

ACCESS TO EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

100 MILLION
people in the European Union have a disability*



1 IN 10
people in the European Union are hard of hearing or deaf*
*The World Bank

Voice call being the de facto method of contacting emergency services prevents a significant proportion of the population from getting help in an emergency.

Accessibility isn't optional - EU requirements mean that in the near future, access to 112 must be possible with methods other than voice call. Use this handy guide to find out the legal requirements and possible solutions for accessible emergency communications!

THE EUROPEAN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS CODE

The EEC states that end-users with disabilities must be able to access emergency services on an equivalent basis with other end-users, and that 112 awareness must also showcase accessibility features.

THE EUROPEAN ACCESSIBILITY ACT

The European Accessibility Act (EAA) includes some requirements on emergency access. It specifies that, at a minimum, real-time text (RTT) should be implemented – and that PSAPs should respond with the same communication method as that received (video responding to video, text responded to by text, for example).

The delegated regulation of the EEC specifies the 'functional equivalence requirements' that need to be met for means of access to emergency services for people with disabilities. The criteria are: Two-way interactive communication; availability in a seamless way, without pre-registration, to people travelling to other member states; communication should be free of charge for the end-users; routing of the communication "without delay" to the most appropriate PSAP and appropriate handling of the communication by the PSAP; equivalent caller location accuracy and reliability compared to means of access for other end-users, and awareness campaigns to promote the existence of these means of access.

TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS



Smartphone application



SMS



Text phone



Relay services



Real-Time Text



Total Conversation



Fax

CONSIDERATIONS

Enabling a PSAP to handle other modes of communication – such as text services, communications in a sign language, and video communications – requires both upgrading the PSAP systems, adapting operations policy (training call-takers to use text), and even employing sign language interpreters. Whichever solutions selected, it must perform **consistently and precisely and must be usable with high confidence**, based on 24h/365 days service provision.