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## Employment for deaf signers in Europe

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*PROVISIONAL RESEARCH & LITERATURE REVIEW*

\*\*\* DRAFT SUMMARY \*\*\*

# **AN OVERVIEW OF DEAF EMPLOYMENT**

## DEAF PEOPLE AND EMPLOYMENT

Deaf people are more likely to be unemployed than their hearing peers (REFS). They depend on the social welfare income more than their hearing counterparts (REFS). The present review of the most recent literature has reported that Deaf and hard of hearing people continue to face significant barriers in their working lives.

This report presents the results of an international literature review of the situation of people who are deaf and hard of hearing relative to their employment status. We tease out implications from the available data with regard to what this means for deaf sign language users in the labour market in Europe, and particularly, in the countries engaging in the DESIGNS project.

We note at the outset that across this report, we frequently include reference to both deaf and hard of hearing people, rather than simply those deaf people who are sign language users (our target group). This is because, where figures relating to deaf peoples' employment are available, they tend to be conflated with data for those with a 'hearing disability' (i.e. without a breakdown of data to indicate whether someone is a sign language user or not, but rather, with reference made only to hearing status), for example, Irish census figures (CSO 2011). Sometimes deaf sign language users are included in a broader grouping of 'visual and sensory disability' (e.g. REFS). Where possible, however, we extrapolate data relevant to sign language using deaf people. Because of this tendency to conflate categories, what we can say is that there is surprisingly little empirical data that relates to the position of sign language users and employment, be that job seekers, graduate-entry employment, those in employment, underemployment issues, or unemployment levels, or re-entry to the job market. There are also questions relating to the intersection between, for example, age, gender, race, disability, and religion, that need to be considered, but which are absent from most of the published data.

Given this, we concur with Houston et al. (2010:9) who note that *'Researchers have been unable to draw conclusions about labour market conditions for people how are deaf or hard of hearing because surveys of individuals with disabilities do not sufficiently sample these groups.'*

Despite these challenges, we hope that this study will be useful in presenting a collated analysis of the available data, and in presenting the gaps that remain to be explored.

We have focused our review on national and international literature and data published from 2000 onwards. We provide an outline of both qualitative and quantitative findings on employment outcomes for Deaf people, workplace barriers described, and accommodations required by law within working environments. We carried out library based research and we also engaged with governmental organisations such as INTREO (A recently established service provided by the Irish Department of Social Protection<sup>1</sup>); governmental census bodies, where applicable (e.g. the Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO)<sup>2</sup>); Deaf-led organisations (e.g. Fevlado<sup>3</sup>); as well as interpreting agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.welfare.ie/en/pages/intreo\\_home.aspx](https://www.welfare.ie/en/pages/intreo_home.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cso.ie/en/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fevlado.be>

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We begin by providing a country-by-country overview, before turning to present an analysis of the key themes emerging.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

Ireland has a population of 4.8 million ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)) and for this review, we follow the international rule of thumb as used by the World Federation of the Deaf and the European Union of the Deaf, there are approximately 5,000 Deaf ISL users. It is important to note that such a figure is not scientific, and the figure remains contested (Matthews 1996, Conroy 2006 and Census 2011). According to the latest census in 2016, there are 4,226 persons using Irish Sign Language at home and it is important to note that not all persons are deaf. The following statistics derived from online national statistical interactive tables ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)).

**Population Usually Resident and Present in the State, who spoke a language other than Irish or English at home 2011 to 2016 (Number) by Language Spoken, Sex, County of Usual Residence and Census Year**

Irish Sign Language		
	2011	2016
State	2,586	4,226
Carlow	19	55
Dublin City	419	563
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	130	232
Fingal	163	300
South Dublin	243	367
Kildare	130	195
Kilkenny	39	80
Laois	33	56
Longford	30	46
Louth	55	103
Meath	132	224
Offaly	23	33
Westmeath	41	42
Wexford	44	110
Wicklow	94	117

Clare	55	74
Cork City	89	141
Cork County	227	388
Kerry	91	171
Limerick City and County	110	141
Tipperary	48	100
Waterford City and County	57	118
Galway City	44	56
Galway County	81	157
Leitrim	8	20
Mayo	39	82
Roscommon	16	29
Sligo	14	36
Cavan	19	37
Donegal	64	122
Monaghan	29	31

**Table X: Geographic distribution of ISL users in Ireland in 2011 and 2016 (CSO interactive table on [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie))**

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While the Census 2016 reports that there are more than 103,000 people reported having deafness or serious hearing impairment, judging by their age groups, the vast majority of them are in age groups of 65 and above. It is also difficult to gauge how many of them are using ISL.

Other than the reports listed thus far, the most recent source of quantitative data on deaf people in employment in Ireland comes from the results of last national census, conducted in 2016. This provides information about the number of deaf and hard of hearing people in Ireland across a range of domains (education, employment, housing, health, etc.). The data provided conflates deaf people and hard of hearing people; it doesn't specify if the respondents were sign language users or not, which makes it impossible to tease out how the data set reflects the specific experiences of sign language users. However, Census 2016 data reports that there are 4,226 residents in the state who use ISL, although this does not mean that ISL is the first language of these respondents. The total number can include deaf people, hard of hearing or hearing people using ISL as their second language etc. A breakdown of the geographic distribution of those who claim ISL as one of their languages is included in Table X below.

Given the number of 37,013 are in the age groups (15 years old to 64 years old, and which is more likely to be eligible for employment), this census reports that 24,500 are in the labour force and 20% of them are unemployed. As for the national unemployment rate, the figure for April 2018 is 5.9% ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)). Therefore, deaf people are three and half times more likely to be unemployed.

### Population Aged 15 Years and Over 2011 to 2016 (Number) by Disability Type, Sex, Principal Economic Status, Age Group and Census Year

Deafness or a serious hearing impairment  
Both sexes

All persons aged 15 years and over

	2011	2016
15 - 19 years	1,170	1,377
20 - 24 years	1,347	1,252
25 - 29 years	1,826	1,427
30 - 34 years	2,348	2,170
35 - 39 years	2,688	2,847
40 - 44 years	3,103	3,347
45 - 49 years	4,072	3,996
50 - 54 years	4,964	5,236
55 - 59 years	6,378	6,682
60 - 64 years	7,776	8,679
	<b>35,672</b>	<b>37,013</b>

### Population Usually Resident and Present in the State, who spoke a language other than Irish or English at home 2011 to 2016 (Number) by Language Spoken, Principal Economic Status and Census Year

	2011	2016
<b>Irish Sign Language</b>		
Persons at work	1,055	1,757
Unemployed looking for first regular job	17	29
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	224	247

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Student or pupil	315	377
Looking after home/family	206	351
Retired	132	211
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	166	251
Others not in labour force	471	1,003
	<b>2,586</b>	<b>4,226</b>

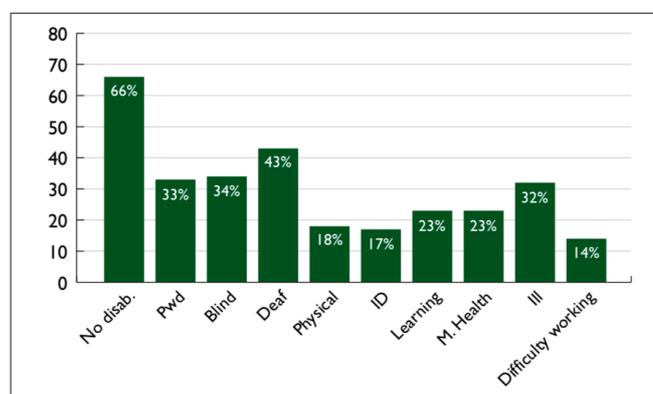
Census 2011 reports the total of ISL users in Ireland as 2,590. This figure includes ISL users who report that they did/did not have a disability, and people who self-reported as being deaf or having a serious hearing impairment. The question put to people was, ‘Do you have any of the following long-lasting conditions and difficulties?’ One of the possible answers listed was ‘Deafness or a serious hearing impairment’. This result, therefore, does not provide the exact number of deaf people whose first language is ISL, but rather an indicative number of deaf people who use ISL as a first, second or subsequent language. 51% of those who responded to this question report that they do not consider themselves disabled while 81.1% of respondents who said they knew a sign language, said they had a hearing impairment (Table X). This shows that some people may consider deafness and hearing impairment a disability while for some people being deaf represents their identity and therefore ISL is their first language and consequently not a disability.

	<b>Irish Sign Language</b>	<b>Other sign language</b>	<b>Total</b>
No disability	1,327	476	1,803
Persons with a disability	1,263	436	1,699
Persons who are deaf or had a serious hearing impairment	1,077	301	1,378
Total	2,590	912	3,502

**Table X: Sign Language Users in Ireland, 2011 (Census 2011:8).**

Such figures like that are not available in the Census of 2016. When comparing to other types of disabilities as in the following table, the category of deaf people has the next highest employment rate. This information was published in 2015.

**Employment rate of people with disabilities, 2011, by disability type**



Source: Census 2011

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Table X: *Employment of people with disabilities, 2011, by disability type (Ireland 2015: 25)*

### **Statutory Services provided**

In Ireland, funding comes from the state and types of grants are available for the following employment activities as follows:

- Job interviews (JIIGS)
- Wage subsidy
- Workplace equipment adaptable
- Personal reader
- Disability awareness training
- Employee retention

It is interesting to note that the grant is available for a personal reader to assist blind people in employment while there is apparent hesitation in granting financial support for interpretation.

With regards to the Job Interview Interpreter Grant Scheme (JIIGS)<sup>4</sup>, this can cover both areas – a job interview and training during the induction period when a person start a new job. The fund will pay a professional qualified interpreter for a 3-hour period including travel costs. Initial feedback on the scheme is that the scheme is heavy-top bureaucratic. Applicants have to get approval from the local employment office for each job interview and interpreters are known for being reluctant in up taking such assignments because of slowness in payment.

With regard to the job interview grant, it is open to the employers and applicants to avail of this grant. However, based on anecdotal evidence, it is often expected that the applicant is to apply for the grant. According to one applicant, availing of the grant can be bureaucratically tiresome since one has to apply for the grant for each interview and it has to be approved by local employment office. Interpreters are known to be reluctant to take on such assignments because of bureaucracy.

In 2011, SLIS set up the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS). This provides an online video link to an Irish Sign Language (ISL)/English interpreter using Skype. In 2013, SLIS recorded 404 bookings for this service. SLIS reports that IRIS has had some success in facilitating access to local level engagement for deaf ISL users with key government services such as Intreo and EmployAbility. SLIS reports that IRIS has made considerable progress: *‘the demand for IRIS is high with a three-fold increase in the number of users since 2011 and a sixteen-fold increase in the number of times it is used’*. (Evaluation of the Irish Remote Interpreting Service 2016: 4). The other major provider of ISL/English interpreting services, a privately owned enterprise, Bridge Interpreting.

SLIS also notes that the state support grant known as “Workplace Adaptable Grant Scheme” is not applied to the interpretation costs. The decision not to extend the entitlement was made by the government’s Department of Social Protection. SLIS feels that the potential of using IRIS in the employment sector is not fully maximised. Since 2014, the service has being extended to four other Department of Social Protection local offices. According to SLIS the number of employers availing of IRIS is growing steadily. SLIS also reports that the government-funded “Workplace Adaption Grant

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Job-Interview-Interpreter-Grant.aspx>

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Scheme” is not extended to cover interpretation costs therefore the costs of IRIS usage are not covered by the state. The exclusion was decided by the government’s Department of Social Protection. SLIS feels such an exclusion prevent the potential of employment advantages for both sides: employers and Deaf workers, of being maximumly fulfilled.

In 2015 the government launched their ‘Comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities 2015-2024’. The key goal is to increase levels of employment amongst people with disabilities as a priority, and the aim is to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities. In terms of categories of people with disabilities, deaf people 43% of deaf people are reported as in employment in 2011 (Ireland 2015: 25).

A main service provider working with deaf and hard of hearing people is DeafHear. They argue that Deaf Awareness Training (DAT) (Note DATs referred to Deaf Awareness Training – not to be confused with another DATs – Disability Awareness Training) is an important element that needs to be considered in supporting deaf and hard of hearing employees in the workplace. Employers can apply for grants up to 90% of the cost of awareness training for employees. (Deafhear.ie).

As for Deaf awareness training; several agencies provide such training to employers and it is difficult to get proper statistical information on this front. However according to Deaforward:

- 18 out of 59 DATs were provided for employers
- Deaf ATs for employers are often done at Deaf employees’ requests while it is a very rare occurrence for employers making a lateral approach.
- Employers are often reluctant to accept offers of DATs because of “costs” despite it was only around €500.
- Deaforward is not a registered Disability AT trainer therefore it is not entitled to state support grants for employers through Intreo or Employment Advice Services. Employers are entitled to get awareness grants but they must use registered trainers to provide awareness training.
- Deaforward made a lot of attempts to register or getting involved in this area but to no area. Speculation is that Deaforward is too “disability-specific” i.e. focussing on ISL / Deaf community.
- One of the former staff members in Deaforward went to one of the training days by registered trainer and she said the contents were way out of order and would not make any meaningful contribution.
- However, when Deaforward got a grant from a different government department – this time: Department of Justice and Equality to provide DATs. There was a sudden rise in the interest among employers – especially the private sector employers.
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In 2008, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) published a report outlining the results of a survey of 300 employers’ attitudes to employing graduates with disabilities in Ireland. This was the first stand-alone research conducted in Ireland that looked at employers’

attitude and people with disabilities in the workplace. Figure X demonstrates that over half of employers reported that they had had interviewed a graduate with a disability. Larger companies tend to have higher incidence of interviewing graduates with disabilities, while SMEs are relatively less likely to do so.

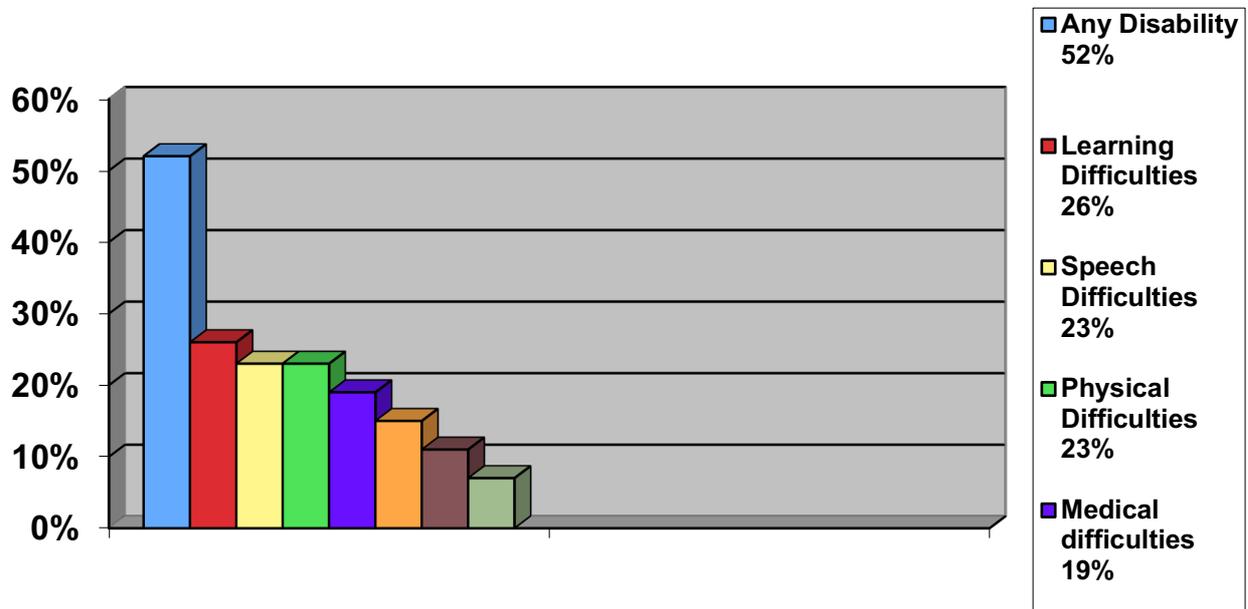


Figure X: Have you ever interviewed a graduate with a disability? (AHEAD 2011: PAGE)

In Figure X above, we see (orange pillar, third from right) shows that 15% of those interviewed by employers were deaf or hard of hearing.

AHEAD also sought to have employers identify possible workplace accommodations they had/could implement in order to attempt to overcome barriers for graduates with disabilities entering the workplace. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission describe “reasonable accommodation” as taking ‘appropriate measures’ to meet the needs of disabled people in the workforce. This means they must make arrangements that will enable a person who has a disability to:

- have equal opportunities when applying for work
- be treated the same as co-workers
- have equal opportunities for promotion
- undertake training.

Reasonable accommodation does not mean that an employer has to recruit, promote, retain or provide training to a person who does not have the capacity to do a particular job. However, an employer cannot decide that a person with a disability is incapable of doing a particular job without considering whether there are appropriate measures which they could take to support the person to carry out the required duties. Such appropriate measures mean effective and practical changes that the employer puts in place to enable employees with a disability to carry out their work on an equal footing with others. These include:

adapting the premises or the equipment, for example, installing wheelchair ramps, providing special computers for the visually impaired, installing loop systems, and of course providing for sign language interpreting.

They then asked employers the following question: ‘Based on this explanation of the term ‘reasonable accommodation’, please indicate whether you would consider each of the following to be ‘reasonable accommodation?’

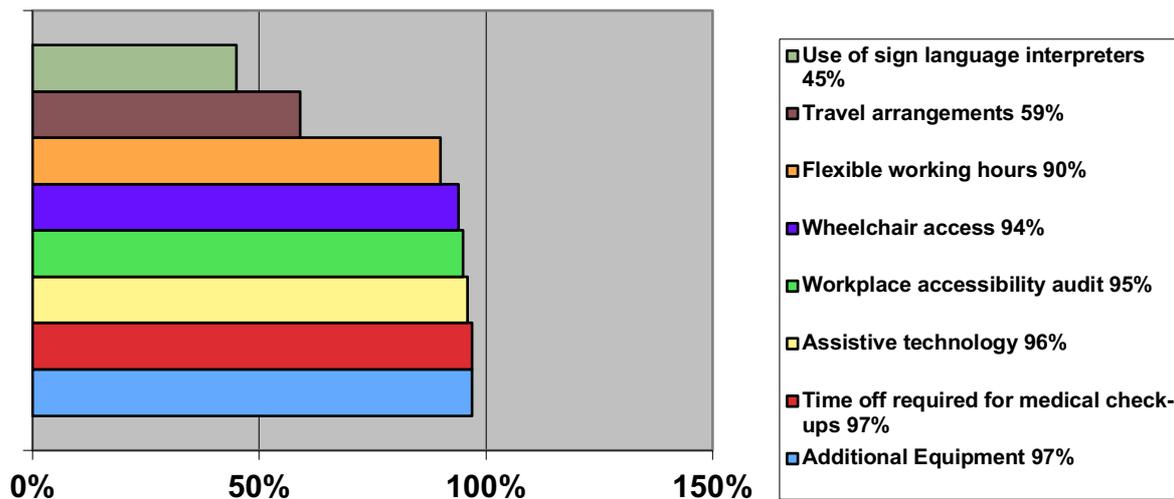


Figure X: Employers’ views on what constitutes a reasonable accommodation (AHEAD YEAR: page).

Figure X shows that the majority of employers felt that the provision of additional equipment (97%), providing time off for medical check-ups (97%), assistive technology (96%), the provision of a workplace accessibility audit (95%), the provision of wheelchair access (94%), and the facilitation of employees via the provision of flexible working hours (90%) constituted reasonable accommodations. In contrast, there was less certainty as to *whether the facilitation of travel arrangements or the use of sign language interpreters are reasonable accommodations*. AHEAD suggests that this may be because there is a cost to the employer associated with these provisions (2016: 18).

For our purpose, the responses with respect to the provision of sign language interpreters are interesting. Only 45% of employers surveyed considered the provision of interpreting to be a reasonable accommodation. It seems that interpreters might not even be provided because of the cost of provision (and the absence of any statutory funding or co-funding for same) or as a result of lack of awareness.

## INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

Punch et al (2007) report that ‘...jobs outside the deafness area may involve even more barriers to gaining employment and promotion and greater reluctance among employers to provide accommodations.’ (Punch et al. 2007: 515). The percentage of sign language interpreters provided is low compared to the other accommodations as hiring a sign language interpreter could be an

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expensive cost for the company. Written communication cannot be an alternative as many deaf people have very low writing and reading skills. The Swedish labour market seems to face the same situation even though there has been an increase since 2002 in the context of Deaf people *‘These increases can imply fewer working opportunities for deaf people, since it can be difficult to supply accommodations for deaf people who need it when work assignments are short’*. (Rydberg 2006 p.18)

At a European level, efsli developed a survey with the aim to collect information on the current situation of VRI. 17 NASLI of the 30 total number of efsli full members filled out the survey. The countries that participated are:

- Belgium, BVGT (Flemish speaking)
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- Germany
- Hungary
- Norway
- Poland
- Romania
- Serbia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland, (French speaking)
- Switzerland, (German speaking)
- Switzerland, ILISSI (Italian speaking)

VRI in the workplace settings where Deaf people carry out their daily work. Almost half of the NASLIs claim to have VRI services provided in the workplace settings such as Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden. According to the outcomes, the VRI service was used mainly in work meetings.

## **REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF DEAF ACROSS THE EU MEMBER STATES**

### **Background**

The questions are selected from a list of questions proposed by the DESIGNS partners including EUD. The choice of questions (11) were adapted to targeted for national deaf associations (NADs), members of the European Union of the Deaf (EUD).

The questionnaire and the project were widely discussed at the EUD General Assembly and the questionnaire was disseminated at the event. This was done as follows:

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- A presentation of the DESIGNS project was given by Prof Lorraine Leeson who informed the general assembly of the project and told them there was a questionnaire.
- Frankie Picron was then responsible for approaching delegates to provide more specific information and distributing the questionnaire.
- Few delegates were able to respond immediately to the questionnaire for various reasons. The majority of the delegates wanted to take time to read the questionnaire and/or check with persons who are experts on the topic of employment.
- In fact, we can add a third step to our process which was following up on our national and regional members in order to receive more detailed feedback from the survey.

### **Number of participants**

Sixteen completed questionnaires were returned representing 16 EU deaf associations.

The participants are as follows: *Austria, Belgium (Fevlado - Flemish), Belgium (FFSB - Wallonia), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Romania*. The countries who reacted to our call to respond to the questionnaire but did not complete the questionnaire are *France, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, UK*. Countries that did not react to our call are *Croatia, Slovakia, Estonia, Greece, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia, Luxembourg*.

### **Results of Questionnaire**

#### *Crucial issues*

From the response we have compiled a list of ‘crucial issues’ below. It is important to note that the participants used various wording and phrasing in their responses, and that I compiled these ‘crucial issues’ from the common themes that arose. It’s interesting to summarise and deduce the ‘crucial issues’ and create thematic categories; education, accessibility, self-development, stereotyping or prejudice, quality of services provided and more (see below).

<b>Category</b>	<b>No of response</b>	<b>Extra information</b>
Accessibility	3	<i>Communication, understanding tasks and responsibilities</i>
Education	3	Hard to self-educate because no interpreter
Stereotype, prejudices	2	
Equal access to adult learning/adult education	3	Equal opportunity
Equal access to vocational training	3	
Right to work, right to learning	1	

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Low quality of service provided by public employment	1	
Lack of training and coaching for deaf people on how to solicit for a job	1	
Discrimination in the labour market	1	
Work effectively	1	
Research	1	
Unemployment rate	1	
Judicious adaption	1	Reasonable accommodation

### SL interpreter in job interviews

<i>Response</i>	<i>No of answers</i>	<i>Extra information</i>
Yes, but hard to find one	7 + 1 <sup>5</sup>	
Yes	5 + 1	Interpreters are of a high standard
No	2	
Other	1	No interpretation is provided, however, a job coach is brought in to communicate on behalf of the deaf person

### SL in workplaces

<i>Response</i>	<i>No of answers</i>
Yes, but not sufficient hours provided	7
Yes, sufficient time and of high standard	4
Yes, but not sufficient quality	3
No	4

### Remote SL

<i>Response</i>	<i>No of answers</i>
Yes	7
No	4
Not sure	5

### Accommodations needs are met or not

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<sup>5</sup> Please note that participants of the questionnaire were allowed choose more than one answer. +1 indicates another option selected by a participant.

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<i>Response</i>	<i>No of answers</i>
Yes	4
No	9
Other	3

### **Mains obstacles and barriers**

For this question participants were invited to indicate what obstacles they face in employment settings:

- Communication (6) - *no accessibility for example in team meeting situations or informal social/coffee break discussions*
- Stereotypes/prejudices (4)
- Ignorance/inexperience about deaf culture and needs (3)
- Mentality and lack of knowledge (5) – *cultural shock in the work environment*
- Hearing perspective of deaf people
- Preconception about deaf worker’s daily communication needs
- Reasonable accommodation (3)
- Capacity of work for deaf individuals is limited (3) inequality of competition – *weak autonomy, low self-esteem*
- No automatic recognition of the need for an interpreter/support
- Low level of basic education (3)
- Lack of professional skills (3)
- Restrictions on the work of certain professions and environment (2) – *No enough variety of jobs/job opportunities*
- More funds and resources needed
- Training of sign language interpreter
- Level of sign language and written language
- Family over protective of a deaf candidate
- No legislation to favour hiring deaf people
- Lack of socialising and networking
- People with disabilities are usually employed if the workplaces receive a tax allowance

### **Deaf associations in advocacy services**

- Education and literacy (3)
- Training in employment matters (9)
- Liaising/go-between (8)

Other: *Translation services, information about rights and duties, advising (job search), awareness, consultant about accessibility for deaf people, cooperation protocol with public bodies*

### **Representation of Deaf employees in equality cases/disputes**

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The answer to this question is simple: Yes or No. Even if the answer is yes, I wish to draw your attention to the nuance of the answer. Many deaf associations tell us that having a letter of support can be the means of representation.

<i>Response</i>	<i>No of answers</i>
Yes	7
No	9

### Resources needed for better support

- Awareness raising campaigns and public education (6)
- Better employment services (5) - *change in vocation education, training in sign language and job trainer/adviser in sign language*
- Information packages (4)
- Education (4) – *one response said bilingual education for the early years is the most essential tool for future access to working life*
- Accessibility in the workplace based on individual needs (2) – *Communication*
- Consistent presence of interpreter (*i.e., meetings, training, consultation among others*)
- Equal access for adult learning/adult education and vocational training
- Preparation programmes/courses for participation in labour market
- Opportunity to build their skills or retrain
- Networking
- Support
- Positive compensation for employing deaf people
- Statistics/research on employment
- Identify barriers of communication and work towards their removal
- Emergency technology in the workplace (*health and safety*)
- Towards an accepting attitude in the workplace
- Employment obligation (law)
- More training for sign language interpreters
- Give career opportunities
- Sign language training for all employer, managers and staff
- Extend government and enterprise investment to cover deaf staff needs

### Any other things to share

This question gives space to national and regional deaf associations to highlight any issues we may have missed.

The following are the responses given:

- Education and schooling system for reasonable accommodation
- Partnership with public employment services and employer organisations
- Know more about unemployment rate of deaf people in EU countries

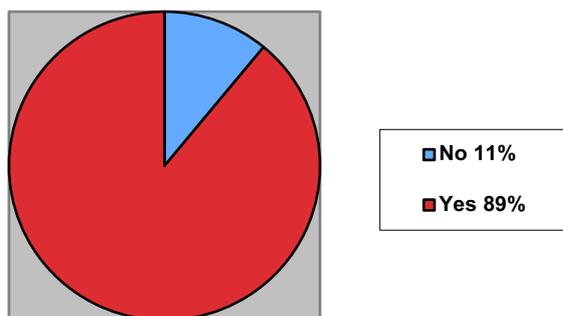
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- Accessibility and maintenance of work
- Need more information about video relay services in different countries (Quality? Costs involved? Method of payment? How many sign language interpreters work in video relay services?)
- Curious to know what age group is it easiest to get a job and similarly the age group which sees the most employed
- Security problems; Construction, transport, logistics and welfare
- Create a supervision team with competence in sign language who would be cultural and linguistic experts
- Legal rights to access all courts through SL
- Certified skilled SL interpreters
- Educational support for Deaf children

## STATISTICS AND FINDINGS FROM THE EUROPEAN FORUM OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Efsli published a report on August 2011 entitled 'The rights to sign language interpreting services when working or studying abroad'. A survey was sent to all efsli full members, the NASLIS (National Associations of Sign Language Interpreters). The NASLIS that fully answered were: France, Serbia, Germany, Finland, Netherlands, Greece, Slovenia and Estonia.

The result to the question: *Does a Deaf person in your country have the right to interpreting services in employment settings?*



Country	Interpreting services in employment settings
Finland	When needed (meetings). Deaf workers have to take hours of their allocated annual hours.
France	There is public funding for public industries and also for private industries. In France the rights differ depending on the industry sector. Some industries refuse to pay or think interpreters are not needed. Here Deaf people have to fight for the right to have an interpreter.
Germany	When needed.

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Netherlands	15% of the Deaf persons contracted hours.
Serbia	100% of the contracted time of the Deaf employee.
Slovenia	Only for public matters. Deaf workers have to take hours of their allocated annual hours. If there is a public matter, the employer pays.
Spain	Whenever the deaf person needs it as long as it does not mean an “unreasonable” cost for the employer.
UK	Deaf people in the employment setting can pay for interpreting services from a programme called “Access to Work”.

Source: efsli August 2011

### EUDY 2014 REPORT

A basic survey was disseminated to Deaf young people in Europe with the objective to analyse the current situation of Deaf people in Europe. 43% of the respondents have stated that they do not currently have a job. According to the EUDY survey in 2014, Spain has 66% of deaf young people without a job, in the Netherlands, 55% of deaf youth are unemployed and in Sweden 22% of young people are unemployed. Participants had shared their experiences and the obstacles they have face when they want to get a job. Most common obstacles are the communication between employers and deaf employees, lack of knowledge about deaf people. *‘The most crucial barrier between deaf and hearing people is communication. This lack of accessibility to sign language interpreters results in too many Deaf young persons being excluded at work. A sign language workplace is a prerequisite for more and more deaf entrepreneurs...’* (EUDY 2014 p.2).

DESIGNS project brings together 4 EU countries therefore we aim to compare the current situation although we would include other European countries if a similar study or research has been conducted. As mentioned in an article published in 2013 by EUD *‘...there were no specific data on deaf people. This data is used to push for inclusive labour market. Therefore, to ensure that deaf people are being included, data on the cost of unemployed deaf people needs to be collected and shared’*.

### UK

The final report to the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust published in 2015 demonstrates that in 2010 there were 56,400 people registered as being deaf in England, and in 2014 there were at least 48,125 deaf children aged 0 to 19 across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Census also showed that there are 15,482 people in England and Wales whose main language is British Sign Language (BSL). Previous data from the GP Patient Survey suggested that there roughly 188,000 people in England who are deaf and use sign language. According to the Scotland Census there are 12,533 people in Scotland who use BSL at home, but sign language might not be the preferred language. There are indications that *‘Deaf people face barriers to employment, and there is evidence to suggest the unemployment rate among Deaf people is higher than the general population.’* In order to support access to workplace, in UK the Access to Work (AtW) scheme is offered to Deaf people. The scheme provides BSL/English interpreters and as well as try to adapt the workplace with the appropriate equipment. However, the evidence shows that sometimes it is not possible to meet the needs. Dickinson states in Sign Language in Action *‘...the current shortage of BLS/English*

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*interpreters...means that deaf employees are struggling to secure adequate interpreting services, despite being eligible for support under the scheme.’ (Napier and Leeson 2016 p. 173).*

### BELGIUM

There are 5000 Deaf people in the Flemish/Brussels and 4000 Wallonia/Brussels. According to ‘A comprehensive guide to sign language interpreting in Europe’ (2016) by Maya de Wit, there are 165 working interpreters in Belgium Flanders and 24 working interpreters in Belgium Wallonia (p. 106).

In 2015, Fevlado conducted a survey in the Deaf community about the experiences in access to work and 100 Deaf people responded to it (<http://www.fevlado.be/fevlado-vzw/nieuws-prikbord/actualiteit/?d=634>). Currently, Fevlado is undertaking actions to increase access and to fight against discrimination in the employment. There are about 6000 Deaf people using sign language in Flanders.

([http://www.fevlado.be/upload/content/Doven%20en%20arbeid\\_aanbevelingsrapport%20\(Fevlado%20vzw\).pdf](http://www.fevlado.be/upload/content/Doven%20en%20arbeid_aanbevelingsrapport%20(Fevlado%20vzw).pdf)). This is an estimation based on the principle of 1 out 1000 people are Deaf and sign language users. No census is available for this issue. There is no information about the number of Deaf people in employment. The only data available demonstrates that on 101 Deaf people, 87 are working and 24 are looking for a job.

### GERMANY

Approximately 900,000 deaf people live in Europe. About 80,000 of these live in Germany. According to the online article ‘Inclusion of deaf people: Creating new jobs, better medical access and social involvement for deaf people’, the aim is to establish 1,000 specialized doctors and where deaf doctors and medical assistants work. The entire team uses Deaf Sign Language (DSL). This concept is unique in Germany and helps to include deaf people in several ways: by creating attractive jobs for them; by improving their medical access and social involvement; by introducing DSL and the culture of the deaf to hearing people. German Sign Language has been recognized as an autonomous language in the law regulating equality of treatment in 2002. Since then the deaf have a right to professional interpreters, when for example visiting state officials or in court. Additionally, interpreters enable the deaf to access education, health care and work environments (<http://www.goethe.de/ges/spa/prj/sog/mup/en3693593.htm>).

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE PRIMARY RESEARCH

### Employment opportunities for deaf people

- Employment opportunities for deaf people
  - Some deaf people assume that they can get jobs in the deaf sector even with no necessary experience or qualifications
  - *'It is deaf people we want to apply because the language for a hearing person who's never signed is so much more difficult and time-consuming to teach, of course we do encourage it'*.
  - Usually start at a lower scale and attend training courses.
  - Some deaf applicants do not have enough formal education qualifications
- Recruitment of deaf people with essential skills
  - Employers are struggling to find deaf people with essential skills for senior management levels including the CEO of an organisation.
  - No deaf applicants for some positions *'I do struggle with this. ... I have tried everything to find publications to advertise and get people to apply... but I just don't get the applicants'*.

### Promotion opportunities for deaf employees

- Promotion opportunities for deaf SL users
- Deaf people lacking confidence and self-belief – going for promotion
- Internship for deaf people with potential of becoming senior managers as a process of recruiting deaf people at senior management level
- Issue of training deaf employees to become senior managers – not able to find people with essential skills

### Employers' perspective on advantages and disadvantages on employing deaf people

- Advantages of employing deaf people – employer's perspective  
**Summary**
  - Have the necessary skills (including shared experience) of working with deaf people (e.g. care services for deaf clients; counselling with deaf SL users with emotional health needs)
  - Have empathy with their deaf clients and shared experiences *'... because they understand deaf culture...'* and have *'BSL (skills) because many, not all, but many of the people that we provide services for want to communicate using BSL [1<sup>6</sup>]'*. *'We believe it's more important to have a deaf person as a role model [even with no previous care experiences or qualifications] because all our tenants are deaf as well, than have a hearing person who has a wealth of care experience, could just jump in the job and run, but then would struggle to communicate' [2]*.
  - Deaf SL users can provide direct services where *'... [clients] don't want to communicate through somebody else with an interpreter there or a hearing person.'*
  - Loyalty – deaf staff stay longer than other colleagues
  - [Café] Creates an upbeat atmosphere - hearing people are drawn to sign language.
  - Embracing diversity - reflects diversity in the wider community, which is a positive thing.
- Loyalty from deaf employees and why?  
**Summary**
  - Employers find deaf employees to be very loyal. *'They stay for a very long time and I don't*

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. [1] and [2] quotes are from 2 different employers

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*know [chuckling] if that is because we treat them well, which I think we do, but it's also because gaining employment can be challenging. But I mean from an employment point of view it's often good because you gain a member of staff who is loyal and stays for a long time and is very skilled and that's a good thing'.....'and maybe, maybe, they enjoy the job [chuckling]'.*

- Comparing with other healthcare organisations with non-deaf employees, there is a higher turnover of employees. *'I speak to a lot of other employers of healthcare people, and they have a very high turnover, people leave very quickly, and I don't have experience of that at all. I have the opposite. We have people that have worked for 20 years'.*
  - #DeafGain
  - Deaf people benefit from working with other deaf SL users. *'I think that's the other reason why we don't tend to lose people, because they love working in an environment that's mostly deaf people because it's nice to have friends and not have to battle to be part of the team.'*
- Employer's perspective of barriers of employing deaf people

### Summary

- Additional physical space required for language professionals (CSWs, SLIs) – *'some of the issues that we've come up with are the environment, so we recently changed the layout of our offices, and because we were doing hot-desking and we needed to fit in a lot of people in a small space including additional staff like interpreters'*
- Suitable physical space for deaf employees: *'We put desks in lines and it's not popular with the deaf staff [chuckling] because they like to face each other so they can communicate, they like to have their back to the wall, they like to not be near a window, and they need a lot of room for extra interpreters. So all of those things are a problem. I mean we've got round a lot of them but some of them, it's not ideal, because they used to have their desks - they had a lot more space and they just had desks opposite each other. I mean they are opposite each other but there is not a lot of space for signing. We have less space, so that was unpopular [laughing], but we designed our meeting rooms - I think they are okay. We have a U-shaped table that you can move about and that is okay. I mean I think everyone's used to it now, but initially, because they'd had so much space before, and now we have very small desks that are tightly packed, that that wasn't an issue so mmm.'*
- Additional cost – CSWs/SLIs for staff and board meetings
- Additional cost – *'... the time, takes longer to organise things because you have to have communication availability.'* Plus *'... sometimes things aren't understood immediately because they might be seeing things from a different perspective, so you have to make sure that everyone's understood everything, so maybe explaining things in different ways more than once, because it is a second language.'*

## Diversity and inclusion policy and other policies

- Diversity and inclusion policy and other policies

### Summary

- Employers have policies in relation to disability but not specifically SL users. *'... because I mean our disability monitoring, we know everything, but we're actually going back to look at other things like sexual orientation and all those other diversity things because we've got some data but not enough...'*
- Employers see deafness as disability – *'So we're looking into that at the moment, but obviously from a disability point of view we know what we have...'*
- Costly to have the policies translated to BSL: *'The issue that we're coming up with at the moment is we want all our policies signed and that is a problem for employers because to do it properly is expensive so...'*
- One employer suggested using AtW to have the policies translated.

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- Getting it right – *‘I think when you get it right and all the people you employ feel like a team, it’s really rewarding and great, and we love our new environment where we have a mixture. We really value diversity and that makes for a really good work environment. If you get it right, from the point of view of loyalty and great work, I think employers have to accept there is cost and effort involved and they have to commit to that right at the beginning and they have to understand that the benefits will outweigh.’*
- Consultation with deaf employees - *‘We did some consultation when we were doing the office changes...’*

### Dynamics/ Working relationships in the workplace

- Deaf and hearing people working together

#### Summary

- Issues of integration even though if workforce is 50% deaf and 50% hearing:
- *‘Well, this is the issue, and we have - even in our offices it’s probably 50 per cent deaf and 50 per cent hearing, and we are still having issues with integration, so I can imagine what it’s like if there’s just one or two deaf people because it’s really hard for them to mix in with those conversations and be part of the team, unless the hearing people are willing to take part in that. There needs to be awareness of everybody of what the needs are and the benefits of being part of a team, and I can imagine that’s really hard’.*
- *‘Our **battle** is when we do have hearing people, when they’re first learning sign language, that they have to remember to try and include everybody in a conversation and that’s where it’s hard, but we are getting there. It is a challenge but everyone is quite determined in [org\*].’*

- Deaf people working together

#### Summary

- Deaf SL users feeling isolated when they are in the minority *‘... so I can imagine what it’s like if there’s just one or two deaf people because it’s really hard for them to mix in with those conversations and be part of the team, unless the hearing people are willing to take part in that.’* *‘... particularly when people’s BSL skills are poor, it is easy for them to just talk to hearing people and not include the deaf people in their chit-chat...’*
- Creating the right culture within an organisation/workplace - *‘...they need to have a statement about having a signing environment ... it is a continuous thing.’*
- Hearing employees with no cultural awareness
- Attitude of Managers is important – setting the tone *‘...they need to be encouraged by their managers,... they need to be pulled up when they’re excluding people...’*

- Signing environment for deaf and hearing employees

#### Summary

- Employer aiming for a signing environment but *‘I can’t say that we’ve totally got that sorted, but that’s our aim.’*
- Employees with no BSL skills tend to talk to other hearing colleagues and by doing so excluding deaf colleagues. The same can be true of deaf people who may be excluding colleagues who cannot sign.
- One employer is *‘... trying to make everybody communicate using sign language and using voice at the same time so everyone’s included in the conversation ...’*

- Social isolation

#### Summary

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- Hearing people remembering to include deaf colleagues in conversation – a challenge according to one employer
  - Deaf people benefit from working with other deaf SL users. *...‘I think that’s the other reason why we don’t tend to lose people, because they love working in an environment that’s mostly deaf people because it’s nice to have friends and not have to battle to be part of the team.’*
  - Hearing employees using interpreter as a buffer and not communicating directly with deaf employees
- BSL skills of hearing employees  
**Summary**
    - In 2 organisations, employees are encouraged to get BSL Level 2.
    - One organisation has a policy where new employees have to learn up to Level 2 in the first 2 years. *‘...the minute that somebody comes into place, they start the sign language class’.*
    - Alternative communication tactics – *‘we do like little flash card things that they carry around with them for key words that they would use within our environment’.*

### Adaptations for deaf employees

- Adaptations for deaf employees  
**Summary**
  - For example:
    - Sufficient physical space – with room enough for interpreters (to enable to make phone calls for example)
    - Office layout for deaf employees
    - Fire alarms for deaf people
    - Door buzzer that flashes
    - No arms on chairs – *‘so you can sign without getting your hands in the way’...*
    - Employers have to *‘think a little bit more’* to consider what kind of adaptations are required.
- Access to information  
**Summary**
  - A recognition by an employer that information is might not be understood immediately – that deaf SL users *‘...might be seeing things from a different perspective ...’*
  - Use of alternative methods, making sure that information is accessible.
  - Employer thinks e-learning courses are not suitable for deaf people
  - Employer trying to ensure information is available in signed videos
  - Recognition that for many deaf SL users English is a second language and therefore *‘Writing things down it can be harder (for them) ...’*
- Recognition of different training needs for deaf staff and hearing employees  
**Summary**
  - *‘Everybody is adapting, for I suppose speed and ease and reducing costs, to e-learning. We don’t use this for deaf people because it is extremely time-consuming’. ‘Deaf people prefer to be trained in a group.... Hearing staff will have e-learning, but all the deaf staff will have group learning where they all go into a room and they have interpreters for a full day. Rather than e-learning where they will have an interpreter each and go through the whole thing. It just takes so long, and you find at the end of it that deaf people have not taken the information in. It is all about how they prefer to learn. We did try it one year and it was a nightmare’.*

### Training for hearing employees

- Deaf awareness training and BSL training

#### Summary

- Importance of Deaf Awareness – *‘They need to have deaf awareness...’ ‘...we try and do deaf awareness training before they have any BSL training.’ ‘The behaviours that are necessary to be able to work together, not turning your back and not covering your mouth, not eating while you’re talking...’*
- SL training – *‘so yes, deaf awareness. I mean I think the initial signs that are polite to use is helpful, mmm...’*
- How to communicate directly with deaf colleagues
- How to work with interpreters – *‘... don’t talk to the interpreter, talk to the deaf person...’ ‘... and also the role of an interpreter, so they understand that the interpreter’s there for them as well as the deaf person and how the interpreter should be used and all those kinds of things. Working with interpreters is good as well.’*

- BSL skills of hearing employees

#### Summary

- Employees are encouraged to get BSL Level 2.
- Employer is *‘... trying to make everybody communicate using sign language and using voice at the same time so everyone’s included in the conversation ...’*

### Access to Work and DWP (UK ONLY)

- Deaf employees are responsible for their own access to work funding.
- One employer thinks that the introduction of the ATW cap will be problematic because it means less money to pay for interpreters. *‘...they’ll have less access to interpreters, so that will be very annoying...’*
- In another organisation, deaf employees are facing cuts in ATW funding and hours
- Some employers do not have any difficulties with DWP
- Impact of ATW cap - *‘the cap that’s come in, that is absolutely going to affect the way that deaf people function with interpreters. We may have a guideline of best practice.. but once this new budget comes in, you may not in fact be able to supply those best practices because of the limitations enforced by the cap’.*
- Employers not knowing about access to work - *‘I think a lot of organisations don’t know there’s any support out there for people who employ a deaf person, like Access to Work, so many people don’t have them’.*
- Deaf people not knowing about access to work
- Govt organisations don’t have access to ATW funding

### Costs

- Working with CSWs instead of SL interpreters due to cost

#### Summary

- Cost does have an impact on choice – using CSWs over SL interpreters *‘We do have some communication support workers that come...because they are a bit cheaper so you can have them for more time...’*

- Additional costs for the organisation

#### Summary

- Employer meets the cost of interpreters for staff meetings even though deaf employees have their own ATW budget

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- Employer meets the cost of 2 interpreters and Palantypist for Board Meetings: *'it's all good stuff but it costs a lot and it's not covered by any government grant'*.
  - Frequent meetings mean additional costs for employer.
  - Employer, who provides services for deaf people, is willing to pay the additional communication costs because it means they *'... can employ best people ...'*
  - Cost of translating company policies into BSL too high.
  - Employer meets the cost of equipment (e.g. £600) –ATW will not *'pay the full price'*.
- Attitude towards to paying extra  
**Summary**
    - One employer was 'chuckling' when explaining having to pay for interpreters and palantypist for Board meetings - is this about an employer being resigned to having to meet the cost – there is not anything that can be done?

### Procedure – booking of interpreters

- Who books interpreter?
  - Deaf employees send a request through and the employer will book for them
- Booking interpreters for meetings – length of time to search for one  
**Summary**
  - Need to book interpreters for meetings in well in advance (~2-3 weeks)
  - One employer would postpone meetings if no registered interpreter is available
  - Impact of shortage of interpreters – *'... that can mean that things don't happen quickly...'*
  - A shortage of interpreters
  - Interpreters must be qualified to be able to facilitate meetings
- Interpreters only booked for meetings with large gathering of staff in one organization
- One organisation produced a guideline about BSL and how to book an interpreter but the org does not have the means of tracking – will the employees use the guidelines?

### Choice of communication support

- Type of communication support
  - Interpreters
  - CSW
  - PCA – personal communication assistants
- CSW for AtW and interpreters for formal meetings (**UK DATA**)  
**Summary**
  - CSWs are being used for 'every day work' and they only use registered SL interpreters for meetings
  - CSWs are employed to assist with general/easier work-based communication
  - The SL interpreters who are booked via agencies are usually qualified (*'... normally qualified, just because that is what is available through agencies...'*)
  - Deaf employees use ATW funding to pay for mainly CSWs not interpreters. *'...It's mostly the Access to Work ones, that we would employ a less qualified person...'*
  - Deaf employees are choosing CSWs because of their hourly rate - means they *'... can have them for longer...'*

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- Using CSW does not affect the quality of communication - *'Quite often [CSWs] are excellent, so we don't have problem with that'*.
- CSWs may struggle with more demanding work based communication e.g. formal meetings so qualified interpreters are used, *'... to have a less qualified interpreter might be easier to find, but sometimes they can't keep up with what we're talking about so it's tricky...'*
- Deaf employee's choice of interpreter  
**Summary**
  - Deaf employees choose CSW because of cost and can have them for longer *'... the deaf people themselves choose their interpreters, they quite often choose to have an extremely good communication support worker because they can have them for longer ...'*
- Deaf employees prefer to have unfamiliar Interpreters for sensitive meetings
- Interpreters suit some domains but not others due to their interpreting skills/ knowledge/ experience
- Interpreters' level of skills and experience vary
- Senior staff have access to interpreters full time but others book on an as and when basis.

### Working with interpreters

- Deaf people don't know how to work with interpreters
- Exclusive use of designated interpreters - other employees have no access to these interpreters

#### Summary

- In one organisation, designated interpreters are not being available to work more generally to facilitate communication. *'...so we have a lot of interpreters around but they are obviously assigned to certain people, so they're not there for general use, we don't share them. I think that's not allowed, they are just for the person, and that does help with general chit-chat, it does.'*
- Implications of individuals managing their own ATW budgets and using designated interpreters who are assigned to work (exclusively) with them. *'Sometimes we can use the Access to Work ones but not often, so we spend a lot of money on interpreters as well to make sure all of our meetings are fully accessible to everybody.'*
- Employer not understanding interpreters' working practice – e.g. delay in responding to employer's demands/ request/? due to lack of an interpreter or wrong interpreter
- Employers and colleagues not knowing how to work with interpreters
- Some employers employ In-house/ staff interpreter
- Finding interpreters that can reflect deaf person's character/ professional style/ skills
- Finding interpreters with essential/ professional/ technical skills for specific jobs

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- Length of time working with interpreters daily vary
- What do the employers think the role of SL interpreters at workplace is?
  - *'The way I use him probably doesn't sound very nice, but the way I always explain it to them is, they're a piece of equipment. They don't do the job for them. They don't make decisions for them. They completely are - like my computer is for me, they are for the deaf person. It's the deaf person who does the job and makes - we've had - if I explain to you why I always say this. We've had interpreters in the past that'll go off and be making decisions and not even have the deaf person with them, yes. It's a little bit, when you're working in care, all our tenants are learning disabled and have complex needs, and they're out there making decisions, and we're like - I had to actually say to them, 'No, that's not your job. That's his job, and you're only there to communicate, that's it, nothing else.' It doesn't sound very nice, but it is - you are here as that person's facility to be able to do the job, basically.'*
  - *'Well, I think our regular Access to Work CSWs do a lot of the written work, writing up notes and writing - helping with English, with emails and reports and some quite complex stuff, which is why it's good that they're regular. You couldn't just walk in and do that, so that's quite a big ask really. The ones that we just have in for meetings, it's just purely interpreting. We try and give them notes beforehand so they can understand any vocabulary and questions and things like that, but that is more straightforward I guess.'*
- Role of interpreter - incidental/ indirect/ environmental communication

### DESIGNS training material

- What to put in training materials/ guides
  - i. Deaf awareness training: e.g. *'keep your face facing the deaf person, don't talk to the interpreter, talk to the deaf person [chuckling], those things that people get wrong really quickly'... 'The behaviours that are necessary to be able to work together, not turning your back and not covering your mouth, not eating while you're talking, those kinds of things....'*
  - ii. Learning SL (including basic signs to start with)
  - iii. Cultural awareness training
  - iv. How to work with an interpreter and understanding the role of interpreter in the workplace: *'....so they understand that the interpreter's there for them as well as the deaf person and how the interpreter should be used and all those kinds of things'.*
  - v. Confidence building and leadership courses for deaf employees going to promotion
  - vi. Physical space for deaf employees
  - vii. Access to grant for sign language interpreter – how to apply and how to claim
  - viii. How to book interpreters
  - ix. A guide with DO and DO NOT lists

## CONCLUSION

The present review is a gathering of the major findings reported in the most recent studies, data available and the most recent literature. People who are deaf and hard of hearing continue to face significant barriers in the workplace. Lack of awareness on the part of employers is a factor contributing to this ongoing situation. *'Studies have found deficiencies in transition-related skills, including self-advocacy skills and knowledge of accommodations, among high school, students who are DHH'* (Punch 2016 p.395). Another important factor connected to employment is the level of education. Due to the crisis, it is expected that high-level qualifications are required and as stated in the article published by EUD (2013) *'This will play a role in deaf people's struggle in labour market,*

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*seeing that they are more likely to be undereducated. As more jobs require higher qualification, it will become more important for deaf people to receive best education as possible in order to survive in the labour market.*' (EUD 2013). Previous studies have shown that deaf people have a lower level of education attainment than hearing people. The relationship between deafness and employment can be complex although the government should increase the possibilities to decrease unemployment offering measures and accommodations in order to support this group.

Implications for further research are needed with this population. Research into the perspective of employers is needed. While there has been a good deal of research into employers' perspective on employing people with disabilities in general, there has been little involving employers in order to ascertain what factors may cause reluctance to hire people with hearing loss and what factors have been found to be beneficial to employ deaf people. Additionally, another service that should be available for deaf student is the service support to have for the transition from school to work in order to provide them with the right skills.

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