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To:  
the Swedish Government  
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SWEDEN

## **Design for All – a beacon for e-Inclusion**

We use Information Technology on a daily basis: at work, at school, at home, in our leisure time and when we communicate with public administrations. As a result, IT issues cut through all social and political sectors of society. In addition, including all people in the information society is an overall goal for Europe. The European Commission is set to issue a Statement about eInclusion in the autumn of 2007, to be followed by a meeting of the Council of Ministers. In 2008, the Commission will make a commitment to achieving eInclusion throughout Europe. Sweden will be holding the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in autumn 2009, when a Parliamentary Conference on eInclusion is expected to be held. Before assessing the “i2010: A European Information Society for growth and employment” Action Plan, Sweden will have the opportunity to set the agenda for Design for All.

How should we go about achieving eInclusion in Sweden? What challenges do we face? Since the autumn of 2006, representatives of government agencies, business companies, special interest groups and universities have been taking part in a dialogue forum about IT based on the concept Design for All. This forum is part of the DESIGN FÖR ALLA.SE project currently being run by the association EIDD Sweden and financed by the Swedish Inheritance Fund.

The following statement is issued in support of the government’s strategic planning for Sweden’s efforts to achieve eInclusion. We do this as members of the dialogue forum, not necessarily as representatives of our respective organisations.

The statement can be summarised as follows:

- Applying Design for All in the field of IT is both financially beneficial and sustainably durable, as well as benefitting all users.
- With a distinct Design for All strategy, Sweden could become an international benchmark.
- Design for All applies to everything, from schools, work life and leisure to services and products such as websites, mobile phones and remote controls.

## Statement from the DESIGN FÖR ALLA.SE IT dialogue forum

Sweden's prospects for eInclusion are excellent. Nowhere else in Europe is the gap between the way that the working population and the way that younger senior citizens use IT so narrow. Broadband is spreading rapidly and is now also available via the mobile network. But there is still considerable IT usage capacity left unexploited.

At present, two different approaches are applied to achieve inclusion. One is to channel the process of planning and designing IT so as to make it user-friendly and accessible for all from the onset. The other is to apply a variety of strategies to compensate for the inadequacies in accessibility and usability, i.e. aids for people with functional impairments and for the elderly. Such supplementary efforts will also continue to be needed in future. But the more skilled we become at developing services and products so that they suit as many as possible right from the start, the less will be the need for individual aids and costly subsequent adjustments.

We recommend treating Design for All as a beacon for eInclusion in the IT field. In the Declaration on eGovernment issued by the Council of Ministers at its meeting in Lisbon, Portugal, on 19 September 2007, priority is given to certain activities directed at groups in need of social support and those who do not currently use IT. Although this is commendable, we firmly believe that Design for All should be the main aim.

Design for All, i.e. design for human diversity, equality and social inclusion, is a mindset attuned to achieving social structuring, architecture and design that emanates from a user-oriented development process. As there is no such being as the average person, it follows that the average person cannot be used as a norm for social planning or for creating goods and services within any market segment. When different human traits such as gender, age and functional capacity are taken into consideration at the onset of the development processes, the prospects of achieving durable quality are increased.

By committing to support Design for All as a strategy for eInclusion, Sweden can become the international benchmark in the aspirations of including broad accessibility and usability in commercial and public design and development processes. That would be worthwhile: research commissioned by Microsoft shows that nearly 60 percent of the working population benefits from accessible technology (*The Market for Accessible Technology: The Wide Range of Abilities and Its Impact on Computer Use*, study commissioned by Microsoft, conducted by Forrester Research, Inc., 2003).

To keep websites on the cutting edge, there are international guidelines that govern accessibility and usability (WCAG, WAI, W3C). These have been processed for Swedish conditions by Verva, the Swedish Administrative Development Agency, which has produced the Guidelines for the 24-hour web to help public administrations improve their websites. These Guidelines constitute a step towards developing websites in tune with a Design for All perspective. One of their strong points is the fact that they stem from a co-operative effort between the industry, public authorities, municipal administrations and county councils. The Guidelines support the user-oriented development process that is at the core of Design for All. Demands for accessibility and usability are integrated among the other demands made on public websites. Meeting the needs of the functionally impaired has become a question of public interest, while features such as keeping the language

simple and the structure logical are examples of demands that are beneficial to all users.

IT acts as driving force to advance both public and commercial services. Behind every new e-service, there is a new working environment with IT tools to keep the service operating. As a result, designing inclusive IT environments, with user-friendly tools for the workers involved, is destined to be a crucial area of progress in future. Although there is a continuous increase in demand for accessibility and usability for users of e-services, the new IT working environments resulting from the increase of e-services are seldom discussed.

Internet use acts as a catalyst for IT development. New channels for Internet access are springing up every day. The web can now also be accessed with a mobile phone or a digital TV. This creates even more development areas for Design for All, such as accessible and user-friendly mobiles and remote controls.

An increased awareness of the important role played by Design for All in benefitting both the quality of life and social sustainability will lead to better decisions and procurement orders. By adopting this approach, Sweden has the opportunity to create a new platform for creative productivity, where professional developers and designers are given the means to display their competence as promoters and suppliers of multi-faceted usability. And that is something that is in everybody's best interest.

#### DESIGN FÖR ALLA.SE IT dialogue forum

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