**Accessibility Insights Webinar with Malin Rygg from the Norwegian Digitalisation Agency December 2020**

ANNIE:  Hello everyone, welcome to today's webinar.

   It is just gone 1pm.

 I will give everyone a chance to join.

 Do feel free to drop into the Q&A box to say "hi"chemical weapon we disabled the chat feature as we discovered it

causes problems for some people using screen readers.

 I will give it a few more moments for more people to arrive.

 I can see a lot more of you joining in now.

 OK.

 So, hello everyone, welcome to the 6th session in our AbilityNet Accessibility Insights, where

AbilityNet's Head of  Inclusion, Robin Christopherson hosts a monthly online chat with individuals who are each

working to improve digital accessibility and digital inclusion.

 This month he is  chatting to Malin Rygg who, is the  ?

Head Of Department at the Norwegian Digitalisation Agency at the Norwegian Digitalisation Agency.

 I am Annie Mannion, I'm the Digital Communications Manager at AbilityNet, I am running you through today's

session.

 So, to go through a few bits of housekeeping ...

 so we have slides available at www.slideshare.

net/abilitynet.

 Also on the website at: If you have any technical issues and need to leave early, don't worry, you will receive

an email in a couple of day's time with the recording, the transcript and the slides.

 Also, depending on how you joined the webinar, there is a Q&A  window, if you want to ask Malin or Robin

questions, do drop them in the Q&A area for them to address.

 They will do that after today's session in a follow-up section on our webinar page which again is: Then we

also have a feedback page you are directed to at the end that invites you to tell us about future topics you

would like us to cover in the webinars, so do let us know.

 Now, over to Robin and to Malin.

  ROBIN:  Fantastic!

 Thank you, Annie.

 Malin, welcome!

  MALIN:  Thank you.

  ROBIN:  Really, really pleased to have you on this month.

 I have known Malin for several years now, it is always a pleasure to have a chat, there is so much going on in

your neck of the woods.

 There is a lot of woods in Norway, I think that there is.

 and in your country and in Europe an across the world as well, and first of all, have to ask, what drink have you

got to help you get through the ordeal?

  MALIN:  I have coffee!

 A lot of it!

 ?

  ROBIN:  I always start the day with a couple of cups of coffee, if I go too

far, then bad things happen!

 I probably said too much there.

 Anyway!

 So, I have tea ...

 brilliant!

  OK.

 Let's start with a question I often put to our guests, that is about the landscape and what's changed in recent

years.

 When it comes to accessibility, what, for you, are the key things that have changed, shifted, even up to the last

ten years, say?

  MALIN:  Well, there has been a, I would say a significant change in

accessibility.

 Firstly, I might say that my field is accessibility of ICT solution, so that is the viewpoint from which I am

speaking.

 I think that one of the biggest changes has been on the legal side.

 There has been significant progress made.

 Especially with regards to the web directive.

 We have gotten the European Accessibility  Act, in Norway, we have had legislation since 2013.

 We have been following up on the compliance ever since.

 Since that, we have gotten more and more also from other countries, that we can exchange experiences with.

  We we can help get them on board of the legislation side of things.

  ROBIN:  Can you explain the Web Directive?

  MALIN:  It is the European directive on making sure that websites and

mobile applications in the public sector, first and foremost are accessible to everyone.

  ROBIN:  I'm jealous that you have enshrined the European Accessibility

Act into Norwegian law legislation, it did not make it for us with Brexit happening.

  MALIN:  We are still working on implementing it but it is planned for

implementation.

 So but I think that also it is a very important thing to say that on the technology side, we are much helped on

the digital inclusion perspective because as we have seen, technology has made significant strides in the

last years.

 Thinking about how how programmes such as  Word PowerPoint have accessibility checks built in,  automatic text on

videos for some.

 We have voiceovers, there is a lot of change since 10, 15 years ago, things that were not available.

  ROBIN:  I think we are potentially spoiled being English speakers as we

tend to get all of the things that have happened in mainstream technology, that have made them more inclusive.

 I know that language is a barer, though, so what things had Norway, do you have  --  barrier.

 So what things in Norway do you have or not that popped up in Windows 10,  IOS, what are you missing?

  MALIN:  It is hard to say.

 I'm not sure what we are missing.

  But what I am impressed with, in the big tech industry companies, like Apple, Google, Microsoft, so forth,

they are doing a safety amount of work for the smaller countries, the smaller languages.

 So, although I think that we may get a lot of things a little later than people with English as the first

language, we do get them.

 So, we see, you know, the big changes that have come with Artificial Intelligence, so that is of course

something that aids the implementation of different languages as well.

 So, ...

 yes, there is still progress to be made.

  ROBIN:  So people are dictating to smart phones in Norway?

  MALIN:  Absolutely!

 We have SIRI!

  ROBIN:  But maybe not the echo, or do you?

 The Amazon Echo?

  MALIN:  Yes, we do.

  ROBIN:  Brilliant.

 I'm a big fan.

 A huge fan.

 OK, what about COVID, then?

 What impact has it had on the landscape.

? We previously talked about legislation but it focused people's minds and peaked their interest, don't

you think?

  MALIN:  Absolutely.

 We have seen a massive change in  awareness.

 In the understanding of the problems for digital inclusion with home schooling in March, April, May,

everyone at home with the home schooling and remote working, that just shifted a lot of things.

 We saw suddenly that things that were impossible to do before ...

 were suddenly very possible.

 for the businesses to do and you saw a dire need for accessible educational tools for all students to be able to

follow school from home, for instance.

  ROBIN:  Here in the UK, the public sector regulations that did make it

through have really focused minds.

 We have been inundated, I don't think it is too strong a word but definitely swamped by higher education

institution, universities, et cetera, who are really prioritising accessibility.

 That could not have come at a better time when students are having to access all of their learning remotely

and obviously in the secondary education sector, there have been a lot of focus on home schooling as well.

  So, there is still a challenge, isn't there, in embedding good practices in the delivery of E-learning materials.

 We still have a long way to go?

  MALIN:  Absolutely!

 As we said, the awareness rose, it was suddenly possible to do things that maybe universities and schools were

hesitant to do before, by accommodating home schooling.

 But on the other hand the knowledge about accessibility and the knowledge amongst teachers and  lecturers are

still too low.

 There is a lot of, I call it  "needless exclusion" not because of the technical solution, necessarily

but because of how they are used or how they are not used to make sure that accessibility happens.

 So, there is a knowledge gap, I would say.

 That is very important to fill that.

 of course, there are technology challenges as well.

 but I think that the motivation to get those kinds of things moving forward, was increased by the pandemic.

  ROBIN:  Yes, I mean you mentioned earlier about home  working.

 I sit on a disability working group of a well-known university involved in creating one of the vaccines ...

 they had a lot of feedback from disabled employees.

 This university employs tens of thousands of people.

 These employees, the disabled employees were contacting their  working group in large numbers saying:

Thank you ...

 we've been calling for the option for home working for many years now in roles that, you know, it is possible

to do that and also for flexible working.

 More flexible working and both of those have been put in place since COVID.

 But what they are worried about now is that that it will go away, after  settling down and getting back to a

semblance of normality, so seeking assurances from the powers that be within the university that they will

not be forced to going back to travel into work w when the role does not require it.

 I think it will be inappropriate to expect people to travel, particularly with disabilities but not just ...

 anybody, really, if they can to it from home, then that is less stressful, this is potentially with

fewer costs and fewer overheads for that particular organisation, so, yes, I think ...

 is it the same in Norway, there is a general feeling that things will never go back to the way it was before?

  MALIN:  It is my personal view, of course but it is a general view it

will not go back to the way it was before but it is important to note that there are pros and cons of

everything and a cost with everybody sitting remote, that you lose some sort of community and some kind of,

maybe other challenges that can arise ...

 so I think we will not go back to the way it was before but maybe have more flexibility and more getting together,

more choice, getting together when it is necessary and then maybe not all the time, so I think it will be a more

diverse way of working.

  And then also going back to school, hopefully.

  ROBIN:  Absolutely.

 As we know, people with disabilities they can need extra support.

 Sometimes it can be delivered remotely but other time it is is invaluable to have somebody physically present.

 Particularly if you have physical support needs.

 So, great, we are living in changing time, what do you think, looking ahead, still needs to change for us to

really move the needle when it comes to inclusion, digital inclusion, inclusive technology in people's

hands, what do you see as being the levers that still need to be pulled?

  MALIN:  Well, one of the things that I think still is important and I think

we will have to push for it for a long time still is the attitude and the knowledge about accessibility and

diversity in general.

 Although we get more technology, as I mentioned, sometimes we see, what I call needless exclusion, that one

doesn't know about technology, or doesn't use it or, and so forth.

 And I think this is also a very important part of, in Norway, the regulation is both for a public sector

and also for the private sector.

 I think that one of the big really important things here is that when you put legislation in place, you signal

this is a choice that society as made.

 We want our digital solutions, whether it be banking, newspapers, whatever, to be accessible to everybody.

 So it is a social choice we have made as a society.

 Then at the same time, showing for the business it is also businessise to reach all customers, to accommodate.

 So it is easier for your customers to do whatever service that you are providing, whether it be private or

public.

 So, I think that is something that we still will be working on many years to come.

 So, the  awareness and just like the attitude towards that, that it is not something we do for special groups but

something that we do for us all as a society.

  ROBIN:  I think that the culture is driven by so many  things, by the

recognition that diversity is a good thing.

  And that people with disabilities, you know, whether it is a visible disability or a hidden disability or

mental health, or whatever it may be, are valuable, are important, both customers with their spending power

and with disabled employees.

 I heard brilliant statistics the other day.

 I  often mention here in the UK that the health and the safety executive did really good research.

 It showed that disabled employees with the right adjustments are as productive as their able-body

colleague, take less sick leave than their colleagues and stay longer in their jobs, they are more loyal.

 I was on a webinar recently, one of the other panel lists, Simon Power update me with the research that said

that the teams including disabled colleagues are more productive than the teams that don't, they are

happier, and the whole team takes less sick leave.

 So I was really happy to have an update to that content.

 So, we are definitely seeing the cultural benefit but at the same time in the UK, one of the challenges is

that the law has no teeth.

 It is not being enforced until the public sector regulations that we spoke about earlier, that finally

named a Government body that was going to proactively monitor and to enforce and potentially issue fines.

 Now this is one of the big reasons why I love to talk to you.

 As I want people to know how you do it in Norway, tell them!

  MALIN:  We have enforced the law since 2013.

 Since 2013 it has been for new solutions.

 Now from the 1st of January,  2021, it is all solution, regardless of when they were developed.

 What we do is that we do inspections of the solutions.

 We do testing, really, we make a report where the company can give feedback and where they have done so,

the report is published.

 If we find breaches of the law, we can issue fines.

 They normally a get 12 weeks to correct the errors that we have found and if the errors are not  corrected

there are daily fines until the errors are  corrected.

 So, we do have a stick, so to speak!

 Although,  we, of course, we want most companies to adhere to the law just by seeing the value of accessibility and

not because we might issue a fines in the end.

  ROBIN:  I think you need carrots and sticks we can talk more broadly about

the business case in a second.

 Obviously we want people to do it for the right reasons.

 But if you have a law and nobody enforces it, and it is left up to the disabled individuals or potentially

NGOs, where they gather together a group of people with disabilities who are disenfranchised to do a class

action, as it is call, what does it say about what the Government thinks of that law?

  You know, this is no machinery in place until this public sector regulation, which actually, it was a

milestone, just a couple of weeks ago we celebrated the 25th anniversary of our disability legislation here in the

UK, the Disability Discrimination Act of 95.

 Yet, the Government did nothing ...

 nothing to enforce it.

 So, you know, it does not  engender inclusion when it comes to the culture.

 OK, it is there, the legislation is there but nobody cares enough about it to enforce it.

 So, what you have chosen to do, it really shifted the needle.

 You have seen a change in how many websites out there are meeting the minimum levels of accessibility.

 It is impacting on disabled customers.

 Tell us about the scale, give us the SAS story about the ...

 that was the one that made me sit up.

  MALIN:  The SAS airline, we controlled them in 2017.

  --  it is a Scandinavian airline with the national office.

 But, we controlled them in the fall of 2017.

They got quite a long time to correct the errors.

 But after I think almost 9 months there were still errors left open.

 Then we issued  the, the fact that they had ten days to correct to the final errors.

 The fine in that particular instance was calculated to about, I think, about the equivalent of 15,000 Euros a

day.

 And that was if the last errors were not corrected.

 But they were.

 It is important to stress that they did correct the errors in the last ten days.

 Of course, that is what we want.

 That the errors are corrected so that the website is more useable.

  ROBIN:  How many days of fines did they accrue?

  MALIN:  No fines.

 They were issued the fines, they had ten days to correct the fines and they did correct them.

 So, we didn't have to post the actual fine in the end.

  ROBIN:  So, the threat of the fine was sufficient for them to finish off what

they needed to do.

 Had they been dragging their feet before that?

  MALIN:  I think that they found it challenging.

 But what I think the fines does, to a degree that not many other measures do, is that they make accessibility a

management issue.

   It comes to the management attention, it is a priority amongst other things, are you going to pay the

 fines or put money into correcting the errors or what are you going to do it?

 It is no longer just a question about the intention and goodwill and are we going to do it?

 Is it in the policy?

 So forth,  it is a hard-core measure that leaves the question to the management table.

 That I think is one thing that the fines can do that not many other more  "soft" measures do in the same way.

  ROBIN:  Money talks.

 Maybe not the right phrase but it certainly makes people sit up and listen when it comes to fines.

  MALIN:  If I might add,  it is very important that the importance for me,

it is first and foremost a signal of what we spoke about earlier, what the society thinks of  this.

 It is not so much a question between the individual, and the company, and whether or not they are discriminated

or not.

 This is more about this is what the society requires from you as a business.

 This is one of the many requirements that you have to fulfil.

 So, I think that is one of the good things about a more general enforcement.

 Then there is many weaknesses and also many good things about more individual perseverance of non-discrimination.

 but the single effect that it has,  it is very important.

  ROBIN:  Definitely, it says as a nation, as a culture, we value

diversity, including people with disabilities.

 There is a brilliant organisation, the valuable 500, Caroline  Casey spearheaded a campaign to get 500

global names to sign up to prioritising disability because of the festival of diversity that we are all

participating in.

 Disability is the poor cousin,  it is the Cinderella, often forgotten and left behind, not invited to the party.

 It requires for the signatories of those who sign up to the Charter to have disability on every agenda at C

level meetings and senior management meeting and the Trustee level as well.

 It needs that.

 You need buy in from the top to prioritise it.

 Do you want to talk about the role of disability champions?

 It needs to come from the bottom up as well as from the top down?

  MALIN:  Absolutely.

 I want to give a big thank you,  actually, to the IT industry and to the tech companies because a lot of

the innovation and there is are some good solutions that we want to use, it comes from the tech companies.

 It doesn't come from those companies because it is legislation, it comes because they think it is  businessise,

that it is part of the policy, that they make a conscious choice I don't think it is either or, I think it is

both.

The Government on their side can say this is what we require, then the tech companies and the businesses

themselves have to have some people that champion this, maybe doing the innovation, driving it forward,

through the competition and also through policy making on their own, which is really important.

 Then, of course, all of the uses.

  Because what I think is very important is also we want everybody to participate.

 We want a society where everyone can participate.

 Participate on equal terms.

 What it also says is that the potential that lies within everybody as part of our society, we meet that.

 We need access to that.

  If we are to be heading towards a future with more technology then we need all of the best people we can

have.

  Therefore, nobody should be restrained by society-made barriers, such as non-accessibility, actually,

what that does.

 So, think that is also a very, very important point to stress.

 It has to come from the needs of the people.

 To meet the needs that the people have so that they can use their potential full selfs.

  ROBIN:  The business case is very strong.

 As you highlight, there is a significant and a tangible and a measurable business case for inclusion.

 It is not just about doing the right thing.

 It is not about fear of repercussions, legal repercussions, the likes of Microsoft, Google, et cetera, they

have benefited from COVID, from the move to digital to online because they were prioritising it prior to that.

 for many years, Apple, as well, they have been making things a priority to make them as inclusive as possible.

 So they were well-placed to scale up products, to meet needs in the market, new needs in the market mace or more

significant needs in the collaborative working in online remote  connectivity or meetings, et cetera, so yes,

absolutely.

 I will finish off by asking you a quick question that was put to you by Christopher Patnoe of Google.

 This was put last month.

 We have touched upon it.

 He basically is saying that in the US, they are not very big on enforcing the law.

 They are a about the lax when it comes to the enforcement of the antidiscrimination legislation and

they leave it up to the individuals.

 There are some organisations that make it their job to take companies to court, et cetera but it is basically

left to private individuals or the private sector to take legal action, a bit like I mentioned before.

 What is your take, I am interested to know how litigious the Norwegians are, are they ready to sue people a lot or

forgiving in that area?

 Is that why the Norwegian Government has really stepped in to enforce the law?

 So Christopher Patnoe is saying, what is the right balance there.

 How do you think, is it a bit of both, maybe?

  MALIN:  I think it is a great question.

 I don't think there a right and a wrong here.

 I think it is very important to strike the right balance.

 Of course, I think that maybe the Norwegian culture in the area is a bit different from the  States.

 But I think that still, what we have touched upon, the active enforcement from the Government is a key component

to convey that accessibility is a choice we makes a a society.

 But there are many good things about the individuals pursuing their rights to be active to have something that

they can do about their situation.

 What I think may be might not always be a good thing about that, is that the burden is solely on the individual.

 That burden can be great so it hinders you to get what you need.

 So I think it is good to strike a balance with enforcement and to have strong ways of making it possible for

individuals to pursue their rights at the same time.

  ROBIN:  Fantastic.

. And sticking with policy, have you got anything that you would like to pass on to our next guest, which is

Alejandro Moledo.

 He is the Policy Co-ordinator, European Disability Forum, what would you like to pass on to him?

  MALIN:  I know Alejandro Moledo, so, now, with the web directive in place

and the European ability act on the way, I would like to know what would EDF see as the biggest future

regulations, what is the next step in your view.

  ROBIN:  The next big step.

 Oh, I wish we had the European Accessibility Act here.

 Beyond that, what is the next big thing?

 Thank you very much, a real pleasure as always.

 Have a brilliant rest of the year.

 Thank you again.

 I will pass back to Annie to wrap things up.

 Thank you, Annie.

  ANNIE:  Thank you, so much, Malin.

 We have had a lot of questions through which we will answer online in the next few days.

 You will receive an email with the link on Thursday.

 A little more information that maybe of interest to you.

 We also run online training sessions on digital accessibility.

 You can find out more at www.abilitynet.org.

uk/training.

 You can use an exclusive 10% off discount code available to registrants of the webinars which is AbilityNet

Webinar 10.

 and there are new training courses announced for the New Year, recordings can be bought in December and January

until the next courses are live.

 We have content for designers, editors, designers, tester, project management and leadership.

 You can keep in touch in our nurse letter.

 news letter for the latest announcements about accessibility.

 You can visit the YouTube channel, download the podcast and there are a suite of services to suit and don't

forget the announcements of the new podcasts soon.

   Thank you again.

 Malin, Robin, everyone that joined us, we are in touch soon.

 Goodbye everybody.