

# EBU Members' Newsletter 2022

## Number eight, September.

## Service to commemorate the passing of the EBU President, Professor Rodolfo Cattani

On September 26th 2022, EBU held an emotional virtual celebration to commemorate the sudden passing of the EBU President, Professor Rodolfo Cattani.

Family members, board members and representatives from various EBU member organisation contributed words of condolence and thankful memories to the celebration. Rodolfo Cattani’s wife and son were present and spoke very movingly of a more intimate family side to Rodolfo. Our readers find hereafter the words spoken by the acting EBU Vice-President, Wolfgang Angermann.

As acting first vice-president, I welcome you to this virtual service to commemorate our president, Professor Rodolfo Cattani, who passed away on September 8th this year.

Members of the European Blind Union, his colleagues and all those who are involved in the work for blind and partially sighted people feel deep grief and sorrow. We lose a wonderful person who dedicated all his energy and profound knowledge to the struggle for equal opportunities in life for blind and partially sighted people worldwide.

For a moment, let us put our focus on some milestones that marked Rodolfo Cattani's life:

Rodolfo Cattani, born in 1941, had a university degree in Philosophy of Science from the Bologna University. He worked as a schoolteacher for 13 years and for almost 20 years he was Managing Director of the Italian National Library for the Blind.

From 1992-1996 he was Vice-President of the World Blind Union (WBU).

From 1997-2019 he was the Chairman of the EBU Commission for Liaising with the European Union.

Since 1997, he was a member of the Board of the European Disability Forum (EDF), and since 2005 he served as a member of the Executive Committee of this European Umbrella organisation.

From 2009-2017 he was EDF Secretary General.

In 2019 Rodolfo Cattani was elected President of the European Blind Union.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these are just pure dates. However, they all remind us of Rodolfo's dedication, his readiness for action and his successful work. His contributions to the benefit of blind and partially sighted people became extremely valuable components of the disability movement's work throughout decades.

With his enthusiasm, his determination, his accuracy and reliability he was a valuable guide to his colleagues. His empathy, kindness and warmth made him a friend to all those who had the chance to know him.

Rodolfo Cattani will remain vivid in our minds and in our hearts and stay in our memory as one of the most outstanding members of the disability movement of our time.

At this moment, my thoughts and words of gratitude also go to Rodolfo's wife, Anna. Throughout the decades of Rodolfo's service to blind and partially sighted people she was close by his side. She was always there to lend a helping hand and give assistance to anyone who needed such assistance.

Anna, we wish you strength and confidence during these mournful days.

**Wolfgang Angermann**, Acting First Vice-President

## Our campaigns

### Accessibility

On 23 September we attended and communicated around the IAAP-EDF online event to celebrate the second anniversary of the Web Accessibility Directive: state of play of implementation, monitoring and testing, compliance and motivation etc. It results that the implementation of the WAD is far from easy, namely because of lack of a harmonised approach to testing, and shortcomings of the feedback mechanisms and of the accessibility statements. On the positive side, however, national monitoring bodies appear to be taking their task at heart, with an activist approach that the Member States’ initial push-back attitude would not let expect. Also, they seem willing to learn from each other and to exchange on best practices. An important message was put across, on which all stakeholders agreed: persons with disabilities and their organisations need to be involved in testing, but their expertise comes at a price and should not be taken for granted.

The leadership of the task-group on accessible payments terminals will report on progress of their work at the annual meeting of the EBU Commission for Liaising with the EU (1-2October).

### Equality

On 2 September, the final joint European Commission-Disability Platform Paper on the Disability Employment Package was published. And on 20 September the Package was launched, during the Czech Presidency “Conference on Integration of People with Disabilities into the Labour Market”. It is one of the seven flagship initiatives announced in the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. For further details on the Package, see the [article below from EDF](#_From_EDF_-).

### Political participation

On 21 September, we sent an action request to our members in the EU, to lobby their national governments and authorities, in support of the European Parliament’s own-initiative legislative [resolution](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0129_EN.html) of 3 May. This resolution proposes a new EU electoral law. Among other aspects, it sets out obligations for Member States to improve the accessibility of the European elections. The proposal is currently being analysed by the EU Council, the which unanimous approval is needed for there to be an EU Regulation; and eventually, to enter into force, the proposal will need to receive the approval of all the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. We count on a ‘spill-over’ effect of best practices on national, regional and local elections.

### Mobility

As announced earlier, our [position paper](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/ebu_position_paper_on_automated_vehicles_sept2022.pdf) on driverless vehicles was published in the context of the EU Mobility Week (16-22 September 2022) and advertised in the framework of their portal and on social media. In the paper, we address the concerns and needs of visually impaired people both as vulnerable pedestrians and as potential users. [European Mobility Week](https://mobilityweek.eu/mobilityactions/) is a European Commission’s DG MOVE initiative, coordinated by Eurocities, ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) and POLIS (network of European cities and regions working together to develop innovative technologies and policies for local transport).

On 16 September we responded to the European Commission's public consultation "Better protection for passengers and their rights", to stress the need to ensure assistance for persons with disabilities and persons when switching between transport modes; to denounce that enforcement of passenger rights is undermined by arguments based on security (not otherwise justified) that open too wide a door for exemptions to the rights of passengers with disabilities; to call for an obligation for transport carriers and terminal operators to regularly publish data on how they have complied with EU passenger rights (e.g. data on delays and cancellations of their services, assistance to persons with disabilities and reduced mobility etc.); to call the Commission to cooperate with the national authorities to ensure a more uniform application of EU passenger rights; and to support the possibility for the Commission to request national enforcement bodies to investigate specific cases of infringements of passenger rights.

### Miscellaneous

On 19 September, in response to the EU statistics office (Eurostat) invitation, we contributed recommendations for the review of the EU SDG indicator set, in view of the 2023 edition of the “Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context”. In our recommendations, we focused on the following two data sets: “People at risk of poverty or social exclusion” and “Long-term unemployment rate”. We deplored that the Commission envisages no modification, stressed the relevance of these data sets for visually impaired people, and called for a disability breakdown, in line with Article 31 of the UN CRPD.

We used the same opportunity to submit our observations about the flaws of the Eurostat database as far as disability is concerned.

a sustainable EU food system. Our response focused on promoting the accessible labelling of food products.

On 28 September we attended the launch event of the European Commission’s ‘Together for Rights’ campaign. This campaign aims to foster the implementation of the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030. We will report on this in the next edition of this newsletter.

## EBU Leadership Exchange Forum

On the 25-26th October, EBU will organise a Leadership Exchange Forum in Paris. This meeting, to which leaders (ideally Directors or equivalent) of all EBU member Organisations have been invited, is an opportunity to debate and share ideas which will provide material for future work within EBU, and greater synergy between members.

It is still possible to decide to participate in the meeting if you have not already done so, for this please rapidly contact Executive Director Lars Bosselmann, with a copy of your request to the EBU secretariat.

Don’t miss this opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas with fellow members !

## EBU on social media

This is to remind you that EBU has updated and relaunched social media activities recently. Our facebook page, which for technical reasons beyond our control, had become impossible to update, has been recreated with a new address. Please connect and [explore this new page](https://www.facebook.com/European-Blind-Union-103536089164014).

At the same time, EBU opened an [account on Linkedin](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ebu1984). We therefore also invite you to take a look at this page and all the opportunities to make connections it provides.

Last but not least our [Twitter account](https://twitter.com/euroblind) is more active than ever, so, if you haven’t already done so, get involved and exchange with EBU.

For any more information on EBU social media activity, contact Nacho Lopez, EBU external communication officer. Nacho would also be pleased to learn of any of your own social media activity.

## ICC – International Camp on Communication and Computers for Blind and Partially Sighted Youth

The idea to organise “International Camps on Communication and Computers for Blind and Partially Sighted Youth” is simple - and this simplicity seems to be its power. When the Educational Endeavour "Computer Science for the Blind" at University of Linz, Austria and the "Study Centre for Visually Impaired Students" at University of Karlsruhe (TH), Germany 1991 started their support for blind and partially sighted students at their universities, proficiency in using ICT and AT was a crucial prerequisite from the very beginning.

The process of making a profound decision about if and where to enter higher education or a job career, to find out how to organise and prepare one's studies/career and where to get the support needed calls for counselling and accessible information.

This process is complex – especially for blind and partially sighted students in terms of technical, pedagogical as well as social aspects – and requires an early start in preparing for, for example, starting university. This is why ICC was developed.

### The International Camp on Communication and Computers

* Aims at making young blind and partially sighted students aware of the benefits of efficiently using Information and Communication Technology as well as Assistive Technologies,
* Shows and develops “compulsory” skills, where to put efforts to enhance technical as well as social skills and the level of mobility,
* Supports students in finding a decision for their career paths and motivates an early and profound preparation before starting,
* Is an excellent opportunity to build up a sustainable network with other partially sighted and blind peers from their own and other countries all over Europe and to exchange experiences.

ICC is an event to start this process and to give an incentive to youngsters to do their best to graduate from secondary school and to prepare themselves well for the entrance into Higher Education and labour market.
After almost 30 years, ICC is still an encouraging and promising event – with a recognizable shift towards social skills and inclusion but nevertheless with a strong technological background.

### The Basic Role of Inclusive Education

Inclusion in mainstream education is becoming more and more important. We are not able to build up an equivalent 'mirror' of the mainstream educational system just for blind and partially sighted students because this system is first and foremost discriminating and secondly way too complex and the whole system changes way too fast to keep a redundant scheme up-to-date.

ICC is set up to prepare for this situation, for inclusive education and for lifelong learning. Again, a profound knowledge in handling modern technology is the key prerequisite for equal inclusion in education.

### Being International: Connecting to Peers, Experts - and EBU

European integration requires efforts that foster networking, mobility, intercultural communication and international exchange. ICC is a contribution to this process for a group with only limited exchange opportunities. Of course, a single computer camp (be it as special as ICC) is not able to solve all issues on a very long list towards successful inclusion and a fulfilling career - but that's not the goal.

ICC offers an incentive for exchanging experiences, for taking the initiative, for engaging and becoming an expert in one´s needs - and for further technical, social, pedagogical and intercultural work and co-operation. Experts benefit from ICC as a good opportunity for networking and learning - hands on and not in theory - from each other and to get to know concepts and methods applied in 21 different countries in Europe and worldwide.

The last two camps 2021 and 2022 had to be moved online, following the directive “Better digital than cancelled”. The barriers were too great for our hosts in Slovenia and Portugal to get national funding and to organise this big group of about 110 people not only safe and secure in terms of their blindness / visual disabilities but also concerning the pandemic and rising prices (not only for flights and travel). Well aware of the difference and drawbacks of limited social interaction, a limited number of participants and experts taking part online, these two camps were planned to keep the international group together and give them at least this chance of meeting up via internet until a meet up in presence wass feasible again.

And in this critical time, ICC is proud and happy to have EBU as competent, open minded and reliable partner at their side. Starting from a “bookmarked fund” that had to be postponed due to Corona starting its devastation some years ago, the partnership developed and ICC was in the lucky position to get the best EBU could give in this situation: peer experts leading great workshops, be it on self-advocacy, Andrej Hatar’s experiences on making lasting impressions or Vytautas Ziedelis, who guided us to his spectacular way of raising personal efficiency, saving time and gaining more control with modern apps, equipment and user proficiency!

This refreshing international atmosphere away from the (often difficult) daily life at home, the freedom in content and methods to concentrate on the youngsters´ needs and the intensive support put ICCs goals also in times of online camps into reach – we are looking forward very much in meeting up and experiencing what is possible with this new strong support at ICC 23 in Telč, Czech Republic that is already in preparation.
To “Celebrate it normal, as it was, but much better” as one of our participants 2022 summarised it.

Come and get involved: <https://www.icc-camp.info>

## Parvis project - webinar on non-discrimination and a new podcast

A webinar on non-discrimination regarding the right to accessible information will be organised on October 18th at 9:30-12:00 and October 19th at 10:00-11:30, on Zoom.

The purpose of this webinar is for visual impairment organisations to share what the most common forms of discrimination are when it comes to receiving accessible information in the areas of healthcare, employment and education in Europe and exchange on solutions and good practices to improve the situation. The outcomes of these discussions will be put down in a joint statement. The second morning of the seminar will recap PARVIS achievements and offers EBU members the opportunity for useful tools in their awareness-raising and advocacy work.

[Read the agenda](https://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/final_agenda_parvis_webinar_on_non-discrimination_october_2022.docx).

Please use [this online form to register](https://form.jotform.com/222583586747369), after which you will receive the meeting link. We look forward to seeing you there!

**Rights-Reporting podcast episode 6 - The right to personal mobility**

Listen to the latest Rights-Reporting [podcast episode on the right to personal mobility](https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-ymfr2-1296938), enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), article 20. You will hear about barriers and challenges, but also about possibilities, tools and solutions to improve personal mobility of visually impaired people. [Read the podcast transcript](https://euroblind-my.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/g/personal/mariem_sene_euroblind_org/EbxxfPXjZdlHuoT4F-OPhEMBpjVmRTdoOotk1rp9lfhjbw?e=DbZWVy).

The episode features two experts, Elaine Howley from Ireland, an advocate, a member of the Disability Stakeholders’ Group and a member of EBU's Low Vision Network in addition to Soelvi Oerstenvik from Norway, President of the Organisation Committee of the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted. Audrey Tormey from Ireland will also share her experiences.

For more information, contact cecilia.ekstrand@srf.nu.

## Portugal - ACAPO defends the notion “Reading is a democratic act”@ Lisbon and Oporto Book Fairs

Last year, ACAPO made its debut at the Oporto Book Fair, where it raised awareness of the importance of providing access to books to all citizens, whether sighted or visually impaired.

This year ACAPO took up the motto “Reading is a democratic act” and at both Book Fairs (August 25th to September 11th), sold books in accessible formats, fostered reading habits among visually impaired persons, called the attention of publishers and booksellers to the visually impaired population’s lack of access to culture, while networking with authors and exhibitors and promoting its Braille printing services.

During the Fairs, ACAPO organized a debate entitled “The accessible book and the Treaty of Marrakech” in order to know the state of the art of the accessibility of books following ratification of the Marrakech Treaty, which European standards can improve the accessibility of the works that we all want to read, how can we promote the book as a consumer object in a desirable and accessible format, while at the same time protecting the intellectual and industrial rights of authors, publishers and booksellers.

Besides defending access to reading and books, ACAPO also called for the right for visually impaired persons to actively participate as authors and cultural professionals, and in this context has invited their members to sell their own works at these fairs.

This Projet was funded by the “Programa de Financiamento a Projetos pelo INR, I.P.

## From EDF - European Commission launches the Disability Employment Package

The new [Disability Employment Package](https://edf-feph.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=865a5bbea1086c57a41cc876d&id=581b452adb&e=dd9efcbf97) was launched on 20 September during the “Conference on Integration of People with Disabilities into the Labour Market”. It is one of the seven flagship initiatives announced in the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

This support is **not developed through new legislation or further funding opportunities** but through a series of measures that, according to the Commission, will help implement existing legislation in six areas.

These areas and related measures are:

* “Strengthening the capacities of employment and integration services” through the publication of guidance for the Member States to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of employment services.
* “Promoting hiring perspectives through affirmative action and combating stereotypes” through a catalogue of positive actions to facilitate the hiring of persons with disabilities involving employers.
* “Ensuring reasonable accommodation at work” by preparing guidelines for employers.
* “Preventing disabilities associated with chronic diseases” issuing a manual for managing chronic diseases and preventing the risk of acquiring disabilities through the publication of a manual issued by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.
* “Securing vocational rehabilitation schemes in case of sickness or accidents” by issuing guidelines.
* “Exploring quality jobs in sheltered employment and pathways to the open labour market” by launching a study on improving the employment for persons with disabilities through alternative employment models, including recommendations for fair working conditions, career development in alternative forms of employment and pathways to the open labour market that comply with the UNCRPD.

Visit the [dedicated EDF page](https://www.edf-feph.org/the-disability-employment-package-reinforcing-the-european-labour-market/) for more analysis of their position.

## Web Accessibility Initiative Communities of Practice - improving access to digital accessibility expertise

Web accessibility experts are in short supply in most European countries. It is why the Web Accessibility Initiative Communities of Practice project ([WAI-CooP Project](https://edf-feph.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=865a5bbea1086c57a41cc876d&id=2c46cac0b1&e=dd9efcbf97)) will discuss how the lack of experts is affecting the implementation of the EU Web Accessibility Directive - and what can be done to improve the situation.

The online meeting will take place on Tuesday, 11 October 2022, from 14:00 to 16:00 CET (Brussels time). Registration is open to all and may be of interest to:

* practitioners from public authorities or the private sector;
* organisations representing people with disabilities;
* researchers;
* product or service providers;
* training providers,
* NGOs,
* policymakers
* Other interested audiences

[For more information](https://www.edf-feph.org/events-slug/wai-coop-open-meeting-11-october-2022/).

**ENDS**.

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