This survey has been requested by the European Commission, Directorate-General Justice and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication.

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.
ACCESSIBILITY

Conducted by TNS Political & Social at the request of Directorate-General Justice

Survey co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication
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INTRODUCTION

The European Union takes action on behalf of its citizens to prevent discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, sexual orientation or disability. Official statistics state that 80 million people in the European Union (or one out of every six citizens) are affected by some kind of disability. This figure is expected to rise in line with predictions for an increasing proportion of older citizens overall in future years.

Accessibility is one of the eight priority area objectives of the European Disability Strategy. The proposed action to meet the accessibility objective is to make goods and services accessible to people with disabilities and promote the market of assistive devices. In early 2011 the European Commission Vice-President, Viviane Reding, announced a commitment to presenting a proposal for a ‘European Accessibility Act’.

This summary covers the following three areas:

- The profile of people with disabilities and the difficulties encountered with accessibility (transport/buildings/communication technology/voting/websites).
- The perception of improved accessibility of goods and services and benefits in removing barriers.
- How to improve and guarantee accessibility.

Methodological note on the survey

The interviews were carried out by telephone (fixed-line and mobile phone) between the 15th and the 17th of March 2012 with nationally representative samples of EU citizens (aged 15 and older) living in the 27 Member States. The target sample size in most countries was 1,000 interviews; in total, 25,516 interviews were conducted. Statistical results were weighted to correct for known demographic discrepancies. More details on the survey methodology can be found in the annex to this summary.
In this summary, the countries are represented by their official abbreviations. The abbreviations used in this summary correspond to:

**ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU27</th>
<th>European Union – 27 Member States</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU15</td>
<td>BE, IT, FR, DE, LU, NL, DK, UK, IE, PT, ES, EL, AT, SE, FI*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMS12</td>
<td>BG, CZ, EE, CY, LT, LV, MT, HU, PL, RO, SL, SK**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **BE** Belgium
- **BG** Bulgaria
- **CZ** Czech Republic
- **DK** Denmark
- **DE** Germany
- **EE** Estonia
- **EL** Greece
- **ES** Spain
- **FR** France
- **IE** Ireland
- **IT** Italy
- **CY** Republic of Cyprus
- **LT** Lithuania
- **LV** Latvia
- **LU** Luxembourg
- **HU** Hungary
- **MT** Malta
- **NL** The Netherlands
- **AT** Austria
- **PL** Poland
- **PT** Portugal
- **RO** Romania
- **SI** Slovenia
- **SK** Slovakia
- **FI** Finland
- **SE** Sweden
- **UK** The United Kingdom

* EU15 refers to the 15 countries forming the European Union before the enlargements of 2004 and 2007: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

** The NMS12 are the 12 ‘new Member States’ which joined the European Union during the 2004 and 2007 enlargements. These are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.
The Eurobarometer web site can be consulted at the following address:
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all the respondents across the continent who gave their time to take part in this survey. Without their active participation, this study would simply not have been possible.
Almost three in ten Europeans (29%) say that they or someone in their household has a longstanding illness or health problem, which has lasted, or was expected to last, for 6 months or more.

In five countries, the incidence is higher than average with around two in five respondents saying that they or someone in their household has a longstanding illness of health problem: Poland (44%), Estonia (42%), Hungary (41%), Finland (39%) and Malta (38%). In contrast to this, one in five or fewer respondents in Belgium (20%), Italy (19%) and Luxembourg (18%) say that someone in their household has a long-standing condition of this kind.
Overall 29% of respondents say that they or a member of their household has been limited in some way, with one in eight (12%) describing this as severe limitation and 17% saying that it has limited them but not severely.

There are six countries where more than one in three respondents say that they or a member of their household has been limited by a health problem for at least the last six months: Germany (39%), Latvia (39%), Estonia (35%), the Netherlands (35%), Austria (35%) and the UK (35%). However, it is only in Germany and Estonia that a significantly greater than average proportion of respondents describe their limitation as severe (17% and 18% respectively compared with a finding for the whole of the EU of 12%).
It is mobility issues that cause the most difficulty amongst EU citizens that say that they or a member of their household have a longstanding illness or health problem.

Nearly two in five respondents (38%) who say that they or a member of their household have a longstanding illness or health problem have experienced difficulties using the sidewalk or crossing the street with a traffic light. The same proportion (38%) say that they have experienced difficulties entering into a building or an open public space, while more than a third (36%) have experienced difficulties taking a taxi, bus, train or flight.

Around a quarter of those who say that they or a member of their household have a longstanding illness or health problem have experienced difficulties using a computer or telephone (26%) or when buying a product or service they needed (online purchasing included) (24%).

Fewer than one in five respondents (18%) who say that they or a member of their household have a longstanding illness or health problem has experienced difficulties voting in an election.

Just under one in five respondents (19%) who say that they or a member of their household have a longstanding illness or health problem has experienced difficulties using official authorities’ websites, while slightly fewer (17%) have experienced difficulties using commercial websites.
2. **PERCEPTION OF IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES AND BENEFITS IN REMOVING BARRIERS**

Almost all respondents (97%) agree that people with disabilities should be able to participate fully in society like people without disabilities (ie. they should be able to go to school, get a job, access shops and supermarkets, go on holidays etc). Eight in ten respondents (80%) totally agree with this statement.

Overall more than nine in ten respondents (93%) agree that barriers make it difficult for people with disabilities, with two in three (66%) saying that they ‘totally agree’ and 27% saying that they ‘tend to agree’.

**7 in 10 Europeans believe better accessibility of goods and services would very much improve the lives of people with disabilities,** the elderly and others with accessibility issues (72% say this when asked just about people with disabilities and the elderly and 69% say this when asked about people with disabilities, the elderly and others such as pregnant women and those travelling with luggage).

47% of Europeans believe better accessibility of goods and services would very much improve opportunities for industry to sell products to people with disabilities and the elderly.

**Two thirds (66%) of respondents say that they would buy, or pay, more for products if they were more accessible and better designed for all,** with specific reference to the inclusion of people with disabilities and the elderly.
3. **HOW TO IMPROVE AND GUARANTEE ACCESSIBILITY**

86% of Europeans agree that having similar accessibility solutions across Europe would enable them to travel, study and work in another EU country. Countries with the highest level of agreement with this statement are Malta (96%), Italy (94%), Ireland (93%), Lithuania (92%) and Greece (92%).

96% of Europeans agree that when public authorities provide goods and services they should be obliged to ensure that they are also accessible to people with disabilities.

94% of Europeans agree that more money should be spent on eliminating physical obstacles which make the lives of people with disabilities and the elderly difficult.

93% of Europeans agree that manufacturers and service providers should be required to ensure accessibility of the goods and services that they sell.

85% of Europeans agree that it should be possible to complain and go to court to seek
sanctions against manufacturers and service providers who do not comply with binding measures to improve accessibility.

Across Europe as a whole, 48% agree that ‘existing rules on accessibility are sufficient to ensure them a good access to goods and services’ (14% totally agree and 34% tend to agree) whilst 47% disagree (15% totally disagree and 32% tend to disagree).

There is a difference of 46 percentage points between the country with the highest and lowest level of agreement (combined totally agree and tend to agree). In the UK seven in ten (70%) agree that existing rules are adequate while in the country with the lowest level of agreement, Greece, around a quarter (24%) agree. Other countries that have high levels of agreement with this statement overall are Sweden (66%), Luxembourg (61%), the Netherlands (59%) and Finland (58%).
78% of Europeans think that having common rules on accessibility in the EU will make it easier for companies to operate in another EU country.

There is a difference of 27 percentage points between the country with the highest and lowest level of positive response. The highest proportion saying yes overall is 90% and was recorded in Ireland. The lowest is 63% and was recorded in both the Czech Republic and Estonia.