Prepare your business for the European Accessibility Act (EAA)

Learn our three-phase approach to educate, equip, and enable your teams by June 28, 2025, and beyond.

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Table of contents

A word from our CEO

Today, we recognize that the internet is essential to life and that internet access is a fundamental human right, just like liberty and the fulfillment of our most basic needs. How, then, can it be that people with disabilities are still being deprived of this fundamental human right?

This must change. Fortunately, there has been progress. Governments continue to introduce new legislation pertaining to digital accessibility. The latest example is the European Accessibility Act (EAA), which becomes law in all 27 EU member states on June 28, 2025.

For organizations doing business in the EU that are compliant by the deadline, new markets will open, new customer connections will develop, and new revenue streams will emerge. For the rest, fines and penalties will be the unenviable norm.

There are legal risks as well. People with disabilities are asking the courts to intervene. They are tired of waiting for businesses to understand that equal access to the internet is essential to an equitable society.

As we enter the next era of global digital accessibility being ushered in by the EAA, we have the opportunity to change the world for the better. Digital equality, like so many similar human rights movements, is about self-sufficiency and independence.

Business leaders can remove barriers by making their digital properties accessible. This is how we will create a truly inclusive world for everyone—including people with disabilities.

Together, we can make digital accessibility a reality.

Preety Kumar
CEO and Founder
Deque

Deque is the digital accessibility leader helping organizations become and stay accessible with the world's best tools, training, strategy, and services.

Introduction

All organizations doing business in the EU, regardless of location, will be impacted by the EAA.

The EAA becomes a national law in all 27 EU Member States on June 28, 2025. You will need a sustainable digital accessibility program in place by this deadline.

You will need to be able to generate clean content and code by the deadline and prove its conformance. Under specific use cases, some content has until 2030 to be remediated.

Risks and benefits of compliance

Risks
- Severe fines and penalties
- Public disclosure
- Brand backlash
- Loss of competitiveness
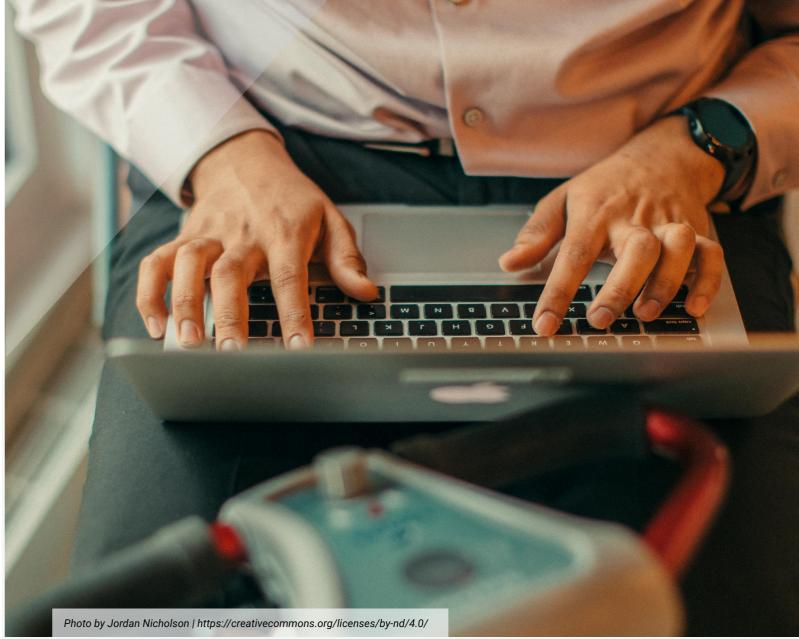
Benefits
- No fines or penalties
- Expanded market share
- Enhanced brand reputation
- Better overall user experiences

⚠️ **Don't risk it**

Failing to comply with the EAA could mean fines as high as €500,000 and even jail time. And remember, each country can separately fine you for digital inaccessibility—you could be paying fines per country!

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Looking for an introduction to digital accessibility?

If you're just starting out with digital accessibility at your company, we invite you to check out our [Beginner's Guide to Web Accessibility](#) and speak with our consulting team for support.

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To achieve EAA compliance by the deadline, your business will need to:

- Understand EAA applicability. To what extent do you have risk?
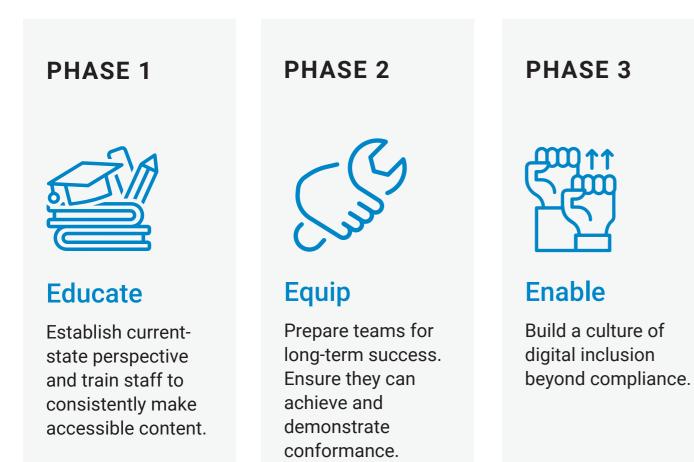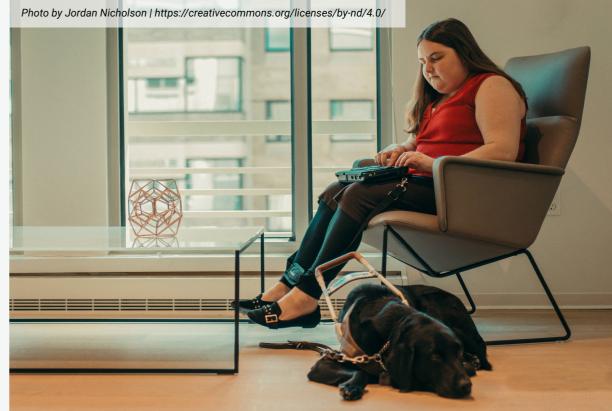- Understand the current state and capabilities of your existing digital accessibility program.
- Have a strategic plan to scale rapidly.
- Have tools, education, and processes in place to ensure consistently clean content and code.
- Start planning for remediation assessments and workflows.

In this guide, we'll walk you through a three-phase approach to building and scaling a comprehensive and sustainable accessibility program, and we'll share a roadmap with steps you can take to ensure EAA compliance.

Our approach to the EAA

PHASE 1

Educate

Establish current-state perspective and train staff to consistently make accessible content.

PHASE 2

Equip

Prepare teams for long-term success. Ensure they can achieve and demonstrate conformance.

PHASE 3

Enable

Build a culture of digital inclusion beyond compliance.

Photo by Jordan Nicholson | https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/

Educate

Establish your current-state perspective

This first phase begins with assessing and understanding your digital properties in their current state, finding where they stand regarding accessibility, and building a robust strategy to move towards optimization. It's also about readying your business for a long-term cultural and digital transformation, where inclusiveness becomes deeply embedded into your organization.

Phase 1 involves:

A	Conduct a baseline gap analysis of digital properties and organizational readiness.
B	Perform comprehensive audits on core pages and templates.
C	Understand accessibility policy and strategic planning.

By practicing accessibility, it's opened up a lot of opportunities. We have a competitive advantage now. It's our job to make this an ongoing practice, so there is no looking back from here."

— Senthilnathan Shanmugam, VP, Technology and Project Delivery, Freshworks

A ## Conduct a baseline gap analysis of digital properties and organizational readiness

Begin by taking stock of where your digital properties stand regarding accessibility. Gathering initial high-level data will serve two purposes:

Spot easy wins

Issues like missing alt text or poor color contrast can be quick fixes for your design and development teams. Tackling these early on will boost confidence before diving into more complex problems later.

Inform your strategy

Baseline data should help shape your overall strategy. You'll probably end up with a mountain of defects to fix, but resist "analysis-paralysis" mode. Instead, look for patterns and key problem areas and use those insights to prioritize your remediation efforts.

When preparing for your baseline audit, consider the following action items:

1. Use automated scanning techniques in your initial testing

You can use automated tools to quickly identify certain accessibility issues and get insights into the current status of your digital products. Choose a tool that can test against the accessibility standard that's right for your needs and a digital accessibility vendor committed to 100% accuracy in reporting. You don't want reports that generate costly false positive results because false positives will negatively impact your team's confidence and hinder adoption.

False positives occur when a testing tool incorrectly flags an element as a potential accessibility defect when it is not actually a genuine issue. False positives lead to wasted time, effort, and cost. Choosing a digital accessibility vendor committed to zero false positives is highly recommended.

Remember, if you can't trust some of the test results, then you have to check all the results!

False positives may increase costs by 386%.

Deque University

Access real-time and on-demand training for all levels of digital accessibility expertise.

- **Personalized learning:** Create a plan that matches your goals and schedule.
- **Role-specific training:** Gain skills tailored to you and your team.
- **Expert answers:** Get digital accessibility questions answered 24-7 with our AI chatbot.
- **Certification prep:** Prepare for IAAP certification with Deque, an approved provider.

2. Equip your teams with specialized accessibility training

Everyone has a part to play in accessibility: developers, content creators, or project managers. By providing training for individual roles within the software development lifecycle (SDLC), you'll help your teams maintain momentum even in the face of more challenging problems. Larger organizations should also consider training around accessibility program management.

3. Complete an organizational assessment

With insights from your preliminary scans, you can evaluate your organization's digital platforms and create a strategic accessibility roadmap. Use the data to formulate burn rates, sprint allocations, and staffing needs. As you create an inventory of your organization's digital products and services, make sure to identify the person responsible for each.

This inventory is essential for the other recommended steps. It will give you a common definition of organizational scope, help ensure alignment to defined goals, and provide a clear understanding of what you are trying to accomplish and when.

The fastest way to alienate developers and torpedo your accessibility program is by wasting their time with inaccurate test results. Instead, equip them with the right tools to fundamentally transform accessible software development."

- Dylan Barrell, CTO, Deque

4. Identify tools to address accessibility gaps

When you find gaps in your digital properties, follow up with testing and remediation tools to address those deficiencies. Specific problems across the SDLC may require specific tools, so be prepared to implement multiple tools across the various steps.

Unique roles deserve unique tools

As you explore digital accessibility options, be wary of tools that offer a "one size fits all" approach. When transforming your business, don't give your teams a Swiss Army Knife when you really need a saw, a hammer, and a drill! Choose a solution that can be tailored to meet the needs of each persona in the software development lifecycle.

The EAA was created to ensure that European products and services are perceivable, operable, and usable by all users, regardless of their capabilities, and robust enough to be compatible with assistive technologies. To meet this standard, you need specialized tools tailored to different roles.

Designer	**Developer**	**Tester**	**Product owner**	**Accessibility program manager**
Avoid creating defects at design	Get instant feedback on code	Manage testing steps and defects	Visualize progress	Monitor performance

Progress report

You should now have a clear sense of how your properties stack up accessibility-wise, the date you need to start planning, and the specialized tools and training in place for your teams to start addressing accessibility issues.

B Perform comprehensive audits on core pages and templates

Now that you know your current accessibility status, you can move on to an in-depth examination of your core pages and templates. This will allow you to narrow your scope toward high-impact items that benefit the most user traffic.

Before starting comprehensive audits, take the following three steps:

1. Conduct in-depth manual audits on key digital assets

Begin with inspections that emulate the user experience of people with different abilities across different devices and through different assistive technologies. You can pinpoint and fix critical accessibility challenges that may not surface during automated scans.

You'll also need to conduct manual testing to verify conformance to the accessibility standard your organization has chosen. Remember, though, that manual audits are time-consuming and costly. Be strategic by focusing on high-traffic pages, user interfaces (UI) critical to core product function, and common components used across a product or service. Remediation in these areas will have the most significant impact.

Deque accessibility audits and compliance testing services

Deque provides trusted, fast, and actionable audits so your team can confidently tackle accessibility issues with clear priorities and zero false positives.

"The initial audit engagement gave us insight into what our accessibility issues really were—their impact, and severity.

It was the first time we really understood just how much was needed and what we had to do. It helped us to prioritize our work moving forward."

—Simon Taghioff, Product Manager, Articulate

2. Use templates and component findings for broad accessibility improvement

By conducting audits on templates, components, and design systems, you can identify common user issues and apply fixes across the board. This will quickly improve accessibility on a larger scale. It will also stop the proliferation of technical debt. When a defect's root cause exists in a central location—such as server-side templates, CSS stylesheets, or imported components—you'll get a compounded effect when you resolve it.

3. Evaluate overall user experience alongside accessibility improvements

Review your pages and templates from the perspective of usability. Look beyond compliance and consider common user behaviors, potential frustrations, and areas for enhancement. Most general usability principles overlap with accessibility success criteria and best practices.

Progress report

You should now have a strong sense of how people with different abilities experience your digital properties and be able to make across-the-board fixes to achieve broad accessibility impact.

C Understand accessibility policy and strategic planning

Creating an accessibility policy and strategic plan will put you on the path to regulatory compliance. You'll also enhance your brand's reputation, expand your market reach, and promote innovation. It's a great way to get alignment across your organization as well. You'll show your employees, customers, and stakeholders that your business values diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility.

Other steps you can consider:

1. Establish an accessibility oversight structure

Create an accessibility team or give responsible people ownership of your organization's objectives.

Write your organization's accessibility policy and public commitment

Your policy is your organization's accessibility manifesto. It will outline your commitment to making your digital properties accessible to everyone. Your accessibility policy should document goals, responsibilities, budget and resource expectations, and procedures.

Your accessibility statement should be a living document available to all users. Regularly review and update it for accuracy. When you complete audits and determine the current state of a product, publish non-accessible content and accessible alternatives. Make sure to provide multi-channel opportunities for feedback. Identify a contact person and share the contact information of a relevant enforcement body. Finally, publish your accessibility statement.

Appoint a dedicated accessibility expert or leader

Consider appointing or hiring at least one accessibility subject matter expert (SME). They'll be indispensable for translating accessibility standards into specific actions. They can also offer insight into implementing the correct strategies, provide training, and ensure your organization maintains accessibility standards that align with the EAA.

Deque's digital accessibility transformation Playbook

The Deque Playbook gives you expert guidance with a clear baseline, strategic roadmap, and actionable steps to help you rapidly scale and sustain your accessibility program.

"The Deque playbook really lays out what we need to do in the near future, and what the best options are for next steps. Having that clarity on what success looks like was a really big piece for our leadership team. It's been super helpful to drive the business case for accessibility."

—Elizabeth Barker, Research Accessibility Manager, NWEA

Develop an accessibility program "playbook"

This playbook can be your organization's standard operating procedure (SOP) document for addressing accessibility issues. It should include your organization's policy, execution plan, roles and responsibilities, and best practices.

2. Embrace a unified accessibility standard

Selecting the best standard for your organization will provide a clear and measurable framework for a policy and strategic plan, ensure consistency, and help you meet compliance requirements.

The European Standard EN 301 549 is robust, widely used, and will likely cover even the strictest EAA reading. It covers requirements for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) products and services in the EU and is the presumed standard for the EAA. EN 301 549 directly references WCAG 2.1 AA and is the requirement for the Web Accessibility Directive (Directive 2016/2102) that regulates public sector websites, documents, and mobile applications.

Having your teams and tools configured for the same outcome makes cross-functional resource sharing easier and helps ensure seamless migration to new standards.

3. Monitor and adapt to evolving accessibility regulations

Your organization must continuously monitor the latest regulatory changes so you can swiftly adapt in time to maintain compliance. Your accessibility policy should automatically trigger an efficient and effective response when changes do occur.

4. Understand customer feedback journeys

Engage with customers with varying disabilities to understand their unique experiences and challenges. Establish structured feedback channels so they can share suggestions and concerns, and make sure they can provide feedback through channels they already use, such as social media. It's all about meeting your customers where they are. For example, some people with disabilities prefer customer service via chat rather than an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

5. Have a data retention plan

To support consumer and regulatory inquiry, you'll need to consider what applicable data you'll need to retain (as defined by the EAA), how you'll retain it, and who from your organization should own this process—having a holistic and fully functioning approach in place before the deadline is essential.

Let's explore a simple example:

If you have a digital product, you can test it for EN 301 549 conformance and use that information to generate your Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT). The VPAT can then be made available on your Accessibility Statement page. This will cover the EAA's requirement to make the information available to the public. You can store the conformance information in your compliance apparatus to meet the retention requirement.

Build on strong foundations

Becoming and staying compliant for the long term means laying the groundwork for organizational transformation. With clear and actionable strategies and policies in place, the right tools and training for your teams, and the capability to monitor and evaluate progress, your organization will be well-prepared to achieve your company's compliance goals.

Congratulations! 🎉

You've completed Phase 1. You're now ready to start putting your strategies to work to increase velocity in Phase 2.

Equip

Prepare your teams for sustained excellence and a proactive future

This second phase is about being agile, responsive, and ready to adapt your strategies based on real-time information. By learning from your progress and solidifying your approach, you can make accessibility a consistent and ingrained element across your organization. You'll strengthen your commitment to improving people's digital lives and align your business with the EAA.

In Phase 2, you will:

A	Establish accessibility remediation goals.
B	Evaluate and refine your accessibility strategies.

Set goals → Use tools and training → Monitor progress → Adjust strategies

REPEAT

The remediation process that we went through with Deque was very well understood and clearly laid out. From the very first person I talked to, all the way through the delivery of the remediation report, as well as the tools that we were able to use to get the job done– it was all there."

— Shannon Landin, Founder and CEO, Codecraft Works

A Establish accessibility remediation goals

To achieve digital accessibility objectives, you've got to be realistic about goals and timelines. You want a program that secures compliance, but transformation depends on many human factors and won't occur overnight. Make sure your organizational goals reflect this reality.

When setting your remediation goals, consider the following three steps:

1. Create actionable and realistic goals

Set your sights on continuous improvement rather than immediate perfection. Implement the accessibility program "playbook" we discussed in Phase 1 and distribute it to your teams. They can reference it when setting their quarterly and annual goals. Making accessibility resources widely available will help everyone get up to speed quickly.

2. Involve teams in determining achievable timelines

Encourage active input from all relevant teams. They're the ones who will be implementing the changes, and their sense of what's achievable will be invaluable. A collaborative approach will also boost team morale and promote a sense of shared responsibility.

3. Estimate timelines based on known rates and velocities

You'll need to determine how fast your teams can work. To define a realistic pace, assess historical data, current team capabilities, staffing levels, and the scope of work required. Then, forecast how long it will take to achieve your goals. This approach makes for better planning and resource allocation and allows you to set realistic expectations.
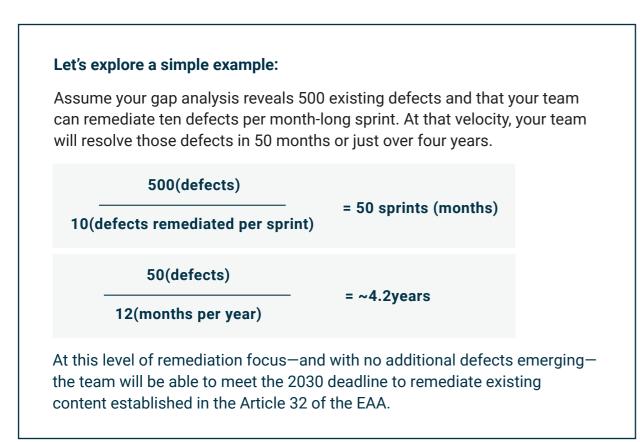

Let's explore a simple example:

Assume your gap analysis reveals 500 existing defects and that your team can remediate ten defects per month-long sprint. At that velocity, your team will resolve those defects in 50 months or just over four years.

$$\frac{500 \text{(defects)}}{10 \text{(defects remediated per sprint)}} = 50 \text{ sprints (months)}$$

$$\frac{50 \text{(defects)}}{12 \text{(months per year)}} = {\sim}4.2 \text{years}$$

At this level of remediation focus—and with no additional defects emerging— the team will be able to meet the 2030 deadline to remediate existing content established in the Article 32 of the EAA.

Deque accessibility remediation services

Get expert help to quickly make your digital content accessible with direct code fixes, industry-leading guidance, and resources to empower your development teams for long-term success.

Ensure readiness with the right tools and accessibility training programs

Investing in the right tools and providing role-based accessibility training will increase remediation efficiency and build team confidence. With the organizational support and resources to accelerate remediation velocity, they'll be excited to dive into something new and pave the way for the rest of the organization to follow.

Progress report

You've established your goals, developed the appropriate strategies, and put all the right support and resources in place to ensure your teams can continue accelerating remediation velocity.

B | Evaluate and refine your accessibility strategies

With accessibility goals in place, you can focus on continuous analysis and advancements in how teams approach and communicate accessibility actions.

Let's look at five ideas to consider when analyzing and adapting your processes:

1. Maintain real-time monitoring and reporting

Real-time reporting makes it possible to quickly spot and rectify any new accessibility issues introduced into a product or service. Regular reviews keep your digital properties on track as features and functions change. You can use historical data to understand why and how problems occur across teams and share your findings to prevent future problems.

2. Ensure accessibility is engrained in all processes

Accessibility should be so commonplace that it's nearly invisible. Initially, for example, you may need to use special accessibility tags and labels within defect tracking to heighten awareness. Eventually, however, they won't need to be separately categorized. Once your accessibility backlog is clear, you can even allow new defects to stream through the process without any extra stops in dedicated "accessibility" dashboards. That's how accessibility becomes a "normal" part of the process. As you continue to integrate accessibility into your organization's procedures, include quarterly planning and retrospectives.

ⓘ **Pro tip**: Get _The Agile Accessibility Handbook_ to learn more about avoiding risk, maintaining agility, and closing the accessibility gap. It's free!

axe DevTools Extension

Easily find and fix accessibility issues with automated tests that offer over 80% coverage, reducing the need for manual testing. No training required—axe DevTools provides detailed guidance and advanced AI-powered tools to save time and boost accuracy.
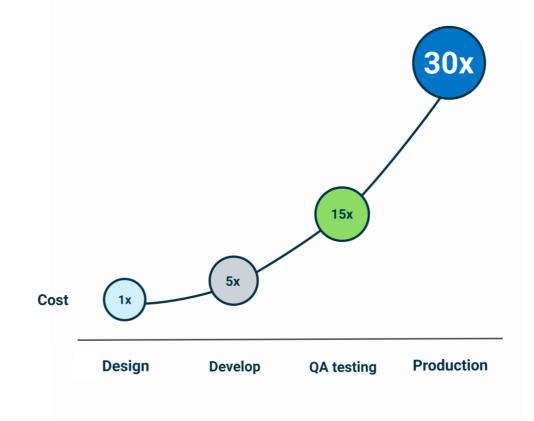
Like any transformative program, the path toward accessibility will get smoother over time. Your teams learn more, your strategies and tools get more effective, and your processes streamline as you get better at "shifting left" and addressing accessibility issues in a more proactive way.

Shift left

Being proactive and shifting left means including accessibility practices early in the design and development stages and catching accessibility issues sooner. By shifting left, your organization will:

- **Save money:** Fixing defects after they reach production is costly.

- **Free up your teams:** Catching defects sooner means less time spent fixing them later.

- **Create better products:** Accessible products are better for all customers.

Addressing accessibility issues at the design stage is efficient and cost-effective. Fixing those defects after they reach production can result in significant delays and far higher costs.
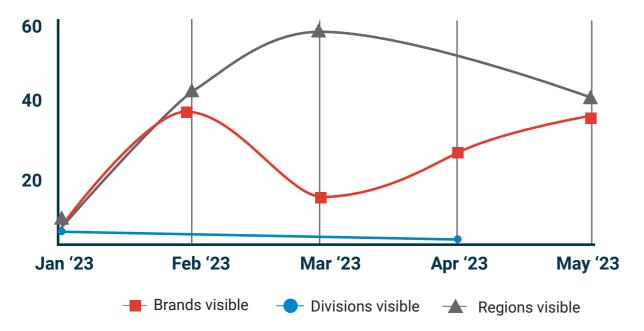
3. Inform future strategy by evaluating current progress

As you continuously analyze your organization's progress, don't just observe outcomes. Investigate root causes. When one team succeeds and another struggles, find out why. If the difference is training rigor and earlier integration of accessibility checks, that's an insight you can use to enhance future strategies and mature your program.

ℹ️ *Pro tip: When evaluating monitoring and reporting tools, make sure you can customize your data. Look for the ability to filter by custom categories like brand, division, and region, as well as nested subcategories (i.e., European vs. North American brand sites).This flexibility helps you:*

- *Spot trends*
- *Compare progress across units*
- *Track issues over time*
- *Explore challenges across the business*

Score trend

4. Allow the tools to do more over time

As your organization matures, your tools and processes should evolve to handle more complex tasks, making it easier for your team to maintain accessibility standards.

The effort required to reach accessibility maturity will map to a bell curve. In the beginning, little effort is needed because little is being done. Once tools and training are introduced, the effort required will increase with new concepts to learn and issues to deal with. Eventually, usage of the tools and training will be optimized, and efforts will settle down to a stable and predictable level.

- **Low maturity (First segment)**: Characterized by low effort and low results.
- **Mid maturity (Middle segment)**: Increasing effort yields increasing results. This is the peak of the bell curve.
- **High maturity (Last segment)**: Characterized by high results with decreasing effort (but never zero). This is the most efficient stage.
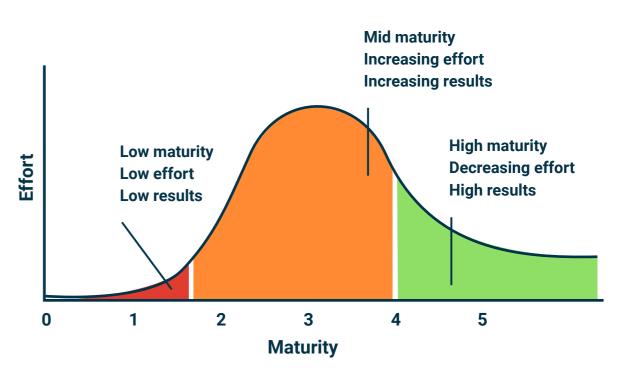

Figure: This bell curve graphically represents the relationship between maturity, effort, and results within an organization or process.

Watch out for the overlay trap!

If vendors recommend overlays (cheap, tool-based automated widgets and plugins), ignore them.
They are a waste of your time. Here's why:

- **Rejected by the EU Commission:** In December 2023, the Director General for Communication within the EU Commission stated they cannot endorse any tools or products that fall into the categories of overlay tools or widgets.

- **Failure to achieve compliance:** Overlays can't guarantee full compliance with accessibility standards like EN 301 549 and WCAG compliance because they can't repair all potential accessibility issues, they fall short of the "functional accessibility" mandated by the EAA.

- **Negative user experiences:** Users with disabilities extensively criticize overlays as being ineffective and counterproductive, so overlays risk not fulfilling the EAA's objective of ensuring equal access for individuals with disabilities.

- **Limited scope:** Overlays are limited in scope and often inaccurate. Even though they can address some accessibility issues automatically, they struggle with complex issues like image descriptions, form accessibility, and dynamic content.

- **Reactive approach:** Overlays try to fix accessibility issues after the website or digital product has been developed. This contradicts the EAA's emphasis on proactively integrating accessibility through universal design from the start.

5. Adapt team approaches to overcome accessibility process challenges

Foster open dialog to pinpoint recurring challenges. If a particular process keeps causing issues, don't accept it as inevitable—change it. But make sure your methods don't conflict with other established team procedures. If there's friction, dig into the root cause and see if there's a better way.

Pro tip: There is no one singular way to "do accessibility." While the standards are well established, the best way to meet them will always be unique to each team.

Expect things to get easier over time

As you begin to implement the strategies we've outlined in Phase 2, expect velocity to increase. If it isn't happening, don't be afraid to modify your approach.

Congratulations! 🎉

You've completed Phase 2. Your teams are getting more effective and efficient all the time, and they're better able to spot issues and make improvements. It's time to start building a truly inclusive culture for the long term.

PHASE 3

Enable

Build a culture of digital inclusion beyond compliance

This third phase emphasizes embedding accessibility into your company culture, celebrating achievements, and constantly evolving your approach. True maturity is about going beyond compliance to foster a workplace where accessibility and inclusivity are incorporated from the start. It's as much about shifting mindsets as it is about developing new processes.

In Phase 3, you will:

A	Promote professional development in accessibility.
B	Highlight achievements in your accessibility journey.
C	Recognize key influencers in your accessibility efforts.
D	Establish relevant metrics and track progress.
E	Foster a truly inclusive culture beyond compliance.

> *At Mindbody, accessibility matters! The lineup of speakers was phenomenal! It felt amazing to learn from people in the accessibility industry and then talk about it within our workspace. We'll be going back to review and share best practices with our team members!"*
>
> — *Kristen Buck, Senior Content Designer, Mindbody*

A — Promote professional development in accessibility

It's important to create a culture of continuous learning. As your team's expertise grows, it fuels innovation and strengthens your commitment to inclusivity.

Here are some ways to encourage professional development:

1. Join accessibility communities

Encourage employees to participate in online forums, LinkedIn groups, local meetups, webinars, or Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) activities. They can share knowledge, experience new perspectives, and stay updated on best practices. They can also troubleshoot technical challenges, find solutions for specific accessibility barriers, and share insights on what your organization has learned about accessibility.

2. Participate in and present at accessibility conferences

Support employees in attending and presenting at accessibility conferences. They'll engage with experts, discover new tools, and network with peers. Conference presentations establish your organization as an accessibility leader and provide a valuable platform to share your journey, insights, and best practices.

3. Pursue accreditation to enhance team expertise and credibility

Encourage employees to earn industry-recognized certifications, such as the IAAP Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC). It validates their skills and enhances your company's credibility. Certifications equip employees with the knowledge and confidence to be accessibility champions.

4. Include certifications as a preferred hiring qualification

Include accessibility certifications as a "preferred qualification" in relevant job descriptions. This sends a message to candidates that you care about inclusivity and will help your organization attract the right talent.

Motivate key roles to acquire certifications

Provide sponsorship and support for employees in roles where accessibility can have a deep impact across your teams.

- **Certified developers** are better equipped to write accessible code, reducing costly and time-consuming remediation.

- **Certified UX/UI designers** can create more inclusive user interfaces and understand how design impacts accessibility.

- **Certified QA testers** can effectively identify and document accessibility issues, understand assistive technologies and user needs, and conduct more comprehensive testing.

- **Certified product stakeholders** can champion accessibility, prioritize it during product planning, and advocate for it throughout the development lifecycle.

- **Certified accessibility coaches** and subject matter experts are better equipped to train, mentor, and support teams on best practices. They provide guidance, answer questions, and help resolve complex challenges.

Pro tip: *Certificates such as the CPACC, WAS, and CPWA, offered by the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP), are globally recognized and a great way for employees to develop and demonstrate conceptual and technical accessibility competencies.*

> *Studying with Deque University has allowed me to increase my knowledge of accessibility towards becoming an accessibility professional. The courses will continually motivate you to learn more and provide accessibility techniques to use in your daily work."*
>
> *- Callum Cussen, Lead UX Designer, AARP*

5. Engage in organizational partnerships

Solidify your commitment to accessibility and gain credibility through strategic partnerships with organizations such as:

The Valuable 500: This global movement encourages businesses to put disability inclusion on their board agendas, promoting systemic change and inclusivity at the highest levels.

Disability:IN: This global organization offers resources, best practices, and a network for businesses to advance disability inclusion in the workplace, marketplace, and supply chain.

By engaging with these and other similar organizations, your teams can learn from industry leaders, leverage best practices, and demonstrate dedication to creating a more accessible world.

Progress report

You're now sending a clear message across your organization that you support professional development and want to see your employees becoming impactful accessibility leaders both in the company and out in the community.

B Highlight achievements in your accessibility journey

Celebrating milestones, big or small, is crucial to maintaining momentum and recognizing the collective efforts of your teams.

1. Promote success in public and internal communications

Publicly acknowledge accessibility achievements on your company website, social media platforms, and internal newsletters. This showcases your commitment to inclusivity and inspires other organizations to follow suit. Develop case studies highlighting successful accessibility implementations within your organization. Share these stories internally and externally to demonstrate the positive impact of inclusive design and development practices.

Initiatives like Deque's "A11Y Champion Pin" program celebrate employees and industry champions who are making an impact on accessibility.

C Recognize key influencers in your accessibility efforts

Identifying and empowering accessibility "champions" within your organization will help to sustain momentum and drive culture change.

1. Empower accessibility champions

Identify individuals within your organization who are passionate about accessibility and provide them with the resources, training, and platforms to advocate for inclusivity. Involve these champions in key decision-making processes related to product development, design, and content creation.

2. Show appreciation and recognition

Recognize, acknowledge, and celebrate your accessibility champions. Offer meaningful rewards for their dedication, such as company-wide shout-outs and funded conference attendance. You could even present an "Accessibility Champion" award at an annual company meeting.

> There was an event to help our associates understand what clients are actually going through. Accessibility had a story to share on this topic. So I sharpened my elbows and muscled my way in. The event was widely attended, and our booth was one of the most impactful. It was a real home run as far as awareness goes. We were invited to participate in events in New York and India. This was executive sponsorship in a time when budgets were being looked at."
>
> — Lesley Hanlin, Head of Accessibility and Inclusion, TIAA

deque

D Establish relevant metrics and track progress

Expanding the range of metrics you track to include performance and feedback data will add depth to the progress reports you share and help increase accessibility momentum.

1. Do more than track numbers

Move beyond just tracking the number of WCAG issues fixed. Define key performance indicators (KPIs) that reflect actual user experiences. This could include metrics such as:

- the success rate of users with disabilities completing key tasks on your website or app
- the number of accessibility-related support requests received
- feedback from users with disabilities gathered through surveys, usability testing, and feedback channels
- improved usability testing results from testing with people with disabilities

2. Monitor and report regularly

Implement tools and processes to track metrics regularly. Share progress reports with stakeholders and highlight both successes and areas for improvement. For example, instead of only reporting that 80% of WCAG errors were fixed, highlight the 10% completion rate increase for online purchases that resulted from design changes based on user feedback.

Pro tip: Teams can manually track information each sprint or use tools that crawl your sites automatically. You can also combine both approaches. What's most important is that the data bubbles up to one central location for easy analysis and distribution.

3. Conduct regular accessibility audits and maturity assessments

Established accessibility maturity models (such as Deque's Digital Accessibility Transformation Index) can help you assess your organization's progress and identify areas for growth. Conducting annual audits and benchmarking against a maturity model can reveal bigger-picture anomalies, such as your website meeting WCAG AA standards while your mobile app lags behind in keyboard accessibility.

4. Embrace continuous improvement and optimization

Use insights from metrics and audits to make informed decisions about resource allocation, process improvements, and strategic planning. Adopt an agile approach to accessibility, constantly iterating and adapting your strategies based on data and user feedback. User feedback might reveal that a specific form field on your website is still challenging for people with cognitive disabilities, even though it's technically WCAG compliant. Using that data, your team can redesign the form, focusing on clarity and ease of use.

axe Monitor

Get a consistently clear picture of what your customers are experiencing in production.

- **Scan all properties:** Monitor websites, mobile responsive sites, and PDFs.
- **Improve reporting:** See actionable reports that drill down into issues.
- **Enable developers:** Filter, prioritize, and export issues easily for remediation.

Deque Accessibility Awareness Lab

Use hands-on activities to help your team understand and experience the diverse ways people with temporary or permanent disabilities interact with technology.

E Foster a truly inclusive culture beyond compliance

EN 301 549 and WCAG compliance is essential, but it's just the foundation. Accessibility is about creating an inclusive experience that goes beyond checking compliance boxes.

Here are some steps you can take to help ingrain inclusivity in your culture:

1. Train teams to empathize and understand user needs

Encourage your team to move away from a "compliance-first" mindset and focus on understanding the diverse needs of users with disabilities. Conduct awareness workshops, training sessions, and simulations to help team members experience digital products and services from the perspective of users with different abilities. Organize a workshop where developers and designers try to navigate your website using only a keyboard or a screen reader. This first-hand experience can be a powerful tool for building empathy and understanding the importance of inclusive design.

2. Incorporate inclusive design principles from the start

Integrate inclusive design principles into your user experience and development processes. Aim to create products and services that are usable by people with a wide range of abilities without the need for adaptation or specialized functionality. Embed accessibility into your company's design system, component libraries, style guides, and development frameworks to ensure that it becomes a natural part of your workflow rather than an afterthought. Ensure your design system includes accessible color palettes, font choices, and layout guidelines, making it easier for designers to create inclusive interfaces from the outset.

3. Encourage user testing with people with disabilities

Involve people with disabilities in your user testing processes to gather valuable feedback on your products and services. For instance, your teams can conduct usability testing sessions where individuals with visual impairments use screen readers to navigate your website, providing direct feedback on any challenges they encounter.

Pro tip: Hosting an *Accessibility Awareness Lab* can help your team understand how people with disabilities experience and use your organization's technology and engage with your digital experiences.

Congratulations! 🎉

You've completed all three phases. Not only is your organization prepared for EAA compliance, but you've also built the foundation for an inclusive culture that will drive long-term growth for your business and increase customer loyalty.
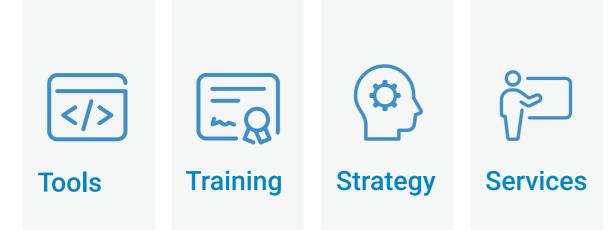
About Deque

| 2B+ axe-core downloads | 140k users trained on accessibility | Forrester Wave **Leader** |

Deque is a pioneer in digital accessibility, known for category-defining leadership in tools, training, strategy, and services.

As a disruptive, innovative leader determined to make global digital equality a reality, Deque has never been afraid to make bold moves— even those that may disrupt our own approaches and ideas. We don't just "do things as they've always been done."

We have consistently been at the forefront of key inflection points in digital accessibility, often creating those moments through audacious and visionary actions. For example, we made our testing rules engine, axe-core, open source in 2015. Today, after 2B+ downloads, it has transformed the industry and unified the digital accessibility landscape by giving everyone access to the same trusted testing rules and freeing developers to work on more advanced features and improvements.

Tools   **Training**   **Strategy**   **Services**

Deque was a game-changer for us. We quickly saw significant progress in our digital accessibility efforts, thanks to the clear, actionable plan tailored to our needs. It not only aligned our teams but also eliminated the usual roadblocks, keeping everyone focused on achieving our accessibility goals."

- Felipe Gusmão, Global Brand Websites, Global Marketing Team, Nestlé Business Services Lisbon

Deque is also a leader in accessibility education and standards development, contributing to WCAG and IAAP initiatives and fostering knowledge-sharing and awareness through efforts like axe-con, the largest digital accessibility conference in the world.

As we enter this new era ushered in by the EAA, Deque continues to lead the way, enabling organizations across the globe to build accessible digital experiences faster and more sustainably.

Conclusion

As you use this guide to prepare your business for the EAA, keep in mind the explicit goals of the directive:

"An environment where products and services are more accessible allows for a more inclusive society and facilitates independent living for persons with disabilities."

As to how to achieve these goals, the language of the EAA is unambiguous: "Accessibility should be achieved by the systematic removal and prevention of barriers, preferably through a universal design or 'design for all' approach."

By considering accessibility early in the process of bringing a product or service to market, you align with the EAA's stated intention to promote "full and effective equal participation by improving access to mainstream products and services that, through their initial design or subsequent adaptation, address the particular needs of persons with disabilities."

At Deque, we advocate for embracing a "shift left" approach to digital accessibility—focusing on accessibility from the start, conducting accessibility testing early in the design and development stages, and catching accessibility issues sooner.

This is not a "one-and-done" process. It's about building a sustainable program that allows your organization to be compliant today, tomorrow, and beyond.

This guide is here to help you achieve compliance by the deadline while laying the foundation for a lifelong commitment to inclusivity that will benefit your organization, customers, and the world.

Educate, equip, and enable your organization to achieve EAA compliance.

Request a free strategic consultation with Deque today.

Get Started

https://www.deque.com/eaa-help/

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