

EN  
E-001876/2019  
Answer given by Ms Thyssen  
on behalf of the European Commission  
(14.6.2019)

Pursuant to Article 21 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities States Parties, including Italy, have to take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including by recognising and promoting the use of sign languages.

To support and complement actions undertaken at national level (language policy being the responsibility of the Member States), the Commission promotes initiatives at EU level for the recognition and use of sign languages, notably through the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020<sup>1</sup> and the EU programmes for education and training.

Through the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-13) and the Erasmus+ programme (2014-20), the Commission has been financing various projects aimed at making communication easier for the deaf and hard of hearing<sup>2</sup>.

The Commission also financially supports the European Union of the Deaf, a not-for-profit, non-Governmental organisation whose members are National Associations of the Deaf from all EU Member States.

The Commission is currently evaluating the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, including the issue of sign language.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SEC:2010:1324:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>2</sup> See for instance "SIGNS - Beyond signs in the city" ( <http://signsinthecity.net> ); "SIGNS2GO - British sign language for foreign signers" ( <http://www.signs2go.eu> ); "DEAF PORT - Developing European language portfolio for the deaf" ( <http://www.deafport.eu> ), "DESIGNS project - facilitating participation of sign language users in employment ( <http://www.designsproject.eu> ). See also the projects "From hands to head", or "Diversity, Equality, Accessibility and Friendship".