To set up a digital accessibility observatory as a forum to take stock of market and technological developments, monitor progress in digital accessibility and provide opportunities for exchange of best practices

To help harmonise approaches across Member States, to ensure a cost-efficient provision of accessible information and services and to enable the participation of all relevant communities in the Digital Single Market, it is important to support the relevant stakeholder communities (such as Member States, public administrations, service providers, academia and associations representing people with disabilities). This can be done by raising awareness of the current state-of-the-art as regards digital accessibility solutions and to offer opportunities to make use of existing know-how and best practices.

Proposals under this action should set up a 'digital accessibility observatory' with the aim to:

1. take stock of market and technological developments in the area of solutions for digital accessibility. This in order to identify gaps as well as available and affordable solutions and services, for fulfilling the accessibility requirements of the Web Accessibility Directive. People with disabilities may be involved in the identification of these gaps, issues and barriers and in the testing of possible solutions;

2. monitor progress of market development in digital accessibility and the deployment of cost efficient solutions across the EU;
3. create, maintain and update an open and dynamic repository of all the project’s findings, such as a digital accessibility platform;

4. provide opportunities for exchange of best practices among Member States and other stakeholders;

5. promote awareness raising, and capacity building.

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU of around 1.5M€ would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Web technologies and mobile apps have become an essential means to delivering and accessing information and services. With 1 in 4 people in the EU aged 16 or over suffering from a long-term disability and an ageing population, web accessibility has become crucial. Web accessibility means that everyone, including persons with disabilities, will be able to better perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the Internet. Web accessibility thus enables the participation of millions of Europeans that may otherwise be at risk of exclusion from the digital society.

The Web Accessibility Directive establishes accessibility requirements for the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies, which public sector bodies need to start to apply as from the 23 September 2019. The resulting public offer of inclusive digital services and accessible information should give a positive impetus to the private sector to follow suit.

Recent studies show that there is a significant divergence in the practical implementation of accessibility solutions and know-how across Member States. This may give rise to inefficiencies if not addressed with supportive actions.

The action will support the implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive. It will support both public administrations as well as other relevant actors, committed to providing accessible information and services, in identifying the most appropriate accessibility solutions. In the long term, it could result in scalable and more affordable solutions. Overall, the actions will contribute to the widespread recognition of the
benefits of accessible digital services and information in an increasingly digital society and economy.

**Last update:** 14 April 2022


European Union, 2024