

ENSURING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUR PDF DOCUMENTS

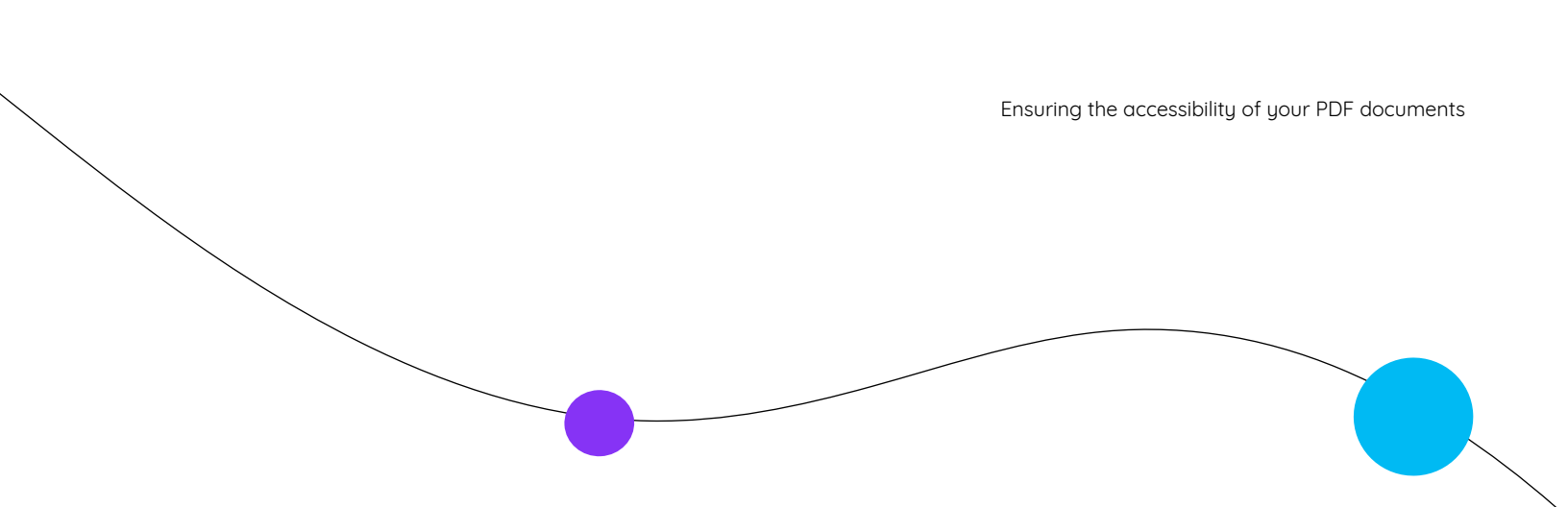
Everything you need to know about PDF/
UA - the new mandatory format in 2025



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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring digital content accessibility has become an essential priority for organisations worldwide. Beyond ethical considerations, the issue plays a key role in corporate social responsibility (CSR), brand reputation, and regulatory compliance. The stakes are even higher now with the European Accessibility Act (EAA) set to take effect in June of 2025, which mandates the distribution of documents in formats accessible to all, including the 101 million people in Europe living with disabilities.

Businesses, both large and small, must now ensure that their content is universally accessible. In fact, 66% of organisations have already adopted strategic plans to guarantee the accessibility of their documents.

In this context, the PDF/UA (PDF/Universal Accessibility) format has emerged as the international standard for PDF documents. It ensures optimal readability and full accessibility for all users, including those who rely on screen readers.

Discover everything you need to know about the PDF/UA format, the challenges of converting existing documents, and best practices for producing accessible PDFs by default. This guide will provide you with a clear understanding of the importance of compliance and equip you with the right strategies to optimise your document management processes.

28 June 2025

the date when the European Accessibility Act comes into effect.

94%

European companies do not comply with the EAA



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE PDF/UA FORMAT - THE NEW MANDATORY STANDARD

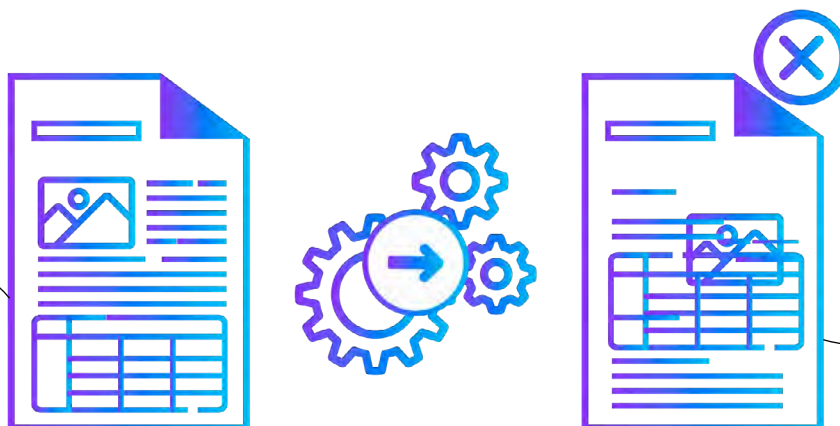
PDF is the primary document format used by organisations worldwide, yet it presents significant accessibility challenges. Anyone who has attempted to convert a PDF into another format knows that, more often than not, softwares struggles to accurately interpret the order and nature of the document's elements.

This is primarily due to the fact that many existing PDFs lack clear tagging and do not comply with accessibility standards. As a result, it is difficult for software to interpret them correctly. This is a significant issue for individuals with visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments.

PDF/UA (PDF for Universal Accessibility) is an ISO standard ([ISO 14289](#)) that establishes the criteria a PDF document must meet to be recognised as fully accessible.

This standard specifies that the document must:

- Clearly distinguish meaningful content from artefacts or decorative elements
- Define a clear reading order using semantic tags
- Include alternative text for visual elements
- Ensure maximum readability with fonts and colours that enhance legibility
- Tag tables and graphics so they can be properly interpreted by assistive reading technologies



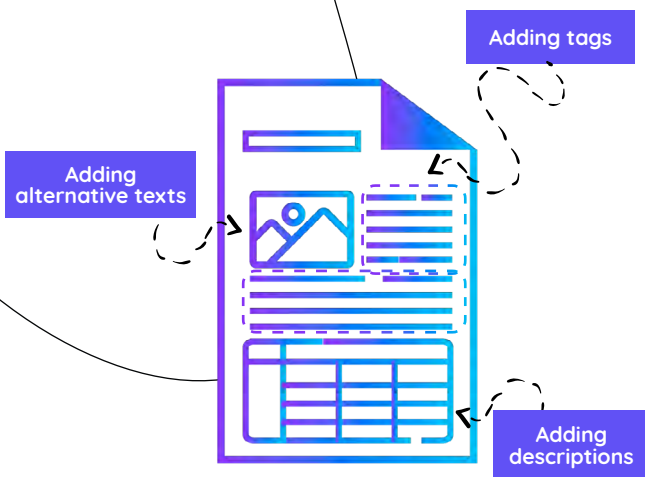


Designed to ensure that all users, including those relying on assistive technologies such as screen readers, can navigate and comprehend document content, PDF/UA represents a fundamental step towards truly inclusive digital communication.

While PDF/UA ensures compliance and significantly enhances document accessibility, it may not fully meet the needs of all users. This is particularly the case for the nearly 30 million people in Europe with colour blindness and the 75 million individuals with dyslexia (DYS), who may require additional adaptations for optimal readability.

Why is PDF/UA becoming an essential standard?

Digital accessibility is now a legal requirement in many countries worldwide, particularly in Europe. With the European Accessibility Act coming into play in 2025, organisations will be required to ensure their PDFs comply with accessibility standards. Any non-compliant PDF/UA document may result in penalties, in addition to a negative customer experience that alienates a portion of consumers.



The European Accessibility Act: obligations and penalties

All across Europe, strict regulations now govern digital accessibility. The European directive on website and mobile app accessibility for public sector organisations has been reinforced by the European Accessibility Act, requiring private companies to comply with accessibility standards, including for their PDF documents.

Non-compliance can lead to financial penalties and severely damage an organisation's reputation. The costs associated with fines, lawsuits, or correcting incorrectly formatted documents can be significantly higher than those incurred through proactive compliance.

Impact on brand and customer relationships

Digital accessibility is not just a legal requirement; it is an opportunity to strengthen customer relationships. An accessible PDF enhances user experience, increases customer satisfaction, and boosts retention. Companies that adopt accessibility standards demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity, strengthening their brand image and differentiating themselves from competitors. One in two companies implementing accessibility measures has reported an increase in customer acquisition.

84%

of websites/apps do not comply with accessibility best practices.

20 000€

This is the current maximum fine for non-compliant companies. This amount is expected to increase with the introduction of the EAS to a 'deterrent' level.

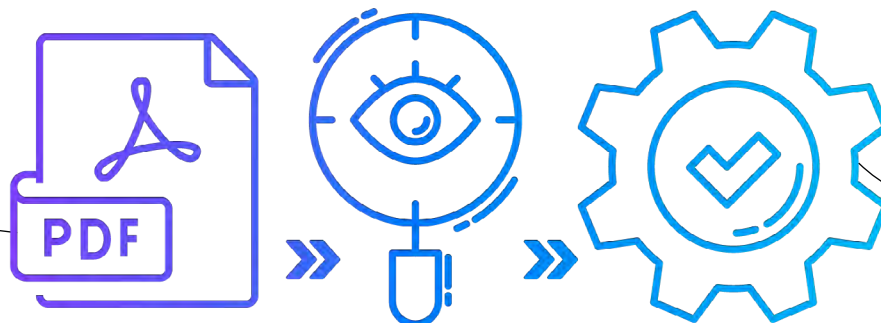
THE IMPORTANCE AND COMPLEXITY OF CONVERTING EXISTING PDFS TO PDF/UA FORMAT

The complexity of converting existing PDFs to PDF/UA format. This is especially true for large organisations with extensive archives. Identifying critical files, assessing their accessibility, and converting them to PDF/UA format requires time and resources.

Government services across Europe have made significant efforts over the years to improve public service accessibility, yet achieving 100% accessibility remains a challenge. In France, government PDFs

have an average compliance rate of 88%. In Luxembourg, this figure drops to 47%, while in the United States, only 20% of government PDFs currently meet accessibility standards. These figures highlight the challenge of converting existing documents to PDF/UA format.

Documents with a complex structure, images, tables or graphics often require manual intervention to be converted to a compliant format. The difficulty is even greater for older documents, which often lack the metadata required for an easy conversion.





Ensuring the accessibility of your PDF documents

4 best practices for converting to PDF/UA

Dedicated technological solutions are now available to simplify the conversion of existing documents. Here are some recommended strategies:

- Use verification tools to analyse the compliance of your existing PDFs, such as PAC, the PDF Accessibility Checker, developed by the PDF/UA Foundation.
- Choose AI-driven automated conversion solutions for simple documents and reserve manual conversion for more complex files.
- Train your teams on best practices for creating accessible PDFs and use tools that ensure document compliance.
- Implement automated validation processes to ensure every converted document fully complies with PDF/UA standards.



AI for faster conversion

With AI-powered solutions like **Inspire Adapt**, software can automatically analyse document structures and suggest conversion templates for each line of a PDF. The user can modify or validate the suggested templates, and the AI takes care of the conversion automatically.



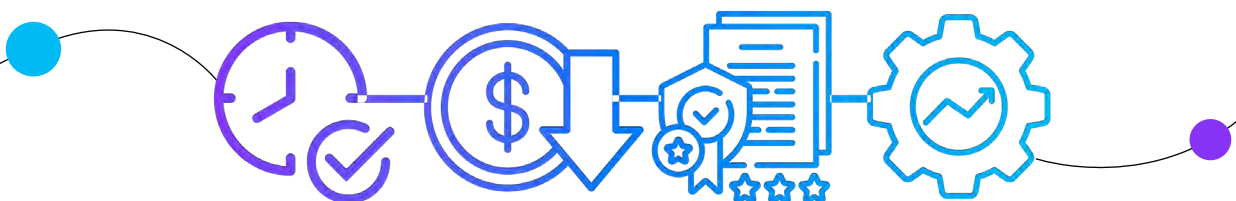
MODERN CCM SOLUTIONS PRODUCE PDF/UA DOCUMENTS DIRECTLY

Modern Customer Communications Management (CCM) solutions like Quadient Inspire enable organisations to design, manage, personalise, and distribute customer documents and communications in various formats, including PDFs. Modern CCM solutions are designed to facilitate the creation of documents that comply with accessibility standards, including PDF/UA. Solutions like Quadient Inspire can even convert legacy PDFs in batches..

The 4 benefits of natively producing PDF/UA files

Creating PDFs directly in PDF/UA format offers several advantages:

1. **Time savings:** no need to rework documents after creation.
2. **Cost reduction:** avoid expenses associated with reformatting non-compliant documents.
3. **Automatic compliance:** ensure every produced PDF meets accessibility criteria from the outset.
4. **Improved efficiency:** internal processes are streamlined, enabling faster and more effective document production.





5 criteria for choosing a CCM solution that creates compliant documents.

When selecting a CCM solution that meets compliance requirements, consider these five key features:

- Ability to natively generate PDF/UA-compliant documents
- AI automation tools to simplify the conversion process
- Seamless integration with existing systems

- Analytics features to audit document compliance
- Support for assistive technologies, such as screen readers

Quadient Inspire, the global leader in intelligent customer communications management (CCM), offers all these benefits through its dedicated Inspire Adapt solution.



I'm interested

1 in 2 European companies

has seen an increase in customers after adopting accessibility standards.



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO AUDIT YOUR EXISTING PDF

Ensuring PDF compliance: a systematic audit is essential:

- Inventory all existing PDFs
- Use specialised audit tools to assess compliance
- Identify strategic PDFs to prioritise
- Establish continuous verification processes for new documents

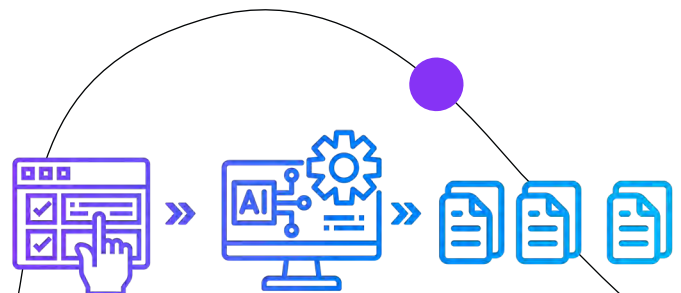
With Quadient Inspire, you can ensure that both your existing and future PDFs are accessible and compliant.

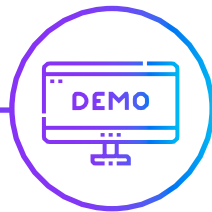
With Quadient Inspire Adapt, existing documents can be quickly adapted to PDF/UA standards using artificial intelligence technologies.

Key features:

- Effortless adaptation of legacy PDFs using AI
- Automatic creation of PDF/UA-compliant documents
- Intuitive interface enabling quick auditing and correction of PDFs

Adopting the PDF/UA format is not just about legal compliance; it is a commitment to universal accessibility, benefiting all your customers and partners. Companies that take this step today will not only enhance user experience but also gain a significant competitive advantage.





Invest now in the accessibility of your PDF documents to build a more inclusive and accessible brand.

Book a free demo of Quadient Inspire

quadient

About Quadient®

Quadient is a global automation platform powering secure and sustainable business connections through digital and physical channels. Quadient supports businesses of all sizes in their digital transformation and growth journey, unlocking operational efficiency and creating meaningful customer experiences.

For more information about Quadient, visit quadient.com