



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Representative Organisations of Deaf People Call on the European Union at the 5th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities to Recognise and Promote National Sign Languages within the EU.

The European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), alongside gathered representatives of the National Associations of the Deaf, express their welcome for the organisation of the 5th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities. This significant event presents an invaluable opportunity to address the barriers that deaf people encounter in exercising their freedom of movement within the European Union.

One of the major challenges faced by deaf people in the European Union is the lack of information delivered in their national sign languages and the limited opportunities to communicate through their preferred languages. This situation arises from the EU institutions' failure to recognise and promote national sign languages.

This challenge is further exacerbated for deafblind people solely relying on personal tactile-sign interpreters to communicate and access their surrounding environment. The EU does not recognise their right to tactile-sign interpreters. We wholeheartedly emphasise their marginalisation within the European Union and recognise the additional barriers they face in exercising their rights to freedom of movement.

Despite the European Union consisting of 24 spoken official languages and having its Member States legally recognise its 31 national sign languages, the EU has yet to endorse these national sign languages as part of its linguistic repertoire, even though it has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and its Article 21(e).

The EUD, the WFD, and gathered representatives of various National Associations of the Deaf strongly urge the European Union to grant equal recognition and promotion to all national sign languages alongside its spoken languages at the EU level with the briefest delay.

By recognising and promoting national sign languages, the European Union will break down communication barriers, foster inclusivity, and ensure that deaf people have equal access to information, services, and opportunities across all EU member states. Only then will the EU Disability Strategy be fully implemented, and we can achieve a Union of Equality benefitting all individuals, including deaf people.