. Country there's many things to do in the country. There's always something. To make our life better. We have professionals here. For me it is the person that knows about this. Here's here with us with a very important disability. He's able to travel in difficult conditions to teach Europe and teach the world what do we have to do so that CTs are a bit nicer with people that have some disability. This fight and resource director from -- he will never stop fighting. We need to be a role model. We need to continue. In Spain we've done very important things that in other countries don't have. For example, people are surprised when they come to Spain and see someone with a wheelchair can visit part of the -- you travel, for example, there's a wall. A very important wall. They can visit this wall in the wheelchair. For example, with tourist come and the Japanese are surprised. We always see Japan as a landmark. Then the Japanese are surprised by our accessibility needs in Spain. If we all agree, if the union of telecommunications, if the two secretaries of state agree, if Spain has been granted. I mean it has been granted to the foundation. This responsibility of being the machine of accessibility let's not miss the opportunity. Let's not commit the same mistakes. Let's try to be the best example. Spain lives thanks to tourism. Tourism needs to have the best conditions. We will all age. We will all need a good example of accessibility in our lives sooner or later. So let's try to do it. Let's try for this to be done. And let's not waste this opportunity that we have been granted. So this home has been -- it is available for this. That's because it is born 85 years ago. So when we were 50 years old, we celebrated it by creating the foundation. We've decided from everything that we got from the street 3% was being invested into this home or this house to improve the lives of people with disabilities also to improve the organizations that represent people with disabilities and that we were told together in the world of accessibility. To do a better country, you have a better Europe. Europe for every single situation, the

disability or without disability and the equality opportunities in partnership. So let's try to be able to make the project to work in the best condition possible. I think our country and I think that Europe, but especially I think that reasons that we have to live with the disability, we deserve it. We can be an example for the rest of the world. There's two ministries with two secretaries of the state that have committed here. I want to thank them. I want to invite them to be able altogether to address this commitment. Thank you so much.

>> Thank you very much. Before continuing with the remaining opening remark, I would like to make a small announcement. As I've already said, we've been very privileged to have a very impressive lineup of speakers. This also means they have been managing very busy schedules and a lot of commitment to be here with you. Our keynote address speakers will be leaving the stage right now to have a lot of impact elsewhere. We would like to thank them for their presence here. Thank you very much one again.

(Applause)

>> After these very inspiring contributions, now I would like to invite to the lectern, our head of ITU Europe Office, Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder for his opening remarks.

>> Thank you. It is very inspiring after the messages from the leaders from Europe and Spain and ITU. I don't want to repeat. I want to bring the original focus. We are getting here together after some break unfortunately caused by the COVID. Where our community which was getting through the annual basis had to switch to the remote. We survived. We wanted to thank all of you to have the patient to work during the period and make sure the original initiative for Europe which inspires and might realize and impact the states, because hopefully next year we'll -- we're thinking about accessible work to happen. In one of the continents. To bring them together. All community across the world. We're proud to present our community, the European community advantaging accessibility in Europe. Our journey started in 2019 going from Marta and Vienna and Australia. We also went through the two remote events here in Spain. Of course, -- well, in Europe, we know we're all connected. We know that everybody has the access. But also the technology is advancing. I think it is very important to note. We are very much privileged in Europe to have the mobile access at the level of almost 100%. 4G and in the 98th percent in Europe. Not only EU, but also the other countries. I'm talking about 46 countries. It is important to note. We are creating opportunities for people who have taken the steps and inspired the others to learn together and to make sure that no one is left behind. Why I was referencing to the newest technologies. We as the Europeans entering in the 5G ecosystem where we're building the capacities of the users that we use the 5G technologies. High speed and reliability which create amazing opportunities for any of the assistive technologies. This is something where in 60 -- I think 67% of the territory of Europe is already covered with the 5G. This means that we can now think about how to use the new technologies and metaverse. We're very happy to help. Those topics are embedded for this year. It is not a surprise. As you know, ITU is not only about policies, regulation, but it is also about standardization. It is also about the spectrum. It is also about the different countries between the dividers which are talking between us. Maybe we are protected by the other. This has to be standardized. This is the reason why we matter. We matter even more working in the private sectors and society and all of you as the community contributing to the different working string in the ITU through the study group and also through such events like today. Dear colleagues, I will not take more time. We are very much pleased to be here. Thank you very much. Thank you

very much to the presidents and the European Commission and all of the teams working patiently around this to make it happen and so many stakeholders to join the policy debate and also the other debates advancing our work on the digital accessibility. Thank you very much one more time. And not taking any more time. Just in second an opening session that we're focused on the policy looking forward to see you again. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

>> next up we have another special remark from the host organization who have kindly provided us with the venue as well. We have Jesus Hernandez, also the director of Accessible E urk.

>> Thank you very much.

. >> Thank you. I'm going to be speaking from the two roles that I have here as the director of accessibility and also responsible for the European Center of Accessibility. This is an honor to be the host of the event in collaboration with the international union of telecommunications, the world of Spain, it is amazing to be here with you today organizing the event. At an international and national level in accessibility. We started working since last century, focused in the moment to withdraw or obtain obstacles. Now we're focused on technology. Nobody ignores. Everybody that has technology suffers from some kind of hindering element and people that have to obtain the disability suffer from the isolation elements with the technology. We were very happy to support this event. As European center for stability, foundation answer decided to reset themselves for this opportunity to manage the accessible EU center. It is one of the landmarks of the rights of people with accessibility in Europe. It was established as so by the commission. They decided to develop the center through tender. We started working in the moment in August creating a consortium. It was a winner consortium. We were able to add to the bill challenge of management. These new activity and these new tasks requested by the commission, by the University from Deans with the European network of accessibility with the European society of company of peoples with disability. And with the UN AB. All of them are experts in accessibility. We configured the task. So the great goal was the deployment of the legislation in matters of accessibility. Now we're living in Europe and idealistic moment when it comes to accessibility. We have the act of web accessibility and we are in the transition people. With different realities when it comes to accessibility it is a huge challenge. So for accessible EU, we are collaborating with the different countries so the deployment and implementation is a reality. Another great challenge was the connection between the different groups of stakeholders that in their daily life and daily activities have the responsibility of developing accessibility. We are talking about public administration, different organizations with the disabilities, company, industry, academia, university, because this is paramount that university incorporates in their agenda their accessibility and this is one of the theories that we're developing. The talent was to train excellent professorials in accessibility. This is connects with what I said before. Unfortunately, the professorials in Europe are abandoning university without having enough training. The commission is very clear there was a very important gap into the issue. One of the biggest goals is to train professionals through different events. To try to have them learning, to do some networking projects, to enhance the awareness. So it was a big challenge. And this year with this event organized together with the telecommunication commission and the European Commission to celebrate most of the events that we've committed to. The year has been very exciting for us to be able to develop this kind of event. One of the great challenges was to build a practice community. The great initial goal is to have more than 500 members that belonged to this practice opportunity and

today we have more than 1,500 in the community. We have goals that were set and achieved. The goal should be to be a knowledge hub and seen as a knowledge hub and to be effective and successful, one of the goals together in the common space the different reports and papers related to accessibility on the European level. We set a goal to achieve joining more than 60 annual references. We have more than 130 references in papers related to accessibility. So you will understand why I said before this year has been very exciting. People from the team will say rather exciting was exhausting. Because of all of the work that we did. So that's why I want to thank all of the team for their huge work that we've done altogether, so the European center of accessibility is a reality. The team, the experts, the member, and especially to the team from our foundation. This is not achieved without the corporation. That's what we're doing here. I want to thank the secretaries of state that have risen between the two secretaries of state and elements are not accessibility. We don't include everybody. I want to thank to the national union of telecommunications. I think this is the beginning of a great story to work altogether in accessible technologies for everybody. Thank you.

>> Now from the Europe Disability Forum, championing the rights for persons with disabilities, please Ana Pelaez.

>> Distinguished authority and dear friends in the name of the European Forum of Disability, it represents more than 100 million of people with disabilities we want to express our thankful spirit to the commission of telecommunications to the European commission and government in their leadership in the European Center of Accessibility for inviting us and allowing us to participate in the important event. It is clear that the ICT permeates the life of everyone. Thank to them, you can study, you can work, and you can have an access to the system, justice, culture, sport, any area of life. Without allowing it, people with disabilities we have benefited from all of the progresses that were produced in the area. And the ICTs are in open door for the participation and clues. Sometimes it is just seen as an additional characteristic. Access to culture or any other thing cannot be given to people with disabilities without drawing their human rights. Without a doubt, there's been a lot of progress in the last years. We have the conventions of the rights of people with disabilities with specific arts on the right to accessibility from article nine that even goes beyond. They will comply with the mandates. I must say our experience hold us that the change can only happen with establishing defined in every single state. It is easy for us to see the acts and the code of electronic communications the example of the progress that has been conducted in Europe. So this progress will be backed by different norms and with different initiatives that will be promoted by the center of accessibility of the European Union. Despite all of the milestones, we have many channels. I'm going to address a few of them. The lack of ambition in the transportation and fulfillment of the EU legislation. That's a challenge. It is a challenge. It is a challenge that new technologies that are now emerging we're forgetting about accessibility. The digital compass of the EU or the AI law. They are not ambitious. Maybe they don't tackle the inclusion. It doesn't work in the isolated environment. It will reproduce in the physical environment. This has an impact on specific groups of people. Like, for example, elderly people with disabilities, or women and girls with disabilities. Compared to men, women with disabilities have small access. They have less digital skill. They've been less trained. They have less experience. Moreover, they are facing different ways of bullying and harassment through what is called cyber violence. Because of all this, I think that not only including the gender perspective, but also the age perspective in the context of the different discussions that are going

to be held. Today is key. If we truly -- if we believe in the principle that's set in the title of today's meeting. ICTs for all of us. This means that nobody can be set aside. But I'll take the extra mile. We not only don't have people that is being set aside, we have people it not even there. This people that are not even there, we need to work for them. I like to wish you a great success in today's session. Congratulations on this initiative. Thank you very much for your attention.

>> I would like to thank all of the opening speakers for their valuable contributions. Thank you very much. Now we'll have to continue the first session of our forum. So I would like to briefly introduce and delve more into the heart of the agenda. So having set the stage, now it is time for us to delve deeper into the heart of the agenda. I'm pleased to introduce the first session of the today, it is the navigating the European regulatory landscape for accessibility. We will set the regional context. We'll have very esteemed speakers from various regulatory agency and more. I would like to invite to the stage Maria Canal Fontcuberta from the EU Representation in Madrid, Ms. Ekaterine Imedadze, the commissioner from Georgia, and I would like to invite to the stage Antonios Perpatdis, and we have Indre Jurgelioniene, Tanja Zaninovic, and Dusan Caf. I would like to welcome them here on the stage. Okay. Good. Perfect. The session will be moderated by Mr. Jaroslaw. I wish you a delightful session together.

>> Great. Thank you very much. Thank all of the speaker for accepting our invitation and join us in the important seg. We hope at the beginning of the forum we have to take a little bit of the retrospective look at what's happening at the regional level. Going across the region and looking at the development of the region and subregional level and also very important what's happening with transposition having the digital accessibility ready pushed to be developed and implemented at the country level. This is very important. We're very grateful to the -- our colleagues from the countries being in charge of the decisions that are facilitate the rollout of the digital accessibility. Let's start our session from all of our distinguished speakers having being presented. Thank you very much for this. Let's let us start from the message from the European commission. This is our different point. Not only for European but also for many other countries from over possibility. You would be able and to be able to introduce the accessibility. Over to you.

>> Good morning, everyone. I would like to start by thanking ITU Accessible Europe for their invitation to take part in the panel. In order to request, I would like to take a step back and recall a bit where we are with the European accessibility act. It has already been mentioned in the previous panels. But at the EU level we did have a number of fragmented rules that sought to make easier accessibility requirements in different fields. But in 2019 with the European accessibility act, we obliged member states to make amends into the legislation to make sure we had functional disability requirements. The rule was adopted on the internal market basis. All members state will be obliged to make sure that every product and service that's placed in the market it is as of 2025, June, complies with a number of requirements who has not been laid down in the directive. In order to get there, we have two important dates ahead. The first one that was passed, member states had to transpose the act into the legislation which was the 28th of June last year. Now farther to the lane with the commission has to do is to check -- first of all to check if the member state has communicated. Those national rules that transpose the act and check as well that the transition is complete and correct. Later on on the 28th of June, 2025, those national rules will have to start applying. We have opened infridgement meetings. Others have not communitied a complete set of rules in

order to make sure that all of the elements are there. And that brings me back to the question -- it is a bit too early for the commission at this current stage to identify best practices, what we know and with this, I'll conclude. What we would like to see. We already see the best practice in the implementation. That exchange and deep exchange between those that have to implement the rule, the authorities, and the different experts in the room and field and persons with the disability. For instance, we see what's happening in Marta. We have a focus group allowing for those exchanges. That's exactly what we would like to see in our member states. With this, I'll conclude. Thank you.

>> Excellent. Thank you very much for this. We take the note. Also as the community we are here to support your efforts for protecting some good practices and also challenges and any kind of the protective measures to be fought through. So we are lucky today also to have some member states of the EU which will be bringing also a little bit of the perspective from the country level. We're joined today by the representative of Lithuania. Can you elaborate with the European alignment with the accessibility act, especially digital inclusivity and the landscape.

>> Microphone. Thank you.

>> Thank you for the floor. To start, I'll make insight on the Lithuania context. We have more than 200,000 people with confirmed disabilities or impairments. If we consider those elderly one, we would have even more people. Given that we have 2.7 million people in total of how a population, we have more than 8% of people that have some impairments and they have to be addressed too. But when we're talking about the accessibility, we have to shift from disability and the wording, the linguistic approach is completely different. We do not focus on the disability as such. We focus on universal design that was pretty well described by Roxana. We fully support the idea that holistic approach should be taken into account. Hence when establishing the framework, we did not put the accessibility requirements and supervision to one authority over to one policymaking authority or ministry. We have at least eight ministries involved in the process. We have four supervision authorities that deal with the accessibility requirements and then they are based on the expertise and the competence they are working in the field. Because it should be integral part of the market surveillance of the regulatory framework. It basically should become a hygiene for the accessible Europe. When we're talking about the elderly, we have in Lithuania, more than 600,000 people who lack basic skills or the level of their skills to digital inclusion. It needs to be improved. Hence there are a various of possibility and various of initiatives that our authorities take into account. One of which, for instance, the communication authority is also -- has just recently started one of the initiatives. That was -- it is supported by our President of Lithuania, which was launched with the participation of ITU general directive, Doreen, and to support people and to focus on elderly, to provide workshop for them, and to improve their skills. And to make their lives easier. When they face some difficulties, we want to emphasize the need. We want to focus and we want to encourage them to use digital world benefits with confidence and to emphasize the importance of them being them in our digital society. That would be a brief overview of what we're dealing with now.

>> Great. Thank you very much for this. Let us turn to Antonios. How is the approach specially for establishing the data connection which is very important for us. We are making the informed decision. Those decisions need to rely on the evidence-based.

>> Thank you. I know I was supposed to be on sight. I caught the flu. Thank

you for being able to attend online. We have a government assignment since 2021 to gather data and follow up on the disability policy in Sweden. It is not harmonized with the work on the accessibility act. It is harmonized in a way. On the government's point of view, it doesn't. Since 2021, we've produced a model to follow up on the sign and accessibility on one side. Individual responsibilities on the other one. Access to infrastructure, access to assistive technology, and competence, et cetera. This is part of the wider, wider inclusion policies on digital inclusion for everyone. It is not only on disability policy. During these two year we've been working, we've realized there's not that much data to access and we would rather develop the service and pin pointing various areas to get some -- some first service and first data gathering to be able to follow up in the next coming eight years. And once the accessibility act is implemented and the rules are put in place, we can probably follow up further and see the actual impacts of the European access act. Some examples of what we've done is interviews with teams working on web and web ability in order to see what they are working on in the university. Both in the -- meaning accessibility and compliance with the coming law, but also usability for users with disability. We are not focusing on on compliance. Another one is a review on the web access and status of the broad set of web sites. Directors and consumers. Not only those that are covered by the European -- director covered by the European access act. That's the first measure that we've done to follow once we're testing with the accessibility. We can get further data rob that. We also did research on use experience on web accessibility in order to see, okay, if there's a set of standard that is are followed. What's the -- how are the users experiencing that. There's still gaps in disability. Although the requirements of disability have met. This is to further develop knowledge and reduce better standards. There's better standards towards the private and public sector. We're diving into more use on the experience. It has been reducing data for years. We're dividing to get the access and information on the problems for use cases. We're working on it. We're greating the broader picture now. -- getting a broader picture now. We would like to show the further launch. We're really looking forward to the implementation of the new rules. We can't really follow anything though. We're definitely the first results. We can probably follow in the coming years. What's the impact of the new station?

>> Great. Thank you very much for your input. So any type of your salespersons in the collection of the data would be of great value to the European community. But also elsewhere. Where the -- none of the collection data is happening or very limited. Any kind of the experience in the domain would be of great contribution. Let's move from Sweden to Greece. We are joined today by Antonios Perpatidis. We would like to ask about the Greek experience of the implementation of the accessibility act in particularly in light of the of the digital transportation. Over to you.

>> Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about Greece. First in context, we have to remember that Greece has recently recovered from a major public debt crisis. This should not be the aftermath without a war. Taking that into account, in 2019, we established the ministry of governance. One with objectives to oversee the engagement in order to take Greece into the era. We set the transformation Bible in order to implement the strategy for 2025. Which comprised all of the targets on connectivity to the skills, government, et cetera, et cetera. As with all of the cases of implementing laws, the idea is to actually be able to train people and change the mindset as what happened in 2004 with the Athens with the Olympics. It had to work in order to get people's trust. Same thing with the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a good opportunity to

make people leap into the digital offer that we made. So we established, for example, the government tool which is golf GR portal. This replaced largely the existing portal. Now this was a upgraded. And it offered any kind -- for people to avoid actually visiting physical -- physically all of the administration. And, of course, there were the urgent measures that we're taking for the pandemic. This is what we call the operation freedom which was -- which included the national vaccination operation plan as well as the registry for all of those that suffered from the pandemic. From the virus itself. Of course we already had in place the one-stop-shop for all of the things the average citizens needs from the state. During the pandemic, they were upgraded and also digitized. We had a breakthrough. The online appointments. We call them my cap live, which means that any person could have an online appointment. This involved a sign language interpreter, if needed. After all of this, in order to reduce the red tape. We had the observatory which established process simplification. Of course, there are other things that were done in this context. Like they have the portal. But I wouldn't want to carry on. Thank you very much.

>> Great. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for this update. There's no doubt COVID was an amazing test for all of the nations to check how many citizens can get disconnected? Yes? In order to make the digital impact working, this was something that was raised already by all of the nations. And it was visible. That's why -- I think we're going to be grateful to COVID that it brought additional information for so many countries to work and ensure that the digital government services are accessibility. Taking care of all of the needs of all of the nation. So now south of Europe, let's go to Croatia. We have Hakam. We know Hakam is taking the leadership next year. They are working closely with the community on one of the working groups around the accessibility. Over to you, but let's start with the -- your experience as the country and how you are transposing all of the European accessibility in terms of the digital accessibility.

>> Hello to all. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Regarding the question, the European Accessibility Act is not yet transformed in the national legislation. There's a member of the working group for drafting the law on accessibility. Together with 44 representatives of numerous ministries and agencies, and so on. So it was a little bit of a challenge to work in such a big group with the numerous government bodies. Croatia decided she wants to have one unified act about accessibility. We didn't decide to go for the sectoral approach. The European accessibility act was carried out by the ministry of labor and social welfare. The process is nearly done. Because it is planned that accessibility act will be adopted in the next year. In the process, we have also involved a good practice of Italy and Denmark. I will also take remarks it exists in our legislation. We have them in the electronic communication act and ordinance of HAKOM. People went out the problem that people in wheel care cannot see the technical specification or price when they enter the operator store. Because they put it horizontally. We obliged operators to put them vertically. And the combination of new accessible act and provisions that they already exist will be a great way that consumer protection on the field accessibility will put on the better and high level. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much, Tanja, for this introduction. Thank you very much for bringing a very specific and also message that we need to be tuned and to take a look at this what is in front of us. These are the challenges also which are related and which are in front of those countries which are in the accession process. We're pleased to be joined by the commissioner coming from Georgia, a long way, Ekaterine. I think you came across the whole region of Europe. We

are grateful and honored of having you as the commissioner to bring and ask a little bit of the message of those countries which are on the way towards the European union. How do you perceive this? What's happening at the country level?

>> Thank you for the nice words of introduction and mentioning the important process for our country. These days it will be the decision made. I hope we'll celebrate with the colleagues and other representatives who are part of the decision. This is -- I want to start with words of gratitude to ITU to European commission to the government of Spain for hosting us, of course, and foundation us nicely providing the permit and resource center. This is a really great pleasure and honor to have this opportunity to share with you. First from the countries and families that we're aiming what is the state of play with European Accessibility Act, and, of course, Georgia has several capacities and harmonization. We're part of the rights of person with disabilities. At same time, Georgia strategies and policies promote digital inclusion and actions to improve the digital services by promoting access to the Internet and making sure this access is inclusive. We have great support from the EU. From ITU. Also projects are funded by the World Bank. Those tonighted efforts are related to commitment of Georgia under this secession agreement, first of all. And the relevant transition and in the future to get the European Union Legislation in our country. What is the state of Georgia now with the accessibility of digital services? Under the European code. We know that -- this code also considers different categories of vulnerable populations such as people having low income or special social needs or social or physical needs. This was a first aim. And the draft amendment was provided for -- to made our communications code and make sure that accessibility to Internet is also considered for the vulnerable group.

It was mentioning that we have for a good coverage of Internet in the urban areas. We have more than 2,000 of people registered with people with disabilities who are receiving some social substitute. -- support. Those are also considered as vulnerable group. The drafting was considered availability and affordability and we took the practice of ITO for the implement and considered in the needs of person with disabilities. And another major project now we have the Georgia project which is funded by World Bank. It is considered -- [music]

>> Building the infrastructure in the rural areas of Georgia. It has a complement of the digital inclusion which considers also providing digital skills and providing enablers and deep diving into the research where our development vulnerability groups as well as physical access to the digital services and perspectives. I will then later try to give you more insight on those initiatives.

>> Thank you very much. We'll come back. One more time. Thanks a lot for going for the whole -- across the whole region to be with us. We appreciate this. So this closes our round of the different perspectives from the countries. Thank you very much for bringing different angles of the channels, opportunities, that we are today also joined by DUsan Caf, those who know Dusan know she's very analytical. This is the reason that we are meeting together. Dusan was working with us at the time to take a look at what was, in fact, a global understanding of the regional level with the level of digital accessibility. As I'm handing it over to you, some -- maybe perspective of this which we experience some years back and where we're heading and what type of the key synergies that you see between the countries happening in the area and also what type of the common challenges that you see. We'll still come back to the challenges. All speakers are invited and ready to think about what you would like to bring to the table. I would like the session to also conclude with the

status of the of the digit channels which we can then later on take a look.
First over to Dusan.

>> Thank you, Jaroslaw. I'm grateful to be here. Spain is a leader in accessibility in Europe. I recognized that when I came to Madrid myself. It is very difficult to say the differences. Certainly among the countries. Certainly we can witness the member states must do that. To implement accessibility legislation, Europe is a leader in regulatory practices. So we witnessed that first with the agreement on the Spanish presidency. These are good signs and trends. We think the study that Jaroslaw mentioned that we investigated the commitment and capabilities of the countries. When we speak about the legislation, these are mainly the commitments. But we witnessed that what is important is the capabilities. Countries not only need to make the commitments, but have to be capable of implementing this commitments. So this is in our opinion very important. There are differences among the countries in terms of EU or non-EU membership or the countries that we have. A small country like Marta, that's committed, and Spain which is a big country. We have countries which didn't have proper legislation through the video broadcasting. It is about commitment and leaderships. This is about the leaders in the regulators. They bring the changes. Well, we are talking about skills. We have also investigated the skills. We forget about the public administration. They are the ones who have to Europe and who are the leaders and they show the way. Our administration with the countries of the legal framework are aware they have to take different approaches. What is important is during the study of the participatory policymaking. It is a standard and more successful. They include countries with disabilities into the policy-making practices. They are much better in the implementation and accessibility practices. The collaboration effort. This is key. Stakeholders have to come together. They have to work together and implement the agreements which reached the stakeholders. There are areas that are important like emergency receives and emergency communications. We have had serious situations. This is very important. The way we talk about accessibility of the action technologies, we have efforts at the EU level among stakeholders that develop the standards and good practices. Also the role of the ITU. I myself work in the area for standardized the solution. There are different technologies. When it comes to the implementation phase, it is the standards which are important. ITU played an important role during the COVID pandemic. For example, they implement it. The working groups -- study groups implement the recommendations and guidelines which are also very important. Based on that, we also implemented a platform for the deaf community and helped them in accessing the services, education, administration services. Yeah. So I think this is -- these are the main emphasis. Technology is important. It has to be accessibility. As I said before, we need smart technology which is accessibility. This technology we witnessed also this throughout Europe is entering other sectors, like transportation, and I know that persons with disabilities and organizations of person with disabilities that work at the EU level, they have not set the slides with the base of the progress here. I witness myself or that are really gate efforts made to make the sectors accessible. It is costly, time consuming, and the EU and the member states as we noticed are investing. We can be -- we can see accessibility of this sector soon, I think, to be much better. Okay. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much for these. Thank you.

>> (Applause)

>> Thank you very much. Also thank you for bringing those who are asked to provide all of the digital features. I think the skills are essential. There's

a lot to be done jointly and in terms of the capacity-building programs across Europe with many levels. We are not talking only about the global federal level, but also it goes to the level of the local communities. And the more deeper that we're going, the more efforts that have to be done. This is an open call for those who are also channeling some capacity building programs in different language. it is also very important to keep this in mind. Not everybody is operating in some language which is more known than the others. As I think we have to think about those issues. But I think we have some questions coming also for the online. Let us greet those following the meeting online. We have the question which is directed to our colleagues from Sweden. Our colleagues are asking if you could elaborate more about the collection of the data and the collection of the data and how hard is it to innovate in the area? It is not easy to get information about those who are disconnected and not using the services. Would you be able to elaborate a little bit this on this in practice call temples? Over to you, Indre.

>> Thank you. We're aware of the difficult -- we know today a lot of service are digital only. Then we can't reach the digital. Some of us are -- we noticed that we're promoting and using of the different methods that are maybe not representative. The use with certain disabilities can promote other uses to be part of this process. It is quite costly, because they use focus group. They use various methods to reach the users. But it also gathers data on the specific needs and specific channels for specific groups. Whereas others traditionally the national statistics typically have a question. Do you have the disability? They gather the whole group. They say what's behind the data. There are other services from -- for example, the translation for that from the agency participation in Sweden. I know there's a panel of about 5,000 individuals with disabilities. I don't know nowadays if they use -- they used to have that you can live and have postal service and also these on telephone as well. But we're really working on this. We're working close to the National Statistics Authority and gathering relevant data. A lot of services are general. You can't tell the specific situations where there's a lack of access from this general service. So we often implement with focus groups to gather information on the specific information or specific challenges in those situations. We need to gather both a lot of data using the focus groups on a smaller set of users discussing them and following them and observing their behavior.

>> Thank you very much for these. Thank you for the questions. We're encounseling the colleagues online in the chat box to put forward your concern and questions for clarification. Colleagues, I was notified that we have only five minute. I negotiated for us seven. It is good news. But now I will be asking your question. Before very synthetic. I think we took a little bit of understanding of what is happening in our countries and what are the challenges and good developments. It is great. I think we would like to learn even more about this, what inspires you and some good practices which you observe at international level and also national level what you would like to scale up and what you would like to also recommend to others to take a look. This forum is about sharing. This is the reason why it is not only about sharing this what we have to share, but also what you are sharing with others and what you are, in fact, absorbing to take as the good practice. Maybe this time let's start just from the right side of the table. We are going to Croatia.

>> Thank you. Since 2016 we have a project about protection who has disabilities. And we are collaborating together with academic community and sections of persons can disabilities. We have a numerous collaboration for the projects of the togetherness. We don't have time to talk about it. This year

we held a conference and brought together operators and media and so on to raise awareness and note interest. Because people with disabilities tend to stay in the shadow. And, of course, we think that regulator role is not only to have a perfect regulation and numerous obligation. As person with disabilities must gain trust in order to point where the problems are. If you are not a person with disability, you cannot know where the problem and what the problem is. Regarding the operators, they need to put additional efforts on the human level, not just only in business and legislation plans, for example, we are encouraging them to have a manual for persons with disabilities and how they can approach them. And also that they involve persons with disabilities in their advisetizement. The topic of disability will be one brought up next year. Next year we're planning to establish the advisor where representatives saw for regulators, operator, and policymakers and, of course, persons with disabilities will be collaborating as well. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much. We're also looking forward to this synergies. At least what we're doing here and we hope that many of you will be benefiting from the actions. Thank you very much for that. Let us move to the European Commission.

>> From our side as a best practice, we want to support member states in the implementation of the European accessibility by making sure that all of those that are going to be actors of change are brought together. That's the strategy for the rights of person with disability that was already mentioned in detail in the prevention panel. We seek to bring together those that have to enforce them and those that are going to be benefiting. The users and also the experts that are going to be able to find the technical solutions that we allow the benefit to become a reality. They have told us in the previous session. The training in order to tackle the skills that has been mentioned as well. The online library, the networking, and, yup, the supporting the development of tools and standards. That's the best practice I would like to highlight here.

>> All right. Thank you very much. Georgia?

>> Thank you. I've started my prevention intervention on the project in Georgia which aims at bringing the physical accessibility and it is very important components which is called the digital adoption program and communications commission as a regulatory. But this is the owner of the -- I think it is -- itself is a very interesting and good practice. To be kind of involved together with government in this kind of can be of course, the private sector and this kind of initiative. The principle varies to investigate and understand what are the digital services. Available or not, and whether the principle of leaving no one behind is working in the country. Why choosing this kind of -- in this kind of initiative communications commission can play an interest and grow in the perspective and being closer to the subscribers part and being closer to providers. This is a good example of the mediation. Understood the strategy within we have interesting research. There were interesting focus group going to the region and understanding on the place whether the real reasons and questions. It is sometimes challenging for people with disabilities to really voice what are real challenge for them. Why they are unable to use the digit tat service. When you go through in our homes, you are ewed to seeing -- for example, people or strangers are coming to the family the people have communities like teachers where mediators to introreduce people from stabilities and social leave. Their abilities in the child, too, tell you what exactly was the region. Not using the digital sty lass. I wanted to share it with you.

>> Great. Thank you very much for this. Now let us turn to the left of the table. I'm come back to indre. Let's start from the intervention.

>> Okay. Yeah.

>> We cannot hear you. You are muted.

>> Now?

>> We have some examples and good practices that I would like to promote is the innovation competition. We've had it for 12 years in Sweden. It is -- we promote and fund projects that our universities sign basically. Now that the EEA is coming, once the market needs to comply with regulation, they should have more market pull for innovations. One example that we're seeing after the web accessibility director was put in place was there were a lot more tools for producing some type, for example. It was time consuming and effort for the public sector body. We promote one such project. It been quite successful afterward. You need to comply and more in this reducing web. The crucial access for the systems, et. They are the suppliers for the service providers covered by the EA. Awareness need to be raised. They need to put a fan and comply. We must -- I don't think we're there yet. Implementation is comp. Clam got it. We know there are a lot of companies that are wakening right now and realizing that we need to start working on this. But it is quite length. Of >> Thank you very much for this. Let's move to Lithuania. Over to you. Thank you. The accessibility act comes into force more than two years from now.

It seems like it is enough time. It is not enough time. If we consider to make it thorough not only check, but put the picture on the pick box. If we. To make a different. We have to basically get anything and the capacity, we I fully support. It is not only about those who benefit from the accessibility regulation. Those who implement and those who sowp St. would have the relative will capacity. This is a digit challenge for everyone. In Litt wane that, we're having shared proanything, it is pretty channeling to establish Europe approach collaboration in the case. We have the comedy which consistence of non-government institutions which consistence of policymakers, advisors, academia, hope that will help. We will build the rail bank capacity. By the way being the co-chair of the working group at Barr Eck terek t. Over going to provide an article and how it is with the changing requirement and development. The focus of the disability is also in that agenda. We are going to do a lot. We are collaborate and build capacity millioners, by al a as well. Thank you.

>> Thank you. Now Greece?

>> What I said before about the change in the mineset. The example that I want to give is regard of how to train people regardless of age and disability. In order to get rid of the old ways. Since the tools are there always. That choice is to be made. The tools can be adjusted for gaming to keep people in. It can be used for changing everyday life. In this context, for instance, when in interest of the center for people to be able to go and get their assessment. This used to be a didn't process. It was in the context. Just telling a them and which aside. There's a few way of doing all of that. People who have actually -- they don't need to go there again and again. At the whole idea is to make whatever the disability and be able to follow out. That's the whole idea. Increase the question is where are the disabled? Nay were all invisible. This is not the case anymore. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much. Last, but not least, our colleague from Lithuania.

>> Yeah. Thank you. To be brief, I wouldn't speak about technology. I would like to mention one thing. We speak about AI all the time. We have to be aware that they want to use AI. Which is a key technology that will enable accessibility in the future. As they mentioned. We have to train the lab language model. European managing. This is very important. Use technology and the development of AI is also important to reserve and be a language with some of them all right. Small, Israel lick we and the initiative in Iceland. They managed to develop the technologies in a short time with a very dedication and support. We need to develop the speech technology and signing technology and

signing avatars if you want to have accessibility services, digital services, and also language translation. I know that these technologies work fine for large languages like English, Spanish, and some others. But for small languages, this is a huge problem. So in the multilingual region as Europe is, we need to take care of this. We invest heavily in sign language and it is important tomorrow. There will be a session on AEP I hope it will be this area.

Celina is trying to reserve the language in the digital world by adopting new law or amends to the law.

>> Great. Thank you very much. This intervention was concluding our session. I think we learned a lot. What is happening across the region. What are the challenges? What are the best practices? This was a great session. Thank you much for all of the contribution. Thank you very much. A point of applause. Let's thank you. Ladies, during our society, as you notice, they were using the world of diversity gives value.

>> As you know, everyone, at 3:30 we're going to have digital accessibility. There are going to be two runner up awards. You'll decide the winner. Now we're going to have a public member draw. You. You are going to be randomly selected. It can be any one of you. We have 12 companies in this little bag. 12, because one of the companies are having some slight company. That's why we have to have them at least. For the other 10, you are deciding what they are pitching. It is fair. Indre will go around randomly choosing you. Try to make eye contact, if you want to get chosen.

So this campaign is going to pitch first. Very, very exciting.

>> This is current. They were an ITU employee. She's a core resource for Europe. So she's focusing on the UN affairs and including also the digital inclusiveness and from Roxana we learned about ten. I think he's in line.

>> Hello. Could you please introduce yourself?

>> Hi. I'm Kia. I'm representing the Ministry of Development in France and its original policy of Poland today.

>> Perfect.

>> And please pick a number from the bag.

>> Okay.

>> I just gave the vision to Yvonne.

>> Do we have Yvonne? We're going to have four-minute pitches later on. You'll get the chance to explain further. Now we go with the second one. He's choosing perfect.

>> You can volunteer.

>> One of the guys is going to talk this afternoon. I've got to see if you can pick my number. Accessibility cloud. I think.

>> Yes, it is. No, it is not. Sign an avatar. Where are you? Stand up?

Wait. There you go. Good luck.

>> Perfect. And now.

>> Hello, madame. Can you please introduce yourself?

>> We have an exciting lunch coming. So.

>> Hello, sir. Would you please introduce yourself?

>> I'm Hector. I helped this morning.

>> Do we have Victor here? Oh. Victor is here. So -- okay. We don't have a lot of time. Maybe I should skip this part. Wave for two seconds. Okay.

Let's go to the fourth one.

>> Thank you very much.

>> Who wants to volunteer?

>> I'm from Georgia's national communication commission.

>> Accessibility cloud.

>> And the fifth company. >> I'm from the company Sony. Alex Hider. Do we

have them here? I think no. They can wave later. This is a cute company.
Nobody is making eye contact.
>> I'm from Serbia.
>> Thank you.
>> Indre, maybe we can have our speakers. The first session they can also
choose -- who is it going to be?
>> Thank you. And we have only three more left. If you want to volunteer, this
is the time. You are going to run out of time. Oh. We have a volunteer. Two
companies more.
>> Universal design of ICT.
>> Do we have them in the room?
>> Perfect.
>> And one more victim. Then we have a volunteer. You are off of the hook.
>> Hello, madame.
>> Hello.
>> Do we have -- the last one to draw one. We have the company.
>> And the winner is. Capito.
>> Oh.
>> Wonderful. Okay. Perfect. Now we'll let you have lunch. Which is also --
I know. It is exciting. We want you to have lunch in the room next.
>> What time do we come back?
>> We're coming back at 2:00. We are reconvening at 2:00 to have a session on
the UN. Thank you.
(Lunch break)