

# Welcoming a new chapter of **greater access** to books for people with **print disabilities**

In September 2010 an important agreement was reached between stakeholders which facilitates the access to reading materials for the print-disabled. This has been reached in conjunction with the publishing community and aims to support publishers in their efforts to create and expand their accessible content.



The agreement outlines a system whereby works in accessible formats converted by specialised bodies, such as Braille, can be much more easily distributed across the EU Member States through a network of trusted bodies. The vision is for a noticeable increase in cross-border distribution of accessible versions of works within a year of signing.

The importance of encouraging reading and literacy for all is vital. However, in some cases the right to access reading has been overlooked. This has been especially true for those people with a print disability, for instance sight loss, dyslexia or a disability which prevents them from accessing certain types of publication. But for those living with a print-disability, accessible versions of content are needed...

# Collaborative working between print-disabled and rightsowner groups

**The agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), has been developed over the past year and has been endorsed in the presence of the EU Commission on behalf of the publishing community by the following organisations:**

- European Writers Congress (EWC)
- Federation of European Publishers (FEP)
- International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO)
- International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM)
- The Publishers Association (PA)
- The Publishers Licensing Society (PLS)

**...and on behalf of the print-disabled community the MoU has been endorsed by:**

- European Blind Union (EBU)
- European Dyslexia Association (EDA)
- The Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB)

## How the agreement will help the print-disabled, AND rightsowners

The MoU encourages a pragmatic approach by providing a practical solution to improve accessibility that is in line with the Berne 3-step test. This is important for rightsowners as the agreement does nothing to undermine publishers' own efforts to increase accessibility of their publications.

**The MoU focuses specifically on five key areas to help facilitate the distribution of accessible works in a controlled way:**

**i) Supporting publishers' efforts to produce accessible content:**

The shared objective is to reach a situation where accessibility needs become catered for through mainstream publishing. To help reach this goal signatories to the MoU will encourage training and support for rightsholders and Trusted Intermediaries (TIs) across Europe, e.g. by implementing measures recommended by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on accessibility, the PROACCESS project, and the EUAIN platform. Those requiring accessible versions of works are encouraged in the first instance to buy publishers' own versions when available.

**ii) Establishing rightsholder-representative bodies across Europe to act as the 'point of liaison' between the Trusted Intermediary and the rightsowner community:**

Organisations providing support to people with print disabilities would find it useful to liaise with a single point of contact to the rightsholder community, e.g. a reproduction rights organisation (RRO), other rights management organisation or trade body. The organisation would assist in facilitating the clearance of necessary rights for the Trusted Intermediary. This MoU seeks to identify such an organisation in each Member State.

**iii) Developing a network of Trusted Intermediaries:**

Signatories will develop best-practice guidelines for Trusted Intermediaries. These will focus on accreditation (and removal of accredited status), transparency, scope of function of the TI, and guidelines for data collection relating to use of works.

The creation of a network of TIs across Europe will be key to the success of this agreement. This network will form the necessary conditions and licences in order to create the vehicle by which accessible works will travel across the Member States of the EU.

**iv) Enabling the TIs to create and provide accessible works across borders:**

When a commercially-available version of a work does not exist, the TI may supply accessible formats made from legitimate originals to other TIs. However these copies cannot be used in a commercial context. The onus is placed on TIs to ensure that accessible formats are delivered to certified persons with print disabilities only, and to ensure that the appropriate end-agreements are in place. Hence, TIs are enabled to create and provide such works without undermining rightsowners efforts.

**v) Creation of an online European accessible e-books service:**

Signatories agree to support the establishment of an online European catalogue of works available in accessible formats to help the discovery of accessible versions. This might begin life as a catalogue, but the vision is for a service to facilitate the discovery and distribution of accessible e-books to authorised users. This initiative will go a long way to ensure that the print-disabled will be able to access the formats of works that they need, at the time they are needed.



## Next steps

Now that the MoU has been agreed and signed, the next phase will focus on establishing a network of Trusted Intermediaries, as well as identifying rightsholder representative bodies in Member States. Other tools needed to support the agreement i.e. guidelines, model licences, and the investigation of an online database of accessible works, will now also be drafted and scoped.

## Further Information

**MoU:** The full text of the MoU can be found on the FEP website: [www.fep-fee.be](http://www.fep-fee.be) Alternatively, please contact David Bishop at the PLS for a copy: [d.bishop@pls.org.uk](mailto:d.bishop@pls.org.uk)

**Accessibility Newsletter:** In addition, you can keep updated on this and other accessibility initiatives by subscribing to the free Accessibility Newsletter which is published by the Accessibility Action Group. Please email Imogen Forbes at PLS: [i.forbes@pls.org.uk](mailto:i.forbes@pls.org.uk) for details.

**Further questions:** if you are a publisher and you wish to discuss this agreement further, please contact your representative trade association or your representative RRO.

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**Designed  
according to  
accessibility  
guidelines**