

## ICANN At-Large

### Web accessibility for people with disability

Around the world, people with a disability face physical, social, economic and attitudinal barriers that exclude them from participating fully and effectively as equal members of society.

Persons with disabilities form the world's largest minority according to the United Nations. One billion people are estimated by the World Health Organisation to have a disability with 80% living in developing countries. Persons with disabilities can equally participate in society and make substantial contributions to the economy if the appropriate Internet tools are available.

Over 100 Governments have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Obligations include implementing measures to design, develop, produce and distribute accessible ICT at an early stage, so these become accessible at minimum cost for persons with disabilities.

W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are increasingly mandated by governments and used by industry to make websites more accessible for people with disabilities. Version 2 of WCAG stipulates that websites are to 'perceivable', 'operable', 'understandable' and 'robust'. The guidelines detail how this is done using three levels of success criteria.

Research by W3C and WebAIM suggests that accessible websites achieve higher SEO rankings than those that do not conform to web accessibility standards.

### **What is the relationship between the domain name system and web accessibility?**

According to AusRegistry in Australia:

"Making information technologies available to people with a disability is not only a matter of basic human rights, it also makes good business sense. Obviously, our industry – particularly Registrars and website development companies – are uniquely positioned to be able to encourage and practice accessible web design within the community.

If we as an industry are able to create greater awareness about why website accessibility options are important, we might be able to make a small but positive impact on this issue."

The ICANN At-Large Accessibility Taskforce has three high-level objectives, one of which is increasing web accessibility.

### **Web accessibility tips**

Gunela Astbrink of ICANN's At-Large Accessibility Taskforce offers the following tips on web accessibility.

These tips are a starting point only. For full information, please go to W3C's [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#).

❖ **Use the alt attribute to *meaningfully* describe images – not 'image 1'**

- adds context to content for blind people using screen reading software
- *SEO = search engines mainly index on text*
- ❖ **Use section headings with H1 to H6 elements to organise content**
  - for people with reading difficulties and for blind people using assistive technology to more easily understand the structure of the content
  - *SEO = used by search engines*
- ❖ **Use form labels**
  - essential for a blind user with screen reading software to understand the context of the form. Also important for people with reading difficulties using assistive technology
- ❖ **Use colours carefully**
  - If colour differences convey information (ie stop/go), also include text for the 10% of people who are colour blind
  - have sufficient colour contrast between text and background
- ❖ **Allow keyboard control**
  - for people with physical disability who cannot use a mouse
- ❖ **Use valid HTML**
  - enables assistive technologies to work properly on websites
- ❖ **Caption videos**
  - important for people with hearing impairments and for people with English as a second language
  - *SEO = search engines mainly index on text*
- ❖ **Provide HTML, rtf or doc version of PDF documents**
  - screen reading software for blind people cannot access some PDFs
- ❖ **Make links descriptive – not ‘read more’**
  - makes links meaningful to users of screen reading software especially if tabbing through links
- ❖ **Use a text-only browser to check your site**
  - *SEO = equates to the action of a search engine bot*

## References

ausRegistry

<http://www.ausregistry.com.au/news/why-website-accessibility-makes-business-sense>

ICANN At-Large Accessibility Taskforce

<https://community.icann.org/display/atlarge/ICANN+Accessibility+Taskforce+2014.03.24+-+Singapore>

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=269>

W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

<http://www.w3c.org/WAI/guid-tech.html>

World Health Organisation - Report on Disability

[http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/index.html)