

SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME



Support-EAM

Supporting the creation of an eAccessibility Mark

SPECIFIC SUPPORT ACTION
IST-2-004754-SSA

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Project Presentation

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1. Project summary

The objective of the SUPPORT-EAM is to propose a strategy for creating a **Web-Accessibility Quality Mark** for Web services by the end of 2005, as part of the Action Plan eEurope 2005: An information society for all. The project co-operates with the CEN/CENELEC in order to make its certification schema **a first step towards a real standard** that would enforce national or international policies.

It clearly refers to the Council Resolution on "eAccessibility" - improving the access of people with disabilities to the Knowledge Based Society (doc. 5165/03), inviting the Commission and the member states "to consider the provision of an "eAccessibility mark" for goods and services which comply with relevant standards for eAccessibility".

1.1. Rationale

The "*eEurope 2005: an information society for all*" calls upon Member States and invites the Commission to tap the Information Society's potential for people with disabilities and tackle the removal of technical barriers for their effective participation in the Knowledge Economy and Society. It also refers to the background work of the W3C/WAI on e-Accessibility recommendations.

Making the thousands of applicable Web services (both public and private) accessible within the next few years will require a major effort across Europe, in terms of practical implementation and R&D. There will be a need for new accessibility standards for 'cutting edge' technologies, new technical solutions for existing technologies, new access technologies for people with disabilities, new web content authoring tools (which automatically create accessible content) and new tools for accessing web content. However, to achieve the best results all of this must be prepared in light of a better understanding of how e-accessibility should be implemented in harmony all over Europe – something, which is now more important than ever, as more and more initiatives within different countries are leading to further divergence in peoples understanding of what is considered to be accessible.

1.2. Project objectives

- To develop a **harmonised methodology** used for assessing Web Accessibility (single-site or large-scale)
- To recommend requirements for a **Web Accessibility certification scheme**,
- To **disseminate knowledge over Europe**.

The project goes through a Quality Assurance process and co-operates with standardisation bodies in order to turn the methodology into a real standard that could be enforced through national or international laws.

Within the WAB cluster, Support-EAM takes an active part in the further development of Version 2 of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (produced by W3C/WAI) by active participation in WAI Working Groups.

1.3. Funding

Support-EAM is a Specific Support Action Project (contract number 004754) co-funded by the INFSO DG of the European Commission within the RTD activities of the Thematic Priority Information Society Technologies of the 6th Framework Programme”.

Duration: 18months, Start date: 01/10/2004, End date: 31/03/2006.

2. Objectives and state of the art

2.1. Evaluation Methodology Harmonisation

The project will create methodological instruments for accessing the implementation of the e-Accessibility recommendations and techniques provided by WAI/W3C (WCAG1.0 and WCAG2.0).

It will proceed in harmonising the expertise of European organisations, who currently all produce and use their own methodological tools when evaluating the accessibility of web services. The project will develop a process for collating and merging the different methodological tools, checking the coherence with the W3C/WAI work, with the WAB Cluster, and with the EuroAccessibility Consortium¹, in order to finally produce a harmonised methodology for single and large-scale Web sites evaluation (UWEM - Unified Web Evaluation Methodology). The UWEM methodology will fulfil the following requirements:

- **Specific to Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Documentation** - All items are drawn from current and future WAI Documentation.
- **Validation by Web accessibility evaluators as ‘fit for use’**, including both technical expertise and testing with end-user.
- **Tool and Browser Independent** - Documents are published in a 'pure' form - there is to be no direct association with a current tool or browser.
- **Uniquely Interpretable** – All questions asked in the methodology have only one way of being interpreted e.g. through simple language and if necessary a specific example.
- **‘Scientifically’ Repeatable** - 2 different web accessibility evaluators can answer the relevant questions on the same site and get the same results (essential as the overall methodology is to be used in support of a quality mark).

¹ <http://www.euroaccessibility.org>

- **Definitive** - As far as reasonably possible all questions will have a Yes or No answer.
- **Translatable** - The context of each question asked in the methodology can be translated into all official European languages.

The methodology will be made public under an Open Source Licence.

Each iteration of the UWEM will be tested against a range of live websites. To gauge its 'international' application, and show its benchmarking potential, it is our hope that these websites will be selected for us by each Government.

2.2. European Authority and Quality Mark

The project will seek an agreement among stakeholders about a scheme for a Quality Mark and certification scheme. This will be done through a CEN/ISSS Workshop Agreement on "Specifications for a complete European Web Accessibility certification scheme and a Quality Mark". The certification process should be supported by a European Organisation with delegation in the different countries/regions capable of applying a unified process for certifying Web sites.

The project will establish contacts in different countries and propose a strategy for setting up such a certification schema at European level. Relevant inventories will be made, and all documented materials will be made publicly available on a centralised Web Site.

The CEN Workshop Agreement will cover four aspects concerned with the certification schema:

- Specifications for a European authority on Web Accessibility certification
- Specifications for the organisations that can issue the Web Accessibility Quality Mark
- Specifications for the process to be followed by each organisation before issuing the Web Accessibility Quality Mark
- Specifications for other good practices to be followed by organisations issuing the Web Accessibility Quality Mark

2.3. Dissemination and Exploitation

The project prepares for the dissemination of the project outcomes all over Europe, focusing on:

- The preparation of training material for professional Web Accessibility evaluators, concerning the certification of accessible Web sites
- Seminars in several countries in Europe in order to inform key organisations that could be interested in the set up of a certification scheme and in the necessary

accompanying services like information outreach, localisation, training, certification, ...

- Co-operation with the EDeAN network for outreaching work.

3. Partners

The partners in the project are summarised in the table below.

No.	Organisation	Short name	Country
1	Association Brailenet (Coordinator)	BNET	FR
2	Fundosa Teleservicios	TSERV	ES
3	Bartimeus Accessibility Foundation	ACC	NL
4	Dublin City University	DCU	IE
5	Universität Linz	IS	AT
6	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven R&D	KULRD	BE
7	AccessInMind Ltd	AIM	UK

Note: the formal name of the Bartimeus Accessibility Foundation is 'Stichting Bartimeus Accessibility'

SUPPORT-EAM will co-operate with the EIAO and BentoWeb projects within the WAB Cluster, with W3C/WAI working groups as stated in the Cluster Agreement and with EdeAN. It has also a strong liaison with the EuroAccessibility Initiative.

4. Workplan

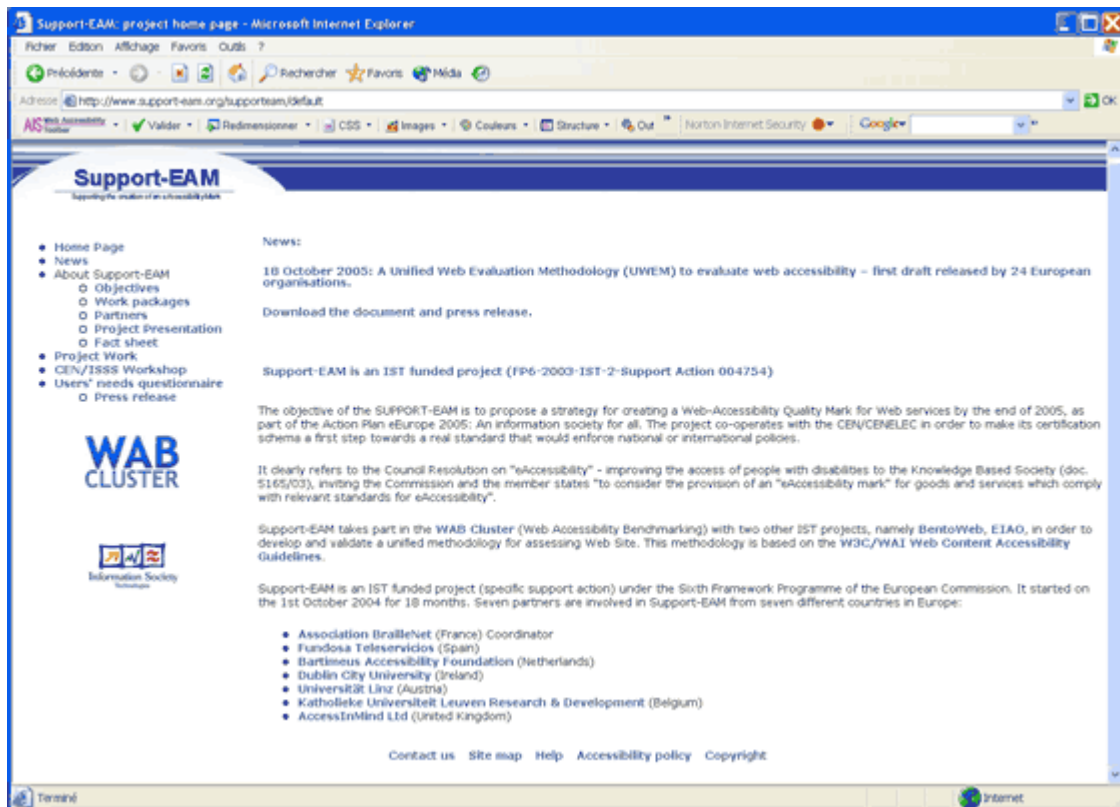
Work package	Short description	Leader
WP1	Project Management and Quality Assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To ensure the timely and quality performance of the Support-EAM project and results.	BNET

<p>WAB Cluster</p>	<p>Evaluation Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To validate and harmonise methodologies and expertise concerning web accessibility. Validation will include information from user-evaluation and expert testing of websites. ▪ To create a unified methodology for evaluating Web accessibility in co-operation with W3C/WAI and the projects in the cluster ▪ To support the WCAG WG in the development of next generation guidelines based on the methodology development work. ▪ To support the objectives of all projects ▪ To maintain compliance with WAI / WCAG (precisely explicitly each time version 1.0 and/or 2.0) ▪ To provide a demonstration of the working prototype aggregation 	<p>ACC</p>
<p>WP3</p>	<p>European Authority – Quality Mark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To identify the Needs of Stakeholders concerning e-accessibility services ▪ To get a CEN Workshop Agreement on a Certification Schema for Web Accessibility ▪ To create a Quality Mark for e-Accessibility evaluation ▪ To propose a strategy for a European Authority ▪ To propose an Exploitation Plan for exploiting the results beyond the term of the project 	<p>BNET</p>
<p>WP4</p>	<p>Dissemination – Exploitation - Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To increase the awareness about needs for harmonisation and certification on Web accessibility ▪ To disseminate the results of the project ▪ To prepare the implementation of a Certification Scheme 	<p>TSERV</p>

5. Support-EAM Web Site

Information on the project outcomes are regularly published on the Web Site.

<http://www.support-eam.org>



6. Related Web Sites

Web Accessibility Initiative

<http://www.w3.org/WAI>

EdeAN

<http://www.edean.org>

EuroAccessibility

<http://www.euroaccessibility.org>

Association BrailleNet

<http://www.brailenet.org/>

Fundosa Teleservicios

<http://www.teleservicios.com/>

Bartimeus Accessibility Foundation

<http://www.accessibility.nl/>

Dublin City University

<http://www.dcu.ie/>

Universität Linz

<http://www.integriert-studieren.jku.at/>

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven R&D

<http://www.docarch.be>

AccessInMind Ltd

<http://www.accessinmind.com/>

EIAO project

<http://www.eiao.net>

BenToWeb project

<http://www.bentoweb.org>