[DE] Media authorities publish accessibility monitoring report

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Christina Etteldorf
Institute of European Media Law

On 30 April 2024, the *Landesmedienanstalten* (state media authorities) published its 11th monitoring report on private media accessibility in Germany. The report notes a rise in the number of accessible services. Particular progress has been made in the area of subtitling, while the use of audio description, sign language and plain language remains less common. The report also looks ahead at broadcasters' plans to improve accessibility in the future.

Both the expansion of accessible services and their monitoring by the state media authorities are based on provisions of the *Medienstaatsvertrag* (state media treaty – MStV), which deals with and implements the corresponding rules contained in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (Article 7) and Directive (EU) 2019/882 on the accessibility requirements for products and services. According to Article 7 MStV, both public broadcasters and national private broadcasters must offer and continuously expand accessible services. They are also required, every three years, to report to the respective state media authority or the supervisory bodies of public broadcasters on the measures they have taken. As the first reports were not submitted until 2023, they were covered for the first time in the 11th monitoring report (instead of information that had previously been given voluntarily). Accessibility requirements and reporting and information obligations also apply to services that provide access to audiovisual media services in accordance with Articles 99a *et seq*. MStV.

Around 190 national television broadcasters and streaming platforms took part in the survey that was conducted as part of the reporting process. The monitoring report examines in detail the measures taken by Germany's two most popular private broadcasting groups, RTL Deutschland GmbH (RTL) and ProSiebenSat.1 Media SE (P7S1). In 2023, RTL's provision of subtitles was at the same level as in the previous report, i.e. 23% on average across its main channels (linear), and rose from 3% to 8% on RTL+ (non-linear). At present, the majority of its subtitled programmes are its most popular fictional programmes, but RTL plans to expand its use of subtitles with the help of AI from the end of 2024. RTL did not provide sign language or plain language services, although some of its channels offered audio description, which is set to be expanded in the future, especially for live sports broadcasts. Meanwhile, P7S1 provided subtitles for 37% of programmes on its most popular channels, a 4% increase on the previous year. Two of its

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channels also increased their use of audio description and sign language compared with the previous year. The group also offers advertisers the opportunity to book accessible advertising. For 2024, P7S1 wants to increase the number of subtitled programmes by 10% and programmes with audio description and sign language by 30%. It also plans to double the number of plain-language programmes (currently 12). Regarding online services (apps, media libraries, etc.), both broadcasting groups say they follow subtitle display standards and provide feedback mechanisms. P7S1 already promotes accessible online content, while RTL plans to follow suit. In future, online services will also offer adjustable playback speeds and screen readers (RTL) as well as keyboard shortcuts and contrast adjustment (P7S1).

Away from the two largest broadcasting groups, the report concludes that the use of accessibility tools is much less widespread. Around 35% of the 175 broadcasters offer subtitles and 4% audio description. Only when they are watched via intermediary platforms such as YouTube or Twitch are subtitle rates much higher, reaching up to 100% on platforms that use automatic subtitling tools as standard.

In their concluding analysis, the state media authorities highlight the fact that the potential for AI to boost accessibility is recognised and already being used in some cases, with firm plans already in place to use it in others. AI could provide affordable solutions for smaller broadcasters in particular. All in all, accessibility is much more firmly established in media companies' offerings than it was even just a few years ago.

11. Monitoring-Bericht Barrierefreiheit

https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/aufgaben/aufsicht/barrierefreiheit/

11th accessibility monitoring report

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