

## e-Inclusion and Accessibility through global standards

---

Many information and communication technologies offer a wide range of accessibility and inclusion benefits to users with specific profiles of abilities and preferences, such as deaf, hard of hearing, blind or partially-sighted users, other disabled users as well as ageing citizens.

Digital technologies have enabled wider participation in work, social and leisure activities, everything from home working, online shopping and social media have improved engagement and provided new opportunities for these users.

Recognising the challenging change in demographics, the ICT industry continues to develop and deliver improved accessible solutions to the market, improving mainstream products and broadening the range of targeted solutions. Competition and voluntary action have led to the rapid provision and improvement of general usability as well as specific e-Accessibility features. Industry's aim is to ensure the market delivers the highest possible level of accessibility while minimising the burden on consumers, public agencies and industry.

Industry is committed to improving standardization and voluntary activities that will allow the deployment of accessible solutions as main selling points in a rapidly growing and very competitive market.

### Our Recommendations

Many of these advances (see examples below) stem from industry-led, self-regulatory initiatives and were not triggered by regulation. DIGITALEUROPE believes that this good basis for future work shows that industry clearly understands the importance of accessibility expectations from policy makers and users.

While the overall population that benefits from accessible ICT is large, each individual group of users with disabilities (e.g. mobility, sensorial or cognitive) may be better served by avoiding market fragmentation and focusing on the use of globally recognized standards. Policy makers can support this through policy interventions and activities such as the incorporation of globally recognized accessibility standards into public procurement practices and the strengthening of research and development.

Any future legislation addressing accessibility should be limited to public procurement and dealt with only at the European level. It should reference globally recognised standards using public procurement as the catalyst so as to enable a single design to be shipped to the largest possible market. This would encourage accessibility features to be included in mainstream products at affordable prices. Regulations adopted at the member state level would lead to fragmentation, increased cost and less choice for consumers. Furthermore, European legislation should aim to outline what accessibility needs should be met without detailing the exact methods for reaching them, using design-orientated standards such as WCAG 2.0.

A globally consistent regulatory approach focusing on standards for public sector procurement and accessible public sector services is essential to encourage the development and deployment of suitable accessibility solutions. It will also help to minimise the cost of accessible solutions without affecting more innovative areas that aren't subject to such universal requirements.

Research and Development funds should be allocated to identifying areas of best practice in existing challenging areas such as cognitive impairment; addressing challenges and identifying new accessibility uses of emergent technologies; and resolving the conflict between accessibility and other design goals (in particular security, privacy and usability).

## Benefits for Citizens

The ICT industry moves very quickly, with new accessible products and features being consulted, tested and brought to the market regularly. This speed allows consumers to benefit from innovative accessibility solutions like no other sector. These, in turn, strongly contribute to reducing social exclusion in the work place, at home as well as on the move.

Today, features such as turn-by-turn walking instructions enable visually impaired citizens to navigate more easily and independently on the street. Similarly, the compatibility of hearing aids with mobile phones opens up new possibilities for certain hearing impaired users while video communications allow using sign language to communicate over mobile phones everywhere.

In the work place, text-to-speech, speech recognition, magnified screens or personalized intelligent assistants are all features that enable access to employment of disabled citizens that might otherwise not make it into the workforce.

At home, access services such as subtitling, audio description, sign language interpretation and all kinds of physical and virtual controls, displays, menus, EPGs, visual and audible feedback on user actions, make television content accessible to disabled users.

In an effort to improve the understanding of accessibility needs and further accessibility solutions, DIGITALEUROPE cooperates with a number of different stakeholders and umbrella organisations. This regular dialogue ensures industry can understand the views and needs of all groups.

## Further information

- DIGITALEUROPE [comments](#) on the draft directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites 2012/0340 (COD) (June 2014)
- DIGITALEUROPE and ITI [messages](#) on e-accessibility in view of the upcoming European Accessibility Act (June 2013)
- DIGITALEUROPE [comments and proposed amendments](#) for draft EP IMCO report on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites (COM(2012)0721 – C7-0394/2012 – 2012/0340(COD)) (June 2013)

## About DIGITALEUROPE

**DIGITALEUROPE** represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies.

**DIGITALEUROPE** ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies. DIGITALEUROPE's members include 59 corporate members and 36 national trade associations from across Europe. Our website provides further information on our recent news and activities: <http://www.digitaleurope.org>

## Membership of DIGITALEUROPE

### Corporate Members (59)

Acer, Alcatel-Lucent, AMD, Apple, BlackBerry, Bose, Brother, CA Technologies, Canon, Cassidian, Cisco, Dell, Epson, Ericsson, Fujitsu, Hitachi, HP, Huawei, IBM, Ingram Micro, Intel, iQor, JVC Kenwood Group, Konica Minolta, Kyocera, Lenovo, Lexmark, LG, Loewe, Microsoft, Mitsubishi Electric, Motorola Mobility, Motorola Solutions, NEC, Nokia, Nokia Solutions and Networks, Nvidia, Océ, Oki, Oracle, Panasonic, Philips, Pioneer, Qualcomm, Ricoh International, Samsung, SAP, Schneider Electric IT Corporation, Sharp, Siemens, Sony, Swatch Group, Technicolor, Texas Instruments, Toshiba, TP Vision, Western Digital, Xerox, ZTE Corporation.

### National Trade Associations (36)

**Belgium:** AGORIA; **Bulgaria:** BAIT; **Cyprus:** CITEA; **Denmark:** DI ITEK, IT-BRANCHEN; **Estonia:** ITL; **Finland:** FFTI; **France:** Force Numérique, SIMAVELEC; **Germany:** BITKOM, ZVEI; **Greece:** SEPE; **Hungary:** IVSZ; **Ireland:** ICT IRELAND; **Italy:** ANITEC; **Lithuania:** INFOBALT; **Netherlands:** Nederland ICT, FIAR; **Poland:** KIGEIT, PIIT; **Portugal:** AGEFE; **Romania:** Anis, APDETIC; **Slovakia:** ITAS; **Slovenia:** GZS; **Spain:** AMETIC; **Sweden:** Foreningen Teknikföretagen, IT&Telekomföretagen; **United Kingdom:** techUK

**Belarus:** INFOPARK; **Norway:** IKT NORGE; **Switzerland:** SWICO; **Turkey:** ECID, TESID, TÜBISAD; **Ukraine:** IT UKRAINE.