Global eAccessibility:
Creating a Trans-Atlantic Open Standard

EABC Policy Paper

EABC and ITI support existing legislation to inhibit discrimination and to promote inclusion of people with disabilities and age-related limitations. Moreover, the companies of EABC and ITI recognize that implementation of accessibility guidelines and compliance with relevant regulations benefits our customers, our own ability to hire and retain employees, and society at large.

The need for accessible information technology is acute across the globe. With an aging population, a growing number of people may benefit from some type of assistance to utilize technology. To meet the needs of their citizens with disabilities or age-related limitations, governments around the world are developing or establishing unique, national, IT accessibility policies; some of which present divergent and conflicting accessibility guidelines for public procurement.

Beyond policy, standards are another critical piece of the global ICT economy. A coordinated global approach to accessibility standardization not only benefits citizens who need accessible IT but also increases the competitiveness of companies by widening their recruitment pool. World-wide, harmonized, market-led, voluntary accessibility standards will reduce the cost to market through economies of scale, and increase product innovation as well as the availability of accessible technology. To this end, EABC and ITI support efforts to:

- Provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities by supporting existing, general, non-discrimination legislation and regulation in markets across the globe.

- Harmonize existing global IT accessibility policies and standards to prevent the creation of unnecessary national technology barriers. Inconsistent regulatory approaches increase market fragmentation, create higher costs, stifle innovation, and yield less accessible products for those most in need.

- Harmonize procurement practices and technology standards for accessibility in order to create a reasonably uniform global playing field for technology companies and to ensure the availability of increasingly high quality accessible IT for all people.

- Develop global, testable, performance-based Web accessibility standards rather than subjective standards that are neither easy to measure nor effective as a means to reach a conclusion on conformance.

- Adopt self-declaration for conformance to accessibility standards on products. Self-declaration has been shown to encourage conformance while not stifling innovation. Requiring third-party certification would increase time to market, reduce the competitiveness of IT companies, and ultimately delay the deployment of accessible IT.

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