# Accessibility technologies in public service media (PSM)

Access Services, RTV Slovenija

Andrej Tomažin ([Andrej.Tomazin@rtvslo.si](mailto:Andrej.Tomazin@rtvslo.si))

**ENACT Workshop**

**(Barcelona, March 19, 2025)**

# PSM & Access Services

"Media, provided as "a public good" can serve minority groups (be they special interest, ethnic, regional, linguistic, those with disabilities or cultural minorities) with content that could never be funded commercially."

Source: Nissen, C. S. (2006). *Public service media in the information society.* Council of Europe.

"Producing quality content for and about persons with disabilities in a fair, non-discriminatory, and impartial manner is only half of the road — media content also needs to be accessible to them."

Source: UNESCO (2024) *Disability Equality in the Media: Representation, Accessibility, Management; Practical Manual.*

# Key Accessibility Measures under AVMSD (1/4)

**Subtitles & Closed Captions**

- Subtitling is the most widely adopted accessibility measure across the EU, with quotas significantly varying among member states.
- Most countries have established subtitling obligations, particularly prioritizing 100% subtitling for news and current affairs programming.
- Accessibility improvements largely focus on increasing the quantity of subtitled content, usually measured by hours broadcast, types of programming, or specific times such as primetime.

**Audio Description & Spoken Subtitles**

- While the use of audio descriptions is growing, quotas are typically lower than those for subtitling due to higher costs and technical complexities.
- Spoken subtitles are specifically included less than half of EU member states.

# Key Accessibility Measures under AVMSD (2/4)

**Sign Language & Easy-to-understand Language**

- Sign language is commonly mandated, especially for news and current events, although less consistently for entertainment programs.
- Public broadcasters generally face stricter obligations for sign language accessibility compared to private broadcasters.
- Some EU countries (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Latvia, Slovenia) include or promote easy-to-understand language formats to accommodate viewers with cognitive disabilities.

Source: Nikoltchev et al. (2023). Accessibility measures as implemented by AVMS providers for persons with disabilities. European Audiovisual Observatory.

# AVMSD: Implementation Trends & Challenges (3/4)

**Progressive Obligations**

- Member states adhere to the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), mandating gradual improvements in accessibility. However, interpretations and implementations vary significantly.
- Some countries clearly define annual accessibility quotas, while others prefer flexible approaches, such as developing action plans or negotiating directly with regulators.

**Funding & Technical Constraints**

- Accessibility obligations often consider the broadcaster's financial and technical capabilities, leading to exemptions or phased compliance for smaller or lower-budget providers.
- A lack of standardized quality benchmarks across the EU complicates consistent implementation of accessibility measures, especially concerning subtitle readability and audio description clarity.

Source: Nikoltchev et al. (2023). Accessibility measures as implemented by AVMS providers for persons with disabilities. European Audiovisual Observatory.

# AVMSD: Implementation Trends & Challenges (4/4)

**Future Outlook**

- There is a notable shift toward broader accessibility, moving beyond sensory disabilities to include cognitive and intellectual impairments through easy-to-read formats.
- Universal design principles are increasingly emphasized, with Denmark notably incorporating these principles explicitly into public broadcasting contracts.
- Future developments are expected to include refined accessibility quotas, stronger enforcement measures, and comprehensive best-practice guidelines across member states.

Source: Nikoltchev et al. (2023). Accessibility measures as implemented by AVMS providers for persons with disabilities. European Audiovisual Observatory.

# EBU Survey Results (Spring 2022) (1/2)

**Scope & Key Findings**

- Survey of 37 public broadcasters across Europe.
- 72% offer all three core services (subtitles for the D/deaf/hard of hearing, audio description, and signed programs).

**Gaps & Challenges**

- Only half have action plans to ensure accessibility during emergencies.
- Live audio description remains virtually non-existent.

# EBU: Future Needs & Concerns (2/2)

**Financial Constraints**

- Many public service broadcasters cite insufficient budgets as a primary barrier to expanding access services.

**Innovations & Customization**

- Customizable access features: e.g., adjustable text size and style for subtitles.

- AI avatars could potentially reduce costs and enable more sign language coverage; the same with automatic speech recognition for SDH.

- Broadcasters seek scalable tech solutions to meet growing accessibility requirements.