

FINAL COMPROMISE AMENDMENTS

Langensiepen report

AccessibleEU Centre in support of accessibility policies in the EU internal market (2022/2013(INI))

Final CA 1 - citations 5, 12, 18, 19a (new), 25a (new), 26a (new)

(covering AMs 1 (Renew), 2 (S&D), 3 (S&D), 4 (S&D), 5 (Renew), 6 (S&D), 7 (S&D), 8 (S&D), 9 (Renew), 10 (S&D))

- having regard to the general comments on the CRPD, ***elaborated by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities***, as the authoritative guidance on its implementation, ***in particular the General Comment No. 2 - Article 9: Accessibility (adopted on 11 April 2014)***,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/782 of the European Parliament and of the Council of ***29 April 2021*** on rail passengers' rights and obligations⁴,
 - having regard to Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive)¹ ***as amended***^{8a},
- ^{8a} ***Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities (OJ L 303, 28.11.2018, p. 69)***.
- ***having regard to the New Consumer Agenda (COM(2020)696), that has amongst its five priorities the specific needs of certain consumer groups, amongst them, persons with disabilities,***
 - ***having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air***^{1a},
 - ***having regard to Commission Regulation (EU) No 1300/2014 of 18 November 2014 on the technical specifications for interoperability relating to accessibility of the Union's rail system for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility***^{1b},

Final CA 2 - recitals A-Ac

(covering AMs 11 (S&D), 12 (S&D), 13 (EPP), 14 (EPP), 15 (Renew), 16 (EPP), 17 (S&D),

19 (EPP))

- A. whereas persons with disabilities have equal rights on an equal basis with others in all fields of life and have the inalienable rights to dignity, equal treatment, independent living, autonomy and full participation in *society*, which benefits all levels of society;
- A a. whereas more than 87 million persons in the Union have some form of disability, and taking into account the ageing demographic trend in the Union;*
- A b. whereas accessibility is an essential precondition for persons with disabilities to fully enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, whereas according to Article 9 of the CRPD on accessibility, in order to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, State Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas;*
- A c. whereas Member States must ensure that accessibility becomes mainstreamed at all levels, not only in public buildings and transport, but also in health and education, as well as increase mobility and integration of people with disabilities;*

Final CA 3 - recitals B-Ba

(covering AMs 18 (S&D), 20 (EPP))

- B. whereas the CRPD defines ‘universal design’ as the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design and without excluding assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities; whereas accessibility is one of the CRPD’s general principles, and the EU and Member States are legally bound by the CRPD under Council Decision 2010/48/EC; *whereas General Comment No. 2 on the CRPD notes the obligation of State Parties to adopt action plans and strategies to identify existing barriers to accessibility, set time frames with specific deadlines and provide both the human and material resources necessary to remove the barriers; whereas accessibility is crucial for the enjoyment of rights of persons with disabilities to privacy, non-discrimination, employment, inclusive education, political participation, and other rights enshrined by the CRPD;*
- B a. whereas local authorities play a crucial role in supporting Member States in the development of social policies, including policies on disability and accessibility, through the analysis of the needs on the ground and the implementation of specific measures;*

Final CA 4 - recitals C-Cd

(covering AMs 21 (Renew), 22 (S&D), 23 (Renew), 24 (EPP), 25 (EPP), 30 (S&D), 78 (EPP))

- C. whereas ensuring high-quality and affordable assistive technologies will *foster the full*

inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and benefit both persons with disabilities and the providers of these technologies, as well as the whole of society; whereas assistive technologies will help reducing disparities among Member States and whereas these technologies can only work in accessible environments;

- C a. whereas higher levels of employment of people with disabilities, greater accessibility and greater inclusion of this group in the workforce have a clear economic potential;*
- C b. whereas the Union has established a comprehensive legal framework for accessibility in the internal market, notably with the adoption of specific accessibility legislation such as the European Accessibility Act (Directive (EU) 2019/882), and includes accessibility obligations in different sectorial legislation, including in the EU funds regulations; whereas the European Accessibility Act, which will apply from 28 June 2025, will introduce significant new requirements in respect of accessibility for products and services;*
- C c. whereas the actual implementation of policies related to disabilities will contribute positively to the competitiveness of the EU's internal market and therefore represents an integral resource for the EU economy;*
- C d. whereas the evaluation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 showed its contribution to improve the situation in a number of areas, but also the fact that persons with disabilities still face considerable barriers in access to healthcare, education, transport, built environment, ICT, employment, recreation activities, as well in participation in political life and other areas of life;*

Final CA 5 - paragraphs -1 and 1

(covering AMs 26 (S&D), 27 (Renew), 28 (EPP), 29 (S&D))

- 1. Welcomes the Commission's Communication "Union of Equality: European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030" ('Strategy'), whose aim is to ensure that all persons with disabilities in Europe can enjoy their rights, take part in society and in the economy under equal conditions and no longer be the subject of discrimination, addressing the considerable barriers highlighted in the evaluation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020;*
- 1. Welcomes the Commission's initiative, announced in the Strategy, to establish the AccessibleEU Centre ('Centre'); **acknowledges that the Centre** aims to increase **the coherence of** harmonised accessibility policies, **to support their implementation**, and to facilitate access to relevant knowledge and skills, promoting a culture of equal opportunities and full participation in society for persons with disabilities, **including at professional level, in a collaborative space between public administrations, business representatives, disability civil society, accessibility experts and users;**

Final CA 6 - paragraph 2

(covering AMs 33 (Renew), 34 (S&D) and 65 (S&D))

- 2. Notes that greater accessibility outcomes in society can only be achieved if the Centre follows the 'universal design' approach; emphasises the need to ensure that this **comprehensive approach to accessibility** is duly taken into account, in particular

concerning physical environment, transportation, information, communication, services, and the area of public procurement contracts and tenders; considers that this approach also implies effective participation of all stakeholders and rights-holders in their proceedings;

Final CA 7 - paragraph 3

(covering AMs 35 (S&D), 36 (Renew), 37 (ECR), 38 (EPP), 39 (Renew), 40 (S&D))

3. Highlights that the EU has established a comprehensive legal framework for accessibility in the single market *based on the mandate of the CRPD, which inter alia includes the European Accessibility Act, the Web Accessibility Directive, Directives on Audiovisual Media Services and Electronic Communications, and technical specifications for railway stations and vehicles; recalls that aspects of this framework have implementation deadlines in the future and encourages further efforts in achieving early implementation;* regrets, that, *where already required,* the implementation of such crucial legislation *varies widely across Member States and, in general,* has not yet been satisfactory, mostly due to the lack of qualified accessibility experts; stresses *therefore* the need for improving the overall knowledge, as well as practical and theoretical expertise, on accessibility policies among public administrations, economic operators *and society in general,* in order to help find suitable, *sustainable and affordable* solutions in each Member State *and thus improve the implementation of existing and forthcoming accessibility requirements; stresses in this context that the Centre should act as an important resource to provide such knowledge and support to Member States in the implementation phase;*

Final CA 8 - paragraph 4

(covering AMs 41 (ECR), 42 (S&D), 43 (Renew), 44 (EPP))

4. *Acknowledges the establishment of ad-hoc working groups for the implementation of certain accessibility legislation;* believes, *however,* that the absence of a coordination and cooperation framework between the EU, the Member States, *in particular public authorities monitoring or enforcing accessibility laws,* and the relevant stakeholders *that support cross-cutting solutions, namely persons with disabilities through their representative organisations, accessibility professionals and the private sector,* represents a further obstacle to the implementation of accessibility laws and to the harmonised enforcement across the EU;

Final CA 9 - paragraph 5

(covering AMs 45 (LEFT), 46 (S&D), 47 (Renew), 48 (EPP), 49 (Renew), 50 (LEFT))

5. Calls on the Commission to ensure adequate funding *both in terms of financial and human resources* for the *establishment and* functioning of the Centre; calls on the Member States to *ensure the resources needed* for the *implementation and* enforcement of accessibility policies, including through EU funds; *stresses that sufficient funding is imperative for the pursuit of effective public policies on accessibility, as well as for achieving progress on a wide range of topics, such as raising awareness through communication actions, in particular towards organisations representing persons with disabilities, recognition of invisible disabilities and harmonisation of national*

disability cards or accessibility standards;

Final CA 10 - paragraph 6

(covering AMs 51 (LEFT), 52 (Renew), 53 (EPP), 54 (ECR), 55 (S&D))

6. Calls on the Commission to establish a secretariat and a forum to steer and lead the work of the Centre; underlines that the forum should guarantee the balanced participation of stakeholders *from the public and private sector* and right-holders with suitable experience in the field of accessibility; stresses that gender *balance* should be ensured; *underlines that the participation of organizations representing persons with disabilities must be ensured as an essential part of the Centre's work, in order to ensure the highest possible level of transparency concerning its activities; believes that the Centre should publish an annual work programme and should include in the forum representatives among the Members of the European Parliament;*

Final CA 11 - paragraphs 7 and 8

(covering AMs 60 (Renew), 61 (EPP), 62 (S&D), 63 (S&D))

7. Highlights the specific challenges posed by particular domains of accessibility policies, such as built environment, public procurement, digital *technologies*, media and culture, *transportation, emerging technologies* and assistive technologies, *and products and services open to the public; calls on the Commission to establish specialised* sub-groups of experts for certain areas; is convinced that these groups should work closely with the Centre, the Member States, *persons with disabilities* and *organizations representing persons with disabilities*, in order to guarantee better assessment, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of accessibility-related legislation;
8. Calls on the Member States to establish national *accessibility hubs, which could comprise of* contact points and mirror groups of experts to work hand in hand with the Centre on implementing, monitoring and enforcing accessibility legislation; *is of the opinion that the national accessibility hubs should facilitate exchange and coordination among relevant stakeholders and rights-holders, including economic operators, organisations of persons with disabilities and national authorities responsible for accessibility and sectorial legislation implementation; is convinced that subject matter experts of the Centre should provide guidance and training to all relevant stakeholders;* believes that such groups could help finding accessibility solutions which take into account the national specificities;

Final CA 12 - paragraphs 9 and 10

(covering AMs 64 (EPP), 66 (Left), 67 (Renew), 68 (ECR), 69 and 79 (S&D))

9. Believes that the Centre should function as a hub which provides relevant EU institutions and bodies and its Member States when implementing Union law with regular assistance and expertise relating to accessibility policies and technical requirements; believes that the Centre should establish *and coordinate* a cooperation framework that would bring together the relevant national and Union bodies with all users groups, in particular organisations representing persons with disabilities, civil society organisations,

academia, **companies** and professionals from all areas of accessibility **and consumer rights**, in order to **support** harmonised **implementation and** enforcement across the EU, provide guidance and training, and to inspire policy **developments** and innovation at national and EU level, including through the identification and sharing of best practices **across sectors, as well as through the creation of tools aiming to facilitate the implementation of Union law; believes moreover, that the Centre could enhance the collaboration between the above-mentioned bodies and organisations with highly innovative stakeholders, in order to promote the development of assistive technologies; considers that the Centre should also provide advice, including guidelines, to relevant EU institutions and bodies and its Member States on their internal accessibility policies and practises;**

10. Stresses the potential benefits of the Centre in supporting the Commission's work, inter alia identifying and helping overcome gaps and inconsistencies in current legislation, providing policy recommendations for updating and developing accessibility laws, **mainstreaming accessibility in all relevant policies under the responsibility of different Directorates General of the Commission, including by identifying priority areas where accessibility should be improved**, conducting projects that explore innovative ways to implement accessibility, assisting in drafting technical accessibility specifications, and helping EU agencies and bodies with accessibility-related matters;

Final CA 13 - paragraph 11

(covering AMs 70 (EPP), 71 (Renew), 72 (ECR), 73 (S&D))

11. Is of the opinion that the Centre should **generate valuable knowledge on accessibility through the use of** research and studies to both the Commission and the Member States, as well as **collect and consolidate** specialised and comparable information and **fully accessible** data, including feedback on the implementation of accessibility laws; highlights that these actions would help accessibility policies to be solidly based on users' requirements and experiences; **stresses that the Centre should help addressing gaps in the collection of statistical data at national level on the situation of persons with disabilities and that cooperation with the relevant statistical bodies, in particular Eurostat, should be foreseen;**

Final CA 14 - paragraphs 12 and 12a

(covering AMs 32 (EPP), 74 (LEFT), 75 (S&D), 76 (EPP), 77 (Renew))

12. Considers that the role of the Centre would be essential in providing **the Commission and the** Member States, stakeholders and right-holders with **knowledge and** support for the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of accessibility policies, including through training and guidance documents in all EU official languages **and written in an accessible, understandable and easy-to-read language;**
- 12 a. **Stresses that the Centre should help to overcome inconsistencies between the CRPD and EU policies, and thereby should help Member States in achieving the primary goal of increasing employment levels of persons with disabilities; points out that this mainstreaming activity needs to involve the EU and the Member States also through the close cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations, public authorities, and the private sector;**

Final CA 15 - paragraph 13

(covering AMs 80 (LEFT), 81 (ECR))

13. Notes that implementing accessibility policies requires a high degree of technical expertise and is not sufficiently included in higher education programmes, thus **contributing** to a lack of qualified accessibility experts in the public and private sectors across domains; stresses that the Centre should **support Member States when developing dedicated education programmes to accessibility related matters and should** provide training to professionals, EU and national public officials and to relevant stakeholders and right-holders **in order to increase awareness on these issues;**

Final CA 16 - paragraph 14

(covering AMs 31 (EPP), 82 (Renew), 83 (LEFT), 84 (ECR), 85 (EPP))

14. Regrets that the standardisation system does not adequately allow persons with disabilities and their representative organisations to participate on an equal footing with other stakeholders **in the activities of European and national standardisation bodies** when drafting accessibility standards; **calls, therefore, for an improved representation within the standardisation system and for a balanced representation among designated experts, in order to guarantee a fair outcome of Union's accessibility legislation and standards;** considers that the Centre should **play an important role in the standard-setting system and could provide expertise to the Commission when the Commission is participating** in the work of the standardisation committees, **including the provision of advice from standardisation experts of organisations representing persons with disabilities,** and, where possible, assist the Commission in drafting technical specifications **and requests for European standards and deliverables in accordance with Regulation 1025/2012, including through the involvement of** all relevant stakeholders and right-holders; **believes that the involvement of the Centre would bring clear benefits to persons with disabilities while moving across the EU and would empower their right to work, live and travel freely;**

Final CA 17 - paragraph 15

(covering AMs 86 (ECR), 87 (S&D), 88 (EPP) and 89 (EPP))

15. **Calls on the Commission to conduct an assessment within five years after the creation of the Centre to evaluate its effectiveness and added value in enhancing accessibility policies within the EU; underlines that based on this assessment, the Commission should take appropriate steps to update and improve the Centre,** including an **evaluation of the possible** establishment of an agency if the objectives listed in its mandate are not accomplished; **calls on the Commission to monitor the work of the Centre and its achievements through yearly reports to be presented to the European Parliament;**