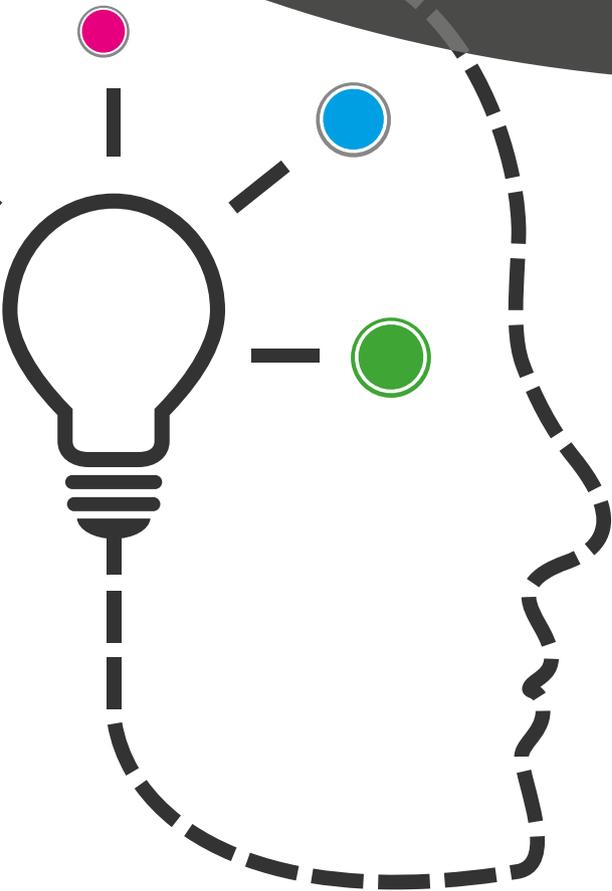
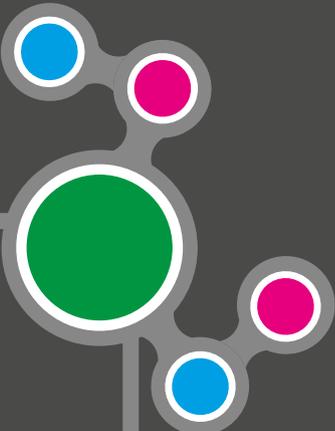


# ACCESSIBILITY IN ONLINE SERVICES



-  **WHAT IS IT?**
-  **TARGET GROUPS**
-  **MEANS OF PROMOTING  
ACCESSIBILITY**
-  **ASSESSMENT**

A decorative graphic in the top right corner consisting of a central green circle with a white border, connected by grey lines to four smaller circles: two blue and two pink, all with white borders.

**Accessibility is about equal access to finding, using and benefiting of online services and online youth work targeted at young people.**

**Accessible services improve access to services for everyone, not just for special groups. Even a small investment in accessibility can improve the usability of the service.**

## WHAT IS IT?

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This guide is intended as an accessibility checklist for the accessibility of online youth work. In addition to websites, it is applicable to online services provided on social media, for example, as well as to youth work on other platforms. The list is not exhaustive - instead, the goal is to become raise awareness of what accessibility means from the point of view of your own work and how you can improve it with small actions. You can also use the list to support regular assessment of your own work.

Accessibility in online work means the technical capabilities and technical accessibility of websites. Accessibility also refers to the accessibility of online youth work and the content of the online services.

### **Why do we talk about accessibility instead of barrier-free availability?**

Originally, barrier-free meant ensuring that public premises and buildings were easily accessible by wheelchair. Barrier-free refers to functional environments, services and offer available to people with disabilities. Accessibility is a comprehensive way of planning that is considered to include barrier-free services. The concept of accessibility describes how easily information, a system, a device, a program or a service can be used regardless of a person's characteristics, such as a disability, membership in a minority or lack of means. Accessibility promotes equal inclusion.

Source: [Esteetöntä opiskelua, esok.fi](https://www.esok.fi/) (in Finnish)

## IDENTIFYING ACCESSIBILITY TARGET GROUPS

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We can start the work towards accessibility by considering who are the target groups of our current services or forms of work. If there is a reason for limiting the target groups, we can move on to consider accessibility within the target groups. Who are the members of the target group who do not yet have access to the service?

Below is a list of different features that can affect a young person's experience of service accessibility. One young person can belong to several different groups at the same time.

- Visual impairment, poor eyesight, perceptual disorders (e.g. colours)
- Hearing impairment
- Cognitive challenges (e.g. attention deficit disorders, challenges of reading and writing)
- Neurological disorders (e.g. epilepsy)
- Sensory hypersensitivity
- Motor difficulties
- Language group (e.g. Finnish as a second language, Swedish as the mother tongue, English or another language as the mother tongue, sign language)
- Age group (e.g. children / young people / young adults)
- Immigrant background (e.g. asylum seekers, first or second generation immigrants)
- Cultural background (e.g. Roma, Sámi, Somali)
- Financial resources (smartphone, fast or slow internet connection)
- Gender (boys / girls / multi-gender / genderless)
- Sexual orientation

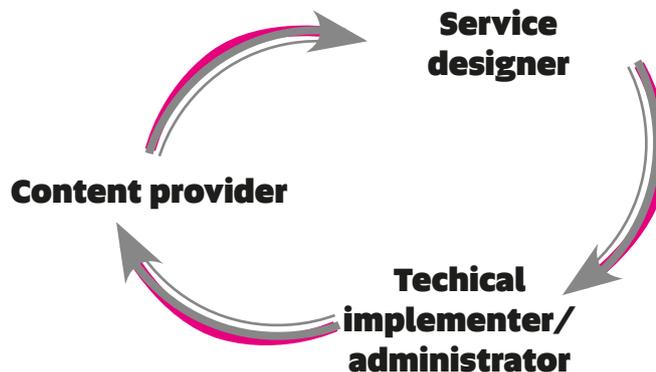
## CONCRETE WAYS TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY ONLINE

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Below is a diagram illustrating the different stages of accessibility work.

- Content provider
- Service designer
- Technical implementer / administrator

Accessibility must be considered in the design phase, technical implementation, and



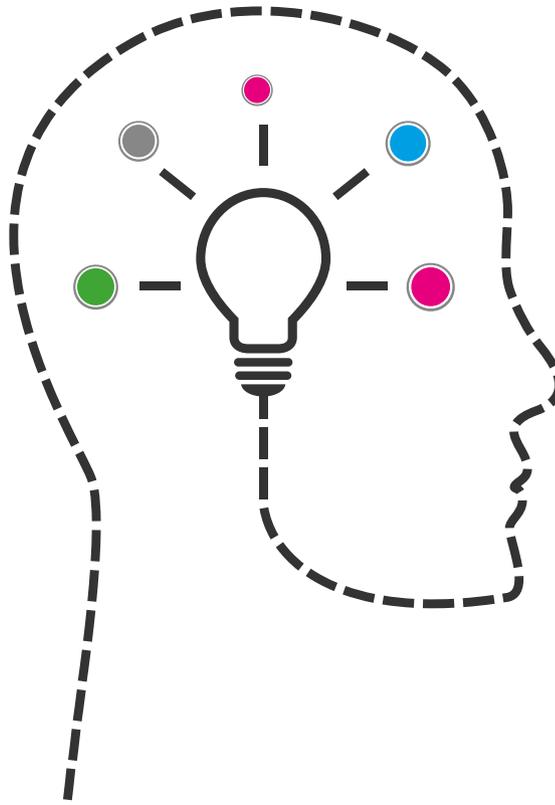
maintenance of online services, and in the production of content.

Concrete ways to improve the accessibility of online services and online work are divided in this guide according to areas of responsibility. The list has been compiled from the point of view of the content producer and the administrator. More concrete instructions for improving accessibility can be found on the [World Wide Web Consortium's \(W3\) webpages](#).

## Design phase

Evaluate accessibility during the service development phase. Who is the service aimed at and who does it possibly exclude?

In competitive procurement, do require that the websites meet [the accessibility criteria](#). It is important that the purchaser pay attention to and monitor the implementation of accessibility, as the providers are not always familiar with it.



## Technical implementation and maintenance

- A simple menu structure. Avoid menu structures that are too deep.
- Clear, informative headlines and subheadings.
- The user's location on the site is clear (e.g. breadcrumbs).
- Information in one place and links provided from elsewhere (cf. the same information on many different pages).
- Avoid heavy content so that the service can also be used on older devices and with a slow internet connection. Be sure to test the site with different mobile devices.
- Enable heading styles and list function (up to heading levels H3 / H4, not too deep).
- Select a font size that is large enough and enable text enlarging.
- Make sure that the contrast between the text and the background is sufficient.
- Avoid flashing or flickering content and fast-changing sliders.
- Assign an alt attribute with text content for images. For images with relevant information, describe them with text equivalents that can be read by a screen reader or are visible elsewhere, [e.g. on W3-website](#).
- Provide descriptive text equivalents to image links and form image buttons. If the image or button is also a link, add information about the link and where the link will take in the text equivalent. This will make browsing with a reader easier.
- Make the form titles and buttons large enough.
- Make sure that the functional elements of the site (e.g. buttons, links, forms) can be used without a mouse.
- Make sure that it is possible to move from one screen of the form to the next in a logical order using tabs.
- [Instructions for creating accessible documents](#).

## Content production

- Limit the amount of information on the site to a reasonable level. Condense and remove if necessary.
- Information in one place and links provided from elsewhere (cf. the same information on many different pages).
- Use heading styles and a list function if you add content to web pages (makes it easier to browse with a reader).
- Make your links descriptive and embed them in the text (read more on the Verke website vs. read more here.)
- The text and content should be clear, considering the target group (e.g. the privacy policy should be understandable for the target group, i.e. young people).
- Include plain language, so that the content is understandable to different people in the target group. plain language section, e.g. on [The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities website](#).
- Support the text with images, videos (can also be shot in plain language), and various audio files or a reading program (e.g. ReadSpeaker).
- If there is text in the images, make sure that the contrast between the text and the background is sufficient.
- Subtitles for videos (can also be written in plain language).
- Videos also in sign language.
- Language versions / service in different languages for the site.
- The content (information, speech style, images, colours) should take into account diversity in general. The diversity of young people should be visible if there are no grounds for delimiting the target group.

## HOW TO ASSESS ACCESSIBILITY?

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- [Tips for website designers.](#)
- Accessibility and usability can be measured and tested with wide range of tools as listed in [W3 -community's webpages.](#)
- Some companies provide services for accessibility and usability measuring and testing. Ask more information from your organization's helpdesk and support services.
- User panel (testing the usability of the technical implementation and content with a diverse set of participants and different devices).
- Visitor feedback (questions about barriers to use and factors that would facilitate access to the service).

Accessibility assessment is something we all must do. In addition to a critical look and joint reflection, please resort to the organisations and tests listed above. In the end, the most important criterion for accessibility is the user's own experience of the accessibility of the service.

