****

# EBU Members' Newsletter 2021

## Number one, January 2021.

## OUR CAMPAIGNS

### Creative Europe/MEDIA

The text approved by the co-legislators in trilogue in December was unanimously approved by the Culture Commission on 11 January and the regulation is expected to be approved in plenary in April 2021 and will be in force from the day of publication in the OJEU.

The European Parliament Rapporteur informed us that the European Commission has started to work on the Work Programme for 2021, which will be formally operational when the regulation enters into force (spring 2021) and eventually implemented by the EACEA.

So, we have started to lobby the Commission so that the provisions of the regulation on inclusion materialise, along the lines of our recommendations, in the 2021 Work Programme and beyond. A letter signed by the Chairman of the Commission for Liaising with the EU was sent on 16 January to the European Commission’s competent units at DG CNECT and EMPL. In that letter, we expanded on our recommendations contained in our position paper of September 2020, to ask that applications which foresee accessibility in their budget get extra points and are prioritised when grants are awarded in general, so that production companies and filmmakers are incentivised to make their works accessible.

### Marrakesh Treaty

We wrote to our member organisation in Norway to enquire about the state of play, and also wrote to the European Commission’s DG CNNECT and the EFTA Secretariat, to enquire about the timeline for bringing EU law into the national legislation of EFTA countries; with no reply so far.

### Equality in employment

At the moment of writing these lines, the Employment and Social Affairs committee (EMPL) of the European Parliament was expected to vote, on 27 January, on an own-initiative resolution on the implementation of the Equality in Employment Directive in light of the UNCRPD -- EBU had largely contributed to the report, together with EDF and other disability organisations. The Rapporteur sees a strong consensus at the EP and is confident about the outcome. In the compromise amendments resulting from discussions within EMPL, it is good to observe considerably better wording, from our point of view, on two matters which we thought were being approach with too negative a stand: sheltered workshops and fines when employers fail to respect diversity quotas.

The Plenary is expected to vote in March or more likely April.

### Miscellaneous

A European Disability Forum meeting with European Disability NGOs on 28 January was an opportunity to express our intention to participate fully in any joint action on the following issues:

* Promoting accessible voting at European elections 2024
* Unblocking the Horizontal Anti-Discrimination (also called ‘Equal Treatment’) Directive at the EU Council
* Upgrading the EU Disability Card scheme

Building on the expertise of our Road Safety and Accessibility of Transports group, we started to prepare the EBU participation in the International Transport Forum consultation meeting (online) on 10 February, for stakeholders to contribute in shaping the ITF summit 2021 programme, in Leipzig in May.

## Accessible audiovisual media services in Austria until 2030

A new law was passed by the Austrian National Council at the end of last year, providing the ground for accessible television and radio broadcasting. Implementing the EU directive on audiovisual media services, the law will force providers of such services to broaden their accessible content. According to the planned time frame, the content of the Austrian national broadcasting company ORF has to be fully accessible by the year 2030.

For the Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (BSVÖ), which has been lobbying for such changes for years, a vital part of the new law is the obligation to publish action and stage plans for the implementation of accessible content, thus holding the broadcasting companies responsible and allowing disability organizations to monitor the developments. Another important step was the inclusion of private companies as well as streaming platforms, which so far have ignored the necessity for sign language, audio description, subtitles or easy to read content almost completely.

“Blind and partially sighted people like to watch TV as well and inform themselves via television programs. Until now, they were excluded from most content. I am therefore very happy that this has to change now!” says BSVÖ president Dr. Markus Wolf. “Accessible information and entertainment programs are a question of equal participation and equal rights.”

## International Disability Alliance (IDA) Survey on Experience of Persons with Disabilities Adapting to COVID-19 Global Pandemic

The IDA survey is now available in all languages planned including English, International Sign, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Serbian and Creole. All links and more information about the survey [available here](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/covid19-survey).

## RNIB and Blind Ambition Employment Webinars

RNIB and Blind Ambition invite you to a series of free weekly hour-long webinars to support job seekers with sight loss in lockdown and beyond.

New Year, New Me, New Job: a series of employment advice webinars

RNIB would like to help as many jobseekers with sight loss as we can to get to the next stage of their career. This could be finding a new role, entering employment, starting an apprenticeship or starting up a new business. Over the next few months, they will be covering a range of topics from help with CV writing, different ways to market yourself, interview tips and much more.

There are 13 sessions as part of the employment webinar programme, starting on Wednesday 3 February 2021 at 8pm. In the first session you will hear about:

* The importance of goal setting and why it’s needed.
* Setting SMART objectives when looking for work.
* How to keep track of your career goals.

Where: [Find out more and register for the event](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1-new-year-new-me-new-job-goal-setting-for-visually-impaired-people-tickets-136586611231)

Please email contact@blindambition.co.uk if you have any issues with registration.

## Let’s Play! - IBF Foundation launches a new grant programme for organizations looking to start playing blind football

The International Blind Football Foundation is pleased to announce a new support scheme to provide equipment for new interested organizations.

“The International Blind Football Foundation Let´s Play! Grant Programme” aims to provide organizations involved in blind football or wishing to start practicing it with the equipment they need to play the sport. IBF Foundation will donate balls, non-official eyemasks and IBSA-approved eyemasks to organizations whose proposals are accepted, at no cost of buying and shipping to them. Projects focusing on youth development (male and female, under 23) and women’s blind football are particularly welcome.

IBF Foundation believes the number of people playing blind football is still relatively small, and one of the obstacles is that the supply of equipment is limited and not readily available. In addition, although the world is in a difficult situation due to the spread of coronavirus, we believe that sports should not be stopped. This is the same as in the past two grant programs.

Getting equipment and starting to play blind football is a gateway. Through playing, visually impaired people can also connect with their peers and experience personal growth. This means that the possibilities for the visually impaired are expanding, and we are convinced this leads to the realization of our organization's vision.

The following types of organisations are eligible to participate in this call for project proposals:

* Blind football teams/clubs;
* Schools for blind people;
* Organizations of and for visually impaired people;
* National Blind Sports Federations (NFs);
* National Paralympic Committees (NPCs);
* National Football Associations;
* NGOs.

Key performance factors to be reviewed include previous experience with blind football, age and gender of the beneficiaries, the financial situation of the organization and expected results.

The call for project proposals is open from **Monday January 25th, 2021 at 9 am (JST) until Monday February 15th, 2021 at 9 am (JST).** Successful applicants will be informed of the results of the selection process no later than **Tuesday February 23rd, 2021 at 9 am (JST)**. The equipment will be purchased by **April 30th, 2021** and delivered as soon as possible thereafter.

**Please check out all the information:**

[www.ibf-foundation.football/letsplay](http://www.ibf-foundation.football/letsplay)

## It’s game on for blind and partially sighted players in Northern Ireland and Scotland with the launch of a new gaming group.

They have come together to explore how they can enjoy the same video-games as their sighted peers, and press developers to make gaming software more accessible.

Set up by national sight loss charity Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), members of the group are taking part on a weekly online call, sharing their own experiences of gaming and which games they've found most accessible.

"They're an incredibly motivated and positive bunch, and I'm very excited to see where they take things," said James Kyle, RNIB Scotland's community connection co-ordinator. "Already the group are discussing ways to play games together outside of the weekly meetings, making YouTube content for their own channels, and possibly fundraising as a group for RNIB as well."

However, the majority of video games at present aren't accessible to players with sight loss, says James, although this does vary.

There are more accessible games on iPhone and iPad than on PlayStation and Xbox game consoles, for instance, he explains. "But thankfully, the situation is improving. In the past few years, a number of big games have added narrated menu-systems, more flexible 'difficulty options', and more audio-cues to convey extra information to the visually impaired player.

"The current leader is 'The Last of Us, Part 2', an action game released this year for the PlayStation 4 game console. It incorporates audio cues, high-contrast modes, and gameplay adaptations to offer blind players a similar experience to that of a fully sighted player.

"The developer, Naughty Dog, invited the disabled gaming community, including blind and partially sighted gamers, to test and provide feedback on the new features they were developing. As a result, the suite of accessibility features and options were far more useful to disabled players."

New technology should by its very nature be adaptable to different people's needs, says James. Text can be enlarged, colour contrast enhanced, audio description and cues added. "People with sight loss can already enjoy accessible books, films and television thanks to new technology - so why not video-games?

"We already have a broad mix of people joining our group, from those with a lot of useful vision to people with none at all. Your level of sight, of course, can significantly affect which games are accessible. We want our group to be inclusive to not only experienced gamers but people who have never played before as well and are looking for a place to start."

Fiona Joyce, RNIB Northern Ireland’s community connection coordinator, said: “Our new VI Gaming group consists of a broad mix of people from those with a lot of useful vision to people with none at all.

"At our final meeting in 2020 the group drew up their wish list for 2021 and have lots of exciting plans including inviting representatives from the gaming industry to speak at the group meetings.”

\* For further information about the RNIB Visually Impaired Gaming Group, phone RNIB’s helpline on: 0+44 303 123 9999; or (in Scotland) contact James Kyle on +44 7552 170 413 or email james.kyle@rnib.org.uk; (in Northern Ireland) visit: <www.facebook.com/groups/RNIBConnectNI>

### Case Studies

David Barry (28) from Bangor in Northern Ireland

David helped set up the group in November after losing his sight at the age of just 25. The father of three, who has a rare sight condition called keratoconus, hopes that the group will provide a much-needed social space for gamers to share their own experiences of gaming and discuss games they've found most accessible. He also wants to challenge software developers to consider blind and partially sighted people when designing new games.

David, now 28, explains: “Having only recently lost my sight, I hated the thought of losing my hobbies as well. My entire social life is around gaming and I worried my sight loss was going to stop me from having a social life.

“The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has many groups, so I spoke to RNIB Connect’s Fiona Joyce to see if there was a gaming group. There wasn’t, but she reached out to colleagues and before we knew it, she had helped set up the gaming group with RNIB Connect in Northern Ireland and Scotland!”

David says everything is online for younger generations and they’re getting into gaming a lot younger. “I want to ensure I keep that connection with my children as well,” said David, “and show other parents with sight loss that they can do the same.”

As a huge fan of the game Clash of Clans, David recently reached out to its creators Supercell to ask them to make their games more accessible.

“My new year wish list involved contacting Supercell. I thanked them for the experience they’ve given us gamers but asked them to make their app more accessible and I even offered the group’s help in doing that for their apps. They don’t seem to notice, but blind people are spending more and more time on their phones. "Technology is the way forward. You shouldn’t be left out of this new online world just because you are blind.”

David plays on anything from Amazon’s Alexa to smartphones, the computer and the PS5 and believes the essence of the new VI (visually impaired) gaming group is about bringing people together. Over Christmas, David tried to get in touch with celebrity VI gamer Brandan Cole who helped developers create the game The Last of Us Part 2 – hailed as the most accessible game for players with sight loss.

The game incorporates audio cues, high-contrast modes, and gameplay adaptations to offer blind players a similar experience to that of a fully sighted player. David succeeded and Brandan is set to give a talk to the group about playing and accessibility in the near future.

Brandon said: “Video games are one of the greatest forms of entertainment in the world today. From videogames come larger than life experiences, vast open worlds, and incredible stories. Everyone, including the totally blind, deserve access to all those things and more, and that’s why I do what I do. Games should be for everyone, and I will continue to do my part to make that a reality.”

Iain Strachan (56) from Glasgow

Iain is registered partially sighted and is a long-cane user. "I have lost about 50 per cent of my sight since this happened four years ago," says Ian. "I have been a gamer for 30 years, playing personal computer and console games and I've recently started a You Tube channel called 'Part sighted gamer', playing sighted and part-sighted gamers.

"I look forward to our weekly Visually Impaired Gamers meeting where we can all share out thoughts on games what we are all playing and have a chat. It's good to talk to fellow gamers about the hurdles of been visual impairment and trying to find accessible games. I hope we can build our group and keep it going in the future."

Emma McLean (30) from Kilmarnock

Emma has no sight. "I feel comfortable around the Visually Impaired Gaming Group as I can share things. We all listen to and understand each other, even if we all have different degrees of sight loss. I really do feel a part of the group.

"When I had my sight, I loved video games. It was Final Fantasy 8 that got me into role-playing games. I really like fantasy games because I feel I am a part of that world and can throw myself into the characters and be anything I want to be.

"I also like it when you can create your character and make what you want them appear to be. But that’s the designing part of me, as I like to give the character a new outfit or look.

"I guess that’s why I would love to make my own video game. I have created the story but need help to take it forward."

## Apply for the Holman Prize

The only qualifications for the Holman Prize are that you must be blind (including legally blind and partially sighted) and that you must be 18 years old by October 1, 2021.

But if you’re not quite ready to upload your 90-second YouTube pitch and fill out the application, there’s no need to worry; applications close on March 14 at 11:59 pm Pacific.

We know just how different applications will need to be during this time of the pandemic. While we recognize this will be a factor for the scope of some peoples’ ideas, we encourage you to think big and imagine your Holman plan without taken the current constraints too much into consideration. We will do everything we can if your idea is successful, to work with you and help you make it happen. Don’t let the pandemic blunt your ambition!

[Check out our Holman Prize frequently asked questions](https://lighthouse-sf.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f40e17a83bbae60b5969a0798&id=df72bb2b53&e=9e86a06ce4) and if you don’t find your answer there, email us at holman@lighthouse-sf.org.

The Holman Prize is brought to you by LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Make your [application for the Holman Prize](https://holman.lighthouse-sf.org/apply/?mc_cid=0211704d41&mc_eid=9e86a06ce4)!

## ****Webinar - Non-financial information and disability reporting in the European Union****

We would like to invite you to join the webinar “**Non-financial information and disability reporting in the European Union**” promoted by [Fundación ONCE](https://www.fundaciononce.es/en) in collaboration with [Global Reporting Initiative](https://www.globalreporting.org/) (GRI) in the framework of [Disability Hub Europe](http://disabilityhub.eu/) (DHub).

The webinar will take place virtually on **February 18th from 11 to 12:30 CET**. You can find the agenda [here](https://disabilityhub.eu/en/outcomes/webinar-non-financial-information-and-disability-reporting-european-union).

The session will be focused on:

* How **Sustainability** and **non-financial reporting** can play an important role in promoting inclusive business practices
* The impact to include **explicit disability-related** requirements in the non-financial reporting agenda and legislative framework.
* How **stakeholders** can contribute to a more disability inclusive non-financial reporting
* Additionally, experts will share **good practices** on how to improve on the transparency of disability reporting

The webinar will count with the participation of **key actors** including the European Commission, the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG), Accountancy Europe, European Disability Forum, and, companies such as Acciona and L'Oréal.

Please register to attend the webinar in the following [link](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_qwxd5-C3RKu00is3Bx_RWQ).

**Feel free to share this invitation with relevant colleagues.**

We look forward to your attendance at the webinar!

ENDS.

**European Blind Union**

6 rue Gager Gabillot, 75015 Paris, France

+33 1 88 61 06 60 | ebu@euroblind.org | [www.euroblind.org](http://www.euroblind.org)