COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

Making Communication Accessible For All

This project has been developed by:

TransMedia Catalonia

GreenSCENT Project

ClearClimate Project

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1. Introduction

Climate change impacts everyone, but access to knowledge and resources varies significantly. The **Communication Toolkit** is designed to address this disparity by making communication accessible to all. Developed by [TransMedia Catalonia](#) (a research group which is part of [AccessCat network](#)), [GreenSCENT](#) and [ClearClimate](#), this toolkit provides recommendations to ensure that climate information is available and understandable to all.

1.1 Why this toolkit?

Climate change impacts all individuals, but not everyone has the same level of access to knowledge and resources regarding environmental issues and actions to combat climate change. Ensuring that information is accessible empowers individuals to take action, contribute to solutions, and stay informed.

1.2 Quick facts

- Around 16% of the global population has a disability ([WHO, 2023](#)).
- People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by climate impacts but are often excluded from policy discussions ([OHCHR, 2020](#)).

1.3 Real example

During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005), people with disabilities faced difficulties such as inaccessible emergency communication systems and a lack of appropriate planning for their evacuation needs ([Frieden, 2006](#)).

1.4 Goals of the toolkit

This toolkit aims to enhance climate advocacy by offering recommendations to make communications, from emergency alerts to climate action posts, both accessible and easy to understand.

To summarise, the objectives of this toolkit include:

- **Educate** on best practices in accessibility.

- **Inspire** content creators and activists to adopt these practices.

- **Advocate** for changes that make climate information universally accessible.

1.5 Structure of the toolkit

The toolkit offers eight specific recommendations to enhance accessibility in climate advocacy communications. Each recommendation includes a concise explanation, detailing its importance for climate advocacy, instructions for implementation, and an illustrative example. The areas of focus for this toolkit include:

- Alternative text
- Colour contrast
- Emojis
- CamelCase hashtags
- Accessible filmmaking
- Audio descriptions
- Subtitles
- Easy Language

This symbol introduces the explanation of **why each accessibility feature is important for climate advocacy**.

2. Alt Text for accessibility

Alt Text, or alternative text, is a textual description of an image that screen readers can read aloud. Screen readers are software applications that help people who are blind or have low vision by converting text and image descriptions into speech or Braille. Alt text enables these individuals to comprehend the content of an image.

Images often convey critical information, especially in discussion about climate change, like graphs of rising temperature or photos of affected ecosystems. **Alt Text ensures that these key insights are accessible to everyone.**

2.1 How to implement Alt Text

- **Be descriptive:** clearly describe what is shown in the image. Prioritise the information according to the aim of the message to be communicated. Mention colours, actions, context, and emotions if relevant.
- **Stay concise:** aim for simplicity and effectiveness. Usually, a sentence or two is sufficient.
- **Avoid redundancy:** don't start with "image of…" or "picture of…" as screen readers already announce that it is an image.
- **Identify the type of image:** ensure to mark the image as "decorative" in the case that it does not contain any relevant information.

For more recommendations, visit the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative page.

2.2 Example
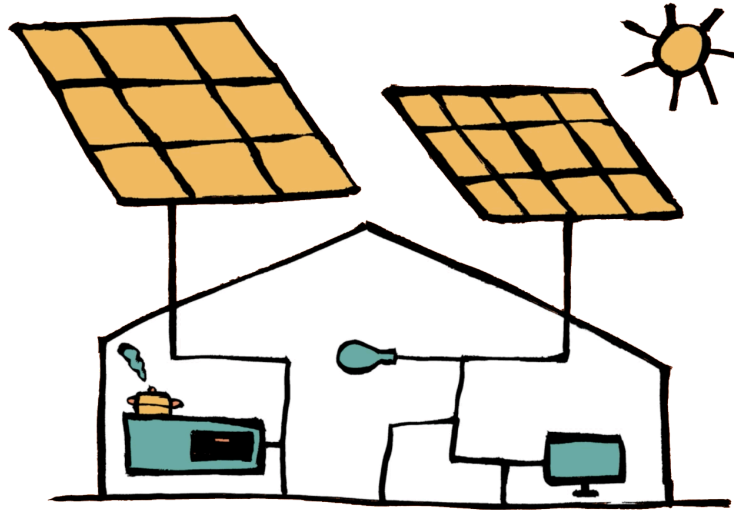
Alt text: a drawing depicts a house with two large solar panels on the roof, representing the source of energy.

3. Colour contrast for accessibility

Colour blindness, also known as colour vision deficiency, is a condition where individuals have difficulty distinguishing between certain colours. The most common form is red-green colour blindness, where red and green hues are hard to differentiate. This condition affects approximately 1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women globally. Other forms include blue-yellow colour blindness and total colour blindness, though both are less common.

Images sharing information about climate change often include text with key details, such as recommendations for saving water during droughts. **If this information does not have a good contrast, it may not be understood by some people.** Ensuring colour contrast guarantees greater accessibility for everyone.

3.1 How to ensure colour contrast

To ensure your communications about climate change are accessible, use free tools like WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker. This free tool verifies that your text and background colour combinations meet recommended contrast ratios, enhancing readability.

3.2 Examples

- This is a **good example** of colour contrast.

- This is a **bad example** of colour contrast.

4. Emojis for accessibility

Emojis have transformed how we communicate, adding personality and emotion into our digital conversations. As we integrate these icons into our messages, it is crucial to consider their impact on accessibility. Each emoji has an alternative text and is converted into descriptive text for individuals using screen readers. For example, a smiley face emoji is read as "Smiling face with open mouth and smiling eyes".

Messages about climate change events should be catchy and motivating, but it is essential to ensure they are also accessible. **Using too many emojis, or placing them at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence, can cause a person using a screen reader to miss the important message**. Emojis can "hide" the key information.

4.1 How to use emojis

- **Limit emoji use:** emojis can make posts engaging, but using too many can complicate things for screen reader users with long descriptions. Keep it minimal and meaningful.
- **Placement matters:** place emojis either at the beginning or at the end of your texts, posts or comments to minimise disruption to the narrative flow for those using screen readers.
- **Choose wisely:** pick emojis that directly relate to your message, especially ones that visually complement climate change topics.

4.2 Examples

- **This is a bad example of use of emojis:** 🌍🔥🏔️ We need to fight for climate justice! 🌍🏔️🔥
  - A screen reader will read: "Earth globe Europe-Africa, fire, snow-capped mountain. We need to fight for climate justice! Earth globe Europe-Africa, snow-capped mountain, fire"
  - This can make it difficult to understand the message.

- **This is a good example of use of emojis:** We need to fight for climate justice! 🌍
  - A screen reader will read: "We need to fight for climate justice! Earth globe Europe-Africa"
  - This makes the message clearer and easier to understand.

5. #CamelCase hashtags for accessibility

Hashtags are a crucial part of spreading messages on social media. They allow users to tag their posts with specific keywords, making it easier for others to find and follow conversations on particular topics. When hashtags are readable, they ensure that important discussions about climate change and sustainability are inclusive and accessible to everyone. Using CamelCase (capitalising the first letter of each word in a hashtag) improves readability, especially for people using screen readers. This format helps screen readers distinguish and pronounce each word separately, enhancing clarity. For example, #ClimateActionNow is easier to read and understand than #climateactionnow.

Climate hashtags, such as #ClimateActionNow and #SustainabilityForAll, help to organise and amplify discussions about climate action and sustainable practices. **Ensuring these hashtags are readable guarantees that everyone can access this important information.**

5.1 How to guarantee hashtags accessibility

By capitalising the first letter of each word, like #ClimateActionNow, we help screen readers accurately pronounce and distinguish the words, making our content more understandable for those who cannot access the visuals.

5.2 Examples

- #climatechange → #ClimateChange
- #climateactivismforall → #ClimateActivismForAll
- #fridaysforfuture → #FridaysForFuture

6. Accessible filmmaking

Accessible filmmaking integrates audiovisual translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process through collaboration between translators and the film's creative team. Accessible filmmaking ensures that content is accessible to those who may have difficulties with the original format. It allows filmmakers to participate in the changes, so their vision is not changed, while translators and accessibility professionals have access to the creative team, which gives better results.

> **!**
>
> With climate change, sometimes a picture (or a video) can be worth more than a thousand words. But not everyone has access to those pictures or the words. **If we film in an accessible way, we can make sure that our message is received as intended by everyone.**

6.1 How to be accessible while filmmaking

- **Consider the organisation of space within the frame and cinematography:**
    - Some colours or patterns at the bottom of the screen can make subtitles difficult to read.
    - In close-up shots of people, subtitles may obscure part of the face.
- Providing translators and accessibility professionals with **pre-production materials** will help them better **understand your vision and the tone of the production.**

The Accessible Filmmaking Guide provides a more in-depth explanation of all the steps and actions to be taken in order to be an accessible filmmaker.

6.2 Example

A possible case is that an important visual element appears on the screen, but it is not visible while using subtitles. In accessible filmmaking, this would be kept in mind when designing the scene and the visual element would be put in a different position.

7. Audio description for accessibility

Audio description is a narration that gives a verbal description of what can be seen on a screen, stage, image, or space for people who cannot access the visuals.

Videos about climate change often include images or written information within the video that convey important information. **If that information is not added into the narration, those who cannot access the visuals will not receive the information.**

7.1 How can we add audio description in our videos

- Integrate the audio description within the narration of your video, instead of making a separate audio track.
- Describe what can be seen in the images and videos clearly. Mention actions, colours, context, and emotions if necessary.
- Be brief. Choose what is important and do not over describe with too many details.
- If something can be understood from sound alone, you do not need to say it.
- Read out loud written information and graphs.

For more information, check the ebook *Pictures painted in Words ADLAB Audio Description guidelines* and the ISO standard ISO/IEC TS 20071-21:2015.

7.2 Example

Imagine there is a video on the effects of climate change. The narrator states that disasters are increasing all over the world due to climate change, and the video shows images of wildfires in Greece, floods in England, and droughts in Spain. Without audio description, a person will only receive a general introduction. However, audio description will help them fully grasp the message.

- **Narrator without visual information:**

  Disasters are increasing all over the world due to climate change.

- **Narrator with visual information:**

  Disasters are increasing all over the world due to climate change, such as wildfires in Greece, floods in England, or droughts in Spain.

8. Subtitles for accessibility

Subtitles are text overlays that appear on videos to display spoken dialogue, enhancing accessibility and comprehension for viewers. They address several challenges that can hinder audio information access: **noisy environments, poor audio quality, language barriers, and hearing difficulties**. Subtitles ensure that everyone, regardless of their situation or abilities, can understand and engage with the content.

- **Interlingual subtitles** translate the spoken dialogue into a different language, helping to bridge communication gaps across diverse audiences. This is particularly useful in spreading globally relevant information, such as climate change awareness.

- **Intralingual subtitles**, also known as subtitles for the Deaf and hard of hearing, include not only the dialogue but also other auditory information like background noises and music. These subtitles provide a richer viewing experience, making it accessible for individuals who cannot access the audio.

> **!**
>
> Videos about how we can reduce our carbon emissions offer practical steps we can take to help the planet. **However, without subtitles, these important messages may not reach everyone.** Whether it is a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, someone trying to watch in a noisy metro, or an individual who is not proficient in the video's language, subtitles provide a way for everyone to access and understand the content. Accessibility is essential for engaging a diverse global audience in climate action.

8.1 How to make subtitles

- Maximum two lines per subtitle.
- Try to use 37–40 characters per line at most.
- Keep subtitles on screen for at least 1 second and at most 6 seconds.
- Do not make them too fast! Keep a reading speed of 17 characters per second at most.
- Synchronise the subtitles with the audio.
- Divide subtitles in two lines carefully. Keep together syntactic units.
- Subtitles are a written text: the writing should be grammatically correct and coherent.
- Currently, the most compatible subtitling format is .srt

For more information, you can check the guidelines from different broadcasters such as the BBC and the ISO standard ISO/IEC TS 20071-25:2017.

There are many free subtitling platforms and software. For example, Subtitle Edit works for Windows and Linux users, and Aegisub is also available for Mac. Both programmes are open-source.
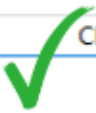
8.2 Examples

- **Interlingual subtitles**

Start time	Duration	Text	Chars/sec: 18,75
00:00:35,780	4,160	We will encourage youth engagement and commitment at each stage of the project.	
< Prev	Next >	Single line length: 38/40	Total length: 78

Start time	Duration	Text	Chars/sec: 16,83
00:00:35,780	4,160	We will promote youth engagement and commitment throughout the project.	
< Prev	Next >	Single line length: 32/38	1,16 Total length: 70

- **Intralingual subtitles**

Start time	Duration	Text	Chars/sec: 21,39
00:00:35,780	4,160	(NARRATOR) We will encourage youth engagement and commitment at each stage of the project.	
< Prev	Next >	Single line length: 49/40	1,12 Total length: 89

Start time	Duration	Text	Chars/sec: 13,94
00:00:35,780	4,160	(NARRATOR) We will promote youth engagement and commitment.	
< Prev	Next >	Single line length: 26/32	2,32 Total length: 58

9. Easy Language for accessibility

Easy Language, also known as Easy-to-Read and Easy Read, is a simplified language variety aimed at making content easier to understand for many people. This includes people with reading and language difficulties, elderly individuals, language learners, and those with cognitive disabilities.

Elderly individuals, people with cognitive disabilities, and language learners might find scientific reports and policy documents difficult to understand. **By translating these materials into Easy Language, we can democratise access to knowledge, enabling them to make informed decisions and take action**.

9.1 How to write in Easy Language

- Use short and simple sentences.
- Use common vocabulary. If you need to use complex terms, explain them.
- Avoid metaphors and figurative language.
- Do not infantilise the text if it is addressed to adults.
- Do not take background knowledge for granted.
- If possible, let users check your Easy Language version.

9.2 How to record an easy audiovisual

Easy audios are audios or audiovisuals in Easy Language. Besides the previous recommendations, you should:

- Speak a bit slower than usual.
- Use longer pauses between ideas to give time to understand the information.
- Make sure the audio quality is good!
- If you use images, make sure they are related to what you are saying.

For more information, check the ISO/IEC 23859:2023 or Inclusion Europe recommendations, or the EASIT platform.

9.3 Example
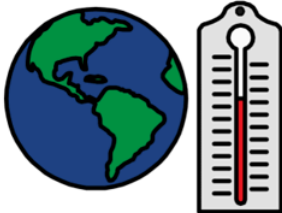
Climate change is about changes
to the earth we live on.

The earth is getting warmer.

This is causing big problems for people
and the planet we live on.

For example, climate change can cause
weather problems like floods,
too much heat and bad storms.

It can also cause problems
for animals and plants.

This example is from the United Nations Human Rights Council and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

10. Conclusions

The Climate Advocacy Toolkit emphasises the importance of making climate advocacy accessible for all, acknowledging that climate change impacts everyone, but not all individuals have equal access to knowledge and resources. By implementing the guidelines in this toolkit, content creators, activists, and organisations can significantly enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of their climate communication efforts.

The toolkit provides clear, actionable recommendations across eight key areas: **Alt Text, colour contrast, emojis, CamelCase hashtags, accessible filmmaking, audio descriptions, subtitles, and Easy Language**. Each of these elements plays a crucial role in ensuring that climate-related information is accessible to people with various disabilities, including visual impairments, cognitive disabilities, and hearing impairments, as well as to those who face language barriers.

For instance, the use of **Alt Text** allows screen reader users to understand visual content, while proper **colour contrast** ensures that information is readable for individuals with colour blindness. **Emojis**, when used thoughtfully, can add clarity and emotion to messages, but overuse can hinder comprehension for screen reader users. **CamelCase hashtags** improve the readability of social media posts, making them more accessible to individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Accessible filmmaking is an integral part of this approach. It involves integrating audiovisual translation and accessibility features during the filmmaking process to ensure that visual content is accessible to a broader audience. This includes considering space organisation within

the frame, providing pre-production materials to translators and accessibility professionals, and ensuring that accessibility services can be integrated from the beginning.

Audio descriptions are important for making video content accessible to those with visual impairments. By incorporating descriptions of visual elements directly into the narration, video content becomes comprehensible to all viewers. Similarly, **subtitles** provide essential support to those who do not have access to both speech and non-speech information in the video.

Easy Language simplifies complex information, making it accessible to people with reading difficulties, cognitive disabilities, and those learning the language. This approach democratises access to critical knowledge about climate change, empowering a broader audience to understand the issues and take informed actions.

The toolkit underscores that accessibility is not just a technical requirement but a fundamental aspect of effective communication. By adopting these practices, we can ensure that climate advocacy is inclusive, allowing everyone to participate in the dialogue and actions necessary to address climate change. This inclusivity is vital for fostering a comprehensive and equitable response to the global climate crisis.

11. Acknowledgement

This toolkit has been created by **Chiara Gunella** and **Marina Pujadas Farreras** in collaboration with:

CLIMATE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Making Climate Advocacy Accessible For All

This toolkit is made for you.

Use it, and if you find it helpful, please share it.

Let's make climate advocacy accessible for everyone.

#GreenForAll