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Access to Books

EP asks Commission to stop blocking blind persons' right to read

The European Parliament today adopted by a large majority a resolution on access by visually impaired people to books. Visually impaired and other print-disabled persons suffer from a book famine. Over 95% of published books are not available in accessible formats that visually impaired and print-disabled persons in Europe can read. In the rest of the world, more than 99% of reading material is [unavailable](#) for tens of millions of visually impaired persons. Negotiations are ongoing at the World Intellectual Property Organisation ([WIPO](#)) to establish an international exception to copyright to facilitate the cross-border movement of reading material formatted for the blind and visually impaired. However, progress has been shamefully obstructed by the European Commission and the Council.

Commenting on the resolution, Danish Green MEP **Margrete Auken** said:

"The European Parliament has now made it clear that there can be no more excuses for not overcoming today's book famine. The European Commission and the Council are currently doing everything they can to weaken the text and make it a paper tiger. The right to read of millions of disabled persons is at stake. The Commission and the Council must cease to be an obstacle to an effective binding treaty for the visually impaired".

Austrian Green MEP, **Eva Lichtenberger** added:

"When there is a clear conflict, human rights should take preference over copyright. In this case no one loses, only one of the most disadvantaged groups of the world wins greater access to culture and education. The Commission and Council must listen to common sense; to the needs of the blind persons and pay less attention to the narrow interests of the a few big industry lobbyists. The EU must support an effective treaty at the World Intellectual Property Organisation."

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Responsible MEPs



Margrete Auken

Member

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