

Buenos Aires Action Plan

STUDY GROUP 1

QUESTION 7/1

Access to telecommunication/information and communication technology services by persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs

1 Statement of the situation or problem

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one billion persons in the world live with some type of disability. According to WHO, about 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in low-income countries. Disability appears in different forms and degrees, regarding physical, sensitive or mental aspects. Also, increasing life expectancy results in elderly persons having reduced capabilities. Thus, it is likely that the number of persons with disabilities will continue to rise.

The inclusion in society of persons with disabilities is a policy of Member States. The objective of such policy is to bring about the necessary conditions for persons with disabilities to enjoy the same opportunities in life as the rest of the population. The disabilities policy has evolved, making urban infrastructure accessible and improving health and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. Moreover, the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination are common policies of Member States.

With respect to telecommunications, at the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Hyderabad, 2010) Member States resolved, by Resolution 20 (Rev. Hyderabad, 2010), that access to modern telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, services and related applications must be provided on a non-discriminatory basis.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) acknowledged that special attention should be given to the needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) High-Level Meeting on the overall review of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes acknowledged the need to address the specific ICT challenges facing children, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons, migrants and remote and rural communities.

On 13 December 2006, UNGA approved the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which came into force on 3 May 2008.

The CRPD establishes basic principles, and also a State's obligations to ensure equal access to telecommunications/ICTs, including Internet, by persons with disabilities.

Resolution 175 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, calls for the introduction of mechanisms to enhance the accessibility, compatibility and usability of telecommunication/ICT services, and encourages the development of applications

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enabling the use of such services by persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs on an equal basis with others.

Resolution 70 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, resolves that the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) study groups should consider aspects of universal design, non-discriminatory standards, service regulations and measures for all persons, especially persons with disabilities.

The ITU-G3ict Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report highlights a series of elements relevant to the development of policies on public access to ICTs, mobile communications, TV and video programmes, web access and public procurement. The report also recognizes the need for flexible legislative frameworks that foster equitable access to telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities in a constantly changing technological environment.

ITU-T Study Group 6 has conducted work and studies on multimedia coding, systems and applications, and Study Group 6 of the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) has conducted work on broadcasting services relevant to ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities.

It is also pertinent to mention that broadband access and usage are highly dependent on literacy, and ICT literacy as well. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that 750 million people aged 15 and above worldwide are illiterate, i.e. they cannot read or write; and two-thirds of them are women.

Several issues encountered by both disability groups and illiterate groups of people have common solutions.

1.1 Accessibility standards

Accessibility standards are essential in order to make it possible for equipment and services to be usable by the broadest range of persons, to be interoperable and to provide the required quality services. ITU-T has prepared several Recommendations and documents that provide information on a wide range of accessibility standards.

It is also important to consider stakeholder participation, whereby persons with disabilities should be involved in the process of elaborating legal/regulatory provisions, public policy and standards.

1.2 Information and statistics

It is important to gather information and data addressing many key issues relating to accessibility to telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities. Therefore, a methodology should be developed to assist the information-gathering process.

2 Question or issue for study

Sharing good practices on implementing national ICT accessibility policies, legal frameworks, directives, guidelines, strategies and technological solutions to improve the accessibility, compatibility and usability of telecommunication/ICT services and the use of accessible telecommunications/ICTs to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in order to

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empower all stakeholders in creating an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities worldwide.

3 Expected output

It is proposed that the Question for study should:

- provide telecommunication/ICT accessibility training to stakeholders, especially policy-makers, on how to engage all national and/or regional stakeholders and share good practices and success stories on the implementation of ICT accessibility policies, regulatory frameworks and services;
- result in a report that identifies good commercial and governmental practices that will support Member States, especially developing¹ and least developed countries (LDCs), in establishing and implementing policies, legal frameworks and strategies on accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs

The report should:

- a) share members' good practices and case studies on how to create political will as a cornerstone for implementing national ICT accessibility policies and strategies to improve the accessibility, compatibility and usability of telecommunication/ICT services;
- b) create a roadmap of requirements that national policy-makers should incorporate in their respective legal frameworks, including a range of measures to support the implementation of accessible ICT policies and services;
- c) highlight ITU products and services available to the members to empower national stakeholders in providing, in particular, the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) training on web accessibility (accessible content and accessible websites), with the aim of ensuring that public government websites are accessible to all;
- d) identify suitable promotion and dissemination mechanisms, including business models, to ensure that persons with disabilities are aware of and are able to use and be empowered by accessible telecommunications/ICTs;
- e) identify mechanisms for the use of telecommunications/ICTs to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, including telework;
- f) identify methodologies that make it possible to compile telecommunication/ICT statistics focused on users with disabilities, in order to monitor the impact of the implementation of ICT accessibility policies, practices and technological solutions.

4 Timing

These activities should be included in the programme of activities of ITU-D Study Group 1 for the 2018-2021 study period, as a new Question.

4.1 Mid-term report expected by 2019.

¹ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

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4.2 Final report expected by 2020.

5 Proposers/sponsors

Mexico/CITEL, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Mali.

6 Sources of input

The following stakeholders are encouraged to supply information for the Question: Member States, Sector Members, relevant international and regional organizations, public and private institutions and civil-society organizations involved in the design of policies and advocacy for the development of technological solutions to alleviate the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in accessing telecommunications/ICTs.

7 Target audience

Target audience	Developed countries	Developing countries
Telecom policy-makers	Interested	Very interested
Telecom regulators	Interested	Very interested
Service providers/operators	Interested	Very interested
Manufacturers	Interested	Interested

a) Target audience

The result of the study will serve Member States, and particularly administrations of developing countries and LDCs, in designing policies and executing strategies and actions for the implementation of technological solutions that improve accessibility to telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities. Moreover, it will enable Sector Members and service providers located in those countries to design and apply proven and successful commercial practices to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and facilitate their access to telecommunications/ICTs.

b) Proposed methods for implementation of the results

Authorities from Member States could consider designing policies and strategies to implement the most suitable technological solutions in the light of the characteristics of their populations and countries. In this respect, there could be short-term, medium-term and long-term action plans so as to permit implementation in phases.

The report should also be useful for administrations of Member States, Sector Members and service providers to encourage the adoption of commercial practices geared to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.

8 Proposed methods of handling the Question or issue

a) How?

1) Within a study group:

- Question (over a multi-year study period)



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- 2) Within regular BDT activity (indicate which programmes, activities, projects, etc., will be involved in the work of the study Question)
- Programmes: Digital inclusion
 - Projects
 - Expert consultants
 - Regional offices
- 3) In other ways – describe (e.g. regional, within other organizations with expertise, jointly with other organizations, etc.): To be defined in the work plan.

b) Why?

The Question will be addressed within ITU-D Study Group 1, in close cooperation with ITU-T Study Group 16 (Question 26/16).

9 Coordination and collaboration

Coordination is recommended with relevant international organizations, and with service providers that have adopted best practices to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs and facilitate their access to telecommunications/ICTs.

10 BDT programme link

To be defined in the workplan.

11 Other relevant information

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