

## NOVIR newsletter 2017

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Welcome to the NOVIR newsletter 2017.

It is the third time the newsletter is produced in English to make sure that we all have access to the same information. The decision to make NOVIR network's common language English was taken on the NOVIR seminar in Stockholm in 2014.

The transition to using English will of course require that we use the time to translate the materials, stories and news, we each want to share.

The newsletter 2017 is produced with the theme: **Training Professionals**. Each country has described the situation on in-service training and training professionals in the field of visual impairment in each country.

In addition each country has written a description about 'the on-going projects' and 'what is going on' in each organization.

I thank you for all the contributions made by the Nordic visual staff.

The information's in this newsletter is compiled by Lea Johanne Sarfelt, editor of the NOVIR newsletter.

Read more about NOVIR on [www.novir.net](http://www.novir.net)

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## Finland

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### Specialization in Education of Visual Impairment in Finland

In Finland it is possible to study special needs education at universities Helsinki, Turku, Joensuu, Vaasa (Swedish) and Jyväskylä. The basic qualification for teachers is Master's degree (300 credits, ECTS). Options for studies are:

**1) To study as a major subject and complete the higher degree in special education.** Studies like this are run in Master's programmes in Special Education. There are a couple of options to choose and according to that the certification will give the right to work as a special education teacher, a special class teacher, a regular class/primary teacher or as a pre-primary or early special education teacher.

**2) In addition, it is possible for a certified teacher (having Master's Degree) to acquire the professional competence in teaching children with SNE.** Multifunctional training lasts one year (60 cr.). These teachers can work according to their background as a special kindergarten teacher or as a special needs teacher in mainstreamed or special schools and day-care-centers.

**Vocational special needs teachers** work in both mainstream vocational institutions and special vocational institutions. They can acquire their competence at Schools of vocational teacher education, usually in connection with the Universities of Applied Sciences. Studies for vocational special needs teacher last about a year (60 credits). Prerequisites are a relevant university or polytechnic degree, adequate work experience and basic vocational teacher education (60 credits)

### Specialization in visual impairment

#### 1) Training special education teachers for pre-school and compulsory school education

During special education teachers' programme the knowledge offered on visual challenges in minimum. There is one compulsory book to read. During previous years, the department of special education asked the lectures for students from the resource center Valteri. Due to the financial issues (university cannot buy anymore extra lessons, Valteri cannot offer lessons free), Valteri-Onerva lack the possibility to run these lessons nowadays.

The basic idea is that whenever the teacher needs more information and specialisation in visual impairment, the municipality will send him/her to Valteri to take part in the much specified in-service training. In early years this worked better, but nowadays due to the economical situation in municipalities, only few teachers attend the courses. Also the length of the course is very short, 1-2 days.

In Finland there are no specified regulations in law or statute for educating the pupils with visual impairment. The Law and Act in Education mention generally that each pupil has a right to have the best education according to her/his individual needs. To organise this in practise is the task of municipality.

### 2) Training special education teachers for vocational training

In Finland there is no specialisation in visual impairment on the vocational teacher education level. Individual specialising teachers with an interest in the field of visual impairment (VI) can choose to do their work practice or otherwise specialise in the field of VI. There is one vocational special needs college (Keskuspuisto Vocational college, part of which was formerly the Arla Institute) that historically was specialised in teaching students with VI, but also in the vocational field teaching increasingly takes place in the mainstream setting.

### Master's thesis, Doctoral thesis on visual impairment

The research for visual impairment at all levels lack the support of professionals. There is no-one having the doctoral degree at the universities on visual impairment. Most research done on Master's or Doctoral level is done under more general studies e.g. general educational studies or adult education studies.

### More information about the teacher training in Finland:

[http://www.oph.fi/english/education\\_system/teacher\\_education](http://www.oph.fi/english/education_system/teacher_education)

<https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/finland/national-overview/teacher-training-basic-and-specialist-teacher-training>

<http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/finland-overview/finland-education-for-all/>

### More information from the support centers for visual impairment:

#### Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting, Finland, [www.valteri.fi/EN/valteri.html](http://www.valteri.fi/EN/valteri.html)

- Valteri - Onerva, Jyväskylä: Services for Finnish Speaking Clients, <http://www.onerva.fi/en/>  
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### What is going on in Finland?

#### Valteri, Centre for Learning and Consulting

Valteri, Centre for Learning and Consulting is a nationwide support service system in Finland. Valteri supplements municipal and regional support services in learning and school attendance. Previous state special schools / support centers for inclusive education had earlier cooperation as Valteri network. In August 2015, the Valteri network merged as a one unit, Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting. Valteri still consists of six units placed all around Finland. Of these units Mikael, Mäntykangas, Ruskis, Onerva and Tervaväylä are for Finnish speaking clients and Skilla (former Svenska Skolan för

Synskadade) for Swedish speaking clients. Each unit offer support services for inclusive education and also each of them have a Valteri school for pupils with special educational needs.

Valteri has a main act to support the implementation of inclusive education in municipalities and to offer a comprehensive range of services in the fields of support used at schools all over Finland, which are general, intensified and special support. Our services can target the needs of individual children and young people, or the needs of an entire working community, municipality or region. The other act is to offer a school placement at Valteri School for some children with specific needs.

Support for the pupils with visual impairment and the staff working with them has been traditionally offered by Valteri Onerva and Valteri Skilla. Onerva offered support to the Finnish speaking schools, whereas Skilla offered support to the Swedish speaking ones.

From the autumn 2016 on, Valteri has divided Finland geographically into three main areas to offer support for pupils with special needs: south, middle and north. Concerning the pupils with visual impairments, this means that Valteri aims, in the future, be able to offer the support for the pupils with VI and their schools from that Valteri unit which is geographically placed closest to them. Thus Valteri has made some changes considering the responsibility areas, when offering support to the pupils with visual impairment and their schools. There is a working group to organise this transition phase. The next phase in the process is how to train staff and how to maintain and create the coherence service all over Finland.

Valteri – Onerva at Jyväskylä, moved to the new building with the open space concept in January 2016. New building follows the accessible, modifiable and open working environment both for pupils and adults. The Swedish speaking unit Valteri- Skilla, moved in together with the Finnish speaking Valteri - Ruskis in Helsinki. New opportunities give both units broader chances to make habilitation as a natural and integrated part of the school day and also create the new ways when supporting inclusive education.

### **Keskuspuisto Vocational College, Finland**

Keskuspuisto Vocational College is going through a turbulent time at the moment and in the coming few years. Partly this is due to the big reform that is taking place in the whole vocational educational system in Finland. Among other things the reform includes a shift towards closer co-operation between schools and working life, education taking place increasingly in the workplace and a combination of the large number of vocational qualifications into fewer, wider qualifications.

Partly Keskuspuisto is going through the same difficult economic times as the rest of Finnish society at the moment. Large budget cuttings in a short time at Keskuspuisto include lay-offs of staff and reducing the number of vocational qualifications provided. The number of students is not decreasing, and students with a visual impairment are now a fairly small minority, nonetheless with much the same needs. As a lot of staff has been laid off, including persons specialized in the teaching and rehabilitation of students with visual impairments, the teaching of students with VI at Keskuspuisto faces the big challenge of finding new ways of supporting the special needs of these students. This will call for new and even closer ways of co-operating and networking with the rehabilitation system and organizations

working with visual impairment on all levels in society. Keskuspuisto vocational college and the teachers working there want to continue using the remaining special knowledge and skills in teaching students with visual impairment. The challenge of finding new ways of working has begun and the coming years will be critical in this development. All in all, in rapidly changing times, e.g. digitalization, the common challenge of keeping up and developing skills and knowledge in the field of teaching students with visual impairments - mainly in a mainstream setting – seems to require more and closer networking both locally and internationally.

### **Renewal of the national core curriculum for pre-primary and basic education**

The national core curriculum for pre-primary and basic education was renewed in 2014. In Finland there is only one national curriculum to follow, e.g. there are no specific curriculums for groups with special needs. The renewal process of core curriculum involved all stakeholders, particularly education providers and education personnel and it also encouraged the parents and pupils to participate in the process. New curriculum stress the action based learning and the integration of subjects and methods. It also points out the importance of the cooperation between learning and habilitation. This supports teachers and the rehabilitation personnel to plan and make the holistic support for a child.

After the renewed core curriculum was completed, the next task was to create the locally stressed curriculum. Each school/municipality had to create the new local curriculum that naturally goes hand-in-hand with the core curriculum. Local modifications will be gradually implemented in schools starting from August 2016.

Pupils with special needs follow the national curriculum according to the subject orientated education or according to the activity areas. A pupil with broad needs for support will mostly have an official statement for special support and thus needs an IEP (Individual Education Plan). The aims and solutions for the education of this pupil are set in details in this plan.

### **The on-going projects in Finland**

#### **EBU / ICEVI- Europe joint Braille project.**

Following the European Blind Union strategic plan for the period 2015 - 2019, Braille as a topic has come into extensive focus. One intended goal by EBU is that all learning material for visually impaired children and youth should be offered in appropriate and timely formats.

Danish Association of the Blind has offered to take the lead in the two-year-project, which will analyze the situation and proper solutions for children and young persons using Braille and to bring up the focal points with an outset of the situation and observations registered in the different countries. The desired result of a project is also to find out the best practices on training Braille, the availability of good and up to date training materials, and the general propagation of Braille, including in the public domain.

The target group is limited for the children and young persons with visual impairment using Braille, under the age of 18 years and who do not have a severe additional disability apart from the visual impairment.

The project is run in two phases by the steering group with members from Denmark, Sweden and Finland - the latter being the ICEVI - Europe link. The project will screen and analyze the various situation and solutions in Nordic countries during the phase one, and then widespread the screening to Estonia, Austria, Italy and France.

In the end, the project wishes to establish the following:

- 1) Use and availability of Braille. Whether the use and availability of Braille in whatever format - paper or electronic - and for all crucial purposes (education and/or leisure) is increasing or decreasing?
- 2) The impact of technology. Is modern technology (ICT) promoting a larger amount of Braille and does that mean that persons who are blind or very severely partially sighted make use of this opportunity?
- 3) The potential impact of other formats and media on the usage of Braille. How could the availability of text on computers (synthetic speech) and narrated text (humane voice) be seen as effecting the extent of use of acquired skills amongst children and young persons who are blind for writing and reading Braille?
- 4) Availability of relevant Braille material at the relevant time and of an equal content. Are blind children from an early age (pre-school, early grades and later on) offered Braille educational material and do these children get the same educational material and at the same point in time as their sighted classmates?
- 5) Educators and educational materials both. Are children met by trained and skilled educators who can teach them Braille competently and in an inspiring manner? Are educators using relevant training material?
- 6) Do children and young persons who are blind maintain their skills in using Braille? And if so, do they continue to use it as a major or minor part of their handling of texts. How can training courses etc. be put in place to ensure that children and young persons who are blind do not over time lose their competences in mastering Braille?

### **Behalf of the project, the steering committee**

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### **Iceland**

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### **Training professionals: The situation on in-service training and training professionals in the field of visual impairment.**

Training of professionals at NIB Iceland is always on individual bases if the professional trained is an employee of the center. As there is no formal education in this field in Iceland, employees have been trained in other countries depending on the education and profession. Continued staff development is very important for the progress of service and employees are encouraged to seek further education. In 2015, for example, over 30% of the staff was involved in higher education in different subjects from web design to public administration to orientation and mobility. Many of these studies and training took place overseas. As for professionals who work for other government agencies, schools and local authorities, they are trained by NIB staff and usually the training takes place at their place of work. Specific training for school staff is usually within the school itself and includes training in Braille, mobility and orientation, and daily living skills. The principal applies that most training is done on individual bases and is organized around specific needs in a specific environment. Over the years, it is our experience that schools, government organizations, and local authorities are very pleased with this service and specifically that it is based on specific needs and in the environment where it is most suited.

### **What is going on at NIB and a short description about on-going projects?**

NIB has been working on many different types of development projects for the last few years and is currently working on five projects. Of these five projects, four projects are European cooperation projects and they are: Vapet- Vip, I-Express, Teach CVI, and Sound of Vision. The fifth project is funded by the Icelandic center for research and is about math materials and is called Sproti. Of the European projects Vapet – Vip, I-Express and Teach CVI is Erasmus + projects but Sound of Vision is H2020. Vapet- Vip and I-Express are new projects and will run until 2019 but Teach CVI will be complete in the fall of 2017. We encourage you to look at the websites of these projects as we think they will all be very interesting to our colleges. The websites are:

<http://www.enviter.eu/projects/vapetvip>

<https://www.teachcvi.net/>

<https://www.soundofvision.net/>

## Norway

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Statped is a national state agency that offers special education services within the educational sector. The municipalities and county municipalities are obligated to meet children, young people and adults in an adequate manner according to their rights within an inclusive learning environment. Statped intends to contribute actively to achieving this objective. Statped's services are voluntary and offered as supplementary support.

Statped is divided into four regional sections and provide services within six different disciplines or fields:

- Acquired Brain Injury

- Complex Learning Disabilities
- Deaf-blindness / Dual Visual and Hearing Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Speech and Language Impairment
- Visual Impairment

We also have a department dedicated specifically to the development of learning resources and new educational technology. Statped has a total of 720 FTEs (full time equivalents).

Read Statped's Annual Report for 2016: <http://www.statped.no/om-statped/statpeds-arsrapport/2016/>

### **Learning resources and technology**

Statped intends to be a driving force behind the development of learning resources and technology within the field of special needs education. We produce special learning aids, teaching materials and media for adapted education such as audio books, books in braille and other tactile teaching materials. During the school year 2015 /2016, Statped has produced approximately 130 textbooks in braille or as e-books intended for braille display.

In 2017 we started a collaboration with NLB (Norwegian library for audiobooks and braille), regarding a joint solution for electronic distribution for Norwegian audiobooks. This solution will offer both downloading and streaming of Statped's audiobooks. This will make it easier for students to play audiobooks from the platform that they prefer. A free and simpler access to necessary audiobooks will increase the opportunity for adaptation for these students in school.

### **Conference about special needs education and technology**

Statped is arranging its yearly SPOT-conference for 2017 in Lillestrøm, Norway 21. and 22. November. SPOT is a practical conference with the goal to inspire, give an overview, increase competence, and give the opportunity to share experiences. The target group is people who use technology in education.

### **Let's play together - Nordic conference**

8th-9th of June 2017 in Trondheim, Norway

Nordic conference on how to create inclusive environments for visually impaired preschool children through play and mobility skills.

### **Publications**

See learning resources at statped.no: <http://www.statped.no/Laringsressurs/Fag/Syn/#1>

### **Sweden**

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### **Further teacher training**

National Agency for Special Needs Education, SPSM, offers in-service training to teachers and paraprofessionals in the education of students with visual impairment. In the five *regions* are carried out courses with focus on the education of students with low vision.

SPSM-Resource Centre Vision offers further teacher training for personnel meeting children and youth with blindness and CVI. The national resource centre in Stockholm has focus mainly on children and students reading Braille, while the centre in Örebro has its focus on children and students with MDVI.

### **Courses with focus on children and students with MDVI**

Personnel in pre-school and school are offered a two days course at the centre or in some cases for a whole team at the local school.

### **Courses with focus on Braille readers**

- For personnel in *pre-school, children 0-5 years*, there is a 4 days' course at the resource centre and a follow-up course at the local pre-school.
- For personnel in the so-called *pre-school class*, when the child is 6 years of age, there is a basic 2 days' course and a 2 days' methodic course at the centre. A one-day follow-up course is arranged at the local school.
- For personnel in *compulsory school, grades 1-3 and 4-6* there is a package of courses in six levels:  
Level 1: a basic course at the centre, 2 days, usually late spring before the student enters the school.  
Level 2: a methodology course at the centre, 2 days, usually in connection to the basic course.  
Level 3: a follow-up course at the local school, 2 days during autumn.  
Level 4: a supplementary course at the centre, 2 days in spring the year after the basic course.  
Level 5 and 6: a one day course during each of the coming two school years.
- For personnel in *grades 7-9* there is a package of a 4 days' basic and methodology course at the centre and a 2 days' follow-up course at the local school.
- For personnel at *upper secondary school* there is a 4 days' course.

The centre also offers courses for teachers in the education of *art, music, handicraft and physical education*. A basic and methodology course and a follow-up course, both 3 days.

### **University programs in Sweden with focus on visual impairment**

**Stockholm University** has a special assignment from the Swedish government to offer courses and programs in the field of visual impairment.

There are two programs with focus on visual impairment

- A master's program in special needs education with specialization in visual impairment, 120 credits, half time studies. Some of the courses are carried out in co-operation with NTNU, University of Science and Technology and Statped in Norway. No program has started during 2017, due to a low number of applying students.

- A program in Special Needs Training-Visual impairment. (Diploma as a Special Needs Teacher) 90 credits, half time studies. SPSM/Resource Centre Vision has been a partner in the program, giving the courses in methodology in the education of students with visual impairment. A program will probably start in autumn 2017.

**Gothenburg University** offers a master's program in vision pedagogical work and vision rehabilitation, 120 credits. The program is a co-operation between Gothenburg University and the University College of Southeast Norway. A program will start in autumn 2017.

### What's going on?

SPSM Resource centre vision provides courses with a new approach for Braille reading students and their parents. Students in pre-school class up to third grade are invited once a year to a three days' course where the theme alternates between reading/writing and mathematics. In grades 4-9 the students have the possibility to apply for two courses in each grade, one with focus on reading and writing and one on mathematics. Courses for parents are offered in parallel with the students' courses up to grade 6.

SPSM received in 2014 a special commission from the Department of Education to develop general guidelines for principal organizers and headmasters with the goal to increase the Braille reading students' results in different school subjects. A first version of the guidelines was published in the end of 2014. Due to changes in different laws that effect the education of students with disabilities a revision of the guidelines has been made. You are able to download a version in Swedish from <https://webbshop.spsm.se/elever-med-punktskrift-som-lasmedium/>

A support material for teachers in the education of children and students using Braille is currently in production. The material is expected to be completed in the end of 2017.

During 2017 new guidelines for education in mathematics and in the use of abacus will be published.

## Denmark

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### Specialization in Education of Visual Impairment in Denmark

In Denmark University College South Denmark (UC Syd) in collaboration with IBOS has the main responsibility for providing further education to professionals working with people with visual impairment.

We have five Diploma courses in the field of visual impairment, 10 credits each, part-time studies:

- Visual impairment or blindness – assessment
- Visual impairment or blindness – Learning, rehabilitation and development
- ADL – Activities of Daily Living. Coping in everyday life with visual impairment or blindness
- O&M – Orientation and Mobility. Being able to travel safe and independent in the physical environment with visual impairment or blindness

- Acquired brain injury and visual impairment, youth and adults

You find more information's here: <http://www.ibos.dk/uk/diplomuddannelser-for-synsprofessionelle.html>

UC Syd and IBOS have applied for a full Diploma in education and rehabilitation in the field of visual impairment, 60 credits, part-time study. Last week, we received a final response that we now have a full Diploma in education and rehabilitation in the field of visual impairment in Denmark. We are of course really happy about that and are looking forward to the further work with the education. The education will be a reality from August 2017.

Furthermore IBOS has several short courses for professionals in the field of visual impairment. You find the courses here: <http://www.ibos.dk/uk/korte-specialiserede-kurser.html>

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### **Training of professionals at Synscenter Refsnæs**

At Synscenter Refsnæs – National Rehabilitation Centre for Children and Youth with Severe Visual Impairment – we use and support five tracks of training of professionals:

- Internal basis program for newly employed at the Center
- Two special designed pedagogical diploma courses designed for our employees and target group
- Nordic Master in Vision pedagogy and vision rehabilitation
- Qualifying and certification in relevant methods and tests
- Participation in national and international conferences, seminars, etc. that supports our professionals with new knowledge and professional network
- Training professionals at our courses at the Centre or courses given at local level

#### **Internal basis program for newly employed at the Center**

Generally, very few newly employed professionals are trained in supporting people with severe visual impairment. They are hired on behalf of their professional competences inside pedagogy, teaching, therapy, psychology and other professions.

Our internal program is an induction to our organization, our services, to vision rehabilitation and how visual impairment affects development and inclusion of children and youth.

Elements in our program are introduction to our organization and administration and our relations to and cooperation with the world around us. Introduction to what is blindness and low vision, how to support development and learning, ADL, orientation and mobility, accessibility to information and

learning, the use of special aids and special designed materials, psychological aspects, the use of other senses, social interaction and additional disabilities. This 3-day program is the first element in our competence development plan for our newly employed professionals. This program is supported by learning through practice together with experienced colleagues around our Center. Next step in training professionals is our two special designed pedagogical diploma courses.

### **Special designed pedagogical diploma (PD) courses designed for our employees and our target group**

These two modules are developed in cooperation with a university College. Our special modules can be combined with other more general modules inside special pedagogy. This year 11 employed at the Center participate the PD. Teaching is taken place at our Center. Teachers are professionals from our Center and specialists from outside the Centre. It is a part-time course and the students are organized in study groups. According to our competence development plan, all of our employees will go through this program.

### **Nordic Master in Vision pedagogy and vision rehabilitation**

This new Nordic Master is now a part of our competence development plan. Our plan is that at least one of our specialists from each team reaches a master level. The first participant will attend the master course this year. More about this master: <https://www.usn.no/studier/finn-studier/optometri/master-i-synspedagogikk-og-synsrehabilitering/?redirect=urllias>

### **Qualifying and certification in relevant methods and tests**

Our specialists and professionals need ongoing training in use of new methods and tests necessary for quality of assessment and with progress to support for a child and youth with severe visual impairment.

### **Participation in national and international conferences, seminars, etc**

To support our professionals with new knowledge and professional network. Present papers on professional issues, learning from other professionals through discussions and dialogue. Bring back home new knowledge, provide this to colleagues, and make use of new knowledge in common practice. These activities strengthen a professional network and support exchange of ideas and best and promising practice.

### **Training professionals at our courses at the Centre or courses given at local level**

At our center, we offer courses for different front professionals from private and public daycare, kindergarten, schools who are for care and education of children and youth with severe visual impairment included in their local community.

The courses deal with general issues in connection to the target group of children and youth and supervision in relation to cases from practice. The purpose of the courses is to provide applicable knowledge to the professionals for use in supporting the inclusion, participation and activities of children and youth in their local communities.

On demand, this support can be conducted locally around the country – often in a more intensive form.

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### **What's going on in Denmark**

#### **Synscenter Refsnæs**

At our meeting in Jyväskylä we informed about how the services in Specialrådgivningen (Specialized Consulting Unit) was put into a public competition. A range of highly specialized services in the area of social services and special education are funded by the state. It is a new trend in Denmark that these services were at procurement (competition). In 2016 this trend hit Synscenter Refsnæs.

We used many resources preparing our bit. In November, we got the message that we won the competition. Only one more provider took part in the competition. The evaluation of the bits found that our bit won on "best quality to best price". So now, we have a 4-year contract with The National Board of Social Services.

The main elements in our services are:

- Specialized counseling to professionals
- Specialized counseling to children at home, daycare and kindergarten
- Specialized instruction to children and youths at school
- Specialized counseling to parents to children with mutable disabilities
- Assessment
- Knowledge Development
- Courses to children, parents, professionals
- Production and providing learning materials

So we are still here!

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#### **The Institute for Blind and Partially Sighted (IBOS)**

IBOS, like Synscenter Refsnæs, has been part of the public competition of the highly specialized counseling of persons with visual impairment in 2016. And fortunately we too won the public competition on specialized counseling to persons with visual impairment in the age 14+ in the next four years.

The main elements in our services are specialized counseling to professionals, citizens with visual impairment and relatives, assessments, knowledge development and short courses for professionals, citizens with visual impairment and relatives.

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### **Review of young people with vision impairments and social skills**

IBOS' psychologist Maria Krøl has made a review of young people with visual impairment and social skills.

The review is in Danish and you find it here:

[http://www.ibos.dk/fileadmin/IBOS\\_publicationer\\_pdf/Litteraturstudie\\_unge\\_og\\_sociale\\_kompetencer\\_dec\\_2016\\_Maria\\_Kroel.pdf](http://www.ibos.dk/fileadmin/IBOS_publicationer_pdf/Litteraturstudie_unge_og_sociale_kompetencer_dec_2016_Maria_Kroel.pdf)

**For further information, please contact:**

Maria Krøl, Authorized psychologist and Specialist in psychotherapy, [CW3M@sof.kk.dk](mailto:CW3M@sof.kk.dk)

### **The app Blinfo and beacons**

As a follow up on the information on the app Blinfo and beacons in general from the last newsletter, we can update with some fresh information: Mobility instructor Gitte Haldbæk and ICT-Specialist Birgit Christensen from IBOS will be presenting the Blinfo app at the IMC16 mobility conference in Dublin from 26 to 29 June 2017. They will be presenting together with Mobility instructor Anne Krag and ICT-Specialist Heidi Stener from Blindecenter Bredegaard. Blindecenter Bredegaard is a nationwide sheltered residence and employment workshop centre for adult people with visual impairment and mental disabilities. <https://www.densocialevirksomhed.dk/blindecenterbredegaard/Sider/default.aspx>

The workshop will offer a possibility to try the Blinfo app as well as presenting how to administrate the system on a daily basis. They will present the "classic" way of using beacons and the Blinfo app: as a way of knowing where you are in an indoor location, but will also explore the more experimenting ways of using the system – as a support in mobility training for example. You will find the workshop titled: "How can bluetooth beacons be used as a helping hand or an aid in mobility?" Wednesday 28 June from 15.30 to 17.30.

Just to recap a little about beacons and Blinfo: The technology works so that each beacon activates a message on an associated app. The speech function on the iPhone reads the message aloud, and the person holding the phone immediately has received the information. It all happens automatically once the app is installed. In that way beacons differs from, for example, QR-code technology, where the user each time has to scan a given code to get the information it hides. The technological experiment is going on in cooperation with the organization Living IT Lab, who developed the app Blinfo.

[www.livingitlab.dk](http://www.livingitlab.dk)

**For further information's please contact:**

Birgit Christensen, [bc@ibos.kk.dk](mailto:bc@ibos.kk.dk)

Gitte Thranum Haldbæk, [gth@ibos.kk.dk](mailto:gth@ibos.kk.dk)

### **Conferences in Denmark**

IBOS will host 1-2 Nordic conferences annually to support the Nordic network and knowledge sharing. The theme will be published regularly. We are happy to receive inputs for topics and interesting speakers. Our ambition is to reach a high professional level and give conference attendees useful and innovative tools for daily practice in working with the target audience. So far the following conferences are in the pipeline:

### **Vision and brain**

Nordic conference on sight and all kinds of brain influences. The items are e.g. Post Com-motio, whip-lash injuries, stroke, cerebral thrombosis - combined with visual effects. The conference will consist of professional presentations and workshops, and will take place on **September 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2017**.

### **Vision and inclusion**

Nordic conference on inclusion of people with visual impairment at all levels - from kinder-garten and education for leisure and work. The conference is set to **autumn 2018**.

### **For more information or input, please contact:**

Annemarie Enevoldsen, [ahe@ibos.kk.dk](mailto:ahe@ibos.kk.dk)

Lea Johanne Sarfelt, [les@ibos.kk.dk](mailto:les@ibos.kk.dk)

## **The on-going projects in Denmark**

### **Erasmus+ KA2 Project IncluTech 2015-2017**

Synscenter Refsnæs and Sensus Aps are collaborating with partners from Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania and Hungary to be able to complete the many intellectual outputs before the conclusion of the project by the end of August this year. Partners are special schools for the blind and partially sighted, universities, associations, rehabilitation centres, resource centres and private entities.

The project aims at describing didactics, tools and materials connected to teaching math, music, first language and foreign language to learners with visual impairment or with dyslexia. The result of that is documented in 12 practical guides. Furthermore, a good inclusion practise catalogue is being produced. It reflects that although the participating countries are all moving towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream education, they are all at very different levels. Finally, the complete e-learning course on the use of the RoboBraille service. The e-learning course consists of 9 modules that go to explain the conversion capabilities of the service combined with a set of quizzes and exercises allowing the participants of the course to be familiar with converting educational material into alternate formats. The guides and catalogue is currently being translated into the national language of the partner countries and will be available for download upon conclusion of the project.

The results of the project will also be disseminated at the followings conferences: Vision & aids - Conference on vision aids, ICT and accessibility in Denmark and at the ICEVI Conference in Belgium.

**For more information** contact project coordinator Tanja Stevns at [tstv@regionsjaelland.dk](mailto:tstv@regionsjaelland.dk) or visit <http://synref.dk/hvem-er-vi/forskning-og-projekter/erasmus-projekt-2015-2017/>

### **Better light for people with low vision**

Bad and insufficient light conditions can cause that children and adults are unable to maintain a self-supporting and active life. For the children it may affect the benefits of their education at school, and for adults it may affect their ability to maintain a job. The right lighting conditions can thus be of great importance to everyday life and well-being of people with low vision.

The Center for Special Education in Slagelse (CSU) has received more than two million d.kr. from Tryg Foundation to establish an interactive light laboratory, where they can test different light settings according to which activity is to be performed. E.g. cooking, reading and working optimally on a PC may require different light settings.

The new project, entitled "Better Light for better living", has started on April 1<sup>st</sup>, and will last for two years. The new light laboratory will be designed as an ordinary apartment, a classroom and a workplace to create as realistic settings as possible to test the light conditions. In order to get an assessment of the activity possibilities at different light settings up to 60 persons with low vision from 3 to 80 years old, will be a part of the project.

The plan is also to develop an App, that seen through virtual reality glasses, can be used to resemble what it's like to be visually impaired. Finally, a portable toolbox/suitcase to be used for light assessment at institutions and in the homes of people with visual impairment is to be developed. The entire project is performed in cooperation with Aalborg University and Royal Dutch Vision in the Netherlands.

**For further information, please contact:**

Low vision Specialist and lightning consultants Anne Jacobsen and Signe T. Tødten, [syn-csu@slagelse.dk](mailto:syn-csu@slagelse.dk) or web-page [www.csu.slagelse.dk](http://www.csu.slagelse.dk)

**A new accessible reader for sheet music**

ICT and VI specialists and engineers at IBOS have developed a new digital and accessible sheet music reader.

It's a piece of software that can be downloaded from the IBOS website and installed on a computer running Microsoft Windows 10. It should also work on Windows7, although the most thorough testing has been conducted on the latest version of Windows10 as of February 2017.

It reads from a digital score, plays the music - and transforms it into two very accessible representations: Text and Music Braille.

These two representations are shown on screen and on a refreshable Braille display. And the text representation is also used for generation of synthetic speech. Both the Braille and Speech representations are made via the JAWS screen reader on the user's computer.

While testing has focused on compatibility with the JAWS screen reader, due to time constraints, we have seen it work with the open-source screenreader NVDA as well.

The IBOS Music reading software will give musicians with a vision impairment access to sheet music without the time consuming process of manufacturing Braille sheet music on paper. As a consequence the studying of music, rehearsing and collaborating with seeing musicians will become much more efficient.

It is possible to see and hear all voices and all musical details, but also to extract a particular voice, and to set the level of details. The tempo can be changed when the music is played and a part of the score can be repeated. The reader uses the MusicXML format, which means that it works well with standard music editing programs, such as Sibelius or MuseScore that can export a score as a MusicXML file.

We are aware of the fact that commercially available solutions exist for the rendering of digital scores in Speech and Braille, however this software is free to download for the end user.

We now aim at further funding to e.g. prepare the music sheet reader for mobile devices and internationalisation.

Moreover, further work is needed in order to enhance the capability of the software to render more details of the MusicXML format.

Your feedback is very much appreciated.

**You find the sheet music reader and contact information here:**

<http://www.ibos.dk/hjaelpemidler/ibos-nodelaeser.html>

### **Accessibility in connection with elections**

IBOS has for some time been giving advices regarding accessibility in connection with elections, for people with low vision or blindness. In 2015 IBOS was involved in a test that used overlay plates with big print, Braille and out posted holes in order to guide people at elections. In that way persons with visual impairment would be able to tick either "YES" or "NO" on the ballot. The vote was in that way also secret because it didn't require help from other people in the voting booth.

Caused by this, IBOS has attended two meetings in the Ministry for Interior Affairs in Denmark, concerning general accessibility in connection with elections. The meetings resulted in a recommendation of which assistive aids should be present in a voting booth at elections. Furthermore we will make an instruction for the furnishing of the voting booth, for which a CCTV and special lighting will be available.

You find an article in Danish about the test in 2015 here:

<http://www.ibos.dk/omibos/nyheder/visning/ibos-goer-valg-tilgaengeligt-for-borgere-med-synshandicap.html>

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