



*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

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## **WFD Statement on Sign Language Work**

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is concerned about sign language work being done without leadership or consultation of deaf native sign language users and WFD Ordinary Members. While a guidance document on sign language work produced by the WFD and the Finnish Association of the Deaf is pending, the WFD would like to clarify its position on the importance of sign language work being led by the Deaf Community.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) article 21 obliges states parties to facilitate and promote the use of sign language. According to the same article, sign languages need to be officially recognised. In the spirit of the CRPD, “nothing about us without us”, organisations of deaf people need to be actively consulted in issues concerning their lives, including their native languages.

The WFD considers exclusion of Deaf Community and their national organisations from sign language work (such as production of sign language dictionary, sign language interpreter training or sign language research) is a violation of the linguistic human rights of deaf people. Decisions regarding sign languages should always remain within the linguistic community, in this case deaf people. Sign language work should under all circumstances be contrived and realised in cooperation with national associations of the deaf.

According to the memorandum of understanding between the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters and the WFD, sign language training for sign language interpreters should be led by the Deaf Community. Moreover, it is important that national deaf associations and national associations of sign language interpreters cooperate closely with each other.

The upcoming guidance document, manual on sign language work includes recommendations on how to start sign language research in a country that does not have previous research in the field. This document will be useful for the global deaf community particularly in developing countries.

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Helsinki, Finland, 19 February 2014

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is an international non-governmental organisation representing and promoting approximately 70 million deaf people's human rights worldwide. The WFD is a federation of 133 nations; its mission is to promote the human rights of deaf people and full, quality and equal access to all spheres of life, including self-determination, sign language, education, employment and community life. WFD has a consultative status in the United Nations and is a member of International Disability Alliance (IDA).

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