

# Web-Accessibility

IMCO meeting 21.03.2013



# What is Web Accessibility (WA)

- Making web content accessible to all users, including:
  - Older people whose abilities are debilitated due to aging
  - Persons in a geographical location with only low-broadband connections
  - People using a mobile device to connect
  - Mobile internet users in noisy or glaring environments
  - People with disabilities
- Accessible websites have higher degree of usability for users



step is an over gift is my so  
aste of time--d this one's f  
st of energy, id you can te  
it a... Thereybody that  
id other fine s is your song  
ough's come may be quite  
m Ben My mple, but nov



# Web-Accessibility in the European Union

- Many efforts taken for the last 12 years...
  - European level: Riga Ministerial Declaration 2006, Council Conclusions market 2009, etc.
  - National level: 23 MS committed to Web Accessibility - Legislative and other specific measures
  - International level: United Nations Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNRPD): signed by all MS, ratified by most
  - 2002: European Parliament resolution on eEurope 2002, Accessibility of Public Websites and their Content
  - 2006: European Parliament resolution on a European information society for growth and employment
  - 2010: European Parliament resolution of 5 May 2010 on a new Digital Agenda for Europe: 2015.eu

# Web-Accessibility in the European Union

- ... current situation:
  - **Low accessibility of public sector websites throughout EU:** less than 40% of the public sector websites despite the national, EU and international commitments
  - **Wide variety of diverging and uncoordinated efforts at EU level :** leading to varying national specifications
  - **Unclear** to procurers what to procure for and how to check that what they got is correct
  - **web accessibility companies** operating mostly in one country



# The European Market of Web-Accessibility

- The web-accessibility market
  - 761.600 public sector websites
  - 19.040.000 private sector websites
  - market potential: € 2,0 billion, realised so far: <10%
- The website developing market:
  - 175.000 enterprises
  - 842.000 employees
  - Estimated turn-over € 144 billion

# Problem and drivers

## Problem:

- Non-functioning of the internal market for provision of web-accessibility;

## Drivers:

- Fragmentation due to different national web accessibility (WA) specs
- Uncertainty for the procurers / owners

# Consequences of the problem:

## **For web-developers:**

- Calls for tender show wide variation of technical provisions (SMEs)
- Large enterprises: barriers such as authoring tools
- Limited interoperability of assistive technologies

## **For citizens:**

- Low accessibility of public sector websites
- Social exclusion

## **For Member States – Owners of websites:**

- Costs for alternative service provision and higher cost/website
- Criticism on social and public responsibility
- Barrier to accessible and inclusive cross-border eGovernment

# Why this solution?

- Why EU action?
  - To ensure the approximation of the different WA laws, regulations and provisions through a legally binding measure
  - To help Member States to comply with their own commitments
- Why legally binding action?
  - To ensure real action in the field and in light of ineffectiveness of softer approach taken so far
- Why a Directive?
  - Provide flexibility for MS to adapt measure to national context
  - Respect proportionality





# Opportunities created by Web-Accessibility for citizens and industry

- For industry:
  - Easier and cheaper to operate EU-wide.
  - Better growth conditions for SME's (clear and consistent use of technical criteria).
  - For private sector: spillovers (cf. Employers Alliance, Lloyds Bank)
- For citizens:
  - Improved access to essential 'basic public services'
  - New jobs: development, maintenance monitoring WA.
- For public administrations
  - Efficiency/effectiveness, reduced need for helpdesk support (20% );
  - Fulfil social responsibility and commitments

# Costs and benefits analysis

- Gains outweigh compliance costs with full compliance:
  - Total cost for (max 6) MS without measures: an average of € 62 million for 100% compliance (plus around € 41 million a year for redevelopment, maintenance and monitoring).
  - for MS with WA measures: costs related to migration of legacy systems. Minimal costs or even reduction to new or revamped websites.
- Benefits for governments:
  - for all EU MS benefits would outweigh the costs, even if not all targeted citizens are being reached.
  - benefits can reach €100s of millions

# Conclusion

## The Directive...

- Facilitates the proper working of the internal market for the provision of web-accessibility, by addressing fragmentation & uncertainty
- Enhances social digital inclusion by ensuring full accessibility of a set of public sector websites (which could generate positive spill-overs to other public sector websites)
- Facilitates fulfilment of national & European commitments by Member States