

Digital Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities

CONCEPT NOTE

Background and rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the shortcomings and inequalities in the education, and persons with disabilities (PWD) appeared in the most vulnerable situation. The information society provides PWD with significant opportunities for lifelong learning and also, through obtaining relevant digital skills (SDG4, target 4.4), for employment. In this context, ICT-accessibility plays a critical role. Strengthening digital skills and practical means to achieve real digital inclusion is set as a priority topic for the UNECE countries at the forthcoming ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference (June 2022).

In 2021, ITU Regional Office for CIS conducted a holistic overview of the ICT accessibility policy and regulatory frameworks in European and Central Asian countries of the region, which serves to provide advice to policy-makers and stakeholders throughout the region in the form of good practices and recommendations to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility, notably to information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.

The latest UNESCO IITE policy brief on impact of the pandemic on PWD in education places special emphasis on the feasible approaches, means and solutions to maintain continuity of and achieve authentic inclusion in the education of persons with disabilities through alternative delivery modalities, most notably via open and distance learning.

As digital means are not only a solution to an emergency, but a long-term investment towards inclusion, sustainability and resilience, this event provides a platform for Member States and other stakeholders to discuss challenges, opportunities, and necessary policy actions, as well as practical issues of digital inclusion and educating PWD in digital skills.

Session objectives and expected outcomes

Objective of the event is to provide an overview of the existing practices of ensuring digital inclusion of PWD and share practical examples of educating PWD in digital skills.

Expected outcomes:

- presentation of the ITU study of the ICT accessibility policy and regulatory frameworks in the CIS Region;
- presentation of the UNESCO IITE policy brief on impact of the pandemic on PWD in education;
- interactive panel discussion to exchange of experience on practical aspects of educating digital skills to PWD and ensuring digital inclusion;
- interactive panel discussion on solutions/ideas/projects aimed at digital inclusion and strengthening of digital skills of PWD.

Organizers

Lead organizers: ITU

Contributors: UNESCO IITE, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan

Focal points: Irina Divakova

E-Mail: irina.divakova@itu.int

Agenda and Structure

Wednesday, 6 April 2022 (8:30-9:45- Geneva time)

08:30 – 08:35 Opening remarks

08:35 – 08:45 ICT accessibility study for CIS region, ITU

08:45 – 08:55 Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on PWD in education, UNESCO IITE

08:55 – 09:40 Interactive panel discussion

Question 1: What are the challenges and what activities you undertake to foster digital skills development for PWD? How do you see it supports eliminating obstacles and barriers to accessibility in education?

Question 2: How the potential of digital technology can further galvanize digital inclusion in the near future?

09:40 – 09:45 Wrap-up

List of Panellists

Moderator: Natalia Mochu, ITU

Panelists: Ms. Natalia Amelina (UNESCO IITE), Ms. Anastasia Konukhova (Vice-Chairman of the ITU-D Study Group “Enabling environment for the development of telecommunications/ICTs”, ITU), Ms. Kristine Gyonjyan (Union of Operators, Armenia), Ms. Zhanna Barakova, Ms. Apel Sarybaeva (Academy of Digital Innovation, Kyrgyzstan), Mr. Ablahad Kuchkarov (tbc) (Hi-Tech Park, Uzbekistan), name tbd (Belarusian Academy of Telecommunication)