The Web Accessibility Directive of the European Union

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Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies

• The Directive was proposed by the European Commission in December 2012 and was adopted by the European Parliament and by the Council in October 2016.

• It entered into force in December 2016.
The aim of the Directive

- To increase digital inclusion by making public sector websites and mobile applications more accessible (perceivable, operable, understandable and robust).

- To reduce the fragmentation of the digital accessibility market by harmonising standards within the EU and promoting best practices among providers of accessibility-related products and services.
Innovative aspects

• Measures to boost the accessibility market by reducing barriers in the Digital Single Market, and thereby making web accessibility more affordable

• Harmonising accessibility standards on a European level both for websites and mobile applications

• Information and services provided on websites and in mobile applications of public sector bodies more accessible
Expected Impact

- EU Member States must bring into force the laws, regulations, and administrative provisions of the directive by September 2018

- Member States have to ensure that

  all websites of public sector bodies are accessible by September 2020, and

  all mobile applications of public sector bodies are accessible by June 2021.
Details

- The directive sets European Standard EN 301 549 as a **minimum standard** for web accessibility (equivalent to WCAG 2.0 Level AA)

- Where it is not possible or would create a **disproportionate burden** to make the content accessible, the public sector body must explain why and provide accessible alternatives.

- Member States must appoint a body responsible for an adequate and effective **enforcement**
Assurances

- Member States must periodically monitor compliance, using a sample, give feedback to public sector bodies on any deficiencies found, and regularly report to the European Commission.

- Public sector bodies must provide an accessibility statement that needs to be regularly updated.

- A feedback mechanism makes possible to report accessibility failures and to request information excluded from the Directive's application.
Additional measures, resources

• Member States shall promote and facilitate training programmes, and take the necessary measures to raise awareness.

• Cooperation between Member States and with relevant stakeholders is encouraged in order to exchange best practices.

• Member States provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the Directive.
Next steps

• Member States must transpose the Directive in their **national laws** by September 2018

• The European Commission will adopt **implementing acts** by the end of 2018, regarding the accessibility requirements for mobile applications, the accessibility statement, monitoring and reporting, in order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of the Directive.