

# EBU Members' Newsletter 2023

## Number three, March.

## Our campaigns

On 23 March, we participated in the EU Disability Platform’s subgroup on the **Disability Employment Package**. Member States were invited to present their approaches on the setting of targets. Our message to them in that context was to connect to the Disability Employment Gap indicator for the EU Social Scoreboard (cf. Eurostat metadata structure, which adopts a functional limitations, not medical, approach). We also asked them to eventually distinguish between sheltered employment and employment in public sector, social economy and business economy, and also recalled our ask to disaggregate per type of disability.

The draft EBU document “Guidance on **reasonable accommodation** for visually impaired employees and applicants” was sent to our members, for comments and input by 15 April, to our working group “Rehabilitation, Vocational Training and Employment” for elaboration. This work will also enable our reaction to the draft guide on reasonable accommodation that the European Commission is scheduled to present to the EU Disability Platform’s subgroup on the Disability Employment Package on 11 May.

On 21 March, together with EDF, we were invited by MEP Tomasz Frankowski, rapporteur of an own-initiative report, to present to the CULT committee of the European Parliament in a consultation meeting with stakeholders, the EBU issues regarding “the future of the European **book sector**”. While EDF essentially spoke about the implications of the European Accessibility Act (e-books), we addressed, Creative Europe funding and the Marrakesh Treaty. We asked the European Parliament:

to invite the Commission to use the opportunity of the mid-term review of the **Creative Europe** regulation 2021-2027, to consider introducing some benchmarking in the regulation on how funding is used to promote inclusion, and in particular accessible-format books for blind and partially sighted people, and

to support our view that compensation schemes should be dropped, in the context of the announced evaluation by the Commission of the **Marrakesh Treaty** Directive, evaluation to take place likely in 2024.

In the CULT committee meeting of 27 March, the rapporteur presented his initial ideas for his report, and he appears to support our call concerning Creative Europe funding. It seems unlikely, instead, that our message regarding the Marrakesh Treaty will be taken on, because CULT is not competent for the author-rights side of things. We will see if we can take it up with the JURI committee.

Regarding the Marrakesh Treaty, we are waiting for confirmation from our member in North Macedonia that their country has still not joined the Marrakesh Treaty (even if they already have legislation in place that partly implements its principles).

On 22 March, we participated very actively in a half-day workshop organised by Ernst & Young and other partners in consulting for the European Commission, aimed at supporting the impact assessment of the future EU initiative introducing the **European Disability Card**. This was an excellent opportunity to push our recommendations, and in particular one idea of ours which – even if not within the scope of the consultants’ mission – is picking up momentum with other DPOs, i.e.: that the card should concern, beyond travellers and consumers, also workers, trainees or students who move to another EU country, where their disability status needs to be recognised in that context for equal treatment. We argue that the card should facilitate the transition while undergoing a “re-assessment” process in the host EU country.

We are still waiting for input for our response to the ongoing public consultation by the European Commission (deadline: May).

We contributed an [Op-ed piece](https://bit.ly/3FQ4TXa) on the Disability Card initiative for the magazine Social Europe.

On 28 March, we were invited by the European Commission’s DG MOVE to speak at their High Level Group of Experts on **Road safety**, to present our priority issues on the matter. We focused our intervention on the remaining issues around silent vehicles and AVAS, and our recommendations for driverless vehicles, as laid out in our position paper of September 2022I. We also mentioned our concerns (albeit without a position on these yet) about the dangers for visually impaired pedestrians of shared spaces (also referred to as mixed traffic area) and the new forms of urban mobility.

On 7 March, we attended another open meeting of the EDF Web Accessibility Initiative Communities of Practice (WAI-CooP) project, focusing this time on the feedback mechanism and complaints procedure of the **Web Accessibility Directive**. For more on this topic, [see the separate article in this newsletter](#_Waiting_for_WCAG).

## Pre-registration for the webinar presenting the EBU handbook on high-quality audiodescription.

On 17th May, EBU will host an online webinar to present its handbook for high quality audiodescription (AD). On the eve of Global Accessibility Awareness day, EBU wants to highlight the importance of using AD to promote access to audio-visual content among blind and partially sighted people.

If you wish to pre-register, please let us know by writing an e-mail to nacho.lopez@euroblind.org. The webinar registration form, as well as the, program and schedule, will be available in our April Members’ Newsletter. The link to the webinar will follow after registration.

## The energy crisis – an additional burden for visually impaired people

“Before I began losing my sight, my electricity bill would have been €80 to €100 every second month. Now my eyesight is worse, I need the lights on to do anything, and my bills are between €150 and €200,” this quote from an Irish man with a visual impairment, illustrates perfectly the severe impact the energy crisis can have on people with disabilities.

The quote is taken from [an article written by our Executive Director Lars Bosselmann for The Parliament magazine](https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/energy-price-crisis-disabilities-european-union). Lars goes into further detail in the article and reaches out to the EU, as well as local and national authorities, to do more to allow people with disabilities in general to maintain their standard of living through the cost of living crisis, the effects of which we are all feeling.

## Norway - Only a phone call away

The Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted have launched two phone services offering knowledge and advice about sight related topics. As a member of the organization, you can get a phone consultation with an ophthalmologist (a doctor specialized in eye and vision care). They have also launched a public phone service that is open every Friday, where anyone can call and consult a nurse specialist. Both services are free of charge.

“We hope that this can be of good use to the Norwegian population and contribute to the spreading of knowledge about sight related topics”, says communications manager Mia Jacobsen.


Specialist nurse Anette Særvold with a telephone headset

## The 2nd episode of the EBU in Action podcast

[Episode 2 of EBU in Action](https://ebuinaction.podbean.com/e/consumer-products/?token=aaf01591db797af60b7e52b2370b8ec8) (March 2023) We discuss with Bart Simons (EBU's representative in ANEC) and Javier Pita (CEO of NaviLens) about the different ways to make information of consumer products accessible. Furthermore, we also learn about the latest news from DBSV with Reiner Delgado. This is also available on the [Apple podcast](https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/ebu-in-action/id1660795249) and [Google podcast](https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9mZWVkLnBvZGJlYW4uY29tL0VCVWluYWN0aW9uL2ZlZWQueG1s/episode/RUJVaW5hY3Rpb24ucG9kYmVhbi5jb20vZTUzNTNlMTItMDcwYi0zMWZjLTkwZWYtNmFkYmM5M2RhMWRj?sa=X&ved=0CAUQkfYCahcKEwjoyKrA0fv9AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQAQ) platforms. [A transcript of episode 2](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/Episode_2_Accessible%20information%20in%20consumers%20products_Transcript.pdf) is also available (pdf file)

## Waiting for WCAG 2.2: when will they be released, and what to expect?

The **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG), published by **World Wide Web Consortium** (W3C), are the internationally recognized guidelines to make web content more accessible, and they are the reference point for digital accessibility of: web sites, mobile apps, and digital contents.

The current version, [WCAG 2.1](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/), was released in June 2018, but **a new update (**[**WCAG 2.2**](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/)**) is right around the corner**, with the addition of new requirements that will **improve accessibility and usability of web content for all users**. This new version is based on WCAG 2.1, which it extends.

If you have already started your accessibility journey towards WCAG 2.0 or 2.1 compliance, don’t worry: **each version of the WCAG is backward compatible**. If you are already compliant with WCAG 2.1 A or AA, it will take little effort to align with the new Success Criteria introduced by this update, so any effort will still be worthwhile.

Now released as a Candidate Recommendation, the WCAG 2.2 will soon be published as a Recommendation. There is no certain date yet, but officially **it is scheduled to be completed and published in May 2023**.

For more information, read the [full article on the Fondazione LIA (Italy) website](https://www.fondazionelia.org/en/research-and-development/waiting-for-wcag-2-2-when-will-they-be-released-and-what-to-expect/).

## ICEVI/WBU Youth survey

In collaboration with ICEVI, WBU and other stakeholders, Royal Dutch Visio is spearheading an effort to reach out to young people with visual impairments (blind and low vision) to determine their wishes and concerns related to the future.

The initiators of the survey believe that all young people with visual impairments worldwide have the right to education and participation in society. Everyday parents and concerned adults do as much as possible to ensure success for young people with visual impairments. However, there remain obstacles in education and employment. We would like to know what young people themselves consider these to be.

**What we need from you:**

1. Please link to our survey if you are between the ages of 18 and 30 years old and have a visual impairment using one of the following links:
* Dutch: <https://forms.office.com/r/6ejfuvd0qB>
* English: <https://forms.office.com/r/MsGe3j4HzN>
* Spanish: <https://forms.office.com/r/CW2PWBkBsX>
* French: <https://forms.office.com/r/przCfFCzNR>
* Arabic: <https://forms.office.com/r/aGzAcU5Eha>
1. If you know anyone between the ages of 18 and 30 years old who has a visual impairment, please forward this letter with the links to the individual.
2. If you are an agency or organization representative, teacher, counsellor, or other professional, please disseminate our survey to anyone you know between the ages of 18 and 30 years old who has a visual impairment.

The survey is fully accessible as a Microsoft form and the link to our digital questionnaire, will be active from March 8th until April 14th, 2023. If you have any questions, please contact: Judith Wijnen: judithwijnen@visio.org or Klaske van Zandbergen: klaske.vanzandbergen@student.hu.nl

**What we will do to follow up:**

* We plan to organize two international meeting days on Wednesday (June 28, 2023) and Thursday (June 29, 2023) based on the results of the survey. The meeting on June 29 will be held physically for those who can be present at the Visio board office in Huizen. Meeting day details with information on how to get to the venue will be sent to anyone who expresses an interest in attending.
* To accommodate international participants and those unable to attend in person, we are offering time slots for digital participants. On 28 June there will be a time slot from 13:00 PM GMT/UTC to 15:00 PM GMT/UTC. On 29 June there will be a time slot from 07:00 AM GMT/UTC to 09:00 AM GMT/UTC.
* The agenda items for these meeting days will emerge from the survey. At the end of the questionnaire, it is possible to register for your preferred meeting day. The meetings will be held in English.
* A report of the research and the meeting day will be sent to anyone who is interested.

Please respond to the survey and forward the info to anyone who might be interested.

## International study on the Impact of LEGO Braille Bricks on Learners with Significant Visual Impairment

ICEVI Europe, a partner of EBU, invites you to participate in a survey for education practitioners from the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), the European Union (EU), and other parts of the world. The survey will explore education and other practitioners’ perceptions and knowledge of LEGO Braille Bricks. The results of this survey will help us to understand what you, as practitioners know about LEGO Braille Bricks. It will also help us to further understand the impact they create and to identify the need for future training and resources. This survey will inform discussion questions for focus groups with education practitioners and children with visual impairment in further stages of the project.

The online survey takes approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes to complete, and your participation in completing the survey is greatly appreciated.

For any queries about this research project, please contact the researcher John Ravenscroft (john.ravenscroft@ed.ac.uk). The following links are for the survey in [English](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023). [French](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023FR). [German](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023DE).

## Preparing for integration of abacus maths in educational innovation

The integration for future educational innovation on abacus maths is underway. We received a supportive response from the Scottish Government regarding our initiative of improving education in numeracy for children and young people with visual impairments by using the abacus, which is already recognised as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament), gave a detailed response including the most up to date information about legislation and policy regarding the Scottish education system; in addition, she highlighted relevant educational institutes and organizations who may be interested in this approach.

In response to a broad range of current educational issues discovered in our previous [article](https://www.euroblind.org/newsletter/2022/november/en/british-abacus-association-baa-reimagine-abacus-indispensable-computing), we will develop a multi-phase project of the integration to explore educational innovation. At the current planning phase, the aims are the completion of new teaching methods of basic arithmetic operations; the initiation of knowledge integration and structuring an education ecosystem.

“Creating new teaching methods is the crux and the fundamental priority at this phase.” Tsao, Pei-Ling said, the president of the British Abacus Association. The new teaching methods have been developed for nearly three years to improve teaching and make the whole of the learning process more effective. Meanwhile, the provision of guidance and resources from our consultants will interweave the collaboration and communication of multiple stakeholders among Taiwan, France and Scotland in the first place to structure an education ecosystem. Special thanks for the advice from Joe FitzPatrick MSP.

**British Abacus Association (BAA)**

**ENDS**.

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