

Special Action Plan on Transforming Internet Apps For Better Access by Seniors and People with Disabilities

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Information accessibility means the equal, easy, and safe access to, interaction with, and use of information by all people including older persons and people with disabilities, which is enabled by information technologies and transcends physical and contextual differences.

Information accessibility remains to be improved in China's public service sector as most websites and apps still feature complex interfaces that tend to discourage under-privileged users. Seniors dare not, can not and will not visit such websites or use such apps while people with disabilities find the digital divide prohibitive. Pictures with no captions, troublesome operations with verification codes, and functions incompatible with devices are but some of the most commonly encountered obstacles. It is against this background that this action plan is developed. It aims at effectively addressing the difficulties that under-privileged groups face with smart technologies and making websites and apps more friendly to the elderly and the disabled.

I. General principles

We should follow Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, fully implement the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Plenary Sessions of the 19th Central Committee of the CPC, and resolutely uphold the people-centered development philosophy. We should pay particular attention to the needs of people with disabilities, older persons, and other socially under-privileged groups, mobilize the resources available from all stakeholders in society, and explore all possible means including administrative regulation, technical advancement, and credit evaluation to facilitate their access to information. We should address the difficulties that under-privileged groups face with smart technologies and make websites and apps more adaptable to their needs. We should build an information society that responds to the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities with adaptable internet apps and ensure that no one is excluded from the benefits of the information age.

Specifically, websites and apps should introduce high-contrast interfaces with big type and big icons to facilitate use by seniors. Companies should further be encouraged to develop simplified and easy-to-use interfaces that improve access with one-click operations and responsive text prompts. For seniors that do not speak Mandarin, their dialects should be more readily recognized and processed.

Websites and apps should better adapt to the needs of visually impaired users and become more compatible with screen readers that render text and image content as speech output and readily process verification codes and icon buttons. Companies should be further encouraged to develop intelligent blind navigation technologies and functions.

Internet content providers are encouraged to add captions, subtitles, or transcripts to videos and make their products more compatible with hearing aid apps so as to improve accessibility by people with hearing loss. Companies are also advised to offer online and other alternative customer services in addition to call center customer services.

Websites and apps should introduce more accessibility features for people with physical impairments such as those allowing users to create their own gestures and those simplifying interactive actions.

To remove the many unwanted pop-up ads that easily mislead seniors and ensure easy and safe access by all underprivileged groups, websites and apps will have to introduce special versions, with no ad plug-ins or inductive touch buttons for payment, which meet the needs of seniors, take special care of people with disabilities, and effectively address obstacles to access.

II. Major tasks

i. Transform websites and apps to better suit seniors and people with disabilities

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, together with the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology and the Internet Society of China, will provide guidance for basic telecommunications companies and Internet service providers as they seek to make their websites and apps better suit the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.

(1) Transform major industrial websites for better access by seniors and people with disabilities. We should follow the *Guiding Opinions of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and China Disabled Persons' Federation on Promoting Information Accessibility* (GXBLXG [2020] No. 146), take into careful consideration the actual needs of seniors, people with disabilities, and other under-privileged groups, and make public service websites that are closely related to their work and life more accessible to them. The first 115 websites to be transformed cover 8 categories ranging from websites of central government agencies, provincial governments, associations of people with disabilities and news media, to travel, finance, social and communications, and life and shopping websites and search engines (see Annex 1). The Internet Society of China shall assist basic telecommunications companies and Internet service providers in accelerating the development of an Internet accessibility service system and building a sound environment for continuing to advance information accessibility.

(2) Transform frequently used apps for better access by seniors and people with disabilities. We should follow the *Guiding Opinions of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and China Disabled Persons' Federation on Promoting Information Accessibility* (GXBLXG [2020] No. 146), take into careful consideration the actual user experience of seniors and people with disabilities, and focus on apps that fall under the top 10 mobile internet sectors, have more than 50 million registered users, or rank top five in terms of the market share to ensure that more apps and functions are available to such under-privileged groups. The first 43 apps to be transformed cover 6 categories ranging from news, social and communications, and life and shopping apps to finance, travel, and health apps (see Annex 2). The China Academy of Information and Communications Technology shall assist internet companies in implementing information accessibility standards during the development, maintenance, and optimization of apps, products, and services.

ii. Assess the outcome of transformation and make it a factor in Enterprise Credit Evaluation.

(1) Establish an assessment system and evaluate the outcome of transformation. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology shall entrust the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, the Internet Society of China, and other competent agencies to establish an assessment system, with clearly defined indicators and weights, for evaluating the outcome of transforming apps for better access by seniors and people with disabilities.

(2) Make assessment findings public and give improvement recommendations. Assessment

findings should be disclosed to the public and recommendations for improvement should be given to companies that fail to develop, transform, or optimize their websites or apps for better access by seniors and people with disabilities.

(3) Make information accessibility a factor in Enterprise Credit Evaluation. The weight of information accessibility should be specified and good performance in ensuring information accessibility should be considered a cause for higher ratings in Enterprise Credit Evaluation. It is only natural that higher points go to internet companies that have established effective mechanisms for information accessibility, are striving to make websites and apps more friendly to seniors and people with disabilities, and continue to engage in social responsibility programs to assist the elderly and the disabled.

iii. Grant and display information accessibility signs

(1) Grant, extend, and revoke the information accessibility sign. Websites and apps that are found to have met the requirements of easy access by seniors and people with disabilities in the

assessment will be allowed to use the information accessibility sign () for 2 years. They will be subject to random checks on their latest versions and the sign may be extended or revoked depending on the findings.

(2) Publicly display the information accessibility sign. Websites and apps granted the information accessibility sign should display it in a prominent position on their pages. Major app stores (platforms) should be encouraged to set up an accessibility zone that helps seniors, people with disabilities, and other under-privileged groups to easily download apps with information accessibility signs.

III. Timetable

(1) Stage I: Planning (January to February 2021). A meeting shall be convened to make arrangements for the special action. All parties involved shall develop their own implementation plans in light of this master plan and their specific conditions.

(2) Stage II: Implementation (March to October 2021). All parties listed in the annexes shall follow the requirements and transform their websites and apps for better access by seniors and people with disabilities. The assessment system shall be established and the evaluation conducted.

(3) Stage III: Conclusion (November to December 2021). The outcome of this special action shall be evaluated and findings disclosed to the public. Websites and apps that have succeeded in meeting the requirements will be granted information accessibility signs while those that have failed will need to follow recommendations for improvement. Findings of the assessment will be used in Enterprise Credit Evaluation.

IV. Requirements

i. Attach great importance and diligently fulfill duties. All parties involved should fully understand the importance of information accessibility to the well-being of our people and assign designated agencies and persons for the task. There should be operational plans for optimization and all parties should bravely shoulder responsibility, fully perform duties, and satisfactorily complete all tasks.

ii. Pay special attention to demand and focus on concrete outcomes. We should start with the most urgent needs of seniors, people with disabilities, and other under-privileged groups and pay special

attention to user experience. Companies should actively integrate new technologies to diversify product portfolios and offer more accessible services and barrier-free apps.

iii. Strengthen publicity and social participation. Parties should give emphasis to different publicity programs that promote major progress in enhancing information accessibility, set up role models, and help create a favorable social atmosphere. Companies, universities, research institutions, and other stakeholders should all join hands to ensure the sustainable development of information accessibility.

Annexes: 1. List of first batch of websites to be transformed for better access by seniors and people with disabilities

2. List of first batch of apps to be transformed for better access by seniors and people with disabilities

Annex 1 List of first batch of websites to be transformed for better access by seniors and people with disabilities

Type	Websites
Websites of central government agencies and provincial governments	https://www.gov.cn/ , https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ , http://www.nhc.gov.cn/ , http://www.moe.gov.cn/ , http://www.cma.gov.cn/ and official websites of 31 provincial and municipal governments
Websites of associations of people with disabilities	http://www.cdpf.org.cn/ and official websites of 31 provincial and municipal disabled persons' federations
News media websites	http://www.people.com.cn/ , http://www.xinhuanet.com/ , http://www.china.com.cn/ , https://www.cctv.com/ , http://www.cri.cn/ , http://www.qstheory.cn/ , http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ , http://www.youth.cn/ , http://www.ce.cn/ , https://www.chinanews.com/ , https://www.sohu.com/ , https://www.qq.com/ , https://www.163.com/ , https://www.thepaper.cn/ , https://www.toutiao.com/
Travel websites	http://www.airchina.com.cn/ , http://www.ceair.com/ , http://www.csair.com/ , https://www.hnair.com/ , http://www.shenzhenair.com/ , https://www.12306.cn/ , https://www.ctrip.com/ , https://www.qunar.com/ , http://www.elong.com/ , http://www.mafengwo.cn/ , https://www.8684.cn/ , https://www.tuniu.com/ , http://www.zhuna.cn/
Social and communications websites	http://www.189.cn/ , http://www.10086.cn/ , http://www.10010.com/ , https://weibo.com/ , https://www.zhihu.com/
Life and shopping websites	https://www.jd.com/ , https://www.1688.com/ , https://www.taobao.com/(including: https://www.tmall.com/), https://www.suning.com/ , http://www.dangdang.com/ , https://www.gome.com.cn/ , https://www.kongfz.com/
Search engines	https://www.baidu.com/ , https://www.sogou.com/
Finance websites	http://www.icbc.com.cn/ , http://www.ccb.com/ , http://www.abchina.com/ , https://www.boc.cn/ , http://www.bankcomm.com/

Annex 2 List of first batch of apps to be transformed for better access by seniors and people with disabilities

Type	Apps
News apps	Tencent News, Sina Weibo, Toutiao
Social and communications apps	(1) social apps: WeChat, QQ (2) Telecommunications apps: China Telecom Online, China Mobile Online, China Unicom Online

Life and shopping apps	(1) shopping apps: Taobao, JD, Pinduoduo, and Xianyu
	(2) Food delivery apps: Ele.me and Meituan
	(3) Housing apps: Lianjia and Beike
	(4) Entertainment apps: TikTok (douyin), Vigo video (Huoshan), Himalaya Audiobooks, iQIYI, Youku, QQ Karaoke and Changba
	(5) Search engine apps: Baidu and Sougou
Finance apps	(1) Payment apps: Alipay and WeChat Pay
	(2) Banking apps: ICBC Mobile Banking, ABC Mobile Banking, CCB Mobile Banking, BOC Mobile Banking, and Bank of Communications Mobile Banking
Travel apps	(1) Navigation apps: Baidu Maps, Gaode Maps and Tencent Maps
	(2) Ride sharing app: DiDi
	(3) Ticketing apps: 12306 China Railway and Ctrip
Health and medicine apps	(1) Doctor consultation apps: 114 Health, haodf, and WeDoctor
yin	(2) Medicine delivery apps: JD Daojia and Dingdang Medicine Express