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W3C Integration Interim Report





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Executive Summary

The present document is a deliverable of the Easy Reading project, which is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Programme und Grant Agreement #780529.

The objective of this deliverable is to report on the progress made on integrating project results into the on-going standardisation efforts at the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). This contribution to standardisation is one of the central elements of the project, which will ensure long-term impact and sustainability of project results beyond the lifetime of the project.

During this first project year, the necessary groundwork was carried out to ensure smooth exchange between the project and relevant W3C working groups and task forces. In particular, W3C allocated critical expertise of senior staff towards the project, to facilitate this exchange. W3C staffs allocated to the project have critical responsibilities in web accessibility for people with cognitive and learning disabilities at the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), and are ideally suited to help address the core objectives of this work package.

During the initial months of this first year, the contribution in this work package has been mostly to help inform project partners about related standardisation efforts at W3C, and how these could be beneficial to the project. For example, the newly adopted Success Criteria in the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and the related efforts on personalization semantics. This was intended to support the design of the framework and other technical solutions of the project.

Since project month 10 (October 2018), staff allocations towards this work package were increased to support the contribution of interim project results into the currently on-going efforts at W3C to better address the entire area of accessibility for people with cognitive and learning disabilities. As the project continues to mature and produce more tangible results, this output from the project into standardisation is expected to increase. Meanwhile, the necessary tying of the project into related W3C efforts has been established, to support the envisioned exchange.



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Introduction

Standardisation is one of the corner stones of accessibility for people with disabilities, and is critical to ensuring interoperability with the assistive technologies and adaptive strategies that people with disabilities often rely on to use digital technology. In particular, technical and educational resources from the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)¹ have been critical in raising awareness on the need for accessibility for people with disabilities, building skills and capacities to leverage existing design and development communities, and providing clear and testable requirements to adhere to. Most well-known is the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)², which is also available as ISO 40500³ and included in the European standard EN 301 549⁴, among other adoption internationally⁵. This latter European standard, EN 301 549, is referenced in the EU Procurement Directive⁶, the EU Web Accessibility Directive⁷, and expected to be referenced in a future European Accessibility Act⁸.

Despite these standards and policies, digital accessibility remains a challenging area for many people with cognitive and learning disabilities due to a variety of reasons. This includes:

- Widespread lack of awareness on the accessibility needs and requirements of people with cognitive and learning disabilities;
- Gaps in research of the technical user requirements for people with cognitive and learning disabilities, in particular for digital accessibility;
- Lesser consideration for people with cognitive and learning disabilities in standardisation, digital education, and in tooling.

The Easy Reading Project comes at an opportune time to help address these issues and contribute to improved digital accessibility for people with cognitive and learning disabilities. More specifically, it is designed to contribute to the on-going efforts at the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), to help ensure long-term sustainability of project results. Given the widespread recognition of W3C and the adoption of WCAG and its supporting resources in Europe and internationally, this contribution of the project potentially impacts millions of people with disabilities in Europe and around the world.

This work package has been specifically designed to realize this coordination and exchange between the project and relevant W3C efforts. In particular, this includes efforts at the following W3C groups:

- Cognitive and Learning Disabilities Accessibility Task Force [w3.org/WAI/PF/cognitive-a11y-tf/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/PF/cognitive-a11y-tf/)
- Personalization Semantics Task Force [w3.org/WAI/APA/task-forces/personalization/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/APA/task-forces/personalization/)
- Accessibility Guidelines Working Group (AGWG) [w3.org/WAI/GL/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/GL/)
- Accessible Platform Architectures (APA) Working Group [w3.org/WAI/APA/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/APA/)
- Research Questions Task Force (RQTF) [w3.org/WAI/APA/task-forces/research-questions/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/APA/task-forces/research-questions/)

¹ <https://www.w3.org/WAI/>

² <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

³ <https://www.iso.org/standard/58625.html>

⁴ https://www.etsi.org/deliver/etsi_en/301500_301599/301549/02.01.02_60/en_301549v020102p.pdf

⁵ <https://www.w3.org/WAI/policies/>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/24/oj>

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/2102/oj>

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202>



Objectives

Tasks 7.1 and 7.2, to realize this project contribution, are defined as follows in the project plan:

1. *Integrate project results and outcomes as part of the next generation of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines for long term adoption.*
2. *Integrate the developed semantics for personalization of content into a W3C protocol for the personalization framework in the ARIA specification.*
3. *Add new techniques to the existing guidelines of WCAG for short term adoption.*
4. *Update deliverables of Cognitive Accessibility Task Force of the W3C Accessibility Guidelines Working Group (AGWG) with the project results.*
5. *Harmonize with other web protocols via the Accessible Platform Architectures (APA) and HTML working groups*

That is, the primary focus of this work package is to feed project results and outcomes into relevant working groups, task forces, and other efforts at W3C, to help maximise the potential impact of the project. This effort is expected to increase in later stages of the project, as it matures and generates more tangible project results that can be brought into W3C. During this earlier stage of the project, the main objective is to feed information into the project about current developments at W3C, and to establish the coordination points between the project and relevant W3C efforts.

Achievements

As planned for this period, information on relevant developments at W3C were regularly shared with project partners, to support the design and development of the project framework. This included:

- Information about the progress on WCAG 2.1⁹, which was in development until June 2018, with specific emphasis on the new success criteria 1.3.5 and 1.3.6 relevant to adaptation;
- Information about the progress on Personalization Semantics¹⁰, where the first W3C public working draft was published in October 2018, which is equally relevant to adaptation.

As of October 2018, W3C has allocated a full-time senior expert on cognitive and learning disabilities to the project. This senior W3C accessibility specialist is involved in all relevant work areas at W3C, to provide a focal point for coordination and exchange with the project. This specialist is also involved in the technical development work areas of the project, to be closer to the relevant work and results.

While there are several related project milestones, MS24, MS2, MS8, MS11, and MS26, these do not directly impact the progress of this work package at this initial stage of the project. The main bulk of effort in this work package is scheduled for later in the project when more tangible results become available. All necessary preparations were made during this initial period for the upcoming stage.

Deviations

Progress during initial period of the project proceeded according to plan without deviation.

⁹ <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

¹⁰ <https://www.w3.org/TR/personalization-semantics-1.0/>



Next Steps

With the first project results maturing and becoming available, we expect to see more input from the project into the relevant work areas at W3C. This includes input into the following work areas:

- Potential educational W3C resources, to help guide designers and developers create content that meets WCAG and is accessible for people with cognitive and learning disabilities;
- Potential input into the Personalization Semantics framework and taxonomy, to address any use-cases from the project that have not yet been considered in this effort;
- Potential techniques on meeting particular WCAG success criteria, with learnings from the project developments on approaches for content adaptation and personalization;
- Potential refinements to WCAG supporting documents, such as Understanding WCAG, to better clarify the relevance for people with cognitive and learning disabilities;
- Potential input into future versions of WCAG, including WCAG 2.2 and 3.0 (“Silver”), which are currently under consideration by the Accessibility Guidelines Working Group.

The appropriate amount of effort is allocated in the project plan to realize these tasks, and the staff to carry out the work has been allocated to the project.

Conclusions

This initial phase of the project was utilised as planned to establish the groundwork for the upcoming exchange between the project and relevant work areas of W3C. The project timeline coincides with important developments at W3C, including with work on Personalization Semantics that has recently started, and upcoming work on WCAG 2.2 and 3.0 (“Silver”) that is currently in planning. Results from the project will flow into these developments, as well as into developments on educational resources accompanying the technical resources from W3C. This will lead to improved sustainability of project results, as well as improved accessibility standards for people with cognitive and learning disabilities.