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If you have any sign language interpreter news, what is happening with your national association, details of your Annual General Meeting or your Conference, knowledge of upcoming training events or other related events, then please share them with us. Send details to the Editor at newsletter@efsli.org

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2015 has been a challenging year for efsli. We have lost several of our board colleagues over the past few months for a range of reasons: in January, efsli Treasurer, Lieve Roodhooft (Belgium Flanders) stood down from the board and some months later, for health reasons, Jolanda Peverelli (the Netherlands) stepped aside. A short time later Peter Llewellyn-Jones (UK) resigned from the board.

Given this, I am the only remaining elected board member (I was elected in Ljubljana, Slovenia), so as it were I am the “last man standing”… But I am not alone, I am currently assisted by two co-opted board members who are supporting me along with Minke and Lourdes. Lorraine Leeson and Tobias Haug were co-opted to work on a strategy plan for efsli for the period 2015 to 2020, an idea emanating from Peter Llewellyn-Jones. However, given the changes of the past months, Lorraine and Tobias have instead been asked to step in and help maintain efsli’s work programme.

Lorraine Leeson is care-taking the efsli finance and Tobias Haug is supporting our work across efsli’s activity range. We are doing our utmost to ensure that efsli’s work programme is implemented, in line with our European Commission Operating Grant contractual requirements. Indeed, a big “win” has been the announcement that efsli successfully secured a 3 year Operating Grant contract, which was signed in June (with delays emanating from the European Commission).

So, it has been a tough few months - a baptism by fire for me, stepping into the President’s role, as I have. However, we are optimistic. Over 200 people have registered for the Warsaw conference in September. We have a full calendar of events planned for the remainder of the year. We have some great candidates nominated for the Board and we trust that, with your ongoing support, we will see 2015 end with a robust board, a clear vision for the work we plan to complete across the remaining two years of our Operating Grant funded period, and a vision that takes us to 2020 and beyond.
This Summer charge your batteries because this Autumn there is at least one efsli school for you:

**Interpreting for the Deafblind**

*25-27 September in Stockholm (Sweden)*

Registration deadline: **30th August**

In collaboration with EDbU (European Deafblind Union)

**Interpreting in educational settings**

*23-25 October in Belgium (city to be confirmed)*

Registration deadline: **20th September**

In collaboration with EUDY (European Union of the Deaf Youth)

**Interpreting with victims of sexual violence**

*27-29 November in Dublin (Ireland)*

Registration deadline: **25th October**

In collaboration with Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (Education and Training Department)

More information at training@efsli.org
It is my great pleasure and honor, on behalf of the European Deafblind Union and as a Deafblind individual as well, to contribute, for the first time, to the efsli newsletter with this informative article. The opportunity to present interpreting in deafblind settings, using its most representative and authentic ‘voice’, the EDbU, is an expression of the continuous successful cooperation efsli and the EDbU have cherished since 2009.

Deafblind interpreting is an area in the field of interpreting that is increasingly being called upon. Because of the nature of dual visual and auditory impairment, social inclusion of Deafblind individuals in public and political life is impossible without the use of Deafblind interpreting services, which is often missing. Although described as “a requirement in order for people with deafblindness to achieve full participation, equality, independence and self-determination in every area of society”, the lack of qualified interpreters working with the Deafblind is widespread and unfortunately, is not limited to a single country or region of the world.

Committed to the development of Deafblind interpreting on a European scale, the Working Breakfast entitled "Deafblind in Europe - Excluded from the excluded?", co-organized by the EDbU in partnership with MEP Adam Kosa, MEP Davor Stier and MEP Helga Stevens, was held in the European Parliament on June 24, 2015. The event, which was the first of this profile ever organized in the European Parliament, included presentations by some of the top leaders of the European Deafblind community. These individuals seized this opportunity and used their national experience to raise awareness of deafblindness as a distinct disability and to stress the lack of qualified interpreting services and legislation in general. They also used this platform to highlight how, in spite of all European inclusive strategies focused on empowering people with disabilities, that is, to make them enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others, Europe still often neglects the Deafblind, a group of people considered to be the most socially excluded amongst all citizens in the European Union.

Their main appeals stated in European Parliament are presented below:

Deafblind - invisible citizens of Europe, Peter VANHOUTTE, VZW Anna Timmermanvereniging, Belgium:

“Although the European parliament recognized deafblindness as a specific disability in 2004, deafblindness in Belgium is still considered as sum of deafness and blindness. There is no statistical data available regarding the number of Deafblind people living in Belgium. Furthermore, the association of Deafblind people receives no funding and no Deafblind interpreting services are being made available by the Belgian government. That makes it difficult to fight for our rights.”

Tamás GANGL, Siketvakok Országos Egyesülete, Hungary:

“The Hungarian census in 2011 showed that there may be more Deafblind people than initially estimated. Although there has been some success in developing laws for recognition of the rights of people with disabilities including Deafblind people, these rights cannot be enforced without trained professionals and funds.”

Francisco Javier TRIGUEROS MOLINA, Asociación de Sordociegos de España, Spain:

“In Spain we have some laws that, in sum and due to their content, we can say they recognize Deafblind people. Often, due to the great general lack of awareness about our disability, resources and supports which correspond to us by law are just being granted to organizations of Deaf or blind people. In order to break from this ‘invisibility’ we have endured for so many years, we must raise awareness. It is time now, as the associative movement of Deafblind people in Europe, for our actual participation, so that we can defend our rights by ourselves on equal terms.”

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Are we able to hear the true Voice of Deafblind in Europe? Sanja TARCZAY, President of the EDbU, Croatia:

“In spite of the imposed social exclusion and isolation, Deafblind people have devoted, and continue to dedicate great efforts in taking the decision-making process affecting their lives and their future into their own hands. As an authentic and powerful ‘voice’ of the Deafblind in Europe, and guided by a strong desire to bring Deafblind people out of isolation the European Deafblind Union is striving to turn the slogan “Nothing about us without us” into a reality for Deafblind people by establishing and providing accessible, high quality Deafblind interpreting services, improving the visibility of deafblindness and ensuring the recognition of deafblindness as a unique disability with individual needs in accessing information, communication, mobility and social interaction.”

How to build an accessible and inclusive Europe for the Deafblind? (the experience of the Scandinavian countries Seppo JURVANEN, Vice President of the EDbU, Finland

“Nothing about us without us.” Or, a more positive expression: “All about us with us”. The EDbU and individuals with deafblindness in Europe are volunteering for collaboration in the building of an accessible and inclusive Europe for people with deafblindness. Respecting equality and rights of persons with disabilities, while ensuring skilled interpreters are available to Deafblind communities, is the right place to start.

Another way to address the lack of Deafblind interpreting services is to increase the educational and training opportunities that lead to skilled and knowledgeable interpreters available to Deafblind communities. Guided by this aim, the EDbU is proud to announce the continuation of the successful cooperation with efsli. The 2015 efsli school “Interpreting for the Deafblind”, organised by the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters in cooperation with the European Deafblind Union (EDbU), will be hosted by the Swedish Association of Sign Language Interpreters in Stockholm from 25th to 27th September. The training will be addressed to sign language interpreters with little or no experience with Deafblind clients, with the aim of broadening their education so they can meet Deafblind clients’ needs in their professional future.

The first such collaboration was established during the efsli 2009 Summer School in Zagreb, where I personally had a chance to present the “Interpreting for the Deafblind Persons” topic. Further collaboration was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2012, in which the EDbU and efsli confirmed the importance of a joint working relationship through a combined effort, something which is of interest to both organisations and its members.
It is quite amusing to realise that, when the deaf community ceases to exist, sign language interpreters will no longer have jobs. In addition however, if sign language interpreters aren’t there, the deaf community would find it very hard to survive, for example, at work, during hospital visits, lobbying and in education. It is good to know that both groups need each other and so, should work together to achieve common goals. That is exactly why, in 2014, the European Union of the Deaf Youth and efsli signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the first time.

Efsli already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the European signing community, represented by the European Union of the Deaf, but as the young people like to say, “we have a voice too!” Ultimately, young deaf people know more about what is needed for sign language interpretation during their education and in their workplace. In this era, where young deaf people are receiving higher education, we are also demanding more from our sign language interpreters. It is quite interesting to see how interpreters are coping with this and how we are working together to achieve a better setting for both parties.

That is exactly what the EUDY is standing for! Better sign language interpretation in education is one aim that is high on our agenda for this, and next year. We are collecting data on the current situation, revising the best (and the worst!) practices and cooperating with different institutions to make sure our findings and recommendations are spread throughout Europe. What organisation is better suited for this than efsli? The first step of cooperation is designing the autumn school for interpreters who would like to be trained to cope with changes occurring at the present time. This will be the first time (and hopefully not the last!) that efsli and the EUDY organise something together. Both organisations will combine their knowledge of sign language interpretation in educational settings for the training event. As a result, interpreters will get the opportunity to share their best practices and obstacles with efsli, the EUDY and other participants.

The EUDY is of course not only for campaigning for better sign language interpretation in Europe. From 1987 to date, we have organized activities for young European deaf people from the ages of 9 to 30 years old. We have broadened our scope of activities from camps to seminars, study sessions, summer schools, trainings and more. We were able to expand only two years ago, when we got an operating grant for the first time. We opened an office, hired an Executive Officer and were able to focus our attention on various projects! Despite all of this however, our flagship activity is still our camps. We have camps for three different age categories: 9-12 years, 13-17 years and 18-30 years. The camps are hosted by different national deaf youth organisations biannually. They provide deaf children with the opportunity to meet other deaf children from different countries, to exchange cultures and to make new friends, friendships which sometimes even last for a lifetime!
Since 2011, the EUDY has also been politically active, our actions focusing on rights in education and employment and the status of national sign languages that are being endangered by governments or other groups. We try to release messages stressing how important it is for young deaf people to grow up with sign language and that their recognition and development should be stimulated. Thanks to our growing network and experience, we managed to secure our participatory status within the Council of Europe, became an observer member of the European Youth Forum (with the wish to become a full member in time), became an associated member of the European Disability Forum and made appearances in the European Parliament. It is still all pretty exciting for us!

Lastly, I would like to encourage you, the readers, to get in touch with the deaf youth community in your country. Just because efsli and the EUDY are working together at a European level, this doesn’t automatically mean that we know everything that there is to know about national policies and situations. National associations of sign language interpreters and national organisations for young deaf people still have a lot of work to do, so why not do it together? Efsli and the EUDY aim to be good examples of this kind of cooperation!

The EUDY will be represented at efsli’s AGM and conference this September in Warsaw. Why not meet us there and say hello?!
Approximately a year and a half ago, efsli published the “Learning Outcomes for Graduates of a Three Year Sign Language Interpreting Training Programme” and “Assessment Guidelines for Sign Language Interpreting Training Programmes.” These publications were the result of a two year collaborative process involving interpreter educators across Europe and incorporated the results of surveys, three working seminars, workshops, and an online platform. The aim of this endeavour was to help ensure that sign language interpreters educated in countries of the European Union graduate from interpreting programmes at minimum levels of competency to practice.

Eighteen months after the launch of the finalised version of these documents, it is interesting to explore what impact may have been made and how the documents are being utilised. I informally asked colleagues who are interpreter educators in seven different European countries to comment on if and how the documents have been applied. The responses I received are insightful and exemplify the diversity of efsli’s members.

A recurring similarity amongst the interpreter educators I spoke with is that their awareness of the existence of the document was borne from their efforts collaborating on it. The efsli Learning Outcomes were intended not to be used as a curriculum but rather as a reference document with descriptors that can be used to inform curriculum or curriculum review, and it seems that they are proving helpful in this capacity. For example, Professor Lorraine Leeson shared that the interpreter training programme she works with in Ireland has been proposing changes to the structures of its degree programmes, and it is very helpful to be able to say that if the programme is changed in certain ways, the minimum threshold requirements endorsed by efsli are still being met. Others have expressed plans to utilise the document. Similarly, Professor Jemina Napier in Scotland said that, as Head of Language and Intercultural Studies at Heriot-Watt University, she is planning a whole review of the curriculum for spoken and signed languages and will be drawing on the efsli document for that.

There are, however, some countries that may face challenges to full utilisation of the documents. Tim Curry, who is an Interpreting Program Developer and Curricula Advisor in the Czech Republic explained that the academic culture of this country—with an emphasis on pure academia and theory that excludes a focus on practical skills, such as those required for interpreting—create a challenge for implementing some of the descriptors in the documents. A university level interpreter training programme has yet to be established in the Czech Republic, and there are currently some challenges to instituting such a programme any time soon. For instance, in order to gain accreditation of a new programme in the Czech education system, a professor must first be able to guarantee the programme’s quality and other such academic level professors to teach the courses. A problem then arises if there are not a sufficient number of people qualified to teach in such a programme.
As Mr. Curry states, “I believe the main difficulty with the efsli documentation is that it expands on topics that many people here do not fully understand and therefore do not know how to create a class that teaches these listed concepts, skills, theories or terminology...the efsli documentation is of no use to someone who has no understanding of the concepts it lays out.” Hence while the efsli documents may serve as a rich resource, a sufficient number of educational professionals with the appropriate expertise is also necessary for implementation.

The academic culture of a country may also prove to be a significant factor toward implementation of the efsli documents. In the Czech Republic, for example, a locus of study on academia and theory rather than practical skills does correspond well with certain elements of the efsli Learning Outcomes, such as the information pertaining to linguistics. Mr. Curry, however, argues that in practice many interpreters do not often use such in-depth linguistic knowledge. Therefore, in the absence of a specified focus on practical skills in the Czech university educational system, Mr. Curry sums up the conundrum of the academic culture when he states, “If the focus is mainly academic theory, the graduates will not have enough practical skills, regardless of the goal of the curriculum.” On a positive note, however, a programme at the community college level is set to open next year, which does have a focus on the practical skills necessary to interpret. While not university level, Mr. Curry notes that this programme is an excellent first step and may pave the way toward utilisation of the efsli documents in future.

One country which is making a transition from two-year vocational training courses for sign language interpreters to programmes on the university level is Spain, and the efsli documents are playing an important role in this development. Mariluz Esteban is Director of the public body Centro de Normalización Língüística de la Lengua de Signos Española (Spanish Sign Language Standardization Center), abbreviated CNLSE. She explains that the process of collaborating on the efsli documents coincided with a revamping of the curriculum to bring sign language interpreter training programmes in Spain to university level. In 2012, Mariluz Esteban began heading a committee of various stakeholders, including representatives from the national Deaf association, national interpreter association, government, and universities to create a curriculum for sign language interpreters at university level. This effort was a comprehensive collaboration on a national level as Ms. Esteban explains that Spain has two sign languages—Spanish and Catalan Sign Language—and a representative from a university running an interpreter training programme for sign language interpreters in Catalonia was involved as well. “We looked at sign language interpreter training throughout Europe and wanted Spain to be on a commensurate level,” she explained. The efsli documents proved a valuable resource in the formulation of the new curriculum. The efsli Learning Outcomes were incorporated in their totality with certain adjustments to align with collective objectives. For example, increases to the minimal number of hours for sign language learning (700 to 850 hours) and interpreting (increased to 1700 hours). Ms. Esteban states, “Without the efsli documents, the entire process would have taken a significantly longer amount of time. It was very helpful to have a holistic reference document to draw upon to facilitate our process.” Dialogue with Spanish universities has been undertaken to stress the importance of the new curriculum, and it is expected that it will be widely adopted. Spain, therefore, provides an excellent example for other countries who may wish to follow suit in utilising the efsli documents.

Ultimately, each country presents its own unique context which influences decisions taken by those in interpreter education about whether and how to utilise the efsli documents. The examples mentioned only touch on a few considerations regarding the experiences of some individuals in just a handful of countries. Despite the diversity of efsli member states, these documents nonetheless provide a useful framework for interpreter educators to draw upon should they deem it helpful. While further formal research needs to be conducted to definitively ascertain if and how the documents are being more widely utilised, it seems that there is some indication that the documents are functioning well in their intended capacity as a reference document for those who wish to use them.
The days are longer  
The nights are shorter  
The sun is shining  
It's noticeably warmer

Summer, every single moment is worth its weight in gold  
Summer, it's like the world's best story and it's waiting to be told  
It's ice cream cones and cherry soda dripping down your chin  
It's summer, man, where do we begin?

Phineas and Ferb definitely know a lot about summer time. Do you know this song? It accompanies me every day now when I am driving with my children around town. And I think that summer is beautiful in Poland – miraculously warm and sunny, buoyantly green and smelling of strawberries. Yes, definitely my favourite of all the seasons. And this year, this time is doubly delightful - because...we are getting ready to welcome you all to Warsaw very, very soon!

It is true that we have been extremely busy for the last few months; some of us had to make some sacrifices in their family life; some gained weight because of all those pierogi we ate during the Organising Committee meetings; some went greyish on their heads, or started on tranquilisers, and the bags under our eyes will be noticeably bigger when we welcome you at the door of the Novotel Warszawa Centrum hotel... I am not exaggerating!

But we have made plenty of wonderful new online contacts; we excelled at co-working and organising events; we could savour absolutely amazing pierogi at every meeting of the Organising Committee (ok, I admit: I am the one with the weight gain...), we brushed up on and professionalised our English, and most of all – we managed to attract more public attention to issues of sign language interpreting than we had expected.

On top of all this, we were so awfully happy and proud that this year’s efsli AGM and Conference would take place in Warsaw, that we were able to take on much, much more!

So, my dear everyone, you cannot disappoint us – you must come to Warsaw for 11-13 September to enjoy the results of our joint efforts, to visit our beautiful city, meet our extraordinary team, listen to / watch our outstanding presenters (we really did it with the programme this year, didn’t we?) and of course - taste those legendary pierogi! You still have a chance to register.

And I can assure you that you will not regret it. You might have seen our conference website – not bad at all, is it? The efsli 2015 Facebook profile exceeded 500 likes last week! Well... the list of participants on the website may be not especially impressive, but do not be misled! The number of conference participants is well over 200 now! It is only that Kamil is currently on holidays so there have been no updates for some time now.

Oh, I forgot to mention that we have a new member in the Organising Committee (have a look at our website and welcome lovely Andrea Fejes)! And that we will have two extra languages of the conference: Russian and Polish! Isn’t that great? And that EUD and Justisigns will have their stands during the conference! And...

And we have still some ideas to surprise you – a Friday excursion around Warsaw’s exceptional sights, an evening cocktail party accompanied by a mini-exhibition of works by Deaf Artists, and the Saturday gala dinner... Well, I think I should not give away too much, but it is going to be fun for everyone. You will read about what we have in store for you on the conference website really soon.

KEEP CALM and  
Do not be afraid:  
We have more than pierogi to feed you with!
In 2012 the “ProSign: Signed Languages for Professional Purposes” project began, funded by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), an institution of the Council of Europe based in Graz, Austria. The project’s Expert Team also worked with the ECML’s cooperating partner, the Moscow State Linguistics University, as well as with a range of associate partners including the European Union of the Deaf (EUD), European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli), the Inspector General for National Education (France), Charles University (Czech Republic), University of Lille 3 (France), University of Vienna (Austria), University of Jyväskylä (Finland), the Faculty of Arts, Antwerp Campus, KU Leuven (Belgium), and the Gruppo per lo Studio e l’Informazione sulla Lingua dei Segni Italiana (SILIS; Italy).

The goal of ProSign was to specify proficiency levels and assessment approaches within signed languages by establishing European standards, to be used in Deaf Studies and interpreting programmes offered at tertiary level across Europe and beyond. The project drew on preliminary work undertaken during the adaptation of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to signed languages. Publications of the project will be available by the end of 2015 at http://www.ecml.at/pro-sign. The following outputs will be published:

- Descriptors across CEFR levels A1-C2, adapted for sign languages
- Approaches to signed language assessment, with examples linked to the CEFR
- A bilingual glossary on key terms related to CEFR and signed language teaching, learning and assessment.

These output will be produced in the project’s two working languages: International Sign and English.

But what exactly is the CEFR? The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment is exactly what the title says it is: a framework of reference. The result of over twenty years of research, it was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabi and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. The CEFR describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. It also defines three ‘plus’ levels (A2+, B1+, B2+).

The CEFR does not offer readymade solutions, but must always be adapted to the requirements of particular contexts - for example, the teaching of a local signed language. For more detailed information on individual proficiency levels and the different scales within CEFR, please refer to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Council of Europe, 2001).

Following four expert meetings, one workshop, one network meeting and two conferences, the ProSign Expert Team met for the final time in Graz in June 2015 to work on the final stages of publication of project outputs. The ProSign publications are intended to act as a point of reference for teachers, teacher trainers and curriculum developers of signed languages in tertiary educational environments. They may also support work of international nongovernmental organisations such as the European Union of the Deaf (EUD), the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli) and other relevant international organisations.

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As a user, you are invited to use the scaling system and associated descriptors in the International Sign version of this document, as well as other documents related to assessment based on CEFR which can be found on the project’s website (http://www.ecml.at/F5/tabid/867/Default.aspx).

Aside from the final publication, the ProSign project also contributed significantly to raising awareness about signed languages in the European context. For example, a discussion on developing a modality-generic CEFR, covering both signed and spoken languages, was initiated by the project team. Disseminating information and sharing CEFR-related materials was an important objective for the ProSign project. We used different means for dissemination and sharing - for example, providing podcasts on CEFR in International Sign and English on the project’s website, organizing events such as the ProSign conferences in Graz (2013) and Hamburg (2014), project workshops and network meetings in Graz, and making use of social media and personal networks, as well as presenting on our work at a number of conferences.

The whole project was only possible because of the support of many institutions and individuals. We would like to thank the staff of the ECML, and all of our Deaf and hearing colleagues who were involved at different stages of this four-year project.

The project’s Expert Team has submitted a new proposal for a “ProSign 2” project under the new four-year ECML programme, "Languages at the Heart of Learning". We will learn the results of the selection process by the end of this year - and we will keep you posted!
Calendar of Events

**September 9-10**  
Deaf interpreters’ seminar “The argument for the use of Deaf Interpreters”  
Warsaw, Poland

**September 11**  
efsli AGM  
Warsaw, Poland

**September 12-13**  
efsli Conference To say or not to say: challenges of interpreting from sign language to spoken language  
Warsaw, Poland

**September 25-27**  
efsli school “Interpreting for the Deafblind”  
Stockholm, Sweden

**October 23-25**  
efsli school “Interpreting in educational settings”  
Belgium

**November 27-29**  
efsli school “Interpreting with victims of sexual violence”  
Dublin, Ireland

See [www.efsli.org](http://www.efsli.org) for a full calendar and more information.

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The prices of the advertisement refer to one published advert in one edition of the newsletter.

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The deadlines for 2015 contributions are:  
15 September for Autumn edition  
15 November for Winter edition

If you have any questions please contact Jolanda Peverelli at [publicity@efsli.org](mailto:publicity@efsli.org).

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