

PODCAST assistive technologies

Voice 1: Sarah

Voice 2: Brian

JINGLE to open intro to podcast

VOICE 2

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on assistive technologies for a more inclusive society.

VOICE 1

Assistive technologies help people with disabilities to participate more fully in society. But what if we already have enough technology for a more inclusive society? We'll be right back...

END OF INTRO JINGLE

VOICE 2

Thanks to developments in assistive technologies, people with disabilities such as blindness or deafness can do the things they want to do more easily... whether it's traveling, reading a book or cooking!

VOICE 1

Some assistive technologies, such as robotic mobility aids, rely on cutting-edge technological developments. But many others, such as reading glasses, crutches and hearing aids, are relatively low-tech and familiar to many of us...

VOICE 2

So, how could assistive technologies help us move towards a more inclusive society? Let's take a look! MUSIC JINGLE

VOICE 1

Technology in this field is moving very fast! Haptic or touch-based assistive technologies such as braille are giving way to new technologies such as cameras that enable live audio description of texts, or even of the environment either via human assistance or artificial intelligence.

VOICE 2

And in the future, bionic eyes could help blind people to see again, maybe even better than those of us who don't need glasses!

VOICE 1

Emerging technologies to help people with hearing impairments are often oriented around the translation between spoken language, sign language and text.

VOICE 2

So there are more and more applications converting spoken words into text. But what types of assistive technologies are being developed for those with autism disorders?

VOICE 1

Well, they are more recent, and less advanced than those for vision and hearing impairments... but they do exist, mainly to help in communication and social interactions, and they are developing!

VOICE 2

What's interesting, when you look at the many types of assistive technologies, is that they can basically be divided into two groups...

VOICE 1

... those which target disability, so as to allow the person to participate more fully in society, and those which target SOCIETY, to make it more inclusive of people with different levels of ability...

VOICE 2

The danger, when you consider the development of assistive technologies, is that while they are increasingly helping users lead more autonomous lives, they might make disabilities less visible, or make us expect disabilities to be fixed ...

VOICE 1

... which could change what we think of as “normal”, and I say this between brackets...

VOICE 2

Advanced assistive technologies might also blur the boundaries between medical recovery and human enhancement and raise expectations of normality. What if bionic eyes became normal?... so there's some thinking to do here!

VOICE 1

Indeed... So what can policy-makers do to prepare the ground for this debate?

VOICE 2

Well, there are many technologies and regulations that could already help us to build a more inclusive society. But technology can only take us so far... A parallel approach to inclusion could be to shift our focus from technology to society.

VOICE 1

So as well as developing assistive technologies to help overcome differences in our abilities, , we can also move towards a society that accepts the normality of being different.

VOICE 2

This is certainly a more challenging approach... What we can already do is work with existing technologies, along with regulations and social actions, to build a better society for all.

VOICE 1

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MUSIC JINGLE TO CONCLUDE