

The President's Message

Dear members and non-members of ICEVI-Europe,

Writing a foreword to the newsletter is almost self-evident, a moment of reflection. How is the state of play of ICEVI-Europe? Are we on the right track with our mission to promote educational opportunities and rehabilitation for children and adults with visual impairment throughout Europe? This means people who are totally blind or who have low vision, including those with additional disabilities. Guided by our aim to help blind and visually impaired people and people with additional needs achieve their desire to actively participate as full members of society, we strive to achieve this by undertaking a range of promotional activities, among others,

- providing a wide range of information
- offering expert advice and linking members with leading practitioners
- organizing training courses, seminars and conferences
- supporting the global program for the prevention of blindness
- supporting professional interest groups

In the second half of 2018 in Saratov, Russia, the 8th ICEVI East European Conference took place for Eastern European countries with the theme, "Accessible Environment for People with Disabilities" and following this event, the Seventh Conference on Psychology and Visual impairment with the theme, "Diversity in many ways" was held in Thessaloniki, Greece.

In 2019, some successful activities have also been carried out:

- February 8th in Suresnes, France: A One-Day Conference for French speakers with the theme, "Visual Impairment and Inclusive Education: What's new?"
- April 16th-17th in Suresnes, France: A Conference of the Professional Interest Group, Teaching and Teacher Training with the theme, "What is good, can always be better; Wondering how to improve the mathematical performances of blind Students"

Several interesting conferences are also being prepared for the coming months:

- May in Budapest: The professional Interest Group, Rehabilitation, organises a conference with the theme, "Expanding Independence in all Ages".

- October in Sofia: The 7th Balkan Conference with the theme, "Free Access, real educational inclusion and Unlimited Technologies."

A diversity of activities supporting persons with visual impairment and promoting their social inclusion are being planned, which are always open to participation by members and non-members of ICEVI-Europe. Conferences are also being prepared for the coming years with the conclusion of our milestone conference, the 10th European Conference of ICEVI-Europe in 2021 in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, consultations are taking place with the EBU to bring the mutual cooperation to a higher level. ICEVI-Europe will participate in the 11th EBU General Assembly in October this year.

It is also worth noting that we succeeded in attracting a new webmaster. It is Istvan Mozes from Hungary. He will certainly be proposing in the forthcoming newsletter.

On request, we are happy to announce that we have obtained an ISSN number for our newsletter. This number is 2666-1527.

I wish you a lot of reading pleasure and I hope to see you soon at one of our conferences.

Finally, we would like to once again express our heartfelt gratitude to our valuable membership network. ICEVI-Europe exists thanks to the continuous support, efforts and loyalty of its members, which play a catalytic role in enabling us to achieve our aim and objects. ICEVI-Europe's ambitious plan is to reach equality in the education and rehabilitation for visually impaired persons in all European countries and we invite all of you to support this ambition. Please encourage your colleagues, motivate schools, services, centres, associations and institutions active in or related to the education and rehabilitation of people with visual impairment to join ICEVI-Europe!

On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe,

Hans Welling
President



ICEVI-Europe Diary of upcoming events

Join us at our upcoming Events in which professionals will meet to share knowledge and best practices, to stimulate cooperation and create networks in order to improve the quality of services to people with visual impairments.

Looking forward to seeing you. Save the dates!



31 May- 1 June 2019 (arrival 30 May - departure 2 June)

1st Rehabilitation Conference of ICEVI-Europe in Budapest

Theme: "Expanding Independence in all Ages"

Venue: MOHA Ház,

1143 Budapest, Gizella út 42-44

Conference Website: <https://lareszegyesulet.hu/en/icevirc2019>

20-23 October 2019 (arrival 20 October - departure 23 Oct)

7TH ICEVI Balkan Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria

Theme: "Free access, real educational inclusion and unlimited technologies"

Venue: Hotel Ramada

Conference Website: <https://baozzd.org>

8-12 August 2021 (with optional days for excursions on 13 and 14 August)

(Arrival 7 Aug 2021)

10th ICEVI-Europe Conference

Jerusalem, Israel

Theme: "Access to Learning and Learning to Access"

Venue: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

In preparation:

Conference of the ICEVI-Europe Professional Interest Group on Early Intervention.

Date to be arranged

Past ICEVI-Europe Events

27-29 September 2018

VIII ICEVI East European Conference

Organized by the International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment, Europe (ICEVI-Europe) with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and the Yuri Gagarin State Technical University of Saratov.

Held in Saratov, Russia

Theme: Accessible Environment for People with Disabilities

Venue: Yuri Gagarin State Technical University of Saratov

See the conference website at <http://icevi.sstuconf.ru/>

1-2 November 2018

ICEVI-Europe Professional Interest Group, European network for psychologists and related professions working in the field of Visual Impairment (ENPVI)

Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece

The 7th ICEVI European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment

Hosted by KEAT, the Center for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind in Greece, located in Thessaloniki and Athens, and organized in cooperation with ENPVI, European network for psychologists and related professions working in the field of Visual Impairment.

Theme: Diversity in many ways

Venue: Mediterranean Palace Hotel

Salaminos 3,

546 26, Thessaloniki, Greece

For further information, please see the conference website at www.keat.gr

8 February 2019

French Speaking ICEVI Day-1 Day Workshop in French for teachers and other professionals about inclusive education

Title: Visual impairment and inclusive education: What's new?

Organized by: INS HEA & ICEVI-Europe and co-organized by the National School of the Blind in Paris, INJA

Venue: INSHEA, 58 Avenue des Landes, 92 150 Suresnes, France

25 February - 1 March 2019

Program Committee Meeting & ICEVI-Europe Board Meeting

Venue: Jerusalem, Israel

16-17 April 2019

ICEVI-Europe Professional Interest Group, Teaching and Teacher training

Conference in Suresnes, France (near Paris)

Theme: What is good, can always be better

Wondering how to improve the mathematical performances of blind students?

Venue: INSHEA, 58 Avenue des Landes,
92 150 Suresnes, France

Save the Date: Access to Learning and Learning to Access

On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe & ALEH Society
We are pleased to announce

SAVE THE DATE

The 10th Conference of ICEVI - Europe
August 8th -12th, 2021

(August 13th- 14th Optional days for excursions)
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, ISRAEL

The Conference Theme

Access to Learning and Learning to Access

The aim of the Conference is to present and share up-to-date pedagogical, technological and social venues to enhance education, rehabilitation and social inclusion of people with Visual Impairments, by modifying environment and improving technology.

Target Audience

Professionals, educational staff and academics from universities, colleges, primary and secondary schools with a specialization in inclusion or special education, representatives of associations and organizations in the field of visual impairment, inclusion and care, parents of students of elementary, secondary higher and vocational education from Europe and other continents, non-governmental organizations, manufacturers and distributors of technologies and equipment for visually challenged people, policymakers and government officials, individuals with visual impairment and people who have special interests in visual impairment issues.

Leading professionals will deliver key notes; renowned professionals will offer presentations, experts will provide workshops and individuals will present posters.

In addition we shall discuss best practice in the areas of

- ◆ Segregation versus inclusion
- ◆ Chasing support technologies for independent learning, mobility and daily living
- ◆ The challenge of employment and regulations - are they impeding or supporting employment
- ◆ Age related sensory changes and related impairments

The ALEH Society was established in 1990. Our goal is to aid and advance higher education for the blind in Israel and promote social mobility. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, founded in 1918 and opened officially in 1925, is Israel's premier university as well as its leading research institution. ICEVI-Europe is an association of professionals and Professional organisations that promotes equal access to appropriate education and rehabilitation of people with visual impairment so that they may achieve their desire to actively participate as full members of society.

For more information about ICEVI-Europe please visit www.icevi-europe.org

On behalf of the IHost Committee,

Tomer Rosner

ICEVI conferences: the synergetic effect

By **Vladimir Ruchin**

Head of the Educational Center of the International Department, Yuri Gagarin
State Technical University Of Saratov, Russia

Board Member of ICEVI-Europe,

Eastern European countries

It is possible to assess the significance of international conferences on inclusive education using narrow frames of applied theory, but any analysis must also look at the social context in which conferences operate. The ideas of Leo Vygotsky and Alfred Adler which are based upon cultural-historical theory and theories of individual psychology, allow us to evaluate these events within such a context and help make it possible to analyse the preparation, delivery and outcomes of conferences in a rational way.

The broad rationale of this conference was to help develop an environment where the process of thinking is focused on one main priority – the improvement of society and active role of disabled people in it. Any discussion of educational developments cannot be separated from their social reality, and the achievement of positive outcomes in intellectual work needs a shared understanding of a stable benchmark - the transformation of society.

It is important to remember that as soon as we remove theory from the dynamics of practice, we are blocking progress on the way to the truth and we are lowering the effectiveness of discussion. As you know, Leo Vygotsky stresses the principal importance of a range of psychological phenomena and Alfred Adler made the significant input in the development of compensation theory. Both these scientists emphasized the significance of social factors.

A great example of an ICEVI conference which explored theory from a context of practice was the IX ICEVI European Conference in 2017 in Brugge. The

various types of activities and the diverse backgrounds of the participants were synthesized to achieve significant results in developing the existing model of education in visual impairment. According to the opinion of the conference participants, the success of the Brugge conference was due to the combination of the excellent organization, support provided by the community and the good overall standard of the presentations and workshops including professional interest groups.

The crucial strength of the conference was the choice of powerful keynote speakers and the inspirational opening speech of the authority representative. The strengthening of ties with the regions, the high quality of papers and amazing possibilities for networking were undoubtedly the conference's strong points. Thus, regarding this conference, we may speak about its effective social orientation and the stable complex of elements underlying its whole structure. These elements were bounded by the work of professionals within the context of existing educational model.

The organizers of the VIII ICEV East European Conference of 2018 in Saratov strived to build on all the above mentioned strengths to form a conference modelled around inclusive education for people with visual impairments. The topic of the conference of the VIII ICEVI East European Conference was «Accessible environments for people with disabilities: results and prospects». The conference was structured around the social significance of access and the participants sought to open new lines of development for inclusive education. The presentations and posters on the topic "Accessible environments for people with disabilities" helped open new horizons on this topic.

The aim of the conference was to search for technological and social solutions that will mitigate the barriers of inequality for people with visual impairments and other disabilities. The concept of an inclusive or accessible environment is based on the conviction that access and social mobility in society is a fundamental human right which provides a basis for greater social justice

through the integration of vulnerable groups within the population. The principle of inclusion involves dialogue between different systems of social order to ensure an accessible environment and reduce social inequality. Social policy aimed at improving education, health and welfare of citizens is impossible without social inclusion, and must involve the expansion of rights and the availability of accessible environment for all people including those with visual impairments and other disabilities.

The conference took place over three days at several locations, which included the Yuri Gagarin State Technical University and Saratov State University named after N.G. Chernyshevsky. Also, guests were invited to the Boarding School number 3 of the city of Saratov, where they were shown how blind and visually impaired children study, and also to the Center for training and rehabilitation for people with disabilities named «Sail of Hope». Before the event, the guests visited the technology exhibition which explored the possibilities for rehabilitation, habilitation and the alleviation of inequality for people with limited vision and other types of disabilities.

The work of the conference was widely reported in the news feeds of the leading Russian TV channels, newspapers, and Internet publications. The support of ICEVI-Europe enabled the conference to become a part of the wider European educational network.

The sessions were also attended and supported by the All-Russian Society of People with Disabilities, the Russian Society of Deaf, The All Russia Association of the Blind, Centre of Psycho-Pedagogical and Medical & Social Support of Children, the Saratov Regional Special Library for Blind People, Association of Parents of Children with Cerebral Palsy "Happiness of Movement", the Russian Children Fund and the Regional Social Organization of People with Disabilities «Perspective».

Y.Gagarin SSTU's scientific library, Saratov Regional Special Library for people with visual impairments" and the IPRbooks company explored in seminars the

issues of library and information services for people with visual impairments, and their work with visually impaired adults and children. They discussed the technological capabilities and potential of special libraries for the cultural rehabilitation of disabled people, and the issues of inclusion in library spaces. The IPRbooks company offered a demonstration of a video clip dedicated to the work of the mobile application for inclusive education of IPRbooks WV-Reader for blind and visually impaired people. During the discussion, the role of university libraries in reducing the information inequality of people with disabilities and developing inclusive principles within higher education was explored.

ICEVI conferences are always aimed at improving achievement in education, rehabilitation, habilitation and social inclusion for people with visual impairment. ICEVI conferences have a synergetic effect, and their social and transformative effects cannot be underestimated.

RESOLUTION

VIII International East European ICEVI Conference «Accessible Environment for People with Disabilities: Technological and Social Aspects of Inclusion from the Perspective of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

By Vladimir Ruchin

1. The conference participants noted the positive effect of cooperation of ICEVI-Europe with the public organizations, educational institutions, including SSTU and SSU.
2. The participants of the conference at the various sessions and discussion platforms consistently emphasized the important benefits of the close cooperation with ICEVI at every stage of conference preparation. This interaction contributed to the high level of discussion of the socially

important topic of "Inclusion" between parents, educational, social and state establishments.

3. The discussions around the problem of "Accessible Environments" paved the way for future cooperation with national representatives of ICEVI in the wider European educational context.
4. The positive effect of the cooperation between SSTU and SSU during the preparations for the conference needs to be consolidated and developed. One of the forms such cooperation can take is in the creation of a Regional Resource Center.
5. The program committee was delegated to develop a program of activities for the establishment of a Regional Resource Center
6. The scientific committee was delegated to disseminate the practical experiences of professionals towards the goal of finding a future solution for the socially important challenge of "Inclusion".
7. A recommendation was made that researchers and professionals work together to develop new directions of development for SSTU and SSU under the theme of «Accessible Environments: Technological and Social Aspects».

Simple Things – The VINCP Minimum Detection Test

by **Dr Katherine Spowart** MRCPCH, DRCOG, DCCH

Consultant Paediatrician, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board



Measurement of visual acuity (VA) is the cornerstone of assessment of vision and is the measure quoted most frequently in communicating what a child can see. However, the results and figures achieved are not only dependent on the child and tester, but on the test itself. The gold standard was the Snellen chart but, for younger children, this has been superseded by the crowded logMAR test (1). Both of these are recognition tests, testing not only the clarity of vision, but recognition and the ability to simultaneously process information. In children who have not developed the ability to match, pictures or letters, then preferential looking tests, such as the Cardiff Acuity Test (2) or Keeler Acuity Cards (3) are used . These provide a measurement of VA in Snellen equivalent, cycles per degree or logMAR, but are not testing the same functions as the recognition tests for older children. These tests provide a measure of detection vision, the awareness that something is there, with no expectation or requirement that the child can process that information beyond this in terms of recognition.

These technical differences often result in confusion for parents and professionals with early tests using preferential looking techniques suggesting a reasonable VA but, when the child moves to a recognition test, their VA appears to be significantly poorer. In some children with very low vision there is no formal measure and with children who are able finger counting may be quoted, or with children who are less able the approximate size, colour and luminance of a toy they respond to. Understanding of vision and what is seen becomes more confused when it is brought into the developmental world. Within early developmental assessments for visually impaired children; motor, social and cognitive development is intertwined with clarity of vision, contrast, colour, perception of movement, luminance and other variables. The reason for this is clear – it is difficult to quantify each aspect of vision in a pure way, particularly in those with very low vision.

Why is this needed? For orthoptists and ophthalmologists it helps to identify progress or deterioration in vision, for parents, teachers and others it provides the starting point in understanding what a child can see and importantly may not see. For paediatricians, who are tasked with providing a holistic assessment of children detailing their abilities and disabilities along with providing strategies and solutions to address difficulties, having no information or information which may not be reliable proves difficult.

Within the Functional Vision Team in Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board we designed a very simple test of vision for those very young, or with very low or difficult to measure vision. This relies on detection only and crucially there is no need to understand any Snellen or logMAR equivalents. It measures simply the smallest size of white disc on a black background that a child can fix on at a set distance, 30cm. It requires minimal training, it provides consistent results and gives a meaningful practical result. Parents and teachers can then be informed of how big objects or detail require to be before a child can see them and, crucially for learning, what detail the child will miss out on if the diameter of the object, or detail on it, falls below or near that level. It can also be used to evidence, rather than describe as in the past, the fatigability of vision in children with cerebral visual impairment and low acuity.

This test has now been provided to all eye clinics, joint functional vision teams and VI education services across Scotland through VINCYP, the managed clinical network for children and young people in Scotland. This has not revolutionised vision testing, but it does allow measures to be repeated over time using the same materials wherever a child is, does give practical information to carers and does allow consistent recording of these children's vision in the national data system for VI children. This has not been previously available within the limited test materials designed for children with very low vision.

Informal feedback on this test has been very positive from orthoptists, paediatricians and VI teachers. Formal qualitative assessment is planned.

This test is available through the VINCYP website www.vincyp.scot.uk.

References

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2. Adoh T O, Woodhouse J M. (1994) The Cardiff acuity test used for measuring visual acuity development in toddlers. Vision Research . 34 (4) , 555-560
3. Preston K L , McDonald M et al (1987) Validation of the acuity card procedure for infants with ocular disorders. Ophthalmology . 94, 644-653

7th ICEVI BALKAN CONFERENCE



7th ICEVI BALKAN CONFERENCE

"FREE ACCESS, REAL EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION AND UNLIMITED TECHNOLOGIES"

By Prof. Dsc **Mira Tzvetkova-Arsova** – Bulgaria

In the period of time **20 – 23.10 2019** in Hotel Ramada in Sofia, Bulgaria the **7th ICEVI BALKAN CONFERENCE** will take place. After a gap of some years in the tradition of Balkan conferences, the capital of Bulgaria – Sofia, will be hosting the 7th ICEVI Balkan conference. Its main theme is **"Free access, real educational inclusion and unlimited technologies"**.

In relation to the main theme, the following thematic areas are open for presentations:

1. Access to inclusive education.
2. Development of social and emotional competencies.
3. Access to programs for independent living and social participation.
4. Access to technology.
5. Orientation and mobility.
6. Low Vision Training.
7. Early intervention.
8. Education of children with multiple disabilities.
9. Updating school programs.
10. Career Development and Vocational Training.

The local co-organizing NGO is the Bulgarian Association for Education of Visually Impaired Children. The conference will be partly sponsored by Bulgarian Ministry of Education and will be under the honorary patronage of the Vice Minister of Education and Science of Bulgaria Mrs. Denitsa Sacheva.

The arrival day is 20 October 2019 and the departure day is 23 October 2019.

The working languages are English and Bulgarian.

The conference fee is **70 Euro** and this covers: the conference bag with materials, a flash drive memory stick with the full texts of the conference papers and meals during the conference. The fee must be sent by bank transfer no later than 15.09.2019!

The Scientific Committee includes:

- Prof. Dsc Mira Tzvetkova-Arsova – Bulgaria (chairperson)
- Prof. Dr. Daniela Dimitrova-Radojichikj – North Macedonia
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vassilis Argyropoulos – Greece
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andrea Hathazi – Romania
- Assoc. prof. Dr. Aleksandra Grbovic – Serbia
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emine Ayyildiz – Turkey
- Mrs. Darija Udovicic-Mahmuljin – Croatia

The Local Organizing Committee includes:

- Prof. Dsc Vladimir Radoulov (chairperson)
- Dr. Margarita Tomova (secretary)
- Prof. Dsc Mira Tzvetkova-Arsova
- Dr. Emanuela Stoilova
- Dr. Maria Valyavicharksa-Karaivanova

- Mrs. Julieta Petkova
- Mrs. Elka Belokapova
- Mr. Kaloyan Damyanov
- Mr. Lazar Jivankin

More details about the conference can be obtained at <https://baozzd.org> and through the conference e-mail address: balkan_conference_2019@abv.bg

After the successful ICEVI Balkan conferences held in 2000 in Varna (Bulgaria), in 2002 in Athens (Greece), in 2006 in Belgrade (Serbia), in 2008 in Istanbul (Turkey), in 2010 in Zagreb (Croatia) and in 2012 in Cluj-Napoca (Romania), it is high time to meet again and to share our achievements, best practices and new ideas.

Welcome to Sofia between 20 and 23 October 2019 for the **7th ICEVI BALKAN CONFERENCE** and meet old friends, make new friends and share your experience with other professionals! We are looking forward to meeting you!



Some of the members of the local organizing committee

News from Denmark

Danish podcast series

IBOS is currently producing a series of podcasts in Danish in collaboration with Synscenter Refsnæs and the Association of parents of blind and visually impaired children. The aim of all the podcasts is to make relevant professional knowledge available for parents and young adolescents with VI. IBOS is

producing 12 different podcasts with different themes including social competencies, my first job and flirting. The podcasts will be uploaded to our homepage and our Facebook-site as they are produced. Please listen with us – and please share!

Scandinavian Vision and Brain Conference

On September the 4th and 5th 2019, IBOS is presenting the Nordic Conference on sight and brain damage. Languages will be Scandinavian. The topics include the impact of Post Commotio, Whiplash injuries, Stroke, Cerebral Thrombosis and their effects on the vision. The conference will consist of professional presentations and workshops and will take place at Comwell Hotel Korsør, Ørnumvej 6, 4220 Korsør.

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