



*Legal Seat – Helsinki, Finland*

**WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF**

An International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO, WHO and the Council of Europe. WFD was established in Rome in 1951

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This Statement is available in International Sign at <https://vimeo.com/121438478>

## **WFD Statement on the Adoption and Adaptation of Technologies and Accessibility**

WFD promotes the rights of deaf people to participate in society, government and other areas of life as equal citizens. The ever-changing and expanding role of technology on a global scale is impacting the lives of deaf persons. The rapid progress in information and communication technologies (ICT) in most cases is creating a positive impact on the life of a deaf person.

The use of various ICT tools that allow for two (or more) way communication such as video, text and cell phones, video and text (telephone) relay services, smart technology and most notably the Internet, has revolutionised interaction opportunities especially for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf blind people as well as persons with disabilities.

Universal Design (also known as Design for All), in product and service development is based on the recognition that it is often easier and more cost-effective to design a product from the ground up, so that anyone can use it, rather than adding in accessibility features for specific target groups after design and build completion.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) ratified by most countries across the world is providing a significant influence for government and business to include universal design in their policies across all spectrums of service provision to their communities. The CRPD sets out obligations for national governments to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully included in their societies and ensure that they are not left behind in any sphere of their lives.

Deaf people have taken advantage of the rapid advances in information and communication technologies, and use them creatively to improve their quality of life. Access to information and ease of interaction is possible by:

1. visual communications (e.g.; YouTube videos with captions, etc);
2. services supplied on-line in sign language;
3. relay services: and,
4. other emerging accessible technologies.

Advances in the Internet, smart mobile devices (phones and tablets) and other information technology provides for new and innovative means to enable communication in sign language, between two or more individuals anywhere in the world. Access to community life is more and more positive for deaf people, as it is increasingly supported by information and communication services that are visual and accessible. The goal of full accessibility and true equality is becoming more achievable.

Our vision is that by 2020, provided CRPD obligations are implemented by government and service providers across the world, deaf people will increasingly experience a significantly improved and barrier-free access to communications, benefit from accessible information and fuller interaction with society through the acceptance of universal design within emergent information technologies. This vision, however, can become a reality only if deaf people are given the opportunity to collaborate and participate actively in ensuring that technologies are accessible and that they meet the needs of deaf people.

WFD has developed a **detailed working document on the adoption and adaptation of Technologies and Accessibilities** which includes reference to ground rules in relation to technology development, service provision and accessibility; and, a detailed table highlighting relevant CRPD articles where access model examples are listed that will help achieve accessibility and equality for deaf people globally.

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Beijing, China, 25 October 2014

**About the World Federation of the Deaf**

*The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is an international non-governmental organisation representing and promoting approximately 70 million deaf people's human rights worldwide. The WFD is a federation of 134 nations; its mission is to promote the human rights of deaf people and full, quality and equal access to all spheres of life, including self-determination, sign language, education, employment and community life. WFD has a consultative status in the United Nations and is a member of International Disability Alliance (IDA). ([www.wfdeaf.org](http://www.wfdeaf.org)) Email: [info@wfdeaf.org](mailto:info@wfdeaf.org)*