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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Non-discrimination and the right to use sign languages in Europe

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Pirkko MATTILA and other members of the Assembly

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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A vast number of Europeans use sign languages on a daily basis as a means of communication and in some cases as their only means of communication. Sign languages are not only used by the hearing impaired but also by their families and friends. Despite recent developments in hearing aid technology, electronic aids cannot fully replace the use of sign languages for the hearing or speaking impaired.

The European Social Charter guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation. Council of Europe instruments establish the right to use minority languages. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises sign language as a language on equal grounds with other spoken languages. In 2003 the Parliamentary Assembly recommended incorporating the rights of sign language users into a specific legal instrument or an additional protocol to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages but little has happened since.

In order to ensure the full enjoyment of equal treatment and the right to non-discrimination for speakers and users of sign languages, the Assembly should revisit the issue of the right to use sign languages in Europe. Despite progress a lot remains to be done in member States. It is therefore necessary to conduct a new analysis of national legislation and best practices to guarantee the right to use sign languages at national level and consider ways to improve the full inclusion of the hearing and speaking impaired in Europe.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
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SOC: Socialist Group
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