# AccessibleEU Centre in support of accessibility policies in the EU internal market

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The European Parliament adopted by 611 votes to 3, with 9 abstentions, a resolution on the AccessibleEU Centre in support of accessibility policies in the EU internal market.

Parliament recalled that accessibility is an essential precondition for persons with disabilities to fully enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is one of the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is legally binding on the EU and its Member States.

More than 87 million people in the EU have some form of disability. Member States must ensure that the principle of **accessibility is mainstreamed** at all levels, not only in buildings, spaces and public transport, but also in health and education, and to increase the mobility and integration of people with disabilities.

***Improving the implementation of legislation***

Parliament welcomed the Commission's communication ‘Union of Equality: European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030’ and the Commission's initiative, announced in the strategy, to create the AccessibleEU Centre (the Centre).

The EU has put in place a comprehensive legal framework for accessibility in the single market, which includes, *inter alia*, the European Accessibility Act, the Web Accessibility Directive, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and the Electronic Communications Directive, as well as technical specifications for stations and vehicles. However, Members regretted that the implementation of this legislation varies considerably from one Member State to another and is not satisfactory to date, mainly due to the **lack of qualified accessibility experts**.

The resolution therefore stressed the need to **improve overall knowledge**, as well as practical and theoretical expertise, of accessibility policies among public administrations, economic operators and society in general. In this context, the Centre should be an important resource for providing knowledge and support to Member States during the implementation phase.

Members called on the Commission to ensure that the Centre is provided with the **necessary funding and staffing** for its establishment and operation and on Member States to ensure the necessary resources for the implementation and enforcement of accessibility policies, including through the use of EU funds.

***Structure***

Parliament called on the Commission to establish a **secretariat and a forum** to steer and direct the work of the Centre. It considered it necessary to have a balanced participation in the forum of relevant stakeholders from the private and public sectors and of right-holders with relevant experience in accessibility. The participation of organisations representing people with disabilities should be guaranteed as an essential part of the Centre's work.

Members believe that **sub-groups of subject matter experts** are needed for certain areas, such as the built environment, public procurement, digital accessibility, media and culture, and assistive technologies. These groups should cooperate closely with the Centre, Member States, people with disabilities and organisations representing people with disabilities.

Member States should establish **national accessibility hubs**, including contact points, and mirror groups of specialists who will work closely with the Centre to ensure the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of accessibility legislation and to facilitate exchange and coordination between relevant stakeholders and right-holders.

***Mandate***

Members considered that the Centre should function as a **hub for exchange**, providing regular support and expertise on accessibility policies and technical requirements to relevant EU institutions and bodies, as well as to Member States when implementing EU law.

The Centre should in particular:

- establish and coordinate a **cooperation framework** that would bring together the relevant national and Union bodies with all user groups, to support harmonised implementation and enforcement across the EU, provide guidance and training, and to inspire policy developments and innovation at national and EU level, including through the identification and sharing of best practices across sectors;

- encourage collaboration between relevant bodies and organisations with highly innovative stakeholders to **promote the development of assistive technologies**, and provide advice to the relevant EU institutions and bodies and its Member States on their internal accessibility policies and practices;

- identify and assist in addressing gaps and inconsistencies in existing legislation, to make policy recommendations for the updating and development of accessibility legislation, mainstreaming accessibility into all relevant policies under the responsibility of different Commission Directorates-General;

- **generate knowledge** on accessibility through research and studies and make it available to both the Commission and the Member States, and collect specialised, comparable and fully accessible information and data, including feedback on the implementation of accessibility legislation;

- provide the Commission and the Member States, stakeholders and right holders with **knowledge and support for the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of accessibility policies**, including through training and guidance material in all official EU languages and in accessible, understandable and easy-to-read language;

- support Member States in developing **specific educational programmes** on accessibility issues and provide training to professionals, EU and national officials, as well as relevant stakeholders and right-holders, in order to raise awareness of these issues.

- help overcome inconsistencies between the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and EU policies, and to help Member States achieve the primary objective of increasing the employment rate of people with disabilities.

***Standardisation system***

Members regretted that the standardisation system does not sufficiently allow people with disabilities and their representative organisations to participate on an equal footing with other stakeholders in the activities of European and national standardisation bodies when they develop accessibility standards. They therefore called for a **better representation in the standardisation system** and a balanced representation among the appointed experts, to ensure that EU accessibility legislation and standards are fair.