



EUROPEAN  
CHORAL  
ASSOCIATION

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# WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINE

in the framework of



## Table of Contents

<b>I. Our journey through an accessible online environment.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. About the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>III. Our recommendations list.....</b>	<b>4</b>
• Add alt text to your images to make them accessible .....	5
• Use semantic markup in your list.....	5
• Accordion elements should be focused or operated with a keyboard.....	6
• Uses descriptive links instead of “learn more”, “read here”, etc. ....	7
• Avoid using symbol characters to create line breaks and arrows.....	8
• YouTube videos should provide non-automated captioning.....	8
• Languages other than English should be programmatically determined .....	9
• Use colors and contrasts correctly.....	9
<b>IV. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Website Accessibility Guidelines

*In an ever-evolving digital landscape, the importance of creating websites that are not only visually appealing but also accessible to all users cannot be underestimated.*

*Web accessibility goes beyond mere compliance with standards; it is a fundamental principle that ensures equal access and opportunities for everyone. Inclusivity, in this context, extends beyond accommodating those with physical or cognitive impairments to embracing a diverse audience with varying needs and preferences.*

*These guidelines are designed to empower content creators and all stakeholders of European Choral Association and its members involved in the web development process with the knowledge and tools necessary to make the first steps towards accessible and inclusive websites. By producing these guidelines, we aim to contribute to a more inclusive digital landscape where everyone, regardless of their background or abilities, can navigate, interact, and engage with content seamlessly.*

*Let's embark on this journey together to build a web that truly leaves no one behind.*

### I. Our journey through an accessible online environment

In the framework of the EU-funded project [IGNITE](#), we committed to addressing this issue by engaging an expert to conduct a comprehensive audit of the website, specifically focusing on its inclusivity level. Our goal was to implement inclusive practices encompassing graphics, text, audio elements, and document this process, culminating in a set of recommendations available to the network.

In July-August 2023, we engaged a freelancer to conduct a thorough audit of the accessibility of the [European Choral Association website](#), focusing on AA compliance (the most common requirement). The audit included a check of all pages in the site included in the menu/submenu navigation<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the auditor assessed templates for social media, highlighting associated issues.

Following the audit, a comprehensive report was generated, outlining identified issues, corresponding WCAG criteria, compliance levels, and suggested fixes where applicable. The report also indicated whether the issue could be resolved by the user (admin) or required developer intervention.

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<sup>1</sup> For content like Events, a handful of pages were looked at to assess the general template rather than checking every single page. The audit did not extend to pdf and other documents available on the site.

Subsequent to the report's completion, a meeting was conducted between the auditor and the ECA team to facilitate discussions on next steps, issue prioritisation, and addressing any queries that arose.

From September onwards, we began strategizing the implementation of received recommendations. Our approach shifted towards immediate changes manageable by website editors, leaving for the future more significant alterations that can only be implemented by IT specialists and developers. Emphasising practical, real-time modifications rather than retroactive adjustments became our focal point. Based on these principles, we've initiated a list of recommendations that you can find in the following pages.

The **guidelines** produced offer a preliminary overview of actionable steps for our network organisations, aiming to enhance website inclusivity based on insights collected from the audit.

## II. About the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 covers a diverse set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the accessibility of web content. Adhering to these guidelines contributes to a more inclusive online experience for people with disabilities, such as blindness, low vision, deafness, hearing loss, limited mobility, speech disabilities, photosensitivity, and their combinations. While these guidelines offer some accommodation for learning disabilities and cognitive limitations, it's important to note that they may not address every user's needs within these disability categories.

The guidelines target the accessibility of web content across different devices, including desktops, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices. Compliance with these guidelines not only improves accessibility for individuals with disabilities but often enhances the overall usability of web content for all users.

Check out the full guidelines for more information: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

In addition to W3C guidelines, the [Accessibility guidelines for editors](#) is also used to further ensure the accessibility of our content.

## III. Our recommendations list

This list is not intended to provide an exhaustive knowledge on the topic but it can be rather seen as a partial sample to what can be easily achieved from the admin side. It is indeed a guide towards the first steps to undertake to make our digital environment more accessible. These steps align with WCAG 2.1 guidelines and aim to create a more inclusive digital environment.

- **Add alt text to your images to make them accessible**

Images inserted into content should be labelled with “alternative text” in order to describe the image for screen readers. The alternative text will be read instead of the images that cannot be viewed from blind people.

This should apply to the images uploaded in the website as well as on Social media.

The content, tone, length, and level of detail of the alternative text depends on the purpose of the image (i.e. some images that are only decorative do not require alt text.)

**Possible solution:** *The admin can add alt texts for existing images on important pages, and for new images going forward where appropriate.*

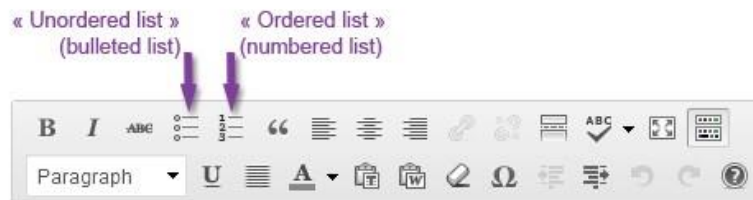


An example of an alt text for this image might be: “Dressed in dramatic black and orange outfits, a mixed choir of around 30 singers gives a performance in Utrecht, The Netherlands.”

- **Use semantic markup in your list**

Lists on the website should use semantic markup (<ul>, <ol>, <li>), so that they can be perceived as lists not only visually but also programmatically. This increases the ability of the user to navigate and understand list content.

When bulleted and numbered lists are included in the content, use the appropriate tools in the publishing software for this purpose, rather than entering dashes or numbers from the keyboard with carriage returns.



2

Use the buttons “Unordered list” (bulleted list) or “Ordered list (numbered list)” instead of dashes and carriage returns.

**Example:** In some pages of our website, we copied the “bullet point” instead of using the tools from the wordpress.

VOICE is a European project for the sustainable development and innovation of choral singing, a first-time major cooperation between choral operators, music educators and researchers. It is a joint effort of 15 coorganisers, spread over 11 countries.

The aims of VOICE are:

- to encourage new events and methods and the creation of innovative repertoire
- promote the voice as universal instrument
- improve the quality of vocal music
- enable transnational mobility and circulation of (young) musicians and choral works
- enhance the dialogue between cultures and generations as well as the exchange of expertise
- develop new tools for the promotion of singing in music education.

VOICE invests in research on the voice in partnership with universities and collect data on choral life in Europe. The 15 partners will spread the results to develop a new vision on choral singing in Europe.

The VOICE project is funded by the Culture Programme 2007-2013 of the European Union under the Strand 1.1 – Multi-annual

**Possible solution:** The admin can correct existing important content and adopt standards for new content posted to the website.

- **Accordion elements should be focused or operated with a keyboard**

Users who navigate with the keyboard cannot access accordion content as accordion elements which hide/show content can only be activated with a click/press.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.accede-web.com/en/guidelines/editorial/use-bulleted-and-numbered-lists-correctly/>



**Example:**

OUR VISION

**Solution:** A simple stopgap solution is to move content out of accordion elements. The text for the page can be rendered normally, divided by headers, with no hidden content.

For Dev: if accordions will still be used on the site, then these can be replaced with a native implementation using the <details> and <summary> elements.

- **Uses descriptive links instead of “learn more”, “read here”, etc.**

Cards, content lists and other patterns sometimes use 'read more' links which don't describe the target content. This makes it harder for users navigating with screen readers to know the destination of a link.

The text link is the text of the hyperlink displayed on the screen.

As far as possible, the text of a link should describe exactly where it goes in unambiguous terms. Use clear and explicit link texts that can be understood when read without the text that surrounds them.

Europe's Ariane rocket blasted off from French Guiana carrying supplies to the International Space Station. Scientists breathed a sigh of relief as the craft reached for the skies after the first attempt had to be scratched at the last minute due to a minor technical problem. The super-charged Ariane-5 is transporting fuel, food, clothing and oxygen ([click here to learn more](#)).

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Links such as “Click here”, “More information” or “Read on” are therefore to be avoided for more informative links such as “Mr Cameron’s statement (read on)”, “Find out more about the Wiltshire contract”, or “More about our welcome offer”.

**Possible solution:** Link text can be modified to be descriptive, or overridden using the aria-label or aria-labelledby by attributes.

- **Avoid using symbol characters to create line breaks and arrows**

Symbol characters should not be used to create visual effects

**Example:** In our page, a long series of hyphens to create a page divider or "—>" to draw an arrow. Screen readers can misinterpret this, for instance reading out 'greater than' for the ">" symbol.

**Possible solution:** Texts can be edited to remove misused characters. Where an arrow is needed, use the HTML arrow characters or an svg. Where a horizontal line is needed to divide text, use the <hr> element.

- **YouTube videos should provide non-automated captioning**

Captions/Subtitles should be provided for all pre-recorded audio/video content.

**Example:**

Our channel's YouTube videos currently feature solely auto-generated subtitles, lacking the precision offered by manually provided ones. This becomes particularly evident in instances involving names, accents, and audio segments containing background noise, where inaccuracies may arise.



**Possible solution:** Verify/correct video captions after they have been automatically generated by YouTube.



- **Languages other than English should be programmatically determined**

The same language should be used for all content on the website. If some of the text needs to be written in a different language from the rest of the page, use the tools in the publishing software to indicate the change of language.

**Example:** The default language of the European Choral Association website is set correctly to English, but where other languages are used the text isn't labelled with a different language attribute.

**Possible solution:** Where other languages are used the lang attribute can be added to the surrounding tag - e.g. <p lang="de"> or <a lang="fr">.

- **Use colors and contrasts correctly**

The visual presentation of text should have a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1. Different sites for contrast checking, for example [contrastchecker](#) or [coolers](#), could be used to verify and assess the contrast ratio effectively.

**Example:** In our website, some buttons, headers, links and content blocks (such as the website's footer) use white text on a light orange background or vice versa. The contrast between the two colors is too low for some users to distinguish.

✓ **High contrast text**



✗ **Low contrast text**



**Possible solution:** changing text from white to black when the orange background is used.

#### IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, this Website Accessibility Guideline mark our initial steps in a continuing journey towards fostering an inclusive digital environment within the European Choral Association, its members and partner organizations.

By adhering to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and supplementing with additional measures, we aim to contribute to a digital landscape that leaves no one behind, recognizing that ongoing efforts will further enhance website accessibility in the future.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to John Ellingsworth for the expertise and guidance he provided us throughout the whole process.