

ICEVI European Newsletter

Issue 63, Volume 23 number 2, September 2017

Coordinated by Andrea Hathazi ahathazi@yahoo.com
Edited by Mary Lee maryblee2000@yahoo.co.uk and
Martha Gyftakos mgyftakos@yahoo.com
Designed by Peter Teplický webmaster@icevi-europe.org

Subscription:

If you want to **subscribe** for ICEVI European Newsletter, or to **stop receiving** it, please send an e-mail message to: webmaster@icevi-europe.org.

Content:

Preface of September 2017 Newsletter	2
Empowered by Dialogue	4
2017 ICEVI Europe Awards	13
Presentation of Beáta Prónay – ICEVI-Europe board member	17
Presentation of Anne Kristine Grosbøll – ICEVI-Europe board member	19
Presentation of Kathleen Vandermaelen – ICEVI-Europe board member	20
First Steps Project: System Changing Early Intervention Project for Visually Impaired Children in Five Different Countries	21
Training professionals: The situation on in-service training and training professionals in the field of visual impairment	22
Teacher training for blind and visually impaired children in Latvia	23
Norway - teaching the professionals	24
Further teacher training, Sweden	25
Announcement of EGDF Conference 2017	26

Preface of September 2017 Newsletter

Dear members of ICEVI-Europe,

The 9th ICEVI European Conference: Empowered by dialogue is behind us. It was a good conference with inspiring keynote speakers after the opening speech of Herman van Rompuy, the former President of the European Union. The conference was enriched by the thought-provoking posters, workshops, presentations on the Quality of Life and the many meetings during coffee and lunch breaks. We trust that the conference proved to be successful for all conference participants and that they found the information and expertise useful and stimulating. We all can be proud and thankful as well for the warm, Belgium hospitality. In this issue of the newsletter you can read more about this conference in Bruges. Please be informed that the proceedings of the conference are published on the homepage of the website of ICEVI-Europe.

In the 2017 General Assembly of ICEVI-Europe, the members have elected or re-elected the members of the board. Three members of the board, specifically, Mrs. Tarja Hännikäinen, representing the Baltic and Nordic countries, Mr. Patrick Temmesfeld, representing the German and Dutch speaking countries, and Mrs. Krisztina Kovacs, representing the Central European countries were not eligible for re-election. On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe and myself, I would like to take this opportunity to gratefully thank each of them for their time, tireless efforts and outstanding contributions to the mission of the organization within their role. The elected new members of the Board are the following: Mrs. Anne Kristine Grosbøll, representing the Baltic and Nordic countries, Mrs. Kathleen Vandermaelen, representing the German and Dutch speaking countries and Mrs. Beata Pronay representing the Central European countries. The Board of ICEVI-Europe sincerely looks forward to engaging in a fruitful cooperation with the new elected board members and hopes that they in turn, will find the experience both beneficial and pleasant.

Unfortunately, we did not manage to find a candidate for the position of president after the death of our former President Betty Leotsakou. Therefore, I will be president ad interim.

Of course, as the Board of ICEVI-Europe, we will evaluate the outcome of this conference with the cooperation of the Belgian Host Committee. But the challenge for the coming time will be to implement the results of this conference. The most important issues are the recommendations of the ICEVI-Europe professional interest groups and the regional meetings.

One item is very clear. The next conference 2021 will be in Israel. It will be an interesting conference for everyone, not only for the members of ICEVI-Europe but also for our colleagues from the countries close to Israel. We hope and look forward to meeting all of you in Israel!

Hopefully in the coming years there will be regional meetings, workshops and a follow up of the professional interest groups.

We only can do that by the active support of our members. That is also the policy of the board. The members of ICEVI-Europe form the association, whose success is dependent on their active participation and support.

I wish you still a nice summertime and maybe holidays. We will keep in touch via our website and newsletter. Please utilize these facilities to send information and keep the members of your ICEVI-Europe Board and colleagues informed.

On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe,

Hans Welling
President



Empowered by Dialogue

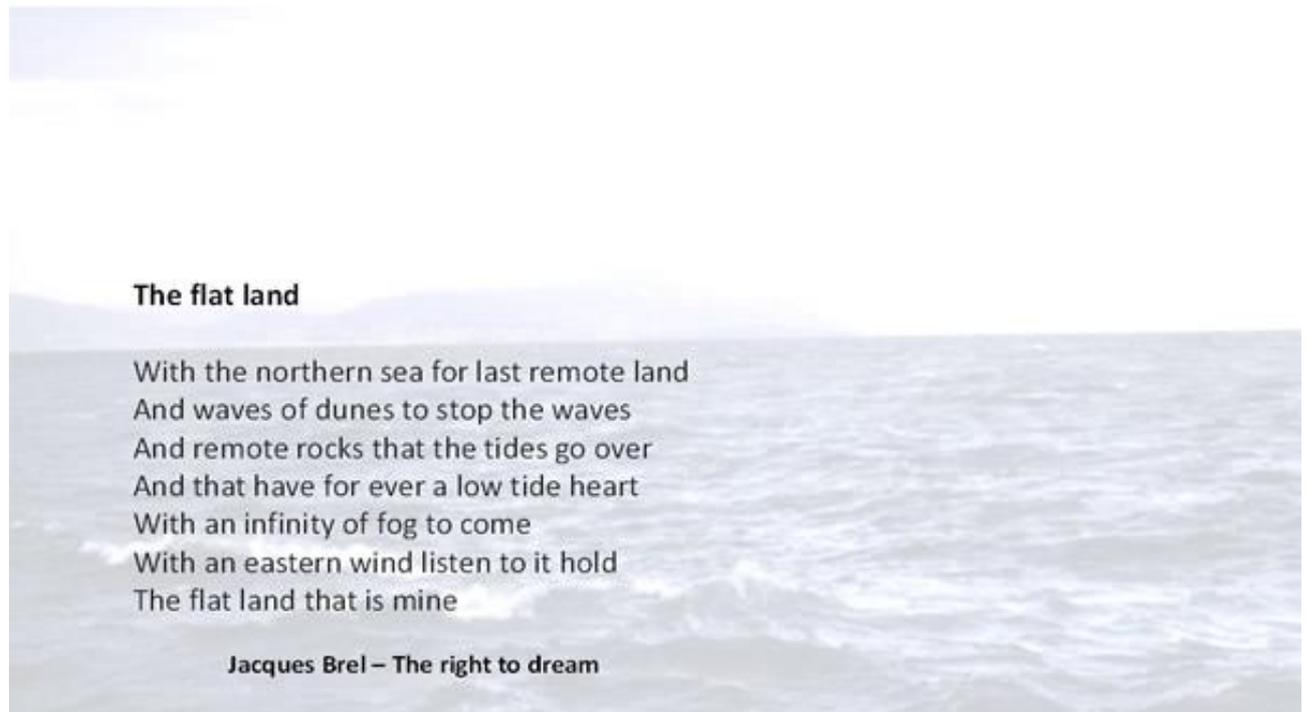
9th ICEVI European conference 2017 in Bruges

Report by Eliane Bonamie



The closing time of the conference! The end ...or is it just the very beginning?

Let's have a short overview and an appreciation of the ICEVI conference. We all got the opportunity to exchange wisdom, expertise and good practices in an open minded dialogue. It was a special meeting place of connectedness; we have to **cherish** this in future times!



The flat land

With the northern sea for last remote land
And waves of dunes to stop the waves
And remote rocks that the tides go over
And that have for ever a low tide heart
With an infinity of fog to come
With an eastern wind listen to it hold
The flat land that is mine

Jacques Brel – The right to dream

Picture: Jacques Brel, (1929-78) was a Belgian singer and songwriter

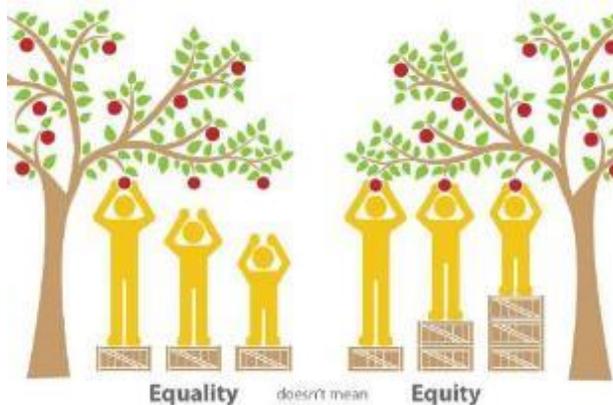
Our societies move constantly, citizens have become more empowered and emancipated. Education, Welfare and Health policy focus on active citizenship and social inclusion. People become more and more responsible for their own well-being and professionals are supportive.

The theme of the conference was “ Empowered by Dialogue”, based on the Quality of Life framework by Dr. Robert Schalock. This theme was specifically chosen because it includes two interrelated concepts, “dialogue” which is believed to be a strong vehicle in order to “empower”. Dialogue is conducted via constructive discussions between open-minded partners, who respect one another’s differences of views. Empowerment refers to the act of making someone stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights. The title has a message on different levels: the individual person, the individual professional, the organization, the society, the conference itself.

Some very inspiring ideas we have to remember:

“Quality of life as a promising concept”

1. Quality of Life starts from the **support** needs and the right to be supported, this is an inspiring and very functional term! Support is like the bridge filling the gap between personal competences and demands of the environment. And support asks for **expertise**! Everyone has the right to have support, everyone needs support. After all, we are in the same boat!
2. **The family quality of life** and the family well-being is a rather new term; the condition in which the family, the family members, the extended family (neighbours, village) have the opportunity to experience situations that are important and feel comfortable for them as family.
3. **Social inclusion** as an active participation in and meaningful contribution to activities. Being involved in a broader group, in a context of diversity, in the society. In that perspective social inclusion of “all” citizens is an important key for the welfare and the well-being of countries.
4. Quality of Life refers to **Citizenship** in the broader context of a society: we all want to be expert of our own life, we all are confident and get strong to control our life and claiming the rights and the duties.
We see here the link with the United Nations Convention: Human rights of disabled people worldwide!
5. Quality of Life starts from **talents** and the strengths and offers **opportunities**; these opportunities we create together with the clients , in partnership, on their demands. For example: the conditions and opportunities to interact, to be informed, to make choices... Nothing about us without us!
6. Quality of Life is a **universal** frame and QOL is a **personally** desired way of life (subjective). Support is **universal** and the kind of support is **unique, personal** (subjective).
7. **Equity is different from Equality.**



Picture: Equality doesn't mean Equity - Inspiration by Claudia Claes

Equality is about sameness, it focuses on making sure everyone gets the same thing . Equity is about fairness, it ensures that each person gets what he/she needs.

8. Keys of Quality of Life:

Happiness as a moral duty, a contentment. It is more than satisfaction. We can cope with a problem and still be happy.

Coping with the impairment/disability, be conscience to live in a dominant visual world (self-determination) and build up the assertiveness IN and TOWARD the visual world. So sighted peers can feel comfortable as well.

Social Emotional competences, self-determination and social responsibility.

Hope as a special powerful attitude.

The power of **communication** and dialogue, to bring together. In that perspective, European networks are important to extend a communication network!

Togetherness is the cement of the society! (Herman Van Rompuy)

Where did we talk about in the oral sessions and meetings?

An overview.

We take the 8 concepts of quality of life and put them in a word cloud. The more a concept was mentioned during lectures, workshops, discussions, the bigger the word in the cloud.



Picture: Tags

Material well-being was mentioned least. In our western society with a good public welfare, we are not very worried about that, isn't it?

We were surprised about the low amount of presentations about **self-determination and emotional well-being!** And we hardly talked about the emotional well-being of **families**, which is important for the family quality of life. These themes must be a point of attention for the next conference!

Rights is also a small word. Rights of the persons who ask support, and rights for those who give support. In times of savings and burn-out, we hardly talked about care for those who give support. Can a policy around that fact empower the self-care? Can it help us to feel more comfortable in the supporting process? Again a theme for the next conference!

As expected, most presentations and workshops were about **social inclusion and personal development**. We discussed a lot of new ideas about specific support.

Research showed that the presence or lack of psychological well-being is the key to obtain inclusion and participation. An important task for the individual, appropriate support with knowledge on time. Besides this, there is still a lot of work on the social and policy level.

Each of us will do something with it and new ideas will arise in every of the 32 countries that participated.

We hope that the meetings and discussions during, before and after the sessions, made us feel connected and that exchange go on in between the conferences. The professional interest groups, the regional groups and the agreements that were made within these groups can contribute to that.

Let's keep empowering each other by dialogue!

Thank you!

200 people representing 32 European countries, and nearly as many languages! It was like the Tower of Babel, a place where we, despite or due to the great diversity have built up a huge creative construction, a tower of expertise by working together!

Thanks to The Belgian Host committee: the service Blindenzorg Licht en Liefde, Center Spermalie and Center Ganspoel. A network of expertise build up throughout the collaboration of these 3 organizations for children, youngsters, adults and elderly with (multiple) visual impairment and their context. They are situated in the Northern part of Belgium, Flanders.

Thanks to the ICEVI Europe Board members, the program committee members and the scientific committee members and the ICEVI world. Thanks to Mister Count Herman Van Rompuy and the Keynote speakers: Prof. Dr. Claudia Claes, Prof. Dr. Bea Maes, Mrs Kristen Layton, Dr. Elke Wagner, Mr. Peter Verstraten, for their inspiring frameworks and for their expertise. Thanks to every participant who enjoyed the conference in an active way. A special "thank you" to all the colleagues who gave an oral presentation or a workshop or who made a poster! Remember: "Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change!" (Renée Brown).

We were all very pleased by the actors of the theatre and by the musicians who colored in between our thoughts with some art!

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the partners: sponsors and exhibitors, and we thank them sincerely for their engagement.

And last but not least, we want to say "thank you" to the several volunteers who did a great job!

Images say more than words

Let's have a look at a selection of pictures that was taken during our conference, with thanks to the freelance photographers.









Eliane Bonamie representative of Flanders- Belgium – August 2017.

Based on the conclusion made by the chairwomen: Eliane Bonamie and Joke Luytten.

2017 ICEVI Europe Awards

Martha Gyftakos, Andrea Hathazi

The Board of ICEVI-Europe has proudly decided to continue the tradition of presenting an award to individuals and organizations that have made a significant improvement in the quality of life of people with visual impairment. This year the Awards that were presented to Individual Achievements, Organization Accomplishments and one award to a Past President of ICEVI-Europe. The main purpose of the awards is to honor people and organizations and recognize their major contributions, efforts, research, best practices, innovation or cooperation within the field of visual impairment in Europe, but also who made a significant impact on the lives of people with visual impairments and their families.

The International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment-Europe

ICEVI-European Award 2017

Presented to

Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou

Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou was a Social-Psychologist/Sociologist who had worked in the field of education and rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired persons since 1994. Throughout her career, she held prominent positions in various organizations, such as being the Scientific Director of the Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece and the Advisor to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs of Greece, Mr. Aris Spiliotopoulos. Her most notable job was selecting the locations of the Special Education Schools that were established and conducting a study on the accessibility of school premises for students with blindness and multiple disabilities. In 2010, she became appointed as President of the Public Entity Paidopoli Agios Andreas Child Protection Unit. She held an Organizational Position at the Center of Differential Diagnosis and Support of Special Educational Needs of Athens as a Career Guidance Counselor for children with visual impairments in 2011. In 2015, she became appointed as the C.E.O. and President of the Administrative Board of the National Center for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind in Greece (K.E.A.T.) from the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, a position which she held until her untimely and underserved death on January 6, 2017. She worked with diligence and great determination to improve the education and rehabilitation services the center provides to visually impaired people of all ages on a national level. She organized many

seminars, special events, and education programs making a decisive contribution to the improvement of the conditions of life of blind people in Greece. Her most recent initiative was building a coalition to eliminate outdated orphanages in Greece and deinstitutionalize children that were confined to their beds. In recognition of Betty's career achievements, scientific knowledge and work ethic, Mrs. Theano Fotiou, Alternate Minister of Social Solidarity at the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity in Greece was planning to appoint her as General Secretary of the Ministry of Labour in July 2017, when her term at K.E.A.T. would come to an end.

Betty was always driven for achieving the inclusion and emancipation of people with disabilities, and especially, people with visual impairments. From early on in her career, both in Greece and abroad, she was devoted to the rights of people who are blind, partially sighted and/or had additional disabilities. She fought with great conviction, diligence, integrity and passion to break down the barriers for the visually impaired and the disabled. She was a dynamic and charismatic individual who with her pioneering ideas worked tirelessly to achieve her vision for the appropriate education and rehabilitation of people with visual impairment, so that they may achieve their full potential. Governed by a sense of altruism and selflessness, Betty put her heart and soul into supporting and advocating for the needs and rights of hundreds of blind and partially sighted children, adults and their families. For more than 12 years, Betty was a member of the Board of ICEVI-Europe, serving 8 years as a Board Member representing the Balkan countries region and 3.5 years as the President. As President of ICEVI-Europe, Betty signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the President of the European Blind Union, Mr. Wolfgang Angermann. She led ICEVI-Europe in endorsing the 2nd edition of the Your Eyes Manual, which aimed to encourage early diagnosis in blindness prevention and highlight the issues of vision loss. A highlight of her Presidency of ICEVI-Europe was the successful organization of many sub regional and international conferences for blind and visually impaired persons such as the 2015 International Conference on Enabling Access for Persons with Visual Impairment held in Athens, Greece. Moreover, Betty played an integral role in ICEVI-Europe's participation in European Programmes and Erasmus+ Projects.

The lasting impact of Betty's work to bring meaning and opportunity to the lives of children and adults with visual impairment is a tribute to her extraordinary life, a life rich in the legacy of good that she has bequeathed to those she has left behind. ICEVI-Europe is proud to posthumously present this award to Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou, in recognition of her outstanding work, contributions and efforts for making a significant improvement in the quality of life of people with visual impairment in Europe, during the 9th ICEVI European Conference: Empowered by dialogue, held in Bruges, Belgium on July 2017.

July 6, 2017

Date Nathalie Lewi-Dumont

Vice-President of ICEVI-Europe

**The International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People
with Visual Impairment-Europe**

ICEVI-European Award 2017

Presented to

Elizabeth Kate Chapman OBE

Elizabeth Chapman was the first woman President of ICEVI-Europe and held office from 1988-1992.

After a successful teaching career at The Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford, Elizabeth joined the University of Birmingham Department for Education where she pioneered courses to train teachers of the Visually Impaired. The first fulltime course for teachers of the visually impaired was established in the 1960s and attracted teachers from across the UK, Europe and the developing world. In the early 1980s Elizabeth founded Europe's first Distance Education Programme to train teachers of the visually impaired, and the programme continues today training over 60 specialist teachers a year at Birmingham.

In the 1984 Elizabeth was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the Queen's awards in recognition of her services to children and young people with visual impairment. Among her many academic achievements, Elizabeth helped to develop the Look and Think procedure to assess and encourage the use of residual vision in children with severe sight loss. Just before her retirement in 1988 Elizabeth co-authored the influential book 'A Visually Handicapped Child in my Classroom', providing information and practical guidance for teachers supporting children with visual impairment in mainstream schools.

Elizabeth was an active ICEVI President, organising and conducting seminars on low vision in a range of countries including the Netherlands, Madeira, Bulgaria, Portugal, Yugoslavia. A highlight of her presidency of ICEVI Europe was the organisation of the 1990 European Conference held in Warwick, England. In the same year, in association with the British Red Cross, Elizabeth helped organise ICEVI's training and support programmes for Schools for the Blind in post-Ceausescu Romania, building the foundations for the important work in Eastern Europe of her successor, Dr. Herman Gresnigt.

After stepping down as President, Elizabeth remained active in the field of visual impairment in the United Kingdom and served for many years as a Governor for both Royal National College and Queen Alexandra College. Now in her 92nd year, Elizabeth is enjoying a quieter life in Birmingham, but retains an active interest in developments in the field of visual impairment. It was the wish of our dear late president, Betty Leotsakou, that Elizabeth's achievements as a leading educator for children and young people with visual impairment and as the first female president of ICEVI be acknowledged by the Awards Committee and we recommend Elizabeth for the President's award without hesitation.

ICEVI-Europe is proud to present this award to Elizabeth Kate Chapman OBE, in recognition of her outstanding work, contributions and efforts for making a significant improvement in the quality of life of people with visual impairment in Europe, during the 9th ICEVI European Conference: Empowered by dialogue, held in Bruges, Belgium on July 2017.

July 6, 2017

Date Nathalie Lewi-Dumont

Vice-President of ICEVI-Europe

**The International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People
with Visual Impairment-Europe**

ICEVI-European Award 2017

Presented to

Perkins International

It is with great pleasure and honor to nominate Perkins International USA for consideration to the ICEVI-European Awards 2017 for Organizations in recognition of the outstanding leadership in addressing the educational and rehabilitation needs of children with blindness and deafblindness and their families all around the world.

ICEVI-Europe acknowledges the significant impact that Perkins International has had over the years in the 67 countries all over the world (Europe and Eurasia, Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean, Middle east and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific), implementing actions and services, providing resources, training and advocacy with the aim to improve the lives of the 4.5 million children around the world without access to education due to blindness.

Perkins International has contributed immensely in developing competences for teachers and educators in the field of blindness and deafblindness, which

lead to the launching of the global training program with the name Perkins International Academy at the United Nations, thus supporting the U.N.'s ongoing push to provide a quality, inclusive education for all learners – including those with multiple disabilities – by the year 2030.

When you say Perkins International you say a trustful partner who develops local capacities and creates functional networks with schools, orphanages, daycare facilities, teacher training programs, government agencies, family advocacy groups and more to transform the lives of children and their families.

For ICEVI-Europe, it has been a privilege to know and promote the mission of Perkins International, to see how dedicated they are in encouraging and supporting professional development for educators, mentioning here the outstanding Educational Leadership Program that offered an authentic opportunity for 250 educators from all over the world to graduate the program, thus accessing knowledge and best practices that will ensure quality education for children and their families.

ICEVI-Europe is proud to present this award to Perkins International, in recognition of their outstanding work, contributions and efforts for making a significant improvement in the quality of life of people with visual impairment in Europe, during the 9th ICEVI European Conference: Empowered by dialogue, held in Bruges, Belgium on July 2017.

July 6, 2017

Date Nathalie Lewi-Dumont

Vice-President of ICEVI-Europe

Presentation of Beáta Prónay – ICEVI-Europe board member



Photo: Beáta Prónay

I'm Beáta Prónay, associate professor at the Faculty of Special Needs Education of University Eötvös in Budapest. I started to work for the university in 1991. Before that I had divergent experiences in the field of visual impairment. I started my professional career in the School for the Blind, Budapest in 1975 as a residential school teacher and worked four years there. I have left the school and became the employee of the State Institute for the Blind, Budapest. I became the leader of the small boarding school for secondary school students and in parallel started to organize rehabilitation for VI for the first time in Hungary. I was leading the group till 1991 while I graduated as a psychologist and besides rehabilitation work I started to work in assessment. During this time I had a 9 month grant in Het Loo Erf now member institute of Royal Visio in The Netherlands. In 1991 I was asked to work for the Institute for the Psychological for Social Needs in the Faculty of Special Needs education. Between 2000-2004 I was temporary head of Department for Vision Impairments.

I have been lecturing in a wide range of subjects: psychology and assessment of visually impaired individuals of all ages, deafblindness, environmental modifications, orientation and mobility and rehabilitation teaching (ADL). I graduated in rehabilitation in Warsaw in 2000 in an American-Polish course. Recently I am engaged in child mental health issues. I graduated as an integrated parent-child counselor in 2012 and have a special interest in parenting as a visually impaired adult.

I'm responsible for two post graduate diploma courses: rehabilitation for vision impairment and integrated parent-child consultation.

My PhD research is about the intelligence testing of blind and seriously low vision school children. I used Wechsler and ITVIC tests for this. I was involved in other researches e.g. trial application of BOS blind in Hungary, trial application and implementation in early intervention the Oregon project.

Among my 65 publications (25 between 2010-2017) some are available on ICEVI homepage. There are some in the subject of assessment, environmental modification, world access for vision impairments. I was the editor together with a colleague of 8 from 10 volumes in a rehabilitation series (2007). In 2015 in an international team Kyriacou, M., Prónay, B., Hathazi, A. we published a report <http://www.euroblind.org/media/ebu-media/additional-disabilities.pdf>.

I have participated in all ICEVI Teacher Training Workshops and organized the [4th Workshop on Training of Teachers of the Visually Impaired in Europe](#), 23rd-26th September 2004, Budapest, Hungary. I'm a member of the ENPVI and have initiated the organization of 6th European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment in Budapest, Hungary in 2016 Theme: PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL SKILLS IN A SIGHTED WORLD.

I was involved recently in two international projects: Tempus project nr. 544333 "Curriculum and Skill Development in Vision Rehabilitation" leading by the German Jordan University, Amman, Jordan. Erasmus + Project nr. 2014-1-EL01-KA200-001631: BaGMIVI "Bridging the Gap between Museums and Individuals with Visual Impairment" Coordinating Organization: University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece.

I'm involved in ICEVI activities as member of the ENPVI and leader of the (Re)habilitation Interest Group, Representative of Central European Countries.

I hope to contribute to the work of the Board of ICEVI Europe. I can serve our work with my ideas and can be a partner in implementation of our results. I would be happy with a more active Central Europe and I'll do my best to facilitate activities in our region!

Presentation of Anne Kristine Grosbøll – ICEVI-Europe board member

Anne Kristine Grosbøll - Director IBOS – the Institute for the Blind and Partially Sighted in Denmark



Photo: Anne Kristine Grosbøll

My name is Anne Kristine Grosbøll, I am 44 years old and I am the director of the Institute for the Blind and Partially Sighted in Denmark.

I have worked at IBOS for 16 years; first as a teacher, then project manager, then personal assistant for the former director, then head of department, deputy director, and since 2015, I have been director.

At the IBOS, we primarily work with adults with visual impairment in relation to work and education, but we work in a wide range of other fields too.

As a Board member at ICEVI Europe, and as a representative for the Nordic and Baltic countries, my main interest is to work with young persons with visual impairments, focusing on successful transitions from childhood to youth and adult life with visual impairment. Many of the member countries of the ICEVI have very valuable knowledge in this area, which we can learn from and hopefully contribute to.

Presentation of Kathleen Vandermaelen – ICEVI-Europe board member



Photo: Kathleen Vandermaelen

My name is Kathleen Vandermaelen. I have been working for Centrum Ganspoel for more than 20 years. Centrum Ganspoel supports children, youngsters and adults with visual disabilities with or without multiple impairments, and their network. Together with Spermalie and Blindenzorg Licht en Liefde we organized the 9th European ICEVI conference in Bruges in July 2017.

Since 2006 I am coordinating the expertise center of Centrum Ganspoel. Through this job I realized how important it is to share knowledge and expertise with colleagues with the same field of expertise.

During my mandate as a board member of ICEVI Europe I hope to be able to encourage people to share knowledge and expertise with each other. I am convinced that this can result in a better Quality of life for children, youngsters and adults with visual disabilities.

First Steps Project: System Changing Early Intervention Project for Visually Impaired Children in Five Different Countries

Mateja Maljevac, project coordinator for the team of professionals working in the field of early intervention, Centre IRIS, Slovenia

The importance of early intervention is well known to everyone who is working and living with children with special needs. However, it is still not systematically provided in several countries, such as Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia etc. It is offered only to individual groups of children with special needs, mostly based on voluntary work of the professionals. In the field of work with children with special needs, a demand for an expert, structured and non-medical early intervention for visually impaired children and their families arose in all countries of the Balkans listed above around the same time. That is the main reason why these countries decided to cooperate and started an international project called First steps.

The First steps project started in June 2012 in Sarajevo and finished with an international conference in May 2017 in Ljubljana. At the beginning of the project seven institutions participated, during the project there were six left:

- Centre IRIS, Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Škola za učenike oštećenog vida Veljko Ramadanović, Beograd, Serbia;
- Škola za osnovno i srednje obrazovanje Milan Petrović, Novi Sad, Serbia;
- Institut Dimitar Vlahov, Skopje, Macedonia;
- QBMK Xheladin Dela, Peje, Kosovo;
- Resursni centar za decu i mlade, Podgorica, Montenegro.

VISIO International from the Netherlands played the most important role in professional training for the staff working in the field of early intervention, especially for psychologists, and for donation of materials and other devices.

The main goal of the project was to establish a system of early intervention for the population of visually impaired children, which may be applied to all other groups of special needs, and a collective formation of a legislative basis for future work.

Early intervention service is provided by a multidisciplinary team consisting of different professionals like special teacher for children with visual impairment and special teachers of other profiles in accordance with the child's needs, special teacher for children with visual impairment certified for functional vision assessment, psychologist, social worker, and others. The team ensures the quality of work with better structure, different professional knowledge and time management as well as continuity of work and the flow of information and data

collected by different members of the team. Work of the team results in an effective individual plan for the child and fulfillment of developmental needs of the child and family needs as well.

During the project the system of work has been tried out in different economic and cultural environments. Therefore, it has established a well structured system of early intervention for all participants on a national level and it emphasizes universality of the guidelines applied regardless of specific education system and funding of the service in each country. The protocol of early intervention for each country is supposed to be a base for all experts working in the field of early intervention for visually impaired children.

The added value of the system is that it ensures comparability of the quality of treatment of visually impaired children in a broader region.

One of the most important outcomes of the project is a cooperation with Slovenian government in order to introduce a law on early intervention for all groups of special needs. The legislation is in governmental procedure and hopefully, it will pass in the parliament and it will be put into practice in 2018.

The First steps project played an important role in an international cooperation between institutions also in other fields of work. We are looking forward to new opportunities to develop a new area of work in our centres of expertise as well as human resources.

Training professionals: The situation on in-service training and training professionals in the field of visual impairment in Iceland

Training of professionals at The National Institute for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Deafblind, NIB Iceland (<http://www.midstod.is/english>) is always on an individual basis if the professional trained is an employee of the center. As there is no formal education in this field in Iceland, employees have been trained in other countries depending on the education and profession. Continued staff development is very important for the progress of the service and employees are encouraged to seek further education. In 2015, for example, over 30% of the staff was involved in higher education in different subjects from web design to public administration to orientation and mobility. Many of these studies and training took place overseas. As for professionals who work for other government agencies, schools and local authorities, they are trained by NIB staff and usually the training takes place at their place of work. Specific training for school staff is usually within the school itself and includes training in Braille, mobility and orientation, and daily living skills. The principal applies that most training is done on an individual basis and is organized around specific needs in a specific environment.

Over the years, it is our experience that schools, government organizations, and local authorities are very pleased with this service and specifically that it is based on specific needs and in the environment where it is most suited.

ICEVI Europe, Contact person by Iceland: Benjamín Júlíusson,
Benjamin.Juliusson@midstod.is

Teacher training for blind and visually impaired children in Latvia

There are four higher educational establishments in Latvia providing teacher training. Three of them provide programs to prepare teachers for children with special educational needs emphasizing the teaching of mentally disabled children and children with the language disorders. Some lecturers from those establishments sometimes (not on regular basis) organize for their students an introduction to the educational process of blind, visually impaired and MDVI children at Strazdumuiza Residential High School. There are not any courses in the field of visual impairment in these programs.

This is why Strazdumuiza Residential High School-Training Centre for Blind and Visually Impaired Children since 1997 has taken over the responsibility to train teachers involved in the work with blind, visually impaired and MDVI children. There are several directions of this work:

- **In-service training** for new-employed staff at Strazdumuiza Residential High School- Training Centre for Blind and Visually Impaired Children that takes place whenever it is necessary according to the Program which includes such topics as
 - Visual impairment or blindness- the basics of understanding, learning and teaching Braille, technical aids and technologies, preparing the teaching materials;
 - ADL and communication skills of blind students;
 - Orientation and mobility;
 - Basics of work with MDVI children.
- **Training courses for teachers/staff working with the blind or visually impaired children in inclusive mainstream settings.** The program for these training courses consists of the same topics as above but are adjusted to the needs of certain specialists applied to the training course (depending on the special needs of their students). These courses are organized according to requirement or the educational establishments where the visually impaired children are included as by the Law of Education of Latvia, educational establishments are

responsible for providing the support that is necessary or for attracting the support from other institutions.

- Since April 2017 **according to the regulation of the Ministry of Education of Latvia there are two specially developed kinds of programs:** "Assistive technologies and their possibilities to diminish the special educational needs of visually impaired students" and "Planning and managing of the educational process for visually impaired learners". The target group for these courses- 150 teachers of mainstream schools. The aim of these courses- to prepare teachers of mainstream educational establishments to be ready to work with visually impaired children in the mainstream setting. There are plans to repeat these courses in future years to cover as much as possible, the teachers in mainstream schools all around Latvia.

ICEVI Europe, Contact person by Latvia: Ligita Geida, ligita.geida@inbox.lv

Norway - teaching the professionals

In Norway there are two schools to get a Masters in the pedagogical approach to visual impairment. It is NTNU(Norwegian University of Science and Technology) Trondheim and at Høgskolen i Sørøst, at Kongsberg.

Due to the programme's broad orientation students will be able to develop their knowledge and skills within a variety of core topics. The students will also develop their analytical and practical skills, enabling them to create teaching conditions which will improve the pupils' academic, personal and social development.

The students will qualify to deal with a variety of special educational challenges within different age-groups, schools and institutions, and be able to solve problems related to special education. They will also be able to deal with various research problems within the field.

The Masters degree in Special Education consists of compulsory courses as well as a Masters thesis. One can choose between courses in learning to teach braille, mobility, information technology to blind and visually impaired or rehabilitation.

Statped has shorter courses for parents and teachers of blind and visually impaired on topics in the school curriculum.

Norges Blindforbund(the Norwegian association of the blind) also offers courses to blind and visually impaired.

ICEVI Europe, Contact person by Norway: Beate Heide,
beate.heide@statped.no

Further teacher training, Sweden

National Agency for Special Needs Education, SPSM, offers in-service training to teachers and paraprofessionals in the education of students with visual impairment. In the five regions courses are carried out with a focus on the education of students with low vision.

SPSM-Resource Centre Vision offers further teacher training for personnel meeting children and youth with blindness and CVI. The national resource centre in Stockholm has a focus mainly on children and students reading Braille, while the centre in Örebro has its focus on children and students with MDVI.

Courses with focus on children and students with MDVI Personnel in pre-school and school are offered a two day course at the centre, or in some cases for a whole team at the local school.

Courses with focus on Braille readers

- For personnel in pre-school, children 0-5 years, there is a 4 day course at the resource centre and a follow-up course at the local pre-school.
- For personnel in the so-called pre-school class, when the child is 6 years of age, there is a basic 2 day course and a 2 day methodology course at the centre. A one-day follow-up course is arranged at the local school.
- For personnel in compulsory school, grades 1-3 and 4-6 there is a package of courses in six levels: Level 1: a basic course at the centre, 2 days, usually late spring before the student enters the school. Level 2: a methodology course at the centre, 2 days, usually in connection to the basic course. Level 3: a follow-up course at the local school, 2 days during autumn. Level 4: a supplementary course at the centre, 2 days in spring the year after the basic course. Level 5 and 6: a one day course during each of the coming two school years.
- For personnel in grades 7-9 there is a package of a 4 day basic and methodology course at the centre and a 2 day follow-up course at the local school.
- For personnel at upper secondary school there is a 4 day course.

The centre also offers courses for teachers in the education of art, music, handicraft and physical education. A basic and methodology course and a follow-up course, both 3 days.

University programs in Sweden with a focus on visual impairment

Stockholm University has a special assignment from the Swedish government to offer courses and programs in the field of visual impairment.

There are two programs with a focus on visual impairment:

- A Masters program in special needs education with a specialization in visual impairment, 120 credits, half time studies. Some of the courses are carried out in co-operation with NTNU, University of Science and Technology and Statped in Norway. No program has started during 2017, due to a low number of applying students.
- A program in Special Needs Training-Visual impairment. (Diploma as a Special Needs Teacher) 90 credits, half time studies. SPSM/Resource Centre Vision has been a partner in the program, giving the courses in methodology in the education of students with visual impairment. A program will probably start in autumn 2017.

Gothenburg University offers a Masters program in vision pedagogical work and vision rehabilitation, 120 credits. The program is a co-operation between Gothenburg University and the University College of Southeast Norway (USN).

ICEVI Europe, Contact person by Sweden: Anders Rönnbäck,
anders.ronnback@spsm.se

Announcement of EGDF Conference 2017



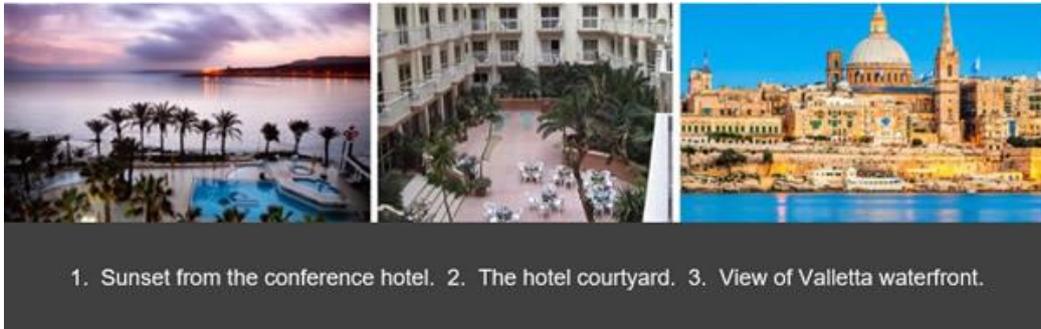
Registrations Open for EGDF 10th Anniversary Conference

Malta, Nov 30 to Dec 2, 2017

Registration is now open for our 2017 conference to allow you to plan your travel while airfares are relatively low. Members, supporters and non-members of EGDF are most welcome but places are limited. Book now for the best rooms, or by 15 September at the latest.

The Maltese venue is rich in ancient history and our hotel is perfectly located right on the seafront. The Mediterranean weather at that time of year is mild, with an average of seven hours of sunshine and daytime temperatures of 20 degrees, a welcome break for those from Northern climes. A stimulating and informative programme is being planned to celebrate EGDF's 10th anniversary. With experts in their fields, we will explore subjects such as the latest

technologies in helping the blind to "see" and in guide dog training. You can learn and share information about the developing European standard on guide dogs and other assistance dogs, which may become a global standard in due course.



1. Sunset from the conference hotel. 2. The hotel courtyard. 3. View of Valletta waterfront.

Photo: EGDF Conference 2017 hotel

The conference begins on Thursday, 30 November with a light lunch available from 12:30 and the programme starting at 14:00 and finishing at 17:45. The special conference dinner starts at 19:00. On Friday, the conference runs from 8:30 to 17:00 with all meals in the hotel. On Saturday morning there will be a meeting for board members from 8:30 to 11:30 and free time for other delegates to enjoy the indoor or outdoor pools or the spa. After an early lunch, an optional sightseeing tour is planned for the afternoon, returning to the hotel at 17:30. The Malta Guide Dog Foundation are planning Meet and Greet services at the airport on Wednesday and Thursday. Transport will be arranged back to the airport on Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday. Outside of those times, you should arrange your own transport between the airport and hotel. MGDF are arranging a spending cage for guide dogs on the hotel grounds.

You will see on the registration form that you can benefit from our special conference rates from Sunday, 26 November, or after the conference if you would like to extend your stay. All hotel bookings must be made with EGDF to get these rates. The rooms that are reserved for us are courtyard rooms; if you would like to upgrade to a seafront room, tell us IMMEDIATELY as only a few are available.

Also please note that our bank has changed and you should use the information on the registration form, even though it may differ from what you used previously.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Executive Director
European Guide Dog Federation