

Global Accessibility Awareness Day: the European Commission is working towards the inclusion of all

20 May 2021 is Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Find out the actions taken by the EU to improve accessibility and what to expect in the near future Union of Equality



Thursday, 20 May 2021, marks the 10th edition of Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD).

What is the EU doing about accessibility?

In order to tackle the many challenges that persons with disabilities face every day, the Commission adopted in March 2021 the new Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 (download the PDF in all EU languages), building on the lessons learned from the previous edition 2010-2020. The new strategy announces the launching in 2022 of a European resource centre - "AccessibleEU" - to increase coherence in accessibility policies and facilitate access to relevant knowledge. Furthermore, in addition to the accessible document, an Easy-to-read version is available in all EU languages.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the digital world has become the main access point for essential public health information, to keep up with education and work, to buy products and services and to maintain a minimum of social contact and participation. Europe's Digital Decade seeks to ensure that everyone in Europe benefits from digitalisation, and no one is left out. To that end, accessibility is a precondition for the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Digital accessibility is an inclusive practice that enables people with disabilities or with some form of

impairment, to *perceive, understand, navigate, and interact* with the online environment. It is also beneficial for those without disabilities as it brings flexibility and allows for personal choices and preferences. For people who would otherwise be excluded and isolated, digital tools and services meeting accessibility requirements (European Standard EN 301 549) can make a huge difference.

The Web Accessibility Directive obliges the Member States to ensure that, by June 2021, the websites and mobile applications of all public sector bodies are accessible to persons with disabilities.

The next step? The European Accessibility Act, improving the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services, and removing barriers created by divergent rules in Member States. In particular, this directive requires key digital tools, products and services, to be accessible by 2025. This includes those placed on the market by the private sector, such as e-books, e-commerce, online banking, websites and booking systems of transport services.

The Commission also supports a range of research and innovation projects (PDF) to improve digital inclusion for persons with disabilities. From automatic subtitling to easy-language drafting, from translation into sign language to community building and skills training. Discover WAI-Tools, WADcher, WAI-Guide, We4Authors and more to come.

Stay tuned! (@BetterNet4EU)

The European Commission is committed to achieving a real Union of equality, by putting in place several mechanisms, policies and actions to ensure the right to access on equal basis with others as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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EU-funded research projects into technologies for accessibility
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Web Accessibility Directive team

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