Accessibility requirements for products and services

2015/0278(COD) - 07/06/2019 - Final act

PURPOSE: to make products and services more accessible to the citizens of the European Union, in particular the elderly and people with disabilities.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility requirements for products and services.

CONTENT: it is estimated that more than 80 million people in the EU have some degree of disability. This accessibility legislation provides for accessibility requirements for essential products placed on the market after 28 June 2025, such as:

- self-service terminals for the purchase of passenger transport tickets;

- consumer banking services;

- telephone and internet services;

- e-commerce;

- e-books;

- calls to the emergency number 112.

Common accessibility requirements

The new Directive makes products and services more accessible by (i) establishing technical standards, (ii) introducing compliance monitoring and (iii) setting up a monitoring mechanism.

Under the Directive:

- products must be designed and manufactured in such a way as to ensure optimal predictable use by people with disabilities and must be accompanied by accessible information on their functioning and accessibility features, as far as possible included in or on the product;

- the product, including its user interface, shall include features and functions that enable persons with disabilities to access, perceive, use, understand and control the product;

- where appropriate, helpdesks (helpdesks, call centres, technical support, relay services and training services) shall provide information on the accessibility of the product and its compatibility with assistive technologies, in accessible modes of communication.

Accessibility requirements shall only apply to the extent that compliance: (i) does not require a significant change in a product or service that results in a fundamental change in its nature; and (ii) does not impose a disproportionate burden on the economic operators concerned.

The Directive provides for lower requirements and obligations for microenterprises operating in the field of manufacture, import or distribution of products falling within its scope. All microenterprises are encouraged to provide services that comply with the requirements set out in the Directive.

Possible solutions

Annex II of the Directive provides a list of non-binding indicative examples of possible solutions to help meet the essential accessibility requirements, such as:

- provide visual, tactile and auditory information so that blind and deaf people can use a self-service terminal;

- include in an ATM a software connector and software to connect a headset that will retransmit the text on the screen in sound form;

- allow users to enlarge a text, zoom in on a specific pictogram or enhance contrast, so that people with visual impairments can perceive the information;

- avoid flashing images, so that people with epilepsy are not put at risk.

Working Group

The Commission shall establish a working group consisting of relevant authorities and stakeholders to facilitate exchange of information and of best practices and to provide advice. This working group shall facilitate the exchange of information and best practice between market surveillance authorities, foster cooperation between authorities and relevant stakeholders.

By 28 June 2030 at the latest and every five years thereafter, the Commission shall present a report on the application of the Directive.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 27.6.2019.

TRANSPOSITION: no later than 28.6.2022.

APPLICATION: from 28.6.2025.

Member States shall provide for a transitional period ending on 28 June 2030 during which service providers may continue to provide their services using products which were lawfully used by them to provide similar services before that date. Service contracts agreed before 28 June 2025 may continue without alteration until they expire, but no longer than five years from that date.