



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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SOC 139**

LEGISLATIVE ACTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Subject : Council Resolution on the eEurope Action Plan 2002: Accessibility of public web sites and their content

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

of

on the eEurope Action Plan 2002:
Accessibility of Public web sites and their content

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the eEurope 2002 Action Plan adopted by the Santa Maria da Feira European Council in June 2000 to enable all citizens to participate in the opportunities provided by the Information Society,

Whereas:

- (1) The Commission, in its communication of 25 September 2001, focused on one of the specific objectives of the eEurope Action Plan 2002: improving access to the web for the 37 million people with disabilities in Europe and for the growing number of older persons, who may be unable to access the information and services offered by the new media.
- (2) The Web Accessibility Initiative by the World Wide Web Consortium has developed a series of guidelines including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ¹ (hereinafter referred to as "the Guidelines") which have become a *de facto* standard used world-wide for the creation of accessible web sites.
- (3) The abovementioned Commission communication draws, inter alia, the following conclusions:
 - National administrations should seek constantly to improve the accessibility of their web pages and explore new and better ways to deliver web content and services as new technologies and new versions of the Guidelines are developed.
 - The eEurope web site will present the progress towards adoption and implementation of the Guidelines by the European Institutions and the Member States.
 - Measures for awareness-raising, dissemination, education and especially training in Web accessibility should be promoted in both the European institutions and the Member States.

¹ <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/>

- Within the framework of the eEurope Action Plan, Member States should encourage not only national public web sites but also local and regional public web sites to comply with the Guidelines.
 - There should be a major initiative devoted to achieving overall accessibility of both public and private web sites during the year 2003, the European Year of Disabled People.
- (4) The Transport/Telecommunications Council of 15 October 2001 took note of the Commission communication.
- (5) The Employment and Social Policy Council of 8 October 2001 adopted a resolution on "e-inclusion - exploiting the opportunities of the Information Society for social inclusion".
- (6) The conclusions drawn up by the Presidency regarding the results of the informal conference on new technologies and disability, which was held in Madrid on 6 and 7 February 2002, stressed *inter alia* the need for measures to encourage web accessibility in the Union.

Bearing in mind:

- (1) the European objective to integrate everyone, particularly people with disabilities and older people into the information society, as expressed in the eEurope 2002 Action Plan;
- (2) that lack of accessibility to the new communication media is a major obstacle to be removed if progress is to be made towards participation by everyone in the Information Society;

- (3) that there are examples of good practice in some Member States as regards training and support for those responsible for web pages and awareness-raising for information officers and managers, as well as for content creators, regarding the Guidelines and their objectives;
- (4) that, though progress has been made by the Member States regarding the specific eEurope Action of adopting the guidelines, work should continue on the implementation of those guidelines in order to achieve the underlying eEurope objective of ensuring that all public web sites are accessible;
- (5) that accessibility to the web is an integral part of public information policy in some countries within and outside the Union and, in such cases, legislation or other policy instruments can provide valuable incentives for web sites to be accessible;
- (6) that technological progress is making it easier to implement the Guidelines and to validate the compliance of web sites with the Guidelines.

Therefore:

1. STRESSES the need to increase efforts to speed up accessibility to the web and the content it offers;
2. ENCOURAGES the Member States to implement specific and adequately-resourced measures to achieve the underlying objective of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan for accessibility of public web sites at all levels of government;

3. INVITES the High Level Group on the Employment and Social Dimension of the Information Society (ESDIS) to monitor progress in the adoption and implementation of the Guidelines and to develop common methodologies and comparable data so as to facilitate the evaluation of progress;
4. ENCOURAGES the Member States and the Commission to take account of the need for digital content to be accessible, for example by, when funding development of websites, requiring those websites to implement the Guidelines;
5. CALLS on the Member States and the Commission to participate in the European Year of People with Disabilities in 2003 and to improve web accessibility, awareness and training, and on the Commission to submit in the first half of 2004 a report giving an overview of progress made;
6. URGES the Member States and the Commission to further develop a permanent dialogue with representative organisations of people with disabilities and organisations representing older persons, so that their reactions to these matters may be taken into account.

