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Accessibility of support services for products and services

Barrierefreiheit von Unterstützungsdiensten für Produkte und Dienstleistungen

Accessibilité des services d'assistance pour les produits et services

Ta slovenski standard je istoveten z: prEN 18340

ICS:

03.080.01 Storitve na splošno Services in general

oSIST prEN 18340:2026 **en,fr,de**

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EUROPEAN STANDARD
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EUROPÄISCHE NORM

DRAFT
prEN 18340

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ICS

English version

Accessibility of support services for products and services

Accessibilité des services d'assistance pour les produits
et services

Barrierefreiheit von Unterstützungsdiensten für
Produkte und Dienstleistungen

This draft European Standard is submitted to CEN members for enquiry. It has been drawn up by the Technical Committee CEN/CLC/JTC 12.

If this draft becomes a European Standard, CEN and CENELEC members are bound to comply with the CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations which stipulate the conditions for giving this European Standard the status of a national standard without any alteration.

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Contents

Page

European foreword	4
0 Introduction.....	5
0.1 General.....	5
0.2 Purpose of the support service	5
0.3 Communication in accessible modes	5
0.4 Accessible information	5
0.5 Operations and management of accessible support service.....	5
1 Scope.....	6
2 Normative references.....	6
3 Terms and definitions	6
4 Support service.....	10
4.1 General.....	10
4.2 Functions of a support service	11
4.3 Accessible support service operations	11
5 5 Requirements for communication	13
5.1 Modes of communication.....	13
5.2 User interface	13
5.3 Contacting the support service	13
5.4 Outsourced	13
5.5 End-to-end chain	14
5.6 Voice communication.....	14
5.7 Written communication	16
5.8 Automated support system and combinations with other accessible modes.....	16
6 Requirements for presentation of information about products and services.....	18
7 Operations of the support service	18
7.1 Management system	18
7.2 Competence on accessibility.....	19
7.3 Support service located in a business premises.....	20
7.4 Measuring Performance	21
7.5 Training of users	22
7.6 Documentation of accessibility.....	22
8 Information for the user.....	22
8.1 Requirement.....	22
Annex A (normative) User accessibility criteria for a support service with automated support systems	24
A.1 Automated support systems	24
A.2 Data quality.....	24
A.3 Output of content for automated support systems.....	24
A.4 Impact assessment and risk assessment for automated support systems.....	25
Annex B (normative) User testing of automated support systems	26

B.1	Selection of users for testing	26
B.2	User testing requirements	26
B.3	Iteration	27
B.4	Recommended metrics and potential acceptance criteria.....	28
B.5	Recommended documentation.....	28
Annex C (informative)	Lived experience of persons with disabilities engaging with support services.....	29
C.1	Introduction	29
C.2	User needs related to a support service.....	29
C.3	User accessibility needs related to information in non-digital form.....	39
Annex D (informative)	Knowledge content.....	49
D.1	Introduction	49
D.2	Awareness	49
D.3	Etiquette.....	50
D.4	User accessibility requirements.....	51
D.5	Knowledge on accessibility legislation and supporting standards.....	52
D.6	Use cases for accessibility requirements.....	52
D.7	References.....	57
Annex ZA (informative)	Relationship between this European Standard and the accessibility requirements of Directive 2019/882 aimed to be covered	59
Bibliography	61

prEN 18340:2026 (E)

European foreword

This document (prEN 18340:2026) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/CLC JTC 12 “Design for All”, the secretariat of which is held by SIS.

This document is currently submitted to the CEN Enquiry.

This document has been prepared under a standardization request addressed to CEN by the European Commission. The Standing Committee of the EFTA States subsequently approves these requests for its Member States.

For the relationship with EU Legislation, see informative Annex ZA, which is an integral part of this document.

Five other standards to be harmonized standards have been requested from the European standardization organisations, CEN, CENELEC and ETSI in support of the European Accessibility Act (EAA), Directive (EU) 2019/882. The different aspects of the EAA accessibility requirements are covered in these standards. The documents are interrelated and interdependent.

These standards are:

- EN 17161, Design for All approach -Managing accessibility of products and services.
- EN 17210, Accessibility of the built environment.
- EN 301549, Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services.
- EN 18340:2026, Accessibility of information presented in non-digital forms on and about products and services.
- ETSI TS 103 919, Accessibility and interoperability of emergency communications and (for) the answering of emergency communications by the public safety answering points (PSAPs) (including to the single European Emergency number 112).

0 Introduction

0.1 General

This document sets out accessibility requirements for a support service.

The main objective of a support service with the responsibility to communicate about accessibility in products and services is to effectively communicate with users that have accessibility needs. The European Accessibility Act (EAA), Directive (EU) 2019/882, emphasises the importance of providing accessibility information for existing or potential users on products and services and includes accessibility requirements on those products and services.

This document sets out specifications and solutions for such a support service. These solutions are developed to fulfil the accessibility requirements of the EAA, according to Mandate M/587. Mandate M/587 refers to a standard for a support service that ensures the information provided about the accessibility of products and services is accessible and communicated in accessible modes of communication.

M/587 refers to the possibilities to use the standard on support services when applying accessibility requirements in other Union acts.

This document can be used by all organisations to make information and communication accessible for the widest range of user needs.

0.2 Purpose of the support service

Users contact a support service when information is needed about products and services. A support service could be a help desk, call centre, technical support or training service or a combination of these services. The support service has the responsibility to explain how to access, understand and use products and services, as well as how they are provided for and developed to fulfil accessibility requirements.

0.3 Communication in accessible modes

An accessible support service provides different channels to enable communication with the user, for example by voice or text. The communication can be either by human contact or automated support systems or a combination of both.

It improves the usability of the support service and the experience of the user to be able to choose between a human contact or an automated contact. Moreover, it is important to inform users when they are interacting with a human or an automated system.

0.4 Accessible information

Information provided through a support service can be presented in digital and non-digital forms. Regardless of the form, the information be presented according to the requirements that are specified in EN 301549 on ICT products and information in digital form, EN 18340, on information in non-digital form and EN 17210 on accessibility and usability in the built environment.

This document specifies requirements of accessibility in the interaction face to face with users.

0.5 Operations and management of accessible support service

This document provides requirements on how to manage the support service, ensure competence in accessibility, how to handle complaints and how to receive feedback.

Competence in accessibility includes disability awareness across the range of functionalities, associated barriers, terminology, applicable legislation and disability etiquette.

Annex C provides valuable information in relation to the lived experience of persons with disabilities engaging with a support service.

prEN 18340:2026 (E)

1 Scope

This document specifies requirements for an accessible support service. This includes general information about the products and services, including information on their accessibility.

This document provides requirements for an accessible support service designed so that information and communication can be accessed, understood and used.

Support services include but are not limited to help desks, call centres, technical support and training services. This document applies to support services that are provided digitally or face to face.

NOTE 1 Where relay services are referred to in this document, relay services are a means to communicate in the provision of support services.

NOTE 2 A support service or part of a support service provided directly and those that have been outsourced are included.

This document is applicable for all organisations of all sizes and across all sectors.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

prEN 301549:2026, *Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services*

prEN 17161:2026, *Design for All approach — Managing accessibility of products and services*

prEN 17210:2026, *Accessibility and usability of the built environment — Requirements and recommendations*

JT012003 – add reference and check through the text and put the requirements back.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp/>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1 accessibility

extent to which products, systems, services, environments and facilities can be used by people from a population with the widest range of user needs, characteristics and capabilities to achieve identified goals in identified contexts of use

Note 1 to entry: Context of use includes direct use or use supported by assistive technologies.

[SOURCE: EN ISO 9241 112:2017, definition 3.15]

3.2

accessibility outcomes

outputs from an organisation's policies, processes and activities that result in products and services that the widest range of users can access, understand and use

[SOURCE: EN 17161:2019, definition 3.2]

3.3

agent

person working for a support service, whose primary role is the handling of customer contacts

Note 1 to entry: Examples of customer contacts are calls, e-mails, fax, and web inquiries.

Note 2 to entry: The role of an agent can vary from contact handling to complex problem-solving activities.

[SOURCE: EN 15838:2009, definition 3.1]

3.4

artificial intelligence system

AI system

engineered system that generates outputs such as content, forecasts, recommendations or decisions for a given set of human-defined objectives

Note 1 to entry: The engineered system can use various techniques and approaches related to artificial intelligence to develop a model to represent data, knowledge, processes, etc. which can be used to conduct tasks.

Note 2 to entry: AI systems are designed to operate with varying levels of automation.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 22989:2022, definition 3.1.4]

3.5

audit

systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining objective evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled

Note 1 to entry: The fundamental elements of an audit include the determination of the conformity of an object according to a procedure carried out by personnel not being responsible for the object audited.

Note 2 to entry: An audit can be an internal audit (first party), or an external audit (second party or third party)

Note 3 to entry: Internal audits, sometimes called first-party audits, are conducted by, or on behalf of, the organization (3.6) itself for management review and other internal purposes, and can form the basis for an organization's declaration of conformity. Independence can be demonstrated by the freedom from responsibility for the activity being audited.

Note 4 to entry: External audits include those generally called second and third-party audits. Second party audits are conducted by parties having an interest in the organization, such as customers or by other persons on their behalf. Third-party audits are conducted by external, independent auditing organizations such as those providing certification/registration of conformity or governmental agencies.

Note 5 to entry: third party audits are those that are carried out by a person or body that is recognized as being independent of the parties involved, as concerns the issue in question

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, definition 3.13.1; & NOTE 5 (new) ISO 29400:20203.157]

prEN 18340:2026 (E)

3.6

automated support system

feature of a support service which can interpret, process and respond to user input without the intervention of a human support service agent.

Note 1 to entry: Automated support systems can comprise rule-based systems and/or artificial intelligence (AI) systems.

Note 2 to entry: Users can interact with automated systems through various communications technologies. These can include voice-based technologies such as a multi-choice menu delivered by Interactive Voice Response (IVR) over telephone and text-based technologies, such as an AI-powered chatbot.

3.7

competence

ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results

[SOURCE: ISO 55001:2024, 3.9]

3.8

continual improvement

recurring activity to enhance performance

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, definition 3.3.2 without notes]

3.9

easy-to-understand language

any language variety which enhances comprehensibility

Note 1 to entry: Easy-to-understand language includes plain language, easy language and any intermediate variety. These varieties share many recommendations, but the extent of comprehensibility is different as they address different user needs.

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[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 23859:2023, 3.1.1 modified]

3.10

end-to-end chain

sequence of information, processes and activities that enable a user to discover, acquire, use, maintain and dispose of a product, good or service, including post-sale support and warranty fulfilment

EXAMPLE 1 In order to make a train journey, a user obtains information about train times and facilities (pre-sale), purchases a ticket, accesses departure and destination stations and facilities, boards, uses and leaves the train and may require support or complaint (post-sale) services.

EXAMPLE 2 A user buying a new television, researches the market, finds a supplier, buys the television, arranges delivery, installs, connects and configures it, uses it, and gets it repaired, updated or disposed of, as, necessary.

[SOURCE: EN 17161:2019, definition 3.5]

3.11

organisation

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, association, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

[SOURCE: EN 17161:2019, definition 3.7]

3.12

real-time text

RTT

form of text conversation in point-to-point situations or in multipoint conferencing where the text being entered is sent in such a way that the communication is perceived by the user as being continuous on a character-by-character basis

Note 1 to entry: Users will perceive communication as continuous if the delay between text being created by the sender and received by the recipient is less than 1 s. However, the actual delay will be dependent on the communications network.

Note 2 to entry: The creation of text will differ between systems where text is entered on a word-by-word basis (e.g. speech-to-text and predictive-text based systems) and systems where each character is separately generated (e.g. typing on a physical keyboard).

Note 3 to entry: Although RTT may often be "perceived by the user" as being sent character-by-character, none of the RTT standards require this to be the case. They assume accumulation of characters before sending and only require that no character is held for more than 500 ms after it is created before the accumulated text is sent. An accumulation time of 300 ms or less is recommended.

Note 4 to entry: It is already common for autonomous ICT to be at one end of continuous bidirectional voice communication. The RTT requirements in the present document ensure that there will be RTT communication wherever there is real-time bidirectional voice communication, even when there is an autonomous ICT at one end.

[SOURCE: prEN 301549:2026]

3.13

relay service

electronic communications service which enable bidirectional communication between remote end-users of different modes of communication (for example text, sign, speech) by providing conversion between those modes of communication, or by providing the needed cognitive support for end-users during the communication, by a human operator or automatic means

[SOURCE: prEN 301549:2026]

3.14

total conversation

bidirectional symmetric real time transfer of motion video, real-time text (3.9) and voice between users in two or more locations

[SOURCE: prEN 301549:2026]

prEN 18340:2026 (E)**3.15****user**

person who interacts with a system, product or service

Note 1 to entry: The person who uses a service provided by a system, such as a customer in a shop or passenger on a train, can be considered a user.

[SOURCE: ISO 27500:2017, definition 3.12]

3.16**user accessibility need**

user need related to features or attributes that are necessary for a system to be accessible

Note 1 to entry: User accessibility needs vary over time and across contexts of use.

[SOURCE: CEN CENELEC Guide 6 definition 2.4]

4 Support service**4.1 General**

A support service is often the first link for the user of an organisation's products and services. The users need information to enable them to use the product and service or to decide if they will purchase them as a potential user.

A support service that has responsibilities to inform about the accessibility of products and services needs to have all the information on accessibility available to be communicated to diverse users. Figure 1 below outlines the types of support services.

Information provided by a support service includes:

- a) usage information on the product;
- b) packaging and information provided on the packaging, and information about opening, closing, use and disposal of the product;
- c) the instructions for products on the installation and maintenance, storage and disposal and where this information is available;
- d) the instructions on the use of the product including the functions, how to activate them and their interoperability with assistive technology;
- e) where the instructions of use are available either through using the product, on the product itself or through other means such as on a website;
- f) about the functioning of the service;
- g) information about the service's accessibility functions and features, and its interoperability with assistive devices and facilities;
- h) where products are used in the provision of services, and how products are linked to the service.

In order to present accessible information and communicate in accessible modes, an organisation can design, develop and operate an accessible support service.

To operate a support service for an accessible outcome, it is important that an organisation acquires the knowledge about the accessible features of their products/services, and how to use accessible communication channels.

The interactions of an accessible support service result in the provision of solutions without barriers that can give an overall positive experience for the user.

4.2 Functions of a support service

Every organisation has its own relationship with their users. Therefore, the need for a support service differs among organisations. Depending on how the support service is organised, different communication channels are used.

Typical examples of these communication channels include:

- in-person interaction -communication in a face to face interaction with users to provide information;
- telephone – communication and provision of information;
- automated interactive communication systems -communication and provision of information
- email – digital communication and provision of information;
- social media- provision of information;
- SMS/text-based- digital communication and provision of information;
- online self-service (downloading support information and instructions from a web service)-provision of information.

4.3 Accessible support service operations

When planning for a support service that provides for diverse user needs in accessible modes, it is important to work in all available communication channels and be aware of their different technical solutions for an accessible outcome.

A support service is comprised of several functions, all of which work together to create an accessible service. This includes the means of communication, the provision of information, testing, management, knowledge and competence, complaints, and verification.

When designing, developing and operating an accessible support service, the organisation can take account of the diversity of users in accordance with EN17161.

To ensure the accessibility of a support service, the organisation can verify that:

- the communication channels are in accessible modes in accordance with clause 5.
- the presentation of information provided by the support service is accessible in accordance with clause 6.
- the support service is managed to optimise accessibility across the operations of its service in accordance with clause 7.
- information is provided to the user in accordance with clause 8.

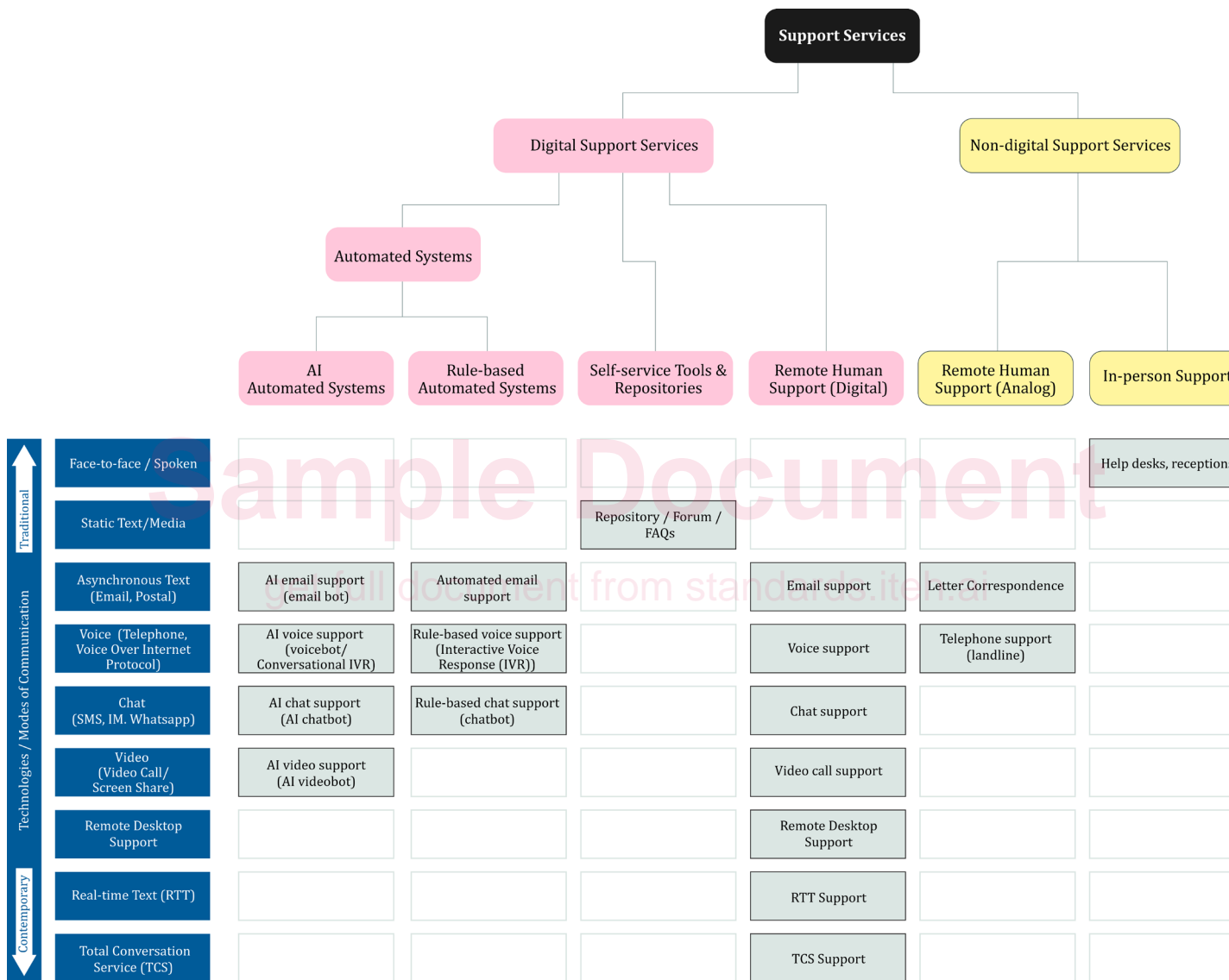


Figure 1 — Types of support services

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between various types of support services and various communication technologies through which users can access support services. The figure is composed of a tree diagram and a table underneath the tree diagram.

The tree diagram in the figure illustrates the distinction between various digital and non-digital support services (where automated support systems is a subset of digital support services).

The table is composed of a number of rows and columns and illustrates some examples of common communications technologies as they relate to various types of support services.

5 Requirements for communication

5.1 Modes of communication

In the support service communication are in different channels. Accessibility can be achieved in one means or channels or in a combination of channels. The channels can be both digital and automated and presented in other ways, such as through the means of voice or visuals, including written words.

NOTE 1 A communication channel is a way of reaching a support service. These channels can also be described as different modes or means.

Combinations of non-digital and digital forms can be used to present information through more than one sensory channel.

NOTE 2 Communication can be either synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous communication examples are face to face, telephone, instant messaging, real time text (RTT) and video. Asynchronous communication examples are email and recorded video messages.

NOTE 3 Provision of a digital solution can be an alternative to a non-digital means of communication and a non-digital solution can be an alternative to a digital means of communication.

In clause 5 there are accessibility requirements that enables users to access, perceive and understand what a support service provides regardless of what sensory channel is being addressed.

5.2 User interface

The user interfaces of the support service system shall be in accordance with EN 301 549.

5.3 Contacting the support service

The organisation shall provide information on all the different ways of communicating with the support service, including contact details on their website(s) and in their mobile application(s).

5.3.1 The contact details shall be consistently available from one location, such as the header, footer, or main menu on a website.

5.3.2 Access to the contact details of a support service shall not be impeded.

EXAMPLE Impediments include authentication, login, user identification

5.3.3 The user shall be able to have contact with a human support agent.

5.4 Outsourced

A support service that is outsourced shall meet the requirements of the clauses of this document in relation to the provision of a support service, information and means of communication.

NOTE EN ISO 18295-2 provides information on outsourcing.