After the COST is before the COST?

A reflection on LEAD-ME

Giacomo Inches,
Martel Innovate

LEAD-ME (2020-2024)

The **Lead**ing Platform for European
Citizens,
Industries,
Academia and
Policymakers
in **Me**dia **Accessibility**
is the Cost Action CA19142.

‘Memory Lane’, 2017

CONTENT4ALL

Project duration: **1. September 2017 to 30. November 2020**
Funding: **Horizon 2020 grant agreement no. 762021**
Call: H2020-ICT19-2017

1. Remote live virtual human to provide live signing (market ready)
   - Enable the low-cost personalization of content for Deaf Viewers with no disruption to hearing viewers.
   - Use of a photorealistic 3D virtual human (realatar) for sign-interpreted content creation.
   - Delivery of personalized signed content to TV (HbbTV) and mobile devices
2. Build a collection of live signed content for further research projects or academic studies
3. Develop the necessary technologies and algorithms to explore automatic sign-translation capabilities (laboratory test/PoC)

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Languages and the Media, 2018

Languages and the Media, 2018

Languages and the Media, 2018

Concertation Event, 2019

ACCESSIBILITY

Report by: CONTENT4ALL

The discussions among project partners in the area of accessibility showed there are quite a lot of overlapping technologies especially for building the pilots. Also, the addressed market in the sense of exploitation activities is quite homogenous. Furthermore, all of the projects operate in the same eco-system of Stakeholders. Therefore, stronger cooperation among the partners towards joint development and exploitations seems to be a logical step. The partners agreed on further evaluate the possibility of building a formal cluster.

Member of the Cluster

- Imac
- easyTV
- C4All
- MediaRoad
- Sign-Hub (did not participate in the discussions)

Joint Exploitation & Innovation Assets

Projects within the accessibility agreed on building a cluster to enforce joint Exploitation to generate an eco-system rather than individual innovation elements. To reach this in the first step a joint list of Innovation of assets of all involved projects will be generated. Demonstrators will include technology from the other projects where possible and useful (e.g. the Avatar of Content4All to be used in the Imac VR environment).

SIGN-HUB is a 4-year research project (2016-2020) funded by the European Commission within Horizon 2020 Reflective Society 2015, Research and Innovation actions. It has been designed by a European research team to provide an innovative and inclusive resource hub for the linguistic, historical and cultural documentation of the Deaf communities' heritage and for sign language assessment in clinical intervention and school settings.

Although the Sign-Hub project is funded under a different theme, it seems to be a good idea to involve them for data collection towards generating an open data set for the collected sign language.

Standardization

Furthermore, the cluster, as a whole, will focus on standardization as a joint effort. Partners of the individual projects will use their established relationships to promote standards for all technologies/innovation assets of the cluster towards the scandalization bodies.

- ITSC (Fincons - mGiacomo)
- ITU-T / R (UAB , IRT)
- INR / ISO (UAB)
- HbbTV (IRT)
- EBU - AS Group (STXT- G.Linder, VRT)
- ANEC (www.anec.eu, UAB)

Involvement of the Deaf Community/User Group

In the area of accessibility, it is of special importance to involve the community represented by the nation and international NGOs actively. The aim is to involve regional and national NGOs through the national partners within the separate projects (e.g. SGB for STXT within Switzerland in the project Content4All).

International partners like the EUD would be involved by the cluster as a whole.

Follow-up-Meeting

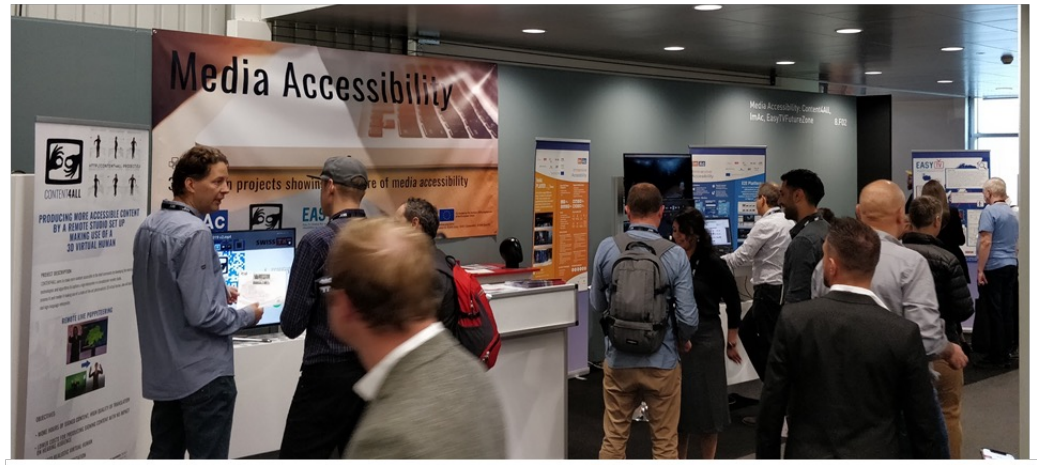
The Coordinators of the projects decided to follow-up on the cluster building. Therefore, they decided to find a date and place to meet again to discuss the next steps Discussions on this potentially will take place end of March/beginning of April in Barcelona. The aim of this meeting would be to establish individual MOUs with the cluster members. The MOU will define the concrete role of the partner within the cluster and it will also define deliverables towards the formal cluster. Also, the MOU is written in a way that it is directly communicable to the stakeholders in the projects in the sense of a press release. Furthermore, the aim of the meeting is to define an action plan on how to move forward concerning the formal cluster.

https://www.mediaroad.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Report-Concertation-Meeting-6-February-2019_FINAL.pdf

IBC, 2019

Sign Languages

Audiodescriptions, cc, ...



RAI AMSTERDAM 2019

These projects have received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 761974 (ImAc), 762021 (Content4All), 761999 (EasyTV).

IBC, 2019

EU Projects on Media and Accessibility

ImAc Immersive Accessibility

- Omnidirectional video (i.e. 360o) and audio
- Accessibility Content Manager,
- Content Editor,
- Player

March 2020

EASY TV

- Image Enhancement,
- Face track and follow,
- Subtitle production,
- Advanced Audio description
- Synchronized Companion device

June 2020

CONTENT4ALL

- Remote live puppeteering to provide live signing
- Accurate offline reproduction
- Collection of live signed content
- Technologies and algorithms to explore automatic sign-translation capabilities (laboratory test)

August 2020

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EU Projects on Media and Accessibility: towards a single platform?

EASY TV

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Virtual 3D Human

HbbTV App

Synchronized Companion device

Personalized (Wizard) User Interface

Image Enhancement

Face Track and Follow

Vocal Interaction

If **integrated**, potentially a **single European Platform** on **Accessibility**

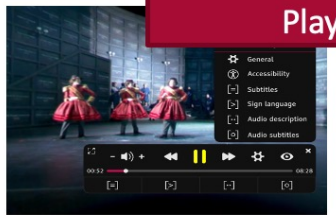
requires EC engagement

Live Signing (Puppetteering)

Automatic Sign Language Generation

Management Server

360° Immersive Player



Accessibility Content Manager

Accessibility Editor (Subtitles, Audio Descriptions, Sign Language)

ImAc Immersive Accessibility

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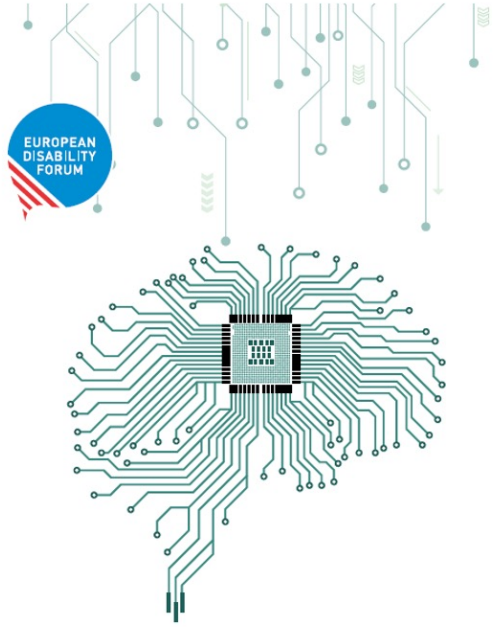
People with Disabilities engagement

- For persons with disabilities, **emerging technologies have the potential to increase inclusion, participation** and **independence** and in some instances, are already doing so.
- Persons with disabilities **should take part in this debate** so they can reap the benefits of technology like everyone
- Persons with disabilities are often **early adopters** of technology
- **None** of the respondents thought that **emerging technologies would have a negative impact** on their lives.
- "The biggest gap is not in technology but in awareness and training"



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ART.30, 21 UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Television content should be accessible e.g. to the Deaf, Blind, …

Excerpt of the UN Convention

Article 30 - Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (1)

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:
Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;
Enjoy access to television programs, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats;
Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.

Article 21

Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities; Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities;

https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

THE EUROPEAN ACCESSIBILITY ACT

- EU Member States have an obligation to apply what the Act mentions (Directive legally binding)
- EU Law that would make many products and services in the European Union (EU) more accessible for persons with disabilities.

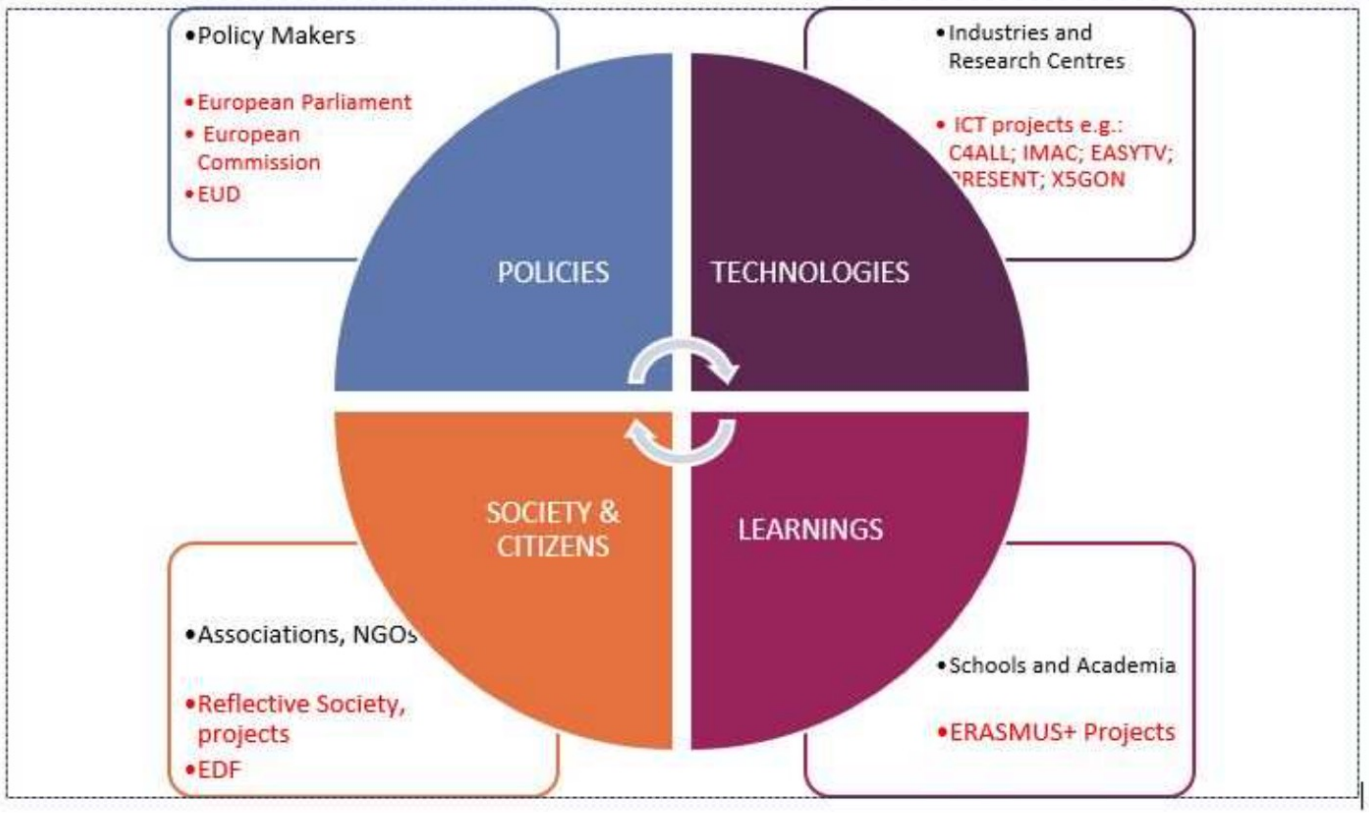
Certain products and services need to be accessible:

- Smartphones, tablets and computer
- Ticketing machines and check-in machines
- Televisions and TV programmes
- Banking and ATMs
- E-books
- Online shopping websites and mobile applications
- Public sector and Private companies

https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/PE-81-2018-INIT/en/pdf

LEAD-ME (2019)

LEAD-ME: Leading Platform for European Citizens, Industries, Academia and Policymakers in Media Accessibility



ACTIVITIES provided by the Action at European level

- Dissemination
- Hackathons, Workshops
- Summer Schools, Training School
- Conferences, Short Term Scientific Missions
- Lobbing and Networking events

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Brussels, 24 March 2020

COST 045/20

DECISION

Subject: **Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the COST Action "Leading Platform for European Citizens, Industries, Academia and Policymakers in Media Accessibility" (LEAD-ME) CA19142**

The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for the COST Action Leading Platform for European Citizens, Industries, Academia and Policymakers in Media Accessibility approved by the Committee of Senior Officials through written procedure on 24 March 2020.

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2020

2022

2020

2023

2024

Immersive Accessibility

EASY TV

European Commission

cost EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

LEAD-ME

Leading Platform for European Citizens, Industries, Academia and Policymakers in Media Accessibility

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SWISS TXT

easier

intElligent Automatic Sign languagE tRanslation

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SKILLAIBILITY

INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF DEAF PEOPLE

Daily themes

- **Monday 23 September 2024 - International Day of Sign Languages: Sign Up for Sign Language Rights**
- **Tuesday 24 September 2024: Inclusive Education**
- **Wednesday 25 September 2024: Sign Language Advocacy**

  Encourage everyone to actively advocate for the rights of deaf individuals and the official recognition of national sign languages. Sign up for sign language rights by promoting your national sign languages in public arenas.

  Guidelines for Achieving Sign Language Rights
- **Thursday 26 September 2024: Building Resilient Deaf Communities**
- **Friday 27 September 2024: Diversity in Deaf Communities**
- **Saturday 28 September 2024: Deaf Cultural Celebrations**
- **Sunday 29 September 2024: Investing in the future of deaf communities**

Thanks

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