



# Web Accessibility

With the rapid growth of information and interactive services provided through the web and mobile devices, a part of the population risks being excluded from basic services from both the private and public sector such as getting information from public services, grocery shopping, medical consultations, online banking, messaging and video-calling services, to name but a few.

Simple changes that make websites and apps more “accessible” can help everyone, not just users with disabilities. For instance, being able to listen to a text when there is not enough light to read or when multitasking, or reading subtitles to a video in a noisy environment. Businesses with accessible services can reach a larger, mostly untapped customer base, and experience an economic gain from doing so. An estimated 100 million people in the EU have some form of disability, and so represent an important market.

Digital accessibility goes beyond technical standards, web architecture and design. Persons with disabilities have the right to access information and communication technologies on an equal basis with everyone else. This ensures their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community ([EU Charter of Fundamental Rights \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A12012P/TXT\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A12012P/TXT), Art 26). In parallel, Article 9 of the UN [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html\)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) (UNCRPD) - rectified by the EU and its Member States - requires that appropriate measures are taken to ensure that persons with disabilities can access information and communication technologies, including the Internet, on equal basis with others.

## The Web Accessibility Directive

The [Web Accessibility Directive \(WAD\) \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A32016L2102&from=EN\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A32016L2102&from=EN) has been in force since 22 December 2016 and provides people with disabilities with better access to websites and mobile apps of public services. Read also a [summary of the Web Accessibility Directive \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A4314916\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A4314916).

The rules laid down in the WAD reflect the Commission's ongoing work to build a social and inclusive European 'Union of equality', where all Europeans can play a full and active part in the digital economy and society. The directive obliges websites and apps of public sector bodies to be “more accessible”, providing a technical standard which clarifies what is “accessible”. It also foresees a limited number of exceptions that include broadcasters and live streaming.

The WAD requires:

- an accessibility statement for each website and mobile app, stating non-accessible content and alternatives as well as contacts
- a feedback mechanism so users can flag accessibility problems or request information published in a non-accessible content
- regular monitoring of public sector websites and apps by Member States, and reporting on the results to the Commission every three years

The WAD complements the [European Accessibility Act \(https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202\)](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202) which covers a wide range of products and services also in the private sector. Further European legislation supports people with disabilities in other areas including electronic communications, audio-visual media services, ebooks, eCommerce and ICT equipment.

The [infographic on 'Digital Inclusion in the EU \(https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/accessibility-essential-some-useful-all\)](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/accessibility-essential-some-useful-all) highlights how these EU policies impact digital accessibility.

## Review of the Web Accessibility Directive

The Commission reviewed the Web Accessibility Directive in 2022. The review took into account the results of a public consultation held in 2021 that gathered views on the application of the WAD in practice, the Member States first accessibility monitoring reports and a supporting study. You can read the [Evaluation report \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2022%3A410%3AFIN\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2022%3A410%3AFIN) and its [Executive summary \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2022%3A411%3AFIN\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2022%3A411%3AFIN). These documents and the consultation results are also published on the [Have your say](#)

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12537-Accessible-web-digital-content-for-people-with-disabilities-review-of-EU-rules\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12537-Accessible-web-digital-content-for-people-with-disabilities-review-of-EU-rules_en) portal.

## Study supporting the review of the Web Accessibility Directive

The study supporting the review of the Web Accessibility Directive and its implementing acts is published on the EU Publications portal:

- [Easy Read executive summary \(https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPK\)](https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPK)
- [Easy Read synopsis report \(https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPN\)](https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPN) of the public consultation
- [Final study report \(https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPL\)](https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPL)
- [Executive summary \(https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPM\)](https://op.europa.eu/s/xjPM)

## Implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive

In October 2018, the Commission adopted two [implementing decisions \(https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/publication-implementing-acts-under-web-accessibility-directive\)](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/publication-implementing-acts-under-web-accessibility-directive) ensuring uniform conditions for the implementation of the Directive:

1. [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2018/1523 establishing a model accessibility statement \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2018/1523/oj\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2018/1523/oj)
2. [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2018/1524 establishing a monitoring methodology and the arrangements for reporting by Member States \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2018/1524/oj\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2018/1524/oj)

A third implementing decision on the harmonised standard for websites and mobile applications that provides for the presumption of conformity with the WAD was [adopted in December 2018 \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32018D2048\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32018D2048) and then [amended in August 2021 \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021D1339\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021D1339). Find more information about [standards and harmonisation \(https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/web-accessibility-directive-standards-and-harmonisation\)](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/web-accessibility-directive-standards-and-harmonisation).

## Transposition of the Web Accessibility Directive

All Member States have transposed the Directive into national law (deadline was 23 September 2018). You can access the [list of the national transposition measures \(https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/NIM/?uri=CELEX%3A32016L2102\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/NIM/?uri=CELEX%3A32016L2102).

## Monitoring of the Web Accessibility Directive

The WAD requires Member States to periodically monitor the compliance of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies with the accessibility requirements. Since [2021 \(https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/web-accessibility-directive-monitoring-reports\)](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/web-accessibility-directive-monitoring-reports), and every three years thereafter, Member States publish and submit to the Commission a report on the outcome of the monitoring and use of enforcement.

## Accessibility overlays

The legal accessibility requirements in the EU are underpinned by technical criteria specified in the harmonised European standard EN 301 549 v3.2.1. Accessibility overlays are tools that can be added to websites with the aim of improving accessibility. Overlays, or any other tools which do not ensure the website itself meets the detailed criteria of the standard, are not an appropriate solution. It is best to fix accessibility issues at their source.

Another good practice is to provide feedback on accessibility issues to those developing or maintaining digital tools, to ensure that those responsible learn about digital accessibility and avoid future problems. To ensure that websites are genuinely accessible, it is important to always involve persons with disabilities in testing.

The European Disability Forum, users with disabilities and many accessibility experts have expressed concern about the use of overlays. For more information visit:

- [Joint statement by EDF & IAAP \(https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/joint-statement-on-accessibility-overlays/\)](https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/joint-statement-on-accessibility-overlays/)
- [Article by The A11Y project \(https://www.a11yproject.com/posts/should-i-use-an-accessibility-overlay/\)](https://www.a11yproject.com/posts/should-i-use-an-accessibility-overlay/)
- [Overlay Fact Sheet \(https://overlayfactsheet.com/en/\)](https://overlayfactsheet.com/en/) signed by nearly 900 accessibility experts.

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