



A n n u a l R e p o r t

2023

The Year of...



Introduction

Welcome to Dbl's Annual Report 2023!

Surely you've read some pretty boring annual reports in other contexts: Lengthy, dry, stiff reports. But of course, annual reports are actually stories about an organisation. They can be told in different ways, from different perspectives, with different intentions.

This annual report basically wants to tell the story of Dbl's development in 2023. It does so from different pens and therefore through different people, all of whom have shaped this development as members of today's Management Committee. This also means different text lengths (which is of course also related to the respective role and involvement), different styles and different approaches to the same genre of text, the annual report: in other words, diversity.

This is certainly appropriate for 2023, because in 2023 we have focused more on diversity and because many new individual members, new organisational members and the elections in the middle of the year have led to a welcome increase in diversity in the or-

ganisation as a whole and also in the Board and Management Committee.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot to do in terms of diversity and in general. Not surprisingly, the various contributions to the annual report therefore also focus on what has been done. However, not everything in an organisation can be 'done'. Organisations evolve and we evolve with them. This also applies to Dbl in 2023, which has not stopped us from including action prominently in our claim.

In the following, you will find thus various reports on the Dbl year 2023, which together make up this annual report. This strongly reflects the other part of our claim: Connecting, which Dbl has long been committed to. In terms of text, the articles are also linked by a game to summarise the year 2023 as the 'Year of....'.

We hope you enjoy what will hopefully not be a boring read!



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CONNECT TO ACT:

A Year of Continuation AND Increased Focus on Concrete Impact for a More Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Future

Mirko Baur, President



'Connect to Act' is how we developed our claim in 2023. This was preceded by the elections, which led to a new Board and a new Management Committee and to correspondingly honouring and welcoming hybrid meetings with the outgoing and incoming groups in the context of the excellent World Conference in Ottawa, Canada.

If this sounds primarily like change, you are mistaken. The claim is a good example of this. Since the penultimate elections in 2019, Dbl has emphasised that it is THE point of connection in deafblindness. Presumably largely unconsciously, this reflects a very typical humanist saying by E. M. Forster: 'Just connect'. He emphasises that we are all part of a human network and that we become human with and through other people. This is natural and cultural and certainly an immediately recognisable core of Dbl: we are a community. We connect and work together. We meet on an equal footing and this results in friendships that last for years.

But we are a community with a specific focus and we obviously want to achieve something together. And that's why we act. We act to be as effective as possible with and for all those living with deafblindness and also with and for all those involved in the field.

The new Board and the new Management Committee have therefore agreed on this new purpose statement :

Dbl is THE point of connection in deafblindness to maximize positive impact with and for all those concerned and involved.

Or, in a nutshell, as a claim. **Connect to Act.** This is not primarily a change, but a next version that builds on the last one. The same applies to the Board and

the Management Committee after the 2023 elections, also in terms of personnel: some members are new, others have been there before. Despite all the changes, this allows for continuity as well as new focus, experience as well as fresh energy.

Taking the Management Committee as an example: we said goodbye to Henriette Hermann Olesen as Vice President, who no longer stood for the office. Mary Maragia, the coordinator of the 1st Dbl Conference in Africa, and Meredith Prain, who had been involved with Dbl for a long time, including in the Communication and the Research Networks, were newly elected as Vice Presidents. Two new Vice-Presidents were therefore elected, as the presidency changed from Frank Kat to myself as the previous Vice-President. Frank remained very actively involved as Immediate Past President. This also applies to the other appointed members of the Management Committee: the Treasurer, Esther van Diik, the Secretariat with Cathy Proll and Sue Hall, the Network Coordinator, Trees van Nunen-Schrauwen,

the Governance Officer, Jackie Brennan and the Information Officer, Irina Moiseeva.

If the latter name doesn't sound familiar, the role of Information Officer had already changed in May: Julia Mayorova left us with a job change and Irina Moiseeva joined us. The Governance Officer role then changed at the end of January 2024: Jackie took her well-deserved retirement and Roxanna Spruyt was newly appointed.

So 2023 is continuity and a new focus, and that also came with newly formulated goals and strategies. This is what we want to achieve in the current term:

- **Clear progress in recognition of deafblindness as a unique and distinct disability**, with:
 - An approved ICF Core Set for deafblindness
 - A Dbl recommendation for a functional definition of deafblindness



- A successful Global Education Campaign in all 3 focus regions and beyond
- **Clear progress in becoming THE link to information and exchange in the field**, with:
 - Vital and communicative Networks
 - Further strengthened Dbl communication
 - Affordable conferences with lasting impact
- **Clear progress in becoming more inclusive, participative and relevant**, with:
 - Close partnership with WFDB
 - Newly clarified structures and processes
 - Active roles in the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment ICEVI, in the International Communication Rights Alliance ICRA (and therefore also in

collaboration with the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication ISAAC), in the International Disability and Development Consortium IDDC and in the Economic and Social Council of the UN ECOSOC (as soon as we have been granted the corresponding consultative status)

We worked on all of this in 2023 and initially also considered how we can successfully pursue the goals and on what value basis. Among other things, this resulted in a new policy on diversity, equity and inclusion, which will be followed by a comprehensive strategy in 2024. A new start has also been made with a newly composed Fundraising Committee (FundCom) with these members: Atul Jaiswal (i.a. Research Funding Specialist), Esther van Dijk (i.a. Chair FundCom), Meredith Prain (i.a. Dbl Vice-President), Mirko Baur (i.a. Co-Chair Fundraising Global Education Campaign), Roel de Haas (i.a. Co-Chair Fundraising Global Education Campaign), Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks (i.a. Dbl Governance Officer), Vikram Choudhary (i.a. Corporate Networker). And the



Communication Committee (ComCom) was reorganised with sub-teams at the end of the year. By the way, these are currently the members of ComCom after Roxanna Spruyt left us due to her appointment as Governance Officer: Graciela Ferioli (i.a. Dbl Social Media Pioneer), Mary Maragia (i.a. Vice-Chair ComCom), Irina Moiseeva (i.a. Dbl Information Officer), Lindsay Balsdell & Cathy Proll (i.a. Dbl Secretariat), Mirko Baur (i.a. Chair ComCom), Sue Wooksey, Leslie Giesbrecht & Madison Smith (i.a. ComCom Communication Ambassadors Coordinators), Trees van Nunen-Schrauwen (i.a. Dbl Network Coordinator), Vikram Choudhary (i.a. ComCom Accessibility Team Coordinator).

But let's take a closer look at the goals, some of the sub-goals and the corresponding work in 2023.

- **Clear progress in recognition of deafblindness as a unique and distinct disability**
 - Our **ICF Core Set Project** has made wonderful progress. The project establishes deafblind-

ness as a unique and distinct condition within the framework of the WHO Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). ICF Core Sets are based on a sub-selection of ICF categories and are instrumental in improving awareness and recognition, service delivery, clinical practice, and research worldwide. The ICF Core Sets development process is highly regulated by the ICF Research Office of the WHO, and requires first of all four research phases: 1. systematic literature review (researcher perspective), 2. qualitative study with individuals with deafblindness (lived experience perspective), 3. expert survey (professional perspective), 4. multi-center clinical study (clinical perspective). By the end of 2023 the four research phases were nearly completed. We could therefore begin to work towards the final project step – the International ICF Consensus Conference. It will take place from 7-9 October 2024 near Barcelona in Spain. All of this would never have been possible without



the excellent co-operation in the project team and the great commitment of Walter Wittich and his research team and network and the European Deafblind Network with Ricard Lopez and his team. Unfortunately, we are currently still lacking sponsorship funds for the consensus conference, a necessity especially for the participants living with deafblindness coming from all WHO regions.

- 2023 was also strongly characterised by our **Global Education Campaign**, which has virtually become our signature project. In 2023, it was primarily about weaving the centrally necessary networks in all three focus regions of the campaign: Africa, Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean. At the same time, we collected data in all participating countries to give the campaign a clear direction. The campaign focuses on 23 countries and is relevant for 5.85 million children with deafblindness, their families, professionals, and researchers in the field. It works with a bottom-up,



top-down approach and a strong multi-level network with a global committee, three regional committees and national leaders with and without deafblindness. It will come with a researchers' initiative in all three focus regions. The results will be presented at the

next joint World Conference of Dbl and the World Federation of the Deafblind WFDB at the University of Zurich in 2027. Regional conferences and meetings are planned along the way: 2024 in Argentina, 2025 in Nepal and with the 1st Dbl Deafblind Africa Network Conference also in Egypt. Nationally, the participating countries are currently focusing on a project that is particularly relevant to them in the areas of the identified biggest needs: early identification & intervention, schooling, vocational training, or assistive technologies. One of the global support systems is an online collection of resources on Google Drive that has just started. And since the 2023 World Conference, there has also been a corresponding new Dbl Network, the Education Network, the creation of which is also due to the enthusiasm and commitment of the Network Chair: Anders Martin Rundh.

- **Clear progress in becoming THE link to information and exchange in the field**
 - As already mentioned, the Communication Committee has been reorganised to **further strengthen our communications**. Specifically, the Secretariat is now also a member of ComCom, the Information Office in Russia has been strengthened with a back-up in Canada and a number of thematically focussed teams have been created. They are responsible for accessibility, Dbl's worldwide communication ambassadors, the Dbl Review, our forthcoming Membership Bulletin (formerly know as our newsletter), for the website, the communication collaboration with Dbl's Networks, the interaction via social media and the membership communication & interaction. All ComCom members remain committed to the focus topics planned for the entire year, which take centre stage for around two months on our website and in

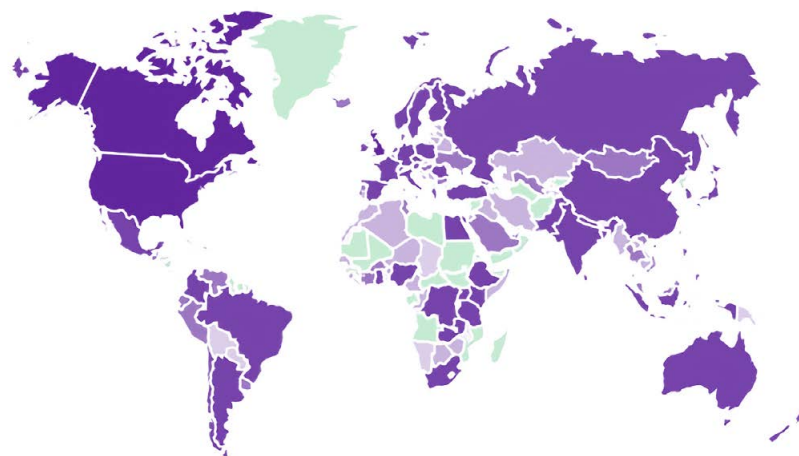
our social media. By the way, Dbl has continued to make good progress with this:

- ♦ **Facebook:** In February 2020 there were 3053 people following Dbl on Facebook, by the end of April 2024 5273, 71.9% of them female. The number of followers has only increased in the last 4 years. In the Facebook benchmarking, Dbl performs well in comparison with similar organisations. We have more followers, more new followers and more content interactions. The posts on the Global Education Campaign and the new memorandum with the World Federation of the Deafblind WFDB achieved the greatest reach up to and including April 2024. Some of these posts were promoted.
- ♦ **Instagram:** Dbl started to use Instagram in November 2018. In February 2020 we had 280 followers, by the end of April 2024 1333, 80% of them female. The number of

followers has only increased in the last 4 years. Dbl performs well in comparison with similar organisations. We have more followers and higher content interactions. Posts during the World Conference achieved the greatest reach up to and including April 2024. Most popular was the post for the next World Conference 2027 in Zurich, Switzerland.

- ♦ **X:** X, previously known as Twitter, remained Dbl's least important social media channel. However, followers increased here too, from 384 in March 2023 to 468 in April 2024. Two tweets about the ADBN's webinar series received the most impressions.
- ♦ **Website:** Compared to 2022, the website had 5.4 % more active users in 2023, around 11,000 new users were registered, 4.1 % more than in 2022, and the average time spent on the site increased by 10.4 % to 1.36 minutes. Most new users came

from search functions or directly, far fewer via social media or referral, even more so than in 2022. Most likely the yarnbombing and the World Conference in Ottawa brought a peak in new users from the USA and Canada at the end of June and the end of July respectively. The most important page in terms of views and users was by far again the landing page. After a huge increase in geographical diversity in 2021, the positive trend of reaching more countries around the world continued. However, compared to 2022, more countries in Asia were reached and fewer in Africa, especially in the West. In 2023, the accessibility of the website was increased with a plugin with a read-aloud function. A webshop was added in cooperation with Switzerland and the resources on the website were reorganised.



- **Clear progress in becoming more inclusive, participative and relevant**
 - In addition to governance work, particularly with the revision of our handbook, which saw a breakthrough at the beginning of 2024, we made progress in 2023 especially with regard to collaborations. Those with the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) have deepened further, for



Deafblind
International Dbl

example with space for the Global Education Campaign at ICEVI's East Asia Conference in Indonesia in September and ICEVI's 1st Africa Conference in Kenya in October. The next steps with the World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB) were very important. Among other things, this led to a new Memorandum of Understanding at the beginning of 2024, which lays the foundation for joint committees and also for a joint next World Conference in 2027. "Connect to Act" is being implemented here across organisations: Because we can definitely achieve more togeth-

er. And because Dbl is convinced that 'Nothing without us' is essential for a more diverse, equitable and inclusive future.

But let's go back to the beginning and thus to the World Conference in Ottawa, surely one of the most memorable Dbl highlights in 2023. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Planning Committee and the Scientific Committee, certainly on behalf of the whole of Deafblind International Dbl, for their great commitment and this excellent World Conference. Grazie mille!



A Year of Transition & Growth

Reflections of the Immediate Past President

Frank Kat



Taking the next stride forward, as the former president of Dbl, I reflect on the developments of 2023, a year characterized by transition and growth, during which our focus was firmly on establishing ourselves as THE point of connection in deafblindness and connecting to act. This was the year the education campaign gained significant visibility and achieved promising initial outcomes. I firmly believe in the paramount importance of this campaign; education stands as the most powerful engine for progress, growth, and independence. Our overarching mission, with a clear emphasis on creating opportunities and advocating for the immediate recognition of the right to education for all deafblind children worldwide, underscores the necessity for collaboration and social engagement with regional partners. Hence, the first step in our campaign in Asia involved establishing a network comprising representatives from various participating Asian countries, including Nepal, Vietnam,

the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, each with its country leader. Collaborating with fellow participants within the Asian team, we collectively worked on crafting the initial draft of a SWOT matrix and later analyzed the strengths and weaknesses in deafblind services. Through interactions with diverse country leaders, I witnessed firsthand the energy and dedication toward achieving our campaign objectives.

I firmly believe that more significant strides can be made through collaborations with our partners worldwide and by involving governments, international bodies, and national partners. As a result of our commitment to this collaborative approach, Dbl is a proud member of IDDC, the International Disability and Development Consortium. Within IDDC, I actively participated in one of the task groups, Inclusive Education TG, where I had the opportunity to share our education campaign priorities.



Deafblind
International Dbl

Furthermore, 2023 is significant for me as it marks a transition year. During the annual meeting, I handed over the presidency role to the new president, Mirko Baur, assuming the position of past president. My role primarily entails ensuring continuity in all Dbl's ongoing activities and projects. I have found great satisfaction in participating in the ManCom and Board

meetings, witnessing Dbl's revitalized ambitions, and the increased involvement of members in various activities, signifying significant progress. So, I have to say that the past president no longer serves its purpose, so I decided to step down from this role in the summer of 2024. I look back with good feelings on the many activities and friendships that Dbl has brought.



A Year of Building Connections

Reflections of the New Vice-President Based in Kenya

Mary Maragia

The last year has been exciting and full of opportunities. Dbl being an effective point of connection in deafblindness worldwide, has given us a platform to reach out to more people and create awareness of what Dbl does. Furthermore, through our meetings and conversations with professionals from other organisations and other stakeholders, it has increased interest in individual membership in Dbl and the Dbl Networks.

Additionally, one of our most important pillars has been networking and building connections with other organisations and stakeholders. Dbl has made progress in becoming the link to information and exchange in the field through the vital and communicative Networks. Furthermore, there has been strengthened Dbl communication through various engagements such as participating in the first ICEVI Africa Conference held in October 2023 in Nairobi.

Another amazing project that is supporting Dbl's effort to reach underserved children with the unique disability of deafblindness in three regions—Africa, Asia, and Latin America & the Caribbean—is the Global Education Campaign (GEC). There has been wonderful engagement with the country leaders who are spearheading the GEC in their respective countries. Every leader is currently identifying the project that they will be implementing in collaboration with respective governments and networking with other stakeholders in 2025/26.

Last but not least, working with my colleagues in the field of deafblindness has given me an opportunity to build more connections, advocate for quality of services, raise awareness and improve the quality of life of persons with deafblindness.



Deafblind
International Dbl



A year of learning

Report of the New Vice President Based in Australia

Dr. Meredith Prain

I commenced in the role of Vice-President in July 2023, just prior to the 18th Deafblind International World Conference in Ottawa, Canada. The conference was as always a wonderful opportunity to learn about the latest developments in deafblindness globally, connect with new friends and reconnect with old. This was also a good and rare opportunity to meet with ManCom and the Dbl Board in person to foster positive working relationships.

Dbl Network and Committee Involvement

I continue to serve on the committees of the Dbl Communication Network and Dbl Research Network, both of which are very active in particular coordinating research grant funding and information webinars, and in July also joined the Fundraising Committee (FundCom), as Dbl has an increasing number of projects we require funding for, including the Global Education Campaign, Regional and World Conferences, and research.

Governance Handbook

Together with Jackie Brennan, Carolyn Monaco and Roxanna Spruyt, I worked to ensure the Dbl Governance Handbook is up to date and reflects current practices of Dbl. In particular I undertook work on the role of the FundCom, one of Dbl's newer committees and updated the guidelines for networks in collaboration with Trees Van Nunen (Network Coordinator) and Mirko Baur.

In an effort to recognise Dbl's work to date and maintain and increase diversity and inclusion moving forward, a diversity and inclusion policy was developed with input from Mirko Baur, Frank Kat, Roxanna Spruyt and Walter Wittich. Further policy development is planned.

Global Definition of Deafblindness

Increasingly internationally, there is recognition of the need for a global definition of deafblindness. While

there are many definitions used across the globe, both the World Federation of Deafblind (WFDB) and work from the Global Education Campaign have identified that many countries still have no definition in use. A small working group of members of Dbl and WFDB have come together to plan and execute global research to develop a universal definition of deafblindness, undertaken to complement the work on development of an International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Core Set – Deafblind.

This definition is not necessarily to replace existing definitions, but to assist those countries who aspire to adopt or adapt a definition.

International Communication Rights Alliance (ICRA)

The ICRA is a group of international peak bodies (including Deafblind International and the World Federation of the Deafblind) and interested individuals wishing to use the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) to raise awareness of communication rights and how to uphold these.

The ICRA has a relationship with the CRPD committee and has made two presentations to the committee with another presentation planned later this year.

In December, the ICRA ran a member engagement session for members to educate people around the world regarding the process of CRPD reporting and how to get involved to raise awareness of communication rights.

Regional Activities

With the recent establishment of the Dbl Education Network, and Global Education Campaign, I have worked with the South Pacific Educators of the Vision Impaired to develop a Community of Practice – Deafblind Education. The moderator of this group is linked with the Dbl Education Network to ensure two way information flow.

Being based in the Asia Pacific region, I facilitated the Dbl Communication Network webinars in this region, with the last webinar having participants from 6 countries in the region attend.



A Year of Growing Membership, Communication and Meetings

Report of the Secretariat

Cathy Proll & Sue Hall



Individual Memberships:

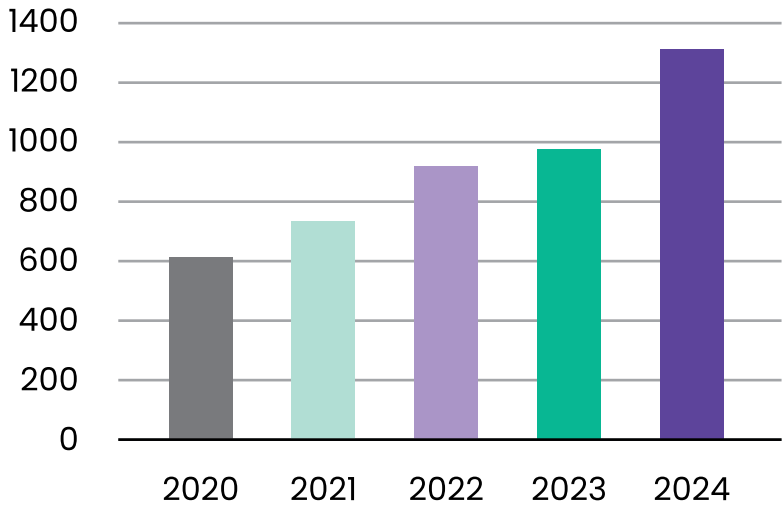
We are happy to report that individual memberships have continued to grow this past year. We had hoped to reach the goal of 1,000 members by the end of

2023. Thanks to a membership drive that took place during the 18th Dbl World Conference in Ottawa, we were able to reach that magic number in July 2023!

Appendix A:

2020	613
2021	737
2022	923
2023	972
2024 (as of April 30, 2024)	1322

Number of Individual Members by Year



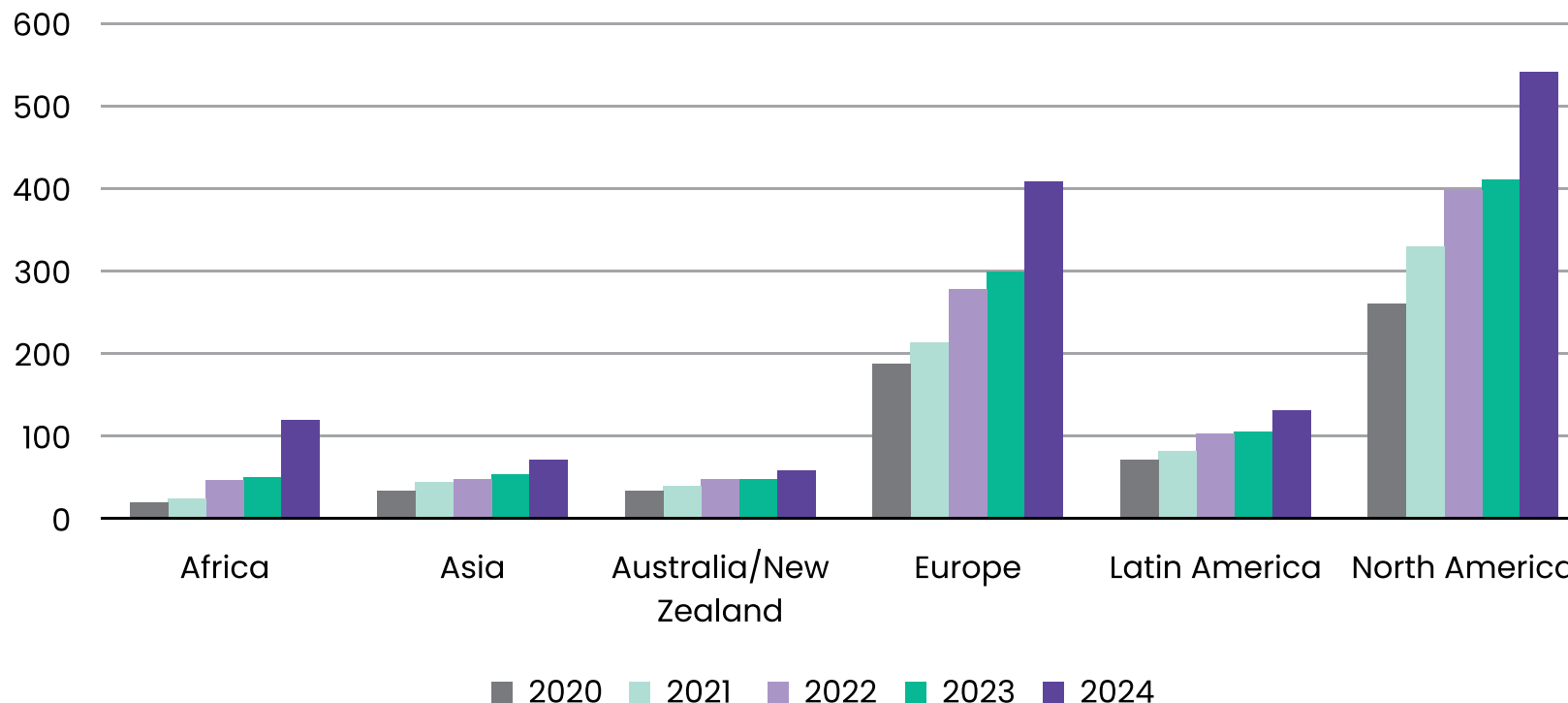
Once again, all the regions have experienced growth in the membership numbers. The average amount of growth in Asia, Australia/New Zealand, Europe, Latin

America, and North America is approximately 21%. As you can see from the chart below, membership in Africa has skyrocketed over the past year, increasing by over 130%.

Appendix B:

	Africa	Asia	Australia/ New Zealand	Europe	Latin America	North America
2020	17	33	34	188	70	260
2021	23	44	39	214	82	330
2022	45	47	47	278	102	399
2023	49	52	47	300	105	413
2024	118	71	56	408	129	540

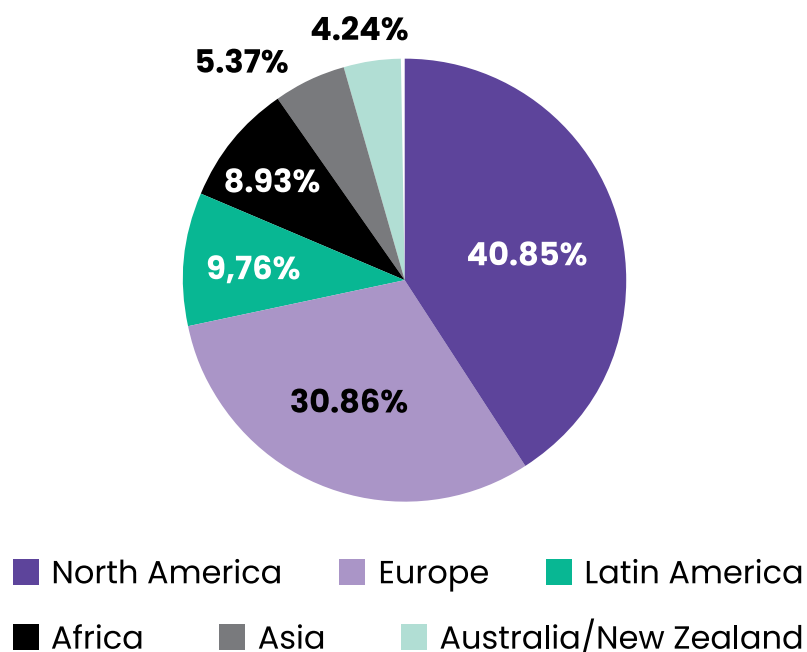
Individual Members by Region



Increasing diversity continues to be an important goal for Dbl. Over the past year, we have welcomed new members from Tunisia, Cuba, and Viet Nam for the first time. Although the percentage of member-

ship by region has seen some changes since last year, it is still clear that almost 75% of the members come from North America and Europe.

Percentage of Total Membership by Region



Thanks to the continued growth in membership, the Secretariat needed to consider ways to streamline the process of communicating with our members. Recently, we began using MailChimp for communications that need to go to all members. We have also been able to automate the delivery of the welcome message that is sent to all new members. Both changes have been very beneficial for the Secretariat, enabling us to work more efficiently.

The Secretariat has also been part of a team within ComCom that is committed to exploring new ways to interact with members. One of the items we've been able to accomplish, again thanks to MailChimp, is to send a birthday greeting to members who provided their birthdate when submitting their new member registration. If you chose not to include your birthdate in your registration, but would like to receive a birthday greeting, please email the Secretariat at dbi-secretariat@sensity.ca so that we can update your information.

Meetings of the ManCom and Board:

ManCom and the Board have continued to hold virtual meetings by using Zoom. ManCom met 8 times in 2023, while the Board met for a total of 6 times. In addition, during the World Conference in Ottawa, the Annual General Meeting included elections for

a new slate of Officers and Board members. For the first time, we offered a hybrid option for the AGM, inviting interested individual members to participate in the meeting even if they were not present at the AGM.

	2020	2021	2022	2023
ManCom meetings	5 meetings were held. All 5 meetings were conducted over Zoom	7 meetings were held. All 7 meetings were conducted over Zoom	7 meetings were held. All 7 meetings were conducted over Zoom.	8 meetings were held.
Board meetings	4 meetings were held. All 4 meetings were conducted over Zoom	4 meetings were held. All 4 meetings were conducted over Zoom	5 meetings were held. 4 were conducted over Zoom and 1 was held during the African conference (hybrid format)	6 meetings were held. Annual General Meeting held at the World Conference in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada with hybrid option for members not present.



A Year With Less Minus and the Plus of a New Fundraising Committee:

Financial Report 2023 of the Treasurer

Esther van Dijk

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Income	68.051	70.216	54.352	58.113	62.713	61.325	61.725	79.522
Expenditures	75.533	81.066	69.198	50.233	54.360	47.895	62.633	86.916
Equity	113.000	102.000	87.000	112.309	120.570	130.679	139.167	118.605

In EUR.

In 2023 Dbl had budgeted an income of EUR 60.000 and an expenditure of EUR 91.000 which would have led to an expected result of EUR -31.000. In reality, however, Dbl took in EUR 80.000 and spent EUR 87.000 which led to a result of approximately EUR -7.000.

Our equity has decreased from EUR 139.000 to EUR 119.000.

Income / Expenditures

Because of 3 new corporate members and because of 3 organisations which upgraded to a large corporate membership we have had more income than expected. However, 7 organisations were not able to pay their membership fee. Currently, we are trying to get them sponsored.

We also received an extra donation from Sensity for the World Conference of EUR 10.000 which we invested in individual sponsorships.

We did not have the expected expenses for the Global Education Campaign and also the organisational costs were less than expected. Furthermore, we had a special year because of the Dbl World Conference in Ottawa. We sponsored a large number of experts with lived experience with EUR 15.000, in addition to the EUR 10.000 from Sensity.

Equity

Our equity has dropped more than the negative result 2023 of EUR -7.000. This is due to some invoices for 2022 that could only be processed in 2023. The

most important one was the one for the Information Officer. Due to the war in Ukraine, we were unable to transfer money to Russia and had to find another solution, which took some time.

Fundraising Committee (FundCom)

The FundCom relaunched in summer 2023 and has already been working hard to raise more funds. A successful strategy seems to be the cultivation of existing corporate members and the recruitment of new corporate members.

In addition, sponsors are needed for the Dbl Conferences and meetings related to the ICF Core Sets project and the Global Education Campaign. FundCom keeps working creatively to meet this need.



A Year With Increased Teamwork

Report of the Information Officer

Irina Moiseeva

Following the path of teamwork, the Information Officer service is now provided by two organisations: Yaseneva Polyana, Foundation Con-nection, and Deafblind Ontario.

These organisations are working together to publish the Dbl Review, reorganise the Dbl website and produce the forthcoming Dbl Member Bulletin (previously known as the Dbl Newsletter).

This collaboration led to regular announcements to Dbl Review readers and a thoughtful approach to website updates, which will be more visible in 2024.

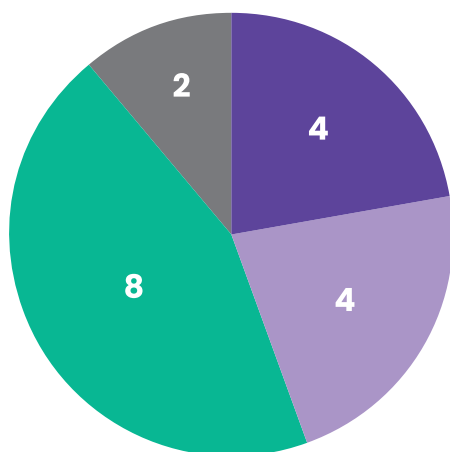
In 2023, 30 materials were published online in the Spring (#69) and Autumn (#70) issues of the Dbl Review, including 10 academic-style articles, five articles on the exchange of experience, 3 interviews, and 12 news articles.

These issues of the Dbl Review magazine are also available in audio versions, thanks to the collaboration with Perkins Library.



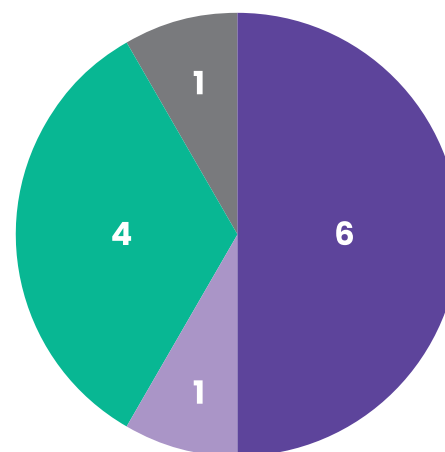
Figure 1. Image from the Dbl website: covers of the Dbl Review Issues #69 and #70.

Figure 2. Type and number of the publications in the Dbl Review magazine in the Spring Issue (#69).



■ Academic-type Articles
■ Exchange of Experience
■ Interviews ■ News

Figure 3. Type and number of the publications in the Dbl Review magazine in the Autumn Issue (#70).



■ Academic-type Articles
■ Exchange of Experience
■ Interviews ■ News



A Year of Beginnings

Report of the Governance Officer

Roxanna Spruyt

Speaking of new beginnings, a new Board was elected at the 18th World Conference in July 2023, with both new and familiar faces welcomed.

By end of January 2024, we bid a fond farewell to Jackie Brennan as the Governance Officer. Jackie is welcoming a new chapter in her life, retirement – but we know she is only a phone call or email away!

Following an “Expression of Interest”, the Board welcomed a new Governance Officer, effective January 30, 2024.

Many thanks are extended to Jackie Brennan, Carolyn Monaco, and Meredith Prain for their work on developing the Governance Handbook, which is now a working draft. The Board will work with this “live document” for the next 18 months, after which a final version will be released with regular annual updates beginning in June 2026. Stay tuned, as part of our strategic plan includes development in the governance role. I am excited to support this important work as Dbl’s governance processes continue to evolve!



A Year of More Networks, Network Members and Networking:

Report of the Network Coordinator

Trees van Nunen

In a world where connection and sharing knowledge are more important than ever, the Dbl Networks are representing these values. Networks are recognized as one of the core activities of Dbl.

In the constitution, one of the stated objects of Dbl is to stimulate the development of Networks with specialized focus. Networks are international groups of individual members and/or organisations, from at least three countries, approved by the General Assembly. Some Networks become elected members of the Dbl Board.

We noticed in 2023 an astonishing increase in the number of individual members participating in the different Networks. This increase is certainly also the result of activities such as webinars and newsletters, which the various Networks have again organised in the past year. But it is also important to mention that the Management Committee (ManCom) and the Communication Committee (ComCom) have

played an important role in this: both in terms of encouragement and advice in the field of communication and representation.

Currently, there are 17 Dbl Networks.

Total Networks Dbl by the end of 2023: 17

- Acquired Deafblindness Network (ADBN)
- Adapted Physical Activity (APA)
- Africa Network
- CHARGE Network
- Communication Network
- Creative Arts Network
- Deafblind Education Network

- European Deafblind Network (EDbN)
- Family Network
- Ibero Latin America Network
- Network of the Americas
- Outdoor Network
- Research Network
- Rubella Network
- Technology Network
- Usher Network
- Youth Network

Activities in 2023:

- We had 4 Network leaders meetings online (February, May, August, November)
- We welcomed 1 new Network: Deafblind Education Network
- During the 18th World Conference in Canada all the Network leaders presented their Network during a plenary session
- During the 18th World Conference mostly all Networks organized a meet and greet with their members or future members
- During the 18th World Conference the Communication Network and Usher Network organised a well visited pre-conference
- Reports in the Dbl Review

- Following an inventory and a discussion about the Dbl Network processes, we came up with recommendations for adjusting the corresponding paragraph in the Dbl Handbook
- Each Network now consists of a leadership committee of at least 3 persons. In order to share the responsibilities and the work, the roles and tasks are described.
- Sharing news from the ManCom and ComCom
- Each Network saw their membership increase
- A second, Co-Network Coordinator will be appointed to support the current Network Coordinator
- An ongoing emphasis on the use of social media
- Involvement of Networks in the Global Education Campaign
- Supporting each Network in the organisation of their activities, both financially and in the field of social media
- It has not yet been possible to relaunch the Adapted Physical Activity (APA) Network. Another attempt will be made to activate this Network in 2024.
- The Rubella network will be part of the Africa Network. This idea will need to be further developed.

Planned activities in 2024:

- 4 Network leaders meetings online
- Reports in the Dbl Review