

Inclusive Event Toolkit

Creating Accessible and Engaging Experiences for Deaf and Hearing Participants



Agency for International
Programs for Youth
Republic of Latvia



Co-funded by
the European Union

INTRODUCTION

Inclusivity means creating environments where everyone feels welcome, respected, and valued. This toolkit supports organisers in planning events that are accessible to both Deaf and hearing individuals, with a special focus on communication, accessibility, and engagement.



KEY TERMS



Deaf

Individuals with profound hearing loss, often using sign language as their primary means of communication.



Hard of Hearing

Individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss who may use hearing aids or other assistive technologies.



Inclusivity

The practice of including and valuing people who might otherwise be excluded.



Accessibility

Designing environments, tools, and events so they can be used by people with different abilities.



Hearing Impaired

A general term often considered outdated. Use person-first terms like "Deaf person" or "hard-of-hearing individual."



LIS (Lingua dei Segni Italiana)

Italian Sign Language.



GSL (Ελληνική νοηματική γλώσσα)

Greek Sign Language.



LSL (latviešu zīmju valoda)

Latvian Sign Language.



International Sign (IS)

A simplified sign language used in international contexts.



Sign Language Interpreter

A professional who translates spoken language into sign language and vice versa.

Planning Inclusive Events:

Checklist



Use this checklist to ensure your event is accessible and welcoming:

- ✓ Clear, large visuals for presentations
- ✓ Good lighting for lipreading and sign visibility
- ✓ Real-time captioning for all audio content
- ✓ Qualified sign language interpreters
- ✓ Assistive listening devices available
- ✓ Designated quiet space for sensory-sensitive attendees
- ✓ Emergency communication plan (visual and accessible)
- ✓ Pre-event briefing for staff and speakers on inclusive practices
- ✓ Post-event feedback collection from Deaf and hearing participants

Inclusive Activity Ideas

• Sign Language Sessions

Organize a 1–2 hour beginner sign language workshop to teach 10–15 basic signs, like greetings, emotions, and numbers. It's great for youth groups, volunteers, or schools, and can be led by a Deaf person. The workshop can take place in libraries, youth centers, classrooms, or even a café back room. To help participants learn, you can give them a small printed sign dictionary or share resources like the Spread the Sign app. This activity is a simple way to raise awareness about sign language, support inclusion, and inspire people to keep learning.



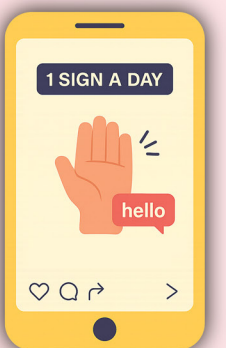
• Silent Meetups or Silent Games

Host a Silent Meetup or Game Night where participants are challenged to communicate without using their voice. In this fun and eye-opening session, everyone must rely on gestures, writing, basic signs, or apps to interact. Activities like charades or Pictionary keep things lively while encouraging non-verbal communication. With just a few simple materials (paper, pens, and a welcoming space), this free activity helps hearing participants step into a more visual world of expression and fosters empathy and understanding.



• “1 Sign a Day” Social Media Campaign

Promote sign language on your social media by sharing a short daily or weekly video or post that teaches one simple sign, such as “hello” or “thank you.” Content can be created and shared by Deaf youth, using just a smartphone and basic editing tools like Canva. These posts, shared on platforms like Instagram or Facebook, help increase the visibility of sign language and Deaf culture online while encouraging consistent, everyday learning in an accessible and engaging way.



• Inclusivity Poster Making Session

Host a creative 1-hour workshop where participants design posters that promote Deaf awareness and inclusive communication tips. Using simple materials like recycled paper, markers, scissors, and glue, they can craft powerful visual messages such as “Deaf-friendly zone” or ways to communicate without sound. For added fun and engagement, turn the activity into a mini competition with small symbolic prizes. This hands-on event fosters creativity while spreading awareness and inclusion.



• Short Film Screening & Discussion

Organize a “Watch, Then Talk” session by screening a film or video that highlights Deaf experiences or milestone events, such as The Silent Child, Deaf President Now, or a local subtitled production. After the screening, host a 30-minute group discussion where Deaf and hearing participants can share reflections and insights. This simple yet powerful activity promotes empathy, deepens understanding, and is especially impactful in youth groups or community settings.



• Deaf Role Model Talk (In-Person or Online)

Invite a Deaf guest speaker to share their personal journey, career path, or advocacy work in a 20-minute talk followed by a Q&A session. Whether hosted in person or online via Zoom or Instagram Live, this event offers a powerful opportunity to promote positive representation and build empathy. This simple yet impactful initiative creates space for authentic voices and encourages meaningful dialogue around Deaf experiences.



• Inclusive Language Challenge

Launch a mini challenge to spark curiosity and promote Deaf awareness through small, impactful actions. Create a simple checklist for individuals or teams, such as school classes or youth groups, with tasks like learning and teaching 5 signs, watching a Deaf creator on YouTube, following 2 Deaf influencers, ordering something silently, and sharing a Deaf awareness fact. Participants who complete the challenge can earn a digital badge, certificate, or a social media shoutout. This fun and flexible activity encourages everyday learning while celebrating inclusion and positive engagement.



• Sign & Paint

Combine creativity and language through an engaging art-based activity where participants choose a meaningful word, such as “respect” or “community”, learn its sign, and then create an artwork or drawing to represent it. It’s a fun and expressive way to connect with sign language while celebrating values through visual storytelling.



• Basic Fingerspelling Treasure Hunt

Make learning fun with a treasure-hunt style game where participants follow a series of clues written in the fingerspelling alphabet. Each time they decode a clue, it leads them to the next one, turning sign language learning into a playful and interactive challenge. Perfect for schools, youth groups, or team-building activities, this game can be set up indoors or outdoors and helps build teamwork, problem-solving skills, and a deeper connection to sign language.



DOS:



Face the person when speaking



Use gestures, signs, or writing



Use the preferred language/method of the person



Be patient and allow extra time



Speak clearly, without exaggerating lip movements



Include deaf people in the general communication and give them leading roles where applicable

Respectful Communication Between Deaf and Hearing People

DON'Ts:



Don't cover your mouth or look away while speaking



Don't speak to the interpreter instead of the Deaf person

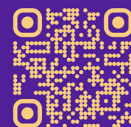
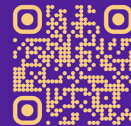


Don't assume all Deaf people lipread or use the same sign language

Tools and Resources

Sign Language Learning

- [SpreadTheSign](#): Multilingual online sign language dictionary
- VL2 Storybook Apps: Bilingual visual apps for young learners (ASL/English) <https://vl2storybookapps.com/>
- LIS video lessons (YouTube: ENS Nazionale, Segni di Integrazione)
- LSL video lessons (Youtube: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFj5fFuOzEnL8HXemKVk-YNZSAevRx_Z&si=31_e04whzRukouX3)
- Introductory LIS courses at ens.it



Communication Apps

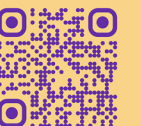
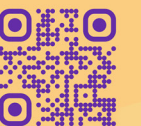
- **Cardzilla** (Android/iOS): Large text display for face-to-face messaging
- **Google Live Transcribe** (Android): Real-time speech-to-text in 70+ languages
- **ZOOM** with subtitles
- **AVA** (All platforms): Live subtitles for group conversations

Deaf Culture & Education

- **"A Journey into the Deaf-World"** – Harlan Lane, Ben Bahan, Robert Hoffmeister: a foundational book for understanding Deaf culture and identity (in English).
- **"When Hands Talk"** (Quando parlano le mani) – Elena Radutzky: a widely used introductory book on Italian Deaf culture (available in Italian).
- Documentaries:
 - "Through Deaf Eyes" (PBS – USA)
 - "The Silent Child" (Oscar-winning short film, 2018)

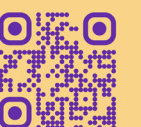
European Projects & Resources

- [Sign-Hub](#): Materials on sign language heritage
- [Deaf Museums Project](#): Cultural info on Deaf communities in Europe
- Guidelines from EUD and WFD on Deaf rights and accessibility
- [Hanbook for inclusive theatre](#)



Academic & Institutional Resources

- [Gallaudet University \(USA\): Open resources on linguistics, pedagogy, and accessibility](#)
- [Greek Sign Language Lexicon](#)



Final Message

Inclusivity is not a one-time act, but a mindset. Every event is a chance to grow together, break communication barriers, and create spaces where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

This toolkit is developed in frames of Erasmus+ KA2 programme project “Bridging words”, project Nr. 2024-1-LV02-KA210-YOU-000250228 in cooperation with Italian partners from “Associazione Ergon a favore dei Sordi”, Greek partners from “VISUAL WORLD” and Latvian partners from “3D Friends”.

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, European Commission or Latvian Agency for International Programs for Youth. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Project financed by Latvian Agency for International Programs for Youth (@jspa_latvia)

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