



Lid van het Europees Parlement

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WIB 04M033

Ente Nazionale Per La Protezione E L'Assistenza Dei Sordi  
Roma - Via Gregorio VII, 120 - 00165  
ITALY

03 December 2014

**Re: Request for support for the lack of recognition of Italian Sign  
Language - LIS**

Dear Giuseppe Petrucci,

It is with pleasure that I am writing to support you in your efforts to legally recognise your national sign language, Italian Sign Language (LIS). I had the unique pleasure of attending your protest march in Rome early November and my team and I are more than willing to help you rectify this discriminatory situation.

As an elected Member of the European Parliament and a sign language user I am particularly interested in ensuring equality for disabled persons, including deaf and hard of hearing citizens. I am aware of the difficulties in securing legal recognition of a national sign language in legislation in EU Member States and in transposing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into national law and practically implementing its provisions.

The EU, as a regional integration organisation, and Italy are both party to the UN CRPD and have therefore committed to a non-discrimination approach in all areas, including the recognition and promotion of the use of sign language (Article 21 CRPD).

Most Member States of the EU have some form of recognition of sign language. Italy is among the last EU countries to not have done so. As an example, as many as four countries have even recognised sign language at constitutional level (Austria, Finland, Hungary,



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Portugal). At the same time 15 EU countries mention or recognise sign language in their education legislation, 14 in an interpreter law, and 11 countries have their own separate sign language law.

While this is by no means an exhaustive list, it gives an indication of the current situation in Europe. For a full overview of all European legislation I recommend to contact the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and consult their comprehensive publication:

*Wheatley, M. & Pabsch, A. (2012). Sign Language Legislation in the European Union - Edition II. Brussels: EUD.*

I therefore strongly advocate for the Italian government to implement the Convention and to ensure full equality of deaf and disabled citizens.

Please do not hesitate to contact my assistant Annika PABSCH (email: [annika.pabsch@ep.europa.eu](mailto:annika.pabsch@ep.europa.eu), phone: +32 2 28 47343) should you have any further questions or need any additional support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Helga Stevens".

Helga Stevens, MEP