

Planning Inclusive Communities

Inclusive regulation: the proposal for
a Web-Accessibility Directive

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The Web-Accessibility Directive

1. Background
2. The proposal
3. Impact on municipalities

1. Background

- Many initiatives at European level in Web-Accessibility **since 2000**
- **“Soft law”** = Encouragements and Commitment
- Initiatives coming from the **three main European institutions**: the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council



1. Background

European Commission

- *eEurope Action Plan (2000) and Communication on eEurope 2002: Accessibility of Public Web Sites and their Content (2001)*
- *Communications on eAccessibility (2005)*
- *Towards and accessible information society (2008)*

European Parliament

- *Resolution on the Commission Communication on eEurope 2002*

Council

- *Resolutions on eEurope Action Plan (2002)*
- *Riga Ministerial Declaration (2006)*
- *Conclusions on the EC Communication on the accessible information society (2009)*

1. Background

- **In addition to the European efforts**, there have been parallel actions:
 - **National measures: 24 Member States**
 - Most of them cover regional and local administrations
 - **International measures: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) signed by all MS and ratified by 25 = **ACTUAL COMMITMENT****



1. Background

- Despite all these efforts, the **situation of Web-Accessibility in the EU today:**
- **Low accessibility of public sector websites:** less than 55% of websites accessible
- **Diverging and uncoordinated efforts:** leading to varying national specifications



Line to take

- **So what now?**
 - “Soft EU law” + National initiatives => **“Harder EU law”**
 - Harder law: current & upcoming **complementary legislative proposals**
 1. Proposal for new Public Procurement Directive
 - 2. Proposal for a Directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies’ websites (Web-Accessibility Directive)**
 3. European Accessibility Act

2. The proposal

- **Identification of the problem:**
 - Non-functioning of the internal market for provision of web-accessibility;
- **Drivers to the problem:**
 - Fragmentation due to **different national web accessibility (WA) specifications**
 - **Uncertainty** for the procurers / owners

2. The proposal

- The proposal establishes **harmonised accessibility requirements** for a **set of public sector bodies' websites**

Requirements

- **In line with four Principles of WCAG 2.0:**

Websites to be accessible in “an adequate way for user’s perception, operation and understanding” and “in a way which facilitates interoperability with a variety of user agents and assistive technologies at Union and international level”

Scope

- Websites **owned by public sector bodies**
- offering **12 types of essential services for citizens**

2. The proposal

Use of standards

- **Presumption of conformity** for websites which meet future **European harmonised standard – WCAG 2.0 AA-**

Monitoring and reporting

- **Compulsory monitoring and reporting to the Commission**
- **Harmonized monitoring methodology** to be decided by MS and the EC

Additional measures

- **Statement on accessibility** of the website

2. The proposal

- **Summary & explanations**

What's the objective?

- Tackle the problem of the internal market on web-accessibility
- by **establishing harmonised requirements for a specific set of websites** and, at the same time,
- **help MS to fulfil their commitments and ensure web-accessibility in EU**

Why set of websites?

- It's a "Silver bullet" – Obligation on a set of websites that will generate a "spill-over" effect to national legislations

3. Impact on municipalities

- Websites falling under scope of the proposal: Websites of the municipalities offering the following services

(1) Income taxes: declaration, notification of assessment

(2) Job search services by labour offices

(3) Social-security benefits: unemployment benefits, child allowances, medical costs (reimbursement or direct settlement), student grants.

(4) Personal documents: passports or driving license

(5) Car registration

(6) Application for building permission

3. Impact on municipalities

(7) Declaration to police, e.g. in case of theft

(8) Public libraries, e.g. catalogues and search tools

(9) Request and delivery of birth or marriage certificates

(10) Enrolment in higher education or university

(11) Notification of change of residence

(12) Health-related services: interactive advice on the availability of services, online services for patients, appointments.

- **In-direct impact on the basis of spill-over effect:** All those municipalities covered by national measures
 - They would remain outside scope of the proposal so no monitoring & reporting obligations

3. Impact on municipalities

- **EP's 1st Reading Resolution**
 - Amendment for extending the scope to cover "**all public sector websites**", including municipalities' websites, and "**websites providing services of general interest**"
 - Municipalities' websites subject to obligations of the proposal (monitoring and reporting)
- **Current status and next steps:**
 - Commission to follow-up EP's resolution
 - Council to resume discussions on the file
 - Upcoming changes: new EP, new Commission, new Presidency



Thank you!