

1. Introduction

f) Executive Summary

This fourth book of the EUD publication series, which explores the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) from a European deaf perspective, focuses specifically on Article 24 and Education.

Most importantly, from a deaf perspective, Article 24 paragraphs 3 (b) & (c) highlight the obligation to facilitate “the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community” as well as to ensure “that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.” This book’s central objective is to analyse these and other relevant paragraphs of Article 24 in order to highlight elements required to ensure the full and adequate implementation of these rights, as well as of the UNCRPD committee’s “General Comment No 4 on the Right to Inclusive Education.” This book aims to point out requirements that EUD considers necessary to ensure that deaf learners of all ages have a meaningful, equitable, and participatory learning experience in an environment that maximises their academic and social development, as stipulated by Article 24.

UNCRPD Implementation in Europe – A deaf perspective. Article 24: Education is divided into three main parts. The introduction contains the full text of Article 24 as well as of the UNCRPD committee’s General Comment No 4 on the Right to Inclusive Education. This was the first time that a General Comment had been published on the topic that is addressed in a book of this series. General Comments provide a more in-depth interpretation of the article in question for State Parties and relevant stakeholders and are therefore intended to influence the implementation of the article. For this reason, both texts are analysed throughout the publication. The second part explores the topic of deaf education from an academic perspective, analysing aspects of Article 24 as well as General Comment No 4. It addresses an array of measures that must be adequately realised in order for an education environment to be considered fully accessible for deaf learners, especially those who use sign language. Only fully accessible environments provide deaf learners with the potential for equal academic, cultural, personal and social development. The third part contains descriptions of practice examples of different accessible bilingual quality education environments for deaf learners—ranging from deaf schools to inclusive schools—highlighting the diversity of options that already exist across Europe.

This innovative series provides a deeper understanding of the UNCRPD from a European deaf perspective, not only in terms of deafness and the importance of sign language, but also with a view toward the practical implementation of specific articles of the Convention, here Article 24 on education. This book is intended to serve as a guide for stakeholders at all levels, including education policy-makers, national associations of the deaf, school leaders, teachers, parents and young deaf learners themselves by providing insights into how to ensure fully accessible quality education for deaf persons. It thus has the potential to act as a conduit for the appropriate implementation of Article 24 of the Convention and contribute to the creation of a Europe that provides equal access as well as equal rights and opportunities for all its citizens.