European Blind Union
Press release
Paris, 01/10/2018

Access to accessible format books: EU and EBU on the same page
The EU ratifies the Marrakesh Treaty and writes a new chapter in the
right to read for print disabled people

At the General Assembly session of the World Intellectual Property
Organization (WIPO) today, the European Union ratified the Marrakesh
Treaty, binding its 28 Member States. This Treaty facilitates the making
and cross-border flow of accessible format works (braille, audio etc)
under a binding legal system of national copyright exceptions.

“It is a major step toward ending the book famine for the millions of
people in the world – 30 million in Europe alone – who are blind, visually
impaired or otherwise print disabled”, says Wolfgang Angermann,
President of the European Blind Union (EBU). “The Treaty facilitates
access to culture and education and, for sure, it will be one of the
elements to enable blind and partially sighted persons to access better
jobs, and to be included in today’s global and digital society.”

EBU campaigned intensively for this Treaty and through our members
we will monitor its application. We now call on other countries to join the
Treaty, and urge the EU countries that have not yet implemented the
directive despite the 11 October deadline, to do so without delay.

The Treaty was adopted on 28 June 2013 under the auspices of the
WIPO in Geneva and it entered into force on 30 September 2016, after
the first 20 ratifications were achieved. At the crossroads of human
rights and intellectual property, it uses copyright law for human rights
goals, making the right to read a reality for persons with print disabilities,
in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

After signing the Treaty on 30 April 2014, the EU adopted in 2017 a
directive to be implemented by EU countries, and a regulation to be
applied in relations with non-EU countries. The deposit of its instrument
of ratification that took place today means that the EU will, in accordance with the rules of the Treaty, effectively become a party on 1 January 2019.

To date the Treaty binds 43 countries around the world, 28 of which are EBU members, including Russia and Moldova. Japan also ratified the Treaty today.

Ends

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 41 European countries.

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