**LOW VISION Services, a Global Right**

**Setting the Standards in Europe**

**EBU Low Vision Conference**

**14-17 June 2018, Laško, Slovenia**

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**Speakers’ bios**

**Bárbara Martín Munoz**

Since 2007 she works in the International Department of the Spanish National Organization of the Blind (ONCE), where she plays an active role with European Institutions regarding the follow-up activities and implementation of rules for persons with disabilities in general, and blind and partially sighted in particular, such as the Marrakech Treaty or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) among others.

Since October 2015 she is the 2nd Vice-president of the European Blind Union (EBU) and nowadays she is finishing her studies in Politics in the Spanish Open University.

**Elaine Howley**

Elaine Howley is the Coordinator of EBU’s Low Vision Team and has spent the last thirty years advocating for the rights of people with disabilities. Her career in advocacy began when Elaine was a university student. As the first Liaison Officer for students with disabilities in Ireland, Elaine was a founder of the national organisation known as the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) and has recently been recognised for her pioneering work in access for students with disabilities at third level. With a professional background in Social Work and Psychotherapy she has spent the last twenty five years in NCBI delivering and managing front line and advocacy services for people who live with sight loss in Ireland. Since the early 1990’s Elaine has been a member of EBU’s Liaison Commission and she was a co-author of EBU’s publication ‘Rehabilitation and Older People with Sight Loss’. She has worked on policy issues both nationally and internationally including the UNCRPD, Marrakesh Treaty and the European Accessibility Directive. Elaine believes in the rights of all people to have the opportunity to participate fully as human beings and citizens and strives for a world where everyone is enabled to reach their full potential and achieve their goals, hopes and dreams for their own lives.

**Barbara Krejči Piry**

Barbara Krejči Piry was born partially sighted in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 1955. She finished Law Studies at the University of Ljubljana, and after 10 years of working in the Ministry of law, she was appointed judge for minor offences in 1988 by National assembly. She had to finish her judicial career as the judge on the Court of appeal and to go into early retirement in 2000 due to the worsening of her sight.

After joining the regional Association of the blind and partially sighted of Ljubljana, she was elected as president of the association for two mandates (2000-2008).

From 2009 to 2011 she was the coordinator of the EBU Women's Steering Group, which organised in cooperation with POB the EBU Women’s conference in Cyprus (March 2010), where the Cyprus Declaration was adopted.

In 2011 she represented EBU in the drafting committee on protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls with disabilities (CAHPAH-WGD), prepared by European Co-ordination Forum for the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 (CAHPAH) in Strasbourg.

In the working period 2011-2015 she was the coordinator of the EBU low vision network and in December 2015 she represented EBU on the WHO ICC Rome, Italy, on standards for visual rehabilitation. As a member of the EBU low vision project group in 2016 she participated in the wider European project PRO4VIP.

Last year she is the member of the EBU low vision team, preparing EBU low vision conference in Slovenia.

**Birgitta Blokland**

Currently a member of the EBU Low Vision Team, Birgitta Blokland has been active in different areas of work in EBU. She has led the 2013-2017 projects on the right to dedicated low vision services in Europe, and has been involved in organizing the EBU LV Conference 2018. She served on the EBU Board, being the first woman elected Secretary General.

Birgitta is founder and member of the EBU women´s network - one of the results from the first EBU Women´s Forum that she organized in 1999. Access to Art & Culture is another area of special interest to her.

She is (co-)author of several publications and has undertaken promotional activities, such as introducing the EBU Diversity & Equality award and giving EBU its own logo with the strap-line. ´The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe´

For her contribution to EBU work, she received the Arne Husveg award in 2018.

**Makedonka Atanasovska Velkovska**

My name is Makedonka Atanasovska Velkovska. I was born in Macedonia where I have finished Medical faculty in 2003 at the Univesity St.Ciril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia. From 2003 to 2007 I worked as a family doctor in Makedonska Kamenica. In year 2007 I arrived in Slovenia where I have finished my nostrification and began my specialisation in ophthalmology in 2009. Untill 2011 I worked as a resident in ophthalmology department in Nova Gorica, hospital centre. Then I continued my status as a resident at Ophthalmology clinic, University clinical centre Ljubljana. At the beginning of my career as a specialist in 2014 I was a member of the team that worked on a pilot project Comprehensive rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired people. I work mostly with glaucoma and blind and low vision patients. I have enrolled in PHD programme in 2016. In 2017 I became an assistant in educational process.

**Eva Škrlec Velkavrh**

Eva Škrlec Velkavrh is an educator of the blind and visually impaired. Team member of the National centre for the comprehensive rehabilitation of visually impaired and blind at the Eye hospital, University Clinical Centre Ljubljana.

**Susanne Trefzer**

Susanne Trefzer has been working in the field of Low Vision at the SNAB (Swiss National Association of the blind) since 2001. As an optometrist, she completed further education in Low Vision.

An important area of ​​her work is the evaluation of the functional vision of patients and the distribution of optical aids. At the competence centre Low Vision of the SNAB, new vision tests and optical aids are also being developed and produced. She also leads the courses in Low Vision.

She gave lectures on "functional vision" in Germany as well as at the Vision 2017 congress at The Hague.

**Krister Inde**

Dr Krister Inde is an author and teacher of low vision rehabilitation. He holds an honorary PhD at Linnaeus University in Sweden, but he is also an entrepreneur of several private companies. He has established low vision clinics and education in Sweden and countries like Jordan. He is currently president of LHON Eye Society, member of SRF, the Swedish Federation of Visually Impaired. His books and projects SEE BAD FEEL GOOD, SEE MORE, SMS, SEEnior, MANUAL IN VISION REHABILITATION, STRONGER TOGETHER, STROKE AND VISION and LOOK FORWARD are some examples of his outcomes.

**Joyce van Boven**

Joyce van Boven is an optometrist from the Netherlands. She works as a low vision specialist and rehabilitation therapist at intensive rehabilitation  of Royal Dutch Visio. She is a member of the expertise group for low vision in the organization.Royal Dutch Visio is a centre for blind and partially sighted people in the Netherlands. It enables visually impaired children, young people and adults to participate in society as fully as possible.Intensive rehabilitation is a comprehensive form of rehabilitation in which the clients receive rehabilitation in an average of 4 days per week during 20 weeks. This form is only for people who experience severe problems in participation.

**Alenka Gajšt**

Alenka Gajšt is partially sighted since birth. She has worked as a volunteer for ZDSSS and EBU in the years 2002 – 2011, being involved in the EBU Youth and later Low Vision working group. She has been working as a disability support coordinator at the Slovenian Association of Disabled Students since 2003. Her role is to coordinate services for student support, run trainings and workshops on inclusive teaching and learning in higher education and promote inclusive society at different levels.

**Anja Uršič**

I am Anja from Slovenia and I am a member of Union of the blind and partially sighted of Slovenia for almost fifteen years. I was born with severe visual impairment – degeneration of macula. Currently, I am completing my master studies of NGOs and HRM at the Faculty of social science in Ljubljana. During my studies I have been trying to build on to my professional and carrier goals by participating at different extra-curricular activities. Few year ago I was participating at the EBU youth employability training in Tirrenia (Italy) where we were elaborating on CV preparation, job interview and different models to improve our competence presentation in order to convince a potential employer. In February this year, I also carried out a two-month internship at the International Unit for carrier services at the University of Vic, in Catalonia led by Erasmus + programme.

**Mary Treasa Cahill-Kennedy**

Mary T has been a lifelong advocate with and on behalf of persons with disabilities. Mary T comes from a family where she and all of her three siblings have congenital cataracts. Mary has had a lifetime of surgery on her eyes and two corneal transplants and she has used personal experience along with her academic background in Equality and Social Justice in her advocacy work with children and adults with intellectual, physical and visual disabilities in her various places of work. Mary T has been engaged in the advocacy work of NCBI and has represented the perspective of people with sight loss on radio many times.

With a particular interest in human rights in the area of gender and disability and an interest in the arts Mary runs Arts Events in Dublin with friends.

Currently working with AT Áiseanna Tacaíochta Mary T provides leadership and support to empower those who have disabilities to direct their own lives through a direct payments model which follows the independent living philosophy.

**Filippo M. Amore MD, PhD**

is an ophthalmologist and a PhD in “Vision Science”, Director of the National Centre of Services and Research for the Prevention of Blindness and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired, Rome (Italy).

The Centre is a WHO- Collaborating Centre since 2013. His primary research interests are: vision rehabilitation multidisciplinary approach, implementation of new technologies in low vision area and evaluation of vision rehabilitation outcomes. Since 2014 he has been involved on the organisation and coordination of the process of WHO International Consensus Conference on Standards for Vision Rehabilitation. During the years, he has attended and has been official speaker in many national and international events related to visual rehabilitation. He is co-author of scientific publications and book chapters, and instructor in training courses. He is an international member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology as well as of the Italian Society of Ophthalmology.

**Susanne Tarp**

Susanne Tarp is chairing the local branch of the DAB (Danish Association of the Blind) as well as the Disability Council in the municipality of Frederiksberg, near Copenhagen. She has been active and a chairperson within the Danish Association of the Blind since 1995 and has held and holds many other positions. Within the EBU she took a special interest in gender issues and became an active member in the EBU women's network, where knowledge and experience is shared within different topics and thus expanding everybody's knowhow. She took part in the EBU women´s conferences and working groups, more recently also in the EBU low vision network. The women in the organisations of visually impaired in the Nordic countries have for more than 20 years had close relations in which Susanne has been actively involved. Participating in and creating networks at grass root level is the main focus"

**Dario Sorgato**

Dario Sorgato was diagnosed with Usher Syndrome at the age of 16. In 2011 he founded **Noisy Vision**, a Non-Profit Organization to raise awareness about sensory disabilities and promote activities for people with visual and/or hearing impairments. With Noisy Vision he organized European workshops and outdoor activities, mostly related to mountain trekking. The awareness campaign **#Yellow the World**, initiated in Helsinki in 2014, became the motivation to reach Everest Base Camp, Mount Etna central craters, Icelandic volcanoes. In 2016 and 2018 he accompanied 12 visually impaired people from all over Europe on a 7 days hike from Bologna to Florence.

**Andreja Albreht**

Andreja Albreht is a landscape architect and a universal design consultant. In the last decade her work has been mostly focused on the accessibility issues for people with vision impairments. She is the founder of the DOSTOP Accessibility Institute, an important Slovenian NGO, dedicated to promotion of the accessibility of built environment, information and services along with implementation of the “UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities” principals into practice. Her work is spread on many levels such as cooperating in national legislation and standardization bodies, performing architectural consulting and educational workshops, working with users and municipalities on the local level etc. She is also the author of several publications on the topic of universal design and people with visual impairments.

**Geraldine Neill**

Geraldine has worked for over 30 years in voluntary and public sector organisations providing services to people with sight loss in Ireland and the UK. During this time she has worked for NCBI (Cork), Social Service Departments in Reading and Islington, South Regional Association for the Blind (SRAB) and the Guide Dog for the Blind Association School of Rehabilitation Studies (UK), NCBI (Dublin) and currently ChildVision (Dublin) where she is responsible for Projects and Research.

After her degree in social Science, Geraldine trained as an Orientation and Mobility instructor. She went on to become a tutor at SRAB and developed content for one of the first Rehabilitation Work courses in the UK to combine O&M and technical skills (ADL) in 1989.

Her experience and knowledge in training both people with sight loss and professionals has led her to work with and alongside ChildVision’s orientation, mobility and low vision assessment team to assess children and design programmes to meet their individual needs; and to examine the standards, knowledge, skills and training required to provide best practice in low vision services.

Geraldine is a member of the host committee organising the 13th International Vision 2020 Conference in Dublin.

This event is co-funded by the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship" Programme of the European Union.