



The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe

REPORT

EBU Access to Culture Survey 2012

Mapping current levels of accessibility to cultural venues and activities in Europe

SURVEY OUTCOME SHOWS:

(visually) disabled people's right to culture poorly implemented

Date: July 2012

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Introduction : right to culture poorly implemented

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD) is one of EBU's guiding documents. Article 30 says:

"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life ..."

On a European Level, the Council of Europe Action Plan (2006-2015) on "Full Participation of People with Disabilities in Society reads:

"The right of people with disabilities as individuals to be fully integrated into society is dependent on them being able to participate in the cultural life of that society..."

The EBU Access to Culture Survey of 2012 maps the current level of accessibility in Europe of cultural venues and activities. The survey results show that the Right of (visually) disabled persons to culture is poorly implemented.

It is now high time for action to improve the situation. This report provides the background for the EBU Survey, the policy context of cultural rights, the results of the Survey and short good practice case studies. It calls for significant change and provides practical steps for stakeholders to take in order to make culture a truly accessible shared space for all.

1. Aims of EBU Access to Culture Survey 2012

1.1 EBU

The European Blind Union (www.euroblind.org) is a non-governmental, non profit-making European organization founded in 1984. It is the united voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe, protecting their rights and promoting their interests. The Central Office of EBU is based in Paris, France. EBU is a member of the European Disability Forum (www.edf-feph.org).

1.2 EBU vision

EBU works toward an inclusive and accessible society in which blind and partially sighted people enjoy equal opportunities and full participation in social, economic, political and cultural life.

1.3 EBU cultural beliefs

EBU believes that:

1. full participation in society requires full participation in cultural life (as much as in social, political and economic life)
2. full participation in cultural life is therefore inseparable from the implementation of the UNCRPD
3. adoption of Design for All principles for all cultural buildings, spaces, activities, programmes, events, exhibitions, services and information is the right and most creative; response to a world in which diversity is the norm.

1.4 EBU Access to Culture Project 2012

The EBU Access to Culture (ATC) Project is a small-scale pilot project, which aims to improve the accessibility to cultural venues and activities for blind and partially sighted people in Europe.

As part of the EBU ATC Project, the EBU ATC Survey findings and recommendations will be widely disseminated in Europe and serve as a tool for advocacy and lobbying. The ATC Survey Report is a tool for societal change and organisational change in cultural organisations. It supports:

- disability organisations with advocacy and lobbying for the cultural rights of people with a disability
- culture sector policy makers, decision makers, funders and managers to take strategic action for the implementation of the cultural rights of people with a disability.

1.5 EBU Access to Culture Survey 2012

The EBU ATC Survey Report is the main output of the EBU ATC Project 2012. It provides highly relevant Europe-wide insights into:

- current levels of accessibility for blind and partially sighted people to cultural sites, events and activities
- good practice
- national legislation and policies for access to culture
- barriers and scope for improvement.

1.6 EBU Call for Action

The EBU ATC Survey concludes with a **Call for Action for cultural policy and strategy change at European, national and local levels** in order to urgently address the over-riding conclusions of the EBU ATC Survey 2012, namely:

- the cultural rights of people with a (visual) disability are poorly implemented
- many cultural sector funding and project development practices discriminate against people with a disability.

2. Policy context

2.1 The cultural rights of people with a disability

International policies and action plans clearly establish the right of people with a disability to participate on equal terms in cultural life:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (HRD), article 27, (1948)

"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts ... and its benefits." (www.un.org/documents/udhr/)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 30 (2006)

"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities ***to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life***, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

- (a) enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;
- (b) enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre, and other cultural activities, in accessible formats;
- (c) enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance...."

(www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150)

Council of Europe Recommendation R(92)6, chapter VIII, section 8,5, (1992)

"Government institutions, leisure and cultural organisations should develop ***comprehensive access policies and action programmes designed to bring about significant and lasting improvements for all people with disabilities.***"

(www.coe.int)

Council of Europe Action Plan (2006-2015) on "Full Participation of People with Disabilities in Society", chapter 1,5, p 8 and chapter 3,2, p 13 about culture)

"The right of people with disabilities as individuals to be fully integrated into society is dependent on them being able to participate in the cultural life of that society..."

"Member states should start with ***an evaluation of their existing disability policy programmes*** and identify in which areas progress has yet to be made..."

(www.coe.int)

European Council Resolution of 6 May 2003 on accessibility of cultural infrastructure and cultural activities for people with disabilities

"...the (European) Council, by the end of 2005, should take stock of the follow-up of the measures to implement the present resolution." (Official Journal C 134, 07/06/2003 P. 0007 - 0008).

2.2 Cultural rights of people with a disability are poorly implemented and discrimination is widespread

In many countries, international policies for the cultural rights of people with a disability have hardly begun to be implemented and as a result cultural exclusion of disabled people remains high.

Even in countries where anti-discrimination legislation confers rights of access to culture for people with a disability, strategic action plans by governments do not, in most cases, appear to exist (Weisen Marcus in 'Disability discrimination in museums is systemic - the case for national strategic approaches', pages 48-78 in 'From the Margins to the Core', Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010, www.vam.ac.uk)

Billions of Euros are being spent every year for cultural activities in Europe, at a local, national and European level with little or no attention paid to equal access for people with a disability, and specifically blind and partially-sighted people.

Example : tens of billions of Euros have been invested in the construction and extension of museums and galleries in Europe in the last decade alone and hundreds of millions in exhibition design specifically. Very little has been done to make the best of the immense wealth of this cultural content accessible to people with a disability – and specifically for people who are blind, partially-sighted, deaf or hard of hearing or who have a learning difficulty. This an ethical scandal of Europe-wide proportions.

People with a disability remain largely invisible in culture sector research. This discriminatory practice contributes to a vicious circle of cultural exclusion.

Without this knowledge of audiences, it is impossible to plan for '***lasting and significant improvements in accessibility***', called for as early as 1992 by Council of Europe Recommendation R(92)6.

2.3 The European Union, the Council of Europe and national governments do not meet their commitments to monitor progress in cultural accessibility for people with a disability

It is striking that no monitoring of progress in cultural accessibility for disabled people appears take place at European and seldom at national level. This is in spite of the fact that such commitments have been made in the European (Union) Council Resolution of 6 May 2003 the Council of Europe (Disability) Action Plan (2006-2015) (see 2.1).

The monitoring of progress of the European Disability Strategy 2010-20 does not include the monitoring of progress in cultural accessibility, in spite of the above commitments.

2.4 The cultural rights of people with a disability can no longer be ignored

2.4.1 The implementation of the UNCRPD article 30 requires that international, national and local cultural policy and decision makers and cultural funders make cultural accessibility for people with a disability integral to all their workings.

For too long have cultural policy and decision makers and cultural funders in Europe considered that cultural accessibility is the province of social services.

2.4.2 Any European Union Accessibility Act should cover all aspects of cultural accessibility, including information about the accessible cultural offer, cultural buildings and sites, cultural experiences (exhibitions, performances, concerts, film screenings, workshops, creative expression), the accessibility of further education courses in culture and heritage for disabled students and mandatory training for students about accessibility and inclusive design.

This would be in line with the European Disability Forum statement that “the Act should have a scope as broad as possible, with a clear and extensive definition of accessibility, and include the requirement to provide accessibility in specific sectors.” (www.edf-feph.org)

The **European (Union) Disability Strategy 2010** provides an excellent dynamic context for implementing the cultural rights of people with a disability and specifically blind and partially sighted people, which are inseparable from the UNCRPD. Full participation in society requires full participation in cultural life. The European Commission DGX (Culture) therefore has an active role to play for stimulating the implementation of article 30 of the UNCRPD, across the field of culture and media.

The monitoring of progress in cultural accessibility for people with a disability and subsequent development of strategic action plans and programmes for cultural accessibility by the **Council of Europe**, the **European Union**, and their **member states** is a pre-requisite for implementation of article 30 of the UNCRPD.

2.5 “In Touch with Art 2010” Conference Resolution on the cultural rights people, with a disability and visually impaired people specifically

In 2007, the EBU General Assembly resolved to investigate access to culture and heritage for blind and partially sighted people. EBU co-organised the “In Touch with Art” Conference on “international perspectives on equal access to museums for visually impaired people”, held on 13-14 October 2010 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, with the UK NGO St Dunstan’s - an independent future for blind ex-Service men and women.

The 145 delegates of the “In Touch with Art” Conference came from 22 countries and 4 continents. Their breadth of expertise was exceptional. They were blind and partially-sighted museum professionals, artists, university teachers, architects and arts development workers. They were museum and heritage educators, outreach workers and managers; exhibition designers and access consultants; producers of audio guides, tactile books, models and images; audio describers, digital technology professionals and social workers.

Together they developed the “In Touch with Art” conference Resolution (and adopted it unanimously (with 1 abstention).

The “In Touch with Art” Resolution (www.euroblind.org, search 'in touch with art resolution):

- includes a thorough analysis of barriers to access to museums, heritage and tourism faced by visually impaired people and an analysis of need for progress.
- asks that local and national government, international institutions and museums, galleries and heritage sties worldwide to implement article 30 of the UNCRPD

The “In Touch with Art” Resolution was presented at European Day of People with Disabilities (EDPWD) 2010, as part of a conference session about the cultural rights of people with a disability and raised considerable interest.

Through the EBU ATC Project 2012, EBU aims to accelerate momentum for change and put the cultural rights of people with visual disability specifically and of people with disability on the agenda locally, nationally and internationally.

3. Methodology

3.1 Scope of the Access to Culture Survey

3.1.1 **The Survey** is small scale (total cost 6,000 Euros). Yet it **provides clear indications about the current accessibility of cultural places in Europe for blind and partially-sighted people and scope for improvement.** It provides insightful qualitative international information and analysis.

3.1.2 This Survey focuses on the accessibility for blind and partially sighted people of **a range of cultural places people visit:** theatres, cinema, opera, dance performances, concerts and museums, galleries, heritage sites and visitor attractions.

3.2 Definition of accessibility

For the purposes of **this Survey, the following definition of accessibility** in cultural places people is used:

“Accessibility is the experience of accessible cultural events and collections. It is the result of a combination of accessible features, including :

- the **environment** (route description to premises, easy to find information desk, clear signage, speaking lifts, tactile maps, etc)
- **visitor information** (accessible websites, accessible information in Large Print, Braille and digital format, telephone information service, etc)
- **welcome** (friendly staff, support in the building)
- **cultural content** (audio description, tactile models, raised images, stage touch tours; tactile collections, guided tours, text panels and labels in accessible formats, adequate lighting, accessible materials for pre-visit and after-visit, etc)

- **employment of blind and partially sighted people** (for example as performers, artists, consultants and guides, exhibition curators).

This definition emphasises the multi-dimensional nature of accessibility and the need for a systematic approach. It fits into the wider definition of "cultural accessibility" developed in 2012 by the European Centre for Cultural Accessibility, which covers all arts and cultural activities and media. This definition emphasises the "cultural accessibility sequence" and processes of change all local stakeholders need to get involved in (www.culturalaccessibility.org).

3.3 Survey Questionnaires

3.3.1 A questionnaire was developed for EBU national member organisations, of whom 17 responded (response rate 36%). **See Appendix**) In addition 2 regional associations of visually impaired people in Hungary responded.

The aim of this questionnaire was to gain a European overview of:

- current levels of accessibility for blind and partially sighted people to cultural sites, events and activities
- national legislation and policies for access to culture
- good practice
- barriers and scope for improvement

The Questionnaire allowed the harvesting of:

- factual information (e.g. on anti-discrimination legislation)
- informed perceptions (e.g. of current levels of accessibility)
- opinions and analysis (e.g. scope for improvement)

3.3.2 A questionnaire was sent to 38 cultural organisations known to have developed good practices in accessibility for visually impaired people. 16 responded (response rate 42 %).

Respondents included: museums, galleries, an environmental discovery centre, theatres, one opera house, one ballet and two associations which provides audio description in theatres in cinemas.

The aim of this questionnaire was to harvest information about:

- good practices, including in accessibility planning
- internal challenges faced by staff members working on accessibility
- external challenges faced by the organisation when promoting access for visually impaired people

4. Findings

4.1 Legislation and national policy

4.1.1 Of the 17 EBU members six were aware of disability rights legislation that covers access to cultural places and cultural activities for people with a disability in their country (35%). Two more (12%) were aware of disability rights legislation, but felt this was not specific enough about access to culture.

4.1.2 The experience of anti-discrimination legislation in the UK (Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and in France (Loi de 2005), which specifies that culture is covered by the law shows that **a correlation exists between legislation which explicitly affirms the cultural rights of people with a disability and dynamism for cultural accessibility.**

4.1.3 European countries need binding national legislation, which makes it explicit that people with a disability have cultural rights.

4.2 Implementation of article 30 of the UNCRPD

4.2.1 EBU members were asked to assess how article 30 of the UNCRPD, which recognises the right of people with a disability to take part 'on equal terms' in cultural life, is implemented in their country:

0 stated 'very good'

3 (17.5%) replied 'good': France, Romania and UK

10 (59%) replied 'poor': Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland

4 (23.5%) replied 'very poor': Cyprus, Netherlands, Portugal

For 82.5% of the respondents, the implementation of the cultural rights of blind and partially sighted people is either poor or very poor. This gives ground to believe that there is a need for serious improvements in cultural accessibility for visually impaired people.

It is interesting to note that 2 of the 3 respondents, who qualified implementation as being "good", are from France and the UK, which have legislation which creates a right of access to cultural services.

In the UK some 300 cinemas provides audio descriptions of most new releases for visually impaired audiences, more than any other country in the world. Some 100 theatres provide audio description services. It is interesting to note, however, that the UK response provided a number of critical reflections about the need to further widen cultural accessibility and to make it integral to everything cultural organisations do.

Since anti-discrimination legislation was brought in in France in 2005, a level of cultural accessibility initiatives developed which is exceptional by international comparison. For example, the number of theatres providing audio description rose quickly to over 50, a small but growing number of museums experiment with accessible and inclusive exhibitions, more disabled people work on accessibility in national museums in France than in any comparable institutions around the world. Again, in France culture professionals, government spoke-persons involved with accessibility and the Culture Minister state in formal and informal discussions, that there is still a long way to go before article 30 of the UNCRPD is implemented.

These responses show:

- a correlation between legislation and cultural accessibility
- the need to fasten pace of progress

They are **a real wake-up call for action by governments and international institutions.**

4.3 Progress in cultural accessibility since the year 2000

Asked whether there was progress in accessibility to cultural venues since the year 2000:

1 (6%) replied 'much': Italy

8 (47%) replied 'a fair amount': Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom

8 (47%) replied 'a little': Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia

0 replied 'not at all'

There is a correlation between the informed perception of progress by respondents and the existence of legislation which creates rights of access to culture.

More effort appears to be made to develop cultural accessibility initiatives than before 2000. A number of people from a number of countries and who are involved with cultural accessibility for people with a disability, feel that attitudes of cultural organisations towards people with a disability are changing. This mentality shift needs to be celebrated, accelerated and transformed into concrete actions.

4.4 Cultural freedoms are restricted because cultural access is poorly developed

The Survey asked respondents to rank a list of 23 access features, most of which are considered good practice (such as accessible websites, information in accessible formats, welcoming staff, audio description and opportunities to touch objects).

The EBU respondents were asked how widely available they feel these features are in cultural venues studied in the Survey:

0 replied: 'Much'

6 (35%) replied 'a fair amount'

7 (41%) replied 'a little'

4 (24%) replied 'not at all'

Two thirds of respondents (65%) consider that essential accessibility features to be little or not available generally in the cultural venues studied in this Survey.

Cultural accessibility is the result of a seamless sequence of access features in a single venue. Even venues which provide access features may continue to present access barriers. Only a minority of venues could be said to have developed higher levels of accessibility.

For example, few museums **provide easily accessible, clear and reliable access information** (which is both concise and comprehensive) **on their websites and thus make independent decision making difficult, if not impossible for visually impaired people.**

In many countries, audio description services in the theatre – the most highly rated access feature in the theatre in the EBU ATC Survey 2012; do not even exist in capital cities and large metropolitan areas. Visually impaired people thus remain denied equal access to national cultural performing arts assets.

Furthermore, this Survey does not investigate the extent and the quality of the cultural offer that has been made accessible to blind and partially sighted people. The needs analysis which informs the “In Touch with Art” Conference Resolution stated that **"choice in museums is poor and that it bears no relationship with the extraordinary cultural significance held in the worlds museums"** (www.euroblind.org, search 'in touch with art resolution').

The response here provides further support for the need of a national and international strategic visions and plans to implement the cultural rights of blind and partially sighted people. It calls for a systemic and systematic approach.

Joined-up work at European and international level is crucial for the development of leisure and cultural tourism by visually impaired people.

Such a strategic vision is, sadly, almost entirely lacking in Europe.

4.5 Cultural accessibility: impact on the quality of life

4.5.1 Respondents were asked whether the access services described in the Survey improve the quality of life of blind and partially sighted people.

3 (18%) stated ‘a huge amount’

8 (47%) stated ‘a fair amount’

4 (23,5%) stated ‘a little’

2 (11.5%) stated ‘not at all’

Nearly two third of respondents (63%) rate the impact of participation in cultural life for the quality of life generally highly.

The value of culture is not un-frequently being questioned. It is to be noted that EBU member organisations, whose professional focus is on social, economic and citizenship rights do also, overall highly rate the value of culture.

The question asked was unfortunately ambiguous. Correlating various responses suggests that at least 2 respondents (12%), who stated 'not at all' or 'a little' are likely to have replied 'a fair amount' or 'much' had the question been clear.

4.6 Research about cultural accessibility is being neglected

All respondents (total: 33) were asked to share information about research and surveys about the accessibility of the cultural venues studies in the Survey.

Only 1 respondent (3%) reported a national survey. The Slovenian Museums Association conducted a national survey of educational provision for disabled users of museums and galleries in 2009 (Rajka Bračun Sova, The Importance of Visitor-focused Educational Programming for Special Needs Access in Museums, in : International Journal of the Inclusive Museum:

<http://ijz.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.177/prod.153>)

Only 1 respondent (3%) reported about an action research project. The Royal National Institute of Blind People and seven museums explored key aspects of access to museums, with a strong user focus, documented in the 'Shifting Perspectives' report 2011 (www.rnib.org.uk, search 'Shifting Perspectives'). The report shows how awareness training gives museum staff confidence in welcoming visually impaired audiences.

The EBU ATC Project Team also wishes to draw attention to:

- development work initiated by the French Ministry for Culture in 2009 on a national template for evaluation of the museum and heritage experiences of user with a disability.
- the survey "Accessibility of museum, library and archive websites: the MLA Audit", Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, England, 2005 (www.egovmonitor.com/reports/rep11278.pdf). This survey remains relevant in 2012 and shows that:
 - only 3% of cultural sector websites meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 01) Level AA
 - the average museum, library and archive home page presents disabled users with nearly 216 potential accessibility stumbling blocks
 - the fewest museums and archives make online collections and learning materials accessible to blind and partially sighted people
- the report "Talking Images Research - museums, galleries and heritage sites: improving access for blind and partially sighted people", Royal National Institute of Blind People, 2003 (www.rnib.org.uk, search 'talking images museums'). User focused, it gives strong qualitative insights into how visually impaired people experience museums and heritage

It is likely that a few more recent research and survey reports exist, about which respondents did not know.

However, **the extreme paucity of research and survey reports is indicative of a deep-seated culture of neglect of disability research which exists in government cultural ministries, in national cultural organisations and in cultural research generally.** What does not get researched although it exists, does not get fed into policy development and planning and thus does not get funded. **This vicious circle needs breaking down.**

4.7 Respondents ask for fundamental change

4.7.1 EBU and cultural organisations (number: 38) were asked what changes need to happen in their opinion for cultural venues studied in the Survey to become fully accessible.

4.7.2 **The respondents** provide a compelling vision of the systemic and systematic changes that are needed to make access to culture for visually impaired people to become an everyday reality. The respondents:

- **clearly put the responsibility for funding and implementing cultural accessibility, guidance and skills development on governments and the cultural sector**
- **highlight wide-ranging needs for implementing the cultural rights of blind and partially sighted people.**

In particular, they stressed that cultural accessibility will only become an everyday reality when cultural rights legislation exists and when funding comes from mainstream and core budgets. The role of funding criteria cannot be under-estimated. The UK made accessibility an essential funding criterion for Arts Lottery funding (which distributes approx. 300,000,000 Euros of funding a year) since 1994. This played a vital (though not sufficient) role in the progress of accessibility.

4.8 Recommendations made by the respondents

1. There should be legislation for cultural rights

One respondent cited the inertia and indifference of cultural policy and decision makers. This negative attitude described exists in other European countries too :

“How to cope with this resistance and indifference?... The cultural policy makers and funders have unfortunately generally no sensibility and the funds they spend are for programs that are fancy, so that they can show off. There are so many examples ... In

my country audio description is not provided by the theatres, not even by the national theatres.”

“There should be accessibility standards and these should be adhered to, such as the “Check for barrier-free design and use of exhibitions” initiated, among others, by Kulturprojekte Berlin.”

Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, Germany

“There should be a legislation about access to cultural places and cultural activities for disabled people”

Portuguese Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted

“There should be legal incentives and/or requirements for private cultural providers to make their cultural contents accessible. Currently most of the accessibility efforts are made by public organizations.”

CFPSAA - French Federation for the Social Advancement of Blind and Partially Sighted People

“Accessibility should also be an obligation for all cultural and heritage institutions. The governmental, justice, and cultural agents should rethink laws and apply and support them to contribute to a better society.”

Municipality of Batalha, Portugal

“National and European policy acts, plans and inclusion priorities are necessary.”

Berlin für Blinde, Germany

"Audio description should be fully and actively recognised as a cultural right."

Audioscenic, Belgium

2. Cultural accessibility should become a criterion for cultural funding

“Full accessibility to all should be an essential condition to get subsidies or funds for museums, exhibitions, films and performances.”

Viziris – Netherland network of organisations working with visually impaired people and
KUBES - Netherland Organisation of Visually Impaired Artists

“The European Commission just announced an increase of financial means for cultural activities : Creative Europe. Funding should be conditional on a policy of inclusion.”

Berlin für Blinde, Berlin, Germany

3. Budgets of cultural organisations should be inclusive of visually impaired people

“The department for cultural affairs at the Berlin Senate asked for a standardised list of access features for exhibitions as an additional decision instrument for cultural funding activities. So the decision for funding will be directly related to the measure of accessibility of the cultural event. To provide this list (necessary features of exhibition design for specific groups of disabled people) and to give the grants only to those who try to include these features should be a highly effective way to install accessibility.”

Berlin für Blinde, Berlin, Germany

“To have a stringent monitoring process would make venues accountable to their funders and audiences – to have to illustrate exactly what resource / effort they are making to develop their services for blind and partially sighted audiences.”

Almeida Theatre, London, UK

4. Cultural policy and decision makers should take responsibility for change

“There is a need for support regarding the possibilities and benefits that persons with a visual impairment might enjoy from cultural access. This should be created on the part of politicians, authorities and employees and executive persons at museums.”

Danish Association of the Blind

“Governments need to encourage a holistic approach for the cultural sector: for example when developing new museums or cultural venues. To design from the beginning all the necessary facilities and make an annual budget and staff provision for the maintenance of such facilities.”

Byzantine Museum, Athens, Greece

5. The private sector has a unique contribution to make

“All films should have audio description.”

Viziris – Netherlands network of organisations working with visually impaired people in collaboration with KUBES - Art for Blind and Partially Sighted, the Netherlands

“For the cinema exhibitors there are large problems to get films with audio description. It is not allowed to change the film content by the exhibitors. This must be organized by the producers directly”.

Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially-Sighted

Private sector involvement : the UK showing the way

The EBU ATC Project Team wishes to highlight that the private sector plays a significant role in the UK’s leading position as a provider of audio of films in cinemas. And this example could be replicated. Major US film distributors, such as Warner Brothers and Buena Vista fund the audio description of a large numbers of feature films. These can be enjoyed from the day of their release in hundreds of cinemas in the UK. The UK film industry and the National Lottery are also funders of the service. (www.yourlocalcinema.com).

6. Cultural organisations need to transform into inclusive organisations and involve and employ disabled people, and visually impaired people specifically.

“Blind and partially sighted people need to be part of the institutions frameworks so employed, volunteers, artists, historians, educators, senior managers, directors etc...for any deep embedded practice and change to occur”

RNIB - Royal National Institute of Blind People, UK

The accessibility of cultural venues is a two way process, which involves blind and partially-sighted people not only as audiences, but also as professionals.

Organisational transformation is facilitated through the employment of people with disabilities and specifically visually impaired people at every level (Annie Delin, Employment at Every Level, in Disability Portfolio, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2005)

(http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110802101741/http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/support/toolkits/libraries_disability/find_out_about_disability)

Employment initiatives to address under-representation of increase of visually impaired people specifically and of people with a disability in general in the cultural sector workforce are a necessary and invaluable part of the agenda for change (statistics of the UK Department for Culture, Sport and Media show, that employees with a disability represent under 3% of department's the workforce, whereas more than 10% of the population has a disability).

7. Accessible and inclusive design of cultural buildings, spaces, products and services should be promoted

“Decision makers should be made more aware that the real value and impact of an exhibition or gallery collection is increasingly being judged by through accessibility criteria.”

Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium

“There should be accessibility standards and these should be adhered to, such as the “Check for barrier-free design and use of exhibitions” initiated, among others, by Kulturprojekte Berlin.”

Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, Germany

Cultural accessibility requires adherence to standards, in particular in the design of buildings and furnishings, as well as in processes of designing spaces, products and services – such as accessible information, inclusive budgets, involvement of people with a disability, calls for tender and procurement which are inclusive of the requirements of disabled people.

The extraordinary diversity of cultural events, products, services and organisations also means, that one-size-fits-all standards are not possible everywhere. Good practice guidance and checklists are a necessary complement to standards. Inclusive design offers huge scope for innovation.

8. Information about the accessible cultural offer should be easily available locally, nationally and Europe-wide.

“There is no list of accessible events, museums, theaters.”

Belgian Confederation for Blind and Partially-Sighted People

This statement highlights a huge task for European countries and for Europe as a whole. If even information on the local and regional accessible cultural offer is not easily available. Europe is in no position to grant visually impaired people access to the benefits of tourism on equal terms. This represents lost opportunities for business. One respondent addressed the challenge of audience development and suggested:

“Perhaps there could be more centralisation among disability organisations so that the communication and visibility of the accessible cultural offer can be improved.”

Base-Court (provides audio description in cinemas), Lausanne, Switzerland

Cultural accessibility requires seamless and quick communication of information. This should be publicly available, for example on tourist information and cultural websites. However, disability organisations have invaluable channels of communication with

users. Information dissemination about cultural accessibility can be very complex in countries where there are large numbers of disability organisations, and ways need to be sought to optimise this.

9. The need for advocacy at national and European level

“There should be a co-ordinating instance...to influence government and society so that accessible culture becomes mainstream.”

Belgian Confederation for Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Advocacy and campaigning for the cultural rights of people with a disability and for visually impaired people in particular is weak and totally under-resourced at national and European levels. In order for significant progress to be achieved, advocacy needs to be strengthened.

Advocacy and campaigning for cultural rights is not in competition with advocacy for rights to information, freedom of movement and economic and social rights. It should be a part of it. Strong advocacy:

- will lead to cultural organisations developing budgets which are inclusive of people with a disability
- recognises the unique contribution the private sector has started to make in several countries and its transformational potential Europe-wide.
- will free-up new resources for a more humane, equal and inclusive society.

The **European Disability Forum** could play a significant role as a partner in advocacy.

10. The need for societal change

“Cultural accessibility should be inserted into school programs in order to contribute to change mentalities and developing citizenship actions.”

This beautiful quote by the Municipality of Batalha. Portugal, reminds us that cultural accessibility, accessibility and inclusion are a societal project which enhances society as a whole.

4.9 Summary of findings

1. Many countries do not have disability rights legislation which explicitly covers access to culture.
2. 82.5% of EBU member organisations stated that the cultural rights of visually impaired people are being poorly or very poorly implemented.
3. There is a correlation between the existence of disability rights legislation and dynamism for cultural accessibility.
4. 65% of EBU member organisations stated that key access features are missing in cultural places.
5. 65% of EBU member organisations rate the impact of cultural accessibility on the quality of life highly.
6. A deep-seated culture of neglect exists in cultural sector research, in which people with a disability hardly exist.

4.10 Summary of recommendations made by respondents

1. There should be legislation about access to cultural places and cultural activities for people with a disability.
2. Cultural accessibility for people with a disability should be a criterion for all cultural funding.
3. Budgets of cultural organisations should be inclusive of disabled people and visually impaired people specifically.
4. Cultural policy and decision makers should take responsibility for change
5. The involvement of all stakeholders is needed, public sector, private sector, NGOs.
6. Cultural organisations need to transform into inclusive organisations and involve and employ disabled people, and visually impaired people specifically.

7. Accessible and inclusive design of cultural buildings, spaces, products and services should be promoted.
8. Information about the accessible cultural offer should be easily available locally, nationally and Europe-wide.
9. Advocacy for the cultural rights of people with a disability needs to be developed.
10. Societal change should start with raising awareness of disabled people's equality in schools.

The above findings and recommendations strengthen previous findings and needs analyses about cultural accessibility for blind and partially sighted people, and specifically those contained in the Resolution of the St Dunstons/EBU international "In Touch with Art 2010" Conference "on equal access to museums, galleries and heritage (www.ebublind.org, search 'in touch with art resolution'). This Resolution developed by multi-disciplinary teams of experts in particular identifies the need to:

1. Build and professionalise the skills involved in creating cultural accessibility for people with a disability
2. Qualitative and quantitative research, guidance and good practice examples about all aspects of the accessible museum and heritage experience for blind and partially sighted people, including audio description onsite and online; touch and multi-sensory opportunities; tactile models and images onsite and accessible online; easily accessible, reliable, concise, yet comprehensive information on the accessible museum and cultural offer; the power of technologies to provide accessible cultural experiences and inclusive exhibition design.

5. Good practice case-studies

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents five case studies and highlights from inspiring projects from 7 countries. The case-studies have a strong focus on project management processes, user involvement and organisational learning.

Projects presented here have been undertaken by dynamic forward looking organisations or individuals who, as a result of the project became champions of change.

5.1.1 Accessibility thrives when cultural organisations committed to being inclusive

The museum and theatres presented here are all committed in a number of ways to becoming inclusive organisations which provide services "for all audiences". They believe in the social responsibility of cultural organisations. Generally speaking, organisations which have a strong commitment to educational programmes for schools, informal life-long learning for adults, diversity, social inclusion and community involvement are also those which are the most committed to provide access to cultural experiences for blind and partially sighted people. They exemplify why Europe needs a vision for socially responsible culture.

5.1.2 Respondents report an increase in visually impaired audiences

Of the 17 cultural organisations which responded to the EBU ATC questionnaire, most have provided access services for visually impaired people for several years. 13 respondents reported an increase in visually impaired audiences. This is an important finding. It shows that there are effective ways of providing accessible services. Sometimes cultural organisations are disappointed by the low take up of accessible services. It often turns out that these have not invested enough time into disseminating

information and developing ongoing relationships with user organisations.

5.1.3 Essential for inclusion: earmarked funding for access provision as and use of the organisation's budget for inclusive products, services and environments

The EBU ATC Report provides some figures about the costs of accessibility (5.1.5.2, 5.5). These costs are always specific to context. For example with theatre audio description, some theatres commission external audio description companies to provide the service, others build a team of trained in-house describers. Some theatres employ paid describers, other volunteer describers. Each time, this has a different impact on the cost structure of an accessible service. It is most important to view these figures in the context of Design for All (also known as inclusive design) principles. There needs to be a budget for specific access services. Yet, the whole budget needs to be deployed in a way that provides accessible cultural experiences "for all". Well deployed, such inclusive product, service and environmental design procedures bring will benefits to all visitors and specifically blind and partially sighted audiences.

5.1.4 Changing attitudes remains a priority

It is still often the case that accessibility projects are being championed inside cultural organisations by committed individuals or teams, without the commitment of the Director and the whole organisation. Thus one respondent mentioned "the extreme prudence and even unwillingness of curators at the very beginning of the project" in getting involved in allowing authentic object to be touched. As the project developed, however, attitudes changed. Another respondent said: "the main internal challenge is the lack of awareness about disabled people, the lack of knowledge about their specific requirements. We still have to fight against a certain way of non-inclusive thinking which is typical for most people (e.g. art could be destroyed by touching it; we don't need to care for special devices or ideas for blind people because they always appear with sighted assistance; we don't need to give priority for design for all in calculating the budgets)."

5.1.5 Cultural accessibility: a work in progress

All of the projects presented below have the honesty of saying "it's work in progress". Yet, each has a highly inspiring story of change to tell.

5.2 Almeida Theatre, London: audio description service

The service

The Almeida Theatre provides an audio described performance for all main house productions. The audio description itself is provided by audio description company Vocaleyes.

A pre-visit audio CD is sent to all bookers giving details of the production, including the style of the production, the set, characters and costumes. In addition, we enhance the content by adding music used in the show and interviews with the actors.

Bookers have the opportunity to come to a touch tour attended by the acting company and stage management before all audio described performances.

The theatre tours are made accessible to visually impaired patrons. Our tour leaders have visual impairment awareness training and training on how to enhance the language used during the tour to convey visual information to those in attendance.

Audio and large print season brochures (Braille upon request) are provided, as well as large print programmes for each production.

Communication, audience development,

The Almeida Theatre sends out information to a local authority group for Blind and partially sighted people and they add it to their talking newspaper.

The access officer also maintains regular contact with the audience as they attend the audio described performances, and so can catch up with regulars as well as meeting new audiences.

Over 10 years, the audience has continued to grow. We have an average audience of between 30-45 people per audio described performance. We send audio brochures to approximately 100 bookers.

Management processes

The access programme began 2001, when the theatre was going through a refurbishment project. The aim was to improve and enhance services for the broadest audience including Deaf and disabled patrons. In the early stages we consulted with a number of arts organisations including disabled led organisations. We also created group of a disabled consultants to inform and feed into this process. This group included representatives of the Blind and visually impaired community. Another reference we used during this time was Vocaleyes who continue to provide audio description services for the theatre.

Organisational learning

The people involved in expanding services to Blind and partially sighted audiences have benefitted by enhancing their skills, becoming aware of other needs and ways of experiencing the programme at the theatre. The level of staff awareness had grown enormously through training and through direct participation with Blind and partially sighted audiences has had a powerful and positive impact for staff, enabling them to feel empowered and knowledgeable dealing with diverse audiences.

Impact on the organisation's working practices

Visual impairment awareness training and direct contact with audiences has fed into the decisions made by the marketing department in the development of our production materials making them more 'universally accessible'. At the same time we acknowledge that it is important to produce other alternate versions of our print in addition to provide good access to those with a specific visual impairment.

Impact beyond the organisation

The Almeida Theatre often mentors other theatre venues with their access programmes, by offering them the opportunity to consult with us about our own internal procedures and practices regarding the provision of services to disabled audiences.

Budget

The approximate budget for our annual cost relating to audio described performances and production of alternate format and other materials for Blind and partially sighted audiences is £13,000.

5.3 Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens : tactile trail

The service

The touch tour of the Byzantine and Christian Museum allows visually impaired visitors to discover aspects of everyday life, religious expression and art in Byzantine civilisation from the 3rd until the 13th century. It consists of 10 original objects of the permanent exhibition and allows for a visit of up to 2 hours.

Selection criteria of the objects included material, solidity, shape, volume and texture, as well their easy-to-reach placement in the exhibition.

A short guide and map of the tour is available, labels in braille, an audio guide as well as human guides on request. The general visitor leaflet of the Museum is available in Braille and is free. Entrance is free for visually impaired visitors.

The Museum also offers a wide range of educational programmes to groups of visually impaired visitors (schools and adults) to enhance both intellectual and sensory access.

The museum is planning a second touch tour in the exhibition spaces about art and society in Crete and the Ionian Islands during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Local collaborations and audience development

The touch tour is part of the museum's drive to create an inclusive environment that will provide equal opportunities to as wide range of visitors as possible, including people with disabilities.

Collaboration has been established with a wide range of organisations: the Municipality of Athens, the Public Transport Organization, a number of schools for pupils disabilities, a psychiatric hospital, a community centre for people with mental health issues and disability organisations. The Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece and the Tactual Museum of Athens have been actively involved in the development of the touch tour and the supporting material (leaflets, audio guide etc).

As a result, new audience groups visited the museum for the first time and accessed the collections and programmes. We've noticed an increased interest in the museum's events and exhibitions by groups of blind visitors who have never visited our museum/or other cultural institutions before.

Management processes

Participation in the ACCU ("ACCU-Access to Cultural Heritage. Policies of Presentation and Use") project in 2004-2007 under the European Commission CULTURE 2000 Programme was a strong motivator factor. The touch tour was developed along the following process:

1. at the first meeting of the ACCU team members, the museum Director approves of the idea and makes a first unofficial choice of objects to include in the touch tour.
2. preliminary in-house research was conducted in the exhibition area in order to define whether it is possible to design a “touch-tour” visit addressed to visually impaired people. The members of the museum’s ACCU team worked in collaboration choosing several objects to include in the tour, according to their solid material of construction, shape, volume and texture, and their -easy to reach- placement in the exhibition. This was photographically documented so that the pictures could be used for a DVD production about the project.
3. Meeting of the ACCU team with the museum’s conservators to seek confirmation and warranty of the safety and preservation of the objects selected.
4. First draft of the touch-tour script.
5. Second meeting of the ACCU team with the Director, who gave his permission to continue on the project.
6. Consultation with users was considered essential. In meetings with representatives from the Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece and the Tactual Museum of Athens, issues pertaining to tactual access to the proposed exhibits were examined, involving their position and signposting, the information material needed, forming a link between the content of the route and the needs and previous knowledge of the visitors, as well as the functionality of the project overall.
7. Final development of the tour and adjustment of the script.
8. Touch tour tried out with individual visitors as well as on groups of visually impaired people.
9. Evaluation by the end-users.

Organisational learning

Enhancing accessibility helps the Museum to increase its social role, to reassess and expand its relations with the public. This has also led to a search for new ways to approach the cultural heritage for which it provides stewardship enable it to appeal to all.

The project has resulted annual training for staff, especially the museum wardens and welcome desk employees.

Impact on the organisation

The project has widened the museums awareness and resulted in the museum developing a Disability Action Plan.

In December 2007, the Byzantine and Christian Museum received an important **award for its contribution to visitor services and social inclusion**: it was awarded CUDOS 2nd place in the Quality and Productivity Awards for Public and Local Administrations and Public Entities, the first such competition organised by the Hellenic Ministry of Interior. The criteria for entry into the competition was the successful implementation of the Common Assessment Framework initiated by the European Union, as well as the carrying out of innovative actions, both in daily operations and in the field of citizen services. The Touch Tour, designed and implemented with the active participation of the end-users, was one of the main actions presented in the nomination.

In October 2008, in Paris, the museum also had the opportunity to present its access programmes, including the “Touch Tour”, in the 5th Quality Conference for Public Administration entitled “The Citizen at the Heart of Public Quality”, in the session “Taking into account new key social issues”.

Impact beyond the organisation

This is difficult to measure, but the museums has been championing access for people with disabilities and visually impaired people specifically at a number of events and conferences.

Budget

An average of 10,000€ is budgeted annually for the improvement of accessibility in the Museum's exhibitions and facilities. The Museum's budget for 2012 is approximately 3,800,000€.

5.4 Municipal Community Museum of Batalha, Portugal : multi-sensory exhibits

The service

The new Municipal Community Museum of Batalha museum opened on 2 April 2011 has been designed right from the start to welcome all visitors, including audiences with a disability. Physical access is excellent, there is easy read information for people with a learning disability and a multimedia guide with Portuguese Sign Language and sub-titles.

Provision for blind and partially sighted visitors a number of objects for touching (originals and replicas), tactile images, an audio guide with audio description, tactile images, information in large print and Braille, Braille labels, raised characters, guided tours for individuals and groups, a space for resting a guide dog, a tactile path in the museum and a route description to the venue. The website and a leaflet provides access information.

A contact telephone number appears on each web page.

The museum has commissioned a report about the accessibility of the website to identify changes needed to guarantee an easy and autonomous navigation.

Management processes

The project took 2 years to be develop and involved consultation with many people from different organizations: schools, universities, disability organisations, companies, and the population from the Town of Batalha.

The fact that the local authority of Batalha is already involved with other projects related to accessibility, facilitated the process with the various related entities.

The museum had a very nice experience during 6 months with a young partially-sighted boy, during an internship program in our museum, in many different tasks : investigation, evaluation of available information in the museum, preparing activities for schools...

Communication, audience development, partnerships

The museum promotes its services for visually impaired audiences via ACAPO, the national organisation for blind and partially sighted people, websites aimed at visually impaired people and direct contact with visually impaired people.

Organisational learning

We are conscious that there is still a long way to go. Our Municipality has worked in different ways to provide good and accessible experiences to blind and partially sighted people. We can mention Pia do Urso Sensory Eco-Park, a project that offers visitors a truly dazzling natural landscape, where they can admire the magnificent restoration work on the typical houses of this rustic region, where stone and wood are the main materials used. This restored village is also home to the first SENSORY ECO-PARK for the visually blind and partially sighted people. A new concept, which aims to offer these citizens the possibility of apprehending their surroundings making use of the other senses, in particular touch and smell.

We wanted to extend our touristic accessible offer. The Museum is the continuation of a very important “accessible tour” and a cultural and educational centre. Besides, we experienced that for blind and partially sighted touching original objects is a rich and unique sensation for them.

Impact on organisation

We ‘have increased our sensitivity to inclusion and accessibility at different levels, understanding the perception of these people about so many different subjects.

Impact beyond organisation

We are conscious that we’ve made a difference on the museological offer in Portugal. Our museum is visited by many museology experts who want to work in similar accessible projects.

We have also contributed to the development of papers and research about accessibility.

5.5 Audioscenic, Belgium : theatre audio description service, www.audioscenic.be

The service

Audioscenic is a non-for-profit organisation which provides audio description in Brussels and in Wallonia, the French speaking part of Belgium. In larger cities, there are usually two audio described performances per play run. Some plays are audio described in several cities. The service is provided entirely by volunteers.

In 2010, we provided audio description for 20 theatre plays and 50 performances staged by 17 different companies for some 300 visually impaired theatre goers.

Audioscenic uses a portable UHF professional sound system with 16 very light headsets and some hearing loops.

The service is provided when at least 5 visually impaired people book in for the audio description of a play. Sometimes we manage to obtain lower price tickets for visually impaired theatre goers.

We also audio described a circus performance, a musical performance involving many visual elements and an opera.

Communication

We publicise the service widely through publications for visually impaired people and on our website. We regularly send our e-newsletter "Carnets de Bord de l'Audio Description" to 450 people.

The mainstream press also reports occasionally about the service, which helps raise awareness.

History and management processes

A grant from the The Fonds Elia et Beeckman of the Fondation Roi Baudouin in 2008 et 2009 enabled Audioscenic to:

- purchase the portable sound system
- train audio describers.

The aim was to develop a professional quality service. The describers were trained by Cédric Juliens, a professional actor and pedagogue. The training consisted of the description of a number of plays of different styles, with feedback from the audio description committee consisting of visually impaired and sighted people.

The describers are professional and actors, amateur stage directors or translators.

Visually impaired theatre goers value the quality of the descriptions and give feedback.

Organisational learning

As the project developed, we became more aware of our values and aims, which are:
to:

- audio description is part of the every-day cultural experience and there is no stigma attached to it
- "theatre can be me for too", thanks to audio description
- audio description is an art form which mobilises theatre, language and social skills and need to be of professional quality. There is no room for a low quality paternalistic service
- audio description has to be user-centered and empower users to experience the type of emotions which are associated with attending theatre performances

We found out that visually impaired people particularly like the fact that audio description "makes me feel like the rest of the audience". Quite a few theaters in the UK provide optional touch tours of stage before the audio description and there it seems to work. Most of our audiences prefer not to have come that much come earlier. They come about half an hour earlier for the introduction to the play - which describes stage set, characters and costume. For most that's about enough (and sometimes already too much) "concession" they want to ask from their sighted partner or companion.

Two surveys undertaken in Brussels show that today's adult theatre goers are primarily those who attended performances as children. This is seldom the case of adults who were born blind or partially sighted. We try reach this group and establish a relationship with people who are in this situation and support their confidence in going to the theatre.

Sometimes special schools are reluctant to take pupils to the theatre and say "We don't have the resources for the transport." Transport can be an issue, but isn't it also the fear of trying something new?

5.6 Berlin für Blinde : city tourist guide, www.berlinfuerblinde.de

The service

Berlin für Blinde is the first website to bring together vital city tourism information for blind and partially sighted people. Visually impaired Berliners and visitors can find information about 'high culture', entertainment and a wealth of essential practical information on the site. Shops, restaurants, pubs and supermarkets which are responsive to the needs of visually impaired people feature on the website.

The website includes information on and reviews about the accessible cultural offer, for example museums with touch tours, stage touch tours of opera performances and the exploration of world famous concert halls and rehearsals by orchestras. Visually impaired people contribute reviews about their touch experiences of heritage, which provide a voice to 'another way of seeing and sensing'.

Berlin für Blinde also informs on a number of places worth visiting for their multi-sensory appeal, ranging from a small chocolate making factory to urban parks. The description of the immersive experience of walking within the vast concrete landscape of the Holocaust Memorial Monument, near the Reichstag is of compelling quality for visually impaired and sighted people alike.

It tries and tests new ways: for example there are detailed way-finding instructions from the nearest public transport stops to places of interest.

The website meets high web accessibility standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). It is very well structured and easy to use by blind and partially sighted people. All audio files have text versions.

Berlin für Blinde was the Winner of the first International Jodi Award for accessible digital culture, given in 2010 in Brussels. In their appraisal, the Judges say:

"Berlin für Blinde helps us conjure up a picture of a world in which disabled people freely travel to the world's many cultural cities, because they have easy access to all the information about accessible travel, entertainment and culture at their fingertips. It does not pretend to say the final word about future guides of accessible cities and their accessible cultural offer, but it unquestionably represents a great leap forward."

(www.jodimattetrust.org.uk/awards-listing)

Management processes

The project was developed by Förderband and started in 2006 in two phases. In 2008, we released the guide as an audio-guide (CD) with additional tactile maps and other supplements (e.g. brochures written in Braille). The website was created in 2009.

About ten visually impaired volunteers, two visually impaired authors and the organisation of visually impaired people in Berlin (ABSJ) advised the research, and also occasionally the Office for the coordination for tourism at the German organization for visually impaired people (DBSV).

The project is managed by one member of staff of the Förderband staff (about a third of their working time). The Berlin für Blinde team consists of 8 people, of which one is visually impaired, working all over Berlin. The website is continually being up-dated.

Involvement of and consultation with visually impaired people had an immense impact on the project.

Visually impaired staff members:

- developed our training programme for sighted people to learn about visual impairment
- advised us continually in choosing interesting places and in understanding the needs of visual impaired people
- taught us how to describe objects and better understand access barriers, as did visually impaired volunteers.
- developed our terminology and special way to describe how to get to the places of interest in a precise and suitable way. This helps maximise the independent mobility of blind people. It is the only website to our knowledge to provide such information. Independent mobility in an unfamiliar environment is a major challenge for blind people - and perhaps it is therefore assumed that this type of information won't work. A number of visually impaired people who gave

feedback to the guide in the last couple of years liked these instructions. The three blind German speaking people who tested the website for the Jodi Awards 2010 test users were enthusiastic about this information.

The involvement of visually impaired people led strongly influenced web design, for example the menu and sub-menu bars, which structure visitor information according to senses involved in a particular visit/activity. This feature was also liked by the German speaking visually impaired assessors for the International Jodi Awards 2010 (www.jodimattestrust.org.uk/awards).

Communication, audience development, partnerships

The Berlin für Blinde web site is being visited by thousands of people per month.. It has links to sites which provide information and services to visually impaired people, tourism and public transport sites

We are present at exhibitions/fairs with equipment for visually impaired people, work with the organisation for v.i. people at Berlin (ABSV) communicating via using newsletters and mail lists. Sometimes we organise events and tours for visually impaired people, e.g. also in cooperation with the Senate of Berlin.

We seek advice and consultation for new services. The Berlin organization for blind and partially sighted people (ABSV) suggests us new ideas. One staff member regularly attends meetings of the ABSV mobility problems working group. Some of our recommendations are in the meantime frequently and regularly visited by the ABSV leisure group and the youth group. Both of them organise leisure activities for visually impaired people.

We work on continual changes and improvements and installed :

- a survey on the site to collect user feedback.
- a special studio software to record new texts into mp3 audio quickly

Organisational learning and impact on organisation

Berlin für Blinde gained new horizons, a much better understanding of the needs of people with disabilities and how to include these needs in the design of culture projects.

We learned about the diversity of visually impaired people, for example about psychological and personal impact vision loss can mean for people undergoing this dramatic change.

The presence of blind and partially sighted people in our office led to greater staff awareness.

Impact beyond organisation

The project helped us promote to right to access to culture more widely in Berlin, because we are well known. We advised cultural institutions, artists and tourism organisations regarding cultural accessibility blind and partially sighted people, supporting organisations develop new access projects, such as guided tours.

We took part in the development of a standardised list of access features for exhibitions, which the Berlin Senate had commissioned. Compliance with this check list is a criterion for cultural funding.

Budget

The web site was designed and programmed by two web designers as a work in progress for the cost of €12.600.

The content of the website was realized with financial support of the Stiftung Aktion Mensch (German Foundation for disabled people) and with support of the Federal

Employment Office in Berlin. The foundation's financial support amounted to €115.000. The total cost which was €138.000. From 2006 up to 2008 about 70 unemployed people who were on training programmes from the Employment Office researched and collected the contents of the CD and the site. They worked from between 3 months up to up to two years. During 2008 two visually impaired authors, a production team of six people and seven speakers worked for 3-6 month as freelancers to write, design, speak and produce the audio-CD (and the tactile maps) which was later transformed into the contents of the site.

5.7 Highlights from inspiring projects

Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels: guided tours

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts is an excellent example of commitment to the long term. In 2000, it held its first access-group consultation in 2000 and launched its first access tours in January 2001. In 2005, it consulted visually-impaired groups, as well as Belgian lead organisations, such "Oeuvre Nationale des Aveugles" (ONA) and the "Ligue Braille", on how to expand activities from sculpture to painting, The museum also drew on the experience of seasoned audio describers and the National Gallery and Tate Modern in London. In 2007 we started our programme of introducing paintings to visually impaired people.

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts fosters experience sharing, networking and new skills development. In 2006, it organised an international conference about access for visually impaired people and in 2012 a workshop with users and other museums about using social media for communicating with visually impaired audiences.

Museo Omero, Ancona : a tactile museum for all

The Museo Omero in Ancona, Italy is a tactile museum which opened in 1993. Its collections span Greek Antiquity to Contemporary Art. Original objects and replicas provide an exceptionally wide collection of objects for touching. Individual visitors and

groups can visit on their own are welcome and guided tours are provided. "All our activities are for everyone with higher attention to visually impaired people."

The idea of a tactile museum was first put forward by the Italian Union of the Blind. Museo Omero was founded by Ancona City Council with the aid of a grant from The Marches Regional Council. It became a State Museum in 1999, confirming its unique status at a national level.

The museum has developed exceptional experience in making collections accessible to blind and partially sighted people, which it shares. It organises a yearly training seminar for museum professionals and organised the international conference "L'arte a portata di mano" ("*Art within reach*") in 1994. It performs a vital role in professional skills development.

Regards Neufs, by Base-Cour, Lausanne : cinema audio description

Base-Cour, an association of film professionals which organises a short film festival in Lausanne, Switzerland launched Regards Neufs ("*New Looks*"), the first cinema audio description service in 2011. The audio description is provided via headsets on the day of the release of the film. Five feature films will be described per season. Once a month a great film classic is also being audio described. The City of Lausanne is one of the funders. Regards Neufs aims to support better social integration of visually impaired people. In the longer term, in partnership with Pathé, Base Court, the initiator of Regards Neufs wishes to make audio description available in every Pathé cinéma in Switzerland.

55 visually impaired people and 65 sighted people attended the celebratory launch of the service in September 2011. The first audio description of a film classic was attended by 13 visually impaired people, the second by 27 and the third by 20.

Regards Neufs is an excellent example of how individual commitment, dynamism, communication and fundraising skills can create a new reality. Audio description in the cinema remains relatively rare (UK, France, Berlin Film Festival), yet it is more popular

than visiting museums or going to the theatre.

6. EBU Call for Action

6.1 Cultural rights: time for action is now

Time for strategic action is now. For too long have the cultural rights people with a (visual) disability remained a low priority, in spite of them being expressly mentioned in **Council of Europe** and **European Union** policies and action plans.

People with a disability and older people must be part of the design solution. They are not the problem. Institutional attitudes are the problem. To break this vicious circle of exclusion, real change in the attitudes, culture, policies and funding of cultural organisations is required.

EBU calls on **European and national cultural policy, decision makers, funders and Award schemes; local authority cultural services and public and private sector providers of cultural services** to take rigorous action to implement the cultural rights of visually impaired people specifically and of people with a disability.

5.2 EBU Principles for Action

All strategic policies, plans, programmes and actions to be developed by cultural bodies and organisations at European, national, local levels are to:

1. be based on the fundamental belief that full participation in society requires full participation in cultural life.
2. adopt Design for All principles (also known as inclusive design principles) right from the start of every project development process, including the development of policies and actions plans
3. involve people with a disability and specifically people with a visual disability at all key stages of project development, as well as disabled and non-disabled cultural accessibility experts. “Nothing for us without us” is the EDF’s motto.

4. aim at the implementation of article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognises the right of people with a disability to take part in cultural life 'on an equal basis'.
5. identify concrete targets designed 'to bring about significant and lasting improvements in access to culture for all people with disabilities', as called for in Council of Europe Recommendation R(92)6 in 1992.
6. make cultural accessibility by disabled people and Design for All principles an essential criterion for all cultural funding.

6.3 At European level EBU urges action

1. The **Council of Europe** and the **European Commission** to develop a common evaluation tool for cultural accessibility of people with a disability. That this provides an analysis of strategic development needs, the barriers to cultural accessibility faced by people with a disability and existing and new solutions for providing cultural accessibility.
2. The **European Council** of the European Union to take stock of the current levels of cultural accessibility for people with a disability, which it was expected to undertake already in 2005, as stated in the **European Council Resolution of 6 May 2003 on accessibility of cultural infrastructure and cultural activities for people with disabilities. That this** be of a strategic nature **and be undertaken in** conjunction with the **European Commission**.
3. The **Council of Europe** and the **European Commission** to monitor progress in cultural accessibility for people with a disability at regular intervals, publish findings in all relevant progress monitoring reports, such as the monitoring of the **Council of Europe Action Plan (2006-2015) on "Full Participation of People with Disabilities in Society"** and the **European Disability Strategy 2010-20**.

4. The **Council of Europe** and **European Union** to call on all their member countries to implement Council of Europe Recommendation R(92)6, as a follow up to the publication of cultural accessibility monitoring reports.
5. The **European Commission** to specifically mention the cultural rights of people with a disability and art. 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in any future **Accessibility Act or Directive**. Full participation in society requires full participation in cultural life.
6. The **European Commission Directorate General X (Culture)** to pro-actively promote the cultural rights of people with a disability and make a strategic contribution to **European Disability Strategy 2010-20** to enable its implementation.

6.4 EBU calls on national governments

1. To put legislation in place to ensure the social, economic, political **and cultural rights** of people with a disability are being implemented, and specifically article 30 of the UNCRPD.
2. To work with the **European Commission** and the **Council of Europe** to develop a common tool for monitoring progress in cultural accessibility by people with a disability.
3. To monitor progress in cultural accessibility for people with a disability, which is an intrinsic part of the implementation of **Council of Europe Action Plan (2006-2015) on "Full Participation of People with Disabilities in Society**.
4. To develop strategic policies and programmes designed to implement Council of Europe Recommendation R(92)6, closely involving national Disability Councils for national and equivalents where they exist on their development, implementation and monitoring.

5. To develop, fund, support and promote cultural accessibility research and evaluation tools for the benefit of users and for cultural organisations, with a strong focus on user experiences.
6. To develop, fund, support and promote programmes for the professional skills in all aspects of cultural accessibility for people with a disability, including design for all.

6.5 EBU calls on local authority cultural services; public sector, independent and commercial sector cultural services providers:

1. To undertake access audits of the physical, sensory and intellectual accessibility of the buildings, spaces, events, workshops, programmes, exhibitions and information; onsite, online, in outreach work with schools and with groups of adults, in outdoor performances.
2. To make an assessment/audit of the (local, national, global) cultural significance of their buildings, spaces, services, activities, performances, events, programmes and collections, so as to identify ways of providing an high quality accessible cultural offer which truly reflect their cultural significance.
3. To develop strategic policies and prioritised plans based on the audits/assessments mentioned above with clearly identified targets and aimed at implementing Council of Europe Recommendation R(92)6.
4. To provide disability awareness and equality training to all staff, so they develop the skills needed to implement the access plan.
5. To put in place all appropriate policies, procedures, practices and processes to becoming an accessible and inclusive cultural organisation:

- Director and senior managers to champion the cultural accessibility of people with a disability,
 - cultural accessibility to be an integrated part of strategy, budget and work plans and staff appraisals on all levels
 - involvement of people with a disability and specifically people with a visual disability at all key stages of audits and strategy, processes and project development
 - staffing policy to include a pro-active commitment to the employment of people with a disability, as employees, artists and consultants
 - work in partnership with other cultural organisations, with disability organisations and places where older and disabled people live, such as care homes and residential centres
 - be committed to being a learning organisation regarding cultural accessibility.
6. To use their enormous creative skills and knowledge to push the boundaries of Design for All (also known as inclusive design) solutions in everything they do.
 7. To write intellectual, sensory and physical access into every project and design development brief/description.
 8. To require from tenders for public procurement of services that they demonstrate their experience and understanding of inclusive design (also known as Design for All) for people with a disability and specifically visually impaired people, both in their submissions and in interview.
 9. To make the funding of cultural accessibility for people with a disability and specifically people with a visual disability, as well as Design for All an integral part of all budgets.

10. To develop a professional culture of evaluation of cultural accessibility and share the learning with others in the cultural, disability and social care sectors.

7. Conclusion: cultural rights - a SHARED responsibility

Cultural accessibility for all has to become an every-day reality for well over 80 million people with a (visual) disability in Europe (EDF figures for EU alone, www.edf-feph.org) and over 40 million people with sight loss (WHO figures for geographical Europe, www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets).

The EBU Access to Culture (ATC) Call for Action sketches out a roadmap for change. It asks that we as stakeholders take pro-active steps to ensure lasting results in the short-term and medium-term for the long-term. Only this way can Significant and lasting improvements in access to culture for people with a (visual) disability be achieved. The result will be an inclusive society in which culture is a shared space for all.

Blind and partially sighted people clearly state that full participation in cultural life is an essential aspect of life and a condition for full participation in society:

"Life without culture is like food with no spices. Culture adds flavour and pleasure to my life."

"Being able to enjoy art and culture in an accessible way is so important to feel truly included in society. Art and culture are great to be shared and enjoyed together with others."

Only by taking joint responsibility and making joint efforts can we achieve an accessible and inclusive society with equal opportunities for all to full participation in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.

Support and join the EBU call for action - make a difference today.



EBU - The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe

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End of EBU Access to Culture summary report 2012

8. Links and Resources

Policy and planning documents mentioned in the Report

Council of Europe Action Plan "Full Participation of People with Disabilities in Society", chapter 1.5, page 8 and chapter 3.2, page 13; www.coe.int

Council of Europe Recommendation R(92) 6 on independent living of people with disabilities, chapter VIII - section 8.5; www.coe.int

Definition of cultural accessibility, European Centre for Cultural Accessibility, www.culturalaccessibility.org

Design for All Principles; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_design

European Commission Disability Strategy 2010-20,

http://ec.europa.eu/news/justice/101115_en.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/news/justice/101115_en.htm

European Council Resolution of 6 May 2003 on accessibility of cultural infrastructure and cultural activities for people with disabilities (<http://eu-lex.europa.eu>, or search)

European Blind Union Access to Culture pages; <http://www.euroblind.org/working-areas/access-to-culture/nr/205>

EBU/ST Dunstons "In Touch with Art 2010" Conference Resolution,

<http://www.euroblind.org/working-areas/access-to-culture/nr/205>

European Disability Forum, www.edf-feph.org

Inclusive Design Principles; there are a number of web documents

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 30, www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150

United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 27 :

www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/

Weisen Marcus, Disability discrimination in museums is systemic - the case for national strategic approaches', pages 48-78 in 'From the Margins to the Core', Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010, www.vam.ac.uk

Reports

Accessibility of museum, library and archive websites : the MLA report, Museums Libraries and Archives Council, England, 2005 (pdf);
www.egovmonitor.com/reports/rep11278.pdf

The Importance of Visitor-focused Educational Programming for Special Needs Access in Museums (report on the national survey by the Slovenian Association of Museums on access for people with a disability), Rajka Bracun Sova, The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum, 2011, <http://ijz.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.177/prod.153>

Talking Images Research: Museums, galleries and heritage sites: improving access for blind and partially sighted people, Royal National Institute of Blind People, 2003 (word and pdf); www.rnib.org.uk, search : talking images museums

Good Practice Guidance

Art Beyond Sight, Art Education for the Blind, USA, a number of resources for museums free and for sale, tactile books for visually impaired people;
<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/>

Guidelines for Audio description in museums, Art Beyond Sight, 1997,
<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-guidelines.shtml>

Shifting Perspectives, opening up museums and galleries for blind and partially sighted people, RNIB, 2011 (£7.50); www.rnib.org.uk, search 'shifting perspectives

Talking Images Research: Museums, galleries and heritage sites: improving access for blind and partially sighted people, Royal National Institute of Blind People, 2003 (word and pdf); www.rnib.org.uk, search : talking images museums

Some more case studies

Jodi Mattes Trust (the website includes case studies of Jodi Award winning and commended projects which use technology to widen access to collections, heritage and information, including: New York Beyond Sight, Berlin für Blinde, Imperial War Museum Duxford; www.jodimattestrust.org.uk/awards)

Museumforall (the blog includes has features about museums which were shortlisted for the Design for All Foundation Awards); <http://museumforallblog.wordpress.com/>

1 : EBU ATC Project Management

EBU ATC Project Team:

Chair: Carol Borowski, EBU Culture & Education Commission 2007-2011

Vice Chair (acting chair): Birgitta Blokland, EBU Secretary General and portfolio holder for culture 2007-2011

Project Officer: Marcus Weisen, international expert and consultant on cultural accessibility

EBU ATC Advisory Panel of specialists in cultural accessibility:

Anastasia Kalou, Get inspired Design Studio, Greece

André Fertier, Chair EUCREA (European Committee for the Creativity by and with Disabled Persons), Secretary General ECCA (European Centre for Cultural Accessibility), France

Judy Dixey, Director, VocalEyes, UK

Fatima Alves, Education Officer, Pavilhão do Conhecimento, Portugal

Siegfried Saerberg, Blinde und Kunst, Germany

Morana Vouk, Director, Tiflological Museum, Croatia

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Appendix 2 : Respondents from EBU member organisations

For their invaluable contribution to the Access to Culture Project, EBU wishes to thank:

Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (ÖBSV), Austria

Belgian Confederation for Blind and Partially Sighted, Belgium

Confédération Française pour la Promotion Sociale des Aveugles et Amblyopes
(CFPSAA), France

Danish Association of the Blind, Denmark

German Federation for the Blind and Partially Sighted, Germany

Hungarian Federation of Blind and Visually Impaired, as well its County Associations
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Heves, Hungary

Italian Union of the Blind and Partially Sighted, Italy

National Council for the Blind of Ireland, Republic of Ireland

Malta Society of the Blind, Malta

Panyprian Organisation of the Blind, Cyprus

Portuguese Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted, Portugal

Romanian Association of the Blind, Romania

Royal National Institute of Blind People, United Kingdom

Spanish National Organization of the Blind (ONCE), Spain

Schweizerischer Blinden - und Sehbehindertenverband, Switzerland

Union of the Blind and Partially Sighted of Slovenia

Viziris Netherland network of organisations working with visually impaired people and

KUBES - Art for Blind and Partially Sighted, the Netherlands

Appendix 3 : Respondents from cultural organisations

For their invaluable contribution to the Access to Culture Project, EBU wishes to thank:

Almeida Theatre, London, United Kingdom

Audioscenic, Brussels, Belgium

Berlin für Blinde, Berlin Germany

Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, Greece

Eugenides Foundation, P. Faliro, Greece

Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn Germany,

Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House, Leeds, United Kingdom

Lighthouse for the Blind and Tactual Museum, Athens, Greece

Municipal Community Museum of Batalha, Batalha, Portugal

Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France

Museo Omero, Ancona, Italy

Regards Neufs, Lausanne Switzerland

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium

Shakespeare's Globe, London, United Kingdom

Very Special Arts, Athens, Greece