

Accessibility Week 2023 – Report

The first Accessibility Week was held at the Gotham Gare coworking space in Lausanne from 22 to 24 May 2023. 225 people attended the event.

Introductions, conferences, and panel discussions took place in the morning. They were accompanied by a PowerPoint and were recorded so that they could be shared on request.

The afternoons were mainly devoted to highlighting the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs programme. An ideation workshop was organised each day, followed by presentations of projects that had received funding under the programme.

Below is a summary of each day. If you would like to see the videos, please contact us using the contact form or by telephone on 077 502 52 03.

Thank you for your interest in the first edition of Accessibility Week. We look forward to seeing you in Fribourg from 14 to 16 May 2024!

We would like to end this summary by thanking our sponsors: the Ernst Göhner Foundation and the Loterie Romande.



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Introductory conference: Accessibility and FRH in action

David Pecoraro, FRH president and caregiver

We need to make research for people with disabilities visible and accessible.

The FRH would like to thank the team at HES-SO Valais who work on the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs programme on a daily basis, as well as the 43 members of the FRH's scientific and expert committees.

The aim of these three days is to enrich the work of the Innovation Booster through workshops, panel discussions, and conferences. The aim is also to bring together researchers, professionals, representatives of institutions, carers and, above all, people affected by disability.

40 experts will be speaking over the 3 days, supported by 15 members of the organising team. We would like to thank our partners HES-SO Valais, Isaac Francophone, Innovation Booster Robotics and Neurodev network.

Programme of Monday 22nd May

Theme: Consistency of practices - Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAA) into perspective

Conference: Le Soutien Gestuel VD: 20 years of experience in Vaud and French-speaking Switzerland

Monique Mischler and Sophie Benoist, speech therapists and members of the Soutien Gestuel committee

Soutien Gestuel Vaudois is a means of Augmentative and Alternative Communication, which supports the expression, comprehension, and construction of oral language. The 300 gestures in the lexicon were selected on the basis of two main criteria: they should be as close as possible to mime and as easy as possible to perform from a motor point of view.

The initiative was developed by speech therapists who joined forces to create an association to formalise the practice in Vaud and French-speaking regions of Switzerland.

Today, initiations and training by speech therapists are organised in institutions, care facilities, associations and for parents.

Panel discussion: Augmentative and Alternative Communication - What can be done on the field?

Moderator: Stéphane Jullien, Speech and Language Therapist and head of the French-speaking Switzerland commission of Isaac Francophone.

Several AAC methods exist (PECS, Makaton, LSF, Soutien Gestuel, etc.) for a multitude of individual needs.

The discussion centred on the following question: how can we put the tools in place, train the teams and, above all, ensure that the people concerned have access to the methods best suited to their needs?

Speakers:

- **Hadja a Marca-Kaba**, social educator and cued speech user,
- **Monique Mischler**, speech therapist and member of the committee of the Soutien Gestuel VD association,
- **Carole Broye**, carer for her son who uses a telethesis,
- **Juliane Dind**, researcher in the Department of Special Education at the University of Fribourg/Universität Freiburg and founder of the Petit conservatoire du Polyhandicap
- **Giovanna Garghentini Python**, Cantonal Director of Pro Infirmis

Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs ideation workshop

In partnership with Isaac Francophone

47 people took part in the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs ideation workshop. The topic of the workshop was Augmentative and Alternative Communication. The workshop focused on two areas: stakeholder training and collaboration between stakeholders. The "Stop - Continue - Start" method was used to identify the pain points and areas for improvement of these topics.

Presentations of projects funded by the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs

- [My Health: I learn and I choose](#)
- [Breaking the sound barrier](#)

**Programme of Tuesday 23 May
Technology and Accessibility**

Introduction: Implementation of the CRPD in Switzerland

Verena Kuonen, Co-President of Inclusion Handicap and member of our expert committee.

Conference: Technological innovations for blind and visually impaired people - Between the promise of an accessible world and the exclusion of certain audiences

Luciano Butera, Director of Technology and Innovation, Swiss Federation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Current technical developments offer a variety of new opportunities for blind and visual impaired people. However, at the same time, technical trends can also lead to the exclusion of the clientele concerned.

Luciano Butera used practical examples to show how technology is changing the daily lives of blind and visually impaired people. The activities of the Technology and Innovation Department were also presented. Finally, the position of the Swiss Federation of the Blind and Visually impaired was discussed, as well as its expectations of research, industry, and service providers.

Panel discussion: From the era of technical accessibility to the era of technologies serving accessibility.

Moderator: Cédric Baudet, Professor, Haute Ecole de Gestion Arc

To what extent is accessibility integrated into new technologies? Is this a myth or a possible reality? The discussion focused first on the limits of accessibility, then on the positive impact of technologies on accessibility, and finally on the possible abuses of emerging technologies. The debate ended with a discussion of the "Inclusivity by design" methodology, which considers accessibility as an integral part of the project from the outset.

Speakers:

- **Céline Witschard and Alex Bernier** representing the Plein Accès association, which works for the social, cultural, educational, and professional inclusion of people with disabilities.
- **Marc Buttica**, scientific collaborator in the Construction and Environment Coordination Department of Pro Infirmis.
- **Carole Baudin**, Dr. in Social Anthropology and Ethnology.
- **Luciano Butera**, Head of the Technology and Innovation Department of the Swiss Federation of the Blind and Visually Impaired FSA.

Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs ideation workshop

In partnership with Innovation Booster Robotics

59 people took part in the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs ideation workshop. The workshop focused on the themes of technology and accessibility. Three areas were explored in depth: automated machines and touch screens, pedestrian crossing signs and household appliances. The "Stop - Continue - Start" method was used to identify the pain points and areas for improvement in these areas.

Presentations of projects funded by the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs

- [e-Services TSA](#)
- [Pro-GIS](#)
- [Comfort reading](#)
- [Bootis](#)

Video of project presentation: <https://lnkd.in/eXBfaYEv>

Programme of Wednesday 24 May

Knowledge transfer between research, practice, and appropriation

In partnership with the Neurodev network

Introduction: From knowledge transfer to co-development of solutions: towards a democratisation of expertise

Stéphane Rullac, Professor, Haute Ecole de Travail Social et de la Santé Lausanne

Conference: The case of the Selody study on visual impairment and couple relationships

Romain Bertrand, Senior Lecturer, Haute Ecole de Travail Social et de la Santé Lausanne

Linda Charvoz, Associate Professor, Haute Ecole de Travail Social et de la Santé Lausanne

The SELODY (Sensory Loss in the Dyadic Context) research project, commissioned by the Swiss National Association of and for the Blind, looked at the effects of one partner's visual and possible hearing impairment on a couple.

This participatory research involved the people concerned throughout the various phases, particularly in the transfer of knowledge. The aim of this approach was to make the results and recommendations as accessible as possible, both to the general public and to people living with sensory impairment.

Panel discussion: How can we promote the co-construction of scientific knowledge and its appropriation by the people concerned and those working in the field?

Moderator: Camille Poursac, Coordinator of the Dual Competence Centre, HES-SO Rectorat

The discussions at this panel discussion were divided into three parts:

1. An overview of the problems and obstacles encountered by those working in the field, those affected, and scientists involved in Knowledge Transfer activities in the field of disability in Switzerland today.
2. An exchange of views on possible solutions for raising awareness and taking action to promote knowledge transfer activities in the field of disability.
3. Exchanges of experiences and practices of knowledge transfer activities in the field of disability with their challenges, benefits, spin-offs, possible developments.

Speakers:

- **Amaranta Fernandez**, Pro Infirmis scientific collaborator in the Services Department, French-speaking Switzerland and Ticino
- **Sébastien Kessler**, co-founder of the company id-Geo
- **Jean-Christophe Pastor**, head of inclusion and participation projects at the Clair Bois Foundation
- **Stéphane Rullac**, Professor, Haute Ecole de Travail Social et de la Santé, Lausanne
- **Aline Veyre**, Associate Professor in the field of disability, Haute école de travail social et de la santé Lausanne

Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs ideation workshop

In partnership with the Neurodev network

37 people took part in the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs ideation workshop. For this workshop, participants were able to choose their topic from among a dozen proposed, linked to those of the BFEH. The "Stop - Continue - Start" method was first used to identify the pain points and areas for improvement of the topic. Participants were then able to start prototyping their topic, using various objects such as Legos or modelling clay.

Presentations of projects funded by the Innovation Booster Technology and Special Needs

- [Discovering your body](#)
- [EVIVO+](#)
- [Plans for this evening](#)

Announcement of the winners of the Innovation Booster's 5th call for projects.

- **MultiSteps:** an application to help patients with multiple sclerosis, using a logbook to record the symptoms they experience.
- **SWICApp:** Social Work Inclusive & Communication App: developing criteria for the specifications of a communication application for the various players in a foundation.
- **Digital Skills:** digital skills to encourage the participation of people with cognitive disabilities.
- **Crossing the sound barrier:** research into the employment needs of employers and people with hearing impairments (continuation of a project supported in October 2022).
- **Analyze-Me:** software tools for processing physiological signals from patients with a non-verbal form of autism.
- **Sound spatialisation:** the impact of sound spatialisation in automatic speech recognition for the hearing impaired.
- **EVIVO+:** taking control of one's health with a chronic illness and an intellectual disability (continuation of a project supported in October 2022).
- **Brillant:** Internet search for existing Braille solutions, hardware, and Android solutions for Brillant - a smartphone film with raised Braille symbols.
- **Wheely Washer:** hands-free, automatic cleaning station for wheelchair wheels.
- **Discovering your body:** an application for discovering your body, learning to feel and move your body to develop voluntary motor skills (continuation of a project supported in October 2022).
- **AAC platform:** a platform to support people with communication disabilities.