

Wednesday 23rd September 2020.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Good morning everybody a woman welcome to the EUD webinar. My name is Markku Jokinen, I am the EUD President. I am happy to moderate this webinar for you during this International Day of Sign Languages, International Week of the Deaf that celebrates globally. First some practical information. We will be discussing several topics during the seminar, the inclusion of deaf people in society. We will be discussing the inclusion of deaf people, deaf culture, language rights, we will have our vice-president speak on inclusion and on deaf culture, the executive director Mark Wheatley will speak on that on language rights will be the EUD board member Lolo Danielsson. In terms of timing every slot will take about 30 minutes. Our first presenter will speak for 10 minutes followed by Q&A, and we'll follow the same format for the other two topics. If you would like to ask a question, there are two possibilities. You can use the EUD WhatsApp group, for comments, with comments and questions or you can use the Facebook comment section. So we welcome very much your comments or questions you may have.

In terms of accessibility of this webinar the main language used will be International Sign, we have spoken English and we have captioning. Also on the side you can see the chat section, also for your information this webinar will be recorded and you will be able to see it after this webinar on the EUD web page.

The recording of this webinar will include the captioning. We will have visuals during the webinar to help you understand EUD's work, and also visuals that shall we shared through social media. I think I have covered all practical household information items, then we are celebrating the International Day of Sign Languages today. And the EUD decided that we would celebrate today by organising this webinar. We want to use this webinar to raise awareness about the concepts that are very familiar to us, deaf culture, sign language, our perception of life and to use this webinar to raise awareness of people less familiar with these concepts and to have an opportunity to discuss these topics with our audience. It's also important that national deaf associations take their responsibility to campaign on their inclusion in society and today is an opportunity for you to share this webinar with your friends and allies to raise awareness about our view of life.

Some basic information first, maybe familiar for some of you, maybe not for others. Globally, round 1% of the world population is deaf. Within the European Union, there's approximately 1 million deaf people. And for these 1 million people sign language is their first language. You may know that there are different sign languages throughout Europe, in some countries there's even more than one sign language. Some people use International Sign, International Sign is to be separated, to be seen as distinct from national sign

language. Many people view deaf people as disabled, as people with broken ears that need to be healed or fixed or cured. Another perception is for deaf people to be seen as a linguistic and cultural minority. This medical view or disability view on deaf people is not enough, equally you need to be aware and it's helpful to understand the Deaf Community as a cultural and linguistic minority as well. That's where we derive our identity from.

At the same time of course we do work with the disability movement, but we usually compliment it as viewing the Deaf Community as a cultural linguistic minority.

Inclusion. Some people think that it's sufficient to have sign language interpreters, no more is needed. It's important that the sign language environment is needed to fully blossom and grow as a person. Just having sign language interpreters is not enough for full inclusion of deaf people.

We will look into more depth on these topics after my introduction, and I am really looking forward to an exchange of thoughts with you. I think we're doing good time wise, so it's time for me to pass the floor to our first speaker, our vice-president, Gergely. Who will speak on deaf people's inclusion, deaf people's inclusion requires more than just sign language interpreters. Gergely.

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: Hello everyone. Thank you Markku for giving me the floor. Today is a very important day, the International Day of Sign Languages we have worked very hard to be able to have this International Day be recognised and thanks to the UN for recognising and making sure that we have established this International Day of Sign Languages.

My topic today will be focusing on the fact that inclusion of deaf people is more than just a provision sign language interpreter. If I need to go to a certain event and I have an interpreter with me the whole time, is that really full accessibility to everything around me? We have interpreters in the workplace, we have interpreters in education, we have interpreters in social events or people's daily lives, but is that enough? Many people think that once you provide an interpreter at any of these events or situations, that the deaf person is fully included. But let's take a step back and look back into history.

If we look at deaf education, there was deaf education centuries ago for deaf children in Paris and England and they were instructed in sign language. On this they were instructed in sign language, there is deaf schools for deaf children, and unfortunately during the Congress of Milan in 1880, sign language use in education was forbidden. So development of the use of sign language in education and for the deaf took a huge downturn.

Within the Deaf Community sign language was still used very prevalent in

sports, privately in social situations, sign language was used within families. But it was almost an underground language. After the Second World War, sign language then got more attention, and sign language was recognised amongst the Deaf Community. Deaf people were proud of their language, and they fought very hard to make sure that they had a right for a sign language interpreter, and they got this right and sign language interpretation was provided for many deaf people in different situations. Then people were wondering is sign language equal to other spoken languages. There was a lot of sign language linguistics done and yes sign language is a fully fledged language, this was proved time again in many different research and studies and sign language was received full recognition.

Deaf people thought, well we have everything, sign language is recognised, we have access to the world through sign language interpreters, however, deaf people felt that this is still, they don't feel that they are fully included and there are still so many barriers. So then there was a very important instrument, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. However, the question is do policy makers and governments really understand how to interpret the Convention for the deaf? Many people again see that oh well there's interpreters provided, there's sign language recognised, however, the UNCRPD very clearly states what inclusion for a deaf person, that can help us truly lobby for what true inclusion would mean for a deaf person. Many countries have ratified the UNCRPD, however, if you look further into how it's been implemented into people's, into different laws and systems, you will notice that is not true. One example is CEFR, the framework for language if you look at the certain levels of languages you have A1, A2, B1, B2, however, spoken language is still seen as a higher level language than sign languages. We still do not have the appropriate examination tools for properly assessing sign languages, this needs to be worked on. Sign languages systematically are still seen as less valuable languages than spoken languages. However, every country is responsible for making sure the UNCRPD is fully implemented within their countries. So the question remains, do governments really understand how to interpret the Convention for the deaf?

National associations of the deaf, I call on you to please take on this work and continue to lobby your Governments, to further explain to your governments how to properly implement the UNCRPD in your country. Here in Hungary for example, sign language testing, so you can have language assessments in sign language is now equal to spoken language, we just achieved this last July. The tool that we used to be able to achieve this was the UNCRPD because it was clearly states that sign language is a fully fledged language and that governments need to support that sign language is recognised as a fully-fledged language in all aspects of life, and in all testing areas as well.

Every country needs to figure out what their path is to make sure that the

UNCRD is fully implemented, but we can all use the UNCRPD to support our discussions with governments. Please remember that just because your sign language maybe recognised and legally recognised in your country, that is not enough. You now need to take the next step and take the next fight up with your Governments to make sure that it's properly implemented, that the laws are changed, that it's recognised in many different aspects of life. So my most important message to you is please do not stop the lobbying, please do not stop fighting for the implementation of sign language rights because we still have a long way to go, even though there's been many instruments and/or sign languages recognised.

Through further amendments in your laws, or any type of systematic processes, then we can fully develop as a Deaf Community in our countries.

Governments must also recognise that deaf people, yes have their own culture, however, within the Deaf Community there are also many different identities. Deaf women, deaf men, deaf children. Elderly deaf, highly educated deaf, deaf people that are not highly educated, and so that the information that is provided to them needs to be at their level and needs to reach them and needs to reach all the different communities. So within our Deaf Community we have sub communities that also need to make sure that they get their rights and their issues heard.

So that was a historical review but what I do see currently, is that we have taken positive steps forward. Within the Deaf Community, we have much more deaf leadership. We have many tools that we can use, for example the UNCRPD to further support our work and our fight. We can use these instruments to further change in the Government, and in laws, but if there's one take away home message it's please, don't think that our work is done. Sign language recognition, UNCRPD is just one step, we need to now implement all of these instruments into our laws and into our current constitution, into our current daily lives. We need to make sure they are visible in the workplace, in education. Once we have full access, then we can take a break but that's not the case yet. At the workplace, if you're only one deaf person amongst many hearing colleagues, providing an interpreter is not enough. Many people think you are providing access to the deaf person, by providing an interpreter. However, this deaf person after the meeting or before the meeting cannot enjoy any of the social dialogue going on. The best case scenario would be that the colleagues also know some sign language. Then is this deaf colleague truly an equal participant in the workplace.

If everyone you knows little bit of sign language, then deaf people can be truly included.

So full inclusion does not mean just providing an interpreter, we need to

remember that there are other ways to achieve this. Making sure that there are sign language environments, that there is direct communication, and it's our responsibility, and our allies' responsibility to make sure that this happens.

It is important that we have access to information, and that we have direct communication just like Markku said before me, the medical point of view of deaf people is a stigmatisation that we need to long get rid of. This is a view of the past, that we are broken, that we need to be fixed, the medical point of view. We need to now change to a human rights point of view and a linguistic point of view of deaf people and the Deaf Community.

Many of us have language rights, sign language is recognised, but now we need to look at full inclusion and what true full inclusion means for the Deaf Community. We are not disabled, if we are fully included. We will not be fully included, if people don't see us as a language minority, and see us in a human rights model. We can fully be included and work, be equal to others if we have sign language or ways to be included in any communication form that fits us. So we have a long way to go, but if we keep moving forward and taking this step by step together, I do see that in the Deaf Community it's already achieving and taking further steps forward, and there are many achievements that have been taken thus far, we need to make sure we take use of these tools empower ourselves and continue lobbying for full inclusion of deaf people. Once again the UNCRPD has been ratified by your country, now we need to work on implementing the UNCRPD, implementing sign language recognised laws in your country. That's what I have to share with you today if you have any questions. Thank you for listening.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you so much to our vice-president Gergely for your presentation on inclusion. If you have any questions, our viewers, as you can see at the bottom of your screen you can type your question in the comment section on Facebook, you can even send a video in International Sign to the EUD WhatsApp number, and on the bottom of your screen you see the WhatsApp number of EUD, WhatsApp group. Let me introduce our next speaker, our director Mark Wheatley who will give a presentation on deaf culture. Mark, the floor is yours.

MARK WHEATLEY: Hello everyone. So exciting to have this webinar of the EUD. My topic is deaf culture, and deaf identity. Looking through several research articles, I have been trying to find out what is deaf culture. What is the deaf identity and how is that achieved. Let me start by quoting the research called Kluckhohn who wrote this definition of culture already in 1951. He states that cultures consist of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting it's acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols that constitute the distinctive achievement of human groups, including embodiment in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional idea and especially their

attached values.

Several other researcher studies on deafness, also mention that deaf identity is achieved rather than assigned. It's the outcome of a growth process. Every cultural and personal identity is achieved through life's progress, by being led into a culture.

Hilde Haualand wrote in 2008 what distinguishes deaf culture from other cultures it's not tied to a specific place, country or location. Since deaf people live all over the world, deaf culture exists all over the world as well. Holcombe in 2016 wrote that the knowledge that these people pass on is crucial, not only to learn about deaf history or to get better at signing, but also to learn how to effectively navigate in the hearing environment. One example of deaf culture is sharing everything. Deaf people tend to talk long and about all kinds of topics. Even intimate ones. It helps other deaf people understand something they can only be explained in the national sign language of the country. Deaf culture also is about taking pride in being deaf and embracing one's deafness with all the uniqueness that comes with it.

So these quotes give you a background, give you a taster, provide you food for thought. An important fact is that 90% of deaf children are born to hearing families. This statistic that's consistent throughout the years. About 30 years ago, the main fabric of deaf culture, the deaf schools, were very strong. Deaf schools provided solidarity in times of discrimination and lack of access. There was a strong closely knit Deaf Community, deaf parties, deaf camps. Now 30 years later we see deaf schools are being closed. Deaf children being mainstreamed in hearing-aid occasion. As Paddy Ladd framed it we're being colonised, we're being enforced into mainstream culture, into hearing society. Putting some of us at a loss. Putting some deaf children at risk of having less opportunities to develop their deaf identity. But nowadays, through social media, deaf people is acquired perhaps in different ways. Because of mainstreaming, of fewer deaf clubs, perhaps at the same time we have better access through legislation. Also, social media provides an opportunity to identify ourselves, to look up to deaf role models, famous deaf people. Now what will happen in the future? What is the bridge between the Deaf Community, and isolated, mainstream young people and deaf culture? One way would be sports. That would be one way for them to acquire and embrace deaf culture. So it's good to keep an eye on the trends, what will be the trends that impact our future for the next 30 years, perhaps sign language legislation implemented in education. Sign languages being taught in schools like other spoken languages. Gergely mentioned an opportunity of language testing and assessment, as accepted as an equally valid tool for testing one's knowledge. We will probably see an increased use of social media, we are still left with a big question. How shall deaf culture be passed on to future generations? With all the mainstreaming going on, how do we pull in the deaf youngsters, a very

important path will be through deaf sports. We know that traditional deaf clubs are diminishing in number, sports have been a traditional path for deaf individuals in deaf culture. We have the European Championships, we have the European Deaf Sports Association so sports can provide a path for individuals, and a path for deaf culture as a collective culture to grow.

I open the floor for questions, and comments. What is the future of deaf culture and deaf identity? It will be fluid, there will be different ways, maybe traditional ways of deaf clubs and places to gather will diminish in number, but perhaps sports, social media, and other ways will open up. Going back to Hilde Hauualands' statement, deaf culture is not restricted to one location it's a global culture. Thank you very much.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Welcome back, thank you very much Mark Wheatley for your presentation on deaf culture and its future thank you so much. Again, if you have any questions, we will see a few coming in, and we will have a Q&A session afterwards. You are welcome to type up more questions, or video yourself and send a question to the WhatsApp group or the Facebook comments section.

I want to introduce the next speaker, Lolo Danielsson, a member of the EUD Board, who will speak on languages and linguistic rights of deaf people. Lolo, you have the floor.

LOLO DANIELSSON: Hello everybody! Thank you Markku for giving me the floor. This is the first time that I will be presenting on this webinar, on a webinar platform so it's a new experience for me. The title of my talk was already mentioned, but I would like to further look at the importance of national sign languages, why are national sign languages important, what is International Sign and also looking to see if sign languages are minority languages I will go further in these three topics.

First I would like to look out the importance of national sign languages and why they are so important. World-wide, people think that sign language is universal, that there is one universal sign language that is used throughout the world. However, we all know and I would like you to know, that every country has their own sign language. Perhaps even more than one sign language. They have their own cultural identity, which is closely intertwined with their own sign language. So every country has their own national sign language, and I think it's important for all Governments to recognise that their own country has their own sign language, and legally recognise their sign language as an official language of their country. There are different ways to legalise a sign language within your legal abilities, it can be recognised as a Bill, or can be put in your Constitution, whatever way works for your Government but it's important that it's legally recognised. Many people wonder if sign languages are equal to

spoken language's once again yes. Spoken language is an oral and auditory language, and sign languages are a visual language and a manual language. Those are the only two differences.

When we look at grammar, and the structure of a language, they both are full-fledged languages, have their own grammar their own structures, and are full-fledged languages is this has been proved in many, many sign language studies.

And a sign language is also learned as a first language. They can speak about everything in sign language, and they can learn about everything through a sign language, and deaf people can use sign language as their first language throughout their whole lives from the day they are born, to the day they die, and use it and be a full-fledged part of society.

However, sign language needs to receive the appropriate status within their country to be given that recognition. Yesterday in the Netherlands the Parliament, the first step has recognised and has voted unanimously passed the sign language law there. So that means if it's going to be fully recognised, they will be able to then fight for further language rights.

There are many countries that have already recognised their sign languages within the EU. This is a very positive step for the European communities, and European countries, however, when a sign language is recognised legally, you must then look further into the other laws and make the appropriate amendments within education, within the justice system, within language rights. So that then needs to take that next step and be fully implemented in their laws and society.

Sign language interpretation also needs to be looked at through the lens of sign languages that have been legalised. What are the rights then for the deaf people now that their sign language has been recognised? So we need to look at all the different possibilities and I call upon all of you, every European country, to look further now that if your sign language has been recognised, in one way or another, to take the next step and contact your governments and continue to make sure that all the laws are any time of certain processes, need to be changed to make sure that you can have full access to this sign language right, that you can enjoy all the benefits of it.

Deaf people still encounter many barriers and language barriers, so whatever that barrier might be within your country, we need to break down those barriers and make sure that we have a barrier free society and life.

I would now like to move on to the topic of International Sign. What is International Sign? Many people think that International Sign is a language, but

when we look further into the use of International Sign, it is compilation of signs or a fix of signs that two people use amongst each other. If I use this sign for example, most people could recognise that this is a flying object that it's an airplane. If I do this sign most people can see it's a boat. So they use many iconic signs, just like the sign for drinking, so you try to find the sign that you know that is more visual. And you use much more visual, much more facial expressions. Your facial expressions can support the signs that you're using to be as clear as possible so that the person you're talking with understand you. National sign languages, however, take into consideration that the person you're speaking to has, exact same set of signs and vocabulary and therefore they have a set standard vocabulary that is used. Currently I am now using International Sign, whereas when we come to a meeting together from different countries, when we have media broadcast like this, we have people from many different countries, however, we come together so often that we come and have an agreed upon set of signs. But they can still vary to a certain extent. But we use the signs from our national sign languages and bring them to International Sign, but they are easily understood. One good example is the sign for corona. A few people use the sign for corona in certain countries then it spread out world-wide, many countries now use the sign the same sign for corona, the hand sign I am using. However, that has been used internationally, that has been taken on into many people's national sign languages. There's a lot more information to be shared about it but that's what I will share with you today, you can find more information in other places.

Thirdly, I would like to talk about sign languages being seen as a minority language. In the UN I have to say when a certain person with a very, very long name that I wouldn't be able to spell out, but they have further looked at sign languages, and also looked at minority languages and said that sign languages is the same as minority languages, can be seen as minority languages. Because there are a group of people and this language belongs to this group of people, and this group of people is a minority group. The EU also has stated in an instrument in regards to empowering national sign languages to be seen as a minority language. So that is also being worked on. So that we can make sure our sign languages do not becoming endangered, to protect our sign languages, because it used by such a small group of people.

So one way we can protect our sign languages, is by making sure they are also recognised as minority languages and it's the minority language of deaf people. That can empower us and that can empower sign language and national sign language so the futures to make sure they live on and do not die out. So I believe it's very important for us to look at sign languages and have them the status as a minority language to make sure they do not become extinct. We need this support, and I believe with many changes in society it will be the make or break of sign language being to continue in society and stay alive. Yes we have national sign languages and minority languages and

minority communities, and we belong to both. Many things can happen in the world, however, we can protect our sign language rights our use of sign language if we also give it the status as a minority language. So that we can make sure we can keep the access and status of our sign languages, that they are full-fledged languages that's so we can make sure we pass this language on.

This is what I would like to share today if you have any questions I look forward to hearing any of your questions and having a nice fruitful discussion. Thank you.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Welcome back. Thank you so much Lolo for your presentation on sign languages as minority languages, on linguistic rights, thank you very much. Now we have had three speakers, and this is your time. We have seen some questions come in, through different channels is time for us to put the questions to our speakers and to open the discussion. David Hay could we have the three speakers on video please a thank you. Ok Lolo, welcome, Gergely, Mark we see all of you very good. Thank you all three of you for your presentation, we have had some questions from our audience, David Hay can you remove the image of the two International Sign interpreters we don't need that on our screens. You read the subtitles which I will sign as well. Then I will put the first questions to you. It's up to you, three speakers to choose who will respond. First of all, "Happy day of sign languages, what is planned to decrease the number of illiterate deaf people?" People with poor reading and writing skills. Who of you would like to respond to this question? I am looking at our three speakers, can you raise your hand if you want to respond to this. Gergely.

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: I can start however, that's a very difficult question. Deaf people that are illiterate does not mean they are not intelligent, doesn't mean they are stupid, they just don't have the tools, they have not had the education, so we need to provide these tools to the deaf people to make sure and the best tool is sign language. So if we can give them sign language, then they can access literacy, however, the responsible to give that to them is the country's Government within their education systems, and also the deaf associations to lobby for those rights, to make sure that sign language is provided to deaf children within education, that they are instructed in sign language, then we can reduce the number of illiterate deaf people.

MARKKU JOKINEN: So Lolo you also raised your hand, Lolo take the floor.

LOLO DANIELSSON: Yes, and also within education that they are educated in bilingual education, so within education in sign language but also yeah not spoken language but in the language of the country. So in written language. So they are taught to read and write. Because currently, they receive only most everything in reading and writing and they don't have enough sign

language, but if they were given the opportunity to learn both at the same time, and give them some practical tools on how to use their sign language knowledge to learn how to read and write, that's also really important.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you Lolo. Perhaps Mark, before you take the floor, it is true that many deaf people do not have good reading and writing skills. Especially when they are mainstreamed. So it's important that sign language is actually the language of instruction and it's for most deaf children the first acquired language. Mark do you have statistics, do you have any statistics of the number of illiterate deaf people?

MARK WHEATLEY: We do not have official statistics. Many deaf people are invisible in global statistics that mainly look at disabled people as a whole population, there's no disaggregated data on the number of deaf people who are illiterate.

MARKKU JOKINEN: This is an issue that clearly is a problem, and can be explained by the fact that sign language is not yet used as language or instruction in many countries. So this lack of access to good education in sign language, has been demonstrated to be a major explanatory factor, explaining the illiteracy of many deaf people. We have many more questions, can we move to next please. I will give you time to read it first then I will sign the question. One person asked "What do you think about inclusive education policy? Which are in place in many countries in Europe currently so what do you think? We know that deaf people still face major barriers in the area of education, mark would you like to start responding.

MARK WHEATLEY: It's true that in many EU countries the inclusive education policies focus maybe on physical accessibility, and typically language and communication are forgotten when inclusive education policies. Also many education policies look at training more interpreters, to provide access to deaf children in mainstream education. However, this fact has positive and negative consequences. Yes, on the upside, deaf children do have access to good quality education in the hearing society the downside is the lack of access to peers and peer's education.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Looking at Gergely and Lolo to see if you want to add something if not ... this question reminds me actually of the World Federation of the Deaf who has a position paper saying inclusive education policy means linguistic inclusion. Inclusion in a sign language environment. Like Gergely mentioned, there is different degrees of inclusion, ideally a sign language environment would be provided. That would be fully inclusive. If not as a Plan B, as a second option, sign language interpreters could be used to provide some form of inclusion.

Ok can we remove the questions. This is interesting. I will sign the question. I am going to take my eye off the camera for a moment to look at my phone. This question could be interpreted in several ways. The first aspect is are deaf people, when they are seen as linguistic minority, does that mean that they are not fully included? And other part of the question says maybe the problem of being a linguistic minority is problematic, maybe it will prevent us from inclusion in society. If deaf people felt fully included in society, perhaps they would not want to be seen as a minority. So perhaps there are other ways, other concepts that are more helpful. It's quite a complex question, layered question. What do you think about the relation between the view of deaf people as a linguistic cultural minority and inclusion. Gergely?

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: Thank you for this question, this is a very interesting question indeed. When only looking at minority languages in general, countries round the world have minority languages within their country. And they are looking to make sure that they have the rights to use their language, so that they because otherwise they don't have access to information. When we put a deaf person in that situation, and we look at them as a language minority, we have the exact same problem, they also do not have access to information because they do not share the majority language. So I think when we look at a deaf person, as a disabled person, or as a deaf person as a language minority, governments in the past like we had said have looked at deaf people as a medical, within the medical view and said they cannot hear, they are in the group of people that cannot hear, that cannot see that they are seen as disabled. However, we have noticed that our disability then or our barrier is communication when we're seen in this light. And therefore, being seen given language rights, would help us have full access to communication. When a deaf person is not able to have full access to their surroundings, to their environment within sign language, then they will be able to get that right by being seen as a minority language. However, we also have other rights that we need as we're seen as disabled. So we don't know what's going to happen in 100 years, if everyone could sign we wouldn't be disabled.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you Gergely. Perhaps Lolo you would like to add something, but before moving on, we have loads of questions come in. We have approximately 20 minutes, 25 minutes left. So perhaps you will not be able to answer all the questions, but Lolo, the floor is yours.

LOLO DANIELSSON: I just want to add, I definitely agree with what Gergely shared but if we look at ourselves as a language minority, then people also see that we have a history, that we have a history that we have carried on. That parents would like to, and want to, pass on this language to their children. So when we're seen as a minority, a language minority, they will look back for generations and see what we like to pass on to following generations. And there are different rules when looking at minorities and their minority

languages. And sign language fits these rules much more! But we don't follow all the rules of what a minority community or minority language has. So unfortunately the minority language community has also said you're not a minority language you're disabled. So we don't really fit in both worlds we're not 100% a minority community, we're not 100% within the disabled community. We're in the middle. So I think that has caused issues. We need to look at what does it mean to be a language minority. We need to look at that further, and not just scratch the surface. If we need access to interpreters, through the more medical point of view, medical model point of view what us that mean. We need to look it at more on a persuasion basis.

MARKKU JOKINEN: I look at Mark and I see you have nothing to add. This is very interesting the notion of inclusion, the notion of being a linguistic cultural minority, as being part of the disability movement, of all three aspects are boxes that need to be ticked, and EUD clearly has a task here to further look into these concepts, their inter-relatedness and how we can use them. The next question. Ok we can remove the question now. The question is, coming from Amanda, we have sign language we also have deaf culture. So a part from the linguistic status, we also have to look at the cultural status of sign languages, and the sign language artifacts, if not, our languages are not documented, that heritage cannot be passed on.

MARK WHEATLEY: This is a very interesting question, nowadays we see many countries taking steps towards sign language legislation. The first step being recognising sign language in law. The next step would be to add to the legislation, to strengthen the legislation. The next step would be to see sign language as recognised by UNESCO for example as a language that needs to be reserved and preserved as a cultural heritage. Austria has taken this step, other countries are moving towards recognising national sign languages as cultural heritage. The EUD has started, or will start a new project, to develop a deaf museum, but there's a lot of steps that need to be taken before we have achieved that. We need to see sign language users as owning human rights, and we cannot forget our history. We cannot forget our values, these are part of our cultural heritage.

MARKKU JOKINEN: You're totally right, we cannot distinguish or separate our language from our culture, and we need to lobby for those in, as one unit. Next question. During this Coronavirus we have seen online meetings go viral. Even this webinar is an example of that. A new barrier is created by not having online captioning, live, do you have any ideas on how live captioning could be provided. Gergely?

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: This also a good question, in my presentation I shared how life is changing, our society is changing the environment is changing, once again Hungarian sign language was recognised in 2009. We knew nothing about

corona or COVID-19, and then COVID-19 appeared. Everything changed the way we went about our daily work changed, however, and I work in the Parliament, I was able to then point to the recognition of sign language, to make sure that we have access to all the information. So it gave me new aims and new reasons to lobby for new laws, and so luckily and so that's something we need to look at. With every change in society, we need to constantly lobby for new rights.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you. Just interrupt you here, perhaps we need to provide information to organisers of webinars, one thing for example is that many automated cameras in video conferencing tools only zoom in on the face and voice seems to have preference. A preference of automated tools. So perhaps we would need wider shots. Gergely?

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: Yeah I think it's true this webinar, and through the corona pandemic, I think it's very good that we at our next board meeting and our next General Assembly, we can actually come up with a set of guidelines. Also to make sure that it's legally recognised that these guidelines on providing interpreting services or interpreters, are taken up legally.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you. The next question on accessibility. Thank you can we remove the question now. Interesting question, live captioning and/or sign language interpretation, which is more helpful. Mark?

MARK WHEATLEY: For me I like both. I like to see sign language interpretation, very important, but imagine if you're looking at a screen all the time, sometimes I need a visual break, visual strain is quite intense. If I have live captioning, I could take my eyes off the interpretation for a bit and look at the caption text. Hearing people can let their eyes wander round the room while they are still getting the auditory information, so for me as a visual person, both are equally important.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Lolo, you want to add something then we move on to the next question.

LOLO DANIELSSON: Yes I completely agree with what Mark said that it's very straining on the eyes, the eyes is as muscle as we know, but if we have different options that is the best, that we're only looking at sign language then we don't have any other options. The more options that are provided, the more we can understand and the more access that we have. If there is something we didn't understand, either in the signing or in the captioning, they complement each other and give us the full picture. So I prefer to have both. To have the spoken language, to get the words but also to have all the information in sign language to fully follow everything, that's the most important.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you Lolo and Mark. We're running out of time, so I want to move quick on to next ... [signed video question] thank you Ahmed from Sweden. So the first element of the question is do we have the statistics, about the number of deaf people in Europe do we have the number of sign language users in Europe?

MARK WHEATLEY: This is very hard to gather data. This is something we share with other groups in the disability movement, we want to see disaggregated data we want to know how many deaf people there are. But even within the Deaf Community, there's huge variation. If you look at people that are medically deaf you will also include people who lost their hearing because of age for example. So we would be interested in knowing how many sign language users there are who are deaf. We have asked this to national deaf associations. A rough estimate is that 0.01 people are sign language users which on a European scale would mean 60,000 sign language users, it's a very rough estimate though we will keep on pushing for more accurate data, for better statistics and also look at the correlation between the number of sign language users and for example employment statistics, how many people sign language users are employed. This part of our future work we will definitely look into it.

MARKKU JOKINEN: I think we move on to the next question. This is a very important question. Yes there are deaf people out there, many in the world, who are not aware of the existence of deaf schools, were not aware of the fact that there's other deaf people in the world. What can we do to include these deaf individuals in our communities. Gergely? No, Lolo first.

LOLO DANIELSSON: Ooh that's very hard to answer! I think [*mobile phone ringing*] in this world with so many individuals so many different languages, how do we reach people. I think this is something that we need to discuss more as we go on. For the moment, I don't have a clear answer unfortunately, perhaps we should be starting to think about how we could tackle the issue.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Lolo, you know that's as Nordic countries we are very active in working in developing countries, so perhaps we are well positioned to start contemplating this issue.

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: Yes it is also a difficult question but a very important question. I believe every country is responsible for recognising when there are deaf people in their community, within the hearing community we need to make sure that they are aware that their deaf children need to receive sign language. However, this doesn't happen very often, they are often are not being sent to deaf schools so I think on a systematic level, we need to work with the medical community and make sure that when there is a child that is

born deaf, that the deaf associations have access to medical community to let them know, to pass on the information that their child can go to a hearing school or a deaf school, that there are different ways of communication. Unfortunately this has been approached in many different ways and it's, there's not one easy answer for this.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you Lolo. Just for your information, and looking at the time, shall we end this webinar at 11.30, or do we have time to go past that a little bit? Ok. My aim is to end this webinar by 11.30, unfortunately. Move on to the next question. Can we remove the question now. In we see a growing number of deaf interpreters, and deaf interpreters are becoming the new topic for debate. Do we see any developments towards University level training for deaf interpreters?

MARK WHEATLEY: As the EUD we work together with the EUDY, the European Union of Deaf Youth, EFSLI, European Federation of Sign Language Interpreters. We're now preparing a position paper on deaf interpreters, position paper outlining the educational requirements for deaf interpreters, this is work in progress. EFSLI will prepare their position paper in collaboration with us on deaf interpreters, and we will make the widely available when we have it.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Next question. Remove the question. On the topic of deaf museum or deaf museums, should we perhaps have a cultural heritage project as EUD, what do you think of this idea, Mark?

MARK WHEATLEY: Recently, the EUD actually won a bid for a project from the Erasmus+ programme, looking at the deaf museums. And our responsibility in this project is to collect information about the existence of deaf museums, very exciting, this project, and we hope that in a year, in a year and a half from now we will have the outcome, so we will be able to share the report.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you Mark. The next interesting question. Interesting. We have been discussing the need to advocate for minority language's but some deaf associations actually lobby for a status equal to that of spoken language which do you think is the most useful, Gergely can I look at you, can you speak from your Hungarian experience.

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: Yes, it's a good question! Yes we see sign languages at a minority language, but indeed in Hungary, sign language has been recognised to where it is also equal to other spoken languages. So then you would say maybe then it's not a minority language. Unfortunately in the minority language rules, so sign language has been recognised within Hungary as the language of the Deaf Community, so I think you can have both, why not?

MARKKU JOKINEN: Lolo, Mark you want to add something?

LOLO DANIELSSON: In Sweden, Swedish Sign Language is not seen as an official language, we have our national language however, Swedish Sign Language cannot be an official language because we already have an official language. So in Sweden, unfortunately not been able to have that same status as official language or as a national language.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Because even spoken Swedish is not seen as a national language. Mark, you want to add something?

MARK WHEATLEY: It's a perfect example, if the spoken language of a country is not legally, doesn't that have any legal status it's such a situation in such a country you can't legislate for a status of sign language.

MARKKU JOKINEN: The next we're running out of time, we have two minutes left, quickly the next question perhaps. One more. Remove the question please. Thank you for the question. Mark, looking at you?

MARK WHEATLEY: In some countries indeed like for example Belgium, indeed deaf people have an interpreter budget. It's not expressed in money, monetary value, but deaf children have the right to use a sign language interpreter for an X amount of hours. And this again, the EUD should, has a role in collecting these models of good examples, of good practice. Vienna you also have a good arrangement, it's something that should be a right universally throughout the European Union.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Let's close at a nice number, we'll have question number 12 as a last question for today. Do we know how many countries have recognised sign language as a minority language? What do you think, any information? Mark?

MARK WHEATLEY: I have to refer here to the EUD report on Status of Sign Languages, I would have to look again at our report to see how many countries sign language has been recognised as a minority language.

MARKKU JOKINEN: And there are different degree and different ways of nine sign language as an official language, as a minority language, other ways. We're coming to end of our webinar. First of all, I want to thank all the people who sent questions, it was important to enable us to have a discussion and a dialogue with you. Also I want to thank our three speakers for your time. I want to close by asking you if you want to briefly comment about what you thought of this webinar, Gergely let me start with you.

GERGELY TAPOLCZAI: I just want to thank everyone that is watching today,

and I what I would like to leave you with us please don't think that our work is done. Our work is not done we need to keep on working on implementing all of the instruments that are there, and all of the legalised sign language laws that we have now been able to achieve.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you for these empowering words Gergely Lolo?

LOLO DANIELSSON: This the first time I have been involved as a panellist at an EUD webinar, it's a new experience for me but also a new experience how to interact with the European community, and until now it's been physical meetings, and this new technology really adds yeah, new possibilities for us. I think it's important for us to see how we can use this technology and this media and broadcasting possibilities for the future, so thanks for having me here and I am really impressed with the possibilities for the future.

MARKKU JOKINEN: Thank you Lolo, and finally Mark.

MARK WHEATLEY: I am sorry what can I say? An important part of deaf culture is to be able to hug each other, that's no longer possible but I am very grateful on the European day of sign languages to be able to share this as part of the International Week of the Deaf, Markku.

MARKKU JOKINEN: That leaves me with the task to wish you all a happy sign language day and like Lolo said sign languages are for all not just for deaf people. Sign languages are important for everybody. It's a way to celebrate a culture, a language, and I wish you all strength in all your work. I want to thank the audience, I want to thank the three speakers, enjoy the rest of International Week of the Deaf. Bye-bye.