

**ICEVI European Newsletter**

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## **The President's Message**

Dear Members and Non-members of ICEVI-Europe,

In the previous newsletter we talked about the great influence that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the lives of all of us. It not only threatens the health and wellbeing of many individuals, but it has also brought changes to our society as a whole. Social distancing measures are having an impact on all our lives, and people with disabilities and the elderly are particularly at risk of isolation.

We too at ICEVI Europe are confronted with the consequences. These include the postponement of the conference of the Professional Interest Group Early Intervention, postponement of the 8th European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment of the Professional interest group, ENPVI, and the adjournment of the 10th European Conference that was scheduled to take place in Jerusalem in 2021. Unfortunately, I regret that it is not yet possible to give a new date for the 10th ICEVI-Europe Conference.

But an even more profound consequence of Covid has been the temporary closure of schools and the reduced services to people with visual impairment. Fortunately, organisations are finding some solutions to these problems through inventive use of Webinars and E-learning, VBS for example pays a lot of attention to online education in its recent magazine. In this edition of our Newsletter we too look at the range of responses to Covid by organisations for the vision impaired in one of our member countries, Israel.

Thankfully, the outlook going forward is much more favourable than it was in our last Newsletter in August.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres said earlier this summer, "The response to the pandemic, and to the widespread discontent that preceded it, must be based on a New Social Contract and a New Global Deal that creates equal opportunities for all and respect the rights and freedoms of all."

But we still have a long way to go. Even before COVID-19 started ravaging nations across the globe, the World Social Report 2020 confirmed that "inequality has increased in most developed countries and remains very high in developing countries." This inequality is particularly evident in the case of people with disabilities. The words of the Secretary-General of the UN are a challenge for all of us who seek to support inclusion.

Let's hope we have better news in the 2021 Newsletter. We encourage you to make frequent visits to the homepage of ICEVI-Europe, <http://www.icevi-europe.org/>, as it is regularly updated with latest developments and announcements regarding new dates for ICEVI-Europe conferences and events, as this information becomes available to us.

I wish all a beautiful new year and good health. Thank you for your efforts in achieving the goals of ICEVI-Europe and supporting people with visual impairments.

Finally, this. On 1 November, our board member Anne Kristine Grosbøll, representative on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic countries, stepped down as a result of accepting a new work position. We thank her very much for her commitment and contributions to ICEVI-Europe in the recent years and wish her continued success in her new professional endeavours.

On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe,

**Hans Welling**  
**President**



## The Experiences of "Ofek Liyladenu": A look into how COVID-19 impacted the services for visually impaired children



Right from the earliest days of the pandemic in Israel, Ofek Liyladenu reorganized its services and adapted them to meet the emerging needs on the ground. In mid-March Israel went into lockdown and we managed to conduct surveys among parents about the situation (early April and early May). The main findings were:

1. Most parents reported that there was no regular personal contact with low vision support teachers, with no face-to-face teaching or meetings. Communication was limited to receiving written materials and WhatsApp messages.
2. Many children found the use of ZOOM challenging and technical training and instruction were unavailable.
3. Regular and subject teachers were not aware of the issues of making teaching accessible to students with via ZOOM, e.g. the need for early preparation of materials, managing participant responses and muting etc. In addition how lengthy screen use caused eyes, headaches etc.
4. Many of the teachers were not aware/familiar with Ministry of Education guidance.
5. There were hardly any personal workplans for the visually impaired children.
6. On many occasions assistive technology remained in closed schools
7. Distance learning was not supported with individual assistance.
8. Parents reported lack of clarity regarding Matriculation exams, e.g. what would be the format, scope etc.

**After conversations with the Ministry of Education most of the above issues were addressed.**

With the ending of the lockdown and a return to something like routine in the education system we conducted another survey and additional issues came up:

1. Examination formats in distance learning were not adapted for visually impaired children.
2. Physical and spatial changes to school environments were not properly introduced and familiarized to students with visual impairments.
3. Partial return to routine extracurricular activities, e.g. after school clubs and courses, caused distress and frustration.

**In general, the uncertainty and restrictions of physical contact and touch created anxiety and emotional regression.**

With the opening of the new school year in September the education system was better prepared and low vision support teachers were regularly supporting the children. The latest developments include a second lockdown which began three weeks ago and we are following and monitoring the situation.

Yael Weisz-Rind, Executive Director

**"Ofek Liyladenu"** - Israel National Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments

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**Online services - from crisis to challenge and opportunity at Migdal-Or (Lighthouse) by Oded Bashan and Rita Lapid**



### About Migdal Or {Lighthouse}

Migdal Or is a multi-service center dedicated to advancing people with blindness or visual impairment towards independent functioning and inclusion in the workplace. Active in Israel for over 60 years, Migdal Or provides a broad and comprehensive response through a continuum of services nationwide, delivered at our four regional branches as well as in the home and work environment of the service-recipient.

In 2011, Migdal Or merged into the Northern Goals Association, one of the largest non-profit organizations in Israel's northern region. This move sought to improve Migdal Or's sustainability by taking advantage of Northern Goal's solid fiscal and organizational infrastructure, allowing Migdal Or to continue its work, expand existing services and develop new ones.

Every year, more than 3,000 individuals of all ages and from all sectors and backgrounds benefit from Migdal Or's unique continuum of programs and services, most of which are funded by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs' Service for the Blind, the National Insurance Institute and the Ministry of Defense.



- Migdal-Or's vision is that every person with vision loss in Israel should be able to fulfill themselves.
- Our mission is to develop and provide professional services that are relevant and innovative, improve functionality, support professional advancement for people with vision loss and provide an information service for those involved with their lives (e.g. family, employers, IDF as well as the general public).

### **Challenges arising from the COVID-19 Crisis**

COVID-19 has interrupted our daily lives. We are faced with uncertainty and have had to make great changes in the way we manage every aspect of our

lives. The family framework is changing: everyone is at home and we need to adjust to a new reality. Working conditions vary, many now work mostly online, rules on public transportation are changing. In fact, the familiar routine has been undermined and it is necessary to create a new one, adopting new strategies and tools in order to function in the new reality.

However, challenges for people with visual impairment are compounded during this period, way beyond those of sighted people. These challenges accentuate feelings of loneliness and difficulties in accessing services are illustrated in the following examples:

A person with visual impairment needs to draw close to objects in order to see them, however today, government rulings require distancing. This is difficult for the person with low vision. For example, the need for social distancing makes it problematic for the population with visual impairment to obtain assistance when walking in public spaces. Mobility outside the home is challenging too. A large number of people with visual impairment use public transport to travel from place to place. During COVID-19, public transport has been reduced and where it does exist, there is fear of infection. As a result, people may shut themselves in their home and feel lonely.

Moreover, a large percentage of people who have decreasing vision are over 65 years. This population is in the high risk category for COVID-19. Sometimes, they are isolated in their homes and may find it difficult to get support. The general feeling of loss and loneliness is intensified among people who have only recently experienced significant deterioration in their vision and are still trying to cope with the loss. This intensifies feelings of helplessness, incompetence and fear.

These and other challenges during the COVID-19 crisis required Migdal-Or - as a leading organization in Israel – to respond in accordance with our vision and mission. We had to quickly develop a variety of responses to the new needs and demands whilst maintaining regular operations. We were also required to make adjustments to the routine face-to-face services and to train the service providers, in order to provide an effective and safe online service.

### **The Needs**

The needs were examined from two perspectives:

1. Through telephone contact with service recipients in order to assess their needs and the possibilities of continuing with services online in light of the new situation
2. A national assessment of the online needs of people with blindness or visual impairment in Israel. The link to a survey was posted on Migdal-Or's website and sent to past users. Further, in order to access the

population who have difficulties with digital systems, volunteers were recruited to contact past users and review the questionnaire with them.

What needs were identified?

- **Functionality and information:** People with visual impairment raised the need to become familiar with online tools which would enable them to function independently on a daily basis to access various services and support their personal well-being. For example, training in the use of Zoom for working online to replace help with orientation and mobility on route to their workplace; ordering groceries online; accessible games for children; use of assistive technological online applications; adjustments of support methods such as seeking guidance when walking while maintaining distance; adjusting the timings for online instruction acknowledging it is difficult to concentrate for long periods; managing options for camera-dependent platforms such as use of the background, aiming the camera at the target etc; internet connection and troubleshooting smartphone/computer problems.

This information was also requested by family members and professionals that support an individual with visual impairment.

- **Social needs:** difficulties in receiving occasional help in the public arena, use of public transport and the fact that leisure services such as enrichment activities, leisure time etc., were reduced at a time when family members and children were continuously at home raised the need for leisure services and social interaction.
- **Emotional needs:** social isolation, inability to move about freely and uncertainty as a result of the COVID-19 situation significantly heightened emotional stress. People felt apprehensive and lonely, and depression, helplessness and inability to function independently raised the need for social workers experienced in the field of visual impairment and the need for access to group support from peers.

### **Mapping identified needs and segmenting services provided**

In order to respond to the changing needs that arose during the COVID-19 crisis, routine services that had traditionally been provided face-to-face were adapted to online. In addition, new online services were developed. Funding, for the most part, was provided in Israel by the Administration for People with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Services and the National Insurance Institute.

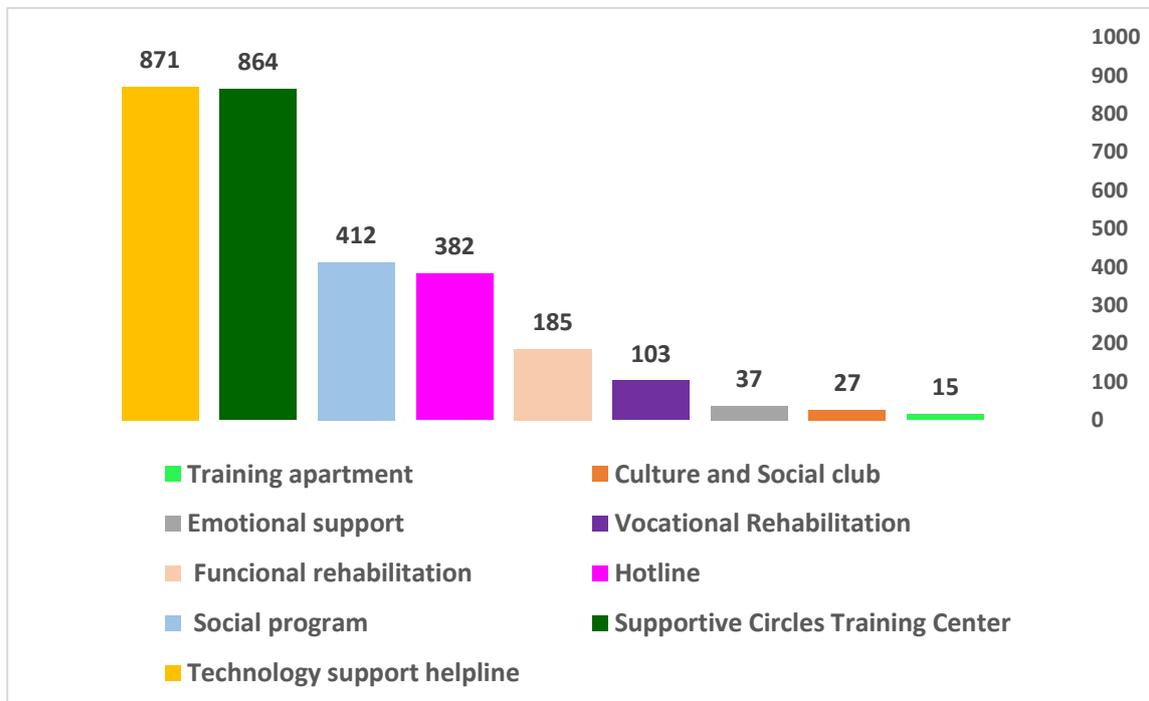
- **Functionality needs:** functional rehabilitation was adapted online carried out by Migdal-Or's Units for Rehabilitation Training Services and the Training Apartments for Independent Living
- **Emotional support:** This was led by the staff of the Institute for the Rehabilitation of Low Vision who adapted to online support groups. In addition, a new helpline opened for individual support

- Vocational rehabilitation: training and preparation for employment has been adjusted to online
- Social and leisure: Online leisure services were provided by Migdal-Or. In this framework, we began a variety of new activities such as yoga and exercise, Mindfulness and Guided Imagery, therapeutic gardening, crossword puzzle groups, Science for children and enrichment lectures on a variety of topics
- Information/knowledge: Distribution of information to people with visual impairment, their families and professionals were adapted for online and via Migdal-Or's Training Center. Subjects included tools for using online platforms, digital accessibility, assistive technology. In addition, webinars and related materials were saved for practice and further reference in an online resource page on Migdal-Or's website
- The increased need for technical support was accommodated by reinforcing the existing technological support Call center.

**What are the Online Services?**

Migdal-Or's online services began in mid-March during the first wave of COVID-19 and some continue today.

Below is a chart showing online service needs during the first three months (mid-March to end of July)



In total, 2,896 people with visual impairment received online services: 2257 people with visual impairment and 639 people in their lives (family members, care givers, social workers etc.) who wanted to enrich their skill set of working with people with blindness or visual impairment.

Some people participated in one activity, some participated in weekly sessions. For example, a person who participated in 10 sessions of the online support group was counted only once in the chart. Meaning, people enjoyed many more hours of activities than shown in the chart above.

## **Insights**

Following our experience with providing online services in a variety of areas, we learned services can be improved based on a number of principles.

### **1. Principles to improve online services**

- Adaptation of online platforms to the individual. It is important to offer a number of platforms to enable the user to participate in the selection of one most suitable for them. Those utilized included Zoom, regular telephone, WhatsApp video, Skype, distribution of materials (pictures, files and short films) via email and WhatsApp.
- Length of sessions: Online sessions should be shorter than face to face sessions. It is difficult for most people to concentrate for long periods during online meetings.
- Guide/Companion: For specific issues, it is important to enlist a companion and determine their role in advance. Their role can help the recipient to practise skill acquisition, with video recording so that the service provider is able to view how learning is carried out, for technical solutions and to ensure the safety of the recipients. For example when the rehabilitation teacher is teaching skills online that involve risk such as learning pouring or cutting with a knife, the recipient could make a mistake and the supervision of the guide becomes critical in preventing accidents. The guide needs to understand their new role and accept it. Coordinating expectations is important.
- New ethical issues: Online services also bring ethical issues which need attention, for example recording a session with knowledge of the participants. It is recommended that this is discussed with the recipient in advance and a clear agreement is reached.
- Verbal guidance: Online services involve a significant amount of verbal guidance. Open questions should be frequently asked. This is to compensate for the fact that the service provider often does not acquire the complete picture even on Zoom.
- Setting goals for sessions: Clear and limited goals should be set for each session and successes should be clearly recorded. Highlighting goal successes will raise self-esteem and a sense of capability for recipients and service providers alike. In addition, it will also provide clear information as where to proceed and where there is still difficulty. To do this correctly, it is necessary to base every activity on task analysis.

### **2. Challenges and Dilemmas**

In online service provision, there are challenges which raise professional dilemmas which should be considered:

- Absence of a complete and immediate picture: one needs to take into consideration that the service provider does not have a complete and immediate picture when the service is being rendered with regards to the technique offered and the implementation carried out by a person with visual impairment. The guide and use of pictures resolve this in part.
- Blurred boundaries: when the service provider uses Zoom from their home, in effect, they enter the home of the recipient. Therefore, a quiet room should be maintained that preserves the privacy of the service recipient with a respectful and appropriate Zoom backdrop. For example, a bedroom is not appropriate but if it is the only option, appropriate background images can be used that do not attract attention.
- Fatigue: Online services often makes the service provider and service recipient very tired. It is advisable to take this into account in order to schedule breaks between the sessions in advance.
- Technology: Consideration must be given to people's comfort with technology and internet interruptions.
- Changing perception: change usually arouses fear and skepticism in most people. Many services, in particular rehabilitation training services for people with visual impairment, have for many years been provided face-to-face. Learning techniques enabling functional independence are often learned through demonstration and touch. The adjustment to providing services online requires a change in belief and perception that this is indeed possible, efficient and effective. Moreover, it requires creativity in resolving new dilemmas, making adjustments and support for future research.

## **SUMMARY**

Online services remain with us in part. The question is if it is as an efficient and effective medium as face to face services. In order to respond to this, we need to understand the difference between the two concepts 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness'.

**'Efficiency'** measures the ratio between outputs and resources i.e. whether the same output is achieved faster with fewer resources. That is: efficiency refers to maximum effort within a minimum time.

Within these parameters, online services are indeed efficient as part of our services in Israel (such as rehabilitation counselling). They are provided in the recipient's natural surroundings and save travel time of the counsellor. It is also possible to save waiting time for services. At the same time, online services are less efficient when demonstrating a new topic. Sometimes, verbal explanations, short films etc. take longer to understand than face to face

demonstrations. However for some people, the fact that online services take longer to cover a topic thoroughly is an advantage, it helps them feel confident, develops their independence and increases their sense of competence. Nevertheless, for most service recipients, online services will require more time to achieve the same results as face-to-face.

**'Effectiveness'** measures whether the activity achieves the desired results. The degree of effectiveness is measured against the desired results for short, medium and long-term impact. It measures the degree of achievement of goals and objectives.

Online services are effective from a number of perspectives. The service encourages the recipient to problem-solve independently, due to the fact that the service provider is not physically present during the learning process. The approach is based on the personal strengths of the recipient and encourages drawing on these inner resources which raises their sense of capability. It also requires significant participation on the part of the recipient which raises self-worth. However it demands precision in setting limited goals for each session so that the recipient is able to clearly see progress and feel empowered.

In addition, some people, do not utilize services if they are required to leave home and sometimes travel long distances (such as leisure and social activities). There are many reasons for this such as fear to leave home with visual or other disabilities, general health, lack of accessibility in outside surroundings, frequency of public transport, geographical distance. Online services make activities accessible and allows anyone who is interested to access them at home.

At the same time, online service is less effective for certain service recipients when personal connection is critical to success, when body language and touch are especially important, when proximity is critical for maintaining safety such as learning to cross at a junction.

Sometimes, online services are not possible when a recipient does not have access to technology and/or a companion who accompanies them to sessions and/or in cases where the recipient is unable to cooperate using this method.

Our recommendation is to examine the method of service delivery in accordance with the content and character traits of the recipient and in cooperation with them. We also recommend to balance between online and face to face services depending on the type and topic of service.

Oded Bashan  
CEO, Migdal-Or

Rita Lapid  
Manager of professional quality  
and development

## Aleh Activity During the Covid-19 Period

by: Dr. Moshe Oved



Aleh helps blind and visually impaired people in Israel of all ages, from early childhood to senior citizenship. The focus of the organization, though not exclusively, is on providing assistance in education and higher education, with emphasis on students who have difficulty seeing. In response to the needs of the population we serve, Aleh has expanded its efforts greatly over the past years to address issues such as job promotion in the open market for visually impaired academics, the creation and operation of work experience, assistance to the families of blind children and to the children themselves, the operation of transition programs for young adults leaving the parents' home and graduating from high school towards university, as well as providing assistance to our alumni who have established families, and so on.

The range of services we routinely offer includes: an audio library, welfare services and emotional support, tutoring and workshops for groups and individuals, social assistance and enrichment, loaning computer aids, sports activities and much more.

During the Covid-19 period, we continued in full operation, often changing the nature of the activity from face-to-face individual and group meetings to remote meetings with the help of the Zoom program. This pivot assured the safety of all and adhered to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health. A few examples of such efforts include:

1. Children with blindness and visual impairment - Utilizing interactive elements on the computer, the mentor remotely assisted his or her assigned child in educational and play activities. In exceptional cases of emotional hardship resulting from loneliness or financial distress, face-to-face meetings were held with clients.
2. Students with blindness and visual impairment - As studies for higher education moved to remote learning, individual assistance with activities such as reading and tutoring moved to remote delivery as well. We loaned computer aids to students who did not previously have them to ensure all students had access to Zoom. In addition, we provided technological support as students adapted to using the software.

Individual learning – Two main issues that students faced during this time were the adjustment to new online programs, such as Zoom, in a short amount of time, and loneliness. We were easily able to find teachers and

readers who could teach remotely and did not have to travel to the blind student's home.

Group learning - Advice we provided to university teachers on how to teach remotely included reading out the study materials that were delivered to the students, notifying the students who have difficulty seeing about events that occur between the students and the teacher and recording lessons on Zoom so that the blind students could review each lesson.

Individual and group learning at a distance created emotional distress for many students and as a result we increased mental health assistance services during this period as well as running a hotline to address the inquiries of people in distress.

3. The Elderly - Because of the vulnerability of the population, we adhered to guidelines of working remotely. However, in many cases, the elderly who did not leave their homes suffered not just from lack of food and medicine, but from loneliness and mental distress as well. We raised funds and recruited volunteers who were willing to take a risk and go to the nursing homes to assist the elderly with their needs. We also provided this group with auxiliary equipment, especially TMSs, in order to allow them to read independently.

4. Employees of the association - Some came to the various offices scattered throughout the country and provided services remotely and some went to individual's homes to assist individuals in distress. The strict precautionary measures taken by the people with blindness as well as the workers and volunteers prevented any cases of Covid-19 amongst the people involved - allowing for continuous care throughout this time.

5. Audio library - We transferred audio books to an app on the mobile phone that is accessible to people with blindness.

6. Sports activity - Group activities were stopped. The team coaches continued to provide remote training for independent sports activities.

Written by: Dr. Moshe Oved, CEO of Aleh Association

## **ELIYA - association for blind and visually impaired children Adapting to COVID-19**



ELIYA is Israel's leading organization for the care and advancement of blind and visually impaired children, as well as for children with additional developmental challenges. Founded in 1982, ELIYA now serves populations in centers throughout the country, from its first and central location in Petach Tikvah, to Jerusalem, Rehovot, Beer Sheva in the south, and Haifa in the north.

ELIYA's focus is on children from birth to age six, in the belief that professional and intensive intervention during these formative years is critical for the development of skills that will help them to successfully integrate into mainstream education and the community at large.

Upon the outbreak of the Coronavirus in March 2020 and following the changes in the operation of ELIYA's Day Care Centers as a result of the Ministry of Health guidelines, we were forced to adjust our working method with the children in our Day Care Centers. In this paper we will present the adaptations made during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the immediate adjustments to COVID-19 was a significant reduction in group activities which meant that we had to increase the amount of toys, games, arts and crafts material in all ELIYA's Day Care Centers tremendously – especially the equipment that had to be purchased for the group of very young infants who tend to use the toys and all materials with their mouth. This was mandated by the fact that the requirements imposed by the pandemic increased individual isolated care. In order to allow all children equal opportunity to use the toys without endangering them or causing them any medical harm we had to double and triple the amount of toys, games, and creative materials purchased.

Upon our return to the new routine, we started to work with a computerized system (CRM) that enables work while maintaining distance between staff members, the sending of health certificates - for staff and families- and the monitoring of activities in all ELIYA Day Care Centers simultaneously. The need to embrace digital record keeping and filing had been present for quite some time, but the pandemic has accelerated the process much sooner than we expected.

The hours of programming and implementation of the system is a complex long-term and expensive project. The implementation involves significant staff retraining to maximize the benefits of the system. In the long run, many man-hours of working time will be saved by no longer having to review and scan individual hard copy records, communication between our Day Care Centers will be vastly improved as will communication between supervisors and staff as well as staff and parents.

Other Adaptation measures include:

- Adapting the sensory aspect of the toys to the visual impairment of the children
- Preparing creative material and home kits to be used by the children during periods of lockdown and quarantine
- Increased staff training on adapting our center-based methods performed by professionals to a home-based method performed by parents
- Increased staff communication with the parents to properly instruct and follow the home care protocol
- The fact that all communication with parents is now by ZOOM or telephone, without personal hands-on meetings has also required of us much improved communication skills.
- Increased emphasis on emotional support for the children, their parents and the staff in order to cope with the emotional burdens that COVID-19 added to the "normal" burdens of the visually impaired
- In accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Health, we were obliged to provide the staff on a regular basis with full protective equipment such as: gloves, masks, protective robes, alcohol and more.
- The beginning of the school year in the middle of a pandemic has also caused changes as the parents cannot accompany their children into the classroom during the first acclimation period as they had in previous years and contact with parents remains more limited
- With the exception of the first month and a half "lock-down" we have continued to function as a rehabilitative facility and have received children in the regular classroom settings. While at the beginning, regulations and fear limited attendance, it has now returned to normal.

It is important to stress that throughout this challenging time, changes have been made, staff has adapted and we have continued to provide the high level of rehabilitative care that has characterized Eliya during its entire history.

Hanit cohen

Prof. Kenneth Koslowe, OD MS FCOVD-A.

CEO

Director, Professional Services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Hanit Cohen".A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Kenneth Koslowe".

## **A Future with Sciences - Transfer of Knowledge Supporting Visually Impaired High School Students Learning Sciences**

by Anett Puskás, youth referent and Attila Ollé, co-ordinator of International Affairs

Hungarian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (MVGYOSZ)

In response to the differences between the statutory requirements and the actual educational conditions facing Visually Impaired children and young people at institutional levels, the Hungarian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (MVGYOSZ) launched a programme called "*Prospects of the Future*" in 2017. As a result of inequalities some high school students are severely disadvantaged when it comes to pursuing their further studies, vocational training and employment, when compared to their sighted peers.

"*Prospects of the Future*" was aimed at assessing the learning and educational situation of Visually Impaired students and elaborating proposals to improve those conditions, based on an analysis of good practices.

The data collected highlighted - among other things - the insufficient support system for providing and maintaining assistive technology and the inadequate use of assistive tools particularly when learning sciences. These shortcomings often result in passivity in science lessons, or exemption from science lessons or even exemption from the science curriculum as a whole for some students with vision impairment .

MVGYOSZ is implementing the project "A Future with Sciences - Transfer of Knowledge Supporting Visually Impaired High School Students Learning Sciences (Reál(is) jövő – Látássérült középiskolások reál tantárgyi tanulását támogató ismeretek átadása- IFJ-GY-20-A-0291) to support the use of assistive Technology, to disseminate appropriate teaching and learning methods and to make relevant information accessible.

The project lasts from October 2020 through March 31, 2021 and offers various possibilities to students, to special education teachers and students, as well as to teachers in integrated education.

An explicit aim of the project is to move away the exemption of students with vision impairment from the science curriculum, and to overcome their classroom passivity that arises from the lack of appropriate teaching and learning support. We wish to present and offer educational institutions and their students, the tools and methods to ensure high school years are active and successful.

During two special webinars which act as the basis of the project, we shall map the availability of tools and equipment, and set up together a list of gap filling tools, apps and software in regard to learning and teaching science. The experts' discussion at the first meeting ended with the conclusion that either the hire

services or the assistive technology outlets that offer appropriate tools and equipment are not used by most of the students or by their parents. Students are forced to borrow any tools and equipment that are available from each other.

Moreover because of a general lack of sufficient purchasing power, assistive tools and devices are often unaffordable or simply not available in Hungary at all. That is why DIY is a frequent solution in Hungary.

As a result of the study the tools, equipment and useful information essential for successful study in the Sciences have been sorted according to the following groups:

1. Special tools and equipment to help learn and/or teach sciences.
2. Learning apps: There include learning applications providing an accessible platform to online education, and there are also designated apps focusing on a specific subject e.g. Chemistry. Unfortunately, not all the apps are accessible. We were searching for apps that can be used – at least partly – by a student with vision impairment.
3. Domestic and international hire service providers and shops selling assistive technology and devices in Hungary: We plan to set up a database showing a list of the available technology (the whole range of available tools and services), terms of services, the area where those tools and services are available, and finally we shall create a map including all these details.
4. Informative websites, web communities: Collecting together information about relevant websites and web communities is important, as they share useful information. The list includes both Hungarian and international communities.

The data and information mentioned above will be collected throughout the project, and will be available in the form of a database accessible to anyone.

The essence of the project 'A Future with Sciences' is the intensive transfer of knowledge in a half-online, half-personal way, implemented from January through to March 2021, on accessible platforms and venues. During these events, experts will give presentations to students, using tools and devices available at present and procured by that time.

After the interactive presentations the findings and results of the project will be shared with integrated educational institutions.

The outputs of the project include also an online publication on the use of the identified tools as well as the ones used during the presentations, including the database mentioned before.

For more detailed information on "A Future with Sciences" visit MVGYOSZ' specific subpage: <https://jovokilatasai.mvgyosz.hu/>

If you have any suggestions or comments concerning assistive apps, online assistive tools, suppliers, etc., please contact us at [ifjusag@mvgyosz.hu](mailto:ifjusag@mvgyosz.hu) .

This project is implemented within the framework of the "Sustainable Future" tender support of the Ministry of Human Resources and is run by The Hungarian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (MVGYOSZ).



EMBERI ERŐFORRÁSOK  
MINISZTERIUMA



## Get the Feel - the Book Launch and 'Mini-training' in Hungary

by Beáta Prónay LÁRESZ (Association of Rehabilitation Service Providers for Individuals with Visual Impairments)

The first time I heard about 'Get the Feel - A survey of suitable materials and working methods for comprehensive sexuality education for children and young adults with visual impairment' was in Brugge in Belgium during the 9th ICEVI-Europe Conference in 2017. The way Emma Vandame and her colleague presented the subject in their workshop very much impressed me.

In 2019 the 1st ICEVI-Europe Rehabilitation Conference took place in Budapest, with the title "Increasing Independence in All Ages". Emma Vandame and Lisa Vanhove were invited to represent the creative community of the 'Mobile Support Service Accent, Centre of Expertise Spermalie-het Anker/De Kade' and hold a Sexual Education workshop on the topic.

LÁRESZ the local organizing body of the conference decided to build on this initiative and to create an opportunity for Hungarian professionals to get to know and study their methodology in more detail. There is a great need for developing adequate sexual education for visually impaired children, youth and young adults in Hungary as well.

During 2019-2020 LARES Z contracted with Spermalie and translated and published 'Get the Feel' in Hungarian. On September 4, 2020, thanks to the FOF2019 grant application supported by EMMI (Ministry of Human Capacities) through NFSZK (National Center for Disability and Social Policy Public Benefit Non-Profit Limited Liability Company) the dream was realised: representatives of the partner institutions and those interested were also present at the book presentation, together with the applicants for the 'mini-training' that was to follow.

The book launch, which was open to the general public too, included the following presentations:

- On behalf of the NSZFK, Zsolt Szilaj, the head of the Hungarian Grants Program Office, presented the NFSZK's plans related to current professional

policy events, e.g. programs, grants directly affecting visually impaired people and professionals, e.g. training of rehabilitation specialists

- In the presentation of the principal of the Kindergarten, Primary School, Vocational School, Skills Development School, Unified Methodological Institute of Special Needs Education, College and Children's Home for those with visual impairments, we heard the results of a survey on the sexual education of visually impaired children and young people. Teachers from both mainstream and special education participated the questionnaire survey.

- Emma Vandamme representing the authors introduced 'Get the Feel' to the wider audience thus introducing the afternoon programme, the 'mini-training'.

Emma Vandamme reported on the characteristics of their own team work, the creation and development of the project ten years ago and its complex goal, which is not only to provide facts / knowledge, but a more complex mission: developing skills, emotions, developing the right attitude.

Her direct presenting style eased the way for the mini-training during the afternoon. At any time of the presentation, we were continuously able to ask questions online.

An interview with Flemish visually impaired young people about their opportunities to acquire information and knowledge about sexuality were in harmony with the presentation of the survey results. Furthermore a case description let us learn about the process of a specific home counselling session. These both ensured the involvement of the participants and were effective introductions to the detailed description of the sex education package and further resources.

The whole day's program was a great challenge under the shadow of COVID19 pandemic – unexpectedly the government decided to close the borders of Hungary from the 1<sup>st</sup> September. Our Belgian colleagues were extremely flexible and held the programme online. The organizers are very grateful to Spermalie and to the presenter and her supporting colleagues for running this successful programme. We did not just sit back but are continuing and improving the process!

**iExpress Myself II – A cooperation project to improve ICT skills of children with MDVI**

# iExpress

The logo for iExpress consists of a stylized blue eye icon with a yellow dot in the center and three yellow lines radiating from the top left. To the right of the icon, the word "iExpress" is written in a blue, sans-serif font, with a small yellow dot above the "i".

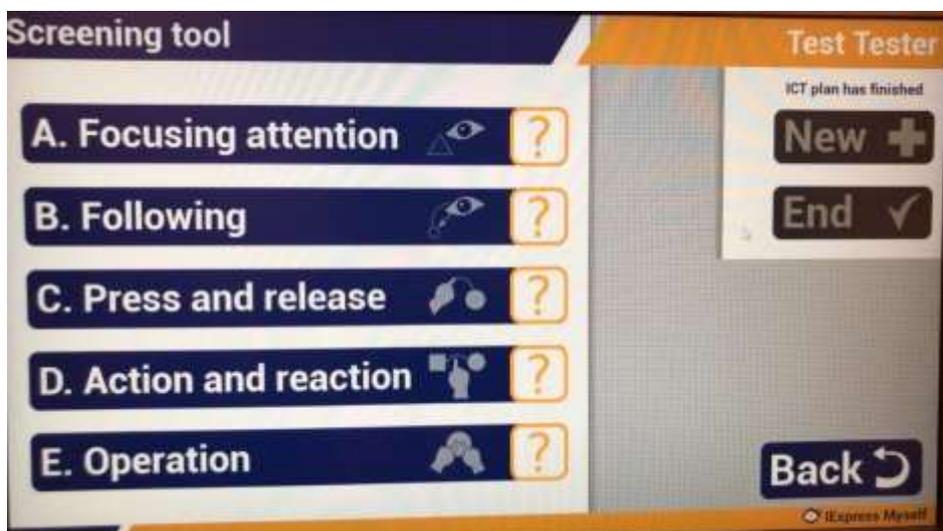
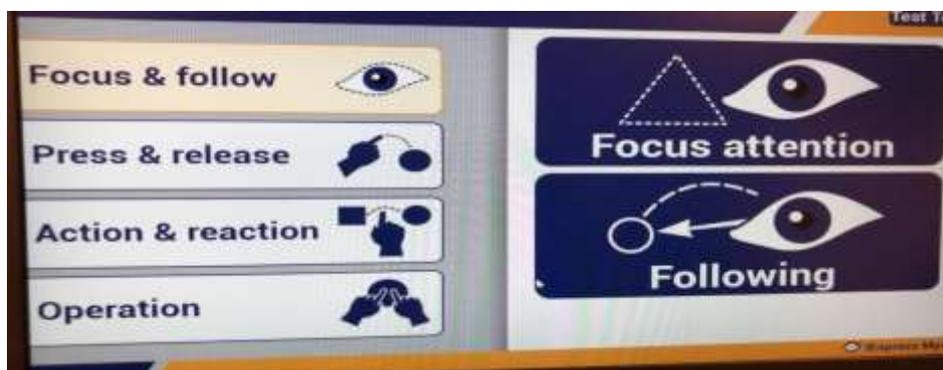
Children with multiple disabilities and visual impairment (MDVI) face many challenges when trying to express themselves to the people around them, at home, at school and everywhere else. The iExpress II project (which is a natural follow-on from the previous project iExpress Myself) ensures that children with multiple disabilities can improve their ICT skills and take more control over the ways they express themselves and communicate. With the material that is being developed, professionals can more easily determine and further develop the ICT skills of MDVI children and older clients with a development level of 0-4 years.

The initiative is an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Innovation Project between the four partners that also cooperated in the first iExpress project: Budapest School for the Blind (Hungary), ASAPYM Foundation (Spain), National Institute for the Blind (Iceland) and Royal Dutch Visio (the Netherlands). Royal Dutch Visio is the coordinator of the project.



MDVI children are often excluded from social activities/interaction or do not fully participate in them due to a lack of possibilities in communication and a lack of motor skills. Self-reliance is limited resulting in a lower participation level. The iExpress tools will offer them opportunities to increase their capabilities to communicate and interact through the use of ICT which will make them more self-reliant and improve their overall wellbeing. The MDVI child has complex needs and communication in general is a challenge for this target group. With the help of the ICT screening tool and ICT training plan we can gain insights into the child's potential to build on early communication levels through action and reaction. In the longer term, these basic skills can lead to further development in the methods of communication which are so valuable for the target group.

After the first project in which we developed a validated screening tool to screen childrens' ICT skills levels, we are now in the process of developing a toolkit including guidelines for using the screening tool effectively. Part of the new project is also to develop software and an application to be able to screen the children, collect the data in a database and generate an ICT plan to work on a training plan with the child. The software is now being tested by the partners. Although we face many issues in the pilot project due to the pandemic, we are now collecting the first results and they seem quite promising! In due course, the software will be downloadable for free on our website (<https://www.iexpressmyself.com/>)



The project will finish in August 2021, but in May/June 2021 we plan to have an online dissemination event in which we would like to present our final results. Should you be interested to participate in this online dissemination event, please send us your contact details ([programmaeuropa@visio.org](mailto:programmaeuropa@visio.org)) and we will make sure that you receive the save the date in good time! You can send any other questions about the project to the same address.

Aukje Snijders

Programme Manager Europe

Knowledge, Expertise and Innovation ( KEI)

Royal Dutch Visio, The Netherlands

## **The DESIGNER creative game**

By Róbert Maly, Márta Bittner, Tünde Bencsik

In 1988 the Hungarian National Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired issued a tender for developing games and toys for blind and visually impaired individuals. Róbert Maly and his wife Márta Bittner co-created three games for this competition: a special chess set, a logical board game, and a creative game.

The board game has been successfully manufactured and marketed in Hungary for many years. The creative game and the board game were transformed, redesigned and further developed. During the redesigning process Róbert and Márta collaborated with the School for the Blind in Budapest and took on board the ideas and advice of the director Ágnes Somorjai, and her colleagues.

Created primarily for blind individuals, these visual education games help enhance the ability to see and perceive space. They develop logical abilities, helping to understand the wonderful world of geometry and its artistic shaping. The games encourage the creation of harmonious processes, through visual and tactile clues, in terms of colours and shapes side by side.

The Creative Designer Game can be used with an extremely wide age range, from kindergarten to high school. Regardless of age, it is a useful tool for skill development and at the same time can be used as a leisure activity.

By playing the game we can familiarize ourselves with the essential knowledge, vocabulary and concepts of space that we use in everyday life – in front of-behind, right-left, below-above and similar relationships - which are difficult to demonstrate otherwise.

Creativity and problem-solving skills spontaneously develop by playing the game.

The game is ideal as an inclusive family and community activity as well.

The elements of the game are attached to motherboards - which provide the playing field – and are easily moved and fixed. The colours of the elements of the game can help people with some colour vision, but they are marked by tactile signs too.

## **Developmental skills and tasks that can be built and explored with Designer games**

### **For blind individuals:**

- Spatial perception, orientation. Modelling of community areas, streets, squares, buildings, intersections, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings.
- Modelling of the interior of rooms to facilitate orientation in the premises.

### **For everyone:**

#### **- Fine motor skills**

Six different shaped plastic elements in four different colours can be snapped into place on the motherboard following various patterns

#### **- Compliance - rule making**

The board games can be played by following specific game rules, or new games can be invented using new instructions.

#### **- Vision, tactile development**

The kit is suitable for recognising colours and shapes and improving concentration. Tactile signs help distinguish colours for both people who are visually impaired and people who are blind.

#### **- Visual memory, recognition of colours and shapes**

This is a kit that develops spatial orientation and seriality, logical thinking and association. It helps develop understanding of symmetry and asymmetry.

Players learn to recognise the patterns of rows, columns, perimeters, diagonals, and can then recreate them. Players learn to observe change and fill in gaps following a model.

#### **- Spatial vision, spatial perception**

We are not all the same when it comes to spatial orientation skills. Some people find each new space a challenge, others more of an opportunity. Our

individual level of spatial perception can often be best explored through games.

This game develops spatial vision, the distinction between plane and spatial forms, and the development of reproductive capacity. Observation of spatial perspectives, and proportions (front, back, side, etc.). Creation of laterality: one side and the other, changing sides, practising laterality in changing situations.

**- Attention, logic**

Divided attention, selective attention and shifting attention - everyone knows how difficult they can be in everyday life. Paying attention for a long time depletes our brain and increases our chances of making mistakes. Those who develop their concentration skills can lighten that burden.

The game also provides opportunities to understand the concepts of **symmetry and asymmetry** through practical examples.

The product has won many national and international awards for its creators. The toy is currently manufactured and marketed in-house.

For more information please contact us:

[designercreativegame@gmail.com](mailto:designercreativegame@gmail.com)

**E-book:**

How do the albums work? To open an Album please click on the cover page in the top or bottom corners!

<http://www.ebookextra.hu/eview/1ff7e042f4c398bc116c0aef5acc9e59>

Colourful harmonies:

<http://www.ebookextra.hu/eview/414706866d7bc55dfff430bf1ba2c01b>

White harmonies:

<http://www.ebookextra.hu/eview/20ea0937545ce5865b0f3edf2ec2f663>

Streets, squares, plans:

<http://www.ebookextra.hu/eview/12c1d50970b37ec3b9e0ea66614f7c7c>

## News from Sweden

Three projects from students at the program in Special Needs Training-Visual Impairment (Diploma as a Special Needs Teacher) 90 ECTS credits

### **1. "Sometimes I play it safe". Braille reading upper secondary students' use of English in school and in extramural activities**

#### **Abstract**

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Author: Carina Söderberg, advisor, National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools

Teachers in inclusive schools often have little or no previous experience of teaching pupils who are blind, and lack knowledge of braille or of the specific digital learning tools used by pupils with blindness. Nevertheless, these teachers still have to meet the needs of *all* pupils and challenge them at their appropriate level. Advisors at *Resource Centre Vision, The Swedish National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools*, are often told by English teachers in grade 7 and above, that students with blindness fall behind their sighted peers in English much more often than in Spanish, German or French. English is for many teenagers a *lingua franca* in online gaming, but English is also frequently used for YouTube and social media. What is accessible without vision? What types of extramural activities do teenagers with blindness engage in where language skills may be improved incidentally?

The aim of the study is to enhance knowledge about braille-reading students' difficulties and strategies in the English education, particularly in regard to their use of English in extramural activities. This qualitative study employs an inductive approach and is based on interviews with five upper secondary school students and four English teachers, each with a braille-reading student in one of their classes.

The results show that the students persistently experience an overall lack of time in their studies. Therefore, short-term goals such as meeting deadlines or studying for a test have a higher priority than tactile reading or long-term goals towards increased independence, such as more efficient ICT skills. The students who find their tactile reading too slow to keep up with sighted peers in the classroom, use predominantly auditory information during English

classes. However, all students know that their choice not to read braille has negative effects on their spelling ability.

Teachers adapt their teaching in various ways. When analysing films, audio-interpreted film or verbal information is not regarded equally as effective as visual information. Consequently, films are shown less frequently than in other classes, in favour of auditory sources of information such as podcasts or TED talks. The teachers understand that the time aspect needs to be considered, since reading braille is generally slower than reading print. The tasks of reading novels do not need adaptations, yet literary analyses are sometimes adapted: finding specific quotes in novels is time-consuming. For that reason, teachers sometimes change the assignment for all students, giving the quotes to be used in the analyses, or lowering the demands for the braille reading student – accepting summaries instead of direct quotations. Teachers often have some insight into the braille-reading students' specific working methods, which is reflected in the way they provide written feedback on essays. Nevertheless, teachers often do not fully understand the specific studying technique used by students with blindness when using their digital learning tools, neither are the teachers fully aware of the difficulties connected to online work such finding useful information on the internet.

The students' use of English in spare time activities varies a lot, but their main choices are auditory, such as audio books and listening to YouTube. Texts from the internet are often read by a screen reader, and thus constitute auditory information. Good ICT skills are a prerequisite for online activities however, social media and co-creative online activities are often inaccessible to students with blindness, unlike for sighted peers who use English both as consumers and producers in multiplayer online games. The students with blindness mostly consume English, since arenas to produce and co-create in English are inaccessible to them. The accessible online games played by the students are audio-based *single player* games, with no opportunities to communicate with others. This could give some insight into pupils with blindness falling behind or struggling more with English than their sighted peers. They are consumers, seldom producers, of English. Pupils with blindness need more support in improving their ICT skills, not only for school work but for taking part in extramural activities, which would be beneficial for practicing English in informal and fun, yet language developmental settings.

Degree Project 15.0 ECTS credits. Special Needs Training-Visual Impairment (90 ECTS credits). Spring 2020. Supervisor: Wieland Wermke, Stockholm University.

## **2. "How can the visual be tactile?" – a Textile teacher´s perspective on working with a student with blindness.**

### **Abstract**

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Author: Ulrika Johansson Staffans, advisor, National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools

The aim of this study was to gain increased knowledge about how students with blindness receive instructions for practical tasks in the subject of sloyd and what obstacles and opportunities affect the pedagogical work from a teacher perspective. There is a lack of research in the subject of sloyd for students with blindness and from an international perspective, the subject is unique as a compulsory subject in Swedish elementary school. A qualitative study was performed with an inductive approach where the sample consist of seven sloyd teachers. Data collection took place with the help of semi-structured interviews.

The results showed that the most common instructions in sloyd were tactile and oral instructions which were performed individually or in large groups. Instructions in Braille varied in their design and did not provide the same amount of information that was offered to the sighted students. Factors that were found to influence the pedagogical work in sloyd teaching were time, adaptations, the role of the resource educator and assessment. Sloyd teachers need to have knowledge of tactile touch during instructions and visual interpretation when teaching a student with blindness. By challenging the student's thinking and stimulating the student to work independently, the teacher can increase the student's opportunity to develop in the subject.

Degree Project 15.0 ECTS credits. Special Needs Training-Visual Impairment (90 ECTS credits). Spring 2020. Supervisor: Wieland Wermke, Stockholm University.

### **3. Not just two eyes!**

## **Reflections from resource persons on their roles in mathematics education for students with blindness in upper secondary school.**

### **Abstract**

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Author: Ann-Charlotte Larsson, advisor, National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools

An inclusive mathematics education for a student with blindness at upper secondary level requires a number of adaptations. The purpose of the study is to take part of resource persons' reflections on their role in mathematics support. The study is a qualitative study with an inductive approach. The results are based on semi-structured interviews with eight resource persons for students with blindness in upper secondary school, which are analysed on the basis of the analysis method "Thematic analysis".

The results of the study show that the tasks of the resource persons in mathematics teaching differ, which is due to a heterogeneous group of students and the fact that the competence of the resource person varies. Most participants believe that the division of roles around the tasks is clear, however a job description can be useful. The resource persons emphasise the striking difference between providing support in mathematics and in other school subjects. One reason is the need for more advanced concrete adaptations of materials in the mathematics education, not least when adapting tests in mathematics. The direct support to the student is also considered challenging, due to the nature of the subject and the unique methodology. For example, the resource person needs to have insight into the student's digital tools and the linear mathematical writing style on the computer.

The study discusses the need for resource persons' knowledge of vision-specific adaptations but also specific mathematical knowledge. A lack of sufficient mathematical competence by the resource person requires more collaboration with the teacher, which is why joint planning time in mathematics is necessary and thus demanded by the resource persons. In some schools, therefore, the teacher is also given a greater responsibility for adaptations in mathematics, unlike in other subjects. According to the resource persons, collaboration with the mathematics teacher benefits when teachers receive vision-specific competence development. Time is required to adapt the mathematics education and material by the resource persons, which they consider they have because time is freed up during lessons in other subjects.

The study discusses the essential need for organizational efforts to build a qualitative mathematical support. Based on specific needs and conditions, schools need - well in advance - to carefully consider competence development, role distribution and organization which best enable equivalent mathematics education for students with blindness.

Degree Project 15.0 ECTS credits. Special Needs Training-Visual Impairment (90 ECTS credits). Spring 2020. Supervisor: Wieland Wermke, Stockholm University.

## **The Results of the 2020 Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest**

The Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest is a worldwide initiative planned and sponsored by Onkyo Corporation and The Braille Mainichi, two Japanese firms actively engaged in the promotion of braille. Its European strand is run by the European Blind Union (EBU).

The 2020 edition of the essay contest received a total of 45 participants from 16 countries

The authors of the winning essays receive prizes made available by Onkyo and Braille Mainichi.

This year's First Prize winner is from Spain, **María Jesús Cañamares Muñoz**, who wrote a topical essay entitled '**Braille and Lockdown**'

The full list of prize winners is as follows:

### **Otsuki First Prize:**

Braille and Lockdown by María Jesús Cañamares Muñoz (Spain)

### **Excellent Works Prize:**

Senior Category: Viorel Serban, (Romania), The Moment That Changes The Course of Life

Junior Category: Amir Gumerov (Russia), Braille and Music

### **Fine Works Prize:**

Senior Category:

Anne Kochanek, (Germany), Greetings from Dots

Tone Mathiesen, (Norway), Braille in the Past and Present

Junior Category:

Andreas Rudisuli, (Switzerland), Is Braille Still Needed Today?

Seb Sloot, (Netherlands), Braille song

You can download and read the texts of all the prize-winning essays on the [dedicated Onkyo page](#).

EBU congratulates all the winners, and thanks all participants and their member countries for their involvement. We hope many of you will feel inspired to participate in the next edition of the Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest!

**Gary MAY**

[www.euroblind.org](http://www.euroblind.org)

## The EBU Podcast

In 2018 EBU decided to create a regular monthly podcast on technological accessibility, innovations and products. It is called the **EBU Access Cast**. This innovative podcast is entirely produced and created by and for blind and partially sighted people.

While of course concentrating on technology which can improve the everyday lives and access to goods and services for visually impaired people, the podcast also covers cultural innovations and gift ideas. The podcast team test devices for listeners, giving practical feedback and tips to assist with using the various gadgets they mention.

Interviews with technology producers and members of the EBU team are also included, and the podcast team visits trade fairs and events to make sure they keep you up-to-date with all the latest innovations, but also the problems you may encounter.

You can listen to the latest and all previous editions of the podcast on [the dedicated page](#), It is also possible to manually subscribe to the EBU Access Cast and listen to it with your favourite player of choice for the podcasts through [the RSS feed](#). The podcast team are always interested in feedback and relevant contributions, so, if you feel you have something to say, get in touch with them at the address below!

We urge all WBU organisations to share this as widely as possible with their members as it both fun, and a valuable service for many visually impaired people.

EBU Accesscast [Twitter](#) and [e-mail](#).



The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe

**European Blind Union**

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**An Invitation to join us at the virtual Habilitation VI UK  
conference on  
Wednesday 3rd March 2021**

# HabilitationVIUK

[www.habilitationviuk.org.uk](http://www.habilitationviuk.org.uk)

To our global colleagues

This year we have all faced a change in the way we work as a result of the global Coronavirus pandemic. The challenges this has brought to our work are both positive and negative. Habilitation Specialists and Orientation & Mobility Officers within the UK have been both creative and proactive in delivering services to children and young people with a visual impairment, both through 'virtual' learning or meetings with parents and children, and through socially distant learning. And trying to teach when wearing face masks – not always an easy task!

Habilitation VI UK normally holds a conference each year with a variety of speakers and delegates attending from all around the UK. Due to the pandemic, getting together is important now more than ever, so we are now organising a virtual conference on 3 March 2021.

Our conference theme is Finding Your Voice – the voices of the visually impaired young people and the voices of the professionals who work with them. Having an online conference gives us a unique opportunity to be joined by some of our colleagues overseas, and to learn a little about how they have overcome the challenges that this year has brought.

We are inviting habilitation and mobility professionals and the students they work with to record 5 minute films showcasing some of the amazing and creative ways you have worked together through the lockdowns, to continue to develop mobility and independence. And to say 'hello' to us all from your part of the world – whether it's Marrakesh, Melbourne, Mumbai, Miami or Milan! We really want to hear from you, to bring us altogether and to learn from each other's experiences, creativeness and determination to deliver the service we are all so passionate about. So, get your phones out, get together and get recording. Send your recording to us and we will upload it onto our conference platform where it will be shown to a global audience both live and available afterwards on the Habilitation VI UK website. There you will be able to access the whole conference for free; which we hope you will find useful for your continued professional development as well as having access to learning resource materials and meeting other teams from around the world.

If you are interested in sending us a video, please send it to us by Monday 21st December 2020 to the following email: [chair@habilitationviuk.org.uk](mailto:chair@habilitationviuk.org.uk)

We really hope to hear from you soon. From everyone at Habilitation VI UK, best wishes to you and stay safe. Angela Wood Chair of Habilitation VI UK



Habilitation VIUK

Treasurer: Suzy McDonald. [payment@habilitationviuk.org.uk](mailto:payment@habilitationviuk.org.uk)

Chair: Angela Wood. [chair@habilitationviuk.org.uk](mailto:chair@habilitationviuk.org.uk)

Secretary: Kate Reed. [secretary@habilitationviuk.org.uk](mailto:secretary@habilitationviuk.org.uk)

Postal financial correspondence to be sent to: Habviuk, c/o Priestley Smith School,

Beeches Road, Birmingham B42 2PY

**Invitation to the forthcoming 8th European Conference on  
Psychology and Visual Impairment,  
in Prague**

8TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON PSYCHOLOGY AND VISUAL  
IMPAIRMENT

**„REAL LIFE (IN) DEPENDENCE“**



Dear colleagues,

The last 7th ICEVI European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment, was held in 2018 in Thessaloniki, Greece. The last theme for the 2018 conference was 'Diversity in many ways'.

We are currently preparing a free continuation of common topics. The forthcoming Conference is called 'Real life (in)dependence' and will focus on supporting the visually impaired to achieve true independence in daily life.

This conference will be hosted by the Primary and Lower Secondary school for the visually impaired and Special Centrum for visual impaired children located in Prague and it is organized in cooperation with ENPVI, the European network for psychologists and related professions working in the field of Visual Impairment.

ICEVI-Europe together with the national organization therefore warmly invite you to join the 8 th ICEVI European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment in Prague, 1st – 2nd July, 2021.

Conference Committee

Markéta Skalická, ICEVI EUROPE, national representative

Martina Malotova, member of the organizational team

Anna Jilkova, member of the organizational team

Beáta Prónay, Board Member of ICEVI-Europe

“I would like to bring this conference to your attention, as it is a great opportunity for professionals in the field of visual impairment to share their knowledge and expertise, present their research, and exchange best practices. You are cordially invited to attend the 8th ECPVI in the beautiful city of Prague!” -- Hans Welling, President of ICEVI-Europe

1 TITLE AND THEME OF THE CONFERENCE

(In) dependence in the life of people with visual impairment

A major concern in leading a life with visual impairment is the issue of (in)dependence. What does it mean to be free and independent? This is the key question for our conference in Prague. How best to help blind and visual impaired people on their way throughout their life? How do psychologists, special educators, medics, visual therapists, and others help solve the problems faced by individuals with VI and their families and how can they maintain cooperation across the different specializations? What does independence mean? Is it a universal, or subjective idea? Can we evaluate it, or should we evaluate it?

These are just a few examples of themes that we can discuss, explore and present in our workshops, presentations, and discussion panels. During the conference we want to monitor assumptions about the skills that specialist need to have for their professional work, because it is important for our clients, patients, families of clients and everyone who is working with blind or impaired people. We warmly recommend you to participate in this conference because it is a great opportunity to exchange knowledge, experiences and skills with colleagues.

## 2 DATES AND PROGRAM

The preliminary conference program

Wednesday 30 June 2021

8 p.m : Informal meeting at Primary and Low Secondary school for children with visual impairment in Prague 2, nám Míru 19

<https://www.google.com/maps?ll=50.074927,14.435172&z=14&t=m&hl=cs&gl=US&mapclient=embed&daddr=Náměst%C3%AD+M%C3%ADru+19+120+00+Vinohrady@50.0749214,14.4351151>

Thursday 1 July 2021

9:00 a.m -9:30 a.m -Registration – Registration desk will be in Hotel Krystal Hall on the ground floor of hotel.

9:30 a.m -11:15 a.m – Welcome Speeches, Keynote Speeches and Presentations

11:15 a.m -12:00 a.m - Coffee break and Posters

12:00 a.m -13:00 p.m -Presentations

13:00 p.m - 14:20 p.m -Lunch (open coffee break)

14:20 p.m -16:40 p.m – Presentations and Poster presentation

16:40 p.m – Closing of Day 1

20:00 p.m – Dinner with cultural program

Friday 2 July 2021

9:00 a.m - 9:30 a.m - Registration

9:30 a.m- 11:00 a.m – Keynote Speeches and Presentations

11:10 a.m – 11:30 a.m - Coffee breaks and Posters

11:30 a.m- 12:30 p.m – Presentations

12:30 a.m. -13:00 p.m thanks giving and Conference closing

13:00 p.m – 14:00 p.m Light lunch/ snacks, open coffe break

### 3 HOMEPAGE

Has opened in 2020 on the website of the host organization <https://www.visionprague2020.cz>

### 4 VENUE

HOTEL KRYSTAL, or Primary and Low secondary school for pupils with visual impairments – auditorium

162 00 Prague 6 - Veleslavín, José Martího 2/407

[www.hotel-krystal.com](http://www.hotel-krystal.com)

Reception:

+420 220 563 411, [kryst@centrum-krystal.cz](mailto:kryst@centrum-krystal.cz)

+420 220563411 - - line: 3307,3308

[rezervace@centrum-krystal.cz](mailto:rezervace@centrum-krystal.cz)

We don't provide accommodation but we can help with advice and guidance.

### 5 CONFERENCE TARGET GROUP

Professionals from the therapeuticals, psychologicals, education, and other fields for those with visual impairments across all ages.

### 6 EXHIBITIONS

The organizers welcome approaches from exhibitors of Assistive devices and Access technologies and other to present at the conference.

The organizers welcome approaches from exhibitors of Motor Control and Sport Activities

The organizers welcome approaches from exhibitors of Cortical Visual Impairment rehabilitation

The organizers welcome approaches from exhibitor of Psychology supports, approaches, interventions,

The organizers welcome approaches from exhibitor of Psychology and Neuropsychology methods and tools

Poster presentations are most welcome.

### 7 ABSTRACTS

Abstracts for oral presentation, posters, workshops and symposia are welcome according to the conference theme.

Abstract submission is opened.

Deadline for abstract submission is 30 th of April 2021

## 8 REGISTRATION

The registration is opened on the conference website at <https://www.visionprague2020.cz/index.php/cs/konference/>

## 9 PROCEEDINGS

Conference presentations/papers – proceedings – will be available on <https://www.visionprague2020.cz/index.php/cs/konference/> and on the ICEVI-Europe website after the conference.

Further information you will find on the conference website at <https://www.visionprague2020.cz/index.php/cs/konference/> and at [ICEVI-Europe website](#)

## 10 FUTURE OF THE PROFESSIONAL INTEREST GROUP, TEACHING AND TEACHER TRAINING

For further information and registration, see the [website of ICEVI-Europe](#).



With best wishes from Martina Malotova and Conference organization team!

## **Announcement: Publication of new books relating to the education of children with vision impairment**

Two new books have been published in the UK this year relating to the education of children with vision impairment. The first is by Fiona Broadley, an experienced teacher of independence and mobility skills to children and young people. The book addresses the main problem areas in developing independence skills for babies and young visually impaired children and their families, by providing simple explanations of skills and offering strategies and techniques to support progression onto the next stage.

<https://www.routledge.com/Supporting-Life-Skills-for-Young-Children-with-Vision-Impairment-and-Other/Broadley/p/book/9780367435783>

The second book is a second edition of 'Learning through Touch' by Mike McLinden, Liz Hodges and Steve McCall from VICTAR .and is written for for practitioners who support learners with multiple disabilities and vision impairment. The text explores the key role that touch plays in the education of these learners and provides practical advice about how to develop the skills through touch that they will need to become 'active agents' in their own development.

<https://www.routledge.com/Learning-through-Touch-Supporting-Learners-with-Multiple-Disabilities-and/Mclinden-Mccall-Hodges/p/book/9780367203009>