Basic information

2016/2952(RSP) RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects	Procedure completed
Resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters **Subject** 4.10.06 People with disabilities 4.10.08 Equal treatment of persons, non-discrimination 4.40.15 Vocational education and training	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
22/11/2016	Debate in Parliament		
23/11/2016	Decision by Parliament	T8-0442/2016	Summary
23/11/2016	Results of vote in Parliament		
23/11/2016	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2952(RSP)
Procedure type	RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects
Procedure subtype	Resolution on statement
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 136-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Motion for a resolution		B8-1230/2016	16/11/2016	
Motion for a resolution		B8-1241/2016	16/11/2016	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0442/2016	23/11/2016	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2017)148	22/03/2017	

Resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters

2016/2952(RSP) - 23/11/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 661 votes to 6, with 23 abstentions, a resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters.

The text adopted was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, Greens/EFA and EFDD groups.

Members recalled that as full citizens, all persons with disabilities, including deaf and hard-of-hearing people, including those who use sign language and those who do not, have equal rights and are entitled to inalienable dignity, equal treatment, independent living, autonomy and full participation in society.

The TFEU requires the Union to combat discrimination based on disability when defining and implementing its policies and activities.

There are approximately one million deaf sign language users in the EU1 and 51 million hard-of-hearing citizens, many of whom are also sign language users.

It is against this background that this resolution is adopted. It stressed the need for qualified and professional sign language interpreters, which can only be met on the basis of the following approach:

- official recognition of national and regional sign language(s) in Member States and within EU institutions,
- formal training (university or similar, equivalent to 3 years of full-time studies, corresponding to the training required of spoken language interpreters),
- registration (official accreditation and quality control system, such as continuing professional development),
- formal recognition of the profession.

Aware that disproportionality or undue burden cannot be claimed to defend the failure to provide accessibility, Members considered that the **provision of sign language interpretation may constitute an accessibility measure or a reasonable accommodation measure**, depending on the situation.

Accessibility: Members reiterated their commitment to making the political process as accessible as possible, including through the provision of professional sign language interpreters and recognised the importance of minimum standards to ensure accessibility, especially in view of new and emerging technologies, such as the provision of internet-based sign language interpreting and subtitling services.

Members are aware of the importance of accurate and precise interpretation and translation services and stressed the need for specialised and highly qualified professional sign language interpreters.

Employment, education and training: Members noted that reasonable accommodation measures, which include the provision of professional sign language interpreters, must be taken to ensure equal access to employment, education and training. They emphasised that deaf, deafblind and hard-of-hearing students and their parents must be provided with the opportunity to learn the national or regional sign language of their environment through pre-school services and in schools.

It is also necessary to:

- include sign language in educational curricula in order to raise awareness and increase the use of sign language;
- take measures to recognise and promote the linguistic identity of deaf communities;
- encourage the learning of sign language in the same way as foreign languages.

Parliament urged that the principle of freedom of movement for deaf, deafblind and hard-of-hearing people within the EU be guaranteed, especially in the context of Erasmus+ and related mobility programmes.

European Union institutions: Members recognised that the EU institutions must represent best practice examples for their staff, elected officials and interns and vis-à-vis EU citizens regarding the provision of reasonable accommodation and accessibility, which includes the provision of sign language interpretation. While recognising that the EU institutions have a system in place to provide sign language interpretation via their respective interpreting departments for accessibility purposes, Members urged the institutions to utilise such existing systems also when providing reasonable accommodation for staff and/or elected officials, effectively minimising the administrative burden on the individual and the institutions.

Lastly, Parliament strongly urged Parliament’s visitors’ service to cater for the needs of deaf, deafblind and hard-of-hearing visitors by directly providing access in a national or regional sign language and speech-to-text services.