THE RIGHT TO READ

FOR PEOPLE WITH PRINT DISABILITIES

EiFL’s support for ratification and implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty
“For generations, visually impaired people have had their requests for accessible format books declined because the books were simply not available. With the rights gained under the Marrakesh Treaty, our community is becoming braver about asking for books. It is like a new beginning!”

– INGA DAVIDONIENĖ, DIRECTOR, LITHUANIAN LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND
“Afterwards, we continued to work with ARTE law firm, drafting proposals for amendments. MP Dastan supported our amendments and ensured that they were included in the copyright bill (2016). We waited anxiously over the next months – and in March 2017, were overjoyed to hear that the President had signed the bill into law. And all our proposed amendments were included!”

“To complete the legal process, the government should also accede to the Marrakesh Treaty. In May 2017, we were delighted when the government deposited its instrument of accession at WIPO, and three months later, in August, the Marrakesh Treaty entered into force in Kyrgyzstan. From now on, librarians would not be forced to turn down requests for accessible format texts because of copyright. At last, blind and visually impaired people in Kyrgyzstan had equal rights of access to information.

“In 2018, to show the Marrakesh Treaty in action, we facilitated the first-ever international transfer of accessible format books to Kyrgyzstan during a national seminar in Bishkek organized by WIPO in cooperation with the State Service of Intellectual Property and Innovation (Kyzgyzpatent). The requested titles were converted into digital accessible format by the University of Toronto Libraries, Canada and transferred to Kyrgyzstan using Dropbox. In that seminar, we showed how straightforward international exchange of accessible books can be.

“Our success in ratifying the treaty and amending our copyright law was the result of a collective effort by many passionate and involved organizations and individuals, including libraries. We are extremely thankful for their hard work.”

Now new services for persons with print disabilities are being rolled out nationwide. The Republican Library for Children and Youth, a public library in the capital Bishkek, is leading efforts to develop a national library infrastructure for accessible books. The library has developed practical manuals on how to convert printed works into accessible formats, and has provided training.

“Now we are working towards creating a national catalogue of accessible books. All our libraries in Kyrgyzstan have access to the catalogue, and can request material needed from other libraries. In this way, blind and visually impaired people will have access to resources from across the country. And if we do not have the book needed in Kyrgyzstan, for the first time, we can request it from another country,” says Nyrilya Sarybaeva, head of the library’s training centre.

LITHUANIA: ‘A TRULY GLOBAL SERVICE’

Lithuania has also joined and implemented the treaty into national law. By enabling cross-border sharing of accessible format material, the Marrakesh Treaty dramatically expands opportunities for learning and research for visually impaired people. In 2020, Inga Davidoniene, Director of the Lithuanian Library for the Blind, received an unexpected request from a student in Delhi in India.

“The student is studying Indo-European languages. Lithuanian is a very old language that belongs to the family of Indo-European languages, and he needed books in Lithuanian. He selected 14 audio books from a list we provided. I was so happy to help. Such an experience gives us confidence that we are moving in the right direction in serving visually impaired scholars. We are becoming a truly global service!”

“In 2020 we organized five seminars for Lithuanian librarians, where our specialists shared knowledge, experience and guidelines for practical implementation of the treaty. More than 300 public and academic librarians took part.

“It is very important for Lithuanian libraries to know that they can also serve readers who cannot read print text. Our aspiration is that all print disabled readers who come to any Lithuanian library will receive the information they need.”

The Marrakesh Treaty – EIFL’s contribution

20 countries joined the treaty

- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Botswana
- Estonia
- Ghana
- Kenya
- Kyrgyzstan
- Latvia
- Lesotho
- Lithuania
- Moldova
- Mongolia
- Poland
- Russia
- Serbia
- Slovenia
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Uganda
- Zimbabwe

23 copyright law recommendations

- Belarus
- Botswana
- Brazil
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Ethiopia
- European Union
- Ireland
- Kenya
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lesotho
- Lithuania
- Malawi
- Mongolia
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- North Macedonia
- Russia
- Serbia
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zanzibar
- Zimbabwe

37 million blind and visually impaired people have greater access to knowledge.*

People living with perceptual impairment such as dyslexia, and physical disabilities that prevent them from holding or turning the pages of a book, also benefit from the Marrakesh Treaty. Global statistics for these beneficiaries are not available.

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