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ICS 35.240.99

**SPECIFICATIONS FOR A WEB  
ACCESSIBILITY CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT  
SCHEME AND A WEB ACCESSIBILITY  
QUALITY MARK**

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**CEN**

**CWA 15554**

**WORKSHOP**

June 2006

**AGREEMENT**

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English version

## Specifications for a Web Accessibility Conformity Assessment Scheme and a Web Accessibility Quality Mark

This CEN Workshop Agreement has been drafted and approved by a Workshop of representatives of interested parties, the constitution of which is indicated in the foreword of this Workshop Agreement.

The formal process followed by the Workshop in the development of this Workshop Agreement has been endorsed by the National Members of CEN but neither the National Members of CEN nor the CEN Management Centre can be held accountable for the technical content of this CEN Workshop Agreement or possible conflicts with standards or legislation.

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## **Foreword**

This CWA was drawn up by a CEN/ISSS Workshop established to obtain a first level European agreement on a European conformity assessment scheme concerning the delivery of a “Quality Mark” for Web Accessibility, in accordance with the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

The decision to launch the CEN/ISSS Workshop was taken at the Kick-Off meeting on 14 April 2005 in Brussels.

This CEN Workshop Agreement was approved following the consensus of the Workshop's registered participants at the final meeting in Brussels on 14-15 March 2006 and a subsequent expression of support through an electronic process that ended on 5 April 2006.

The CEN Workshop Agreement is based on the assumption that a Quality Mark for Web Accessibility will be beneficial to users including elderly people and users with disabilities. Many stakeholders support this assumption, as proven by the existence of many (national) labelling schemes already. It was noted that some major IT companies and their sector representative organisations clearly state a preference to use supplier's declaration of conformity, which is more feasible and efficient according to their opinion. The Workshop therefore considered third party conformity assessment and supplier's declaration of conformity equally.

The list of companies and organisations that have participated in the Workshop and expressed support to this CEN Workshop Agreement is available from the CEN Management Centre upon request.

W3C/WAI asked it to be recorded that they object to the implementation of this CEN Workshop Agreement until such time as high-quality, comprehensive, and condensed versions of the evaluation methodology and training requirements & plan are available.

This CEN Workshop Agreement is publicly available as a reference document from the National Members of CEN: AENOR, AFNOR, ASRO, BSI, CSNI, CYS, DIN, DS, ELOT, EVS, IBN, IPQ, IST, LVS, LST, MSA, MSZT, NEN, NSAI, ON, PKN, SEE, SIS, SIST, SFS, SN, SNV, SUTN and UNI.

## **Introduction**

### **A Convergence of needs**

User and consumers organisations, industry and governments agree that the accessibility of technology is a significant and relevant issue that shall be addressed seriously and coherently.

Accordingly, in its Communication on eAccessibility, September 13th, 2005, the European Commission proposed a set of policy actions that should foster eAccessibility. It calls on Member States and stakeholders to support voluntary positive actions to make accessible ICT products and services far more widely available in Europe.

All see the accessibility of technology as a large-scale problem concerning many business domains and hitting a growing potential market. They consider that standards should help towards a society more beneficial to all citizens, matching the ethical objectives of modern democracies.

Also the work done by the W3C under the Web Accessibility Initiative is recognised as a possible basis for building up Web Accessibility, particularly the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Whatever basis is chosen, it must be globally harmonised.

### **Diversity of approaches**

Based on this convergence, various demands have emerged from the stakeholders and concrete answers have been developed in several places for assessing the conformity of websites to the WCAG recommendations.

For instance, in several European countries, organisations working with disability groups have developed labelling schemes based on third party assessment, with some local success. In some cases they have been recognised by official governmental organisations. They also appear to have met expectations of Web site owners and small or medium sized Web agencies. In general these initiatives have been welcomed, also by public opinion, as a means to forge a path towards a more inclusive society. In several countries those organisations are exploring the possibility to adhere to certification schemes provided by international standards for certification or inspection. The approach of certifying accessibility by independent third party is supported by user and consumer organisations.

In parallel, the European Community has stated clear political objectives towards eInclusion. For instance, in its January 2003 Resolution on eAccessibility, the Council called for an “eAccessibility mark” for goods and services. The 2002 Ministerial Declaration on eInclusion reflected that “a European web accessibility label that certifies compliance with W3C/WAI<sup>1</sup> guidelines could be considered in order to avoid market fragmentation”. In its recent communication on eAccessibility, the European Commission announces they will foster the use of three approaches not yet widely used in Europe: (i) accessibility requirements in public procurement, (ii) accessibility certification, and (iii) better use of existing legislation (referenced in section 4.3).

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<sup>1</sup> World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)

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