

XXXVIIth Congress on Education of Blind and Visually Impaired People

The Association for Education of Blind and Visually Impaired People (Verband der Blinden und Sehbehindertenpädagogik e. V. - VBS) welcomes you to the XXXVIIth Congress on Education of Blind and Visually Impaired People from July 31 to August 4, 2023 in Marburg, Germany, on the theme „Life. Education. Participation. individual - specific- flexible“ and invites all VBS members, blind and visually impaired people as well as those interested from the field of education, teaching and rehabilitation related to blindness and visual impairment to use this congress as a platform for the further development of learning and living environments focusing on participation and inclusion.

In keeping with tradition, the congress is intended to provide an opportunity for scientific discussion, professional discourse, for the acquisition of new knowledge and experience and for personal exchange at national and international level.

The theme "Life. Education. Participation: individual - specific - flexible" aims to address and expand upon the perspectives of a permanently developing pedagogy for the blind and visually impaired that have been highlighted in previous congresses. The triad "Life, Education, Participation" alludes to the social interrelationships in all phases of life, deliberately focusing on the role of education for the blind and visually impaired in its practical implementation. The design of inclusive learning and living environments requires expertise that shows individual, specific and flexible approaches. The congress aims to map this wide range of possibilities in theory and application as well as to contribute to the expansion of options of action.

The congress committee has opted for a flexible basic structure that provides for four continuous subject areas so that key topics can be pursued continuously or deliberately changed over several congress days. Inclusion is not treated as a separate subject, but is implied in all subject areas. The same applies to complex impairment.

Participation in the congress is possible from Monday to Friday (July 31 – August 4, 2023), Monday to Wednesday (July 31 – August 2, 2023), Wednesday to Friday (August 2 – August 4, 2023) or on a per-day basis.

Subject areas

1. Digitalization

The shift to digital has received new impetus in several areas of life, particularly as a result of the Corona crisis. A huge variety of video conferencing systems, educational

platforms and cloud solutions have been introduced, revealing challenges regarding data protection, usability or processing/streaming capacity. It has been and continues to be observed that in the context of blindness and visual impairment, on the one hand, digital media enable diverse opportunities for participation, but on the other hand, can also create new barriers despite the use of assistive devices. In order to reduce barriers to participation related to "infrastructure" (e.g., educational platforms) and digital formats (e.g. digital textbooks), the principle of universal design and the criteria for accessibility must be consistently observed. In addition, specialized didactics must also be taken into account in order to find sensible and accessible solutions. Closely in line with these efforts is the promotion of an emancipated approach to digital technologies, so that dependencies can be avoided and dangers prevented.

2. Professionalisation / Training / Interdisciplinarity

The design of learning and living environments aiming at comprehensive participation and social inclusion requires specific professionalization of those acting in the field. In all pedagogical areas of action, appropriate measures must be taken to identify necessary quality standards, to secure existing ones or to adapt them to meet emerging challenges. The professionalization measures concern all professional groups in education, psychology, medicine and rehabilitation and, in particular, all forms of cooperation among the various disciplines as well as with supporting services such as assistance personnel.

3. Education

In the second decade after the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the question arises as to how the required access to quality education is currently represented. The answer must take into account the lessons learned during the pandemic. Which inclusive developments are being pursued and how are they being implemented? Which are the solutions to current challenges, for example in early intervention or at school? The focus should be on necessary structural developments as well as on tangible didactic solutions.

4. Living, Working, Leisure

Inclusive learning and living environments are not limited to the field of education. Inclusion becomes a comprehensive social task that does not end once someone graduates from school. Which concepts of education in the context of blindness and visual impairment are pursued in order to enable full social participation in the areas of habitation, work and leisure? Institutional developments, legal frameworks and their implementation, but also rehabilitation measures on different levels can be key factors for successful participation.