



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.

PO Box 65, 00401 Helsinki, FINLAND

FAX: +358 9 580 3572

www.wfdeaf.org

President

COLIN ALLEN

Email: wfd@wfd.fi

STATUS OF SIGN LANGUAGE IN LEGISLATION

(Updated: 25 June 2014)

The status of sign language varies in each country, therefore, the legislators and governments understand the roles of sign languages in different ways. In some countries the rights of Deaf people to education and equal participation in the society is secured by legislation. In others it is forbidden to use sign language even in class rooms. A Deaf person's access to Sign language and belonging to a Deaf community should not be denied or ignored by governments.

1. Sign language recognized in the Constitution

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Austria '05 | 6. Portugal '97 |
| 2. Finland '95 | 7. Czech Republic '98 |
| 3. Uganda '95 | 8. Ecuador '98 |
| 4. South Africa '96 | 9. Venezuela '99 |
| 5. New Zealand '06 | 10. Zimbabwe '10 |

2. Sign language recognized in other legislation

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 11. Iran ('28) | 34. Iceland ('99 E) |
| 12. Sweden (81 PD) | 35. Thailand ('99 R) |
| 13. Zimbabwe ('87 E) | 36. Mozambique ('99) |
| 14. Canada ('88 – '93 LA) | 37. Greece (2000 E) |
| 15. Australia ('91 D) | 38. Latvia ('01) |
| 16. Belarus ('91 DP) | 39. Brazil ('02) |
| 17. Denmark ('91 E) | 40. Some German States ('02) |
| 18. USA ('91 ADA) | 41. Greece (2000 E) |
| 19. Switzerland ('94 FC) | 42. Latvia ('01) |
| 20. India ('95) | 43. Brazil ('02) |
| 21. Russian Federation ('95) | 44. Some German States ('02) |
| 22. Slovak Republic ('95 SL Law) | 45. Romania '02 |
| 23. Colombia ('96 SL Law) | 46. Spain ('07) |
| 24. Lithuania ('96) | 47. Sri Lanka ('03) |
| 25. Norway ('96 E, not a law) | 48. France ('05) |
| 26. Poland ('97) | 49. Mexico ('05) |
| 27. Czech Republic ('98 CSL Law) | 50. Cyprus ('06) |
| 28. Perú ('98) | 51. Belgium- Flemish Sign Language ('06) |
| 29. Iceland ('99 E) | |

- 30. Thailand ('99 R)
- 31. Mozambique ('99)
- 32. Ukraine
- 33. Macedonia ('09)

- 52. Estonia ('07)
- 53. China
- 54. Uruguay
- 55. Hungary ('09)

ADA = Americans With Disabilities Act
DL = Discrimin. Law
DP = Discrimin. Policy
R = Resolution by the Government
E = Education Law
FC = Federal Council

LA = Legisl. Assembly/ Law Amendment
PD = Parliam. Decision
SL = Sign language

Recognition in other legislation in theory guarantees people using Sign language as their first language equal rights in comparison to other citizens in regard to e.g. employment, education, court matters and social and public services.

3. Sign language officially recognized by the government

- 49. United Kingdom (2003)
- 50. Cuba
- 51. Mauritius
- 55. Denmark (13 May 2014)

- 52. Bolivia (2009)
- 53. Kosovo (2010)
- 54. Russian Federation (2012)
- 56. Spain (14 June 2014, national sign language day)