THE EUROPEAN ACCESSIBILITY ACT

The European Accessibility Act (EAA) includes some requirements on emergency access. It specifies that, at a minimum, real-time text (RTT) should be implemented – and that PSAPs should respond with the same communication method as that received (video responding to video, text responded to by text, for example).

THE EUROPEAN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS CODE

The EECC states that end-users with disabilities must be able to access emergency services on an equivalent basis with other end-users, and that 112 awareness must also showcase accessibility features.

The delegated regulation of the EECC specifies the ‘functional equivalence requirements’ that need to be met for means of access to emergency services for people with disabilities. The criteria are: Two-way interactive communication; availability in a seamless way, without pre-registration, to people travelling to other member states; communication should be free of charge for the end-users; routing of the communication “without delay” to the most appropriate PSAP and appropriate handling of the communication by the PSAP; equivalent caller location accuracy and reliability compared to means of access for other end-users, and awareness campaigns to promote the existence of these means of access.

TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

- Smartphone application
- SMS
- Text phone
- Relay services
- Real-Time Text
- Total Conversation
- Fax

CONSIDERATIONS

Enabling a PSAP to handle other modes of communication – such as text services, communications in a sign language, and video communications – requires both upgrading the PSAP systems, adapting operations policy (training call-takers to use text), and even employing sign language interpreters. Whichever solutions selected, it must perform consistently and precisely and must be usable with high confidence, based on 24h/365 days service provision.