AccessibleEU Final Report

Working together to build a more accessible European Union for persons with disabilities

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Content

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Abstract

This document accounts for the actions undertaken in the first year of the Centre, dedicated to both setting up structures, systems, and networks, as well as delivering initial services. In its first year, the project has seen significant progress despite encountering unforeseen issues that impacted its timeline. This report also outlines the valuable lessons learned obtained from these challenges to steer the project's direction in the upcoming years.

AccessibleEU is a European initiative dedicated to advancing accessibility, with the aim of ensuring equal opportunities and inclusion for all. Over the course of this year, it has successfully undertaken key actions such as, including conducting awareness-raising events and workshops, establishing a community of practice, and defining a set of indicators to monitor accessibility in all Member States among others.

Working together to build a more accessible European Union for persons with disabilities

Executive Summary

AccessibleEU – the EU Centre for Accessibility – is a commitment of the European institutions to promote universal accessibility of products and services with the aim of ensuring equal opportunities and inclusion for all, in line with the EU Directive (EU) 2016/2102.

In accordance with the Tender Specifications, upon signature of the contract Nº VC/2022/0185 (the "**Contract**") by the European Commission on 16th December 2022, the Contracting Authority (the DG Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion of the European Commission (hereinafter "**EC**")), the Beneficiary institution of the Contract (Fundación ONCE (hereinafter "**FONCE**")) the Consortium partners (EASPD, ENAT, UNE and Johannes Kepler Universität Linz), subcontracted organisations (EDF, AGE, DIGITALEUROPE) and the support services contractors (Deloitte, Pomilio Blumm and UNISYS), the current report summarises progress in the implementation of each contract phase.

The initiative has seen significant progress in bringing together policy makers, experts and persons with disabilities, as well as in providing guidance for the implementation in accessibility standards via training, awareness-raising, and technical publications. Most notably, a brand was created that provides a landing point and space for a community of practice, that is growing constantly. Deliberations on EU policy have been linked to national legislation and implementation practice by defining a set of indicators to monitor accessibility in all Member States and providing support to standardisation and technical specifications.

Please note that the figures indicated in the document represent the results obtained up to the date of its submission, in this regard all data referring to publications, events attendees, events held, etc are not final. It is expected that by the end of the natural year, the goals identified in the contract will be achieved.

1. Task 1. Management

Task 1 was organised in four phases: Initiation, Planning, Execution, and Closure and a horizontal support phase during the entire project life cycle for monitoring and control. Currently both the, Initiation and Planning phases, are completed, while the Execution phase is being finalised, and the Closure phase is in progress.

The Initiation phase was undertaken by the EC, as the programme scope, needs, opportunities and programme objectives and constraints were identified in the tender specifications. The planning phase started with the kick-off meeting and with first planning document version with the Inception Report, including validation of the proposed timeline, scope, and methodology.

The Execution phase included the following tasks: FONCE Undertook the activities in line with the deliverables required in the tender, and fostered the relations with the experts and stakeholders, according to the quality expectations and timeline agreed. The implementation of quality control measures for all deliverables are constantly being monitored for performance. Finally, the closure phase will finish with the approval of the final report by the European Commission.

During this first year, **41 contracts** have been signed, including contracts with Romanian government, San Marino and United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and ESSL Foundation. Regarding the **monitoring and controlling** of the project the **101 meetings** have been conducted, including meetings with the EC, weekly Consortium meetings, meetings with National Experts and meetings with the Advisory Board of the project.

The methodology for **project monitoring is PM2**, a European Commission methodology for project management. Three training sessions have been conducted throughout the year with members of the Consortium and National Experts to raise the importance of identifying and monitoring risks, issues, lessons learned, and decisions taken.

2. Task 2. Communication

This task consisted in designing the Communication plan for the first year of the project, designing the communication actions on accessible formats to be taken for the promotion of the products of the project.

In this sense, a website has been created (www.accessibleeucentre.eu) to showcase the project, upload news, include event schedules for visitors to sign up, and a repository of information with library references and best practices from all member states is being developed. In addition to the website, communications have been conducted through the official social media channels of the project @EU_Social, including four Twitter posts per month and two Facebook posts per month.

Four newsletters have been sent so far using the EC tool for newsletter creation. In these, information has been shared about news, events, accessibility materials, among other things.

3. Task 3. Online library on accessibility knowledge

The main objective of this task was to create a library content and good practice cases of accessibility solutions. In this sense, each Member State was asked to submit 5 good practices and 3 library references. The documents were reviewed by experts to ensure high-quality content, publishing on the website those considered as most relevant.

In total, this year, we have collected 195 good practices and 173 library references, surpassing the minimum agreed upon with the European Commission, which was 135 good practices and 60 library references. At the moment, there are 153 good practices and 134 library references uploaded to the website for reference, surpassing the objectives set for this year. References and practice examples are tagged and can be filtered by keyword, subject, country, language, and publication type and year.

4. Task 4. Awareness-raising

The objective of this task was to raise awareness in accessibility matters in Europe. In this regard, a report has been prepared based on the results of a needs questionnaire sent to key stakeholders to assess the status of accessibility in the member countries. As a result of this survey, it has been determined that most (84%) of the 138 respondents are familiar with European legislation on accessibility, although there are still some areas that need improvement, such as promotion the existence of EU regulation in transport.

As another awareness-raising activity, the proposal included the organisation of at least one awareness-raising session per country, depending on their group, and one session at European level. In this sense, 34 awareness raising events have been celebrated, 2 at European level and 32 at national level. The total collected from the events' final reports already received, show that over 5.600 people were in attendance.

5. Task 5. Facilitation of a community of practice

The community of practice aims to engage professionals in different fields responsible for implementing accessibility measures. In this sense, the community of practice has been established through a **LinkedIn group**. The goal for the first year was to achieve 500 members in this community and this year, over **1.575 members** have been reached. Since its creation, **89 posts** have been published, and it is estimated to have reached a total of **125,572 views**. To incorporate new members into the community of practice, a dissemination effort has been undertaken at events, on the website, and through other communication channels.

Furthermore, in order to enlarge the community, a series of networking sessions have been planned, both physical and online. This year a total of **25 events** have been held, two of them at European Level. The data collected from the events' final reports already received show that over 4.800 people were in attendance.

6. Task 6. Guidance and support materials

To support the implementation of accessibility in spaces, products, and services, facilitating the access and the knowledge on legislation and standards it was proposed to elaborate a guide per year. The topic of this year's guide was **"Getting to know European Legislation on accessibility and its implementation to EU countries"**.

Regarding the contributions made from the expert team, in order to expand the knowledge of stakeholders in matters related to accessibility, 5 documents have been prepared on the area of expertise of each expert of the core team: Built environment, Transport, Information and communication technologies, EU policies of accessibility, and Standardisation.

7. Task 7. Bench-learning events, workshop, training, and mutual learning

Following the line of the events mentioned, in this task workshops are proposed in each country to carry out training actions. A total of 31 workshops have been held, three of them at European Level. In total, more than 4.400 people have attended the events from which the final report has been received.

One of the workshops has involved a 25-hour course on "Designing accessible technologies" which was open from November to December. The course has had a participation of 521 people.

8. Task 8. Support monitoring, compliance, and surveillance of accessibility

The main objective of this task is to monitor action and progress of member states to implement accessibility legislation and standards.

A document has been developed establishing a general methodology to use a set of indicators. These indicators are currently based on EU accessibility legislation and standards, primarily focusing on qualitative aspects due to variations in awareness, knowledge, and implementation across the EU. The indicators are also categorised into six areas: Mainstream Accessibility, Built Environment, Transport, ICT, Public Policies, and Data Availability.

National Experts were asked to provide feedback on the indicators. The collection of this information is just one step. The progressive inclusion of indicators will continue to be planned year after year, coinciding with the increasing implementation of accessibility-related initiatives among countries of the European Union.

9. Task 9. Studies

The objective of this task was to develop a study per year. For this year, the theme chosen is **"how multimodality in customer service enhances accessibility"**. The process followed has been carrying out a desk study, followed by a survey, interviews and workshop about Multimodality. After integrating and analysing all the information and data gathered, the final study was delivered.

10. Task 10. Support European standardisation and technical specifications of the EAA

Throughout this year, AccessibleEU has supported the European standardisation activities regarding the implementation of Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services (European Accessibility Act, EAA) and Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the

Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies (Web Accessibility Directive, WAD) in order to achieve the objective of supporting organisations of people with disabilities.

To meet this goal, a document on [Accessibility Standards at European Level](#) has been published and several activities have been carried out, including participation in the standardisation projects at European level and participation on training and awareness raising events.

Besides this, AccessibleEU is involved in 3 European level working groups. An agreement has been reached between Fundación ONCE and UNE to make available the 3 accessibility standards. In addition, as mentioned in task 6, a specific guide on standardisation topics has been created.

Finally, in order to assess the participation of OPD in standardisation regarding accessibility, and to assess the accessibility of the standardisation system, from 2023-11-14 to 2023-12-01 a survey to the National Standardisation Bodies of the EU countries was performed. The results are currently being analysed.