

Draft- For seeking stakeholder comments

**Government of India
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**

Dated: 07.10.2025

**Inviting comments on the Guidelines for Accessibility of Content on
platforms of publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for
Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment**

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting proposes to introduce the following Guidelines for Accessibility of Content on platforms of publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment.

2. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting solicits comments from General Public by 22.10.2025. The comments may be submitted at the email address: digital[dash]mediamib[at]gov[dot]in in MS Word or PDF format by 22.10.2025.

**Government of India
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001**

Dated: 7th, October, 2025

Guidelines for Accessibility of Content on platforms of publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment

PREAMBLE

Whereas the Constitution of India guarantees various kinds of Fundamental Rights to all its citizens irrespective of their religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 14 of the Constitution of India provides for Right to Equality before the law. It further states that the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Whereas India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("the UNCRPD" or "the Convention") which came into force in May, 2008. The Convention recognizes accessibility as a human right and requires signatories to adopt appropriate measures to ensure access by persons with disabilities to information and communication technology, emergency services and internet services on an equal basis with others.

Whereas in December 2015, the Government of India launched 'The Accessible India Campaign' also known as the 'Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan' to enable persons with disabilities to gain universal access, equal opportunity for development, independent living and participation in all aspects of life. The campaign seeks to enhance accessibility by making significant changes to the infrastructure, information and communication systems in the country.

Whereas the Government of India also enacted The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (The Act), which is the principal and comprehensive legislation concerning the persons with disabilities. The Act defines the responsibilities of the Central and State governments with regard to the services for persons with disabilities. The Act also recommends creating a barrier-free environment by removing all types of discrimination against persons with disabilities whereby they can enjoy the benefits of development as any other citizen.

Whereas section 29 of The Act requires the appropriate Government and the local authorities to take measures to promote and protect the rights of all persons with disabilities to have a cultural life and to participate in recreational activities equally with others. Section 40 requires the Central Government to lay down the standards of accessibility for the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including appropriate technologies and systems, and other facilities and services provided to the public in urban and

rural areas. Section 42 requires the appropriate Government to take measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to information and communication technology in a manner that all contents available in audio, print and electronic media are in accessible format; persons with disabilities have access to electronic media by providing audio description, sign language interpretation and close captioning; and all electronic goods and equipment which are meant for everyday use are available in universal design.

Whereas keeping in view the provisions of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, on 27th September, 2017 constituted a Committee of Experts and Stakeholders to formulate Accessibility Standards for Persons with Disabilities. After deliberations, the Ministry has formulated Accessibility Standards for Persons with Disabilities in Television Programmes and issued the same on 11th September, 2019.

Whereas the Code of Ethics for online curated content (OTT platforms) under The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 provides that every publisher of online curated content shall, to the extent feasible, take reasonable efforts to improve the accessibility of online curated content transmitted by it to persons with disabilities through the implementation of appropriate access services.

Whereas, vide Advisory dated 22.04.2025, the publishers of online curated content were advised to comply with the various provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 while publishing content on their platforms. The self-regulatory bodies of OTT platforms were advised to ensure that content published by OTT platforms are fully compliant with various provisions of applicable laws of the land.

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, and the larger public objective of ensuring access to recreational content for the persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has formulated the Guidelines for accessibility of content on platforms of publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for persons with hearing and visual impairment.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 These guidelines lay down Accessibility Standards for audio-visual content made available by publishers of online curated content (OTT platforms) to ensure that such content is accessible to persons with hearing and visual impairment.

1.2 The objective of these guidelines is to provide an enabling framework to support the development of a culture and practice of accessibility of content by publishers of online curated content for persons with hearing and visual impairment.

1.3 The focus of these guidelines is not only on the content but also on the information and other support needed by persons with disabilities to enjoy such content.

1.4 For the purposes of these guidelines, accessibility of audiovisual media services made available by publishers of online curated content shall be understood to include the

accessibility of the audiovisual content itself, and that of user interface components, onscreen information and interaction mechanisms, enabling persons with disabilities to independently perceive, navigate, and interact with the service.

2. DEFINITIONS

“**Act**” means the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

“**Access service**” means a service such as subtitles, closed captioning, audio description and signing that improves the accessibility of content for hearing and visually impaired persons.

“**Appropriate Government**” is defined under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016.

“**Audio Description**” is the auditory narration of visual representations in an audio-visual content for enhancing the content consumption experience for visually impaired persons. During gaps in dialogue, it describes visual elements such as scenes, settings, actions and costumes.

“**Subtitles**” means textual versions of the dialogue which are displayed on screen and synchronized with the audio to assist viewers.

“**Closed captioning**” is the means by which audio dialogue, speaker identification and sound representations of an audio visual content are made visible on demand by the user via on-screen text that is synchronised with the audio content.

“**Accessibility Indicator**” means an indication of which content on the platform of a publisher of online curated content is accessible, usually accompanied by internationally recognized access service icons or upper-case letters. Audio-description is represented by “(AD)”, Closed-captioning is represented with “(CC)” and Indian Sign language interpretation is represented with “(ISL)”.

“**Indian Sign Language Interpreter**” is a certified interpreter who uses the Indian Sign Language to provide communication access to deaf and hard of hearing persons.

“**Promotional Audio Visual Content**” in the media includes the teasers and trailers of the said content used for promotional purposes.

“**Open Captioning**” is captioning that is an integral part of the audio visual content and cannot be turned off and the user does not have to do anything in order to see captions or subtitles.

“**Signing (or Sign Language)**” is communication using sign language. A sign language (also signed language) is a language which, instead of acoustically conveyed sound patterns, uses visually transmitted sign patterns (manual communication, body language) to convey meaning—simultaneously combining hand shapes, orientation and movement of the hands, arms or body, and facial expressions to fluidly express a speaker's thoughts.

"Sign Language Interpretation" is the translated version of the audio visual content (speech and other sounds) conveyed in sign language by the Indian Sign Language Interpreters for the viewers who are hearing impaired. Whenever a reference is made to 'sign language' in the Indian context, it will refer to a variant of it called 'Indian Sign Language' (ISL).

"Short Form Content" refers to audiovisual media content with a total duration of 10 minutes or less, designed to be consumed in a brief format.

Unless otherwise defined in these guidelines, other terms shall have the same meaning as under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

3. ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

3.1 Guidelines for Audio Description: Publishers of online curated content shall strive to make available audio descriptions of the audio-visual content for its users in a concise and comprehensible format to fit within the allotted time, enhancing the original piece without causing distractions.

3.2 Closed and Open Captioning Guidelines:

- i. **Accurate:** Captions must match the spoken words in the dialogue. In addition, captions should convey background music and other sounds. It is critical to include the non-speech auditory information also to provide the mood, the context of the scene and dialogue. For example, *a door bell ringing or the creak of the door is closing.*
- ii. **Synchronized:** Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and must be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers.
- iii. **Complete:** Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the content to the fullest extent possible.
- iv. **Spelling and grammar:** Captions should use accurate spelling. Grammar should follow what is being said on screen. Use of proper grammar may be especially considered when writing non-verbal parts of a captioning text.
- v. **Position of captioning:** Captions should not block other important visual content on the screen, overlap one another or run off the edge of the video screen.
- vi. **Case, italics and underlining:** Captions must use mixed case. Using all upper caps or all lowercase for captioning text should not be done unless it is critically required for understanding the video. For signifying emphasis, it is recommended to use italics instead of underlining text.
- vii. **Color:** Captions should be legible, with appropriate font color in contrast to the background.

3.3 Indian Sign Language Guidelines: Indian Sign Language interpretation by interpreters must be provided in a picture-in-picture mode and it must be accurate, synchronised and convey a clear message to the hearing impaired. Where Indian Sign Language Interpretation is provided, it should be in a manner that the viewer can see not only the hands but also the facial expressions of the interpreter. The image of the interpreter

superimposed upon the original film should generally appear on the bottom right hand side of the screen.

3.4 Publishers of online curated content shall ensure that the user interfaces of their platforms (such as websites, mobile applications (iOS, Android), smart-TV applications, desktop software, etc.) are designed and developed to be accessible to persons with disabilities by ensuring compatibility with assistive technologies.

4. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

4.1 **Phase I:** Publishers of online curated content shall, upon expiry of six months of the date of publication of these Guidelines:

- i. ensure that all new content carries at least one accessibility feature for hearing-impaired and visually-impaired viewers, namely Closed/Open Captioning (CC/OC) and Audio Descriptors or Indian Sign Language (AD/ISL);
- ii. prominently display, at the time of release, content descriptors indicating the accessibility features, including for promotional audio-visual material; and
- iii. integrate and make functional the accessibility features across user interfaces of their platforms.

4.2 **Phase II – Progressive Implementation:** Publishers of online curated content are encouraged to provide at least one accessibility feature for hearing-impaired and visually-impaired users, namely Closed/Open Captioning (CC/OC) and Audio Descriptors or Indian Sign Language (AD/ISL) progressively to all the content in their content libraries. Towards this objective, publishers shall strive to achieve the following milestones:

- i. not less than 30% of the total content library within twelve months;
- ii. not less than 60% of the total content library within eighteen months; and
- iii. 100% of the total content library within twenty-four months of publication of these Guidelines.

5. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

5.1 The publishers of online curated content shall submit a status report in respect of the accessibility of content within the content library on their platforms as on the date of publication of these Guidelines, and quarterly progress report in light of the implementation schedule as above.

5.2 The publishers of online curated content shall take effective steps to publicise and create awareness among the public about the accessibility of their content on OTT platforms including through highlighting accessible programmes on electronic programme guides, printed programme guides and providing information in publications aimed at persons likely to benefit from accessible content.

5.3 To achieve/ensure the accessibility of audiovisual content on OTT platforms online content to the users, including for the persons with hearing or visual disability, the industry is encouraged to collaborate and work with the organizations working in the field of accessibility of content for persons with disability.

6. EXEMPTIONS

6.1 While these guidelines seek to progressively expand accessibility across online curated content made available on OTT platforms, it is important to acknowledge certain inherent technical and operational challenges, such as those related to practical difficulties in real time captioning or audio descriptions in live or deferred live events, audio content and advertisements which are typically short form.

6.2 In light of the practical and operational considerations, the following categories of content are exempt from accessibility requirements of these guidelines:

- i. Live and deferred live content.
- ii. Audio content such as music, podcast, etc.
- iii. Short form content

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

7.1 The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting shall establish a Committee under the chairmanship of an officer not below the rank of a Joint Secretary to the Government of India, to monitor the implementation of these guidelines and redress grievances pertaining to accessibility of content on OTT platforms. The Committee shall hold its meeting every quarter and communicate its decisions to the concerned entities for implementation.
