

# Assessment of the Status of eAccessibility in Europe

## Report of the MeAC ("Measuring Progress of eAccessibility in Europe") study

### The European policy context

The "Measuring progress of eAccessibility in Europe" (MeAC) study was launched as part of the follow-up to the European Commission's Communication on eAccessibility of 2005. This Communication highlighted the need for improving access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by people with disabilities. It also announced that a follow-up on the eAccessibility situation would be made two years after the Communication, at which time the Commission may consider additional measures. The current report supports that follow-up, providing the results of an extensive benchmarking exercise and analysis on the status and progress of eAccessibility in Europe.

eAccessibility is one of the priorities within the eInclusion pillar of the 'i2010' initiative, the European Commission's strategic policy framework on the information society and media until 2010. The 2006 Riga Ministerial Declaration on 'ICT for an inclusive society' confirmed European commitment to eAccessibility. The Commission Communication on eInclusion of November 2007, amongst other, follows up on the eAccessibility Communication of 2005 and identifies further steps.

The current report from the MeAC study was prepared as background input to the eInclusion Communication and further steps in EU policy.

### Research approach & methods

Against this background, the evidence-base and analysis presented in the MeAC report focuses on three core questions:

- What is the current eAccessibility status situation in Europe as a whole and across the Member States?
- How well-developed is current eAccessibility policy at EU-level and across the Member States?
- What conclusions can be drawn in support of decision-making about possible future needs for reinforced or new policy measures at EU-level?

A major data gathering programme was implemented to compile the information needed to answer these questions, including:

- Survey of the policy situation in relation to eAccessibility in the EU Member States and in selected comparison countries (Australia, Canada, United States)
- Measurement of the status of eAccessibility in each of these countries on a common set of selected key indicators
- Surveys of key stakeholders (ICT industry, user organisations, and public procurement officials)
- Desk research.

This report provides the most complete dataset ever on eAccessibility in Europe and beyond.

### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the information provided in this document.

### Highlight results

Overall, the results show that there is only limited progress towards eAccessibility detected in Europe, and further EU-level measures need to be considered to stimulate progress in eAccessibility. Three key findings underpin this conclusion:

- **The eAccessibility 'deficit':** People with disabilities in Europe continue to be confronted with many barriers to usage of the everyday ICT products and services that are now essential elements of social and economic life. Such eAccessibility deficits can be found across the spectrum of ICT products and services, for example telephony, TV, web and self-service terminals.
- **The eAccessibility 'gap':** From a comparative perspective, the eAccessibility situation for people with disabilities across Europe as a whole, in terms of both eAccessibility status and eAccessibility policy, compares very unfavourably with that comparison countries examined in the MeAC study (AU, CA and US).
- **The eAccessibility 'patchwork':** Finally, the situation across Europe for both eAccessibility status and eAccessibility policy is very much a patchwork at present. The overall picture shows many important gaps, uneven attention across the spectrum of eAccessibility themes, and wide disparities across the Member States.

To address these issues, the report presents a range of policy options for consideration. These include better leveraging of existing measures, strengthening of existing measures and introduction of new measures.

### The study team

The MeAC study (2006 – 2008) is jointly conducted by:

- empirica Communication and Technology Research, Bonn
- Work Research Centre, Dublin

in cooperation with

- The Royal National Institute for Deaf People, London
- The Royal National Institute for Blind People, London
- eWORX S.A, Athens

The current report (including annexes), was compiled and edited by Kevin Cullen (WRC), Lutz Kubitschke and Ingo Meyer (both Empirica) with input from all team members.

The study is financed and conducted for the unit ICT for inclusion of the European Commission, DG Information Society and Media (INFSO-H3).

The full report (including annexes), as well as information on EU eAccessibility policy are available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/einclusion](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/einclusion)