



## **How can new technologies make things better for people with disabilities?**



**Easy to read**

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## Who are we?

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We are the **European Disability Forum**.

We are an organisation  
of people with disabilities in Europe.  
In short, we are called '**EDF**'.



At EDF, we work to protect the rights  
of people with disabilities in Europe.  
We think that people with disabilities  
should have the same chances in life  
and take part in the community like everyone else.  
We also think that people with disabilities should decide about their lives.  
**Nothing should be decided about us without us!**

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## What is this booklet about?

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We wrote this booklet to talk about new technologies.  
By reading this booklet, you will learn:

- What new technologies are.
- How new technologies can help people with disabilities in their everyday lives.
- How to make this happen and make things better for people with disabilities.



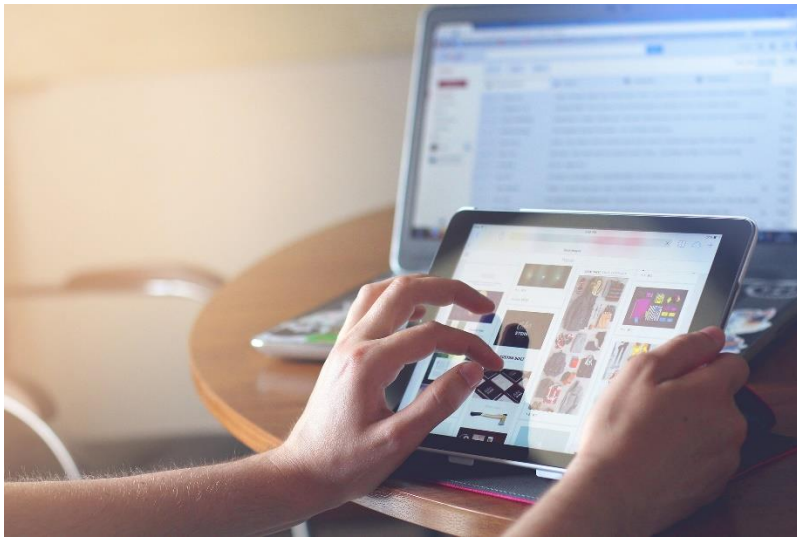
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## What are new technologies?

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'**Technologies**' are tools and machines

that help people to solve problems or do things.  
For example, computers and the internet.



**‘New technologies’** are technologies  
that will bring many changes in our lives in the next years.

New technologies can help people with disabilities  
to do some things more easily.

For example, ‘Braille’ machines help blind people  
read and get information.

Other machines make the text bigger  
so people who cannot see well, can read it.

There are also machines that can read the text  
to people who are blind and they cannot read it themselves.

So technology is very important for people with disabilities.

It can really make a difference in their lives  
and help them to take part in the community.

For that to happen,  
technology must be accessible for people with disabilities.

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## What does the European Union do to make technology accessible?

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The **European Union** is a group of 28 countries in Europe that came together to make things better for people. The European Union works to make things better for people with disabilities too.



The European Union sees how important new technologies can be for people with disabilities. It tries to make sure that more and more technologies become accessible so people with disabilities can use them.

There are many laws and agreements in the European Union that talk about how important technology is for people with disabilities.

For example:

- **The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**  
The UN Convention says what rights people with disabilities have and how countries can protect these rights. In short, we call it **'the UN Convention'**.

The UN Convention says that technology is very important for people with disabilities.

It can help them to be part of the community.

The UN Convention talks about the right of people with disabilities to use technology.

The European Union and all its countries signed the UN Convention.

That means that they agreed to do what the UN Convention says.

So the European Union and its countries should make sure that technology is accessible so people with disabilities can use it without problems.



- **The Sustainable Development Goals**

In short, we call them ‘**the SDGs**’.

The SDGs are goals that many countries in the world set to make the world better.

They want to do that by 2030.

For example, they agreed to protect people who are very poor or left out.

The European Union agreed with the SDGs and should work to make them happen.

The SDGs aim to **leave no one behind**.

Technology can help a lot in this.

It can help many people have better lives and take part in the community.

If people cannot use technology, they may be left out.

For example, if blind people do not have a Braille machine or other technology, they will not be able to read their emails, transfer money or use the internet like all other people. They will be left out from many things in life.



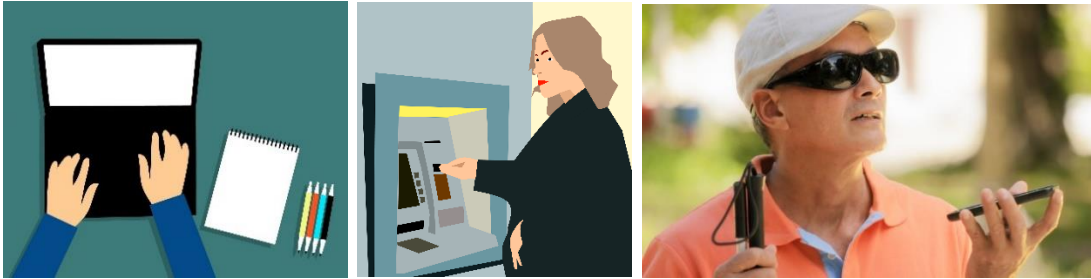
- **The European Accessibility Act**

The European Accessibility Act is a law that the European Union is now making.

The law will make more things and services in Europe accessible for people with disabilities and all people.

For example, computers, cash machines, mobile phones

and other things.



- **The European law for accessible public websites**  
The European Union made a law that says that public websites in Europe should be accessible. For example, the website of your hospital or the community you live in should be accessible. This way, people with disabilities and all people could use them and find important information. The law says that public websites in Europe should be accessible by September 2020.

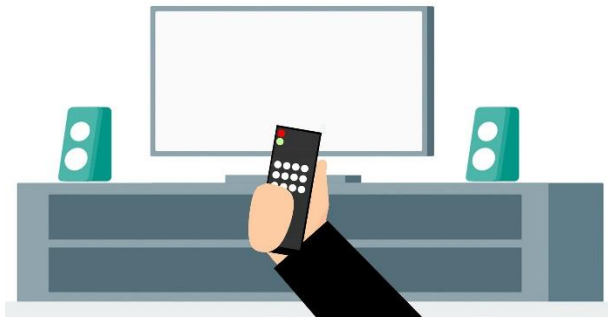
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## How can technology help people with disabilities?

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New technologies can help people with disabilities live independently and take part in all things in life, like all other people. For example, thanks to technology:

- **Many online spaces that people use to get in contact with each other are more accessible.**  
For example, Facebook uses some technology that tells blind people what pictures show.
- **Television programs, movies and videos can be accessible for people with disabilities.**  
For example, there may be sign language or subtitles in movies so people who are deaf or cannot hear well can watch and understand like other people.



- **People with intellectual disabilities can get information in ways that are easy to understand.**  
For example, technology can help people find, read and understand difficult information.
- **People with disabilities could have experiences that they would not have otherwise.**  
For example, for people in wheelchairs it may be hard to climb a mountain. But there is technology that could help them to get a taste of this experience. For example, there are some glasses that make them see things as if they were climbing a mountain.



- **People with disabilities can better prepare their trips and avoid last minute problems.**  
For example, a person in wheelchair can check their route to the bank on an online map. They can see the streets online



and check which way is best for them.

- **Deaf people can get information in sign language with avatars.**

Avatars are icons that look like people but are not real.

They are made by computers.

Avatars can use sign language to explain information to deaf people when having a real person is not possible.

- **People who cannot move some parts of their body can wear a machine that helps them move independently.**

Or it can protect them from falling down and hurting themselves.

- **People with disabilities can do more things in their everyday life and be independent.**

For example, there are smart watches

that do not only show the time but also allow people to answer phone calls or check their emails.



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## What are the problems with new technologies?

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To make this booklet, we made a small survey. That means we asked people with disabilities to tell us what they think about new technologies. Most people with disabilities said that new technologies could be very useful for them





if they were accessible.

Sadly, many new technologies are not accessible for people with disabilities.

Or even if they are accessible, they may be hard to use.

Many people with disabilities who took part in our survey said that:

- **Information about how to use technology is often not easy to understand.**

For example, a blind woman said that she has a smart watch that could help her know the time but also check her emails and messages.

But she does not know how to use it.

She finds information about how to set it up very hard to understand.

She said that information should be easy to understand

and all people should get help to set up and use technology.

This way technology could make a difference in their life.



- **People who make these technologies may not know enough about accessibility.**

Or they may not test their technology with people with disabilities to see if they can use it.

They often make technology

that does not meet the needs of people with disabilities

or people with disabilities cannot use it.

- **It can be hard for people with disabilities to get help when they do not know how to use technology.**

They may not know which number to call to ask for help.

Or even if they find the number,

for some people with disabilities, calling may not be possible.

For example, calling is not possible for deaf people

and people who do not hear well.



- **Technology should be personalised**  
That means that each machine must be able to adjust to the need of the person who uses it.
- **As in many things in life, people with disabilities face discrimination in technology too.**  
This means that they are not treated like other people. For example, if you search the word 'doctor' on the internet, you will never see a doctor with disability. This makes other people think that people with disabilities cannot be doctors or other things that other people can. There are many people with disabilities who are great in their jobs as doctors, actors, athletes or anything else. It is unfair that they are not seen.
- **People with disabilities may not feel safe using new technologies.**  
Often new technologies collect too much information about the people who use them. It is not easy to know how this information will be used. For example, we can see this with Facebook. Technology like Facebook collects a lot of information about people's lives. It knows who your friends are, which places you have visited, what your hobbies are and other information. It is hard to understand how all this information will be used and if it is safe to share so much about your life.



People who use technology should get clear information about this and use technology in a safe way.

- **Many great new technologies are very expensive and most people with disabilities do not have the money to buy them.**

Countries should make sure that all people with disabilities have the chance to use technology and make their lives better.

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## What can be better?

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New technologies can really help people with disabilities and make a difference in their lives.

For that to happen, we think that:

- **Countries should use new technologies to help people with disabilities be part of the community.**

But they should not see technology as the answer to all problems.

Sometimes only technology is not enough.

Some people prefer or need other kind of support too.

In some things, having a person to help you is much better than using a machine.

People with disabilities should be asked to say what really works for them.



When countries make laws or decisions about new technologies they should always ask people with disabilities for their opinion and do that in ways that are accessible for them.

For example,

they should use Braille for blind people,

sign language for deaf people

and easy to read for people with intellectual disabilities.

- **People who study or work to make new technologies should learn about accessibility.**

This way the technologies they make will be easier to use for people with disabilities and all people.

They should also know the needs of people with disabilities and make technology that meets these needs.

They should always talk with people with disabilities and ask for their opinion.

Companies who make and sell new technologies should help people with disabilities to understand how these technologies work and how they can use them.

- **Organisations of people with disabilities should talk to companies and people who make laws and decisions in Europe.**

They should tell them how important it is to make new technologies accessible for all people.

This is what we try to do with this booklet.

We try to show everyone how useful technology can be for people with disabilities.

When technology is accessible and used in the right way, it can make a big difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

It can help them be part of the community.



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## More information

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If you have questions  
or if you need more information

please send us an email at [info@edf-feph.org](mailto:info@edf-feph.org).  
Also, you can visit our website at [www.edf-feph.org](http://www.edf-feph.org).

