



Commission welcomes agreement to make public sector websites and apps more accessible

Brussels, 3 May 2016

Negotiators of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed tonight on the first EU-wide rules to make the websites and mobile apps of public sector bodies more accessible, especially for the blind, the deaf and the hard of hearing.

The internet has become an essential way to access and provide information and services. It is therefore more important than ever to make sure that everyone can perceive and understand websites and mobile apps, and interact with them properly.

Around 80 million people in the EU are affected by a disability. As the EU population ages, the figure is expected to increase to 120 million by 2020. A common approach to ensure web accessibility will contribute to an inclusive digital society and to unlocking the benefits of the [Digital Single Market](#), for all European citizens.

The Directive will cover public sector bodies' websites and mobile apps, from administrations, courts and police departments to public hospitals, universities and libraries. It will make them accessible for all citizens - in particular for the blind, the hard of hearing, the deaf, and those with low vision and with functional disabilities.

Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, welcomed the agreement: *"Internet access should be a reality for everyone. Leaving millions of Europeans behind is not an option. Tonight's agreement is an important step towards a Digital Single Market, which is about removing barriers so that all Europeans can get the best from the digital world."*

Günther H. **Oettinger**, Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, said: *"It is not acceptable that millions of European citizens are left behind in the digital society. The agreement that we have just reached will ensure that everyone has the same opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the internet and mobile apps, to participate in society to a fuller extent and to lead a more independent life."*

The agreed text of the Directive:

- covers **websites** and **mobile apps of public sector bodies** with a limited number of exceptions (e.g. broadcasters, livestreaming).
- refers to the **standards** to make websites and mobile apps more accessible. For example, such standards foresee that there should be a text for images or that websites can be browsed without a mouse which can be difficult to use for some people with disabilities.
- requires **regular monitoring and reporting** of public sector websites and mobile apps by Member States. These reports have to be communicated to the Commission and to be made public. The Directive on web accessibility along with the European Accessibility Act proposed in December 2015 ([press release](#)) which covers a much wider number of products and services, are both part of the efforts of the Commission to help people with disabilities to participate fully in society.

Next steps

Following tonight's political agreement (in 'trilogue', between negotiators of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission), the text will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council. After that it will be published in the [Official Journal](#) and will officially enter into force. Member States will have 21 months to transpose the text into their national legislation.

Background

In December 2012, the European Commission presented a proposal for a Directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites ([press release](#)).

Article 9 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) obliges Member States and the EU to take appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities, on equal basis with others, to inter alia information and communication technologies, including the internet.

The [European Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#) builds on the UN Convention and contains actions in several priority areas, including web accessibility, with the objective "to ensure accessibility to goods and services including public services and assistive devices for people with disabilities."

The Commission is strongly committed to ensuring the accessibility of its websites and of its mobile apps and has adopted high international standards as objectives to attain for them. These are reflected in the [Information Providers Guide](#), the Commission's guidelines for internet publication. The Commission also continues to invest in raising awareness and training web managers on web accessibility.

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