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# EBU Members' Newsletter 2021

## Number Nine, October.

## In Memory of Maria Kyriacou

The board of the European Blind Union, its national members, and all her friends and colleagues mourn the sudden death of our secretary general, Maria Kyriacou, who passed away on October 11th 2021.

No one of us can measure the pain and loss that her husband, her family and relatives have suffered. Still, we sincerely express our deep condolences and wish them strength and confidence during this difficult time.

Maria Kyriacou was born in Cyprus on April 1st, 1972. She had a BSc in special education and a Med in the education of people with visual impairments. For the past twenty five years she had been working as an educator at the St. Barnabas School for the Blind in Cyprus where her main areas of expertise had been the education of children with multiple disabilities as well as early childhood intervention.

Maria served as an ordinary member of the EBU Board for the working period 2011-15, as the Secretary General for the period 2015-19 and had been re-elected to the same position for this term of office.

In addition to her work as secretary general she dedicated special interest and energy to the promotion of rights of blind and partially sighted women and took responsibility in many working groups, surveys, and organising conferences on this subject.

Our sincere condolences also go to our national member in Cyprus. As an expert in all the issues related to people with visual impairments she worked with great enthusiasm in the school for the blind, where she did perfect work with her children. Reports say: "She loved them all and she was loved by them all."

We will think of Maria with great gratitude and respect for her tireless work, her important initiatives and ideas that contributed so much to EBU's achievements.

She was full of vitality, joy, and always with a warm smile on her face. We will miss her very much, but she will stay alive in our memory as one of the most outstanding persons we ever had the honour to meet.

**Wolfgang Angermann**, Ordinary board member and EBU President 2011 to 2019

## EBU Belgrade Declaration, 2021.

The [Union of the Blind of Serbia](https://savezslepih.org.rs/) and the European Blind Union invited all EBU Members to the 2021 annual conference themed around **Employment and Rehabilitation of Blind and Partially Sighted People**. The event on this undoubtedly critical topic took place in Belgrade from October 20th to 22nd. It was also an important part of the anniversary celebrations of the Union of the Blind of Serbia, to mark their 75 years of commitment.

At the end of the conference, EBU published [**the Belgrade Declaration, 2021**](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade.docx), with our results and conclusions.

We thank our Serbian member for their welcome and organisational skills.

For further information, visit the [event page](http://www.euroblind.org/events/ebu-annual-conference-2021-employment-and-rehabilitation-blind-and-partially-sighted-people).

## OUR CAMPAIGNS

### Marrakesh Treaty

In reply to our concerns expressed, jointly with EDF, about its Summary Report on its targeted consultation on the availability of accessible-format non-print works within the internal market (ref. previous Newsletter), the Commission reassuringly replied as follows: “the conclusions from the stakeholder consultation will be more developed, and we will also present the relevance of other EU legislation. In this context, we will also take into account the clarifications you have submitted.”

### Reform of EU electoral law

To the Rapporteur and Shadow Rapporteurs within the European Parliament’s Constitutional Affairs committee (AFCO) we have expressed support for the [EDF recommended amendments](https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2021/10/2021-EDF-position-paper-EU-electoral-law-Final.pdf) to the resolution on the reform of the EU electoral law. These amendments aim to further harmonise the electoral system and procedure applicable to European elections, to meet the needs of people with disabilities. AFCO is expected to vote on the text in December.

### European Accessibility Act

The relevant unit of the European Commission thanked us for the clarification we had brought (see previous Newsletter) about our position on excluding e-books from the standardisation mandate for the implementation of the EAA.

### Consultations

We replied to the following European Commission public consultations:

* The [public consultation on the implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/response_to_consultation_on_wad_oct_2021.pdf), even if many questions were intended for individuals or from a national perspective. We used this opportunity to signal some accessibility defaults of this consultation itself and to call the Commission to practice what is preached in the directive for the public sectors of the Member States.
* The call for feedback on the roadmap for improving access to emergency communications through single number 112

### Events

We attended the following events:

* EDF-ENGO meeting (7 October), focusing on the upcoming EU Review by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* Annual Conference of the Geneva Human Rights Platform (12 October). EBU was invited to speak in in the panel entitled ‘Building back better: How should national human rights actors address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities?’. On that occasion we were represented by our Board Member, Tytti Matsinen
* 3rd EDF peer support meeting on the European Accessibility Act (26 October)

### Miscellaneous

* On 12 October, Antoine Fobe, Head of Advocacy & Campaigning, animated an EByouth e-workshop "Towards Successful Campaigning".
* On World Standards Day, 14 October, we supported on Twitter the ANEC communications campaign to highlight how their standardisation work contributed to the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals. We focused our support on those SDGs of more direct concern to our community.
* After the EBU annual conference on ‘Employment of Blind and Partially Sighted People - a Key to Inclusion’ (20-22 October), we circulated on Twitter the resulting [Belgrade Declaration](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/documents/declaration_belgrade.docx).

We have started to prepare the agenda of the annual meeting of the EBU Commission for Liaising with the EU (Ljubjana, 20-21 November).

## The 33rd EBU Access Cast is now online.

Welcome to the [33rd number of the EBU Access Cast](https://ebuaccesscast.libsyn.com/ebu-access-cast-32-0) – our podcast about assistive technology for blind and partially sighted people. In this episode Hlynur, Mario, Tanja and Pawel cover a wide range of topics regarding accessibility, from Pawel’s birthday present to himself to a new software suite that turns up Mario’s cravings for cheesecake to the maximum… and everything in between.

We cover the ongoing [European Commission survey on digital accessibility](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-seeks-feedback-improve-public-sector-website-and-mobile-apps-accessibility), where the objective is to seek feedback to improve public sector website and mobile apps accessibility. We encourage everyone to partake in the survey and let your voice be heard. Also we took a look at a [new mod for the game Hearthstone by Blizzard](https://hearthstoneaccess.github.io/), how it works and how the new mod has increased its accessibility. The website named [Can I play that](https://caniplaythat.com/) was also mentioned.

Mario went with us through the new [Sunu app](https://www.sunu.com/) update for the Sunu band and how he used it patience as a weapon in dealing with some bluetooth issues regarding it.

There were no let-downs in the Gadget section. The show’s number one online shopper, also known as Pawel, showcased his new [JBL Link Portable speaker](https://www.jbl.com/LINK%2BPORTABLE.html) and Tanja spoke about a [Minimize to tray](https://github.com/sandwichdoge/MinimizeToTray) option she finds handy. Some discussions were also about [Chromecasting music](https://github.com/elibroftw/music-caster) and more related topics. [Tweesecake](https://tweesecake.app/), not Cheesecake, is a new light-weight, multi-purpose, robust software suite that allows users to easily use keybord commands to control Twitter and Telegra, navigate your file system and much more. We looked in to it.

An easy way to create a digital copy of your Covid certificate and store in your phone wallet? Yes please! We took a look at [getcovidpass.eu](https://www.getcovidpass.eu/) before taking on [Apple’s “California Streaming”](https://www.t3.com/news/apple-event-dates-products) online event and their newcomings. We took a look at what is new inside the newest [Beta version of Android 12](https://www.androidauthority.com/android-12-features-1195735/).

And if that wasn’t enough already we had discussions on digital accessibility matters from Hlynur’s point of view after his [Siteimprove](https://siteimprove.com/) conference input. Last but not least, an interview with Gleb Zevkov, CEO of Voxmate. We hope you guys enjoy the show, we sure did!

Get in contact with us, share your comments or suggestions via email ebuaccesscast@euroblind.org or via Twitter @ebuaccesscast.

## Austria - More inclusion in the labour market

At this year's White Cane Day on October 15th, 2021, the important topic of "More inclusion in the labour market" was addressed by the Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (BSVÖ). Blind and visually impaired people have always faced great challenges in the job market. In addition, the Corona crisis caused the situation to worsen drastically.

Work is an essential component for a self-determined life. The foundation for self-determination through fair working conditions and pay is an open and inclusive labour market. However, barriers to entry, lack of accessibility and prejudiced selection criteria often make equal opportunities in the labour market impossible. In order to facilitate integration into the primary labour market, BSVÖ has been campaigning for decades and is still actively advocating for the freest possible choice of occupation, equal and fair opportunities on the job market and a fulfilling work situation; factors that should enable blind and visually impaired people to lead a self-determined life with equal opportunities.

Dr. Markus Wolf, President of the Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted Austria emphasizes: "Blind and visually impaired people are very motivated if you just give them a fair chance. In recent years, many professions have also become accessible to blind and visually impaired people. We will keep working on further opportunities for people with disabilities in the labour market!"

## Portugal - ACAPO filed a complaint on access to vote discrimination based on disability

In early 2021, ACAPO alerted the electoral administration to the inaccessibility of the website recensamento.mai.gov.pt, which did not allow visually impaired persons to know, through the same means as any other person without disabilities, where to go to vote. This inaccessibility was caused by the fact that the portal requires, in addition to voter identification data, a human verification code, of the captcha type, which is only contained in an image and is therefore not accessible to screen readers used by visually impaired persons to access the internet.

Despite the warning given at the beginning of the year by ACAPO, and the commitment made at the time by the competent body of the Government, which undertook to overcome this barrier, two weeks before the Local Elections of 26 September, the website was still inaccessible to visually impaired persons and ACAPO had not been consulted on the best solutions or techniques to make the website accessible. This also represents a violation of the European Directive on the Accessibility of the websites of public entities (EU Directive No. 2016/2102), which has already been transposed into Portuguese law.

Thus, on September 12, 2021, ACAPO filed a formal complaint with the competent body to sanction the entity that maintains the census website, for discrimination based on disability. After this quick action by ACAPO, the human verification mechanism, using images, which made the voter registration portal inaccessible to visually impaired persons, was removed. Even so, ACAPO will continue to proceed with the sanctioning of the entity responsible for the website, especially so that other public bodies also take seriously the obligation to contemplate accessibility in their websites and in their mobile applications.

## Germany - moving forward on mobility!

The German Federation of the Blind and Partially-Sighted (DBSV) and RTB GmbH & Co. KG have founded a new company together. With SMS - Smart Mobility Services GmbH, DBSV wants to revolutionize the support of blind and partially sighted persons in the mobility sector.

When people with visual impairments are traveling from A to B, they face numerous challenges - how do I find out which bus line has just arrived, which track the train is leaving from, and where the elevator is located? While there are a variety of apps to assist those affected, the problem is just that: the variety! How are those affected supposed to know which facilities are available for the blind and partially sighted and which app to open when in order to receive optimal support?

DBSV is therefore working together with RTB GmbH & Co. KG on an app that brings together many app-based island solutions in the mobility sector. For example, if you approach a public building with a signal transmitter at the entrance using this meta app, it will be activated automatically, making it easier to find the entrance. The meta-app will support the location of elevators, traffic signals and info points for indoor navigation, and an automatic warning will be triggered at appropriately equipped construction sites. Under the leadership of DBSV, a network of manufacturers and organizations has also emerged to work with the association to develop app-based mobility solutions that are compatible with the Meta app.

## Estonian and Finnish Blind Unions partner in a joint project to promote the inclusion and independence of visually impaired young people.

The Estonian Blind Union and the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired have established a 2 year joint project “My Own Life”, which aims to identify and solve the biggest issues with independence and independent living among visually impaired young people in both countries.

Groups of 18 to 25 year olds are participating in activities, training, discussions and lectures about independence, career building and work culture, as well as building meaningful relationships, having and fulfilling your dreams or gaining confidence in everyday situations. The project participants are working with visually impaired mentors who, individually or in groups, give insight into achieving your dreams and independence. The project includes experts from the rehabilitation sector, as well as psychologists or coaches in various fields.

One of the projects goals is also to produce an information booklet, each country individually, which would give tips to parents, social workers and young people on achieving greater independence when blind.

The project is financed in Interreg Central Baltic

## Encouraging participation in sport in the UK

On 28th September, RNIB in partnership with British Blind Sport, launched See Sport Differently, a three-year campaign which aims to tackle lower levels of wellbeing amongst blind and partially sighted people by highlighting the benefits of physical activity, and demonstrating to blind and partially sighted people and the sports industry alike that sight loss doesn’t need to be a barrier to participation.

RNIB and British Blind Sport are working together to raise awareness among the two million people with sight loss in the UK, and across the sports sector, about how more blind and partially sighted people can get involved with sport and feel the benefits. Visit the campaign hub for more information about [See Sport Differently](https://www.rnib.org.uk/see-sport-differently).

## RNIB - Help us understand how accessible and enjoyable video games are for people with sight loss.

At the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), we are looking at how accessible video games are for people with different types and levels of sight loss (mild, moderate, severe). The consortium, led by the Royal National Institute of Blind People, is supported by researchers with experience in media and gaming from i2 media research at Goldsmiths, University of London and University of Edinburgh, Moray House School of Education and Sport. We are aiming to understand people’s experiences, needs and preferences in relation to playing games and how enjoyable existing games are to play for people with a vision impairment and how this compares with sighted gamers.

There are three participant categories for the survey:

* Gamers with sight loss
* Non-gamers or ex-gamers with sight loss
* Sighted gamers

We expect most people will take between 20-25 minutes to complete the survey and the questions you get will be tailored to you based on your answers to previous questions.

We invite all gamers to complete this [survey](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YKXM9Q3). It doesn’t matter how you play (console, desktop, laptop, smart phone or tablet) or whether you play strategy games, adventure games or if you’re a puzzle game fan. We want to hear from you. You will also have a chance to be entered into a prize draw for a £50 Amazon voucher.

If you have any questions about this survey or accessible gaming in general contact us at gaming@rnib.org.uk.

ENDS.

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