

Joint Proposal for Workshop at IGF 2020

NADP- G3ict- SUITA

**Title :Digital Discrimination during the COVID 19 Pandemic:
Challenges and Solutions**

Background:

As a result of the global lockdown due to the COVID19 pandemic, all essential services have migrated to virtual platforms and remote participation methods for education, businesses, emergency or health services. Much of those services were often impossible to access for persons with disabilities and those with specific needs - 15% of the world population as per the World Bank and WHO estimates. This lack of accessible digital platforms meant that many could not access the guidelines around the world to help protect themselves and their families to fight COVID-19. As a result, Persons with Disabilities and those with specific needs, especially older persons with age related disabilities, were at a significantly higher risk of illness, isolation and death.

Digital Exclusion due to lack of digital accessibility accommodation equals to a form of discrimination as per the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) ratified by 181 countries. Since well documented digital accessibility solutions exist, they should be utilized. Beyond the COVID19 Pandemic, in the future these solutions should be implemented on a global basis and be standardized and interoperable.

This session will examine with the audience, and well-known international accessibility experts, the most prevalent forms of digital exclusion that occurred during the pandemic and the solutions for accessible remote communication and participation for Persons with Disabilities.

Workshop Chair: Andrea Saks, Chair of ITU JCA-AHF (Joint Coordinating Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors), USA

Remote moderator: Judith Hellerstein Internet Society (ISOC Accessibility SIG), USA

Onsite moderator: Paulina Lewandowska Secretary of International Federation of Hard of Hearing Young People (IFHOHYP), Vice President of the Association of Hard of Hearing People and CI users (SUITA), Poland Expertise: Youth with disabilities, Inclusive education

Speakers:

- **Lidia Best**: Chair of the National Association of Deafened People (NADP) UK, Vice President of European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) Expertise: Inclusion and participation of deaf and hard of hearing people, late deafness
- **Christopher Lee**: Chief Learning Officer, Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict) and Managing Director, International Association of Accessibility Professionals. Expertise: multi-sensory disability, learning disabilities and dyslexia , USA
- **Shadi Abou Zahra**: World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), Expertise: Webs accessibility, France
- **Fernando Botelho**: f123.org , Expertise: Remote participation for persons who are blind or vision impaired, Brazil
- **Masahito Kawamori**: Keio University, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Rapporteur SG16/26, Expertise: accessibility, standardisation, innovation, academia, Japan

Topics that will be discussed by the speakers in brief presentations and a round table setting with audience participation:

1. Describing specific barriers to digital access to virtual platforms.
2. How remote participation and remote participation tools should be set up to include all participants
3. COVID 19 pandemic's real impact on Persons with Disabilities and those with specific needs because of technical exclusion.
4. Solutions that can be implemented with examples of good practices.
5. Digital divide among Persons with Disabilities and those with specific needs including those with age related disabilities
6. Educating Governments on what needs to be done by raising awareness of technical solutions with education.