

**EBU Strategic plan 2024-2027**

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# Introduction

The **European Blind Union (EBU)** is a non-governmental, non-profit-making European organization founded in 1984. One of the six regional bodies of the [World Blind Union](http://www.worldblindunion.org/), it is the only regional organisation representing the interests of blind and partially-sighted people in Europe.

EBU aims to protect and promote the rights and interests of all blind and partially sighted people in Europe. EBU is “working towards an accessible and inclusive society with equal opportunities for blind and partially sighted (BPS) people to fully participate in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life”, meaning that accessibility and inclusion based on equal opportunities are core at the level of expected impact, to foster participation of blind and partially sighted citizens in all aspects of life.

Its objects and powers are set out in Article II of its [Constitution](http://www.euroblind.org/about-us/structure/ebu-constitution). In EBU 42 countries are represented by a member organisation or a consortium of organisations[[1]](#footnote-1). Its work is directed by an [Executive Board](http://www.euroblind.org/about-us/structure/people#board) of 13 elected members who are accountable to a General Assembly held every four years. In the General Assembly, the members are represented by delegations.

EBU is an umbrella organisation connecting its member organisations through a network structure. The concept of ‘umbrella’ emphasises that EBU, represents and provides support to its members.

# Vision

Our vision is: *“A Europe which supports and empowers blind and partially sighted people, in which we can be self-determining and which fully includes us within all aspects of society, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Sustainable Development Goals”*.

# Mission

Our mission is:

* To promote the rights and interests of all blind and partially sighted people to European bodies.
* To support and strengthen national organisations of blind and partially sighted people.
* To support, produce and disseminate relevant research and best practices relating to policies and services

enabling the full participation of blind and partially sighted people in all aspects of life.

# Values and Principles

* Upholding the right of self- determination of blind and partially sighted people to make decisions and choices about our own lives.
* Focusing on the human rights and needs of blind and partially sighted people while fully cooperating with those with other disabilities.
* Ensuring equality of participation and treatment of blind and partially sighted people with diverse experience including differences relating to: visual impairment, other disabilities, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.
* Ensuring a positive approach to achieving outcomes based on non-discrimination and positive action i.e. taking proactive steps to remove barriers and promote equal opportunities for blind and partially sighted people.
* Having regard for the welfare and advancement of blind and partially sighted people in developing countries.
* Supporting the full inclusion of and where appropriate specialist services for blind and partially sighted people (a “twin-track approach”).
* Working in partnership to promote the interests of blind and partially sighted people and to prevent avoidable sight loss.

## Priority 1: Raising awareness, advocacy, and policy influencing.

### Objectives:

#### **AWARENESS RAISING**:

Targeting individuals, policy makers, stakeholders and society at large about the rights and needs of blind and partially sighted people.

**ACTIONS**

* Providing an overview of the rights and social services for blind and partially sighted people in European countries and highlight good and bad practices.
* Participating cross-sectors and external consultations.
* Responding to EU-level programme grants and European projects.
* Mapping the situation in each member country, defining national priorities and targets.

#### **ADVOCACY**:

Supporting the blind and partially sighted community to alert policy makers and other stakeholders about issues not properly addressed.

**ACTIONS**

* Campaigning for improved political participation of blind and partially sighted citizens.
* Advocating for fully accessible and inclusive products and services (including household appliances).
* Bringing visual impairment-related issues on the map of EU instruments and dialogues with non-EU countries (e.g. pre-accession process).
* Campaigning in all areas of blind and partially sighted people’s lives
* Advocating for full access to digital training services and ongoing education

#### POLICY INFLUENCING:

Supporting European and international-level policy frameworks and tools, common models/alignment of standards for services.

**ACTIONS**

* Campaigning for the full accessibility of digital services
* Advocating for the ethical and accessible implementation/application of artificial intelligence.
* Campaigning for all forms of mobility to be fully accessible to and safe for blind and partially sighted users.
* Supporting simplification of project procedures in access to funding.

#### COOPERATION AND ALLIANCES

Strengthening links with European and international organisations/networks

**ACTIONS**

* Increasing interactions and joint actions with partner organisations within and outside the EU (e.g. in fields of ageing, education, etc.).
* Collaborating with private sector actors, sectorial organisations etc.
* Developing a plan for alliance-building in support of the advocacy/campaigning objectives stated above.

## Priority 2: Empowering blind and partially sighted persons enabling full participation in all aspects of life

### Objectives:

#### TRAINING/EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL REHABILITATION

**ACTIONS**

* Facilitating exchange between BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED citizens.
* Conducting Workshops, training sessions, webinars.
* Organising Summer camps (e.g. for young people).
* Providing resources to educators to help them better support blind and partially sighted students.
* Developing and supporting the participation of blind and partially sighted students in exchange programmes (like Erasmus+).
* Mapping measures carried out at national level, with an umbrella overview and sharing of good practices.

#### SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT

**ACTIONS**

* Fostering accessible and inclusive labour markets (e.g. inclusive hiring practices, issues of work-life balance, cooperation with employers).
* Circulating existing guidelines and good practices.
* Promoting affirmative action through the employment of visually impaired staff.
* Participating in the EU Disability Platform’s Employment sub-group in so far as continued.
* Promoting access to lifelong/adult training and education.
* Sharing mechanisms of anti-discrimination in different countries.
* Sharing good practices in preconditions to employment.

#### ENABLING SAFE MOBILITY

**ACTIONS**

* Focusing on autonomous and safe mobility, including common/public, individual and micro-shared mobility, driverless vehicles, silent cars (use of AVAS) and shared spaces.
* Involving blind and partially sighted users in the testing and development of new forms of mobility.
* Developing a group of blind and partially sighted people who act as champions for EBU across social channels.
* Supporting legislation for accessible mobility services.
* Supporting accessibility of built environment (transport, information, shared spaces, digital maps etc.).
* Promoting legislation for accessible mobility services.

#### ADVANCING ACCESSIBILITY OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AND PROTECTING CUSTOMERS

Including digital accessibility

**ACTIONS**

* Engaging with industry partners from the start.
* Promoting assistive technologies (digitalisation, AI audio descriptions etc.).
* Promoting the accessibility of transport.
* Promoting the accessibility of payment terminals.
* Supporting access to sport and leisure.
* Supporting the development of accessibility tools, including labelling of food products.
* Collecting and disseminating good practices.
* Promoting actions related to braille and large print.
* Monitoring and pushing the implementation of EU directives and their influence outside the EU.

## Priority 3: Strengthening the capacity of organisations of blind and partially sighted people across Europe

### Objectives:

#### FACILITATING COOPERATION BETWEEN MEMBERS.

**ACTIONS**

* Bringing members together in (European) projects through EBU as a broker.
* Making EBU members act visibly together in main campaigns.
* Bringing together EU and non-EU based members (e.g. considering policy frameworks not only at EU level but also at the level of the Council of Europe).
* Identifying each EBU’s national organisation key contacts for different areas.
* Establishing mentorship schemes between member organisations of different capacities.

#### SUPPORTING THE CAPACITY OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

**ACTIONS**

* Signalling funding opportunities, supporting/strengthening their communication processes.
* Looking into ways on how to make EBU resources accessible for members’ use (e.g. translation of material).
* Providing email bulletins and virtual briefings on funding opportunities for member organisations.
* Identifying specific needs, e.g. countries in need, small countries, non-EU countries, countries where government support for blind and partially sighted people is weak.
* Providing financial support for members in their grassroot activities.
* Providing capacity building tools and good practices.
* Setting up effective and simple working structures to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plans, e.g. Committees (Women, Youth, etc.) and expert groups (on EBU priority themes).
* Clarifying Solidarity and Development Funds objectives.

#### PROVIDING MEMBERS WITH RELEVANT AND ACCESSIBLE DATA

**ACTIONS**

* Providing timely and accessible research, good practices and relevant data, e.g. on legal frameworks and services available for blind and partially sighted people in each country.
* Providing basic statistics on numbers of blind and partially sighted people in each country.
* Disseminating key research on eye conditions and eye care.
* Sharing research from external sources.
* Improving access to EBU online information and its ongoing circulation.
* Inviting members to take part in relevant projects and consultations.
* Forwarding updates and available data and research outcomes within the EBU network.

#### SUPPORTING MEMBERS ADVOCACY EFFORTS

**ACTIONS**

* Providing capacity building activities and tools (e.g. advocacy toolkit to be used at national level).
* Bringing the weight of EBU advocacy in support for national-level advocacy, where appropriate (on request from members).
* Encouraging advocacy mentoring support between members.

## Priority 4: Strengthening EBU as an umbrella of organisations of blind and partially sighted people to improve impact and sustainability.

### Objectives:

#### ENSURING A STRONG MANAGEMENT OF THE NETWORK/UMBRELLA

**ACTIONS**

* Ensuring a solid governance structure and induction of the new Board.
* Setting clear criteria for volunteers taking part in EBU processes, (nominated by members, able to deliver results and support the organisation in a respectful, responsive and committed way).
* Strengthening the tripartite cooperation between the Secretariat, Board and National members.
* Clarifying the function of networks, commissions and working groups and set criteria for the roles and responsibilities of their facilitators.
* Implement the orientation given by the General Assembly to open a branch office in brussels whilst remaining a French non for profit organisation.
* Empowering young leaders, ensure a balanced representation, reflecting the diversity of the EBU members and blind and partially sighted citizens.
* Continuing the Leadership Exchange Forum, which brings together CEOs of the member organisations.
* Establishing similar direct liaison in communications, advocacy, fundraising etc.
* Setting up a specific capacity building stream for young people/leaders strengthening self-advocacy and taking up leadership roles.
* Setting up a specific capacity building stream for women to strengthen their self-advocacy and taking up leadership roles.
* Using available funding instruments to promote diversity.
* Continuing regular country/regional visits.
* Connecting members with shared interests.
* Ensuring the Board meeting minutes are read by all members.
* Sharing information of the MEL taskforce in charge of monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan.

#### FOSTERING THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE MEMBERSHIP

**ACTIONS**

* Developing membership engagement profiles.
* Conducting regular webinars with Q&As to get to know each Member Organisation better.
* Sharing information on the structure and capacity of each national organisation (members pages).

#### STRENGTHENING THE VISIBILITY OF EBU

**ACTIONS**

* Raising awareness on its work/results through effective information provision/communication, including the use of different communication channels.
* Developing transparency of EBU internal communication channels, for example by providing information about EBU email lists, women’s network and low-vision network, women's tea talks etc. on EBU website.
* Using members own communication channels to circulate EBU outputs
* Expanding EBU Institutional Journalists Database.
* Clarifying with the new Board, the use and subscribing conditions of Discussion Lists and informing members.

#### STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABILITY OF EBU

**ACTIONS**

* Diversifying funding sources.
* Striving for a more environmentally sustainability (e.g. by assessing and addressing the environmental footprint of the activities developed and implemented by EBU).
* Drafting a sustainability charter (including, e.g. establishing guidelines for EBU Board meeting procedures, such as the balance between in-person meetings and online meetings (considering functionalities, e.g. the first meeting with the new Board are recommended to take place in-person to get to know each other) and advising that for Board meetings venues are selected that are easy accessible, e.g. also by train.
* Improving the effectiveness of EBU fundraising strategy.

#### STRENGTHENING THE SECRETARIAT

**ACTIONS**

* Supporting ongoing staff training.
* Improving secretariat capacity and work environment.
* Taking care of the wellbeing of staff.
* Setting up a code of conduct and understanding between staff, board and members to ensure mutual respect and constructive collaboration.
* Implementing safeguard mechanisms against moral pressure and harassment of the staff.

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1. Additionally, EBU has two associate members. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)