

ICEVI European Newsletter

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Message from the Board

Dear members of ICEVI-Europe,

There have been quite a few activities and developments within ICEVI-Europe that have taken place since our last board meeting in Bordeaux, France.

First, we would like to inform you that we have created a second option of payment for your membership contribution via the online PayPal system, available on our website. This will serve as a solution by way of eliminating the extra bank charges for transferring membership contributions from members in certain countries outside of the EU, as it is in the case of the East European Countries.

ICEVI-Europe was invited to participate in an assembly of committees on the issues of international cooperation and solidarity in the education of people with disabilities. There was a kick off meeting organized by the BEYAZAY Association in Turkey. The Beyazay Association of Turkey is a non-profit organization with its 69 local branches and 4 branches abroad. Beyazay has been carrying out many projects on the education of people with disabilities in Turkey since 2007. "Education Enables" is one such project that has been for the last 3 years under the aegis of the First Lady of the Turkish Republic. During this meeting, in which ICEVI-Europe participated and gave an extended presentation of its mission, aims and goals, it was mentioned that Beyazay are planning to apply this project at an international level under the name of UNESCO to reach people with disability around the world and help them to get a better education in schools. The project is not only for students with disabilities but also for their families, for students without disability and for teachers.

ICEVI-EUROPE was also invited to participate in the Board Meeting of the EUROPEAN BLIND UNION which was held in Cyprus on June 6th – 8th 2014. The Past President of ICEVI Europe, Hans Welling, our Vice-President, Klaus Hoem and I, had prepared and presented a Memorandum of Understanding based on common areas and topics that the two organisations can actively work on together to achieve mutual benefits. Pending amendments by both organisations, the MOU will be finalised at the upcoming Board Meeting of ICEVI-Europe in Madrid, Spain.

In the context of continuing to fulfill its mission - promoting education and rehabilitation opportunities for people with visual impairment throughout Europe by sharing, networking, cooperating, and advocating –ICEVI-Europe is thrilled to announce two major conferences:

The 5th European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment (ECPVI 2014) will take place in Bratislava – Slovakia at the Mercure Bratislava Centrum Hotel on the 20th – 21st November 2014.

The ECPVI 2014 Conference is designed for researchers, psychologists, health, social care and education professionals that have an interest in visual impairment. For further information regarding registration procedures, forms and important dates, you are welcomed to visit the conference website at <http://www.unss.sk/ecpvi/>.

Also, the first International Conference on Enabling Access for Persons with Visual Impairment (ICEAPVI-2015) will be held in Athens, Greece, between February 12th - 14th, 2015 at the Eugenides Foundation, which generously sponsored the venue. This event is co-organised by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Speech and Accessibility Laboratory, Department of Informatics and Telecommunications) and the International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment-Europe (ICEVI-Europe).

As preparations for a successful conference are underway, we are very excited that this conference will not only serve as a platform where professionals and practitioners throughout Europe can exchange knowledge and best practice and share experiences, but also it will promote and establish a network for enabling access for persons with visual impairment.

For further information regarding registration procedures and important dates, you are welcome to visit the ICEAPVI-2015 website at <http://access.uoa.gr/ICEAPVI-2015/>.

Please make a note of these dates in your calendar and join us for these important events. **We look forward to meeting you in Bratislava, Slovakia and in Athens, Greece!**

*On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe,
Betty Leotsakou, President*



Does inclusion of visually impaired students work? What are the pitfalls of inclusion?

Introduction

Over the last 30 years, many European countries have made a tremendous shift in their educational approach with regard to visually impaired students. In this process, the focus has moved from special schools towards inclusive education in mainstream schools.

Denmark has a reputation of being a country where inclusion is successful, but over the past ten years, I have often been asked whether this is really the case. Is inclusion a good approach for visually impaired students?

Several parameters can be used to investigate or evaluate the outcome for visually im- paired students in mainstream education. But one essential question beyond the educa- tional outcomes per se is the subsequent position of the visually impaired person in the labour market.

The important evaluation question therefore, is, what is the percentage of visually impaired students...

- who get similar grades to fully sighted peers?
- who receive a full graduation diploma at the end of 9 or 10 years of schooling?
- who complete a higher (tertiary) education programme?
- who complete a qualifying or vocational education programme?
- who find gainful employment that lets them support themselves?

A recent research project (see note 1) studied the outcomes of the educational and rehabilitation ef- forts in Denmark over the last 40 years. The outcome, briefly put, is very disappointing. It would be easy to say that this is due to inclusive education, since that has been the gen- eral educational approach during the period in the study, but there is no indication that the visually impaired students would have been better off in special schools.

Note 1: SFI – The Danish National Centre for Social Research 2010. Based on responses from 1,364 members of the Danish Association of the Blind. Compiled and coupled with information from the Ministry of Social Wel- fare, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment.

The research project simply found that the services available to visually impaired people have failed in the above-mentioned aspects, and that the present trend is continuing in the wrong direction. At the same time, it should be mentioned that the Danish authorities have never spent as much money on services for people with a visual impairment. Thus, the poor outcome has nothing to do with cuts. The only explanation I can come up with is that we are not managing the inclusive and rehabilitation services in the right way.

What, then, is the right way? I will conclude this paper with a general European overview of essential themes to specify how these services should be managed to achieve better results than we have been achieving in Denmark over the last 40 years.

The structure of this paper

Part one offers a summary of the research project on educational outcomes for visually impaired students and the position of visually impaired persons in the Danish labour market.

Part two part will address the situation of visually impaired adolescents in inclusive settings with an emphasis on psycho-social factors. To me, this is the key factor in understanding subsequent difficulties.

In part three, I will discuss the impact of psycho-social conditions later in life by referring to a job rehabilitation project for visually impaired people who are unemployed.

In part four, I will outline how inclusive education and rehabilitation services should be structured and organised, and what content is essential to achieve a successful result. I will do that by referring to experiences in a number of European countries.

Hopefully, this will offer the reader insights into the conditions and parameters of inclusive processes.

Part 1 Barriers to inclusion

It may come as a surprise to many that in many ways, the situation for visually impaired people in Danish society is moving in the wrong direction. As a group, visually impaired people encounter many barriers and difficulties in society. A visual impairment may isolate the person, make it difficult to get a degree and can lead to unemployment. Research shows that it is not the visual impairment in itself that causes the problem; rather, it is the lack of education and issues with low self-esteem that make it difficult for people with a visual impairment to find employment. In the 1990s and 2000s, many legislative initiatives and projects aimed at offering special-needs support were launched, but with little effect.

It is difficult to offer one single explanation for this deplorable situation. One important issue is pervasive changes in society and in demands on workers, which have occurred very quickly, but on the other hand, it is apparent that our services have failed to adjust to match these transformations.

In age, the visually impaired respondents in the research project span from 70 to 30 years (see note 2). Inclusion – or integration, as it was known then – was officially introduced in 1980. Thus, the generation of people born in the 1960s was the first to encounter inclusive education. The research project does not state any direct link between inclusion and the deplorable Danish outcome; it simply shows that the negative development that began for the generation born in the 1950s, now between 50 and 59 years old, has continued

and even gained strength, and it is now impacting the generation born in the 1970s, who are currently aged 30-39.

Note 2: The generations who were born in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s, respectively. The generation who was born in the 1980s was included because they are expected to have completed their education.

What are the figures?

Table 1: the percentage of visually impaired people who complete a vocational education programme.

68-82%	Born in the 1940s
64-78%	Born in the 1950s
58-72%	Born in the 1960s
48-68%	Born in the 1970s

The reason for the big differences between the generations stems from differences in development for people who are partially sighted and those who are blind. There are also differences between men and women. Interestingly, for the generation born in the 1940s, more blind men than fully sighted women completed a vocational education programme. The group with the biggest drop in percentage is partially sighted men.

Table 2: the percentage of visually impaired people who complete a qualifying education programme (see note 3).

56-69%	Born in the 1940s
52-61%	Born in the 1950s
42-48%	Born in the 1960s
27-29%	Born in the 1970s

Note 3: This covers a broad spectrum of education, including specific programmes such as massage therapists, piano tuners and telemarketing workers.

Table 3: the percentage of visually impaired people who complete a tertiary programme.

42-68%	Born in the 1940s
42-64%	Born in the 1950s
39-55%	Born in the 1960s
26-30%	Born in the 1970s

In this regard, blind women do better than blind men. For people born in the 1940s, 68% of the women got a further education, compared with only 42% of the men. The biggest drop is for partially sighted men: from 62% to 26%.

The overall analysis shows that the oldest generation of visually impaired people have almost the same education rates as fully sighted people. The

picture has since changed dramatically, so that the share of visually impaired persons in the youngest generation included in the research project who complete an education programme has dropped to one third of share for fully sighted people. This is a big setback for blind and partially sighted people situation in the field of education. This change has occurred in the matter of just a few decades, and there is no indication of change in that trend in Denmark. On the contrary. A structural change in the organisation of services from 2007 has put even greater pressure on visually impaired people.

The situation in the labour market

Most visually impaired adults rely on a pension or welfare benefits. This despite the fact that many of them would be quite able to work. Whether they feel that they are able to work is a question that I shall return to. The 20% who say that they would like to work are especially those who have previous work experiences, and those who have a tertiary degree. Being in a relationship also increases the likelihood of wanting a job. Thus, a person who has no education and no previous work experience and who lives alone is less likely to pursue a job.

The research project found that 37% or less of the visually impaired are employed. But this number depends on the definition of employment. This number includes people in supported workplaces and similar projects. Using the definition of being fully self-supporting, the actual percentage is 15%.

That leaves Denmark with the highest unemployment rate for people with visually impaired in Europe, 85%.

There are of course several reasons for this. Resistance and ignorance among employers is one possible explanation, but often workplaces are in fact very positive once they learn about the possibilities for support and assistive solutions. A major obstacle is so-called mental barriers. These will be addressed when I discuss the situation in the inclusive education system (part 2) and when I refer to the rehabilitation project from Aarhus (part 3).

Part 2 Visually impaired children – inclusion or isolation?

This part of the research project is based on interviews with 13 blind children between the ages of 10 to 15 years. Their parents were also interviewed.

The report paints a very worrying picture of visually impaired teenagers. Today, all visually impaired students without additional disabilities are included in mainstream education. This gives them the ambition of living on par with their fully sighted peers, but it does not afford them the conditions they need to live a fully integrated life. If they were to enter society for real, they would have to learn about social interactions and gain insight into themselves and their visual impairment. Even if this process of realisation may sometimes be hard and painful. The adults (see note 4) fail in this respect. They are more concerned about the child's wellbeing here and now. They want to provide a good childhood and protect the children and adolescents from painful experiences. The adults are successful in the here-and-now; but for the child,

the cost is an inadequate development of the human resources that are so important later in life. Especially in the labour market.

Note 4: This includes parents, teachers and other professionals.

Modern childhood sociology underlines relationships with peers as the most important factor in the child’s identity development. But the research report shows that the gap between the visually impaired child and the peer group expands as the child becomes a teenager.

The visually impaired children in the research project state that they are doing well in school, but they have a feeling that they are not met with the same demands or challenges as their peers. One of the general statements from parents is that they have an “extremely close” relationship with their child. In this regard they differ from parents of fully sighted children who typically state that their relationship is “close”.

Some numbers about the children’s and teens’ social life.

Receive visits from a friend:	Visually impaired	Fully sighted
5 times a week	0	9
2-4 times a week	8	49
1 time a week	15	22
A few times a month	23	14
More rarely or never	54	7
Visit a friend:	Visually impaired	Fully sighted
5 times a week	0	7
2-4 times a week	8	55
1 time a week	8	12
A few times a month	23	12
More rarely or never	62	5

About the academic level at school

Research has shown the mainstream schools have difficulties in providing academic skills that equals the level of fully seeing students. Many of the visually impaired students don’t have satisfying academic competences when they leave school. Their grades are lower and many of the visually impaired students leave the ground school after 9 or 10 years without a complete certificate of graduation. In this way half of the group of visually impaired students is excluded from entering gymnasium or vocational school.

The impact on a personal level

Generally, the visually impaired students are satisfied with their school. Some factors are outlined as difficult. Many of the respondents feel that they

are regarded as weak or “special”, and that this stigma prevents them from interacting fully with their peer group. The students state that they are often placed in atypical educational and social situations because of their visual impairment. In this sense, paradoxically, the child appears to view the support system (see note 5) as stigmatising and as an obstacle to social interaction rather than an aid to development.

Note 5: The support person, visiting consultant/teacher and technical aids.

Part 3 How the psycho-social implications hinder access to the labour market

As mentioned earlier, the unemployment rate of visually impaired people is extremely high in Denmark. This has of course led to several government-funded projects to ease this group’s access to the labour market.

One of these projects, “A foothold in the labour market”, submitted its final report in May 2011. The project was carried out in a collaboration that involved the Danish Association of the Blind, the Ministry of Employment and Marselisborg Research Centre in Aarhus.

In 2008, the Danish Association of the Blind conducted an employment study where the members were asked if they wanted to participate in this project, which might help them find a job. 360 visually impaired persons responded: They would like participate; they wanted a job. After two information meetings in Aarhus and Copenhagen, 99 visually impaired persons signed up. 56 persons completed the whole course, while 45 participants left during the project period.

Of the 56 persons who went all the way, 37 had found a job or embarked on an education programme by the end of the project. The report does not specify how many were in each of these groups.

To me, it is interesting to understand why less than 10% of those who stated that they wanted a job actually managed to find one. Why did more than 90% quit during the time from their first response to the end of the project? Many of those who chose not to sign up or who dropped out along the way were asked this question. The typical reply was that they had “changed their minds”.

The project managers conclude that visually impaired people “turned out to be a difficult group to help.”

Most of the explanations that were offered by the group of “drop-outs” had to do with anxiety and worrying. They had very low self-esteem and were insecure with regard to their own abilities. They foresaw all sorts of difficulties, but most of all, it was difficult for them to maintain their motivation.

Motivation is a psychological theme that is closely related to identity and self-image – precisely the mental competencies that we discussed as lacking in part 2 of this paper. When the relationships or interactions with the peer group

are weak we often find a specific identity constellation, which is characterised by an inadequate understanding of one's own competencies, limited social skills and social understanding and difficulties in articulating realistic goals that reflect one's needs and wishes.

This renders the visually impaired person uncertain and fearful, and understandably, the professional finds it difficult to help the person.

From this point of view, it is obvious why inclusion does not work in Denmark. Inclusion in Denmark is not a failure; it simply fails to produce the desired outcome: full participation in society. We are not doing it the right way.

Part 4 What is the right way?

In my work on the board of ICEVI-Europe (see note 6) , we have often talked about inclusive education. We have looked into the different situations in different countries, including unemployment rates.

Note 6: International Council for Education and Re/habilitation of People with Visual Impairment. <http://www.icevi-europe.org>

We have identified three key areas, which of course overlap.

1. The qualifications of the involved professionals

This includes frontline classroom teachers, consultants, rehabilitation workers and social workers.

Specifically, these professionals need knowledge in the following areas:

- Compensatory methods or educational approaches that work for visually impaired people.
- Competence in managing inclusive methods.
- Competence in working with relationships; for instance the families' behaviour, the support teacher's role in the classroom, the attitude of the parents of the other children in the class, and the general public's interaction with the visually impaired person.

These qualifications should be mandatory. In some countries (see note 7) the law specifies mandatory teacher qualifications and a specific curriculum.

In Denmark we have absolutely no national requirements or regulations in these areas.

Note 7: The UK and Norway.

2. The organisation of services

This concerns the issue about the number of support organisations or institutions; the way their responsibilities are outlined or how their tasks are described, and the way they cooperate. These matters are essential to the outcome of the services.

These services include early intervention, teachers of the visually impaired, special schools or centres, production of educational materials, national or local support centres, vocational schools and universities, jobcentres, in-house training, rehabilitation agencies, technical compensation

in the workplace, and associations of the visually impaired. These services may be labelled and organised differently in different countries.

But it has become clear to us that if there are too many independent organisations that do not cooperate closely, the outcome for the visually impaired recipients of these services is poor. On the other hand, a unified system (see note 8) with clear responsibilities produces much better results (see note 9).

The Danish system consists of several services on a national, regional and municipal level. There is no formal cooperation or governmental regulation; instead there is a competitive culture where everybody is struggling to get "customers" to level the budget.

Note 8: Like ONCE in Spain where the unemployment rate of the visually impaired is 20%. This is close to rest of Spain.

Note 9: In The Netherlands they have just merged several organisations into one, "VISIO".

3. The funding of services

The central question is, "Who foots the bill?" Of course, all expenses are somehow covered by public funds in Denmark; no visually impaired student has to pay extra because of their impairment. In Denmark, we often say, for example, that technical aids are free of cost for the user. That is true, but there may be a cost in terms of inclusion.

I remember visiting a school where a blind boy in the 7th grade needed a new computer for use in the classroom. Due to a political budgeting decision, all the educational resources in that specific municipality were transferred to the local schools according to the number of students at the school. In the school that I visited, no additional resources were allocated for this visually impaired boy, so the cost for the new computer had to be taken out of the ordinary budget. The only place where the headmaster could find this rather large amount of money was in the budget for extra-curricular activities. The annual field trip for the class was cancelled, and the boy had his computer. But he was not very popular afterwards.

This story illustrates that if a school, a vocational training centre or a university has to cover extra costs out of the ordinary budget to provide special services such as technical aids, special teacher training or special lighting in the classroom, the consequences for inclusion are disastrous.

As I said earlier: Everything is paid for with public funds. But if a teacher or a parent feels that the other students or the school is losing money due to the inclusion of a student with an impairment, or if the blind student's literacy teacher needs a braille course but has to compete with the math teachers who have their own legitimate training needs, then things are bound to go wrong.

It is important that a country has centralised resources that are earmarked for visually impaired students. This includes resources for assistive aids, for staff and teacher training, for professional support and for education

materials. If we want to offer inclusive education it is essential, that the visually impaired student is never seen as an additional financial burden.

In Denmark, there is a strong political tendency to minimise or reduce national or regional resources. The mantra is that “decisions are best taken at the local level”, meaning that the headmaster is in the best position to decide whether the roof needs repair or the teachers need additional training. That may be true, but it is not helping the inclusion of visually impaired students.

Summary

From my point of view, we are practically taking all the wrong turns in the way we manage inclusive education in Denmark. It does not make sense to say that inclusive education is wrong or ineffective in itself. Inclusive education is the right way to educate visually impaired students. But we have to do it the right way and not look at it as a way to save money. In many cases, creating truly inclusive education is more expensive than setting up special schools.

When I look at European countries I see a direct relationship between how a country manages the three organisational issues and the unemployment rate of visually impaired people in that country.

The important issue is to choose the right model of inclusion.

Peter Rodney, MA (Applied Psychology)

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- Lecturer of Psychology at the Danish University of Education, Dept. of Special Education.
- Vice chair of ICEVI-Europe.
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Music, a path to Social Integration

INTRODUCTION

"According to MR. Miguel Angel Torralba Jordan, University of Barcelona, our society, our own life style, generates a full set of difficulties between all of the persons who are forming something that, in a kind of ideal way of thinking, we call community. The inclusion of disabled people in each and every situation of social life has nowadays become a constant value in our days. In lots of countries around the world, legislation has been passed with the objective of guaranteeing the same opportunities for everybody to be able to participate in social life, especially emphasising the situation of disabled people."

Integration is always started in school and our objective, integration, which there's no doubt has a great meaning for us, must be the means to obtain cooperation, solidarity, equality of opportunity, understanding... All of these words give us a great content in which we have to work, for us to be able to achieve the said objective.

Integration, for example, and in this case, the integration of students with visual impairment, is not only made by placing them in the same classroom with the rest of their classmates, but this process must be an active compromise in which we must be conscious that it must be integrating as well as appropriate for the student with these characteristics. In the integration process that follows a child with visual impairment, it is important to be conscious that we must be very patient and persevere.

As an example that inclusion can be achieved through different activities, we have the case, in the Principality of Andorra, of a student who has integrated into society through music, just as well as his partners and neighbours did.

A CASE IN ANDORRA

Let us focus on a blind student integrated in one of the high schools in the Principality of Andorra. This small country offers an extensive service, which depends on the "Nuestra Señora de Meritxell's school, with visiting specialist professionals, who are familiar with every educational system (French system, Spanish system (MEC) and Andorran system) offering the support and resources which are necessary for students who are disabled. In this case the blind student, who is also followed by the CRE ONCE Barcelona, has received and continues to receive the basic educational resources necessary for him to be able to have a good social and learning development.

He started his music classes when he was nine. The instrument that he chose to learn at that time was the piano. When regular school finished, he went to music school three afternoons per week. He used to go once a month to the CRE ONCE of Barcelona where he pursued different educational activities, one of those being music, and he joined a group of students with similar disabilities from other schools in Catalonia. Now he is about to be

twenty years old, he plays the piano, the guitar and the bass guitar. This activity has permitted him to be introduced to the musical world of Andorra and to be a part of a music band which gave him enough tools to help him develop as a person as well as participating in lots of activities in and out of the high school, to meet people and to perform as a part of other bands.

They meet every weekend to rehearse their songs in their practice room. This activity helps him to interact with other people who are external to his group of schoolmates from the last course before attending university, thus allowing him to interact with people beyond his school friends, and undoubtedly helping him lead a normal life unhindered by his disability.

The band that they have formed is still young, and they have only participated in one performance but, apart from the group's performance, he performs in an individual way. He sometimes plays the guitar solo in some pubs in Andorra on Saturday nights. He also performs in every festival which is organised by ONCE of Barcelona in some places in Catalonia, like the "Música a les Mans" festival.

CONCLUSION

Music has been in this case and can be in others, a path to social integration just as a person with no disability, and we must emphasise the fact that having a visual impairment must not prevent a person from getting in contact with the rest of the world, by forming relationships with other people, doing other activities and overcoming the disability in a normal way, and without any accident.

We can affirm that music can be a path to social integration, we would like to encourage the parents of children who are visually impaired to introduce them to this world when they are young, for them to be able to fully develop as active citizens in a not so responsive society, which has to learn that thanks to diversity we can be better people, and avoid the person with a disability being side stepped, abandoned and discriminated against by the fact of having a disability.

Mariona Carbonell Del Castillo, pedagogue.



New open, adaptable and innovative learning and working environment

ONERVA, Center for Learning and Consulting is a nationwide state-subsidised service centre offering support in learning and school attendance, particularly when difficulties are related to vision, hearing, language and interaction. Onerva Mäki Special School operates in connection with Onerva Centre for Learning and Consulting. All actions by Onerva Centre are at the moment run at four different premises.

The new centre including the special school and support services for inclusive education is supposed to be completed by January 2016. One of the aims in this building project is to create a new kind of learning and working environment that enables functionality, activeness and the application of new technology.

"You can't do anything sitting at those old desks"

Dynamic multipurpose learning spaces

New space arrangements and new ways to use spaces have been created for the learning and working premises, in compliance with modern ideas on learning. Based on these aims, some spaces that have traditionally not been utilised in teaching are harnessed for educational use. Examples of this are the stairs of learning, which offer the opportunity to functionally practise the key skills of learning: reading, calculation and perception of time. We hope that the building will be a model for a new way to construct schools – taking into account pupils' special needs both within the building and in its surroundings. The integration and presence of new technology in daily school life supports pupils' networking with peer groups and promotes the utilisation of information networks in teaching.

The new building is optimal for action-based learning because its premises and furniture can be adapted to different purposes. In addition, the target of the project is to utilise the premises efficiently, making the common spaces available for the various functions, in various ways, from morning to evening. Restaurant Omppu (Finnish for apple) is the heart of the entire building and, at the same time, a meeting place. Both staff and pupils can work together with others in the open working area and, for example, with a peer in the intensive working area, or alone in the silent working area. These different working areas are called the park, fountain and den, adapting Julianna Nevari's learning space concept. In compliance with the space concept, the project is called 'Oivallus' (Finnish for 'insight').

Accessibility and multi-sensory impact in the learning environment

The design process has been based on pupils' needs. Accessibility refers to the suitability of the premises for everyone, irrespective of the nature of support needed. The spaces and routes are clear, barrier-free and safe, and

the perception of space is facilitated by limiting and outlining different spaces with contrasts. Good acoustics are an important factor that promotes learning. The spaces can also be lit in various ways, which is important from the viewpoint of vision as well as of concentration.

*Further information of the project
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5th European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment (ECPVI 2014)



When?

20th – 21st November 2014 (Thursday – Friday)

Where?

Bratislava – Slovakia - Mercure Bratislava Centrum hotel
www.mercure.com/gb/home/index.shtml

Who?

- Are you working with people with visual impairment?
- Are you a researcher conducting research in the area of visual impairment?
- Are you a teacher who wishes to get a deeper insight into the psychology of visual impairment?
- Are you a professional working on interesting topics that you think might be interesting to share with others?

The ECPVI conference is designed for researchers, psychologists, health, social care and education professionals that have an interest in visual impairment.

How?

To be able to participate on the conference it is necessary to fill in the registration form by 31st of August 2014. You are free to submit also your abstract; you can find all relevant information concerning registration under the following link:

<http://www.unss.sk/ecpvi/>

Good-to-know details:

- Registration fee: 80 Eur (includes: conference materials, coffee break, 2x lunch and 1x dinner)
- Registration & abstracts submission deadline: 31th August 2014
- For further information consult the conference web:
<http://www.unss.sk/ecpvi/>
- For any questions contact the conference team here: ecpvi@unss.sk

Partners



Photogallery - 4th ECPVI conference, Heidelberg



*Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union,
Bratislava, Slovakia*

Conference *Challenges in Visual Rehabilitation*

9 – 10 October 2014

In 2014, the Belgian low vision rehabilitation centres celebrate the 10th anniversary of the convention with the government (recognition protocol).

The Rehabilitation Centre "De Markgrave", located in Antwerpen, will organise a national conference, with international speakers, for ophthalmologists and professionals in the field. The congress will take place on October 9th and 10th, 2014 in Antwerpen.

The themes will be low vision today and in the future, and the compensation techniques that people with low vision can acquire by training.

Within the theme of compensation techniques we want treat both viewing strategies and mental imagery through their applications in daily life activities, like mobility, computer use, and other activities.

We are proud to offer you a high quality program.

Thursday, October 9th

INTRODUCTION

- Principles of modern Low Vision, state of the art, Prof. Samuel Markowitz (Canada)
- Visual desire and confidence in low vision children, Mr. Krister Inde, low vision, specialist, (Sweden)
- Children and adolescents with visual impairment, Dr. Béatrice Le Bail (France)

VISUAL STRATEGIES

- Principles of viewing strategies? Prof. Samuel Markowitz
- Principles of Eccentric Viewing, Mr. Krister Inde
- Visual strategies: orthoptic requirements, training, successes and failures, Mrs. Céline Sonnet, and Mrs. Christiane Hervault (France)
- Steady Eye Movement, Mr. Nicolas Collins (GB)
- Compensatory training of Hemianopsia, Mr. Nico Oskam (Netherlands)

Friday, October, 10th

MENTAL IMAGERY

- Mental imagery: introduction, Mrs. Ann Moinet (Belgium)
- Mental imagery of the partially sighted child, Mrs. Laurence Orveillon (France)
- Mental imagery of the blind child, Mrs. Ans Withagen (The Netherlands)
- Application in mobility training Mrs. Stéphanie Cassel (Belgium)
- Echolocalisation, Prof. Ir. Herbert Peremans (Belgium)

- Mindmapping of blind children, Mrs. Catherine Vanderbeken (Belgium)
 - Application in use of computers, Dr. Thea Van der Geest (The Netherlands)
 - The economic benefit from Low Vision Rehabilitation, Prof Samuel Markovitz
 - Conclusion
 - Common statements of the Visual Rehabilitation Centres of Flanders
- Please find the full program details, the practical information and registration form on:

- *English:* www.lowvision2014demarkgrave.be/en
- *Français:* www.lowvision2014demarkgrave.be/fr
- *Nederlands:* www.lowvision2014demarkgrave.be/nl

vzw De Markgrave - samenwerkende voorzieningen voor blinden en slechtzienden

Markgravelei 20-22, 2018 Antwerpe

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Web: www.demarkgrave.be

Let Me Play

Let me Play - DVD to support parents with blind and partially sighted children

“Let Me Play” is a DVD that was produced in a project developed collaboratively between the Scottish Sensory Centre, The Royal Blind School, Edinburgh and RNIB Scotland as well as individuals and people involved in working with visually impaired children from local authorities in Scotland. This 40 minute DVD has been produced to help parents to engage, stimulate and nurture their child using positive play techniques. “Let Me Play” shows children at different stages of development engaged in play activities encouraging visual tracking, communication and physical skills. We hope that this will be a useful resource offering exciting possibilities for learning, not only for parents but for a range of professional practitioners across the early years sector. Specialist teachers of the visually impaired are being encouraged to use the DVD with families.



The DVD will be made available free of charge to all families of children aged five and under living with sight loss in Scotland. The videos are also available on each of the organisations' websites:

- www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/earlyyears/letmeplay/home.html
- www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-professionals-nb-magazine-health-professionals-nb-news/dvd-support-parents
- www.royalblind.org/education/information-resources/for-parents/let-me-play-dvd

The DVD was launched on Wednesday, 28th May 2014 at an event hosted in Edinburgh by Stuart McMillan, MSP.

All three organisations involved in the production of this resource, support the Scottish Government's values and principles of 'Getting it Right for Every Child' and promote a positive ethos that reflects the components of a Curriculum for Excellence.

www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk

Visual impairment and autism guidance material

This material was developed by the Visual Impairment and Autism Project, which ran from September 2008 to March 2011.¹ The guidance material was first made available in the Resource Pack which was published as a CD-ROM by RNIB in May 2011. This sold out at the end of 2012. It was then posted on the RNIB website, where it was freely available. However, earlier this year, it was removed from the website. The reason for this is that the RNIB website is under-going a major revision. Some parts of the website went live several months ago, and it now looks very different. But work remains to be completed on other parts of the site. One of these is the guidance material for practitioners working with children and young people who have visual impairment and autism.

The intention is to make the material available again in the autumn of this year. I am involved in the project to return the material to the RNIB website and am taking the opportunity to make some corrections and revisions and to add some new material. So, when it does return, it will be more up-to-date and more comprehensive.

For details of the Project, visit

<http://ianpbell.com/visual-impairment-autism/>

Braille On- Line Training (BLOT) Programme

This is an update on the RNIB-led initiative to develop an online training programme for qualified teachers of the visually impaired about how to teach literacy through braille to children and young people.

The learning materials for the programme are almost complete and video material featuring interviews with children and teachers has been collected from schools and services across England and is being edited for inclusion in

the programme. Teachers are being recruited for the pilot version of the programme that will be run between November 2014 and February 2015. After evaluation a final version of the programme will be launched on 2015 and made available to VI teachers and VI teachers in training across the UK.

ROMAN BRVAR – a teacher you don't often meet 1950 – 2014

Death is cruel and ruthless, does not choose and always comes too soon.

Roman Brvar – our colleague, a teacher of geography and history, a teacher at the Institute for blind and partially sighted (<http://www.zssm-lj.si/>) in Ljubljana and a man of inexhaustible energy.

It was often said: »Roman can handle everything!«
He was strong, cooperative, full of new ideas, everything he was doing, he really did it with his heart and brain – everyone wanted to be like him.
We knew there was a lot of denial – even in his private life, but despite this he continued his work, always smiling and claiming: »I do this for blind and partially sighted children at our Institute. They deserve the best!«.

Roman Brvar was born in 1950. He was partially sighted himself and also a student at the Institute for blind and partially sighted students. Later on he finished Geography and History studies at the University of Ljubljana and was employed at the Institute for blind and partially sighted. He was a teacher for 26 years!

In this time he got almost all possible prizes and awards for his professional and educational work and for his innovations in didactics materials (<http://582.gvs.arnes.si/wordpress/pripomocki/>).

In 2004 he retired, but kept going on with his work, therefore he got an award from the Republic of Slovenia in the field of education (2005) for his copyrighted work on books and didactics materials for blind and partially sighted children and youth.

He wanted to help and educate teachers in the mainstream schools. In order to help them he wrote many articles and some books. First he wrote **Geografija nekoliko drugače** (also translated in English: **Geography in a different way**; <http://vkljucitev.wordpress.com/geography-in-a-different-way/>), then in 2005 **Kaj, kako? Zakaj tako?** (in English **What, how? Why so?**), where innovations, adaptations and improvements, when working with a blind or partially sighted child, are presented.

The most complex of all is the manual **Dotik znanja** (in English **The touch of Knowledge**), where tips for the education of blind and partially sighted are written down.

Roman also had his own web page **Iz prakse za prakso** (in English **From practice for practice**) (<http://vkljucitev.wordpress.com/>), where his articles and thoughts were published. One of the best may be (which is almost »a must« these days): »User friendly museum has guidance for blind and partially sighted visitors.«.

He did not forget about students, future teachers of blind and partially sighted, and taught them at the *Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana*. Just a few months ago he gave lectures to students in Koper. And they were excited about his work.

In the last years, he was writing a book **Z igro do učenja** (in English **With play to learning**), where many games and play ideas suitable for young blind or partially sighted children are presented in pictures, photos and description – in order to play and learn. All the illustrations in the book are Miha`s (Brvar`s oldest son`s) work. Roman did not live to see the publishing of the book.

Still, there will be words (in the introduction of his book **Dotik znanja** (in English **The touch of Knowledge**), which he dedicated to blind and partially sighted children:

»Turn on the light instead of complaining of darkness. One tactile model is worth 1000 words. Let the child feel and he will remember.«

We will miss him a lot!

All the colleagues of the Institute for blind and partially sighted in Ljubljana, teachers, his friends and all the children

ICEAPVI-2015

International Conference on Enabling Access for Persons with Visual Impairment

February 12-14, 2015, Athens, Greece

<http://access.uoa.gr/ICEAPVI-2015/>

The **International Conference on Enabling Access for Persons with Visual Impairment (ICEAPVI)** is an interdisciplinary scientific event, where researchers in the domain of education, rehabilitation, Information&Communication Technologies (ICT) as well as Assistive Technologies for persons with blindness and low vision meet to present and exchange their recent ideas and newest research.

ICEAPVI-2015 will be held in Athens, Greece, between February 12-14, 2015.

We invite researchers working in the field of visual impairment to submit papers for oral presentation or posters in the areas of:

- access to learning,
- access to interpersonal communication,
- access to printed information,
- access to electronic information and the WWW content,
- access to recreation and leisure and
- access to the built environment.

Deadline for submissions: September 15, 2014

ICEAPVI-2015 is co-organized by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Speech and Accessibility Laboratory, Department of Informatics and Telecommunications) and the International Council for the Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment- Europe (ICEVI-Europe).

The organising committee of the ICEAPVI-2015

Further information:

Web: <http://access.uoa.gr/ICEAPVI-2015>

Email: iceapvi@di.uoa.gr



ICEAPVI-2015

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Technologies for all, solutions for everybody... newsletter EBU, May-June 2014

After the enthusiastic reception offered to the previous editions of **TifloInnova -the International Exhibition of Assistive Technology for people with Visual Disabilities organized by ONCE-** in 2005, 2008 and 2011, the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind is working to make sure that, from **21 to 23 November**, blind and visually impaired persons, their families and related professionals will be able to enjoy a single, tailor-made venue for assistive technology. A place to search for and discover the products and services that have been designed for their use and enjoyment; a setting in which to participate in supplementary activities (conferences, round tables, demos and presentations of the latest products and trends), share similar concerns with other users and exchange information and experiences with manufacturers, developers and distributors.

TIFLOINNOVA 2014 will be held at the *ONCE "Sports and Cultural Centre" in Madrid (Paseo de la Habana, 208)* - on 21, 22 and 23 November 2014 - and it will be open to professionals and the public in general (free admission for all visitors).

For more detailed information, please visit: <http://tifloinnova.once.es> or www.tifloinnova.once.es or contact tifloinnova@once.es

Live innovation!



Press release: "Education enables" - Campaign for People with Disabilities of the Beyazay Association of Turkey

The INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL for EDUCATION and REHABILITATION OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT EUROPE strongly supports the "education enables" campaign for people with disabilities of the beyazay association of turkey

Istanbul, Turkey – June 1, 2014 – Mrs. Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou, President of ICEVI-Europe was cordially invited by the Beyazay Association of Turkey to attend the assembly of committees on the issues of international cooperation and solidarity of education of people with disabilities. The aim of this event was to promote a campaign seeking to empower people with disabilities through education worldwide.

The Beyazay Association of Turkey, a non-profit organization with its 69 local branches and 4 branches abroad, has been carrying out many projects on the education of people with disabilities in Turkey since 2007. "Education Enables" is one of these projects which has been for the last 3 years under the aegis of the First Lady of the Turkish Republic. They are planning to apply this project at an international level under the name of UNESCO to reach people with disability around the world and help them to get a better education in schools. The project is not only for students with disabilities but also for their families, for students without disability and for teachers.

One of the main core values of ICEVI-Europe is the belief that all people with visual impairment have the basic human right to a quality and comprehensive education. ICEVI-Europe shares and supports the initiative of the Beyazay Association of Turkey to help blind and visually impaired people achieve their desire to actively participate as full members of society, provided they have better access to education.

"We are looking forward to what we strongly believe will be a fruitful collaboration and cooperation between ICEVI-Europe and the Beyazay Association of Turkey, with the common aim of promoting equal opportunity to quality education for all visually impaired people, enabling them to lead full and independent lives," said Betty Leotsakou, President of ICEVI-Europe.