



ADLAB PROJECT

Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind

What?

ADLAB is a three-year (2011-2014) project on Audio-description (AD) with the aim to design a set of reliable and consistent guidelines - usable throughout Europe in both industry and training - for the practice of AD.

Audio-description is the insertion of concise, carefully timed verbal descriptions illustrating the essential visual elements of an audiovisual product, such as a film or play, for the benefit of the blind and visually impaired community (VIP).

Why?

1. Access to service provision for the VIP is a right, not a privilege. The need to improve the practice of AD is paramount and the demand for more audiovisual products with AD is growing.

2. AD fails to receive the attention it deserves at industry, government and educational level. There is considerable variance in the stages reached in promoting access for the sight-impaired within the EU, and considerable imbalances. For example, the guidelines that exist in Europe are far from being homogeneous. Some are valid, at least locally, but others are controversial and not universally accepted, and in many areas there are no guidelines at all.

Who?

The project takes on a European perspective, with academic and professional partners from eight European countries: Italy (the University of Trieste, Senza Barriere), Spain (Autonomous University of Barcelona), Portugal (Instituto Politécnico de Leiria), Belgium (Artesis University College, VRT), Poland (Adam Mickiewicz University) and Germany (Bayerischer Rundfunk).

How?

The ADLAB project aims to: (1) Analyse current common practices, national norms and guidelines and get an overview of what the present situation with regard to AD is and what still is required in the provision of AD. (2) Define a set of international standards and reliable guidelines for the industry and training. (3) Provide the material for the setting up of a Europe-wide network of AD courses in higher education. (4) Sensitise policy-makers.

The project's objectives are being pursued through a series of Work Packages (WP).

User Needs Analysis

Partner responsible:
Bayerischer Rundfunk, DE

Content:
Detailed research & questionnaires

Text Analysis and Development

Partner responsible:
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, ES

Content: Bottom-up and top-down analysis of AD-materials and "virgin" films to define best practices

Testing

Partner responsible:
Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, PL

Content:
Test findings on target audiences via questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and comparative studies

Guidelines

Partner responsible:
Artesis University College, BE

Content:
Assemble findings in an extensive manual, usable throughout Europe in both industry and training

Key results User needs analysis

Number of blind people in Europe

It is difficult to determine reliable numbers in Europe. In addition, it is particularly worth noting that in every participant country the biggest and growing group of blind and visually impaired people is that of the over-65. The most important cause of this phenomenon is, of course, the aging of European populations. This is also problematic because this group is not usually included in official figures for the legally blind or visually impaired.

Country	Population	Official estimates	Other sources
BE	11m	WHO: 13,200 blind	220,000 low vision
DE	81.8m	WHO: 1.2m visually impaired	150,000 blind 500,000 visually impaired
IT	60.8m	ISTAT: 362,000 blind 1.5m visually impaired	
PL	38.2m	Poland Survey: 1.4m people with some degree of visual impairment	350,000-500,000 visually impaired.
PT	10.7m	CENSOS: 165,000 visually impaired	between 130,000 and 140,000 blind
ES	46.2m	Observatorio Estatal de la Discacidad: 47,500 blind 750,000 visually impaired	/
UK	56 m	Access Economics: mild sight loss: 1,138,792 moderate sight loss: 440,268 severe sight loss: 217,930	/

AD Laws and Regulations

Regarding the special laws and regulations on AD there is wide variation. Some countries have provisions regulating specific forms of accessibility, others have only sector-driven regulations (e.g. for public broadcasting). Every country seems to have regulations on AD as provided by the national broadcasters.

Country	With AD legislation	Country	With AD legislation
BE		CZ	
DE	x federal	DK	
IT	x	ES	
PL	x	FI	
PO	X but not in effect	LT	
ES	x	LU	
UK	x	SI	
ER	x	EIR	x
CY		SE	x

Amount of AD on DVD and TV

All partner countries have provisions for blind and visually impaired to varying degrees in the following sections: TV, dvd/blueRay, museums, Theatre/opera/ballet. Results show a somewhat comparable situation in all the countries involved in the research in that public television typically offers AD services to some extent while the private market is less interested in making its audio-visual productions accessible.

Country	AD on TV since	Public TV broadcaster	Private TV broadcaster	Minutes of AD on TV/year
BE	2012	VRT	-	780
DE	1993	BR, Arte, NDR, WDR, MDR, ZDF, 3Sat, HR, RBB, SWR	-	93.600-140.400
IT	1997	RAI 1,2,3	-	218.400
PL	2011	TVP	TVN	15,000
PT		RTP	-	3120
ES	1995	RTVE, Televisión Pública Andalucía, TP de Catalunya	Disney Channel Antena 3 Televisión	
UK		BBC	BSkyB	

Country	Commercial DVDs and Blu Rays	Special DVDs (not for the general public)
BE	13 + 5	-
DE	130 + 20-30	-
IT	5 + 2	388
PL	21	-
PT	3	-
ES	37	-
UK	500+	-
FR	70	-

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www.adlabproject.eu

ADLAB Project Partners:

The Department of Language, Interpreting and Translation Sciences at the University of Trieste (co-ordinating institution) and the Senza Barriere association in Italy, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Instituto Politécnico de Leiria (Portugal), Artesis University College (Belgium), Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland) and the television companies Bayerischer Rundfunk (Germany) and Vlaamse Radio en Televisie (VRT), Belgium.