



**Co-operation Agreement  
between  
World Federation of the Deaf  
and  
World Association of Sign Language Interpreters  
Updated Version: 21 August 2018**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Co-operation Agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities associated with a mutually agreed collaborative relationship between the World Federation of the Deaf (the 'WFD') located in Helsinki, Finland and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters ('WASLI') located in Melbourne, Australia (together, the 'Parties'):

**IN WHICH:** the official languages for communication, in person and in writing between WFD and WASLI are International Sign and written English respectively.

**IN WHICH:** the agreement recognises that the Parties are independent international non-governmental, non-profit organisations as described in clause 2.

**IN WHICH:** the Parties are represented respectively by the WFD President, Colin Allen, and WASLI President, Debra Russell (or their appointed representatives).

**IN WHICH:** the agreement respects the Parties' respective philosophies.

**IN WHICH:** the agreement is not intended to be legally binding.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### **World Federation of the Deaf**

Established in Rome, Italy, in 1951, the WFD is an international non-profit and non-governmental organisation of deaf associations with a current membership of 135 countries worldwide. Associate members, international members and individual members also make up the WFD's membership base. The WFD has eight Regional Secretariats and one Co-operating Member. The WFD Youth Section is also part of the WFD. The WFD is based in Helsinki, Finland, where the WFD Secretariat operates. The vision of the WFD is to promote the human rights of deaf people including recognition of sign language(s) in all aspects of life. To fulfil its vision, the WFD partners with the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, national organisations of deaf people, and other relevant stakeholders.

### **World Association of Sign Language Interpreters**

WASLI was established in July 2003 during the XIV World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in Montreal Canada. WASLI's goal is to promote and support the development of interpreters around the world. For example, some countries do not yet have interpreter associations or interpreter training, so WASLI works to encourage those countries to create national interpreter associations. WASLI also work to promote strong working ties between national interpreter associations and national Deaf associations, in the same way that WASLI and the World Federation of the Deaf work together.

## 3. RATIONALE

### **World Federation of the Deaf**

The WFD works towards the global achievement of human rights for all deaf people and conducts its activities with the goal of equalisation of opportunities and full participation in society by deaf individuals in every country in accordance with the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and other general acts and recommendations of the UN and its specialised agencies.

WFD aims to:

- Advocate for an accessible society, including a bilingual educational environment as well as services and information provided in sign language, where deaf people can enjoy the same human rights as all other people.
- Promote the establishment of local, national and regional organisations of deaf people and to guide and support activities of all its members.
- Ensure that deaf people in every country have the right to promote and preserve their own sign languages(s) and receive support for the advancement of their cultural and linguistic identities.

## World Association of Sign Language Interpreters

The aim of WASLI is to advance the profession of sign language interpreting worldwide. In pursuit of this aim WASLI will:

- Encourage the establishment of national associations of sign language interpreters in countries that do not have them.
- Be a support network for existing national associations of sign language interpreters.
- Share information and be a reference point for interpreting issues, using the World Wide Web and other internationally accessible ways.
- Support the work of sign language interpreters working at international events, e.g. conferences, sporting events.
- Work in partnership with deaf and deafblind associations on sign language interpreting issues.
- Encourage research.
- Develop and promote standards for high quality training, education and assessment of sign language interpreters.
- Host conferences and seminars.
- Liaise with spoken language interpreter organisations and other organisations having common interests.

### 4. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Co-operation Agreement is to replace the “Joint Statement”, adopted by WFD and WASLI on 23 January 2006 and signed on 13 July 2007. It sets a formal framework for co-operation between WFD and WASLI and aims at reducing, wherever possible, duplication of services and resources in the achievement of common global objectives such as:

- Recognising the sharing of common values in promoting human rights of deaf people through sign language(s) and sign language interpreters.
- Agreeing to reasonably co-operate and collaborate in opportunities that contribute to the shared values, including providing leadership and advocacy to Deaf Communities and the Sign Language Interpreters’ Community globally.
- Agreeing to observe areas of co-operation in line with the Agreement pursuant to clause 5.

**Have therefore agreed** on the following:

### 5. AREAS OF CO-OPERATION

Co-operation between both Parties will focus on but are not limited to the following areas of work:

- Promotion of human rights in any area regarding deaf people’s rights within the framework of the UN Human Rights system, paying particular attention to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- WFD and WASLI reaffirm their commitment to full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by all UN member states. Both organisations note the importance of the implementation of the Articles dealing with sign languages and professional sign language interpreters.
- Encouragement of collaborative agreements and activities between National Associations of the Deaf and Sign Language Interpreter Associations.
- Promotion of national deaf associations as those responsible to lead sign language development, research and publication of sign language materials and dictionaries, and to actively develop appropriate training for deaf sign language instructors, ensuring that the national sign language is taught by deaf persons whenever possible<sup>1</sup>
- Support and promotion of the recognition of national sign languages and national sign language interpreters, including the implementation of legal measures.
- Areas of support and promotion as agreed to by the two organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> WFD and WASLI recognise the right of universities to work closely with hearing linguists that are fluent in the sign language of the country and serve as effective allies within the Deaf Community. However hearing sign language interpreters with little or no training in teaching sign language should not be used, but rather ensure these work opportunities are presented for deaf teachers of sign language.

## **6. CONSULTATION AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

The Parties shall, on a regular basis, keep each other informed of and consult on matters of common interest, which in their respective opinions are likely to require mutual collaboration.

Regular meetings shall be convened between representatives of both Parties to coordinate work planning and projects so as to avoid duplication of services and resources.

Consultation and exchange of information and documents under this clause shall be without prejudice to arrangements which may be required to safeguard the confidential and restricted character of certain information and documents.

The Parties may invite each other to send observers to the WFD / WASLI General Assemblies and General Meetings as well as to meetings, conferences and congresses convened by them or under their auspices in which, in the opinion of either Party, the other may have an interest. Any fees or travel costs related to the attendance of the observer/s from a Party shall be covered by each respective organisation and shall not be the responsibility of the inviting Party.

## **7. REPRESENTATION**

As both Parties represent the Deaf and Sign Language Interpreters Community at international meetings, conferences and congresses, clear delineation of the roles of both Parties is required so as to avoid duplication of services and resources and to ensure full representation of the Deaf Community in any meeting, conference or congress.

Each Party shall respect the scope of representation of the other Party.

Both Parties recognise the primacy of WFD in advancing the human rights, cultural, educational and sign language rights of deaf people throughout the world.

Both Parties recognise the primacy of WASLI in advancing all matters related to the development of professional sign language interpreting.

Each Party may inform the other Party if they are unable to attend a meeting, conference or congress that relates to its scope of representation. In this case, it may delegate its mandate to the other Party for the meeting, conference or congress concerned.

## **8. DURATION**

The agreement shall become effective upon signature by the authorised representatives from the WFD and WASLI, and will remain in effect unless it is revised (pursuant to clause 10) or terminated in writing (pursuant to clause 11).

## **9. REVIEW**

The agreement shall be periodically reviewed every four (4) years from the date of signing.

## **10. REVISION**

Any variation to the agreement shall be made in writing and signed by both Parties.

## 11. TERMINATION

Both Parties shall have the right to terminate the agreement by giving at least thirty (30) days' notice in writing.

## 12. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Parties shall attempt in good faith to resolve any dispute derived from the Agreement by means of consultation and negotiation between the Parties.

## 13. CONFIDENTIALITY

- The parties agree and acknowledge that both the terms of this Agreement and the discussions relating to the collaborative activity of the Parties are confidential and neither Party will disclose them without the prior written consent of the other Party.
- Each Party agrees that it shall not at any time disclose to any person any confidential information concerning the activities, business, or affairs of the other party except as permitted below:
  - a) To its employees, officers, or advisers who need to know such information for the purposes of carrying out this Agreement. Each Party shall ensure that its employees, officers, or advisers to whom it discloses the other party's confidential information comply with this clause; and
  - b) As may be required by law, court order, or by any governmental or regulatory authority.
- No Party shall use or disclose any other Party's confidential information for any purpose other than to perform its obligations under this Agreement.

## 14. ENTRY INTO FORCE

By signing below, the Parties agree to the above roles and responsibilities outlined in the Agreement.

There are no expressed or implied conditions, warranties, promises, representations or obligations, written or oral, or signed in relation to the agreement other than those explicitly stated in it or necessarily implied by international law.

### WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

Signed at Budapest, Hungary on 8th November, 2017




Mr Colin Allen, President



Dr Joseph Murray, Vice-President

### WORLD ASSOCIATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Signed at Budapest, Hungary on 8th November, 2017



Dr Debra Russell, President



Mr. José Ednilson Junior, Vice-President