

Authors:

- *Gerrit Van den Breede*, consultant for aids for people with visual impairment in various organisations in Flanders since 1986. Training: electronics & IT, technical university level.
- *Ward De Bruecker*, consultant for aids for people with a hearing and/or cognitive impairment. Training: Masters in Psychology

Organisation: KOC - Kenniscentrum Hulpmiddelen (aid skills centre) (www.koc.be) is a service that forms part of the VAPH (Flemish Agency for the Handicapped). The KOC:

- ❖ Maintains an online database of aids with photos, moving images and prices
- ❖ Distributes information to the public via publications such as information brochures and the quarterly Infovisie Magazine (visual impairment)
- ❖ Supports the provision of advice on aids
- ❖ Advises on policy.

Accessible digital television for the visually and hearing-impaired in Flanders

Belgacom TV (www.belgacom.tv) and Telenet Digital TV (www.telenet.be) are the two biggest digital television providers in Flanders. They represent the biggest group of customers and they are the only ones to offer interactive digital television. Their digital and interactive service has been assessed by the KOC with regard to accessibility both for the blind and the visually impaired and for the deaf and the hard of hearing.

Watching digital television

Digital TV programmes are neither more nor less accessible to the blind and the visually impaired than traditional analogue television.

The visually impaired can use a bigger television set or sit closer to the screen.

The blind are assisted by a sighted person who provides an oral explanation of the images.

The KOC is investigating ways for the blind to watch television independently.

The deaf and the hard of hearing encounter difficulties with watching television because the content of TV programmes relies on speech. A TV programme becomes accessible to them when the spoken text is shown in a legible form using subtitles (teletext).

The KOC is investigating ways for people with hearing impairment to watch accessible television.

Using digital television

- Electronic programme guide (EPG)
An EPG gives a detailed summary of today's and future TV programmes on the various channels. The operation, the user interface and the language used are the elements that have an impact on the accessibility of EPGs. The KOC is investigating this.
- Video-on-demand and recording programmes with a digital video recorder (DVR) are options that the KOC is investigating with regard to their practicality.