



2021

2021
IMPACT
REPORT

ŽITŇANSKÁ



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EUD would like to thank the European Commission for funding this 2021 Impact Report under the REC Work Programme. Without their substantial financial contributions, the publication of this report would not have been possible.

The support of the EUD Board and President an accurate and up-to-date account of the activities in 2021.

Board 2017 - 2022:

President Dr Markku Jokinen

Vice-President Dr Gergely Tapolczai
(Resigned February 2021)

Vice-President Sofia Isari
(Appointed August 2021)

Board Member Louise "Lolo" Danielsson

Board Member Daniel Büter

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

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

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



Dr Markku Jokinen



Dr Gergely Tapolczai



Louise "Lolo" Danielsson



Sofia Isari



Daniel Büter

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2021 is available in
International Sign:



SCAN ME

FOREWORD BY EUD PRESIDENT

During 2021, which was yet another year impacted by the global pandemic, we all had to continue facing new challenges and adapting to new realities. EUD swiftly adjusted and learned how to operate in virtual environments to continue its important work. Even though it was challenging to adapt, EUD saw this as an opportunity to expand its network, attend more events and organise more virtual meetings.

In 2021 we held our first virtual Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA). During the EGA we had an open discussion with our members about how to ensure that the perspectives of all deaf people are addressed through EUD work. As the result of this discussion during the EGA, EUD published a statement on intersectionality and has committed to establish a working group to ensure that no one in the deaf community is left behind. Just before the EGA we received the resignation of Dr Gergely Tapolczai as a Vice President of the EUD. On behalf of EUD Board, I once again, would like express our gratitude to Dr Tapolczai for his contribution, counsel and service since 2009.

One of the biggest highlights of 2021 is the publication of the new European Disability Rights Strategy 2021–2030 which was developed in close consultation with civil society organisations representing persons with disabilities including EUD. We had worked closely with the European Commission when evaluating the previous 2010-2020 Strategy and proposed concrete recommendations for the new one. Even though the past decades brought progress in access to healthcare, education, employment, recreation activities and participation in political life, many obstacles remain. In 2021 the European Commission showcased that it is committed to scaling up European action. EUD is excited to see that the new strategy builds on its previous strategy by contributing to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Pillar of Social Rights at both EU and national levels.

To continue the discussions on the important topics for the deaf community, EUD organised a number of webinars in 2021. We raised awareness about the European Disability

Rights Strategy 2021 – 2030, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Green Deal, the European Vaccination Strategy, and many others. Keeping in mind that the human rights of deaf persons are strongly linked to national sign language recognition, we celebrated the International Day of Sign Languages by organising a webinar to raise constitutional recognition of national sign languages with an aim to raise awareness about the importance of constitutional sign language recognition.

Very importantly, in 2021 we witnessed the recognition of national sign languages in Bulgaria, Norway and Italy. This made 2021 a landmark year, because now all the 27 EU Member States recognise their national sign languages! Another major highlight is that Slovenia has recognised its national sign language in the Slovenian Constitution. Slovenia is the fifth country to achieve constitutional recognition of their national sign language. On behalf of EUD I would like to express our congratulations to Bulgaria, Norway, Italy and Slovenia on their achievements in 2021. Among EUD members, Switzerland remains the last country to officially recognise its national sign languages I strongly encourage all members to join forces and support the Swiss Federation for the Deaf in advocating for this legal recognition.

Even though 2021 was challenging, it brought many positive changes. Our rapid adaptation to the new more virtual work showcased that no matter what challenges life brings I, the Board and EUD staff are committed to continuing the work to ensure that deaf people are not left behind.



Dr Markku Jokinen
EUD President

EUD INTRODUCTION

EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

Based in Brussels, Belgium, EUD is a not-for-profit European non-governmental organisation (ENGO) comprising National Associations of the Deaf (NADs). It is the only supranational organisation representing deaf people at European level and is one of the few ENGOs representing associations from all of the 27 EU Member States, in addition to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the UK. Acceding, candidate and potential member countries can choose to be affiliated members with the option of becoming full members as soon as they officially enter the EU.

EUD aims to establish and maintain EU-level dialogues with its relative institutions and

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

EUD also has signed memorandums of understanding with the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli), the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY), the European Deaf Sports Organisation (EDSO), the European Deafblind Union (EDbU) and the European Network of Sign Language Teachers (ENSLT). Since 2017, it has held special consultative status with the United Nations.

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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

These key values are also mirrored in the daily work of its Brussels headquarters. The office provides a fully accessible signing environment with 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 EUD's work 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.

Aside from the right to sign language in itself, access to sign language is also essential for the fulfilment of other basic human rights, such as the right to equal education, information

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

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

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

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

The Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) took place on Saturday 27 February 2021 through the Zoom platform. The decision of the board to call the EGA was based on three reasons: to enable an open discussion about LGBTIQ+ and other issues, to proceed with discussing the statutes that comply with the new Belgian legislation, and to approve the membership application from Luxembourg.

The EUD elections were meant to take place in May 2021 but due the global pandemic, Full Members were asked to approve the extension of the mandate for the board for one additional year.

Prior to the EGA, the board was informed of the resignation of Dr Gergely Tapolczai as a Vice President. This decision was unanimously accepted by the EUD Board members, including Dr Tapolczai, during the EUD Board Meeting on 4 February 2021.

The membership application from Luxembourg was discussed and approved by the EGA delegates, allowing Solidarität mit Hörgeschädigten ('solidarity with the hearing impaired') to become a Full Member of EUD.

The new statutes were updated to comply with the recent Belgian legislation. This was an urgent matter for the EUD. They were approved by the Full Members, whose representatives had already signed off the proxy letters for the statutes before the EGA, to seek the royal decree.

Finally, the EUD's statement on intersectionality was discussed by the delegates. They proposed amendments and approved it at the end of the EGA.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY



EUD INITIATIVES

BOARD MEETINGS

The EUD Board Meetings were held virtually in 2021, with an increased number of meetings compared to 2020. The Board convened 13 times in total. The meetings took place on:

Board meeting	Date
1. Meeting	7 January
2. Meeting	25 January
3. Meeting	2 February
4. Meeting	4 February
5. Meeting	25 February
6. Meeting	29 April
7. Meeting	19 May
8. Meeting	10 June
9. Meeting	28 July
10. Meeting	24 August
11. Meeting	26 August
12. Meeting	20 October
13. Meeting	21 December



EUD Board Meeting on Zoom

EUD General Assembly took place on Saturday 28th August 2021 through Zoom Platform. During the General Assembly, EUD board member Sofia Isari was elected as the Vice President of EUD and the mandate will end

on 28 May 2022. The next General Assembly will be taking place in Marseille, France. Its host, the Fédération Nationale des Sourds de France (FNSF), took the opportunity to give a presentation about its venue.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

EUD General Assembly on Zoom



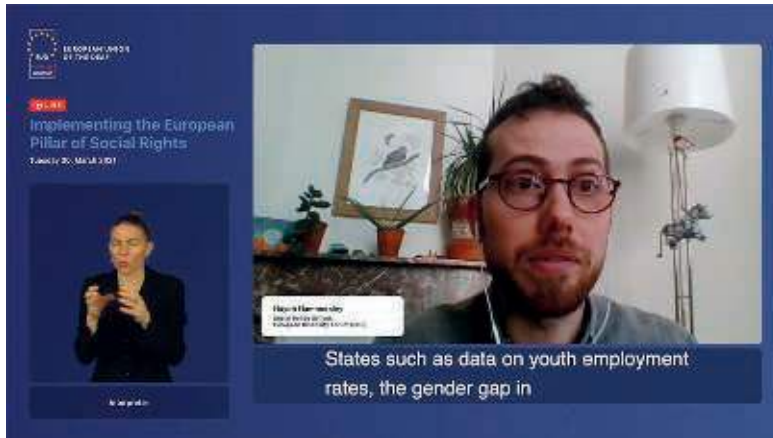
Impact Report 2021 is available in International Sign:



EUD INITIATIVES

WEBINARS

The aim of the webinars is to strengthen the capacity of national member organisations to actively contribute to the implementation of the European Disability Rights Strategy, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and other relevant policies and initiatives.

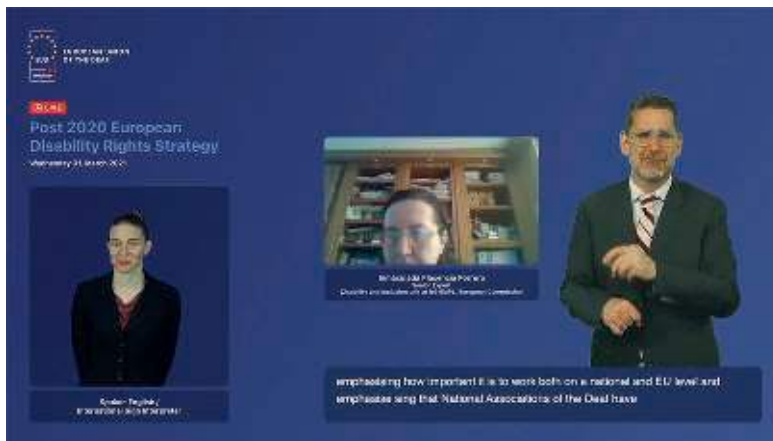


Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

On the 30th of March, EUD organised a webinar to inform its members about the Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and encourage NADs to engage on this at the national level.

4,100
views

58
peak live viewers



Disability Rights Strategy 2021- 2030

On the 31st of March, EUD organised a webinar to present the work that has been done in recent years to influence the post-2020 Strategy. A representative from the European Commission explained the new structure and priorities of the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021 – 2030.

4,700
views

44
peak live viewers

Intersectionality in the European deaf community

On the 21st of April, EUD hosted a webinar on intersectionality, as we understand diversity as part of the collective richness of the deaf community and strive for inclusion, equality and equity in all of its senses. EUD’s aim is to ensure that its work makes equally visible the perspectives of all deaf persons, irrespective of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, sexual orientation, language or gender identity; and guarantees the rights of all deaf people are protected, respected and fulfilled. At this webinar, we learned more about intersectionality within the deaf community and explored how we can all work together to ensure equality, equity, diversity and non-discrimination.

995 views

82 peak live viewers

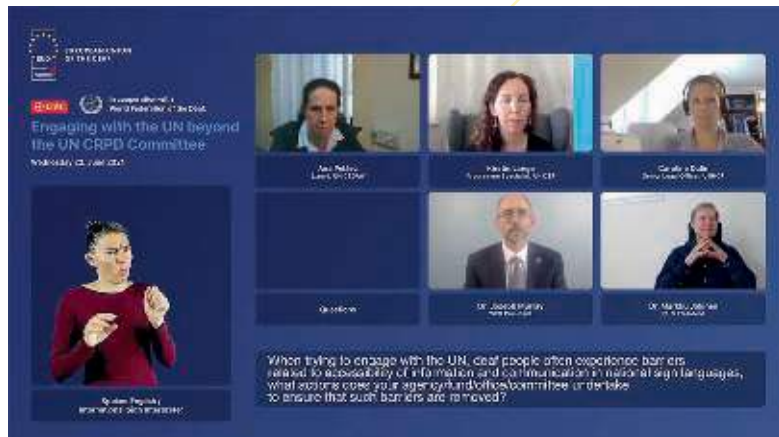


Engaging with the UN beyond the UN CRPD Committee

On the 23rd of June, EUD organised a webinar to highlight that there are several UN Treaty Bodies, agencies and funds that EUD members must engage with to ensure the systematic and cross-cutting inclusion of deaf persons throughout the UN human rights protection mechanisms. For instance, during the webinar EUD emphasised that for advocates of deaf women rights it is essential to engage with the Committee of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW). Deaf women must be meaningfully included in the process of the implementation of the UN CEDAW so that their views and perspectives are visible in efforts to achieve stronger protection against discrimination and gender-based violence. The webinar also encouraged NADs across Europe to forge more robust relations with UN entities such as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

3,100 views

42 peak live viewers





Constitutional Recognition of Sign Language

On the 23rd of September, EUD organised a webinar on constitutional sign language recognition and its impact when ensuring human rights for deaf persons. During the webinar, presenters answered the following questions: Why have only a few countries have achieved the constitutional recognition of sign language? What are the benefits of constitutionally recognising sign languages? How can NADs advocate for this? EUD gathered experts from Finland, Hungary and Slovenia to discuss their journey towards achieving the constitutional recognition of their sign languages and dispensed advice on how to do.

4,600
views

79
peak live viewers

The EUD has three working groups: Gender Equality, Deaf Lawyers, and ICT and Accessibility. The following three sections detail some of their achievements in 2021

WORKING GROUPS

The 65th virtual session of the Commission on the Status of Women

GENDER EQUALITY

The 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) took place from 15 to 26 March 2021. In light of the COVID-19 situation, it was held in a hybrid format with mostly virtual meetings. EUD Board Member and Chair of the EUD Gender Equality Working Group, Louise Lolo Danielsson attended a number of these virtual sessions and events. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. During its annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organisations and UN entities discuss progress and commit to further action. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission's parent body, for follow-up. This year's theme was women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

EUD participated in three interactive dialogues. The first one focused on the theme of eliminating violence against women in public life. During this dialogue, participants discussed how violence against women significantly affects their engagement in public life and decision-making. To eliminate it, such violence must be tracked and documented, and effective prevention measures need to be put in place. In the dialogue on the theme of women's participation and leadership in the COVID-19 response, panellists addressed the need to deliver female-led, gender-responsive, sustainable and resilient recovery. The third interactive dialogue focused on women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development.

EUD also attended a number of side events, which were interpreted in International Sign.



EUD meets ILGA-Europe

On 27th of January, EUD had a meeting with ILGA-Europe (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), which is an independent, international non-governmental umbrella body bringing together over 600 organisations from 54 countries in Europe and Central Asia. They are part of the wider international ILGA organisation, but ILGA-Europe were established as a separate region and an independent legal entity in 1996. ILGA itself was created in 1978.

The purpose of the meeting was to find out more about the work of ILGA-Europe and explore how both organisations might work more closely together and support deaf LGBTI advocates.

During the meeting ILGA-Europe explained that the three main pillars of their work are:

1. Advocating for human rights and equality for LGBTI people at European level, before organisations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation

ILGA-Europe already plays an active role in supporting deaf LGBTI people. These are a few good practice examples from Hungary and Ireland:

Project in Hungary

A project is being coordinated in Hungary by Silent Rainbow, a group of LGBTI deaf people supported by the Hättér Society. The aim of the project is to strengthen the operation of Silent Rainbow by recruiting new members, improving the internal cohesion of the group, exploring the needs of deaf LGBTI people, creating a strategic plan, and making the group more visible to the public. They organised a public event during Budapest Pride in 2020. They also host monthly community meetings and publish awareness-raising materials and informational videos on the challenges faced by LGBTI deaf people.

in Europe (OSCE) in particular in relation to asylum, hate crime and hate speech, and upholding rights to education, employment, family, health, legal gender recognition and bodily integrity, and freedom of assembly, association and expression.

2. Strategic litigation by using European courts to advance the rights of LGBTI people. The use of European courts to ensure full recognition and implementation of human rights for everyone – irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics – is one of the key working methods of ILGA-Europe to achieve full equality for LGBTI people in Europe.
3. Strengthening the LGBTI movement in Europe and Central Asia by providing training and support to its member organisations and other LGBTI groups on advocacy, fundraising, organisational development and strategic communications.

Project in Ireland

D/deaf and disabled LGBTI young people using the charity BeLong to Youth Services identified a gap in practitioners' knowledge across Ireland when it comes to working with intersectional communities. They developed two informational videos. The first advised youth workers on how to be more inclusive in their practice towards D/deaf and disabled LGBTI+ youth and the second covered how to stay safe online and on the scene.

The EUD encourages advocates and activists who lobby for the rights of deaf LGBTI people to engage with these kinds of organisations. For those who are struggling to find partners and support on the national level, European-level organisations like the EUD and ILGA-Europe can assist in establishing links.

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2021 is available in
International Sign:



2nd Deaf Women's European Forum

The 26 delegates from 16 NADs in EUD's 31 member countries, including some affiliated associations for deaf women, were present at a distance at the 2nd Deaf Women's European Forum on 21-22 October 2021.

This forum revealed that some of EUD's member countries do not show their support for the situation of deaf women. There are still differences among NADs, especially with regard to women's access to services on equal terms. Close co-operation between NADs, including affiliated associations for deaf women, is a prerequisite for respecting women's rights. This is to, among other things, improve the living conditions of deaf women at various levels around Europe. Some of the NADs must also provide support for the formation of new clubs, committees or associations for deaf women.

In order to achieve equal access and rights for all deaf women in Europe, the situation must change. For that reason, a survey was administered which resulted in proposals that all NADs in the EUD's member countries should commit to:

- in close co-operation with affiliated deaf women's associations, regularly support women's rights by following up with information and measures.
- respect gender equality in the association's work and across its board, staff and members. At the same time, this gender equality must also be respected by all affiliated associations, clubs, and committees.
- increasingly include deaf women's topics in the associations' in action plans and agendas and make them transparent in the association's work
- draw the attention of the respective national governments to the situation of deaf women at all levels - locally, regionally and nationally.



These proposals are intended to help NADs try to find some adequate solutions and should be implemented as soon as possible, so that measures can be taken to improve the living conditions of deaf women in Europe.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility with Apple:
Designed for all Learners

Celebrating Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) on the 19th of May 2021, Apple held an interactive workshop providing an overview of its accessibility features and their implementation in the classroom. This was complemented by the call for an accessible digital learning environment through the European Commission's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Digital Education Action Plan.



Elisa Molino, Accessibility Policy Lead for Europe at Apple, highlighted the importance of the relationship between education and accessibility. She said "powerful technology is the technology that empowers each and every one of us, realising Apple's perspective that accessibility is a human right".

The session featured demonstrations of accessibility features that can support learners with a disability. This included increasing the size of text and items with a digital magnifying glass ('Magnifier'), using vocal commands to open and navigate services and apps ('Voice Control'), putting closed captions into video projects ('Clips'), and adding audio components to text ('Spoken Content').

Meetings with Google

EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley held regular meetings with Google's accessibility team and discussed the company's services for the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities

such as real time speech to text translation, live captioning for Youtube and other improvements. EUD continues work with Google in the field of Accessibility.



EDF / Apple – Inclusive Education

On 12th of October 2021, the EUD attended a webinar co-hosted by EDF and Apple, on the benefits of accessible technology for students with disabilities. It aimed to present the accessible features that Apple has introduced and provide a discussion on how that technology is helping these students thrive.

The opening remarks were made by Sarah Hellinger, Apple's Senior Director of Global Accessibility and Policy Initiatives. She stated that Apple believes 'technology can play a powerful role in helping students be more productive, creative, collaborative, motivated, and empowered, and create independence to foster dignity and live out their dreams'. Furthermore, she outlined Apple's views on accessibility and disability, saying that both are on a spectrum and that technology varies depending on the student's needs and their disability. To make the technology more compatible with disabled learners' requirements, Apple has worked with several deaf schools, as well as schools for blind and visually impaired pupils.

The panellists were invited to discuss their experiences teaching children with disabilities through assistive technology with Apple products and apps such Pages, Keynote and Numbers. David Niemeijer, Founder and CEO of Assistive Ware, argued that there had been considerable advances in developing assistive technologies and putting accessible features into mainstream products. He ascertained that the barriers facing inclusive education lie outside of technology, and include things such as:

- A lack of belief from teachers/educators in the potential of students with disabilities;
- A lack of funding, as the technology is available but schools often lack the budget to purchase it and make it available for all students;
- A lack of knowledge about the accessibility features or the availability of certain assistive technologies; and
- A lack of collaboration between the schools and parents, with schools saying that parents often are not taking on shared responsibility to ensure that the students have access to the technology they need, and the parents saying that the schools do not train them in the technology that their children are supposed to use or allow the child to bring it home with them.

At this event, it was exciting to see how these evolving assistive technologies affect the lives of students with disabilities and how technology is making education more inclusive and empowering. Having technology companies understand the needs of students with disabilities will improve their access to education and ensure that no one is left behind.



EUD INITIATIVES

ADPA – LNB

EUD made an agreement of co-financing with the European Parliament, on citizens' engagement action in the framework for grants in communication which will run from January 2021 to June 2022.

The aim of this project, called Accessible Democratic Processes for All: Leave No One Behind the European Parliament, is to make the Parliament's communications on the post- COVID-19 recovery plan more

accessible for deaf Europeans and enable their full and equal political participation in the EU. This includes increasing deaf citizens' awareness of the role and democratic values of the European Union by promoting strategic engagement with EU institutions.

For a year and a half, in collaboration with the European Parliament, EUD will address four relevant topics in the framework of the post-COVID-19 recovery plan through accessible videos in International Sign, accessible webinars, and interviews with MEP.



DESEAL

EUD has been involved in the DESEAL (Deaf Senior Education for Active Living) project since September 2020. This project is orchestrated by four partners from Italy, France and Austria, and aims to work towards promoting equality, non-discrimination, and diversity for deaf older people through the provision of accessible digital information.

To achieve this, DESEAL's consortium, which is coordinated by the Turin Institution for the Deaf, are working on providing training materials for deaf seniors to enable them to access information and gain digital skills. They are also supporting trainers and educators to adapt training methods and materials for deaf seniors. EUD, in collaboration with its DESEAL partners, administered questionnaires through its network to investigate these needs.



The Artificial Intelligence for the Deaf (aiD) project aims to address the challenge of deaf people's communication and social integration by leveraging the latest technological advances in machine learning (ML), human computer interaction (HCI) and augmented reality (AR) technology. Specifically, speech-to-text/text-to-speech algorithms have reached a high level of accuracy, as a product of the latest breakthrough advances in the field of deep learning (DL). However, the commercially available systems cannot be readily integrated into a solution targeting communication between deaf and hearing people. Moreover, existing research efforts to tackle the problem of transcribing sign language (SL) videos or generating synthetic SL footage from text (using avatars) have failed to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

aiD addresses these issues by developing speech-to-text/text-to-speech modules tailored to the requirements of a system for deaf communication. Most importantly, aiD's partners are meeting the core technological challenge of SL transcription and generation in an AR environment. aiD's vision is to exploit and advance the state of the art in DL to solve these problems with groundbreaking accuracy, in a fashion amenable to commodity mobile hardware including smartphones and tablets. This will be in contrast to existing provision which depends either on sophisticated costly equipment (multiple vision sensors, gloves and wristbands), or lab-only systems limited to fingerspelling as

opposed to the official SLs that deaf people actually use. Indeed, existing provision which depends either on a word-by-word basis, thus missing the syntactic context and are not amenable to commodity mobile devices. aiD's vision is to resolve these inadequacies so as to offer a concrete solution that facilitates interaction between deaf and hearing people on demand. The project's core innovation lies in the development of new algorithms and techniques that enable the real-time translation of SL videos to text or speech and vice-versa (SL avatar generation from speech/text in an AR environment) on mobile devices.

Addressing the multifaceted challenge of enabling deaf people to effectively communicate, interact, and eventually participate in social life will bring about a major breakthrough in the lives of hundreds of thousands of European citizens. Inspired by a deep understanding of the deaf community's needs and the capacity of modern ML and AR technologies, the overarching goal of aiD is to pursue cross-disciplinary innovation that builds on and extends the latest academic research advances to offer a comprehensive suite of solutions catering to deaf people's communication needs.



EUD INITIATIVES

DEAF MUSEUMS

Deaf Museums is a consortium composed of seven organisations in six European countries. The Deaf Museums project is financed by Erasmus+ funding and started on 1st of October 2020.

EUD and its Deaf Museums partners value the collective, community work to preserve deaf heritage and deaf history and are proactively sharing these treasures with others. They allow everyone to look back, look around, and look forward; to remember how things were, before; to learn about important people

and events in the past; and to understand ourselves, our communities, our cultures, and our world.

In practical terms, the Deaf Museums team are producing a number of 'good examples' to show what everyone can do to preserve and share deaf heritage. On the project website, the partners report what they did and why, and what was or was not successful. Working alongside experienced museum professionals, they are producing a basic course in museum skills: a 'cookbook' for people who want to help preserve deaf heritage.



JUSTISIGNS 2

JUSTISIGNS 2 is led by a consortium of European experts from Ireland, Belgium, Spain and the UK who are collaborating to undertake research within the deaf, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking communities to investigate the experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) and their interactions with victim support agencies.

JUSTISIGNS 2 is focused on education and training to improve access to support services in GBV cases by increasing awareness and providing training to multi-agency actors who engage with victims.



EUD is part of the three-year Horizon 2020 project called EASIER, which started in January 2021. It is working with the Switzerland-based company Martel and 13 other consortium partners from eight European countries, including SL technology research groups and experts in human sciences and technology.

EASIER aims to create a framework for barrier-free communication among deaf and hearing citizens across Europe by enabling users of European SLs to use their preferred language to interact with hearing individuals. The six SLs that the project covers are: British, Dutch, French, German, Greek and Swiss German. It also caters for five spoken languages: English, Dutch, French, German and Greek. The project team is preparing the framework to be able to include other European spoken and signed languages.

In the EASIER consortium, the EUD focuses on user involvement by bringing in members of deaf communities for needs analyses, design specifications, feedback and evaluations. The EASIER application will be designed and built based on the input from these (deaf) end-users.

EASIER



EUD is continuing its work in the EU-funded Smart and Healthy Ageing Promoting Empowering Systems (SHAPES) project. Since its launch in 2019, SHAPES has been creating Europe's first open ecosystem enabling a broad range of digital solutions for supporting and extending healthy and independent living for older individuals.

The SHAPES Innovation Action intends to build, pilot and deploy a large-scale, EU-standardised open platform. Through the integration of an array of technological,

organisational, clinical, educational and societal solutions, the project seeks to facilitate long-term healthy and active ageing and quality of life. Mediated by technology, in-home and local community environments interact with health and care networks contributing to the reduction of hospitalisations and institutional care, and associated costs.

SHAPES



EUD INITIATIVES

SIGNON

EUD is involved in the consortium for the Horizon 2020 project SignON, which began in January 2021. Led by Dublin City University and composed of 17 partners, the consortium offers the EUD a chance to bring forward its expertise and end-user perspective.

SIGNON is a user-centric and community-driven project that aims to facilitate the exchange of information among deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing individuals across Europe, specifically targeting the Irish, British,

Dutch, Flemish and Spanish sign languages and the English, Irish, Dutch, and Spanish spoken languages.

EUD will fulfil a central role in gathering users' responses and reporting their requirements to the consortium by defining use-cases and co-designing and co-developing the SignON application. The project will deploy the SignON service as a smartphone app running on standard devices.



FREE TECH SIGNS

With our most recent project, Free Technology Signs (FTS), launched in December 2021, we are aiming to increase the possibility for life-long learning and personal growth for deaf job seekers to facilitate their inclusion and employability. To do so, together with

partners from Austria, Germany, Italy and Turkey, the FTS Consortium are working on developing accessible and bilingual digital resources in sign language along with written language to give opportunities to deaf job seekers to learn independently and gain transferable digital skills.



MEDIA

For a number of years now, EUD has been determined to produce high quality and fully accessible information for its members and other interested parties. This is done to increase EUD’s visibility for two reasons— firstly, to raise our profile and publicise our campaigns among political stakeholders, and secondly, to make the wider deaf community aware of what we are working towards.

EUD’s approach to disseminating information generally takes the form of International Sign with selected features like English subtitles, a voiceover in English, and/or a transcription of the video in English text on the same page as the video. This format for dissemination is aimed at being fully accessible for all, bringing to life the disability movement’s slogan ‘nothing about us without us’.

Website

Our website, eud.eu, had 140,271 users in 2020. This increased in 2021 to 171,758 visitors, who clicked on our pages 383,526 times in total. The most popular months were January and November. There was also a dramatic increase in hits on the videos embedded on our website, from 73,000 in 2020 to 104,100 in 2021. The team were working throughout 2021 on the new website, which will be launched in 2022.

171,758
page views

104,100
hits for videos

Newsletters

EUD has two types of newsletters, internal and external. The internal newsletters are for the EUD Full Members, and contain documents such as reporting templates, guidelines, fact sheets, announcements, agendas, questionnaires, evaluation forms, presentations, and meeting minutes. The external newsletters containing the EUD’s activities are made available to all key audiences and stakeholders. A total of 30 newsletters were sent in 2021, 23 of which were internal. External newsletters were sent out on 7 occasions. They were opened by the recipients about 71% of the time.

23
internal
newsletters

7
external
newsletters

Impact Report 2021 is available in International Sign:



140 posts

56,286 likes



Facebook

The official EUD Facebook page lost a few dozen fans this year; our followers decreased from 56,363 to 56,281. However, our posts received 56,286 likes. The information that is 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.

135 tweets

6,950 followers

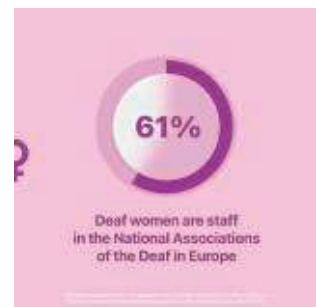
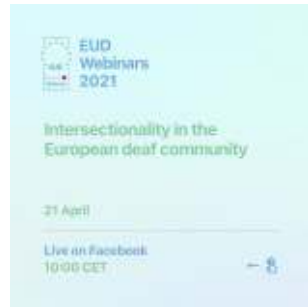


Twitter

Twitter enables our organisation's daily activities to be shared immediately. It also serves as an ideal platform to publicise information regarding special events, including the first virtual General Assembly and Board Meetings when they occur. We anticipate this area of our work will connect with a much larger audience in time. During 2021, we increased our number of followers to 6,950, and got 709 retweets and 191 mentions.

Instagram

Instagram, a social media platform that was launched in 2013, is a distinctive way to capture political life through an artistic lens. This is a small, but growing niche audience for us. Back in 2016, we had 950 followers, and now we have 3,980.



28 posts

3,890 followers

UN CRPD

In March 2021 the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities opened its 24th online session. During this session, Estonia was reviewed and in April the Committee

published its Concluding Observations. Later in August the Committee, during its 25th session, reviewed France and its Concluding Observations were released in September.

UN CRPD Committee reviews Estonia

This was the Committee's first assessment on Estonia's implementation of the UN CRPD. Estonia ratified the Convention in May 2012. Prior to the State Party review, the EUD worked very closely with the Estonian Association of the Deaf to ensure that the issues related to deaf persons would be properly addressed. The EUD encouraged the Association to be an active player in the review and collaborate with other relevant partners to ensure that deaf people are not left behind during the process. Most importantly, EUD strongly supported the Association when submitting the alternative report which informed the Committee in detail about the situation of deaf persons in Estonia.

After the dialogue, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities published the Concluding Observations and one of its recommendations was that Estonia should ensure access to sign language interpretation and speech-to-text services for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons in all areas of life. Moreover, the Committee encouraged Estonia to strengthen grants and incentives

to increase the provision of training for sign language interpreters, including at the university level, and adopt measures to raise awareness about deaf culture and Estonian Sign Language. The Committee also urged Estonia's government to guarantee the accessibility of all public information sources, including media and TV services, for all persons with disabilities. This should encompass access through sign language, captioning, and subtitles, and the allocation of adequate funding for the development, promotion and use of these measures. The Committee also asked Estonia to ensure better accessibility through Estonian Sign Language when implementing five Articles of the UN CRPD: Article 13 on access to justice, Article 21 on freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information, Article 24 on Education, Article 27 on work and employment, Article 30 on participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport.

EUD's collaboration with the Estonian Association of the Deaf can be seen as a good practice example of joining forces to produce favourable outcomes. The EUD would like to thank the Association for their hard work in making deaf perspectives visible during the review process, and wants to encourage other members to be similarly active in this regard.



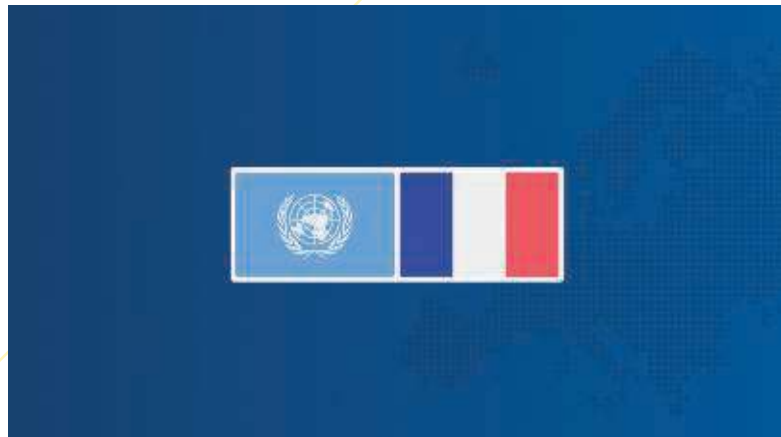
UN CRPD Committee reviews France

From 18th to 23rd of August 2021, France was reviewed by the UN CRPD Committee. EUD supported the National Federation of France for the deaf and gave them relevant information and advice on drafting the alternative report and meeting with the Committee Members. Before the country review, the Federation of France for the Deaf provided the Committee with the alternative report which explained in detail about the barriers faced by deaf persons in France.

After the dialogue, the Committee published the Concluding Observations urging France to recognise French Sign Language as an official language, including at the constitutional level, and promote access to and the use of sign languages in all areas of life. The Committee also asked France to recognise the professional status of sign language interpreters, deliver systematic and extensive training for them, and establish professional standards for interpretation. Furthermore, the Observations advised that France should ensure access to public and private broadcasting services and audiovisual content through sign language interpretation, subtitles, audio description and other accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities. The also said the French government needs to set up mechanisms to protect children with disabilities against being compelled to use cochlear implants and furnish them with the opportunity to learn sign languages and participate in deaf culture.

Regarding education, the Committee asked France to ensure that access to French Sign Language is provided at the early stages and that deaf culture is promoted in inclusive educational environments. They suggested that France adopt programmes with specific goals and time frames to offer individualised support to young persons with disabilities through the provision of reasonable accommodation in tertiary education, including to facilitate their international mobility, and use of sign languages.

Finally, the Committee asked France to guarantee access to justice and information about the pandemic for all persons with disabilities, including through sign language. EUD would like to thank the National Federation of France for the Deaf for their hard work in making sure that deaf perspectives were represented during the review process. We will continue supporting the Federation in its efforts to ensure that the Concluding Observations are implemented by the French authorities



EUD & WFD JOINT INPUT TO THE GENERAL COMMENT ON UN CRPD ARTICLE 27

As part of the process of drafting a General Comment on Art. 27 of the Convention, the right to work and employment the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities launched a call for written submissions. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities invited States parties to the UN CRPD Convention, United Nations entities and specialized agencies, other United Nations human rights mechanisms, non-governmental organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, and other interested stakeholders to participate in the general discussion and to provide with written submissions on the draft General Comment on Art. 27 of the Convention.

EUD together with the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) took the opportunity to participate in this consultation process and provided the Committee with a joint submission. WFD and the EUD highlighted that deaf people face a unique situation compared to other persons with disabilities due to their specific cultural and linguistic identities and their use of national sign languages.

Among many other recommendations, EUD and WFD emphasised that while the funding and presence of professional and accredited national sign language interpreters remain the essential elements of the reasonable accommodation for deaf persons in the labour market in light of the Article 2 combined with the Article 9.2(e) of the Convention, for deaf people to fully exercise their linguistic human rights to participate in and contribute to the labour market, the accessibility and inclusion of the labour market itself through national sign languages must be guaranteed. This could be realised through fostering the opportunities to participate in the labour market directly in a national sign language and ensuring that sign language working environments are provided.

The General Comment on Art. 27 of the Convention is being developed and will hopefully be published soon.



In June 2021 the 14th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) took place. This time the conference was virtual.

During the General Debate of the Conference of State Parties EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley presented a statement on behalf of the European Union of the Deaf. This year's General Debate focused on building back better from COVID-19 crisis and included video statements made by the representatives of the State Parties to the UN CRPD and civil society organisations which highlighted the urgent need to include persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in national and global recovery plans.

In its statement EUD highlighted that the recovery from COVID-19 can be an impetus to find new solutions for building more

sustainable, inclusive and equal societies. However, inclusion must be an integral part of crisis response. In order to ensure that we build towards a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world, EUD encouraged the State Parties to the UN CRPD to place organisations of persons with disabilities, including National Associations of the Deaf (NADs) at the core of the decision-making process in relation to COVID-19 recovery. EUD emphasised that when meaningfully consulted, organisations of persons with disabilities will ensure that the COVID-19 response does not infringe rights granted by the UN CRPD and meaningfully addresses the disproportionate socio-economic impact that is experienced by persons with disabilities, including deaf persons.

CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES (COSP) TO THE CRPD



Impact Report 2021 is available in International Sign:



LAUNCH OF THE 5TH BOOK OF EUD'S UN CRPD BOOK SERIES

In December EUD launched the 5th book of the series UN CRPD implementation in Europe - a deaf perspective.

The new EUD book focuses on UN CRPD Article 9: access to information and communication for the deaf. In a first attempt to deepen the interpretation of Article 9 (1) (b) of the UN CRPD, in 2018 EUD published a position paper on the accessibility of information, communication, and knowledge. Then, in September 2019, to expand and refine this initial interpretation and highlight further angles and applications of accessibility, EUD invited authors from different domains of expertise and experience to contribute to its book. But rather than focusing exclusively on Article 9, the book aims to highlight the connections between Article 9 and other articles of the UN CRPD. To explore a range of deaf perspectives and possibilities that relate to this synergy, the volume is organised into seven interlinking and overlapping themes.

The first theme, which has an introductory chapter and three main chapters, explores the legal frameworks for accessibility in the UN CRPD and the EU. The second theme

highlights how the sense of urgency that came with the COVID-19 pandemic became a catalyst for new initiatives facilitating access to information and communication. The third theme focuses on the access to social and mental health services and represent the intersection of Articles 9 and 25 on the right to health care, and Article 17 on the right to the protection of physical and mental integrity. The fourth theme of the book is that the accessibility of information and communication can also be approached from an intersectionality perspective. The fifth theme relates to justice and employment, and its four chapters exemplify Article 9's links with two other Articles of the UN CRPD, namely Article 13 on access to justice and Article 27 on work and employment. EUD also advocates for access to audiovisual content and information, emphasising that high quality is necessary to ensure meaningful access for the user; this is explored in the three chapters that make up the sixth theme on audiovisual media services. The seventh and final theme is on accessibility, artificial intelligence, and technologies. Investment in new technologies, including those based on artificial intelligence, are a major focus of the EUD's advocacy due to their role in the realisation of access to information, communication, and knowledge.

By including diverse contributions ranging from research articles to policy contributions and examples of good practice from NADs, EUD book endeavours to introduce a deaf sign language perspective into the debate on Article 9 UN CRPD while stimulating further advocacy and exploration of different angles of accessibility. The interactive pdf version of the book optimises its accessibility for the EUD's main stakeholders, i.e. users of visual languages, by showcasing visual resources and short videos.

The fifth EUD book is now available on EUD website.



STRATEGY FOR THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 2021-2030

In March, the European Commission presents its ambitious Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 to enable their full participation in society, on an equal basis with others in the EU and beyond. The

new strategy builds on its predecessor, the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, and contributes to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and UN CRPD at both EU and national levels.

Launch of the Strategy – EUD webinar

On the 31st of March, EUD organised a webinar to discuss the new European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030. During the webinar, the structure and priorities of the Strategy were explained by Inmaculada Placencia Porrero, Senior Expert at the Disability and Inclusion Unit of the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) at the European Commission.

The Commission highlighted that the objective of this Strategy is to progress towards ensuring that all persons with disabilities in Europe, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation can enjoy their human rights, have equal opportunities to participate in society and the economy, and are able to decide where, how and with whom they live. The Strategy also aims to ensure that persons with disabilities can move freely in the EU regardless of their

support needs and without experiencing discrimination. The new and strengthened Strategy takes account of the diversity of disability comprising long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which are often invisible (in line with Article 1 of the UN CRPD). Moreover, addressing the risks of multiple disadvantages faced by women, children, older persons, refugees with disabilities, and those with socioeconomic difficulties, it promotes an intersectional perspective in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With an ambitious set of actions and flagship initiatives in various domains, the Strategy has numerous priorities, such as accessibility, quality of life, equal participation, and the role of the EU to lead by example and promote the rights of persons with disabilities globally.

Inmaculada Placencia Porrero
Senior Expert,
Disability and Inclusion unit,
European Commission



The Strategy's flagship initiatives are as follows:

In 2022 the Commission will launch a European resource centre **AccessibleEU** to increase coherence in accessibility policies and facilitate access to relevant knowledge.

The Commission will propose the creation for a **European Disability Card** by the end of 2023 with a view to be recognised in all Member States.

By 2023, the Commission will issue **guidance recommending to Member States improvements on independent living and inclusion in the community**. Building on

the existing voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services, the Commission will present, by 2024, a specific **framework for Social Services of Excellence** to improve service delivery for persons with disabilities.

In 2022, the Commission will present a **package to improve labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities**.

In 2021, the Commission established the **Disability Platform**.

The Commission will adopt a renewed **HR strategy** that will include actions to promote diversity and inclusion for persons with disabilities.

EUD analysis of the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021 – 2030

After the publication of the Strategy, EUD analysed it in detail and identified the relevant actions that we will need to undertake

in the coming years to contribute to its implementation. Considering the flagship initiatives and other planned actions, EUD developed an internal plan which will serve as the basis of our work for the next four years.



EDS!

European Disability Rights Strategy 2021 – 2030: strategic dialogue

On 19th of March, EUD participated in the virtual strategic dialogue organised by the DG EMPL at the European Commission. The participants discussed the new Strategy which was presented by Katarina Ivanković Knežević, Director of Social Affairs at DG EMPL.

They aimed at finding out more about each initiative and highlighted that co-operation among organisations of persons with disabilities, EU Member States, and the European Commission will be fundamentally important when delivering the objectives of the Strategy. EUD Executive Director Mr Mark Wheatley drew attention to the importance

of collecting disaggregated data by disability type to measure the progress for persons with different disabilities. He suggested that the flagship initiative on improving the labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities should include a data collection platform or network for co-operation between EUROSTAT, national offices of statistics, national focal points on the UN CRPD, and organisations representing persons with disabilities. He also highlighted that the EU Member States should use harmonised methods and tools for data collection such as the Washington Set of Short Questions.

Disability Platform: flagship 1 of the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021 – 2030

The Strategy is the establishment of the new Disability Platform. In October 2021, the European Commission fulfilled this commitment, replacing the High-Level Group on Disability and bolstering support for national disability strategies. The Platform brings together national UN CRPD focal points, organisations of persons with disabilities and the European Commission. The online presence of the Disability Platform will contain information on its meetings, activities, analyses, and country information, including national government's promotion of accessible and inclusive good practices. In 2021 EUD applied to become a member organisation of the Disability Platform and was accepted.

Following an open call for applications, all the EU Member States put forward their representatives, and 14 civil society organisations active in the field of disability, including the EUD, were selected. In December 2021, the EUD attended the first meeting of the Platform, during which the Commission presented the state of play of the implementation of the Strategy and presented the draft Work Programme for the Disability Platform.

TRANSPPOSITION OF THE EUROPEAN ACCESSIBILITY ACT

Peer support meetings at the European Disability Forum

The European Accessibility Act (EAA) is at the stage of being adopted by EU Member States, whose deadline is June 2022, with some exceptions. To support organisations of persons with disabilities, such as EUD members, disability advocates and accessibility experts, the European Disability Forum organises peer support meetings which the EUD participates in and encourages NADs to attend so they can learn about the EAA transposition process in various EU Member States. EUD disseminates information about and updates from the meetings via its communication channels.



In February, the EUD attended the first peer support meeting. The participants exchanged information on which ministries in different countries were responsible for transposing the EAA, as well as the obstacles that their organisations face when trying to influence the transposition at the national level. At the subsequent meeting in June, a representative from the European Commission informed participants regarding the progress of the transpositions. The third meeting, which was held in October, was an informal discussion between organisations of persons with disabilities and accessibility experts, to allow them to share their experiences and update each other about national transposition efforts.

Chapter on the importance of an ambitious transposition of the European Accessibility Act for deaf people in the EU in EUD book on Accessibility

To better inform NADs about the potential impact of the European Accessibility Act for deaf persons in the EU, we asked the European Commission to publish their explanation of it in our book on Article 9 of the UN CRPD. In their chapter, the Commission concentrates on why an ambitious transposition of the EAA by national governments can improve deaf

people's daily lives. The chapter explains the scope the Act, Member States' main obligations, and the additional requirements for electronic communications. EUD strongly encourages all its members to read the chapter carefully and engage in advocacy for ambitious transpositions of the EAA.

Impact Report
2021 is available in
International Sign:



Policy Roundtable on the European Accessibility Act hosted by Facebook and European Disability Forum

In May, EUD attended the virtual policy roundtable hosted by the European Disability Forum (EDF) and Facebook in celebration of Global Awareness Accessibility Day (GAAD) to discuss the transposition of the EAA. The discussion was opened by Monica Desai, Head of Facebook's Global Connectivity and Access Policy and, Humberto Insolera, Executive Committee member of EDF.

During the panel discussions, each presenter provided individual insights on to how to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities through technology in digital services. They also addressed the impact of COVID-19 on the transposition of the EAA as the pandemic accelerated the process of digital transformation.

Mr Insolera highlighted that the involvement of persons with disabilities is one of the key factors for the success of the EAA. He called on national governments to take advantage of accessibility requirements of the Act and make sure that organisations of persons with

disabilities are meaningfully consulted, and their views are reflected in the final legal texts. Then, Ms Placencia- Porrero introduced the next steps, including working with Member States and disability organisations to support inclusive and participatory standardisation in co-operation with accessibility experts, persons with disabilities and industry partners.

Having a strong and ambitious transposition of the EAA is important for the deaf community; therefore, after the policy roundtable, the EUD once again informed NADs about the need to act at the national level and encouraged them to take action to ensure that the transposition of the EAA is effective and the national laws correctly implement its requirements. The NADs were also reminded of the existing resources that are available on the EUD's website, such as toolkits and webinars.



SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALSRegional Forum on
Sustainable Development

From the 10th to 18th of March, the EUD participated in the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD), hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE). The RFSD is an annual event dedicated to discussing how to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in our region. The Forum offered seven days of SDG action with 12 virtual peer learning roundtables, followed by hybrid plenary sessions. There was also space for a range of discussions during the side events and various pre-meetings, such as the Civil Society pre-meeting.

EUD together with the EDF attended the Forum as part of the Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism's (RCEM) constituency of persons with disabilities. This year the French Council of Disabled People for European Affairs (CFHE) also joined our constituency.

Side event 'Building an inclusive
and effective path for civil society
engagement in the High-Level
Political Forum'

In the context of the High-Level Political Forum, in July EUD attended a webinar organised by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities. The event was entitled 'Building an inclusive and effective path for civil society engagement in the High-Level Political Forum'. Its aim was to discuss how NGOs and other organisations could strengthen their work nationally and internationally to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in relation to persons with disabilities.

Prior to the RFSD, the RCEM constituency of persons with disabilities advocated for the Forum to become more accessible for deaf participants, as previously it did not provide interpreting in International Sign. We were very pleased to see that the UN ECE lived up to its commitment of not leaving the deaf participants behind in discussions on the delivery of the SDGs in our region, and for the first time provided interpreting in International Sign. This not only gave more visibility to the importance of accessibility through sign language, but also made it possible for EUD's Executive Director to represent the civil society in Europe and deliver the joint statement in International Sign during the plenary session. EUD would like to thank the UN ECE for making the Forum more accessible for deaf participants and highlighting that accessibility in all of its senses must continue playing a key role to ensure fully inclusive processes.

Martyna Balciunaite, EUD Policy Officer, presented the advocacy work of the Regional Constituency of Persons with Disabilities the UN ECE. Her presentation provided insight into how the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Europe was made more accessible for persons with disabilities through the advocacy efforts of the Constituency, e.g. providing sign language interpretation for deaf participants. She said that 'ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities is an obligation, not a choice'.

Action plan on implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

In March the European Commission presented the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, a policy instrument which aims at delivering new and more effective rights for citizens. The Pillar builds upon 20 key principles, structured around three categories: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion.

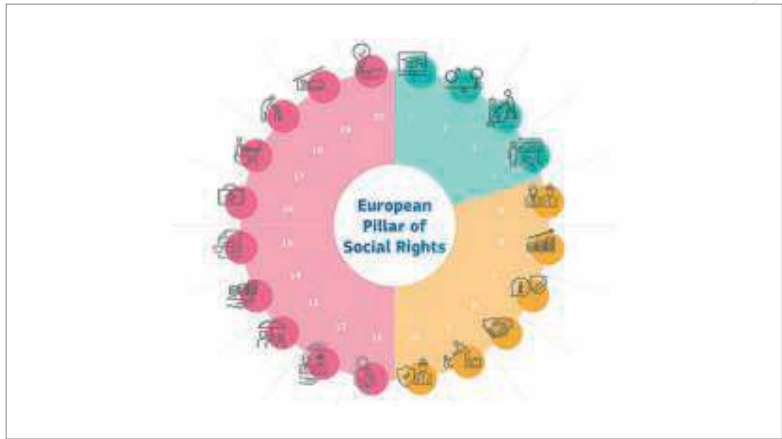
The Pillar will also play a role ensuring that the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will be socially fair and just. Shortly after the launch of the Pillar in 2017, EUD published a toolkit in International Sign which explained in detail the importance of this instrument.

Civil society meeting on the EU Semester

In June 2021, the EUD attended a conference on the involvement of civil society organisations in the European Semester and the preparation of national recovery and resilience plans.

EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS AND EU SEMESTER

To support the implementation of the principles of the Pillar, the European Commission's Action Plan will aim at upgrading Europe's social market economy to fit the opportunities and challenges of today and tomorrow and ensure just transitions for all. EUD organised a webinar where the EDF's Social Policy Officer, Haydn Hammersley, presented the Action Plan in detail. During the webinar we advised on what next steps the NADs should take at the national level.



The conference provided participants with the opportunity to discuss their progress and challenges in the light of the 2019 – 2020 Country Specific Recommendations. EUD reminded its members that a toolkit on the European Semester and how to get involved is available on EUD website in International Sign.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EU High-Level Group on Disability

The final meeting of the EU High-Level Group on Disability took place in April, and allowed the EUD to receive many important updates and share them with its members. Later in the year, the High-Level Group was replaced by the Disability Platform.

During the meeting, the representative from Estonia explained the process and the outcomes of their country review by the UN CRPD Committee. Later on, the presentation of the programmes of the Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies took place. The representative from Portugal said their Presidency has three priorities: the future of decent work; social cohesion and social rights; and equality and non-discrimination.

The representative from Slovenia presented the general objectives of the Slovenian

Council Presidency in the areas of employment and social rights, which are to continue discussions on mitigating the social and economic consequences of the public health crisis; to contribute to the improvement of working and living conditions for all generations; and to address demographic challenges through a life-cycle approach. Later in 2021, EUD promoted the relevant events and activities of both presidencies among its members.

Furthermore, during the meeting, the European Commission informed the participants about the evaluation of the European Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 and the new Strategy launched in March. The Commission explained that the new Strategy supports the implementation of the UN CRPD by Member States and also implements it in the EU institutions in accordance with the responsibilities of the EU as a party to the Convention.



EU Diversity Month

In May 2021 the European Commission launched the EU Diversity Month. The launch event covered several topics, from the increasing need for a more diverse and inclusive and access to the labour market for minorities, to uniting businesses against racism. EUD highlighted that one of the main points of the discussion concerned the kind of indirect and implicit discrimination which

is often experienced by the deaf community in the workplace. It centred around the fact that implicit discrimination is much more dangerous to minorities as it is not something explicitly seen and therefore is difficult to identify and tackle. The conversation ended with a call for more awareness on the different challenges faced by various minority groups.

European Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021 and Access City Award

On the 2nd and 3rd of December, the European Commission celebrated the European Day of Persons with Disabilities with an online conference. It featured talks by high-level experts and representatives from the Commission, disability organisations, and national governments. The themes of the conference were access to healthcare, digital transformation, and the needs of children with disabilities. It was announced at the conference that Luxembourg City won the Access City Award 2022, with Helsinki and Barcelona in second and third place.

The European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, delivered the opening address and outlined the importance of the EU Disability Rights Strategy released in March 2021. She described some of its flagship initiatives such as the EU Disability Card and AccessibleEU, which seeks to bring together ideas and tools to improve access to places, services and information.

The first panel of the conference focused on the health of persons with disabilities. Rodolfo Cattani, a member of the Executive Committee at the EDF, reminded participants that health is a universal human right and that under Article 25 of the UNCRPD, states must take measures to ensure access for all persons with disabilities to health care services on an equal basis. The second panel focused on the digital transition. EDF Board Member Humberto Insolera cited Article 9 which obligates states to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy equal access to information and communication technologies.

EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley posed a question to this panel regarding the accessibility of social media content. He highlighted the lack of sign language

interpretation and video captions on websites and asked what measures are being considered to incentivise these and ensure that online content is accessible for deaf persons. Mr Insolera responded that the EAA already states that it is the responsibility of all producers and organisations to make their products accessible for those with disabilities.

The conference's final panel focused on supporting children with disabilities and protecting their rights. Zuzana Kondradova, Thematic Coordinator at Eurochild, explained that children with disabilities face multiple challenges because of how society treats them. She said that these include a lack of quality, inclusive and accessible early childhood education, health care and rehabilitation. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, children and young adults were not getting access to rehabilitation, and assessments and examinations were being put on hold. Mr Wheatley asked the panellists what measures were being considered across EU Member States to ensure access to sign language during childhood, especially for migrant and refugee deaf children. Elisabeth Gosme, Director of COFACE Families Europe (which advocates for social policies that consider families' needs and guarantee equal opportunities for them), stated that the families of deaf and hard-of-hearing children need to be made aware of their right to inclusive education. In addition, Ms Gosme raised the importance of training for teachers to increase their knowledge of various disabilities.

The conference celebrating the European Day of Persons with Disabilities provided the blueprint for the Commission to address barriers and provide solutions.

Impact Report 2021 is available in International Sign:



Assessment of the implementation of the EU Disability Card

In July, the European Commission released a study assessing the implementation of the EU Disability Card pilot. This pilot project was financed under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014 – 2020. The pilot was implemented in eight countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Romania, and Slovenia) from 2016 to 2018. The purpose of the pilot project was to assess the Card's usefulness and cost effectiveness for ensuring the provision of services and benefits to persons with disabilities when travelling across the EU, to promote their rights and support the voluntary mutual recognition of their disability status.

The study provided several recommendations for the EU Member States when implementing the Card. First, it should cover four sectors: culture, leisure, sport and transport. Second, the participation of national providers should be mandatory, and service providers offering

benefits to nationals with disabilities prior to the Card's introduction should also offer the same benefits to foreign cardholders with disabilities. Third, providers should follow and/or implement the clear accessibility standards published by the European Commission, and national law enforcement authorities should ensure that the services offered by providers are accessible in accordance with legal obligations. Fourthly, use of the Card should be regularly monitored at relevant levels and the Commission should provide the Member States with a standard format to collect monitoring data. Finally, consistency should be ensured in the provision of information about the Card.

EUD informed its members about this assessment of the EU Disability Card and encouraged them to provide feedback to help the Commission make improvements for the next Card.

Future of the EU Disability Card

In September, EUD attended a webinar entitled 'Discussion on the future of the Disability Card: What kind of Card do we want?' Hosted by EDF, the event focused on the future of the EU Disability Card and the work of the eight aforementioned Member States involved in the pilot.

There were three discussion groups based on the following areas: scope (what the Card should cover); legal basis (functions and characteristics of the Card); and use and promotion. EUD attended the second discussion group, focusing on the legal basis of the Card.

Emmanuelle Grange, Head of the Unit of Inclusion at the European Commission, presented the pilot project's results and argued that persons with disabilities should not encounter any obstacles when they are using their right of free movement. However, the practical reality is that they still face many barriers, including a lack of mutual recognition

of disability status. She further explained that the Commission will propose an EU Disability Card in all Member States by the end of 2023.

Importantly for the deaf community, the discussion raised the point that it is essential to advocate for the Card to benefit people with different disabilities, including those which are not visible. Some participants expressed their concerns that an EU Disability Card would only be associated with people who have visible disabilities. Some had experienced communication barriers and discrimination when trying to use the Card. It was illuminating to learn more about this project from several Member States' representatives, who explained the successes and drawbacks of the Card.

EUD welcomes this European Commission initiative to ensure the right to freedom of movement for persons with disabilities, including deaf people within the EU.



EP Disability Intergroup

In March, EUD attended the virtual event on the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021 – 2030 organised by the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament and EDF.

The aim of the event was to gather together MEPs, members of the UN CRPD Committee, and representatives from the European Commission and organisations of persons with disabilities in order to discuss how to make the commitments and objectives of the new strategy a reality.

The event was opened by Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality, who presented the Strategy and its priorities in detail and thanked the European for supporting its delivery. EDF President Yannis Vardakastanis highlighted that the allocation of human and financial resources will be fundamentally important for the meaningful realisation of the objectives of the Strategy. MEP Dragos Pislaru emphasised that the EU Member States should use recovery

and resilience funds wisely as these could be good financial instruments to support the Strategy's implementation. MEP Katrin Langensiepen said the strategy also needs clear targets, timelines and resources to implement the UN CRPD in the EU. MEP Radka Maxová added that focal points, if established in all EU institutions, would play an important role in monitoring the implementation of the UN CRPD. A number of MEPs underlined the need to focus more on accessibility and political participation to ensure people with disabilities are not discriminated against.

The event was an excellent opportunity to see that the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament is committed to action and continued collaboration with organisations of persons with disabilities, UN CRPD experts and the Commission to deliver the objectives of the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030.



EP PETI Committee: EUD petition

In 2021 the European Parliament started implementing the petition tabled by EUD Executive Director Mark Wheatley in 2016, requesting that the Petitions Committee (PETI) accept petitions in the national sign languages used in the EU. To implement the petition and allow such a service, the European Parliament, in consultation with EUD and the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli), aim to establish a non-binding reference list of national

sign language translators to translate tabled petitions submitted in national sign languages. The list would be for information and reference only and the further possible recruitment will be organised by the European Parliament.

In 2021 the EUD and efsli disseminated the call for translators among the NADs, and they are still waiting for applications at the time of writing.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

On the 11th of February, EUD attended an event organised by the European Economic and Social Committee on the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy.

To combat discrimination against all LGBTIQ+ people, the Commission adopted this Strategy on 11 November 2020. This is the first-ever Commission strategy on LGBTIQ equality and delivers on its commitment to

building a Union of Equality, where diversity is celebrated as part of the collective richness, and all people can be themselves without risk of discrimination, exclusion or violence.

For EUD it was useful to learn about the new strategy and we are committed to raising awareness about the need to ensure that synergise with the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021 – 2030 and ensure that deaf LGBTIQ+ people are protected against intersectional discrimination.



Civil Society Organisations: Key Actors for the Future of Europe

On the 5th of November 2021, the EUD attended a conference hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in partnership with Civil Society Europe. The conference's purpose was to provide a forum for reviewing the state of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Europe.

During the conference the first results of the EESC study on 'The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on fundamental rights and civic space' were presented. An online survey was conducted by 238 CSOs in 11 languages, and combined with in-depth interviews. The results revealed that CSOs had been affected substantially by the COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, solutions allowing new sources of funding for CSOs must be established, as well as clear

instructions to EU Member States on how to include CSOs in their resilience and recovery plans and provide European guidelines and standards on freedom of assembly and association.

The conference covered the overall challenges and barriers faced by CSOs in several EU Member States regarding protecting fundamental rights and civic space. The speakers discussed experiences of their dialogues at both national and European levels, especially when dealing with the pandemic. They highlighted the importance of the role of CSOs and the increasing need for them to engage in constant communication with national governments and the European Commission.

EUD has signed memorandums of understanding with several NGOs with which it has common goals.

NGO



EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION

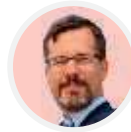
NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE DEAF

Austria – Österreichischer Gehörlosenbund (ÖGLB), **Belgium** – Doof Vlaanderen, Fédération Francophone des Sourds de Belgique (FFSB), **Bulgaria** – Съюз на глухите в България (СГБ / UDB), **Croatia** – Hrvatski savez gluhih i nagluhih, **Cyprus** – Ομοσπονδία Κωφών Κύπρου, **Czech Republic** – Svaz neslyšících a nedoslýchavých v ČR (UDHH), **Denmark** – Danske Døves Landsforbund (DDL), **Estonia** – Eesti Kurtide Liit (EAD), **Finland** – Kuurojen Liitto (FAD), **France** – Fédération Nationale des Sourds de France (FNSF), **Germany** – Deutscher Gehörlosen-Bund (DGB), **Greece** – Ομοσπονδία Κωφών Ελλάδος (HFD), **Hungary** – Siketek és Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége (SINOSZ), **Iceland** – Félag heyrnarlausra, **Ireland** – Irish Deaf Society (IDS), **Italy** – Ente Nazionale Sordi (ENS), **Latvia** – Latvijas Nedzirdīgo savienība (LAD), **Lithuania** – Lietuvos kurčiųjų draugija, **Luxembourg** – Solidarität mit Hörgeschädigten, **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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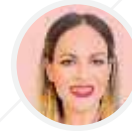
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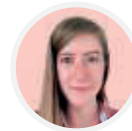
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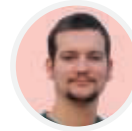
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Objectives of the Programme

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
- 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.

