

The European Accessibility Act: What you need to know

EFHOH Guide

- **Aim 1:** The first draft of the European Accessibility Act was created to improve the accessibility of disabled people to goods and services in the European Union.
- **Aim 2:** The Accessibility Act was drafted in order to meet the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).
- **Why?** As part of the UN's Disability Strategy between 2010- 2020.
- The European Accessibility Act is in the form of a directive- A legislative act that sets out a goal that all EU countries must achieve.

What is covered?

- Both products and services are covered within the Act, focusing on Information and Communication.
- The Act includes basic Implementation and enforcement mechanisms to ensure member states follow its ruling.
- Accessibility requirements are covered in a broad sense.
- The proposal presents clear rules and obligations to the economic operators (i.e. manufacturers, importers, distributors, and service providers) of accessible products and services.
- A step towards Accessibility but not a 'miraculous solution'.

What is missing?

Regulation and Exemptions

Effective monitoring and surveillance of the economic operators is needed to ensure individuals and companies do not create loopholes to prevent them from creating new accessible products such as hearing aids. Exemptions need to be clarified as a result.

The Scope

There is a limited scope and it is too narrow. The built environment, which includes the installation and fitting of hearing loops, is not covered in the Act. Transport is only

partly included. Accommodation services are not addressed at all within the scope of the act.

Discrimination

Discrimination is covered but only in a very general sense. The problem of hearing loss and sensory discrimination needs to be addressed, particularly in light of hearing loss and gradual hearing loss not being defined as a disability.

Nothing with the Act related to the discrimination of temporary disabilities or disabilities that increase over time.

Disability Organisations:

The absence of the participation of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) in adoption and implementation of the Act needs to be addressed.

Definitions:

Broader definition of disability is needed to include HoH people. The Act must be defined to provide accessible services and products to 'people with disabilities'.

Clearer and better definitions for audio visual services are needed, which include subtitles, sign language and audio description to ensure all sensory disabilities are represented fairly.

Education

Inclusive education for disabled children needs to be matched specifically to their individual needs and disabilities and allow students to feedback on the aspects that are positive and negative.

Implementation Period:

At the moment the implementation period is 6 years, which needs to be shortened.

NEXT STEPS:

- Once upon Consolutions begin again EFHOH will work with the EDF and other disability bodies to ensure the European Accessibility Act includes all disabilities.
- There will be negotiations between European Union bodies to discuss a final draft and look towards a fully accessible directive.
- Main Aim: Swift adoption of an ambitious and meaningful Accessibility Act.