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# EBU Members' Newsletter

## Number five, May 2020.

## OUR CAMPAIGNS

### Marrakesh Treaty

As announced in a previous edition of this Newsletter, our campaigning efforts now focus on the Western Balkans, building on the regional dynamic there and the already well-established practice of regional exchange and cooperation for the Marrakesh Treaty campaign objectives. On 13 May we organised an e-workshop which gathered our six member organisations in the region, including our observer member from Kosovo, to take stock of results achieved so far and exchange on experience, needs and available advocacy tools. Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina have requested EBU support in their advocacy.

### Accessible lifts

EBU is preparing for the CEN/TC 10/WG 7 meeting of July, which will focus on the concerns of visually impaired persons in the revision of the Accessible Lifts standard EN 81-70. In that perspective, we have started to draft a note to WG 7 on the items other than those already listed for discussion, that we want to see considered in the revision of EN 81-70, i.e. touch screens, communication interfaces for alarm systems, etc. We will also need to push our views regarding braille and hearing-enhancement systems, and secure the reasonable agreement found within WG 7 on the contrast of signs on control devices.

### Creative Europe/MEDIA

We have started to make contacts at the European Commission about the proposed Regulation on the Creative Europe programme for 2021-2027, as part of preparing our position paper regarding the sub-programme MEDIA.

### COVID-19 pandemic response

On 30 April we attended the first meeting (online) of the re-established Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament: “Impact of COVID-19 outbreak to persons with disabilities”; and on 18 May we participated in the EDF Webinar on Human Rights violations of persons with disabilities during COVID-19.

Besides relaying World Blind Union and EDF surveys on the matter, we have sent out our own survey to our full membership on 26 May.

### Rail passengers’ rights

We relayed to our national member organisations a European Disability Forum (EDF) request to act on the ongoing recast of the 2007 EU Regulation on Rail Passengers Rights and Obligations, as the negotiations between the EU institutions enter their final round and are expected to reach an agreement under the Croatian Presidency of the EU in the second half of June. In particular, in the countries opposing a significant lowering of the 48 hour pre-notification time for assistance for persons with disabilities, we asked our member to send a message to their ministries of transport and to their allies in the government.

## The 22nd EBU Access Cast!

[Welcome to the May edition of the EBU Access Cast](https://ebuaccesscast.libsyn.com/ebu-access-cast-22-0), full of interesting news from the Assistive Technology and Digital Accessibility industries.

We kicked off this one by holding a small exchange of Android apps between Mario and Paweł including email clients and useful Wear OS apps.

WE then discussed all that is new and accessible in the [latest release of Chrome](https://groups.google.com/forum/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=footer#!msg/accessible/xdnuK-5ACjo/rP-DhHnHAQAJ) marked with the version number 81.

Apart from browsers, both of the popular Windows screen readers, [NVDA](https://www.nvaccess.org/post/nvda-2020-1-released/) and [JAWS](https://support.freedomscientific.com/Downloads/JAWS/JAWSWhatsNew), have had their latest versions released recently as well.

An episode recorded in May would not be complete without mentioning the Global Accessibility Awareness Day, celebrated on the 21st of this month. As always it is full of various [events and activities](https://globalaccessibilityawarenessday.org/events/#this-years-events) most of which will be held online this year and so many more of you will be able to attend. Discussing accessibility gave us a chance to wonder how accessible COVID-19 contact tracing apps in different countries of Europe might be and whether this is a reliable solution in its current form.

In the last episode, we pointed to the fact that mask usage instructions in an accessible form have proven to be impossible to find. A month has passed and, surely enough, the German organisation of the blind and partially sighted DBSV have published their own [page on using masks](https://www.dbsv.org/corona.html#protecting).

As we often remind you, books are a great part of accessibility and thanks to an interesting [Daisy Consortium webinar](https://daisy.org/webinar-series/), we had a chance to learn about some solutions allowing those with reading disabilities to access their favourite books using smart speakers.

One service not mentioned in the webinar is [Pratsam](https://www.pratsam.com/home.html), a Finnish solution that makes it easy for a library to setup their digital access portfolio ready with cloud, web and mobile apps as well as smart speaker skills.

Another company that has not fallen behind in delivering outstanding accessibility experience is Apple. From the patents they have applied for, we can deduce that a support for [enhanced photo taking accessibility features](https://appleinsider.com/articles/20/04/02/future-iphone-could-talk-vision-impaired-through-taking-a-good-photo) are forthcoming and so is the ability to make [binaural (3D) recordings](https://9to5mac.com/2020/05/04/binaural-recordings/) with the iPhone. The celebration of this month's accessibility awareness activities has also been marked by their making available of a brand new [accessibility website](https://support.apple.com/accessibility). VoiceOver improvements can be also spotted in the latest release of [Logic Pro X](https://www.applevis.com/forum/macos-mac-apps/logic-pro-x-version-105-out-many-enhancements-voiceover-users), the music-making and sound editing software.

We may learn soon what else is new in regards to accessibility at both Apple and Google as both companies intend to hold their events on the [22th](https://www.apple.com/pl/newsroom/2020/05/apple-to-host-virtual-worldwide-developers-conference-beginning-june-22/) and 2[3rd](https://developer.android.com/android11) of June respectively.

Speaking of large companies and communities, a set of [Wordpress-related accessibility resources](https://www.deque.com/blog/wordpress-accessibility/) has been published by the Deque University.

Finally, we shared a way in which all of us could contribute into building amazing technology that will profit us in the future. [Mozilla Common Voice](https://voice.mozilla.org/en) is an initiative where everyone can contribute voice data for a wide variety of languages to make it possible for robust speech technologies to be built. Our listeners in Slovenia will be also pleased to know that Tina has joined the Vocalizer TTS family extending the offer of available language options.

Watch this space for the next episode where we'll be sure to deliver even more exciting news. Meanwhile, feel free to reach out with your thoughts and suggestions through our [Email](mailto:ebuaccesscast@euroblind.org%20) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/EBUAccessCast/).

For more on this and much more useful information, go to [the podcast page](https://ebuaccesscast.libsyn.com/ebu-access-cast-20)!

## The EBU Access Cast is looking for new contributors

Are you young and ambitious, passionate about technology, and think that you know something about assistive technology? If so, then you can perhaps become a new contributor to the EBU Access Cast podcast.

Yes, we are looking for more people from across Europe who are visually impaired and who have knowledge about today’s modern technology and accessibility. If you speak good English, and you would like to have your voice heard on our podcast, please send us a short biography about yourself, including participation in similar projects.

Our team would like to expand with new and fresh minds who are ready to help us in taking our podcast to an even more professional level. After we receive your propositions, we will contact you for a short interview.

Also, beyond the general contributors for our podcast, we are looking for a sound editor, with good experience in audio editing and postproduction. If you think that you are the right person for making our podcast sound good, send us your CV and a small reference with audio examples and we will contact you.

All enquiries should be sent to [ebuaccesscast@euroblind.org](mailto:ebuaccesscast@euroblind.org).

## **Lars Bosselmann interviewed on BBC radio In Touch**.

EBU Executive Director Lars Bosselmann was interviewed on the BBC [In Touch radio programme](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000j81f), along with other contributors, on the theme of social distancing and leaving lockdown. Lars arrived as EBU Director on the very day lockdown was introduced, and so has had to come to terms with a new job, flat and city, all within the context of lockdown. Other contributors include Kirsten Hearn, a blind listener, Peter Brass, a board member of the German Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted, and Professor Robert Dingwall, a sociologist with a public health specialism based at Nottingham Trent University. The programme is presented by Peter White.

[Listen to the programme online](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000j81f).

## TÁVSZEM - Remote Eye, a Project Helping VI People in Hungary Wins the SozialMarie Audience Award 2020

The common collaboration of the communities of Visually Impaired people all over Hungary resulted in success: The SozialMarie Audience Award 2020 went to TÁVSZEM – Remote Eye.

The Tender for SozialMarie is announced every year, searching for projects aiming at the improvement of the quality of life of a disadvantaged social group through innovative tools and community solutions. The program searches for social innovations that have already been tried and proved to be effective in Central and Eastern Europe. Due to the ongoing COVID-19, the 16th SozialMarie was awarded to 15 excellent social innovations in frame of a virtual Award Ceremony on 1st May, 2020. The first three prize-winners were endowed with € 15,000, € 10,000 and € 5,000, while the other 12 projects won € 2,000, each.

The final nominees for the Austrian-founded SozialMarie - Prize for Social Innovation 2020 included 10 projects by NGOs from Hungary, as well as others from Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Slovakia. An experts’ jury nominated 34 projects from 288 submissions, and later awarded 15 prizes to the best innovations. There was a 16th, a people’s choice award decided by the international audience.

During the online vote between 23-29 April, from a record total of 12,319 votes, 1,761 were cast for the online remote assistance project of MVGYOSZ - Hungarian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted. Thus, TÁVSZEM – Remote Eye won a financial support of €1,000.

In frame of TÁVSZEM – Remote Eye services sighted professionals act as the eyes of a Visually Impaired user via the camera of a smartphone, using a designated accessible application. This way the operator can inform the client by describing what is to be seen around the blind user. Having won the audience awardis a real professional and community success in the life of MVGYOSZ. And all this could not have been achieved without another professional success.

The staff of SozialMarie kept in regular e-mail contact with the nominees, and provided information on the process of submitting an application, the nomination, the audience voting, and the jury process. The continuous up-to-date information was especially important during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which also led to serious changes in process of the online audience vote, as well as in the organization of the public vote and the award ceremony.

During the preparation phase, the organizers offered a pre-testing opportunity for the nominated organizations as the public vote took place on a brand new, freshly developed, and published website. Preliminary testing was, of course, also done by our experts, as we considered it essential that the link was accessible for visually impaired persons and to have equal chances to participate in the public vote.

During the testing, we had to face the fact that in spite of the possibility of casting only one vote from a particular e-mail address and to confirm that vote a link received by an email had to be opened also, the voting process contained an extra built-in security feature requiring an action, which could not be done without the ability of visual perception (CAPTCHA). Thus, anyone using a screen reader or living as a partial sighted could not participate on his or her own in the voting. Considering equal accessibility as one the main priorities of MVGYOSZ in all fields of life, we thought it was a must to report that obstacle to the organizers.

Having not more than a day and a half left till the opening of the public vote, we did not have high hopes for the situation turning favourable. We were all the more surprised to receive an immediate reply from the Hungarian coordinator, saying that our claim had been forwarded to the developers, not to speak about the next advice a few hours later confirming that the security feature in question had been removed from the voting process. That is such a small but important reinforcement in advocacy work, which is unfortunately very rare in Hungary. Thanks to this intervention and to the prompt reaction by the organizers, as well as to bringing together our visually impaired communities, colleagues and members of MVGYOSZ and its member associations, TÁVSZEM-Remote Eye Project won not only the Audience Award, but also collected a record number of votes.

As the winner of the Audience Award, TÁVSZEM-Remote Eye receives a financial support of €1,000 for further education and development of the operators providing the actual services in frame of the project.

As to TÁVSZEM-Remote Eye services and in what fields that remote assistance is provided to Visually Impaired people, you can read a more in a separate article to follow in a later issue.

## Audio-Art: audiodescribed visits to the museums of the Paris municipality

The Physical and Cultural Accessibility service of the association Valentin Haüy has set up (in French) ‘Regards Tactiles’, a visit with audiodescription of the museums of the Paris municipality.  
Would French speakers like to discover "Le retour de chasse de Diane" by Jules Boucher or "L'odalisque au fauteuil" by Henri Matisse or even, "L'Équipe de Cardiff" by Robert Delaunay?  
The association Valentin Haüy is proposing twice-weekly opportunities to discover 16 artworks from the collections. Every Wednesday and Friday you can learn about a work of art in audiodescription.  
"[La défense de Paris](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6mDHWoNtIg)" by Ernest Barrias - 1883 in the Petit Palais - Musée des Beaux-Arts of Paris  
and "[Sainte Geneviève, sainte patronne et protectrice de Paris, devant l'Hôtel de Ville](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udWiZCe9X68)" – anonymous work - circa 1620 - Carnavalet. Museum.

There is a [playlist on youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6mDHWoNtIg&list=PLbigsZkDDuoMbb02X8MLeZSlGUM6K8NyC) of the proposed works.

## From the newsletter of our friends at ICEVI-Europe: Using Vitual Reality to support Orientation and Mobility Instruction

**Timo Repo and Outi Lappalainen, Valteri Centre Finland**

Virtual Reality (VR) is changing the ways people play games, watch videos and use software. Visually impaired people can use virtual reality products even if they have a severe vision loss. Our students have used VR technology to visit interesting sites on Google earth, land on the moon and of course play games! At the moment we are testing the effectiveness of using a 360°video recordings in helping individuals with visual impairment to learn new travel routes.

**Orientation and mobility in virtual reality**

When learning new routes, people who are visually impaired need a lot of repetition so that the details of each route can be safely memorized. Tackling a new route for the first time on your own after your Orientation and Mobility training can be exciting but scary, but opportunities to experience the journey through VR -goggles can help relieve the travelers’ anxiety and build up their confidence.

After a few orientation and mobility sessions, the traveler can watch the VR- video at home or in some other safe environment. The traveler practices and memorizes the route as many times as needed and without time limitations to become confident about the twists and turns of the route. The video can be paused at any location and travelers can explore particular landmarks, turns and details at their leisure.

When the traveler feels confident enough, the route can be practiced for real. After the session the orientation and mobility instructor can assess the benefits of the video and suggest areas that should be studied more.

Any everyday route can be filmed. It can be a route to work, school, interest groups or even the local convenience store. The video can be filmed by the orientation and mobility instructor, a relative or by the travelers themselves with a 360°camera. The video can be watched from a computer, a tablet, a smartphone or from VR- goggles. The benefits of watching the video from VR-goggles is that the video is seen right in front of the viewer’s eyes, which helps people even with relatively low visual acuity to see the details (one individual had 0,01 visual acuity). It is also easier to focus on the video, because the goggles block everything else from the user’s view and help you immerse yourself in the task at hand.

**What you need in making the videos**:

A 360 camera

VR- goggles. The goggles don’t need to be expensive ones. For example goggles which have a head mount for a smartphone (google cardboard etc.) can be used. Just make sure the lenses are good.

A computer and a software that can convert the filmed video to 360 form.

Feel free to send questions about this article.

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## News from RNIB Scotland

A final-year student at the University of Abertay in Dundee has developed a video game that people who are blind and partially sighted can play. Alasdair Marnoch (22) from the Isle of Lewis launched his new game, called 'FHear', at the university's digital graduate show on Friday, May 15th.

FHear, is a horror-themed game that is playable through audio alone. There is no need for sight to be able to play and enjoy it and experience everything it has to offer. In FHear, the players finds themselves stranded in a dark forest and must use their hearing to identify the direction of a guide and escape the pursuit of a malevolent creature. The sense of fear and foreboding is heightened by the music, which grows more intense as the creature gets nearer.

“I grew up playing the violin and piano so I guess you could say that music has always been a passion of mine," says Alasdair, who has the sight loss condition nystagmus. "I’ve always enjoyed playing computer games and have loved learning about how sound and music are used within the computer games industry whilst at university.”

A student on the university's Sound and Music for Games degree course, Alasdair didn't initially seek to create a game that was playable by people with sight loss. It was only during development that he realised that he was creating something that was accessible to them. "Students at Abertay have been working from home, which has made the research and development stages of my project more difficult than it should have been," he says. "On the other hand, it’s cut out many forms of distraction in my life and focus all my attention on developing FHear."

Now he is aiming for a career as an audio designer for a game development studio, a natural fit given his musical background and interest in games.

"I’m going to start reaching out to games development companies and sound designers and see if there’s any interest in the concept. It will also be a great way of showing prospective employees what I can do to do within, sound design, music and games development."

ENDS.

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