



PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE ON THE ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC SECTOR BODIES' WEBSITES

EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM, AGE PLATFORM EUROPE AND ANEC URGE THE COUNCIL TO SUPPORT THE PARLIAMENT'S POSITION ON WEB ACCESSIBILITY

26 February 2014

Today Members of the European Parliament have shown their strong commitment to a more inclusive Internet for all. The Parliament's report on the proposal for a Directive on the Accessibility of Public Sector Bodies' Websites has introduced extremely valuable changes to the Commission proposal. These will benefit the majority of citizens across the EU and will boost the web-developing European marketplace, giving a perfect example of how a piece of legislation can contribute to inclusive growth in the digital field.

Unfortunately, the Council is lagging behind and has not started the negotiations on this important piece of legislation yet. For this reason, the undersigned organizations call on all Member States, and especially the Greek Presidency, to prioritize this dossier and endorse the Parliament's position.

Currently, less than one-third of public websites are accessible, while over 60 % of the European population accesses the Internet every day. Many citizens, especially persons with disabilities and older people, are excluded from taking full advantage of the Internet since the websites are not properly designed for them. The European Parliament has understood that it is certainly feasible to change this situation by following the worldwide acknowledged accessibility guidelines which are already incorporated in a European Standard (EN 301 549 from Mandate M/376). Developing websites in compliance with the accessibility requirements will enable everyone living in the EU to access all the information and functionalities available online regardless of their age or disability. This is even more fundamental for those websites belonging to the public sector and providing essential services to the public.

The Parliament's vote today has widened the scope of the Directive to cover all public websites as well as those services of general interest provided online and has proposed the necessary institutional mechanisms to enforce this legislation with the main stakeholders involved in the process. We are thankful for this strong support and we want to remind both the Council and the Commission that it is time to take the lead on inclusive policies like this and fulfill previous political commitments regarding web accessibility such as the the 2006 Ministerial Declaration of Riga in which the European countries committed to ensure accessibility of all public websites by 2010; the Digital Agenda for Europe which stated that web accessibility would be delivered by 2015, the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the EU in 2011, in which accessibility is one of the general obligations.

80 million Europeans with disabilities, 150 million aged over 50, and many citizens without high ICT skills would benefit from this legislation. Furthermore, the market of web-developers, which employs more than 1 million people, will be able to work across the EU, and governments will not need to establish costly alternative means to provide information or services because of the inaccessibility of their websites.

Once again, the undersigned organizations urge the Council and the Commission to push for this legislation and start the negotiations as soon as possible. Those millions of citizens have waited long enough.



The **European Disability Forum** (EDF) is the European umbrella organisation representing the interests of 80 million persons with disabilities in more than 30 countries in Europe. The mission of EDF is to ensure disabled people full access to fundamental and human rights through their active involvement in policy development and implementation in Europe. EDF is a member of the International Disability Alliance and works closely with the European institutions, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

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AGE Platform Europe is a European network of around 167 organisations of and for people aged 50+ which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million senior citizens in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most.

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Raising standards for consumers

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and conformity assessment, as well as related legislation and public policies. ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and is open to the representation of national consumer organisations in 33 countries. ANEC is funded by the European Union and EFTA, with national consumer organisations contributing in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels. Avenue de Tervuren 32, box 27, B-1040 Brussels (Belgium). Tel.: +32 2 743 24 70 / Fax.: +32 2 706 54 30. Email: anec@anec.eu. EC Register of Interest Representatives: Identification number 507800799-30. Website: www.anec.eu

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