What is digital accessibility?

Web accessibility: a social imperative

To display subtitles for the video (FR): after starting it, use the "Activate subtitles" button located on the bar to the lower right of the screen. This video was produced by the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis, as part of the Access-Key program.

Definition, scope

Digital accessibility consists in making it possible for everyone, especially persons with disabilities, to use computer hardware and software, as well as to consult and create digital resources, on devices of all kinds (computers, mobile telephones, tablets, etc.).

Digital accessibility is concerned with all types of disability: visual, hearing, physical, cognitive, technical, etc.

Rather than adapting products to persons with disabilities, we prefer the notion of **universal design,** which seeks to create products that can be used by everyone, regardless of sex, age, situation or disability. We insist also on the fact that digital accessibility addresses all types of disability, including those due to age, thus addressing a population of millions of people in France alone. And that these improvements in fact constitute best practices (editorial, ergonomic, etc.), which improve access to digital sites and applications for all.

The regulatory framework

In Europe digital accessibility is understood as a citizenship obligation: the widest possible circulation of digital accessibility products and services promotes professional placement, social integration, and personal autonomy. The video above represents an excellent example.
Certain European countries are at the policy forefront: Ireland (Disability Act, 1999), UK (Disability Discrimination Act, 1995), Germany and Spain (2002), Greece (2003).

In France, the law n° 2005-102 of 11 February 2005, "Equality of rights and opportunity, participation and citizenship of disabled persons", provides, in Article 47, for "the accessibility of online public communication services of the State and local authorities, and the public establishments that depend on them", as a first step.

In the United States, digital accessibility has been in place since 1998, with the adoption by Congress of an amendment commonly known as "Section 508", which deals with the accessibility of federal sites and government electronic resources.

Standards

Since 1997, the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium), the web standards authority, has been engaged with issues of accessibility, creating the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative). The WAI has issued 61 recommendations for making the web accessible, especially in relation to assistive technologies used by disabled persons.

On this basis, national standards have been created. They enumerate the tests to be applied to web pages as well as the criteria for validating their accessibility. The reference document is rather technical and is for use by professionals only. It is used for auditing sites and measuring their level of accessibility, for correcting sites that are inaccessible, and for implementing best practices from the

start of a project. Note that accessibility places demands on everyone involved on a web project: creators, designers, developers, web coders, editors, etc.

In France, two older reference standards (Accessiweb and RGAA) were combined in 2015 to create RGAA V3, the current national standard.

It is possible to certify a website, clearly indicating its level of accessibility. France, and Europe, recommends the double-A level for certifying sites. The triple-A level concerns content of a particular kind and is not applicable to all sites.

Sciences Po thus uses the RGAA reference standard, level double A, for its certification. The attestation of compliance for this site as well as the contact person for accessibility is available using the "Accessibility" link at the bottom of each page.

"Accessibility means that the web is created so that disabled persons can perceive, understand, browse, and interact with the web in an effective way, as well as create content and make a contribution to the web."

Pour en savoir plus

- [Access-Key videos (University of Nice Sophia Antipolis - FR)](#)
- [RGAA standard (FR)](#)
- [Law of 11 February 2005 for equality of rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of disabled persons (FR)](#)
- [The "section 508" website](#)