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# EBU Members' Newsletter 2021

## Number six, June/July 2021.

## OUR CAMPAIGNS

### Creative Europe/MEDIA

On 16 June we issued a [press release](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/press_release_on_first_creative_europe_2021-27_calls_for_proposals_june2021.pdf) to welcome the progress observed in the first calls for proposals under the Creative Europe Programme for 2021-2027, which show some very positive developments for persons with a visual impairment.

The call for proposals ‘Films on the Move’ underlines that the MEDIA strand shall provide support namely for encouraging the use of subtitling, dubbing and where applicable, audio description tools. It further indicates that “special attention will be given to applications presenting adequate strategies to ensure gender balance, inclusion, diversity and representativeness”. This counts for up to 5 of 45 points in the award criteria for relevance. By comparison, similar calls under the previous period of the Programme did not mention inclusion in the award criteria.

A similar approach is taken in the calls for proposals ‘Tv and online content’ and ‘Audience Development and Film education’, albeit without explicit mention of audio description. Also noteworthy is the call for proposals ‘Networks of European Cinemas ’which, among expected results, includes adjusting the business practices of European cinema theatres in terms of inclusion.

We see it as a concrete and encouraging result of our campaigning for MEDIA funding to the film industry to promote equal access to culture for persons with visual disabilities.

We were invited by the Head of the Unit of the Audiovisual Industry and Media Support Programmes at DG CNNECT of the European Commission, to a meeting (25 June) to update civil society organisations on the diversity and inclusiveness policy development and support activities for 2021 and beyond. The meeting was presented as “an occasion to exchange practices and priorities and find where possible synergies to strengthen our policies and common messages.” Feedback on this meeting will follow in the next newsletter.

### Marrakesh Treaty

On 11 June the government of Montenegro tabled the draft law for the ratification of the Treaty. It is expected that the Parliament will in turn adopt it in the fall.

### European Accessibility Act

We contributed initial comments to ANEC on the draft European Commission mandate – in fact an implementing decision with annexes – to EU standardisation organisations to produce harmonised standards for the implementation of the EAA.

In the context of an EDF meeting, we also conveyed our main messages to the Commission representative. In particular, we welcomed the following indications in the draft:

“The work [of drafting new or revising existing harmonised standards] shall ensure inclusiveness of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. The work processes, meetings venues and documents shall be accessible for persons with disabilities.”

“The harmonised standards shall be available free of charge for non-profit organisations.”

This is a positive response to our advocacy for more inclusiveness and transparency, jointly with EDF. But it is just a draft, which need support.

### Accessible lifts and other standards

We have continued to liaise with ANEC, to contribute comments on their position paper on the technical revision of the EU standard for accessibility to lifts (EN 81-70:2018).

The EU standardization body CEN is currently developing a European standard on tactile lettering. A good number of EBU national members are part of the respective working group “CEN/TC 293/WG 13) as representatives of their countries. That working group started its deliberations recently.

### Web Accessibility Directive

EDF was consulted by the European Commission on the draft survey question of an upcoming public consultation on the application of the WAD, and we were given the opportunity to comment on these.

### Miscellaneous

An EU agreement was found at the end of May, on the EU digital COVID certificate, which eventually, after shortcomings in the initial version, includes provisions on accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The Portuguese Presidency’s council conclusions on the European Disability Rights Strategy are disappointing. The Council should have gone further into detail on the provisions that concern the Member States and the Council as an institution. Instead, the Council Conclusions (Conclusions) remain superficial and do not contain many specific commitments on the implementation of the Strategy.

### Events

We attended the following events:

* The EDF Accessibility Summit: 'Accessibility and the Future of Work: The Role of Digital' (1-2 June).
* The periodical EDF-ENGO coordination meeting (10 June), to discuss the Conference on the Future of Europe and also to share news on our respective activities.
* The European Commission Strategic Dialogue meeting on the European Bauhaus initiative (10 June). We are looking into how to participate.
* The EDF workshop on access to health (15 June).
* The second meeting of the EDF European Accessibility Act Peer Support Group (21 June). A representative of the European Commission presented the draft mandate to European standardisation organisations for harmonised standards for the implementation of the EAA (see above).

## PARVIS on RNIB Connect Radio, and further updates

PARVIS will soon air its second mini-video on the right to accessible information. The English version will be available on the [PARVIS YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBLKX-DklJI98RHUjODP3KA) on July 12th, and the translated videos in French, German, Montenegrin, Slovak, Spanish, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Dutch and Swedish on July 21st. The mini-video is accompanied by an e-workshop on how to advocate for the right to accessible information, held on July 12th and facilitated by Cecilia Ekstrand from SRF. If you are interested in participating, kindly email Cecilia Ekstrand by **July 6th** at the latest**.**

**PARVIS was also given an opportunity to speak on RNIB Connect Radio about the project’s first video on the right to accessible healthcare as well as developments of future activities. You can listen to the recording in its entirety** [**here**](https://audioboom.com/posts/7883582-european-blind-union-releasing-videos-supporting-rights-of-blind-and-partially-sighted-people)**.**

PARVIS is currently working on developing EU guidelines on audio description. A questionnaire for improved audiodescription has been sent out to all EBU members by email, which you can also access [here](https://bit.ly/3vcm255). The deadline for responding to the survey is **July 8th** and your contribution is highly appreciated!

Mariem Sene

PARVIS Project Coordinator

## The Latest EBU Access Cast.

The [last episode before the summer break](https://ebuaccesscast.libsyn.com/ebu-access-cast-31) includes a Special interview for you about Navilense.

Pawel said that he found a nice iOS app called Replica which allows iOS user to make audio and video stream though their Browser, and Mario told us his positive opinion about newest generation of the Svarovsky white cane which is very different than the previous canes from the same Brand.

After gadgets we talked about Twitter and different ways how you can use it, through its native interface and a bunch of integrated shortcuts which you can find in the very nice review, as well as Usage of 3rd party clients for Twitter.

Different Messenger clients are today’s Standard in the communication, but are they equally accessible? Mario Talked about Whatsapp web set of scripts which are being developed by blind developer Juliano Lopes which bring up more accessibility features into Whatsapp web while using it through your Browser, and Pawel found out the Add-on for NVDA for desktop version of Whatsapp Client. We touched the topic of accessibility of Telegram for Android and iOS as s Signal which became very popular in the last few months.

Since we mentioned many different Messengers we thought that it’s the best time to bring you the news that Clubhouse became available for Android, and Mario introduced Clubdeck, very accessible unofficial Clubhouse Client to the general audience. However if you thought that this is everything from us for today’s dose of how to communicate, wait a second. Pawel is also having the announcement about Elten, a new very advanced audio Network from Poland for blind people.

It As the Summer started to show its strength, it looks like that after a long long time of not being able to travel, we will be able to do that with new Covid green passports, and you can learn more about it.

After all the topics which we had, it is a time for dessert, and that is the interview about Navilense, a very nice system which uses specially made QR codes developed to help blind people to use them in so many different ways. CEO and founder of the Navilense company Mr. Javier PIta gave an exclusive interview to Hlynur and Pawel and Tanja prepared also a Short demo of their newest feature called Navilense 360.

Enjoy listening and have a great summer! Should you have any questions, remarks or content you would like to contribute, you can reach us by email at ebuaccesscast@euroblind.org or [twitter!](https://twitter.com/ebuaccesscast)

## Austria - Inclusion through sports

The 6th of June is considered the day of visual impairment in Austria. This year the Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (BSVÖ) made "Sports and Health" the motto for the occasion. A topic that is more up-to-date than ever, after the corona-related lockdown and the opening steps that are taking place in the sports sector nationally.

Movement is an essential contribution to an active life. In addition to physical well-being, sport is also of great importance for mental health and represents an important building block for inclusion and participation in society.

How much the many benefits of exercising are valued at BSVÖ can be seen through a wide range of sporting activities offered by the seven national organizations to their members. Everything from gymnastics, yoga, swimming to table tennis, darts or bowling is included. Additionally training camps for a variety of summer and winter sports are provided.

Dr. Markus Wolf, President of the Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted Austria (BSVÖ), emphasizes: “Sport is of great importance, especially for visually impaired people. Everyone should have the opportunity to do sports and not only to do something for their own health, but also to actively participate in life and society. That's what we stand for!"

## Montenegro - Equal and empowered

From March 2021, the Union of the Blind of Montenegro- UBM began the realization of the project "Equal and Empowered" supported by EBU through its Solidarity Fund, in line with the GEAR activity, to strengthen the capacity for dealing with gender policy.

Lack of knowledge about gender equality, anti-discrimination mechanisms, lack of information about the importance of gender equality, inaccessible information, the presence of intersectional discrimination, are the reasons for creating a project idea.

The main goal of the project is to reduce the level of discrimination against visually impaired women in Montenegro, by strengthening their position and participation

At the VIII regular session of the Executive Board of the UBM, which was held on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, the initiative to establish a **Women's Committee** was supported. The establishment of the Women's Committee is a crucial step towards the adoption of policies, plans and measures that lead to equality, reduction of multiple discrimination based on gender and disability in order to obtain an inclusive and responsible organization, which is, in fact, the UBM.

For the needs of holding workshops and trainings, materials in accessible format, CEDAW Convention and the Law on Gender Equality of Montenegro in audio format and in Braille were prepared, and the “Future We Want” was prepared in 30 copies in Braille.

In June, two workshops for 17 and 19 visually impaired women related to the topic of strengthening self-confidence and self-esteem were held.

Radio shows are being continuously prepared, focusing on the issue of gender equality of visually impaired women, and are broadcasting once a month.

In the following period, three workshops will be held on the topics of gender equality, discrimination, violence of visually impaired women, as well as training aimed at strengthening the capacity of employees in the UBM and in eight local organizations.

## Feedback from the World Blindness Summit

The [World Blindness Summit Madrid 2021](https://www.worldblindnesssummit.com/es/node/39) has gathered over 4,000 people from 152 countries around the world who have set the future of over 285 million blind people who demand an inclusive future in terms of access to education, employment, culture and all areas of life.

At the closing ceremony, the Government Vice President Carmen Calvo pledged to continue working "for the rights" of people with disabilities “to build their personal life projects with equal opportunities and in freedom".

This was her statement at the closing of the largest global event for blind people ever held, with over 4,000 participants from 152 countries around the world, co-organised by the ONCE Social Group, the World Blind Union and the World Blind Union [World Blind Union](https://worldblindunion.org/es/) (WBU) and the [International Council for Education of the Blind](https://icevi.org/) (ICEVI).

In her speech, Calvo stressed that "it is not about integrating, but about including", and appealed to the efforts of society as a whole, including private and public authorities, and recognised that this path "requires a change in regulations". “We must continue to ascertain the quality of the rights enjoyed by democracies in terms of the quality of life of people with disabilities", she said.

Hence, she highlighted the amendment of Article 49 of the Spanish Constitution, which will not only stop referring to 4 million people with disabilities in Spain "in an almost denigrating way", "but will also mean a firm commitment to an inclusive, free and strong society, when their rights and opportunities become the strength of democracy".

**Uniting to leave no one behind**

Miguel Carballeda, President of the ONCE Social Group, highlighted the importance of being able to hold this summit despite the difficulties. “We have fulfilled our commitment to the World Blind Union (WBU) and ICEVI to discuss the future of the 285 million blind people around the world who want to be an equal part of society”.

In this sense, he stressed the importance of people and teams, because "united we will go further and achieve more things, without leaving anyone in civil society behind". As a result of this joint work, Carballeda stressed that all the political groups in Congress and the Senate have supported the holding of this World Blindness Summit, "which has made Spain, and Madrid, a benchmark for the inclusion of blind people throughout the world".

Cristina Gallach, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, described the summit as "an avant-garde, disruptive and innovative event" that has served to address challenges and objectives that raise awareness in civil society and continue to make progress "in improving the rights of millions of blind people".

In this regard, she highlighted the ONCE Social Group's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and "its model of inclusion with an impact in our country and beyond our borders". “You have managed to pinpoint Spain at the centre of global inclusion", she added, before indicating that "you can count on me as an ally in the defence of the rights of people with disabilities".

At the closing of the Summit, Martine Abel Williamson, recently elected President of the World Blind Union, intervened from New Zealand to highlight the importance of organisations representing people with disabilities and to recall that blind people "have to be brave and move forward together, united, for a better future".

ICEVI President Frances Gentle highlighted the importance of Braille in promoting the education of blind children around the world. “The magic made by the six dots used in Braille have opened wide the doors of knowledge for blind people. We never feel so free as when we hold a Braille book on our knees", she said.

**Institutional support**

A large number of national and international authorities have been there to give their support, in person or online, to the World Blind Summit. It is worth mentioning the participation of HM Queen Letizia, who was at the inauguration, or the Presidents of the Congress and the Senate, Meritxell Batet and Pilar Llop; the Minister of Inclusion, José Luis Escrivá; the President of the Community of Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso; the Mayor of the Madrid, José Luis Martínez-Almeida; the Secretary of State for Social Rights, Nacho Álvarez; and several ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in our country.

From outside our borders we have had the participation of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell; the European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli; and the Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres, who wanted to show his support to World Blindness Summit Madrid 2021 by signing a letter in which he committed himself to the blind people of the world to work for their inclusion.

In addition, several public and private entities have wanted to support the holding in Madrid of this historic summit for blind people from all over the world.

**Accessible technology**

The Summit, under the slogan "Everyone's vision", has developed over 50 debates on diverse topics that affect blind people in the fields of education, training, employment, autonomy, technology, reading, culture and sports, among others.

To make meetings possible and participation easy from anywhere in the world, the World Blindness Summit Madrid 2021 has had the largest technological platform available, which provides security, usability and privacy to the event, and also access from remote countries. The platform has supported at least three audio channels for the sessions that have been developed in the three official languages of the event (English, French and Spanish).

It has allowed the participation of at least 10 speakers through video and audio, and at least 1,000 attendees with an instant messaging communication channel. The platform has been able be accessed from various types of devices: desktop or laptop personal computers, digital tablets and desktop or mobile phones.

### World Blind Union General Assembly: Election Results

For its 10th General Assembly, the World Blind Union (WBU) has organized the **first global accessible online participatory process** to elect its new Table Officers.

280 WBU delegates have elected **Martine Abel-Williamson** (New Zealand) as the **new President of the World Blind Union.** Martine Abel-Williamson is on the board of WBU national member Blind Citizens New Zealand.

The new leadership of the WBU for the term 2021 to 2025 has been elected as follows:

* **1st Vice President: Fernando Riaño (Spain)**
* **2nd Vice President: Yaw Ofori Debra (Ghana)**
* **Secretary General: Diana Stentoft (Denmark)**
* **Treasurer: Diane Bergeron (Canada)**

In the coming days, the biography of the President and of the newly elected Table Officers will be published on the [WBU website](http://www.wbu.ngo).

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)