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# EBU Members' Newsletter 2022

## Number five, May.

## Ukraine update

Dear readers,

As you all know, the war in Ukraine and its severe consequences for blind and partially sighted people continues to be the most worrying development in present times. This month, we have been able to re-establish direct contact with our Ukrainian member, UTOS, and granted them with some financial support. This has been possible thanks to your generous donations you gave to our Solidarity Fund in the early days of the war.

I will not attempt to summarise the tough conditions for the blindness movement in Ukraine, I prefer you to learn more about the situation by reading the following automated translation of an extract of a letter UTOS sent to us in May. This is definitely more authentic and moving than reading my words. Please continue to keep in touch with me regarding the war in Ukraine and your potential further support. Here is the extract from their letter:

“On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation, with the support of the Republic of Belarus, launched an unsuccessful full-scale military aggression.

Innocent civilians have been killed as a result of missile attacks by the Russian Federation and Belarus, missile and bomb attacks by the Russian air force and artillery fire on Ukrainian settlements, Including people with visual impairments who are members of the Ukrainian Association of the Disabled (UTO), which is a member of the European Blind Union.

The war is ongoing until today and the consequences are terrible.

There are significant losses among the social enterprises of the UTOS community (hereinafter referred to as the OSG), in particular the Kramatorsk TPS UTOS, the Rubizhansk TPS Unit 1 UTOS, the Mariupol TPS Elektroaparat UTOS, the Lysychansk TPS UTOS, which have been dismantled, Vinnitsa TEA UTOS’ windows were damaged in the impact of the missile, Ivano-Frankivsk TEA UTOS is located near the military airport, so the facade of the UTOS building was damaged as a result of the impact on the airport, In particular, significant cracks have developed that require extensive repairs. The premises of the Luhansk regional HMS organization are also completely demolished.

However, we continue to work. The Ukrainian Association for the Blind evacuated a total of more than 500 volunteers outside Ukraine and continues to evacuate people every day. People are being moved from areas where the war has broken out to western Ukraine or to more peaceful places.

Time-limited accommodation centres have been set up.

The UTSO in Dnipropetrovsk took over the evacuation of people from Donetsk and Luhansk regions and especially from the city of Mariupol. In addition, together with the Dnieper UVP UTOS, it has established the production of "jaywalkers" - devices for obstructing traffic or stopping wheeled vehicles, as well as a centre with all the necessary facilities for the accommodation of refugees in the UTOS organization, which currently houses 82 people and has more to come.

A similar facility has been established in the city of Vinnytsia for 50 people. At the base of POG "Vinnitsa UVP UTOS" operating volunteer hub, local farmers gave pigs for the needs of the army, so we were able to run a regular production process. They have already produced 1.5 thousand cans.

There are also accommodation facilities in the western Ukraine in Mukachevo, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk equipped with the necessary equipment for short and long term accommodation.

Volyn, Lviv, Transcarpathian, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi regional UTSO organizations are the most active in placing internally displaced persons from the northern regions of Ukraine, The main objectives of these areas are to meet, relocate and provide humanitarian aid and housing for people who have moved from the war zone. In addition, they are engaged in transferring these people to neighbouring countries.

Particular attention is paid to insulin-dependent ATO members.

Accommodation was not previously designed for so many people so we have to pay for utilities for electricity, water, sewage, sewage, at least minimally cover the cost of our employees and the fuel (eg drivers may be blind people require wages.) or other one-time assistance, because at this time of everyday work, at risk to their health, blind workers are left without means of subsistence, They spend their own resources on daily work and do not receive wages or any other remuneration, and cannot be engaged in any other work other than at the UTOS.

The Ukrainian Association for the Blind has little financial support from the state until 2022, but the programme is now closed as all the money is being spent on the war. The UTOS is appealing to the authorities, but they cannot help the Association for the Blind.

The Association is left without financial support, but with the obligation to help the members of the Association - people with visual impairments.”

[**Lars Bosselmann**](mailto:ebudirector@euroblind.org)**,** EBU Executive Director

## Our campaigns

### Accessibility

#### Books - Marrakesh Treaty

We sent to our members in the EU a request for feedback on the results of the Marrakesh Treaty so far and in particular, where applicable, on the impact of a compensation scheme for author rights holders and of an obligation to be registered on a list of authorised entities.

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

The kick-off meeting of the task group for accessible payment terminals and other self-service terminals is set for 1st June.

#### Horizontal

We attended, on 18 May, the first meeting of the EU Disability Platform’s subgroup on the future AccessibleEU resource centre. This subgroup will inform the creation of *AccessibleEU* and accompany its first years of functioning. Members of the sub-group have been asked for feedback on the structure and the activities of *AccessibleEU*, in view of the drafting of a contract to the Commission – which is what this is about; *AccessibleEU* will have no formal legal role.

### Equality

We attended, on 18 May, the first meeting of the EU Disability Platform’s subgroup on the Employment Package. The Commission presented the 6 agreed areas of the Package, within which members of the sub-group are called to comment and eventually to propose their participation:

* Strengthening the capacities of employment and integration services
* Affirmative action and combatting stereotypes to promote hiring perspectives
* Ensuring reasonable accommodation at work. On this, it was recalled the Equality in Employment Directive will not be reviewed, but rather guidance developed, exchange of best practices fostered for good implementation
* Securing health and safety at work to prevent disabilities
* Securing vocational rehabilitation schemes in case of chronic diseases or accidents
* Exploring quality jobs in sheltered employment, pathways to the open employment market

We used the opportunity of this meeting to welcome the inclusion of the Disability Employment Gap statistics within the data set for the Social Scoreboard, as a first important result of the EU Disability Rights Strategy.

### Political participation

On 16 May we attended the European Disability Forum event around the publication of EDF’s 6th Human Rights [Report](https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/human-rights-report-2022-political-participation-of-persons-with-disabilities/) (see more on this below), focusing on political participation. This report integrates input from EBU based on the output of our Accessible Voting Awareness-raising project.

We have identified and started to liaise with the Commission units that will work on the future guide of good electoral practice and we learned that it is planned for quarter 3 of 2023.

### Social security and welfare

We attended, on 18 May, the first meeting of the EU Disability Platform’s subgroup on the future EU Disability Card. The discussion revolved around the type of initiative (a legal act?), whether it will cover also the Disability Parking Card, the scope of the services covered, and how to facilitate free movement in Europe and the recognition of the disability status without overstepping national competence in this area.

We have started to investigate available data on disability benefits across the EU, with a view to contributing to the announced study on social protection and services for persons with disabilities, announced in the EU Disability Rights Strategy for 2023.

### Mobility

We are looking into the opportunity of the European Mobility Week 16-22 September to showcase our [PAsCAL project on **connected automated vehicles**](https://www.pascal-project.eu/).

On 4 May we delivered and published a [response](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/ebu_response_to_consultation_on_technical_specifications_of_automated_vehicles_may_2022.pdf) to the European Commission’s consultation on the safety of automated vehicles (revision of the implementing regulation), based on feedback from our Road Safety and Accessibility of Transport group.

### Horizontal

On 18 May we provided input, at the request of the rapporteur, to the European Parliament’s Petitions Committee, for their opinion on the European Parliament’s report "Towards equal rights for persons with disabilities".

On 24 May we attended the presentation by Eurostat – the EU’s statistical body – of its 6th annual [report](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/14665254/KS-09-22-019-EN-N.pdf/2edccd6a-c90d-e2ed-ccda-7e3419c7c271?t=1653042954499) on the monitoring of progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Besides the horizontal chapter on the impact of COVID19, disability is mentioned about SDGs 1 (Poverty), 2 (Education) and 8 (Employment). Regarding SDG 10 (Equality), there is still not one single mention of disability in the report, other than to describe the goal – which we have publicly questioned Eurostat about at the meeting. Their reply acknowledges a gap: “This is an issue that is being discussed. We know there is interest for this issue. The difficulty is how to find comparable statistics across the EU. A data gap, we can say, which makes it hard to use disability as an indicator for the monitoring report.” For the record…

On 25 May we attended the European Economic and Social Committee public hearing "Improving Equality in the EU", namely to hear what is being said about the proposed horizontal Equal Treatment Directive, blocked at the EU Council for many years now. More on this in the next edition of this Newsletter.

## PARVIS: Announcing the Day in Life of a Visually Impaired Person video

With participation from Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden, the PARVIS project is proud to present the “[A day in life of a visually impaired person compilation video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4hCfdyUxDQ&t=26s)”, which details obstacles blind and partially sighted people face in their daily lives and offers solutions on how to overcome them. The video, which features real life scenes and contains audio description, highlights accessibility issues related to the built environment, living independently, inclusive education, receiving information, work and employment, participation in culture and sports, as well as the right to join public and political life.

This video that is currently being translated into 11 languages serves as an important awareness-raising tool, and supports many other [PARVIS activities](https://www.euroblind.org/awareness-raising-blind-and-partially-sighted-persons-rights).

These include an [awareness-raising podcast](https://ebudc.podbean.com/) released every two months until November 2022, two rights-related social media campaigns, info-sessions targeted at blind and partially sighted citizens about existing legal frameworks such as the UNCPRD and e-workshops to build the capacities of VI organisations in their awareness-raising and advocacy work. In addition, the project organises two key events with the participation of decision-makers to inform policy-making, discuss existing rights-related obstacles and find ways to improve the situation.

For more information, visit [euroblind.org](https://www.euroblind.org/awareness-raising-blind-and-partially-sighted-persons-rights) or contact PARVIS Project Coordinator [mariem.sene@euroblind.org](mailto:mariem.sene@euroblind.org).

## ****EDF Human Rights Report****

**The Sixth Edition of the European Disability Forum’s Human Rights Report focuses on the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and to stand as candidates in the European Parliament elections, also known as ‘EU elections’.**

It explores the legal and practical barriers that prevent millions of persons with disabilities from exercising the same political rights as other EU citizens and highlights consequences, such as the underrepresentation in politics of persons with disabilities.

This report provides recommendations for both EU policy makers and national governments, as well as for EU level and national political parties, in such a way to allow the EU and national governments to discuss with DPOs what the best solutions are, taking into account the national voting culture and context. The aim is to provide data, tools, and recommendations for governments and DPOs to work hand in hand to reduce inequalities and ensure accessible elections at the national and EU level.

To download the report in different formats, visit the [dedicated EDF webpage](https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/human-rights-report-2022-political-participation-of-persons-with-disabilities/).

## Portugal - Is Internet truly acessible to @ll?

In the week that marked World Telecommunications and Information Society Day and the Global Accessibility Awareness Day, ACAPO organized a debate with the motto: "Is the Internet truly accessible to @ll?”

Portugal was one of the first countries in the world to legislate on this matter but more than 20 years later, there is still a long way to go in the public sector. In the private sector, the path is practically non-existent - Portuguese legislation still does not provide, for example, that websites and apps of supermarkets and stores are accessible.

To discuss these issues, ACAPO invited experts in this field. To moderate the session, Pedro Pinto, teacher of Informatics and Researcher at the Instituto Politécnico da Guarda and responsible for the largest technology site in Portugal. One of the speakers, Jorge Fernandes, Digital Experience Team -Digital Transformation Division at AMA – Agência para a Modernização Administrativa, I.P.  referred to the history of WEB accessibility in Portugal. Daniel Serra, co-responsible for the portal “Ler para Ver – the largest website in Portugal on visual impairments, spoke from a user's view. Finally, Rui Batista, a well-known programmer spoke about the constraints from the programmer's perspective.

Unfortunately, Internet is a world that is not yet fully inclusive for all. There is still a lot to improve. ACAPO will continue in this and other matters to fight for the rights visual impaired persons and to increase the literacy of blind and low vision citizens in the various areas covered by visual impairment.

**ENDS**.

**European Blind Union**

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