

ICEVI European Newsletter

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President's Message



Dear Members of ICEVI-Europe,

First and foremost, I hope that all of you have had a wonderful summer vacation. As we approach the beginning of fall and start of a new school year for our educator professionals, I would like to draw your attention to the interesting activities and events that will commence shortly in Europe, outlined in this issue of the Newsletter.

Alot of new and exciting initiatives that contribute to ensuring an improvement in the lives of children and youth with visual impairments are taking place. A new project within Erasmus+ Key action 1, EDUCARE, is about to start in autumn. It is a staff exchange programme for professionals who work in the field of visual impairment with children with behavioural problems, designed to improve their skills and competences, broaden their knowledge and better train them to handle the problems of pupils and students with VI/MDVI and behavioural problems. Moreover, an Erasmus+ youth project will take place in September in Cyprus, whose objective is to promote resilience, empowerment and wellbeing in young people with visual impairment via five planned workshops. It is wonderful to announce that a training course on early intervention with children who are visually impaired and blind with multiple disability is commencing in Tbilisi, Georgia. It will consist of three parts-theoretical training, workshop and final evaluation/examination with full certificates being awarded to successful participants and proof of participation to the remaining. I encourage you to take a look at the Action Sheet developed by the EBU Network on Blind and Partially Sighted Children, regarding Children and youth with a visual impairment and what is needed to obtain successful inclusion.

Included in this issue is a press release from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, regarding a successful initiative wherein it launched a special programme for blind and partially sighted visitors. They, along with their sighted friends, family and guides, will be able to partake in an interactive guided tour and a multi-sensory workshop in order to "experience" Vincent van Gogh's paintings. Another interesting project already taken underway is the ENTELIS project, which brings together nine partners from across the European Union and one partner from the United States, in order to address the issue of the digital divide with respect to difficulties experienced by people with disabilities and elderly people in engaging with ICT.

At this point, I would like to announce that the Board of ICEVI-Europe will be meeting with the Organizing Committee of Bruges on November 23, 2015 regarding preparations for the upcoming 9th European Conference 2017 in Bruges. Various important details will be discussed including the title and

theme of the conference, exhibitors, sponsor opportunities, and other logistical information. Moreover, it is my pleasure to announce the 7th ICEVI Eastern European Conference in Belarus will be organized by ICEVI-Europe and co-organized by the Belarusian State Pedagogical University and take place in 2015. We are currently in the process of discussions with the Board of the Belarusian State Pedagogical University and will meet shortly with the Host Committee of the conference to discuss the preparation and organization of the conference. We will make more information regarding these two conferences known to you as it becomes available.

I would like to encourage you to become familiar with the concepts and content of two conferences that will take place throughout Europe in 2016. The first International conference by INS HEA will take place on 17-19 March 2016 at Cité des Sciences, in Paris, France. Its theme is centered on sensory issues and disability, specifically about the sense of touch and the effects of senses on perception, cognition, emotion, behavior; the links between touch, learning and memory; and the implications of research on special adjustments for people with disabilities. The second conference organized by Verband für Blinden- und Sehbehindertenpädagogik e.V." (VBS) / "The Association of Pedagogy for the Blind and Visually Impaired" and ICEVI will take place on August 1-5 2016 in Graz. Its theme is centered on "Perspectives in Dialogue" regarding the topic of Inclusion of the blind and visually handicapped. It is about the perspectives of different faculties, such as educational science, social science, medicine, technology, therapy, but also regional, national and international approaches as well as the manifold concepts of all those involved in the process. These promise to be very interesting and rewarding conferences and we would like all of you to participate and attend. Further important information can be seen in this issue.

ICEVI Europe continues its good work along with you and on your behalf. Your contribution of ideas and suggestions are welcomed and play an important role in our success.

We would like to strongly encourage all National Representatives (National Contact Persons) to submit in the form of articles any news, events, projects, publications, scientific work or good practices that have been undertaken in their country in the field of visual impairment to the Coordinator of the Newsletter, Mrs. Andrea Hathazi, so that it may be included in future issues of the ICEVI-Europe Newsletter.

*On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe,
Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou, President*

Children and youth with a visual impairment - What is needed to obtain successful inclusion?

European Blind Union

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1 The current situation

Children with visual impairments, (VI), grow up and live with their families to a greater extent than before. There are still institutions in many countries but the number is decreasing. It has thus become a common approach for blind and partially sighted children and youths to attend mainstream schools.

In Europe today, with the trend set out after the Salamanca Declaration issued in 1991 as a first strong policy statement, inclusive education is the point of departure in a majority of schools.

It is important that families and other persons who frequently meet a VI child, for instance in schools, have the necessary knowledge to create an environment for the children that develops their potential, skills and knowledge. All persons concerned with a VI child must understand their specialist needs in order to support them. The resources that are available in schools do not always reach families or others close to the children.

Often, VI children live far from each other due to the fairly low occurrence of visual impairment and consequently they have limited opportunities to meet children in the same situation. Likewise, and for the same reason, their parents have an equally limited opportunity to meet other parents with blind and partially sighted children.

The children concerned have few opportunities to obtain a feeling of security relative to their visual impairment and their whole identity as such due to the very limited possibility of meeting VI peers.

There is also a strong trend towards low demands being made on blind and partially sighted children and youth as they are subsequently faced with very low expectations. This is true in the family setting as well as in school and leads to serious problems as it affects the process of socialization and may lead to a low degree of empowerment and weak self-confidence.

In the day-to-day lives of VI children and youths, many adults are involved and tend to surround them and be in their immediate vicinity. Consequently, they relate much less to persons of their own age. Blind and partially sighted children and youths regrettably experience a lot of loneliness in school and during their leisure time. They have less opportunities and offers to participate in leisure activities. The composite effect of the above facts may lead to a

lower degree of academic performance, poorer grades and may, consequently, lead to poor psychological health.

Many blind and partially sighted children are deprived of the opportunity to do exercise and sports at school or after school and they become overweight and tend to move slowly and less securely.

Children may also acquire modes of behavior or certain odd habits that may lead to a degree of marginalization. While sighted youths can correct and modify their behavior and oddities by observing their environment and peers, this is not possible to the same degree for VI children who are dependent on direct instructions and demonstrations. Therefore they are not subject to an immediate socialization process through observation.

2 WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD; EBU Proposals on Changes and Progress

It is essential that the rights of blind and partially sighted children, alongside those of other children with disabilities, be promoted and respected, as specified in article 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



The blind and partially sighted children and youths of today are the future of the movement and the leaders of tomorrow.

A structured early intervention and support system must be developed and maintained nationally with focus on VI children and their families.

Habilitation services must include the offer for VI children to meet in groups or one-to-one to train in all necessary skills and capabilities and to fortify the sense of genuine individual identity. Support must be rendered by all relevant areas and professions dealing with visual impairment in a coordinated and holistic manner.

Support systems must be developed and maintained, targeting parents and other resource persons that liaise with children in order to ensure an optimal and well prepared support for blind and partially sighted children in their development. Parents must have the opportunity and be made conscious of the necessity to encounter visually impaired adults to obtain increased knowledge and hands on experience about what it means to live with a visual impairment.

Organisations representing persons with a visually impairment must offer additional training and education to the basic habilitation services. Examples of such offers may include summer camps, family encounters, specific training of parents and meetings specially arranged for children and youths.

During such gatherings, children can be stimulated to acquire all the necessary basic compensatory skills and competencies, activities to challenge boundaries and limitations and strengthen their self-reliance. Through such activities, VI children will make friends who are also blind and partially sighted and find role models. Parents will also realize the value of creating their own networks.

With the current technological development and opportunities, children, youths and parents as well as professionals such as habilitation trainers and teachers can easily contact other persons in the same situation and facing the same challenges despite distances and across borders. Such electronic means for exchange of experience must not, however, exclude the establishment of physical meeting places and training spaces.

EDUCARE

Marija Jeraša

*teacher at the Institute for Blind and Partially Sighted Children Ljubljana
contact person of EDUCARE for Slovenia*

A new project within Erasmus+ Key action 1 is about to start in autumn: EDUCARE is a European staff exchange programme where partner organisations have found a common interest in the theme of behavioural problems in connection with visual impairment. As we experience the number of young people with VI (Visual Impairment) and MDVI (Multi Disabled with Visual Impairment) who develop behaviour problems has been growing and

the professionals working in the field of visual impairment are facing challenging situations for which they have not been adequately educated and prepared to cope with. Lack of competences generates new problems and causes stressful situations on both sides. Therefore, the teachers and other professionals recognise there is a great need to increase the quality of professional knowledge and understanding of the target group.

Visual impairment is a low incidence disability. Specialist organisations working in this field, which this group represents, tend to be unique within their country and need to reach out beyond national boundaries to work with others who are dealing with the same issues and challenges. Fortunately, through our previous cooperation in EU projects and networks, like MDVI Euronet and ENVITER, the partners have established good contacts and we believe we will all be able to benefit knowledge, good practice and strategies from each other.

There will be six partners in the project whose applications have been approved and some potential joined partners, as the applications of four partners have not been successful. Each partner will send 3 to 4 professionals to the exchange activity. The profile of the participants is a professional with a background in VI/MDVI, a few years of work experience in the field of VI/MDVI, working with children/young people with behavioural problems, speaking and reading English on an active level and highly motivated to learn, share and implement lessons learned.

The partner organisations agreed upon the following objectives:

- Sharing recent research/literature available in Europe
- Better understanding of the needs of the target group
- Discovering models/approaches for professionals/staff to deal with the issues
- Sharing and exchanging the challenges and (good) practice
- Improving the staff competences regarding the treatment of behavioural problems of pupils and students with VI/MDVI (knowledge, skills, attitude)
- Adoption of the strategies shared
- Implementing new knowledge, skills
- Reducing the stress level of the professional
- Better achievements of pupils and students with VI/MDVI with behavioural problems

There will be four staff exchanges, each preceded and followed up by a range of activities and every exchange will be focused on one behavioural issue. During the exchange events experts will train the three different models from the Netherlands, good practice will be shared, new methodologies, case studies, current research in focused areas of interest will be presented and

taught, giving a coordinated overview of specific behavioural disorders in relation to those with VI/MDVI in order to give the professionals new tools to work with the target group. In between the exchange events a number of activities will be carried out by the participants like reading recommended literature, working on questionnaires, discussing, evaluating and analysing case studies, writing reports and giving presentations in their own language for the colleagues in their organisation and country.

Topics of the four exchanges/training events:

1. Introduction to three methodologies developed in the Netherlands.
2. Aggression/Self-inflicted injuries
3. Behavioural problems related to autism
4. Transition processes and their relation to difficult behaviour

Professionals working in the field of visual impairment addressed through this project deal with complex and severe individual needs. The results of the project will be on three different levels.

The knowledge, the professionals will learn about specific (international) models, methods, practices and techniques, will result in earlier recognition and better understanding of the problem. Skills and competences of the professionals will be improved, they will learn how to use/adopt these techniques in order to integrate them into daily activities, so we can expect more appropriate interventions.

The staff will be prepared/trained to handle the problems of pupils and students with VI/MDVI and behavioural problems, which will decrease stress level, give confidence and improve the learning experience of VI/MDVI persons.

Long-term benefits of improved staff competences will also show in better prevention and abilities to avoid severe behavioural problems, in addition, we expect the target group will have better opportunities to set out on the road to full integration in society.

At the moment the partner organisations are in the process of forming working teams:

- Royal Dutch Visio (Koninklijke Visio), the Netherlands,
- University UEMC (Universidad Europea Miguel de Cervantes), Spain,
- Budapest School for the Blind (Vakok Ovodaja, Altalanos Iskolaja, Specialais szakiskolaja, EGYMI, Kollegiuma es Gyermekotthonaaiskolaja), Hungary,
- Southern Bavarian accommodation and sheltered workshops for blind and visually impaired people (Südbayerische Wohn- und Werkstätten für Blinde und Sehbehinderte gemeinnützige GmbH), Germany,

- Jordanstown School - Regional School and Centre of Excellence for children who are deaf or visually impaired, Northern Ireland,
- Institute for Blind and Partially Sighted Children Ljubljana (Zavod za slepo in slabovidno mladino Ljubljana), Slovenia.

The first of four staff exchanges/training events will take place in the Netherlands from 20th to 22nd October and will introduce the participants to three Methodologies developed in the Netherlands, being The Vlaskamp Model developed by the University of Groningen, The Social competence Model developed by PI research and adapted to the target group by Royal Dutch Visio and Own Initiative Model.

Who am I – Promoting Resilience, Empowerment and Self-Awareness amongst Young People with Visual Impairment

Maria Kyriacou, ICEVI National Representative Cyprus

From September 5 – 13, 2015 twenty four visually impaired youth, ages 16 – 22 from six different countries will get together in Ayia Napa, Cyprus for a Key Action 1 – mobility of Youth project. The project entitled “who am I – promoting resilience, Empowerment and self-awareness amongst young people with visual Impairment” was submitted on February 4, 2015 to the Youth Board of Cyprus by the St Barnabas School for the Blind as part of the Erasmus + calls.

The consortium consists of schools for the visually impaired, organizations of persons with visual impairment and service support centers from Cyprus, Italy, Iceland, Germany, Georgia and Serbia.

The general objective of the project is to promote resilience, empowerment and wellbeing in young people with visual impairment. The age group 16 – 22 is a crucial stage of human development for all. The transition from meta-adolescence to early adulthood constitutes a period of change in every life domain of the person. Individuals with visual impairment are often dependent on others and find it hard to function as independent members of society, especially if they feel that they do not have the skills or the competences to do so.

Psychological resilience is a fundamental concept of the healthy and positive development of any individual. It refers to the individual’s ability to overcome a difficulty quickly and effectively and consists of various concepts. These include concrete progress, such as improved confidence, coping and self-esteem, and less measurable outcomes, such as doing better than expected, or simply maintaining the status quo. These benefits are of particular importance to children and young people with disabilities, who face additional adversity, disadvantage, and challenges to their development.

All these issues will be addressed throughout the week and will form the activities of five planned workshops. In addition, the young people will be involved in other creative workshops such as arts and crafts, music and dance. During the week, various social events will also be arranged so that young people will have the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas, get to know each other's culture and meet some of the sites and traditions of Cyprus.

Feeling Van Gogh makes art accessible for visually impaired visitors

Amsterdam, March 2015

Vincent van Gogh's artworks can now also be "seen" through touch: the Van Gogh Museum has launched a special programme for blind and partially sighted visitors. Feeling Van Gogh consists of an interactive guided tour and a multi-sensory workshop. Feeling Van Gogh makes Vincent van Gogh's paintings accessible for visually impaired visitors, as well as their sighted friends, family and guides.

Stimulating the senses

Four times a year, specially trained guides take the visitors on a tour through the museum, explaining Van Gogh's story by means of the paintings from the permanent collection. Next, a workshop will take place in a studio, equipped for this purpose: Van Gogh's works can be explored with simplified relief prints and a model of The Bedroom. Furthermore, the senses are stimulated by the scent of lavender from the south of France and quotes from Van Gogh's letter, that are read out loud.



Photo: Nina Albada Jelgersma

Van Gogh Museum Relievo Collection

The Van Gogh Museum Relievos – premium quality 3D reproductions of Van Gogh’s paintings – are the main focus of this workshop. These Relievos were developed by the museum at an earlier stage and they have proved to be very suitable for this programme. Vincent van Gogh is known for his thick, impasto brush technique and the Relievos now offer those who are blind or partially sighted the opportunity to experience his paintings through touch. Touching these paintings is also a unique experience for sighted participants.

A museum for all

One of the main objectives of the Van Gogh Museum is making the Vincent van Gogh’s life and art accessible to as many people as possible. Feeling Van Gogh is an important step forward in achieving this. Connecting with the artworks by appealing to various senses, and discussing Van Gogh’s art together, results in a very positive effect on how visually impaired visitors experience the museum.

“I had visited the Van Gogh Museum before, but it was mainly something that the other members of my family enjoyed and I was simply dragging my feet. This time I felt I was also participating and that was fun, because you really experience the museum a lot better.” Robert –partially sighted participant.

Cooperation

Feeling Van Gogh was developed by the Van Gogh Museum in close cooperation, from an early stage, with blind and partially sighted representatives of Dutch organizations in the field of visual impairment: Kubes (art for the blind and partially sighted), Oogvereniging (association of the blind and partially sighted) and of the EBU. The programme was co-funded with a substantial financial contribution from the Oogfonds (The Dutch Eye Fund).

Booking for foreign groups

Please contact us at vangoghopgevoel@vangoghmuseum.nl.

XXXVI. Convention of Pedagogy for the Blind and Visually Impaired - "Perspectives in Dialogue"

The „Verband für Blinden- und Sehbehindertenpädagogik e.V.“ (VBS) / The Association of Pedagogy for the Blind and Visually Impaired” and the ICEVI organises this convention in Graz from August 1st to 5th, 2016



Every VBS member, every blind person and those who are visually impaired as well as anybody interested in the education, training and rehabilitation of the blind and visually impaired is welcome to use this convention as a platform to further develop their understanding of inclusive learning and the living environment.

For interested people from all those countries where there is the EU-programme ERASMUS+ please ask your National Agency immediately whether you can get funding for this in-service event.

The convention will, following its tradition, offer an opportunity for scientific discussion, for specialist discourse and the gaining of new insights and experiences; it will also be a national and international framework for personal exchange.

The topic "Perspectives in Dialogue" continues the themes of previous conventions. The experiences in the development of inclusive education settings clearly indicate the necessity for knowing and taking into consideration the different views on the construct inclusion. The aim of the convention is to bring together and to discuss the different perspectives of the topic "Inclusion of the blind and visually handicapped"; It is about the perspectives of different faculties, such as educational science, social science, medicine, technology,

therapy, but also regional, national and international approaches as well as the manifold concepts of all those involved in the process.

The Convention Committee has decided on a basic structure with an emphasis on certain topics. The convention is arranged in seven consecutive topics that are designed to offer a framework for participants to engage with a particular topic in detail.

Participating in the convention is possible from Monday to Friday (August 1st to 5th, 2016), Monday to Wednesday (August 1st to 3rd, 2016), Wednesday to Friday (August 3rd to 5th, 2016), or on a daily basis.

The allied subjects will comprise presentations, experiences and discussions on the following topics:

1. Inclusive region

Monday

Inclusion refers to the diversity of individuality and ways of life. Consequently, inclusion cannot be regarded as or implemented as something isolated but must influence comprehensively ways of human co-existence. Inclusive regions will be developing, come into existence, or may already have been well established. Getting to know them and discussing them will be the first focal point. Concepts, visions, results and partial results will be the topics of presentations and discussions.

2. Profession

Tuesday morning

Developing inclusive education settings can happen successfully only when those engaged in the process are adequately professionalised. This means changing or readjusting the profiles of present professions and defining new professions or fields of activities. The improvement of quality and standardisation are consequently seen as the goals for the general and special teaching professions (at all phases), for the professions in therapy, medicine and rehabilitation but also for fields of activities hitherto not included as professions such as personal assistance or school assistance.

3. Law and developmental co-operation

Tuesday afternoon

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) is asking new questions – though they are not the first of their kind – in respect of different national and international legal norms. On top of this the UN CRPD puts special meaning on international co-operation including international developmental programmes. This normative framing meets a long tradition of international co-operation within the faculties of education for the blind and visually handicapped, ophthalmology, and related professions and trades.

4. Phases of life

Wednesday

Any impairment of vision has, in different phases of life and development, varying effects on activities and participation and entails specific regulations in the areas of law, institutions, professions, resources, and many more, trying to accommodate special needs. The three perspectives "phase of life" – "individuality" – "profession" are to pose the right questions and encourage discussion in terms of the most suitable ways of increasing activity and enabling equal participation. Comprehensive interdisciplinary approaches are welcome as are individual accounts of concepts in diagnostics and training. We aim at presentations and discussion of contributions concerning the following phases of life: infancy, school years, vocational training, adulthood, senior citizens, and also the involvement of various institutions in tertiary education and special training.

5. Medicine

Thursday morning

Inclusion entails health services that are needed by people with special needs because of their disability, including early diagnosis and intervention. What we are aiming at are presentations of current research projects; new findings in diagnostics and therapy in ophthalmology; the co-operation in general medicine, psychology, neurosurgery, medical technology, education of the blind and visually impaired and others.

6. Media

Thursday afternoon

Inclusion is closely connected with the term and claim of "universal design". It is this "universal design" that – also according to the UN CRPD – does not exclude special measures for particular groups of people with special needs. And it is just in this area that things have really happened during the last four years so that new opportunities have arisen for the blind and the visually impaired. Particularly the sector electrical / electro-technical media has seen an increase in developments that further and change professional and social participation and learning. It needs to be stated in this context that new possibilities and didactics are having a fascinating discussion. This dialogue will be coloured by

- new learning concepts and systems
- methodically didactic implementation in schooling and vocational training
- innovative techniques that promise more independence and new horizons
- discourse on what is feasible and do-able, ...

7. Inclusive models

Friday

Inclusion is comprehensive in another definition: an inclusive community necessitates and premises the acceptance of multitude as a constituent component of human socialising. Groups of constituent attributions as per features are in disagreement with individuality and diversity. In a definition like this a profession specificity that has made possible, coined and developed present-day quality standards is under suspicion of wanting to continue traditional systems. So the questions to be asked are: How can qualified functionally necessary offers for the development of participation and self-determination become components of inclusive models? Which models of inclusive behaviour are found in real life already? How do they implement individualism and professional quality?

We invite you to participate in our topics with presentations and discussions and request from you

- lectures that represent present-day research and/or introduce current deliberated experiences from the different spheres of activity (20mins)
- round table discussions with statements from experts outlining different perspectives on a topic (90mins)

Students of various degrees, consultants and graduates of relevant training and degree studies as well as everybody in educational and international exchange projects are welcome to present their theses, research concepts and findings in poster workshops or activity islands on Tuesday or Wednesday.

The language of the Congress is German. Contributions in English are welcome. Parts of the contributions in German will be translated simultaneously.

Call for Papers

Please send your abstract by October 16th, 2015 as an e-mail attachment (text file: *.rtf, *.doc; *.docx, *.odt) to office@vbs-2016.at giving the following information:

- format of presentation (lecture, discussion round, poster)
- allocation to a topic (when applying for a lecture or discussion round)
- author/s, conductor of discussion round
- title, if applicable subtitle (in German and English)
- abstract of contribution / concept of discussion round (max. 200 words in German or English); stating:
 - issue and
 - essence of contribution

- basic reasoning of prepared statements (when applying for a discussion round)

The Convention Committee will screen the abstracts that have been handed in and make a choice. As soon as possible you will receive information after the decision-making about the acceptance or refusal of your contribution.

Abstracts will stand a good chance of being accepted when they

- introduce innovative concepts
- fit well into the subjects and topics
- report on interdisciplinary or international work
- make reference to and reflect on real-life experience
- portray in person the "perspectives in dialogue" by the author/s or presenter/s.

Abstracts that have been accepted will be published before the beginning of the convention, thus enabling those interested to make a choice. The convention report will contain all the contributions on CD-ROM; keynotes and lectures also in written form. So we already make you aware that the contributions accepted have to be digitalised and that the abstracts/results of discussion rounds are to be handed in as soon as possible after the convention.

For further current information please check the homepage <http://www.vbs-2016.at>.

We are looking forward to your contributions!
The members of the Congress Committee

International conference INS HEA Sensory issues and Disability - Touch to learn, touch to communicate



In partnership with Universcience, 17-19 March 2016 at Cité des Sciences, Paris, France



universcience



Within the series of conferences about “sensory issues and disability” (“Olfaction, memory and learning” in 2009, and “Listening, acting, music and brain plasticity” in 2011), this conference deals with the sense of touch. Research programs aim to better understand the main principles underlying the sense of touch (proprioceptive vs. exteroceptive touch, tactile perception and kinesthetic movements), as was done for vision or hearing (Dupin, Hayward & Wexler 2015). Yvette Hatwell (1986) and her collaborators (Streri, 1991; Hatwell, Streri, Gentaz, 2000) showed long ago that touch was a high performance learning tool. Tactile and visual modalities interact very early in the life of a sighted baby, and touch allows blind people to understand the environment and how space is made up. Although it is rarely used in some cultures and rarely worded, touch is essential for some disabled people in their daily lives as a communication and learning tool. This is obviously the case for blind and severely visually impaired people, but also deafblind people (Souriau, 2013), those hindered in their verbal communication, or people with multiple disabilities for whom this is the preferred mode of communication. Last, touch is rarely used by non-disabled children. Yet research carried out by Edouard Gentaz shows that for preschool students, using haptic exploration of raised letters helps them connect their visual representations and their phonological representations –thereby eventually helping them learn to read and write.

This symposium aims to:

- Identify current scientific knowledge about touch.
- Show how the use of touch, interacting with other senses and with language, may foster learning processes, autonomy and access to

culture, particularly for people with disabilities or special needs, but also for non-disabled people.

- Allow participants to meet and exchange views so as to mutualize good practices and skills in this field.

The specific focus will be tactile modality, as it fosters knowledge among young people with visual disabilities (thanks to braille, tactile pictures, raised drawings, visuo-tactile interfaces) and access to communication for young disabled people who experience issues in this regard.

This conference is intended for all people – researchers, students, teachers, educators, therapists, culture professionals, parents, disabled and able people – who are interested in research on sensory modalities and the effects of senses on perception, cognition, emotion, behavior; the links between touch, learning and memory; and the implications of research on special adjustments for people with disabilities.

Oral presentations or posters may consist of scientific contributions (psychology, neurosciences, computer science, educational sciences, anthropology, philosophy...) or reflective practice on educational, cultural and pedagogical practices.

The call for proposals focuses on three thematic lines:

- Research in psychology and neurosciences in the field of sensoriality, particularly haptics.
- Research and experiments in the educational and pedagogical domains: teaching active touch to children and teenagers, tactile communication, braille, raised images, creating tactile devices for all as part of "universal design".
- Touch, communication and knowledge among children with multiple sensory or cognitive impairments.

Scientific committee: Mélissa Arneton (INS HEA-Grhapes), Michel Bris (INS HEA), Anne Chotin (INS HEA-SDADV) Hoëlle Corvest (Universcience), Edouard Gentaz (University of Geneva, CNRS), Vincent Hayward (Isir - Pierre & Marie Curie University, Paris), Bénédicte Leclercq (Universcience) ; Nathalie Lewi-Dumont (INS HEA-Ghrapes), Minna Puustinen (INS HEA-Grhapes), Jacques Souriau (University of Groningen), Danièle Toubert-Duffort (INS HEA-Grhapes), Bertrand Verine (Praxiling, University of Montpellier)

Organizational committee: Olivia Brachet (INS HEA), Hoëlle Corvest (Universcience), Yannick de Bouillane (INS HEA), Nathalie Lewi-Dumont (INS HEA-Ghrapes), Séverine Maillet (INS HEA), Nel Saumont (INS HEA)

Guidelines for submitting oral presentation / poster proposals:

Please send your proposals for contributions, in French or English, in PDF format (12pt font Times New Roman, 1.5 line spacing, 2.5cm margins).

Proposals must include the presentation or poster's title, a summary of max. 500 words, 3 to 5 keywords, bibliographic references (max.10). Participants will clearly indicate the desired format for their presentation (oral or poster) and the type of contribution (scientific or critical personal statements). Please state the name, organizational affiliation and mailing address of the author(s) and send your proposal as an email attachment to: severine.maillet@inshea.fr.

Key dates:

Abstract submission deadline: September 21, 2015

Notification of acceptance: October 15, 2015

Conference: March 17 & 18, 2016 (and March 19 as part of the Semaine du Cerveau)

Conference proceedings are planned for publication.

Références bibliographiques / Bibliographic references:

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**Letter form Prof. Emmy Csocsán PhD. - Solveig Sjöstedt, MA
Honorary Counsellor**

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ISaR - Inclusive Services and Rehabilitation

Dear colleagues,

We, the editors of ISaR International would like to invite you to our virtual resource centre: www.isar-international.com. The data bank contains a didactic pool with methodological solutions in the various fields of inclusive education, a link list with close to 200 links to web sites on assistive technology, education subjects, visual impairment, links to libraries, organizations and educational institutions for students and young persons with visual impairment. Through author search or going directly to the literature data base you can find books and articles with short resumes concerning different aspects on visual impairment and education. The teaching and learning material section gives you good ideas about what is available for your students. *ISaR - Inclusive Services and Rehabilitation* helps teachers, parents, students and all interested persons in the field of visual impairment to get information, ideas, contacts etc. Our intention is to help all involved persons to learn from each other's experiences. There are many different sources to that field on the net. ISaR helps you to orientate and find the most adequate information you need.

We are looking for more contacts to spread our information about the possibilities of ISaR. The information we get today will be available in ISaR tomorrow. We are looking forward to your contributions as well. What we are interested in is to get more international information on literature, didactic solutions which we then will be able to forward to our visitors.

There are lots of changes in most of the countries we know about in the fields of education for children with special needs. Please send us information about your education system, addresses of schools with good practice and give us feedback on our contributions published in ISaR-International. ISaR International could be a forum where ideas from all over the world will function as an 'inclusive pool' where the experts can receive and exchange good ideas to forward to the politicians and other persons with an interest in inclusive education and the power to make a difference.

Your contribution will, of course, be inserted with your copyright.

Together we achieve more!

Dortmund, Budapest, Helsinki, July 2015

Early intervention course in Georgia

Mariam Mikiashvili, Georgia

On August 20-27 training on early intervention with children who are visually impaired and blind with multiple disability, is planned in Tbilisi Georgia. This is the first course on that issue.

The course consists of three parts:

Part one: August 20-27 theoretical training + workshops.

Part two: participants of the course work individually with blind or partially sighted children with multiple disability. They will prepare reports and submit them to the trainers.

Part three: final evaluation and examination.

The training is conducted by Mrs. Marina Strothmann and Mrs. Simone Prantl from Munich, Germany.

After having studied psychology and pedagogics Marina Strothmann started to work in early intervention in the south of Germany (Bavaria) after a short period as a teacher in a primary school. For almost 35 years she worked in that field and became a well-known expert so that ultimately she delivered training all over Germany and abroad. She initiated, for instance, early intervention in Greece. She retired last autumn.

Originally from Austria, Simone Prantl has, since 2006, been a member of the early-intervention-staff of the well known "Blindeninstitutsstiftung" in Bavaria, Germany and was closely collaborating with Marina. In particular she is an expert in the application of electronic media in the practice of early intervention.

The training is sponsored by the private non-profit association "Freunde der Blindenschule in Tbilisi, Georgien" from Marburg in Germany the board of which is represented by Dr. Matthias Westroem. This association closely collaborates with the other great and well-known educational institution for the blind in Germany, the "Blista" which will be responsible for issuing the certificates for this training.

The project's Georgian partner is Mariani. Also partners are: Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia inclusive education development division, , Teachers Professional Development Center, Tbilisi State University Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, First Step Georgia, Tbilisi 202nd Public School For Blind.

The participants will be selected based on applications and Skype interviews from around Georgia. There will be 16 participants in total who will have a responsibility to spread the knowledge among their colleagues in the future. The background for the participants is: Psychology, occupational therapy,

special pedagogics; knowledge of at least one foreign language English or German; experience of working with 0 to 7 years old children who are blind, have visual impairment or multiple disability. Only successful participants will be awarded full certificates. Others will receive a proof of participation in the training.

Bridging the Digital Divide: The ENTELIS Project

Katerina Mavrou

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The [ENTELIS project](#) is funded by the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme (duration 2014-2016) (KA3 ICT Multilateral Network) and brings together nine partners from across the European Union and one partner from the United States. The main partners of the project are: AIAS Provincia di Bologna Onlus (Italy, Coordinator), AAATE (Europe), EASPD (Europe), EVBB (Europe), SAMK (Finland), EUC (Cyprus), HF Trust Limited (UK), OtW (FYROM), NFVB (Ireland), IMPT (USA – Third Country Partner). The project also holds a number of associate partners **and welcomes any other interested Organisation to join the network as associate partner, by applying according to the network rules.**

The aim of the project is to address the issue of the digital divide with respect to difficulties experienced by people with disabilities and elderly people in engaging with ICT and therefore may be prevented from fully enjoying its benefits, in a rapidly changing era of information and communication technologies. The network collaborates in the development of strategies and policies for digital skills development of persons with disabilities of all ages. The first year of the project has been completed with successful outcomes in the development of the state-of-the-art report.

A conceptual framework supporting this study was developed to facilitate awareness of the elements involved and their relationships. In the framework the end-user with disabilities has the most central position, as furthering his/her digital skills development is the key objective of this project. It further includes different significant actors and other parameters (learning environment, needs & aspirations, policies & practices and experiences), functioning and interacting in a person surrounding "ecosystem". During the State of the Art study data of different natures were collected from different sources and using different methodologies, including a literature review of scientific articles and conference papers, interviews with persons with disabilities and other stakeholders, the collection of innovative experiences. An overall of 150 scientific articles and 13 relevant and recent projects have been studied and analysed under the following analytical themes: ICT & ICT-AT in

education, ICT & ICT-AT and older adults, ICT & ICT-AT and daily life (communication, health & wellbeing, independence, environment and factors, hobbies, activities), ICT & ICT-AT in employment, resources for ICT & ICT-AT, barriers to ICT & ICT-AT, best practices in ICT & ICT-AT.

Interview data were collected by six members of the consortium, including the third country partner for the United States (AIAS, EUC, SAMK, OtW, Hft and IMPT) from different groups end-users (including people with VI who participated in the Cyprus research), service & product providers and trainers/educators. These data were analysed under the same themes as the literature review.

In general, outcomes of the literature review and interview data analysis indicated the following: ICT and ICT-AT can be effective in all domains (education, communication, daily life, health, community etc) of the lives of PwD of all ages; both literature and interview participants emphasize the vital role of ICT-AT for independence, social integration, educational success, employment opportunities, and overall quality of life of PwD; there seems to be heterogeneity in the way technology is considered and utilized among various groups of PwD, and there seem to be groups of individuals less included in processes relevant to them, such as people with intellectual disabilities; a number of challenges and barriers for ICT-AT competence development are identified, such as financial issues, lack of awareness, lack of ICT-AT technology adoption skills, failure to appreciate use and functionality of AT, high learning curve in technology skills that the adoption of ICT-AT may require from some individuals, lack of training for trainers, insufficient and inconsistent supportive policies, etc.

This first phase of the project concludes with suggestions for further research, for policy and practice and for the continuity of the project itself. It seems that there is a need for further investigation into the reasons for the adoption/abandonment of ICT-AT, into the ways to respond to user's heterogeneous needs for ICT-AT skills, on mechanisms to reduce the impact of barriers and to strengthen facilitating factors for the acquisition of digital competencies according each individual's personal and/or career needs and aspirations, on the effects of popular mainstream and mobile technology on digital skills acquisition and on more consistent and comparable statistical data in Europe and internationally. For policy and practice, the following needs are identified: the need for increasing awareness, the need for specific professional development among teachers and parent training, the need to reduce the gap in the transition from secondary to higher education, the need to improve access to appropriate technology, the need for more inclusively designed and accessible technology, and the need to involve all relevant stakeholders representing various perspectives. Finally, it is suggested that through the project as well as after its completion, the network could explore further possibilities for the development of ICT-AT learning programmes customized to needs and users in various groups and also develop position papers and

dissemination material that will target the general public, but also specific groups of policy makers, the industry, academia, the practitioners/professionals and the end-users.

The main outcomes of the research study of ENTELIS, including detailed results on interview data and experiences from people with visual impairment, will be presented at the [AAATE 2015 conference in Budapest](#), 9-12 September.

WBU-ICEVI Joint Assemblies 2016 - Second call for papers

18-25 August 2016, Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando, Florida, USA

Host Organisation: National Federation of the Blind (USA)

ICEVI DAY - 22nd August 2016

Theme for ICEVI Day: Education For All Children with Visual Impairment: Beyond 2015



ICEVI Day Programme Committee

Chairperson

Frances Gentle

Members

Colin Low

MNG Mani

Lucia Piccione

Praveena Sukhraj-Ely

Kay Ferrell

Susan LaVenture

Krisztina Kovács

WBU-ICEVI Joint Assemblies

The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment and the World Blind Union will be jointly holding their General Assemblies at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida, USA, from 18th to 25th August 2016. The joint Assemblies will include an ICEVI Day on Monday 22nd August 2016 that will be dedicated to conference-style papers and workshops. The Schedule for the WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies is as follows:

- **Thursday, August 18** – Meetings of the WBU Executive meeting and other WBU Assembly Committees

- **Friday, August 19 to Monday, August 22** – WBU Assembly proceedings
- **Monday, August 22** – ICEVI Opening Ceremony, ICEVI Paper Presentations
- **Tuesday, August 23** – Joint WBU-ICEVI concurrent sessions
- **Wednesday, August 24** – Joint WBU-ICEVI concurrent sessions, ICEVI Regional Committee meetings, WBU/ICEVI Closing Ceremony and **Gala Dinner**
- **Thursday, August 25** – ICEVI General Assembly and Executive Committee meeting

Programme Committee's invitation

The ICEVI Day Programme Committee invites you to respond to this Call for Papers by submitting an Abstract for consideration no later than **September 30th, 2015**. The program will include dedicated time throughout the day for parent and family presentations and workshops.

Theme for ICEVI Day

The theme of the ICEVI Day is "Education for All Children with Visual Impairment: Beyond 2015". The theme highlights the United Nations 2000-2015 education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals that have guided global and national efforts to achieve universal primary education and gender parity by 2015. With the 2015 MDGs deadline rapidly approaching, the United Nations and international community set to work to create a new global development and sustainability agenda. The Beyond 2015 education agenda encompasses a vision of access to all and rights-based perspectives on equity and inclusion. The Beyond 2015 education agenda includes particular attention to gender equity and overcoming all forms of discrimination in and through education.

Presentation Topics

Papers are invited on all aspects of education for children and youth with visual impairment including, but not limited to, the following:

- Parent and family perspectives, e.g. building family support systems, the role of parents in education, parent impact on community, formation of parent groups
- Early childhood intervention or Early childhood care and education (ECCE)
- Before-school or preschool education
- Awareness creation and advocacy in education of children with visual impairment
- Inclusion or inclusive educational practices

- Educational equity for girls and women
- Curriculum alignment or adapted instructional materials
- Access to curricular and extracurricular areas, or the expanded core curriculum
- Teaching mathematics or science
- Literacy or alternative formats (braille, large print or electronic)
- Orientation and mobility
- Social, life or independent living skills
- Career education
- Access to sport, physical education or recreational activities
- Education options for out-of-school children with visual impairment
- Transitions: Home to school, or school to adult life
- Education for children with visual and multiple disabilities (MDVI) or deafblindness
- Low vision
- Access to mainstream or adaptive/assistive technologies
- Innovation and emerging technologies
- Principles of universal design in education
- Innovation in the provision of support services or use of community resources
- Personnel preparation – education of teachers or other professionals
- Role models and mentors
- Higher education - opportunities and challenges
- Alternative education models for young adults
- Tackling adult illiteracy among persons with visual impairment

Type of Presentations

The Programme Committee invites the following four types of presentations:

1. Paper presentations

Paper presentations of 15 to 20 minutes duration, relating to one of the ICEVI Day topics. The presentation format may include a demonstration, discussion, or lecture.

2. Interactive workshop presentations

Interactive workshop presentations of 40 minutes duration, providing opportunities for the active engagement of participants.

3. Video presentations

Video presentations of 20 minutes duration, with an extra 10 minutes for discussion, showcase one of the ICEVI Day themes. Video presentations may be a suitable option to presenters who speak languages other than English.

4. Poster presentations

Presenters will be provided with a dedicated space during the ICEVI Day to present their poster, to interact with delegate, and to answer questions.

Audio-Visual Devices

The following equipment will be available for all types of presentations: computer and data projector, single slide projector, video, DVD, overhead projector and LCD projectors.

Translation

Simultaneous translation will not be possible for the concurrent sessions. People wishing to present papers in languages other than English may send a request to the Programme Committee, which will explore the possibility of arranging translation but this cannot be guaranteed.

Key dates

- Deadline for abstract submission – Extended to: **September 30th 2015**
- Committee feedback to authors: **January 31st 2016**

Guidelines for Abstract Submission

- The closing date for abstract submissions has been extended to **September 30th 2015** and all successful presenters will be notified by January 31st 2016
- The Programme Committee will only accept abstracts that are written in English
- An Official ICEVI Day Abstract Form is required for each presentation
- Lodgment of an abstract does not indicate automatic inclusion in the ICEVI Day Programme
- The lodgment of an abstract acknowledges your consent to publication (if accepted) in the ICEVI Day Abstract Booklet provided to delegates
- Abstract receipt will be acknowledged to the person submitting the abstract
- Further communication will be with the lead author presenting the paper, unless otherwise directed in your abstract submission
- On acceptance of the abstract, authors will be asked to submit a formerly prepared paper for inclusion in the conference proceedings
- When completing the ICEVI Day Official Abstract Form, please adhere to the following guidelines:
 - Use single line spacing and an easy-to-read font, such as Verdana, Arial or Calibri

- In 250 words or less, concisely outline the aims and content of the presentation
- Check that all sections of the Abstract Form have been completed before submission.

Please email, post or fax your completed ICEVI Day Official Abstract Form by **September 30th, 2015 to:**

Dr. Frances Gentle

Chairperson of the ICEVI Day Programme Committee,
c/o The ICEVI Secretariat

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