

● springbok

No one left outside

E-BOOK

a practical guide to Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility can feel like a complex jungle, but at its heart, it's simply about ensuring no one is left outside. This e-book is your guide to navigating the European Accessibility Act, turning compliance into a competitive advantage.



Content

CHAPTER 01

The new standard for digital excellence

Digital accessibility is about creating digital products that are inclusive, adaptable, and universally usable. In other words: **every website and app should be designed and built for everyone.**

In our connected world, digital accessibility is a fundamental requirement of doing business. As the **European Accessibility Act (EAA)** is now a reality, organizations face a simple choice: adapt or risk commercial and legal consequences. Digital accessibility is no longer a “nice-to-have” feature.

01

The barriers you don't see

Just as many disabilities are invisible - roughly **80% are non-apparent** - most digital barriers also remain hidden. These obstacles often go unnoticed by decision-makers or developers.

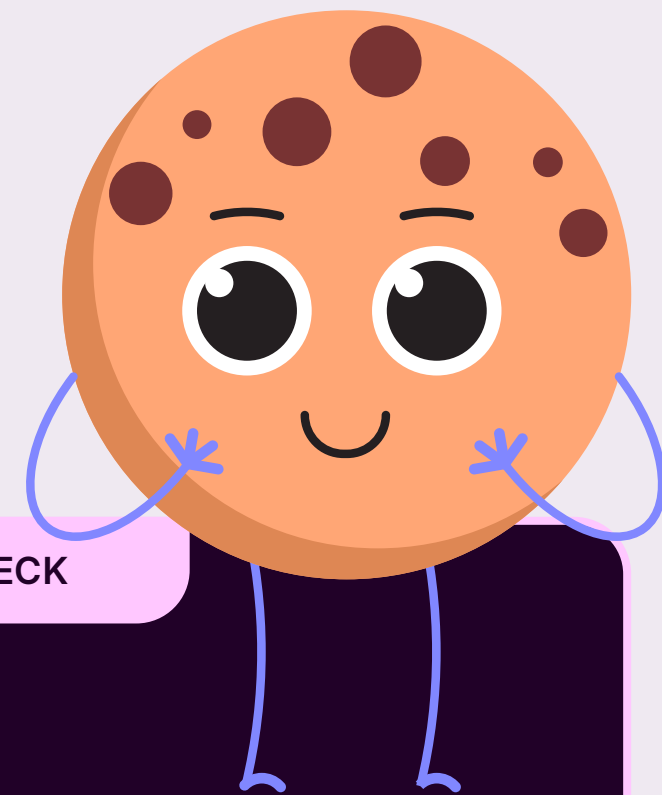
Common “hidden” roadblocks include:

- **Poor contrast:** Making text difficult or impossible to read.
- **Missing labels:** Leaving screen reader users guessing what a button does.
- **Keyboard traps:** Modal overlays (like cookie banners) that users cannot exit without a mouse.
- **Unclear navigation:** Making simple actions like shopping or booking a service a frustrating experience.

““

“Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.”

Steve Jobs



REALITY CHECK

Think cookie banners are straightforward? Without proper coding, they're a hidden wall. If users can't 'see' it with a screen reader or 'reach' it with a keyboard, they are lost before they've even begun.

02 Why it matters

In the EU, 1 in 4 adults over the age of 16 - around 27% of the population live with some form of disability. That equates to over 101 million people who face barriers when interacting with digital services.

But accessibility is not just about permanent conditions. It covers a full spectrum of human experiences:

- **Permanent:** A user who is blind or has a long-term motor impairment.
- **Temporary:** Someone navigating a site with a broken wrist.
- **Situational:** A parent holding a child in one arm or someone using their phone in bright sunlight.

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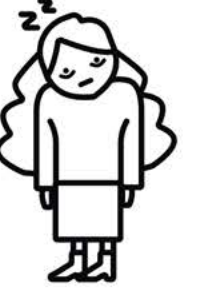








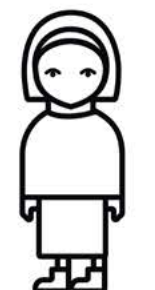
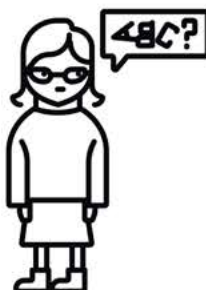
Accessibility is not a nice to have, it's a social responsibility. It means the difference between inclusion and isolation.”

Alyona Matvieieva

UX & IAAP Certified & Accessibility Expert

REALITY CHECK

Accessibility isn't about statistics alone. It's about the real people behind the numbers: your aging parents, your friend's dyslexic son, your neighbor recovering from a stroke. For them, accessible digital design isn't a luxury - it's a lifeline.

	Motor	Vision	Auditory	Speech	Cognition
Situational	 Carrying a baby	 Sun on screen	 NC headphones	 Foreign languages	 Tired
Temporary	 Broken arm	 Eye infection	 Hearing aid	 Throat infection	 Concussion
Permanent	 Missing limbs	 Blind	 Deaf	 Non-verbal	 Dyslexia

DARESAY
by KNIGHTEC

03 The 'everyone wins' effect

Inclusive design doesn't just help users with disabilities - **it makes platforms better for everyone.** Clean structure, clear labeling, readable content, and responsive layouts lead to better engagement and retention. Companies that invested in accessibility early are already reaping the benefits: improved SEO, smoother usability, higher conversion rates, and stronger brand loyalty.

What works for accessibility often works better for all:

BENEFIT	HOW IT WORKS
Improved SEO	Search engines prioritize well-structured, machine-readable content.
AI-Readiness	Clean data and structured inputs allow AI tools to deliver better personalization and voice interactions.
Increased brand trust	Inclusion builds trust and shows your brand's true character.
Higher conversion and loyalty	Accessibility reduces friction. By removing barriers, you prevent drop-offs, keeping customers engaged and more likely to return.

04 Every touchpoint counts

Accessibility must be built into every digital interaction from the start. It touches every digital touchpoint. It is a requirement that spans strategy, design, technology, and operations. If it breaks at any point, the experience fails.

This includes:

- **E-commerce and apps:** product listings, forms, error messages and checkout flows must be fully usable with keyboards, magnifiers, screen readers.
- **Emails and documents:** transactional emails, PDFs and downloads must be readable, understandable and navigable with assistive technologies.
- **Digital campaigns:** landing pages, sign-up flows, banners and videos must be perceivable, operable and understandable for all users.
- **Customer support:** chatbots, contact forms and help flows must be operable without relying only on vision or a mouse.



REALITY CHECK

For large companies, the challenge is often one of scale and consistency. For small and mid-sized companies, the challenge is different. With fewer digital products they often lack the dedicated accessibility expertise or structured processes to meet the standards.

CHAPTER 02

The European Accessibility Act (EAA)

Across Europe, the legal framework around digital accessibility has undergone a major transformation. With the European Accessibility Act (EAA, Directive (EU) 2019/882) now fully in force, digital inclusion is a legal requirement that applies to a wide range of private sector services.

What is the EAA?

The European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882) is a landmark regulation that harmonizes accessibility standards across all EU member states. For businesses, this means one legal baseline for accessibility across all EU markets. Compliance is assessed against EN 301 549, the EU's recognised accessibility standard. For digital products and services, EN 301 549 maps directly to WCAG 2.1 Level AA.



01

Is your business in scope?

If you sell products or provide services in the EU, you are likely covered. The EAA applies to:

- **E-commerce:** Retail sites, online booking, and subscription services.
- **Banking:** Financial services and banking apps.
- **Telecommunications:** Communication platforms and devices.
- **Transport:** Ticketing portals and travel apps.
- **Media:** E-readers and digital publishing.
- **Hardware and software with interactive interfaces:** smartphones, ATMs, payment terminals.

Even if a website does not process transactions directly, but provides **detailed product information, guides purchasing decisions**, or initiates service contracts, it may still fall under the scope - particularly if it plays a functional role in the buying process or forms part of a service chain that leads to a consumer agreement.

DID YOU KNOW

The definition of 'e-commerce' is broad. If a business offers products or services through a website or app, and enters into a **digital agreement with a consumer** - such as accepting online payments, subscriptions, or bookings - it is very likely covered by the EAA.

02 Key requirements

Accessibility under the EAA means every user must be able to perceive, navigate, understand, and interact with your digital service - whether it's a checkout flow, PDF manual, mobile app, or confirmation email.

This reflects the **four core accessibility principles, known as POUR**, which form the foundation of the WCAG guidelines:

- **Perceivable** - content must be presented in ways users can sense (text alternatives for images, captions for videos).
- **Operable** - all functionality must be usable via keyboard and assistive technologies.
- **Understandable** - interfaces and content must be clear, consistent, and predictable.
- **Robust** - content must work reliably across devices, browsers, and assistive tools.

REALITY CHECK

Struggling with a 'wait-and-see' mentality in your boardroom? There is a common misconception that you have until 2030 to comply. This is not the case. For almost all active digital platforms, the time to act is now. Having trouble convincing your management of the urgency? Get in touch for the legal facts that will help you build a bulletproof business case for immediate action.

03 Consequences of ignoring

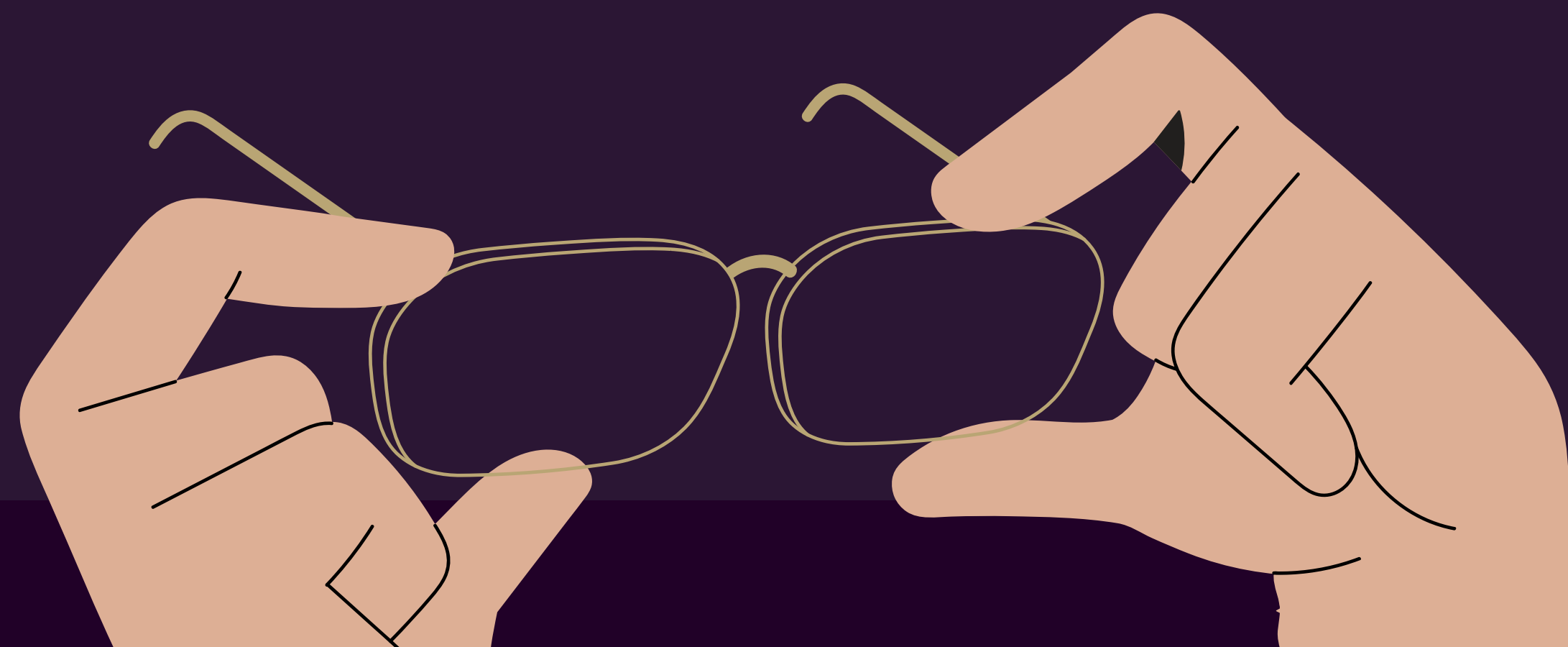
The EAA mandates each member state to enforce compliance through their own national bodies. This means penalties will vary by country. And if a business operates in the EU, each country can separately fine it for digital inaccessibility.

Potential consequences for non-compliance include:

- **Heavy fines:** in some regions, fines can reach up to €1,000,000 or 6% of annual turnover.
- **Market restrictions:** your services could be suspended or blocked.
- **Reputational damage:** consumer complaints and legal action can harm your brand trust.

DID YOU KNOW

In both Belgium and the Netherlands, the EAA is enforced in a similar way: there isn't one single body for everything, because different authorities take charge depending on the sector. For example, in Belgium this can involve the FPS Economy (Economic Inspectorate) for areas like e-commerce and consumer services, while in the Netherlands you'll typically see ACM for e-commerce/consumer services and AFM for financial services.



CHAPTER 03

Implementing accessibility

Turning accessibility from a legal obligation into a core part of your digital strategy begins with a change in mindset. It's not about fixing a website once. It's about building a sustainable process.

“

“Progress over perfection. Take the first step. No matter how small it is, it's a step forward. Don't wait until you get the website, product, or whatever is just right”

Meryl Evans

Inclusive Communication
Strategist & TEDx speaker, CPACC-Certified.



01

The accessibility audit

The first step in any effective accessibility roadmap

An accessibility audit is the first step in any effective accessibility roadmap. It evaluates your current digital touchpoints against WCAG 2.1 AA and EN 301 549 standards, uncovering both compliance gaps and user experience blind spots.

Audits can take two forms:

- **Accessibility scan:** A quick review to spot the most common barriers, achieve "easy wins" and informing your strategy.
- **Comprehensive accessibility audit:** A deep dive to identify hidden issues, ensuring your remediation plan meets full EAA 2025 requirements.

Both approaches - scan and audit - are sufficient to draft an organization's **accessibility policy and public commitment statement**. And will also point out the knowledge gaps in the team(s). Once you understand your starting point, you can begin the process of remediation and integrate accessibility into your ongoing digital strategy.

“At ENGIE, we believe progress only counts if everyone can move forward with us. We didn't just audit our digital platforms to tick a box; we did it to close the gaps and ensure our energy is accessible to every single customer. We turned compliance into a better experience for every user.”

[Read more about Engie case](#)

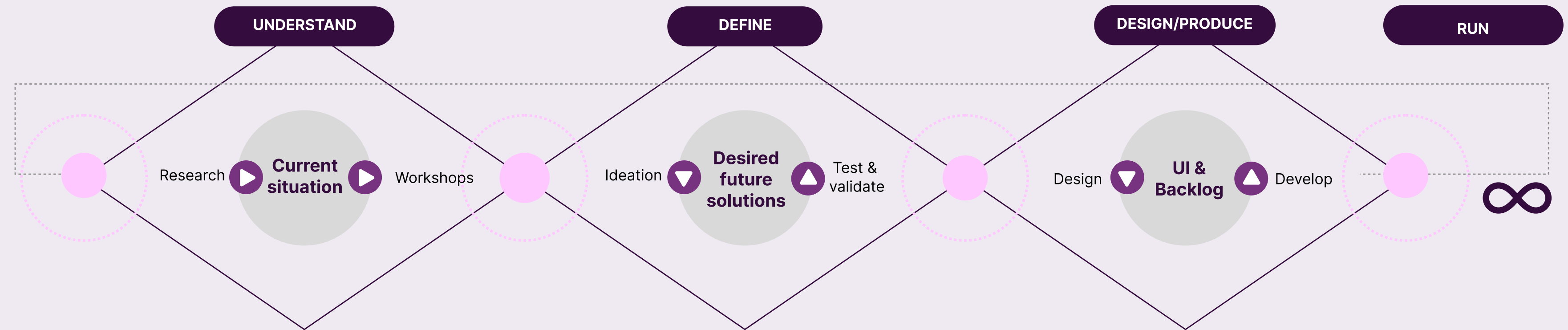
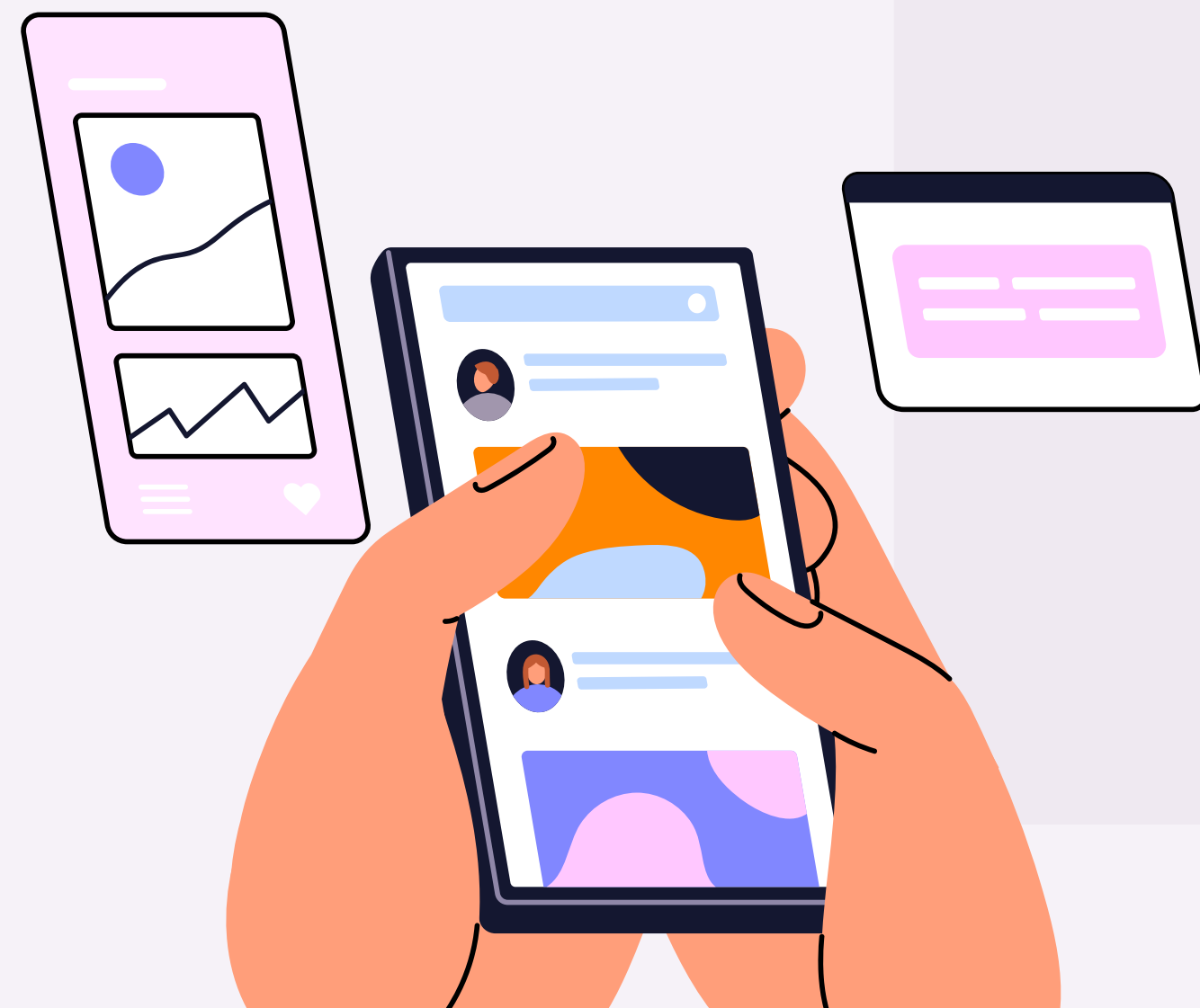
Kristof De Bondt

Chapter Lead Digital Marketing, ENGIE

02 Integrating from the start

Build inclusivity into every screen, flow, and interaction. Right from day one.

Accessibility is a strategic design mindset, and the most effective way to address it is to embed it early in the design thinking process. At Springbok, we integrate accessibility into our **Triple Diamond design approach**:



Understanding phase

- Audit the current state of accessibility across digital touchpoints
- Understand the diverse needs of the users
- Identify accessibility pain points in existing journeys
- Audit design patterns and content for barriers

Define phase

- Turn research into inclusive problem definitions and experience goals
- Use accessibility standards to inform your future-state experience vision
- Create accessible user flows and information hierarchies
- Wireframe and prototype components and layouts with accessible interactions in mind

Design/ Produce phase

- Design accessible UI components: clear labels, readable type, adequate contrast, visible focus states
- Write inclusive UX copy: plain language, clear instructions, accessible error messages, meaningful link text
- Use semantic HTML, labelled forms and accessible ARIA (when needed)
- Build for keyboard operability, logical tab order, and consistent focus management
- Prepare accessibility specs alongside UI documentation, dev stories and design systems
- Test before launch

Run phase

- Accessibility doesn't stop at launch. Test each new release, feature or component
- Keep accessibility statements and documentation up to date
- Plan for continuous improvement: fix regressions, expand scope, train teams

CASE

Bright Plus

Recruitment without barriers

The Challenge

Recruitment agency Bright Plus faced a double hurdle: a rebranding had lowered their visibility, and a complex mobile-unfriendly application process was driving away young talent. They didn't just need a new look. The platform needed to become clearer, more inclusive, and user-first.

How we did it

We didn't guess, we listened. Through deep UX research and user interviews, we mapped every pain point in the candidate journey. We then moved into five agile sprints to build a new platform from the ground up. Accessibility was proactively integrated throughout design - from wireframes and prototypes to documentation and dev handover.

The result

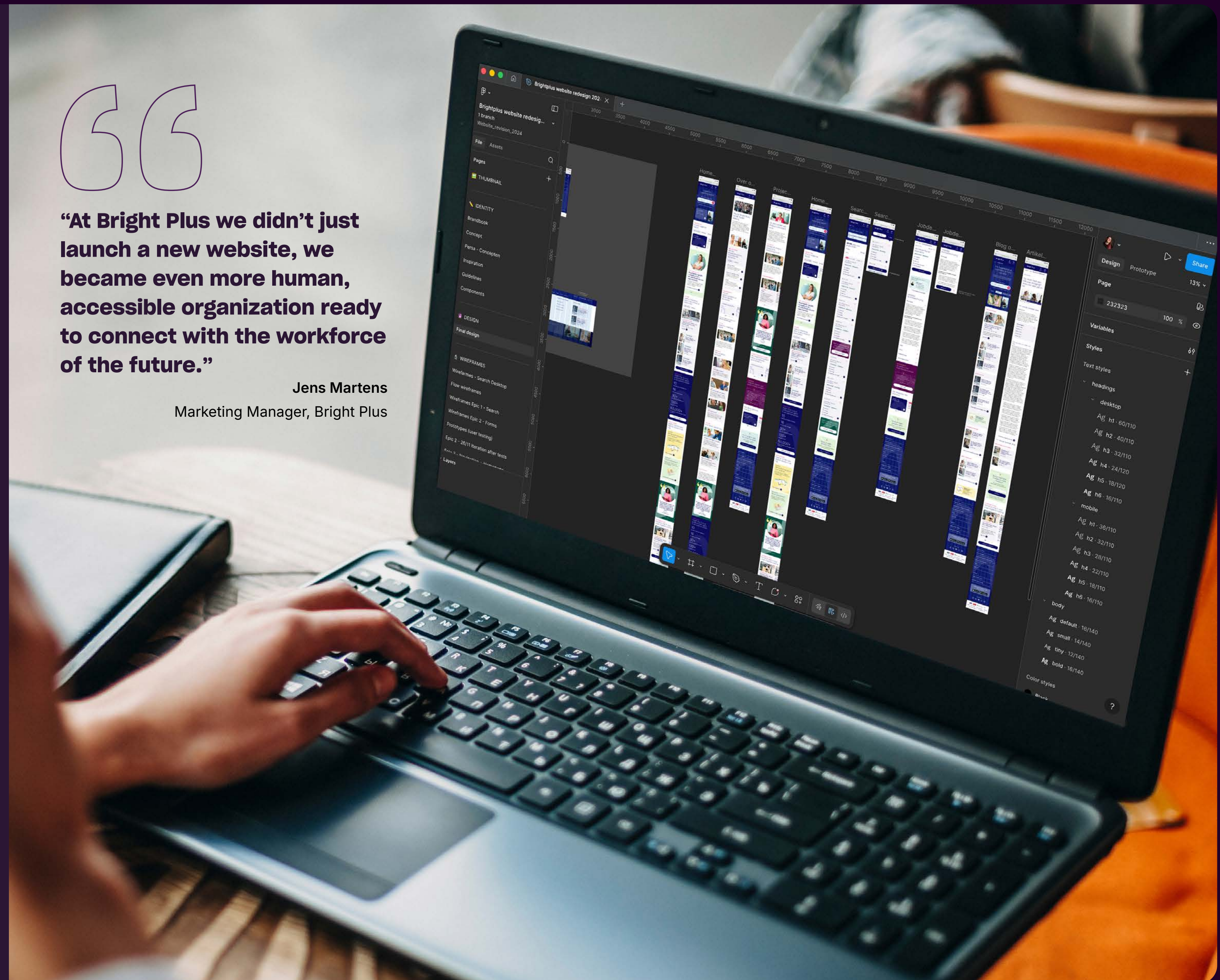
- **Frictionless flow:** a redesigned application process that candidates actually finish.
- **Personalized career guidance** tailored to the user's logged-in experience.
- **AI-ready search:** smart filtering built for the speed of tomorrow.
- **Inclusive by design:** a platform that works perfectly on any device, for every user.
- **A documented design system** and functional specs for in-house development.

“

“At Bright Plus we didn't just launch a new website, we became even more human, accessible organization ready to connect with the workforce of the future.”

Jens Martens

Marketing Manager, Bright Plus



03 Technical implementation: coding for inclusivity

Accessibility is not a feature - it's a foundation

Behind every accessible experience is inclusive code. From proper HTML semantics and focus handling to ARIA roles and readable markup, accessibility must be baked into the very DNA of a digital product - not patched on afterward.

Accessible technical implementation includes:

- **Semantic HTML elements** used correctly (e.g. headings, lists, landmarks)
- **Keyboard focus** states and logical tab order
- **Clear form labels** (and ARIA roles where absolutely appropriate)
- **Text alternatives** for non-text content
- **Clean, responsive layout** with readable structure
- **Accessible announcements** of error messaging and status updates
- **Regular testing** with assistive technologies

“

Springbok leads by example
“You can’t advocate for accessibility without walking the walk. We treated our own website redesign as a test lab to prove that accessible code is the foundation for a faster, more beautiful, and truly inclusive digital experience.”

Peter Van Wijnaerde
CMO Springbok



04 Emails accessibility

Making every message work for every user

Emails are often overlooked - but they are a **critical part of digital service delivery**. From order confirmations and password resets to billing notices and contract updates, these communications are essential touchpoints. If they aren’t accessible, the service itself isn’t fully accessible.

Most transactional and service emails sent today are still unusable for many customers. A user who cannot read their password reset email or follow an account link is effectively locked out, no matter how accessible the website itself may be.

We are currently applying this approach with leading brands, including Brico, LIDL, Menzis, Anderzorg, VinkVink, and others — ensuring their emails are optimised for every user.

REALITY CHECK

*According to the **Email Markup Consortium**, email accessibility ensures that everyone can receive and understand your messages, regardless of disability or the assistive technologies they use. Yet in 2025, research revealed that 99.89% of HTML emails contained accessibility issues rated “Serious” or “Critical.”*

CHAPTER 04

Our 3-step accessibility compliance roadmap



DID YOU KNOW

A note on accessibility widgets

An accessibility widget or overlay is a software solution that aims to improve the accessibility of a website on top of the existing website code. Our position: We do not recommend them. These tools are misleading and do not ensure true compliance with the EAA (see the [Overlay Fact](#) and [EU Commission Statement](#)). Real accessibility requires fixing issues at the source - in your code.

At Springbok, we simplify the path to compliance into three clear stages:

Phase 1: Audit & Statement

Start with clarity

We map your key pages and critical user flows to identify blind spots. This results in a detailed report, an issue overview dashboard, and a prioritisation matrix. The audit feeds into an accessibility statement, which becomes an important public document. It shows that you've begun your accessibility journey and are actively working toward compliance. While it doesn't guarantee full protection, it creates a first layer of reassurance and accountability.

Phase 2: Remediation Support

Turn findings into action

We begin this phase with a prioritisation workshop to align on internal resources, define workflows, set KPIs, and organise working rhythms. We help your team implement fixes and update your statement regularly to reflect your progress. After every 1-2 sprints, we update your accessibility statement - keeping your documentation current for users, teams, and regulators.

Phase 3: Re-audit and support

Accessibility is a journey, not a destination

We recommend a follow-up audit to confirm all known issues have been addressed. But accessibility isn't a one-time fix. From this point on, every new page, update or feature should meet accessibility standards. We provide quarterly reviews and tailored training to ensure every new feature meets the standard.

CHAPTER 05

Fostering an inclusive digital culture

Accessibility isn't just about meeting regulations - it's about building better digital experiences for everyone. Beyond legal compliance, accessible design improves usability, performance and reach. And it is just the right thing to do. It's a long-term investment in customer trust, brand equity, and inclusive innovation.



““

**“Accessibility is not a problem to be solved.
It’s a culture to be built.”**

Sheri Byrne-Haber

Multi-award winning values-based engineering,
accessibility, and inclusion leader

Mindset matters

Tools and audits are important, but they're only the starting point. Real changes happen when accessibility becomes part of how people think, work and make decisions. Every day.

Embedding accessibility is about creating an inclusive environment - both physical and psychological - where people feel supported, confident and empowered to design and build for everyone. It means hiring inclusively, helping teams work together and making inclusion a shared responsibility - not just a specialist's job.

To build a sustainable, inclusive culture, focus on these pillars:

- **Training:** Provide teams with the knowledge they need to make accessible choices daily.
- **Ownership:** Ensure accessibility is a shared responsibility across design, tech, and content.
- **Integration:** Inclusivity must be built into your organization's DNA—not “bolted on” as an afterthought.

Ready to make **accessibility** your next move?

Whether you're navigating compliance, starting an audit, or building inclusive experiences - let's explore what's next, together.

Our team is here to guide, advise, or simply share ideas over a good conversation. Digital experience starts with discovering.

Let's get in touch!

Explore more

Want to learn more about Digital accessibility? - Check our additional resources:

Webinar

[Making sense of digital accessibility](#)

Article

[10 Critical Accessibility Issues Revealed by Our Audits](#)



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