

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

TRAI releases Recommendations on “Making ICT accessible for Persons with Disabilities”

New Delhi, 9th July 2018: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has today issued its recommendations on “Making ICT Accessible for Persons with Disabilities”. The recommendations are available on TRAI website (www.traai.gov.in).

2. Telecommunication today provides the underlying infrastructure over which several services like banking, education, healthcare and public services are delivered. However, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) are not able to fully access these ICT services mainly due to lack of necessary accessibility features or unaffordable prices of the equipment or due to unavailability of required services. For having an inclusive society and in view of growing focus on digitalisation, it is necessary that benefits of ICT technology are passed on to every person in the society including PwDs.

3. In view of the above, TRAI, Suo-moto, issued a Consultation Paper on “**Making ICT Accessible for Persons with Disabilities**” on 20th December, 2017 to engage the stakeholders in a constructive dialogue to identify the barriers being faced by the PwDs in accessing telecom and broadcasting services and to identify key areas where policy interventions are needed. The comments received from the stakeholders on the paper were placed on TRAI’s website. An Open House Discussion (OHD) with stakeholders was organised on 5th April, 2018.

4. After analysing the responses received from the stakeholders, deliberations held during the OHD and considering the present legal framework and identifying action points to encourage access of ICT services by PwDs, the Authority has come out with recommendations on the matter.


5. The salient features of the recommendations are as follows:

- i. Disabilities as specified in Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD), 2016 are comprehensive and do not require any modification for formulating policies for enabling ICT access to PwDs.
- ii. A Steering Committee under the aegis of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities be setup with Members from Department of Telecom (DoT), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB), Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY), Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Ministry of Finance with a mandate to (i) Review from time to time accessibility of ICT to PwDs (ii) Formulate guidelines, implementation and monitoring mechanism to improve ICT accessibility for PwDs (iii) Suggest additional measures required by the Government including funding requirements; and

- (iv) Collaborate with state Governments for proper coordination and harmonisation of the activities to be undertaken.
- iii. The Measures suggested by International Telecommunication Union (ITU) viz. (i) ensuring availability and affordability of accessible equipment & assistive tools (ii) PwD specific products, tariff plans & accessible customer care services (iii) Making services and interfaces like television and internet accessible to PwDs through closed captioning and audio description etc. (iv) undertaking awareness campaigns on availability of accessible content and tools, should be adopted in India.
- iv. Government should mandate the device manufacturers/importers not to curtail the accessibility features available in popular operating systems in any manner from their devices (manufactured or imported in India). An undertaking to this effect may be taken from manufacturers/importers while lab certification.
- v. TSPs to identify and register PwDs under special category and necessary changes in Customer Acquisition Forms (CAF) should be made to this effect.
- vi. TSPs, MSOs and DTH operators to have a special desks in their call centres/customer support centres to handle calls from PwDs using assistive technologies.
- vii. To facilitate accessibility of emergency services by PwDs, separate desks in each Public Safety Answering Point [to be setup following earlier recommendations made by the Authority on 07.04.2015 regarding "Integrated Emergency Communication and Response System (IECRS)"] to be setup where attendant executive should accept calls/SMS/Social Media calls from PwDs and provide them assistance. The desk would also have Relay Centre to cater to requests from deaf and speech impaired people.
- viii. TSPs, MSOs/DTH and PSAP operators to provide sensitivity training to their executives to deal with issues of PwDs.
- ix. Specific essential accessibility standards for mobile phones, landline phones and set top boxes have been identified and prescribed.
- x. Percentages of channel content to be developed in accessible format for PwDs with audio and visual impairment have been prescribed; with 50% of the channels to be developed in accessible format by next five years.
- xi. By the end of 2020, all mobile handset manufacturers producing 5 or more different models to produce atleast one mobile handset satisfying accessibility criteria for PwDs.

- xii. Set Top Box (STB) manufacturers/importers should make/import atleast one model in different variants of STBs in accessible format by 2020.
- xiii. Government creating and maintaining a database of devices and ancillary equipment satisfying prescribed accessibility standards.
- xiv. Government to mandate that ICT products (Computer Hardware, Mobile Phones, STBs) procured by Government agencies should be accessible to PwDs and should have associated support documentation and services in accessible format.
- xv. All Government websites to be accessibility compliant to the PwDs.
- xvi. Department of Telecom (DoT) and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) to instruct TSPs and DTH/MSOs to conduct awareness campaigns regarding accessibility issues, design, affordability, availability of assistive tools and products and about various Government policies/schemes pertaining to accessible ICT that can be availed by PwDs.

6. For further details, Shri Sanjeev Banzal, Advisor (CA&IT), TRAI may be contacted at Telephone: 011-23210990 or email ID: advisorit@traigov.in.


(U.K. Srivastava)
Secretary I/C (TRAI)
9/7/18.