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# EBU Members' Newsletter 2022

## Number three, March.

## The war in Ukraine, its consequences and EBU’s action

Dear readers,

In the terrible context of the war on Ukraine that is already in its 5th week now, I would like to give a quick overview of the situation as it presents itself today, as well as of the action already taken by EBU and planned to undertake in the near future. As the information we can gather changes all the time, this summary will be updated on a regular basis, as you saw last week when the Board sent a special communication on Ukraine.

Already during the first day after the Russian invasion, EBU published a [press release](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/ebu_press_release_on_ukraine.pdf) forcefully condemning the military action as well as calling for all parties to ensure the protection and safety of blind and

partially sighted people. While these seem just words, our press release forms our political position towards the tragic and unjustified events.

Very quickly, EBU started an open call for special contributions to help blind and partially sighted people in Ukraine and refugees fleeing the country. I would like to take advantage of this article to thank our members who have already made a generous contribution to that special section of our Solidarity Fund. The money you are giving will benefit to 100 % people in need as a direct consequence of the war on Ukraine. The exact actions that receive support are assessed on a case-by-case basis, but the cornerstones of what the funding will support are the following:

1. As much as possible, immediate and direct support to blind and partially sighted people still living in Ukraine, in order to provide them with protection and access to basic services.
2. We support our members in neighbouring countries in their enormous efforts to welcome blind and partially sighted refugees. For example, we are currently looking into funding a coordination position in Poland whose role would be not only to serve as focal point for refugees coming to Poland, but also to identify capacities in other countries to host them, as well as mapping needs in terms of accessible material, for example.
3. Members who are from bordering countries and who need support, please let us know what exactly your needs are, so that we can assess if and how we can intervene.
4. We do not forget that there will be needs beyond the times of the terrible war. For example, we know that a school for the blind in the city of Kharkiv has been damaged by a bomb. So, this shows that efforts to re-build that school, and certainly other critical infrastructure for the inclusion of blind and partially sighted people in post-war Ukraine, will also require resources, and we will play our part in the reconstruction phase.

Before letting you read the other articles in this edition of our monthly newsletter, I would like to re-state that I am serving as coordination point for all questions and information about Ukraine. So please feel free to get in touch.

**Lars Bosselmann****,** EBU Executive Director

## Our campaigns

### Accessibility

#### Books - Marrakesh Treaty

Montenegro ratified the Treaty.

We relayed the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) invitation of expressions of interest from organisations for training and technical assistance on how to produce books in accessible formats for persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled.

#### Accessible e-books – Implementation of Accessibility Act

We used the opportunity of the latest EDF EAA peer-support meeting to warn participants against the blanket exemption sought by publishers for legacy e-books (i.e. published before June 2025), with the support namely of Denmark; and of the Daisy Consortium's open forum on accessible publishing, to react to an erroneous reading of the EAA by representatives of the industry in Finland and Sweden, when they suggest that legacy e-books are in fact excluded. We informed EMPL-C.3 of this latest development.

#### Accessible web

We drafted a memo for our member organisations outside the EU on how to promote web accessibility legislation, based on the EU example of the Web Accessibility Directive. The memo was sent to Montenegro and Serbia, in response to their expressed interest.

Based on past comments from our members, we contributed input to the European Disability Forum for their feedback to the European Commission on the accessibility of their online consultations.

#### Accessible payment – implementation of Accessible Act

We now have an established list of participants to the taskforce that will produce recommendations for accessibility of payment terminals. These are experts from 12 EU countries, and among these the following three will take leadership in the group: Estonia, Germany and the Netherlands.

#### Horizontal

Within the new EU Disability Platform, we expressed interest to participate in the subgroup to be created on defining what to make of the AccessibleEU resource centre. And on her request, we provided comments to MEP Langensiepen's draft report for a European Parliament own-initiative resolution in the Internal Market and Consumer Protection committee, on what the AccessibleEU should be (mandate, resources, organisation etc.).

We also had a joint meeting with the European Disability Forum and ANEC—the consumer voice in EU standardisation--about responding to the European Commission’s public consultation on a revision of the EU Standardisation Regulation.

### Equality

#### Equality bodies in the EU

We contributed comments to the European Disability Forum for their response to the European Commission’s public consultation on strengthening the role of equality bodies in the EU Member States, in view of a possible legislative proposal.

#### EU package to improve labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities

Within the new EU Disability Platform, we expressed interest to participate in the sub-group to be created on this package.

### Political participation

Ahead of the vote of the Constitutional Affairs committee of the European Parliament (AFCO) on the reform of the EU electoral code, we sent our voting recommendations (amendments we support on the matter of accessibility of elections) to a large selection of key AFCO members and group political advisers, as well as to the AFCO secretariat. The compromise amendments agreed between political groups are all very positive for us.

The vote is scheduled place on 28-29 March and we will comment on its results in the next edition of this Newsletter.

### Social security and welfare

Within the new EU Disability Platform, we expressed interest to participate in the sub-group to be created on the future initiative for an EU-wide Disability Card.

We attended the European Commission’s Strategic Dialogue meeting of 11 March on the European Care Strategy. We learned about a Commission communication in the 3rd quarter of 2022, in which the Commission will propose a Council recommendation on long term care needs and calling for the revision of the Barcelona targets. One of the three building blocks, along with Quality and Affordability, is Accessibility (including but not only for persons with disabilities). We intervened to say that we welcome the attention to accessibility to long term health care and to early child education care for persons with disabilities, and in general the synergy with the European Disability Rights Strategy, and that we are willing to try and collect feedback from our national member organisations on gaps at national level.

### Mobility

We had a bilateral meeting with the International Transport Forum’s Secretariat. The principle of a slot in the 2022 edition to bring the perspective of blind and partially sighted people on CAVs seems to be agreed. We are waiting to hear back from them on which specific angle interests them more and where it would be fit in the program. We were also invited to contribute to the ITF blog before the forum.

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

After a European Disability Forum (EDF) coordination meeting, we participated in 16 March to the private meeting of the CRPD Committee with civil society organisations. In complement to EDF’s alternative report, our statement on that occasion focused on the default of the EU Marrakesh Treaty Directive as regards the possibility for Member States to opt for giving compensation to right-holders, and on the insufficient use of Creative Europe funding to the film industry to promote audio description and audio subtitling.

Subsequently, we replied in writing to the CRPD Rapporteur who asked for further details about the Marrakesh Treaty. In follow-up, we also attended a second meeting of civil society organisations only with the Rapporteur, in which we also addressed the matter of accessibility defaults of EU online public consultations.

We look forward to finding out if and how our concerns will eventually be reflected in the CRPDs list of preliminary questions to the EU.

## In the driving seat - New materials on Connected and Autonomous Vehicles

Over the past months, concrete results have derived from the EC-co-funded research project PAsCAL, focusing on Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs)!

You can now [download the report](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/pascal_survey2_report_20220316.docx) of the second survey on the acceptance of CAVs. 1030 blind or partially sighted persons contributed out of a total of 5659, which is a fantastic outcome! In particular, 8 EBU national members collected more than 800 responses directly, a massive involvement which exceeded by far the consortium’s expectations and was duly acknowledged.

The survey’s main conclusions addressing visual impairment are the following:

Visually impaired (VI) people have a higher intention to use a CAV than sighted people, except for the younger generation (aged from 18 to 29).

VI respondents considered CAVs would have an added value in terms of safety, sustainability, independence, efficiency, affordability and ease of use. When it comes to privacy, no improvement is expected.

Expectations from VI persons in relation to CAVs are positive. They are even more positive in comparison with sighted respondents.

You can also [access for free an online comparative tool](https://pascal-survey.shinyapps.io/CAV_Acceptance) created by the Mannheim university to extract statistics per country, age, education level, employment status, etc., and, importantly, visual impairment. Like any mine, you have to go deep to extract your own gold. Its use is complex and poses accessibility challenges.

Yet, the university will present it during an info session on **Monday 25 April at 14.00 CET** so that you can use it for our own communication or advocacy purposes. This short session will only be intended for EBU and its member organisations. Any interested person shall register by email at ebuprojects@euroblind.org. The session link will be circulated shortly before the session.

PAsCAL partners’ work is not over. Based on the many activities implemented, including focus groups and tests with Italian and German blind and partially sighted persons, the consortium is currently feeding the future Guide2Autonomy (G2A), a set of 100 recommendations that will allow an improved understanding of CAVs. A few of them will focus on visual impairment. The G2A shall be launched during autumn 2022, just before the project ends.

For more information on the project, please visit the [PAsCAL website](https://euroblind.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=62d697c14fca54ea17e942ba4&id=51551a9f07&e=165381f4fd), follow its progress on social media ([Facebook](https://euroblind.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=62d697c14fca54ea17e942ba4&id=c998a67059&e=165381f4fd) - [Twitter](https://euroblind.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=62d697c14fca54ea17e942ba4&id=5f0082bf98&e=165381f4fd) - [LinkedIn](https://euroblind.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=62d697c14fca54ea17e942ba4&id=3f423d3a6d&e=165381f4fd)) or contact Romain FERRETTI, EBU Project Manager.

## Erasmus+ project “Unanimously to obtain skills”

We are very pleased to inform you that after a long period of time, the Croatian Blind Union, among numerous activities and projects, also started implementing an ERASMUS + project in the area of adult education with another EBU member!

We are proud to announce that as of 1st March, 2022, we have been implementing this project together with our Slovenian colleagues and partners, the Union of the Blind and Partially Sighted of Slovenia.

The aim of the project is to improve communication, social and digital skills of blind and partially sighted people in order to prepare and empower them to enter the labour market or change jobs.

The estimated duration of the project is 12 months, and the activities are aimed at increasing the competencies of adults (aged 18-50) with visual impairments who are members of both partner organisations.

The main activities of the project encompass two 4-day meetings in Premantura (Croatia) and Okroglo (Slovenia), and 6 virtual trainings.

The project kick-off meeting will take place in Zagreb on April 26. We will keep you updated!

## BLINDA - Mobile Audio Library for the Blind and Partially Sighted



Blinda is a project of eight partner organizations from Slovenia, Germany and Croatia: the Union of the Blind and Partially Sighted of Slovenia, Audibook and Jožef Stefan Institute from Slovenia, the German Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted and the Blista Centre for People with Blindness and Visual Impairment from Germany and Zaklada Čujem, vjerujem, vidim, Udruga MEB and A-Soft from Croatia.

The aim of the project is the development of technology that will enable blind and partially sighted people to easily access audiobooks and other audio content, through the Blinda mobile applications, in accordance with the Marrakesh Treaty.

The main result of the project will be the Blinda mobile application for blind and partially sighted registered users, which will enable them to stream and listen to audiobooks and other audio content independently. The mobile application will also enable cross border exchange of audiobooks.

There are 30 million blind and partially sighted individuals in Europe and most of them need more autonomy in accessing audio books.

During the pilot implementation phase of the project, the registration will be available to eligible users from Slovenia, Germany and Croatia. After the implementation phase is finished and Erasmus+ project is complete, the plan for the future is to offer inclusion to all other EBU member organizations.

The objectives of the project Blinda are:

- to increase the accessibility of learning materials and literature for the blind and partially sighted by providing access to audiobooks and other spoken word content via the Blinda mobile application.

 - to equip librarians and mentors who work with the blind and partially sighted with the knowledge, skills and competences to be able to support the use of the Blinda library.

- Conclusion of the project is planned for the end of April 2022

- Start date for user registration is planned for the second half of April 2022

- For more information contact us at: info@blinda.org

The project is funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ funding programme.

## DAISY EU Inclusive Publishing Forum

For persons with print disabilities the European Accessibility Act offers the promise of accessible ebooks and related services. However, many publishers are still not aware of what they need to do, and where they can get advice.

Disabled persons organisations and libraries for blind and otherwise print disabled persons have a great deal of expertise to help make this change successful. However, time is limited and there are never enough resources. The DAISY Consortium has established a forum to help share knowledge and expertise across the EU27 and beyond. Participants are already learning about projects they can replicate, where to direct technical questions, and how the action in their country compare to others.

Information about the forum is on the DAISY website at [daisy.org/eaa](https://daisy.org/eaa) where it is possible to sign up to [join the mailing list](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=zYgEVmxrFU6N6iFiSgPbX16DeO6U-8VOhvKpiRhpxC1UQVpOSzI0WjFDM084UkwxNzlVTVRLNEJLVy4u). There will also be open forum sessions on Zoom to hear the latest developments and discuss the tricky questions.

## The UK’s Elections Bill – Removing protections for blind and partially sighted voters

The Parliament of the United Kingdom is currently considering a bill that will have a significant impact on the support offered to blind and partially sighted voters at polling stations in the UK.

The Elections Bill will do away with the provision of a minimum standard of equipment for blind and partially sighted people at polling stations. Instead, it will be up to the individuals who run the polling stations to decide what equipment is reasonable to provide.

Furthermore, unlike current legislation which stipulates equipment must be provided to enable an independent vote, the new bill is proposing that equipment only needs to be provided to “make voting easier”. A phrase which is open to interpretation, and which could lead to provisions falling well short of the current levels.

RNIB are concerned that if this bill passes in its current form it will lead to a post code lottery of provision at polling stations and a deterioration in the voting experience of blind and partially sighted people across the UK.

To lobby the UK Government RNIB have launched a petition in support of their challenge to the Elections Bill. If you’d like to show your support, you can find the petition [here](https://e-activist.com/page/98590/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=web).

Amy Craddock, RNIB

## Updates on the PARVIS awareness-raising project.

**Third episode of rights-reporting podcast**

[The newest episode of the Rights-reporting podcast](https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-rzx39-11dcd80) hosted by Neven Milivojevic from Sweden, focuses on the right to digital inclusion, stipulated in UNCRPD article 9. Read the [transcript](https://euroblind-my.sharepoint.com/%3Af%3A/g/personal/mariem_sene_euroblind_org/EjbvaKIfDmxJqbarTlzaeA4BMTM_hor-w9r7tcYashxmuw?e=rsoF8e).

In this episode, Ines Hlevnjak from Croatia shares her experience when trying to create a profile on the funding and tenders’ portal of European Commission. Furthermore, Jakob Rosin – Chair of Estonian Blind Union and Bruno Tot – Assistive Technology Expert from the Croatian Blind Union, will discuss about barriers and challenges as well as possibilities, tools and solutions to realise digital inclusion.

**Video on Right to Maximum Independence**

A new awareness-raising video on the Right to Maximum Independence based on UNCRPD article 26 is now also availablein [Dutch](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21HVRIcJ2X8&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=8), [French](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiU9r194-kU&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=3), [German](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oA1Z4ng5BVw&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=5), [Lithuanian](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5EtR36AcU4&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=5), [Montenegrin](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw9eMXl_Mg8&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=10), [Portuguese](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZNNifI4Mpg&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=9), [Spanish](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIBXvLBMmCw&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=6) and [Swedish](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpuHnpEo8Qc&list=PLcyYCwa6mweFKPIgL_LSUgNzOXgC1ODrI&index=7). [Read the scene-by-scene description](https://euroblind-my.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/g/personal/mariem_sene_euroblind_org/EWn3pFEM8dtIiYMbZsKLxSQBl5mH38rN8SB1sk3RUo43EA?e=R72ZKn).

## France - MARIUS DE L’AUDIODESCRIPTION 2022

A jury of 160 people, for the most part visually impaired, aged between 18 and 83, and drawn from all over France but also Belgium and Monaco, voted to decide on the Marius award for Audiodescription 2022.

This award, which has been in place since 2018, thanks to the work of EBU’s French member the CFPSAA, is presented at a ceremony which takes place at the French ‘Centre National du Cinéma et de l’image animée’.

This year’s prize, the fifth edition, was given to the film Aline, by renowned French actress Valérie Lemercier, broadly based around the life of singer Celine Dion. The author of the audiodescription was Raphaëlle Valenti and the reading provided by Delphine Harmel, both of whom were present to receive the award on the 23rd of February.

EBU continues to encourage this initiative which puts the importance of audiodescription for visually impaired people in the spotlight. This also feeds into our own [campaign to associate Creative Europe/Media funding to the film industry with the provision of Audiodescription](https://www.euroblind.org/creative-europe/media-funding-film-industry). For more information on audiodescription, you can also consult our 2020 EBU Focus newsletter on Audiodescription, available in [English](http://www.euroblind.org/newsletter/ebu-focus-english/2020/october/en), [French](http://www.euroblind.org/newsletter/ebu-focus-french/2020/october/fr), [Spanish](http://www.euroblind.org/newsletter/ebu-focus-spanish/2020/october/es), and [German](http://www.euroblind.org/newsletter/ebu-focus-german/2020/october/de) on line, and as word documents in [Polish](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/ebu-focus-audio-desc_polish_pl.docx), [Serbian](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/ebu-focus-audio-desc_serbian_sr.docx) and [Turkish](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/ebu-focus-audio-desc_turkish_tr.docx).

## Portugal - Double Certification for ACAPO

ACAPO was awarded a European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) Certificate covering the following services: its ten Social Rehabilitation Centres located across Portugal, its three regional Independent Living Support Centres and the three divisions of its Employment and Vocational Training Department. The audit took place in December last year and in addition to examining the work of these departments, it heard from ACAPO Members, users of our services, our social partners and the Association’s governing bodies.

Since 2010, when we achieved ISO:9001 Certification in the field of “Representation of interests at a national and international level”, ACAPO has held that the recognition of and improvement in performance quality through certification was the way to go. This is because we recognise the importance of permanent openness and learning, plus external validation of our work. Having walked this path for over ten years, in December 2019, ACAPO successfully applied for funding from the 4th Edition of the Quality Certification Program run by the Portuguese Association for Quality (APQ) and backed by the Montepio Foundation. It was set up to support economic entities in the implementation of Quality Management Systems and the obtaining of the respective certification, in accordance with the EQUASS Assurance benchmark, which is represented in Portugal by the APQ.

This result reflects the quality work that ACAPO carries out daily with visually impaired persons, reinforcing the commitment made in our mission statement.

**ENDS**.

**European Blind Union**

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