



## **EDbU Manifesto on the celebration of the European Deafblind Day 2019**

The European Deafblind Union (EDbU) is a European association that joins together European national organisations for deafblind people. It was founded in 2003. as an international non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation.

The EDbU is a European Forum for the exchange of good practice and knowledge in the field of deafblindness which also helps to increase solidarity among European national organizations for deafblind people.

As a true Voice of the Deafblind in Europe, the basic aim and function of the EDbU is to work for equality and full social inclusion of deafblind people in all European countries. As unique European organization which represents the real identity of the Deafblind community, the EDbU celebrates the 22<sup>nd</sup> October as the European Deafblind Day due to its establishment.

We celebrate this day to inform the society about deafblindness and to make them aware of our needs as well as the abilities. Considering that, we state the following;

Deafblindness is a unique disability that consists of a combination of two sensorial losses, both hearing and visual, that generates major problems for having a global perception, as well as difficulties in communication, training and information access. It also generates important difficulties for mobility. Therefore, it is essential for us to have professionals that are well educated for our communication systems.

A challenge faced by EDbU, as organization managed by Deafblind people, is to achieve equal treatment and opportunities, as well as a real and effective

exercise of the rights of deafblind people as it is stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

For the reasons above mentioned, we deafblind people demand the following:

1. To determine by the European bodies the Emergency Resolution On Professional Deafblind Interpreters/Intervenors and Equal Access to Communication for People with Deafblindness in Europe, adopted at the Conference "Alone We Can Do So Little, Together We Can Do So Much" which took place in the European Parliament, Brussels (Belgium), 5th of June 2018; Having regard to the Written Declaration (1/2004) on the needs of people with deafblindness adopted by the European Parliament calling for the recognition of deafblindness across Europe
2. To be able to have an independent living, fully participating in every aspect of life. Public bodies should implement the measures to guarantee universal accessibility for deafblind people.
3. To promote research on and the implementation of different and specific communication systems used by deafblind people, aiming to disseminate them and promote their use among the whole group of deafblind people. We also demand the recognition of Sign Languages among Europe as official national languages and to consider also the deafblind people community as user of this language.
4. To have right to freely practice the decision-making on equal basis with the rest of the citizens. For doing so, public bodies need to facilitate the measures that make possible the access to a stable and qualified guide-interpreting service. This would contribute to eliminate communication barriers and facilitate social inclusion and effective participation of deafblind people in every aspect of life.

5. To have access to the required and competent experts (e.g. professional interpreters for deafblind people, communication mediators) as well as the access to adjusted assistive technologies.
6. To recognise, advertise and promote the red and white cane as symbol of the deafblind people collective by the public bodies in order to give it social visibility.
7. To promote the use and research of new, adjusted and assistive technologies. Which represents a revolution of accessibility to important information and everyday communication of deafblind people.
8. Women and young girls with deafblindness face stronger and multiple forms of discrimination, in a higher degree than the rest of women and girls with disabilities as a consequence of the uniqueness of deafblindness and how it affects every sphere of our lives. For this reason, when designing specific public policies, we have to be taken into consideration, and measures should be adopted to guarantee that we can fully enjoy our fundamental rights on equal basis with the rest of women with and without disabilities.
9. Deafblind youth is willing to live their lives joyfully as the rest of European youth, having the same opportunities as them in every aspect of their lives.

For all the above mentioned, deafblind people appeal to public bodies and demand the following:

It is urgent to legally recognise deafblindness as a unique disability and protect it by LAW which guarantees us to fully enjoy human rights.

We demand an official European census in order to know the exact number of people with deafblindness.

We demand public bodies to acknowledge that access to communication is a right, and therefore we have the right to have access to intervenors or interpreters for deafblind people.

Public bodies have to be aware that without economic resources we cannot develop the programmes that guarantee universal accessibility.

Only if our demands are fulfilled, our motto will be asserted: “**Accessible DeSIGNed Europe for Deafblind**”.