2.9: International Digital Accessibility Regulations

United Kingdom

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act in the United Kingdom does not specifically address how web accessibility should be implemented, but in Section 29(1), require that those who sell or provide services to the public must not discriminate against any person requiring the service. Effectively, preventing a person with a disability from accessing a service on the web constitutes discrimination.

Sections 20 and 29(7) of the Act make it an ongoing duty of service providers to make “reasonable adjustments” to accommodate people with disabilities. To this end, the British Standards Institution (BSI) provides a code of practice (BS 8878) on web accessibility, based on WCAG 1.0.

For more about BSI efforts, watch the following video:

Europe

Throughout Europe, a number of countries have their own accessibility laws, each based on WCAG 2.0. In 2010, the European Union itself introduced web accessibility guidelines based on WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements. The EU Parliament passed a law in 2014 that requires all public sector websites, and private sector websites that provide key public services, to conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements, with new content conforming within one year, existing content conforming within three years, and multimedia content conforming within five years.

This does not mean, however, that all countries in the EU must now conform. The law now goes before the EU Council, where heads of state will debate it, which promises to draw out adoption for many years into the future, if it gets adopted at all.

Readings & References:

- The EU Internet Handbook: Web Accessibility
- New European Standard on accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services (ETSI EN 301 549)
- Standard – EN 301 549
Italy

In Italy, the Stanca Act 2004 (*Disposizioni per favorire l’accesso dei soggetti disabili agli strumenti informatici*) governs web accessibility requirements for all levels of government, private firms that are licensees of public services, public assistance and rehabilitation agencies, transport and telecommunications companies, as well as ICT service contractors.

The Stanca Act has 22 technical accessibility requirements originally based on WCAG 1.0 Level A guidelines, updated in 2013 to reflect changes in WCAG 2.0.

Readings & References:

- Stanca 2013 Requirements (Italian)

Germany

In Germany, BITV 2.0 (*Barrierefreie Informationstechnik-Verordnung*), which adopts WCAG 2.0 with a few modifications, requires accessibility for all government websites at Level AA (i.e., BITV Priority 1).

Readings & References:

- BITV (Appendix 1)

France

Accessibility requirements in France are specified in Law No 2005-102, Article 47, and its associated technical requirements are defined in RGAA 3 (based on WCAG 2.0). It is mandatory for all public online communication services, public institutions, and the State, to conform with RGAA (WCAG 2.0).

Readings & References:

- Law No 2005-102, Article 47 (French)
- *Référentiel Général d’Accessibilité pour les Administrations (RGAA)* (French)

Spain

The web accessibility laws in Spain are Law 34/2002 and Law 51/2003, which require all government websites to conform with WCAG 1.0 Priority 2 guidelines. More recently, UNE 139803:2012 adopts WCAG 2.0 requirements and mandates that the following types of organizations comply with WCAG Level AA requirements: government and government-funded organizations; organizations larger than 100 employees; organizations with a trading column greater than 6 million Euros; or organizations providing financial, utility, travel/passenger, or retail services online.

(See: Legislation in Spain )
Australia

Though not specifically referencing the web, section 24 of the Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 makes it unlawful for a person who provides goods, facilities, or services to discriminate on the grounds of disability. This law was tested in 2000, when a blind man successfully sued the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) when its website prevented him from purchasing event tickets.

The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) shortly after released the World Wide Web Access: Disability Discrimination Act Advisory Notes. These were last updated in 2014, and, while they do not have direct legal force, they do provide web accessibility guidance for Australians on how to avoid discriminatory practices when developing web content, based on WCAG 2.0.

Readings & References:

- [World Wide Web Access: Disability Discrimination Act Advisory Notes](#)

Readings & References: For more about international web accessibility laws, see the following resources:

- [Chapter 17 – Web Accessibility (2006)](#)
- [Policies Relating to Web Accessibility (W3C)](#)
- [Government accessibility standards and WCAG 2](#)
- [World Laws WebAIM](#)