



Deafblind
International **DbI**

Annual Report 2020

A CHALLENGING YEAR

A challenging year



The Board and Management committee (Man-Com) of Deafblind International herewith presents the Annual report for 2020.

This has been a year marked by disruption and unexpected change around the world, caused by the alarming and devastating spread of COVID-19. It has been a dizzying period of uncertainty. 2020 was a year of challenges, hardship and tragedy for so many. But the pandemic has also spotlighted the position of persons with deafblindness and the need of accessible communication. COVID-19 highlighted the importance of inclusive thinking for disability sector and also made clear that many things still need to be addressed. This also brings us an opportunity to strengthen the Government's focus on disability and to enhance outcomes for disabled people as we work on the COVID-19 response and recovery. It brought changes to our society as a whole. Social distancing measures are having an impact on all our lives. However, quick technical improvement as in Zoom and Microsoft Teams made it possible for some persons with deafblindness to have direct contact, participate in meeting and webinars, more than ever before. Despite COVID – 19, it was also a very successful year, many new and planned activities were set



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Introduction, by
the president of
Deafblind

through. Our projects in Africa, the outreaching communication, communication ambassadors, collaborations with several new partners and exciting initiatives of our networks are good examples of that. New working groups and committees (Communication Committee, Funding Committee) were creative and were able to generate a lot of activities in the field and share this through social media, the Review magazine and direct contact. Due to the fact that most of the planned conferences were postponed, DBI decided to organise the first DBI webinar in June around the theme "Living with Deafblindness in a New Reality". Also important to mention is that Walter Wittich was awarded the JT Award in 2020, Walter was one of the driving forces behind this webinar week. It was indeed a wonderful success in connecting around the globe!

DBI is an international not-for-profit membership organisation, our major goal is to connect individuals who are deafblind, their families, professionals,

researchers, developers, service-organisations, universities, national and international agencies and any other relevant partner in the field. In 2019 the Board approved on the 4 year strategy; to become the "Point of connection". It consists of Pro-active Communication, Expanding our relevant International Collaborations, Stimulating Research and Learning From Each Other and Enhancing our Culture of Diversity and Inclusion. You will read more about this in this annual report 2020.

The General meeting of DBI took place in June 2020, remotely via Zoom. Making use of Zoom or other means to keep frequent contact was already part of our communication strategy. Although we all miss real contact and the interaction of conferences, presentations and meetings, the frequent online-communication has contributed to a closer contact and involvement with our members.

As this report shows, it has been another busy and productive year for DBI, on our way to the "Point of connection".

Frank Kat
President of Dbl

Introduction, by
the president of
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Reaching out: Communication, Africa & Collaboration with ICEVI in 2020

Mirko Baur, “Strategic” Vice-President, Julia Mayorova, Dbl Information Officer

April 22, 2021

2020 has obviously been a very challenging year all over the world and especially in all circumstances where physical distance is simply not possible. However, 2020 has also been a very successful year in terms of outreaching communication, collaboration and our projects in Africa.

Outreaching Communication

The Com(munication)Com(mittee) has met online once a month, enjoying a great and effective collaboration. The position of the Dbl Information Officer changed in the last quarter of the year due to professional changes. Passionately involved in ComCom were 2020:

Dmitry Polikanov (i.a. Dbl Information Officer) > Julia Mayorova (i.a. Dbl Information Officer)

Eugenio Romero Rey (i.a. Editor of the Spanish Dbl Review)

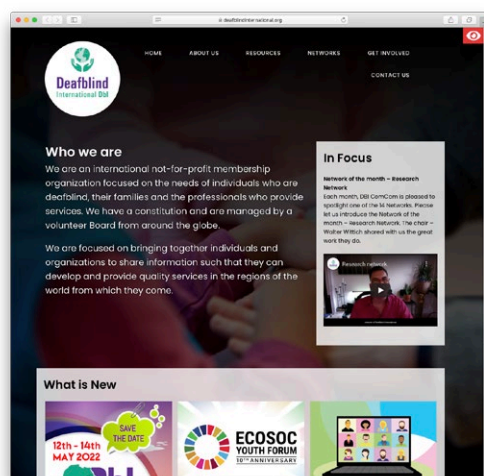
Graciela Ferioli (i.a. Dbl Social Media Pioneer)

Mirko Baur (i.a. Chair ComCom)

Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks (i.a. Dbl Communication Ambassadors Coordinator)

Trees van Nunen-Schrauwen (i.a. Dbl Network Coördinator)

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Julia Mayorova,
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Officer report
on outreaching
Communication,
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in 2020



Together with the teams behind its members and especially with the team of the Information Officer, ComCom has achieved among else in 2020:

- Dbl branding guidelines
- A new and digital Dbl Review
- A new website
- A developing collaboration with a growing network of Dbl communication ambassadors all over the world
- A start into merchandising with Dbl t-shirts
- And a practice of strong communication themes for a certain amount of time on all outreaching communication channels



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in 2020



One of those themes focused on membership and led together with the Board decision for a free individual membership to a still ongoing increase in members. Of course ComCom was also involved in the organization of Dbl's very first webinar series.

ComCom's priorities in 2021 are to continue the good work and to complete the communication possibilities. Part of that is the already launched exchange platform on Telegram, but there is more to come. Just watch out...

Regarding statistics the following can be mentioned:

Facebook: In February 2020 there were 3053 people following Dbl on Facebook by the end of April 2021 3833.

Instagram: Dbl started to use Instagram in Nov 2018. In February 2020 we had 280 followers, by the end of April 630.

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Website:

Since taking over in September 2019 the numbers of visitors and page views have increased every analyzed month. We have updated the design and structure of the website, it is constantly updated and developed. We make sure that the site is accessible and easy to use for all visitors.



8 700 new users

~1.500 visits per month

Users from 112 countries

Website traffic top 5 countries:
USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Greece, Italy

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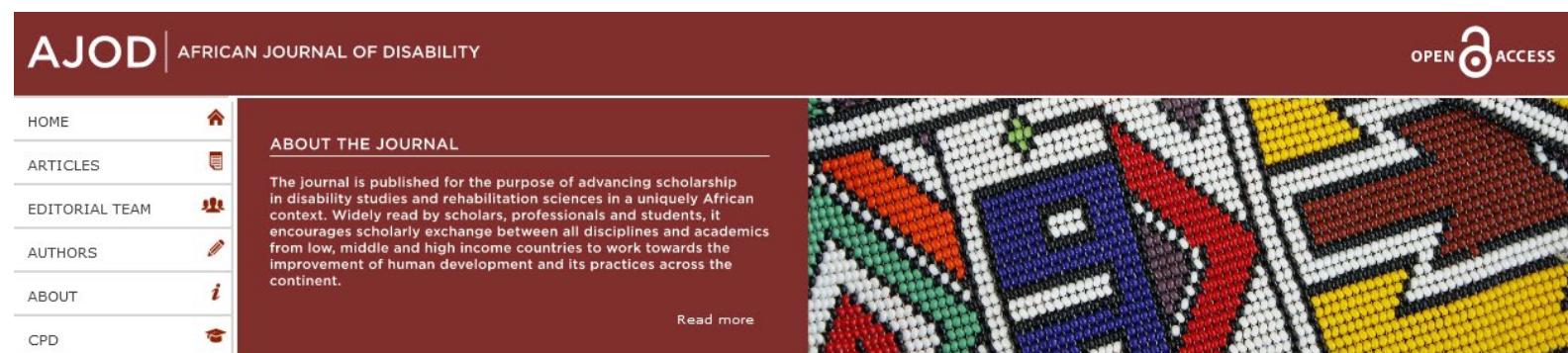
African Projects

By 2020 Dbl's African Researchers' Initiative on Deafblindness ARI was launched and our Board Member Pawlos Kassu Abebe as ARI Coordinator was supported by a Research Advisory Committee (AC ARI). Its members are:

Prof. Dr. Marleen Janssen, University of Groningen, The Netherlands; Dr. Meredith Prain, Senses Australia, Australia; Dr. Daniel Dogbe, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana; Victor Locoro, Kyambogo University, Uganda; Dr. Pawlos Kassu Abebe, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia (Chair AC & Coordinator ARI)

By the first half of 2020 the AC ARI had peer reviewed 32 abstracts that were submitted in response to the corresponding call. As planned, ten abstracts were selected from the entries. Each project was assigned a coach from the AC.

Those selected received in September the first half of their research grant of 500 Euros each. In the meantime a first project is finished and the article about it is set to be published in the African Journal of Disability. The researchers who submit their research in due time will be further sponsored with an additional 700 Euros to present their research at the 1st Dbl Africa Conference in Nairobi, Kenya.



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The preparations for the Africa conference have made a decisive first step in February 2020 during a trip of Mirko to Nairobi. The trip resulted in a broad-based local planning committee. Organizational challenges led to a new management structure in September. The chair of the planning committee, Edwin Osundwa, was completed with a managing coordinator, Mary Maragia. Mary receives an honorarium from Dbl. At the end of November, the existing 5 subcommittees were supplemented with an advisory international subcommittee. And in March 2021 the conference was rescheduled from October 2021 to May 12-14, 2022.

At the time of this report the following persons are involved in the technical committee, the local umbrella committee:

- Edwin Osundwa, Sense International Country Representative Kenya (Chair), Mary Maragia, Head Deafblind Unit Kilimani Primary School/Perkins International (Managing Coordinator), Lydia Chege (Chair Logistics Subcommittee), Alex Kaluyu (Chair Accessibility Subcommittee), Pawlos Kassu Abebe (Coordinator ARI), Julia Mayorova (Young Researchers' Conference Dbl), Sylvia Moraa (Chair Publicity Subcommittee), Ann Musalia (Chair Resource Mobilization Subcommittee), Charles Omboto (Chair Scientific/Content Subcommittee), Peter Oracha (Maseno University), Marianne Riggio (Perkins' Educational Leadership Program)

The international advisory consists of:

- Mirko Baur (Chair, Switzerland), Maria Brons (The Netherlands), Saskia Damen (The Netherlands), Henriette Hermann Olesen (Denmark), Geir Jensen (WFDB, Norway), Emma Judge/Alison Marshall (UK), Martin Kieti (ICEVI, Kenya), Mary Maragia (Kenya), Julia Mayorova (Young Researchers' Conference, Russia), Jude Nicholas (Norway), Cathy Proll (Canada), Marianne Riggio (USA), Sian Tesni (UK), Tracey Veldhuis (Canada), Kenneth Verngård (Norway)

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**12th - 14th
MAY 2022**

**SAVE
THE DATE**

Dbl

Dbl Africa Conference

**The Deafblind Reality in Africa:
Meeting the SDG Opportunities & Challenges**

For more information: dbiafricaconference@gmail.com
www.deafblindinternational.org/conferences/africa/ @africadb

Host Partners:

Deafblind International Dbl, sense International, ICEVI AFRICA, KENTALIS, Terna Schweizerische Stiftung für Taubblinde, cbm, Deafblind International Dbl

Dbl's 1st Africa conference will connect persons with deaf-blindness, parents, families, practitioners and researchers all across the continent and beyond. And it will connect hands-on workshops with the latest research.

Doing so it will present the 10 brand new African research projects, made possible by Dbl's ARI. It will serve as a platform and exchange hub for young researchers from all over the world by including Dbl's Young Researchers' Conference.

And it will connect with the immediately preceding Helen Keller World Conference of the World Federation of the Deafblind WFDB, also taking place in Nairobi.

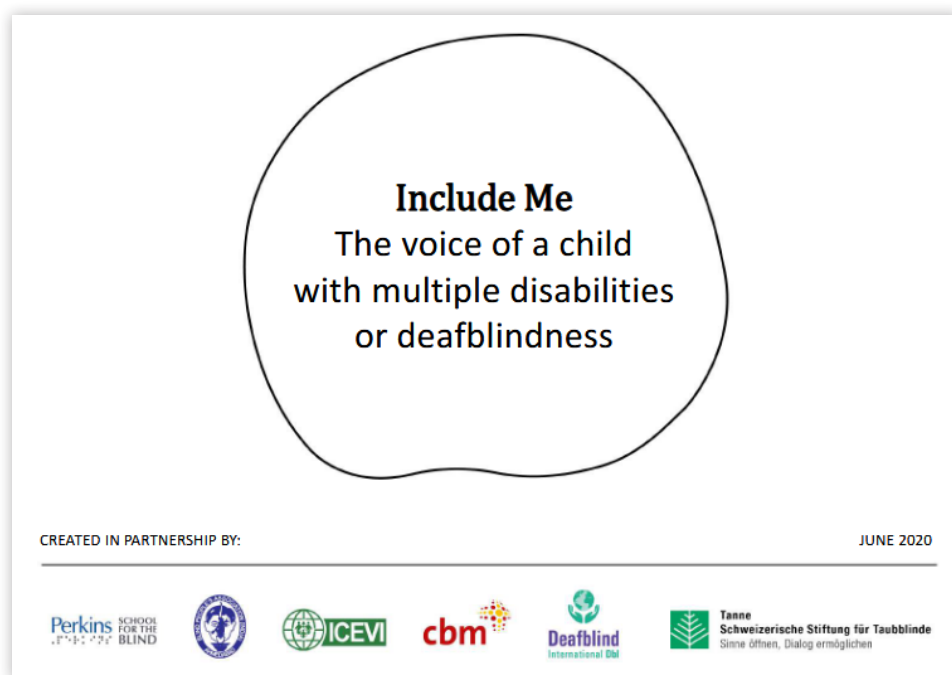
So: Save the date!

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Collaboration with ICEVI

The collaboration with ICEVI resulted the publication of “Include Me” in the first half of 2020. “Include Me” is an open source resource for families, caregivers, community workers, educators, and friends who support and encourage children with multiple disabilities and vision impairment (MDVI) or deafblindness (DB) to participate in home, community and educational activities. Written from the perspective of a child with MDVI or deafblindness, “Include Me” helps us all to hear the voice a child who, like all children, is “waiting and wanting to be loved, respected, and included”.

“Include Me” has been created in multiple languages, and all versions are designed for printing on A4 size paper (in landscape page layout).



In the second half of the year, the collaboration with ICEVI showed us a way towards a campaign for communication rights, hopefully including access to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Read more about that from our Vice president Henriette Olesen.

Vice-president Henriette Olesen



My focus has been on being the point of connection with other international associations that focus on sensory loss.

Closer collaboration with WFDB

Early 2020 – before COVID stopped us from travelling, we met with Geir Jensen and Alisson Marshall from Sense International. Discussing the international Report about Deafblindness, and how DbI, could play a role in future reports. Also talking about how information could be shared between our associations, to enlighten and strengthen our joined focus on deafblindness in the world. Because of COVID, it has been contact by mail, but I see a great interest in sharing with each other. I am so happy that it also became possible to have both Helen Keller Conference and African Conference at the same place at the same time.

New collaboration – ICRA

A great idea from Meredith Prain came up to work on a joined focus on communication with ISAAC. We have met once a month and have now formed an alliance with representatives from DbI, Isaac, ICEVI and speech pathologists. The International Communication Rights Alliance was formed in 2020 to promote international and national awareness, entitlements and corresponding quality services for persons with comprehensive communication needs. Focusing on article: 2, 12, 21, 24 in the UNCRPD convention about communication rights, we have tried to get communication more explicit with our comments. These comments, we will present for the committee on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Closer collaboration with WFD

We have been corresponding with WFD – to talk about a closer collaboration, like we have with ICEVI and WFDB. Soon, Frank and I will join an online meeting with WFD.

Vice president
Henriette Olesen,
CRPD

Governance Report

The Dbl Board voted to change the position of a Development Officer to Governance Officer and to expand the role of this position.

The responsibilities of this role include:

1. Amend the Constitution so allow for only the President and Treasurer to register in the Netherlands as part of the regulations for a non-profit.
2. Develop procedures for working groups; including the Networks and other subcommittees to give the groups guidelines as to what needs to be approved before action is taken and when approval isn't needed to allow these groups to move ahead with their plans as easily as possible.
This work needs to be done in conjunction with the Treasurer, Networks Coordinator, ComCom, and Vice President.
3. Review the Handbook and update the policies and procedures. Add new procedures if needed.
4. Create a new Board Member Orientation Program
5. Review the Nominations Process and develop a plan for voting when there are more than 35 potential board members. Consider amending the Constitution to allow the Board to modify the number of Board members during a given term depending on the needs of the Board.
6. Develop procedure for creating and filling a needed Officer Role on ManCom so that the process is transparent and give Board members the opportunity to apply for the role. This will include developing a decision-making metric.

The process and focus 2020–21

Development Officer role changed to Governance Officer:

- Expression of Interest created by ManCom
- ManCom received responses and selected the Governance Officer

Primary Focus of Governance Officer for year:

- Study the Constitution to ensure the work of ManCom and the full Board is aligned with Constitution
- Monitor timelines in constitution related to financial audit and when to schedule AGM at end of year
- To determine how meetings can be held (face to face and/or virtual)
- Partnering with other organization through a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)
- Membership: clarifying the corporation is the member, not the representative on the Board so a corporate can change their representative if needed
- Review nominations process and identify need to address Board capacity



This actually occurred in 2021

- Draft and present motion to full Board for approval to identify the Board President and Treasurer as representative of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce
- Review Awards process and criteria with new Board for future awards
- Identify procedures that need to be created or updated

Our Vision, “The point of connection”



We are an international not-for-profit membership organisation focused on deafblindness. We are connecting individuals who are deafblind, their families, professionals, researchers, universities, national and international agencies and any other relevant partner in the field.

We have a constitution and are managed by a volunteer Board from around the globe.

We are passionate on bringing together and connecting all the relevant players in the field:

To make a real difference in the lives of persons with deafblindness around the world. The quality of services and policy for persons who are deafblind is the key to sustainable development and education.

The key word is connection, connecting worldwide and improving access to the necessary information and to raise awareness of deafblindness, to have it recognised as a unique disability, so central to our work is networking between all stakeholders, sharing of information on a global & local scale, supporting specialized knowledge, skills, competencies and promoting inclusion and good quality-services for children and adults of all ages who are deafblind.

Therefore our focus for the period 2019–2023 is:

To be THE point of connection in deafblindness worldwide!

Strategy

- Connecting through proactive internal and external communication
- Connecting through collaborations with the relevant international organisations
- Connecting through stimulating research and learning from each other
- Connecting through enhancing our culture of diversity and inclusion

Our Vision, The
point of connection

Goals 2020/21



Proactive Communication

The necessary reorganisation is completed and works well from the point of view of those directly involved.

The new website and the design of the digital DbI Review is a fact.

International Collaborations

The relevant partners are contacted (ICEVI/ WFDB/ WFD/EASPD/ISAAC/ HK) and further collaboration will be discussed or put in to projects such as WHO ICF research project and a corporate campaign for communication rights (CRPD).

Stimulating Research and Learning From Each Other

Networks have a small DbI budget in 2020 and 2021 to be able to support their initiatives.

The African Research Initiative (ARI) has more than 8 research projects written.

Enhancing our Culture of Diversity and Inclusion

For the conference in Africa we will have a broad-based local planning committee, a technical committee and an international advisory committee.

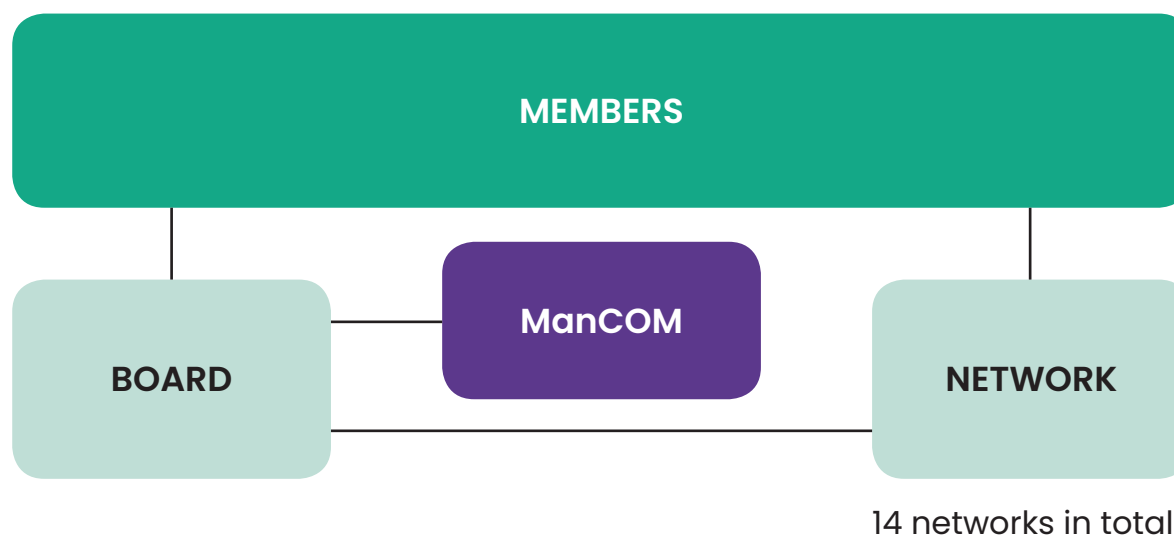
On the way to a more diverse and inclusive income structure, the system of membership fees is reviewed and redefined and free membership is part of our outreaching communication.

THE point of connection 2020/21



The organisation, ManCom, Board, Networks, Committees

Members are the backbone of Dbl, through members we can reach others, share new insights and build necessary networks. Members can have a place on our Board after election, and the board chooses a management committee every 4 years. Detailed information can be found in our constitution and our policy and procedure book.



ManCom 2020

President	Frank Kat
Vice Presidents	Mirko Baúr Henriette Hermann Olesen
Governance Officer	Jackie Brennan
Secretariat	Cathy Proll Michelle Borton
Comm inform Officer	Dmitry Polikanov / Julia Mayorova
Treasurer	Maria Brons
Networks	Trees van Nunen-Schrauwen

Large corporates board 2020

Large Corporates

Able Australia	Kate Macrae
CBM Christoffel-Blindenmission – Christian Blind Mission e.V.	Sian Tesni
Deafblind Ontario Services	Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks
Koninklijke Kentalis	Trees van Nunen/ Maria Brons
Lega del Filo d'Oro	Rossano Bartoli
National Resource Center for Deafblindness: Mo Gard	Lena Goransson
ONCE – Programa de Sordociegos	Eugenio Romero Rey
Perkins International	Katherine Holland/ Gloria Rodrigues Gil
Sense	Richard Kramer
Sensity	Cathy Proll

Small corporates board 2020

Small Corporates

Addis Ababa University	Pawlos Kassu
APSA-CRESAM	Sonja van de Molengraft
CDBA National	Carolyn Monaco
Center for Deafblindness and Hearing Loss, Denmark	Henriette Hermann Olesen
Deafblind Australia (DBA)	Meredith Prain
Deafblind Support Fundation "Con-nection"	Julia Mayorova
Koninklijke Visio	Ine Berkelmans
Nordic Welfare Centre	Maria Creutz
Osterreiches Hilfswerk fur Taubblinde (OHTB)	Ursula Heinemann
Overbrook School for the Blind	Jackie Brennan



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Perkins International Latin America and the Caribbean	Gloria Rodrigues Gil
RFPSC-ANPSA	Dominique Spriet
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen FSSC Faculteit GMW	Marleen Janssen
Sense International India	Akhil Paul
Senses Australia	Matthew Wittorff
Signo Vivo	Lise Marie Overland
Spanish Federation of Deafblindness (FESOCE)	Ricard Lopez
Stiftelsen Eikholt	Roar Meland
Tanne, Schweizerische Stiftung für Taubblinde	Mirko Baur
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Chris Montgomery
The New York Institute for Special Education	Bernadette Kappen

Small corporate
members

Networks & Dbl

Networks are recognized as one of the core activities of Deafblind International. In the constitution, one of the stated objectives of Dbl is to stimulate the development of networks of specialized professionals collaborating to benefit deafblind persons and their families.

Networks are international groups of individual members and/or organizations, schools and institutions approved by the Board from at least

three countries that are mutually connected by language, culture, geographic location or objects and satisfy criteria to be determined by the Board.

Networks, comprised of members of the organization, are permitted to cast votes in the election process and at the annual meeting. Some Networks become members of the Dbl Board.

Currently there are 14 Dbl Networks

Total networks of Dbl, 14, in 2020

- Acquired Deafblindness Network (ADBN)
- Adapted Physical Activity (APA) Network
- CHARGE Network
- Creative Arts Network
- Communication Network
- European Deafblind Network (EDBN)
- Ibero Latin America Network
- Network of the Americas
- Outdoor Network
- Research Network
- Rubella Network
- Technology Network (NEW!)
- Usher Network
- Youth Network



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Networks

Activities in 2020 and planned activities 2021

2020:

- We had 4 network leaders meetings online (January, April, July and October)
- Network Activity Grant Application Form, was developed and shared
- Individual membership for free
- Updating network pages on the websites is done
- Spreading responsibilities of the network leaders
- Sharing news from the ManCom and ComCom
- Reports Dbl Review

Planned activities 2021:

- A videoclip history and importance of the Networks
- A videoclip Network of the Month (starting in January 2021)
- 4 network leaders meetings online
- Reports Dbl Review
- Building bridges between the Networks

Secretariat report and new individual members



Meetings & individual Memberships

ManCom met face to face only once last year in Amsterdam, that was just before travel restrictions blocked further meetings. We had another 4 Mancom meetings via Zoom, but had many more meetings amongst us via zoom to keep contact and projects going.

The Board met 4 times via Zoom and the General meeting was on the 19 th of June 2020, also due to COVID -19 via Zoom.

Webinar

DbI held first webinar series June 22-26, 2020 "Living with Deafblindness in a New Reality"

Total of 26 presentations over the week.

Had 2553 participants over the week

New Individual Members in 2020

We are happy to say that we have been growing in individual membership over the last year – a number of **447 new individual members**.

Breakdown by Continent:



We now have a total of **648 individual members** all together.

Financial Report

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Income	68.051	70.216	54.352	58.113	50.681
Expenditures	75.533	81.066	69.198	50.232	58.885
Equity	113,000	102,000	87,000	104,000	112.000*

* Represents Bankposition on 1 January 2021