AccessibleEU: Building Community, Connecting Stakeholders

Networking Event

Fundacion ONCE, Madrid. 7th November 2023

Concept Note

1. Context and Background

The European Commission's AccessibleEU Resource Centre, which is part of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, strives to enhance accessibility coherence through strategic tools including training, awareness, and sharing best practices. This effort includes promoting accessibility standards and engaging public, private, and civil society DPOs, to foster a united EU approach.

AccessibleEU adopts a Design for All approach, boosting accessibility for greater inclusivity, social integration, and improved quality of life for European citizens throughout their lives. As a European one-stop shop, AccessibleEU provides stakeholders with cutting-edge expertise, benefiting policymakers, legislators, accessibility advocates, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

By consolidating dispersed knowledge, AccessibleEU helps translate EU legislation into Member States' contexts, nurturing a trans-European community of accessibility professionals through gradual collaboration, catering to unique national needs.

Building a Community of Practice, connecting the different stakeholders is a priority already included in the European Accessibility Act (EAA), which foresees national coordination structures as an implementation mechanism.

AccessibleEU, relying on the in-depth knowledge of its network of National Experts, aims to strengthen contacts and connections between key players and main entities, both public, private, and non-profit, to foster common interests.

It is also imperative to assist all parties to ensure that the dedication of resources responds adequately to the new accessibility regulations and to offer better services and products to the growing customer demand. In this regard, networking events on a European scale are crucial to

connect stakeholders in accessibility in a changing context that increasingly demands effective solutions.

2. Objectives of the Networking Event

- To weave a network that ensures the connection between all parties involved in accessibility across all sectors, and fosters the creation of public-private alliances for the strategic development of actions that promote accessibility in environments, products, and services.
- To facilitate a structured dialogue between leaders of industry sectors, public administrations and civil society representatives as well as other professionals and stakeholders involved in accessibility to identify specific capacity-building and support needs, bringing together innovative approaches.
- To include all accessibility professionals at institutional and business levels and promote their participation to foster knowledge, skills and competences within the entire community, sharing successful experiences and methodologies for addressing the challenges faced.
- To encourage dialogue the creation of incentives for the accelerated implementation of accessibility and innovation solutions in all EU countries in a scaled and weighted manner, fostering equitable engagement and promoting partnerships between stakeholders.
- To identify and promote commitment to good practices, supporting their adoption and development over time as an enrichment strategy for all parties, and their dissemination and replicability in all countries.

3. Target Audience

- Policymakers and public officials in charge of the development and execution of strategies that facilitate the connection between all parties involved in the development of actions focused on the achievement of accessibility and integration of all citizens.
- Organizations linked to the world of industry, communications technology companies, organizations from the world of economics and finance, and the broad spectrum of construction; Associations and organizations dedicated to assistance and public service at the European level.
- Representatives of members of civil society, especially those representing people with disabilities, the senior, and European consumers as a whole; Persons with disabilities, seniors, and European consumers on a personal basis.
- Professional associations, societies, and organizations representing professionals in charge of developing accessibility structures, both digital and physical accessibility, throughout Europe and those especially linked to design, engineering, architecture, technology, IT, and telecommunications; Universities and trainers of future accessibility

professionals in Europe; Specialists in all the above fields who wish to integrate the networks to be presented; Developers of IT solutions, technical experts in accessibility infrastructures and services.

- All organizations and groups providing services to people with disabilities and foundations linked to research and innovation in providing services and products, public and private entities that provide assistance and support to dependent users.

4. Benefits and take aways

- Networking and building alliances among groups, associations, specialists, service providers, users, policymakers, and members of civil society to establish links between all parties with common interests.
- To be part of AccessibleEU's extensive community of practice at a crucial moment in the growth of the Center, being able to contribute to the development of the Center and the entities and people involved in the actions carried out.
- To learn from good practices and solutions in establishing partnerships to achieve the integration and development of accessible activities, products, and services throughout Europe.
- To take advantage of an international platform to disseminate the results of initiatives that can help the growth of peers and in all member states.

5. Networking event format and duration

The networking event will last six hours and be held in a hybrid format. The event is structured in six specific panels and a status point on the trajectory of AccessibleEU so far.

 It will start with the Opening Session, followed by a review of the achievements of the first year of the European Accessibility Resource Centre. The panels will then begin, starting with the Industry Panel, which will end before the coffee break, followed by the Public Administrations Panel, followed by the Civil Society Panel, which will precede the lunch break.

After lunch, it is time for the Universities and Professional Associations Panel, followed by the last of the panels, the Accessibility Networks Panel. The event will conclude with Closing Remarks by the Director of the European Accessibility Resource Centre.

6. Draft Programme

9.00 – 9.30 Registration

9.30 – 10. 00 Opening Session

10.00 – 10.30 Achievements in the First Year of AccessibleEU

10.30 – 11.30 Industry

Experts from the technology industry, the banking, the construction industry, the service provision industry, and the training industry will answer the critical questions of the industry sector. How do we structure the different organizations to reach the spectrum of the national organizations' members in the heterogeneous European countries? How do we develop a common strategy to incorporate accessibility in all the member organizations they represent? How to achieve maximum involvement in the actions that allow constant growth, in the conquest of the integration of accessibility through training and the establishment of alliances.

12.00 – 13.00 Public Administrations

The panelists will shed light on the interactions of administrations with all stakeholders, primarily entities representing people with disabilities, senior representatives, legislators, and providers of products and services in the disability sector. They will also present the best practices they consider most relevant in promoting the entities they are part of, municipalities, government departments, and clusters of resource centers and service providers.

13.00 – 14.00 Civil Society

Representatives of the most prominent organizations that give voice to civil society will present their outstanding and committed work in interactions with all stakeholders, fostering the relationship of their members with suppliers of products and services and with the rest of the members of civil society with whom they interact in multiple ways and a wide variety of initiatives.

14.00 – Lunch

15.30 – 16.30 – Education and Professional Associations

Specialists from universities and professional associations, publishers and content disseminators will explain how they act from their institutions to include accessibility professionals from all institutional and business levels in developing their work. They will discuss how they promote engagement to enhance community learning, facilitating the exchange of best practices and successful methodologies to address daily challenges.

16.30 – 17.30 – Accessibility Networks

Europe's most qualified experts will present how to build a solid network to ensure the connection between all stakeholders in the accessibility sector and promote the creation of associations and groups to strategically develop actions to strengthen public-private collaboration networks that advance accessibility in environments, products, and services.

17.30 – Closing remarks