



Sounds in European E-Learning - SEEL
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STUDY ON THE INDIVIDUALS WITH VIZUAL DISABILITIES FROM ROMANIA

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General considerations

European Union considers any type of disability as a problem for the entire society. This means continuous preparation and adaptation in all the fields for psycho-socio-economical integration and maintenance of disabled individuals.

Although Romania is adapting to the legislation, and, so, to the European terminology, our country is still using the collocation “handicapped individuals”. Law 448 from the 6th of December 2006 concerning protection and promotion of disabled individual rights, modified and completed in September 2010, defines that “disabled individuals are those persons who are missing the abilities of developing usual daily activities, because of physical, mental or sensorial affection, needing measures of protection for supporting their recovery, integration and social inclusion”.

Visual disability is a sensorial deficiency and it consists in different levels of diminution of visual acuity (to the total lack of sight). Therefore, visual disability means the diminution of visual acuity on one or both eyes, along intrauterine life until death.

Actually, in Romania there are living over 120.000 individuals with visual disabilities..

Still slow, but there appear plural facilities for the individuals with visual disabilities and also their chances to get a socio-professional integration are increasing.

A few Romanian entrepreneurs have based the Foundation “Cartea Calatoare”, a social enterprise which produces books in audio DAISY format and it’s selling them to the libraries across Romania. Thus, the individuals with visual disabilities may **access, for free**, literature, manuals, school books or university classes.

Another example is Caravaggio Experience – Multi-Sensitive Exhibition for blind individuals and visual disabled individuals from the Art Collection Museum in Bucharest, during October 5th to November 26th. The space for Exhibition was especially arranged.

The first film festival from Romania for visual disabled individuals took place in May, this year. According to Radio Timisoara, “a project for visual disabled individuals will be launched on Wednesday in six cities across Romania. Through “BatPro” - Computer for visual disabled individuals, there will be developed a simple IT application, designed for visual disabled individuals who are not familiarized in using computers. It will allow to the user to go through a

menu, using only four keys, where he/she will have the chance to choose different options that will offer access to: a collection of audio books, news about web-sites of plural newspapers, information available over the internet, online radios.”

One more important element for integration of visual disabled individuals is constituted by projects.

Orange Foundation is one of the important organizations who develop and finance such projects. On April 23rd, Orange Foundation has mentioned the winners of the 2015 edition of the financial exercise program “World by sound and color”, designed for educational cultural or healthy life projects, developed for visual or audacity disabled individuals.

There are also another foundations and organizations in Romania who finance this type of projects.

Some examples of winning projects that will be implemented during May 2015 and July 2016 are:

- ☞ **Audiosofia Association**, with the project called “Diagnosing audacity affections”
The goal of the project is prevention and reduction of audacity disabled among children.
- ☞ **Special school for audacity disabled individuals „Sfânta Maria” from Bucharest**, with the project “Sign-Word-Image – Communication without barriers for the audacity disabled students, through developing a web page which will have embedded evaluation sheets structured on curricula areas on the model of PISA tests, where the terms will be explained in words, graphic images and sign-language, too.
- ☞ **Lions Club Arad**, with the “BatPro Project – Computer for visual disabled individuals” This project will develop a simple concept application, easy to be tracked by visual disabled individuals who are not familiarized in using computers, where they will have access to audio books, news, etc.. This application will be installed on refurbished computers that will be donated to disabled visual individuals.

Visual disability within educational system in Romania

During last few years, it’s to be tried more and more the integration of blind and ambliopic children in regular public schools. Yet, there isn’t exist an appropriate environment for a good activity for this category of students, both to the lack of available materials as well as manuals or

didactic boards and sketches and to the lack of special training provided to educators and teachers for this type of job: working with special needs children.

This is why a good alternative is represented by special schools designed for visual disabled individuals.

Within **Disabled children psycho-pedagogy**, www.scritub.com/sociologie, there are to be found recommendations for the teachers who are teaching to the visual disabled students in special schools or public schools:

- ☞ Because a smile or some other nonverbal approving behavior is not always visible, there are recommended, as appreciation modalities, verbal approving or a tactile touch (as, for example, an easy pat on the shoulder).
- ☞ To be found out from your student what's the place there he/she is viewing optimal to the whiteboard.
- ☞ The light isn't to be reflected on the board; what's to be written on this should be visible for everyone.
- ☞ If the student is sensitive to the light, he/she mustn't be placed next to windows. To be ensured means of protection against light for his/her eyes (sunglasses, hat with a brim, etc.).
- ☞ It's necessary to ensure some supplementary space for some special materials needed by these students, as well as it's necessary to encourage the students to use them.
- ☞ Using materials or asking for a special assistant – it's better to be requested only in need and if the student wants it.
- ☞ The students, having us around, can and must fulfill the same tasks as their classmates, although they might need adaptations of their means of teaching or a reduction of their tasks, because some time limits (or extension of these time limits).
- ☞ It's recommended to include some themes bound to seeing or visual disabilities within the curricula; example: at Sciences (Physics) – information about light – optics.

Other key-elements for school integration

- ☞ Proceedings for facilitation work with written materials
- ☞ Using maps and sketches
- ☞ Using various tools (optics, tools that reinforce tactile functions), tools that potentiates audacity running, electronic tools
- ☞ Using Braille alphabet
- ☞ Using an interface for blind individuals, tactile dynamic graphics, Braille, Dots Plus Braille, screen reader, voice caption tools

Annexed here, there is the list of the most important special schools for visual disabled children. In most of the cases, these schools have all the educational levels: *School for visual disabled individuals from Bucharest; High School for visual disabled individuals Sfânta Maria from Arad; High School for visual disabled individuals from Cluj-Napoca, Theoretical High School Iris from Timisoara; High School for visual disabled individuals from Buzau; Moldova High school for visual disabled individuals from Targu Frumos.*

Scholarships and programs

Many of the universities from Romania provide special conditions for the disabled individuals; some certain organizations financially or materially support the educational process through some special projects on the length that a disabled individual is following the academic years of study. In order to find the offers for disabled individuals, please visit the web-sites of the universities. For the support programs designed to disabled school or university students we will complete a list which will be public here, as well as we will get the information. If you know any NGO which runs programs supporting blind individuals, please let us know about it, writing as many information as needed on our contact page.

Educational resources

There exist a number of tools and websites specially designed for blind students that may help them during learning activities. Thus, we recommend www.scoalapentrutoti.ro where are to be found different supporting materials for blind students, www.carti-daisy.ro, where are to be found some books in a Daisy format, but, as a software, there is to be consulted The Teacher of Braille de la Baum.