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International Council for Education and Re/habilitation of People with Visual Impairment

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The President's Message

Dear Members and Non-Members of ICEVI-Europe,

Welcome to this issue of the ICEVI-Europe Newsletter.

Recently I have been reminded of the joys of working with children with visual impairment (VI). As an academic, it is not often now that I get to actually go into a classroom and meet and talk to children with VI. However, due to the LEGO Braille Bricks research that I am leading I am having lots of opportunity to do this. And what a privilege and honour it has been. I can honestly say what a joy it has been chatting to and discussing with children from all ages about their likes, dislikes (and of course LEGO), about their hopes and desires for the future and it really has given me a lift and a very simple reminder of the work that we all do. So I think what I would like to say to all researchers, academics is to get yourselves back into the classroom (if not already) and reengage with the children and their staff and I hope, it will be as wonderful of an experience as it was for me. Thank you to all the children and staff I met – truly great, and I hope to meet more of you in the coming months.

Since the last newsletter, colleagues from ICEVI-Europe and the Robert Hollman Foundation have been working hard on getting the ICEVI-Europe 10th Anniversary Conference prepared. As you will see in this newsletter the title of the conference will be "Supporting Children and Young Adults with Visual Impairment: What can we do? What can be done?. We aim for this conference to have a real multidisciplinary approach so we will open the conference up for presentations from different perspectives such as medical/psychological, education, re/habilitation, orientation and autonomy. As you can see, we are hoping for a wide professional contribution as children with VI, and their families, are often supported by a wide range of professionals but always thinking of the child at the centre of their work.

So in this newsletter we thought it would be a good idea to introduce to you all the work of the Robert Hollmann Foundation for those that do not know them, which are based in Italy but founded by a Dutch entrepreneur. Fascinating work.

Also included in this newsletter is work being conducted by the British Abacus Association about the possibilities and uses of the abacus as a learning tool for children and young people with VI.

I was also interested to read about the new easy materials for people with VI and intellectual disabilities in Hungary, particularly focusing on WINDOWS 10 and Apples' IOS systems. I did read these and it took me back to my first ever book I wrote for people with visual impairment which is I think called, "Modifying Windows 95" for People with Visual Impairment which like the operating system is out of print.

I wish you all well, and happiness, and not only do I hope to see you in Padova in May 2025 but I may see some of you at the International Symposium on Physical Activity and Individuals with Visual Impairments or Deafblindness which will be held June 8-11th, 2023

https://sportrealeyes.it/ispaviparma2023/.

Do not forget that if you haven't completed the LEGO Braille Bricks survey yet then please do we are closing the survey May 31st see the links below

English: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023
French: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023FR
German: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023DE

Take care

On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe,
Dr John Ravenscroft
Professor of Childhood Visual Impairment
President

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Children with Visual Impairment: The Robert Hollman Foundation Experience

By the Robert Hollman Foundation team, Padova and Cannero Riviera (VB)

The Robert Hollman Foundation (RHF) is named after Mr. Robert Hollman, a Dutch entrepreneur, who established the foundation in Italy in 1979, donating a part of his fortune to build it.

The *mission* of the Foundation is to promote the development of all children with visual impairment (VI), from birth to the age of 14 years, and to support their families through a multidisciplinary and holistic approach.

For more than 40 years, the Foundation has been providing free-of-charge services in its two specialized centers: the Padua center which supports children aged 0 to 14, while the Cannero Riviera Center, along the banks of Lake Maggiore, hosts children aged 0 to 4 years.

The *approach* of the Foundation, thanks to the presence of a multidisciplinary team, is developed through participatory observation as well as active and empathic listening to the child and the child's parents.

The *aims* are:

- *To accompany parents* in regaining their role as knowledgeable experts on their child and to help them to discover the child's potential, without focusing exclusively on the limitations and the potential disadvantages that may follow sensory impairment.
- *To make a diagnosis* as soon as possible to build the best support along the growth path of the child with visual impairment and their family. Over the years, the Foundation's professionals have learned that a reliable diagnosis can be made in a noninvasive way. During the diagnostic process, we believe that the information obtained through clinical examinations is not the only relevant factor. It is important, above all, to create a comfortable environment to put the family and the child at ease and to better understand them. Thus, the Foundation's role is not limited to formulating an accurate diagnosis, but also to contextualizing it within the family's daily life in order to build an individualized habilitation programme for each child

Fig 1 Eye evaluation in a customized setting

- *To develop a customised supporting pathway* that is best suited to families' needs and those of their children.

The *supporting pathway* begins with a consultation when parents first ask the Foundation for help (Fig. 2.3). The multidisciplinary team that assists the family generally consists of a coordinator (who is usually a psychologist-psychotherapist), a habilitation therapist, an educator, and an orthoptist.

In our daily multidisciplinary work with children, it has been empirically observed that several meetings are necessary to give time to families and professionals to discover the strengths of each child, even their smallest visual capacity, to accurately observe their use of other senses and to understand which activities or devices facilitate the functional use of each child's skills.


Fig. 2.3 The multidisciplinary team with children and their families during consultations

At the end of the consultation, some families might continue to come to the Foundation by attending weekly sessions. Each plan is personalized in order meet the child's needs and involve the relevant professionals.

In the child's first years, the Foundation aims to help them discover the surrounding environment in a tailor-made therapeutic context, focusing on multisensory integration. Proposals are specific and can be carried out individually or in small groups, always in playful and creative adapted settings (Fig. 3,4, 5).


Fig. 3, 4, 5 Different activities at the Foundation

Parents are enabled to participate in the planned activities with their child and are supported by professionals in their first interactions with the world of visual impairment. In this way, parents will discover not only the challenges related to their child's disability, but also the possibilities of helping their child achieve things they couldn't even imagine or hope for. In addition, they will be able to take inspiration for adapting their home environment and offering their children enjoyable and accessible activities in their daily lives.

From school age onwards, the Foundation offers group activities with the aim of helping children interact with their peers who experience visual impairment; children are also encouraged to develop autonomy skills (Fig. 6). RHF professionals provide children with a safe space, where they can share their feelings and emotions about what they experience in their daily lives (Fig. 7). Among the activities on offer are cooking classes; creative play groups; musical, speaking and listening activities; as well as sessions that encourage children to think about their future and to start making plans. This context supports children in developing their individual and social skills through meaningful relationships and friendships that can continue outside the Foundation.

Fig. 6 Autonomy activity

Fig. 7

At the age of fourteen, the Foundation's care path comes to an end; children and their families are ready to continue their journey of autonomy thanks to the network they have built over time. Of course, even after the age of fourteen, the Foundation's doors remain open should any special needs arise.

Thanks to the foresight and philanthropy of Mr. Robert Hollman, the Foundation is today dedicated to 4 areas (fig. 8 aside):

1. The children and their families to whom we offer our support

In the last school year, from September 2021 to June 2022, the Foundation worked with 408 children, who mainly came from northern Italy and, particularly, from the Veneto region. Among these children, 24% were affected by diagnostically confirmed rare diseases and the distribution according to the level of VI is shown in Fig. 9. Most of the children were between 0 and 10 years old, but there were also a few children aged 11-14.

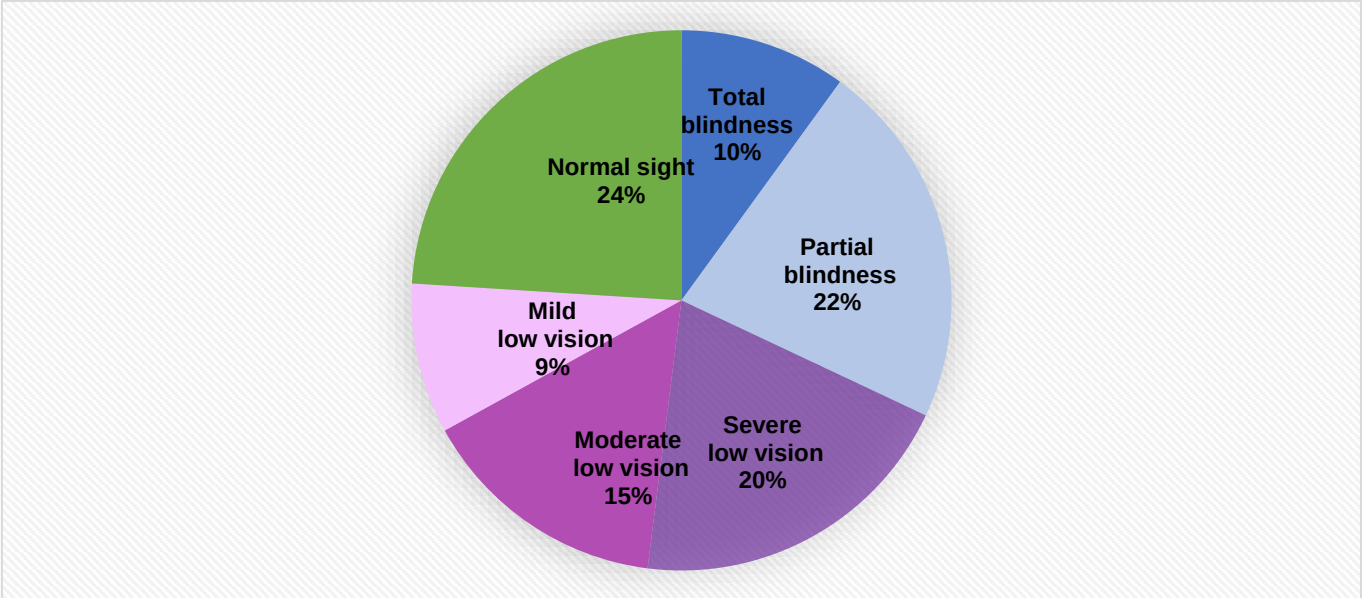

Fig. 9

Families who come to the Foundation are from all parts of Italy. Usually children have already been seen often by a professional and may have undergone several examinations, as parents try to look for answers and reassurance even before they arrive at the Foundation. In other cases, however, parents may have recently learned of their infant's visual impairment, and the Foundation turns out to be the first facility they rely on. In both cases, families experience different and sometimes contradictory emotions, processing them in many different ways.

2. The professionals who care for the children

For all children followed by the Foundation, the multidisciplinary team also works to build and maintain an active network of relationships with professionals in their area.

This makes it possible to share what has been observed and to provide useful information and advice for the continuation of the child's habilitation. If the child has already started going to school, it is essential to get to know his or her educators and teachers in order to share any relevant and up-to-date information. In the Foundation's experience, it has been observed that working in synergy and close cooperation with all the child's caregivers is indispensable both for the children (to promote harmonious growth) and for their families.

3. The whole community to help it understand the world of low vision and blindness.

We try to promote everything that can decrease the gap between society and people with visual impairment. The Foundation involves the community in national and international projects including:

- the co-creation of an accessible and inclusive park (Fig. 10, 11)

Fig. 10, 11 Realizing the "Parco del Tesoro"

- the organization of tactile publishing competitions

Fig. 12, 13, 15th edition of the international contest "Typhlo &Tactus"

- exhibitions

Fig. 14 International Exhibition on illustrated tactile books "Pagine senza confini"

- creation of multi-code books

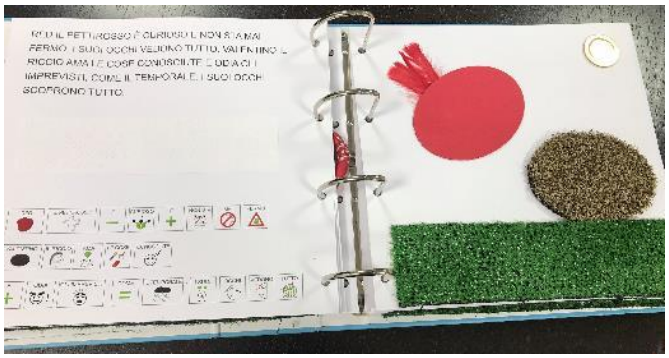

Fig. 15 The multicode book "Il Tesoro del labirinto incantato"

- accessibility consulting

4. to <u>academia and science</u>

Visual impairment is a multifaceted area in which it is possible to continue to learn and grow only through a close interaction between habilitation, healthcare, research, training. Scientific research can help the Foundation further improve intervention methods and their effectiveness. At the same time, the Foundation's doors are open to academia to share and explore issues related to visual impairment in developing children and the holistic and multidisciplinary approach we use in supporting them.

Actually, the RHF is involved in a couple of EU projects:

1. Flex Picture Ebooks
2. See my life

After 45 years of experience, it is always a thrill to watch the growth and journey of our children, to follow their progress and to see how they grow thanks to the support system we have built with them too.

Preparing for the integration of the abacus into mathematics education

By Tsao, Pei-Ling, President of the British Abacus Association (BAA)

The integration of the abacus into future educational innovations in mathematics is underway. We received a supportive response from the Scottish Government regarding our initiative to improve education in numeracy for children and young people with vision impairment by using the abacus, a tool whose use is already recognised as a UNESCO example of intangible cultural heritage.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament), gave the BAA 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 explored in our previous article, we are developing a multi-phase project to explore educational innovation in the integration of the abacus. At the current planning phase, the aims include the completion of new teaching materials covering basic arithmetical operations; the initiation of knowledge integration and structuring an education ecosystem.

Creating new teaching methods is the crux and the fundamental priority during this phase. The new teaching methods, which have been developed for nearly three years, aim 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) to structure an education ecosystem. Special thanks for the advice from Joe FitzPatrick MSP.

(Update: On account of the Scottish Cabinet reshuffle in March/April, Jenny Gilruth MSP was appointed as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills; Joe FitzPatrick MSP was appointed as Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning.)

Easy to read learning materials on information technology developed in Hungary for people with vision impairment and additional needs.

By Norbert Márkus

A series of four new easy-to-read publications on information technology for people with vision impairment and additional learning difficulties, have been released by the IT Foundation for the Visually Impaired (INFOALAP) based in Budapest, Hungary. The instruction materials were written in Hungarian with the financial support of the Slachta Margit National Institute for Social Policy (NSZI) and the Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources (EMMI), and were made publicly available, free of charge, in 2022. Readers of these tutorials are introduced to the essential functions of the Windows 10 and iOS operating systems and the Microsoft Edge and Safari web browsers in simple steps, and are seamlessly acquainted with the basic operation of screen readers.

Easy read materials in Hungary are usually marked with a logo showing the letters „KÉK". This acronym stands for "könnyen érthető kommunikáció" (easy-to- understand communication). Easy to read materials use simple language and consist of short sentences that focus on the essentials, strive for clarity and avoid abstract concepts and ambiguous wording. More complicated concepts are made easier to comprehend by being broken down into simple steps supported by numerous examples.

INFOALAP's easy-to-read publications have been prepared using a uniform methodology based on research results, feedback from experts of the field and members of the primary target group. These tutorials only require minimal computer skills to get started. Readers are guided through a range of activities, such as turning on or off their devices, using the most important features and applications, navigating documents and websites. Filling out simple web forms, downloading files from the internet and the handling of removable flash drives are among the more advanced skills discussed. The first mention of a new concept or a technical term in the text is immediately followed by an accompanying explanation in simple sentences, saving the readers from having to look up information in other chapters or books.

These tutorials have been developed with the aim of providing basic IT knowledge that can be directly applied in practice, taking accessibility into account. The emphasis has been on ensuring a smooth progression, with any new knowledge building on skills acquired in earlier parts of the tutorials. Readers can immediately try out and practise the new techniques on their PCs or

iPhones. Since each line holds a single sentence, screen-reader users can press the down arrow key to listen to new instructions, consider the information heard, complete the task, no matter how long it takes, and then move on to the next sentence.

Processes are usually described step by step from beginning to end. At each step, readers are given instructions on what to do next and how to accomplish that task. That is followed by an explanation of what is supposed to happen and why.

Although the emphasis is on independence, there are cases where the tutorials recommend their readers to seek support from a competent assistant
to help them to perform more complicated tasks. Appendices offer guidance for assisting persons on how to configure the operating system and important applications in order to provide the accessibility experience disabled users will need when going through the lessons.

Besides their primary audience, works in this series may also prove useful for those who are reluctant to use information technology, including elderly people living with visual impairments. The tutorials allow such people to acquire practical IT skills that give them access to up-to-date information, and make it easier and more cost effective to keep in touch with their acquaintances, or to spend their leisure time in a more meaningful manner.

The special target group of people with combined disabilities and the specific subject matter make these books, with a combined length of about five hundred pages, an international first in their field.

The four easy-to-read materials can be downloaded from INFOALAP's website at https://infoalap.hu/letoltesek/tananyagok/ (the page is in Hungarian).

Save the Date: 10th ICEVI European Conference May 15-17, 2025 in Padova, Italy

SAVE THE DATE

10th ICEVI

European Conference

Padova, ITALY, May 15-17, 2025 Town Hall and University

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT:

What can we do? What can be done?

Conference Theme and Aim

This conference will focus on the need for a multidisciplinary approach in offering support aimed at ensuring the best quality of life for children and young adults with visual impairment. Presentations will be an opportunity to share experiences on important areas of their lives: medical/psychological care, education, re/habilitation, orientation and autonomy.

Looking forward to 2025, we will involve European professionals in a coparticipatory process. We would like to identify the key principles of the global approach, share what these mean in theory and understand how they can be put into practice. Our

final goal is to provide to those professionals who wish to offer a global approach a document of Key Principles which will support their work with children/young adults with visual impairment and their families.

Target Audience

All the people who believe in a multidisciplinary approach when supporting children/young adults with visual impairment:

Staff and professionals from all levels of schools. Educators, Psychologists, Re-Habilitation Specialists, Special Education Teachers, Orthoptists, Optometrists, Paediatricians, Ophthalmologists, Neuropsychiatrists, other interested physicians, University researchers and students. Associations and Organizations representatives. Caregivers, parents and families. Manufacturers and distributors of technologies and equipment. Nongovernmental Organizations and Policymakers and Government Officials.

Who and Where

ICEVI-Europe is an association of professionals and professional organisations that promotes equal access to appropriate education and re/habilitation of people with visual impairment, so that they may achieve their desire to actively participate as full members of society. www.icevi-europe.org

The Robert Hollman Foundation (RHF) is a private non-profit making organization of Dutch. It offers free consultation and support for the development of children (0-14 years) with visual impairment. www.fondazioneroberthollman.it

Padova is an historical city dating from XIII century B.C. and it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Town Hall is housed in the Palazzo Moroni which was built in the 16th century.

The University of Padova was founded in 1222. It is one of the oldest Universities of the World. Its Aula Magna Bo' (known since 1399) gave hospitality to Galileo Galilei where he taught.

Padova Town Hall and University will host the Conference in their prestigious and historical buildings (Palazzo Moroni and Aula Magna Bo').

Hoping you will join us to share thoughts and experiences and help us to create a document of Key Principles for supporting children and young adults with visual impairment and their families!

Pre-Program of ICEVI-Europe French Speaking Day "Digital technology and students with visual impairment: what's new?"

Vendredi 9 juin 2023 à l'INSEI (ex-INSHEA, Suresnes)

Journée Scolarisation des élèves déficients visuels « Déficience visuelle, éducation inclusive et numérique : quoi de neuf ? »

Programme indicatif soumis à modifications

8h30 Accueil (foyer et terrasse du foyer) et inscription aux ateliers

9h - 9h20 (amphithéâtre) : **Introduction de la journée et présentation du programme**

Murielle Mauguin (Directrice de l'INSEI), Nathalie Lewi-Dumont (représentante des pays francophones, bureau ICEVI-Europe) et Caroline Treffé (formatrice et coordonnatrice pédagogique, INSEI)

9h20 - 9h40 (amphithéâtre) : Accessibilité, utilisabilité et acceptabilité des manuels scolaires numériques
Laetitia Castillan, chercheuse associée laboratoire CLLE (université de Toulouse)

9h40 - 10h (amphithéâtre) : **Projet de Plateforme Moodle accessible aux déficients visuels pour la formation en Sciences**

Ludovic Petitdemange, chercheur, CNRS (Paris)

10h - 10h20 (**amphithéâtre) : Présentation du laboratoire Cherchons pour Voir et de deux projets de recherche-action (DERi, les dessins en relief interactifs et Tangible Box: les objets interactifs)**

Céline Barbancey, enseignante spécialisée (IJA) et Christophe Jouffrais, chercheur (Irit) et laboratoire Cherchons Pour Voir (Toulouse).

10h30 - 12h Première session d'ateliers de 45 minutes (sur inscription)

- **Atelier 1 : « Informatique débranchée, informatique accessible »**
  Sandrine Boissel, enseignante spécialisée TFV, conseillère pédagogique (académie de Grenoble)

- **Atelier 2 : « Apprentissage du braille et outils numériques »**
  Éric Obyn, enseignant spécialisé à l'Inja (Institut national des jeunes aveugles, Paris)

12h Exposants et librairie de l'INSHEA
Exposants : Les Doigts Qui Rêvent, Librairie en Gros Caractères, Insidevision, Mes Mains en Or, Eurobraille, Fédération 100% Handinamique…

12h30 - 13h30 : Repas

13h05 - 13h30 Visite de l'École de Plein air
Vincent Le Calvez (INSEI) sur inscription (nombre limité)

13h30 - 15h Deuxième session d'ateliers de 45 minutes

- **Atelier 3 : « Atelier interactif : méthode d'adaptation numérique de livres illustrés jeunesse autour de quatre exemples (C. Ponti, D. de Monfreid, A. Boutin, G. de Pennart) »**
  Anaïs Brard et Sophie Blain, Les Doigts Qui Rêvent
- **Atelier 4 : « Création sonore et numérique »**
  Florence Bernard, formatrice à l'INSEI, chercheuse associée au laboratoire Grhapes (INSEI)

- **Atelier 5 : « Présentation de l'outil « référentiel de compétences pour l'utilisation d'une technologie d'aide »**

  Céline Chandran et Amandine Kohler, enseignantes spécialisées DEVI, Centre Pédagogique pour élèves handicapés de la vue (Lausanne, Suisse)

15h - 15h20 (amphithéâtre) Mathématiques, numérique et déficience visuelle, une enquête auprès de collégiens et de leurs enseignants
Mathieu Gaborit, enseignant spécialisé, doctorant au Grhapes (INSEI)

15h20 - 15h40 (amphithéâtre) Présentation de l'Orna, Observatoire de ressources numériques adaptées
Mathieu Muratet, maître de conférences en informatique (INSEI)

15h45 - 16h45 Table ronde « Usages du numérique et élèves déficients visuels »
Élèves et étudiants, enseignants spécialisés, professionnels experts :

Catherine Miguet, coordonnatrice d'Ulis TFV (Rambouillet) ; Elise Méry, coordonnatrice d'Ulis TFV (Paris), Eric Obyn, professeur spécialisé (Paris)…
Table ronde animée par Caroline Treffé (INSEI)

16h45 - 17h Clôture de la journée d'études
Caroline Treffé et Nathalie Lewi-Dumont

La librairie sera ouverte toute la journée.

Inscriptions et renseignements

Les inscriptions sont ouvertes !

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Avec le soutien de :