Accessibility of Romanian Health Information Websites. A Survey

Elena JITARU\textsuperscript{a}, Ioana MOISIL\textsuperscript{b}, Adriana ALEXANDRU\textsuperscript{a}

\textsuperscript{a}ICI – National Institute for R\&D in Informatics, Bucharest 1, Romania
\textsuperscript{b}Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania

Abstract. The poster reports results of a survey carried on in the frame of a Romanian research project PRO-INCLUSIV - „Methods and tools to create multimodal interfaces for the development of inclusive information systems, with high degree of accessibility”. The objective of the survey was to evaluate Romanian sites for accessibility. We are presenting the results of this evaluation.

Keywords. Accessibility, Websites, Health information

People with disabilities (PwD) tend to seek health related information online more frequently than the able-bodied population. Nevertheless, for health information Web sites to be of real use to PwD, they must first be accessible to them. We have analyzed the degree of accessibility of health websites evaluating their compliance to the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) guidelines (\url{http://www.w3.org/WAI/}) and we selected 116 health information Websites from the Romanian information portals.

None of the web sites we looked at are completely accessible to PwD. The poster analyses the most common errors found in the Romanian health information Websites. We also evaluated the interest of stakeholders in inclusive ICTs by means of a questionnaire. The main finding was that while web-designers though knowing priorities concerning accessibility minimize their importance, managers lack this knowledge. Most of development specifications did not address accessibility aspects. Moreover, users-group was elitist and did not include people with disabilities.

The project „PRO-INCLUSIV - Methods and tools to create multimodal interfaces for the development of inclusive information systems, with high degree of accessibility”, tries to correct the observed pitfalls by creating a core task force for the development of inclusive information systems, serving as a basis for a future network of excellence at national level. In this respect, the design-for-all approach is addressing a broad spectrum of users, including elderly, disabled people, people with low educational level, as well as people that are not able to make use of their abilities.

The poster underlines the degree to which Romanian health information Websites behind with regards to accessibility for PwD. This is partly due to a lack of information and training for technical resources as well as a lack of commitment and leadership at the political level. The results of our study demonstrated the need to increase the awareness of Web accessibility among the designers of Web sites and at the level of managers.

\textsuperscript{1} Senior researcher, ICI – National Institute for R\&D in Informatics, 8-10 Averescu Av., 011455, Bucharest, Romania, E-mail: jitaru@ici.ro