



**World Blind Union**  
**Union Mondiale Des Aveugles**  
**Unión Mundial de Ciegos**

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Dear Ambassador before the EU:

I am writing to you on behalf of the World Blind Union to ask for your support for effective EU legislative procedures working towards covering the needs of every blind and partially sighted person within the EU and around the world.

In this regard, we have been told by our colleagues from the European Blind Union (EBU) that next Wednesday the 22nd of March, the COREPER is considering a regulatory issue that would be a step of utmost importance for increasing access to culture and education, as well as helping social integration of every person with visual disabilities in Europe: the Directive and Regulation for the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty (Com(2016) 596).

Unfortunately, the latest draft proposal of the Presidency of the Council introduces important changes in the original proposal of the European Commission, primarily weakening and changing "recital 11". Essentially, the presidency proposes to permit an economic compensation for every book made accessible for blind or partially sighted people, as well as allowing commercial availability clauses. These modifications proposed by the Council, if passed, would seriously weaken, if not override the main accessibility objectives of the Treaty; to end the "book famine" that deprives blind and partially sighted people of the vast majority of published works.

**The Council's proposed draft would create legal uncertainty for cross-border exchange, greater administrative burdens, greater costs and a chaotic regulatory situation between different EU country legislations concerning the access to culture and education by blind and other print-disabled persons.**

We are happy to see that the European Parliament has generally supported the European Commission's original proposal, aiming at an effective and harmonized implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty which does not allow added barriers to access. Therefore, we trust the Council and every Member State within it will eventually approach this advanced position and work towards the needs of blind and partially sighted people. **In this regard, we strongly ask you to withdraw the draft proposal and accept the**

**original European Commission text as it stands.** Our main concern is that the Marrakesh Treaty works in a proper manner, facilitating access not only to culture but to education and employment in favour of the full integration of its beneficiaries.

We certainly do appreciate your commitment to more than 30 million blind and partially sighted citizens in Europe and over 285 million people around the world and we thank you in advance for reconsidering the Council's position.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred K. Schroeder". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat slanted style.

Dr. Fredric K. Schroeder  
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