

Guidelines for creating barrier-free videos

Introduction

Video accessibility is essential to ensure that as many people as possible have access to the content. In particular, people with visual or hearing impairments should be able to consume the content and benefit from the important information.

The German Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance (BITV 2.0) and the German Disability Equality Act requires the International Climate Initiative (IKI) to provide barrier-free content on the website.

The IKI would therefore like to support its implementing organisations in creating barrier-free videos. These guidelines are recommendations and are not mandatory for creators in partner countries, but should be used as a guide.

Criteria for barrier-free videos

Barrier-free videos have the following characteristics: They are accessible and operable without barriers. Closed captioning is provided for people with hearing impairments, while audio description provides important information for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Recommendations for video production

When producing videos, the following points should be considered to make the content as accessible as possible:

- If no separate audio description is to be offered, an acoustic description of the visible content must be provided.
- Content that flickers or flashes more than three times per second should not be used, as this can trigger epileptic seizures.
- An adapted speech tempo with clear pronunciation could help people with hearing impairments or non-native speakers to better understand the content.

Captions in Videos

Captions can be created during video production or added later to videos that have already been produced. There are two types of captions: open captions and closed captions:

- Open captions are permanently embedded in the video material, which are integrated into the video during production and cannot be changed afterwards.
- Closed captions are stored in a separate file and can be turned on or off via the video player. This type of caption can be customised based on the video player, which is especially helpful for people with certain visual impairments.

Text Design for Closed Captions

In this guideline, the IKI recommends the use of closed captions as the preferred method.

Requirements for the presentation, form and content design of captions

- The caption should be presented at the same time as the sound and, if possible, be lip-synchronised.
- Longer sentences should be divided into units of meaning.
- The minimum duration should be 2 seconds (or a reading speed of 13 - 15 characters per second).
- Position at the bottom center, if text is already there, then at the top center.
- The font should be high contrast and easy to read.
- The caption should be no more than two lines at a time.
- Important audio information is placed in parentheses, e.g. (bells ringing).
- Quoted texts are placed in quotation marks.
- The name of the speaker is followed by a colon.
- The style of music is named when music is heard.
- Lyrics are indicated by hash marks (#).

Technical options for creating captions

Various tools and methods are available for creating closed captions. Many video editing programs offer options to create captions and export them as a file in various formats. It is recommended that you enable automatic subtitles if possible and use them as a starting point to check.

Video players also have the ability to automatically create and adjust subtitles. This is usually available in multiple languages.

YouTube

When using YouTube as a video player, several options are available to add or edit captions:

- Enable automatic captions.
- Manually create or edit of captions directly in the YouTube Creator interface.
- Upload a caption file.

The [YouTube help page](#) offers comprehensive support in the creation of captions.

YouTube can automatically create captions for your videos using speech recognition technology. These should always be reviewed and used as a starting point for correct captions. AI, such as ChatGPT, can help improve the spelling and punctuation of automatically generated captions. However, the text should not be completely rewritten.

Vimeo

When using Vimeo as a video player, there are two ways to add captions:

- Enable automatic captions (for paid accounts only).
- Upload a caption file. Only the SRT and WebVTT formats are supported.

Automatically generated subtitles should also be checked on Vimeo.

Conclusion

The recommendations listed here are meant to be supportive and show how barrier-free content can be implemented without much effort. Every step in this direction promotes equal opportunities and strengthens the IKI as a role model for inclusion and digital accessibility.