Comprehensive eAccessibility Policy

Digital exclusion is widespread. In many countries accessible websites, digital content, kiosks, and emergency services are not available. One of the biggest challenges the Arab world faced was that Arabic did not feature in assistive technology. Qatar’s eAccessibility Policy is well on the way to reducing a number of the most severe barriers.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

General Usability
The eAccessibility policy outlines an end-to-end approach which considers all elements of an ecosystem required to deliver accessible technology for people with a disability.

Coherent approach
The policy addresses ICT within one scoping document and establishes a broad mandate for a single body to oversee eAccessibility, to offer collaboration and partnership with public, private and not-for-profit sectors to see access technologies fully implemented within Qatar.

Cross-cutting
Mada is mandated to raise the level of accessibility across all digital platforms and to make digital content more accessible to all.

FACTS & FIGURES
- 20 assistive technology solutions introduced in Arabic.
- 1,100 people with a disability supported, 950 professionals trained.
- 250 people used eLearning portal.
- Website accessibility support provided to over 60 sites.
- Telecoms providers offer 50% discount on tariffs.

IN BRIEF
Qatar’s National eAccessibility Policy addresses key issues surrounding information and communication technologies. It lays the foundations for an accessible ICT ecosystem that enables people with disabilities to take full advantage of ICTs. Its goals are to reduce the following barriers:

- Inaccessible websites and content
- Inaccessible telecommunications services and supporting technologies
- Inaccessible public access terminals/kiosks and ATMs
- Limited usage and access to assistive technologies
- Lack of accessible digital content, especially in Arabic.

NATIONAL E-ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Year of existence: 2011
Country/region of origin: Qatar
Beneficiaries targeted: Persons with disabilities
Responsible body: Ministry of Information and Communications Technology
Stakeholders: Public and private sector (ICT departments and industry, DPOs)

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The policy has been of interest to other Gulf States and its replication in other countries is achieved via the establishment of a Gulf region assistive technology network, which draws upon services, researchers and policy makers across the region to discuss progress and to share resources. Mada continues to play an active role in contributing to global access efforts.

IMPLEMENATION

In general, ictQATAR is charged with ensuring implementation and closely monitoring the progress of the policy. It maintains relationships with all parties responsible for implementing the policy’s provisions. ictQATAR can also review, update and/or widen the policy’s scope. As a minimum, the policy review takes place every five years. The key innovation within this policy is to address information and communications technology within a single scoping document and by establishing a wide mandate for a single body to oversee eAccessibility (Mada), so that issues are addressed in a coherent and consistent manner. Mada operates with a budget of 23 million QAR per year.

SOURCES
Nominated by: Axel LEBLOIS, The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict), USA


«Qatar’s comprehensive eAccessibility Policy is a first but highly significant step on the road to promoting a digital world that is accessible for Arabic-speaking people with disabilities.»
(David Banes, Mada Center, Qatar)