



The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe

EBU Access to Art and Culture

Results of the survey about Audio Description in EBU Countries conducted in 2021 as part of the PARVIS project

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Introduction

The PARVIS A9 project Team on compiling a handbook for audio description (AD) has made an online survey regarding how AD works in practice, on existing audio description guidelines, and in which areas there are guidelines. The survey has been shared to all European Blind Union member organisations via a mailing list. It was made in Google forms. Answers were gathered between June and August 2021.

Below we present the answers for each question.

Responding countries and organisations

16 countries and 18 organisations have responded. The Czech organisation has left two answers. Three organisations from Finland have responded. Thus there are three answers from Finland.

The table below displays the respondents.

Country	Organisation
Austria	Austrian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Union of the Blind of the Republic of Srpska
Croatia	Croatian Blind Union
Czech Republic	Czech Blind United (SONS)
Czech Republic	Czech Blind United (SONS)
Estonia	Estonian Blind Union
Finland	Cultural Services for the Visually Impaired
Finland	Näkövammaisten kulttuuripalvelu
Finland	Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired
Germany	Deutscher Blinden- und Sehbehindertenverband
Hungary	MVGYOSZ
The Netherlands	Oogvereniging

North Macedonia	National Union of the Blind of the Republic of North Macedonia
Norway	Norges Blindforbund
Portugal	ACAPO
Serbia	Union of the Blind of Serbia
Sweden	Synskadades Riksförbund
Switzerland	Schweizerischer Blinden- und Sehbehindertenverband SBV
United Kingdom	RNIB

AD availability

Is AD provided in your country?

In almost all countries there are some AD. However, there is no AD at all in North Macedonia according to the respondent. In Bosnia and Herzegovina AD is on a very low level according to a remark from the respondent.

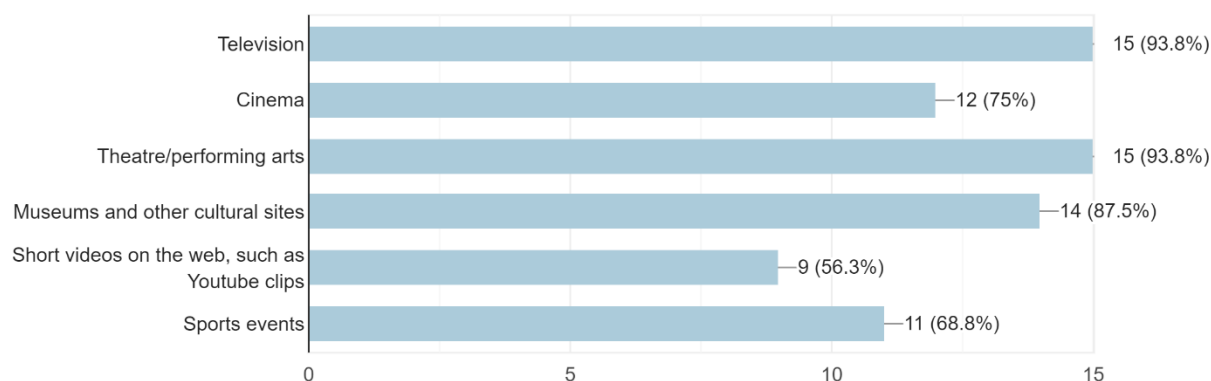
In which of the following areas is there audio description?

The respondents had to select between the following areas:

Television, cinema, theatre/performing arts, museums and other cultural sites, short videos on the web, such as Youtube clips
Sports events.

If yes, in which of the following areas is there audio description? (More than one option possible)

16 responses



AD on tv, theatre, museums, sport events and arts exist in almost all countries. 12 respondents say there is AD in cinema. AD in short videos and social medias only exists in 8 of the 16 countries according to the respondents. In Finland where three different organisations have responded, two of them say AD in short videos exists, while one of them says it doesn't. One reason could be difficulties in finding AD versions on the web since there is still no standard in how to publish AD tracks for short videos. The new EU legislation making AD mandatory for videos made by governments and authorities on their own platforms were taken into force less than one year ago.

If available, by what means do blind and partially sighted people access the Audio Description in the above categories?

The possibilities of accessing AD vary between countries and areas. Here are some of the responses:

Estonia: Cinema + tv are not ticked, since audio description in those areas is inconsistent and takes place only once or twice a year. Via TV, blind and partially sighted people need to activate a special audio channel on their TV box, via an inaccessible interface, which requires sighted help to be used. In some theatres, some plays per season have audio description.

Germany: In TV there is no extra device necessary, in cinemas it is provided via an app, in theatres via an app or an extra device, same for sports event.

The Netherlands: It is limited available in the abovementioned categories. It exists, but is not mainstreamed and more occasionally.

It is slowly expanding and improving a bit. But it is not yet a fully integrated service.

- TV and some cinema: with an App (Earcatch) Subtitles on TV through a separate (paid) service
- Theatre: through live audio description via headphones, usually by a specialised provider (Komt het Zien)
- Museums and other cultural sites: in live guided tour by museum guide
- YouTube videos, through an app. Low quality as it is a service where anyone who wants to help out, is allowed to describe a video. without any training or knowledge.

Norway: MovieReader app, a channel with audio description provided by the Norwegian broadcasting cooperation (NRK) or by using an option at their website (<https://tv.nrk.no/programmer/synstolk-accessibility>). At Oslo Met they have a QR-code to be scanned when viewing a painting, sculpture etc at their campus.

Sweden: TV and cinema is most common, especially the public service television. There are some accessibility issues with one TV channel and problems to find shows with AD. Statistics in this field don't exist.

AD legislation

Is AD required by law in your country?

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, and Serbia there is no legislation on AD according to the respondents. Also the Czech republic and Estonia have replied there is no legislation, but since they are EU members there is legislation for videos from governments and agencies published on their own platforms according to the EU web accessibility directive.

For which of the following areas are there legislation?

Eight countries have answered that there is legislation for television broadcasts and four for cinema. Sweden has an addition to the EU directive on web accessibility. If a video (is published on a third party

platform and if that platform permits AD the video should be audio described.

Under which legislation?

Austria: Audio visual media services directive. But the national tv broadcaster is only required to provide 100 % accessibility in 2030.

Czech Republic: Czech legislation sets requirements on minimum percentage for both public and private broadcasters.

Finland: The law for the digital services <https://vm.fi/digipalvelulaki>

Hungary: ACT CLXXXV OF 2010 ON MEDIA SERVICES AND ON MASS MEDIA

Switzerland: RTVG & RTVV (access services); FFV (in Switzerland produced films with a financial contribution of the Confederation: CHF 300'000.00 for fiction films and CHF 120.000.00 for documentation films)

The United Kingdom: Communications Act 2003

AD production

Who produces AD in your country?

The respondents could select between the following categories of AD producers: Organisation of blind and partially sighted people, Commercial companies/paid freelancers, and volunteers.

It was possible to checkmark more than one category. Respondents could also designate own categories or make remarks.

Commercial companies (15 answers) and volunteers, e.g. students, (7 answers) are the most common producers of AD.

What experience or qualifications if any, are required for an audio describer to be contracted?

There are no mandatory qualifications in any of the countries. Some respondents say experiences or having taken a course in AD are good qualifications.

Some countries, such as Estonia, have advocated for content creators to hire professional audio describers.

Estonia: Blindness organisations have lobbied for content creators to book only certified audio describers but there have been situations where audio description has been done in house by incompetent people. This is mainly due to a lack of order and regulation in the field as well as little knowledge amongst the content creators.

Are blind and partially sighted users involved in the development and evaluation of the audio description?

A majority of responding organisations say they are involved, but not always. Here are a few of the answers:

Austria: We are involved most of the time, but not always.

Estonia: If the AD is provided by a professional / certified audio describer, the describer is produced in tandem by a sighted describer and a blind consultant.

AD guidelines

AD guidelines is used in 9 of the responding countries, and not used in 7.

Television and cinema are the most common areas for AD guidelines. Three respondents say guidelines is used for AD in short videos and sport events.

Are these national guidelines or internal guidelines?

Most countries seem to have a mixture of internal guidelines and national, official guidelines.

Here are some answers:

Finland: National, but unofficial.

Norway: National guidelines

Switzerland: National for TV, cinema, theatre, sport; international for museums and monuments.

Who produced these guidelines in your country?

Organisations of blind and partially sighted people are the most common producer of AD guidelines, followed by broadcasting companies.

Were blind and partially sighted people involved in the drafting process of all or some of these guidelines?

In most countries (11 of 13 responses) visually impaired people are involved when guidelines are produced, but there are exceptions, for instance in the Netherlands:

It largely depends on an individual at one or more of the above areas, who searches the internet for a checklist or guideline on AD. But the next person in the same company does the same and comes up with another checklist from the internet, etc. It is not a policy or one guideline from the internet that is then adopted by the company assist own guidelines. In the small non-profit for theatre description they found a mix of guidelines from the internet and developed their own way of making live AD at theatres, in which they train their staff.

How are these guidelines made available to audio describers in your country?

In some countries, guidelines are available on websites. In other countries guidelines are spread during courses on AD. In some countries organisations of blind and partially sighted people distribute them to tv- and film companies.

Croatia: They were distributed to some TV houses.

Estonia: During their initial training. No written guidelines exist.

Finland: We have material on our association's website. Just now we have the study about AD in Finland in progress and we are going to update our guidelines this year. Former ones are from the year 2012.

We are also going to make an recommendation for organising the training for the audio describers.

Norway: On websites of NRK, MediaLT and Oslo Met.

Switzerland: Co-production with the audio describers, web publication.

United Kingdom: They are on the Ofcom website. Ofcom is UK's Communication Regulator.

AD training

Is specific audio description training available in your country?

In nine of the countries there is some sort of training for audio describers. In seven countries, there is no specific training at all.

AD training for Cinema, theatre and museum are most common.

Only one country, Finland, has training for short videos and social media.

Who provides audio description training in your country?

In seven countries Commercial companies/paid freelancers provides AD training. Training in universities or other higher education is afforded in five of the countries. In five countries organisations of visually impaired people offer training in AD. In five countries there is inhouse training by tv- or film companies.

What experience or qualifications if any, are required to become an audio describer trainer?

Eight countries have responded this question. The most frequent answer is “no formal qualification at all” or “long practice experiences”. In some countries however, a diploma is required.

Finland: Our trainers have been audio describers themselves. University teachers have done research on it.

Hungary: An audio describer trainer must have a diploma or higher education degree.

Are blind and partially sighted people involved as trainers or consulted in the development of the training?

In almost all countries where AD training exists blind or partially sighted people are involved in AD training.

AD funding

To your knowledge, do funding entities in your country include audio description as a condition of their granting financial support?

In half of the countries, there is some condition on providing AD for granting financial support. Conditions exist in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Norway, The Netherlands, Sweden, and the U.K.

In which of the following areas does this condition apply?

In almost all countries the conditions are for cinemas only.

In Switzerland there are conditions for television as well. In the Czech Republic there are conditions for cinema and theatre and arts. according to one of the two replies.

In Sweden film producers and distributors can apply for benefits from the film entity regarding AD in cinema, but it is not mandatory. Swedish public service television and one commercial channel have to audio describe five percent of their own production.

Comments and links

Below you will find comments and links from the respondents. Countries without comments or links are not mentioned here.

Comments

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Audio description in Bosnia and Herzegovina is only in the initial stages of development. Public TV services are obliged

to ensure accessibility for 25% of the programs they broadcast in the next 5 years. There are no laws and guidelines governing this area yet, and only some civil society organisations are starting to popularize audio description.

Czech Republic: Please see our report on audio description and subtitling sent on May 15 to DBSV and Antoine for details (contact urbanek@sons.cz if you have not been given it). The audio description is not centrally controlled in our country.

Finland: We have recently, last autumn, requested funding from ministry of education and culture, to get funding for a survey on the condition of audio description in our country based on which planning for proper vocational training for AD can begin. Three different parties, producers, describers and users, were heard during the conduction of the survey. In addition, four popular webinars on different topics were held. The results of the survey are going to be published in September after which a committee will begin the planning of the vocational training. Thank you for a well-prepared questionnaire on an important topic.

Hungary: Description training courses are available only occasionally.

Norway: On the question "Is specific audio description training available in your country?" I have written yes, but I am not sure if this is still the case. There used to be a training available from MediaLT. I am not sure if they still do this or if other have similar trainings. I am not sure of the requirements when it comes to sports. I have only worked on audio description at the cinema and television, in addition to the cooperation with Oslo Met on 20 pieces of arts visible at the University's campus. NRK (Note: the Norwegian broadcasting company) has also done simultaneous audio descriptions of Saturday entertainments, such as the Eurovision song contest and other big productions.

Portugal: Sorry I couldn't be more precise.

Links

Finland

For the cinema:

https://www.ses.fi/en/grant_type/audio-description-and-subtitling-for-the-hearing-impaired/

AD in TV platform:

<https://areena.yle.fi/tv/ohjelmat/30-1530>"

Germany

<https://hoerfilm.info/audiodeskription-empfehlungen.html>

<https://hoerfilm.info/audiodeskription-empfehlungen-kinder.html>

<https://deutscher-hoerfilmpreis.de/hoerfilmpreis-2021.html>

<https://kinofueralle.de/filme.html>

<https://www.gretaundstarks.de/greta>

<https://www.ffa.de/foerderung-von-barrierefreiheit-im-kino.html>

<https://www.kinoblindgaenger.com/>

Hungary

Act CLXXXV of 2000 on

Media Services and on Mass Media (Hungarian language):

<https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1000185.tv>

Switzerland

<http://www.sbv->

[fsa.ch/dienstleistungen/interessenvertretung/zugaengliche-kultur-audiodescription](http://www.sbv-fsa.ch/dienstleistungen/interessenvertretung/zugaengliche-kultur-audiodescription)

<https://www.kulturinklusive.ch/de/tools/handbuecher-299.html>

<https://fedlex.data.admin.ch/filestore/fedlex.data.admin.ch/eli/cc/2007/151/20210101/de/pdf-a/fedlex-data-admin-ch-eli-cc-2007-151-20210101-de-pdf-a.pdf>

http://admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c443_113.html

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