

EBU video LOW VISION – IMPACT & ACTION

TRANSCRIPT

Note from the transcribers: text corresponding to participants with low vision, are indicated with their name. Text parts with no name indication, correspond to the narrator audio.

The EBU low vision video content:

-Imagine…..

-Welcome to EBU

-Low vision – Facts

-Low vision – Impact & Action

-Low vision services in Europe

-Call to Action

-Contact EBU & Credits

Start of transcript text:

Opening scene

IMAGINE, if you became partially sighted…

Would you have everything you need to adapt to a life with reduced vision?

Would you be able to participate fully in society?

Would you feel supported, or hindered, by your environment?

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both blind and partially sighted people have an equal right to essential services that reduce the disabling impact of sight loss.

If you are partially sighted in Europe, where you live determines wheter you receive dedicated low vision support.

Every partially sighted person has an equal right to access essential low vision services.

With your help, we can make sure this right is upheld.

WELCOME to EBU, the voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe.

LOW VISION – FACTS

There are more than 30 million blind and partially sighted people across Europe.

As our population ages, this number is set to increase.

So chances are, you or someone you know, will experience reduced vision.

Sight loss can affect everyone. Although, those over 65 are most at risk.

The vast majority of people with sight loss have low vision, also called partial sight.

You have low vision or partial sight, when reduced eye-sight cannot be fully corrected with glasses or contact lenses, surgery or medicine.

How low vision impacts daily life, varies widely.

Two people can both be partially sighted, yet have very different ways of seeing.

Your attitude and abilities may also depend on whether you had low vision since birth or lost sight later in life.

Therefore, low vision services and support must be tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual.

LOW VISION – IMPACT & ACTION

Regular activities, like reading your mail, finding your way around the supermarket, cooking for family, watching your favorite shows on TV, writing a note or message, recognizing your friends or getting out and about, can all become more difficult with reduced vision.

Appropriate tools, training and support can make these tasks easier.

Accessible Environment

Daily activities are highly affected by the extent to which you can navigate the built environment and access information, goods & services.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, if you are responsible for publishing information, producing goods, providing services or designing the built environment, you are required to make reasonable adjustments for blind and partially sighted people.

Adopting an inclusive design makes good economic sense. An accessible world is better for everyone!

Attitudes

You may not be able to tell at a glance if someone is partially sighted.

This can lead to misunderstandings and attitudes to low vision, that are often difficult to overcome.

It’s in all our interests to raise awareness of the challenges facing partially sighted people.

Use vision

Partially sighted people want to use their remaining vision, to the maximum.

 Larger print, magnification, lighting and contrasting colors make a huge difference.

Complementing low vision aids and inclusive technology, with audio and tactile solutions can also be beneficial.

Susanna-

Hello, my name is Susanna. I’m 20 years old, and I’m studying history in university and practicing goalball in the national team.

I have low vision, and that means, that I see some colors and some contrasts, and I can use my vision a little when I’m moving in the streets and stuff like that. But, for example, I can’t read and I read braille and use white cane.

Low vision affects my everyday life, but with the help of other people and new technical devices, I can manage and do everything I want.

I think every visually impaired person has the right to get help and services that they need to live independently.

Elaine-

My name is Elaine. I have condition called Albinism.

For me, that means, that there are many things that I do differently from other people, but there are very few things that I am unable to do.

Having low vision probably impacts on every single aspect of my life. Although.. quite often, I don’t even think about that.

In fact, if I was to live on a desert island, I would believe that I could see everything there was to be seen. Because when I look around, I can see everything that …I can see. And that’s how it is, and that’s how it has been all my life.

I would never allow my low vision to get in the way of what I do, but I need to figure out how to do that.

Accessible environment

Elaine-

For people with low vision, access is extremely important.

Access to the environment, access to public places, access to the services we need, access to sufficient income to do the things we want to do, access to information.

Take the public environment for example. I believe, that I as a person who has low vision, have as much right to walk safely on the footpaths of the place in which I live, and the places to which I travel, as anybody else.

There are very many small things that can be done, to make the environment much more accessible - to make a big difference to how I and many others with low vision, use public spaces.

Stairs

For example, highlighting the edges of steps - makes a huge difference to me. Walking down a set of steps that has edges that are highlighted, and walking down a set of steps with NO highlights on the edges, are just worlds apart. It doesn’t cost much to do, it’s a simple thing, but for me, it makes the world of difference.

Elma- Stairs are my worst enemy. These have cost me a lot of injuries. If there were a yellow line here, I would be able to see that. Tthat would be very helpful.

Edgars

Hello, my name is Edgars. I’m 31 years old, and I have Stargardt’s disease:

an inherited form of Macular Degeneration. I was not aware of it, until the age of 20.

If I had to describe my vision, I see like through a pipe or a ring. In the center of my focus I see fine. A blind area surrounds the center. Outside the blind area, I start to see again.

ATTITUDES

Elaine-

I know, that I can look clumsy, sometimes. I do my best not to look clumsy.

In the world, generally people judge people very quickly by appearances.

So, one message that I would like to get across, is that, even though a person with low vision can appear to be clumsy and disorganized, and a little bit all over the place, it doesn’t actually mean that they ARE.

It’s just that they’re trying to manage the different techniques of working with the materials they need.

Elma-

My name is Elma. I was born with a very rare condition called Aniridia, or missing of the iris. My vision is very very low, it’s blurry and out of focus. For me, the most difficult thing about being visually impaired, is disrespect. People can be disrespectfull, because they don’t understand.

Elaine-

We have a responsibility to explain to others, and to help others to realize that, actually, low vision is nor mal. It’s not that strange, it’s okay.

Edgars-

By sharing this information, we can raise awareness in society, regarding this problem, and help those who have just faced these situations, who have lost their vision partially or completely.

Dario-

Raising awareness and sharing the information and the knowledge about this disability, it’s really important. Because, we can inform also the people that do not have low vision and do not have friends or family with this kind of disability, how to react and how to help.

LOW VISION SERVICES IN EUROPE - STANDARD

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both blind AND partially sighted people have an equal right to essential services that reduce the disabling impact of sight loss.

As well as blindness services, dedicated low vision services must also be available, to meet the distinct needs of partially sighted people.

Your circumstances and individual needs along with your functional vision, must be considered, to determine how much useful vision you actually have, and the type of support and services that may be required.

Elaine-

Low vision and rehabilitation services of a high quality, that are personalized and accessible, should be made available to every person who lives with low vision – Throught their life. Many eye conditions deteriorate, so they change over time.

So a person´s needs change. Their vision goes down, their confidence often goes down. Some of the things the were able to do before, they struggle with now. And they need some training, they need to learn how to do things differently – many many times during their life.

Low vision training and support

You have a right to receive training in, maximizing your visual potential, using low vision aids and assistive technology, mobility and orientation, and independent living skills.

You are entitled to assistance with adapting your home, school and work environments, with adequate lighting, good contrast and appropriate colors.

Plus, you may need support with social interaction, education, employment and leisure activities.

You must be offered psychological and emotional support, information and any other help you or your family may need.

In addition, you should have the opportunity to connect with other partially sighted people.

Low vision services must be available at an early stage.

They must be provided by a highly skilled, multi-disciplinary team of low vision professionals, at a venue that is accessible and easy to reach.

Low vision services have to be free of charge or low cost.

EBU promotes the implementation of these standards for low vision services in Europe, based on best practice and on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Joan-

My name is Joan, I am 68 years old, and the condition I´ve got now is sort of classed as degenerative Myopia.

I´ve lost the central vision in my left eye. I can still manage to read, and to see letters.

I was a very confidnt, out-going person, before my sight got bad, very independent.

A really nice lady told me all the different options I had and different things I could have to help me. It´s given me back a lot of confidence.

Assistive technologies

Joan-

The first thing I learned, was to e-mail. That was one of the things that I wanted to do. I can write letters, but it’s not enjoyable anymore. So that was, wonderful. And as I say, you´re meeting people, it´s a social thing as well.

Jill-

My name is Jill Mann. My condition is Retinitis Pigmentosa. It affects the retina, causes very patchy vision. I have difficulty focusing, and I can´t see to read or watch television. And I have difficulty seeing colors.

I do access the web. And that, I find, is absolutely brilliant! Fashion and home and that sort of thing. And it´s great, because you get information, they tell you exactly what it is, how much it is, what color it is...

It´s made me a lot more independent. As I say, I don´t have to have people to read letters to me now. I can write letters and I just find it brilliant.

Peer support

Jill-

Coming in, it’s amazing! People are so friendly, and you learn an awful lot by coming down here and chatting to people.

Psychological support

Edgars-

I have not turned to the society of the blind, because this far, I have managed to deal with all the issues related to my worsening vision, on my own.

Looking at it now, I would actually recommend for others to turn to professionals, because it will save you a lot of time. I have dealt with my problems on my own, but now I understand that there is a point in seeking professional help in rehabilitation centers.

I think we should share our life experience, so that other people could appreciate it and find solutions of any kind, for themselves faster.

Dario-

My name is Dario and I have Usher´s syndrome type 2.

Which is a combination of visual impairment due to Retinitis Pigmentosa, and hearing impairment.

My vision is really narrow, really reduced, at a point that I see only a tiny hole in the middle. So to say, that I see my hands now, now I don´t see.

I was never supported by a professional that would have guided me to faster acceptance of this condition and these limits. And I had to go through all of this by myself.

Peer support

Dario-

Yeah, sharing, it´s one of the most important things. To know that you´re not alone and that people like you are facing exactly the same problem in daily life, and sometimes even bigger, So…. there is always somebody that can suggest you and give you support. Whether moral or emotional or technical. And giving the information to access to this kind of services.

I hope that the standards of the EBU will be shared. Because they definitely define, in a very clear manner, the information that needs to be taken onboard by every country and by every city. So that every visually impaired, everybody with low vision, can have easy access to the information and to the services that we need.

At an early stage

Elaine-

The earlier a person begins to use low vision aids after the onset of an eye condition, the better outcomes they have.nI started out life as a six year old, using these: magnifiers on glasses, on a glasses frame.

For me they work out very well. I can read anything that I want to read.

It’s a little bit unsightly, to be honest; I’m quite happy to read like that!

Low vision services final statement

Elaine-

Every single person - regardless of their age, regardless of how long they have their eye condition, regardless of their circumstances - should be able to access a high quality vision service; should be able to go back and revisit rehabilitation services for the supports that they need, when they need them. And RELY on those services, because they make a huge difference to our lives.

CALL TO ACTION

We have to make sure that EVERY partially sighted European has equal access to the low vision services they need.

We all must contribute to a more inclusive society, in which EVERYONE can participate fully.

YOU< can help and take action:

-Raise awareness of low vision and its impact by sharing this video;

-Promote quality low vision services and standards in your country;

Adopt inclusive design for the accessibility of the built environment, information, goods and services;

-Support prevention and early diagnosis programs.

CONTACT EBU for more information, the transcript of this video and guidelines at www.euroblind.org

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

CREDITS

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End of EBU video transcript ´LOW VISION – IMPACT& ACTION´ pf T

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### About EBU

EBU is a non-governmental, non-profit making European organisation founded in 1984. It is one of the six regional bodies of the World Blind Union. It protects and promotes the interests of blind and partially sighted people in Europe. It currently operates within a network of national organisations of the visually impaired in 45 European countries.

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