

2017

2017
IMPACT
REPORT



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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 2017:

Board 2014 - 2017:

President Dr Markku Jokinen
Vice-President Dr Humberto Insolera
Board Member Louise "Lolo" Danielsson
Board Member Alfredo Gómez Fernández
Board Member Dr Gergely Tapolczai

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



Dr Markku Jokinen



Dr Gergely Tapolczai



Louise "Lolo" Danielsson



Sofia Isari



Daniel Büter

The EUD interns Gianluca Grioli, Bernadette Auersperg and Valeria Giura, 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.

FOREWORD BY EUD PRESIDENT

My mandate as president came to an end this year along with the other four board members. We held board elections in Valletta, Malta wherein I was re-elected as the President of EUD by our members. I am humbled and honoured to continue my work for sign language users across the Europe. We were saddened to see Dr Humberto Insolera and Alfredo Gómez Fernández finish their mandate, but are happy to welcome Daniel Büter (Germany) and Sofia Isari (Greece) as our new board members. We wish our two new board members the best of luck for their coming term!

EUD has once again recruited another staff member, a policy assistant, Martyna Balčiūnaitė (Lithuania) to support Katja Reuter, our Policy Officer.

There are two inspiring deaf and sign language users who achieved great things this year, the first being MEP Helga Stevens, who was nominated as one of the candidates for the Presidency of the European Parliament. The second was Dr Humberto Insolera, who was elected to the Executive Committee of the European Disability Forum (EDF). We are encouraged to see such amazing work and we hope to see more inspiring deaf individuals becoming role models and leaders.

Focusing on our work for this year, there were several changes within our organisational structure, including mentioned staff changes. However, it did not end there, in our lobbying work we faced tricky situations, particularly with regards to the European Accessibility Act (EAA). In the initial proposal given by the European Commission, we were pleased to see that Deaf sign language users were

considered, and the Act looked positive. However, the European Parliament made many compromises that weakened the European Accessibility Act for not only our members, but for all persons with disabilities across the EU. Yet, we must remain positive about the proposed EAA, although we believe there is much room for future amendments, which we will continue to strive for.

Putting the EAA aside, another main part of our work this year was the topic of education for deaf learners. We have released a position paper that has been voted on, and adopted by the official delegates of our National Associations of the Deaf (NADs). The position paper focused on the UNCRPD Committee's General Comment No 4 on the Right to Inclusive Education. This position could not have been published at a better time, as the fourth book of the UNCRPD series also focused on Article 24: Education and was also published this year. It is 260 pages long, containing articles written by several reputable authors, edited by our Policy Officer, Katja Reuter. It is available to be purchased online and on our website.

Within the EUD's working groups, we have made some changes to keep up with current affairs, for instance, there is now a new working group focusing on Gender Equality.

I would like to finish my foreword by announcing that EUD has been given the status of Special consultative with the United Nations, which is a remarkable achievement. We are very honoured to be one of the few NGOs around the world to have been given this special status.


Dr Markku Jokinen
EUD President



EUD INTRODUCTION

EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

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

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

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

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

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

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

These key values are also mirrored in the daily work of its Brussels headquarters. The office provides a fully accessible signing environment with international staff from many different countries across the EU. 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 system that fosters the acquisition of the national and/or regional sign language(s) (and the national written language), deaf children will not be able to enjoy their basic human rights as children or later in their adult life.

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

EUD INITIATIVES

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

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

The EUD General Assembly took place in Valletta, Malta on the 20th and 21st of May 2017. We also had workshops focusing on Gender Equality and the EUD Membership fees, which were moderated by Louise Danielsson, Berglind Stefánsdóttir and Dr Gergely Tapolczai respectively.

Furthermore, EUD board elections took place. As there were only five candidates, the voting process was simplified. The delegates voted and approved all the candidates as follows:

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

The delegates at the General Assembly welcomed the new board and witnessed the departure of Alfredo Gómez Fernández and Dr Humberto Insolera after their 4-year term. We thank them for their contribution to achieving the goals of EUD.

The hot topic of the General Assembly was the membership fees. During the debate, many points were raised. After the debate was concluded, it was voted that the membership fee will increase by 5%, however the board will have the authority to discuss with NADs who are facing financial difficulties on a case by case basis.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND EUD BOARD ELECTIONS, VALLETTA, MALTA



The new EUD board 2017-2021,
Valletta, Malta



EUD Election Results,
Valletta, Malta

EUD INITIATIVES

BOARD MEETINGS

In 2017, the four quarterly board meetings of EUD took place in Rovaniemi, Finland; Valletta, Malta; Brussels, Belgium and Budapest, Hungary. 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. Rovaniemi, Finland

On the 3rd and 4th of February, EUD had their first board meeting in 2017, which took place in Rovaniemi, Finland.

During the meeting, board and staff planned the upcoming general assembly in May, including the workshops, seminar and the

EUD board elections. Moreover, staff and board discussed EUD's policy and media plans for 2017, recent development in EUD's ongoing and new projects, for example emergency service accessibility, employment of deaf persons as well as other advocacy and research work that EUD has been undertaking in 2017 on the topic of deaf education.



EUD Board Meeting,
Rovaniemi, Finland

2. Valletta, Malta

The second board meeting took place as part of the General Assembly in May. As it was the last meeting for the 2013- 2017 EUD Board members, it was a good opportunity

for the board to reflect and ensure a smooth transition for the new board. The focus of the board meeting was the implementation of the 2017 work programme. It also involved final preparations for the General Assembly.



Steven Mulvaney, President,
Maltese Association of the Deaf

3. Brussels, Belgium

The third board meeting of the year 2017 brought together the new board for the first time. It took place in EUD's office in Brussels over two days. The EUD Board discussed important issues such as updates on the adoption process of the European

Accessibility Act and the UNCRPD publication on Article 24: Education. Furthermore, other topics linked to EUD's 4-year programme proposal prior to the European Commission's approval were addressed.

EUD Board Meeting,
Brussels, Belgium



4. Budapest, Hungary

The fourth board meeting of 2017 took place in Budapest, Hungary to coincide with the 3rd International Conference of the World Federation of the Deaf. EUD Executive director Mark Wheatley attended the board

meeting on behalf of the EUD staff, discussing activities of 2017 and the remaining work that needed to be finished to be in full compliance with EUD's work programme for 2017.

Róbert Ormóni
Director of Hungarian Association of
the Deaf, Budapest, Hungary



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, Rovaniemi, Finland

The Finnish Association of the Deaf organised a seminar, in which the board and staff participated and gave presentations. Up to 70 Members of the deaf community in Rovaniemi and its surroundings as well as the President of the Finnish deaf association were present to follow presentations on EUD's work, inclusive education, employment, sign language recognition in the EU and the UNCRPD and the rights that it confers to persons with disabilities, including to deaf people. Furthermore, it gave the board and staff the opportunity to have direct animated exchange with the members of the Finnish deaf community about their priorities, challenges and opportunities with regards to accessibility and equal rights in all areas of life.

Seminar in Rovaniemi, Finland



Seminar, Valletta, Malta

The European Pillar of Social Rights seminar, organised by the European Union of the Deaf and Deaf People Association of Malta was very successful with an attendance of over 100 participants. Various experts gave presentations focusing on different aspects of European social policy from a deaf perspective, covering topics such as sign language recognition, political participation, employment, interpreting and refugees in Europe. We would like to share our appreciation and thanks to the Deaf People Association of Malta and all their work to make this a successful event for us all.

Seminar, Ghent, Belgium

The EUD Board members gave a seminar to introduce EUD's work to the Flemish Deaf community. The turnout was approximately 50 people. EUD's interactive presentation explained EUD's structure, its members, as well as its vision to achieve equality in public and private life for Deaf sign language users. There was a debate after the presentation during which all board members gave specific examples from their home countries with regards to education and employment. The Flemish Deaf community were given many opportunities to engage in the debate. We would like to express our appreciation and thanks for the hospitality from Fevlado.



From left to right: Dr Markku Jokinen, Dr Humberto Insolera, Alistair de Gaetano, Hons. Dr Justyne Caruana, Steven Mulvaney, Helga Stevens MEP, Mark Wheatley, Oliver Scicluna

There are three Working Groups at EUD which focus on current issues of importance or topics that the General Assembly decides are a priority:

WORKING GROUPS

Update on the Gender Equality Working Group

The Gender Equality working group was recently established. Its coordinator, EUD board member, Lolo Danielsson, met a group of deaf women interested in working on these topics during a World Federation of the Deaf conference in Budapest, Hungary to discuss advocacy topics of interest related to gender equality as well as future activities in this regard.

Lolo Danielsson also made an intervention on behalf of the working group and of deaf women across Europe during a public hearing organised by the European Disability Forum

and MEP Soraya Post on "Ending Forced Sterilisation of Women and Girls With Disabilities" at the European Parliament on the 5th of December 2017. She used the opportunity to present personal accounts of forced sterilisation of deaf women that the working group had collected in preparation for this intervention.



Press statement,
Louise "Lolo" Danielsson,
EUD Board member

Update on the Deaf Lawyers Working Group

The Deaf Lawyers Group was actively involved in researching and preparing several proposals related to the increase of the EUD membership fees. The results of these discussions were presented during the

workshop on the Membership fees during the EUD General Assembly in Malta and one of the proposals was adopted by the EUD membership.

Update on the ICT and Accessibility Working Group

At the EUD board meeting in Budapest, our new board member Daniel Büter took over the leadership of this working group. In order to follow up on on-going issues in this area as well as prepare new working group activities for 2018, he attended a variety of lectures on communication accessibility during the 3rd International Conference of the World Federation of the Deaf, held in Budapest on the 8th until the 10th of November 2018, e.g. video relay service, new arising technologies with regards to sign language interpretation videos, etc. Furthermore, he

worked on building up further networks, e.g. with experts in these fields. Finally, plans have been established for recruiting new members to the working group to work on a variety of topics via email and webinars. Current plans involve activities around on-going accessibility related draft legislation, such as the European Accessibility Act, the Audio-Visual Media Service directive and the European Electronic Communications Code as well as TV programmes for deaf sign language users, video relay services, the accessibility of the European elections 2019, etc.

EUD INITIATIVES

BOARD MEMBER ACTIVITIES

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 other topic areas, such as education, from a deaf perspective.

Flemish Deaf Seniors, Ghent, Belgium

Dr Markku Jokinen attended the Flemish deaf seniors conference. This was an incredibly important event considering that there is a growing population of senior citizens in Europe as well as in the deaf community. During an exchange, this issue was addressed with regards to Europe in general, in the deaf community and particularly in Flanders. The discussion was animated, as there was a strong motivation from the participants to improve living standards, built environments

and interpreter provision as well as many other aspects crucial for social inclusion.

De Gelderhorst from the Netherlands is just one example of a service provider who showcased examples of their services during this conference to demonstrate their capabilities and services. It was fantastic to see the Flemish Deaf community representing themselves, bringing their queries directly to the government through a group of ministry representatives present at the event, who took notes on the current situation to improve the quality of life of these senior citizens. The discussion was very positive and we hope that in the future provisions and standards will improve not only in Flanders, but across Europe.

Dr Markku Jokinen
EUD President



"Full Inclusion: With Sign Language" conference, New Dehli, India

The Indian National Association of the Deaf organised a conference on "Full Inclusion: with Sign Language" in Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi on the 21st of September 2017 to celebrate the

International Week of the Deaf. EUD Vice-President Dr Gergely Tapolczai attended this event and gave two lectures outlining the Hungarian situation with regards to its sign language law. Furthermore, he informed the audience about EUD's work and had the opportunity to further discuss this in personal conversations with participants.



"Full Inclusion: With Sign
Language" conference,
New Dehli, India

World Deaf Day, Padova, Italy

EUD Vice-President Dr Gergely Tapolczai attended the World Deaf Day that took place in Padova, Italy from the 28th to the 30th of September. Its objective was to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the creation of the Italian Association of the Deaf. Within this event, a conference took place during which a variety of informative lectures were given. A number of examples of positive policies with regards to deafness were presented, including in the area of education and employment. Dr Tapolczai gave a presentation, highlighting

the importance of recognising sign language and advocated for the recognition of Italian Sign Language (LIS). We were glad to see that an Italian senator, who is a strong supporter of the recognition of LIS attended the conference. The next day of the event, a demonstration for sign language and particularly LIS took place, which allowed the organisers to draw attention to the deaf community and LIS as well as the responsibility of the Italian Parliament to move forward with the recognition bill.

Dr Gergely Tapolczai
EUD Vice-President



SINOSZ 110 years Anniversary, Budapest, Hungary

On the 11th of November, Executive Director Mark Wheatley as well as board members Sofia Isari, Lolo Danielsson and Daniel Büter attended the event organised by the Hungarian National Association of the Deaf to celebrate its 110th anniversary. It opened

with a theatrical recreation by deaf children of the first meeting of the formation of SINOSZ. The Hungarian president attended the event as well. It was a great networking opportunity with the deaf community of Hungary who had gathered for this event.

SINOSZ 110 Anniversary,
Budapest, Hungary



EUD INITIATIVES

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

EUD is one of the few European-level organisations that offer a regular remunerated internship programme. It is also the only internship that provides a full signing environment, enabling young sign language users to improve their International Sign skills

and their knowledge of European policy, 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.



Gianluca Grioli

Gianluca Grioli from Italy was the first intern joining us in Spring of 2017. He stayed with us to support the preparations of the General Assembly as well as EUD's media production for this event.



Bernadette Auersperg

Bernadette Auersperg from Austria was the second intern joining us in Autumn of 2017. She worked with our In-House sign language interpreter and Administrative Officer, Romy O'Callaghan, on administrative and financial work.



Valeria Giura

Valeria Giura from Italy was our third intern in 2017, using funding she was able to obtain from the Italian government to join EUD for the internship. It enabled her to do research task that the EUD membership had voiced interest in. Concretely, she has been researching the right to disability benefits and sign language interpretation provision across the EU. She will continue this research work in January 2018.

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

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

MEDIA

The EUD website that was launched in 2015, it allows us to release a variety of catalogued information, also enabling us to be more innovative with regards to accessibility, providing press statements in International Sign and English. Furthermore, 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.

WEBSITE

Statistics

There were 39,500 hits on the videos embedded on our website in 2017. We have increased the 48,500 ratings to this year.

Strategic Dialogue Meeting
on the European Semester



EUD INITIATIVES

SOCIAL MEDIA

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

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



Facebook

The official EUD Facebook page is still attracting new Facebook users and we are proud to say that we have increased our 'likes' from 47,000 to 53,000. The information that is being disseminated on our website is also shared on the Facebook page, along with additional photo albums of past events. The page is targeted at the general public and its exposure illustrates our lobbying work in addition to various events EUD attends and subjects it addresses.

Twitter

Twitter allows us to instantly inform about the daily activities of EUD Board members and staff. 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 account.

Instagram

The introduction of Instagram began back in September 2013. It is a distinctive way to capture political life through an artistic lens. This is a small, but growing niche audience for us. We have 1,147 followers this year.



EUD INITIATIVES

NEXES PROJECT

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

The NEXES Consortium presents a strong multi-disciplinary and complementary collective, with solid competences and experience developing research and innovation projects

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



Nexes Review Meeting, Milan, Italy

The first NEXES meeting of the year marked the halfway point of the 3 years-term of the NEXES project. It took place in January at the office of AREU in Milan, one of the NEXES project partners, which is a company working on regional emergency services.

During this meeting, the NEXES project partners had the opportunity to discuss with two officials from the European Commission about their review of the quality of work that the NEXES consortium had done so far, providing feedback to ensure that the project does not deviate from its main goals.



NEXES Project partners,
Milan, Italy

Nexes Testing Pilot, Ljubljana, Slovenia

On the 11th of April 2017, in the framework of a testing exercise in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the consortium presented the NEXES System and its capabilities to ensure that the emergency services provide efficient and effective support to the users. They used the opportunity to demonstrate the use of communication capabilities between citizens and emergency services and to identify possibilities of improvement of the NEXES system and Apps. During the pilot, several storylines based on natural disasters were acted out. The participants, including the Slovenian deaf association, interacted and highlighted the benefits and challenges of the

Participants in the testing exercise,
Ljubljana, Slovenia

enhanced location information, video calls, chat messaging functionalities and of the exchange of enriched caller information, including personal data, video and photographs the caller is willing to share.

The outcome of this meeting was positive and showed gaps in technology, information deficiencies and regulations amongst the different emergency response organisation and good practices and future trends to be followed.



NEXES Project Meeting, Bucharest, Romania

During this event held in Bucharest on the 16th and 17th of November, project partners demonstrated through the pilot the full extent of the new communication and information exchange capabilities of the NEXES system, upon the conclusion of the NEXES action's development phase. This pilot was an important activity of the NEXES project. Two workshops took place, with an audience composed of stakeholders in the establishment, management and operation of emergency

Pilot testing,
Bucharest, Romania

services in Romania and representatives of the national civil society and security industry. Our project officer Frankie Picron presented the accessibility aspects of the NEXES system. After this event, NEXES partners took the opportunity to have a milestone meeting to prepare for the crucial last months of the project which will end in April 2018.



EUD INITIATIVES

DESIGNS PROJECT

The newest project that EUD is involved in is "DESIGNS" which aims to improve labour market inclusion of deaf persons. Apart from financial autonomy, work and paid employment serves to develop a sense of belonging with positive mental health benefits and identification with the wider community. However, Deaf people throughout the world continue to face barriers in various areas of life, including employment. At the same time, research and data on unemployment is underreported and inaccurate. For instance, "deafness and hearing loss" is often used to report data, and sign language users who are Deaf are not sufficiently researched.

DESIGNS brings together partners from 4 EU countries, who are renowned experts in the fields of Employment, Education and Training, Sign Language Interpreting and Training, and Deaf community advocacy to work on these issues. The overall aim of the project is to create VET and CPD training resources and exchange

best practices across Europe to facilitate greater participation of Deaf sign language users in employment.

This will be achieved by:

- 1 Creating a training module for Deaf job seeking graduates from higher education who are reported to be underemployed and who have a lower propensity to get a job;
- 2 Creating a training module for employers to increase their awareness of deaf job applicants and job candidates so that Deaf job applicants have a better chance in succeeding in employment;
- 3 Creating a training module for sign language interpreters as part of their continuous professional development to understand the nature of interpreting in education and employment (pre-employment/during employment) settings.



DESIGNS Project Meeting, Dublin, Ireland

On the 11th and 12th of January, the first meeting of the DESIGN's project took place in Dublin. It was organised by the chair of the DESIGNS project, Haaris Sheikh from Interresource Group Limited. The meeting was followed by the official launch of the project

at the Town Hall Session at Deaf Village Ireland. 10 presentations by the expert group were given and the event was live-streamed to more than 16,000 international viewers. research work that EUD has been undertaking in 2017 on the topic of deaf education.

DESIGNS Project Partners,
Dublin, Ireland



DESIGNS Workshop, Valletta, Malta

During this event that took place of the EUD General Assembly (GA), the DESIGNS project was presented to the EUD member associations. Furthermore, we took the opportunity to ask them to participate in a survey of 11 questions targeted to EUD's member associations. Prof Lorraine Leeson (a member of the consortium) gave a presentation about, informing participants

about the project and the upcoming survey. Frankie Picron then approached delegates to provide more specific information to distribute the survey. Following the workshop, he analysed the received information and followed up with our national and regional members to receive more detailed feedback from the survey. The received data was then send to the DESIGNS partners.

DESIGNS Project Meeting, Edinburgh, Scotland

On the 16th and 17th of June, the second consortium meeting took place at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, which is one of the project partners. Project officer Frankie

Picron and Executive Director Mark Wheatley summarised the data collected from the DESIGNS Deaf Employment project in the above-mentioned Europe-wide survey.

DESIGNS Partners,
Edinburgh, Scotland



EUD INITIATIVES

SIGN TEACH PROJECT

The SignTeach project is a three-year project that is co-funded by the EU Erasmus+ programme that finished in 2017 after running for three years. Its objective was to develop, implement and evaluate an Open Educational Resource (OER) for sign language teachers and their trainers in EU member states. The OER includes information for new and experienced sign language teachers about a variety of topics, such as didactics, class management,

the Common European Framework Reference for sign languages, meta-linguistics, ICT and entrepreneurial skills, as well as interviews with new and experienced teachers and their learners.

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



Meeting, Siena, Italy

The last meeting of the SignTeach project took place in Siena, Italy. All the partners of the consortium came together to discuss the last tasks to be completed. Concretely, participants discussed the steps required

to finalise the valuable book named "Sign Language Teaching in Europe – Report & Recommendations", one of the projects' outputs, as well as topics of a more managerial nature.



SignTeach Project Partners,
Siena, Italy

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

The EU's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2010 means that there is now an obligation to implement the enshrined rights in a timely manner. Its legal

UNCRPD

implications have been widely discussed at an institutional level. As a result, it has become evident that this is a new and complex area where international, European and national political responsibilities overlap.

UNCRPD review sessions in Geneva, Switzerland

EUD, as the only European-level NGO representing deaf people and sign language users follows the UNCRPD review sessions of its members closely and provides information to its members. The aim is to support and encourage our member associations to participate in the review process and to provide up-to-date information, whilst simultaneously training the whole European deaf community. EUD supports national deaf associations of the countries that are under review by the CRPD Committee and we broadcast information through various communication channels, such as our social media accounts and our website, to ensure that the deaf perspective is mainstreamed throughout the review. EUD works in close co-operation with the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) to provide information and to ensure that the accessibility of each Committee session is guaranteed and maintained.

Between the 14th and 30th of August, EUD followed the 18th UNCRPD session online to observe the committee's review of Latvia, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We closely followed the committee's assessment of the progress in implementing the Convention and supported Latvia, Luxembourg and the British and Northern Irish deaf communities through social media.

A wide variety of issues were discussed during the review sessions. The delegations

of countries presented how they have been working towards a full implementation of the UNCRPD, and the committee pointed out its concerns about several shortcomings.

EUD was particularly pleased to see active engagement from their member organisation, the British Deaf Association (BDA) during the review of the United Kingdom. Representatives from the BDA travelled to Geneva as part of a delegation of the British Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs) to highlight to the UNCRPD committee that the deaf perspective must not be overlooked. The committee's recommendation to the UK government is to take steps to ensure the "full and equal participation" of deaf people on juries, allocate funding for sign language courses to ensure full inclusion in family life/education/work, and develop compulsory standards for securing access to information from public services and authorities. The chairman of the BDA Dr Terry Riley stated that he was glad to see that the committee has expressly recommended that the UK government create legislation protecting the language rights of deaf people, and that so many of the committee's remarks were related to this important issue.



UNCRPD Review Session,
Geneva, Switzerland

Position paper on the UNCRPD committee's General Comment No 4 on the right to inclusive education

In the first quarter of 2017, EUD worked on its position paper on the UNCRPD committee's General Comment No 4 on the right to inclusive education that had been published by the UN in August 2016.

While EUD had provided input to the General Comment through a joint submission with the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the World Federation of the Deaf Youth Section (WFDYS) and the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY). We felt that the General Comment failed to include several elements

that, from the perspective of various deaf-led organisations and academic researchers, are required to ensure that deaf children have a meaningful, equitable and participatory learning experience, are socially included and are academically successful in inclusive education. Therefore, our objective was to add detail on how to provide adequate inclusive education for deaf learners. This was achieved by highlighting positive aspects of the General Comment, aspects to be improved upon and recommendations with regards to the deaf perspective on the topic of inclusive education.

The draft position paper was provided to EUD's national member associations in sign language and in writing ahead of the Annual General Assembly in May and was adopted during this meeting.

David Hay

EUD Communication & Media Officer



Special consultative status with the United Nations

We are pleased to announce that in 2017, we have been granted special consultative status with the United Nations. From now on, we can put forward our input at public meetings at the United Nations international conference and their preparatory bodies. Each year,

we will receive the provisional agenda of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which we may attend and additionally, we now have the capability to submit our written statements and make presentations to governments represented at this council.

EUD is one of the few ENGOs that has been granted consultative status with the United Nations.

Mark Wheatley

EUD Executive Director



UNCRPD Publication series: Article 24: Education

EUD has been working over the last few years on a publication series on the topic of UNCRPD implementation from a deaf perspective, with each volume addressing a different article of the Convention, exploring it from both an academic and best practice perspective, and at all levels from European to regional. The aim of the series is to provide possible interpretations of the UNCRPD with regards to its implementation for deaf citizens, including deaf sign language users and hard of hearing people.

In December 2017, EUD published its newest volume of this series addressing Article 24 on education, edited by EUD Policy Officer Katja Reuter. The topic is explored from various angles, including the importance of legal foundations for bilingual education for deaf learners in Europe, interpreter use in inclusive education, the need for early sign language access, and the accessibility of teacher training. It also presents good practice examples, highlighting the diversity of settings in Europe that provide accessible bilingual quality education.

Professionals from various disciplines have contributed to this volume, including EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley and the editor herself. In general, author's backgrounds span from academia and NGO work to education provision and sign language interpretation. They explore how learning environments must be designed to be accessible for deaf learners, especially sign language users, to maximise their academic and social development, as enshrined in Article 24. Thus, this book aims to support its implementation for deaf learners in the best way possible.

The book launch took place on the 4th December during the European Commission Day of Persons with Disabilities. We used this opportunity to present the book to Commissioner Thyssen and provide her with some information about education of deaf learners in Europe.



UNCRPD Publication series:
Article 24: Education.
Edited by Katja Reuter



From left to right: **Katja Reuter**,
EUD Policy Officer, **Marianne
Thyssen**, European Commissioner
and **Dr Gergely Tapolczai**, EUD
Vice President

EU POLICY INITIATIVES AND EVENTS

The European Accessibility Act

Throughout the year, EUD closely followed the legislative procedure of the European Accessibility Act (EAA), which aims at providing a common EU definition of, and implementation framework for, accessibility requirements for a number of products and

services in the internal market, making them accessible to persons with disabilities and persons with functional limitations. Below is the timeline of the steps in the adoption of the EAA that EUD has actively been involved in through advocacy actions:

1. The EMPL committee adopted its report on the EAA

In the course of the legislative procedure for the EAA, different committees of the European Parliament gave their opinions in the form of a report. The Employment Committee (EMPL) adopted its report on the EAA in April, which



was drafted by MEP Ádám Kósa who had been chosen as the rapporteur within the committee. Previous to the its adoption, EUD had submitted input to the draft amendments to the EMPL report and followed the adoption process very closely.

From left to right: **Dr Humberto Insolera**, EDF Executive Committee and **Dr Adam Kosa**, Member of European Parliament

2. The IMCO Committee adopted its report on the EAA

The European Parliament's Internal Market Committee (IMCO Committee), which is the committee that is responsible for this file, adopted a disappointing report on the Accessibility Act in May. EUD and the European Disability Forum expressed their concerns about the IMCO Committee

favouring business demands over the rights of people, including persons with disabilities, older people and all consumers. EUD believes that the report has watered down the European Commission's original proposal. The IMCO Committee rejected almost all amendments on issues that the disability movement had proposed. In the final vote, the report was adopted by a narrow majority of IMCO's members: 20 in favour, 17 abstentions, 0 against. This motivated EUD to campaign strongly for ambitious legislation on the accessibility of products and services in Europe.



Mark Wheatley
EUD Executive Director

3. EUD interview's various MEPs about the EAA

In the framework of our advocacy campaign for a strong EAA, Executive Director, Mark Wheatley visited the European Parliament in Brussels to interview Ádám Kósa MEP about the results of the IMCO vote in May and to get his expert opinion regarding the Act's impact on the deaf community in Europe. MEP Kósa explained the legislative procedure for adopting the European Accessibility Act and its potential benefits for deaf persons.

Moreover, EUD was given an exclusive opportunity to have an interview with the rapporteur of the European Accessibility Act before it was voted on in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. MEP Morten

Løkkegaard explained how the EAA could improve the life of persons with disabilities and provided examples of the concrete changes that the EAA could bring. EUD's Mark Wheatley reminded MEP Løkkegaard that the European deaf community requires subtitles and sign language interpretation in media outlets and needs the EAA to contain clear requirements for broadcasters to create accessible TV based on obligations that will be established in the Audiovisual Media Service (AVMS) directive. The full interviews are available on our website.

Morten Løkkegaard
Member of European Parliament



4. Preparation of the plenary vote on the EAA

EUD wrote their position on how the MEPs should vote to ensure that the EAA can have a positive impact on the lives of deaf

persons across the EU. This document was disseminated to all the MEPs before the plenary vote took place.

Romy O'Callaghan
In-house sign language interpreter



5. Plenary vote on the European Accessibility Act

On September 17th, EUD was present in Strasbourg and followed a very important plenary vote on the European Accessibility Act. EUD regrets that, for deaf Europeans, the EAA missed out on a big opportunity for a more accessible Europe, as the Parliament decided to keep obligations with regards to audio visual obligations in the draft Audiovisual Media Services Directive rather than covering it in the EAA and applying its functional requirements for making the services accessible. The current draft of the AVMS Directive obliges Member States to ensure their broadcasters increase the accessibility of media content, but there are no concrete EU level obligations mentioned. Therefore, countries will move at their own speed and can get away with doing very little and continue to exclude deaf people from accessing audio-visual media services, without breaching their obligations under the AVMS Directive. Moreover, the EAA will not apply to microenterprises that manufacture,

import or distribute products and provide and services that fall within its scope. This means that microenterprises will not have to make their products and services (such as e-commerce and e-books) accessible.

On a positive note, the report voted on by the plenary states that telephony services, including emergency services, must provide at least one mode of operation that does not require hearing, which is progress towards the accessibility of these services for deaf Europeans.

EUD regrets that several crucial points were left out. We will continue to collaborate with the European Disability Forum in the next stages of the process to advocate for making the Act stronger. This process will continue during the negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union (henceforth referred to as the Council) and the European Commission.

6. The Council of the European Union general approach

In December, the Council adopted a general approach for their trilogue negotiations with the European Parliament and the European Commission. While we were very glad to see that the negotiations on the EAA have progressed further with the adoption of the general approach, EUD was very disappointed to see that the Council involved plans to remove emergency services from the scope of the directive, intending to only address them in the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC), a directive that is being discussed in the EU institutions at the moment.

EUD strongly opposes this decision. Our objective was for obligations with regards to emergency services to be covered in

the EECC, while the EAA would describe, through its functional requirements as stated in its Annex I, how these services must be made accessible. If emergency services are deleted from the European Accessibility Act, there is a risk that EU Member States might transpose the EECC in a way that is incomplete or insufficient, as there are no concrete functional requirements providing information on how to make these services accessible.

EUD will work on further advocacy actions, informing Member States about this development so that they can meet with their government representatives to advocate to keep emergency services as part of the EAA.

In May 2016, the European Commission proposed a directive aimed at revising the audio-visual media services (AVMS) directive from 2010. The objective of the revision is to adapt the former directive to new market realities. While the directive deals with many aspects regarding audiovisual media services, its article 7 on the topic of accessibility is of major importance to the deaf community in Europe. Indeed, the adoption of a strong directive will oblige the Member states to adopt new binding laws improving the situation of media accessibility in their country.

In cooperation with the European Disability Forum, EUD has undertaken advocacy work to improve this article, with the objective of including EU level obligations for broadcasters to make their audiovisual media services more accessible for deaf persons through the provision of subtitles and sign language interpretation for deaf and hard of hearing persons. However, we met a lot of resistance from industry representatives as well as some political stakeholders and experienced problems with regards to the accessibility of negotiations regarding this file. For instance, a feedback session on the AVMS directive trilogue negotiations in the European Parliament was done behind closed doors, and EUD was denied their request to receive meeting documents.

On the 10th of May 2017, the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT committee) voted to amend the European Commission proposal towards an updated directive. We appreciate that the committee has included an obligation for broadcasters to ensure that their services are "made continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities". This was a big step forward from the previous version of the article that only contained an encouragement for broadcasters to make their services accessible, which has proven insufficient to create real change. However,

the current version of the article leaves it up to the broadcasters to develop these measures "in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including media service providers and organisations of persons with disabilities" at national level. While we strongly support the inclusion of organisations of persons with disabilities in the negotiations for the development of these measures, we regret that the committee has decided to not set concrete European level accessibility targets, favouring interests of the broadcasting industry over the interests of the disability community. EUD has been advocating for establishing concrete percentages by which broadcasters would have to increase the accessibility of their services in regular time intervals, potentially starting from a Europe-wide percentage of accessibility to be reached after a certain deadline. Furthermore, we were disappointed to see that the concrete access services in question, i.e. subtitles and sign language interpretation for deaf and hard of hearing persons and audio-description and spoken subtitles for blind and visually impaired persons, have not been included in the binding part of the text, but are only mentioned in the non-binding text, weakening the future impact of the draft legislation.

Finally, it was unfortunate that the members of the Committee voted to move directly to inter-institutional trilogue talks with the Council and the European Commission, with a view to finalising the legislation on the basis of the committee amendments, rather than on the basis of a plenary vote. This deprived EUD from further interacting with other MEPs to introduce amendments for a plenary vote to make the article on accessibility stronger.

EUD is continuously working with the European Disability Forum to see what further advocacy actions are still feasible with regards to trilogue negotiations, and how it is interconnected with the European Accessibility Act.

THE AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA SERVICE DIRECTIVE REVISION

THE EUROPEAN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS CODE

EUD has been following the legislative procedure regarding the adoption of the European electronic communications code (EECC).

On the 14th of September 2016, the Commission proposed a new European electronic communications code which would overhaul the existing legislative framework for telecommunications, including emergency services. The code has been designed to take into account changes in markets, consumer trends and technology, all of which have significantly changed since 2009, when the framework was last amended. EUD drafted amendments on article 102 on emergency services that supported EDF in writing their amendments, to which EUD also provided input to ensure that access to emergency services through interoperable total conversation technologies and third-party-relay services is ensured.

The Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) committee of the European Parliament voted on its report on the 2nd of October 2017. EUD was glad to see that a paragraph had been included obliging Member States to ensure

that access for end-users with disabilities to emergency services is available through emergency communications and that this access must be equivalent to that enjoyed by other end-users, through total conversation services or third-party relay services. Furthermore, we were glad to see it stated that end-users with disabilities must be able to access emergency services on an equal basis with others, whilst travelling in another Member State, where feasible, without any pre-registration. We also appreciate that Member States must ensure that citizens are adequately informed about the existence and use of the single European emergency number '112', as well as its accessibility features, including accessible initiatives specifically targeting persons travelling between Member States, and persons with disabilities. The Parliament took the decision to enter into interinstitutional negotiations confirmed by plenary (Rule 69c) in October. The Council mandated the Estonian Presidency to commence trilogue negotiations on the code. EUD will closely follow the trilogue negotiations, particularly with regards to its interconnectivity with the European Accessibility Act.

CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN EMERGENCY NUMBER 112 AND THE EUROPEAN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS CODE

On the 7th of February, EUD participated in a workshop organised by the European Emergency Number Association (EENA) on the European emergency number 112 and the Electronic Communications Code. The workshop was organised close to the European 112 Day, which takes place on the 11th of February every year, to raise awareness of the European emergency number and the on-going negotiations regarding the directive.

EUD's project officer, Frankie Picron, was one of the speakers during the event, presenting how to make emergency services accessible for deaf and hard of hearing persons. He highlighted that fully accessible multi-channel emergency services are not only crucial for persons with disabilities, including deaf and hard of hearing persons, but for everybody who could find themselves without the capacity to hear or speak after an

accident or a trauma, meaning that they have the potential to save numerous lives. He also introduced the public to the NEXES project in which EUD is a partner.

A number of speakers covered various topics, including new technological advances, such as advanced mobile location (AML). AML is a technology that already exists in android smartphones. It allows the phone, after an emergency call to 112 has been placed from this phone, to automatically send a text message with the coordinates of the caller to the emergency service. This would allow emergency services to locate a person in need a lot quicker, as the margin of error is significantly reduced compared to current technology used. However, only a few countries in Europe have created the possibility for their emergency services to receive, analyse and use these text messages.

EUD closely follows developments regarding the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020. A progress report on the implementation of the strategy up to 2016 was published in February 2017. It lists some tangible successes and describes the implementation of the UNCRPD by the EU, including within the EU institutions themselves. It also confirms the need for a European strategy that will continue to deliver on its objectives, taking into account the UN Concluding Observations.

Throughout the year, EUD attended the Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) committee meetings at the European Parliament, where the implementation of the EU Disability Strategy was discussed. The objective of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is to pursue actions on the European level in eight priority areas: accessibility, participation, equality,

employment, education and training, social protection, health and external action.

THE EUROPEAN DISABILITY STRATEGY

EUD followed the European Parliament's drafting process of the report on the "Implementation of the European Disability Strategy." The rapporteur of the draft report was MEP Helga Stevens. EUD has always supported her view that the Members of the European Parliament must make the report strong and give the European Commission tangible guidelines and goals on how to continue with the European Disability Strategy beyond 2020 to benefit all persons with disabilities in Europe. The rapporteur drafted a report in close consultation with disability organisations, taking into account not only the European Disability Forum's (EDF) general view but also EDF's member organisations' views such as EUD. In July 2017, EUD provided input to this report.

EUD participated in the 2017 Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth (ACIG), where the European Commission discussed with civil society how to create better opportunities for disadvantaged young people, like young persons with disabilities, to participate in society and access the labour market. The Convention, which was opened and closed by the European Commissioners Marianne Thyssen and Valdis Dombrovskis, saw panel debates and presentations by young people, including young people with disabilities that have encountered obstacles of various kinds while trying to participate in society or trying to find employment.

During the Convention, one of the workshops aimed at addressing social inclusion challenges of young people with disabilities. Some of the challenges include: access to community-based services, access to inclusive education and to the labour market, their right to inter alia, family life, community living, freedom of association and protection from violence and access to justice. For EUD, the workshop was an opportunity to discuss the specific obstacles to social inclusion that young persons with disabilities, including young deaf persons, face today and to exchange on the solutions and best practices that exist as well as discussing what else the EU and the Member States could do.

THE ANNUAL CONVENTION FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

From left to right: **Danny Canal & Timo Rowies**, EUDY Representatives and **Mark Wheatley**, EUD Executive Director, Brussels, Belgium



THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

Throughout the year EUD closely followed the European Pillar of Social Rights, participating actively in a number of events on this topic. The pillar is an initiative by the European Commission, whose aim is to provide a reference framework to screen the employment and social performance of participating Member States and to drive social policy reforms at national level as well as, depending on the issue concerned, on a European level. In order to identify social policy priorities at a European as well as at national levels, the accuracy of existing EU social policy legislation, new trends in work patterns and social policies as well as the structure of the proposal itself, the European Commission had opened a public consultation to which EUD, together with more than 16.000 other organisations and individuals, contributed to.

On the 23rd of January, EUD participated in a high-level conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights, organised by the European Commission. The objective of the conference

Mark Wheatley
EUD Executive Director



was to wrap up the consultation and to get further input through working group discussions on several aspects of the pillar and to define its future direction. Various high level political experts were present as participants or speakers, including the president of the European Commission, the president of the European Parliament, the European Commissioners responsible for the policy areas concerned and national ministers, as well as representatives from civil society and other interested stakeholders. This demonstrates that high-level policy-makers at European as well as national levels consider improvements in social policies across the EU to be a strong priority. EUD participated in the general conference as well as workshops on "Equal access to the labour market and skills development" and "The future of social protection" to follow the discussions and see that a disability perspective is represented in the discussions.

On the 27th of April, EUD participated in a roundtable discussion at the European Parliament on the topic of the pillar. During the discussion, it was highlighted that the Social Pillar will serve as a compass for a renewed process of convergence towards better working and living conditions among participating member states. It was pointed out, that even though the principles listed in the Pillar will not be directly enforceable or create new obligations for the Member States, it still is a very important document as it shows the EU's intention to safeguard social rights of its citizens across the EU. Many challenges such as globalisation, digital revolution, migration, integration, the euro zone crisis, differences in legal systems in Member States, make it very difficult to have converged social systems. However, that is the purpose of the Social Pillar – to seek for more convergence in social policies among member states. To achieve that, there is a need for more effective coordination of economic and social policies.

On the 1st of June, EUD attended a workshop organised by the European Law Academy where the purpose of the Social Pillar was explained in more detail. It was highlighted that the new Social Pillar represents the idea of a social Europe, which focuses on its citizens.

The Social Pillar promotes modernised social protection and recommends active inclusion. However, it has to be taken into account that it is the Member States who will have to ensure full implementation of the 20 principles that it sets out. Due to different starting points in the Member States, the idea of the Social Pillar is that Member States are free to choose their own pace for the implementation process. The implementation of the Pillar will be supported by an online social scoreboard to track trends and performances across the EU countries.

On the 11th of September, EUD participated in a meeting at the European Economic Social Committee. One of the objectives of the meeting was to highlight how the European Pillar of Social Rights is linked to the reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe by 2025. During the hearing, it was explained that both the Single Market and European Monetary Union need a social dimension to function well. The European Pillar of Social Rights will serve as an important initiative for social dimension through legislative instruments, policy coordination, and financial instruments.

On the 20th of October, Executive director Mark Wheatley and Dr Humberto Insolera attended the High Level Group meeting on disability. The meeting started with a round of updates from the Member States on the UNCRPD including the state of play with regards to the ratification of the UNCRPD by Ireland. Furthermore, the concluding observations of the UN Committee on Latvia, Luxembourg and the UK were discussed. Participants also followed a presentation of the Estonian Presidencies' presentation, which described main on-going issues as well as achievements and future priorities of the Bulgarian presidency. The European

Commission described the progress made in implementing the European Disability Strategy. Moreover, a discussion took place about the European Accessibility Act and the progress of negotiations in the Council and the European Parliament. Other topics of discussion were the European Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Access City Award, the implementation of the Equal treatment in employment directive as well as the Slovenian example of using the EU Disability Card. In a final session, media and copyright issues were discussed, focusing on the Audio-visual media services directive and the Marrakesh treaty.

HIGH LEVEL GROUP MEETING



EESC – EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Throughout the year, EUD actively participated in events organised by the European Economic and Social Committee on a variety of topics.

Right of persons with disabilities to vote in European Parliament elections

On the 7th of June, EUD participated in the public hearing on the 'Right of persons with disabilities to vote in European Parliament elections.' The objective of the hearing was to inform the Study Group SOC/554 of the EESC to support it in its work on an information report investigating how European Parliament election procedures are determined, considering the needs of persons with various disabilities, and how this affects their right to vote. In this context, a public hearing was organised to present the first conclusions of the report and to look at successful projects and practices. EUD was present to highlight the deaf perspective and to inform the audience what needs to be done for deaf people to be fully included in political decision-making processes.

This hearing was important, as the right to political participation, including the right to vote, is a basic right of every citizen of the European Union. The opportunity to actively participate in political life and vote lies at the heart of every democratic society - denying this to people on the grounds of disability constitutes a form of discrimination. However, research reveals that people with disabilities remain excluded from political participation or have their rights limited by legal and physical barriers. For deaf persons, many barriers exist that significantly limit their active participation in the political process. Debates, manifestos or any other relevant information that is crucial to form a political decision must be accessible through sign language interpretation or subtitles. At a European level, especially the European Parliament and its Committee meetings must become fully accessible for deaf persons, allowing them to make an informed choice. Accessibility is often understood as a removal of physical barriers, however for deaf persons the barriers are different ones. Denial of sign language interpretation or subtitling makes the political process inaccessible as well. As a state party to the UNCRPD, the EU has the obligation to ensure that all persons with disabilities, including deaf persons, enjoy equal recognition before the law (Article 12) and full participation in political life (Article 29). These rights are also protected by Articles 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information) and are closely linked to article 9 (Accessibility). The full participation of persons with disabilities in society is also a core element of the European Disability Strategy. It is crucial to mainstream the deaf perspective to ensure that deaf people have real right to vote in the European Parliament's election.



Employment of Persons with Disabilities: follow-up on equal treatment directive 2000/78/EC

On the 22nd of June, the EUD attended a public hearing on equal treatment in employment and occupation organised by the EESC. The aim of the event was to follow up on equal treatment in the employment directive 2000/78/EC and to analyse what has been achieved and what still needs to be done to achieve the full implementation of the directive.

The directive spells out the obligation to take appropriate measures to eliminate disadvantages, in line with the principles of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in their employment, enabling them to "have access to, participate in, advance in employment, or to undergo training" (article 5). This means that deaf people must be provided with a sign language interpreter in their employment, since sign language interpretation would be considered as reasonable accommodation for the deaf employee. Mr Dimitriou, a Legal Officer in the unit on Disability and Inclusion of the European Commission noted that the obligation to eliminate barriers hindering the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in employment on an equal basis with other employees is currently limited, as the provision of reasonable accommodation cannot impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. Stefan Trömel from the

International Labour Organisation (ILO), presented a guide produced by the ILO that promotes diversity and inclusion through reasonable accommodation in employment. He highlighted that compliance with legislation is not enough to ensure equal treatment, but that diverse and inclusive attitudes and the removal of unconscious bias of employers are essential. MEP Marek Plura, noted that a comprehensive support system and mechanisms to ensure the independence of persons with disabilities while seeking employment are needed. Procedures for obtaining subsidies should be simplified and awareness campaigns on how to employ persons with disabilities should be conducted.



THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

The European Solidarity Corps' objective is to create professional opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. These opportunities will include volunteering and solidarity-related jobs, traineeships and apprenticeships, both in the young people's home countries and abroad.

Currently, the European Solidarity Corps is being designed to improve the employability of young Europeans, including disadvantaged groups, such as young persons with disabilities. The objective is to create a platform to connect young persons with organisations providing placements that would allow participants to gain professional experience supporting their inclusion into the labour market. This group of young people is very heterogeneous, facing different and often multiple, barriers to entering the labour market and partaking in civic engagement and therefore require additional support. To allow these young persons to find placements

through the European Solidarity Corps scheme, it needs to be accessible – from the application stage to the actual placement.

For the deaf community, it is essential that such opportunities are accessible and available for young persons with disabilities on an equal footing with others. The Commission consulted stakeholders such as EUD to define key priorities and shape the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps. It is crucial to EUD that persons with disabilities are not being overlooked and to ensure that solidarity placements are made available for all profiles and backgrounds. The consultation results have been informing the Commission's legislative proposal, therefore the participation of the EUD in consultations was very much needed for the deaf community to stay represented and to influence the legislative proposal. EUD's aim is to ensure that young people with disabilities can access such opportunities on an equal footing with others.



Press Statement
Mark Wheatley
EUD Executive Director



**EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS**

On the 28th of April, EUD attended the Info Day on European Training and Certification in Culture, Media, and ICT Accessibility for the ACT project. One of the objectives of the ACT project is to create a definition of a new professional profile, "Media Accessibility Expert/Manager for the Scenic Arts", as well as various types of training activities for such a professional that will be proposed. The time has come to establish such a new professional profile and their training, since accessibility plays a major role for persons with disabilities in modern knowledge-based information societies. The project focuses on promoting equal opportunities and accessibility to culture, media and ICT and the creation of the profile of accessibility expert, which is needed to empower all citizens and especially people with disabilities.

The project is being developed through a series of activities starting with a study of the current and emerging needs in the fields of media, culture and ICT in terms of accessibility, which were presented by representatives from different organisations. During the discussion on what kind of quality requirements deaf users expect to find in culture, media and ICT, Mark Wheatley presented two specific issues from a deaf user's perspective and proposed solutions to these issues. Concretely, he highlighted that deaf persons face various obstacles while accessing AVMS and telephony services. With regards to AVMS, Mark Wheatley emphasised that many barriers exist that limit media services' full accessibility. For instance, many TV programmes are broadcasted without or poor quality subtitles and/or sign language interpretation and remain

inaccessible, which constitutes a violation of the UNCRPD. Furthermore, if access services are available, users often do not have control over their functioning. Mark Wheatley highlighted that deaf persons need to be provided with adequate access to media services, through subtitles and sign language interpretation.

With regards to telephony services it was noted that there is a lack of efficient, around the clock VRS/VRI services that allow deaf persons to communicate with hearing persons via the phone. Moreover, VRS/VRI services are often limited due to restricted opening hours and paid-for use. It was suggested that deaf people must be made aware of the availability of the services regardless of which countries especially in emergency situations. Costs additional to the one of a normal phone call should not be placed on the deaf people using the services.

Closing remarks were given by MEP Helga Stevens, who highlighted how essential accessibility is for persons with disabilities. EUD hopes that the establishment of the new professional profile of media accessibility expert/manager will improve the current level of accessibility in the fields of media, culture and ICT for deaf persons.

EUROPEAN TRAINING CERTIFICATION IN CULTURE, MEDIA, AND ICT ACCESSIBILITY



Martyna Balčiūnaitė
EUD Assistant Policy Officer

ALTE 6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, BOLOGNA, ITALY

From the 3rd to the 5th of May, the 6th International ALTE conference took place in Bologna, Italy. The conference addressed how to promote the creation of connections between language learning, teaching and assessment, and encouraged contributions from all those involved in language education

at large, both across Europe and around the world. Mark Wheatley opened the panel session "Insights from research on sign language tests" together with representatives from deaf academics. He also gave a short presentation about sign language from European perspective.



ALTE 6th International Conference,
Bologna, Italy

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

This conference, which took place from the 14th and 15th of June at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland, brought together deaf scholars and researchers from all over the world to discuss recent developments in the field. Mark Wheatley was one of the panellists on a panel discussion on

"The relationship between academics and public policy: an exploration in the context of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015". He gave a short presentation about the development of sign language policy and the functioning of the sign language committees/councils in various European countries.



Executive Director,
Mark Wheatley,
Edinburgh, Scotland

Beginning of 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially entered into force. Over the next fifteen years, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change to implement these objectives. The SDGs call for action by all countries to promote prosperity through the creation of strategies aiming at building economic growth and addressing a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. While these goals are not legally binding, governments are expected to develop national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals.

In order to advance these objectives on a European level, the European Commission adopted the communication "Next steps for a sustainable European future" (COM(2016)739) on the 22nd of November 2016. This communication maps out the EU policies contributing to the implementation of the SDGs and announces a detailed regular monitoring of the SDGs in an EU context from 2017 onwards as well as the development of a reference indicator framework for this purpose. EUD, together with the EDF, has been calling upon the European Commission to drive a campaign for better data collection and analysis. To represent the European deaf community in this discussion, EUD has been participating in several events on this topic at European level.

On the 30th of March, EUD participated in a stakeholder meeting at the European Commission organised by Eurostat on indicators for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals in an EU context. The meeting with stakeholder organisations was another opportunity to ensure that the EU indicator set includes disability related indicators in line with the 2030 Agenda and the UNCRPD. EUD recommended to Eurostat to systematically disaggregate data by disability for the indicators. We also asked Eurostat to reinstate the 11 disability indicators that had been removed from the initial agreed SDGs framework and to provide a strong leadership for harmonised indicators on a disability-inclusive development with a systematic approach to mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities.

On the 7th of June, EUD attended an event on "The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the European Union" organised by the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament and EDF. The European Union has a critical role to play in successfully achieving the SDGs by 2030. It was highlighted that the EU must publish an overarching EU strategy or framework to promote political coherence and coordination, actively including persons with disabilities and other groups at risk of marginalisation. At a European level, the EU must be a leader with a clear and inclusive 2030 Agenda implementation plan, including targets and a timeline. It is crucial that the EU invests in capacity-building and awareness-raising, so that European citizens know about the SDGs.

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A NEW FRONTIER OF RIGHTS AND PROGRESS FOR THE EU



On the 8th of June, EUD participated in a capacity building training organised by the European Disability Forum, focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals. During the hearing, EUD increased its understanding and knowledge about the SDGs. It was explained how the UNCRPD should serve as a guiding framework for the implementation and the monitoring of the SDGs, and practical strategies were presented on advocating for the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities at national levels. The training focused on three development areas: an overview of the SDGs – the link between the SDGs and the UNCRPD, the SDGs at the global, regional and national levels and the importance of data collection. EUD received clear recommendations on how to advocate for the full implementation of disability-inclusive SDGs.

THE ENIL FREEDOM DRIVE, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

From the 24th to the 28th of September 2017, EUD participated in the Freedom Drive 2017 in Brussels, one of the key campaigns organised by the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) that takes place biannually since 2003. The Freedom Drive has developed over the years: this year, it was a large 4-day event, which brought together up to 300 activists. It provided EUD with the opportunity to promote human rights issues, especially the ones related to disability rights, as well as share experiences and ideas with colleagues from around Europe. During the Freedom Drive, EUD and other participants demanded full implementation of the UNCRPD in Member States and on the European level.

The goal of the Freedom Drive 2017 was to raise the key concerns of the European Independent Living movement with the European policy-makers in Brussels. The Freedom Drive's motivational workshops and conference provided a platform to facilitate an exchange of ideas with European level policy-makers as well as to develop new strategies and partnerships. EUD and other participants met with Members of the European Parliament, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility Marianne Thyssen and other EU officials and organisations. Throughout the discussions, the importance of full implementation of the UNCRPD across the EU was emphasised. Moreover, it was highlighted that the European initiatives that have a

potential to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, such as the European Accessibility Act or the European Pillar of Social Rights must be strong and enforceable.

During the conference "A Voice for All!" discussions took place with the Vice-President of the European Parliament Mairead McGuinness, focussing on the rights of children as well as young people with disabilities and their families to ensure that disabled children's voices are heard at the European level. MEP Mairead McGuinness highlighted that while advocating for the right to independent living, it is essential to ensure that no one is left behind. Often children and young people with disabilities lack a strong voice and are overlooked by disabled people's organisations and this needs to change. Therefore, the conference provided an opportunity for children and young people with disabilities themselves as well as children's rights advocates and experts to be the main speakers, to explain about the barriers they face and to encourage policy makers to remove them.

The Freedom Drive was an event of disability pride, with many young people with disabilities joining the march for Independent Living through Brussels. EUD as an organisation representing rights of Deaf people together with other organisations and participants participated and showed that people with disabilities are proud, strong and visible.



Italian Sign Language recognition

Currently, a framework bill on the rights of citizenship of deaf people, hard of hearing persons and deafblind persons is being discussed in Italy. It has been approved in the Italian Senate and has been handed to the Chamber of Deputies for consideration. Next, a stakeholder debate about the law will take place.

We have followed up on the content of the law. While we are happy to see that the bill is moving forward, we share the concerns of many members of the deaf community in Italy with regards to the fact that the current draft law does not recognise Italian Sign Language

NATIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE RECOGNITION

(LIS) as a language per se, but rather sees it as a tool for communication. We also regret that the draft currently does not foresee financial means that must be made available for the implementation of this draft law, once adopted. This entails the risk that without additional funds the situation of lack of access through sign language for deaf persons in Italy will not change, despite the law.

We will continue following up on the adoption process and are happy to support our national member association ENS in their efforts advocating for improving the law and achieving adoption.



German Sign Language (Luxembourg) recognition

We have followed the process of the recognition of German Sign Language in Luxembourg that has progressed throughout the year. The draft law modifying the language law from 1984 was introduced in May 2017. Afterwards, a parliamentary commission as well as a rapporteur were nominated for the file. In the second half of the year, various legislative services provided opinions on the file.

We are glad to see that this law would recognise German Sign Language as a full language and that it would grant deaf persons

the right to interpretation in contact with the administration, with the fees being covered by the state budget. We also appreciated the reference to the right for deaf learners to follow primary and secondary education in sign language. We believe however that the scope of the law could be larger, as it currently does not cover the area of employment, for instance.

We will continue following the process in close contact with VGSL, our Luxembourgian member, and hope for a swift recognition of German Sign Language in Luxembourg.

NATIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE RECOGNITION

Irish Sign Language recognition

EUD followed the progress of Irish Sign Language (ISL) recognition throughout the year and supported the process through social media. Furthermore, EUD wrote an advocacy letter to the Irish senate, An Seanad, supporting the recognition of ISL and highlighting the need for Irish policy-makers to closely collaborate with the Irish Deaf Society in the drafting, revision and adoption



of the draft bill to utilise its experience with regards to deaf rights and sign language in Ireland.

We were very happy to see that the Irish Sign Language Act 2017 passed all five legislative stages and is therefore officially adopted. We congratulate the Irish Deaf Society for their 30 years of effort and long hard work towards the recognition of their Irish Sign Language!

Press Statement

Mark Wheatley

EUD Executive Director

Greek Sign Language recognition

We were glad to see that Greek sign language was recognised through a bill passed in September this year. Article 65 (2) is of major importance as it recognises Greek Sign Language as equal to the Greek language and states that the State is to take measures to promote it, and to meet all the communication needs of the deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

This was a great victory of the Greek Federation of the Deaf and the whole

community of the deaf and hard of hearing people it represents, as their key demand for the recognition of their language as equal to the Greek Language was finally satisfied.

The Greek Federation of the Deaf will continue working towards the full implementation and enforcement of the law. EUD will follow up on the progress made in this regard, in close cooperation with HFD.

Many congratulations to the Greek Federation of the Deaf and deaf people in Greece for the recognition of their Greek Sign Language!



Press statement

Sofia Isari

EUD Board member

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

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

The European Commission is the main legislative organ of the European Union with the right of initiative to propose laws for adoption by the European Parliament and the Council. EUD, among other disability ENGOs, receives

funding from DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. EUD regularly attends high-level events and conferences, particularly in relation to the UN CPRD and disability issues in general.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Speech by the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility in EUD's seminar during the General Assembly 2017

EUD was particularly pleased to have Commissioner Thyssen delivering a speech to EUD's member organisations during our General Assembly in Malta. She addressed on-going EU initiatives that will benefit deaf persons across Europe, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights.

On the second day, a panel took place on how to make cities more accessible in a sustainable way and what is needed to allow

better inclusion for all at a local level. In this context, there was an interactive panel with city representatives from across Europe together with politicians from the national and EU levels. Finally, the Access City Award, which aims at rewarding cities across Europe for their efforts and commitments to be accessible to all, took place, with Lyon, France, Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Luxembourg, Luxembourg winning first, second and third place respectively.



Marianne Thyssen
European Commissioner for
Employment, Social Affairs,
Skills and Labour Mobility

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

European Commission's Day of Persons with Disabilities

Every year, EUD joins the celebration of the Day of Persons with Disabilities (EDPD) that is organised by the European Commission. This year's conference was entitled "We are EU citizens". At this event, a wide range of politicians, high-level experts and persons with disabilities debated the challenges faced by persons with disabilities with regards to political participation and explored possible solutions.

The Head of the Disabilities and Inclusion Unit of the European Commission, Ms Emmanuelle Grange opened the conference and highlighted that it must be ensured that persons with disabilities are better informed of their rights and can make their voices heard. Ms Grange underlined that the right to political participation is essential to every citizen in Europe and must be ensured for people with disabilities so they can live as fully-fledged citizens. EDF president Ioannis Vardakastanis emphasised that it must be ensured at the EU level that all values, especially human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and human rights are respected.

EUD participated in two different panels during the first day. The first panel focused on social policy and was an opportunity to receive an update on European initiatives for better inclusion of persons with disabilities. Mr Michel Servoz, Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission, announced that the Social Pillar was proclaimed in the Social Summit in November 2017 and that it is a shared political commitment to build a

social Europe as well as one of the means to implement the UNCRPD. After the first panel, a debate took place. EUD Vice-President Dr Gergely Tapolczai took the opportunity to engage with the panellists and asked what the EU institutions can do to protect the rights of parents and children with disabilities. Mr Rodolfo Cattani from the Executive Committee of the European Disability Forum commented that parents should be free to decide what should happen to their children. It is important to have a right to choose the best solution and the state should not be in the position to impose solutions.

The second panel brought forth the question of political participation. The right to vote and to be elected was discussed. The purpose of this panel was to identify challenges faced by persons with disabilities regarding the right to political participation and to find solutions for real equality concerning this fundamental right. It was highlighted that people with disabilities should be allowed to make political decisions themselves. Restricting the right to vote based on a disability is direct discrimination according to the UNCRPD Committee under article 29 of the Convention. However, there are too many obstacles regarding the participation in political life for persons with disabilities. To remedy this, many legal and administrative barriers to political participation need to be removed. Voting procedures, facilities and election materials must be made accessible. Generally, opportunities for participation in political and public life must be increased.

On the second day, a panel took place on how to make cities more accessible in a sustainable way and what is needed to allow better inclusion for all at a local level. In this context, there was an interactive panel with city representatives from across Europe together with politicians from the national and EU levels. Finally, the Access City Award, which aims at rewarding cities across Europe for their efforts and commitments to be accessible to all, took place, with Lyon, France, Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Luxembourg, Luxembourg winning first, second and third place respectively.



The European Parliament (EP) is the directly elected parliamentary institution of the European Union. Together with the Council of the

European Union and the European Commission, it exercises the legislative function of the EU

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

European Parliament Day of Persons with Disabilities

On the 6th of December, EUD participated in the 4th European Parliament Day of Persons with Disabilities (EPPD) jointly organised by EDF and the European Parliament. The event brought together hundreds of delegates from organisations of persons with disabilities from all over Europe, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and high-level representatives from other EU institutions. The EPPD was a landmark event and a unique opportunity for European citizens with disabilities to have dialogue with their elected representatives and speak up for their rights. EUD staff and EUD board members were present to discuss the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and participate in political and public life, an overview of the European Disability Strategy 2020-2030 and the implementation of the UNCRPD and the SDGs by the EU.

The President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani and EDF President Yannis Vardakastanis opened the conference. President Vardakastanis highlighted that throughout EDF's existence, the European Parliament has been a strong and vocal defender of the human rights of persons with disabilities.

The first panel, co-chaired by MEP Ádám Kósa, MEP Marek Plura, and Maureen Pigott, who is a member of the EDF Executive Committee, focused on political participation of persons with disabilities. They discussed aspects to be achieved for the European elections 2019 to be fully accessible. MEPs and delegates of the European disability movement made interventions highlighting that legal and administrative barriers, inaccessible processes and information, and a general lack of awareness about political rights can deny persons with disabilities the opportunity to political participation. After the discussion, the EDF Manifesto on the European Elections was adopted. It encourages Member States to ensure that polling stations are accessible to all persons with disabilities and that the

voting procedures (including for remote voting) are accessible and easy to understand. Election campaign facilities and materials, political debates, political party programmes and websites must be accessible to, and inclusive of persons with disabilities.

The second panel, co-chaired by MEP Helga Stevens, MEP Kostandinka Kuneva as well as Gunta Anca, who is a member EDF Executive Committee, focused on the new European Disability Strategy 2020-2030 (EDS) and on how to create a disability-inclusive EU budget. This strategy must satisfy all the provisions of the UNCRPD, with a budget allocated for its implementation and a well-resourced monitoring mechanism. It must foster smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It also must take into account other instruments such as the European Pillar of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was highlighted that it should include the year 2021 as the next European Year of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the ratification of the UNCRPD by the EU. Moreover, it was voiced that the Strategy should be the establishment of a structured dialogue with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations with an independent budget line.

After these presentations, a round of interventions by MEPs and delegates of

4th European Parliament Day of Persons with Disabilities



EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

the European disability movement took place. EUD president Dr Markku Jokinen made an intervention and highlighted that the EDS should be based on the Concluding Observations to the EU by the UN Committee. For deaf Europeans, some of the recommendations are particularly important. For instance, the committee recommended that the European Union needs to take the necessary measures to enforce the implementation of its legislation on access to information and communication to facilitate access in sign languages. President Jokinen emphasised that the EU should monitor compliance with the strategy on a regular basis and report to citizens on how Member States comply with these obligations in the Web accessibility directive and that the European Accessibility Act needs to be adopted by the Council.

Moreover, the UNCRPD Committee recommended that the European Union take the necessary measures to enable all persons with all types of disabilities to enjoy their

right to vote and stand for election, including by providing accessible communication and facilities. President Jokinen highlighted that it is crucial to take the deaf perspective into account before and during the election period and to make it fully accessible to the deaf voters through sign language or subtitles. After the discussion, the EDF Resolution on the European Disability Strategy was adopted.

The third panel was co-chaired by MEP Olga Sehnalova, MEP Marian Harkin as well as Nadia Hadad, a member of EDF's Executive Committee. It focused on the Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of taking into consideration persons with disabilities in their implementation. EDF Vice-President Ana Peláez Narváez highlighted that it is crucial that the EU implements the SDGs and keep up to their commitment to leave no one behind. No person with disability should be forgotten, including those in more vulnerable situations such as women, children and refugees with disabilities.

The situation of refugees and migrants with disabilities

On the 28th of March, EUD participated in the event 'Refugees and Asylum-Seekers with Disabilities: Overlooked, underserved' at the European Parliament. The topic of refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities is very important, as there are many deaf refugees in camps that are not receiving the medical or communication supports that are necessary. Furthermore, deaf people are often put into a single refugee camp for ease of communication, which risks exacerbating

racial and religious issues that can exist between people of different origins. Mark Wheatley highlighted to the Commissioner that there should already be a mediation framework in place for deaf persons and hearing persons, this is not something that should be requested by the deaf or hearing refugee who wants information, but something that should be automatically in place. The refugee crisis is a serious issue. The EU is working on a solution, which needs to be handled from a human rights perspective. EDF and the Human Rights Watch (HRW) are working together to improve the standard for refugees with disabilities and EUD intends to collaborate with EDF and HRW to make sure deaf refugees and asylum seekers are not overlooked.



The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an independent ENGO that represents the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform, which brings together

Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

On the 17th of May, the European Disability Forum organised a workshop in cooperation with CBM and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in Brussels. EUD was there to present the NEXES project. EDF members shared experiences and different perspectives on inclusive DRR on a European level through presentations.

The European Accessibility Act (EAA) conference by EDF and Disability Intergroup

On the 8th of November, EUD took part in a conference about the European Accessibility Act. The event was organised by the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament.

EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley was a speaker on a panel on accessibility of ICT products and services presenting the user perspective on this issue through a deaf lens. He presented the various barriers that deaf persons still face with regards to ICT accessibility, for example with regards to telephony and emergency services, audio-visual media services and transport. He also highlighted that accessibility of products and services does not only benefit persons with disabilities, but really benefits all members of society, who in different situations can also be unable to use an inaccessible product or service.

Other speakers of this panel showcased technological advances in the area of audio-visual media services, which make it possible to produce access services in a less costly manner and even customise technological aspects of the service to fit one's own wishes. Additionally, they pointed out that requirements of the act need to be functional to make it future-proof and allow

representative organisation of persons with disabilities from across Europe. EUD is one of EDF's members. It is based in Brussels, Belgium.

EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM

Throughout the discussion, key issues that occurred regularly in this regard were highlighted and ways to implement the SENDAI framework for action in Europe were addressed. Moreover, participants discussed recommendations and future actions that can be taken.

manufacturers and service providers to be innovative. It was also highlighted that such new accessible technology must also function together with assistive devices.

Furthermore, more technical aspects of the act were discussed. For instance, participants exchanged ideas on how it can be ensured that consumers are informed about the accessibility features of the product or service they wish to purchase. They also pointed out the need for the product to contain accessible information about its functions and that there must be accessible information about the availability and the nature of an accessible service, so that the consumer knows where such a service can be purchased.

Finally, MEP Helga Stevens pointed out that it is crucial for all stakeholders at the European and national levels to work towards a swift adoption of the act in the European Parliament and the Council.

It was a very useful exchange of views, as it brought experts from different fields together to discuss various perspectives on how to make sure that the act becomes a strong piece of legislation that will hopefully, once adopted, improve the accessibility of products and services in the EU.

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

Demonstration: Accessibility? Act!

On the 6th of March, EUD, as well as members from its Belgian member organisations Fevlado and FFSB, participated in a protest regarding the European Accessibility Act organised by the European Disability Forum in front of the European Parliament in Brussels.

The objective of the protest was to raise awareness in the European Parliament about the disability community's strong interest in the adoption of an ambitious European Accessibility Act. Members of different Belgian-based disability and social policy organisations as well as other people interested in the topic participated in the

protest. Various speakers from different organisations, including EUD, EDF, as well as several MEPs took the floor to highlight the European Parliament's and the Council's responsibility to create a strong act that will create a more accessible Europe.

The protest took place immediately before a meeting of the Internal Market committee of the European Parliament, the committee responsible for the EAA. Many participants joined the meeting to listen to the discussions, demonstrating their interest in this draft directive. EUD, as well as several other disability organisations, used the opportunity for an informal discussion outside of the meeting room with the rapporteur for the act, MEP Morten Løkkegaard, on the scope and the details of the act.

With this protest, EDF intended to send a strong message to the MEPs present in the committee meeting, showcasing how crucial this act and a more accessible Europe are for all European citizens, including persons with disabilities and deaf persons.



EDF Executive Committee: Dr Humberto Insolera

The EUD is pleased that our former board member has been elected to be a member of the Executive Committee of the European Disability Forum. He will work to make sure that the deaf perspective is fully included in EDF's work. Congratulations and the best of luck to Dr Humberto Insolera!



EDF advocacy campaign for a strong EAA

The European Disability Forum conducted an advocacy campaign in front of the European Parliament in September. EDF joined the campaign to man the information stall. Several MEPs passed and expressed their support for a strong Accessibility Act. EUD informed MEPs that we counted on them to vote for our proposed amendments in the plenary meeting on the 14th of September, and to make the text stronger and more ambitious. EUD wants to achieve an Accessibility Act that can bring a real change in the lives of all Europeans, including 80 million persons with disabilities.

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

Ivanka Bucko
efsli president,
Valletta, Malta

Ivanka Bucko, efsli president attended the EUD GA in Malta upon invitation by EUD and gave a short presentation about the co-operation between the two organisations. EUD supported efsli by giving logistical advice for their deaf interpreters project meeting in Brussels.



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

2017 was a special year for European Union of the Deaf Youth, as they celebrated the anniversary of the foundation of EUDY. They organised their 30th Anniversary celebration in Stockholm, Sweden on the 6th of October. During this event, EUD Board Member Lolo Danielsson attended the reunion of the former and current Board Members of EUDY. She gave a presentation about the importance of co-operation between EUDY and EUD.

30th Anniversary of EUDY,
Stockholm, Sweden

Jari Pärgma, EUDY's then vice-president attended the EUD GA in Malta upon invitation by EUD and gave a short presentation about the co-operation between the two organisations.

EUDY Secretary General Liisa Halonen and Mark Wheatley have been meeting every month to discuss each other's organisational activities and events. Mark Wheatley also attended EUDY's board meeting in Brussels during December 2017.

Former EUDY President Timothy Rowies contributed an article about EUDY's work of providing non-formal human rights education to deaf sign language using learners to EUD's 2017 publication on the implementation of article 24 of the UNCRPD from a deaf perspective in Europe.



THE EUROPEAN FORUM OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS (efsli)

THE EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF YOUTH (EUDY)

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

THE WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF (WFD)

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is an international non-profit and non-governmental organisation of deaf associations from 133 countries. In addition to this, its membership includes Associate Members, International Members and Individual Members as well as two categories of Youth Members. The WFD has 8 Regional Secretariats and one Co-operating Member. Its legal seat is in Helsinki, Finland where the WFD Secretariat operates.

EUD participated in the 3rd International Conference of the World Federation of the Deaf in Budapest, Hungary that took place from the 8th to the 10th of November. During the conference, different topics in plenary, group and board meetings were discussed: bilingual education, sign language in the families, deaf employees on the employment market, communication without barriers, new IT revolution, and participation in the decision-making process. Mark Wheatley gave a keynote presentation about the UNCRPD Article 27, Employment. He confirmed that the topic of employment is crucial for

the future development of Europe and to reach the EU's long-term growth and job strategy, the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. He demonstrated deaf people's potential as valuable employees in the open labour market, and as entrepreneurs who can give a different perspective and added value to any diverse team. He highlighted that to realise the rights of deaf people, policy makers need more information on the best ways to remove barriers and promote inclusion. The presentation also contributed to understanding the UNCRPD not only in terms of deafness and sign language but also in view of practical implementation. Its objective was to enable deaf associations and individuals alike to understand the ramifications this and other articles of the UNCRPD and to work together with policy makers in implementing these adequately and equally.

EUD consulted WFD with regards to its new book on Article 24: Education within the UNCRPD book series. WFD set up an internal expert group that provided input to one of its articles on EUD's interpretation of the General Comment No 4 on the right to inclusive education.



Colin Allen
WFD President,
Valletta, Malta



3rd International Conference
of the WFD, Budapest, Hungary

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

Niall Fearon, EDSO Board Member attended EUD's GA in Malta upon invitation by EUD.

Niall Fearon
EDSO Board member,
Valletta, Malta

Furthermore, President Markku Jokinen hosted a meeting with EDSO President, Bjørn Røine and Secretary General Juha-Matti Aaltonen on the 14th of December 2017. Points of discussion involved how the two organisations will co-operate in 2018 especially with regards to EDSO's objective to obtain financial support from the European Commission.



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

EDbU President Sanja Tarczay attended the EUD GA in Malta upon invitation by EUD and gave a short presentation about the co-operation between the two organisations. On the 24th of October, Mark Wheatley was invited to a lively round table session about Sign Language interpreting in kindergarten schools. A short

Sanja Tarczay
EDbU president,
Valletta, Malta

intervention was made by Vladimira Velički, Ph.D., Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, Croatia who focused on the language development and lingual skills of preschool children. A representative from the Education and Teacher Training Agency in Croatia was also present. Furthermore, two association of the deaf participated (Croatian Association of Deaf and Croatian Deaf Sports Association). All three of these organisations were joined in one united aim - to make sure that they follow the quote of the disability movement "Nothing about us without us", and that it should not be violated and to ensure that their voices are heard while promoting the respect for the inherent dignity of all deaf/ deafblind and hard of hearing persons in Croatia.



EUROPEAN DEAF SPORTS ORGANISATION (EDSO)

EUROPEAN DEAFBLIND UNION

EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

EUROPEAN PLATFORM OF DEAFNESS, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAFBLINDNESS

The European Platform of Deafness, Hard of Hearing and Deafblindness, which was established in 2012 continued its regular meetings in 2017. All members are simultaneously members of EDF, the European Disability Forum:

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

EUD has been participating in the meetings of the European Platform to exchange information about on-going EU level political initiatives and the policy and advocacy work of the different members of the Platform with regards to these and other topics related to deafness.

Throughout the year, Platform members have cooperated actively in the preparation of an event in collaboration with Microsoft on the topic of accessibility from a deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind perspective that will take place in 2018.



EUD ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Austria – Österreichischer Gehörlosenbund (ÖGLB), **Belgium** – Federatie van Vlaamse Doven Organisaties (FEVLADO), Fédération Francophone des Sourds de Belgique (FFSB), **Bulgaria** – Съюз на глухите в България (СГБ / UDB), **Croatia** – Hrvatski savez gluhih i nagluhih, **Cyprus** – Ομοσπονδία Κωφών Κύπρου, **Czech Republic** – Svaz neslyšících a nedoslýchavých v ČR (UDHH), **Denmark** – Danske Døves Landsforbund (DDL), **Estonia** – Eesti Kurtide Liit (EAD), **Finland** – Kuurojen Litto (FAD), **France** – Fédération Nationale des Sourds de France (FNSF), **Germany** – Deutscher Gehörlosen-Bund (DGB), **Greece** – Ομοσπονδία Κωφών Ελλάδος (HFD), **Hungary** – Siketek és Nagyothalók Országos Szövetsége (SINOSZ), **Iceland** – Félag heyrnarlausra, **Ireland** – Irish Deaf Society (IDS), **Italy** – Ente Nazionale Sordi (ENS), **Latvia** – Latvijas Nedzīrdīgo savienība (LAD), **Lithuania** – Lietuvos kurčiųjų draugija, **Luxembourg** – Vereinigung der Gehörlosen und Schwerhörigen Luxemburg (VGSL), **Malta** – Għaqda Persuni Neqsin mis-Smigh, **Netherlands** – Dovenschap, **Norway** – Norges Døveforbund (NDF), **Poland** – Polski Związek Głuchych (PZG), **Portugal** – Federação Portuguesa das Associações de Surdos (FPAS), **Romania** – Asociația Națională a Surzilor din România (ANSR), **Slovakia** – Asociácia nepočujúcich 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.

