2018 IMPACT REPORT

2018

EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EUD would like to thank the European Commission for funding this 2018 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 2018:

Board 2017 - 2021:

President ..... Dr Markku Jokinen
Vice-President .... Dr Gergely Tapolczai
Board Member .... Louise "Lolo" Danielsson
Board Member .... Daniel Büter
Board Member .... Sofia Isari

The EUD interns Roy Maguire and Serafine Duss, 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 Gergely Tapolczai

Louise "Lolo" Danielsson

Sofia Isari

Daniel Büter

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FOREWORD BY EUD PRESIDENT

2018 has been a very busy but special year. It brought many positive achievements for the deaf persons in Europe.

2018 was the year of the European Accessibility Act or the EAA. After three years of negotiating we have an agreement. Throughout the negotiations EUD, in collaboration with the European Disability Forum, National Associations of the Deaf (NADs) and other organisations has undertaken many advocacy actions in order to make sure that the final version of the Act imposes obligations to ensure accessibility for products and services that are critical for the deaf community. The final result is not perfect, but it will make substantial progress in some areas which are particularly important for the deaf Europeans and the accessibility of many digital products and services will not be theoretical anymore. This is an excellent example of how joint advocacy efforts between the National Associations of the Deaf and EUD, effective collaboration with other European level organisations and meaningful dialogue with European institutions can lead to positive results.

The agreement on the EAA has a potential to deliver changes for deaf persons across the EU. However, this change will not be automatic, it will require our dedication and hard work during the period of transposition, to make sure the EAA is properly transposed an implemented into the national laws of the Member States of the EU. Only then it will bring real and meaningful change in terms of accessibility to deaf persons in Europe.

In order to discuss the theme of Accessibility from various angles, EUD used an opportunity to engage with industry and worked together with Microsoft co-organising a seminar focusing on accessibility and technology. Microsoft hosted the seminar entitled ACT (Accessible Communication Today!) in collaboration with the members of the European Platform of Deafness, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblindness.

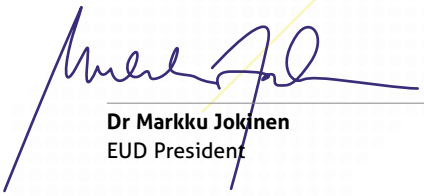
In addition to this work, EUD drafted a position paper on the 'Accessibility of Information and Communication'. This document is vital to our lobbying work as it can be used as a tool to outline the barriers deaf people face in their daily life in Europe and express EUD's stance on such issues. It was adopted by our General Assembly in October of 2018.

While ensuring accessibility, sign language plays a critical role. EUD is delighted to remember the 23rd of September, which was an incredibly special day for the sign language users, globally. It was the 1st International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL)! The declaration by the United Nations (UN) announced that the IDSL will be celebrated annually on the 23rd September as part of the International Week of the Deaf. Our Executive Director Mark Wheatley attended the special celebratory event in Geneva, Switzerland for two days at the United Nations Headquarters.

EUD has been active and very busy in 2018. You can see our journey through our board members and the amount of activities they have been involved in throughout Europe.

We're very pleased that every member has done their best to raise the profile of EUD and gain a larger network this year. We hope to see this to continue in the upcoming year.

We would like to thank the European Commission for its continued support, and look forward to our onward collaboration. Also, we wish to take this opportunity to thank our National members of the Deaf and, we know that together, we will achieve our aim in bettering access for all deaf persons across the EU. Whilst 2018 has been a successful year, our work is never done. We will endeavour to work just as hard, if not more, in 2019 to achieve more for the deaf community across the EU.



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 people at European level and is one of the few ENGOs representing associations from all of the 28 EU Member States, in addition to EFTA countries: Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. EU acceding, candidate and potential member countries can choose to become affiliated members with the option to become full members as soon as they officially enter the EU.

EUD aims to establish and maintain EU level dialogue with its relative institutions and officials, in consultation and co-operation with its member NADs. EUD is a full member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) and is a Regional Co-operating Member of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) to tackle issues of global importance, and also has participatory status with the Council of Europe (CoE).

EUD also has signed MoUs with the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli), the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY), the European Deaf Sports Organisation (EDSO) and the European Deafblind Union (EDbU). Since 2017, it has Special consultative status with the United Nations.

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the core mission of EUD to promote, advance and protect the rights of and opportunities for deaf people 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 internationtal staff from many different countries across the EU. Most 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 systems that foster 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 that the right to sign language is 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.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

On the 6th of October, EUD had its 32nd General Assembly (GA), which took place in Vienna, Austria. Delegates gathered from 27 National Associations of the Deaf (NADs). The GA was an opportunity for the board members and staff of EUD to give an overview of EUD's work and financial accounts.

During the GA EUD Assistant Policy Officer, Martyna Balčiūnaitė, gave a presentation on the position paper 'Accessibility of Information and Communication', which was consequently adopted by the General Assembly, and furthermore delivered an overview of the policy work undertaken by the policy team in EUD. David Hay, Communications and Media Officer gave a presentation about EUD's communication and media strategy. EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley presented the projects in which EUD has been involved in over the year 2018. The aim of the presentations as given by staff and board members was to demonstrate the overall aim of EUD's strategies and assure the delegates that the EUD policy team and staff are on the right track to achieve the main goals of EUD, which are in line with its vision.

Furthermore, three motions were proposed by the general assembly prior to the meeting and were discussed by the board and GA. The Danish Deaf Association tabled one motion and Doof Vlaanderen, the deaf association representing Flanders, Belgium, tabled two motions. It is also important to mention that the co-operative partners of EUD had a chance to take the floor. These partners include the European Disability Forum, the European Deaf Sports Organisation, the European Union of Deaf Youth, The European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters and the European Network of Sign Language Teachers.

EUD is delighted that the GA was a successful event where delegates participated actively, leading to many fruitful discussions. In particular, EUD would like to express its appreciation to the Austrian Deaf Association for their time and commitment in contributing to the success of the General Assembly.

EUD INITIATIVES

BOARD MEETINGS

In 2018, the four quarterly board meetings of EUD took place in Prague, Czech Republic; Brussels, Belgium; Vienna, Austira and Sofia, Bulgaria. The board meetings play an important role in the European-wide co-operation of Deaf communities, as these meetings, along with the General Assembly, are the cornerstones of EUD's democratic structure.

1. Prague, Czech Republic

From the 8th to the 10th of June, EUD had its first board meeting of 2018, which took place in Prague, the Czech Republic. The meeting gave the board members an opportunity to review the work plan of 2018, and plan for the upcoming 4-year work programme 2018 to 2022.

EUD Board Meeting,
Prague, Czech Republic

2. Brussels, Belgium

On the 1st of September, EUD had its second board meeting at the EUD headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. At this time the board and staff took the opportunity to discuss the past and current work of EUD and discussed strategy for the future. The board members also had a chance to meet our two new interns, Serafine Duss and Roy Maguire.

During the board meeting many important topics were discussed including how to prepare for the Workshop and the Seminar for the General Assembly. It was discussed that meaningful feedback from our member organisations is necessary in order to adopt a strong position paper on Accessibility of Information and Communication.

Katja Reuter,
EUD Policy Officer

3. Vienna, Austria

On the 3rd of October, EUD board members gathered together to have their 3rd board meeting in Vienna, Austria prior the EUD General Assembly. During the board meeting, EUD board members and staff took an opportunity to review EUD's work of 2018 and do the final preparations for the General Assembly.

Later that day EUD and the Österreichischer Gehörlosenbund (ÖGLB, the Austrian Deaf Association) attended a press conference with the national media regarding the seminar, with ÖGLB, on "Overcoming barriers together – Austrian best practices for Europe".

Helene Jarmer, President of Austrian Association of the Deaf

4. Sofia, Bulgaria

On the 15th of December EUD staff and board members gathered for the final board meeting of 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria. During the meeting EUD staff gave an update about the developments regarding European legislation that EUD follows. It was an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and discuss the future work and strategies.

EUD Board Meeting, Sofia, Bulgaria

EUD INITIATIVES

MEMBER WORKSHOPS

As part of EUD's commitment to building the capacity 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.

Seminar, Prague, Czech Republic

The Prague Association of the Deaf celebrated 150 years since its establishment by hosting a conference on the 8th of June entitled, 'How to prepare Deaf people for the future?' The conference was organised by the Czech National Association of the Deaf (SNNČR), The Czech National Association of the Deaf Youth (CDY), the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY) and the European Union of the Deaf (EUD). We were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic audience and felt that the conference was a great success. We are very grateful for the cooperation of the four organisations and the time they invested in order to make this event possible for the local deaf community.

Seminar, Namur, Belgium

EUD with the Federation of Deaf Belgians (FFSB) co-organised a Seminar, which focused on education and interpretation for deaf children in Wallonia, Belgium. Our Policy Officer and editor of the publication entitled ''UNCPRD Article 24: Education'', Katja Reuter, took the opportunity to explain Article 24 of UN CRPD from the perspective of EUD. Also, EUD Board members, Louise Lolo Danielsson and Sofia Isari, gave a presentation on Maya's De Wit research on sign language interpretation. The seminar was a successful event which ended with an interactive discussion between the board, staff and participants of the seminar. EUD appreciates co-operation with the FFSB and is looking forward to further collaborations in the future.

Seminar, Sofia, Bulgaria

On the 14th of December, a seminar and workshop took place in Sofia, Bulgaria at which the EUD board provided information about the work of EUD. Not only this, the board presented other important topics, such as EUD and lobbying to the local deaf community of Bulgaria. The event was well received with 50 persons attending.

We would like to thank the Union of the Deaf for their work in preparing for our arrival and their warm hospitality during our stay in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Workshop, Vienna, Austria

On the 4th of October, the workshop hosted by EUD before the General Assembly took place. The aim of the workshop was to discuss accessibility for deaf persons from various perspectives.

The workshop focused on the accessibility in four areas:

1. Accessibility for the deaf in employment. The Erasmus+ project 'DESIGNS' of which the overall aim is to create Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Continual Professional Development (CPD) training resources and exchange best practices across Europe to facilitate greater participation of deaf sign language users in employment was presented. Executive Director, Mark Wheatley was leading the session regarding its progress over the past year.

2. Accessibility of information and communication. The recently drafted position paper titled 'Accessibility of Information and Communication' was presented. The session was led by EUD Policy Assistant, Martyna Balčiūnaitė. The delegates were briefed on the position paper and given the opportunity to make comments. Interactive session led to fruitful discussion how to improve the position paper. All the comments from the delegates were taken into account and incorporated into the position paper prior the approval by the General Assembly.

3. Accessibility while exercising right to political participation and accessibility while exercising freedom of movement. The session was again led by EUD Policy Assistant, Martyna Balčiūnaitė. During an interactive session the delegates were invited to answer two surveys produced by EUD and share their experiences. Answers of the delegates were collected and documented and will serve as valuable evidence for EUD's future advocacy work.

The delegates were engaged in the discussions for all three topics and were well prepared for voting on the position paper at the General Assembly upcoming that same weekend.

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Seminar, Vienna, Austria

On the 5th of October EUD and Österreichischer Gehörlosenbund (ÖGLB, the Austrian Deaf Association) co-organised a seminar "Overcoming barriers together – Austrian best practices for Europe".

The opening ceremony for this event was very special as we were honoured to have the Federal President of Austria, Alexander Van der Bellen and his wife, Doris Schmidauer present. After Federal President Van der Bellen gave his opening speech, there were eight more opening speeches from European non-governmental organisations and national representatives. The seminar went into detail on ten different best practices, on both a national and European levels.

The seminar was an incredibly successful and informative event for the 120 participants.

EUD would like to express its gratitude to ÖGLB's team for their tireless work and co-operation to ensure a successful event for everyone.

EUD INITIATIVES

THE ACTIVITES OF THE BOARD

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

The 6th German Culture Festival of the Deaf, Potsdam, Germany

EUD President Markku Jokinen and EUD Board Member Daniel Büter had the honour to attend the 6th German Culture Festival of the Deaf in Potsdam, Germany that took place between the 17th and 19th of May. The festival's theme was "Our Culture with Sign Language: Inclusive and equal".

"Developing Deaf Interpreting", Hamburg, Germany

On the 25th of May, EUD President Markku Jokinen and EUD Board Member Sofia Isari participated in the conference "Developing Deaf Interpreting" in Hamburg, Germany. The conference was a successful event, which gathered 120 attendees from twenty different countries.

The project "Developing Deaf Interpreting", funded by the Erasmus+ project, started in September 2015 and ended in August 2018. The project is a cooperation amongst five partners: the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli), the University of Hamburg, the University of Applied Sciences (HUMAK), the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra and the Danish National Association of the Deaf (DDL). EUD Board member, Sofia Isari is also the chair of the Deaf Interpreters Committee at the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli). The aim of the project is to develop deaf interpreting in Europe.

EUD President Jokinen was invited to give a presentation during the conference. He highlighted the importance of lobbying for the development of deaf interpreting as a profession in Europe. EUD needs to be involved in this development to facilitate the future of deaf interpreters, particularly when considering the quality of the service and training of the professionals at varying stages of qualification.

During the conference the interpreting profession was discussed considering three aspects of the profession: These three professions need to be concretely defined in Europe. Furthermore, it was emphasised that no network is established between professionals who work with both spoken and sign language, and those professionals who work with sign language, which is necessary in order to have better cooperation between the two professions.

The conference gave great opportunity to open dialogue between EUD and the project partners. We look forward to following the project and look forward to contributing to it in any way that we can.

'Developing Deaf Interpreting', Hamburg, Germany

The 50th Anniversary of DeafFestival, Athens, Greece

On the 21st of September 2018, our EUD Board member Sofia Isari represented EUD at an event in Athens, Greece. The event, 'Deafestival' was organised by the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf to mark their 50th anniversary celebrations.

The 80th Anniversary of the Lithuanian Deaf Association, Vilnius, Lithuania

EUD Vice President Gergely Tapolczai and board member Sofia Isari attended a seminar at the Lithuanian Parliament in Vilnius, Lithuania to celebrate the 80-year anniversary of the Lithuanian Deaf Association.

From left to right, **Dr Gergely Tapolczai**, EUD Vice President and **Sofia Isari**, EUD Board Member

INADI & CAS Seminar, Bueno Aires, Argentina

In November, EUD President, Markku Jokinen was invited by INADI (The National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism) and CAS (Argentina Association of the Deaf) to promote accessibility and social inclusion of deaf people in Europe and Argentina.

Markku Jokinen networked with various minsters from Argentina along with the representatives from the INADI and CAS. Also he had an opportunity to meet local deaf leaders of Argentina.

Moreover, the seminar focusing on the social inclusion of deaf persons took place and Markku Jokinen presented Europe's perspective on the topic. The audience consisted of various stakeholders, ministers, teachers, interpreters and other professionals.

EUD INITIATIVES

GENDER EQUALITY

Meeting of the Gender Equality working group in Brussels, Belgium

The Spanish Confederation of the Deaf (CNSE) in collaboration with FESORD CV (Federation of Deaf people of the Valencian Community) and the EUD Gender Equality Working Group were organising a European conference on the protection of deaf women's rights and gender equality in Valencia, Spain. Its purpose is to establish a network of deaf women that will facilitate an exchange of information and collaboration between national associations. The Gender Equality group met with partners in March in Brussels to discuss the plans for the conference.

1st Deaf Women Forum, Valencia, Spain

EUD board member Louise "Lolo" Danielsson and the EUD Gender Equality working group members attended the 1st Deaf Women Forum, in Valencia from the 18th until the 20th of October. The aim of the Forum was to encourage leadership and political participation of deaf women and to discuss how to incorporate gender perspective into governance on national and European levels. It provided a space for debate and exchange of experiences of deaf women across Europe, which in turn led to productive discussions.

During the Forum proposals and agreements on strategic lines of action in favour of deaf women and girls in Europe were analysed. Three strategic guidelines in particular: strategic guideline 1 on gender perspective and deaf associative movement, strategic guideline 2 on gender violence elimination, and strategic guideline 3 on deaf women and health care.

The 1st Deaf Women European Forum was a great opportunity to discuss the rights of women, gender equality and social inclusion from the deaf perspective. Equally it gave the best platform to present legal tools for the advocacy of women and girls with disabilities.

Additionally, the conference on Feminist Initiative, Equality, Accessibility and Social Justice took place during the Forum. Moreover, round table discussions took place on various topics such as equality and no discrimination of deaf women from a feminist perspective, linguistic and cultural identity and intersectionality, deconstructing different ways of violence against deaf women: audism and misogynist violence, deaf women in European associative field, experience from national associations from Europe.

The Forum concluded by finalising future proposals to the political agenda for gender equality and rights for deaf women in Europe. The Forum was organised by the Spanish National Confederation of the Deaf, the Deaf People Federation of the Valencian Community and the European Union of the Deaf.

Louise "Lolo" Danielsson,
EUD Board Member

MEDIA

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. Information is available in International Sign and videos contain English subtitles; and/or a voiceover in English. A summary of the content of the video in English text is provided 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".

WEBSITE

The EUD website that was launched in 2015, allows us to release a variety of catalogued information and enables us to be more innovative with regards to accessibility, providing press statements in International Sign and English. Furthermore, more video-friendly features were added, for instance a way to allow deaf citizens to contact EUD with video messages in sign language. The website's new design already attracted more people after its decline in the past few years due the emerging social media channels within the EUD.

Statistics

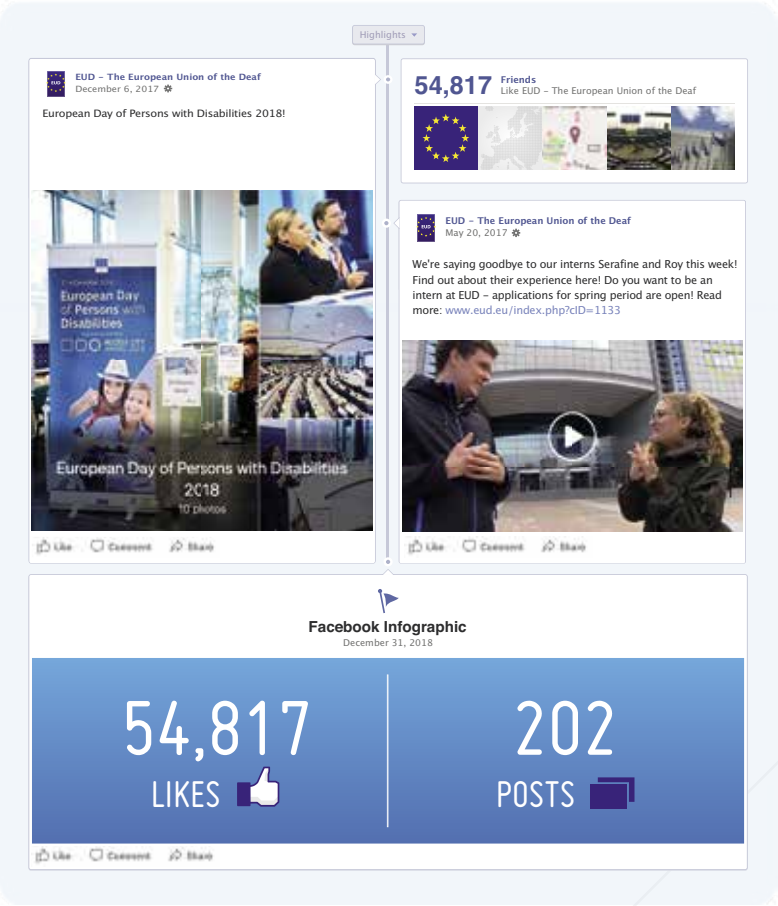
There were 39,720 hits on the videos embedded on our website in 2018. We have increased the 59,571 ratings to this year.

European Emergency Number 112 Day

EUD INITIATIVES

SOCIAL MEDIA

Although the EUD website is valuable and beneficial tool 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 53,000 to 54,800. 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. Many 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 EUD General Assembly in Valletta, Malta, which made it the highlight on our Twitter.

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. We have 1,823 followers this year.

EUD INITIATIVES

NEWSBITES

The 'NewsBites' is an adaptation to the needs of today's society where viewers and readers want information in quick, easy-to-understand formats. In the past, EUD would release statements regarding policy issues or events we attended in a form of videos ranging between 4-5 minutes. However, this had to change, since our content would not reach out to huge audiences. From the perspective of EUD, there was a need to convert any information about our daily activities into snappy bulletins in order to keep up with the current trend of viewers wanting to receive information in a quick and concise manner. As a result, the concept of EUD's 'NewsBites' was started in addition to our usual statements and videos on our website and social media outlets. This allows the audience to be informed about EUD's activities in an easier, more 'on-trend' format and quicker. EUD published three 'NewsBites' so far this year and will continue publishing them.

1st Edition of NewsBites

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 as well as their knowledge of European policy, media production and administrative work. EUD's interns have come from many different EU countries to support and inspire the local deaf community and younger deaf people.

Serafine Duss

Serafine Duss, from Switzerland, was one of two interns joining us in autumn of 2018. She worked with our Executive Director, Mark Wheatley, on preparing on the General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, administrative and financial work. We would like to thank her for all her hard work in ensuring a successful General Assembly.

Roy Maguire

Roy Maguire from Ireland was the second of the two interns who joined us in autumn of 2018. He stayed with us to support the preparations of the General Assembly as well as EUD's media production for this event. He also produced first EUD NewsBites. He worked extensively with our Communication and Media Officer, David Hay. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank him for all his support.

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NEXES PROJECT

Project Workshop, Izmir, Turkey

The NEXt generation Emergency Services (NEXES) Consortium held the Final International Workshop at the Dokuz Eylul University Distance Learning and Research Centre in Izmir, Turkey, on March 22nd and 23rd 2018. The NEXES Consortium is responsible for implementing the NEXES Action, a research and innovation project co-funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 programme. Since it began in May 2015, the seventeen NEXES partners have conducted research, testing and validation of the integration of IP-based communication technologies and interoperability capabilities with the emergency services. The reason for this is to attain increased effectiveness and performance to create the next generation emergency services. At the NEXES Final International Workshop, the NEXES Consortium successfully presented the results of their hard work over the course of their three-year project, revealing their main achievements. They also presented and carried out a pilot activity, demonstrating the new advanced next generation capabilities that can be used by emergency services and citizens. This event gathered more than 100 participants, representing the European Union, governmental and public authorities, law enforcement authorities, representatives from fire brigades, medical services, civil protection services, civil society entities, non-governmental organisations and academia. Overall, an incredibly successful event.

Frankie Picron,
EUD Project Officer

Project Workshop, Brussels, Belgium

On the 13th of June, the NEXES project's final meeting took place in Brussels, Belgium where the partners gathered together to finalise all the details for the project. The EUD Executive Director, Mark Wheatley attended the final NEXES project meeting. He gave a presentation on how end-users with disabilities would benefit from the long-term involvement of EUD in the project.

Mark Wheatley,
EUD Executive DIrector

Project Meeting, Bruges, Belgium

On the 11th and 12th of January, the DESIGNS consortium held their 3rd meeting in Bruges, Belgium which was kindly hosted by the Bruges Deaf club. The DESIGNS project is funded through the European Commission's ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership programme. The project brings together seven partners from four EU countries that are renowned experts in the fields of Deaf Studies research, education and training, employment, sign language interpreting and Deaf community advocacy. The overall aim of the project is to create research-driven, evidence-based Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Continual Professional Development (CPD) training resources and exchange best practices across Europe to facilitate greater participation of deaf sign language users in employment. The DESIGNS consortium had two days of meetings, and then attended the city hall meeting where all the partners presented various aspects of the project to the deaf community of Bruges and beyond. Topics such as interpreter provision, the skills of the interpreter, the deaf community and qualifications, the challenges of promotion and progression in a job were just a few of the topics that were presented. Additionally, members of the deaf community took the opportunity to take the floor and give accounts of their personal experience in employment settings.

DESIGNS consortium, Bruges, Belgium

Project Meeting, Berlin, Germany

On the 7th and 8th of June, the Designs project had their 2nd consortium partners' meeting in Berlin, Germany. The project also delivered their community event on the "Employment of sign language users in Europe" on the 7th of June. At this event, the experts were given the chance to discuss their initiatives for the project and gave the floor to the community wherein they could share their experience, enabling the project to create some training products, such as:

- Specialised training for Sign Language Interpreters who work in employment settings
- Sign Language and Deaf cultural awareness and training for employers and colleges
- Workshops for the Deaf community on employment matters, depending on the type of training needed

Our Executive Director, Mark Wheatley was in attendance and gave a talk in the community event on "Deaf Employment from the Deaf Perspective – Results from the EU Survey". Not only this, he moderated a questions and answers session at the end of the event.

UN CRPD

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UNCRPD

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first international legally binding instrument setting minimum standards for rights for people with disabilities, and the first human rights convention to which the EU has become a party. As of 2018 all EU Member States are parties to the UN CRPD.

Ireland ratifies the UN CRPD

On the 7th of March EUD celebrated the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) by the Irish government. This marks a historical moment for deaf persons in Ireland. EUD is looking forward to collaborating with the Irish Deaf Society before their first review under the UN CRPD Committee and during the process of implementation of the UN CRPD on the national level.

Celebration of the 1st International Day of Sign Languages

On the 12th and 13th of September, EUD celebrated the first International Days of Sign Languages in Geneva, Switzerland. During an event organised by the Swiss Federation of the Deaf together with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN Office in Geneva, EUD Executive Director, Mark Wheatley gave a presentation about the legal recognition of sign languages in Europe.

During the presentation EUD highlighted the importance of the legal recognition of sign language(s) and provided examples where national sign language(s) are recognised in Europe, and how this was achieved. EUD emphasised the necessity of legally recognising sign languages as official national or regional languages, as it ensures sign language users access to exercising their fundamental rights, it was also mentioned what lack of legal recognition constitutes significant barriers for the deaf community.

Palais des Nations,
Geneva, Switzerland

The European Accessibility Act

2018 was a crucial year for the European Accessibility Act (EAA), since the final version of the Act was negotiated amongst the European Commission, the European Parliament and representatives of national governments in the Council of the EU. Finally, in November 2018 a compromise agreement was reached.

Throughout the year, EUD participated in regular strategic meetings with other European NGOs at the European Disability Forum to make ensure that EUD's advocacy on the EAA, along with the advocacy work of the other European NGO's stayed strong, as much as possible, throughout the negotiations.

Over the year EUD has undertaken many advocacy actions to make sure that the final version of the Act includes critical elements essential for the deaf community. EUD saw the EAA as a crucial opportunity to end discrimination against deaf persons who find themselves in an emergency situation and cannot contact emergency services. Therefore, one of the priorities for EUD was to ensure that the EAA included obligations to ensure interoperable end-to-end accessibility for emergency services, including the European emergency number 112.

The initial Council's position (i.e. the joint position of national governments) on the EAA, did not oblige Public Safety Answering Points' (PSAPs), to answer accessible emergency communications, Real-Time Text and/or video communications, alongside voice calls.

EUD, together with the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the European Emergency Number Association, has therefore written a statement urging the Council to change its position and to oblige PSAPs to be able to handle such accessible emergency communications. Additionally, EUD encouraged NADs to undertake advocacy actions on the national level, disseminate joint statements for responsible authorities, and publish it on NADs websites and social media channels, using the hash tags #AccessibilityAct and #EmergencyCall4All. EUD provided NADs with concrete instructions of what actions were needed on a national level. EUD encouraged NADs to engage with their national government representatives in the Council of the EU and to ask them to change their position on emergency services in the European Accessibility Act (EAA).

We have stayed actively engaged with NADs, prepared advocacy materials, encouraged them to engage with their national governments to ensure that that the Act obliges emergency centres to be able to receive and answer accessible emergency communications.

After the political agreement, the European Commission announced that the EU institutions agreed on the establishment of common accessibility requirements for electronic communications including the 112-emergency number.

EEUD is grateful to see advocacy used in action to deliver a result. It is important to highlight that without to joint advocacy efforts between the National Associations of the Deaf and EUD, effective collaboration with other European level organisations and meaningful dialogue with European institutions this would have not been possible. EUD sees this as a milestone achievement and wants to express its appreciation for everyone who engaged in the advocacy for accessible emergency services.

EUD is looking forward for the final text of the EAA to be adopted in the plenary in the European Parliament in 2019.

AudioVisual Media Service Directive revision

In 2018 EUD collaborated with the European Disability Forum (EDF) during the revision of the Audiovisual Media Service Directive (AVMSD) in order to make sure that the article on accessibility was improved considerably.

EUD was pleased to see that the final text of the Audiovisual Media Service Directive revision was adopted with stronger provisions for accessibility of media services for deaf consumers.
The revised directive will include an article on the accessibility of media services, which will be stronger, compared to the article in the previous directive. The 2010 directive only called upon Member States to encourage media service providers to ensure their services are gradually made accessible to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted in their respective countries, but it did not create any obligations. EUD saw it as a huge shortcoming of the Directive and advocated for the article on accessibility to contain an obligation, which was achieved. This is a considerable success and is moving legislation in the right direction towards accessibility.

The formal adoption of the directive at the European Parliament took place during the plenary session in October 2018. After it is published in the Official Journal of the EU, the AVMSD will then be transposed into national law of EU member states and will create new obligations for media broadcasters. EUD will be available for advice and support to NADs with regards to advocacy work for a strong transposition of the revised Directive into national law.

European Electronic Communications Code

EUD, in collaboration with the European Disability Forum (EDF) has been advocating for better rules for consumers with disabilities, including deaf end-users, particularly regarding the rules for electronic communications at the EU level, which are included in the revision of the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC).

EUD is pleased that the final text of the European Electronic Communication Code was adopted at the European Parliament during the plenary session in November 2018. This directive improves the access and choice of persons with disabilities, including deaf persons, with regards to electronic communications. The EECC will also create requirements for accessible emergency communications and the single European emergency call number, 112.

When the EESC is published in the Official Journal of the EU, EUD will work closely with NADs to prepare toolkits to assist EUD members during the transposition of EECC into national laws. EUD will continue being at the disposal of all NADs to provide advice and support with regards to national advocacy work for a strong transposition of this directive (and others) into national law.

The proposal for the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (MFF)

In May 2018, the European Commission adopted a proposal for the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF) for the period 2021-2027. EUD, in collaboration with the European Disability Forum, started following the developments regarding the proposal for the new Common Provisions Regulation, the new proposal for the European Social Fund Plus, the new proposal for the Justice Rights and Values fund and the new proposal for the Erasmus + programme.

Throughout its advocacy campaign, EUD highlights the fact that the EU and all of its member states have ratified the UN CRPD, therefore the EU budget should be a tool to implement the UN CRPD and should not support actions which are in conflict with it.

Cathrine Naughton,
EDF Director

1. The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

EUD supported EDF in its advocacy work for the new Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) and fought for it to contain strong references to the UN CRPD. This is to ensure that the new CPR ensures accessibility for persons with disabilities and make accessibility a criterion for selection of operations. Moreover, for EUD it is essential to ensure that the CPR contains strong partnership principle within the Regulation. EUD provided EDF with input for their first assessment of the proposal, including recommendations on how to improve it.

2. The European Social Fund+ (ESF+)

Regarding the new proposal for ESF+, EUD agreed with and supported EDF's priorities, which are to maintain and strengthen references to the UN CRPD as well as having a clear mention of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in actions, targeting the most marginalised groups. The funds must not be used for inaccessible infrastructure, products or services. EUD gave comments and recommendations to EDF in their first assessment of the proposal. In particular, EUD highlighted the fact that funds should not only be earmarked for capacity-building of civil society organisations, but also for accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities and their organisations to ensure equal participation.

3. The Justice, RIghts and Values Fund

On the 3rd of September, EUD attended a public hearing at the European Economic Social Committee on the Justice, Rights and Values Fund. We followed developments made regarding the new proposal to ensure it is capable to realise its objective, which is to sustain democratic and inclusive societies, as well as to uphold citizen's values and fundamental rights.

4. Erasmus+

EUD, in collaboration with the European Disability Forum and the European Union of the Deaf Youth started its advocacy work regarding the new Erasmus Plus proposal. While the amount of funding foreseen for the new programme is very positive, the proposal is very disappointing from the perspective of young persons with disabilities. There is barely any mention of disability in the text, and nothing whatsoever is said about accessibility and reasonable accommodation.

EUD has started its advocacy work with an aim to improve the programme proposal particularly concerning accessibility for young persons with disabilities. This includes young deaf persons and their access to the Erasmus university exchange programme through the provision of sign language interpretation, and common rules surrounding which authorities are responsible for organising interpretation.

EUD sees the importance of making the Erasmus university exchange programme accessible for deaf persons and will continue its advocacy work to ensure it.

Impact Report 2018 is now available in International Sign! Scan the QR code:

www.eud.eu/impact-reports/translation-international-sign/

The Social Security Coordination Regulation Revision

EUD has continued its advocacy on the revision of the Social Security Coordination Regulation. EUD drafted an advocacy document together with EDF and ENIL and highlighted the need for the regulation to coordinate work-related disability benefits so that economically active persons with a disability can access the labour market on an equal basis with others. The advocacy document was distributed to members of the European Parliament working on this file.

After discussions with EUD, MEP Helga Stevens tabled amendments introducing the notion of "work-related disability benefits" in a separate chapter during the revision of the of the social security coordination regulation.

Additionally, EUD was in contact with the rapporteur of the social security coordination regulation revision in order to provide him with expertise and arguments on why coordination of social benefits is essential for the deaf community.

The European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU Semester

In 2018 EUD focused on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR or the Pillar). EUD views the Pillar as an important instrument that establishes a series of principles and rights which, are a joint responsibility of Member States, the EU and relevant stakeholders to deliver it. One of the ways to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights is through the process of European Semester.

EUD participated in strategic dialogues and seminars organised by the European Commission and learned about the links between the European Semester, its Country Reports and Country-specific Recommendations (CSRs) and the European Pillar of Social Rights. EUD focused on how civil society could play a stronger role in promoting reforms in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights on a national level during the European Semester process. On top of this, EUD developed a toolkit for its members in International Sign explaining the European Pillar of Social Rights, the process of the European Semester and possible opportunities for national associations of the deaf to get engaged with their governments as well as the European Commission during the process of the European Semester to implement the EPSR.

The Sustainable Development Goals

EUD welcomed the report produced by the European Disability Forum (EDF) entitled "the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) report: A European perspective to respect, protect and fulfil the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". EUD used this report when it provided the NADs with an overview of the strong link between the UN CRPD and the SDGs.

EUD followed a number of webinars provided by the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and Bridging the Gap project. EUD disseminated information collected during these webinars to the NADs, and in turn raised awareness on what opportunities exist for advocacy surrounding the SDGs in order to implement the UN CRPD in Europe.

Subsequently, EUD disseminated a toolkit, which was produced by the World Federation of the Deaf, to its member organisations. The toolkit, in International Sign, provides NADs with valuable information on the UN CRPD and SDGs, giving practical examples as to how these instruments can support advocacy work on the national level.

EESC – EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Women with disabilities in the EU: situation and way forward

EUD attended an event organised by the European Economic Social Committee's Permanent Study Group on Disability Rights on "Women with Disabilities in the EU: Situation and Way Forward." The aim of the event was to look into the situation of women with disabilities in the EU and propose some recommendations to improve it.

During the hearing it was highlighted that State Parties to the UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities must fully implement Article 6 Women with Disabilities of the Convention and must take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for women with disabilities. General Comment No 3 is a valuable tool that should be used while implementing Article 6 of the UN CRPD. It further explains how to combat multiple forms of discrimination and how to empower and support women with disabilities themselves.

Mark Wheatley, Executive Director of EUD, highlighted that EUD has a Working Group on Gender Equality, which focuses on empowerment of deaf women. Moreover, Mr Wheatley mentioned that in October 2018 EUD member, Spanish Federation of the Deaf (CNSE) in collaboration with FESORD CV (Federation of deaf people of the Valencian Community) hosted the first European Conference on the protection of deaf women's right, working towards gender equality. Furthermore, he stated there is a need to increase the understanding of the situation of deaf women. There is a need to create networks of deaf women for deaf women and facilitate the exchange of information and collaboration between national associations of the deaf and EUD, which is being worked upon by the Gender Equality working group of EUD.

Mark Wheatley,
EUD Executive Director

Jusice Rights and Values Fund

On the 3rd of September EUD attended a public hearing on the Justice, Rights and Values (JRV) Fund at the European Economic Social Committee. The European Commission drafted a proposal for a regulation establishing the Justice, Rights and Values Fund, which was published in May 2018.

The objective of the fund is to help sustain open, democratic and inclusive societies, as well as empowering people by promoting and protecting their rights and common values. The JRV Fund is a key instrument for the promotion of EU values, fundamental rights, democracy, the rule of law, the participation and support of civil society and the engagement of local communities. The proposal for a Rights and Values programme is intended to support civil society, encourage people's participation and foster the diversity of European society.

EUD will continue following up upcoming developments regarding the new proposal for Justice, Rights and Values Fund to ensure it is capable to realise its objective in sustaining democratic and inclusive societies, and upholding citizen's values and fundamental rights.

People with disablitities as a human capital: their contribution to the economy and society

On the 20th of June EUD participated in the public hearing 'Persons with disabilities as a human capital: their contribution to the economy and society'. The objective of the hearing was to discuss what policy changes are needed to allow persons with disabilities to maximise their contribution to the economy and society and to find out what civil society can do to facilitate this process.

People with disabilities are capable to perform as others, however they must be provided with an opportunity. In order to promote opportunities, there are many initiatives on the European level such as the European Accessibility Act, the European Disability Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester. It was emphasised that it is absolutely crucial to move away from the medical approach to disability towards a human rights approach. With this we will see people with disabilities as equal participants in the society who are capable of many things if given an opportunity. This is a key element in the implementation of the UN CRPD and in enabling people with disabilities to participate in economy and society on equal basis with others.

Catherine Naughton, the Executive Director of the European Disability Forum, highlighted that it is crucial to focus on the enforcement of existing legislation and provide funding for specific actions that support employment of people with disabilities. Furthermore, there must be adequate social protection systems in place separate from income support, in order to allow people with disabilities to participate in the economy. New forms of employment and flexible arrangements would benefit people with disabilities while seeking employment too. Mark Wheatley, Executive Director of EUD, added that a strong revision of the social security coordination revision that would include the coordination and portability of disability benefits, is necessary to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their right to free movement and find work abroad.

The public hearing was a great opportunity to exchange views on how best to advance the situation of people with disabilities, not only that, but to highlight the need to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the economy and society. EUD will continue its work on European initiatives that have a potential to provide people with disabilities with more opportunities.

The European Regional Development and Cohesion Policy

On the 6th of September EUD participated in the public hearing on the European Regional Development and Cohesion Policy. During the hearing a new proposal for the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) was discussed.

CPR, which sets out common provisions for seven shared management funds, aims to reduce fragmentation of rules, and delivers a common set of basic rules for seven funds including the Cohesion Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus.

At this meeting, it was highlighted that the EESC recommends to keep the principles of promotion of equality between men and women, non-discrimination, accessibility of persons with disabilities, as well as of sustainable development, in the new CPR proposal. Members of the European Economic Social Committee strongly recommend that Article 7, which promotes equality and prevents discrimination based on disability in the current CPR 2014-2020, be reintroduced into the proposed CPR 2021-2027. Moreover, it was stressed that the CPR that during the selection of operations, accessibility for persons with disabilities be ensured. This would then be reflected in Article 67 of the proposed CPR.

EUD agrees with the EESC and will follow the legislative procedure of the new CPR 2021-2027 together with the European Disability Forum. We will advocate to ensure the principles of non-discrimination and accessibility to be reintroduced into the new CPR.

The new MFF and cohesion policy: how to better use EU funds for persons with disabilities in the new financial framework

On the 23rd of October EUD attended a public hearing on the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the years 2021 to 2027 and Cohesion Policy.

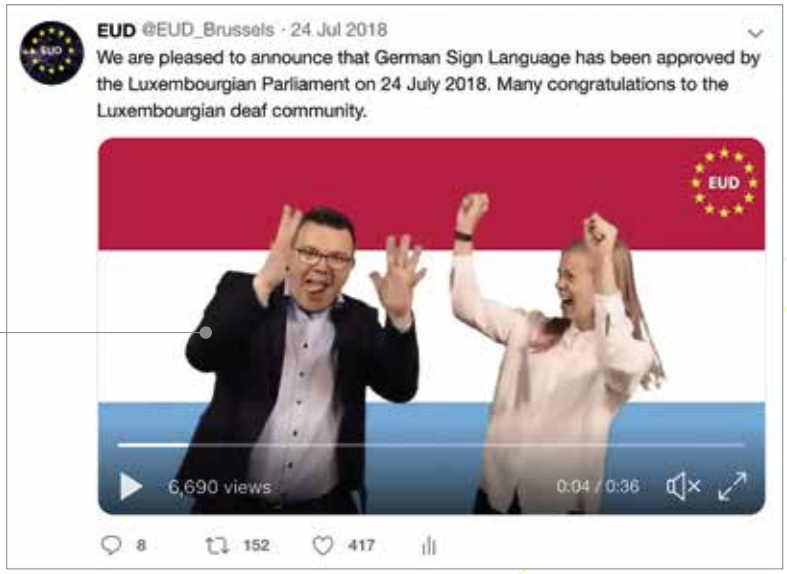
The new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the years 2021 to 2027 includes, among others, new proposals for the new Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), the new European Social Fund Plus and the new proposal for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). During the hearing it was discussed how to better use these EU funds for persons with disabilities considering the new financial framework.

All member states and the EU itself have ratified the UN CRPD, therefore the next Multiannual Financial Framework should be a tool to implement obligations under the UN CRPD. Relevant regulations have to be clear that any investment in inaccessible infrastructure or technology cannot be accepted. Moreover, persons with disabilities and their representative organisations must be involved in governance and monitoring committees, to prevent inaccessible operations receiveing funding. Crucially, there must be a clear link between all funding programmes and the UN CRPD.

EUD is and will continue to be involved while advocating for inclusive Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the years 2021 to 2027.

German Sign Language (Luxembourg) recognition

We are pleased to announce that the Luxembourgian Parliament recognised German Sign Language in Luxembourg on the 24th of July 2018. Many congratulations to the Luxembourgian deaf community.



EUD's celebratory video

Council of Europe's Standing Committee Meeting in Helsinki, Finland

On the 23rd of November, EUD President, Markku Jokinen attended the meeting of the Standing Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). During the meeting, Resolution 2247 (2018) 'Protecting and promoting sign languages in Europe' was adopted by PACE, which marks an incredibly important achievement for sign language users.

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EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The High Level Group on Disability

In May 2018, EUD attended the High Level Group Meeting on Disability, reuniting civil society organisations, the European Commission staff as well as government representatives at this Council on a biannual basis. A number of topics relevant to legislation at the EU level and disability policy initiatives were discussed.

EUD intervened several times during the meeting, emphasising the need for disaggregation of disability by disability group. Particularly from the deaf perspective, the collection of statistics is problematic as it puts all deaf persons into one category, not taking into consideration sign language users, or those who have become deafened at a later stage in life. EUD highlighted that disaggregated statistics are needed for more targeted policy and advocacy work. EUD also reminded the participants in attendance of its petition published to the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions, asking for the possibility for deaf sign language users to submit their petitions in video format in their national or regional sign language. EUD also asked for an update regarding this petition, considering they had not heard any information from the committee for a prolonged period of time.

The second High Level Group Meeting on Disability took place on the 25th of October 2018. EUD was present to follow and participate in relevant discussions on the topic of EU level policy and coordination initiatives in the area of disability as well as social policy particularly concerning updates about the implementation of the UN CRPD at EU and national levels. Furthermore, there were important discussions surrounding the new European budget, including the European Structural and Investment Funds. Again, EUD intervened several times, calling on the European Commission to publish their upcoming consultation on the European Disability Strategy in national and regional sign languages as well. EUD Executive Director, Mark Wheatley also took the floor to bring up the topic of emergency services, especially considering the state of emergency centres in the European Accessibility Act. EUD highlighted that it advocates for to ensuring that emergency centres comply with the same accessibility requirements as mobile phone manufacturers and telephony service providers thus creating a fully accessible emergency communication chain that is crucial for the European deaf community. Furthermore, EUD used the occasion to optimise informal discussions with several government representatives, specifically concerning the European Accessibility Act.

Mark Wheatley, EUD Executive Director and **Katja Reuters**, EUD Policy Officer

The Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth (ACIG)

On the 27th of April EUD participated in the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth (ACIG or the Convention). This year the Convention brought together civil society organisations and policymakers to discuss how to achieve truly inclusive growth and strengthen the social dimension in the EU. During different workshops, side events and plenary debate, participants analysed how to implement principles and rights enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR, Social Pillar or the Pillar) on a national as well as EU levels. Implementation of the Pillar would develop long-term solutions to fight poverty, increase employment and strengthen social cohesion and inclusion for all, including people with disabilities.

During the Convention, EUD representatives participated in various workshops. The first workshop focused on EU funding and how it can support the Implementation of the Social Pillar. The EPSR will be a reference point in the design of the post-2020 EU financial programming period. At the event, it was mentioned that all four funding instruments managed by DG EMPL, (the European Social Fund (ESF), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) and the Employment and Social Innovation programme (EaSI)), will play a major role in delivering the Pillar. Not only that, it will also play a role in the social and employment priorities promoted by the European Semester. It was emphasised that without reliable monitoring and adequate funding, the results of the Implementation of the Pillar will not be sufficient.

EUD believes that one priority of the new multiannual financial framework should be to overcome the social inequalities in the EU. Investment in people and human capital should be a top priority starting from early childhood. The workshop aimed at answering how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can ensure an inclusive Implementation of the Pillar. Throughout, the participants discussed how best to maximise synergies with the SDGs and the Pillar, and how to make sure that no one is left behind during the process of implementation.

The objectives, targets and indicators of the SDGs should be occur in tandem with the implementation of the Social Pillar. Moreover, during the workshop participants discussed how to align the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the SDGs and the Pillar in order to ensure inclusive outcomes for persons with disabilities. During the third workshop participants discussed the European Pillar of Social Rights in terms of the multilateral economic policy coordination. It was highlighted that the EPSR will be implemented throughout the European Semester.

Participants with first-hand experience of the social issues at stake, and the representatives from European and national institutions who are responsible for designing and implementing policy, all had an opportunity to discuss their opinions.

The closing remarks of the Annual Convention of Inclusive Growth concluded that the implementation of the Pillar is a necessary step for the EU, if it truly aims to strengthen its social policy dimension. With presentations, workshops and interactive sessions, the Convention was an excellent opportunity for the EUD team to exchange ideas and best practices with representatives from the European Commission and other stakeholders and explore how to turn the principles of the Pillar into a reality.

The Work Forum of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the EU and the Member States

On the 29th of May EUD attended the Work Forum on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention or UN CRPD), organised by the European Commission (EC or the Commission).

The Work Forum took place in Brussels and brought together representatives responsible for implementing and monitoring the UN CRPD at the EU level and on the national level. This year it focused on three topics: 'health, habilitation and rehabilitation of people with disabilities', 'disability awareness and training programmes', and 'the role of UN CRPD Committee'. Manuela Geleng, Acting Director Social Affairs, Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Commission opened the event. Mrs Geleng stated that all Members States of the EU have ratified the UN CRPD at last, and as a result are under an obligation to implement it. Since the European Union itself is a party to the Convention, it is aware of its commitment to cover all the recommendations issued by the UN CRPD Committee and should aim to implement them whilst also adopting necessary measures such as the European Disability Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Accessibility Act and other relevant legislative measures.

It was highlighted that in order to implement the UN CRPD at the European level, it is necessary to make sure that the new Multiannual Financial Framework for the EU (MFF) will not cut funding to healthcare and investments in equality, non-discrimination and accessibility for people with disabilities.

During first session of the Work Forum focused on 'health, habilitation and rehabilitation of people with disabilities' it wasbhighlighted that organisations representing and run by people with disabilities should be involved in designing, implementing and monitoring health programmes, services and devices in order to ensure they comply with the human rights approach to disability.

Likewise, the training of health professionals is crucial. It is important that health care professionals see people with disabilities not as people suffering from diseases or as a burden, instead they should be recognised as rights-holders that cannot be treated without their informed consent. This is particularly important for women with disabilities, who often face forced treatments, abortions or even forced sterilisations. Such practices constitute an absolute breach of the UN CRPD. Mark Wheatley, Executive Director of EUD, added that there is a serious lack of accessibility for deaf women when seeking information, therefore it is critical that information be available in accessible formats, such as easy-to-read guides and/or sign language interpretation.

The second session focused on 'disability awareness and training programmes'. One of many important points raised throughout the discussion was the lack of representation of people with disabilities in the media. There are serious gaps regarding the presence and roles played by people with disabilities. Broadcasters must be encouraged to increase their work with people with disabilities as participants in shows and create initiatives where people with disabilities are presenters or hosts on TV shows.

The Work Forum on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a great opportunity for EUD to learn about practical Implementation and monitoring of the Convention. EUD will be following relevant developments regarding the Implementation of the UN CRPD at the European level.

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European Day of Persons with Disabilities 2018 and Access City Award

On the 3rd and the 4th of December EUD Board Members Sofia Isari and Louise 'Lolo' Danielsson and EUD staff participated at the European Day of Persons with Disabilities (EDPD) conference, which took place in Brussels and was organised by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum.

During the EDPD conference EUD learned about the next European Disability Strategy (EDS) for the period of 2020 - 2030 and its implementation through the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021 – 2027.

Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Helga Stevens presented European Parliament's report on the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2010 - 2020. The report lists the recommendations for a comprehensive and effective 2020 - 2030 Disability Strategy. MEP Stevens emphasised that it is essential for the new European Disability Strategy to ensure full implementation of the UN CRPD in all areas of EU policy by mainstreaming accessibility, participation, non-discrimination and equality. Moreover, it was highlighted that it is essential to allocate adequate budget, adopt clear timeframe for implementation and to establish monitoring mechanism. Emmanuelle Grange, Head of the Disability and Inclusion Unit, at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Commission, highlighted that the new European Disability Strategy can only be a success if all stakeholders, including civil society, are involved while designing the new strategy. Mrs Grange encouraged all stakeholders to participate and collaborate together with the European Commission during the period of drafting the new Disability Strategy 2020 – 2030.

During the second panel presenters and participants discussed how will the next Multiannual Financial Framework contribute to the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2020 - 2030. During the panel new proposals, the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and Rights and Values programme were presented as tools for future implementation of EDS 2020 - 2030. Andriana Sukova, Deputy Director-General at DG EMPL, European Commission highlighted that the new proposal for ESF+ aims at promoting the inclusion in the society of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others and aims at contributing to the implementation of the UN CRPD. At least 25% of investments under ESF+ will target social inclusion, with specific actions for people at risk of discrimination, including boosting labour market participation of people with disabilities, enhancing inclusion and reducing inequalities. It was concluded that the next EU budget should be a tool to implement rights and principles of UN CRPD and should not support actions which are in conflict with it.

The EDPD conference was concluded with an Access City Award ceremony. Ms Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility handed out the three traditional awards to the most accessible European cities. The third place was awarded to Gdynia, Poland, the second place was awarded to Evreux, France and the first place was awarded to Breda, the Netherlands. Breda's commitment to accessibility, its inclusive philosophy, constant engagement with people with disabilities and continuous improvement is commendable and is the perfect example how to ensure accessibility to all.

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

During the trialogue negotiations for the European Accessibility Act, EUD together with the European Disability Forum reached out to the representatives in the Council to make sure that they take into account the positions of disability movement.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Multilingualism Day in the European Parliament

On the 29th of September, EUD, Federation of Deaf Belgians (FFSB), MEP Helga Stevens and MEP Ádám Kósa, hosted the stall at the European Parliament in Brussels. The aim of this stall was to raise awareness about sign languages in the EU and to engage with the public.

From left to right, **Serafine Duss**, EUD Intern and **Martyna Balčiūnaitė**, EUD Policy Assistant

European Parliament Resolution on Minimum Standards for Minorities in the EU

In the Resolution of 13 November 2018 on Minimum Standards for Minorities in the EU, European Parliament noted that one person in a thousand uses a national sign language as their first language and these languages should be awarded official status. It also highlighted that an education has a key role in socialisation and identity development and remains the main tool to revitalise and maintain endangered minority languages. It noted that when it comes to minority language education there is no one single best-practice model that is suitable for all national and ethnic minorities and highlighted that there is the need for special attention to be paid to people using sign languages.

Disability Intergroup

On the 22nd of November EUD participated in the event entitled 'Making the Digital Single Market accessible for persons with disabilities' at the European Parliament. It was organised by the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the European Parliament's Disability Intergroup. The event was co-hosted by MEP Olga Sehnalová, and MEP Jana Žitňaská. During the event relevant pieces of European legislation that contribute to making digital single market accessible for persons with disabilities were discussed. On the 28th of November EUD participated in the event organised by Disability Intergroup and learned about the European Disability Card.

EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM

On the 26th of May, the European Disability Forum hosted their Annual General Assembly in Vilnius, Lithuania. EUD Board member Louise 'Lolo' Danielsson attended this event. She took the opportunity to interact with one of the members of the EDF Executive Committee Humberto Insolera, who is the former Vice-President of EUD. Dr Insolera chaired a debate discussing the Web Accessibility Directive. The Web Accessibility Directive is now adopted and is at the stage where it must be implemented into the national laws. EUD took the opportunity to discuss in depth the methodology of implementation, particularly concerning access to technological services. This workshop gave EUD a better understanding of how to use the toolkit on the Web Accessibility Directive as prepared by EDF. The toolkit is now available on EDF's website for the public to use. It is a useful instrument that explains what the Directive covers, what the key provisions are (i.e. scope, accessibility requirements, exemptions, enforcement, monitoring, etc.) and suggests what needs to be done at national level to ensure the best possible implementation. The toolkit and an explanation of it in International Sign is also available at EUD's website.

From left to right, **Louise Danielsson**, EUD Board Member and **Dr Humberto Insolera**, EDF Executive Committee Member

EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF YOUTH (EUDY)

On the 9th of June, EUD in collaboration with EUDY hosted a workshop about the experiences of what is means to be on the board of ENGO for the local deaf community. We would like to share our appreciation to the Czech National Association of the Deaf (SNNČR), the Czech National Association of the Deaf Youth (CDY) and the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY) for hosting us in Czech Republic.

The European Union of the Deaf Youth held their annual General Assembly in Constanta, Romania on the 14th and 15th of July. Our Vice President Dr Gergely Tapolczai had the honour of chairing the General Assembly and observe the election of the new board. We would like to congratulate the newly elected board members and are looking forward to cooperating with them in the future.

General Assembly, Constanta, Romania

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

EUROPEAN FORUM OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS (efsli)

EUD President Markku Jokinen attended the efsli 2018 Annual General Meeting and Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia from the 14th to the 16th of September. He gave a presentation to an audience of over 300 sign language interpreters from around Europe highlighting the importance of collaboration between the deaf client and an interpreter. It was emphasised that if the relationships were improved, this would lead to more efficient interpreting, and as a result, better access for the deaf community. President Jokinen emphasised that interpreters and users of interpreters should work in tandem with a common goal in mind for the interaction to be the best success. Not only this, but he encouraged interpreters to be braver in interrupting interaction to ensure that deaf clients can have their say. President Jokinen closed by stating that users of interpreters should be more engaged with interpreters to ensure the best possible outcome for all involved.

Markku Jokinen,
EUD President

WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF (WFD)

On the 5th of February 2018, a cooperation meeting between the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) took place in Helsinki, Finland. EUD President Markku Jokinen and EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley represented EUD, while WFD President Colin Allen and WFD Board Members Eeva Tupi and Nafisah Rantasalmi represented WFD.

EUD and WFD took the opportunity to review and evaluate the past cooperation and were pleased to note that EUD and WFD has had a strong cooperation over the years. However, it was decided that the cooperation agreement needed to be updated. This resulted in adding some additional cooperation work to further develop the relationship between the two organisations and to reflect the current political climate.

We would like to thank the Finnish Association of the Deaf for their hospitality throughout the day.

Colin Allen,
WFD President

EUROPEAN DEAF SPORTS ORGANISATION (EDSO)

On the 7th of May, EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley attended the 4th European Mountain Bike Championships 2018 in Anhee, Belgium, organised by the Belgian Deaf Sports Committee (BDC). He had the honour of participating in the medal ceremony of the European championship XC Team Relay/XCR. EUD would like to say a hearty congratulations to all winners and participants of this Championship.

On the 18th of October the representatives of EUD attended the 19th EDSO congress in Heraklion, Greece. EUD's Executive Director, Mark Wheatley, gave an overview of the Erasmus+ funding programme at the EDSO congress.

From left to right, **Mark Wheatley**, EUD Executive Director, **Sofia Isari**, EUD Board Member, **Gergely Tapolczai**, EUD Vice President

EUROPEAN DEAFBLIND UNION

On the 5th of June, EUD participated in a conference organised by the European Deafblind Union (EDbU) entitled 'Alone We Can Do So Little, Together We Can Do So Much'. The conference took place at the European Parliament and was hosted by MEP Helga Stevens and MEP Adám Kósá, both of whom opened the event. Sanja Tarczay, the President of the EDbU chaired the event, and throughout different stakeholders raised many important points.

During the event, there was a presentation on 'the emergency resolution on Professional Deafblind Interpreters and Equal Access to Communication for Person with Deafblindness in Europe'. With this resolution the European Parliament together with the European Deafblind Union, European Deafblind Network and representatives of persons with Deafblindness in Europe urge all EU Member States to recognise Deafblindness as a unique, dual sensory impairment to ensure their right to qualified and professional deafblind interpreters/intervenors. Additionally, this recognition would ensure the right to access and reasonable accommodation, which would in turn to ensure the right to education, training, employment and independent living, and full participation, self-representation and equality in Europe. Mark Wheatley, Executive Director of EUD, expressed that EUD fully supports EDbU and the emergency resolution.

Sanja Tarczay, EDbU President

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

EUROPEAN PLATFORM OF DEAFNESS, HARD OF HEARING AND DEAF BLINDNESS

On the 20th of February 2018, the European Platform of Deafness, Hard of Hearing and Deaf blindness together with Microsoft organised a seminar entitled "ACT: Accessible Communication Today". The seminar took place at the Microsoft Office Headquarters in Brussels. Accessibility enables people to realise their full potential, and it plays a vital role for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or Deafblind. Upcoming technology promises a future where many of the challenges that people with disabilities currently face in society could be tackled with creative solutions. For it to become a reality, accessibility needs to be an integral part of the development of tomorrow's products and services, as well as built into our society's policies and culture. The European Platform of Deafness, Hard of Hearing and Deafblindness, together with Microsoft gathered key stakeholders from across the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector as well as the disability movement and the European Union institutions to discuss the potential of accessible technology. Moreover, there was discussion on the technical and legislative aspects in this area and the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

The seminar was an opportunity to highlight and discuss the potential benefits and impact of the latest advances in accessibility. Emmanuelle Grange, Head of the Disability and Inclusion Unit of the European Commission opened the event. Helga Stevens, Member of the European Parliament and Jenny Lay-Flurrie, Microsoft's Chief Accessibility Officer also gave opening presenations. Later, representatives from members of the European Platform of Deafness, Hard of Hearing and Deafblindness gave presentations. This included Markku Jokinen, EUD President, Liisa Halonen, EUDY Secretary General , Wouter Bolier, SIGNAAL (Platform Doven, Slechthorenden en TOS) and Ricard López, European Deafblind Network (EDbN) (giving a speech prepared by Peter Vanhoutte, EDbU Board Member, who unfortunately was unable to attend in person). These stakeholders highlighted the concrete challenges that they face, if accessibility is not provided.

Next Hector Minto, the Senior Accessibility Evangelist at Microsoft gave a presentation about the latest technological developments regarding accessibility. During the lunch break Hector Minto presented some of the accessibility features Microsoft developed for deaf, hard of hearing and Deafblind persons. After which, Inmaculada Placencia Porrero, the Senior Expert in the Social affairs, Disability and Inclusion Unit of the European Commission and Alejandro Moledo, the New Technologies and Innovation Officer at the European Disability Forum gave an overview of the relevant EU draft legislation and current standing regarding the topic of accessibility. After the presentations, a fireside chat, moderated by EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley, took place during which participants had a chance to ask questions and make statements of personal experience.

Emmanuelle Grange,
Head of the Disability and Inclusion Unit of the European Commission

EUD ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE DEAF

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), **Lativa** – Latvijas Nedzirdīgo savienība (LAD), **Lithuania** – Lietuvos kurčiųjų draugija, **Luxembourg** – Vereinigung der Gehörlosen und Schwerhörigen Luxemburg (VGSL), **Malta** – Għaqda Persuni Neqsin mis-Smigħ, **Netherland** – 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** – Asociáca nepočujúcich Slovenska (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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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.

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