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Making sign language one of Europe's official languages

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Ms Miren Edurne GORROTXATEGUI and other members of the Assembly

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

Hearing is the main vehicle through which language and speech develop. Because oral communication is the key player in human communication, deafness can influence persons' linguistic and communicative development, affecting their cognitive processes and, ultimately their integration into society and the labour market.

Unlike spoken languages, sign language is a visual-gestural language, used by deaf persons and thus providing them with a means of communication. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 recognises the importance of this language. It considers that a way of removing obstacles and barriers is "to provide ... professional sign language interpreters" (Article 9.2.e). It also regards sign language as one of the "appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others" (Article 21.b). It also proposes a series of tools to ensure participation by persons with disabilities in political and public life (Article 29).

On the basis of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Convention on Human Rights, the Council of Europe endeavours to promote equal opportunities, to improve the quality of life and independence of persons with disabilities and to guarantee that they can freely express their choices, enjoy full citizenship and take an active part in society.

Following in this vein, the Assembly should propose that sign language be regarded as one of Europe's official languages.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EC: European Conservatives Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left