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