e-Government Accessibility in Spain:

The Result of Continuous Improvement Efforts

Universal accessibility[1] is the condition to be fulfilled by environments, processes, goods, products and services, as well as objects or instruments, tools and devices, to be understood and used by all persons in safe and simple conditions and as independently and naturally possible. This condition therefore not only **benefits people with some kind of disability, but also all potential users** as its design is improved and it becomes easier to use.
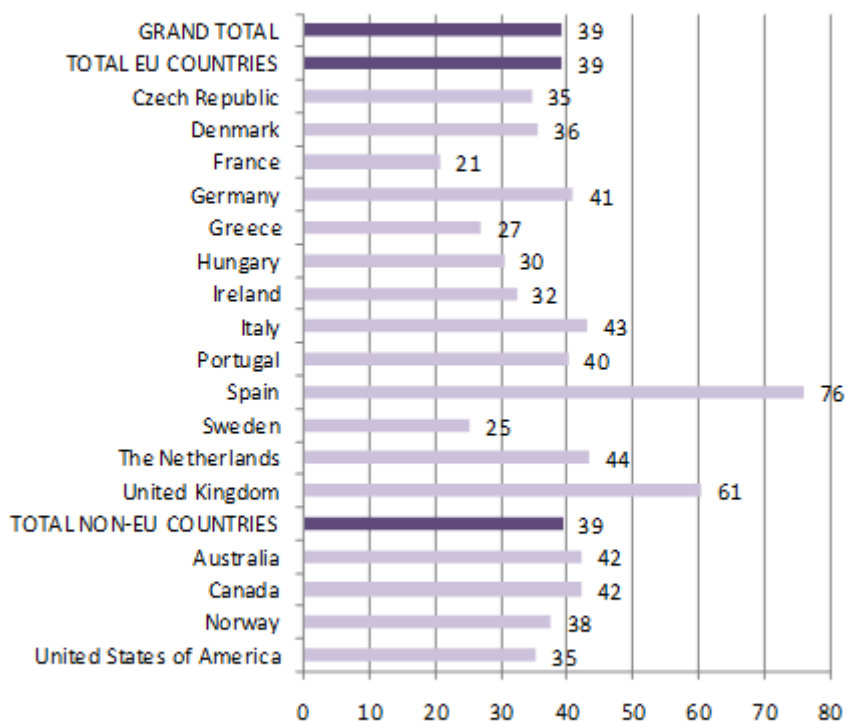
e-Government, which seeks to increase the use of its services so that the benefits are extended to society as a whole, must have universal accessibility as a characteristic feature. For this reason, its pages must be **designed and built so that its contents and services are available to all persons,** regardless of their sensorial capacity and the technology available to them. Fulfilling this objective has been the reason behind website accessibility evaluation initiatives of the digital public services, on a national and international scale.

The European Commission has recently published the **e-Accessibility Monitoring Study**[2], which was carried out between 2010 and 2011, evaluating the accessibility of e-Government services of the Member States of the European Union, United States, Australia, Canada and Norway, among other aspects. The study **places Spain as indisputable leaders in the field of accessibility of the European Public Administration websites.** Our country is also ahead of the non-European Union states that were analysed.

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[1] See Article 2 of Law 51/2003 on equal opportunities, non discrimination and universal accessibility of people with disabilities.

[2] Available at: http://www.eaccessibility-monitoring.eu/researchResult.aspx

Status of Web content accessibility (government websites), by country

Country	Percentage
GRAND TOTAL	39
TOTAL EU COUNTRIES	39
Czech Republic	35
Denmark	36
France	21
Germany	41
Greece	27
Hungary	30
Ireland	32
Italy	43
Portugal	40
Spain	76
Sweden	25
The Netherlands	44
United Kingdom	61
TOTAL NON-EU COUNTRIES	39
Australia	42
Canada	42
Norway	38
United States of America	35

Source: Monitoring eAccesibility in Europe: 2011 Annual Report.
Unit: Percentages

The position held by Spanish Public Administrations in this evaluation is also proof of its constant progress in terms of web accessibility. Whilst our Administrations occupy a leading position in the aforementioned results, in the previous evaluation as part of the **MEAC– Measuring Progress of e Accessibility in Europe Study,** carried out between 2006 and 2008, Spain's accessibility rating was slightly above the European Union average.

This **progress is the result of the efforts made in recent years, fostered and promoted by the e-Government Website Accessibility Observatory,** set up in 2010 by the General Directorate for the Promotion of e-Government.

The **e-Government Website Accessibility Observatory regularly evaluates the accessibility of Spanish Public Administration portals and websites, among other activities**. More than 300 General State Administration portals have been evaluated, 152 belonging to the Autonomous Communities (8 portals for each

Autonomous Community) and 208 under the responsibility of the Local Authorities (4 for each province). The results of each of these studies, which are issued to the heads of each service analysed, have enabled a continuous improvement cycle in the accessibility to public sector websites to be implemented: Around **48% of the Spanish Public Administrations portals analysed have experienced improvements to their accessibility** over the past 2 years.

This positive evolution in the accessibility to the websites of our Administrations has been the result of their joint efforts. According to the in-depth data obtained by the Observatory, the main portals of the General State Administration and the Autonomous Communities fulfil the Priority 1 accessibility requirements.

The following graph shows the evolution over the different waves of analysis in the sphere of the **General State Administration. 7% more portals have surpassed the Priority 1 accessibility threshold** and the portals that also fulfil the **Priority 2** accessibility requirements **have increased by 17 %.**


Evolución del Nivel de Adecuación. Observatorio AGE
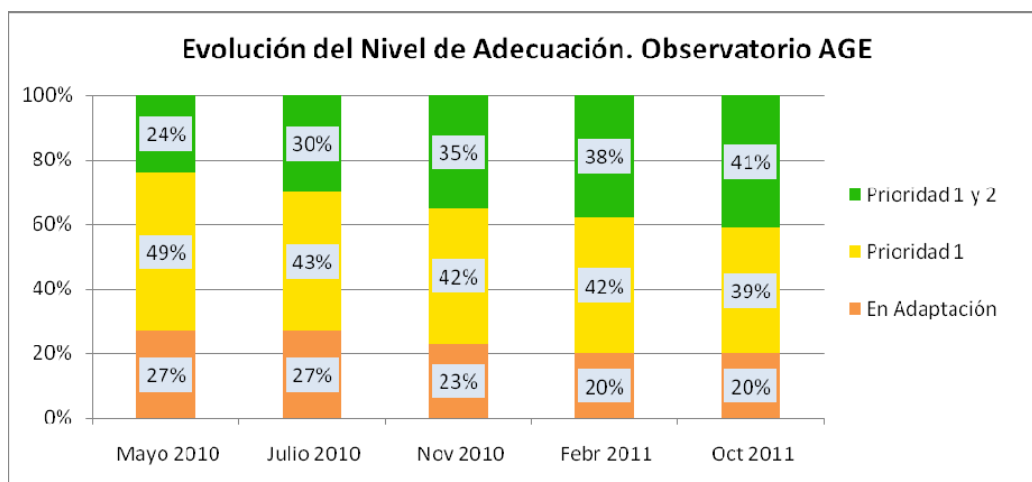
Focussing on the **General State Administration portals with a greater number of citizen visits,** such as the ministerial portals and unique portals like 060, Official State Journal, Tax Office and Social Security, a higher level of improvement can be appreciated. **All of the portals fulfil Priority 1 in accessibility and 70% of these portals also fulfil Priority 2.**
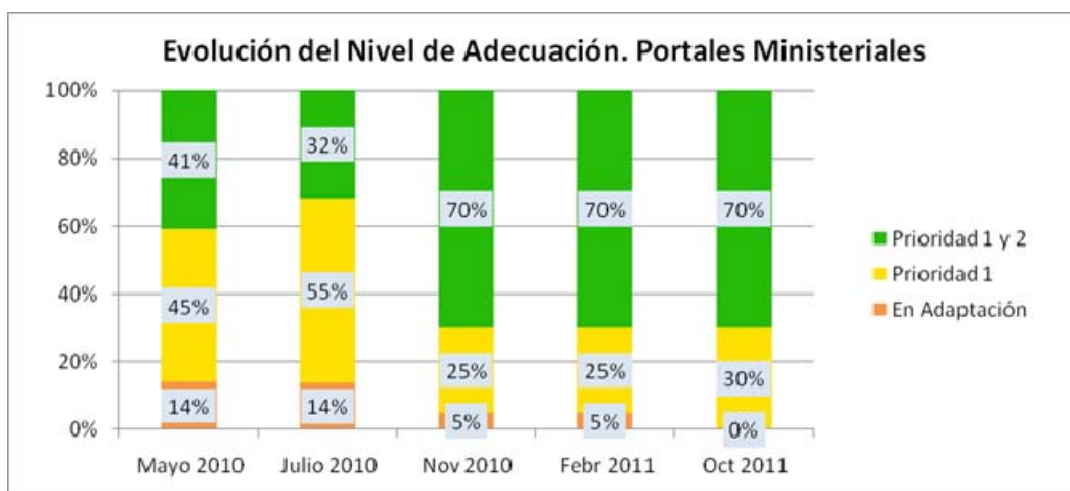
Progress in the e-Government accessibility levels, as indicated above, can also be appreciated in the regional and local spheres. Of the portals attached to the **Autonomous Communities, a further 13% of portals have been adapted to Priority 1 and the portals that have been adapted to both Priority 1 and Priority 2 have increased by 14%.**
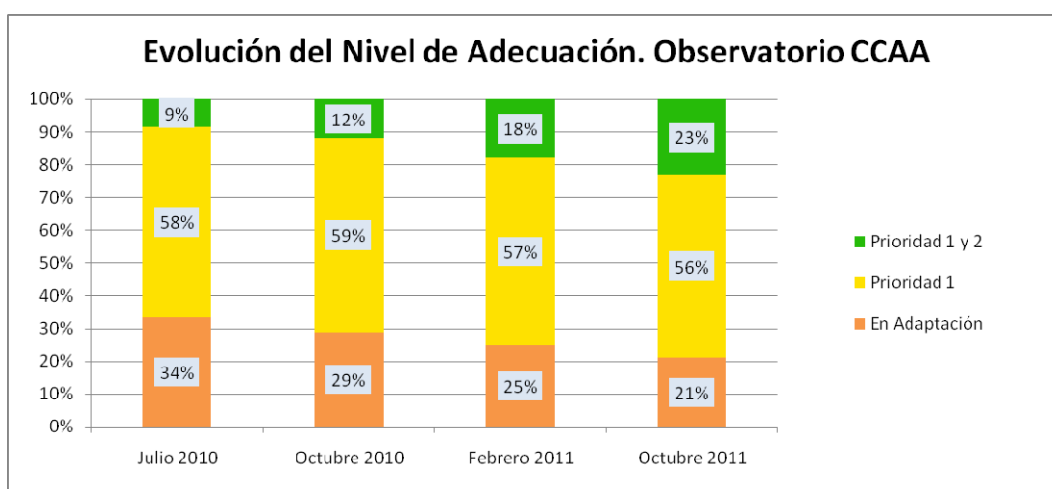
Like in the General State Administration, the Observatory has identified greater improvements to the website accessibility of the main **portals** of each of the **Autonomous Communities**. In this case, the fact that **all of the portals have fulfilled Priority 1 accessibility requirements and the portals that have also fulfilled the Priority 2 requirements have increased by 19%** is particularly significant.
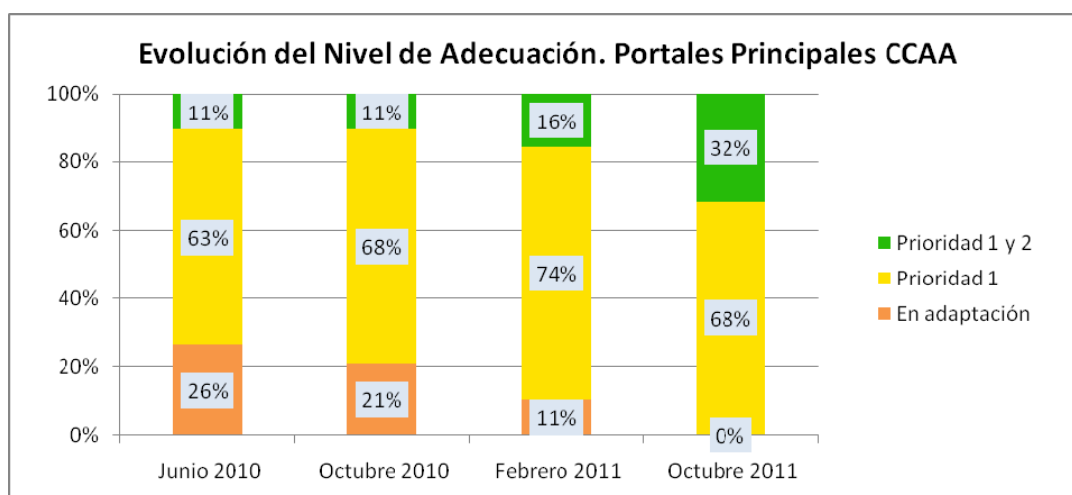
Along with this regular study into the website accessibility of the Public Administrations, the e-Government Website Accessibility Observatory also offers society and Governments another series of services and tools that facilitate the development of accessible website services. They are all available in the "Inclusive e-Government – Accessibility" area of the e-Government website[3].

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[3] http://administracionelectronica.gob.es/accessibility