Welcome to our fifth Erasmus+ **Certified Digital Accessibility Training** Project Newsletter, where we write about digital accessibility education in EU and also share our thoughts about needed integration of knowledge and skills in the field of digital accessibility at different levels and disciplines of regular education.

Digital Accessibility in Education

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The digital accessibility field is growing and so is the need for providing qualified professionals in digital accessibility. Some organizations have already been actively working on the implementation of digital accessibility by creating digitally accessible websites, hiring employees with digital accessibility skills, or digital accessibility experts. However, in order to be able to create digitally accessible websites and applications, it is important that different professionals involved in creating the web are qualified in this field.

We have done an analysis of existing courses on digital accessibility and we found out that the number of web accessibility training and courses has been increasing. Although the majority of existing training in the field of Digital Accessibility is offered in the USA, whereas in Europe, the training offer is a lot smaller. Education for web accessibility is carried out both by universities and by private organizations. Nevertheless, web accessibility is still considered to be a niche set of skills that most often is not part of the standard curriculum of ICT, web design and other related programs at the vocational and higher education level. Currently there are only a few university courses that include web accessibility in their teaching programs. Most of them are in the field of ICT and are organized as stand-alone courses. However, there is a need for the integration of digital accessibility skills in different VET and higher education programs/curricula (e.g. ICT, web design, marketing and communication disciplines etc.).

Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills

In general, we classify the Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills in three different categories: Essential Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills, Professional Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills, and Specialized Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills.

Essential Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills

Essential digital accessibility knowledge and skills are those that are necessary for people to understand the need for digital accessibility and those that are needed to create accessible digital content. As we live in the era of digitalization, everyone is creating digital content, which is why we believe that essential digital accessibility knowledge and skills should be included in basic school education (in subjects such as Media Literacy, Ethics, Computer science, and interdisciplinary in all subjects where digital content is created).

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Professional Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills

Professional digital accessibility knowledge and skills are those that are needed for work in a particular profession. The knowledge and skills are related especially to the profession of Web developers and Web designers. As digital accessibility is becoming a must for all web pages, acquiring this knowledge, skills and competencies for these professions should be mandatory and should be integrated into regular VET and higher education programs.

Specialized Digital Accessibility Knowledge and Skills

Specialized Digital Accessibility knowledge and skills are those that are needed only by people working in specialized professions, related to Digital accessibility (e.g. people working as Digital Accessibility Managers or as Digital Accessibility Testers). These employees can be of different educational background, but they need to upskill themselves with specialized knowledge from the field of digital accessibility, which can be achieved through stand-alone courses on different topics.

Recommendations for Successful Acquisition of Digital Accessibility Skills

In order to support the realization of the European Directive on web accessibility, it is important to equip knowledgeable professionals with the needed skills and competencies. Offering non-formal stand-alone courses or training is not sufficient, therefore different solutions are required for acquiring different skills related to digital accessibility. In the light of the experience from our **Certified Digital Accessibility Training project**, we believe that the solution is in integrating different topics of Digital Accessibility at different levels of regular education, from basic education to VET and higher education. Non-formal stand-alone courses are options only

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for acquiring specialized knowledge on Digital Accessibility for professionals working in specialized digital accessibility jobs. Furthermore, these specialized professions should be regulated by national vocational qualifications in order to ensure equal competencies of people working in these newly developed job positions.

Follow our social media networks, where we regularly publish news on events as well as other interesting digital accessibility-related topics. If you are interested in learning about digital accessibility, visit our **website** and start learning on our **e-learning platform.**

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