

Sign Language Act in Europe and Hungary **by dr. Ádám Kósa**

Member of the European Parliament
co-chair of the Disability Intergroup

president of the Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard-of-
Hearing

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On the topic

CRPD

Language rights as human right

Sign languages in the EU MSs

Sign language act in Hungary

Implementation






United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD) what does it say in general?

Article 8 - Awareness-raising

1. States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures:
 - a) ***To raise awareness throughout society***, including at the family level, regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities;

Measures to this end include:

- b) ***Fostering at all levels of the education system***, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities;
 - d) ***Promoting awareness-training programmes*** regarding persons with disabilities and the rights of persons with disabilities.
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What does the UN Convention say on accessibility?

Article 9 – Accessibility

2. States Parties shall also take appropriate measures to:

- e) Provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public;

And there are articles on education, sport, leisure time, etc...






What does the UN Convention say on access to information?

Article 21 - Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

b) Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;

Article 2 – Definitions: "Language" includes spoken and signed languages and other forms of non spoken languages;



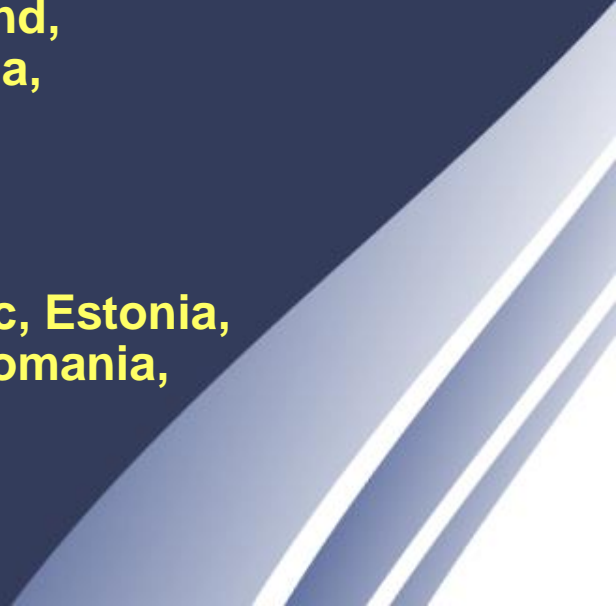


Language rights as human right

- Important documents for linguistic rights include the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) etc.
- **Language rights + human rights = linguistic human rights (LHR)** : not all language rights are LHR, although all LHR are language rights. Necessary rights, as in human rights, are those needed for basic needs and for living a dignified life, e.g. language-related identity, access to mother tongue, right of access to an official language, no enforced language shift, access to formal primary education based on language, and the right for minority groups to perpetuate as a distinct group, with own languages.



Status of Sign Languages in EU

- Sign Language mentioned in the constitution
 - **Austria, Finland, Hungary, Portugal**
 - Sign Language mentioned in a language act or similar
 - **Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden**
 - Sign Language mentioned in other acts or legal documents
 - **Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, UK**
 - Sign Language formally recognized by the government or parliament
 - **Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK**
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European Union and sign language


Resolution of the European Parliament on sign languages for deaf people (1988)

6. Calls upon Community institutions to set an example by making provision, as a matter of principle for sign language interpretation at meetings organised under their auspices and attended by deaf people;

Resolution of the European Parliament on sign languages (1998)


'8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that public meetings organised by EU institutions are accessible to deaf people by providing a sign language interpretation service on request;

'11. Calls on the Commission to introduce measures to ensure universal design in multimedia applications so that deaf people are not excluded from new applications;





2009 Act on the Hungarian Sign Language and the use of Hungarian Sign Language

- World's most complex sign language law
 - Sign Language recognised as a language in its own right
 - Guarantees interpretation services
 - Makes it compulsory to educate Deaf children in sign language or bilingually
 - Provides equal access to public services
 - A sign language interpreter is to be provided during criminal proceedings
 - Amending the Radio and Television Broadcasting Act by specifying how many hours should be interpreted to sign language (e.g. 14 hours per day in 2015)
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HSL law: before and after

- Before:
 - No LHR approach in hungarian law system
 - Low understanding
 - Low accessibility
 - Low employment rate
 - Low level of empowerment of the Deaf people
- After:
 - LHR approach + new system: disability AND linguistic minority
 - Higher understanding
 - Better accessibility
 - Better employment rate
 - Higher empowerment
 - More chance for full inclusion into society

Implementation

- Every legislation is very important step, but their implementation is CRUCIAL.
- Implementation of HSL law:
 - ministerial regulation about SL interpreter services
 - ministerial regulation about accreditation of certified SL interpreters
 - Law about subtitling
 - Under process: information package for parents of disabled childrens
- Implementation projects of HSL law:
 - KONTAKT vrs/vri service for deaf and HoH people (pax: 1200, 8500 hrs/month)
 - **SIGNificant** Chance – sign language research, corpus, methodology of new bilingual education

Closing remarks

Further efforts should be done in the fields of...

- surveys and data on the deaf, the hard of hearing and their needs
- common strategy for lobby
- PR activities about the sign language interpreters with special regard to public and private service providers
- organised dialogues via professional and thematic events between clients and interpreters
- resources for strengthening organizational, professional identities (programmes)
- ways to support more efforts for IT investments in Structural Funds
- realise culture as a lobby measure for better understanding the needs of clients, interpreters as well as services



**Thank you for your
attention!**