

Broadcasters and disability organisation draw up common recommendation on future EU rules for audiovisual access services

The European Disability Forum (EDF), the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACT) have made a common proposal to improve the accessibility of audiovisual media services for persons with disabilities. Broadcasters and the umbrella organisation of the European disability movement reached this agreement upon the initiative of the Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Petra Kammerevert, who is preparing the European Parliament's report on the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD).

BRUSSELS, 14 February 2017. EDF, EBU and ACT (the “signatories”) today released a common proposal to introduce progressive and sustainable measures for the delivery of accessible audiovisual programmes in Europe. The signatories expect these measures to enhance the accessibility of TV programmes for persons with disabilities, in particular via subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, audio description, spoken subtitles and sign language interpretation, also known as access services.

The common proposal aims to improve existing wording on audiovisual accessibility under Article 7 of the 2010 Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), which EU legislators are currently reviewing. A large number of stakeholders and EU decision-makers have highlighted the need to maintain and develop the AVMSD's provisions on access services.

MEP Petra Kammerevert (S&D, DE), newly elected Chair of the Culture Committee and co-rapporteur on the European Parliament's report on the Directive, must be credited for her encouragement to stakeholders to work together and for kick starting initial discussions. Signatories call on Members of the Parliament and Council to support this proposal in their ongoing discussions towards a finalised text.

Rodolfo Cattani, EDF Secretary General, stated: “Persons with disabilities have the right to enjoy audiovisual content as anybody else, and that is why the AVMSD has to make sure that the programmes, both broadcasted and on-demand, incorporate access services. If adopted, we will be closer to a fully inclusive media environment. However, we still need to cover the accessibility of the equipment, information, and gateways to this content, such as TV equipment, electronic programming guides, websites and mobile applications, in other EU legislations”.

EBU European Advocacy Adviser Jacques Lovell stated: "Europe's Public Service media is committed to offering programmes for all segments of society. Making sure that persons with disabilities can follow TV programmes is very important. By supporting this common proposal, we hope that public service broadcasters can build on their track record in the area of audiovisual accessibility and continue innovating to offer state-of-the-art subtitling, audio-description and sign-language interpretation."

Grégoire Polad, Director General of ACT in Europe, stated: “This agreement pays testament to the fact that by working together stakeholders can develop consensual and balanced outcomes. Commercial broadcasters in Europe are keen to get their content to all Europeans developing innovative and user-oriented accessible services in the process. The agreed approach is ambitious yet proportionate; allowing for a sustainable and bright future for EU access services”.

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Association of Commercial Television in Europe

The Association of Commercial Television in Europe represents the interests of leading commercial broadcasters in 37 European countries. The ACT member companies finance, produce, promote and distribute content and services benefiting millions of Europeans across all platforms. A healthy and sustainable commercial broadcasting sector that plays an important role in Europe's economy, society and culture.

For more information please consult www.acte.be

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European Broadcasting Union

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is the world's foremost alliance of Public Service Media, providing television, radio and online services. The EBU has 73 active members in 56 countries in Europe and beyond. The organisation provides technical expertise in order to drive media innovation and coproduction across every entertainment genre and advocate the values of Public Service Media organisations.

For more information please consult www.ebu.ch

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European Disability Forum

EDF is an independent non-governmental organisation that represents the interests of 80 million people with disabilities in Europe. EDF promotes the implementation and monitoring of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) which the EU and almost all its member states have ratified. EDF is focusing on ensuring that EU legislation and policies are in line with the UN CRPD, and therefore the adoption of a meaningful European Accessibility Act is of vital importance to us.

For more information please consult www.edf-fehp.org

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Annex - Article 7 AVMS Directive – Agreed text & recital language

Article 7 is replaced by the following:

1. Member States shall develop appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure that services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction are made progressively accessible to persons with disabilities. These measures shall be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including media service providers and organisations of persons with disabilities.
2. Measures taken should be notified to the European Commission, the contact committee and ERGA without delay. The Commission and the ERGA shall facilitate the exchange of best practices, such as the quality aspects and common pictograms, between audiovisual media service providers.
3. The measures referred to in paragraph 1 shall include a requirement that media service providers report on an annual basis to Member States about the steps taken and progress made in respect of progressively making their services accessible to persons with disabilities. Member States shall ensure that this information is communicated to the national regulatory bodies.
4. The measures referred to in paragraph 1 shall encourage audiovisual media service providers to develop accessibility action plans in respect of progressively making their services accessible to persons with disabilities. Such action plans shall be communicated to national regulatory authorities.
5. Member States shall ensure that emergency information, including public communications and announcements in natural disaster situations, made available to the public through audiovisual media services, be provided, in an accessible manner for persons with disabilities, in more than one sensory channel.
6. Member States shall encourage that audiovisual media service providers aim, through their content production, programming, editorial policies, and training schemes, to deliver access services.

Recital

The provisions about accessibility for persons with disabilities referred to in article 7 only apply to audiovisual media services as defined in article 1.a of this Directive, namely programmes. Access services to improve accessibility of audiovisual media services means a service such as audio description, subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, spoken subtitles and sign language interpretation.