

“If you are very strong, you must also be very kind” (and accessible!)

The famous quote from Pippi Longstocking exists in many variants and fairytales in different cultures. I never made the connection to accessibility before we were awarded the research project We4Authors Cluster, funded by the European Commission. In this project, we have been working together with market leading authoring tool producers to develop a set of accessibility features that can be implemented in any technical environment. Together we are really very strong.

In the scope of the Web Accessibility Directive, public sector bodies usually require their ICT suppliers to deliver accessible websites from the technical side and then train their web authors to publish in an accessible way. The authoring tools are often forgotten in the mix, but they do influence most of the accessibility (or inaccessibility) out there. If the tools are not helping the authors to create accessible content, life becomes much harder for everyone.

Often someone needs to lead the development to make a difference. The built-in accessibility features of smartphones are one example of a bold innovation that changed the de facto standard of what users expect from a product. In fragmented markets with thousands of competing players of different sizes, joint forces and collaboration may be just as impactful

All said and done, Funka has put together a market Cluster of the most used authoring tools in the public sector in the EU, including Drupal, Joomla, Umbraco, Plone, SiteVision and the editor Tiny MCE. Together with the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP), we have investigated what web authors need to create accessible content, and what the market offers to support them. Based on the results of that initiative, we have developed ten accessibility features that aim to bridge the gap when it comes to what the authoring tools provide to support web authors.

The features created in the project are free for anyone to implement in any authoring tool. They include mandatory built-in accessibility features to make accessibility the default set-up, prompts and warnings to guide the authors and avoid mistakes, information and reminders for items that are not possible to automatise and incorporate the use of emerging technology like Artificial Intelligence.

The results of the project are presented on the project website with videos showing:

- The problem from the end user perspective
- The challenge from the web author perspective
- The solution recommended by the project (the feature)
- The result of implementing the feature

The videos provide the code of the accessibility features and there are also separate technical documentation and guidelines for implementation.

We hope that all market players will use the features, implement them, spread them and make it part of their standard offering. Accessibility shouldn't be an add-on, it needs to be the way we always do things.

We also welcome any further refinements or improvements of the features – use them as a tool to get a head start in accessibility, and then keep pushing for more. If we all work together, we are not only stronger, but we can make a real change.

Please do reach out if you have any questions or comments or if you would like to join the Cluster and contribute to our upcoming adventures!

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Cluster project website: <https://accessibilitycluster.com/>

Cluster project main results: <https://accessibilitycluster.com/main-results>

