

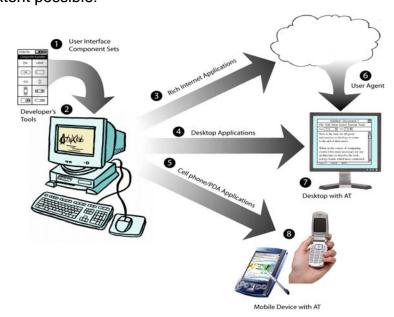
ÆGIS

Open Accessibility Everywhere:

Groundwork, Infrastructure, Standards

What is ÆGIS?

ÆGIS develops an Open Accessibility Framework (OAF) consisting of open source accessible interfaces and accessibility toolkits for developers, along-side accessible applications and open source assistive technologies for users. ÆGIS will produce this framework through user research and prototype development with current and next generation ICT. This should deeply embed accessibility into future ICT for the open desktop, rich Internet applications, and mobile devices. ÆGIS results will be referred to standards organisations where appropriate, and made available under open source licenses to the greatest extent possible.



At a Glance

Acronym:

ÆGIS

Full Title:

Open Accessibility Everywhere:
Groundwork, Infrastructure,
Standards

Contract No:

FP7-224348

Start Date:

September 2008

End date:

February 2012

Project Web Site:

www.aegisproject.eu



The Project is co-funded by the European Commission, 7th Framework Programme Software development - whether for desktop, for rich Internet applications, or for mobile devices - follows a predictable path. Using user interface elements from a component set , the software developer composes them in a developer's tool in order to build a rich Internet application, or a desktop application, or a mobile application for a PDA or cell phone. The rich Internet application requires a web browser that knows how to expose it to an assistive technology running on the desktop. Likewise, the more typical

desktop application is (or is not) accessible depending on the availability of suitable assistive technology running on the desktop. Mobile applications are (or are not) accessible depending on the availability of suitable assistive technology on the cell phone or PDA.



Be part of it!

The ÆGIS Concept

The ÆGIS project seeks to determine whether 3rd generation access techniques will provide a more accessible, more exploitable and deeply embeddable approach in mainstream ICT. This includes desktop machines, rich Internet and mobile applications. This approach will be developed and explored within the Open Accessibility Framework (OAF) through which aspects of the design, development and deployment of accessible mainstream ICT are addressed. The OAF provides built-in accessibility solutions, as wellas toolkits for developers, for "engraving" accessibility into existing and emerging mass-market ICT-based products. This makes accessibility open, plug & play, personalised & configurable, realistic & applicable in various contexts. ÆGIS is placing users and their needs at the centre of all ICT developments. Based on a holistic user centred design (UCD) approach, ÆGIS will identify user needs and interaction models for several user groups including users with visual, hearing, motion, speech and cognitive impairments, as well as application developers, and will develop open source-based generalised accessibility support for mainstream ICT devices/ applications:

- the open desktop,
- · rich Internet applications, and
- Java-based applications for mobile devices

All developments will be iteratively tested with end users, developers and experts in three phases at 4 Pilot sites Europe wide (in Belgium, Spain, Sweden and the UK).

Who will benefit?

ÆGIS addresses 2 categories of end users:

- Developers of ICT infrastructure, applications and services -referred to hereinafter as "developers"
- People with disabilities -referred to hereinafter as "end users"- who experience milder or more severe forms of one or more of the following impairments
 - Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Motor impairment
- Speech impairment
- Cognitive impairment



It is worth noting that the target end user groups include also the elderly, given that the vast majority of elderly people experiences one or more of the above impairments.

These people have the competence, in most cases, to lead independent and active lives, but, are at risk of exclusion due to the impairment(s) that they are experiencing, as well as the complexity and lack of accessibility and usability of ICT. It is worth noting that people with disabilities represent at least 16% of the overall EU working age population, but only 40% of persons with disabilities are employed compared to 64.2% of non disabled persons. This gap often exists because of a lack of properly adapted working environments (both in terms of hardware or software).

People with disabilities included in the main ÆGIS end user group are supported through a multitude of stakeholders that are duly considered and supported by the ÆGIS Open Accessibility Framework, such as:

- ICT providers (industrial players and SMEs)
- National, local and regional authorities
- Teachers / tutors / trainers/ formal informal care-givers
- Disability groups, forums and Associations
- Family members
- Mobile service providers
- Public / private Social security service providers and insurance companies
- Web service providers
- Health care and emergency support service providers
- Policy makers / standardisation bodies



The ÆGIS RIA toolkit allows collaborative work of people with various impairments in a single application







Project Objectives

The main objectives of the ÆGIS Project can be classified in research/scientific, technological, social and economical domains. They are listed below per area.

Research / Scientific objectives

- •To model the wants and needs of people with disabilities and turn them into user interaction elements in using rich applications of mainstream ICT .To structure a holistic UCD methodology which follows across the project phases. To demonstrate and prove that use of 3rd generation open desktop access techniques resulting in equal or better end-user access experiences as compared to the existing, 2nd generation proprietary approaches.
- •To bring 3rd generation access to rich Internet applications & mobile accessibility, Developing innovative approaches to building generalised accessibility support, using free & open source accessibility frameworks and infrastructure(s).

Technological objectives

- •To build a set of developer's tools and user interface component sets that improve the speed, accuracy, ease, of use and reduce expense of creating 3rd generation accessible applications for the desktop, for rich Internet applications, and for mobile platforms.
- •To develop new approaches and algorithms for eye-tracking, using standard web-cams to enable highly affordable access to the open desktop & mobile devices for people with severe physical impairments.
- •To explore real-time-text methodologies for the open desktop and for communication between the desktop and mobile devices.
- To explore and develop language ontology based, concept coded, graphical symbol support for text comprehension in standard office software.
- •To develop window management and magnification techniques on the open desktop for visual & cognitive disabilities; including assistance in locating applications, locating key portions of application content, dynamic reading assistance through text-to-speech, etc.

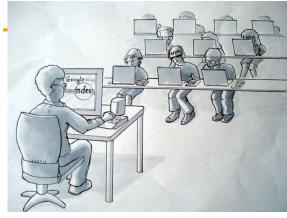
- To develop methodologies and techniques for connecting 3rd generation API-based accessibility information exposure from visually designed, free-form "Web 2.0" user interfaces
- To develop an accessibility testing framework for inclusion into large, distributed, open source projects for rapid detection of accessibility problems introduced by new code and preventing accessibility regressions.

Social objectives

- •To empower people with disabilities, the elderly and any other groups of users being disadvantaged today when using Internet services, desktop PC or mobile devices, so that they may benefit fully from mainstream ICT, at negligible extra cost or effort.
- •To bring improved support for built-in multilingualism to mainstream ICT applications, in order to boost equality in service provision and opportunities throughout Europe.
- •To provide to people with severe cognitive impairments better tools for expressing themselves in written form using commercial off-the-shelf office productivity tools.

Economical objectives

- •To reduce the cost of developing accessible cross-platform ICT solutions for all users, using the new ÆGIS open source modules, frameworks and developer tools.
- •To reduce decisively (to the level of even eliminating) the cost of assistive technologies for individual users with disabilities in getting full access to desktop, mobile and Internet applications, through the provision of open source frameworks and assistive technologies.
- •To decisively reduce (to the level of even eliminating) the cost of creating accessible documents including those in DAISY, Braille, and Large Print formats.
- To create new business opportunities for small and medium enterprises by providing high quality and low cost, all-inclusive frameworks, toolkits and applications.



Cost-effective on-line Accessible Classroom tools offered by ÆGIS





The Parts of ÆGIS

ÆGIS is composed of 5 "sub-projects" (SP1 through SP5):

SP1: User Centred Design, Integration and **Pilot Applications**

This SP defines the User Centred Design and Use Cases to be followed throughout the project. This SP also develops the ÆGIS open accessibility framework and architecture. This Open Accessibility Framework is comprehensive, holistic approach to programsupport matic for assistive technologies. Finally, this SP will organise the local testing and evaluation through pilots in countries.

SP2: Open Accessible Desktop

SP2 will complete the 3rd generation approach already underway in desktop open development. lt will demonstrate/prove that the 3rd gen. can meet & the exceed access offered using the 2nd gen./reverseengineered way of the proprietary platforms. It also tackles affordability and APIs, as well as issues in accessible prototype document creation, eye- technologies, gaze techniques, and mobile devices. maintains accessibility quality in longrunning distributed development.

SP3: Web Applications Accessibility

3rd SP3 brings the generation Rich **Applications** creating tools, and building user cost agent/browser API for accessibility. Ιt approach all prove this through a set of real-life emerging applications and sample built with components developer's tools.

SP4: Mobile Applications and Consumer Devices Accessibility

SP4 mirrors research work of SP3, but as applied to Javabased applications for mobile devices. addition. it includes research into and building the underlying accessibility frameworks

assistive for

SP5: Horizontal Activities

SP5 is responsible | the project | for management, the I training of the I consortium members I Approach and pilot end-users. It Internet will also manage the ("Web project's dissemination 2.0"), defining user in- activities. This SP will terface component sets, address the exploitation, developer business scenarios and effectiveness I support activities. It will explore based standardisation will policy issues, identifying existing standards . policies / trends ÆGIS related to ÆGIS. and informing ÆGIS the development work. will also define strategies, channels and plans for the dynamic introduction of the 🛮 ÆGIS results and key applications, especially its numerous open source ones, into standardisation actions and incentives. Finally, this SP will take care of any ethical and gender issues that might arise within the project.

Pilot Sites and Demonstrators

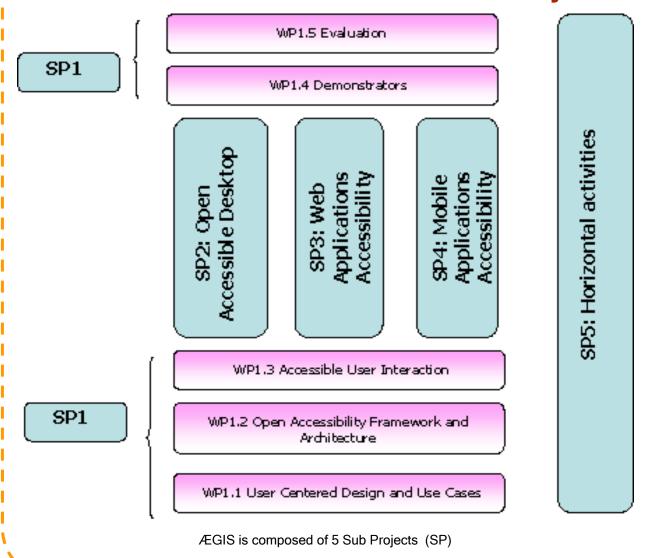
distinct pilots are planned Belgium, in Spain, Sweden, and the UK. Each pilot will undertake evaluation in 3 phases (trials and mockups, early prototypes, and final prototypes). The

pilots aim to involve vision, mobility, cognitive, hearing and speech impaired people, as well as experts in the field, tutors and other facilitators and developers.

All feedback received from each of the 3 evaluation

phases will be fed back into the development process that will take place in the project period following each evaluation phase.

The ÆGIS Sub-Projects









CSUN and the ÆGIS panel

By Peter Korn - ÆGIS Technical Manager

Last month (March 2009) was the 24th annual <u>CSUN conference on Technology and Persons with Disabilities</u> (and personally my 17th year in a row of attending it). While attendance was down compared to last year, the interest and intensity was if anything greater than before. This year saw a significant increase in open source accessibility options - with multiple talks about open source assistive technologies on both Windows and UNIX platforms, as well as open source "plugins" and DAISY players from multiple sources. Even Microsoft got into the act, showing an open source DAISY player (written in non-open Silverlight) and an open source "Save-As DAISY" add in to the non-open Microsoft Word.

Several ÆGIS consortium members attended CSUN, and three of us -Sally Cain of RNIB, Greg Fields of RIM, and I - gave an hour-long | presentation on the ÆGIS project. The presentation room was about 2/3rds full. I began our presentation, introducing the project and its focus on building accessibility into future mainstream ICT. I also spent some time talking about the ÆGIS philosophy & approach -> 3rd generation accessibility and the concept of the "accessibility value delivery chain" where we consider not just accessible applications but everything that has to first go into the software development process in order to realize a highly accessible outcome. I continued my segment with a discussion of the three main focus areas: open source desktop, rich Internet applications, and Java-based mobile devices. I concluded my remarks by re-using one of the first slides from our kickoff meeting: noting that every second of every day 4 babies are born, 36 mobile phones are activated, and some 411 web pages are created -> underscoring the critical importance of getting ahead of this explosion of devices and content through building accessibility in from the start.

Sally Cain led the bulk of the remainder of our presentation, describing the user field studies that we are doing in ÆGIS. Sally talked about the way the studies were being created, and the very positive responses we have been getting to ÆGIS - that the users are very keen to be involved in this work. Sally then looked in turn at the preliminary results RNIB has received in field studies around rich Internet applications, around desktop computers, and around mobile devices.

She noted that the theme of personalization / customization was coming up in multiple places. Another interesting preliminary results she reported on was the extent to which users would "stick at difficult tasks" - spending far more time than perhaps a typical user would trying to get things to work. Another observation coming up from the studies was the extent to which the cost of access technology is a significant barrier.

Greg Fields closed our presentation with a discussion of RIM's involvement and role in ÆGIS. He connected some of the key tasks that RIM will be working on with work RIM is doing outside of ÆGIS -> with the 3rd generation accessibility API they were announcing at CSUN for their Blackberry family of mobile devices, and also with some work they are doing with partners around real-time text (with 4CTelecom's AnnieS) and with a 3rd generation screen reader for Blackberry (with HumanWare's Orator for BlackBerry).



24th Annual International
Technology & Persons with Disabilities
Conference
March 16-21, 2009 Los Angeles, CA

We received a number of questions from the audience - mostly focused on the user field studies. Attendees were particularly interested in the studies around mobile and Rich Internet Applications, and expressed a desire to see these studies conducted more broadly, among a much larger population of Europe and also worldwide. This contrasts with the ÆGIS focus on depth, and on having a set of users who we return to longitudinally throughout the course of the project, getting their feedback on our prototypes as they evolve (I must note that audience members expressed appreciation of this approach; they simply also wanted a broad study with tens of thousands of participants). We also had specific questions around our 3rd generation mobile accessibility work, and whether we anticipated that work would affect the radio layer of mobile devices (Greg's succinct answer: "no").

I look forward to returning to CSUN in 2010 (at it's new location in San Diego) and giving another presentation on ÆGIS and the early results of our prototype development!



Be part of it!



Upcoming Events - Join Us!

"Accessibility for All:
Open Source – based Generalised Accessibility
Support
for Mainstream ICT Devices/Applications"

ÆGIS User Forum
UK, 4th June 2009, 14:00-19:00

Venue: Research In Motion UK Ltd 200 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 3XE, United Kingdom.

ÆGIS (Open Source-based Generalised Accessibility Support for Mainstream ICT) aims to make devices like desktop computers, mobile phones and internet applications more accessible to people with disabilities: the end-users. The project will produce assistive software that can be built into mainstream devices. It will also create tool kits for software developers; accessible solutions developed using Open Source technologies.

ÆGIS is placing users and their needs at the centre of all its ICT developments, and focuses in particular on users with visual, hearing, motion, speech, language and cognitive impairments. This is why we are inviting you to this <u>User Forum on Thursday 4th June 2009 in London.</u> We aim at having fruitful discussions between both end-users and application developers, thus better understanding your needs when wanting to use accessible desktop, mobile and internet applications. It will ensure that future technologies and services will meet the needs of the end-users, and both mainstream and assistive technology developers.

The agenda is as following:

USER FORUM AGENDA

Time	Topic	Speaker	
14.00 - 14.15	ÆGIS project at a glance	Dr. Evangelos Bekiaris (CERTH- HIT)	
14.15 - 14.30	ÆGIS technical presentation	Peter Korn (Sun Microsystems)	
14.30 - 15.30	Demos	Peter Korn (Sun Microsystems)	
15.30 - 16.00 Coffee break			
16.00 - 18.00	Interactive (via discussion) generic use case user scenario presentation - with breaks	Mr. Karel Van Isacker (EPR); Mr. Edward Chandler / Ms. Sally Cain (RNIB)	
18.00 - 18.30	Discussion and conclusion	Mr. Karel Van Isacker (EPR); Mr. Edward Chandler / Ms. Sally Cain (RNIB)	

The ÆGIS consortium partners are pleased to invite you to join this forum. Your expertise and collaboration will be vital to the success of the project and for the well being of people with disabilities. The registration form can be found at the ÆGIS website at http://www.aegis-project.eu/user forum.html. Alternatively, you can contact us at info@aegis-project.eu/user forum.html. Alternatively, you can contact us at info@aegis-project.eu/user forum.html.

We look forward to welcoming you at the event!



Be part of it!



Upcoming Events - Join Us!

ÆGIS 1st Pan-European Workshop

'Accessibility for All: Open Source – based Generalised Accessibility Support f or Mainstream ICT Devices/Applications'

5th June 2009, London, UK

Having affordable accessibility support into mainstream ICT devices/ applications is much wanted in the disability community. Accessible devices and applications offer the backbone to many people with disabilities across Europe and beyond to maintain their autonomy as this is associated to a better quality of life.

Supported by the 7th Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development of the European Union, the ÆGIS (Open Source-based Generalised Accessibility Support for Mainstream ICT) project aims to develop an Open Accessibility Framework (OAF) through which aspects of the design, development and deployment of accessible mainstream ICT are addressed. The OAF will provide developers with embedded and built-in accessibility solutions, as well as toolkits for "engraving" accessibility in existing and emerging mass-market ICT-based products, thus making accessibility open, plug and play, personalised and configurable, realistic and applicable in various contexts. Simultaneously, the project will provide Open Source Accessible Desktop Applications to the end-users (people with disabilities, older people)

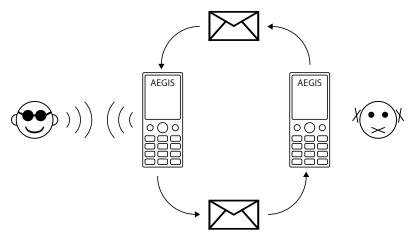
On behalf of the ÆGIS Consortium, we kindly invite you to participate in its first Pan-European Workshop that will take place on Friday 5th June 2009 at Research In Motion UK Ltd, Slough, Berkshire, United Kingdom.

This workshop will present the preliminary findings of the project related to the Use Cases selection and preliminary user requirements, thus stimulating discussions on these issues between both end-users and application developers. Its outcome will be taken into account by the Consortium during the further course of the project. Key stakeholders from relevant areas are expected to participate (such as end users' representatives and organisations, EC representatives, technologies developers, etc.). This workshop therefore is an excellent chance to meet experts from relevant fields.

Participation to the ÆGIS workshop is **free of charge**. However, due to space limitation, participation will be on a first-come first-served basis. We would appreciate it if you could **register before Thursday, 30 April 2009**.

For further information about the workshop, its agenda and registration, please visit the ÆGIS website at http://www.aegis-project.eu/user_forum.html or contact info@aegis-project.eu/user_forum.html or

We are looking forward to welcome you on the 5th of June!



One of the applications that ÆGIS is developing: the ÆGIS mobile companion



ÆGIS - FP7-224348: find more info at http://www.aegis-project.eu/







WORKSHOP AGENDA

Time	Topic	Speaker	
8.30 - 9.00	Registration		
9.00 - 9.10	Welcome and Aim of the Day	Mr. Karel Van Isacker (EPR)	
9.10 - 9.35	EU Policies on elNCLUSION	Mr. Miguel Gonzalez-Sancho (European Commission, ICT for Inclusion, Information Society & Media Directorate General)	
9.35 - 9.50	ÆGIS at a Glance	Dr. Evangelos Bekiaris (CERTH- HIT)	
9.50 - 10.10	First feedback as collected during user forum	Mr. Iván Carmona Rojo (FONCE)	
10.10 - 10.40	Demos and Technical Overview	Mr. Peter Korn (Sun Microsystems)	
10.40 - 11.00 Coffee Break			
11.00 - 12.30	ÆGIS Draft Use Cases and discussion	Dr. Evangelos Bekiaris (CERTH- HIT)	
12.30 - 14.00 Lunch			
14.00 - 14.30	Standards for content (and content interoperability) in the field of elnclusion - and beyond	Dr. Christian Galinski (Infoterm)	
14.30 - 15.00	Accessibility overall	Ph.D. Gregg C. Vanderheiden (Trace R&D Center University of Wisconsin - Madison)	
15.00 - 15.30 Coffee break			
15.30 - 15.45	Kick off of Open Accessibility Everywhere Group (OAEG)	Dr. Evangelos Bekiaris (CERTH- HIT)	
15.45 - 16.30	Round table	Moderated by Dr. Evangelos Bekiaris (CERTH-HIT) and Mr. Peter Korn (Sun Microsystems)	
16.30 - 17.00 Conclusions			

Consortium



Centre for Research and Technology Hellas / Hellenic Institute of Transport www.hit.certh.gr



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Royal National Institute of Blind People, UK www.rnib.org.uk





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Universidad Politécnica de Madrid / Life Supporting Technologies, Spain www.lst.tfo.upm.es



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FPD, Sweden www.femtioprocent.se



University of Toronto / Adaptive Technology Resource Center, Canada www.atrc.utoronto.ca/



Research In Motion, Canada www.rim.com







Indicative Use cases

SCENARIO 1 - Desktop accessibility

Martin is 27 years old and suffers from retinitis pigmentosa, an eye disease that affects the light sensitive part of the eye and results in loss of day vision. Being a schoolteacher in a specialised school for blind, Martin is fully aware that conventional printed material is problematic to read for most of his pupils, and so are the electronic means like e-mail, the web, etc., unless they acquire a plethora of assistive technology devices and software. The latter is often problematic as they sometimes have compatibility problems and require various installations, lacking typically integration possibilities, and are furthermore platform dependent, making it expensive for his school for example to acquire Windows driven PCs, while also making it less affordable for his students. He was therefore delighted to hear of the ÆGIS suit of tools, which provided him the possibility of an all-in-one solution, which benefits his daily work, as well as that of his students. Namely, ÆGIS allows Martin and his pupils to produce accessible material since ÆGIS software e.g. allows Martin to create textual documents, which he can then seamlessly transfer into DAISY format books for people with print impairments. Martin and his pupils will also have access to accessible material because they can now use the open source assistive technology which will be embedded in the desktop tools provided by the project, and with no extra burden on the school's limited budgets. In addition, being fully platform-independent, the users are no longer bound to one platform or the other. This allows Martin and his students to operate the software from any computer they have, whether it is running a proprietary operating system or not. Finally, the extent of the ÆGIS consortium will ensure that multilingual support will be available for the ÆGIS software.

SCENARIO 2 - Web application accessibility

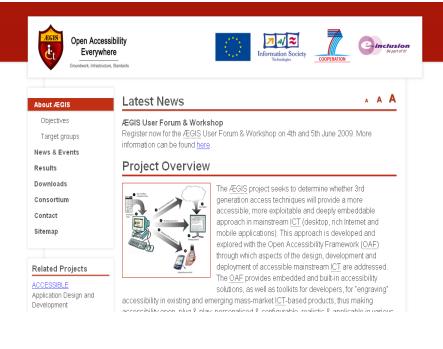
Julian is running a small assistive technology consultancy company that aids companies to make the working environment more accessible in terms of used software, so that they will be able to employ people with disabilities. In this respect, he recently accepted a job to make an existing but poorly accessible Rich Internet Application (RIA) more accessible and also cross platform. For this, he uses the ÆGIS developer toolkit. The ÆGIS tools for creating Rich Internet Applications (RIAs) and the user interface component sets Julian can choose from - already tested and proven to be accessible via assistive technologies on multiple platforms - allow Julian to transform the existing RIA in one that provides the same interface to all his employees, while also allowing every kind of assistive technology to be fully working with these RIAs.

SCENARIO 3 - Rich cell phone & PDA accessibility

Molly is 20 years old, and is blind from birth. This has however not stopped her from using all latest technologies to support her, nor has it stopped her from having a very active life. A friend of Molly told her recently about the ÆGIS mobile companion that can be freely downloaded to your mobile, and features a wide range of accessibility support. Molly uses since some years speech technology (TTS) for her mobile, however the supporting software has been expensive and was not always working on every mobile she could purchase. Hence, Molly is more than interested and goes to her regular shop, where she normally purchases her mobile. She goes into the store, and finds several cell phones based on ÆGIS, which include a framework that supports assistive technologies, and where all of the built-in phone applications are already accessible. After discussing her needs with the salesclerk and trying several phones, she selects one. The salesclerk, as a courtesy, downloads the ÆGIS screen reader to her at no charge, which integrates perfectly into the phone (she could have done this herself later had she wanted to - and had some assistance in getting the phone to do the download). The result is that Molly bought her mobile already totally equipped to support her main need: having a talking mobile through TTS. Few weeks later, Molly wants to get software onto her phone to track her expenses for her work trips. She browses the selection of software for sale - using the accessible ÆGIS web browser built into her phone - and finds one that incorporates the ÆGIS accessibility framework which she purchases, downloads, and installs. When she then launches it, she is pleased to see that it speaks just fine with the now integrated speech system on her phone. This is the result of the fact that the ÆGIS speech software is open source and free, so that every software vendor can get it at no charge and develop with it.

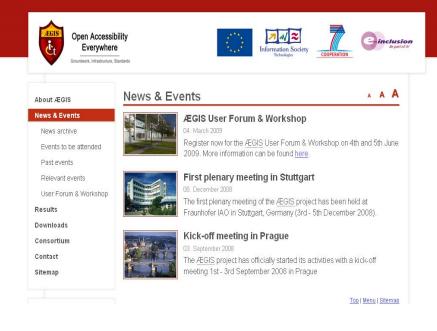


Find all about ÆGIS at http://www.aegis-project.eu/





COOPERATION



Related Projects



ACCESSIBLE (Accessible Applications Design and Development - http://www.accessible-project.eu/)

The triggering idea behind ACCESSIBLE is to contribute for better accessibility for all citizens, to increase the use of standards, and to develop an assessment simulation environment (including a suite of accessibility analysing tools as well as developer-aid tools) to assess efficiently, easily and rapidly the accessibility and viability of software applications for all user groups.

ACCESSIBLE will exploit the technologies behind the recent expansion of accessibility tools and standardisation methodologies, in order to provide an integrated simulation assessment environment for supporting the production of accessible software applications mobile or not

This will enable large organisations, SMEs or individuals (developers, designers, etc.) to produce software products of superior accessibility and quality, accompanied with appropriate measures and proposals for best practice.

The proposed system will be demonstrated in the four pilots of ACCESSIBLE for the assessment of: a) Mobile applications (including JavaFX Scripts), b) Web applications, c) Web services (mainly focusing on infomobility services), and d) description languages (e.g. UML, SDL, etc.).







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