



2016

2016 IMPACT REPORT



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EUD would like to thank the European Commission for funding this 2016 Impact Report under the REC Work Programme. Without their substantial financial contributions, the publication of this report would not have been possible.

The support of the EUD Board and President have been of invaluable help to create an accurate and up-to-date account of the EUD activities in 2016:

Board 2014 - 2017:

President Dr Markku Jokinen

Vice-President Dr Humberto Insolera

Board Member Louise "Lolo" Danielsson

Board Member Alfredo Gómez Fernández

Board Member Dr Gergely Tapolczai

The EUD interns Monika Kozub and James Mclean, along with all members of staff contributed to this up-to-date report with photos, texts and signed input.

Our member associations are at the heart of our work and we thank them for assisting and co-operating with us throughout the year.

The European Disability Forum (EDF), our European disability umbrella organisation, has been a great partner in all our work, informing us and collaborating with our Board and staff via email and in person, in and outside of Brussels.

In support of its daily work, EUD has been in contact with a large number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and other EU policymakers and aspires to continue this fruitful co-operation in the coming years.



Dr Markku Jokinen



Dr Humberto Insolera



Louise "Lolo" Danielsson



Alfredo Gómez Fernández



Dr Gergely Tapolczai

FOREWORD BY EUD PRESIDENT

2016 is the year where we saw action after much advocacy work. I am very proud to be part of the European Union (EU) after seeing several developments concerning European deaf communities. We have worked endlessly over 30 years and are now at the stage where we can see changes regarding the laws. The most important act that we have followed for years is the draft directive for the European Accessibility Act, as it has the potential to make a difference for deaf communities across Europe. We are actively advocating for this directive and have been speaking out for its adoption at numerous events. Yet, it doesn't end there, several MEPs, including MEP Helga Stevens and MEP Ádám Kósa, have written a resolution on sign language and sign language interpreters in the EU, which has been adopted in the European Parliament. Our efforts have not gone unnoticed, and it is now vital for us to ensure that all is in order for the implementation of the resolution in the next few years.

It doesn't end there, MEP Helga Stevens wrote a very important resolution based on a report about the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), which was adopted with an overwhelming majority in the European Parliament. This report contains a few crucial mentions about education, personal and professional mobility and accessibility for the deaf, including how sign language is crucial to allow equal access and equal opportunities for the deaf.


Furthermore, the European Union of the Deaf has been working on increasing its visibility within the political networks by reaching out to Marianne Thyssen, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, and other European policy-makers to inform them of our work and deaf rights issues.

The EUD Board and staff members went to Granada (Spain), Scheveningen (The Netherlands), Bratislava (Slovakia) and Las Palmas (Gran Canaria) for board meetings, seminars and the General Assembly. All those visits were very positive and we had the opportunity to reach out to different deaf communities as well as key stakeholders within the political sphere. During the EU presidency of Slovakia, we co-hosted a reception with MEP Jana Žitňanská in Bratislava and engaged with the local deaf community. I would like to express my appreciation to MEP Jana Žitňanská for her hospitality.

Despite all those huge achievements, we have been faced with several setbacks this year. The British vote to leave the EU will have an overwhelming affect on us all. I am very saddened and very much regret this decision and we are deeply concerned that the social position of deaf and hard of hearing British citizens might worsen in the aftermath of the "Brexit". We have published our statement regarding this concern.

Regarding the Audiovisual media services directive, we have suffered a huge setback, with the Culture committee of the European Parliament aiming at deleting these services from the scope of the European Accessibility Act. We will continue to persevere and urge the Members of the European Parliament to re-consider this issue.

There was an event, organised by MEP Helga Stevens in the European Parliament in Brussels that we, as one community of sign language users, will treasure for a long time to come. It was a significant achievement to put together a conference providing interpretation from and into all 31 EU regional and national sign language in one room. The topic was 'Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages' conference. I was one of the speakers there. I believe after many years of being involved with advocacy work, this was one of the most remarkable achievements for me to witness, the richness of all EU sign languages all in one place.


Dr Markku Jokinen
EUD President



EUD INTRODUCTION

EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

Based in Brussels, Belgium, EUD is a not-for-profit European non-governmental organisation (ENGO) comprising National Associations of the Deaf (NADs). It is the only supranational organisation representing deaf sign language users at European level and is one of the few ENGOs representing associations in all 28 EU Member States, including Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland. EU acceding, candidate and potential member countries such as Serbia, can choose to become affiliated members with the option to become full members as soon as they officially enter the EU.

Aiming to establish and maintain EU level dialogue with the European Union institutions and officials in consultation and co-operation

with its member NADs. EUD also has participatory status with the Council of Europe (CoE).

Furthermore, EUD is a full member of the European Disability Forum (EDF), the umbrella organisation of Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) in Europe and has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) to tackle issues of global importance. EUD also has signed MoUs with both the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsl), the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY), the European Deaf Sports Organisation (EDSO) and the European Deafblind Union (EDbU)

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the core mission of EUD to promote, advance and protect the rights of and opportunities for deaf people (including sign language users) in the European Union to ensure they can become full citizens in their own right.

To achieve equality in both public and private life for deaf people, EUD has laid out three main long-term objectives:

- 1 Recognition of the right to use an indigenous sign language;
- 2 Empowerment through communication and information; and
- 3 Equality in education and employment.

These key values are also mirrored in the daily work of its Brussels headquarters. The office provides a fully accessible signing environment with international staff from many different countries across the EU. The majority of staff are deaf sign language users and all hearing staff must know or learn one national sign language as well as International Sign. Gender equality is also taken into account in all employment policies and when organising events and speakers.

SIGN LANGUAGES AS A HUMAN RIGHT

Inherent to the work of EUD is the belief that the right to sign language is a basic Human Right. Sign language users, similarly with national minorities, are in need of specific targeted and coherent protection regarding their language and all human rights. National and/or regional sign languages are the mother tongues of deaf sign language users across the EU and the world.

The right to sign language in itself is a human right, but access to sign language is also essential for the fulfilment of other basic human rights, such as the right to

equal education, information or to a fair trial. Without early access to sign language programmes and/or an educational system that fosters the acquisition of the national and/or regional sign language(s) (and the national written language), deaf children will not be able to enjoy their basic human rights as children or later in their adult life.

EUD therefore advocates the right to sign language as an essential prerequisite to ensure full and equal citizenship for all deaf people.

EUD regularly plans and carries out campaigns, workshops and other pan-European events to reach out to the deaf community, in addition

to the wider hearing society and key European and national policy-makers.

The SignTeach project is a three year project that is co-funded by the EU Erasmus+ programme. It will develop, implement and evaluate an Open Educational Resource (OER) for sign language teachers and their trainers in EU member states. The OER will include information for new and experienced sign language teachers about didactics, class management, the CEFR for sign languages, meta-linguistics, ICT and entrepreneurial skills, as well as interviews with new and experienced teachers and their learners. Answers to the following questions about transnational mobility will be included: Where can you go if you want to go abroad to learn or teach a sign language, or to receive further training as a sign language teacher?

A bilingual online SignTeach Glossary with didactic and linguistic terms explained in International Sign and English text will increase the accessibility of the information on the website for Deaf sign language users.

The fourth and the fifth meeting of the project took place this year in Prague and in Antwerp. EUD is part of the consortium for the project and will support the other members, with the final project report that will be written after the end of the project in 2017.

SIGN TEACH PROJECT



SignTeach Consortium Partners



EUD INITIATIVES

NEXES PROJECT

In May 2015, the Grant Agreement for NEXES was signed between the European Commission and the NEXES partners, delivering almost 6 million Euros to the research and development of next generation emergency services that integrate IP-based communication technologies and interoperability. Its aim is to ensure that emergency services will become fully accessible for the deaf people across the Europe.

The NEXES Consortium presents a strong multi-disciplinary and complementary collective, with solid competences and experience developing research and innovation projects, that ensure significant contributions will be

handed to Europe's standardisation effort on emergency services. 17 organisations from 10 countries participate in the project, including emergency physicians associations, police prefectures, telecommunication and technical service companies, national ministries, a geolocalisation service company, university institutes working in these fields and a communication service provider for deaf and hard of hearing. Throughout the project, EUD lends its expertise in the area of accessibility for the deaf as one of the consortium members, generally represented by EUD project officer Frankie Picron.

In 2016, EUD contributed to the NEXES project through presentations during a meeting in Berlin and a workshop held in Scheveningen, The Netherlands.



Frankie Picron
NEXES Project Officer

EUD PETITION

After talks with the European Parliament's Petitions committee, EUD tabled a petition to the European Parliament on the 13th of September requesting it to allow for the submission of petitions in European national and regional sign languages.

Currently, only the tabling of petitions in the EU official (written/spoken) languages is possible, which means that deaf sign language users are denied access to the European Parliament through its petitions committee. However, as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU clearly states, "any discrimination based on any ground

such as (...) language (...)” is prohibited. Furthermore the EU having ratified the CRPD, its institutions have an obligation to implement its provisions with regards to accessibility (article 9) and freedom of expression and opinion (article 21). We strongly believe that allowing for the tabling of petitions in all national and regional sign languages used in the EU is the only way to provide full and equal access for deaf people on an equal basis with others.

We will follow up with the Petitions committee of the European Parliament on the progress regarding this issue.

During the assembly, the EUD President took the opportunity to reflect on the work of EUD achieved in 2015. The excellent independent evaluation report EUD received in 2015 demonstrates its effectiveness. He shared his gratitude towards the EUD staff, board members and the members of the National Associations of the Deaf. During the General Assembly (GA), several topics were discussed, but the most controversial one was the structure of the membership fees with which the NADs financially contribute to EUD. The NADs rejected all proposals and opted for further investigation before next GA in Malta (2017) in order to make sure that the future of EUD remains financially sustainable in the

future and that it can continue to carry out its advocacy for deaf people.

President Emeritus of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), Liisa Kauppinen, who received the 2013 United Nations Human Rights Award Prize from the United Nations, chaired the General Assembly throughout the weekend. EUD wishes to thank Liisa for her dedication and support during the GA.

We also had the opportunity to witness the signing of the WFD Congress contract between FNSF (France) and WFD for the next WFD Congress in Paris, France in 2019.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN SCHEVENINGEN, THE NETHERLANDS

Delegates of Maltese
Association of the Deaf



EUD General Assembly



Delegates of Slovenian
Association of the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing



EUD INITIATIVES

BOARD MEETINGS

In 2016, the four quarterly board meetings of EUD took place in Granada, Spain; Scheveningen, The Netherlands; Bratislava,

Slovakia and Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, Spain.

1. Granada, Spain

The first quarterly Board Meeting took place in Granada, Spain. EUD Board members took the opportunity to review EUD's work in 2015 and to followup the plans for the 2016 work programme.

We had the honour to meet the Mayor of Granada during our visit and exchanged views regarding services for the deaf. During the trip, we celebrated a milestone achievement, the 50th anniversary of the Association of the Deaf in Granada, attending the community's festivities in the evening.

2. Scheveningen, The Netherlands

The second board meeting took place in the framework of the General Assembly in May. The focus of the board meeting was the implementation of the 2016 work programme and also concerning the final preparations for the General Assembly.

3. Bratislava, Slovakia

The third quarterly Board Meeting took place in Bratislava, Slovakia. EUD Board members took the opportunity to review the EUD General Assembly that had taken place in Scheveningen, The Netherlands. The board members also used the opportunity to follow-up the financial aspects of the work programme and proposed to make minor amendments.

4. Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, Spain

The final board meeting of 2016 took place in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria in Spain. The EUD board conducted its meeting during the first two days of our stay, reviewing the work of 2016 and exploring the possibilities for 2017. Other topics were discussed, for example how EUD can support advocacy for the implementation of the sign language resolution in the Member states as well as EUD's cooperation with our partner organisations in the coming year.

EUD had the great opportunity to meet the deaf community in Gran Canaria at its club in Las Palmas and to have a direct exchange with many of its members.



EUD Board meeting,
Las Palmas, Spain

As part of EUD's commitment to capacity building of its members, the European deaf community in general as well as associated organisations, EUD regularly organises trainings, seminars and workshops in a

number of areas. These events are open to member association staff and boards, regional representatives or other interested parties from the wider deaf community, professionals and political stakeholders.

EUD SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

In the framework of EUD's board meeting in Granada, a seminar took place on the morning of the 20th of February to engage with the deaf community in the region of Andalusia.

The seminar presented EUD and its work to the attending members of the Spanish deaf community in order to strengthen the mutual cooperation. Concretely, EUD's interactive presentation explained EUD's structure, its

members, as well as its vision to achieve equality in public and private life for deaf sign language users. All Board Members gave specific examples from their home countries about sign language interpretation services, legislation and education.

The outcome was very positive with an attendance of 300 delegates.

SEMINAR GRANADA, SPAIN

Concepción Mª Díaz Robledo
President of Spanish Association
of the Deaf

Guadalupe Cuerva Cobo
President of Granada Association
of the Deaf



During a joint seminar, organised in co-operation with the Dutch national association of the deaf "Dovenschap", a number of representatives from EUD partner organisations, such as WFD, efsli and EUDY gave a great variety of presentations, focusing on the innovation of deaf businesses

and organisations in their efforts to ensure accessibility for and participation of the deaf in society. 100 persons attended the seminar, which was very well received. We would like to share our appreciation for Dovenschap's efforts to make this a successful event for us all.

SEMINAR ON DEAF BUSINESS INNOVATION, IN SCHEVENINGEN, THE NETHERLANDS

EUD Seminar,
Scheveningen, The Netherlands



EUD INITIATIVES

NEXES WORKSHOP, SCHEVENINGEN

On the 19th of May 2016, EUD and Omnitor hosted a NEXES workshop on Accessibility in emergency response in Scheveningen, The Netherlands. Members of the NEXES Consortium and 45 representatives of EUD and its member organisations were present, including the presidents of numerous NADs. As such, the workshop represented an unprecedented opportunity to engage directly with members of the deaf community, and to secure valuable feedback on their experiences of dealing with emergency services, and on the advancements considered by the consortium of the NEXES project.

The deaf community currently experiences a variety of barriers in accessing and communicating with emergency services. There is considerable variation in available communication methods between different regions and countries, and those options that are available (e.g. SMS, fax, calls via relay services, pre-registrations, dedicated numbers to memorise) do not provide the fast and reliable access necessary for equality of access and effective emergency response.

In the framework of the workshop, several exercises were organised. One of them, for example, took the form of a 'walk through' of an emergency response scenario involving a terrorist attack on a mass transit system, delivered in sign-language by Lisa Åström of Omnitor as well as Mark Wheatley and Frankie Picron of EUD, with designated intervals for facilitated group discussion. The topics discussed were currently available communications options and any associated impediments to communication, alternatives considered by NEXES, advantages and/or limitations.

The feedback gathered was invaluable and provided a fascinating insight into the challenges the deaf community faces in their interactions with emergency services, and into their requirements for Next Generation of Emergency Services, highlighting both the vital importance of end-user expertise and the commitment of the consortium partners to the project's success. The NEXES project represents an important and innovative effort in advancing the possibilities for truly universal, democratic and inclusive emergency services.



Frankie Picron
NEXES Project Officer



NEXES Workshop,
Scheveningen, The Netherlands

We also had the honour of co-hosting a cocktail meeting with MEP Jana Žitňanská, assembling representatives of the Slovak Deaf community and associations along with EUD representatives. The topic of the

cocktail meeting focused on 'The renewed cooperation between EUD and the Slovak Deaf community under the auspices of the Slovak presidency'.

COCKTAIL RECEPTION WITH MEP JANA ŽITNANSKÁ

Jana Žitňanská
Member of European Parliament



EUD with the members of
Slovak deaf community



During a conference on the 17th of December on how citizens' involvement can support the achievement of rights for the deaf, organised by the Federation of associations of the deaf of the Canary Islands, FASICAN, the EUD board gave presentations about EUD's work as well as other important topics, such as deaf education. Other presentations dealt with the

importance for deaf persons to know their national or regional sign language legislation and to compare them to examples of strong adoption and implementation in other countries, as this can help them to better advocate for sign language rights in their country. The conference was well received with 175 persons attending.

SEMINAR, LAS PALMAS, SPAIN

EUD presentation,
Las Palmas, Spain



EUD INITIATIVES

EUD BOARD ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, EUD board members have participated as speakers in a variety of events across Europe to raise awareness among conference participants about EUD's activities and to discuss other topic areas, such as education, from a deaf perspective.

SGB-FSS Conference, Bern, Switzerland

On the 1st of June, EUD president Markku Jokinen took part in an education and professional congress on the undiscovered potential of sign language, organised by the Swiss Association of the Deaf. The idea of the congress was to study a concept of language resilience in the framework of the UN CRPD and how it could be used for human rights advocacy work for the deaf. Members of the deaf community as well as stakeholders in German-speaking countries were present. Markku Jokinen gave a presentation on the topic of inclusive education focusing on the use of sign language in education and participated in a discussion panel with the aforementioned stakeholders.

SGB-FSS Conference, Bern, Switzerland
Left to right: Helmut Vogel, Helene Jarmer, Roland Hermann and Markku Jokinen



Deaf Education Conference, Portlaoise, Ireland

On the 1st of October, EUD president Markku Jokinen took part in a deaf education conference with the title "Meaningful Access to Language, Equality and Education", organised by an Irish Deaf activist. The conference was aimed primarily at parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, the education professionals working with them and policy advisors in this field. Its aim was to identify a number of key objectives to improve the education of deaf and hard of hearing children in Ireland. A panel of both Irish and international experts spoke about a variety of related issues. Markku Jokinen gave a presentation analysing inclusive education in the UN CRPD.

Valladolid Anniversary Conference, Valladolid, Spain

On the 15th of October, EUD president Markku Jokinen participated in the 75th Anniversary of APSAVA, a local Spanish association of the Deaf in Valladolid, Spain. Presentations on various topics of interest were given. Markku Jokinen presented on how deaf persons can prepare for the future through making use of technological trends and highlighted the importance of deaf persons participating in planning for future societies.



Markku Jokinen
EUD President
Valladolid Anniversary Conference

World Deaf Day, Rome, Italy

On the 23rd and 24th of September, the World Deaf Day took place in Rome, Italy, celebrating the 65th birthday of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). In this context, various events were organised to spread information and to demand the recognition of Italian Sign language, one of the few sign languages in the European Union that are not recognised yet by law. Throughout the conference, various speakers gave presentations to an audience of approximately 100 members of the Italian deaf association. EUD board member Alfredo Gómez Fernández presented information about the aims and objectives of EUD as well as its ongoing advocacy efforts, projects and publications. The following day, the Italian Deaf Association (ENS) organised a manifestation with 3,000 participants demanding the recognition of Italian sign language.

World Deaf Day, Rome, Italy

Left to right: **Florjan Robja, Colin Allen, Giuseppe Petrucci, Humberto Insolera and Alfredo Gómez Fernández**

Deaf Interpreters Seminar, Copenhagen, Denmark

On the 31st of October, EUD board member Louise "Lolo" Danielsson attended the seminar on "Deaf interpreters in Europe" in Copenhagen, Denmark. The seminar is part of Erasmus+ supported project: Developing Deaf Interpreting. During the seminar, the very first survey of the situation of deaf Interpreters in Europe was presented and discussed with participants from all of Europe. Among the 70 participants were deaf interpreters, hearing interpreters, interpreter teachers, sign language linguists, researchers, media workers, representatives from deaf associations, sign language interpreter associations, interpreting and translation companies, TV -stations, as well as from European organisations such as efsli and EUD.



Louise "Lolo" Danielsson
EUD Board Member



EUD INITIATIVES

WORKING GROUPS

There are three Working Groups at EUD focussing on current main issues of importance, or topics that the General Assembly decides to have been a priority:

- Deaf Lawyer
- Accessibility
- ICT

Each group is chaired by one Board Member: Dr Gergely Tapolczai, Dr Humberto Insolera and Alfredo Gómez Fernández respectively. The purpose of each EUD Working Group is to create a forum to exchange ideas, to formulate recommendations for Member States and at European level, as well as demonstrating good practices and negative examples. During 2016, the groups mainly worked via email and individual webcam meetings.

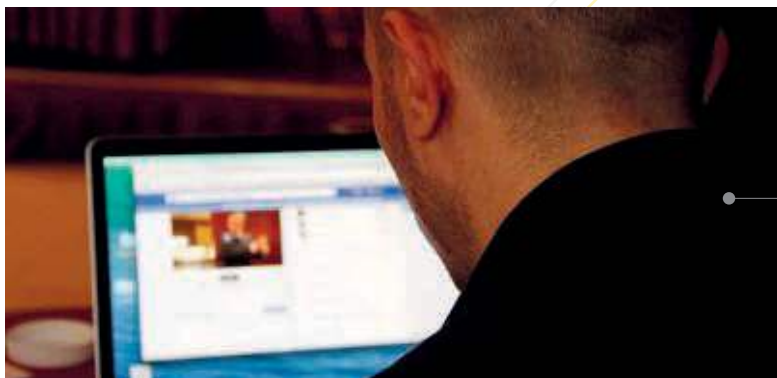
The Deaf lawyer group set up the regulations concerning the membership fee structure, which was presented during the General Assembly in Scheveningen, The Netherlands.

EUD, together with the accessibility working group, used the position paper on the accessibility of elevators that had been written by the working group the previous year, to inform EUD's reply to the European Commission public consultation on the evaluation of the Lifts Directive 95/16/EC.

The ICT group did not specifically focus on any topics, but was instrumental in providing valuable feedback to the EDF ICT expert group, ensuring that EDF received adequate information in relation to deaf sign language users. It also monitored and contributed to internal relevant discussions within the International Telecommunication Union.

MEDIA TRAINING FOR EDF

On the 28th of October, EUD's media and communication officer David Hay gave a workshop to the staff working on media within EDF. The workshop was designed to expand the participants' editing skills, especially on how to make videos accessible for the target audience. David Hay presented examples of his work with EUD's accessible videos and demonstrated the subtitling features along with colour separation overlay, which applies to two or more layers in one clip and is suitable for showing a sign language interpreter on the screen. EUD's in-house interpreter Romy O'Callaghan interpreted the meeting.



David Hay
EUD Communication
and Media Officer

EUD is maintaining its determination to produce high quality and fully accessible information to its members and other interested parties to increase the visibility of its output, especially for the political stakeholders and the wider deaf community. Dissemination of information generally takes the form of International Sign Language

videos with selected feature(s) of: English subtitles; and/or a voiceover in English; and/or a summary of the content of the video in English text on the same page. The format of dissemination is aimed to be fully accessible for all. It brings to life the slogan of the disability movement, which is "Nothing about us, without us".

MEDIA

The EUD website was launched this year with its new look and more accessibility features after it had been reworked last year. It allows us to release a variety of catalogued information, also enabling us to be more innovative with regards to accessibility, providing press statements in International Sign and English. Furthermore, we added new,

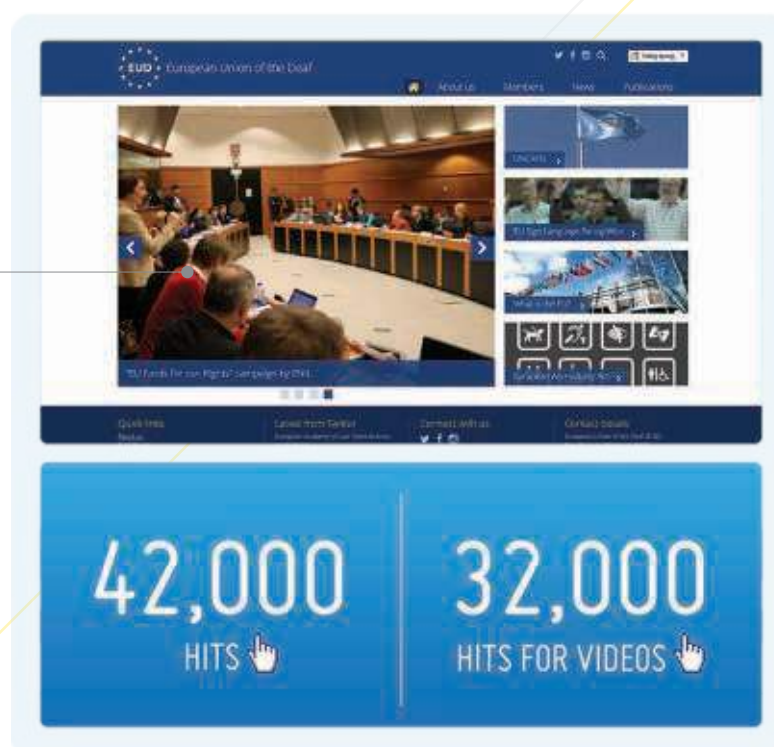
more video-friendly features, for instance a way to allow deaf citizens to contact EUD with video messages in sign language. We hope that the website's new design will attract more people after its decline in the past few years due the emerging social media channels within the EUD.

WEBSITE

Statistics

There were 32,000 hits on the videos embedded on our website in 2015. We have increased the ratings to 42,000 this year.

EUD's new website launched



EUD INITIATIVES

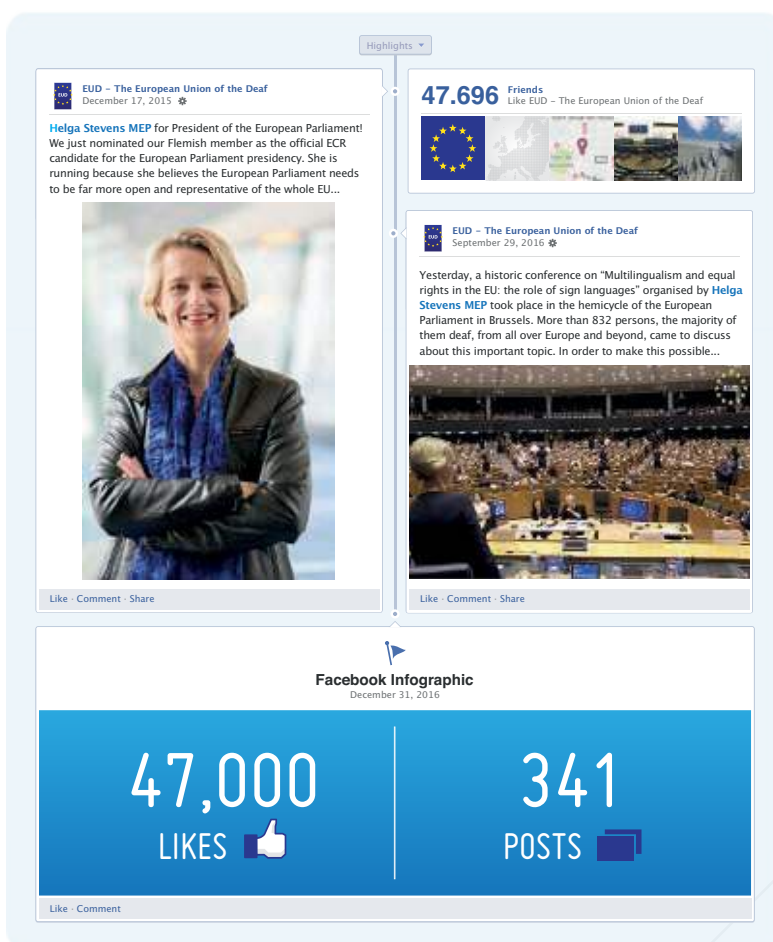
SOCIAL MEDIA

Although the EUD website are valuable and beneficial tools in connecting with Deaf people in Europe and around the world, EUD uses social media to disseminate content in real

time. EUD has grown to one of the most visible organisations at European level, surpassing many other equally sized associations in geographic and quantitative reach.

Facebook

The official EUD Facebook page is still attracting new Facebook users and we are proud to say that we have increased our 'likes' from 33,000 to 47,000. The information that is being disseminated on our website is also shared on the Facebook page, along with additional photo albums of past events. The page is targeted at the general public and its exposure illustrates our lobbying work in addition to various events EUD attends and subjects it addresses.



Twitter

Twitter allows us to instantly inform about the daily activities of EUD Board members and staff. Several of the events that took place this year were strongly disseminated via Twitter. The NADs were especially proactive with regards to social media while attending the 'Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages' conference, which made it the highlight on our Twitter account.



Instagram

The introduction of Instagram began back in September 2013. It is a distinctive way to capture political life through an artistic lens. This is a small, but growing niche audience for us. Back in 2015, we had 500 followers, now we have nearly doubled it to 950 this year.



EUD INITIATIVES

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

EUD is one of the few European-level organisations that offer a regular remunerated internship programme. It is also the only internship that provides a full signing environment, enabling young sign language users to improve their International Sign skills and their knowledge of European policy and media production. EUD's interns have come from many different EU countries to support and inspire the local deaf community and younger deaf people.

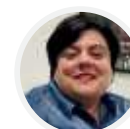
Monika Kozub from Poland was the first intern joining us in 2016. She stayed with us to support the preparations of the General Assembly as well as EUD's media production. During her time, she also assisted MEP Helga Stevens' office with their event promotion materials.



Intern
Monika Kozub
(March - June)
Cracow, Poland

The second intern was Vanessa Soto who dealt with administration work and supported our previous administrative officer, Heather Daley.

The third intern was James Mclean who joined us from the United Kingdom. He wrote a report on the advantages of establishing a common sign language symbol in the European Union and researched various national situations with regards to the use of audiograms to establish the right to receiving social security benefits, a practice that EUD is opposed to, as it promotes the medical model of disability and not the social model promoted by the UN CRPD. James also supported MEP Helga Stevens' office in preparing the 'Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages' conference and had the chance to enhance his video production skills by assisting EUD's Communication and Media Officer David Hay.



Intern
Vanessa Soto
(March - June)
Oviedo, Spain



Intern
James Mclean
(September - December)
West Midlands, United Kingdom



Monika Kozub
EUD Intern



James Mclean
EUD Intern

UNCRPD ratification by Finland and the Netherlands

UNCRPD

On the 11th of May 2016, Finland ratified the UN CRPD as well as its Optional Protocol. Both entered into force for Finland on the 10th of June 2016.

On the 13th of July 2016, the Netherlands also finalised the UN CRPD ratification process by depositing its instruments of ratification of the Convention at the office of the Secretary-General of the UN in New York.

EUD highly welcomes the UN CRPD ratification by Finland and the Netherlands, as this obliges both countries to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

by all persons with disabilities, including deaf and hard of hearing persons. With now just one EU member state shy of having ratified the UN CRPD, this was an important step towards all of them ratifying the only international human rights instrument that is dedicated exclusively to the rights of persons with disabilities.

We would like use the occasion to call onto Ireland to ratify the convention, so that all EU member states, in cooperation with EU that ratified it in 2010, can work together for the equal treatment and full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

General Comments on article 6 and 24

In the framework of the same UN CRPD session, general comments on article 24 on education and on article 6 women and girls with disabilities were presented.

The objective of general comments issued by the UN CRPD committee is to give more detailed definitions prescribed in the article in question in order to allow the parties to the Convention to fully implement them.

EUD had been awaiting the publication of the comment on article 24 on education, as it had provided input in the consultation phase, and strongly welcomed the publication of both general comments.

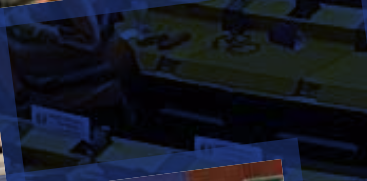
With regards to the comment on article 24 on education, we appreciated the clear definition of inclusive education, involving a systemic reform change of all aspects of the education system to overcome the barriers that persons with disabilities face. We were also glad to see that the comment highlighted several provisions that are necessary to allow deaf students to have a meaningful educational experience. However, we also felt that the general comment disregarded several elements, where the deaf experience partially differs from other disability groups, for instance with regards to the importance of

deaf students to be taught in sign language alongside deaf peers to allow them to be included in their class and to thrive academically, linguistically, socially and thus personally.

We were also glad to see the publication of general comment on article 6 - Women and girls with disabilities. The World Federation of the Deaf had submitted a strong contribution highlighting how deaf women and girls are especially vulnerable to violence and abuse, as they often experience communication difficulties when trying to report an abuse, due to the lack of sign language skills of police and medical authorities and unavailability of professional sign language interpretation. Furthermore, WFD highlighted that there is a lack of accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services, as they rarely provide information in sign language. This leads to many deaf women lacking information about these services and subsequently to health problems. We appreciate that deaf women were mentioned several times throughout the comment, but regret that neither sign language nor sign language interpretation provision were mentioned specifically, when referring to the need of accessible information for women with disabilities.

“MULTILINGUALISM AND EQUAL RIGHTS IN THE EU:

CONFERENCE



SM HTS THE ROLE OF SIGN LANGUAGE” RENCE



UNCRPD review sessions in Geneva, Switzerland

EUD, as the only European-level NGOs representing deaf people and sign language users, regularly attends and actively contributes to the UN CRPD review sessions. The aim is to not only support and encourage our member associations to follow suit, but to also be able to provide up-to-date information and training to the whole European deaf community. EUD works in close co-operation with WFD to ensure that the accessibility of each Committee session is guaranteed and maintained.

On the 24th and 25th of August, EUD was present at the 16th UN CRPD session to observe the committees review of Italy's progress in implementing the Convention and to give our support to the delegation representing the Italian deaf community.

A wide variety of issues were discussed during Italy's review session, where the delegation of the Italian government presented how it has been working towards a full implementation of the UN CRPD, and where the committee pointed out its concerns about several shortcomings in that regard. Additionally, during a specific session for civil society, a group of Italian civil society organisations, including the Italian Deaf association (ENS), had the opportunity to inform the committee about their views on the progress made.

Katja Reuter
EUD Policy Officer

Both the committee and ENS clearly pointed out the urgency of recognising the national

Italian sign language, as Italy is one out two European countries who haven't legally recognised their national sign language yet. This constitutes a major barrier for deaf persons; for instance, many teachers and communication assistants in educational settings are neither trained in sign language nor about deaf students' communicational needs. Also, sometimes, deaf people have to pay for their own legal assistance in courts as interpretation may not be provided otherwise. In addition to this, the lack of recognition is one of the causes of the lack of sufficiently trained legal interpreters in Italy. The recognition of Italian sign language would open many doors in this regard.

The committee also enquired about the degree of sign language interpretation provision in public and private TV broadcasting.

Following the session, EUD interviewed the representatives of ENS, Giuseppe Petrucci and Dr Humberto Insolera, on their thoughts about the replies of the Italian government to the CRPD committee's questions. ENS expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of clarity of some responses and its hopes for more clarity in future written responses to the committee. EUD furthermore enquired about ENS' views on the current state of progress towards the recognition of Italian sign language and reaffirmed EUD's continuous interest in working together. The accessible information video about this session was published on our website.



Humberto Insolera
EUD Vice President

Giuseppe Petrucci
ENS President

United Nations (UN) Social Forum

EUD participated in the 2016 UN Social Forum in Geneva, which was dedicated for the first time to the rights of persons with disabilities. A large variety of topics were addressed, including accessibility and non-discrimination, participation and empowerment of persons with disabilities and on how to raise awareness and implement the human rights-based approach put forward by the UN CRPD. Additionally, among many others, a very interesting side-event on inclusive education was held.

Colin Allen, chairperson of the International Disability Alliance (IDA) as well as president of WFD, was a speaker on the opening panel and WFD's human rights officer Elena Down spoke on the panel on inclusive education. On that panel, she highlighted that high quality bilingual or multilingual education, where the primary language of instruction is sign language, leads to the best educational outcomes for deaf students. Additionally, she underlined the importance of deaf students being taught together with other deaf peers to allow them to fully develop their language and culture, as otherwise they are not included. She also highlighted how crucial it is for deaf children to learn sign language early in life in order to prepare them for their future participation in society. Parents have an especially important role to play in that regard.

At the main event, EUD executive director Mark Wheatley underlined the need for legal sign language recognition around the world to ensure that deaf persons can fully participate in all areas of life and called onto the state

parties to adopt such legislation. He also denounced the wide spread discriminatory practice of prohibiting deaf persons to serve as jurors in court. In this and many other examples, the UN CRPD needs to be used as a tool to raise awareness against discriminatory laws and practices, excluding persons with disabilities from participating in society.

Furthermore, Terry Riley, member of EUD as well as the official representative of WFD on the Board of IDA pointed out how austerity measures particularly affect persons with disabilities. Due to this, they are losing rights - for example regarding the number of paid hours for sign language interpretation - that had already been achieved. He also highlighted a British good practice example regarding media accessibility, a law from 2003 that obliges broadcasters to subtitle 90% of its broadcasts and to provide 10% of them with sign language interpretation.

We also had the opportunity to network with other deaf policy actors, such as Alastair McEwin, the Disability Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission.

We were happy to participate in such a high level event on disability rights, presenting the challenges various disability communities face, but also the advances DPOs have been able to successfully fight for. We also hope that our interventions helped to inform policy-makers around the world about deaf rights issues.

Mark Wheatley
EUD Executive Director

Alastair McEwin
Disability Commissioner,
Australia



EU POLICY INITIATIVES
AND EVENTSImplementation of
the UNCRPD in the EU

On 7 July 2016, the European Parliament adopted with an overwhelming majority a very important resolution based on a report by the Parliament about the implementation of the UN CRPD.

The UN CRPD is the only human rights treaty that has been ratified by a regional organisation - the EU - and nearly all of its Member States have ratified the convention, too. The EU's progress in implementing the Convention, by making sure its legislation fully complies with it, was reviewed in 2015.

The report drawn up by MEP Helga Stevens, one of two deaf Members of the European Parliament, specifically looked at the concluding observations the UN committee issued to the EU in 2015, reviewing its report submitted in 2014. It makes recommendations on the observations that refer to policy areas where the EU has the competency to suggest disability-inclusive legislation, but also pays special attention to how the EU institutions implement the UN CRPD in their objective to act as a role model in this regard. On this basis, the resolution calls on the

European Commission and the Council of the European Union to fully implement the UN's recommendations.

We very much welcome the adoption and the strong backing of this resolution and report by the European Parliament, which shows that promoting the rights of persons with disabilities is a value widely shared within the European Parliament and demonstrates its dedication to work towards a more inclusive Europe for persons with disabilities.

This dedication is further highlighted by the fact that a very high number of parliamentary committees provided input to the report. This shows the importance of mainstreaming disability across all policy areas. Additionally, the text was drawn including the suggestions from disability organisations across Europe, including EUD, and thus respected the principle of participation of persons with disabilities and their organisations at all stages, as put forward by the UN CRPD.

We would like to congratulate MEP Helga Stevens for her hard work on this excellent report. We are looking forward to continuing our cooperation with the European Parliament, as well as its Disability Intergroup to advocate for a more inclusive Europe for its deaf and hard of hearing citizens.



Left to right: Catherine Naughton, MEP Helga Stevens, MEP Dr. Ádám Kósa and Mark Wheatley



Result of the voting of the resolution, European Parliament, Strasbourg, France

European Accessibility Act

In 2010, the European Commission committed in the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to exploring “the merits of adopting regulatory measures to ensure accessibility of products and services”. This is why it published in December 2015 the draft directive for the European Accessibility Act (EAA), after doing an impact assessment, deciding on the type of legislative measure to be developed and consulting stakeholders through a public consultation.

The EAA sets common functional accessibility requirements for certain key products and services. Those include, among others, computers, telephones, audio-visual media, transport and banking services as well as e-commerce. These accessibility requirements will improve the functioning of the internal market, as it will make it easier for companies to provide accessible products and services across borders, which will both benefit them and persons with disabilities who, due to increased competition, will be able to buy them at lower prices.

The draft directive is currently being discussed within the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

EUD is actively advocating for the adoption of this directive. Due to its focus on ICT products and services, it is highly relevant for deaf and hard of hearing persons. While EUD thinks that this proposal is a very important step forward, we would, among other things, like to see more elements included into its scope. Furthermore, we believe that the use of a separate accessibility label would allow consumers to make an informed choice about what product or service they buy. We also believe that more details regarding enforcement and monitoring need to be provided, so that the directive will have a notable effect on the availability of such products and services for consumers with disabilities.

In order to make our views heard, we are participating regularly in meetings with important stakeholders, such as the EU institutions, but also other disability umbrella organisations in Brussels, especially the European Disability Forum.

“Disability Thematic Network Forum for Inclusion” with the title “Leveraging the European Accessibility Act to promote change”



Mark Wheatley
EUD Executive Director



Audio-visual Media Service Directive revision

End of May 2016, the European Commission proposed a directive aimed at revising the audio-visual media services (AVMS) directive from 2010.

Since the adoption of the previous directive, the European Union has ratified the UN CRPD, which establishes the right to "enjoy access to television programmes in accessible formats" in Article 30.

In spite of this, the European Commission has decided to delete the article on accessibility in the new draft, an article which, so far, stated that "Member States shall encourage media service providers (...) to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability". The argument used to explain this decision is that the European Accessibility Act might create such accessibility obligations for TV. However, the EAA is currently only a proposal that might not be adopted in its current state or at all. Indeed, there are already voices in the European Parliament who argue in favour of deleting AVMS from the scope of the EAA. Even if it is adopted, it is unclear how long the adoption and implementation process might take. We believe that this is the opportunity for a strong harmonised result, where one act complements and does not replace elements of the other. In order to achieve this, the revision should contain compulsory

accessibility targets in the AVMS directive that are then specified through functional requirements in the EAA.

In order to understand the magnitude of this directive, it is important to point out that about 800.000 deaf sign language users as well as about 51 Million hard of hearing persons live in the EU. Additionally, the European Blind Union estimates that there are more than 30 million blind and partially sighted persons in Europe. Making AVMS accessible to these groups would allow broadcasters to significantly increase their viewership and thus their financial returns. In not creating binding accessibility legislation, the EU institutions would not be looking ahead, ignoring the demographic changes Europe is facing. Indeed, the number of hearing and visually impaired Europeans can be expected to increase in the coming decades due to population ageing, as many European citizens, who are currently non-disabled are expected to acquire a hearing or visual impairment later in life. At the same time, the technical challenges to creating accessible AVMS are rapidly shrinking, as subtitles, sign language interpretation, audio description and audio subtitles are becoming increasingly easy to provide.

We are thus strongly advocating for this directive, trying to convince the members of the European Parliament and the Council to amend the current version of the draft directive to include binding European accessibility targets for AVMS. Only if both the EAA and the revised AVMS directive contain such compulsory requirements, the right of accessibility for persons with disabilities that is enshrined within the UN CRPD is guaranteed to become enforceable across the EU.

Mark Wheatley
EUD Executive Director

European Union of the Deaf

Audiovisual media services directive

that "Member States shall encourage media service providers to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people"

End of May 2016, the European Commission proposed a directive aimed at revising the audio-visual media services (AVMS) directive from 2010.

Since the adoption of the previous directive, the European Union has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It establishes the right to "enjoy access to television programmes in accessible formats" in Article 30.

In spite of this, the European Commission has decided to delete the article on accessibility in the new draft, an article which, so far, stated that "Member States shall encourage media service providers (...) to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability".

News

- European Commission
- Written Declaration
- Interview with new eBRI President
- World Day for Audiovisual Heritage
- What is the Serbian Sign Language Law?
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- Meet your MEP: Maja Esterházy
- EUD welcomes Croatia
- EUD General Assembly
- UN CRPD Workshop 22-23 October 2014
- UNCRPD
- Joint EDF - IDDC Conference
- UNCRPD Civil Society Meeting
- Citizens Hour
- Integration You and Me

European Web Accessibility Directive

On the 2nd of December 2016, the directive on Accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies was published in the Official Journal of the European Union, after having been adopted in the first half of the year. These are the first EU-wide rules to make public sector bodies' websites and mobile applications accessible for persons with disabilities.

About 80 million EU citizens who have a disability are prevented from accessing information, products and services on the Internet, as many websites lack adequately adapted content for the deaf and the hard of hearing, the blind as well as for persons with low vision and with functional as well as intellectual disabilities.

The Directive sets out minimum conditions for accessibility and it requires regular

monitoring and reporting of the sites and apps' accessibility by Member States. We regret however that public broadcasters' websites are excluded from this directive. This is why it is crucial to work on the revision of the AVMS directive and the EAA to make sure that audio-visual content is accessible for deaf and hard of hearing persons.

EUD has collaborated with EDF on the advocacy work that led to this agreement. The objective of EUD's advocacy was to provide information about the importance of harmonised web accessibility requirements for deaf and hard of hearing persons and to allay concerns about the contents of the draft directive.

From entry into force onwards, Member States will have 21 months to transpose the text into their national legislation.

Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth

On the 21st of March, the European Commission organised its first Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth, during which EUD was present. Marianne Thyssen, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, opened the convention. She pointed out that this convention is organised as one of the actions taken by the European Commission to demonstrate its dedication and efforts to improve social inclusion and growth for all. The convention is also linked to the public consultation on a European Pillar for Social Rights which was released by the

European Commission and whose objective includes fighting against poverty, increasing employment as well as equality for men and women, life long learning etc.

The full day Convention also included parallel and interactive workshops where all participants, representing different civil society organisations and public authorities, discussed challenges and actions for improvements in the fields of employment and inclusive labour market, social investment and EU funds, social convergence and fight against poverty, and integration of refugees.

Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth, Brussels, Belgium



European Pillar of Social Rights

On the 8th of June, EUD took part in a very interesting meeting with the European Commission on the development of a European Pillar of Social Rights. During this meeting, EUD shared its concerns in the area of employment and freedom of movement in the EU for deaf persons, for example the fact that sign language interpretation services are not uniformly available across EU countries. Furthermore, participants reviewed the Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth that had taken place in March and discussed its outcome to further progress on this issue.

During the course of this year, the European Commission published a public consultation on the European Pillar, asking stakeholders to provide input regarding the social situation in the EU and the existing EU-legislation in this area, on the future of work and welfare systems and the design of the Pillar itself. EUD replied to this extensive consultation,

pointing out social policy priorities on national and European levels from a deaf perspective, such as the lack of sign language recognition legislation in many EU Member States, the lack of access to education in sign language as well as the lack of formally trained sign language interpreters whose services allow deaf persons to access all areas of life, including employment and public services. It also highlighted the lack of accessibility of information, a lack of awareness of deaf rights as well as the use of the medical model of disability to calculate disability benefits by measuring the degree of hearing loss, for instance. Furthermore, it gave examples on how the scope of the EU social acquis could be improved, the main trends in the area of employment and welfare systems it sees and which are the main risks and opportunities linked to these trends. Finally, it provided feedback on the structure, scope and content of the pillar itself.

European Disability Strategy

In 2010, the European Commission released its European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (the Strategy). The aim of the Strategy is to empower people with disabilities, so that they can enjoy their full rights and benefit fully from participating in society and in the European economy. Unfortunately, for deaf people in the EU, there are still many obstacles to reach this objective and deaf people are facing barriers and discrimination on a daily basis. EUD is therefore pleased to see that the European Commission is following up on its promise to review the Strategy made during the EU review of the UN CRPD in August 2015. Since the release of the Strategy, the EU has ratified the Convention and had its first review, resulting in the first recommendations in the form of Concluding Observations. We strongly encourage the Commission to review the Strategy taking into account the recommendations made by the UN CRPD Committee in September 2015.

In various events, EUD continued to highlight barriers for deaf persons that exist in the EU and that would need to be addressed in the mid-term review of the strategy as well as the follow-up strategy for 2020-2030.

However, it is not necessarily because of or thanks to the Strategy that barriers have been removed or exist. Existing barriers could be linked to the lack of ratification or implementation of the UN CRPD by national governments. Furthermore, many achievements could be a result of the national governments' work in implementing the Convention. However, with an EU-wide policy document such as the Strategy, it is important to evaluate how this Strategy influences and mainstreams other EU-level decisions and how it encourages its Member States to follow it in their national policies. This is why it is of high relevance for EUD to provide, during high-level political events, real life examples from persons with disabilities who are faced with barriers and experience discrimination on a daily basis, in order to potentially inform the strategy.

Disability High Level Group meeting

On the 9th of June, EUD participated in the High Level Group disability meeting 2016. The task of this group is to monitor the latest policies and priorities of governments concerning people with disabilities, to pool information and experiences and to advise the Commission on methods for reporting on the EU-wide situation with regard to disability in the future. With all 28 EU Member States'

ministers working on disability issues in one room, we were able to discuss in depth about the European Accessibility Act. But that was not the only topic on the agenda; the current state of the UN CRPD ratification by Ireland, the Netherlands and Finland was also addressed. EUD managed to get some answers from these delegates regarding the ratification process in their countries.

Disability High Level Group,
Brussels, Belgium



Work Forum on the Implementation of the UNCRPD

On the 10th of June, EUD participated in the European Commission work forum on the UN CRPD. The title of this year's forum was 'Consolidating the ground for implementation: 10 years after the UN CRPD'. Representatives of NGOs and Human Rights centres across Europe were present at this event. Participants discussed ways

to ensure that the human rights of persons with disabilities are at least maintained and possibly improved upon, as well as strategies to protect them from decline. EUD attended the conference in order to ask questions and to ensure that we are on the right track with regards to implementing the Convention in a deaf-inclusive way.

Work Forum on the Implementation
of the UNCRPD,
Brussels, Belgium



"Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages" conference

On the 28th of September, a historic conference on "Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages" organised by MEP Helga Stevens took place in the hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels. Approximately 830 persons, the majority of them deaf, from all over Europe and beyond, came to discuss this important topic. In order to make this possible, interpretation into 31 European national and regional sign languages, one non-European sign language and the EU's 24 spoken languages were provided by in total 145 interpreters.

Many important topics regarding sign languages and sign language interpretation were discussed by a variety of speakers. EUD president Markku Jokinen gave a presentation on the topic of sign language recognition in the EU. Other speakers presented about the two previous European Parliament resolutions on the topic and the situation of professional sign language interpretation in the EU and the European Parliament.

The speakers unanimously highlighted the crucial importance of sign language recognition and the availability of sign language interpretation for the full inclusion of deaf persons into society. They also underlined that recognition alone is not enough: Only the full implementation of this legislation in the Member states can make sure that deaf Europeans have access to fully qualified interpreters with a university degree in sign language interpretation, as is best practice. However, the speakers pointed out that while the situation of sign language recognition and interpreting is very diverse between EU member states, there generally there is a severe lack of fully university-qualified sign language interpreters in the EU, with a ratio from 8:1 to 2500:1 sign language users to sign language interpreters. This is, among other things, strongly linked to the difficult working conditions of sign language interpreters, which are highly inadequate, considering that they require a high degree of language proficiency as well as a university degree in sign language interpretation in order to be qualified interpreters.

We hope that this important event as well as the resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters that the European Parliament adopted this year will give a strong push to the full recognition of sign languages in all EU member states and lead to necessary revisions of already existing national and regional law and practices. Only in this way will the situation of sign language interpreters be improved and adequate training of new interpreters can be ensured, so that deaf Europeans can fully participate in all aspects of life, on an equal basis with others.



"Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages" conference, Brussels, Belgium

European Parliament resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters

On the 23rd of November, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters, written by several Members of the European Parliament, including deaf members MEP Helga Stevens and MEP Ádám Kósa. EUD also provided input to the resolution. It points out the importance of providing accessibility for the deaf through sign language interpretation as well as which measures need to be taken in order to improve the provision of sign language interpretation at EU and national levels.

We are very happy to see the overwhelming support that the Members of the European Parliament have lent to the resolution: 661 Members voted in favour, only 6 voted against and 23 abstained. We hope that this strong result in the European Parliament will not only echo in the other European institutions, but on a national level, encouraging authorities to implement its recommendations.

In a next step, the resolution will be brought to the Council, the European Commission and EUD for concrete discussion on how to disseminate the information and encourage implementation. EUD has and will continue to inform its members about the resolution and on how they could advocate with their authorities and political representatives for using the resolution at national level to improve legislation and practices with regards to sign language interpretation provision.



661 Members voted in favour, only 6 voted against and 23 abstained



The celebration toast for the sign language and sign language interpreting resolution



European Day of Persons with Disabilities

On the 29th and 30th of November, EUD participated in the 2016 edition of the European Day of Persons with Disabilities, organised by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum.

The conference specifically celebrated the 10th anniversary of the UN CRPD. Presentations and discussions focused on the progress that has been made in the EU to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, based on the Convention.

A variety of organisations and groups of persons with disabilities were present, in addition to associations and companies working to improve the life of persons with disabilities, government representatives, EU institutions representatives, academics and many others.

The conference addressed numerous topics, including a review of the 10 years of existence of the UN CRPD, showcasing which advances

have been made from the medical model to the human rights model and which still need to be achieved. Another panel focused on the link between the UN CRPD and the efforts made on a European level to support the creation of efficient social policies in the EU Member states. Furthermore, advances in the area of accessibility and freedom of movement within the EU as well as the rights of women with disabilities and the need to empower and protect them from multiple discriminations were discussed.

EUD's board was present in Brussels to take part in this important event. Mark Wheatley as executive director as well as EUD president Markku Jokkinen and board member Louise "Lolo" Danielsson took the opportunity to ask a variety of questions to the panellists, for example on the advances that the EU has achieved in implementing the UN CRPD, the importance of making accessibility, reasonable accommodation provision and social protection work together as well as regarding concrete European initiatives, such as the EU Disability Card.



Marianne Thyssen
European Commissioner



EUD Board members

MALTESE SIGN LANGUAGE RECOGNITION

On the 16th of March 2016, the Maltese Parliament approved the bill declaring that the Maltese sign language is to be considered an official language of Malta. We at EUD are very pleased to have supported the NAD in Malta for years in their work to reach this great milestone.

Three years ago, EUD had cooperated with the NAD in Malta to organise a meeting with high-level representatives of the ministries in Malta to explain the importance of recognising their sign language. Since then, dialogue with the deaf association and research on sign language and on how it could be included in the national legislation has been conducted.

Additionally, on the 11th of November 2015, EUD had hosted a conference in the European Parliament and encouraged the representatives of Maltese deaf community to meet with and lobby their MEPs. Malta took advantage of this opportunity and met with Maltese MEPs to put their case forward about the recognition of Maltese sign language.

This is a great achievement for Malta and we congratulate the deaf association for their ongoing work on the matter. We also applaud the Maltese Parliament for respecting its deaf citizens and their linguistic rights. As Malta ratified the UN CRPD, the Maltese government has taken a step towards respecting the obligations put forward by the Convention, one of them being to promote and recognise sign languages. The bill sets up procedures regarding the creation, composition and functions of the Sign Language Council of Malta, which is being set up in order to achieve a situation where the deaf community is consulted on matters relating to Maltese sign language. The bill also establishes objectives regarding the promotion of the use and development of Maltese sign language, whilst declaring that the Maltese sign language is to be considered an official language of Malta, and for other matters ancillary or consequential thereto.

Local deaf community with the Maltese MP Justyne Caruana



EUD's press statement



EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

EUD's work would not be possible without external co-operation. EUD not only works together with European-level institutions and NGOs, but also with organisations of global importance.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission is the main legislative organ of the European Union with the right of initiative to propose laws for adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. EUD, among other disability NGOs, is partially funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General Justice. EUD regularly attends high-level events and conferences, in particular in relation to the UN CRPD and disability issues in general.

On the 25th of April 2016, our Executive Director, Mark Wheatley met with Marianne Thyssen, the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility. This was an opportunity to give Commissioner Thyssen a personal copy of EUD's 2015 publication, which is part of a series on the UN CRPD seen from a Deaf perspective. The book addresses UN CRPD Article 33: National Implementation and Monitoring.



Marianne Thyssen
European Commissioner



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament is the EU's law-making body. EU voters directly elect it every 5 years, the last time was in May 2014.

EUD collaborates closely with various Members of the European Parliament on all policy

initiatives that are of interest to the European deaf community. We are especially in close contact with deaf MEPs Helga Stevens and Ádám Kósa, but have established a wide network of collaboration with various MEPs across all political groups.

The European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsl) represents the interests of sign language interpreters in Europe. efsli is a European membership-led organisation of sign language interpreters consisting of national & regional associations with individual and associate members. efsli is working towards improving the status of the profession of sign language interpreters in Europe.

EUD and efsli have been co-operating for many years, assisting each other in issues that concern both organisations alike.

EUD board member Louise "Lolo" Danielsson took part in a meeting of the Developing Deaf Interpreting project, one of whose consortium partners is efsli.

In December Mark Wheatley had a meeting with efsli President, Ivana Bucko and Executive Director, Marianella Salami to discuss on how to strengthen the collaboration between two organisations during 2017.

EUROPEAN FORUM OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS (EFSLI)

EUDY is a European non-profit making organisation whose membership is comprised of national associations of deaf youth in Europe. EUDY's vision is a Europe where all young deaf people are able to come together and share their experiences across cultures and boundaries, so they can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others. Full social and political participation empowered by non-formal training and cross-cultural youth exchange, including access to education and employment.

EUD Board member, Louise "Lolo" Danielsson represented EUD during the EUDY General Assembly that took place in Leksand, Sweden on the 15th and 16th of October 2016.

EUDY President Timothy Rowies collaborated with EUD's Executive Director, Mark Wheatley on preparing the interpreters in a dedicated workshop for the 'Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages' beforehand.

EUROPEAN UNION OF DEAF YOUTH (EUDY)

Louise "Lolo" Danielsson
EUD Board Member



EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF (WFD)

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is EUD's equivalent at an international level, representing deaf associations all around the world.

To avoid duplication of work and to allocate resources in the best possible manner to achieve common global and European objectives, EUD

and WFD signed an agreement in 2012. EUD and WFD co-operate on a regular basis, most notably with regards to member associations' attendance at the UN CRPD Committee sessions in Geneva. EUD was pleased to see that WFD President Colin Allen is now Chair of the International Disability Alliance. EUD and WFD also attended the Social Forum in Geneva together.



Colin Allen
WFD President

THE EUROPEAN DEAF SPORTS ORGANISATION (EDSO)

The European Deaf Sports Organisation (EDSO) promotes and contributes to the development of sport opportunities and competitions, from grassroots to elite level, for deaf athletes. EDSO also supports and encourages educational, cultural, research and scientific activities that contribute to the development and promotion of the European Deaf Championships.

As part of our cooperation agreement with EDSO, our President, Markku Jokinen took the opportunity to chair the EDSO Congress in Yerevan, Armenia on the 7th and 8th of July.



Bjørn Røine
EDSO President

The European Deafblind Union (EDbU) is a European Association that joins together European deafblind people's organisations. It was founded in 2003. It is an international non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation. The basic aim and function of EDbU is to work for equality and full participation in society by deafblind people in all European countries.

Sanja Tarczay
EDbU President

EUD President, board members and Mark Wheatley had a constructive discussion with EDbU President, Sanja Tarczay during the European Day of Persons with Disabilities conference. We are looking forward to strengthening the co-operation between two organisations further during 2017.

EUROPEAN DEAFBLIND UNION



The European Platform of Deafness, Hard of Hearing and Deafblindness, which was established in 2012 continued its regular meetings in 2016. All members are simultaneously members of EDF, the European Disability Forum:

- EURO-CIU ...** European Cochlear Implant Users
- EDbN** European Deafblind Network
- EFHOH** European Federation of Hard of Hearing
- FEPEDA** European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children
- EUD** European Union of the Deaf
- EUDY** European Union of the Deaf Youth
- EDbU** European Deafblind Union

European Platform of Deafness,
Hard of Hearing and Deafblindness

This year, the European Platform focused on the topic of producing a common platform banner and roll-up for the platform to inform about its activities during common advocacy events. It also started collecting ideas for a future common event on accessibility for the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind. Last, but not least, its members kept each other informed about their involvement in various European policy-related matters of interest for all as well as their own organisation's activities.

EUROPEAN PLATFORM OF DEAFNESS, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAFBLINDNESS



EXTERNAL TRAININGS

To support EUD member NADs and partners in topics and issues relevant to European and national disability policy development and to keep increasing its knowledge on current developments in this regard, EUD staff and Board regularly participate in trainings organised by external entities.

DISABILITY SUMMER SCHOOL IN GALWAY

From the 20th to the 24th of June, EUD's policy officer Katja Reuter participated in the Disability summer school organised by NUI Galway.

The purpose of this summer school was to allow participants to acquire insights and skills needed to support effective reform for persons with disabilities on the basis of the UN CRPD. The participants included persons with disabilities, their families, civil society groups of persons with disabilities as well as advocates for disability law reform, lawyers, policy makers, policy analysts and others.



Disability Summer School,
Galway, Northern Ireland

The focus of this year's summer school was civil society and its role in changing laws and policies around people with disabilities. The programme covered a variety of issues, including advocacy challenges, opportunities, processes in Europe and other parts of the world as well as an introduction to the basics of treaty law to further the understanding of participants of UN judicial procedures. It also provided a variety of national examples and good practices on how specific countries successfully work on creating disability-inclusive legislation in various areas covered by the treaty, for example accessibility. Also, the cooperation between civil society and other actors, such as human rights institutes, the interaction between policy-making and academia as well as disability law clinics was addressed.

UNCRPD AND EU DISABILITY LAW AND POLICY

On the 23rd and 24th of May, EUD's policy officer Katja Reuter assisted in a training session organised by the European Law Academy in Trier.

The aim of this seminar was to provide participants with the necessary knowledge and legal tools to use the UN CRPD combined with the relevant EU law in their daily practice. During the seminar, the purpose, general principles and rights the UN CRPD establishes were defined and the relationship of the Convention with EU law was elaborated on. Additionally, the functioning of the responsible UN Committee, the functions of the Optional Protocol of the Convention as well as the State reporting processes and DPO

involvement in this process were presented.

Furthermore, various key disability-related topics were discussed in detail, including the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to freedom of movement, of access to justice as well as accessibility of products and services. Additionally, these rights established in the Convention, were linked up with existing and future EU legislation in this regard, such as the European Accessibility Act, the revised audio-visual media services directive and the Web accessibility directive.

A special session was dedicated to the topic of education and employment.

EUD ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Austria – Österreichischer Gehörlosenbund (ÖGLB), **Belgium** – Federatie van Vlaamse Doven Organisaties (FEVLADO), Fédération Francophone des Sourds de Belgique (FFSB), **Bulgaria** – Съюз на глухите в България (СГБ / UDB), **Croatia** – Hrvatski savez gluhih i nagluhih, **Cyprus** – Ομοσπονδία Κωφών Κύπρου, **Czech Republic** – Svaz neslyšících a nedoslýchavých v ČR (UDHH), **Denmark** – Danske Døves Landsforbund (DDL), **Estonia** – Eesti Kurtide Liit (EAD), **Finland** – Kuurojen Liitto (FAD), **France** – Fédération Nationale des Sourds de France (FNSF), **Germany** – Deutscher Gehörlosen-Bund (DGB), **Greece** – Ομοσπονδία Κωφών Ελλάδος (HFD), **Hungary** – Siketek és Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége (SINOSZ), **Iceland** – Félag heyrnarlausra, **Ireland** – Irish Deaf Society (IDS), **Italy** – Ente Nazionale Sordi (ENS), **Latvia** – Latvijas Nedzirdīgo savienība (LAD), **Lithuania** – Lietuvos kurčiųjų draugija, **Luxembourg** – Vereinigung der Gehörlosen und Schwerhörigen Luxemburg (VGSL), **Malta** – Għaqda Persuni Neqsin mis-Smigh, **Netherlands** – Dovenschap, **Norway** – Norges Døveforbund (NDF), **Poland** – Polski Związek Głuchych (PZG), **Portugal** – Federação Portuguesa das Associações de Surdos (FPAS), **Romania** – Asociația Națională a Surzilor din România (ANSR), **Slovakia** – Asociácia nepočujúcich Slovenka (ANEPS), **Slovenia** – Zveza društev gluhih in naglušnih Slovenije, **Spain** – Confederación Estatal de Personas Sordas (CNSE), **Sweden** – Sveriges Dövas Riksförbund (SDR), **Switzerland** – Schweizerischen Gehörlosenbund, Fédération Suisse des Sourds, Federazione Svizzera dei Sordi (SGB-FSS), **United Kingdom** – British Deaf Association (BDA)

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Cindy Cave
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To August 2016



In House Sign Language Interpreter/
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Romy O'Callaghan
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From October 2016



This report is supported by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020

Objectives of the Programme

This programme shall contribute to the further development of an area where equality and the rights of persons, as enshrined in the Treaty, the Charter and international human rights conventions, are promoted and protected. Its nine specific objectives are to:

- Promote non-discrimination
- Combat racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance
- Promote rights of persons with disabilities
- Promote equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming
- Prevent violence against children, young people, women and other groups at risk (Daphne)
- Promote the rights of the child
- Ensure the highest level of data protection
- Promote the rights deriving from Union citizenship
- Enforce consumer rights

The information contained in this report does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

