



The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe

European Blind Union

Press release

Paris, 11/11/2018

Setting the bar too low

Disappointing agreement reached on European Accessibility Act

On 8 November, the European Union found a provisional political agreement on the European Accessibility Act (EAA). The European Blind Union (EBU) welcomes this positive development, after difficult negotiations, but it regrets that the agreement falls far short of the horizontal act initially contemplated.

“The agreed text is a good step forward, but sadly the restricted position of national governments proved too strong in the negotiations”, says Rodolfo Cattani, Chair of the EBU Commission for Liaising with the EU. “Despite the missed opportunity, we hope that the EEA nonetheless will drive things in motion towards more accessible goods, services and systems for over 30 million blind and partially sighted Europeans”.

The EAA formulates for the first time a comprehensive set of minimum requirements for all businesses to make a range of products and services accessible for persons with disabilities, and which will have to guide public procurement. Importantly, ATMs, payment terminals and all e-commerce websites and e-book readers are covered. However, with its limited scope, the EAA remains mostly a digital act. The Member States shied away from covering the built environment, tourism and urban transport in any meaningful way. Furthermore, microenterprises are excluded as far as services are concerned.

EBU nevertheless hopes that both Parliament and Council will formally approve the agreed text before the European Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2018. Together with other interested associations, we will then monitor the transposition of the directive into the national laws of the EU Member States and take part in the necessary standardisation work to breathe life into the EAA.

The European Commission proposed the EAA in 2015. The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union entered into negotiations at the beginning of this year. EBU has accompanied this political process since the beginning, arguing for an expansive scope of the directive. Despite the unsatisfactory outcome, the effort was worthwhile.

Ends

About EBU

EBU is a non-governmental, non-profit making European organisation founded in 1984. It is one of the six regional bodies of the World Blind Union. It protects and promotes the interests of blind and partially sighted people in Europe. It currently operates within a network of national organisations of the visually impaired in 42 European countries.

6 rue Gager Gabillot 75015 PARIS (France)

Tel: +33 1 47 05 38 20 Fax: +33 1 47 05 38 21

Contact: Antoine Fobe - ebucampaigning@euroblind.org

www.euroblind.org

Twitter @euroblind