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# EBU Members' Newsletter 2021

## Number Ten, November.

## OUR CAMPAIGNS

### Marrakesh Treaty

With Liechtenstein ratifying the Treaty in late October, the following European countries remain that still need to join: Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Turkey.

At the annual meeting of our Commission for Liaising with the EU, we agreed to gather input on the implementation of the Treaty in the EU, through a survey to our members in the EU, in the context of the second review of the EU by the UN CRPD Committee, scheduled for spring 2022.

### Reform of EU electoral law

Together with EDF, we continued to lobby the European Parliament’s Constitutional Affairs committee (AFCO). The amendments tabled by MEPs or groups very largely reflect our recommendations, although with considerably more support from the S&D and Greens/ELA groups than from others. We will need to continue our lobbying ahead of the AFCO vote on the amendments, likely in December.

### Equal Treatment Directive

In October, EDF met with the Rapporteur in the European Parliament to discuss regressive amendments that had been made in the first half of 2021 by the Portuguese presidency. We will liaise with EDF in the preparation of an EDF position to lobby the French Presidency and the Commission.

### Web Accessibility Directive

At the annual meeting of our Commission for Liaising with the EU, our members were informed again about the [EDF Training Toolkit](https://www.eud.eu/news/training/edf-toolkt-web-accessibility-directive/) on the implementation of the Directive.

### European Accessibility Act

As a result of the annual meeting of our Commission for Liaising with the EU, we plan to sound out the possibility to set up a taskforce to make specific recommendations for the implementation of the Act as far as payment terminals are concerned, and maybe also self-service terminals.

### European Disability Platform

After the publication of the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 in March, and the disappointing Council conclusions, the European Commission has launched the call for organisations to join the new Disability Platform. Reminder: this Platform, which replaces the High Level Group on Disability, will meet four times per year and will be formed by the focal points at EU and national level, in addition to representatives of organisations of persons with disabilities and service providers. Disappointingly, the new Platform does not have the power to propose initiatives or to evaluate actions and remains essentially a place of discussion and exchange. However, DPOs represented will now have full membership instead of observer status. EBU responded positively to the call, to be represented by our President and alternatively by the Chair of our Commission for Liaising with the EU.

### Review of the EU by the UN CRPD Committee

At the annual meeting of our Commission for Liaising with the EU, it was decided that EBU would contribute to the EDF alternative report.

### Events

On 20-21 November, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, we had the annual meeting of our Commission for Liaising with the EU, in which we took stock of noteworthy EU developments in the past year and discussed future steps in advocacy and campaigning, as well as internal organisation matters. Due to the sanitary context, after the fully online edition of 2020, this edition was with a mix of physical and online participation.

## The 34th EBU Access Cast is now online.

Welcome back to the [34th episode of the EBU Access Cast](https://ebuaccesscast.libsyn.com/ebu-access-cast-34) where, as always, we provide you with the news around assistive technology and accessibility. This episode, hosted by Paweł and co-hosted by Tanja, Mario and Hlynur contains big amounts of news from the Big companies out there, impressions of technology we have ourselves tested and a nice demo at the end so tune in and enjoy! You can always review the [transcript](https://ebuaccesscast.libsyn.com/ebu-access-cast-34-transcript) of the podcast if that form suits you better.

For any lovers of movies and TV Series, Paweł has tested [Teleparty](https://teleparty.com/), a browser extension that allows a group of friends to watch a movie together with everyone keeping their individual audio and subtitle settings intact.

We then head of to find out what Microsoft has in store. The announcement of the [Surface Adaptive Kit](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/surface/surface-adaptive-kit-guide)  has made rounds all over the Internet. We discuss possible use cases for the blind helped by Tanja who has recently tested one of the Surface laptops. Of course we did not forget that Windows 11 has recently been released. WE start off the discussion on that particular topic by diving into [running Android apps on Windows 11](https://forum.audiogames.net/topic/42594/android-apps-now-available-in) and how accessible and usable that is going to be. Those of us who have had a chance to run windows 11 share their first impressions. But Microsoft doesn’t just stop there. They also organize a [handful of webinars](https://sway.office.com/X0w6OiF9638N7Mb7?ref=Link) addressing all that changed in Windows 11 in regards to accessibility. Speaking of events, this year’s editions of the [NVDACon](https://nvdacon.org/) and [Sighttech Global](https://sighttechglobal.com/) are taking place soon.

On a more negative note, Apple has recently made itself a bit of a bad name with the blind community. Firstly, the developer of the Flicktype keyboard has had problems [publishing into the App Store](https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2021/08/iphone-keyboard-for-blind-) then he discovered his app was turned into an [Apple Watch feature](https://appleinsider.com/articles/21/09/15/apple-refutes-flicktype-dev). Next, a blind developer has had issues [updating one of his games.](https://www.applevis.com/forum/accessibility-advocacy/apples-app-revie) Finally, a rain of headlines fell upon the Internet as many blind users discovered that [Siri features](https://appleinsider.com/articles/21/09/30/apple-removes-siri-features) such as checking the call log or sending E-mails were gone. These examples show how lack of awareness on accessibility issues appearing in some departments of even the biggest companies, coupled with the politics behind technology can severely affect our access to solutions we use every day.

On the Google front, a new version of the Android [Accessibility Suite](https://www.progaccess.net/article.php?id=240) [was released](http://tiflocomp.ru/index.php?mod=news&act=show&id=1839&sec=&p=1)  with a surprisingly huge jump in the version numbering. Are the changes significant enough to justify such a change? We also congratulate the users in Slovenia and Belgium, as Slovenian and Belgian French join the family of [Vocalizer voices on Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=es.codefactory.vocalizertts). Further down the Google line, Youtube is rolling out a slew of new features that should make [audio more accessible](https://techcrunch.com/2021/10/07/youtube-announces-new-audio-features). Can you hear that audiodescription coming? Come and find out!

We also had a last-minute, surprising news from Mastercard who have announced their brand-new [accessible card design.](https://www.mastercard.com/news/press/2021/october/mastercard-introduces-accessible-card-for-blind-and-partially-sighted-people/)

We also discussed the appearance of Susan Bennett, the voice actress behind the original Siri voice, in [the latest campaign by UserWay](https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-original-voice-of-siri-helps-userway-promote-web-accessibility-301388675.html). Can the gap in accessibility be bridged by a single line of code and how does the marketing in the accessibility space look like today?

To top the whole show off, Hlynur introduces us to Isak, an Icelandic developer behind Retinaid, a way to revolutionize playing tabletop games by blind people. Feel free to contact Isak to find out how you can get involved in testing and check out the [list of currently supported games (PDF)](https://traffic.libsyn.com/secure/ebuaccesscast/RetinAid_Supported_games_11._nov_2021.pdf).

You can get in touch with us by sending an e-mail to ebuaccesscast@euroblind.org or reaching out to us on Twitter at [@EbuAccessCast](https://twitter.com/ebuaccesscast) Until the next time!

## International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November 2021)

Under the global theme “[Orange the World: End Violence against Women Now](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism)!” the United Nations marks the start of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women commemoration reminds us we all have a role to play to achieve a brighter future free from violence.

The official UN commemoration event took place on November 24.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, a new UN Women report, based on survey data from 13 countries published on November 24, shows that COVID-19 has eroded women’s feelings of safety, both at home and in public spaced, with significant negative impacts on their mental and emotional well-being.

However, there is also evidence that ending violence against women and girls is possible, with a comprehensive approach that tackles the root causes, transforms harmful social norms, provide services for survivors and ends impunity.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/media-advisory/2021/11/media-advisory-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women-25-november>

EBU women produced two brochures on the right to live without violence, together with [a guide on how to use](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/media/women/guidelines-for-the-information-package.docx) these. The [first brochure is aimed at professionals](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/media/women/The-right-to-live-without-violence-1-professional.pdf) in healthcare, social services. The [second brochure was made for blind and partially sighted women](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/media/women/The-right-to-live-without-violence-2-women-and-org.pdf) and their organisations:

Also in the 2019 EBU GEAR conference held in Malmö, violence was on the agenda. The [Swedish report ´Looking the other way´ is also available from the EBU website](http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/guidelines#_Women), as is the impactful short film ´[In Plain Sight](https://drive.google.com/drive/mobile/folders/1_bQpMJeiVVz-y1V3wijJeHjGVdoJaFxh?usp=sharing)´, shown at the same conference. «InPlainSight\_MASTER\_Synstolket\_PR422HD» has English audio description

"InPlainSight\_MASTER\_Synstolket\_Undertekster\_H264-HighBR\_HD» has audio description and subtitles.

The EBU women´s network warmly recommends you to revisit these materials and use them.

For more information contact ebusecretariat@euroblind.org

## PARVIS updates, November 2021

A video on [Equal Right to Work](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PO3ksgGuNYw&list=PLcyYCwa6mweG4EjTj7NMm6AVenK4o8vvA) is currently available in 11 languages. A scene-by-scene description replacing audio description, has been added in the comment box under each video. Please subscribe to the [PARVIS YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBLKX-DklJI98RHUjODP3KA/playlists) and re-share the English videos on your website and/or social media, so that we can raise awareness of these important rights in as many European countries as possible!

A new video on Right to Culture and Sports will be available in January. In addition, we have the opportunity to provide you campaign material on Access to Culture, including tweets and visuals that you can translate and use in your own social media accounts, such as Twitter or Facebook. If you are interest, please contact PARVIS Project Coordinator mariem.sene@euroblind.org.

A ‘Rights-Reporting’ podcast, of which the first episode will focus on the accessible labour market, will air **November 30.** This episode includes a presentation of a case where this right has been violated, as well as guests from Montenegro and the Netherlands to discuss how different tools can improve the situation. EBU will share the podcast link and transcript once they are available – and we encourage you to translate the transcript and disseminate it with the podcast link on your social media accounts.

Four Info-sessions aimed at blind and partially sighted (BPS) citizens in at least 10 European countries will be organized in 2022, of which the first one at the beginning of next year. These info-sessions will detail mechanisms BPS citizens can refer to if they consider their rights have been denied. If you are interested in organizing such session either online or in-person in your country, do not hesitate to contact PARVIS Project Coordinator.

We are also currently planning for the project’s biggest activity – an awareness-raising decentralized event on political participation organised on Europe Day (9 May 2022) in 10 different countries, aimed at decision makers. As this event also includes a joint media action, online media training will be provided to participating organisations. If you are interested in learning more or participating, kindly contact PARVIS Project Coordinator Mariem Sene at your earliest convenience.

## EBU Belgrade Declaration, 2021.- update

Following on from last month’s news that EBU published [**the Belgrade Declaration, 2021**](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade.docx), after our conference on employment, we can now inform members that the Declaration has been translated and is now also available in [Albanian](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade_albanian_sq.docx), [Estonian](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade_estonian_et.docx), [French](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade_fra.docx), [German](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade-de.docx), [Hungarian](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade_hungarian_hu.docx), [Italian](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade_italian_it.docx), [Montenegrin](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade-mne.docx) and [Spanish](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade_es.docx).

We hope this will be useful to you, please do not hesitate to translate the document into your own language and inform the EBU office!.

For further information, visit the [event page](http://www.euroblind.org/events/ebu-annual-conference-2021-employment-and-rehabilitation-blind-and-partially-sighted-people).

## Germany - Action plan to promote the self-representation of women within DBSV and its regional associations

In 2021, DBSV participated in the European Blind Union‘s (EBU) Gender Equality Awareness Raising (GEAR) project with funding from the European Union. As part of the project, an action plan was formulated to promote the representation of women within DBSV. The DBSV Board of Directors unanimously adopted this plan on October 9, 2021 in Bielefeld. In doing so, DBSV, its 19 regional associations and corporate members declare their commitment to the equal participation of women within the association and federation work.

Read about the [measures that will be implemented to achieve equal representation of women within DBSV](https://www.dbsv.org/aktuell/frauenaktionsplan.html#engl)

## Portugal - ACAPO advocates early retirement for Persons with Disabilities

On October 19, ACAPO participated in the public hearing on the study of the early retirement scheme for persons with disabilities. This has been one of ACAPO's oldest claims that still remains unfulfilled 10 years after it came to Parliament for discussion. The measure has already been adopted in several European countries, being supported by several studies that recognize the increased effort on the part of persons with disabilities at a professional level. For Rodrigo Santos, President of ACAPO, it is essential to guarantee "a decent retirement that takes into account the wear and tear of a contributory career that develops in circumstances that imply greater difficulty."

The study, presented by the Government, highlights the lack of concrete data on the situation in Portugal, but recognizes that there is indeed a group of people who can be covered. In general, ACAPO agrees with the premises of this study and considers that it underpins good decisions, being essential to recognize that for persons with disabilities, early retirement through the extension of a contributory career is "a duty imposed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is a duty of citizenship and justice, but it is also a duty to recognize the contribution of those who, through their efforts, and with some added pain, have also contributed to the very system they would like to now to benefit”, words of Rodrigo Santos at the public hearing.

## **RNIB new report: ‘Seeing streets differently**

**How changes in our streets and vehicles are affecting the lives of blind and partially sighted people.’**

Seeing streets differently report:

* presents our evidence on the biggest barriers to walking journeys faced by blind and partially sighted people,
* it introduces a guide to understanding how blind and partially sighted people get around, and
* sets out our recommendations to local authorities in England and the Department for Transport.

The [full report is available here](https://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/Seeing%20Streets%20Differently%20report%20-%20RNIB%202021%20%281%29.pdf).

The RNIB website also lists [14 things you can do to make our streets more inclusive.](https://www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning/priority-campaigns/inclusive-journeys/14-things-you-can-do-help-make-our-streets-more-inclusive)

## British Abacus Association (BAA)- Reimagine the abacus: The indispensable computing device and the computing brain

The following article from the BAA offers an insight into the possibilities and uses of the abacus as a learning tool for the visually impaired community.

The abacus is generally regarded by some special educators as the best all-around computing device available to students with visual impairments in East Asia and the United States. It has been used widely in their education systems. “The abacus is the best computing device for students with visual impairments to learn arithmetic” Dr. Lin, Ching-Jen said, the Director of the Center of Education and Rehabilitation for the Visually Impaired, National University of Tainan in Taiwan. Meanwhile, the current evidence shows the abacus training may be applicable in both educational and clinical settings to benefit persons who are visually impaired, persons with different types of disability and the elderly with or without cognitive impairment.

We visited the Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles (INJA) and the IMPRO Valentin HAUY, Association Valentin Haüy (AVH) (with blind and partially sighted people) in 2019 and where no abacus training was taught. The visits led to the discovery of the brain science behind this learning. Abacus learning is not just limited to numeracy but is also founded on the coordination and interrelationship of the brain and the hands in what is referred to as the abacus-based mental calculation (AMC). The AMC is shaped by computing the abacus, students with visual impairments could touch to get a sense of space to acquire the AMC skill to perform fast and accurate calculations without physical abacus with appropriate instruction. The AMC could unlock the potential of computing brain, and this may be a lifelong skill. Furthermore, the coordination and interrelationship may also be the key to benefit persons with disabilities. Previous studies indicate that the abacus training can induce specific changes in the brain. It also may improve executive functions, working memory and intelligence quotient (IQ).

[Our report](https://baauk.org/our-publications/) presents the insights from organizations and experts with a pilot test in Taiwan by the Center of Education and Rehabilitation for the Visually Impaired, National University of Tainan (NUTN), the Taipei Parents’ Association for the Visually Impaired (PAVI), the Taiwan Chamber of Commerce (TCOC). Special thanks for the advice from Ms. Marie-Renée HECTOR, the Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), Mr. Joe FitzPatrick and Ms. Sue Parsons at Dundee and Angus College. There will be a set of new abacus learning resources available in Europe for educators and students in the future.

ENDS.

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