

[DE] Media regulators publish 2025 accessibility monitoring report

IRIS 2026-6:1/25

*Sandra Schmitz-Berndt
Institute of European Media Law*

On 5 May 2026, the German media regulatory authorities (*Mediananstalt*) published their report on accessibility in the private television and streaming sectors. Under Section 7 of the State Media Treaty (*Medienstaatsvertrag*), and in accordance with Article 7 of the EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive, nationally licensed, privately owned television broadcasters and providers of television-like telemedia must report every three years on the accessibility of their services and publish action plans setting out measures to improve it. Furthermore, the implementation of the European Accessibility Act has also obliged access service providers – including platforms, user interfaces and media intermediaries – to take accessibility into account and provide the media regulators with relevant information. As in the past, the media regulators will continue to conduct the accessibility survey annually in order to compare and monitor developments. Although participation was voluntary in 2025, 146 of the 211 private providers that were contacted took part, meaning that more than 69% of nationally licensed broadcasters were covered.

The monitoring report devotes separate sections to the RTL Deutschland and ProSiebenSat.1 broadcasting groups, while two further sections examine the accessibility of other private broadcasters and streaming providers.

RTL Deutschland increased the subtitling rate for its linear programmes in 2025 to an average of 26.6%. Programmes with particularly high audience figures, such as shows, docu-soaps, series, feature films and sports broadcasts, were subtitled. Increased use of AI for subtitling is expected in the future. Audio description was offered for selected programmes, but sign language and plain language were not. The RTL+ streaming service also significantly improved its subtitling rate from 10% to 18%. Within the broadcasting group, VOX and RTL Zwei achieved particularly high subtitling rates, while Super RTL and Nitro recorded lower but stable figures.

ProSiebenSat.1 further increased the accessibility of its free-to-air TV and streaming services in 2025. The average subtitling rate for the channels Sat.1, ProSieben, Kabel Eins, sixx and ProSieben Maxx rose from 41% to 45.9% compared with the previous year, with ProSieben achieving a subtitling rate of 53% and placing greater emphasis on audio description, sign language and

deaf performers, including in major entertainment programmes such as *Germany's Next Topmodel* or *The Masked Singer*. Programmes featuring audio description, sign language and plain language were expanded across the broadcaster group as a whole. The Joyn streaming platform underwent further technical development to improve accessibility. Furthermore, since 2025, Joyn has been offering additional live streams with sign language and audio description.

The expansion of accessible media services continues to be driven primarily by the major broadcasting groups, while smaller providers are making significantly less progress. Of 123 small broadcasters, around 55% offer subtitles and around 10% provide audio description. Subtitling of content on platforms such as YouTube or Twitch is particularly common, mostly thanks to automated subtitling. However, services differ not only according to the size of the provider, but also, where smaller providers are concerned, according to the sector: news channels such as WELT sometimes offer full subtitling as well as sign language interpreters, while other channels have only low coverage rates or still need to overcome technical challenges. For example, Disney Channel provided subtitles for only 4% of its linear programming and Nickelodeon does not offer any accessible content. Individual providers in the sports, documentary and entertainment sectors are gradually expanding their accessible services and increasingly relying on AI-assisted subtitling as well as technical improvements to their streaming and online services.

Pure streaming providers also further expanded their accessible services in 2025. As mentioned above regarding the RTL Group, RTL+ increased its subtitling rate to 18% and offers audio description directly in the player or via an app. Also as outlined above, Joyn expanded its offering to include live streams with sign language, audio description and, in some cases, plain language, as well as technical improvements to accessibility. Amazon Prime Video achieved a very high subtitling rate of 99% and added features such as audio description, adjustable dialogue volume and warnings for visual effects known to trigger photosensitive epilepsy.

The media regulators emphasise that accessibility in the private media sector is becoming increasingly important overall and that there are good examples of accessible entertainment formats, while at the same time stressing that these developments should be further expanded. They justify this by pointing out that accessibility cannot be achieved through one-off measures, but only through long-term strategies and structural integration within media companies.

Link zur Pressemitteilung der Medienanstalten

<https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/pressemitteilungen/barrierefreiheit-im-privatfernsehen-monitoring-der-medienanstalten-zeigt-messbare-fortschritte/>

Link to the media authorities' press release

<https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/pressemitteilungen/barrierefreiheit-im-privatfernsehen-monitoring-der-medienanstalten-zeigt-messbare-fortschritte/>

Link zum Monitoring-Bericht Barrierefreiheit 2025

<https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/barrierefreiheit/monitoring25/>

Link to the 2025 accessibility monitoring report

