

EBU & ICEVI-Europe Joint Project 'Training and Propagation of Braille'

ICEVI-Europe participates as a Partner in the European Blind Union / DAB / REC 16-17 braille project. The purpose of the project is to collect good practice in the area of Braille teaching as well as evidence of the importance of Braille literacy. The project will be over two years (2016/2017). Since its first phase will focus on the Nordic experience, John Heilbrunn on behalf of the Danish Association of the Blind who leads on the project, and recommended Mrs Tarja Hännikäinen from Finland to participate as a member of the Steering Committee of this project, representing ICEVI-Europe.

The purpose of the project wish to establish the following:

- 1) Use and availability of braille. Whether the use and availability of braille in whatever format (paper or electronic) and for all crucial purposes (education and/or leisure) is increasing or decreasing.
- 2) The impact of technology. Is modern technology (ICT) promoting a larger amount of braille and does that mean that persons who are blind or very severely partially sighted make use of this opportunity?
- 3) The potential impact of other formats and media on the usage of braille. How could the availability of text on computers (synthetic speech) and narrated text (humane voice) be seen as effecting the extent of use of acquired skills amongst blind children for writing and reading braille?
- 4) Availability of relevant braille material at the relevant time and of an equal content. Are blind children from an early age (pre-school and in the initial grades - and later on) offered braille educational material and do these children get the same educational material and at the same point in time as their sighted classmates?
- 5) Educators and educational material both at initial and follow up training. Are children met by trained and skilled educators who can teach them braille competently and in an inspiring manner? Are educators using relevant training material?
- 6) Do children and young persons who are blind maintain their skills in using braille and do they continue to use it, and if yes, as a major or minor part of their handling of texts?
- 7) How can procedures, training courses etc. be put in place to ensure that children and young persons who are blind do not over time loose their competences in mastering braille?

The project will screen and analyse the various situation and solutions in all Nordic countries during the phase one, and then widespread the screening to Estonia, Austria, Italy and France during phase two. The questionnaire used provides important information about the circumstances and conditions pertaining to the use of braille and the experience on the extent of training facilities, technical services and pedagogical methods to propagate braille. Thus, in 2016, the expert group collected data on Nordic countries through a desk study and a survey. As a part of the process, the workshop with pedagogues from Nordic Countries in Denmark took place in October 2016.

Phase 2, in 2017, the expert group extends the scope of the study with a view to collecting and compiling knowledge, applied practices and experience on braille training and production of teaching materials in the field of braille usage in other European countries. Circulation of a second questionnaire to Austria, Estonia, France and Italy and fact-finding visits to institutions in Austria, Estonia, France and Italy will take place. The final conference 21.-23.11.2017 in Denmark offers a venue to discuss the final results.

All the above will result in a final report including a multi-faceted and updated set of recommendations. The dissemination of final report will take place in December 2017.

Further information:

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