Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Regional Workshop on “Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) policy and technical toolkits based on the final ESCWA e-Accessibility templates
Online Workshop, 25 August 2021

Preliminary Information Note

Background

Although Arab countries are increasingly committed to realizing the rights of persons with disabilities, those in the Arab region are still among the most marginalized population groups, facing multiple barriers which hinder their ability to participate in society on an equal basis with others. Research shows that in terms of literacy, education and employment, persons with disabilities remain disadvantaged. Women with disabilities in rural areas are particularly marginalized. For instance, they are more likely to have lower access to education, health and employment.

In parallel, it is worth mentioning the vital role that digital technologies can play for people’s empowerment and in promoting better access for all towards building more inclusive societies. In the Arab region, the ICT sector has fortunately made some positive strides in development in the past few years and, as a result, can have a great impact in digital inclusion throughout the region.

In this context, ESCWA has launched in 2020 the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) project to support policy makers in the Arab counties to develop/improve their national policies and guidelines for enhanced e-Accessibility. This would help to bridge the digital divide and enable all society members to access and use ICT.

Under the framework of the ADIP project, ESCWA has developed in 2020 two templates namely:
- National E-accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region.
- National Technical Guidelines on E-Accessibility for the Arab Region.

The first drafts of these templates were reviewed and discussed during an online consultative meeting held by ESCWA on 10-11 November 2020, attended by 60 participants, including government officials and experts who are engaged in the ESCWA inter-governmental disability working group (IGED) and other government officials and experts from the ICT sector, in addition to representatives from and regional organizations

21-00541
dealing with digital government and digital inclusion in the region. The final versions of the templates benefited from the discussion and took into considerations most of the recommendations.

The National E-accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region focuses on developing a general framework for a national policy in order to support enabling access of persons with disabilities to information and communication technology (ICT) and public services, for a more inclusive society.

Based on sound and practical international standards, the National Technical Guidelines on E-Accessibility for the Arab Region prepared under the framework of the ADIP project and range from the simple and easy to implement to the more challenging and harder to follow. Adopting these guidelines by governmental policymakers will definitely make the lives of persons with disabilities easier and more productive in spite of having minimal functionalities in websites accessibility and accessible digital platforms.

In the same context, ESCWA team is working on developing the ADIP online platform to assist Arab policy makers in using those templates. A first prototype is currently ready and includes the developed templates, best practices, and other related material, and an online community of practice dedicated space for disability focal points.

In this workshop, the final version of these templates will be overviewed in addition to the interactive tools developed by ESCWA to support policy makers in the Arab region in using those templates, through the ADIP online platform prototype.

**Objective**

The main objective of the workshop will be to discuss the best options to adopt, adapt and implement ESCWA e-accessibility templates towards their roll out at national level and the improvement of the ADIP online platform prototype.

**Format**

This Regional Workshop on “Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) policy and technical toolkits based on the final ESCWA e-Accessibility templates” online will run online over 2 hours on 25 August 2021 and will be conducted in English and Arabic.

**Expected Results**

The main outcome of the event will be to produce a set of recommendations (a vision) for the dissemination of the ESCWA e-accessibility templates and their adoption by the Arab policy makers. Also, the workshop will contribute to the definition of the additional needed features of an advanced version of the ADIP online platform, including the ADIP Toolkits, taking into consideration the recommendations and feedback proposed by participants.

**Discussion topics**

*ESCWA e-Accessibility templates on National Policy and Technical Guidelines*

- Overall presentation of the main components
Prototype of ADIP online platform
- Layout and structure
- Digital accessibility features
- Substantive themes and content

ADIP policy and technical toolkits based on the final ESCWA e-Accessibility templates
- Structure, Layout and functions
- Features and usability

ESCWA Focal Points

Ms. Mirna El Hajj Barbar  
Programme Management Officer  
United Nations Economic Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA)  
E-Mail: barbarm@un.org

Mr. Nawar Al-Awa,  
Regional Adviser on Technology for Development  
United Nations Economic Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA)  
E-Mail: alawa@un.org