Online public services to be made more accessible for the disabled and elderly

The websites and apps of public administrations, hospitals, courts and other public sector bodies will have to be made accessible to everyone, under new EU-wide rules approved by the European Parliament on Wednesday. The web accessibility directive, already agreed by Parliament and Council, should make it easier for disabled and elderly people to access data and services on the internet, e.g. to file a tax declaration, apply for an allowance, pay fees or enrol at university.

"Today, we have ensured that e-government is accessible to everyone. Just as physical government buildings should be accessible, so too should the digital gateways. We solved the public side of web accessibility, but the internet is far more than government websites and apps. We need reform also for the private world of services, from banks to television stations to private hospitals. I hope that we can soon adopt the European Accessibility Act, so that both public and private services are accessible to all our citizens", said Parliament's rapporteur Dita Charanzová (ALDE, CZ).

Under the new rules, the websites and mobile apps of public sector bodies - from administrations, courts and police departments to public hospitals, universities and libraries - will have to meet common accessibility standards. MEPs ensured that apps used on mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, must also comply with these rules.

Feedback mechanism

Public sector bodies will have to provide and regularly update a "detailed, comprehensive and clear accessibility statement" on the compliance of their websites and apps with the directive, including an explanation for those parts of the content that are not accessible, and the reasons for that inaccessibility. A "feedback mechanism" will have to be put in place to enable users to report compliance issues and to request specific information if content is inaccessible.

On-demand access to certain types of content

Some types of content are excluded from the scope of the directive, but only if they are not needed for administrative processes, such as office file formats, pre-recorded time-based media or the content of archived websites. MEPs ensured that public sector bodies will have to make

EN

Press Service, Directorate General for Communication
European Parliament - Spokesperson: Jaume DUCH GUILLOT
Press switchboard number (32-2) 28 33000

1 I 3

this excluded content accessible to any person upon request (on-demand access).

Public sector bodies will have to give an "adequate response to the notification or request within a reasonable period of time", and provide a link to an "enforcement procedure" for use in the event of an unsatisfactory response to the feedback or on-demand request. Member states will have to designate an authority tasked with monitoring and enforcing these rules.

Around 80 million people in the EU have a disability. As the EU's population ages, the number of people with disabilities or age-related internet access difficulties is expected to increase to 120 million by 2020.

Next steps

Once the directive is published in the EU Official Journal, member states will have to transpose it into their national laws within 21 months of its date of its entry into force. They then have 12 months to apply the provisions to new websites, 24 months to apply them to existing websites and 33 months to apply them to public sector bodies' mobile applications.

Procedure: Co-decision, second reading agreement

Facts

• This directive lays down the first EU-wide rules to ensure that the websites and apps of public sector bodies are made more accessible to users, in particular persons with disabilities.
   •

• Several EU member states have adopted measures based on internationally used guidelines for the design of accessible websites, but their national laws and measures nonetheless differ substantially.

Making websites accessible for everyone
Bridging the gap: making websites accessible for everyone

Further information
Adopted text will be available here (click on 26.10.2016)
Directive on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies - text agreed by EP and Council
Video recording of debate (click on 25.10.2016)
EP Research: publications on web accessibility

Audiovisual material for media

EN

Press Service, Directorate General for Communication
European Parliament - Spokesperson: Jaume DUCH GUILLOT
Press switchboard number (32-2) 28 33000

2 I 3

Political groups

News pages of the EPP group
Press release by the S&D group
News pages of the ECR group
News pages of the ALDE group
News pages of the GUE/NGL group
News pages of the Greens/EFA group
News pages of the EFDD group
News pages of the ENF group

Contacts

Isabel Teixeira NADKARNI

Press Officer

📞 (+32) 2 28 32198 (BXL)

📞 (+33) 3 881 76758 (STR)

📱 (+32) 498 98 33 36

🐦 @EP_SingleMarket

✉ isabel.nadkarni@europarl.europa.eu

....

EN

Press Service, Directorate General for Communication
European Parliament - Spokesperson: Jaume DUCH GUILLOT
Press switchboard number (32-2) 28 33000

3 I 3