Periodic Reporting for period 1 - WAI-CooP (Web Accessibility Initiative – Communities of Practice)

Berichtszeitraum: 2021-01-01 bis 2022-06-30

Zusammenfassung vom Kontext und den Gesamtzielen des Projekts

The “adoption of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) guidelines for public websites” has been a priority for the European Commission (EC) since the late 1990s, and first formally communicated as...
such in the eEurope 2002 Action Plan published in 2001. Many communications, resolutions, and actions from the European Council, Parliament, and Commission followed during these past two decades, leading to many efforts to promote digital accessibility across Europe. Most recently, these efforts included the following EU legislation:


In this context, the European Standard EN 301 549 is a critical resource. The first version “Accessibility requirements suitable for public procurement of ICT products and services in Europe” was published in 2014, and includes the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 for “Web”, “Non-web documents”, and “Software”. A later version “Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services” was published in 2018, and references WCAG 2.1. This approach aligns with the 2017 revised technical standards for Section 508 of the United States (US) Rehabilitation Act, which also references W3C’s WCAG2ICT technical note, which in turn maps applicability of WCAG to software and to web and mobile apps.

Common accessibility policies and a single, internationally harmonised, technical standard represents a major achievement for millions of people with disabilities in Europe and beyond. It helps strengthen the internal market for accessibility, enables cross-border development of technical solutions, capacities and skills, and employment opportunities. It also represents European leadership in cross-border cooperation, and provides exemplary models for neighbouring countries and potentially for other regions of the world.

Yet, despite these efforts, studies continued to show a lag in accessibility implementation due to a variety of reasons. More importantly, the studies continued to show significant discrepancies in implementations across different EU Member States, public sector bodies, and private entities. That is, despite the harmonisation of policies and standards on a pan-European level, there remains de-facto fragmentation in their application on a practical level.

WAI-CooP was specifically designed to address root causes of this fragmentation, and thereby to accelerate consistent implementation of accessibility across Europe and beyond. It follows a collaborative approach designed to help stakeholders involved in the ecosystem of accessibility implementation exchange best practices, and make efficient use of existing technical solutions, as well as to provide authoritative interpretations of the international accessibility standards underlying the EU Web Accessibility Directive.
Some of the main accomplishments reported:

- **List of Accessibility Courses**: The Course List has been approved for publication and the Course Submission Form is online since June 9. More than 30 submissions were received by end July 2022. These have been carefully checked with the organizations requesting that their courses are posted.

- **List of Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools**: In close coordination with the W3C WAI Education and Outreach Working Group the team worked on a comprehensive requirements analysis based on interviews with developers, designers, testers, monitoring bodies, government officials and users. This has included development of use cases and user scenarios. The revision includes the new WAI website components infrastructure, frameworks, and styles, along with a new submission form. The list will be re-populated with revised search criteria and filters.

- **List of Policies and Practices Internationally**: Period 1 results constitute more than 25 countries and more than 30 policies. The current results include links to pages with localized accessibility statement generators or templates, information for local public sector bodies and other implementation support pages, documents or organisations in a specific country or region.

- **Online Research Symposium**: after extensive research through 2232 scientific publications and 23 conference programs on accessibility, discussions with the chairs of the W3C Accessible Platform Architecture Working Group and its Research Questions Task Force, a first symposium (Nov 2021) was held as a broader exploration of current research challenges and opportunities in digital accessibility.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**: an initial list of FAQs was developed, validated, and iteratively refined within the project. Additional feedback was sought from the Web Accessibility Directive Expert Group and other selected groups (e.g. EDF’s ICT expert group) during the soft-launch period. The initial set of FAQs was reviewed and enriched with additional content and new questions have also been added to the FAQs on the website.

- **Open Meetings**: 3 were held to: introduce the project to relevant stakeholders in the international community (Jun 2021); support exchange of the Web Accessibility Directive while promoting contributions to the EC consultation (Sep 2021); and monitoring of the Web Accessibility Directive (Apr 2022).

- **Standards Harmonisation**: multiple efforts to address comments from Europe and elsewhere in the development of WCAG 2.2 and to avoid development of unrelated guidance in national organisations that would make it more difficult for organizations to implement and to test for conformance to conflicting sets of guidance.
The WAI-CooP project is designed to 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.

WAI-CooP is also designed with considerations for diverse contexts and situations in individual communities, organisations, and people in Europe and internationally. It aims to empower these diverse communities with vetted, high-quality, and authoritative resources that are aligned with the international standards for digital accessibility, thereby impacting implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive from the inside of the accessibility ecosystems of the individual Member States. Specifically, WAI-CooP will have sustained impact on the training and certification opportunities for different audiences involved throughout implementation, and on suppliers of digital products and services including for evaluation and authoring tools, as well as for policy and decision makers at the local, national, regional, and European levels.

These combined expanded and updated resources provide a common framework and platform for building accessible and innovative products and services that advance the current state-of-the-art, and are essential to supporting implementation of the European Directive and to help make the web accessible to people with disabilities.

Verwandte Dokumente

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