

Necessary activities for the implementation of the concept of inclusive furtherance and education of people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing in the EU countries

(to be understood within the framework of "inclusion for all")

Introduction

We, the participants of the "DEAFVOC 2 CONFERENCE ON DEAF EDUCATION", Klagenfurt, November, 19th, 2010, deliver this document to institutions, organisations and people responsible for furtherance, education and training of people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing. We are convinced that only the realisation of the demands included in the text below guarantees an adequate inclusion of people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing.

We are happy that the European Union takes "Inclusion for all" as a main goal of its social activities. However, there have to be adequate forms of inclusion for people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing and for the deaf-blind.

The recommended measures should be realised on the basis of the principles of "Self-determined Life" which means that either the parents or the children themselves decide which offers from a comprehensive set of possibilities they will take up. These choices are now underpinned by several rights which are formulated in UN conventions, EU and national laws. This means that the right of people to decide on measures has to be accompanied by the right to get these measures realised. We ask all countries which did not do that already urgently to ratify of UN convention. For people who declare themselves as culturally deaf and/or sign language users, deaf culture and identity rights as well as language minority rights have to be adequately implemented.

We emphasize the need to consider the individual language repertoire of every person who declares him-/herself to be deaf or hard-of-hearing (e.g. sign language as a mother tongue or as a second language, spoken language or combinations of these) in order to achieve full, barrier-free access to education, communication and information. The phrase "irrespective of whether spoken language, sign language or combinations of these" is therefore valuable for all of the measures indicated.

At the moment we have too low numbers of sign language competent teachers, persons in early furtherance and counselling in many countries. This situation requires immediate change so that in the near future bilingual education is delivered professionally by people who are competent in sign language. This includes special promotion of deaf teachers.

Measures for people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing

1 Offers in furtherance and education

1.1 Babies and infants

- 1.1.1 Early diagnosis (new-born screening)
- 1.1.2 Early intervention: Immediately after diagnosis appropriate information for parents concerning choices and appropriate furtherance offers, development of an individual furtherance/education plan
- 1.1.3 Special monitoring of language development (irrespective of whether spoken language, sign language or combinations of these)
- 1.1.4 If necessary, individual professional "language & communication assistance"

1.2 Kindergarten, preschool

- 1.2.1 Continuation of furtherance and monitoring
- 1.2.2 Written language starting from 4 years (for bilingual children also via sign language)
- 1.2.3 Special check of communication/language competences in relation to the transition to school (including special adaptation of tests for bilingual children and adaptations for migrant children)

1.3 School, college, university and vocational training: barrier-free offers for all educational attainments

- 1.3.1 Continuous offers for primary, secondary and tertiary levels through qualified teachers or sign language competent assistance. Sufficient working hours for support personnel (teachers, tutors, sign language interpreters, etc.)
- 1.3.2 Bridge courses, special tutoring, where necessary
- 1.3.3 Barrier-free access to all counselling (e.g. vocational guidance) and lifelong learning offers, which are available for hearing subjects

2 Professional qualification of people working in the field of people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing

- 2.1 Modification or completion (additional qualificative courses and exams) of education and training for
 - + Persons working in early furtherance and kindergarden
 - + Teachers in mainstream or special schools, inclusive classes etc.
 - + People working with parents and/or children outside the educational institutions e.g. in counselling or therapy
 - + Assistants in schools
 - + Interpreters in educational settings
- 2.2 In bilingual settings only people with a bilingual qualification can be teachers. For that appropriate provisions for learning sign language have to be installed.
- 2.3 Appropriate opening of all teacher education programmes for persons who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing (on the basis of opening for all people with special needs)
- 2.4 Special advancement of assignment of persons who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing at all levels of furtherance and education
- 2.5 Institutional education for real time transcription of spoken language (real time caption/velotypie or "respeaking")
- 2.6 Institutional education for deaf translators and interpreters between sign languages

3 Accompanying data collection and research, project funding

- 3.1 Collection of data necessary for political planning of resources for inclusion
- 3.2 Research especially in long-term development of different persons who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing
- 3.3. Setting new criteria for the funding of national and EU-projects: Any piece of software to be developed within a project has to fulfill the requirements of barrier-freeness obligatorily (cf. WAI: WCIG 2.0: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/> plus the possibility to insert information in sign language at all positions where this is appropriate/necessary). The same is valid for any website.
- 3.4. Any project aiming at service for all people with special needs has to proof that the needs of people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing are fulfilled by the project performance and products.
- 3.5 New regulations for funding of projects which include people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing: The costs for inclusion (e.g. transfer of spoken into

written or signed language, preparation of respective information, documents, hiring of professionals like interpreters) must not be assigned to the normal budget (and its limits). Instead, there has to be an extra budget for these inclusion measures to be applied for.

- 3.6 Providing a EU budget for organisations of persons who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing so that these can set out calls for projects they are interested in and to avoid technically driven projects only.

4 Public offers

- 4.1 Comprehensive subtitling/captioning of all visual media (television, cinema); sign language translation/interpretation
- 4.2 Access to communication: public interpretation services including online services
- 4.3 Inclusion into acoustic telephony via relay centres (remote/distance interpreting offering written and sign language); free ICT equipment for inclusion
- 4.4 Access to culture and cultural services (e.g. literature into and from sign languages, establishing a continuous production of sign language "books")

5 Political measures: Appointment of inter-/transdisciplinary working groups

- 5.1 Initiation of processes like the recent one in Ireland (cf. <http://www.ncse.ie/>): Joining all representative organisations working in the field in order to develop a medium term action plan (according to the recommendations of the UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities, the respective national action plans) for people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- 5.2 Installation of a "One-stop-shop" for information, counselling and research for all deaf and hard-of-hearing issues, including all relevant institutions and representatives of people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- 5.3 All measures positively decided on have to become part of the regular education system of every EU country. They can be organised related to requirement in order to be economically sustainable.
- 5.4 Establishing a European agency for the education of people who declare themselves to be deaf or hard-of-hearing.