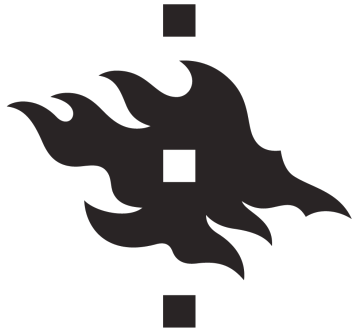




ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL SERVICES: A PILOT PROJECT

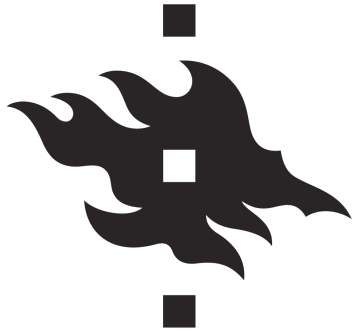
EUNIS Conference 2023



University of Helsinki

- Established in Turku in 1640, transferred to Helsinki in 1828.
- 11 faculties.
- 30,997 students.
- 8,381 employees.
- Bilingual (Finnish and Swedish), teaching also in English.
- Four campuses in Helsinki and operations in 13 other locations in Finland.
- 11,123 yearly publications.
- More than 600 digital services

* Figures from 2022



Center for Information Technology



Center for IT services at the University of Helsinki.



Over 60 years of support for studying, teaching and research.



Expenses: 17.4 MEUR, returns: 17.1 MEUR



190 staff.

* Figures from 2022



ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL SERVICES: A PILOT PROJECT

- Conducted by University of Helsinki (UH) Center for information technology
- The focus of the pilot project: testing and measuring the need of resources for supporting University of Helsinki product owners and software developers in the field of accessibility
 - Accessibility support for teachers and students is provided by other departments, as well as support in content creation for other staff members
- Pilot team building the support consists of two software development experts, a customer support expert and a project manager
 - A legal advice is provided by in-house legal services where needed
- The pilot project is ongoing, planned to end in October 2023



KEY FOCUS AREAS

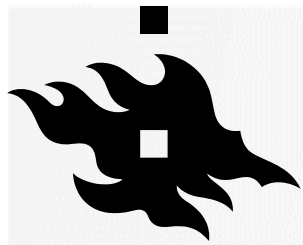
- In the planning phase, University of Helsinki stakeholder groups and project members met in a workshop to define the focus areas for the pilot project
- Five key focus areas were defined in the planning phase
 - Accessibility audit procurement
 - Guidelines for software development
 - Automated tools for accessibility checks
 - Accessibility statement
 - Accessibility requirements in procuring digital services



1. ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT PROCUREMENT

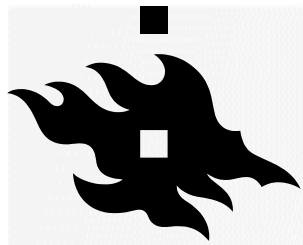
- **Objectives:** Support for Product Owners in procuring accessibility audit services
- Accessibility audit procurement in University of Helsinki is carried out by using a framework contract

- **Initial findings:**
 - Defining the scope of an accessibility audit already requires some understanding of accessibility requirements
 - An external accessibility audit is not financially viable option for all digital services



2. GUIDELINES FOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

- **Objectives:** Provide accessibility guidelines for software development and create necessary documentation
- Software development is carried out by either using outsourced resources (Product Owner being a representative of University of Helsinki) or UH software development team
- **Initial findings:**
 - Understanding and following accessibility requirements is not yet a part of the basic skillset of a software developer
 - Accessibility should be a part of software development project DOD (Definition of Done), and accessibility principles should be enforced along the way
 - Accessibility checks with automated tools should be introduced as a part of software developer's working routine
 - Because a digital service rarely is taken care of the same product owner during the whole lifespan, simple checklist-type accessibility instructions for product owners are crucial



3. AUTOMATED TOOLS FOR ACCESSIBILITY CHECKS

- **Objectives:** Select a limited number of recommended tools and provide initial support (Free of charge versions of Wave and SiteImprove & Screen reader software: NVDA and Voiceover)
- There are commercial tools available from software requiring paid licences to free of charge browser extensions
- **Initial findings:**
 - Using tools that require paid subscriptions or licences are not a financially viable option for all projects
 - Tools that are free of charge may be subject to unexpected changes or limitations of functionality
 - Interpreting reports of automated tools and finding the best way to apply software fixes according to the findings may require advanced understanding of accessibility principles and technical options
 - Digital service should always be tested manually with a screen reader software, automated tools are not capable of analysing all potential problems with user interaction



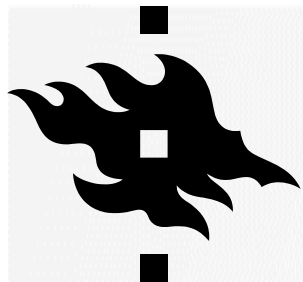
4. ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

- **Objectives:** Provide support for creating accessibility statement
- **Initial findings:**
 - The largest initial demand would seem to be for in-house accessibility audits that would provide the accessibility statement for the digital service
 - In-house accessibility audits are not viable option due to limited accessibility expert resources in University of Helsinki, at the time the viable alternatives are
 - If an external accessibility audit is carried out, the most viable alternative is to get accessibility statement as a part of the delivery
 - If procuring an external audit is not possible, automated accessibility checking tools and screen reader software should be used by personnel responsible of the service to assess the accessibility of the digital service
 - Product Owners have reported that using screen reader software might require training



5A. ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN PROCURING DIGITAL SERVICES

- **Objectives:** Provide support in describing accessibility requirements in tendering documents
- **Initial findings:**
 - Procuring existing software
 - Compliance with the criteria of the latest version of the WCAG guidelines, i.e. the criteria of level A and AA of WCAG 2.1 guidelines, should be required in procuring an existing software product
 - Responsibilities should be clearly stated in the contract, and procurement unit should include contract terms in offer request documents
 - Always validate the accessibility of the digital service in procuring phase, accessibility documentation provided by the vendor is often inaccurate



EXAMPLES OF CONTRACT TERMS

(LEGAL COUNSEL MIKKO KAUNISVAARA, UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI 2023)

- As part of the delivery of the Service, the Supplier is responsible for ensuring that the Service meets the national Act on the Provision of Digital Services and WCGA 2.1 specifications “Accessibility measurements”. The customer has the right to perform a separate audit regarding the accessibility requirement.
- Accessibility measurement
 - **The Customer has the right to perform an audit** regarding the fulfillment of the Accessibility measurements criteria regulated and defined in this contract, national legislation and/or the WCAG 2.1 guideline. **The audit is performed by an external service provider specified by the Customer.** The Customer is responsible for the costs of this audit.
 - For the sake of clarity, let it be stated that **the costs resulting from the implementation of errors, omissions or additions found in this audit are the responsibility of the Supplier.**



5B. ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN PROCURING DIGITAL SERVICES

- **Initial findings** (continued)
 - Procuring resources
 - In procuring software development team as a resource, tender documentation should include clear statement of expectations towards skills of the developers in following accessibility guidelines as well as responsibilities of different roles and parties involved
 - In current situation vendors tend to provide developers unskilled in accessibility and shift all responsibility concerning accessibility to the buyer unless clearly stated otherwise

Please remember, that as a service provider you are responsible of the accessibility of the service, even if it has been procured from a third party supplier.



ACCESSIBILITY & DIGITAL SERVICES SUGGESTED ACTIONS

1 Prevent the acquisition of digital services that are not accessible

- Procurement phase: Responsibilities clearly stated, validation of accessibility criteria
- In-house services: Introduce accessibility into software development processes

2 Check your existing digital services

- Automated tools
- Screen reader software
- Accessibility statement
- Buy external accessibility audit services where needed

3 Provide support

- Product owners, software development, procurement
- If possible, have staff trained in accessibility
- Provide necessary contracts to procure external accessibility audit services