



**To:**

Members of the European Parliament

**Brussels, 30 January 2017**

Ref. EDF-017-03-YV

**RE: Open letter to Members of the European Parliament concerning the European Accessibility Act**

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

After reading the draft report of the IMCO Committee on the European Accessibility Act (2015/0278(COD)), published on 6 January 2017, the European Disability Forum, AGE Platform Europe, and ANEC are **deeply concerned about the direction that this report is taking**. It is watering down the Commission proposal and we believe it threatens to lead to an unambitious position of the European Parliament which will not represent the interests of EU consumers, nor promote their rights effectively, including 80 million persons with disabilities and 190 million citizens aged 50 and older.

Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) obliges parties to guarantee access "*on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and system, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.*" The proposal for the Accessibility Act foresees that only certain products and services need to be accessible, such as smartphones, tablets and computers, ticketing machines and check-in machines, televisions and TV programmes, banking and ATMs, e-books, and online shopping. Even the Commission proposal is limited compared with the obligations under the UNCRPD.

EDF, AGE Platform Europe, and ANEC would like to draw your attention to the draft report and particularly to several key elements which threaten to adversely affect the scope, the accessibility requirements, the linkages to other Union acts, the definitions, and the mechanisms persons with disabilities can use to complain. **If these amendments are enacted, the proposed law will not make any real improvement to the lives of EU citizens.**

We disagree with

- completely removing accessibility of the **built environment** (AM 61), especially as we were trusting the European Parliament to propose the full inclusion of the built environment in the Act



- removing key **accessibility requirements** from Annex I, and the use of general **functional performance criteria** instead, regardless of the nature of the products and services concerned
- excluding **micro-enterprises** from the scope and weakening the obligation for SMEs to notify (AMs 17 & 43)
- the claim that existing **accessibility requirements in transport** are sufficient (AMs 7, 8, 56, 57, 58, 59)
- diluting the references to **other Union Acts** that mention accessibility, such as the Public Procurement Directive, the Trans-European-Networks Regulation, and Structural Funds (AMs 10 & 100)

Over the past five years, the European Parliament has expressed on a multitude of occasions, including in resolutions, its support for an ambitious European Accessibility Act, with strong, binding measures to improve the accessibility of goods and services in the EU market for persons with disabilities. The Parliament also has a strong recent track record on accessibility issues and very recently achieved an excellent result with the adoption of the Web Accessibility Directive.

At a time when the fundamental principles of the European Union are being challenged, we believe the European Parliament needs to demonstrate to its citizens that it can and does improve their lives and that it does make a difference – for the better, and not for the worse. The Parliament can also help make the EU a world leader in accessibility and innovation by stimulating the internal market in accessible products and services.

**This is an opportunity for the European Parliament to show again that it is the strong voice defending the rights and interests of its citizens. We urge MEPs to adopt a position that ensures the European Accessibility Act lives up to its name and leads to a more accessible and more forward-looking Europe.**

We would be happy to reply to questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Yannis Vardakastanis  
EDF President

Anne-Sophie Parent  
Secretary-General of AGE Platform Europe

Stephen Russell  
Secretary-General of ANEC



**The European Disability Forum (EDF)** is an independent NGO that represents the interests of 80 million people with disabilities in Europe and promotes the implementation and monitoring of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which the EU concluded, along with 27 of its member states. Currently, we are focusing on ensuring that EU legislation and policies are enacted which effectively implement the UNCRPD, and therefore the European Accessibility Act is of key importance to us.

**AGE Platform Europe** is a European network of non-profit organisations of and for people aged 50+, which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 190 million citizens aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most. Our work focuses on a wide range of policy areas that impact on older and retired people. These include issues of anti-discrimination, employment of older workers and active ageing, social protection, pension reforms, social inclusion, health, elder abuse, intergenerational solidarity, research, accessibility of public transport and of the build environment, and new technologies (ICT).

**ANEC** is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and conformity assessment, as well as related legislation and public policies.