Zürcher Hochschule
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Web tool makes PDF documents readable for the visually impaired

Researchers at ZHAW have developed a web tool which makes existing PDF documents accessible. These can then be correctly read by text-to-voice programs. The newly developed tool, called PAVE, is now available for free online.

Visually impaired people use special software to read out electronic documents. These programs, however, only work for PDF documents if they have been appropriately „tagged" or include the necessary metainformation. PAVE is the world's first web tool to easily solve this common problem. Two years ago, the ICT Accessibility Lab at ZHAW's School of Engineering had already developed plug-ins for creating accessible PDFs using MS Word and MS PowerPoint. However, these plug-ins are unable to improve existing PDFs. This is where PAVE comes in, according to Alireza Darvishy, head of the ICT Accessibility Lab: "The user uploads a PDF document to PAVE, regardless of which application was used to create it, and the document is then immediately tested for accessibility. The web tool then makes as many automatic corrections as possible to the metainformation of the document." The content and visual layout of the document remain unchanged. The user then receives suggestions for any potentially remaining corrections; these can be made directly using PAVE.

The web tool was developed by ZHAW researchers with support from the Swiss Federation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (SVB).

International Recognition for Project
The [International Conference on Computers Helping People with Special Needs](#) (ICCHP) recognizes software projects that serve people with disabilities. At this year's final round in Paris, the team at the ICT Accessibility Lab was awarded first place by an international jury for their open-source software, PAVE. ([More on the award presentation](#))

The web tool is available for free online at the following address: www.pave-pdf.org

About the ZHAW School of Engineering
With 13 institutes and centers, the ZHAW is among the leading technical institutions in Switzerland. It guarantees the highest quality education and introduces innovative solutions to the economy, particularly in the areas of energy, mobility and health.

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