

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000499/25
to the Commission**

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(5 February 2025)

Subject: EU multilingualism in light of the principle of equality and non-discrimination

Currently, the 29 national sign languages of the EU are recognised as full languages by all 27 EU Member States ⁽¹⁾.

1. Considering that the provisions of Article 21(e) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), in conjunction with Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Articles 21 and 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, place the obligation on its States Parties to officialise the national sign languages in their territories, does this impose the obligation on the EU to officialise the 29 national sign languages of the EU as official EU languages?

2. In light of the principle of equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of both disability and languages, should Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, Articles 21 and 22 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 5 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities oblige the EU institutions to facilitate interactions for deaf EU citizens and national sign language users in national sign languages of the EU?

3. By which means can the legal recognition of 29 national sign languages of the EU as official EU languages be achieved, and should a review of EEC Regulation 1/1958 ⁽²⁾ be recommended, or would the adoption of distinct legislation be more suitable?

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Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(24 April 2025)

In its answers to written questions E-001876/2019 ⁽¹⁾, E-003446/2019 ⁽²⁾, E-005238/2020/rev.1 ⁽³⁾, and P-003875/2022 ⁽⁴⁾, the Commission outlined that the legal status of languages in each national legal order is a matter falling under national competence.

Apart from the implementation of EU law, it is for Member States to ensure compliance with fundamental rights in accordance with their constitutional order and their obligations under international law.

As parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, they are bound by the provisions on sign language contained therein.

Regulation 1/58 ⁽⁵⁾ lists all the official languages and the working languages of the institutions of the Union; sign languages are not included.

That regulation is adopted by the Council, acting unanimously and without a Commission proposal, on the basis of Article 342 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ⁽⁶⁾.

The Commission is taking steps to reinforce the availability of international sign interpreters for EU conferences and meetings. In the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 ⁽⁷⁾, it committed to increase the accessibility of audiovisual communications and publications as well as interpretation in international sign language.

Each institution is competent for the provision of sign language interpretation. The interpretation service of the Commission provides sign language interpretation into and from international sign in meetings and conferences where this service is requested by the meeting organiser and according to the needs of the participants.

¹ World Federation of the Deaf, 'The Legal Recognition of National Sign Languages', <https://wfdeaf.org/news/the-legal-recognition-of-national-sign-languages/>.

² EEC Council: Regulation No 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community, ELI: [http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1958/1\(1\)/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1958/1(1)/oj).

⁽¹⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2019-001876-ASW_EN.html

⁽²⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003446-ASW_EN.html

⁽³⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-005238-ASW_EN.html

⁽⁴⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2022-003875-ASW_EN.html

⁽⁵⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:01958R0001-20130701>

⁽⁶⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tfeu_2016/art_342/oj/eng

⁽⁷⁾ For more information, please see: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability/union-equality-strategy-rights-persons-disabilities-2021-2030_en

To the best of its ability, the interpretation service also provides interpretation into and from national sign languages if specific requests are made in this sense.
