

Rio Declaration on Accessible Language and Inclusive Participation

Introduction

We met in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at the Latin American Conference on Easy Read - Plain Language - Easy Language (LACEL 2025), representatives of governments, international organizations, universities, civil society organizations and citizen movements from the Americas and Ibero-America, to reaffirm our commitment **to the right to understand** as the basis of human dignity, social inclusion and participatory democracy and to make the commitment to move towards a regional agenda 2025–2027 for the strengthening of accessible language as a transversal human right.

Introduction

We are in the city of **Rio de Janeiro**.
We participated in the **Latin American Conference on Easy Read - Plain Language - Easy Language (LACEL 2025)**.

In this conference we participate:

- governments of different countries
- international organizations
- universities
- civil society organizations
- groups of people working for their rights in America, Spain and Portugal.

We met with a common goal:
to defend the right to understand.

The right to understand is important for:

- **Human dignity:**
each person is worth for himself or herself and deserves to be treated with respect.
Information in accessible language helps to give that respect.
- **Social inclusion:**
All people should have the opportunity

	<p>to participate in their communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory democracy: People can have their say, and participate better in their community when they understand what governments are communicating. <p>We are committed to working between 2025 and 2027.</p> <p>We want to build a common plan to strengthen accessible language.</p> <p>We believe that accessible language is a transversal human right. This means that it is necessary for all aspects of life.</p>
<p>1. Fundamentals</p> <p>1. General principles</p> <p>This Declaration is based on the principles and commitments assumed by the international community through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 217 A (III), 10 December 1948). • International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 2200 A (XXI), 16 December 1966). 	<p>1. Basis of this Declaration</p> <p>1. General ideas</p> <p>The general ideas of this Declaration arise from several international agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 217 A (III), 10 December 1948). • International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations General Assembly,

- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 2200 A (XXI), 16 December 1966).
- **International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** (2006), particularly its articles 9 (Accessibility), 13 (Access to Justice), 21 (Freedom of expression and access to information), 24 (Inclusive education), 25 (Health), 27 (Work and employment), 29 (Participation in political and public life) and 30 (Participation in cultural and artistic life).
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/77/254 (2022)**, which recognizes access to accessible information and communication as an essential condition for full participation, and urges States to promote standards that ensure that information is understandable to all people, and to eliminate communication barriers. It also encourages United Nations agencies to integrate the accessible language dimension into their policies.
- **World Intellectual Property Organization's Marrakesh Treaty** (2013) which recognizes the need to expand accessibility to printed texts for persons with disabilities, ensure the elimination of barriers to access to information, and ensure equal opportunities, participation, and full and effective inclusion in society.

Resolution 2200 A (XXI), 16 December 1966).

- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 2200 A (XXI), 16 December 1966).
- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** (2006).
Especially the articles:
 - 9 (Accessibility)
 - 13 (Access to Justice)
 - 21 (Freedom of expression and access to information)
 - 24 (Inclusive education)
 - 25 (Health)
 - 27 (Work and employment)
 - 29 (Participation in political and public life)
 - 30 (Participation in cultural and artistic life).
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/77/254 (2022)**. This resolution recognizes that access to information and accessible communication are key to full participation.

It also calls on UN countries to remove communication barriers and advocate for access to easy-to-understand information.

It also invites United Nations agencies to include accessible language in the actions they take.
- **Marrakesh Treaty** (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2013).
This treaty recognizes that persons with disabilities must be able to access books and other printed texts. Countries must remove barriers to access to information. All people should have equal opportunities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of Mexico on Access to Information (OAS, 2019), which defines transparency and access to information as pillars of democracy. • Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (Barcelona, 1996) and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001), which affirm linguistic diversity as the common heritage of humanity. • Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994), which established the principles of inclusive education as part of the right to equity. 	<p>to participate in social and cultural life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of Mexico on Access to Information (OAS, 2019). This statement affirms that clear and accessible information is the foundation of democracy. • Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (Barcelona, 1996) and Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001). These two statements affirm that different languages are an important part of our cultures. So, it is necessary to protect our languages and value their use in our communities. • Declaration of Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994). This statement affirms that all children and young people should learn in schools that include all people. It also says that schools must provide the necessary support so that everyone can study together.
<h2>2. Specific principles</h2> <p>Unlike previous declarations focused on specific fields – such as education, language or disability – this Declaration proposes an integrative, transversal and structural vision of accessible language as an instrument of cognitive justice and social cohesion.</p>	<h2>2. Specific ideas</h2> <p>Previous statements focused on separate topics such as education, languages or disability.</p> <p>This Statement is different because it proposes to unite these themes and look at them at the same time.</p> <p>It also points out that accessible language is important for many areas of life</p>

<p>We recognize that educational, digital and language gaps are today one of the main causes of social and labor exclusion in our countries.</p> <p>Cognitive accessibility is the instrumental precondition for learning, functional literacy, employability and cultural participation and the exercise of rights.</p> <p>In coherence with the frameworks of UNESCO (Education 2030), ECLAC (Regional Agenda for Social Inclusion), MERCOSUR (Strategic Plan for Social Action) and UN (Agenda 2030, SDGs 4, 8, 10, 16 and 17), this Declaration proposes to place accessible language as a cross-cutting axis of educational, cultural, technological and digital ethics inclusion policies.</p>	<p>and not just for a particular topic.</p> <p>Accessible language allows all people to have the same opportunities to understand, decide and participate.</p> <p>This favors a fairer and more united society.</p> <p>We recognize that today, in our countries, differences in education, access to technology, and language are the main causes of social and labor exclusion.</p> <p>Cognitive accessibility is an important tool for all of us to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn and understand what we read • make decisions • work and look for work • participate in cultural activities • exercise our rights on equal terms. <p>This Declaration relates to other international agreements and agendas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO (Education 2030) • ECLAC (Regional Agenda for Social Inclusion) • MERCOSUR (Strategic Plan for Social Action) • United Nations (2030 Agenda and SDGs 4, 8, 10, 16 and 17). <p>We propose that accessible language be a theme that is present in all the policies of our countries: educational, cultural, technological and digital.</p>
---	--

- **Transversality:** articulates education, culture, work, technology, public communication and democratic governance under the same axis: the right to understand.
- **Ibero-American and Pan-American perspective:** recognizes Spanish and Portuguese as vehicular languages of inclusion, also promoting the diversity of indigenous, creole and local languages.
- **Structural, not welfare-based approach:** accessible language is not a policy for minorities, but an essential component of social equity and knowledge economies.
- **Multi-format and multi-channel intervention:** promotes cognitive accessibility in texts, digital, audiovisual and

This Declaration defends these ideas:

- **Transversality:**

The right to understand is the central theme. This right allows other topics to be analyzed such as education, culture, work, technology, public communication and participation in government.

- **Ibero-American and Pan-American perspective**

This Declaration is addressed to the countries of America and also to Spain and Portugal.

This Declaration recognizes Spanish and Portuguese as languages that allow inclusion in the Americas.

It also promotes the diversity of indigenous, creole and local languages because all these languages are part of our American identity and should be respected and valued.

- **Structural, non-healthcare approach**

Accessible language is not an isolated aid for a small group or minority of people.

Accessible language is built for the whole society. It is very important for activities and jobs who need to move forward with information and knowledge.

communicational environments, in convergence with universal design and technological accessibility.

- **Civil governance and regional cooperation:** promotes the creation of the **Ibero-American and Pan-American Network of Accessible Language**, a technical and plural space for cooperation between NGOs, universities, public and private institutions and interested parties.

This Declaration does not replace previous international frameworks, but articulates them under a perspective of accessible language and cognitive justice.

- **Multi-format and multi-channel intervention**

Accessible language must be present in different media.

For example:

- texts
- websites and apps
- audiovisual materials
- communication materials.

Accessible language must respect universal design and access to technologies.

- **Civil governance and regional cooperation**

The declaration encourages creation of the Ibero-American and Pan-American Network of Accessible Language. This Network will be a technical and plural space with:

- civil society organizations
- universities
- public organizations
- private organizations,
- and others interested in accessible language.

This Statement is not a substitute for previous international agreements.

This Declaration relates to these agreements and connects them from the idea of accessible language.

It also reinforces the idea of **cognitive justice**: all people should have equal opportunities to understand information

	and use that knowledge to study, work, and participate in society.
<p>3. Central principle</p> <p>The right to understand is an enabling right that allows all the others to be exercised. It requires an alliance between States, international organizations, academia and organized civil society to be guaranteed.</p> <p>This Declaration aspires to build that alliance, from Ibero-America and the Americas, to move towards a truly inclusive, participatory and accessible communication for all people.</p>	<p>3. Most important idea</p> <p>The right to understand is a right that allows all other rights to be exercised. To ensure this right, it is necessary that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • countries • international organizations • universities and study centres • and civil society organizations work together <p>This Declaration seeks to build that union and joint work with all the countries of America, Spain and Portugal.</p> <p>We hope to work for inclusive, participatory and accessible communication for all people.</p>
<p>2. Diagnosis and challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequalities in literacy, reading and digital comprehension continue to be an obstacle to inclusive development in our countries. • Legal frameworks and public policies on accessible language are still fragmented and have little interoperability. Dialogue between 	<p>2. Current situation and challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequalities in reading and writing and understanding information in digital media These inequalities continue to be a barrier to inclusive development in our countries. • Poorly connected laws and public policies Laws and public policies on accessible language

governments, universities, companies and social organizations must be strengthened.

- Technological and linguistic gaps overlap: millions of people do not have access to understandable content in their languages or formats.

- The expansion of artificial intelligence and automation opens up opportunities for inclusion, but also risks of exclusion if systems are not designed with accessibility criteria in mind.

are still not well connected to each other.

That is why it is necessary to improve communication between

- governments
- universities
- enterprises
- and social organizations.

• **Differences in access to technology and language**

Differences in access to technology and access to language occur at the same time.

As a result, millions of people cannot access content that they can understand in their own languages or in accessible formats.

• **Artificial intelligence and automation**

The expansion of these technologies opens up opportunities for inclusion.

But there may also be a risk of exclusion when technologies are not created with accessibility in mind.

• **Need to work together**

Reducing these differences requires long-term cooperation between:

- countries

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need sustained cooperation between countries, sectors and communities, based on technical exchange and mutual recognition of standards to reduce these gaps,. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sectors - and communities <p>Cooperation should ensure knowledge exchange and that countries accept the same rules to work together.</p>
<h3>3. Guiding principles</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to understand: Everyone has the right to receive information and communicate in accessible formats – oral, written, digital, visual or augmentative – that allow people to understand, decide and participate on equal terms. • Accessibility: Universal design involves creating texts, environments, technologies and services that can be used and understood by all people, complemented by cognitive and communicational accessibility. 	<h3>3. Ideas that build the Declaration</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to understand Everyone has the right to receive information and to communicate in accessible formats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oral • written • digital materials • imagery • augmentative or alternative systems of communication. <p>Accessible information should allow to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand • decide • participate on an equal basis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility Universal design proposes to create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • texts • environments • technologies • services that all people can use and understand.

- **Active participation:** People with disabilities, low literacy or indigenous languages, as well as all groups and communities with technical or experiential experience, must participate in the creation and validation of materials on accessibility and inclusive communication. Participation must be effective and meaningful, ensuring that the people involved have a real influence on the decisions that determine the accessibility of content, environments and public policies.

- **Linguistic plurality:** Accessibility recognizes and respects the diversity of Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, indigenous languages, and sign languages, affirming the linguistic and cultural richness of Ibero-America and the Americas as the basis for inclusive and diverse communication.

Accessibility also includes:

- to be able to understand
- to be able to communicate.

● **Active participation**

People must participate in the creation and validation of accessible materials and inclusive communication.

This includes:

- people with disabilities
- people with low reading or writing
- people who speak indigenous languages
- groups and communities with technical or life experience

Participation must be real to influence important decisions on the accessibility of content, environments and public policies.

● **Linguistic plurality**

Accessibility recognizes and respects the diversity of languages:

- Spanish
- Portuguese
- English
- French
- Indigenous languages
- Sign languages

This diversity is part of cultural identity of America, Spain and Portugal.

- **Professional ethics:** the adaptation and validation of accessible texts must be carried out with training, technical rigor, validated quality and fair labor recognition.
- **Regional cooperation:** The countries of the South and the Americas as a whole will cooperate to develop a common framework of accessible language and cognitive accessibility, recognizing the interdependence between accessibility, education, culture, and work. This cooperation will integrate knowledge and experience in an equitable dialogue that promotes universal design, technological innovation and linguistic inclusion.

This diversity of language is the basis of inclusive communication.

- **Professional ethics**

Creating and validating accessible texts

They must be carried out with:

- knowledge
- commitment
- proven quality
- fair labor recognition.

- **Regional cooperation**

The countries of the South and the whole of America should work together to create common rules on:

- accessible language
- cognitive accessibility

This cooperation recognizes the relationship between:

- accessibility
- education
- culture
- work

Regional cooperation should:

- bring together different knowledge and experiences
- promote universal design
- promote accessible technologies
- include the diversity of languages.

4. Shared commitments

We are committed to:

1. Promote public policies and practices that recognize accessible language as a cross-cutting human right, essential for education, culture, work, cognitive justice, participation, and democratic life.

2. Incorporate cognitive accessibility in all stages of the design of policies, services and technologies, ensuring that their development and monitoring include the active participation of civil society, academia and local communities.

4. Shared commitments

We are committed to:

- Promote public policies and practices that recognize accessible language as a human right that crosses all other rights.

Accessible language is essential for:

- education
- culture
- work
- equality in understanding
- participation
- life in democracy.

- Incorporate cognitive accessibility in all stages of the design of:

- policies
- services
- technologies.

Ensure that the creation and control of accessible information include the active participation of:

- civil society
- universities and study centres
- local communities

- Develop accessible literacy and vocational training programmes in:

- easy to read

3. Develop accessible literacy programs and professional training in easy read, plain language, easy language and audiovisual translation, with certification, labor recognition, and technical cooperation between countries.

4. To promote interdisciplinary research, participatory evaluation and the production of evidence on understanding, impact and participation, to guide policies and decisions based on knowledge, good practices and evidence.

5. Promote regional cooperation mechanisms, observatories, and training platforms that guarantee the sustainability of accessible language policies and their multilateral monitoring.

6. Create and strengthen national, Ibero-American, and Pan-American networks, such as the Pan American Network of Accessible Language,

- plain language
- audiovisual translation

These programs must have:

- certification
- labor recognition
- technical cooperation between countries.

● Support research on different topics

- participatory evaluation
- and the production of evidence on understanding, impact and participation.

This evidence should guide

- public policies
- knowledge-based decisions
- good practices
- evidence.

● **Promote in the region:**

- forms of cooperation
- observatories
- training platforms that ensure the continuity of accessible language policies and their monitoring by several countries.

● Create and strengthen national Ibero-American and Pan-American networks such as the Pan-American Network of Accessible Language.

These networks must:

<p>to coordinate efforts, share learning, and promote social innovation in cognitive accessibility.</p> <p>7. Promote collaboration and exchanges with civil society organizations, universities, and academic institutions in other regions, in South-South and South-North cooperation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coordinate efforts - share learning - promote social innovation in cognitive accessibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote collaboration and exchanges with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - civil society organizations - universities - academic institutions in other regions. <p>Promoting this cooperation in political agreements which are known as South-South and South-North.</p>
<h2>5. Main lines of action 2025–2027</h2> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure accessible education and literacy: promote educational programs in easu read, plain language and easy language at all levels. 2. Develop ethically accessible technology and artificial intelligence: promote the incorporation of cognitive accessibility in digital platforms, software and automated content. 	<h2>5. Main lines of action 2025–2027</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advocate for accessible education and literacy Promote education programs in plain language, easy language and easy read at all educational levels. ● Develop accessible technology and artificial intelligence Promote cognitive accessibility to be present in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - digital platforms - software - and content created with automatic systems. Technology must have an ethical use and respect the right to understand. ● Support audiovisual culture and mediation Promote the creation of accessible and multi-language versions of:

<p>3. Promote culture and audiovisual mediation: promote the creation of accessible and multilingual versions of cultural works, museums, media and libraries.</p> <p>4. Ensure public communication and citizen participation: promote that state and social information is clear, verifiable and understandable.</p> <p>5. Strengthen regional, South-South and South-North cooperation: build sustainable alliances between governments, universities, DPOs, NGOs, international cooperation and multilateral organizations.</p> <p>6. Promote accessible language with the Treaty Bodies, especially the CRPD, CRC, HRCttee and CESCR, and with UN agencies in their UNDIS strategy.*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural works - museums - media - and libraries. <p>● Ensure that public communication is clear, true and understood.</p> <p>● Strengthen cooperation in the region. Build lasting alliances between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - governments - universities - organizations of persons with disabilities - civil society organizations <p>This cooperation can be within policies known as South-South and South-North.</p> <p>● Promoting accessible language at the United Nations To ensure accessibility in all your communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in the spaces where treaties are worked on For example: CRPD, CRC, HRCttee and CESCR. - in United Nations agencies - in the strategy known as UNDIS.*
---	---

6. Nature and follow-up

This Declaration was adopted in **Rio de Janeiro, on October 30, 2025**, as a result of the consensus between public, social and academic actors gathered at CLALF 2025.

States, international organizations, universities and social organizations are invited to **disseminate, apply and evaluate** the principles expressed herein, and to present their progress at the **2026 Follow-up Conference**, within the framework of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as in the framework of the sessions on the CRPD to be held in 2026 (for example, COSP**).

6. Nature and follow-up

This Declaration is made in the city of Rio de Janeiro on October 30, 2025.

It is the result of the agreement between public, social and academic actors who participated in LACEL 2025.

We invite:

- countries
- international organizations
- universities
- social organizations

to disseminate this Declaration, to implement it and to evaluate its principles.

We also invite to:

- present progress at the 2026 Follow-up Conference, at the United Nations General Assembly.
- share these developments in 2026 in CRPD-related sessions, for example at the COSP meeting.

7. Meaning and projection

7. Meaning and projection

The **Rio Declaration** sets out a vision

The **Rio Declaration** establishes an Ibero-American and Pan-American vision of accessible language as a cross-cutting human right and a tool for inclusive participation.

It seeks to ensure that no one is left out of full participation, education, work, access to health, participation in public and private life, as well as access to justice, or the digital world due to lack of understanding.

It affirms that understanding is not a privilege, but a concrete way of exercising dignity and freedom.

about Accessible Language
from the countries of America, Spain and Portugal.

This vision understands accessible language
as a human right that cuts across all other rights
and as a tool for inclusive participation.

The Declaration seeks to ensure that no person is left out of:

- full participation
- education
- work
- access to health
- participation in public and private life
- access to justice
- the digital world.

These barriers should not exist due to lack of understanding.

The Declaration affirms that understanding is not a privilege.
Understanding is a concrete way of exercising dignity and freedom.

*

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child

HRC - Human Rights Committee

CESCR - Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

UNDIS strategy - United Nations Disability Inclusion strategy.

COSP - Conference of State Parties of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities