Good afternoon, everyone.

I'm June Lowery, Head of Unit

of the European Commission's DG

for Communication Networks, content

and technology. DG Connect.

Welcome to this online event

on the Web Accessibility Directive

co-organised by the European Commission

and the European Disability Forum.

Today is a key milestone

for this directive

because from today all websites

from the public sector across the EU

should be accessible

for persons with disabilities.

On this especial occasion

I'd like to welcome all the speakers,

panellists and special guests,

and we're delighted to have with us

Helena Dalli,

European Commissioner for Equality,

Tisaharan Szobá, vice-president

of the European Parliament,

Yannis Vardakastanis, president

of the European Disability Forum,

and Thierry Breton, Commissioner

for the Internal Market.

Even if they can stay

for a short time,

our warmest thanks to each of them

for taking time today

to mark this milestone with us.

The meeting is taking place

on the Gotowebinar platform,

one of the most famous tools

in videoconferencing.

Before we start, we have

some housekeeping rules.

As there is 500 people registered,

we can't give to all the floor.

So all participants are muted

and will remain muted throughout.

International sign language

and live captioning are provided.

The link for the live captioning

is in the Chat box.

In the Goto platform offers

three boxes in total.

The Chat box, a Questions box

and a Handout box.

Please, use the Chat box

for any technical issue you experience

and the team at EDF

will be happy to help you.

In the Handout box you can access

useful documents

including the agenda

and the slides being used today.

And in the Questions box, please

write questions to the speakers,

and if appropriate, indicate

who your question is for.

We’ll only take questions

through the questions box.

There will be two breaks for questions

after each part of panel discussions.

Given the time constraints,

some questions may be grouped,

but we’ll answer to any question

that cannot be taken live afterwards.

This webinar is being recorded

and it’ll be available afterwards.

We’ll send you the link,

and by participating in this event,

you agree to this recording.

All participants will receive

details of the recording

and where the replies are

once the event is over

and these are available online.

Lastly, a survey will be launched

immediately after the event,

so please take part

so we can do even better next time.

And a short reminder

to all our speakers

that you're responsible

for your microphones and cameras.

So now, it is my greatly pleasure

to invite Helena Dalli,

European Commissioner for Equality

to open this event.

We're very grateful to you

for your support,

and the floor is yours.

MS DALLI: Thank you, June,

can you hear me?

JUNE: Loud and clear.

MRS DALLI: Very good.

MS DALLI: Thank you

for organizing this

and good afternoon

to all the participants.

Some 30 years ago

when the worldwide web was invented

the premise was academic information

should be available to everyone.

Today the web permits

almost every facet of our lives.

It’s something

that we take for granted.

But the truth is, that the web

isn’t accessible for all.

Today we celebrate the change

the Web Accessibility Directive brings

to our digital world and chiefly,

to people's everyday lives.

The adoption of this directive was

a milestone in the EU

because it puts digital equality

on the map.

It claim the foundations

for a digital society for all.

A Europe fit for the digital age is

one of the Commission's top priorities.

Its aim is to enable everyone in Europe,

including persons with disabilities

to reap the benefits

from Information Technology.

Just look at us today, while we’d liked

to be together in person,

to mark this moment, the online nature

of this event illustrates perfectly

the importance

of accessible digital technologies.

The websites of public sector bodies

will have to be accessible,

from now on, thanks

to the Web Accessibility Directive.

This obligation will change the lives

of persons with disabilities in the EU

and open up new opportunities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic,

the digital environment has become

more relevant for learning, for work,

for health, for entertainment,

for access to products and services,

and for social contact.

In short, to be part of society.

The pandemic has revealed the value

of an accessible digital environment.

Official websites have been

sources of up to date information

about the evolving

public health situation.

The situation and rules

changing frequently,

being adequately informed is vital

for our well being

and to limit the spread of the virus.

Persons with disabilities must have

the same access as everyone else

to official websites which harbour

this valuable information.

Charges brought by changes,

by the Web Accessibility Directive

are more than a technical matter.

This is a matter of access

and participation

of persons with disabilities

on an equal footing with others.

This is particularly important

in an aging society.

We must ensure that all can continue

to fully participate in society

and the economy and be able

to realize their full potential.

President Von der Leyen started

to lead on the EU's implementation

of the UN Convention on the Rights

of Persons with disabilities.

The Convention sets clear obligations

and objectives on Accessibility

including on ICT Accessibility.

EU Institutions need to lead

by example,

and to comply with the obligations

under the UN Convention.

I'm determined to ensure

this compliance.

During the Coronavirus crisis,

I made sure

the EU Commission's digital messages

were accessible

and could reach

Persons with disabilities.

Our website providing information

on COVID-19 and all documents

and published messages

are accessible to all.

We've also increased the number

of video messages with captioning

and sign language interpretations,

so the Web Accessibility Directive

and tools for its application also

guide us in EU Institutions.

Our approach is that communication

should be born accessible

and we're making changes

to our Europa website, for instance,

Today our focus is

on public sector websites.

However, a digital society

also includes the private sector

and the digital markets where products

and services can freely circulate

across the Member States of the EU.

European Accessibility Act compliments

the Web Accessibility Directive.

It applies to websites of key services

offered by the private sector.

This includes online banking,

telecommunications,

access to audiovisual media services,

eBooks and eCommerce.

These two instruments use

the same accessibility requirements.

This coherence in EU legislation

is necessary

to streamline the implementation

of web accessibility.

To foster the creation

of coherent markets and to facilitate

the use of accessibility

to persons with disabilities.

In the coming years Member States

will need to pay particular attention

to the implementation

of these legislative Frameworks.

ICT professionals need to be trained

on accessibility matters.

Accessible authoring tools

will facilitate implementation,

and we need to ensure monitoring

of the accessibility of websites.

These issues will play

a prominent role

in our work in the coming years

as we embrace the digital transition.

I’ll work closely

with members of the Commission,

in particular, executive vice-president

and Commissioner Breton

to make this digital transition

is just equal.

Looking ahead, we are

at a turning point.

Our ten year Disability Strategy

is coming to a close.

The Commission will present in 2021

a strengthened Disability strategy.

The strategy will be based

on the findings of an evaluation

of the current strategy which showed

that it was instrumental

in raising awareness

on Disability policy at EU level.

It contributed to placing Disability

higher on the EU agenda.

It promoted a set

of important legislative options

notably in the field of accessibility.

And it positively contributed

to the implementation

of the UN Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities.

But we've also learned

the current strategy didn't fully meet

its expectations since not all actions

could be fully implemented.

In July, I launched a consultation

with a wide range of stakeholders.

National representatives, experts

and members of the European Parliament

to seek input into the formulation

of the future strategy.

One take away is that accessibility

remains at the top of the agenda.

It’s expected that the future strategy

will include measures necessary

to continue improving accessibility

including digital accessibility.

Discussions in this space today

are another opportunity to share

your experience and to inform us

of priorities for the new strategy.

Our work is guided by UN Convention

and European Pillar of Social Rights.

People with Disabilities have the right

to access services

that allow them to fully participate

in the labour market and in society.

We need to create a work environment

that accommodates their needs.

Unprecedented situations like the one

we’re going through collectively

makes it more important than ever

to share practices and experiences

on how we can overcome

common challenges.

They also offer opportunities to renew

our commitment to common goals

and to accelerate their achievement.

We must do to build an accessible

and inclusive digital Europe.

I congratulate all of you

who have contributed

to making the objective

of accessible public websites

a reality in the EU today.

I’d like to thank

the many persons with disabilities

for their indispensable contribution

to this work,

we'll remain in contact

to the organizations

representing

persons with disabilities.

Together we can identify

concrete measures that the EU can take

to continue to improve

digital accessibility.

As worldwide web inventor,

Tim burners Lee put it,

the goal of the web is

to serve humanity.

Let us make that a reality for all.

I thank you.

JUNE: Thank you very much,

Commissioner Dalli,

for the Commission's commitment

to persons with disabilities.

I'm honoured to welcome

our next speaker, Dita Charanzová,

Vice President of European Parliament

and formal Rapporteur

for the Web Accessibility Directive.

Vice-president, the floor is yours.

MS CHARANZOVÁ: Thank you very much.

Thank you for inviting me here today.

I think Commissioner Dalli

has set the correct scene.

You've already mentioned it,

I had the honour

to be the Rapporteur

on the Web Accessibility Directive.

I have to say this has a warm place

in my heart for two reasons,

for the content, and second

it was my first file

when I was a Rapporteur

of the EU Parliament.

And what it taught me

was never give up.

Never give up a struggle

when something is worth fighting for

and also never accept

the mandate of the Member States

and to  don't accept always

the proposals as they stand

from the European Commission,

with all respect to MS Dalli.

It should be recalled

that original draft proposal

of the Web Accessibility Directive

was limited

to 12 types

of public sector bodies websites.

but not anywhere close

to the full inclusion

of persons with disabilities.

As it was clear back in 2016,

and is clearer today due to the crisis

our lives centre around access

to information online.

We are digital society.

As I wrote at the time,

a society is never complete

until every citizen has equal access.

For the Parliament having access

to fill your income taxes

or just to apply for passport

wasn't enough to meet this objective

and the objective

of the UN Convention.

This is why we pushed to extend

the list to all governmental websites.

In fact, some may recall

the original,

my original proposal was to extend

even to private websites.

Luckily my colleague was able

to push that part

through the European Accessibility Act.

We wanted to cover as much as possible

within the scope of the directive.

This is also why the Parliament pushed

to include mobile apps into the scope.

To include only old school websites

isn't going to match the reality

of a society which is glued

to their phones and devices.

Here I'd like to pay credit

to the Dutch presidency

for their openness understanding

on this directive

that allowed us to find a compromise

and have a deal.

Some Member States were only thinking

about the short term costs

of updating websites

and it was the Dutch presidency

that managed to convince them.

Here I’d like also to thank

the European Disability Forum

and the European Blind Union

for all your work.

At that time when I was a Rapporteur

it was really vital for our work,

both for instance the Blind Day

or many private technical meetings

organized just to explain

what was at stake.

So, that brings us to today,

the deadline for all websites

to being made accessible and nine months

until the all apps must be accessible.

So will the Member States

meet the deadline?

Well, I'm looking forward to hear

from the experts,

but, suddenly I'm afraid

the answer will be no.

Of course, we must wait

until the first monitoring next year.

But I think if we all want to have

the positive report,

we must now push the Member States

to step up their efforts

and to respect the EU law

and not waste time.

In addition, within the directive

there is one point

that Parliament wasn't very happy

about and was forced to accept,

which is

the disproportionate burden clause.

While I do have

some understanding for this clause,

we must make sure it is not abused

and misused.

Member States bodies must show merit

when invoking such an exception.

And the Commission and users

must watch out for potential abuse.

Lastly, we still need to push

Member States

to do more than what is

in the directive itself.

We all should set up a new goal:

triple A standards, not only double.

We should all ensure that websites

are actually tested

by individuals with disabilities.

One thing is to be accessible on paper

and another thing is the reality.

So, for me, true web accessibility

in practice must be our goal.

I was honoured to sponsor

two such projects in the EU budget.

Web access by default and one entitled

Web inclusiveness access for all.

Both of which have

the goal of allowing

individuals with disabilities

to better access to online world.

It's my pleasure to see also

I'm virtually in the room

with the unit of European Commission

that is working on those projects.

Ladies and gentlemen,

at the end of the day,

what the Web Accessibility Directive

will be judged on is if it makes

a real change in how are citizens

able to access information online.

Even if we might not being able

to say it today

I hope we are getting closer

to this goal.

And I can guarantee

everyone here today

as long as I'm

in the European Parliament,

you'll have someone in your corner

to make sure this happens.

Thank you very much for the invitation

and for being with you.

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you,

vice-president Charanzová,

for your heart felt words

and timely reminder

the very important role the Parliament

has played

in achieving

the Web Accessibility Directive

and ensuring digital inclusion

across Europe.

Our final opening speakers is

Yannis Vardakastanis,

the President

of the European Disability Forum,

an umbrella organization

that defends the rights

of over one hundred million persons

with disabilities across Europe

under the motto,

nothing about us without us.

Mr Vardakastanis,

the floor is yours.

YANNIS: Thank you very much.

Dear Commissioner for Equality,

dear Vice-president

of the European Parliament,

dear participants, dear colleagues.

It's my pleasure to welcome you

to this important online event today

on behalf

of the European Disability Forum.

It's absolutely incredible

to speak today, celebrating,

and I’ll say a few words

about celebrating, the landmark date

for digital accessibility

and participation.

There is no question

that we've come a long way.

That we've put in place in Europe

very important legislation.

It has been already mentioned

by the Commissioner

and the vice-president

so I'm not going to repeat.

But, today, today

this very important day,

we need to think how,

what is legislated in Brussels

it's to be found

by the European citizens

in their villages and in their towns

of their Member States.

We speak about a web accessibility

of public sector websites and apps.

And we're going to see how progress

has been achieved.

We need to deal with the gap

between legislating rights

and making rights work.

This gap has to be

really dealt with both

by the European institutions

and their Member States.

It's well known

that the EDF campaigned

and worked closely

with the European Commission

and I’d like to thank its servants

during the last decade.

The vice-president of the Parliament

has helped us a while ago,

and with many other colleagues

in Disability movement

and in the wider sector to make it

as inclusive as possible

and to complete the legislation

with the European Accessibility Act.

But the question remains,

how persons with disabilities

enjoy, in practice,

in their daily lives, in their work,

in their free time,

in the enjoyment of other rights

this legislation we've put in place.

And I'd like to mention

a very important component

that has to be more taken

into consideration

where they put if place legislation

at European level.

We should create more space

for the organizations

of persons with disabilities to play

a vital role both

at the European and national level

for the monitoring

in the implementation stage.

Because when it goes

at national level,

and the legislation is transposed

to national legislation,

usually, and I say usually

the Member States don't give

the right place

to organizations

of person with disabilities.

They may say

"nothing about us without us"

but usually they mean it

for themselves.

It's very important that both ensure,

the Commission and the Parliament,

that the empowerment of organizations

of persons with disabilities

at national level comes also

through the legislation

enacted at European level,

and I'd like to leave it,

to leave you with this message:

that "Nothing about us without us"

isn't an abstract slogan.

It has to do with the capacity

to influence what happens

and influences the real life

of persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you very much,

Mr Vardakastanis

for setting the scene

for the conference

and identifying exactly

what today is about.

How we move from the words

of the directives to the actions

having a positive impact on the lives

of persons with disabilities in Europe.

And on that note, I'm delighted now

to welcome

our keynote speaker, Bart Simons,

a Web Accessibility expert and lecturer

who is going to explain

what Accessibility means in practice.

So Bart, over to you.

BART: Good afternoon.

Now, websites and apps are a blessing

for many people with disabilities.

I'm one of them. I don't know

if you can see it on the camera,

I'm reading my notes

from Braille paper, so ...

If websites and apps are accessible,

they boost the independence

of many people with disabilities.

Now, we've spoken

about accessibility,

what does it mean? I'm not here

to give you definitions,

I'd summarize accessibility

as providing the best possible service

on an equal basis

to all your citizens,

customers, users,

whatever you want to call them.

And this for existing...

...For existing customers

or citizens,

but also for those who aren't using

your service due to inaccessibility,

accessibility will increase

your potential users.

Now we're talking today

about the new legal requirements

for making websites and apps

of the public sector body accessible.

But my plea is

to let legal compliance

not be your main motivation

to do this.

Take pride in your accessibility,

in providing the best possible service

through your digital channels

to all customers alike.

Why is it that that websites and apps

are maybe even more important

for people with disabilities

than to the public in general?

I see two main reasons.

The first one is technical.

Computers, smartphones, tablets,

they are today very accessible devices

to a whole range of users either

they're accessible out of the box

or you can customize them

to your individual needs.

Solutions exist if you cannot see

the screen, you can install

some software on your computer

to read the text out loud

If you can't use your fingers

to type on keyboard,

you can use speech recognition software

and dictate to your computer

or you can give it

spoken instructions.

If you cannot manipulate a mouse,

you can have alternative measures,

you can use a touch screen

or you could point

at the screen or the keys

in different ways.

If you have trouble to operate

touch gestures

on a touch screen,

you can customize the device

so even if you have a disability

you can operate the device.

Plenty of technical solutions exist

to make our computers, smartphones,

tablets perfectly usable

and thus accessible.

The second compartment of why

people with disabilities would benefit

much from websites is

that we can perform actions

more easily in a digital world

sometimes than physical world.

In physical world there are

many accessibility problems,

many actions require handling papers

which is difficult

if you are blind you need assistant

to read it or to fill out a paper form

or if you have to handwrite, you can't

independently fill out a paper form,

if there is physical interaction

with people, for example in a city hall

and you need to speak

to get things done,

not everybody can communicate

in sign language.

Let alone that the building itself

might be accessible

for someone in a wheelchair,

or not all actions,

if you go to a grocery store, you are

to take items from the shelves,

which is also very difficult to do

if you're in a wheelchair.

So in a physical world,

people with disabilities often need

assistance or accommodations

which might be expensive.

In the digital world,

we can be more independent,

it can be a more inclusive

and pleasant experience

if the websites and apps are

accessible to access their services

You can fill in an online form

even if it takes more time.

You can do it independently

if it's well lay out

You can do your grocery shopping

and have it delivered at home

which is easier than grab everything

from shelves

and bring it home

if you can't drive, for instance.

Access to information is

easier in a digital environment

for many people with disabilities

than in a library full of books

which might be on a high shelf

or not available in Braille

where you, again, would depend

on a human reader

or time consuming scanning

of documents to access the information.

When it's digital and accessible,

there is a much bigger potential

to benefit from it on an equal basis

for people without disabilities.

This potential of websites and apps

to solve those accessibility barriers

in the physical world, they come true

when those websites and apps are built

and maintained following

accessibility standards.

The accessibility guidelines are

I said that websites are a good thing

for persons with disabilities,

and the devices are accessible is also

not new, this is since many years.

But, unfortunately, each study

year after year reported

very low numbers

of accessible websites

and no structural progress

was monitored.

That is why the Disability movements

we welcomed with a lot of passions

the publication of the directive

we're talking about today.

We look forward to more apps

being built accessibly,

and accessible for our audience.

And if this, what is important is

that people who build websites,

they are knowledgeable

about what they're doing.

We haven't trained them

in accessibility, we can't blame them.

So one of the messages that will be

important for Member States is

we can't expect things to be accessible

if we don't raise awareness,

if we don't train people

to do the right thing,

only then we'll be able

to really realize

those potential benefits

of accessible websites and apps.

Now to answer the kind of question

from Ms Charanzová,

will everything be accessible tomorrow?

Pragmatically speaking,

I think that we all know

that tomorrow

not everything will be accessible

after today's deadline.

A key requirement in the directive is

that public sector body websites

they'll publish

accessibility statements

where the layout

line the level of accessibility,

they might explain why certain parts

of the websites are not yet compliant

and offer temporarily

accessible alternatives.

This Accessibility statement is

a place to provide contact information

to communicate directly with people

or service in charge of accessibility

to address individual questions

or problems

and help that customer

or citizen individually.

Now, you'll quickly realize

that helping individual requests takes

much more time than investing

in accessible services.

So hopefully the direct communication

between the people

who need this accessible service

and the people in charge will help

to understand why we have to do it,

not just to comply with the law,

but to deliver that best possible

and equal service to all our citizens.

The last requirement

in the European directive is

that Member States set up

an enforcement body.

For me, as a user, a citizen,

this is very important

that enforcement body,

that it can help me when I'm stuck,

when I contact a website to report

or to have to ask a questions

or an alternative and I get no answer,

I'm invited to contact

the enforcement body.

I hope as a citizen

that this enforcement body will be

an ally for me, that this body has

the knowledge, the expertise,

the financial means and the real power

to support me as an individual citizen

towards this public sector body

when I encounter a problem,

that this enforcement body

that it will be on my side

and help me to rectify

the situation.

JUNE: Bart, this is

your ten minutes reminder.

BART: I need one more minute.

It's the role of the enforcement body

to assist me, to assist the citizens

to obtain their rights,

to push the public sector body

to fulfil its legal obligations

so that

accessible web sites and apps

can really mature,

I hope this enforcement body can play

the role of virtual Ombudsman

to help realize this realize...

...this reality that websites and apps

will be more accessible

than they've ever been before.

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you very much

for that insightful reality check

into why digital accessibility matters,

what it means in terms of independence

and equality, and really untapped

the potential to develop this further.

Thank you very much

to all our speakers so far.

As we move to the panel discussion,

just a quick reminder,

you can ask questions at any time

in the Questions box.

And if appropriate, indicate the speaker

who your question is for.

We'll have a break

after the first part of the panel.

So to set the scene, I invite now

my deputy, Gudrun Stock,

to whom thanks must be given for being

the inspiration behind this event

to give a brief overview

of the directive.

Gudrun, over to you.

GUDRUN: Good afternoon.

To provide the context

for the upcoming panel interventions,

I'll give a brief overview

of the web Accessibility directive.

So, the directive has two objectives.

On the one hand, to increase

digital inclusion by making

the websites and mobile applications

of public sector bodies

more accessible for citizens,

particularly, those with disabilities.

And on the other to harmonize

the internal market

for web accessibility products

and services

based

on common accessibility requirements.

To facilitate its implementation

the Commission has adopted

three implementing acts.

A model accessibility statement

to be used by public sector bodies

to indicate the level of compliance

of their websites

and mobile applications

with the accessibility requirements

as Bart described very ably

that purpose in his presentation.

They also should provide

a feedback mechanism for users.

The second implementing act is

a monitoring methodology

for Member States to report

the outcomes to the Commission.

And a harmonized European standard

was drafted in support of the directive

published in the official journal

of the European Union.

The standard harmonizes

the internal market

and sets the accessibility required

for presumption of conformity.

It's the first harmonized standard

for web accessibility in the EU,

and currently under review.

This timeline shows the key dates

for implementation of the directive.

While blue dates are behind us,

red is still ahead of us.

The first date in red is

why we are here today.

All public sector body websites

across the EU needs to be accessible.

And all mobile applications

as from June next year.

We are about to launch

the review of the directive,

which is due by June 2022.

This review will take into account

the first monitoring reports

Member States will have to submit

in December 2021

To conclude, a slide with links

with information about the directive

that you may wish to consult

after the event.

Thank you very much and I wish you

or all of us a fruitful panel.

JUNE: Thank you very much.

Today's deadline is about the work

that has been done across the EU

to turn the words of the directive

into public sector websites

and services that should be accessible

for persons with disabilities,

The panellist will consider this effort

from different points of view.

I’ll remind all the speakers

when five minutes are up.

To start, a warm welcome

to Elisabeth Aguilera

and Asa Holmberg, representing

two different Swedish bodies

they'll kick off our first panel.

Over to you, ladies.

ELISABETH: Thank you very much

Hello, Europe! I'm really moved

by this opportunity to speak.

ASA: Thank you.

Can you see our screen now?

JUNE: Yes, we can.

ASA: Thank you.

Don't reinvent the wheel

This is our public sector experiences

from Sweden.

ELISABETH: I'm Elisabeth Aguilera

I'm chief Accessibility officer

at Swedish Public Employment Services,

that is responsible

for the public employment service

implementation of labour market,

policies and more.

ASA: I'm Asa Holmberg.

I'm digital Accessibility strategist

and Business Developer

at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.

We administer the social insurances

of Sweden like sickness benefit,

or parental leave benefit.

Don't work in splendid isolation.

Three years ago I got to know

Mrs Aguilera

at a Disability conference

in Stockholm.

We talked about challenges

that we share regarding accessibility.

And we asked ourselves

how can we help each other?

After all, our, businesses are paid

by taxpayer money,

so we should be able to cooperate.

And we found

some areas of cooperation.

For instance, how to make accessible

code components

and sharing training materials.

How to create accessible documents,

internal processes,

like checklists for example,

user experience and design,

UX copy, user testing,

and procurement.

And these are some of the areas

we’ve identified.

One area that has great potential

for influence is procurement.

In Sweden, the public sector pushes

and of those 5% are digital service

and Information Technology.

So, it has really great potential

for influence.

And we started to talk

about our challenges in procurement,

and the external challenges

that we found were

low awareness

on new stricter laws,

low accessibility maturity

among suppliers.

They usually say we know

WCAG guidelines,

but usually they don't know

the WCAG guidelines

and the WCAG guidelines

are hard to understand.

And procurement from human perspective

is often overlooked.

ELISABETH: If we continue talking

about challenges in procurement,

we also had some internal challenges.

so I turned to Asa to discuss

these challenges but not to details.

Technical demands could limit

suppliers of digital services.

We also do need internal knowledge

for assessment of the supplier's answer

and we lack of clear requirements.

So we do cooperate with each other

throughout all of Sweden,

but we also share our network.

You should talk

to my colleague Katerina, Asa said.

thanks to that I talked to Asa

and she connected me with Katerina,

who is an expert in procurement

in the area of Accessibility.

When me and Katarina talked,

she gave me the idea she had.

To use a System Usability Scale

to assess procurement.

System Usability Scale is

a questionnaire with ten questions,

measures perceived usability

on a scale of 1 to 5

and has a reliability of 85%.

This meant that it's not new to me,

and would not be new to my agency.

But to use the system usability scale

as an evaluation method

in procurement will be new,

and we'll keep the human perspective

that matches our demands.

So, our message, with this talk, is

share your knowledge

and share your network.

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you very much,

that was perfectly on five minutes.

I can't thank you enough for that,

both for your wonderful talk

which I'm sure has inspired

other sector bodies across Europe

and I hope we'll come back on that.

That's my timer.

So, thank you very much.

Our next panellist is from Bulgaria,

it's Stefania Mircheska,

from the republic of

Bulgaria state eGovernment agency.

Stefania, over to you.

STEFANIA: Thank you.

Good afternoon to all participants.

On behalf of the chairman

of the state eGovernment agency,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity

to participate in this event

as national monitoring

and enforcement body.

State eGovernment Agency

which was established four years ago,

implements the government policy

in the area of eGovernment,

certification services,

electronic identification,

network and information security.

As a national body for monitoring

and enforcement of the Directive,

the agency has prepared a methodology

or monitoring and testing

the Accessibility of the content

of websites and mobile application

and Action Plan including time frame

and activities for its implementation.

The Action Plan contains all steps

to develop a methodology,

in order to better inform organization

of the public sector,

on a website on an agency,

all documents have been published.

Since the transposition process

was set up a working group.

The basis of this discussion

was a report made under the project

Civic initiative for web Accessibility

in the public sector.

The project includes

the following activities:

create a network of 15 organisations

of people with disabilities,

nine individuals, IT specialized,

expert of web Accessibility.

The report showed us a screening

of 100 active institutional websites

regarding their Accessibility.

The screening was made

by people with disabilities

even before the process

of transposition started.

So we already cooperate

with disability people's organization

that are committed

to web Accessibility in Bulgaria.

In the process of elaboration

of methodology we work closely

with the Bulgarian academy of science,

disability people's organizations, etc.

to facilitate the public sector bodies

to harmonize the standard

and the W3C 2.1 guidelines

has been translated into the Bulgarian

by the Bulgarian institute

for standardization.

The agency working with the Association

of Municipalities made

a presentation of the methodology

of all municipalities in Bulgaria.

We, eGovernment agency, work

in close cooperation

with the Ministry of Labour

and social policy during the process

and Disability people's organizations

to promote web Accessibility.

In July, the methodology

was presented

in front of National Council

for People with Disabilities,

which is a consultative body

of the Council of Ministers.

It gives us the field

of a platform of consultation of NGOs

and people with disabilities covering

different types of disabilities.

The chair is the Vice Prime Minister,

its members are deputy Ministers

of sectoral policy which has a link

with disability issues

as well as national representatives

of Disability people's organizations.

After a discussion they received

comments and recommendations

for methodology,

and improvements were accept.

In the National Council meeting,

it was decided

that they'll help us to involve

in the process of monitoring and testing

people with disabilities,

and which will start in October.

The process of development

of the document and trial testing,

we have many challenges, one of them

is an insufficient number of experts,

appropriate choice of automated tools,

absence of knowledge

and certification training

of web Accessibility,

and developing in-depth method.

I'm pleased to participate

in this event.

I expect to learn from other speakers

and use the opportunity

to exchange knowledge with people

dedicated to web accessibility.

Thank you for your attention.

JUNE: Thank you very much,

Ms Mircheska

for explaining to us the efforts

that Bulgaria has gone through already

and how you involved

disabled people from the beginning.

That's very good practice

as we've heard from previous speakers.

Thank you very much.

Don't forget you can enter questions

in the Question box as we go along.

Don't wait for the question break.

Otherwise we may be running behind,

as we're already slightly

behind schedule.

However, our next speaker is

Shadi AbouZahra

who works with the W3C

web Accessibility initiative.

He coordinates standardisation,

innovations accessibility priorities,

and international promotion.

So Shadi, over to you.

SHADI: Thank you very much,

it's a great honour to be here.

So, I'm the standards person,

talk about standards and hopefully

some resources

that can be helpful to you.

Today, several times

there has been mentioned

of the web content

Accessibility guidelines,

which is the international standard

for web Accessibility.

It defines core principles

such as perceivable, operable,

understandable and robust,

taken up in the directive.

It's important to recognise

the role of standards

because before this Directive,

we actually had varying requirements,

accessibility requirements

in different EU Member States,

and that's a great burden,

that's a great problem

to transfer knowledge, to transfer

tools and experiences.

So, through the European standard,

EN 301 549 we've heard about before,

the WCAG 2.1 has been adopted

in the EU.

Even though we're all focused right now

because it's the 23rd of September,

on content and evaluation

and how are we doing,

I think it's important to understand

Accessibility and their components.

Commissioner Dalli has mentioned

the important role of authoring tools

and the authoring process

in general.

How can you ensure Accessibility

without the process and the tooling

to create accessible content?

How can you support your employees

who are publishing content

that may not be technical and need

tools to support,

to maintain the level of Accessibility

on websites or mobile apps?

So there are more standards

in the field.

It's important to shed a light

on the authoring tool guidelines.

For example when you're procuring

a content management system

or other tools

that help you create content.

How do they support you

in Accessibility?

At W3C we also provide

many more resources,

I cannot get

into the detail of many of them,

as an evaluation methodology

for websites to help you guide

through the process of evaluation.

Guidance and a tool, open source tool

to help generate or help organizations

generate Accessibility statements,

developed by the Commission funding,

it's open source and available

so you can use it and reuse it

to adapt it to your own requirements

in your own Member States.

We have a list

of over 150 evaluation tools

that all serve different purposes

that you can use to filter

and to find the appropriate tool

for the task.

Also we have

a lot of advocational resources

for training I'll mention some

in a little bit.

But this has been said before,

Accessibility isn't just technical.

We need to focus on the guidance

and the awareness raising.

One of the current projects

that is coming to an end

called the way tools project focuses

specifically

on trying to harmonize

the different types of tools

and how they interpret

the guidelines.

Out of this project are

three open source testing entrance

that is coming out of the project

and also example implementations

and experiences here from Portugal

and Norway,

the national observatories,

we had an event yesterday,

some of you attended that,

and the resources

and slides will be shortly available

from that event.

Another project that we have is

a WAI guide project

focusing more on the training

and educational side.

We heard before that WCAG is

hard to understand,

but that's only part of the equation,

another part is

that also there's

a big lack of awareness.

The previous speaker mentioned it,

lack of awareness and lack of skills.

And the WAIguide project focuses

on developing training materials,

so you can try to expand

the capacities in your countries.

I must say this is one of the things

I may like about this Directive.

It doesn't only focus on the technical,

there is a responsibility

to promote awareness and build

training and capacities locally

so we can, actually, together,

manage Accessibility.

Just one last advertisement

based on the curricula

that I've been developed

through the WCAG project.

We also have a cooperation

with UNESCO where we develop

a free online course,

freely available.

You can find it from the WAI website,

and you can take that course.

It's also for nontechnical people

who are maybe project managers

or responsible for accessibility,

not maybe the actual developers,

to learn about what Accessibility

really means

and what are the terms

and the requirements.

I'll come to a close,

just let you know

these resources are

freely available on the website

W3C.org/WAI

for the web Accessibility initiative,

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you very much.

Information about technical resources,

but it's much more than the technology

and the resources are valuable for all.

We move to Denmark for final speaker

of this part of the panel discussion,

Stein Erik Skotkjerra who is an expert

on the field of inclusive design.

Over to you Stein Erik.

STEIN ERIK: Thank you very much,

June.

Dear colleagues,

congratulations to all of us.

I think we can say

on this very special day.

I think we all agree

this is an important milestone

on the journey

to a more accessible Europe.

So, my name is Stein Erik Skotkjerra,

I'm the CEO and cofounder

of the quite small for now

consulting company called Inklusio.

We're based in Denmark, we do work

with accessibility

and inclusive design from public sector

and private customers.

Trying to help them improve

their digital presences.

One of the interesting projects

we're working on is in this context is

that we've been awarded for supporting

the Danish Agency of digitization

in the monitoring of public websites

and overlaps in the coming year

and possibly longer.

we do this through a consortium,

consisting on Inklusio, so us,

and another company called

Special Minds IT.

It's a fantastic story

from many perspectives.

I, myself happen to be blind,

Special Minds IT only employ

consultants who are

on the Autism spectrum,

so I think we can say

we are a diverse group.

First and foremost, we are specialists

and experts at what we do,

but many of us experience

the Accessibility barriers on our own.

through our everyday lives,

so this is extra meaningful for us.

We're in the early stages

of defining the method and approaches,

that we'll be using

in this monitoring process

I'd like to point to some reflections

that we've made so far

and some challenges

to focus on in the future.

First of all, monitoring is

a key to any change process.

Without monitoring,

we have no idea what's going on,

what's going wrong,

what's going well,

therefore we can't prioritize

our efforts.

We need to be able to measure

these things

and it needs to be open

and transparent

so that anyone can reproduce

the findings that we achieve.

This is essential that we create

full trust in these processes

because it affects

a lot of public sector bodies,

a lot of users, therefore

we’ve chosen in our project

to work with open source

Accessibility evaluation software.

Namely one of those Shadi mentioned

in his presentation called Coweb.

We also use openly available

methodologies of Accessibility.

This this way anyone can inspect

what we've achieved

or what we've discovered

and they can reproduce it themselves.

When we work with monitoring

to be hung up in discussions

about tools, technologies

and methodologies

data is a powerful tool,

but data collection is not the goal.

The goal is to use data

for driving positive change.

furthermore, we need to create

as much learning as we can.

That is both

for the individual public sector body

that is monitored, so they can improve

and remove the barriers

that they identified

with along the way,

but it's also across Europe

so that we can create learnings

and prioritize our efforts.

We can gain insights into things

like what are

the most frequent usability barriers,

then we can have training materials,

issue specific guidance,

identify technological advancements

that can improve the situation.

Lastly I want to mention

that it's important

that user-centred approach is taken,

we can easily forget this

in our rush towards data

and large scale browsing.

Lastly some of the challenges

that we see,

we need to create platforms

to share the knowledge

that we all gained

in these processes.

Secondly, I call for more research,

the Accessibility field is very based

on practical experience

and a lot of personal knowledge

that we need to be able to build

or work on more solid documentation.

So to sum up we need to continue

sharing,

motivating and inspiring each other

to create this change

to get the max value

for the effort we put in.

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you so much,

both for your inspiring business model

and for the interesting presentation

you just and for perfect time keeping.

So thank you all very much.

Let our speakers have

a quick breath

while I formulate some questions

coming in from our many participants.

We'll start with a question for Bart,

at the very beginning,

perhaps the others may want

to chip in with this as well.

Bart, in the Netherlands, only 2,000

of the estimated 7,000 government

and public websites so far have

an Accessibility statement.

There are no sanctions or fines

for those missing 5,000 websites

that don't have

an Accessibility statement.

Are there tools that this Directive

offers to fix this?

BART: I'm not sure

that that is a question for me.

The directive itself doesn't foresee

any penalties if you want.

Maybe someone else.

My answer would be no.

JUNE: Gudrun, do you have

anything to add on that?

It's clear it's up to the Member States

how they transpose it.

The Accessibility directive

doesn't foresee fines.

We'll hear a review of the Directive

in the second half of the panel.

Another question in general:

what are the quality standards

to ensure Accessibility?

There is some exceptions

in the Directive but for example

when live events are broadcasted

on public websites

are there minimum requirements

of accessibility services?

Who wants to take that and if so,

could you put your camera and mic on?

SHADI: I could take this.

If that is okay. So...

(NO AUDIO)

The WCAG defines

Accessibility requirements

also for live events,

so for live media.

There are specific exemptions

in the directive as far as I know

on broadcasting because there is

other directives or other laws.

This is something that will might vary

from country to country.

Because as we know

the Directive is a minimum requirement

and countries can actually go

beyond that.

And in which exact law it would fall

in your country is different,

I hope in most European countries

there are some antidiscrimination laws

to require live content

to be accessible.

JUNE: Thank you very much.

There's another question for you,

Shadi, so maybe

you could stay online.

What are the biggest challenges

when moving a site,

a public administration site

from double A to triple A standard?

Are there some common shortcomings

of WCAG 2.1 accessible sites?

SHADI: Good question, I’d say

the core issue is expertise and skills,

There are often triple A requirements

that are low hanging fruit

depending on the website

you're working on, say for example,

colour contrasts, colour luminosity

to be technically correct.

If you consider that

from the beginning,

you may be able to meet

triple A requirements.

Others may be more tricky depending

on your website and application.

We're talking technicalities,

it comes down again to the skills

and process, are you really trying

to meet Accessibility

for the end users or are you trying

to tick off some boxes of a standard?

(...)

Oh, I was on mute, sorry,

I got my buttons wrong.

A question for Sweden or Bulgaria,

how have you managed

to involve persons with disabilities

namely with intellectual disabilities

Is there a standard for plain text

or easy reading in your language?

Elisabeth first,

thank you.

I'll start by answering

if we've involved people.

Yes, we've worked Asa and me

with an organisation called Biesznaun.

I have right now a woman

working with us,

and she's interviewing

people with intellectual disabilities

to understand the customer journey

for something called [SWEDISH],

that is something important

for people who are unemployed now

and some other agencies

that also work with us so...

Yes, we involve people

and organisations as much as possible.

JUNE: Thank you. Anything to add,

Asa or Stefania?

ASA: I can add something, we work

with an organization called Biesznaun.

We call this the user extreme users

because they are really good

at spotting things that are bad

in design and inaccessible things.

They have some cognitive disabilities

and are really good

at spotting the things

that doesn't work.

And, we are in a project called Digico

where we're trying to find

how to make cognitive...

Make it into the guidelines.

We find it hard that,

since most public sector goes

for the double A in the WCAG,

it's not so much cognitive...

...not much

about cognitive disabilities.

We're trying to find testable...

So you can use them in the law

in the future.

JUNE: Great. Thank you.

ELISABETH: Can I add something?

JUNE: Yes.

Thank you, I’d just like to add

that we're trying to systemize

that the public employment service

in inclusive design

where we actually do notice exclusion

and that we are actually designing

for people that is indeed,

that would be finally better

for all people using the design,

as Asa said.

If we design for persons

and if we do use them in user tests

we'll actually spot things

that will make better for everyone.

We had iterated it,

the Microsoft inclusive design toolkit

and added on the cognition cluster

on that.

We'll love to share that poster

as a support to inclusive design

JUNE: Thank you. Stefania,

what is the view of Bulgaria?

STEFANIA: Yes. Thank you.

Our agency is trying to involve

more people with disabilities

and covering different types

of disabilities.

Also we involved in that way

different people's organisations

Regarding accessibility, they're making

assistive technologies.

They use like screen readers

or [INAUDIBLE].

But we have another challenge,

our main one.

That is the right choose

of automated tools

from one hand

to two meters requirement

as a simplified [INAUDIBLE] criteria.

and for other is to find

more reliable result.

We know we have

many automated [INAUDIBLE]

for testing which all of them

are with open code

and free online testing

and they cover different criteria.

but to use such automated tools

is the main challenge for us now.

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you. Stein Erik,

I have a question for you.

What areas should be covered

by research?

What should be

the new research priorities?

STEIN ERIK: That's a good question.

I'd say everything

but a field we lack

of research on is,

and that actual users need

is a broad view of users.

Because we've been focusing

on users,

let's say, with blindness,

low vision, etc.

I'd like to see research

on cognitive disabilities,

on the connection between Accessibility

and other usability

and many other things

that we do today are primarily based

on ...I wouldn't say

anecdotic evidence

but at least on practical experience

from the experts in the field.

When we focus on standards

and guidelines that's all well,

I'd like to have more trust

in these standards

that actually represent

the user needs out there.

I know this work is going on

also with the W3C

but I'd really like to see the research

underpinning this work.

Also when it comes to standardization,

and standardisation it's crucial,

because we can't

although I'm a user involvement fanatic

we cannot involve users

in every little step in design

and development phase of products

or websites so we also need to have

some generalization to draw on

when we want to apply and focus.

So the research I'm wanting the most

is probably detailed research

on the needs of different user groups

so we can kind of distil those

and focus the user testing

on the outer areas of the Accessibility.

JUNE: Thank you very much.

Another question for you or Shadi.

How do you see

the role of artificial intelligence

in helping with web Accessibility?

Do you see it as a potential benefit

or a potential risk

or what's your view?

STEIN ERIK: I can go first

and then also Shadi.

I definitely see artificial intelligence

as a useful tool in the toolbox.

Not the only tool, I think the changes

need to happen in the organizations,

I don't believe artificial intelligence

will remove the Accessibility barriers.

But I'm sure artificial intelligence

will be key in identifying them,

also possibly in suggesting

how to fix the Accessibility barriers

that we find in the digital world.

Of course that raises

a lot of ethical challenges.

That is important to take it

into account as well.

JUNE: Thank you. Shadi,

would you like to add?

SHADI: I completely agree with him,

there's a specific question here

for example on the captions.

I think AI has an incredible potential

to support us

doing captioning more effectively.

But to my knowledge in many languages

the degree of accuracy...

It's still not fully reliable,

especially for technical terms

and other specific domains.

So we're still long way away

from being able to lean back

and rely AI that will do

everything for us.

There is a potential here

and maybe that reflects

the research request that Stein Erick

has been making here.

AI is important for Accessibility,

and we need more research in this area

to see how it can support us

in different ways.

JUNE: Thank you. Probably time

just for a final question.

I'll take questions until 25 past-ish

given that we're running a bit late.

Questions about awareness raising

within organizations.

Gudrun, would you like to start

with that and then the other panellist?

GUDRUN: Can you hear me?

JUNE: Yes.

Thank you. The Commission launched

a call for proposals last year,

and we intend to support a project

from next year to support Member States

and public sector bodies

in the implementation of the directive

It'll gather and make available

to all relevant stakeholders

resources on awareness raising,

training and monitoring and reporting.

Also look at technological advances

that are in the market

that could make Accessibility easier

for the content types

that are currently excluded

from the directive.

So this is something

I wanted to point out.

Now I give the floor to other people

that would like to answer too.

Thank you.

JUNE: If the panellist would have

a quick word on awareness raising,

Asa, over to you.

ASA: I find the users situation

in the EN standard really good to use

because everybody can be disabled

in different situations.

Like, if you sit with cell phone

in bright light,

it's hard for you to see contrasts.

And I use this

inside my organization

and usually that's a good thing

to raise awareness.

JUNE: Very practical

and very good answer. Thank you.

BART: If I can...

JUNE: Please, go on.

BART: Yeah, raising awareness is

essential

and to all levels in your organization,

from upper management to web editor.

It's important to know

what you're doing and why

if you're asked

to work on Accessibility.

In Belgium, we started already

with the web development students,

we go to high schools and give

a guest lecture every year

to the new students already

in first year to tell them

what is Accessibility, its benefits,

what happens if you won't work on it.

So as early as possible,

before they learn to make websites

that they already have

the experience of Accessibility

and how people with disabilities

use their apps and websites.

JUNE: Very interesting.

Thank you, Bart. Elisabeth?

ELISABETH: Yes, one thing

to raise awareness is also

that you can either get the team

or some executives

to actually witness when somebody use

a system, the Internet or the website,

and see how it's experienced.

And, also you can test yourself

with simulators and raise awareness

that way.

JUNE: Yes. We found that

very effective here as well.

I know we have a lot more questions

and I promise

the questions will be answered

after the event if they aren't answered

But, we'll now move

on to our second panel,

because we still have

a wonderful set of speakers for you.

And next panel starts

with Armony Altinier

who's worked with the French government

on implementing Accessibility standards,

for many years. Madam Altinier,

over to you.

I hope you're with us and you can put

your camera and microphone on.

ARMONY: I'm with you.

Thank you.

I'm looking for my window

to share the screen.

Can you see my screen?

JUNE: We can see it

very clearly now. Thanks.

ARMONY: I'm going to talk

about a project called Impact.

Bonjour. I'm French, I apologize

for my bad English.

I hope everyone will understand

what I'm talking about.

My name is Armony Altinier,

founder and CEO of Koena,

a social enterprise specialised

in digital Accessibility

I founded it in 2016, at the same time

as the Web Directive.

I’ve been working

as a web Accessibility consultant

for more than 13 years,

and if I created Koena,

it's because I think we need

a new perspective,

we need a European approach

because we have everything in France.

We have a law since 2005,

we have standard in French.

We have professionals,

some are really specialized.

We have experts in France.

And yet, nothing is accessible.

It doesn't really make a change.

So we created this European project

with four wonderful partners:

UAB in Spain, DCU in Ireland,

ECQA in Austria

and Normandie university in France

Inclusion is

at the heart of our project.

Impact means inclusive methodology

based on the perception of Accessibility

and compliance testing

and we think it's really important

to join these two dimensions,

not only compliance to standards,

but also to work

on the perception of Accessibility.

Because the problem is not

really problem of budget,

it's not a technical problem.

The problem is probably more cultural.

So, to start a project,

we wanted to collect some data,

so we made a survey to map

the situation of web Accessibility.

And we obtained participation

from abroad the EU.

You'll find the source next week

at the impact-access.eu website.

And we also had

a French study to know

if computer service companies

in France have the skills expected

to create web services compliant

with the Accessibility standards.

You'll have the link too.

And both studies published

in 2020 revealed

when asked do you think there is a need

for training in digital Accessibility?

there is a need of training,

even if many respondents are experts

they still need to be trained.

When we asked in the French study

in France

what are the main guidelines

for Accessibility,

and those guidelines exist since 2009,

so it's not new at all.

in France ignore

what are

the Web Accessibility Standards.

So, the aim of the Impact project

is to create a new job,

a digital Accessibility educator.

This new professional will be

an Ambassador

because we stated is many companies,

administrations or organizations

they tried to externalize,

to buy expertise

and it doesn't last in the long-term.

So we need people to be in charge,

inside the organization.

Their job will be a bridge

between technical and management teams

because it's really a problem

to communicate together.

The management team says

it's not our problem, it's technical,

and technical teams

don't have the funding to be trained.

The other challenge is to represent

the needs of users with disabilities.

So when we see

the web Accessibility directive,

we can just look at the EN 301 549

and have a big headache

or to see it as an opportunity

to improve your digital service

with the Universal Design approach.

Because together we are powerful

and I really think if we work together

we can move forward to the next step

at this big challenge

to make digital world really accessible

and inclusive for everyone.

JUNE: Thank you very much,

Armony.

Very insightful presentation

so thank you for sharing that.

Our next speaker from the UK is,

I'm told, George Rhodes,

who is passionate

about Accessibility statements.

Is this true, George? And if so,

can you please tell us more?

GEORGE: Absolutely. Thank you,

for the introduction.

So my name is George Rhodes,

Director a digital accessibility company

called Allable in the UK

we help with the digital accessibility

and you could say I'm an obsessive

of Accessibility statements.

I spent quite a lot of work

looking at Accessibility statements.

I've looked at several

from EU countries now

including 1824 from United Kingdom.

Most of these are

around government organizations.

JUNE: I don't want to interrupt

you straight away

but the quality of the audio

isn't good, could you speak louder

or more slowly or get your headset?

Please, try. Thank you.

GEORGE: Hopefully is that better.

Is it better if I speak up?

JUNE: That is better, yes,

thank you.

GEORGE: Okay, wonderful. Apologies.

I can recap slowly if it helps.

I've looked at Accessibility statements

in the last year or so.

Many, many over five countries now.

In the UK I've tried to expand my list

to include

not only low relevance,

but universities,  police forces,

Fire and rescue, colleges, NHS,

which is our health service,

disability assessment centres,

which support disabled students

and many industry regulators.

The outcomes of that research show

that local governments, universities,

in particular,

because I've really pushed

in education standpoints in the UK.

And police forces have all taken

quite a look of action

to get compliant statements out

while a few other groups,

[INAUDIBLE] NHS departments,

disability assessment centres

and industry regulators

are all lagging behind slightly.

I'd like to share a few examples

of some other countries I've looked at

and then touch

on a couple of common pitfalls.

First I'd like to mention is

why Spain and Denmark both use

common statement formats,

many of them achieving compliance

and useful statements along

with Denmark providing a platform,

which has allowed people like me

to sit and browse

Accessibility statements

to our heart's content.

We use a prescriptive approach

to Accessibility statements in the UK.

Our format is very set

and very detailed around

There are ways in which not just

the UK but everyone can move

to a more user-centred approach

for accessibility statements

[INAUDIBLE] in Luxembourg,

flatter governance structures,

many of the municipalities

which are all very small

and sometimes rural organizations

haven't engaged as much as we'd like.

The following example is

from a colleague of mine

Jules Ernst from the Netherlands.

He went even further

and he is looking

at the municipalities

and he's collecting information

not only about the statements

of those websites,

but about the tools and companies

that these organizations use

to deliver Accessibility

so can provide even more information

such as 80% of the municipalities

he has looked at have

some form of Accessibility statement

on their website,

of their website online

and 21% have already published

statements

on the Dutch centralized register

of Accessibility statements.

Finally, hopefully people

can still hear me.

I want to talk

about the common pitfalls,

The first one, disproportionate burden

that we mentioned earlier.

I see more than a hundred claims

using this clause within the directive

many of which don't have

a good evidence back up these claims.

Some of the excuses I've heard

have been quite shocking.

The other common pitfall

that many of us focus too much

on the legal wording of the statements

which makes them

too complicated for many users.

And I think we should focus

much more on delivering

good use of support and improving

user experience regarding statements.

That's it for me.

Please, contact me

with lists of organizations to look

at their Accessibility statements

because I’d like to built

this research community across the EU.

JUNE: Thank you very much.

That was interesting.

I'm sure there questions for you,

perhaps you could unplug

or replug your head set

before the question part.

We hate to lose more quality

on this end with you.

Thank you very much.

Now we move to our final panellist,

Alejandro Moledo

of the European Disability Forum.

He coordinates the EDF advocacy

towards the European Parliament

and a good friend of my unit.

Alejandro, welcome. Over to you.

ALEJANDRO: Thank you very much.

Can you see my screen?

JUNE: Yes, we can.

ALEJANDRO: Just a second.

Okay.

I’ll keep my camera off,

I'll connect it after.

First of all, thank you very much

to the colleagues from the Commission

for co-organizing

this important event with us.

I'm personally thrilled

to be part of it and to see

the result of many years and advocacy

from our members to ensure

that one hundred persons

with disabilities in Europe

can benefit

from inclusive digital public sector.

This is the end of it. Well, the end

of the legislative process,

but the beginning of a long journey

on improving

the Accessibility

of public sector websites.

This is what we want to end,

disabling websites to be able to enjoy

and benefit from all the services

and the eGovernment online.

Being the last one has the benefit

that I can refer

to all the great interventions

before.

But I have a little piece of news

for you, which is that from EDF,

from the European Disability Forum,

today we launched a survey

for users

on the web Accessibility Directive.

You can either use the QR code

you see on the slide

or the link that you can find

on the Chat box.

In this  in this survey we aim

at getting agreements

of how people with Disabilities see

and perceive

the Accessibility

of their public sector.

We also aim at understanding

how persons with disabilities perceive

and use the Accessibility statement

and the feedback

and enforcement mechanisms,

meaning how we can contact

the website owners to fix

an Accessibility problem

or to launch a complaint when we see

that Accessibility is not fixed.

So, I encourage you all to complete,

fill out this survey,

which is available

also in French and Spanish.

In order to be short, I’ll just go

through seven concrete considerations

that I want to make when it comes

to the directive we're discussing.

The scope of the directive,

as many of you know, had

it includes some exceptions

which in the current situation,

with the COVID-19 pandemic

has proven to be a mistake.

We hope and encourage Member States

to go beyond and to cover websites

and mobile applications of schools,

of nurseries, kindergartens, NGOs...

I don't include the websites

of public broadcasters

because this has been finally included

in the Accessibility Act,

which will also have a huge impact,

positive impact on web Accessibility.

We know there were many controversies

around the inclusion of intranets

and extranets, and what it means,

substantial renovation

of intranets and extranets,

and from our point of view,

these important tools

should be made accessible as well.

Otherwise a person with disabilities

couldn't to work in the public sector.

And this goes as well for software.

Many software used

in public Administrations

isn't accessible

to persons with disabilities

and that prevents

their full participation and their work

in the public sector.

This is already covered

by the public procurement legislation.

All public procurement must include

accessibility as precondition.

And now, as we heard before,

we have the European standard,

and we have the tools to make sure

this is the case.

Accessibility as we've heard

in this ongoing journey,

it won't be fixed

from one day to another.

We need or the public sector bodies

need to set to some priorities

to ensure that their websites

evolve and improve over time.

One of them will be not to focus

so much on little things,

as all my pictures have

alternative text.

First you need to make sure

the main goal of your website

that you're providing online

to citizens is accessible.

You can also invest

on accessibility professionals

in your staff

with the trainings available

with the resources mentioned before,

invest not only in money,

but also on time and resources

to be able to succeed.

And this is when it comes

to raising awareness mentioned before.

Accessibility should be understood

as a priority

in this technical specifications

or in contracts.

When a public body procures a website,

mobile application needs to bear in mind

Accessibility needs to be prioritized

and needs to be put very clear

with references to standards

in the public contract.

JUNE: Five minute warning,

Alejandro.

ALEJANDRO: Sorry about that.

I'll go very quickly.

The Accessibility statements

as George said

it's key to bear in mind

this must be useful for users.

First of all, sorry,

the Accessibility requirements.

I missed my slides. Here, just to comply

with the Accessibility standards,

but then go beyond for priority content

and I take advantage and mention

that today is

the international sign language day.

Content is important, for instance

could be posted in sign language.

Comfort tools, simply mention this

this should not be the solution,

this is a way to make

websites easier, such as Plugins,

Add-ons on websites,

and those don't make it accessible.

As I mentioned, this should be useful

for the users not just for compliance.

Monitor and reporting, I’ll mention

as the Swedish colleagues said,

it's important to exchange information

and this is the ultimate purpose

of monitoring and reporting

to improve and exchange best practice.

And involve users.

This is my last consideration,

which is, in the end, to test

with users what works best.

And the bonus track, I couldn't resist,

we need to start working on it,

because Accessibility isn't something

you can fix overnight.

We need to start working on that

because it's the preferred option

for many persons with disabilities.

And I thank you very much.

I also thank you, in advance

for filling out the survey

that we launched today.

Thank you.

JUNE: Thank you. Very interesting

and pertinent presentation.

We have again a lot of questions,

we'll try to fit in as many as we can

before our very final speakers.

I’ll start with questions

for Gudrun Stock,

our deputy, which are questions

for Commission colleagues.

When can we expect technical guides

or other standardized tools

for technical implementation

because there are problems in that.

Some kind of Accessibility tool

that could be a standard EU tool.

Gudrun: Can you hear and see me?

JUNE: We can.

Gudrun: Very good. We mentioned it

several times

throughout the discussion today

that we’re going to launch

the review

of the web Accessibility directive.

And there will be a public consultation

during that in around mid-next year.

For the time being, we don't have

firm plans for such tools,

but public will be consulted,

stakeholders can contribute

what they consider is missing

or what could help facilitate

or accelerate

the implementation of the directive.

This would be a prime opportunity

to contribute

and answer like that

to the consultation.

JUNE: Next one. When will

the latest version of the standard

on Accessibility of ICT products

and services be published?

GUDRUN: It was under review.

The process is for the Commission

to review the new version

and then to take internally a decision

if it's sufficiently different

from the previous version.

If that is so, it'll be published

in the official journal of the EU,

like the first version

of the standard was.

I cannot give a precise date

but it'll take,

if the Commission decides

to publish that standard,

a new version of it,

then it'll take a couple of weeks

or few months to finish the procedure

for publishing in the journal.

JUNE: So watch this space.

Question regarding enforcement.

What are the enforcement mechanisms

under the directive.

Are there fines similar to the case

of the famous GDPR?

GUDRUN: No fines are foreseen today.

Every Member States has to appoint

enforcement bodies

that users can turn to in case

they don't get a satisfactory answer

from public bodies that have made

available content not accessible.

Then citizens have the possibility

to turn to the Commission

if they consider

bad application of the directive.

And then the Commission will decide

how to treat the case,

when there is

a severe case of bad application

it could even be taken to the court.

There is no systematic scheme

or system of fines foreseen for now.

JUNE: A question for George.

I hope his sound is better now.

What do you mean by user friendly

regarding the Accessibility statement?

What do you recommend

public sector bodies to do?

to expand on the standard template?

How can you tell if this is working?

Three questions, not just one.

GEORGE: Hopefully my audio is

better now. My apologies for that.

When I say Accessibility statements

should be more user friendly,

considering I've read

so many of these now

and I've been involved

in some user research,

which was very interesting,

we worked with several disabled people

and I've seen other organizations

doing their own user research

including government departments,

the Accessibility statements are often

too focused on particularly wording.

The example that springs to mind

is disproportionate burden.

The phrasing of which I’ve heard

several disabled colleagues say

it makes them feel

like they are the burden

and it's disproportionate

for the organization to support them.

Which isn't the view

that should be taken at all.

This kind of language,

and other very legal forms

it doesn't help many users

as much as providing clear information

about issues, clear information

about work arounds,

and what you're doing

about the statements.

I’d encourage organizations

to make sure that they have

all of the legally required information

in their statements,

but go as far as they can to focus

and provide

detailed user support and information.

Variety of contact addresses

and other contact routes.

Clear and concise information

on issues.

And there are ways

in which you can do that.

There's advice online. I'm even aware

of matching systems now

that are coming out to support

organizations not just for compliance

but going steps further provide

truly useful statements

such as the aspire accreditation scheme

here in the UK.

JUNE: Thank you.

We're running out of time.

I'll share a couple of comments

to show the cooperation that is in place

A comment from Italy: we've developed

a national platform

to get the Accessibility statement

in compliance with the Directive model.

Belgium replied: We're delighted

to share our tools and standards

with other Member States.

So I hope today allows us to build

on the existing cooperation.

I'm sorry but we can't have

more questions.

We'll reply to all the questions

and you'll be sent the details of those.

Thank you to the panellist

for their interesting presentations.

Before our closing remarks,

we return to the European Commission.

I'm very happy to give the floor

to Lene Na...

I've practiced this, I do apologize.

Lene Naesager,

Director for Strategy

and cooperate communication

at the European Commission DG

for Communication.

Lene, apologies for messing up

your name, over to you.

LENE: No problem,

It's absolutely not an issue.

Thanks for the invitation, I'm pleased

to be with you today.

It's a very important subject.

Before starting my presentation

that will move fast with the slides.

I just want to share

something with you.

This question about Accessibility

is very important for me.

When I was a young girl, my mum,

she worked in a kindergarten

with blind children, so I've been,

in a way, introduced to the challenges

of people with disabilities

right from when I was two years old.

So it's really something

that is about people.

It's about how, also the European Union

can serve people out there.

And it's very important that we give

the largest possible access

to our websites and our applications.

And when we create the web content,

we always follow two rules.

First one is users first. So we can move

on the slides even more.

Yes, the lady there.

User first.

Everybody should be able

to navigate our sites easily.

This is really a key principle

that we have.

The next slide. The second rule is

that we need to be inclusive.

So, we must make our content

accessible to people with disabilities

and we welcoming

to as many users adds possible.

This is really key for us.

When we talk about that,

it's key that the web Accessibility

it's essential if we want to create

high quality websites

and not to exclude anybody.

How do we put that into practice?

It's quite a challenge,

as you can imagine.

As an institution, we communicate

with a lot of text.

We have like 90 public organizations.

Several hundred of websites.

And our role is really

in my Directorate, in my unit

dealing with Europa,

the European Commission

to bring order and consistency

in all this.

And, when we redesigned

The Commission's website,

where we seek to simplify the design

and the structure to it

to meet user needs also by providing

an accessible platform and navigation.

We did that on the basis

of a survey with 100.000 people.

And now this main serves as a gateway

to other Commission websites,

which is very important to note.

So, our main website has

many built-in accessible features.

For instance you can

magnify the text up to 500%.

All pages have

a skip-to-main-content button.

And the user interface is

a keyboard operable.

And we have quite a lot of success

in place to use the website.

There's about five million visitors

per month.

How are we ensure that we meet

user needs on all other websites?

There we have guidelines and standards

and we have

a detailed online governance manual

to be followed

by the services of the Commission.

This is a group for anyone

working on our websites

in the services of the Commission

that provides advice

on many aspects of web design,

including, of course, Accessibility.

And we also have asked

all the Commission websites

to comply with the version

of the 2.1 of the WCAG level AA

which is in line with the directive

you mentioned earlier today.

Of course, we're not alone.

We're working with Accessibility experts

to expand our guidance in this area.

We've also increased, which is

important in relation to monitoring

the Accessibility auditing

that we carry out,

as Stein Erik mentioned it's important

to be able to measure what we're doing.

This is really a key element

for us as well.

And lastly, we’ve developed

some technical tools

to make it easier to stick

to the rules that I just state out.

And we're building

a brand new publishing platforms

which, when finished will host

over more than one hundred websites

and our team's plan is to be able

to build an accessible site

in just a few days on the basis

of these new platforms.

So, we also offer catalogue

of accessible design building blocks

like buttons, list and filters.

Of course there's a lot of work

to do in this area,

and we're just in the start.

So, we've launched, recently

a new Accessibility programme

to keep us on track.

And we're working really hard

to remove any barriers

that could stop people

from using our web sites.

This was in short what we're doing

in the European Commission.

If you have any comments,

if you have any ideas

about how we can improve,

please let us know,

we're always available for that,

because it’s a very important issue.

We want all citizens to be able

to get the information that we have

on the Europa website

of the European Commission.

So thank you.

JUNE: Thank you, Lene.

Thank you for really showing

we do practice what we preach

at the European Commission

and we expect the same from ourselves

as from the Member States.

We've almost come

to the end of our time together.

But before we close, I'd really like

to thank the European Disability Forum

for their excellent co-hosting

in organizing this event.

And for hosting it really

so ably today.

And my warmest appreciation to my team

for all the hours and dedicated effort

that has gone into making

this afternoon run smoothly.

Very well done to all involved.

We'll finish with a surprise visit

from the Commissioner

for the internal market, Thierry Breton.

Although he couldn't be with us

in person today,

he was determined to show

his support for this event

and the cause of digital Inclusion.

So Mr Breton,

we now have a video from you.

MR BRETON: Ladies and gentlemen.

Today is an important deadline.

Today is the day,

by which the websites

of all public sector bodies

across the European Union have

to be accessible

for persons with disabilities.

Web Accessibility is not only

about common technical standards.

or architecture and design.

It is an issue of political will

and it is a moral obligation

in the United Nations Convention

on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

to which the EU and it's Member States

are party.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted

more than ever the fundamental need

for online public information

and services to be accessible for all.

Web Accessibility increases

inclusion, autonomy

and participation for persons

with disabilities in the digital sphere.

It helps public sector bodies

to live up to their goal task.

Global accessibility requirements

harmonize the market and help

our companies in particular SMEs

to offer their services

even more boldly.

Before the Web Accessibility Directive

was adopted in 2016

less than 10% of websites

in the EU were accessible.

The Web Accessibility Directive

is a game changer

even if it is still

in an early stage of implementation.

This is why we intend to continue

without any hesitation

along the path to Accessibility.

The first monitoring report

by Member States will come next year

It will give us the baseline,

in terms of Accessibility

of public sector websites

and mobile apps across all Europe.

In parallel, we will launch

the review of the directive.

On this basis, we will be able to see

what more is needed.

Of course, this is only a part, albeit,

of paramount importance

of our efforts

to digital Accessibility.

As you know we have embedded

Accessibility

in the Audiovisual Media

Services Directive

and the European Electronic

Communications Code

to name just a few pieces

of legislation.

I am committed

to see these two important

regulatory frameworks implemented

in full in all Member States

as soon as possible.

Moreover, we intend to make full use

of the digital education Action Plan

and of the digital Europe programme

to ensure that all Europeans,

young people and adults

with and without Disabilities

have the skills they need they need

for life and work in the digital age.

We also want to train

ICT professionals on Accessibility .

This is a crucial step

if you want all websites,

audiovisual media services,

transport,

banking, eCommerce services

as well as eBooks

to be accessible by 2025.

This is also an opportunity

for web and App developers.

Skill and expertise gained

when making public websites

and mobile apps accessible

will be indispensable, I said,

when the requirements will be implemented

also in the private sector.

Finally, let me recall

that we are funding research

and innovation projects

towards digital inclusion.

There are good ideas out there

for future research in this field.

For example, the potential

of artificial intelligence

for improving Accessibility solutions

is huge.

These are examples

of what we intend to support

under horizon Europe

in the near future.

Let me conclude with personal

and heartfelt thanks to all of you.

With your participation today,

you constant dedication and your ideas,

you have shown we all share

a clear commitment.

We have a common goal,

everyone,

including persons with disabilities

must be able to benefit from technology.

Let's continue to work together

to build

an accessible digital Europe

for everyone.

JUNE: I found that speech

from Commissioner Breton inspiring.

We had

a very intense afternoon together

and I hope you found the discussions

as enlightening as I have.

It's given us all food for thought.

Thanks to you all,

participants and speakers

for celebrating

this landmark day today.

It shows how Europe can make

a difference to the lives of millions

and the Commission's commitment

to make Europe fit for the digital age.

I thank all those

who have worked tirelessly

since the directive was adopted

in 2016

to make digital Accessibility a reality.

Perhaps not a perfect reality yet,

but a huge progress has been made.

Whether you're from the tech industry,

the public sector, academia,

not for profit, with

or without disabilities

we all have a role to play

as Commissioner Breton has just said.

Today is an important date

but it isn't the final destination.

Next year, already sees

the deadline for mobile apps,

the reporting and a public consultation

as the directive is reviewed.

Please make your views heard once

that public consultation is launched.

To mark the date when the mobile apps

have to be accessible

we're planning another event

on the fifth of June 2021.

Pandemic permitting,

it'll be in Brussels,

We very much look forward

to seeing you there, so save the date.

Thank you for your patience

this afternoon.

I'm glad we haven't overrun too badly.

Please respond

to the two surveys awaiting you,

the one from EDF and our short survey

that will come directly after the event

to help us do better next time.

Have a good evening,

and let's work together

for a more accessible future,

thank you.