EAA

Everything Businesses Need to Know About the European Accessibility Act

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Is your business ready to meet the demands of the European Accessibility Act (EAA)? Any organisation offering products and services within the European Union will be affected, and the June 2025 compliance deadlines are fast approaching. So, the time to act is now.

The European Accessibility Act (EAA) stands as a pivotal advancement in the journey toward universal digital accessibility. This landmark piece of legislation represents a significant step forward in ensuring that all EU citizens, including those with disabilities, have equal access to products, services, e-commerce platforms, mobile apps, and other online experiences.
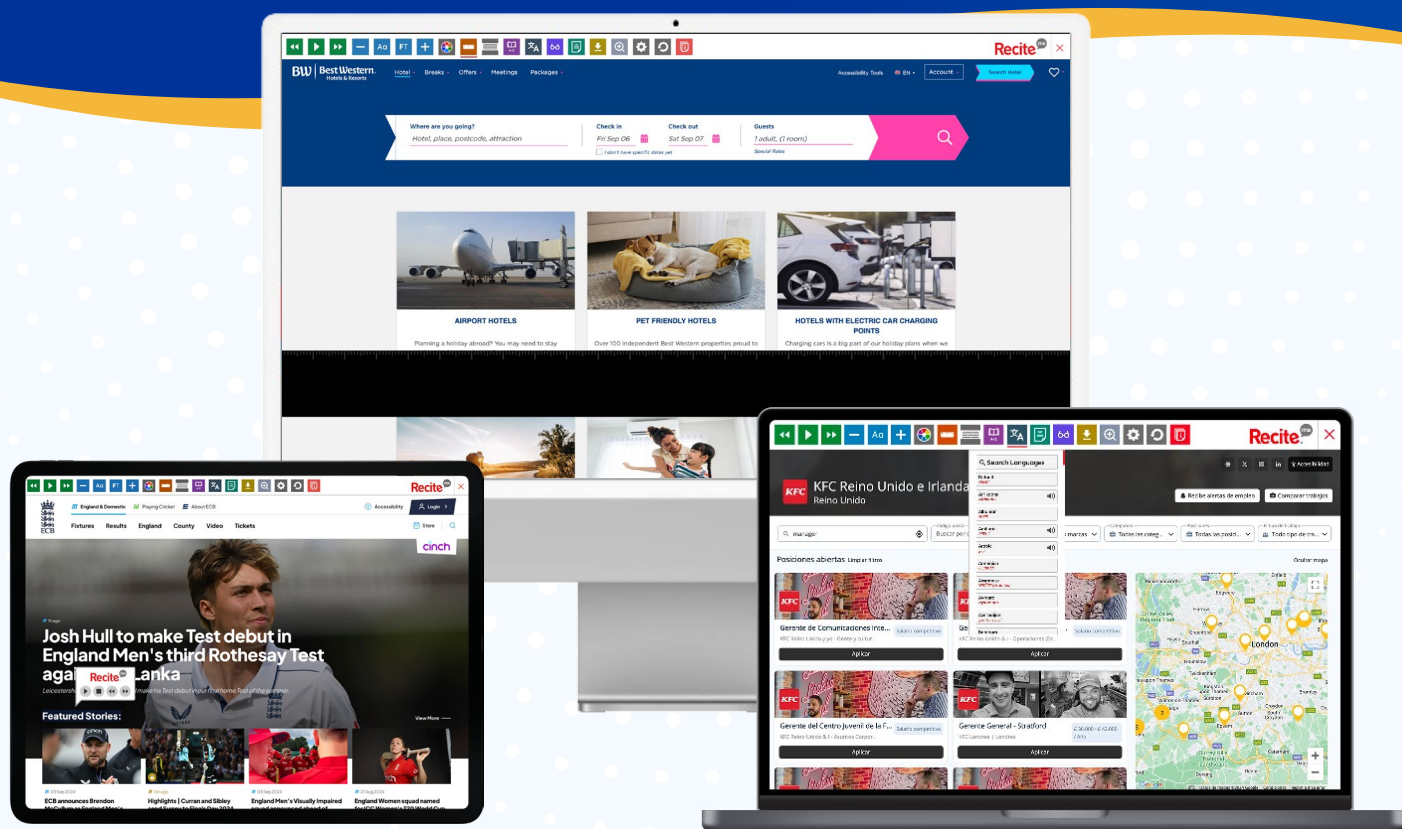
However, compliance isn't just about ticking a legal box. It's about demonstrating your commitment to inclusivity, positioning your brand as a leader in accessibility, and opening up opportunities to serve millions of potential customers with disabilities.

Don't wait until the last minute. Ensure your business is ready to comply, thrive, and achieve long-term success in the booming EU market. In this guide, we'll walk you through everything you need to know, from the key dates and technical standards to a list of best practices for ensuring ongoing compliance.

What is the European Accessibility Act?

The [European Accessibility Act (EAA)](#) is a set of accessibility requirements shared by all EU member states.

Adopted on June 28, 2019, it sets out functional accessibility requirements that apply to a wide range of products and services, from digital devices and e-commerce platforms to public transportation and financial services.

From a digital perspective, the primary goal is to remove [online access barriers](#) that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society and the economy. By establishing a common set of web accessibility standards, the EAA seeks to ensure all EU citizens can access and use products and services on an equal footing.

The EAA builds on existing accessibility resources, such as the [Web Accessibility Directive](#) and the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). However, it goes further by addressing accessibility across a wider range of sectors and requiring that all relevant products and services on the EU market comply with its requirements.

When Does the European Accessibility Act Go into Effect?

After initial adoption in 2019, EU member states had until June 28, 2022, to transpose the directive into their national laws. Despite many countries missing this deadline, businesses and service providers are still expected to comply with their relevant national laws by June 28, 2025.

The phased implementation timeline was designed to allow time for adaptation while simultaneously ensuring that accessibility requirements are applied uniformly across the European Union. Now, with the organisational compliance deadline fast approaching, businesses must take proactive steps to get ahead of the game and implement the necessary changes to ensure their products and services meet the required standards.

What are the Official Technical Standards of the EAA?

One of the unique aspects of the European Accessibility Act is that it doesn't prescribe a single set of prescriptive technical standards across the EU. Instead, it sets out functional accessibility requirements, allowing each member state to define the specific technical criteria in their national laws.

While this approach provides flexibility, it also means businesses must be vigilant about understanding and adhering to the standards relevant to the markets in which they operate.

Given the level of national variability, businesses are strongly encouraged to align their accessibility efforts with widely recognised standards like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which already form the basis for other continent-wide accessibility frameworks like EN 301 549.

The Relevance of WCAG in Digital Accessibility

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are published by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international organisation comprising several member organisations and industry professionals. The guidelines are already the foundation of many existing digital accessibility laws across the EU, including several pieces of national legislation, such as:

- The Equality Act (UK)
- Law N° 2005-102 (France)
- The Disability Equality Act (BGG) and the Federal Ordinance on Barrier-Free Information Technology BITV 2.0 (Germany)
- Law 34/2002 and Law 51/2003 (Spain)

The most up-to-date version is WCAG 2.2, with WCAG 3.0 expected for publication soon.

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WCAG Criteria Essentials

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are internationally recognized standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to ensure that digital content is accessible to all users, including those with disabilities.

The rule establishes WCAG Version 2.1, Level AA as the official standard for digital accessibility compliance included the (EAA), which is essential for organizations aiming to meet legal and ethical responsibilities.

WCAG is structured around four key principles, known as POUR: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust. These principles ensure that content is accessible in various ways:

Perceivable means users must be able to perceive the information being presented (e.g., text alternatives for non-text content).

Operable ensures users can interact with the interface (e.g., keyboard accessibility).

Understandable focuses on the clarity and predictability of the content and interface (e.g., clear instructions and error messages).

Robust ensures content can be interpreted by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.

Level A

The most basic level of accessibility, comprising criteria that should be easy to achieve without much impact on website design or structure. For Level A conformance, a webpage must satisfy all Level A Success Criteria or a conforming alternate version.

Level AA

WCAG AA compliance is a legal requirement for certain sites and includes additional criteria to Level A. For Level AA conformance, a webpage must satisfy all Level AA Success Criteria or a conforming alternate version.

Level AAA

With even more benchmarks set above Level AA, this is the most comprehensive standard of accessibility compliance. For a website to achieve this rating, it must comply with every listed Level AAA success criterion or a conforming alternate version.

The European Accessibility Act (EAA) 2025 is directly connected to these standards, as it requires that all digital products and services offered within the EU comply with WCAG 2.1 Level AA. Ensuring that digital content is inclusive, enabling equal access and opportunities for all users, regardless of their abilities.

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Which Organisations Do the EAA Apply to?

The EAA's reach extends far beyond the borders of the EU itself, affecting any business over a specific size that wishes to trade, headquarter, and maintain a strong presence within the European Union.

The long and short of it? If your business offers products or services to the EU market, the EAA likely applies to you. Here's a quick breakdown of the key factors that determine applicability:

Business Size
Any business with 10 or more employees and a turnover of 2 million euros annually.

Market Presence
Any business that sells goods or services within the EU, regardless of its headquarters.

Physical Presence
Any business with a registered headquarters within the EU, regardless of market penetration.

What Technologies are Covered Under the EAA?

The EAA sets out functional accessibility requirements, meaning it focuses on what needs to be accessible rather than prescribing specific technical solutions. Here's an overview of the technologies covered.

- ICT products like computer hardware and software, smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices.

- E-commerce websites and mobile applications.

- Self-service terminals, including ATMs, ticketing machines, and check-in kiosks.

- Transport services like information and booking systems and ticketing platforms.

- E-books, PDFs, and online documents.

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The Risks of Non-Compliance

The EAA isn't just another regulatory hurdle. It's a critical aspect of corporate responsibility and market access in the European Union.

So, compliance isn't only about meeting your legal obligations. It's also about fostering a more inclusive society where digital barriers are dismantled for underlined millions of people.

Legal Penalties

Fines

The amount varys depending on the severity of the violation and the regulations of individual EU member states.

Legal Costs

You may face costly legal challenges, including lawsuits from individuals or advocacy groups. This can lead to expensive legal proceedings and settlements.

Prison Time

In some EU member states, penalties for non-compliance are particularly stringent, with the possibility of up to 18 months of imprisonment.

Reputational Damage

Negative Publicity

Non-compliance can attract negative media attention and public scrutiny. Leading to a loss of consumer trust and confidence that may prove difficult to rebuild.

Brand Image

Morally-focused customers are increasingly ethical in their purchasing habits and may view your company's commitment to inclusivity as a reflection of its broader corporate social responsibility.

Stakeholder Confidence

Non-compliance can erode the confidence of shareholders, investors and business partners. Making it more difficult to secure new investments.

Regulatory Scrutiny and Market Access Limitations

Restricted Market Entry
Non-compliant products and services may be prohibited from entering or remaining in the EU market.

Public Procurement Exclusion
Many public procurement contracts in the EU require compliance with accessibility standards. Non-compliance may disqualify companies from bidding on lucrative contracts.

Increased Monitoring
Failure to comply with the EAA, may attract scrutiny from regulatory bodies, leading to more frequent audits and inspections. Creating ongoing compliance challenges.

Consumer and Employee Dissatisfaction

User Experience
Products and services that are not accessible lead to frustration and dissatisfaction among users with disabilities.

Customer Loyalty
Accessibility issues can erode customer trust and drive customers toward competitors offering more inclusive and user-friendly experiences.

Employee Morale
Failure to prioritise accessibility can impact morale, among employees who value inclusivity or those with disabilities. Resulting in reduced employee productivity and retention.

Competitive Disadvantage

Market Position
Companies that fail to comply with the EAA may find themselves at a competitive disadvantage compared to businesses that prioritise accessibility and inclusivity.

Innovation Stagnation
By neglecting accessibility, businesses miss opportunities to develop new, inclusive products and services that better meet the needs of a diverse customer base.

Talent Attraction
Companies known for prioritising accessibility are often more attractive to top talent, making compliant organisations employers of choice.

Best Practices for Maintaining Compliance with The European Accessibility Act

Maintaining compliance with the European Accessibility Act (EAA) is not a one-time-and-done task. It requires a proactive and systematic approach and constant monitoring, adaption, and adjustment. Here's a list of best practices to help you hone your EAA compliance strategy.

Accessibility Testing

Regular auditing is crucial for maintaining compliance, especially for businesses with continuously updating content. Plus, technological development and the potential for EAA updates mean the goalposts for compliance may shift as benchmarks evolve.

However, help is at hand! Tools like the [Recite Me Accessibility Checker](#) automate the compliance process by running 396 separate WCAG-based scans and generating a prioritized fix queue to ensure maximum compliance in the shortest possible time frame. Once the automated scan is complete, you can fine-tune and spot-check for any additional errors manually, although the checker typically picks up the vast majority, if not all of them.

Accessibility Training

Offering accessibility training to employees, particularly those in roles that impact user experience, builds awareness and ensures [accessibility best practices](#) are being followed across your organisation. However, where possible, it's always advisable to provide the training to as many individuals as possible.

Here at Recite Me, we offer a variety of [accessibility training courses](#) that you can check out and share with your employees.

Demonstrating Your Accessibility Accomplishments

If you're making significant improvements to become a market leader in accessibility and inclusion, why not make some noise about it?

The best accessibility software solutions come with a dedicated account manager and comprehensive reporting to help you identify what's working and showcase your achievements in your marketing campaigns and on your social media platforms.

Displaying an accessibility statement on your website is also recommended, as this lets site visitors know what they can expect now and what you're still working on to improve their future online experiences. Writing an Accessibility Statement can take time. However, tools like the Recite Me's Free Accessibility Statement Generator can provide a custom statement for immediate upload within just a few minutes.

Committing to Individual User Adjustments

Your website won't automatically become inclusive just because you make it accessible. For maximum inclusion, you need to provide ways for users to make individual user-level adjustments. The Recite Me Toolbar allows individual end users with sight loss, cognitive impairments, learning difficulties, physical disabilities, and varying linguistic needs to make customisations in line with their personal needs and preferences. They can:

- **Aa)** Have text read aloud using the built-in screen reader.

- Download and save any written web content as an audio file.

- Choose the exact colour contrast between the text and background.

- **Aa** Change the font type and size.

- Strip away graphics to remove visual distractions.

- Zoom in on any part of a webpage.

- Use the built-in spell-checker and a fully integrated dictionary and thesaurus.

- Access text-to-speech in 65 languages and on-page translation in over 100 languages.

How to Start Actioning EAA Updates

There's no golden rule when it comes to addressing areas of EAA non-compliance because each accessibility concern is weighted equally. In other words, every inaccessible element needs your utmost attention.

That said, a good starting point is to begin by addressing the most common accessibility errors on your website. According to a WebAim report, these include:

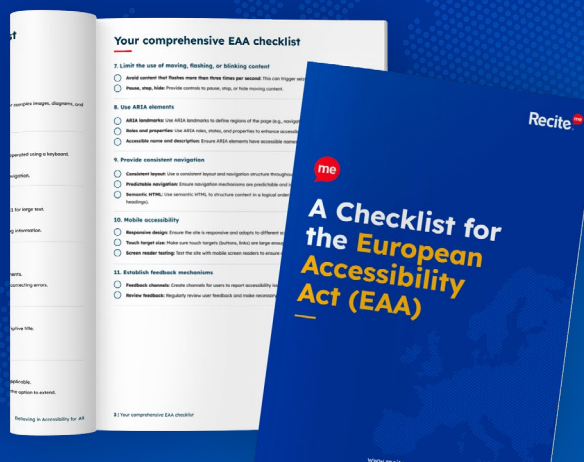|	
Low contrast text	**No defined image alt text**
No defined form labels	**Empty or non-descriptive links**
Empty or non-descriptive buttons	**Missing document language**

Looking for a more comprehensive list?

We can help! Recite Me's comprehensive checklist for European Accessibility Act (EAA) accessibility has plenty of detail, examples, and use cases for you to learn from.

Download the Checklist

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Let's make your website accessible and compliant

Recite Me's accessibility platform is designed to ensure compliance with accessibility regulations and enhance user experiences. Kick-start your accessibility journey today with a free accessibility consultation.

Book a Demo

Website Accessibility Checker

Website accessibility and compliance made simple. The Recite Me Accessibility Checker identifies accessibility code issues and shows you exactly how to fix them through the power of AI.

Book a Checker demo

Plan
Identify the scope of your digital landscape to determine which pages and documents need testing for compliance.

Scan
Conduct a comprehensive scan of your website against WCAG 2.2 success criteria to pinpoint accessibility issues.

Fix
Utilise AI-powered insights to prioritise and guide you on fixing issues for the most significant improvements in accessibility.

Maintain
Implement programmatic scanning to ensure ongoing compliance and that new content remains accessible to all users.

Recite Me Assistive Toolbar

Digital barriers stand in the way of visitors reading and understanding your online content. Create an inclusive experience online by providing assistive technology and language options to enable everyone to customise your website in ways that work for them.

Book a Toolbar Demo

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