



MEDIA RELEASE

Mobile phones for people with disabilities – are there any and where do I find them?

Vienna, 21 May 2020: The MWF is very pleased to be partnering with the Austrian Association in Support of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Hilfsgemeinschaft) to provide better information on accessible mobile phones for blind and visually impaired users and help them find devices that best suit their individual needs.

Mobile phones have become an integral part of daily life. In particular for blind and visually impaired people, these devices have become an indispensable tool for mastering day to day life. The smartphone facilitates independent communication and navigation, can read out messages, inform about accessible routes and mobility options, and even crowd-source support via video and camera. But only, if it is accessible!

In a research project on the social value of mobile accessibility, 70% of respondents indeed confirmed that the mobile device makes a huge difference in terms of having access to services and society. High value is placed on accessible technologies in terms of providing access to education, employment and independent living.

However, the penetration of mobile technology among people with disabilities is still lower than among non-disabled peers. One reason for that is the lack of information. Which smartphones responds to my individual needs? Which device can I use well? These are important questions often difficult to find the answer to for users.

For this reason, the Austrian Association in Support of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Hilfsgemeinschaft) has collaborated with the Mobile & Wireless Forum (MWF) to provide a practical solution. The new website <https://gari.hilfsgemeinschaft.at> facilitates the search for accessible mobile phones available in the German speaking countries. This service is part of the new web presence of the Hilfsgemeinschaft and offers the search of accessible devices for everyone via the mentioned link.

More detailed information on mobile accessibility and accessible devices can furthermore be found on the website of the Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative (GARI), which offers detailed information on accessible mobile phones, tablets, wearable, Smart TVs and accessibility related apps in 19 languages (www.gari.info).

Klaus Höckner, CEO of the Austrian Association in Support of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Hilfsgemeinschaft) said: "GARI allows for the precise search for an accessible device that fits my needs. To offer this information to more users, we are integrating the GARI information into our new website and are providing daily updated information. The use of digital devices makes daily life a lot easier for the blind and visually impaired, however only when these devices are really accessible. As Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired we want to actively contribute to making the access to information about and on accessible devices as smooth as possible for people with disabilities."

Michael Milligan, Secretary General of the Mobile & Wireless Forum (MWF) said: "We are happy to help all users find devices that best suit their needs. Cooperations with organisations such as the Hilfsgemeinschaft are crucial to reach the people that will benefit most from this information and help them identify a device that can make their life easier. The truth is that we have great accessibility

solutions in the market today and it is a pity when people miss out just because they do not know about them.”

The challenge is to reach with this information the people who will benefit the most by learning about available accessible devices. That the Hilfsgemeinschaft now provides access to his information via their website and helps spread the word in the German speaking countries, is an important step in this direction.

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About the Austrian Association in Support of the Blind and Visually Impaired:

The Hilfsgemeinschaft (Austrian Association in Support of the Blind and Visually Impaired) is an independent non-profit organisation, founded in 1935 to improve the living conditions of visually impaired persons. As the largest organisation for visually impaired persons in East Austria they support around 4.300 members. Membership is free for visually impaired persons and enables them to access many services free of charge. The main focus of their work is to eliminate existing barriers in the area of communication, architecture, tourism, transport, sport as well as to promote

More information about the Austrian Association in Support of the Blind and Visually Impaired:

<https://www.hilfsgemeinschaft.at>

About the Mobile & Wireless Forum (MWF):

The Mobile & Wireless Forum (MWF) established the Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative (GARI) in 2008 to provide information on the accessibility features within mobile phones and to help consumers identify devices that supported those features. Today, GARI features an online database where you can find information on the accessibility features in over 1,500 devices including mobile phones, tablets, Smart TVs and Wearables. You'll also find information on accessibility apps that work on these devices. The database is free to use, available online in 19+ languages and is used by governments, user organizations, telecom providers and many other stakeholders around the world.

More information about GARI: www.gari.info

More information about the MWF: www.mwfai.org