

In the world of the blind: high-tech technologies fail to Cluj for lack of money

School for the Visually Impaired in Cluj is the only place that offers educational programs for the blind, from primary school until graduation from twelfth grades. While in other countries these children to reach advanced technologies that help them read and write at school in Cluj old typewriter handy for decades. 27 international experts arrived in Cluj last week, presenting "paper" methods and technologies that would help blind people to learn.



Under the protection and guidance of teachers Cluj from LDV, young blind learn to read, write and use calculator. In the age of technology and the latest gadgets, blind students in Cluj but still using Braille typewriter, an invention of now more than 100 years. "We have about 70 such machines in schools, saying that cover needs," said Silviu Vanda, deputy director of the High School for the Visually Impaired in Cluj. Deputy director himself has such a machine, a 25-year-old model that still uses further with confidence with computer and writing pad, a tool and rudimentary. Although outdated, these machines are expensive, their price is around 600 euros. Despite the steep price, the school was able to equip classes with Braille machines in the context of the Romanian state does not subsidize such purchases.

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Million textbooks

But the typewriter is obsolete solution, and school leadership recognizes this. Still in school there are several computers, used especially in computer science classes. "Envoys will come with laptop at home," said the deputy director. "We want to equip computers with special classes of speech, and for that I partnered with a foundation that supports us," said Vanda. All the information learned at school could then be stored easier, faster and more accessible. Initiative is not a fad, since textbooks printed in Braille are bulky and expensive version. The reason is simple - a regular manual 300 pages of history, for example, turned into Braille, "occupy" least 3 different volumes. Moreover, costs are skyrocketing, and the books are deteriorating quickly. Such manual and even cost £ 1300! "Fortunately these manuals are paid Inspectorate of Cluj County. We try to provide students textbooks for all subjects, but especially for those at baccalaureate," added the deputy director of the blind school. Although Cluj school has its own Braille printing workshop, the cost of printing their own books as one exorbitant, so activity is limited to those strictly necessary printing, and exam preparation tests Bac students. "We have a Braille printer that cost no more than \$ 10,000. I want to use it more often but special printing paper for Braille is also very expensive. We have found a kind of replacement bags we paper, a kind of thinner cardboard from a factory in Dej. It's good for Braille," said deputy director.

Latest technology for the blind

A regular computer desk has no value for a blind, but has an appendix of speech or Braille display, it becomes a utility. Although foreign specialized institutions for years using Braille display, it does not enjoy the same popularity and Romania. One reason is its very steep price, between 10,000 and 20,000 euros. LDV has two such models, but they are not used. "For us not pay off. Rather use voice synthesis. It's much cheaper," said Silviu Vanda. Latest technology but should be accessible to those who have the gift of sight, says Dr. Ulf Glaser, professional trainer in an institute for the blind and visually impaired in Germany. Cluj-Napoca currently LDV this week for a project meeting of 27 international experts on education and rehabilitation of people with visual difficulties, the German specialist presented a number of modern applications and devices blind people can work efficiently.

Tactile books for blind

When the world around you is inaccessible through sight, touch left to save. For primary and secondary school students from School for the Blind an innovative way of learning is tactile books. They are actually illustrations in relief, made of special materials and information can be "read" with your fingers. Such cards have a maximum of 10 pages and get a copy costs to 200-250 lei. Silviu Vanda said it plans to bring in high school he leads these books through a partnership with telecommunications company Orange. Tactile books are not new teachers in the high school for the blind. In 2008 and 2011 they were involved in workshops of producing tactile books, originally trained as a French "Les doigent qui rhubarb".

Chance to retraining

From screens that invert the colors, increase hundreds of times writing and convert it directly into Braille, high-definition screens or tablets furnished rooms, the Electronic improve the quality of life. The main reason, explains Dr. Gasler is the chance to re-orientation training for the blind. "We are able to prepare for a new profession those who are blind, for example, after an accident. Talk in general office job where computer use, "explains therapist working in the institute The Berufsforderungswerk Halle (BFW). "We use hi-tech equipment they become available," he emphasizes. One of the appliances listed in Cluj helps the blind to read newspapers or books normal - it scans reproduce it in writing and then reading. Such a device even cost 3000-4000 euro, but German state subsidized by health insurance because it explains the German, in Germany it is generally accepted that everyone has access to information. "If you want an iPhone or a tablet, however, are not subsidized," he continued.

The game "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire", adapted for the blind

A professor at the School for the Visually Impaired Cluj developed for his students educational computer game. "We started about two years to develop computer games for the blind. The last one I made is a quiz type, similar to the game "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire". Although there are quite a few games on the market like I wanted it to be accessible and blind. To be one shared by both, "says Emanuel Boboiu. The game has already been tested in computer science classes and students enjoy their teacher invention. "The game has general knowledge questions from history, geography, world capitals. Each chooses a set of questions and can play, "he explains. The game can be installed on a normal PC and a computer equipped with voice synthesis. "We use a program that reads what is written on the screen. It's about screen reader. The game was programmed so that it can be easily read by the screen reader, "explains Professor. Another game developed specifically for blind young teacher is a game of online backgammon. It can be played both the demo version, the term "expiration" and indefinitely after its purchase price of 13 euros. The game is successful and has already been bought by people around the world, says its creator. "He had great success since it supports multi-langue (nr.red - in several languages). The full chat is also included with Google Translate, so if two players want to chat, it activates instantly, "says Emanuel. Professor says that programming is a passion that has acquired through specialized courses and is an additional income.

Material taken from daily Transylvania REPORTER

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