

# European Newsletter 1 • 2003

## Letter from your European Chairperson

Dear Friends,  
Welcome to the spring edition of the ICEVI Newsletter. I hope you enjoy its mixture of news, information and ideas for further contacts and reading. I am sorry to have to raise the question of membership fees with you again, but ICEVI Europe's work will depend on this income. Without it there will be no Newsletter, web-site or contributions to developing services. If you are not yet a paid up member, please join as soon as possible. Encourage your colleagues, schools, services and centres to join as well! Please see further details on how to pay and the application fee inside the Newsletter. I wish you all a very happy springtime!

Eberhard Fuchs  
ICEVI European Chairperson

## Education of the Visually Impaired in Lithuania celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In February 2003, education of the visually impaired and also Kaunas Boarding School for the Visually Impaired, as the first institution for the education of the blind in Lithuania, celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Over the years many changes have taken place. A big school for the blind was built in Vilnius in 1975. The partially sighted pupils remained in Kaunas Boarding and the Vilnius school developed into the Lithuanian Educational Center for the Blind and Partially sighted (LASUC). It has a department of preschool education, middle and vocational school, department of adapted new technologies, Braille manuals publishing office and the hostel in Vilnius school. Kaunas Boarding School follows a similar model and now has blind pupils again since the Integration law passed in 1991. Furthermore, the educators from the Department of Social Education work in the Early Education field, and advise mainstream schools teachers and instruct blind adults in O&M and daily living skills. Instructors of visually impaired work in the kindergartens in regional centres. Unfortunately, it is only in Kaunas and Vilnius regions that the visually impaired children and adults living in remote localities are supported by instructor and rehabilitation services. Day Centres function in many regions.

The support of ICEVI and CBM gives an opportunity for the teachers to participate in international conferences and to organize seminars in their own schools. The Lithuanian Union of the Blind and Partially Sighted supports the educational projects. The conference "The education of the visually impaired in the changing education process" will take place on 75th anniversary in Kaunas Boarding School for the visually impaired. Teachers and lecturers from Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia are invited to the conference.

Genovaitė Vaitkuviene  
Principal, Kaunas Boarding School for the Visually Impaired

## ICEVI EUROPE

### International Newsletter

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### Editors

Marianna Buultjens  
(Content)  
tel ++44 131 651 6204  
e-mail:  
marianna.buultjens@ed.ac.uk

### address for correspondence

Scottish Sensory Centre  
The Moray House School of  
Education  
University of Edinburgh  
Holyrood road  
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ  
United Kingdom

Marika Carlborg  
(Layout)  
tel ++358 9 511081  
e-mail:  
marika.carlborg@arlainst.fi

Grazyna Walczak  
(Printing and Distribution)  
tel ++48 22 6432289  
e-mail:  
abaw@polbox.com

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Blind Children in Laski,  
Poland.

website:  
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"We all love playing!" Lithuanian pupils enjoy a music lesson

## The EBU Commission for MultiHandicapped Blind and Partially Sighted People

The European Blind Union Commission on Activities of Multihandicapped People was constituted in 1988 with Dr Hans Neugebauer as chairperson. The principle objectives of the Commission are to advocate on behalf of multihandicapped visually impaired young people and adults, their parents and carers as well as to promote awareness of multiple disability. The members are representatives of national bodies with a member of the EBU Board as an active participant. The method of working is via ad hoc groups, plenary meetings funded by the national organisations and the hosting of international conferences every three years.

During 1990-93 the Commission focused its attention on the sensitive period of transition to Adult life. This led to the conference in Bad Liebenzell, Germany, 1992. This resulted in the publication, "Transition to adult life of multihandicapped blind youngsters

In 1993-96, The Commission turned its attention to the problems of the Multi-disabled visually impaired infant and the unmet needs of parents. "Timely Intervention" was the fruits of the International Conference held in Bad Berleburg 1995. Parents need timely access to early intervention specialists. Timely intervention should empower parents so that their feelings of competence are nurtured.

From 1996-99, the Commission changed its title to the EBU Commission for MultiHandicapped

Blind and Partially sighted People. Aboard now, were three parents of multi-handicapped young people. The special project was "communication" with multi-handicapped visually impaired children with little or no language.

The current programme 1999-2003 is engaged in promoting awareness of multi-disabled visually impaired people and their complex needs. Each country representative has a different audience and are taking forward the programme in ways suited to their own society. Our German colleagues are celebrating the 150th anniversary of The Blindeninstitutsstiftung. A sixth school for MDVI young people has been opened near Frankfurt. The year long celebrations includes many social, cultural and educational experiences. A bus with the colours and logo of the Blindeninstitut will be in service around Würzburg for a year. Hopefully this vehicle will not be driven by our President!

Isobel Yule

### Publications

Deutscher Blindenverband (1992) Transition to adult life of

multihandicapped blind youngsters. Edition Bentheim, Wuerzburg.

De jong,CGA& Neugebauer,H (1996) Timely Intervention: Special Help for

Special Needs. Edition Bentheim, Wuerzburg

Weisz, M, (2002) Communication, Bartimeus, The Netherlands.



"EBU commission members in the Netherlands 2002"

## New Developments in the Ukraine

At the end of 2002 ten representatives of different regions of the Ukraine, including those from the Ministry of Education and Science and heads of special education establishments for visually impaired children, visited the Rehabilitation Centre «Sensis» in the Netherlands. We were interested in the Netherlands' experience of moving «from a special school to rehabilitation centre». We visited schools situated in Grave and Breda and learnt about consultation services in Nijmegen. Much needs to change in the Ukrainian system. Early identification and special assistance to child and family is becoming a primary task. The Education and Rehabilitation Centre for Visually Impaired Children «Lewenia» in Lviv has established a service for early psycho-pedagogical assistance for blind and partially sighted children. They are learning from what has been done in Germany and The Netherlands but developing a model which will suit the Ukraine.

The service is in its infancy, but is already facing up to problems such as convincing parents they need educational help to assist the development of their visually impaired infants; overcoming resistance from certain segregated 'special' systems; trying to convince society to accept children with developmental problems.

That is why, ERC «Lewenia» sees one more important mission for itself, beside the seminars carried out for the parents and special studies for the children: preparation of modern society for new approaches, new changes.

In Ukraine Early Childhood Intervention can be fun!

Our stay in the Netherlands confirmed the fact that successful integration of visually impaired people depends on early identification and qualified assistance at the earliest stages of a child's development. Not only financial support, but primarily training of specialists to work in the new conditions, for them to make use of other people's experience and develop their own way of doing things are all important on the way to success.

On the behalf of the representatives of the Ukrainian Special Pedagogics we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the colleagues from «Sensis»: Mrs. Carina Poels, Mrs. Corrie de Haas, Mr. Jan Ottenvanger, Mr. Jan Linders, Mrs. Annemieke Mulders, Mr. Patrick Meuldijk.

Ph. D Wira Remazhewska  
(Headmistress of ERC «Lewenia»)



“I’m Posting the Pebbles” Active learning through play for children who are blind or vision impaired by Liz haughton and Sandie Mackevicius is a delightfully written and illustrated book. For those who work in Early Childhood Intervention it will be irresistible as it brings together two of our favourite topics: active learning and play! Liz and Sandie show how we can learn so much from observation of children who are blind or vision impaired playing in an ‘enabling’ environment. For more information email: [visequip@rvib.org.au](mailto:visequip@rvib.org.au)  
Cost: 25 Australian Dollars

“Helping Children who are Blind” (ISBN 0-942364-34-1) Written by Sandy Niemann and Namita Jacob this book launches the Early Assistance Series for parents, caregivers, teachers, health and rehabilitation workers who work with families of disabled children in the first five years of life. Many international groups and organizations qualify for Hesperian’s discounted poor country prices. For information on pricing contact: [bookorders@hesperian.org](mailto:bookorders@hesperian.org) web address: [www.hesperian.org/](http://www.hesperian.org/)

## ICEVI Europe Membership and Membership fees

Membership entitles you to 3 copies of the Newsletter each year and a free copy of The Educator. It brings you into a community of people who are committed to the exchange of knowledge and know-how, the on-going improvement of staff training and expertise, and the continual development of the quality of education and resources available to persons with visual impairment.

Individual member:

- fee 25 Euros a year
- 100 Euros for 4 years

Corporate members:

- fee between 100 and 500 Euros per year, depending on the number of people employed at the school, institute, centre etc:
  - 100 Euros for schools etc without own budget
  - 200 Euros for schools etc with less than 100 employees
  - 350 Euros for schools etc with between 100 and 200 employees
  - 500 Euros for schools etc with more than 200 employees

Individual members receive 10% reduction in the European Conference fee.

Corporate members receive 10% reduction

- for 2 persons if they pay 350 Euros or less
- for 3 persons if they pay 500 Euros or more a year

Method of payment

The international bank account-number (IBAN) is DE8679090000003318400 Swift-Code / BIC

Code: GENO DE F1 WU1 VRBank Wuerzburg

Please make sure that all the transfer-expenses are covered by you!. The fee must include the taxes in Germany too! The minimum fee of the banks for each transfer is 10,2 Euro. Please do not send cheques/checks! The fee for cheques/checks would be higher than the fee for individual membership. If you can afford it, please transfer the membership fee for 4 years, at 100 Euros (individual member) to keep the transfer-expenses as cheap as possible. Members from the Eastern European countries will receive a letter which clarifies the transfer procedure in Eastern Europe

Please fill out the Membership form which is on page 5 (if you are not yet a member).

## The Support Center for Tartu Emajoe School

In Estonia, the activity of non-governmental organizations has been increasing during the recent decade. New organizations like The Support Center for Tartu Emajoe School have started their work on behalf of visually impaired people. This non-profit making foundation was established at the school for the visually impaired and blind in the summer of 2000. The aim of the center is to improve the educational opportunities for the visually impaired at both special and mainstream schools. The specialists of the support center are concentrating on: further teacher training courses; rehabilitation services for visually impaired; vocational training courses for the visually impaired.

The work of the center is project based. Several international and local projects have been carried out in 2000-2002 including the following:

1. The School and Society for the Visually Impaired. This project was supported by the Netherlands Cooperating Foundations for Central and Eastern Europe and The Royal Netherlands Embassy Matra/KAP programme and involved: training courses for mainstream schools' teachers; counselling and other rehabilitation services; preparing the tactile materials for visually impaired students; co-operating with mainstream schools, welfare departments and organizations for visually impaired; sharing information with the community about the special needs of visually impaired stu-

## Application form for the membership in ICEVI-Europe

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street, No.: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation - Street, No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation - City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes, I ask for membership individual members 25 Euro a year / 100 Euro for 4 years
- corporate member without own budget 100 Euro a year
- corporate member with less than 100 employees 200 Euro a year
- corporate member with between 100 and 200 employees 350 Euro a year
- corporate member with more than 200 employees 500 Euro a year

You may fill in this form on-line at [www.icevi-Europe.org](http://www.icevi-Europe.org) OR download the application form (zipped rtf format) and send it to the Office of ICEVI-Europe:

Address:  
ICEVI-Europe  
Eberhard Fuchs  
Ohmstrasse 7  
D-97076 Wuerzburg  
Germany

fax: 0049-931-20921233  
e-mail: [E.Fuchs@vbs-gs.de](mailto:E.Fuchs@vbs-gs.de)

dents. A new rehabilitation room was set up, furnished, and equipped. As a result The Support Center for Tartu Emajoe School was added to the list of rehabilitation service centers officially recognized by the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs. Now it is possible to apply for governmental financing of rehabilitation services for visually impaired.

2. Projects on developing vocational training opportunities for the visually impaired. In co-operation with Sonneheerdt Work and Training Center in The Netherlands an upholstery class was established and five student's work places were equipped. The other project, in the framework of Leonardo da Vinci programme, was in partnership

with Sonneheerdt Center and Arlainstitute from Finland. It was for teacher training in upholstery, ICT and curriculum development. Since November 2001 the Support Center for Tartu Emajoe School has a governmental training licence for carrying through vocational training on upholstery and ICT for the visually impaired.

The specialists of the support center are very thankful for the fruitful and pleasant co-operation at international level and they hope to continue it.

Jaan Aruväli  
Chairman

## European Seminar for Educators of ADL- and/or O&M-Teachers

This seminar was held in Frankfurt, Germany, December 6 – 9, 2002 to promote the development of European professional standards for the education of those individuals who work with blind and low vision persons, specifically as Teachers for Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and/or Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialists.

It was the first joint seminar of these two groups of professionals. Before the 'merger', seven European Seminars for Trainers of O&M Instructors and one working meeting for trainers of ADL trainers (Copenhagen, 2001) were held. The idea of holding joint seminars was brought up and discussed at the 7th O&M Seminar in Budapest in 1999.

The quality and status of the education and rehabilitation for blind and low vision persons is reflected in part by the educational standards for those teachers who instruct specific blindness/low vision related skills, such as orientation and mobility and activities of daily living. Presently much diversity exists among individual European countries in regard to content and length of the training courses for these professionals. The consolidation of European states into the European Union offers an opportunity to establish appropriate educational standards for this professional field, which are in compliance with the recommendations and guidelines of the European Union.

The Seminar drew 25 participants from existing programs within Europe which offer formalized education for ADL and/or O&M Teachers for blind and low vision persons. The 12 countries represented were the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Greece, United Kingdom, Ireland, Hungary, Italy, Croatia, Norway and Poland.

The event was prepared by three German organizations: Institute for Rehabilitation and Integration of the Visually Impaired (Institut für Rehabilitation und Integration Sehgeschädigter, IRIS) from Hamburg, German Institute for the Blind (Deutsche Blindenstudienanstalt, BLISTA) from Marburg, and the Foundation for the Blind (Stiftung Blindenanstalt) from Frankfurt on the Main.

The most important accomplishment was the decision and the first steps taken towards establishing a European professional association of organizations conducting training in the areas of Activities of Daily Living and/or Orientation and Mobility. A working committee was established and mandated to develop a constitution for the proposed organization and to make arrangements for its registration.

Antonina Adamowicz-Hummel

An investigation into the mobility and independence needs of children with visual impairment in mainstream schools in UK has just been published by researchers at Birmingham University and from the outcomes of the research a mobility and independence curriculum framework has been developed. The full research report is available to download free of charge from: [www.education.bham.ac.uk/research/victar](http://www.education.bham.ac.uk/research/victar)

The 6 Step method of Teaching orientation and Mobility is a new approach developed in Queensland, Australia, which has been greeted enthusiastically by teachers, O&M specialists, teacher aides, parents and the children and young people themselves. It is called: a learning centered approach to competent travel for the vision impaired. Children are encouraged to gather and use sensory and environmental information for their own needs. Check it out at the following website where you will get information about the book and video: [www.6stepmethod.com/about.html](http://www.6stepmethod.com/about.html).

## Italy – Opening of the European Year of People with Disabilities

In conjunction with the official opening of the European Year of People with Disabilities the Second National Conference on Policies for Person with Disabilities was held in Bari on 15 February 2003. Blind persons contributed very actively to the conference and in particular the workshop sessions. The final document included and appeal to the Italian Government to: intensify activities to prevent impairments which cause disabilities; resource effective integration of disabled children in schools; plan appropriate teacher training courses taking into account the different disabilities; provide the structures to deliver educa-

tion to multihandicapped people; promote vocational training for disabled people; ensure website accessibility for disabled users. The representatives of the various ministries who attended the conference promised that they would do their best in their sector to achieve the objectives of the European Year of People with Disabilities.

Enzo Tioli  
Vice-President, Italian Union of the Blind/Chair of the Education  
Commission of the EBU

Are you interested in Music Education for the Visually Impaired?

If so, you will be pleased to hear that the Institutet for Blinde og Svagsynede in Hellerup, Denmark, are planning a conference in Copenhagen on this topic in October 2003. If you wish more details please email the following address for more details: [ibs-erhverv@ibos.dk](mailto:ibs-erhverv@ibos.dk)

Qualitäten – XXXIII. Kongress  
Der Blinden- und Sehbehindertenpädagoginnen und -pädagogen Rehabilitation und Pädagogik bei Blindheit und Sehbehinderung 04. – 08. August 2003 Universität Dortmund For further information on this conference which will be held in the German language  
Email: [kongress@vbsnrw.de](mailto:kongress@vbsnrw.de) Homepage <http://www.kongress.vbsnrw.de> For a programme contact Eberhard Fuchs at Email: [e.fuchs@vbs-gs.de](mailto:e.fuchs@vbs-gs.de)

## MDVI Euronet News

MDVI Euronet is a network of organisations from across Europe dedicated to developing knowledge, understanding and best practice in the education of children and young people with Multiple Disabilities and a Visual Impairment. In December 2002, the network held its first workshop at the Resourcentre Vision/Ekeskolan in Örebro, Sweden. The workshop examined the visual assessment of MDVI children and provided the opportunity to meet and share good practice in relation to the aims, methods and practical consequences of the assessment process. The workshop attracted delegates from 9 different European countries. Further workshops are being planned with details being finalised in May 2003.

Members of the network are also currently participating, or preparing, projects funded by the EU Comenius Action. Organisations from Sweden, Scotland, Ireland and the Czech Republic are presently working on a school development

project which is examining the potential and practicality of special schools developing a resource centre role. A second, more ambitious project is being prepared which, if accepted, will involve organisations from 8 different European countries. ImPAct MDVI aims to address concerns expressed by teachers of MDVI children as to how they are expected to integrate a diverse curriculum and the particular skills they have been taught into a meaningful education process. This will be achieved by applying an innovative 5-step working method developed in Norway by Tellevik and Elmerskog (2001). The project will culminate in a European In-service training opportunity for interested teachers.

For more information on the work of MDVI Euronet visit [www.mdvi-euronet.org](http://www.mdvi-euronet.org) or write to [info@mdvi-euronet.org](mailto:info@mdvi-euronet.org).

## Mirela Arion

It is with great sadness that the Department of Special Education of Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, announces the premature death of lecturer Mirela Arion, our dear colleague and friend. Mirela Arion was an enthusiastic participant in the ICEVI workshops on the training of teachers of the visually impaired in Europe. In our department of Special Education Mirela ran courses, seminars and workshops in IT support

for the visually impaired. During her last months she had been preparing her PhD on Human-Computer Interaction and IT Access for the Visually Impaired. After a period of great suffering, Mirela passed away on 15 January 2003. Our greatest sympathy goes to her grieving family and friends.

Vasile Preda

## A late letter to my friend

### In remembrance of Mirela Arion 17 February 2003, Budapest

Dear Mirela,

I can not; I do not want to believe that you have passed away. I am writing to you naturally, as we used to correspond for a long time. We met in Budapest at the first Teacher Training Workshop of ICEVI Europe and became friends. Since then we regularly met each other at conferences and workshops of ICEVI and always spent our free time together. There was something common between us, our spirit, the way of thinking, behaving and the love of our students. Dear Mirela, do you remember how we greeted each other whenever we met? You started to talk to me in Romanian and I did the same in Hungarian. It was funny and elevating at the same time. I always wanted to understand why and how we became such good friends living so far away from each other. I do not know and will never know your answer. I only know that your exceptional personality aroused my interest from the start. Knowing your unpretentiousness, I want to tell you and everybody why I think you were so unique. Your straightness and candour helped me a lot in many professional questions. In the same time you were able to have dreams and beliefs and optimistic views on the future of the life of our students in Central and Eastern Europe. We shared a common view on the need to improve the quality of training, especially by using information technologies. I remember how wise you were when I be-

came impatient and lost my temper with the slow speed of the changes in our countries. You used to relax me with your smiling face, soft voice and sympathy: "Don't worry Krisztina, it will happen!" Last time we met in Warsaw during the third Workshop on Training Teachers of Pupils with Visual Impairment and had a wonderful time there. We were laughing, talking a lot, singing and dancing at the closing party and said good-bye on the last day. I did not know that it was the last time for us to be together. We planned to meet again at the World Conference in Noordwijkerhout, the Netherlands. And you were not there. I happened to know that you had become seriously ill. Since then we talked regularly on the phone. You were too nice again, optimistic not telling me about your suffering. And I hoped and prayed and waited for the good news. It did not come, in stead I got the letter from your husband, Dorin. He wrote: "Krisztina, Mirela died on the 15th of January. She lived courageously as you might know and died courageously, too. I dare to say she died like an angel, only wanting to love the people around her." What can I add to this? Nothing more than that you have not died in my soul and in the memory of your colleagues and friends all over Europe.

With ever love from your best Hungarian friend,  
Krisztina Kovács