

# **BaGMIVI - Bridging the Gap between Museums and Individuals with Visual Impairments**

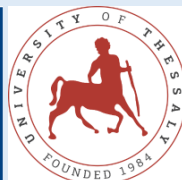
## **Best Practices Guide**

**Intellectual Output 7 (IO7)**



**Erasmus+**

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**IKY**



**BaGMIVI**

Bridging the Gap between  
Museums and Individuals  
with Visual Impairment

## **Project Coordinator**

**University of Thessaly, Greece**



## **Partners**

**Babes-Bolyai University, Romania**



**Sofia University, "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bulgaria**



**Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary**



**International Council for Education of People  
with Visual Impairment –European Region,  
Netherlands**



**Bulgarian Association for Education of Visually  
Impaired Children, Bulgaria**



**Museum of Cycladic Art, Nicholas and Dolly  
Goulandris Foundation, Greece**



**Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography, Romania**



**Rakursi Art Gallery, Bulgaria**



**Szent István Király Múzeum, Hungary**



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Erasmus+



**BaGMIVI - Bridging the Gap  
between Museums and  
Individuals with Visual  
Impairments**

**KA2 - Cooperation and  
Innovation for Good Practices**

**Call: 2014**

**Intellectual Output 7 (IO7)**

### **Project Identification**

Action Type	Strategic Partnerships addressing more than one field of education training and youth
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<b>Intellectual Output 7 (O7) Best Practices Guide</b>	31/8/2017

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## 1. Executive Summary

The present Intellectual Output (O7: Best Practices Guide) constitutes part of the activities of a European Project entitled "BaGMIVI: **B**ridging the **G**ap between **M**useums and **I**ndividuals with **V**isual **I**mpairments" with code number: "2014-1-EL01-KA200-001631. The coordinating partner is the University of Thessaly and Dr. Vassilios Argyropoulos acts as the Coordinator of the project.

According to the approved proposal of BaGMIVI Project the intellectual output 7 (O7) is a Best Practices Guide for the development of differentiated museum educational programmes and material and the enhancement of the access and participation of individuals with visual impairments to museums. The Best Practices Guide includes: a. examples of differentiated programmes and materials for individuals with visual impairments which have been developed during the BaGMIVI Project, and b. the main conclusions of the analysis of the data which have been collected through the reflective logs. More analytically, the participants - museum staff, teachers and individuals with visual impairments- of all participating countries, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, after each museum visit have described in reflective logs their experiences, their emotions, their concerns, the challenges encountered and how they dealt with them as well as their suggestions for the improvement of access of individuals with visual impairments to museums (Intellectual Output 6). The conclusions of the analysis of this data shaped a framework of good practices which were included in the present guide.

The chief participating organizations of Intellectual Output O7 (including the Project coordinator organization) are the following:

1. UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY, (Greece - Coordinator)
2. UNIVERSITATEA BABES BOLYAI, (Romania).
3. SOFIISKI UNIVERSITET SVETI KLIMENT OHRIDSKI, (Bulgaria).
4. EOTVOS LORAND TUDOMANYEGYETEM, (Hungary).
5. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT- EUROPEAN REGION (ICEVI-EUROPE), (Netherlands).
6. BULGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN, (Bulgaria).

7. MUSEUM OF CYCLADIC ART, NICHOLAS AND DOLLY GOULANDRIS FOUNDATION, (Greece).
8. TRANSYLVANIAN MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY, (Romania).
9. RAKURSI ART GALLERY, (Bulgaria).
10. SZENT ISTVÁN KIRÁLY, (Hungary).

The following sections include a brief description of the differentiated museum programmes which have been developed during the BaGMIVI Project and the best practices which have been revealed from the experiences and the suggestions of the stakeholders.

## **2. Brief Description of the design and development of differentiated and accessible Museum Programmes**

The development of differentiated museum programmes was part of the activities of BaGMIVI Project. The participating museums were the following: the Museum of Cycladic Art in Greece, the Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography in Romania, the Rakursi Art Gallery in Bulgaria and the Szent István Király Múzeum in Hungary. The content of the differentiated programmes depended on the kind of each participating museum and the goals that each museum have set in order to provide educational opportunities and meaningful experiences to individuals with visual impairments in their museums. The following sections include a brief description of the differentiated programmes which have been developed and implemented by the aforementioned museums.

### ***2.1. Nicholas and Dolly Goulandris Foundation Museum of Cycladic Art Museum of Cycladic Art (Greece)***

The Museum of Cycladic Art as partner of BaGMIVI project has developed a differentiated educational programme for students with visual impairments with the title “The Cyclades through touch”. The design and the development of the educational programme was based on: a. the museum staff training in issues of visual disabilities and access to museums which was held by the University of Thessaly (see O4 Greece: video from museum staff training, <https://youtu.be/pEtKHiagVtg?t=2>) and b. collaboration between members of the museum staff, partners of the museum and special education teachers from the School for the Blind in Athens. The main concept of the development of the aforementioned educational programme was also the design of a museum kit with direct or indirect references to the Cyclades and their history. The museum kit was designed for the School for the Blind in Athens as well as for the Museum of Cycladic Art as part of their educational programmes. The content of the museum kit consists of the following objects and materials:

- ❖ A marble figurine of the folded arm type
- ❖ An embroidered map of the Cyclades
- ❖ The tactile water map
- ❖ A puzzle consisting of broken parts of different figurines.
- ❖ Pieces of foam
- ❖ Tactile book
- ❖ Tutorial video



The multisensory museum kit acted as the basis for a series of multi-sensory activities which were implemented during the visits in the museum of the students with visual impairments (see O5 Greece: video from the development of differentiated and accessible museum programme, [https://youtu.be/b5WB0CGW\\_bg?t=3](https://youtu.be/b5WB0CGW_bg?t=3)).



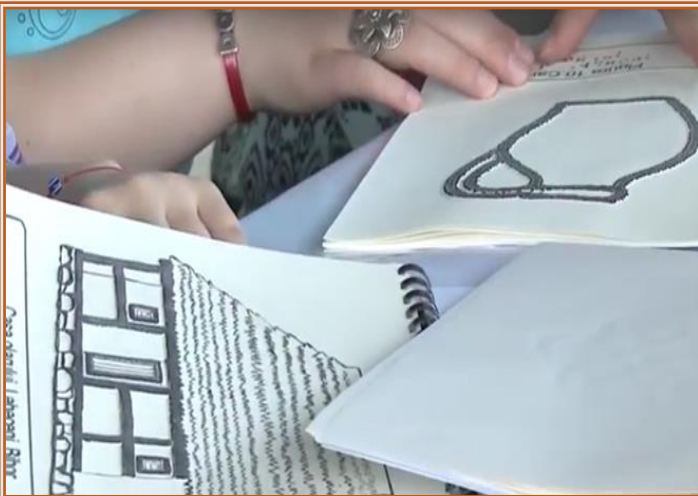
**Figures 1-4: Part of the content of the museum kit of the Museum of Cycladic Art, Greece**

## ***2.2. Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography (Romania)***

The Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography as partner of the BaGMIVI Project has developed two different educational programmes for individuals with visual impairments, one for the museum which is situated in Cluj-Napoca and another one for the open-air Romulus Vuia Park which is situated on the city's north-west side. The educational programmes were designed by the museum's specialists, based on consultation with the special education teachers of the Special High School for the Visually Impaired and the museum staff training which was held by the specialists of the Special Psychopedagogy Department (see O4 Romania: video from museum staff training, <https://youtu.be/3RRW6Sl1VjY?t=8>). In summary, some of the differentiated educational materials which were developed are the following:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ❖ Guide text in Braille                  | ❖ A model house                               |
| ❖ Braille labels                         | ❖ Replicas of the traditional ceramic vessels |
| ❖ Illustrations printed on special paper | ❖ Miniature etc.                              |

The aforementioned material acted as the basis for a series of activities which were implemented during the visits in the Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography and in the open-air Romulus Vuia Park of the individuals with visual impairments, as for example tactile exploration of the traditional houses, the basic types of the traditional Transylvanian pottery, the potter's working techniques, workshop of clay modelling etc. (see O5 Romania: video from the development of differentiated and accessible museum programmes, <https://youtu.be/93IJB0Rcul?t=35>).



**Figures 5-8: Part of the differentiated material of the Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography, Romania**

### **2.3. Rakursi Art Gallery (Bulgaria)**

The Rakursi Art Gallery as partner of BaGMIVI project has developed two different educational programmes for individuals with visual impairments: one with the title “Touch the Treasure” (a tactile exhibition of objects – selected replicas of Thracian ancient treasures) and another one with the title “A Glimpse into XX century Art” (an introduction to different movements in modern and contemporary art such as classicism and realism, expressionism, cubism, conceptual art etc.). The educational programmes were designed by the staff of the Gallery, based on the training which was held by the specialists of the University of Sofia (O4 Bulgaria: video from museum staff training, <https://youtu.be/ICQfqUejrT0?t=6>) and in collaboration with the teachers of the school for the Blind “Louis Braille” in Sofia. Also a conceptual artist has participated for the design of an interactive workshop during the second educational programme. Some of the differentiated educational materials / practices which were developed are the following:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ❖ The replicas of Thracian treasure objects | ❖ Collage paintings from different fabric materials and textures  |
| ❖ Audio guide                               | ❖ Use of different materials various sand papers, puff balls, beads, glitter materials, aromas from different dry plants and herbs etc. |
| ❖ Texts in Braille                          |   |
| ❖ An interactive game with tactile map      |   |

The aforementioned materials and practices gave the opportunity to the students with visual impairments to explore and learn about the Thracian ancient treasures and to express themselves and feel included, to feel like participants in the world of visual art, etc. (see O5 Bulgaria: video from the development of differentiated and accessible gallery programmes, <https://youtu.be/XsmSSnQabFY?t=2>).





**Figures 9-12: Snapshots of the differentiated programmes of the Rakursi Art Gallery, Bulgaria**

## **2.4. Szent István Király Múzeum (Hungary)**

The Szent István Király Múzeum as partner of BaGMIVI project has developed different educational programmes for individuals with visual impairments and more specifically in Hetedhét Toy Museum and in City Gallery in the town of Székesfehérvár. The educational programmes were designed by the staff of the museum, based on the training which was held by the specialists of Eotvos Lorand University (O4 Hungary: video from museum staff training, <https://youtu.be/Q9BASugf3rQ>) and in collaboration with special education teachers. Some of the differentiated educational materials / practices which were developed are the following:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ❖ Replicas of the old furniture and dolls               | ❖ Original statues   |
| ❖ Tales, music, exercises to release tensions           | ❖ Experience of bronze casting, blacksmith and pottery art |
| ❖ Exploration of a tactile miniature of the city center | ❖ Toys   |
|   | ❖ Creation of statuettes from beeswax                      |

The aforementioned materials and practices gave the opportunity to the students with visual impairments to participate in creative activities, to make their own works of arts and to create their own stories. etc. (see O5 Hungary: video from the development of differentiated and accessible museum programmes, <https://youtu.be/YyVpjkrmiWI?t=4>).



**Figures 12-16: Snapshots from the educational programmes of the Szent István Király Múzeum, Hungary**

### 3. Best Practices

#### 3.1. Introduction

Some of the basic characteristics of the BaGMIVI project which can be considered as best practices are the following (See Box 1):

- a. the development of networks between different associations such as schools, museums, universities and associations for the Blind. These networks provided opportunities for collaboration between persons from different sectors and enriched the perspectives regarding issues of access and inclusion to museums for individuals with visual impairments. Furthermore, these networks led to interdisciplinary approaches, interdisciplinary working teams and collaboration between museums and schools for the development of differentiated educational programmes and materials. It can also be argued that the development of networks can contribute to the sustainability of the collaborations and the relevant activities.
- b. the implementation of museum staff training in issues of disability and access to museums. The collaboration with Universities led to the development of a common corpus (training material) which constituted the theoretical and practical underpinning of the training.
- c. the development of educational programmes and material which was based on collaboration between museum staff and special education teachers, reflection and evaluation. This process provided opportunities for sharing ideas, experiences and improvements.

- ❖ **Networks between different associations (e.g. schools, museums, associations for the Blind, universities).**
- ❖ **Interdisciplinary approach.**
- ❖ **Interdisciplinary work teams (museum educators, special education teachers, artists, etc.).**
- ❖ **Collaboration between teachers and museums' staff.**
- ❖ **Museums' staff training in issues of disability and access to museums.**
- ❖ **The process for the development of educational programmes.**

**Box 1: Characteristics of the BaGMIVI project**



The following best practices have been revealed from the analysis of the reflective logs which have been obtained by all stakeholders during the BaGMIVI project (Intellectual Output O6).

### **3.2. Axes of best practices**

#### **3.2.1. Collaboration between museums and schools**

The collaboration between museums and schools may include a variety of practices and activities such as: a) communication between museums and schools and b) collaboration for the development of educational programmes /materials.

##### **a) Communication between museums and schools**

- ❖ Teachers should provide information to the museum staff regarding the characteristics of the students with visual impairment (VI), (e.g. the type of visual disability, mental skills, additional disabilities, interests, etc.).
- ❖ Before the visit in the museum, the museum staff should inform teachers for the content and the goals of the educational programme (e.g. with presentations before the visit of children in the museum, preparation activities for teachers).
- ❖ Communication for practical issues.

##### **b) Collaboration for the development of educational programmes /materials**

- ❖ Collaboration and support from special education teachers during the development of educational programmes / materials.
- ❖ The museum staff should be consulted by special education teachers (choosing exhibits, number of objects used, and proper methodology).
- ❖ Specialty advice to the museum staff in the psychology and special pedagogy.
- ❖ Collaboration and support from experts with different specialties (interdisciplinary work groups).
- ❖ Preparation activities for the children before the visit in the museum in collaboration with the museum staff.

- ❖ Evaluation of the educational programme or material by special education teachers and individuals with visual impairments.
- ❖ Reflection on the educational programme or material.
- ❖ Permanent contact between museum and special education teachers for the development of more educational programmes or/and repeated visits with the same school groups in the museum.

- ❖ ***“Consultation with experts of special pedagogy and other experts of visual impairment is definitely necessary” (Member of museum staff)***
- ❖ ***“Our children have very limited opportunities, so this is an important initiative” (Special Education teacher)***
- ❖ ***“Their visits to museums should become regular” (Special Education teacher)***

### **3.2.2. Design of appropriate educational material**

It is important for individuals with VI the design and the provision of a variety of accessible educational materials in order to enhance their sensory and intellectual access and encourage their active participation. For example:

#### **Tactile material**

- ❖ Variety of types of tactile material (e.g. two and three-dimensional material).
- ❖ Miniature, replicas.
- ❖ Tactile maps.
- ❖ Tactile books.
- ❖ Tactile diagrams.
- ❖ Tactile material with a variety of textures.
- ❖ Broader range of materials.
- ❖ The material should be in the right form, size, scale, and textures for VI visitors.
- ❖ The material should be designed according to the age and knowledge of the VI children.

#### **Access to original objects**

- ❖ Use of original objects (e.g. statues, traditional pottery objects, toys, paintings).

- ❖ Authenticity, originality of the objects.
- ❖ Elements of architectural originality.
- ❖ Use of natural objects (e.g. marble, stones, etc.).
- ❖ Use of tools and explanation of the procedure for the creation of various objects (e.g. molds, process of bronzing).

### **Technical and IT support for diversification of the activities**

- ❖ Assistive technology (e.g. embossers, braille displays, speech outputs, 3-d printers, etc.).
- ❖ Technical support (e.g. lighting, hearing aids, etc.).
- ❖ Financial support (for the purchase of materials which accommodate the needs of persons with VI).

- ❖ *“I figured out the use of this tool” (Student with VI)*
- ❖ *“I really enjoyed touching different objects in the museum” (Student with VI)*
- ❖ *“The tactile exploration of the figures help the students to understand better and to develop new concepts” (Special Education teacher)*
- ❖ *“The tactile exploration offers the students the chance to build in their mind an image about the environment with a structure and architecture” (Special Education teacher)*
- ❖ *“Develop their abilities of tactile exploration and space orientation” (Special Education teacher)*
- ❖ *“The students with VI experience moments of joy and satisfaction when they are able to touch the miniature house” (Special Education teacher)*
- ❖ *“They experienced the 3-D model and then they could shape the whole in their minds” (Special Education teacher)*

### **3.2.3. Content and implementation of Educational programmes**

#### **Issues of design and content of museum educational programmes**

- ❖ Interdisciplinary approach of the content of the educational programme.
- ❖ Adaptation according to the individuals' needs, skills and knowledge.
- ❖ Educational programmes with specific topics.

- ❖ Variety of educational programmes and activities due to variety of interests of individuals with VI.
- ❖ More choices / opportunities for educational programmes in the museums with different topics.

***“I want to be surprised”***

***“I would like to be surprised by new exhibition and new presentation”***

***“To learn about the past people’s life”***

***“To participate in activities relevant to tradition”***

***“I was very happy because I was allowed to touch”***

***(Students with VI)***

- ❖ Connection of the educational programme with the environment around the museum and the cultural characteristics of the location.
- ❖ Outdoors activities.

***“It was fun to walk around the city and touch statues”***

***(Student with VI)***

- ❖ Connection of the educational programme with topics of the curriculum.
- ❖ Combination of theory and practice.
- ❖ Enrichment of new knowledge and skills (e.g. practicing in the recognition of shapes, materials, verbal skills, orientation and mobility, motor skills, new information such as the history of the museum, professions, knowledge for the procedure of constructing / creating pieces of art, etc., contact-making with others, proper behavior in public institutes, etc.).
- ❖ Information and new knowledge regarding the museums in general, the collectors or the kind of collections.
- ❖ Decision of the number of objects according to the topic of the educational programme, the number and the characteristics of the target group and the duration of the programme.
- ❖ Provision and design of a variety of tactile material.

- ❖ Appropriate number of spaces in the museum where the educational programmes take place.
- ❖ Use appropriate and accurate directions/terms that make sense to people with VI.
- ❖ Variety of activities:
  - Multisensory activities.
  - Motivating activities.
  - Simplicity.
  - Play activities involving museum-educational material.

❖ ***“It was fun! they had to find the right place of each item on a tactile map”  
(Special Education Teacher)***

❖ ***“I did a paining! That was something that I haven’t done before in my life” (Student with VI)***

❖ ***“I heard the story, I touched things, I remember everything!” (Student with VI)***

❖ ***“It was fascinating to have the chance to touch so many things in a museum” (Student with VI)***

- ❖ Interaction with the exhibits.
- ❖ Use of different means and methods (e.g. poems, music, tales).
- ❖ Preparation of the visit.
- ❖ On-going evaluation (suggestions or new ideas from students and special education teachers and improvements).

## **Implementation and educational process**

- ❖ General characteristics / face to face interaction during the educational programmes:
  - Ice breaker activities.
  - Simplicity, vividness.
  - Cooperative learning / Working in groups.
  - Useful tips for the activity

- Active participation and support by teachers during the educational programme.
- Support of individuals with VI by other sighted persons.
- Motivating children.
- Entertainment, humor, pleasant atmosphere.
- Positive emotions.
- Socialization.

- ❖ ***“New emotions and perceptions. It was fantastic because our children developed their own picture with different materials”***
- ❖ ***“The children felt content, proud and satisfied”***
- ❖ ***“ They developed the feeling of national proud because of the exhibits”***
- ❖ ***“ They felt gratitude and inner peace”***
- ❖ ***“The children should have fun”***
- ❖ ***“Children’s interests and levels of motivation are different”***

***Special Education Teachers***

- ❖ Information regarding the museum and the educational programme:
  - Prior to the museum visit, some materials like brochures should be sent to the school for preparation.
  - Explanations about the location of the gallery and the way to get there.
  - Preparation activities. Explanations about the topic of the visit and introduction to the subject.
  - Clarification about the main topic or theme of the visit.
  - A theoretical presentation of the museum.
  - Reminders about the rules of visiting museums and galleries.
  - Inform the students in advance about the day and time of the gallery visit.
- ❖ Information about the exhibits / Intellectual access:
  - Descriptions, explanations.
  - Verbal descriptions during the educational programme.

- Information about exhibits (e.g. more information for some exhibits, sufficient and useful information).
- Specific amount of new information.
- Giving additional information (if needed).
- The information should be given to the students in a more accessible and understandable language for them.
- Explanations of words or terms that may not be clear or metaphoric to children with VI.
- Avoiding non-verbal communication / gestures.
- Avoiding some words/ technical language.
- Effective communication.
- Use appropriate voice (e. g. not shouting).
- Active participation of students with VI.

❖ Material for access to information:

- Information in braille.
- Braille labels for the objects.
- Tactile guide printed in braille.

***“Everything was presented in a nice and accessible way to the students”***

***“The children were able to understand the role and their place in the house when they were allowed to explore the objects by touch”***

***“The direct contact [haptic] with the objects helps them to imagine the representations of the objects”***

***“The tactile exploration offers to the students the chance to build in their mind an image about the environment with its structure and architecture”***

***Special Education Teachers***

- ❖ Small groups of children. Limited number of students in the groups in order to be able to observe and explore each exhibit.

❖ Issues of time:

- Short activities.

- Short educational programmes.
- More time and more space for the practical activities.
- Extra time should be devoted to familiarizing children with the materials.
- More time for specific topics and specially designed activities.
- Breaks.

***“Provide more pieces of the exhibits, so the students will not cueing in order to touch them”***

***Special Education Teacher***

❖ Museum environment :

- Reduce the background noises.
- Group management / attention to all children.
- Orientation of individuals with VI in the surrounding area of the museum.
- Specific roles to all children during an educational programme.

***“Decrease the number of sighted people, because the increased noise sometimes block the blind students’ attention and cause them frustration”***

***Special Education Teacher***

### **3.2.4. Museums’ staff behavior and attitudes**

During the implementation of educational programmes with individuals with VI the museum staff should address them in a way that individuals with VI feel:

- ❖ Accepted.
- ❖ Secure.
- ❖ Free to choose.
- ❖ Very welcome.

In general, the museum staff should adopt behavior and attitudes:

- ❖ Gentle and friendly.
- ❖ Loving, warm and positive attitude.



- ❖ Professionalism.

***“A person with disabilities in general, and a visually impaired one, in particular, should be treated with respect and dignity, not with pity”***

***Member of Museum Staff***

Also, museum staff should:

- ❖ Inspire and motivate individuals with VI.
- ❖ Be enthusiastic.
- ❖ Get feedback from students.

***“The children felt accepted and were treated with respect”***

***“The museum staff used appropriate language according to the age of children and they created a very friendly atmosphere”***

***“Excellent organization and very professional attitude by the gallery staff”***

***Special Education Teachers***

### **3.2.5. Teachers' behavior and attitudes**

The teachers should be supportive to the museum staff as well as to their students in order to contribute to the implementation of the educational programme.

***“Teachers were unreserved and open, that made us to feel free and ready to collaborate”***

### **3.2.6. Characteristics of the museum space**

- ❖ Issues of physical access/facilitations:
  - Provision of appropriate space for the movement of the group of individuals with VI in the museum.
  - Transportation to the museum.
  - Parking spaces in the surrounding area of the museum.
  - Adapting the outdoor museum space for visually impaired persons.

## **4. Overall Conclusions**

BaGMIVI project supports the social agenda of the European Union on non-discrimination and equal opportunities of individuals with visual impairments for access to cultural goods, museums and galleries. The present project may be an example of the development of networks and collaborations between schools, museums, universities and associations for the Blind as well as between people with different professions and individuals with VI.

This best practices guide is a reflection of this experience which was gained by all stakeholders in the BaGMIVI project. The aforementioned practices do not cover the range of issues of access and inclusion of visual impaired people in museums. However, they can shape a basis for further collaborations and relevant activities. In order to “bridge the gap between museums and individuals with visual impairments”, there is a need for a more systematic collaboration at school, museum, societal and state level so as the results of this programme - and from other similar initiatives – would be used and generalized to other settings as well. More partnerships between different organizations, collaborations with specialists and people with disabilities, assessment of activities, further research and good practices constitute key factors for an inclusive museum. It is argued, that all the above mentioned lead to equal educational, cultural and social opportunities for all people with or/and without visual disabilities.

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