



FEAT

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Author(s): Susanna Laurin, Johan Kling, Sara Kjellstrand

Partner(s) contributing: N/A

Abstract: The Report on user needs describes the results from interactions with various stakeholders concerning their needs and demands for improvements in web authoring tool templates, including an online survey, online workshops and interviews.

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Executive summary

This report summarises the findings of the research on user requirements in the project FEAT. The purpose of the activity was to gather and analyse user requirements from stakeholders in different parts of the value chain: authoring tools producers, suppliers of authoring tool templates, web authors, as well as end users with and without disabilities. The aim of the activities is to ensure that the templates are useful for web authors, feasible from a technical perspective, and that the end result has an impact on end users with disabilities.

In order to decide which templates to prioritise during the project, the collection of user requirements focused on three main target groups of the project:

- The users of the templates - web authors, primarily in the public sector – are central to the investigation.
- The enablers - Episerver partners including the templates in their offering – are key to the success of the project uptake and spread, and therefore their views on prioritisation and feasibility are important.
- The real beneficiaries of templates having built-in accessibility by default - end users with disabilities – are always leading the way when it comes to decisions on which accessibility problems are most important to solve.

The methodology used for ensuring the templates developed in the project meet the needs and requirements of these three target groups is a combination of online survey, online workshops and interviews. In this way, the research team has had the possibility to receive quantitative as well as qualitative responses. The findings have also been compared to the results of the stakeholder engagement in the We4Authors pilot project.

The key results of the activity can be summarised as follows:

- There is a great demand for templates with built-in accessibility features in the Episerver community
- The users of the templates are a heterogenous group with varying knowledge of web publishing in general, and even more so when it comes to accessible publishing. This means that the templates should ideally cover both simple and more advanced functionality
- Out of nine specific items that web authors claim to be most challenging, eight may be addressed in the templates

Next steps:

Based on the findings around user requirements, the features will be sorted, prioritised and analysed from the perspective of technical feasibility. This will be assessed including both factors related to the Episerver framework, and broader factors that are common to the core functionalities of other authoring tools, as shown in the We4Authors pilot project. The result of this activity will be a list of accessibility features to be developed in a set of templates.

The specifications will pay special attention to identifying which accessibility features can be implemented as automated features, and which features can be made accessible by providing support to the web author in cases when the feature requires manual handling and flexibility in decision making. The objective is to make sure the templates provide as much built-in accessibility as possible.



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This will minimise the risk of errors and leave room for web authors to concentrate on content production, while at the same time provide support for web authors using the more complex features.



1. Introduction

Scope and objective of deliverable

This deliverable describes the work done in identifying and analysing the user requirements of the relevant stakeholders; mainly web authors but also end users with disabilities and suppliers of Episerver websites. The aim of the deliverable is to make sure that the templates produced in the project are solving the most prioritised accessibility problems for web authors using Episerver and other authoring tools using templates in a similar way. By involving all parts of the web authoring value chain, the project can ensure that the templates are feasible from a technical perspective, user friendly and supportive for web authors, and that they also have a real impact in increasing accessibility of the website for end users with disabilities.

Methodology of work

The methodology for collecting user requirements from the different stakeholder groups (web authors, authoring tools providers, ICT suppliers and end users with disabilities) is based on gathering user needs and comparing them to the results of the We4Authors pilot project. In the current project and deliverable, the level of detail can of course be much more granular, since the target audience is focusing on specific templates and features. The work is based on the experience and needs of web authors using and suppliers delivering on Episerver, which is used as the demonstrator for the model templates.

The methods used for gathering user requirements are:

- Online survey primarily focusing on public sector web authors
- Workshops with regional and local government web authors
- Interviews with industry partners and end user organisations

To achieve the best possible result and outreach and after agreement with the European Commission, the online survey of FEAT was sent out in combination with the survey of We4Authors Cluster. In this way, the survey could reach both public sector web authors using Episerver as well as authors using any other authoring tool. No overlap was made between the two projects. This report is based only on respondents using Episerver.

The survey targeting Episerver-users was sent out to Funka's network of local governments, European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN) and known Episerver clients and partners via email. 50 respondents completed the survey in full.

Because of the outbreak of Corona pandemic, it has been hard to persuade public sector professionals to focus on accessibility research during the spring of 2020. Despite this, the project has performed online workshops in smaller groups in different networks.

The online workshops have worked well, leading to interesting discussions and specific recommendations from the web authors.

For end users with disabilities and suppliers of Episerver, a set of interviews has been performed to validate the results from the pilot project as well as the survey results.



2. Web authors requirements

To collect user requirements from web authors, an online survey and interviews were carried out.

2.1 Online survey

The online survey was created jointly by Funka's researchers, developers and web author trainers, collaborating to ensure the questions would cover all relevant aspects of the authoring experience.

2.2 Online survey pilot

The survey was piloted via the network of public sector bodies that Funka normally activate to do early testing of new products and services. The network consists of 18 authorities from the Nordic countries who are long term clients and keen on accessibility. All of them were invited to piloting the survey, 11 of them tried it out and 6 gave additional feedback.

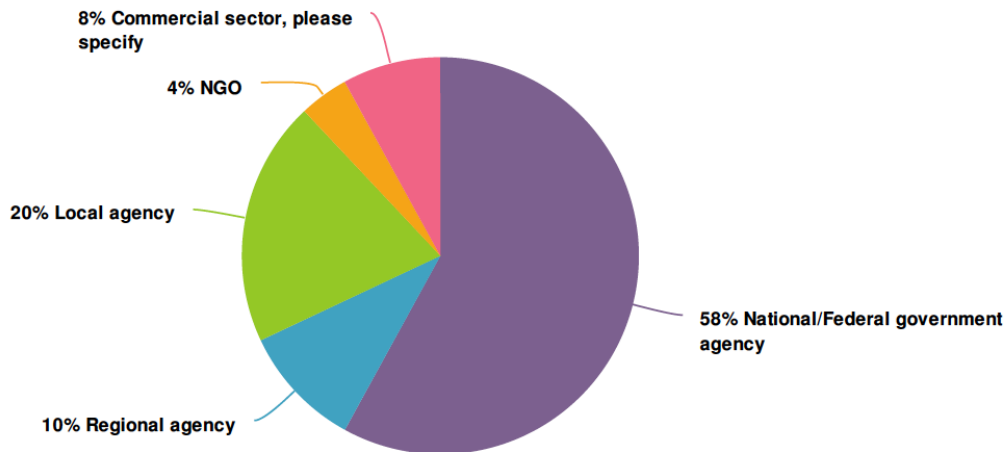
2.3 Online survey

As per agreement with the PO, a combined online survey covering both this project and the Cluster project was used. Respondents who chose Episerver as their authoring tool were asked specific questions about Episerver. The online survey was sent out to the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN), to Funka's general contacts within the public sector in the Nordic countries and to Episerver clients, the vast majority being public sector authorities. 50 respondents completed the survey in full."

2.4 Online survey results

The result of the online survey is presented below:

1. Where do you work?

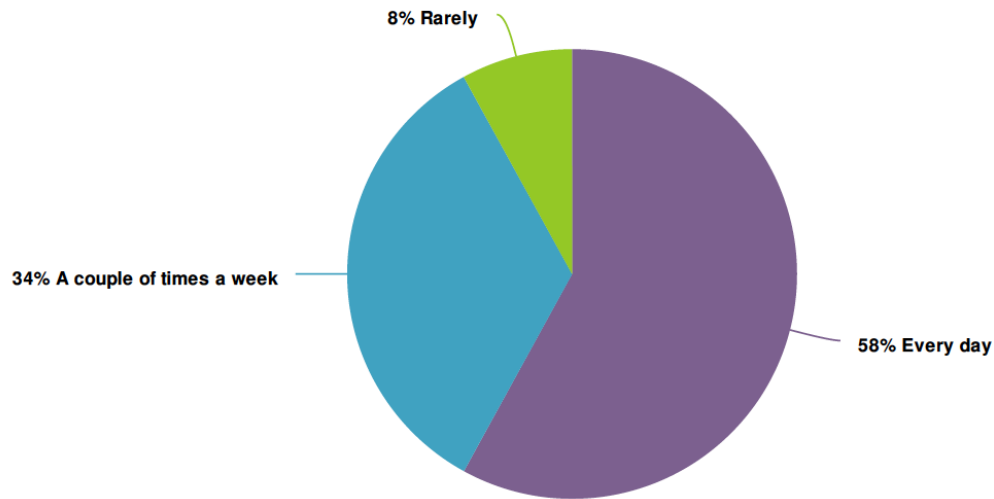


Value	Percent	Responses
National/Federal government agency	58.0%	29
Regional agency	10.0%	5
Local agency	20.0%	10
NGO	4.0%	2
Commercial sector, please specify	8.0%	4

Totals: 50

The reason that national agencies has a higher representation than regional and local ones probably has to do with Episerver being quite expensive. At least in the Nordic countries, national agencies in general have more resources for communication and ICT than regional and local governments. Among the clients of the research team, web authors at national level also generally have a deeper knowledge when it comes to accessibility.

4. How often do you publish on the web?

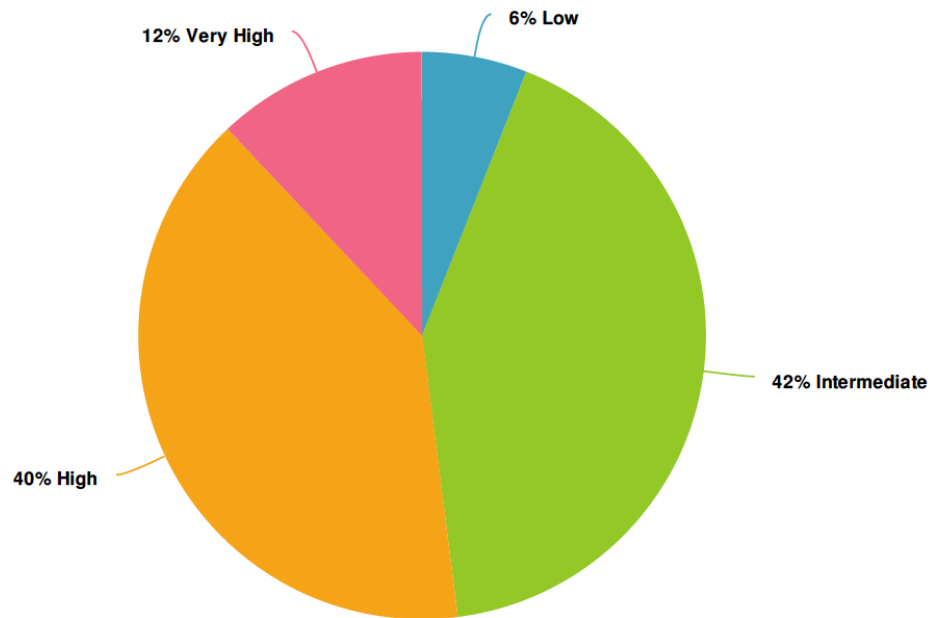






Value	Percent	Responses
Every day	58.0%	29
A couple of times a week	34.0%	17
Rarely	8.0%	4

Totals: 50

A majority of the respondents were professional web authors, who publish on the web every day or a couple of times a week. This means on the one hand that the respondents are probably familiar with many of the obstacles accessible publishing can mean. On the other hand, they do not represent the vast majority of the target audience who may benefit most of the project results: web authors who are not professional authors and who are publishing as a small part of their day job. The fact that the most “professional” of the web authors are the ones responding to a survey like this is very natural, since they have an interest in the topic. This is also the reason for the mixed methodology for collecting user requirements in the project. It is very important for the success and impact of the project that the results cover a wide range of needs; from experienced web authors to people who publish seldom, from authors with good knowledge about accessibility to authors who are new to the subject.

5. How would you rate your accessibility knowledge?

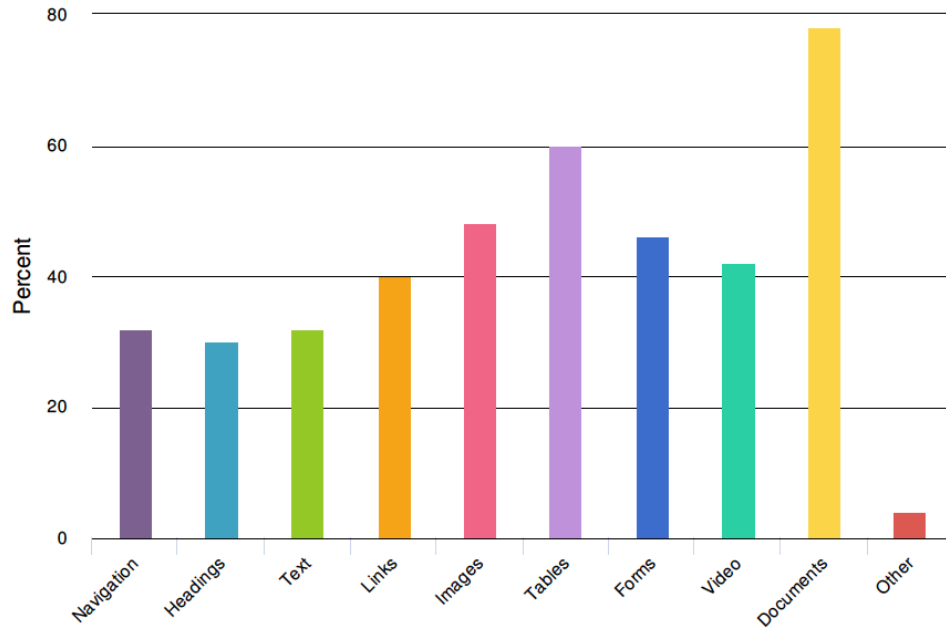


Value		Percent	Responses
Low		6.0%	3
Intermediate		42.0%	21
High		40.0%	20
Very High		12.0%	6

Totals: 50

82% of the respondents rate their accessibility skills as intermediate to high. Again, this is the result to be predicted in a survey like this and it means that the respondents are knowledgeable of the subject.

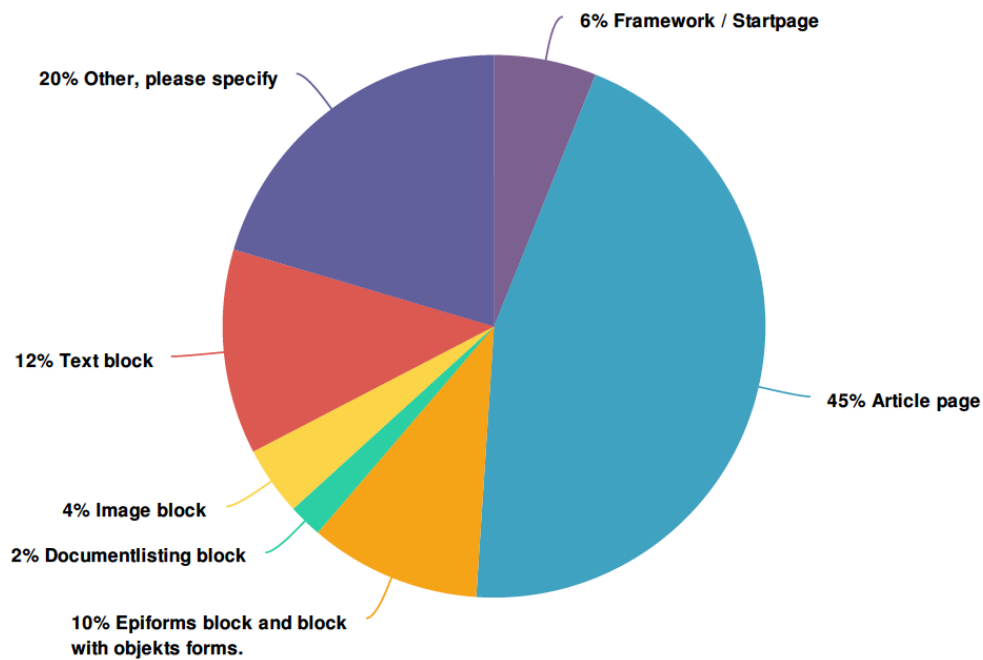
7. Which areas are most difficult for you/your organisation when it comes to accessibility (where you are uncertain or where it most often goes wrong)?



Value	Percent	Responses
Navigation	32.0%	16
Headings	30.0%	15
Text	32.0%	16
Links	40.0%	20
Images	48.0%	24
Tables	60.0%	30
Forms	46.0%	23
Video	42.0%	21
Documents	78.0%	39
Other	4.0%	2

When asked which areas are most difficult when it comes to accessibility, almost 80% of respondents answered documents, which is not something the Episerver templates can address in a meaningful way. It was possible to give multiple answers without prioritisation and all alternatives were chosen by at least 30% of the respondents, tables being the second most selected feature. It can be argued that for example forms or video are used less often than text and images which should be taken into consideration when analysing the results.

8. In which parts of EpiServer would it be most beneficial for you to have built-in accessibility features?



Value	Percent	Responses
Framework / Startpage	6.1%	3
Article page	44.9%	22
Epiforms block and block with objekts forms.	10.2%	5
Documentlisting block	2.0%	1
Image block	4.1%	2
Text block	12.2%	6
Other, please specify	20.4%	10

Totals: 49

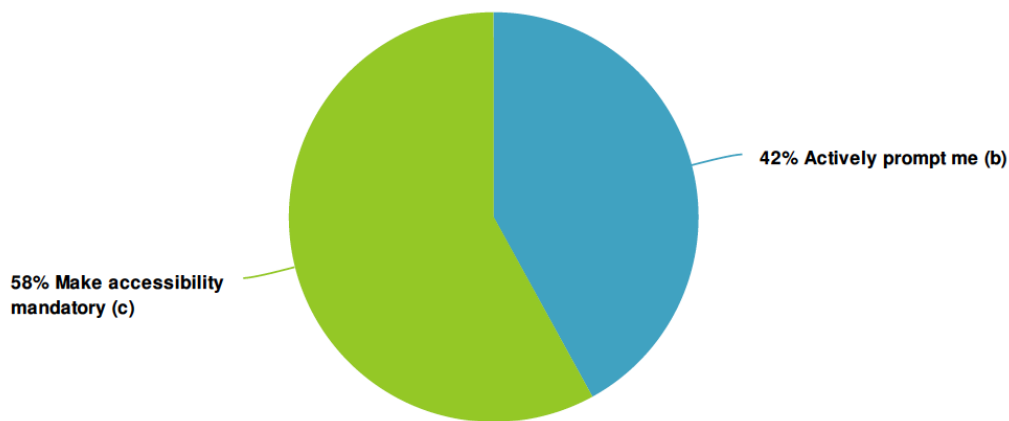
Free text answers
Headings, ALT-texts, tables with built-in function to set the right heading
Templates with functions/APIs retrieving information from other systems
All
All parts of tables: column headings, table names, responsiveness



All or most
All
All
Can only select one here, but want to tick for calendar event, text block, default page
Should have such functionalities in all parts of EPI!
If there was any way to create accessible forms that also meet all other requirements for security, data protection and that could replace documents in Word, Excel and PDF

To close in on the question of prioritisation from another perspective, the survey asked most specifically for which Episerver template, block or object that authors would like to see with built in accessibility features. Around 45% of the respondents chose Article page which points to the fact that very basic accessibility support is needed in the parts used by almost every author, every day. Another specific template that was mentioned was Epiforms, which is not surprising since accessible forms is one of the most complex parts of authoring. Among the respondents who chose "other", most described a need for built in accessibility features "everywhere".

13. Would you prefer default accessibility features that inform, nudge or force you to publish accessibly? a) have an optional field where you can fill in the ALT -text of an image if you like b) prompt you to fill in the ALT -text of an image when you try to publish an image c) have a mandatory field where you have to fill in the ALT -text of an image to be able to publish the image I would prefer the tool to:



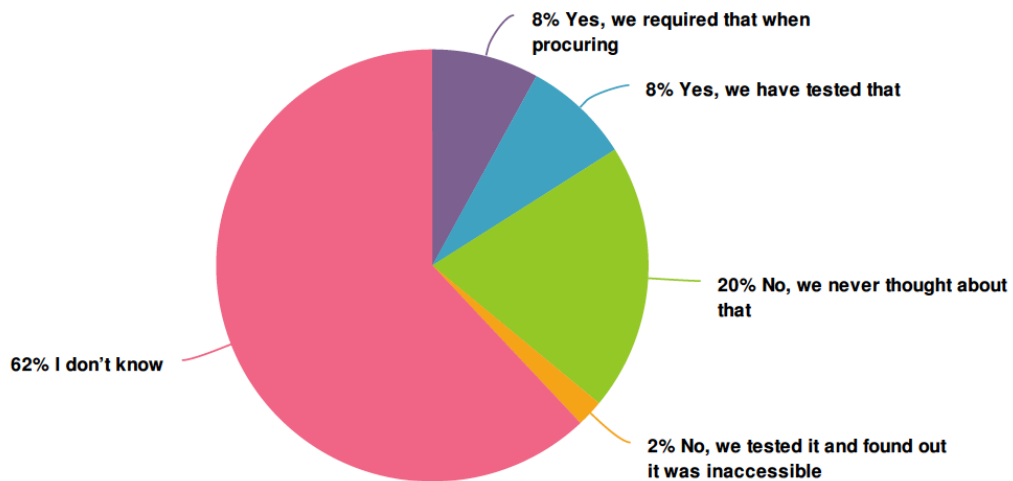
Value	Percent	Responses
Actively prompt me (b)	42.0%	21
Make accessibility mandatory (c)	58.0%	29

Totals: 50

One interesting result from the survey was that as many as 58% of the respondents would like the accessibility features to be mandatory, whereas 40% would prefer them to be actively prompting for accessibility. No respondent chose the alternative a) inform about accessibility.

Based on previous experience, mandatory accessibility usually works well in theory, but when tested in reality, most clients prefer a little bit more flexibility. The survey result may depend on the respondents being authors “in the field” who only see their own part of the authoring environment and thereby miss some potential problems with making accessibility mandatory. Since the respondents claim to publish on the website every day or every week, they are clearly not the web site owners. On the other hand, the result may point to something quite interesting; that the people actually publishing the content would prefer to be more “forced” to do the right thing. The result can also be interpreted as a frustration with things going wrong when it comes to accessibility, and a sense of urgency on the topic.

16. Is your authoring tool in itself (i.e., the back end or editor interface) accessible to people with disabilities?

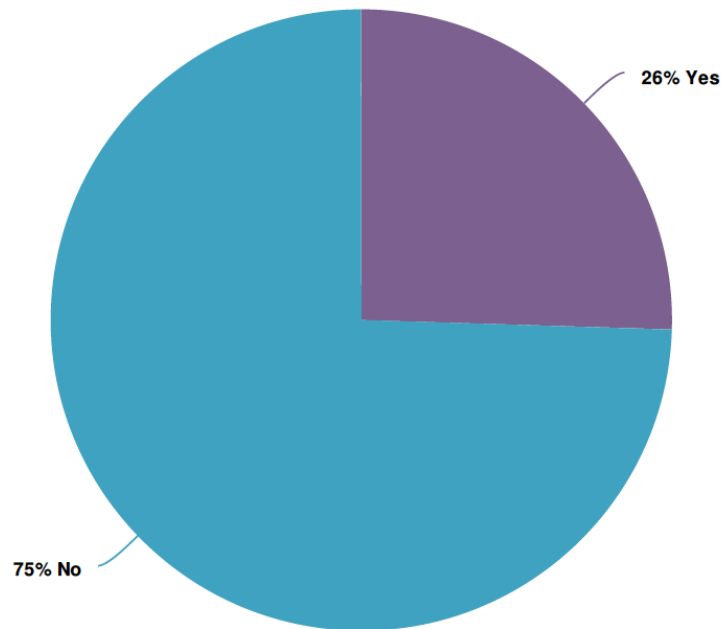


Value	Percent	Responses
Yes, we required that when procuring	8.0%	4
Yes, we have tested that	8.0%	4
No, we never thought about that	20.0%	10
No, we tested it and found out it was inaccessible	2.0%	1
I don't know	62.0%	31

Totals: 50

A few respondents claim that requirements for back end accessibility for authors with disabilities were in place when procuring the tool but only a handful have actually tested it. 60% say they don't know.

14. Were built-in accessibility features in the authoring tool part of the decision-making process during procurement?



Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	25.5%	12
No	74.5%	35

Totals: 47

Only about a fourth of the respondents say that built in accessibility features was part of their procurement process. This is of course interesting as it may say something about the awareness of accessibility in the organisation as such, not only in the communication department.

Cost of training

The research team was fully aware of how difficult this question would be to answer but chose to keep it in the survey to see what came out of it. As expected, the vast majority (96%) of the respondents answer either “no” or “I don’t know” when asked about the cost for training authors. This probably has to do with the role of the respondents, who are not responsible for budget issues.

The reason for asking this question is of course that the research team would like to show the potential economic benefit of accessibility by default in the templates.

Responsibility for remediation

All respondents who are aware about accessibility testing being made, say that accessibility remediation is done internally. This clearly shows that resources could be saved by using templates

with built-in accessibility. It could also be that the respondents are part of the team taking care of their department's accessibility issues. That would be a strong reason for the respondents urging for built in mandatory accessibility.

Future possibilities

The authors wish list for accessibility in the authoring tool can be divided in several groups:

- Specific functionality (accessible forms, tables etc)
- Accessibility by default, so the author doesn't have to add anything extra
- Reminder before publishing
- Live testing of accessibility while publishing
- Information describing why accessibility is important and how to do it
- Warnings
- Contextual support
- Simulations of assistive technology
- Validation of text

Some of these, like simulations of assistive technology and validation of text are clearly out of scope of this project, while some of the others are important input for the continued work.

2.5 Workshop results

As a complement to the survey results, the research team has performed two workshops; one open to the public but specifically targeting representatives from regions from all over Europe, ERRIN members and beyond, and the second one for local governments in Funka's municipality network. The invitations specified the topic as EpiServer-related and most participants had some kind of experience in EpiServer, the majority being current users but some also former and potential future users, currently exploring different authoring tools as part of the decision-making process.

The main objective of the workshops was to collect answers on two specific questions:

- which part of the publishing process is most difficult when it comes to accessibility
- which kind of built in accessibility would be most useful for authors

The two workshops had a similar methodology: presenting the project and then asking structured and specific questions about Episerver templates as well as open, general questions around accessible publishing. The online format is quite different from face to face workshops and it is hard to catch details and nuances from all participants. But in general, discussions were lively and the participants very active.

2.6 Open workshop targeting European regions

The open online workshop with representatives from regions had 14 participants from 6 countries; Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Italy. It was a mix of professional communication officers publishing often or daily and website owners/project managers. The accessibility knowledge was estimated by the workshop leader as average to low.

The result of the dialogue can be summarised as follows:

- The most obvious result is frustration.
- Accessibility is perceived as very difficult and time consuming.

- Even the support that do exist in the tools is not commonly known or much in use.
- Participating authors and web site owners perceive the requirements of the Web Accessibility Directive as hard or impossible to reach.
- Participants claim a lack of resources and a need for training.
- Very basic accessibility support is needed and “everything should be automatically built into all parts of publishing”.
- Apart from these basic needs, participants pointed to the need for instructions and stepwise help to be built into the authoring tool.
- If that is not possible, at least clear manuals and information about the possibilities of the authoring tool was requested.

In general, participants focused on the need for more support, training, manuals etc. That is probably due to the lack of awareness among these authors around the potential of built-in accessibility features that templates can cover.

2.7 Workshop by invitation only for local governments in Sweden

The online workshop with representatives from Swedish local governments had 17 participants representing 12 municipalities, 9 of them are currently using Episerver, but all of them claim to know the set up and functionality of authoring tools using templates. Funka’s network of local governments has worked together in accessibility related issues since 2008 so most of the participants are both experienced and skilled in the topic. The participants also know each other from before which makes the dialogue easier.

In this workshop, the discussions were much more detailed and resulted in a list of specific accessibility features that participants agreed on being valuable for advanced and less advanced authors alike:

- Standard objects in standard article pages such as headings and links should be automatically accessible and impossible to break in the editor. These features are the most commonly used by non-communication professionals publishing and “they just have to work”.
- Diverse level of publishing rights should be used to make sure content is always quality checked before publishing. This way, authors who use the templates often can have more flexibility, whereas “seldom authors” will be restricted to only publish what is accessible from the start.
- Complex objects such as forms and tables should have standardised set ups for simple versions, so that they are as much as possible automatically accessible “out of the box”. For the more advanced authors who create add on-functionality, supportive information should be provided.
- When it comes to design issues and navigation, more flexibility needs to be given and instructions are preferred to mandatory fields that “need to be overruled anyway”.

3. End users with disabilities

Through the regular end user testing performed by Funka and the vast network of test persons with disabilities, user requirements have been collected in structured interviews as well as ad hoc discussions. A set of short online interviews were performed to collect the top five challenges as defined by end user organizations. All test persons in Funka’s test network were asked the same



question: “name the most common accessibility problem(s) you experience in your daily life”. Furthermore, blind and visually impaired web authors using Episerver have shared their experiences with the research team.

The number of end users who have contributed to the study are 23 in total:

Structured interviews with representatives of Disabled Persons Organisations (visitors and web authors): 8 interviews with representatives of DPOs for

- Deaf
- Hard of Hearing
- Parent organisation for dyslectic children
- Downs Syndrome
- Motor impaired
- Autism
- Young persons with visual impairments
- Stuttering

Structured interviews with end users with disabilities in our network of test persons (visitors): 12 end users who self identify as:

- Intellectual disability
- Cognitive impairment
- Rheumatism
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Wheelchair user with motor impairments also in the upper limbs
- Visual impairment (2 people, one blind, one low vision)
- Reading- and writing problems
- Dyslectic and dyscalculic
- Non-diagnosed concentration and focus challenges
- ADD
- Disabled

Visually impaired web authors: 3 people in total, 2 medically blind and 1 severely visually impaired.

End users as visitors

Interestingly enough, the majority of end user organisation representatives and individual end users with disabilities list the same kind of challenges as the top priorities when it comes to public sector websites:

- The content is difficult to understand
- Relevant material is hard to find (within the website or hard to know which public organisation is responsible for what)
- It is hard to get in dialogue with the right person

When asked to specify distinct accessibility barriers, the differences between target groups are evident. The responses within any given target group are however quite homogenous at this high level. The problems pointed out by the main target groups can be summarised as follows:

- Visually impaired users find low contrast and small text most difficult.
- Blind users say structure and navigation are the most common problems.
- Hard of hearing users have trouble with videos that lack captioning.
- End users with motor impairments mention small click areas and lacking visual focus as the main obstacles.
- Persons with cognitive disabilities find understanding instructions and content challenging.

The disabled persons organisations mentioned assistive technology as a problem as such, some groups claim problems in the provision such as lack of competence and irrelevant testing procedures. Other groups report a big need for training and support, to maintain the skills of using the tools. Some assistive technology users claim that they have to wait for updates for a long time, when living in a small language area.

End users as web authors

The national Swedish organisation of visually impaired have been using Episerver as their authoring tool for many years. The editing interface has been altered so that legally blind users can have a smaller interface with less disturbances. This means it may be perceived as more user friendly and easy to grasp. On the other hand, is it not possible to perform all publishing work in this environment. Despite a high ambition from the start of the development of the website, the organisation has concluded that a complete authoring tool serving a modern website is very hard to maintain if the author is blind or severely visually impaired.

4. CMS producers

Based on the pilot project results, the research team has analysed which industry requirements could be useful to implement in Episerver templates. Furthermore, interviews have been performed with 9 Episerver partners and the company called Episerver, which is producing the authoring tool.

The Episerver partners interviewed are all focused on public sector clients:

- KnowIT (Premier Platinum partner)
- Valtech (Premier Platinum partner)
- Authority (Gold partner)
- Comprend (Gold partner)
- Esatto (Gold partner)
- Iveo (Gold partner)
- Softronic (Gold partner)
- Tieto Evry (Gold partner)
- Visma (Gold partner)

The Episerver partner levels are based on the number of Episerver certified developers in the company, the number of new Episerver installations and the number of Episerver websites under management by the company. Premier Platinum is the highest level out of five, whereas Gold is level 3. The partners interviewed have public sector clients of different sizes in different countries.



Among both partners and the Episerver company, interest and demand have been intense. There is a strong need for better accessibility support among clients using Episerver and the partners are expressing a sense of urgency to be able to provide good solutions to public sector clients who are focusing on compliance to the Web Accessibility Directive.

In general, Episerver partners are mostly interested in standardised templates that comply with the accessibility requirements. This is in reality a step before accessibility by default, making sure the tool as such doesn't create inaccessibility through bad code or similar.

The slightly more mature suppliers point to specific items such as forms, tables and video players, where problems appear frequently.

All partners interviewed agree to these statements:

- All Episerver websites produced stem from earlier developments, where objects and blocks are re-used.
- There is a demand for better accessibility support among public sector clients (and, sometimes beyond).
- Using by default accessible templates would be extremely useful for Episerver partners, saving many hours of development time that can be spent of personalisation for the specific client.
- Episerver templates with built-in accessibility published in Episerver Market place or Foundation would be easy to use as a selling point for Episerver as a tool.

The Episerver partners interviewed did not foresee any technical issues using the templates, on the contrary, the majority of them claim that they missed the templates earlier provided by Episerver (the so called "examples" that according to Episerver were only provided for inspiration and never meant to be used as actual templates).

5. Comparison to pilot results

The current research results are much more granular and specific to EPiServer than the pilot project workshop results. On the other hand, many of the topics are still the same, and the demands from authors are similar. In general, the current project has collected more advanced requirements from more skilled users. The We4Authors pilot project targeted a broader audience and gathered needs from web authors, end users with disabilities and industry that is probably more reflecting the reality.

5.1 Best practice examples from web authors

The results from the Brussels workshops with web authors in the pilot project, that are most relevant for tools development are:

- Validation of code and content
- Accessibility by design, it should be embedded and by default.
- Instructions must be accessible and user-friendly.
- A need for more information, manuals, online support, phone hotline etc
- A template to include all specific accessibility features.

5.2 Best practice examples from end users

The results from the Brussels workshops with end users in the pilot project, that are most relevant for tools development are:

- It is hard to find providers who can produce accessible websites and PDFs: This will be addressed with the project templates
- It takes time to make accessible testing, which results in (bad) quick fixes: Using templates with built-in accessibility decreases the need for testing.
- There is a lack of accessible templates that end user organisations who don't have the money to invest in "the perfect" tool can use: Episerver comes at a price, but as soon as the features of the templates are being implemented or used as a basis for development or better ideas, open source or cheap authoring tools may provide the same level of accessibility.
- There is a lack of back office support for end user organisations: With ready to use templates, there will be less need for support when it comes specifically to accessibility.

5.3 Best practice examples from the industry

The results from the Brussels workshops with authoring tools providers and ICT suppliers in the pilot project, that are most relevant for tools development are:

- A general lack of knowledge and expertise: With built-in accessibility by default, web authors don't have to learn accessibility, it is automatically taken care of or instructed about.
- A general lack of awareness on all levels: With templates that provide technical accessibility, awareness becomes less important.
- It is really hard to keep everyone up to date with requirements, especially with the speed of technical development: Using the ready to go and free of charge templates with accessibility by default built into them means the possibility to leap-frog several development steps and focus on making the deliverable unique.
- Repositories of good practices are needed: This is exactly what the project will provide.
- Authors have different levels of accessibility competence: Therefore, the templates must cover basic as well as more advanced publishing situations.
- The main accessibility challenge is the constant need to train new people: The project results will decrease the need for training among the authors.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the pilot project and the activities performed in WP1, it is clear that accessibility by default can mean different things, depending on the level of knowledge of the web author. Since most of the web authors are not communication experts, there is a need for basic accessibility support. On the other hand, it is in the more complex part of web authoring where accessibility tend to go really wrong. The basic features are possible to automate, whereas the more advanced publishing demands flexibility and manual handling – which requires more support and instructions than automation.

The key end user demands that can be covered by templates are fairly easy to meet, which means prioritisation from that perspective is coinciding with web author's needs.

The most encouraging result from the research until now is the big interest from the Episerver community. The fact that Episerver partners are so willing to use the templates and that the Episerver users are in such demand for them show a great potential of uptake of the project results.