

Guideline universal design

Sheet 16: Websites



What? ¹

An **accessible website** offers services and information that are usable and accessible to everyone. Everyone has simultaneous access to the same volume of identical information via an accessible website.

Why and for whom? ¹

Today, the Internet occupies an increasingly prominent place in society. Websites have therefore become a very important source of information. Many institutions for higher education also offer information and services via their website. However, websites are often not automatically accessible and usable for everyone. Because the internet is largely visual in nature, blind people and visually impaired people have relatively often problems with the accessibility of the internet. And because of the increase in multimedia (think of YouTube movies, for example) - the lack of subtitles in sound is also becoming increasingly important, especially for the deaf and hard of hearing. But accessibility for websites is also important for people with a limited hand function or, for example, limited reading skills.

Accessibility of websites is not only important, but also legally anchored in Flanders. ²

From September 23, 2019, all new websites (published from September 23, 2018) must be sufficiently accessible. From September 23 2020, this applies to all other websites. The deadline for mobile apps is June 23 2021. Websites of Flemish universities of applied sciences and universities must also comply with these guidelines. [This link provides more information about the regulations concerning accessible websites](#) (Dutch). There are various accessibility guidelines, for example the WCAG 2.0 AA guidelines (international) and the guidelines of AnySurfer (Belgium).

Tips & Tricks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 10

Colour, contrast en fonts

- ❑ **Colour and text** | Use colour in such a way that everything can still be understood in black and white or for colour blind people. Think of plus or minus points or coloured bars in a graph. Add clarifying text in addition to the colour.
- ❑ **Colourblinds** | Make sure that colour combinations do not cause problems for colour blind people.
- ❑ **Fonts** | Choose a sans serif font like Calibri or Verdana, at least in point size 12. Avoid all capital letters, italic and underlined words. Fat words can be used to emphasize something (but do not use bold words for titles: use headers / styles).
- ❑ **Contrast** | Ensure a good contrast between the colour of the background and the text.

Structure

- ❑ **Structure** | Certain people with a disability cannot simply 'freewheel' or browse. The length and location of pieces of text determine readability. Ensure that websites have a logical structure, that text blocks are not too long and take the reading order into account.
- ❑ **Navigation** | Make sure someone finds the way quickly on the website, for example by an overview bar at the top that makes clear in which layer / where in the website one is located; include only useful items in the navigation bars.
- ❑ **Pop-up windows** | Avoid many pop-up windows.
- ❑ **Navigation blocks** | Be consistent in the design of navigation blocks, use clear and unambiguous titles and headlines and be consistent in the name (e.g. module 1: title, module 2: title or part 1: title, part 2: title but not for example: top frame, left frame).

Compatibility

- ❑ **Compatibility** | Make your website compatible with different browsers.
- ❑ **Labels** | Give buttons and frames a label of interest, text-to-speech programs follow them.

- **Mobile** | Make sure that a smartphone and / or tablet clearly shows the content.
- **Software compatibility** | Ensure compatibility with supporting software. Built-in reading software in the website can promote accessibility for specific target groups but is not a necessary integral accessibility solution:
 - whoever has a heavy reading limitation will usually already have access to supporting software;
 - built-in reading software does not read certain contents or is incomplete (e.g. selection windows in the settings);
 - reading parts of the website requires selection with the mouse, this can also cause accessibility problems.

Customer service

- **Languages** | Make sure the website is accessible in different languages.
- **Latest updates** | Provide a list of 'latest updates' this is easier than when a person has to go through everything again.
- **Operation and loading time** | It involves more than just technical accessibility, smooth operation and a fast loading time are important.
- **Personalisation** | Allows you to change the font or background of the website (e.g. more contrast, more sober, bigger, etc.) and integrate a zoom function.
- **Writing style** | Write actively, clearly and simple, avoid difficult technical terms and long sentences.
- **Fill-in forms** | Concerns fill-in forms: mark required fields to fill in, the same applies to incorrectly filled in fields (please indicate this via e.g. red colour, bold and the text 'wrong'). Ensure that mistakes can be corrected without having to re-enter everything.
- **Up to date** | Check regularly that all links, documents and external URLs still work.
- **Clarity** | Place yourself in the position of the user: is everything clear, are references clear, is everything easy to find, is it clear where you can go with questions and / or problems?

(Multi)media

- ❑ **Alt-text** | If images or figures do not receive a caption or explanation, they are lost. Always add an Alt text and / or text equivalent in the text.
- ❑ **Audio description and subtitles** | Ensure that the content is accessible to the deaf / hearing impaired as well as the blind / visually impaired: insert audio description for written text and subtitle audio content (preferably with closed captions) or provide a transcript.
- ❑ **Stop multimedia** | It must always be possible to pause or set off animations and / or changes.
- ❑ **Visual and auditory** | Fill visual input with auditory input: for example, add a short sound when a page is fully loaded or choose different sounds for different types of links.

Operation and referral

- ❑ **Navigation** | Websites often require precise mouse movements: build the possibility to enlarge text, and if possible, install voice navigation. Navigating should also be possible with a keyboard or with alternative input devices, not just via the mouse. Someone must be able to consult all parts of the website without having to click.
- ❑ **Hyperlink** | Put a meaningful text with every link.
- ❑ **Click-throughs** | Ensure that information is accessible quickly and easily, without the need for frequent click-throughs.
- ❑ **Hot keys** | Build some hot keys such as, for example ctrl + F for searching.
- ❑ **Navigation links** | Create navigation links, for example 'go to index' or 'go to the top of the page'.
- ❑ **Drop-down menus** | Avoid drop-down menus and incorrect headers in function of screen readers.
- ❑ **Search bar** | Integrate a search bar.

Know more?

- Learn here more about web accessibility for different disabilities (Dutch).
- The [what, how and why of web accessibility according to the Flemish Government](#) (Dutch).
- Read here [about web accessibility in practice, the WCAG guidelines in brief](#) (Dutch).
- Consult here [the checklist accessible websites for web editors of the Flemish Government](#) (Dutch).
- View the [WCAG 2.0 level AA guidelines here](#) (Dutch).

In practice

“Universal communication must also be taken into account in the communication service. There are often technical errors in terms of accessibility. There are people who know something about it technically and people who know something about it in terms of education and that sometimes clashes. We must learn to speak the same language together.”

References

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