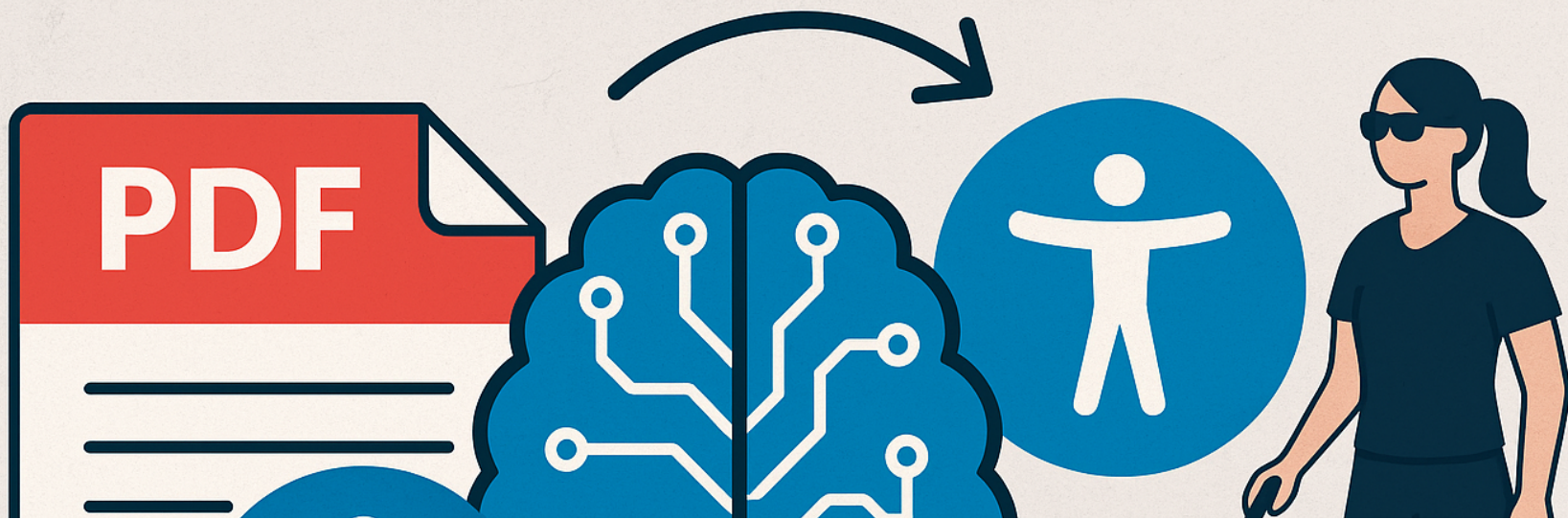




**PDF Days
Europe
2025**

AI and PDF Accessibility

Thomas Schempp | Head of Software Development | axes4 GmbH

Automatic Captioning

Subtitles in Zoom or Teams? Sometimes they're a source of amusement, but they significantly lower the barrier for people with hearing loss.



Modern Hearing Aids

Thanks to AI, they filter out background noise so that their wearers can hopefully understand everything, even at the proverbial cocktail party.



Navigation in Everyday Life for People with Vision Loss

Take ChatGPT on your smartphone, for example: give it access to the camera and ask what it sees. It will describe your surroundings in astonishing detail. Try it out—or talk to me after the presentation.



Easy-to-read Language

Do you understand legal texts at first glance, or do you sometimes rely on AI to simplify them? Many people feel the same way even with everyday texts—and AI can help them, just as it helps us, to navigate the jungle of language.



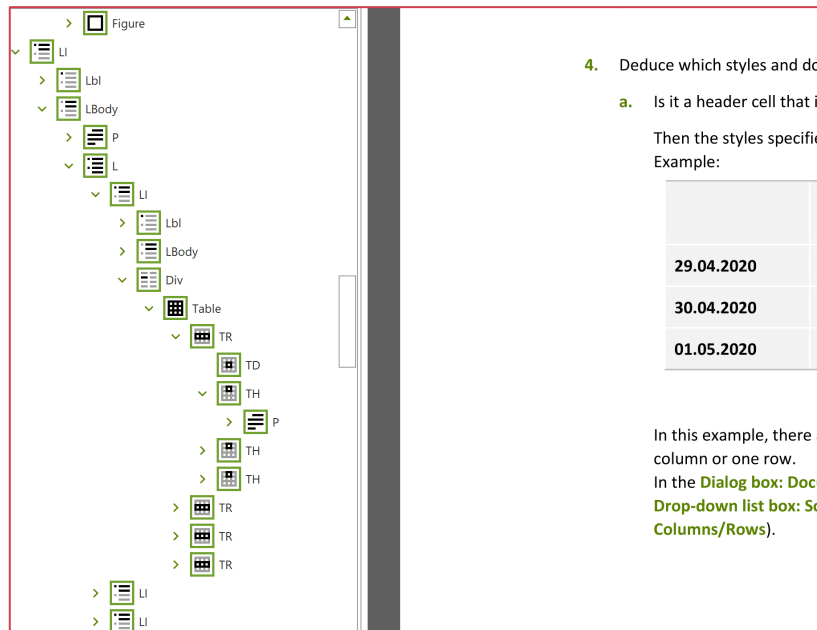
Equal Access

Equal Access means that all people—regardless of their individual abilities or limitations—have the same access to information, services, and opportunities. It ensures that no one is excluded. And it demands that accessibility is considered from the very beginning, so that everyone can participate on equal terms.



PDF/UA

On a hidden layer, the document contains tags—similar to HTML—that identify headings, tables, images, and so on.



The screenshot displays a PDF accessibility tree on the left and a table example on the right. The tree shows a hierarchical structure of tags: Figure, L, Lbl, LBody, P, L, L, Lbl, LBody, Div, Table, TR, TD, TH, TH, TH, TR, TR, TR, TR, L, L.

4. Deduce which styles and document structure are used to create the table.

a. Is it a header cell that is used to create the table?

Then the styles specified in the table are:

Example:

	Header
29.04.2020	23
30.04.2020	20
01.05.2020	19

In this example, there are two columns and three rows. In the **Dialog box: Document Structure**, the **Drop-down list box: Scope** is set to **Columns/Rows**.

Matterhorn Protocol



The Matterhorn Protocol is a collection of test criteria. It describes what a PDF must fulfill to be considered accessible, listing specific error cases that can be checked—like missing alternative text for images or incorrect heading structures.

Guiding Questions

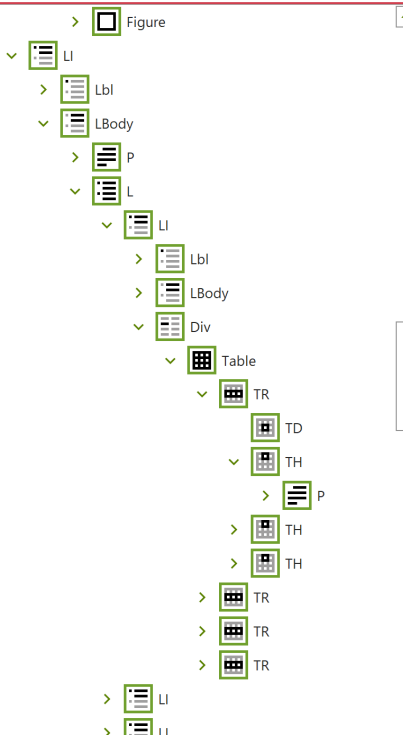
- Can AI replace PDF/UA?
- Can AI tag a PDF document?
- Can AI help with the Matterhorn Protocol?
- In what other areas of PDF accessibility might AI be useful?

Can AI replace PDF/UA?

ChatGPT's Own Admitted Limitations when Reading PDFs:

- “Multi-column text may get jumbled—I sometimes have to reconstruct the right order.”
- “Tables are readable as text, but often misaligned—I’d have to ‘clean them up.’”
- “Footnotes and column breaks don’t come out faithfully.”

Can AI tag a PDF document?



4. Deduce which styles and document settings are used for the table.

a. Is it a header cell that is not merged?

Then the styles specified in point 4 with the table structure are used for the table.

Example:

	Highest temperature	Location
29.04.2020	23 °C	1
30.04.2020	20 °C	1
01.05.2020	19 °C	8

In this example, there are no merged header cells, no merged column or one row.

In the **Dialog box: Document Settings**, the **Document Structure** tab is active. The **Drop-down list box: Scope of a merged header** is set to **Columns/Rows**.

?

halten in diesem Informationsblatt einen kurzen Überblick über Ihren Versicherungsschutz. Die Informationen sind nicht abschließend. Der Vertragsinhalt ergibt sich aus folgenden Dokumenten:

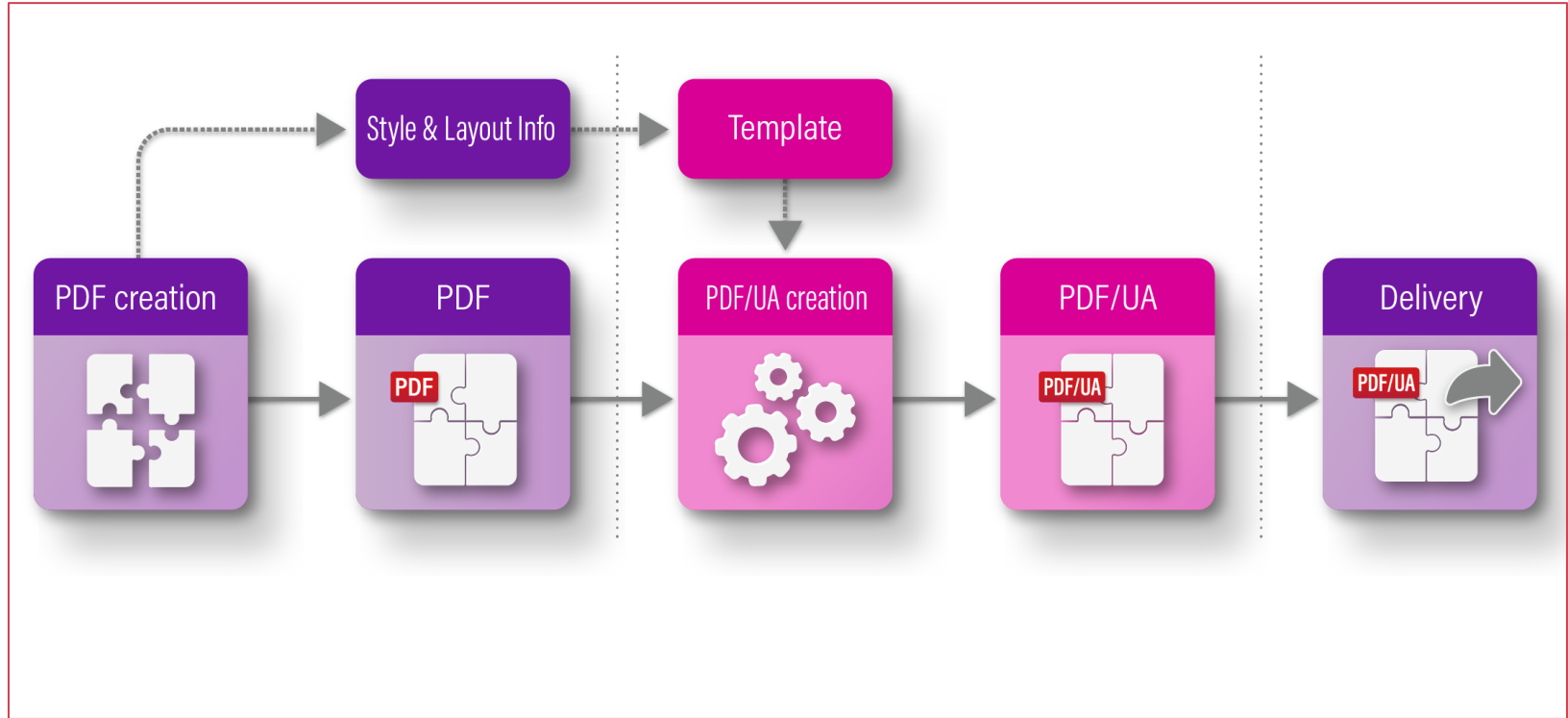
- Ihrem Antrag,
- dem Versicherungsschein und ggf. weiteren schriftlichen Vereinbarungen,
- den Allgemeinen Versicherungsbedingungen (AVB).

Wenn Sie umfassend informiert sind, lesen Sie bitte alle Unterlagen durch.

welche Art von Versicherung handelt es sich?

Handelt sich um eine Geräteschutzversicherung. Im Versicherungsfall übernehmen wir die Kosten für die Reparatur oder den Ersatz der defekten Geräte. Die Kosten für diebstahl, Diebstahl und Brand werden ebenfalls übernommen. Die Kosten für diebstahl, Diebstahl und Brand werden ebenfalls übernommen.

Serial Documents and the European Accessibility Act



Conclusion

- PDF/UA remains the gold standard. There is no AI magic that creates accessible PDF documents—certainly not if the goal is Equal Access.
- AI can support checking—especially the Matterhorn checkpoints that require human judgment.
- In the future, AI may improve automatic tagging enough to make corrections more efficient than doing everything manually.
- For serial documents, template-based tagging shows great promise, and AI can help here.