



Accessible Information Provision
for Lifelong Learning

Making the Agency accessible: efforts to
implement accessibility within all areas of the
organisations work



Workshop Overview

- Background information
- Improving the Agency's ability to be accessible:
 - Web and web tools
 - Electronic files
 - Printed materials
 - Conferences and meetings
- Discussion Groups



Why is accessibility relevant for us?

- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006) is a guiding principle of Agency work:
 - the obligation to ‘provide accessible information to persons with disabilities’ (Art.4)
 - the need for ‘the design, development, production and distribution of accessible ICT’ (Art.9)
 - the right to education ‘without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity’ for persons with disabilities (Art.24).



Implications for the Agency

The Agency:

- .Sees itself as an Information Provider for Lifelong Learning;
- .Believes accessibility goes beyond web accessibility;
- .Is constantly trying to improve accessibility in all areas of the organisation's work.



Web accessibility: ILRT

- ILRT is an IT Services Research and Design organisation part of the University of Bristol, UK
- Contains advisory services, a web development team and semantic web researchers.
- Over 15 years of web development experience
- Promotes a *User-Centred Design* methodology
- ILRT commissioned to produce Agency's website in 2007



European Agency website

- Developed using Plone - an advanced Content Management System
- Alternative interaction mechanisms (e.g. country information)
- Provides Search & Sitemap alternatives to locating content
- Identifies use of mixed language content
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA compliant



Additional Tools

InfoDesk

- Document sharing site
- Fully usable without Javascript

Higher Education Accessibility Guide (HEAG)

- Database of disability support in higher education across Europe
- Results appear on the [main agency website](#)



Additional tools (cont.)

Bristol Online Surveys (BOS)

- Used by over 300 organisations
- Offers phone-based survey submission service
- Many respondents successfully use BOS with assistive technologies



Accessibility Issues (provider's perspective)

- Accessibility costs money
- Influences every phase of project lifecycle
- Design matters
- Challenging keeping up to date with technologies, specifications and guidelines
- British Standard 8878 Web Accessibility Code of Practice



Electronic Files

- The Agency produces publications in 21 languages available on website free to download
- Efforts to improve accessibility of Agency files include providing graphic files in two versions: graphic and text only (<http://www.european-agency.org/news/euronews/euronews-20>)
- In order to improve accessibility the Agency:
 - created a Style Guide which is continuously updated
 - set up an Editorial Working Group



Specific requirements for electronic files

- Specific accessibility requirements must be fulfilled when creating files in Word:
 - document structure / using styles; adding alternative text or description to graphic elements, graphs, charts; readability of tables, etc.
- How to make PDFs accessible:
 - tagging, setting the language, alt text for graphics, accessibility check.
- Efforts to make not only publications accessible, but also all files intended for public usage by training Agency Staff.



Electronic files: Challenges

- The issue of translating alternative text for graphic elements into all Agency languages
- Difference in software used by staff creates difficulties when training
- Inability to add alt text in Word for MAC (2008)
- The issue of design elements, which may be more attractive but less accessible (tables, graphs, charts, pictures, colour background)
- To what extent should graphic files be accessible if we provide a text only file as well?



Printed Materials

- At the moment the Agency does not focus heavily on accessibility of printed materials. The printed materials generally use graphic elements to support content and use the corporate design.
- Efforts to ensure access to the information:
 - accessible alternative versions available online,
 - the font is always sans serif (Arial or Tahoma) and as much as possible size 12,
 - no overlapping images,
 - no strong background design to distract from the text.



Conferences and meetings

- Preparing conferences to be as accessible as possible – what do we look out for?
 - A hotel with fully accessible rooms,
 - Short travel time from airport to hotel,
 - Conference facilities on one level,
 - Provision of equipment such as microphones, induction loops and etc. by hotel,
 - Dining area on 1 level and permitting of guide dogs,
 - Using airlines that have the necessary assistance available.



Group Discussions



Questions to the Group

- 1) What are the steps/phases towards accessible information provision you have experienced in your organisation?
- 2) What solutions do you have within your organisation for:
 - Attractiveness versus Accessibility for web, electronic files and printed materials;
 - providing accessible printed materials?
- 3) From your experience, which organisational processes does providing accessible information impact on? Are there areas we did not cover?



What are the steps/phases towards accessible information provision you have experienced in your organisation?

- Netherlands: 125 guidelines provided by the government which all governmental institution
- UK Standard: does it comply with the Dutch guidelines? Variation within National Guidelines within Europe?
- Lack of awareness, for example in Schools across Scotland or the use of optical headers or templates
- Lack of awareness also in Latvia and by teachers
- Guideline for putting information on the website aimed at state institutions (legally binding)



What solutions do you have within your organisation for:
Attractiveness versus Accessibility for web, electronic
files and printed materials;
providing accessible printed materials?

- Accessibility versus Attractiveness it is an issue difficult to see through with teachers. Attractiveness often wins.
- Also a discussion regarding procurement –
- Dependent on purpose: information should be accessible, public to gain members – more attractiveness
- A vs A is an old myth
- One should be able to make a source both



What solutions do you have within your organisation for:
Attractiveness versus Accessibility for web, electronic
files and printed materials;
providing accessible printed materials?

- Video: flash
- PDF solutions: text only and graphic version;
pdf but many ask for word file
- PDF for security reason
- ODF?



From your experience, which organisational processes does providing accessible information impact on? Are there areas we did not cover?

- Admissions policy, employment
- Environment – potentially everything
- If it is an attitude change you begin to think of all aspects or processes



Conclusion

- i-access is also a learning experience for the Agency
- Workshop, conference and project outcomes will be used to further develop our ambition to provide accessible information for lifelong learning

