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# EBU Members' Newsletter

## Number nine, October 2020.

## OUR CAMPAIGNS

### Creative Europe/MEDIA

As EU interinstitutional negotiations on the regulation for this programme for 2021-2027 are about to resume, we are preparing to communicate around our position paper.

The European Parliament rapporteur has expressed support for our demands in our recent Focus newsletter. He informed us of a strong will, from the EP side, to have the programme ready for 1st January 2021, without downward compromise on crucial points.

### Marrakesh Treaty

The UK has joined the Treaty on its own rights. The Treaty will continue to be applicable there after end of post-Brexit transition period, without a gap in time.

We are looking into the application of the Treaty in non-EU European Economic Area countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway). The relevant instruments of EU law need to be incorporated into the EEA agreement through an EEA Joint Committee decision, and this is taking more time than usual.

Our member in Bosnia-Herzegovina informs us that their country is now making quick progress toward ratification of the Treaty, [more on this below](#_Ratification_of_the).

### Accessible lifts

We submitted written recommendations to CEN/TC 10/WG 7, the EU standardisation body’s working group that is revising the accessible lifts standard, and to ANEC, ahead of its meeting of 7 October.

We were not invited to this particular meeting, despite it being the direct continuation of the July meeting. We made it fully clear that we nevertheless relied on ANEC to voice our recommendations, as always.

It was agreed at this meeting to first concentrate on finalising the contrast issue, and only after address other issues (the full extent of which is still being discussed).

### Equality in employment

We took an active part in communication in support of MEP Katrin Langensiepen’s report for the European Parliament on the implementation of the Employment Equality Directive in light of the UNCRPD, around its publication and presentation to the EMPL committee of the EP. We also promoted the content of this report in the context of European Commission consultations for the future European Disability Strategy (see below).

### Consultations by the European Commission

We participated in the following consultation meetings:

* Strategic Dialogue meetings: "Launching the 2021 European Semester" (19 October) and "Consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan" (21 October)
* Consultations by Commissioner Dalli’s cabinet for the new European Disability Strategy – the first 2 of a series of 4 meetings, on: Mobility, accessibility and participation (22 October) and Employment, skills, social protection, social services and independent living (23 October). The outcomes will feed into a later joint meeting with Commissioner Dalli on 11 November. We will give our members in the EU an overall report in November.

We responded to the online consultation on the evaluation of Regulation (EC) N° 1107/2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air. See [our response](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/response_to_consultation_on_evaluation_of_regulation_of_rights_of_pwds_in_air_travel_oct_2020.pdf), in which incidentally we complain about the lack accessibility of the consultation process for BPS persons.

We called on our national member organisations to participate in this consultation and to circulate it widely, as well as in the ones also on passenger rights respectively in transport by coach and in waterway transport.

As a result of our pressure jointly with EDF, we obtained from the Commission an extension of deadlines and Word versions of the questionnaires in accessible format in Dutch, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. We will be increasingly vocal on the matter of accessibility of online consultations in the future, especially where PWDs are particularly concerned by the topic; and in fact we have raised this point again in the consultation about the European Disability Strategy (see below).

### Events

* We participated in the EU Disability High Level Group (15 October) in which the German and Portuguese Presidencies presented their programmes, and the current and future European Disability Strategies were discussed.
* We participated in seminar on the European Accessibility Act organised by the Federation of European Publishers and the International Publishing Association at the Frankfurt Book Fair (16 October). We were represented by Prof. Thomas Kahlisch (DBSV and dzb lessen) who highlighted the opportunities for all of the EAA as regards e-books.

## SIGN up NOW - EBU 2020 Webinars: Acoustic Systems for Information and Navigation!

Tuesday, November 10, 2020 to Friday, November 27, 2020 on line 10, 18 and 27 November 2020

Due to the current global health crisis, this year’s EBU conference focusing on **acoustic systems for information and navigation purposes** will be held in the form of **3 online events.** You can [download the programme](https://euroblind.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=62d697c14fca54ea17e942ba4&id=6e32382337&e=165381f4fd) for these events here.

The dates are:

* **10 November at 10 am**
* **18 November at 10 am**
* **27 November at 10 am**

Webinars will be audio recorded and each one will last approximately **2.5 hours** with a short break in between. Presentations will be in **English** with interpretation available in **French, German and Spanish**.  
   
All events are public. You can register by providing the following information to Romain FERRETTI, EBU Project Officer, at [ebuprojects@euroblind.org](mailto:ebuprojects@euroblind.org):  
- First name and LAST NAME  
- Country  
- Organisation/company (if relevant)

After registration, you will receive a confirmation and shortly before the conference a ZOOM link to join the webinar.

We kindly ask all participants to [download and fill in a **questionnaire**](https://euroblind.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=62d697c14fca54ea17e942ba4&id=a9b4097070&e=165381f4fd) on the situation of acoustic traffic lights in your country and to return it to Jan URBÀNEK at [urbanek@sons.cz](mailto:urbanek@sons.cz) with a copy to Josef SÖGNER at [office@orientierungsmanagement.com](mailto:office@orientierungsmanagement.com) no later than 23 October.

Please feel free to share this invitation within your networks and get back to us if you have any questions.

## Welcome to the 26th EBU Access Cast podcast on accessible technology innovations!

Welcome back to [this month's edition of the EBU Access Cast](https://ebuaccesscast.libsyn.com/ebuaccesscast-26), as always packed with the latest assistive technology news and gadget discussion. Our content in written form is in our transcript

We started this one off with Mario telling us all about his brand-new phone, the [Samsung Xcover Pro](https://www.samsung.com/us/business/products/mobile/phones/galaxy-xcover-pro/), the latest in the famous line of rugged, durable smartphones made by Samsung. This experience gives us a chance to discuss what to watch out for when choosing the right Android smartphone, including some less obvious characteristics, and how to make sure you will not need to return your purchase days after bringing it home.

Not only Mario had an interesting device to present, as Paweł got a hold of [Feelspace Navibelt](https://www.feelspace.de/?lang=en), an aid in form of a belt worn around the waist that makes independent navigation easier.

We broke off the path of new hardware to point at a [survey](http://www.edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/press-release-all-eu-public-sector-websites-must-be-accessible-today) opened by the EDF where the opinion of disabled citizens is asked regarding the accessibility of public sector websites following the deadline of the 23rd of September which is when the Web Accessibility Directive should be met by all of the EU member states.

Our discussion of new devices carried on to the news section as well, as we discussed the latest [Google event](https://blog.google/products/devices-services/launch-night-in-helpful-devices-2020/) which, short as it was, introduced us to a slew of new speakers, smartphones and even a much smarter Chromecast streaming device. Beyond the event, Google surprised us all, with a little help from Ubisoft, by presenting the feature of [alternative audio tracks for youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaOKSUlf4TM&feature=youtu.be&has_verified=1&ab_channel=UbisoftNorthAmerica) videos. Will audiodescription become the new norm on the world's most popular video sharing platform and how easy is it to find the new option?

As is often the case with us, we also took a moment to check out what is new with the most essential pieces of software, the screen readers. While [NVDA 2020.3](https://www.nvaccess.org/post/nvda-2020-3/) introduces system keys' emulation and changes for touch screen users, [JAWS 2021](https://support.freedomscientific.com/Downloads/JAWS/JAWSPublicBeta) beta greets us with Sharky, its brand-new voice assistant, and some more image recognition news.

We also had to share an unfortunate piece of news regarding Samsung's Voice Assistant. Beginning with One UI 3.-, [Samsung's Android experience based on Android 11](https://www.sammobile.com/news/official-changelog-android-11-based-one-ui-3-0-beta-update/), the company has decided to retire its own screen reader in favour of Google's Talkback. Does Talkback have any real competition at the moment and how easy is it to bring a new screen reading experience to the Android platform? What were your memories connected with the Voice Assistant?

Should you have any questions or queries, do not hesitate to contact us using our [email](mailto:ebuaccesscast@euroblind.org) or [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ebuaccesscast?lang=en).

Stay tuned and, most of all, healthy and safe in these difficult times.

Until the next episode coming to you in November.

## Ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty in Bosnia and Herzegovina

At the initiative of the Union of the Blind of the Republic of Srpska, in July 2017, the ratification process of the Marrakesh Treaty began.

After the general elections in B&H in 2018 the Republic of Srpska government was constituted, but also the government in the cantons, the Federation of B&H and at the level of B&H. Only after the constitution of the newly elected government structures at the end of 2019, were the basic preconditions acquired to start the process of the Marrakesh Treaty ratification and to perform the process of harmonization of laws and bylaws that regulate these issues.

On 12th March 2019 we were informed that the ratification case was in the regular procedure for consideration in the B&H Council of Ministers, followed by a debate in the B&H Parliament, the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples, and finally the B&H Presidency would make a decision on ratification.

At the beginning of September 2020, we received official information from the Institute for Intellectual Property of B&H informing us that both Parliamentary Houses (House of Representatives and House of Peoples) passed the Decision on ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty in July 2020.

We expect that this process will be completed in the current year, and the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty will be officially accepted, which will bring our country into the group of ninety countries that have signed the ratifications of the Marrakesh Treaty. This opens up space for the standardization of books and other content in formats adapted to the specific needs of blind and partially sighted people and others who have difficulty reading common prints. The availability of books and other content without barriers is slowly and surely becoming a reality.

**Branko Suzić**, President of the Union of the Blind of the Republic of Srpska

## Slovakia - From Education to Inclusion

As we know, accessibility is an important part of the modern and fully fledged life of people with a visual impairment. Nowadays, the legal conditions have been created in Slovakia under which accessibility can become a reality in the country. The problem arises, however, when we include the human factor into the process. The employees of various client centres, even those directly responsible for individual accessibility areas, can’t react properly or provide people with visual impairment with adequate information or adapt the environment to be the most accessible and user-friendly.

In September 2020, the Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union started an international project titled **From Education to Inclusion (EDI)** funded by the Erasmus+ Programme. Our partners are [FUNKA](http://www.funka.com) from Sweden and [Teiresiás](https://www.teiresias.muni.cz/) from the Czech Republic. The project will last until February 2022.

The goal of the project is to contribute to eliminating the barriers by creating training modules for specific target groups. These are employees of Slovak municipalities in positions directly working with clients, managers of the built environment within the municipality or those spreading information within the municipality, and leaders with a visual impairment.

We aim to pilot the training modules created and, as a result, to raise the social inclusion of blind and partially sighted people in society. Also, after finishing the project, our ambition is to offer our training to Slovak municipalities and thus raise awareness on visual impairment and accessibility within the Slovak public administration bodies.

[More information on the project is available](http://www.unss.sk/edi).

## A success in the Netherlands: Green ‘corona vests’ for keeping 1,5 m distance

When you are blind or partially sighted, it can be difficult to keep the 1,5m distance. Often other people don’t take your visual impairment seriously. In March 2020, several blind and partially sighted who worried about keeping the distance of 1,5 meters phoned the Dutch Eye Association (Oogvereniging).

People were criticised because others thought they came too close on purpose. In a Zoom meeting a few days later, the team decided we had to do something about this. We found out that vests with a text couldn’t be ignored. We chose reflecting green vests - yellow vests have another connotation over the last year – with the text **‘I can´t see you, could you keep your distance?’** on the front and the back. The vests were free for members of the Dutch Eye Association, others could receive one for €7,50.

It was a big success: now, 7 months later 1500 jackets have been sent to people all over the Netherlands (and some to Belgium). Even schools and rehabilitation centres asked for the vests for their mobility lessons!

**Ellen van Herk**, Team Oogvereniging

## Belgium - White Cane Safety Day – Elisa Michiels & Lambertine Bonjean square.

The municipality of Saint-Gilles (Brussels) decided that a hitherto anonymous square will take the name of the two founders of the association: Élisa Michiels and Lambertine Bonjean.

The Élisa Michiels et Lambertine Bonjean square was inaugurated on October 15, on the occasion of the White Cane Safety Day. This decision is a response to the ‘Women’s names’ motion passed by the Saint-Gilles City Council in 2019. This motion highlighted the virtual absence of streets and public spaces bearing the name of women. The goal of the municipality is to increase the visibility of women in public spaces while paying tribute to a major association active on its territory.

The Brailleliga/Ligue Braille is very touched by this initiative. The association dedicates the square to its volunteers as two blind volunteers – Élisa Michiels and Lambertine Bonjean – founded the Brailleliga/Ligue Braille. Their goal was to support blind people in Belgium, allowing them to live a normal life, not characterized or limited by their blindness. Since that day, the association has further developed a wide variety of services. Today more than 15,500 blind and visually impaired members of the Brailleliga/Ligue Braille live their daily lives in complete autonomy.

## Sight Tech Global - New Accessibility Tech Event on Dec. 2-3



On Dec. 2-3, Sight Tech Global will be hosting a free, virtual conference in partnership with TechCrunch dedicated to bringing together the tech pioneers who are applying the latest advances to accessibility tech for the visually impaired.

Technologists from Amazon, Waymo, OrCam, Microsoft, Humanware, & many more will be speaking at the show on their latest advancements for the visually impaired. In addition to being able to learn from these tech innovators live, attendees will be able to ask speakers their questions directly through our virtual Q&A platform.

[Book your FREE ticket today to hold your virtual seat at the show by clicking here](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sight-tech-global-tickets-117352240711?aff=Euroblind). If you have any questions, please feel free to email info@sighttechglobal.com.

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