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**Objet :** Accessible emergency communication /Accessibility Act/Accord EUR-OPA et Conférence du Conseil de l'Europe

Madame l'Administratrice générale, chers collègues et partenaires,

Comme souhaite le rappeler l'[EDF](#) avec fermeté - voir ici-bas - , actuellement, **les services d'urgence demeurent largement inaccessibles pour de nombreuses personnes handicapées.**

Plusieurs pays ont développé des solutions plus ou moins ad hoc. Voir le [Centre de Crise belge](#) qui fait partie du Service Public Fédéral Intérieur.

Néanmoins, de nombreuses personnes handicapées ne peuvent pas encore compter sur un moyen accessible de contacter les services d'urgence qui travaillent dans toute l'UE, contrairement à leurs homologues non handicapés, qui peuvent composer le 112 avec un appel vocal régulier, partout et 24h / 24.

La proposition Accessibility Act de la Commission européenne et en particulier le rapport du Parlement européen garantissent l'accessibilité de bout en bout des services de téléphonie et d'urgence (Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) disponibles et interopérables dans toute l'Europe pour toutes les personnes « qui ne peuvent communiquer oralement ».

Ces moyens de communication accessibles sont requis pour tous les opérateurs économiques impliqués. *Si cela s'avère impossible une solution similaire à celle proposée par la présidence maltaise de l'UE pourrait être soutenue: une proposition visant à imposer aux États membres de désigner un ou plusieurs Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) pour recevoir, répondre et gérer les communications d'une manière accessible.*

**Malheureusement, le Conseil a décidé d'exclure toutes les exigences relatives aux Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) dans sa position concernant l'Accessibility Act.**

En tant qu'État partie à la Convention des Nations Unies relative aux droits des personnes handicapées (UN CRPD), l'UE et tous ses États membres doivent appliquer ses dispositions, y compris l'article 9 qui oblige les États parties à assurer l'accessibilité de l'information et des communications aux services d'urgence.

**RAPPEL : l'accord EUR-OPA du Conseil de l'Europe** quant à lui encourage l'amélioration de la planification des urgences, de la réaction aux catastrophes et de l'atténuation des risques pour les personnes handicapées par le biais de son projet sur les personnes handicapées dans la préparation et la réaction aux catastrophes.

Les 4-5 décembre 2014, la Belgique a organisé une Conférence pour l'inclusion des personnes handicapées à la préparation et à la réaction aux catastrophes avec le Conseil de l'Europe dans le cadre de la Présidence belge du Comité des Ministres (SPF Intérieur de Belgique – Madame Sylvie KORMOSS ici en Cc) assisté par les entités fédérale et fédérées belges compétentes pour le handicap).

[http://www.ibz.be/download/newsletter/PROGRAMME-FR-DisabilityConference\\_Brussels\\_4-5dec2014\\_Programme\\_fr\\_17.pdf](http://www.ibz.be/download/newsletter/PROGRAMME-FR-DisabilityConference_Brussels_4-5dec2014_Programme_fr_17.pdf)

La publication [\*Risques majeurs et personnes handicapées\*](#) (juillet 2014) a offert un aperçu de la situation actuelle dans ce domaine en Europe et montre qu'il reste beaucoup à faire pour améliorer la préparation aux situations d'urgence.

A cette fin, [\*une boîte à outils Risques majeurs et personnes handicapées\*](#) avait été élaborée par des professionnels de la protection civile et des décideurs pour promouvoir la résilience de tous aux niveaux national, régional et local. La boîte à outils, présentée lors de la Conférence, est facile à utiliser, elle donne des conseils pratiques et des grandes orientations d'une façon qui est simple à mettre en œuvre. Elle constitue un processus itératif, fondé sur l'évolution des besoins, des attentes, du savoir et de la technologie pour améliorer la résilience des personnes handicapées.

[\*This is The Earth\*](#) est un dessin animé géorgien sous-titré en anglais pour enfants en cas de tremblements de terre; applicable aux personnes handicapées notamment celles souffrant de déficiences mentales.

La résolution sur [\*les principes éthiques pour la réduction des risques de catastrophe et de la promotion de la résilience des populations aux catastrophes\*](#), adoptée en 2011, a servi de base au programme de travail actuel. Un [rapport](#) qui dresse un état des lieux de la situation actuelle, des [lignes directrices](#) et une [recommandation](#) ont été publiés par le Conseil de l'Europe et adoptés par ses Etats membres.

**Je vous invite à utiliser tous les moyens qui sont les vôtres pour infléchir dans le bon sens la position du Conseil de l'Union européenne.**

Cordialement,

Brigitte Plumet  
Directrice  
Direction générale

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**Envoyé :** mercredi 9 mai 2018 12:12

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**Objet :** EMERGENCY CALL TO THE COUNCIL: Accessible emergency communication for persons with disabilities: a requirement to save lives

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Joint statement European Disability Forum, European Union of the Deaf, European Emergency Number Association, European Deafblind Union, European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, European Association of Cochlear Implant users, European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children, European Deafblind Network

# EMERGENCY CALL TO THE COUNCIL

## Accessible emergency communication for persons with disabilities: a requirement to save lives

**The Council's proposal to exclude Public Safety Answering Points (centres answering emergency calls) from the upcoming European Accessibility Act will keep millions of persons with disabilities at risk. The above organisations call on the Council of the EU to accept mandatory and common accessibility requirements for services handling emergency calls. We have the right to call for help!**

The European Commission published its [proposal for the European Accessibility Act](#) (EAA) at the end of 2015. Once adopted, the Act will set accessibility requirements for several products and services, **including emergency services.**

Currently, emergency services remain largely inaccessible for many people with disabilities. Several countries have developed ad hoc solutions, such as specific mobile applications that users need to download or to register in beforehand. Nonetheless, **many persons with disabilities cannot yet rely on an accessible way to contact emergency services that works across the EU**, unlike their non-disabled peers, who can dial 112 with a regular voice

call everywhere and around-the-clock. The Accessibility Act can finally address and fix this discriminatory situation that endangers millions of lives.

Both the European Commission proposal and especially the [European Parliament report](#) ensure end-to-end accessibility of telephony and emergency services by applying the same accessibility requirements. These requirements are **voice communication, text, including Real-Time Text and video communication, alone or in combination as Total Conversation services**. By making these services available and interoperable across Europe, persons that cannot communicate orally, as well as deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons, including those who use sign language, will be able to communicate with anybody, including with emergency services, on an equal basis with others.

These accessible means of communication are required for all economic operators involved. Indeed, both the Commission and the Parliament argue that smartphone manufacturers must ensure that their devices support Real-Time Text and Total Conversation services and that electronic communication network operators must carry them through their networks.

Consequently, to make emergency services accessible, somebody will need to respond using Real-Time Text or Total Conversation services. Thus, the so-called Public Safety Answering Points (**PSAPs**), the centres that answer emergency calls, **must be able to appropriately receive, answer and handle such accessible communications, as they do with voice calls**. This is technically feasible and there are even [industry standards](#) available.

Unfortunately, the Council decided to exclude all requirements for PSAPs in its [position](#) regarding the Accessibility Act. **We are therefore urging Member States to reconsider their position**. It makes no sense to require smartphone manufacturers and network operators to support these accessible ways of communication in emergency services, if PSAPs are not required to be

equipped to handle and respond to them. Excluding them would simply break this vital communication chain.

We advocate for a strong Accessibility Act and for Member States to ensure that all emergency services are accessible, as stipulated by amendments 187, 292 and 300 of the European Parliament report on the Act. However, if this is not possible, we would instead support a solution similar to the one put forward under the Maltese presidency of the EU: a proposal to establish **a requirement for Member States to designate one or several PSAPs to receive, answer and handle these communications in an accessible manner**. This solution would enable each Member State to choose their preferred PSAP or PSAPs to handle these accessible communications, based on national circumstances, such as the size of the country, its population, average number of accessible calls, political system, and so on.

### **We therefore suggest the following requirements:**

“Specific accessibility requirements related to services answering and handling emergency calls, including to the single European emergency number 112: Ensuring that emergency communication using voice, text, including real time text and video (Total Conversation) are appropriately received, answered and handled, by one or several PSAPs that have been previously designated to be responsible for, and capable of responding using the same communication means.”

As State Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), the EU and all its Member States must implement its provisions, including [Article 9](#) which requires States Parties to ensure accessibility of information and communications, including with regards to emergency services.

As a matter of fact, the **inaccessibility of emergency services in the EU**

**was highlighted by the UN CRPD Committee** in its 2015 [concluding observations to the EU](#). The Committee specifically asked the EU to ensure that the emergency number 112 is fully accessible to all persons with disabilities across the EU. This requirement can only be met by ensuring end-to-end accessibility of emergency services in the European Accessibility Act that is **available to all and interoperable everywhere** as regular voice calls.

**If Member States fail to deliver, the lives of those that cannot communicate orally, and of more than 52 million deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind European citizens as well as the people that surround them will continue to be put at risk.** Countless other persons will also be affected as everyone can find themselves in a situation where they are unable to call emergency services using oral communication, e.g. being unable to speak or hear after an accident or to speak because it would put their safety at risk, such as during a burglary. In short, all Europeans will immensely benefit from enhanced accessible ways to contact emergency services.

**We therefore call on the EU institutions, and especially the Council, to adopt our proposed amendment in the European Accessibility Act to ensure end-to-end accessibility of emergency services. This will literally save lives.**

## **Endorsements**

This call is endorsed by the following organisations;

- [European Emergency Number Association](#)
- [European Disability Forum](#)
- [European Union of the Deaf](#)
- [European Deafblind Union](#)
- [European Federation of Hard of Hearing People](#)
- [European Association of Cochlear Implant users](#)

- [European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children](#)
- [European Deafblind Network](#)

**For more information please contact;**

**André Félix**

External Communications Officer

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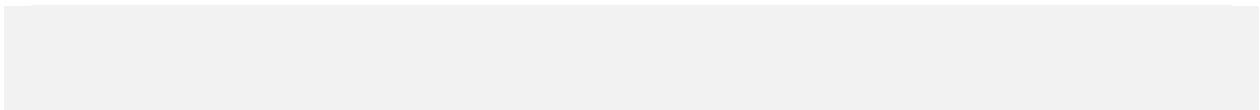
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**Good practice video:**



Video by the [European Union of the Deaf](#). A deaf woman walks in a park and sees a man lying on the ground. She tries to wake him up. Since he does not react, she proceeds to call the fully accessible emergency number, which is equipped with real time captioning and sign language interpretation. She communicates with an emergency service operator in sign language via an interpreter and lets the operator know that the man is not reactive. He asks her where she is and she tells him the name of the park. As it is a complicated name, she decides to type it in via Real-Time-Text so that emergency services are sure to find the right place. The emergency operator then tells her that an ambulance is on its way and asks her to stay and check if he is still breathing. She agrees and hangs up. Waiting for the ambulances, she then gently shakes the man trying to wake him up.



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The European Disability Forum is an independent NGO that represents the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisation of persons with disabilities from across Europe. EDF is run by persons with disabilities and their families. We are a front runner for disability rights. We are a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe. [www-edf-fehp.org](http://www-edf-fehp.org)

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