

01. What is accessibility?

Definition

Web accessibility is about ensuring that everyone, including people with disabilities, such as visual, hearing, motor or cognitive impairments, is able to use and interact with websites and applications.

To achieve this, the European Commission requires that all its **websites, mobile and web-based applications**, comply with the [Web Accessibility Directive](#) (Directive (EU) 2016/2102).

The relevant technical rules are set out in [European accessibility standard EN 301 549](#), which closely follows the industry standard, the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#).

The target compliance level is [WCAG 2.1, Level 'AA'](#).

Creating content in line with these standards will ensure that all users – regardless of the device or software they are using – can access and use the information, services, and tools we provide. **However, always think about your users, not just about being compliant.**

Rules

To meet the European Commission's web accessibility standards, websites and mobile apps must comply with [EN 301 549 v3.2.1](#) and [WCAG 2.1, Level 'A'](#).

WCAG Principles

The European Commission uses the industry standards "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines" (WCAG) published by the [Web Accessibility Initiative](#) (WAI) of the [World Wide Web Consortium](#) (W3C), the standards organisation for the web. Each guideline has testable 'success criteria' (61 in total). WCAG divides the success criteria into three "levels" of accessibility (A, AA and AAA) that require increasing effort to implement.

WCAG consists of [four design principles](#):

Perceivable

- [provide text alternatives for non-text content](#)
- [provide captions and other alternatives for multimedia](#)
- [create content that can be presented in different ways](#)
- [make it easier for users to see and hear content](#)

Operable

- [make all functionality available from a keyboard](#)
- [give users enough time to read and use content](#)
- [do not use content that causes seizures or physical reactions](#)
- [make it easier to use inputs other than keyboard](#)

Understandable

- [make text readable and understandable](#)
- [make web pages appear and operate in predictable ways](#)
- [help users avoid and correct mistakes](#)

Robust

- [make sure content can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents](#)

Obligations for Commission site owners

All Commission websites and mobile apps must meet level 'AA' as a minimum.

NEW SITES (incl. revamps) AND EXISTING SITES (when significant changes are made)
1. evaluate your site's level of accessibility
2. send an evaluation report with a timeframe for improvements to COMM Europa Management
3. design a feedback mechanism
4. publish an accessibility statement (linked to from the footer of the site or for each application)

Legal background

The [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCPRD\)](#) is an international, legally binding instrument setting minimum standards for the rights of people with disabilities. All European Union (EU) Member States have signed and ratified it. The main elements of the UN Convention are reflected in the [European disability strategy 2010-2020](#).

Web accessibility action plan

As part of [its disability rights strategy for 2021-2030](#), the Commission committed to adopting an [action plan](#) on web accessibility. This plan will help ensure compliance of EU websites, including documents published on these websites and online platforms, with European accessibility standards. Specifically, it requires web-based content to comply with the latest version of WCAG.

DG Communication has been mandated to implement the Commission's [web accessibility action plan](#) by 2025.

Related links

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) Overview](#)

[Understanding WCAG 2.1](#)

[Techniques for WCAG 2.1](#)

[How people with disabilities use the web](#)

[Web accessibility fundamentals](#)

[E-Learning on creating accessible publications](#)

Contacts and support

If you require further assistance on this topic? Please contact [Comm Europa Management](#).