



# GUIDELINE OF GOOD PRACTICES

**FROM DISABLING  
TO ENRICHING  
THE DEAF WORLD:**

**A PROJECT TO COMBAT  
MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATIONS  
DEAF PEOPLE ARE FACED  
WITH IN ALL AGES IN EUROPE**

**HELLENIC  
FEDERATION  
OF THE DEAF**

*Program Coordinator  
Vassilis Kourbetis*



**DECEMBER  
2001**

NATIONAL CO-FINANCING: PREFECTURE OF ATHENS 

EUROPEAN COMMISSION   
DIRECTORATE - GENERAL EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION against discrimination



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## **GUIDELINE OF GOOD PRACTICES**

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# HELLENIC FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

The European Union



against discrimination

**From Disabling to Enriching the Deaf World:  
Forms of discrimination Deaf people are faced with in Europe**

## **GUIDELINE OF GOOD PRACTICES**

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Funded by



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION

**December 2001**



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# THE PROJECT

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## INTRODUCTION

The project "From Disabling to Enriching the Deaf World: A project to combat Multiple Discriminations Deaf People are faced with in all ages in Europe" was designed and coordinated by the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf in cooperation with three other European organizations of the Deaf.

The practice of Deaf people themselves designing a project that concerns them is not widely adopted. Usually, hearing organizations and individuals design and implement projects for the Deaf without their participation. This common practice has led to the situation that exists today in the Deaf community.

The present situation is not the same in all European Union countries and the rest of the world. But even in the best conditions we have observed that the Deaf are faced with multiple discrimination throughout their life at multiple levels.

Our goal in this project is to identify the multiple discriminations that Deaf people face in Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Spain by listening to the views of Deaf people in these countries. Our ultimate goal is to draw up a Good Practice Guide hoping that when it is implemented these discriminations could be minimized.

In this project you will find information on the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf organizations that participated in the implementation of the project, information on the project itself and The Good Practice Guide.

The Hellenic Federation intends to continue the analysis of the survey results and to present them in a multimedia form. That will also include the transnational survey and its results, and the play that was performed by the Hellenic Theatre of Deaf on the topic of discriminations Deaf people face, in Greek Sign Language.

It is our hope that future programs will follow the practice and methodology that we have applied and will enrich them, so that the proposals to be implemented will be based on scientifically substantiated findings.

We would like to thank everyone involved in the project, individuals and organizations. Without their help this project would have never come to life.

We would like to thank all of the Deaf people that participated in the survey,



especially Mr Nikos Spanos who undertook the difficult task of conducting the interviews.

We also would like to thank the Sign Language Interpreters, the translators, the secretary of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf and everyone who contributed to the success of the Conference in Rethymnon Crete which are too numerous to mention here.

*On behalf of the Hellenic Federation of The Deaf*

*The President*  
**Konstantinos Gargalis**

## **THE HELLENIC FEDERATION OF THE DEAF**

The Hellenic Federation of the Deaf (HFD) is a national organization representing Deaf people in Greece through its 17 member associations. Here our interest is focused on its social aspect and activity.

The Hellenic Federation of the Deaf (HFD) has a long history of promoting equal opportunities and the welfare of the Deaf. It is a member of the National Association of Handicapped People (E.S.A.E.A.), The European Union of the Deaf (E.U.D.) and the World Federation of the Deaf (W.F.D.). It has a long-lasting successful cooperation with other public and private organizations that are interested in the welfare of the Deaf community and it has organized special committees (Women's Committees, the Committee for Greek Sign Language) that assist the Federation in designing and implementing its programs. The Federation covers the expenses of sign language interpreters for all its members whenever it is needed. For this reason it works closely with the Sign Language Interpreters' Union and it operates an interpreting service on its premises.

The Federation provides everyone interested with all information that concerns the Deaf in Greece.

In its long and productive history the Federation has played a leading role in designing and implementing programs that have been implemented for the benefit of the Deaf.

- It is responsible for the coordination of the various activities of associations of the Deaf, which are members of the HFD.
- It has contributed to the cultural and social development of Deaf people all over Greece.
- It has promoted vocational training for the Deaf that are unskilled.
- It has worked very hard for the rehabilitation and social inclusion of the Deaf and in general of handicapped people.
- It has conducted studies about Sign Language and has coordinated all the efforts in order for Greek Sign Language to be recognized as the language of the Deaf and hard of hearing, which was achieved with success (L2817/2000).
- It promotes information and sensitizes public opinion about the problems Deaf people face.
- It fights continuously for the equal participation of the Deaf in social and political life.

- It has collaborated with other organizations of the European Union within the framework of different programs i.e. Horizon, Leonardo and the 5<sup>th</sup> Directorate.
- Programs that characterize the activities of the Federation are the following:
  - ✓ Deaf Animatures
  - ✓ Deaf Empowerment

Both of these programs have as an axis for their actions to empower and encourage the Deaf community of Greece in cooperation with other european organizations of the Deaf. These programs can be seen as forerunners of our project.

## THE PROJECT

The project "From Disabling to Enriching the Deaf World" is a project to combat multiple discriminations Deaf people of all ages face in Europe.

It was designed and coordinated as it was mentioned before by the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf.

It is funded by the European Union.

The partners of this project are:

- ASSOCIATION OF DEAF PEOPLE IN RETHIMNO "ARKADI" CRETE
- FEVLADO BELGIAN FEDERATION OF THE DEAF
- CENTER FOR TEGNSPROG OG TEGNSTOTTET KOMMUNIKATION - DENMARK
- CONFEDERATION NATIONAL de SORDOS de ESPANA

It is a continuation of previous projects that HFD has implemented and the response to the dire need of the Deaf for full social inclusion and a holistic development of their own potential.

The Deaf internationally face discrimination on multiple levels. One of the most obvious discrimination that Deaf people face is the lack of communication services from the hearing community that could be accessible and effective for the Deaf community. The percentage of Deaf people in Europe who have hearing parents is 90% or more. They are faced with discrimination from the early years of their lives even inside their family. In Greece most of the hearing community that have some kind of relation with the Deaf community (parents, teachers, experts, public services people) do not know or do not use Greek Sign Language. This practice has a long-term consequence, which increases the oppression that members of the Deaf community face.

Most public services focus on the rehabilitation of Deaf people, providing them with different financial benefits. This way, society itself might produce an alibi of "interest and welfare" but the Deaf continue to be faced with obstacles, which are very difficult to overcome. This is the reason we decided that it was necessary and imperative to design and implement this project.

The project "From disabling to enriching the Deaf World" was designed and is being implemented by Deaf organizations. This fact is a good example of good practice to combat discriminations that Deaf people face and a message of the goal of the program, which is none other than to develop opportunities, for the

Deaf in order to cultivate all of their abilities, to involve them in the research so that they themselves register their needs and problems, and finally their equal participation in the policymaking of social politics especially in matters of their concern.

Four countries, Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Spain are implementing this project. Thus we are given the opportunity to compare information on different levels of discrimination that exist in different socioeconomic environments but also various examples of good practice against those discriminations.

The project began on 15 December 2000 and ended on 15 December 2001.

The goals of this project were:

- The detection and registration of the multiple discriminations that Deaf people face in each of the four partner countries throughout their life
- The empowerment of Deaf European communities so that they are able to collectively confront discrimination not only at a national level but also at a transnational level.
- The information and sensitization and finally the adoption by the European hearing communities of the Good Practice Guide for the removal of discriminations, so that the Deaf could have better access to goods and services in all aspects of their life.

The activities that were designed and implemented in the framework of the project were the following:

1. **A transnational workshop with the topic being to define different ways of combating discrimination that Deaf people face in the partner's countries.** The workshop was held in Athens, March 2-4 2001. During this meeting the partners agreed that it is not enough to hypothesize about the discriminations Deaf people face but it is necessary to conduct research in order to find out what Deaf people feel about these discriminations which they encounter in their every day lives. Through this research we hoped that the multiple forms of discrimination would be brought to light as well as the ways of combating them. The methodology of the research was also agreed upon. Furthermore, each partner presented the situation that exists in its country. Finally, we agreed upon in a common Questionnaire that could satisfy the goals of the research and its results could be compared.
2. **A second transnational workshop was held in Athens, June 8-9, 2001.** In this workshop the partners discussed the progress of the survey in each of the four countries and agreed on a common way of coding the results, so that information that arises from them could be comparable and utilized to promote and register not only the similarities but also the uniqueness of the discrimina-

tion Deaf people face in each country. We were also interested in common ways of combating discrimination effectively. During the meeting details of the preparation of the third and most important meeting, which was the European Conference, were discussed.

3. **The European Conference was held in Rethymno Crete, October 19-20, 2001** with the participation of many European organizations. The goal of the Conference was to announce the results of the research that was held in Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Spain and also to adopt practices in order to combat various forms of discrimination and strategies, on a pan-European level, for the removal of barriers to the access of goods and services that are available to the hearing of all ages in the European Union. The Conference, as it was stated, formed an example of good practice against discrimination by providing access to communication through the use of many interpreters that were available in the different sign languages of the participants as well as the presence of an International Sign Language interpreter. This, would not have been a point of discussion if the Conference was held in a northern European country, but we must point out here that it is one of the very few times that this type of practice was applied in Greece. ARKADI, a local Deaf association, was responsible for organizing the Conference, which give the opportunity to empower a local community. It is also important to mention here that Deaf people from all over Greece participated in the Conference. A forum of exchange of ideas, practices and future actions was developed for the first time on a level so different from the pathological approach of the past! Deaf and hearing had the opportunity not only to express their views but also to be taken into consideration for the creation of a Good Practice Guide.
4. In this Conference it was also decided that the results of the transnational workshops and that of the Conference would be published in a **Good Practice Guide in a multimedia form**. This Guide, whose central points were announced at the end of the Conference, was presented to the European Union and will constitute a tool for the Deaf and hearing and a means of pressuring the people that are responsible for forming social policy, to apply practices that minimize discrimination.

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# GUIDELINE OF GOOD PRACTICES

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## INTRODUCTION

A research study was conducted in the four countries (Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Spain) and was presented within the framework of the European conference "From Disabling to Enriching the Deaf World" held in Rethymno, Crete, on October 19 and 20, 2001. Its main goal was the identification and registration of a wide spectrum of forms of discrimination that Deaf people face in Europe in different socioeconomic and cultural environments. An additional goal was the provision of a Good Practice Guide that can be adopted on a pan-European level in order to combat multiple discriminations present in each country.

We found that the views of the Deaf on what they expect from society and what society should anticipate from them, meet and are aligned with the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, this substantiates the righteousness of the position of the Deaf community as well as the position of the International organizations.

Forming a Good Practice from a human rights point of view and not from the angle of a welfare policy will corroborate the accomplishment of the program's goals. However this Guide can only be put into practice, if the Deaf communities play a creative and effective role in its implementation. The Deaf Associations and the Federations of the Deaf should co-operate with other organizations of the disabled, so as to present a common ground in the negotiations with public services to formulate and implement the policies that effect them.

The Deaf organizations should emphatically present their needs to the media, produce information for the parents of Deaf children, teachers, governmental agencies and politicians. Above all, they should seek their participation in the decision-making committees on every level of their life and on every topic, that concerns them.

The forms of discrimination that were detected in each of the four partner countries and are mentioned below exist on different levels in each country.

Depending on the social framework in which they appear, they range from a catholic validity to a weakening in range and latent in operation existence.

## **FAMILY**

Generally, parents do not come in contact with Deaf adults even after their child is diagnosed as being deaf. Moreover, Deaf children socialize with Deaf adults when they have already entered an educational environment.

- ☛ The Deaf child, his parents and members of the extended family should come into contact with the Deaf community as soon as possible and these contacts should be consistent.

After the diagnosis parents come into contact mainly with doctors and speech therapists, hence there is a pathological approach to the problem.

- ☛ Support services for parents and their children should be established that will contribute to Depathologising Deafness through:
  - interdisciplinary approach
  - contact with specialists from the Deaf community.
  - contact with other families that have Deaf children
  - involvement in this process, not only of deaf children and their parents, but of other members of the family as well, such as grandparents and siblings.

Adults and the family in general do not know and do not use sign language in their every day communication.

- ☛ After the diagnosis of Deafness the family must begin learning and using sign language as soon as possible

It is documented that there is a lack of technical equipment in the place where Deaf children live.

- ☛ Parents should be informed as soon as possible about all technological aids and should be guided to install technical equipment where the Deaf child lives, such as mechanisms that could transform sound signals to visual.

Parents generally express over-protection towards their Deaf child in relation to his/ her siblings.

- ☛ In order for a Deaf child to be able to experience and explore the world that surrounds him/her and be able to develop a normal and complete personality like all children he/she needs protection and not over-protection.

Parents do not select the appropriate school environment for their Deaf child.

- ☛ Parents should have the right and the ability to choose among different educa-



tional environments and finally select the one that permits their child to develop his/her abilities and skills to the maximum.

Parents do not help their children in their homework and do not encourage them to participate in extracurricular activities.

- ☛ The family should offer tutoring and should encourage after-school activities that will develop a Deaf child's free time in a creative way.
- ☛ The family should offer an appropriate environment for the balanced emotional and affective development of the Deaf child. The family should adopt effective communicative strategies that respect the natural language of the child: sign language.

## EDUCATION

There seems to be a dropout of students during elementary and secondary education. There is ineffectiveness of the educational system at different levels, depending on the country.

Based on their schooling experience, Deaf people point out the existence of barriers in their academic education: violence, compulsory oral communication and the existence of teacher's low expectations of their Deaf students.

There is a lack of effective communication between teachers and students. The way the Deaf communicate with their teachers varies from country to country, with oralism still playing a major role. Teachers communicate with each other mainly through speech, not taking into consideration the negative feelings they provoke in Deaf children. The use of educational interpreters either does not exist or is insufficient.

- ☛ There should be early training and education for Deaf children that include sign language as an essential part.
- ☛ Equal education for the Deaf should be a bilingual bicultural education tailored to the requirements of deafness, with sign language as the dominant element.
- ☛ There should be development and improvement of bilingual educational models.
- ☛ In order to offer more for the development of the Deaf children's identity, the so-called "heritage teaching" ought to be used: This shows the Deaf as a linguistic and cultural community with important identity figures and a positive perspective on life and work in the area of deafness.
- ☛ The staff in a school for the Deaf should know and use sign language.
- ☛ Sign language should be used during the teaching process.
- ☛ Sign language should be taught as first language in schools for the Deaf.
- ☛ The Deaf pupils should count on Deaf teachers and / or valid sign language models in the classroom

- ☛ Teachers should be highly educated, have an excellent command of sign language and be familiar with the Deaf culture of their country.
- ☛ School curriculum should be flexible and adapted to the needs of the Deaf children and should be aimed at an overall development of their abilities.
- ☛ There should be accessible educational material to Deaf children at all levels of education.
- ☛ During education and vocational training the opportunity of working permanently with a computer should be given to all Deaf persons.
- ☛ There should be a high level of support services in all levels of education and the use of educational interpreters should be extended where needed.
- ☛ University programs for sign language interpreters should be established.
- ☛ There should be sign language courses on TV.
- ☛ There should be decisive and systematic promotion of Deaf persons' knowledge of the spoken languages of their environment by means of:
  - multimedia courses on written languages, considering sign languages (constructive teaching, help function in SL, etc) in order to allow or improve access to written information of the hearing society
  - research on bilingualism and second languages for Deaf persons
- ☛ Sign language should be taught as a second language and should be offered as an optional course in schools for hearing children.
- ☛ There should be special support for Deaf persons in higher education; e.g. systematically offering services (qualified interpreters, tutors, note-takers), information, mediation and counseling centers.

## EMPLOYMENT

Deaf people experience problems in finding employment, which they attribute mainly to their deafness.

- ☛ Equal opportunities should be given for productive and profitable employment in the labor market. There should be equal access for the Deaf to all general measures towards improving employability as well as towards securing employment within an open labor market. It ought to be consolidated by means of adoption of truly radical legislation both at a national and pan – European level.

Deafness itself, along with communication problems are also considered as causes of the fact that the vast majority of Deaf people are not employed in a profession they actually like.

- ☛ Deaf people should have access to all areas of employment (including but not limited to new types of employment). Appropriate vocational counseling should be readily available within the context of the educational process and that

would be further reinforced by means of special counselors with knowledge of deafness and sign language in order to ensure that a Deaf person is placed in a suitable job.

The Deaf generally have no access to services ensuring life-long education and training.

- The necessary communicative arrangements and modules such as interpreters should be made possible. This will ensure access to all procedures and means for a life-long education so that Deaf people could be able to respond to the needs of acquiring a wide range of skills and adapt to the continuously increasing needs of the employers.

There are Deaf people who believe that their income and their promotion at work is not equal to that of their hearing colleagues and that their employer treats them in a more unfavorable way than that of their hearing colleagues. They also believe that the employers who avoid hiring Deaf people do it mainly because of fear, ignorance and lack of information about the Deaf.

- Facilitating a wide range of training options so as to ensure an enduring integration of the Deaf in the labor market should be combined with the process of informing, encouraging and supporting the employers through a national and transnational policy for the Deaf.
- Encourage the adoption of appropriate legislation against direct discrimination, due to ignorance and prejudices, and indirect discrimination due to refusal of what would be “a reasonable facilitation of adaptation” through technological means, that the Deaf face in their workplace.
- The Public Administration should promote the development of campaigns to raise awareness among companies regarding the characteristics of Deaf people and their professional capabilities, and they should be designed and implemented by multidisciplinary teams composed of Deaf and hearing experts in the Deaf community and the work field.
- Permanent services of information and labor coaching should be set up, made up of multidisciplinary teams with the same characteristics as the former ones.
- To make the professional integration of Deaf people in all the professional fields easier, companies should count on Sign Language interpreters or develop Sign Language training programs aimed at the employees of the company where the Deaf person works.

## **SERVICES**

Access to employment, to continuous education and training and to social life is not available to Deaf people.

Deaf people encounter problems of communication and information with the transportation system, public services, shops, courts, and the police.

The interpreting services are insufficient in terms of organization, quality and availability.

☛ Conditions should be established for easy access to information and communication. There should be use of all technological opportunities for access, with emphasis on electronic sources of information:

- better access to the Internet and the www, i.e. more and improved software for visual communication
- subtitling of all television programs
- television programs exclusively for the Deaf
- development of common standards for communication aids
- cooperation at a European level for the improvement and advancement of the technological aids
- increased participation of the Deaf in the EU- programs for relevant technical developments
- promotion of a database with regard to deaf-specific projects.

Better visual information in the area of mass public transport (airports, railway stations, bus stations) and continuous information during their transport.

☛ Information screens in shopping centers.

☛ Efficient social work services should be improved for the benefit of the Deaf.

☛ Rendering of mental health services at a community level.

☛ Interpreting should be available in all services that Deaf people participate in.

☛ Education and better interpreting services should be further developed.

☛ Informing the Deaf as well as the hearing on how to use interpreting services.

☛ Better education and specialization of interpreters in legislation, education, medicine, science and international sign language.

☛ Improve the availability and organization of the interpretation services.

## **SOCIAL LIFE**

Deaf people consider themselves as members of a linguistic and cultural minority group. They report that their language is oppressed, not recognized and not widely used. As long as their language is not recognized by the hearing establishment the Deaf will continue to face discrimination and remain excluded from basic social rights that members of the dominant hearing community enjoy as given.

Deaf people need the recognition of their sign languages and every opportunity to use them, to teach them in a continuous way, to do research on them, and to further develop them.

☛ Sign languages should be legally established by each member state.

☛ Acknowledging the Deaf community as a linguistic minority with a Sign Lan-

guage of their own for each EC country”.

- ☛ Implementation of research on practical application, according to the needs of the Deaf.
- ☛ Increased collaboration of Deaf persons in research. Deaf persons will probably also need a kind of “positive discrimination” in order to be able to compete with hearing persons as research collaborators i.e. concerning the qualifications needed for a job.

Organizations of the Deaf constitute centers of reference and support for their members.

- ☛ A main responsibility of the Deaf community and the state is to strengthen, support and modernize Deaf clubs.
  - ☛ Assistance should be offered by intensifying communication between the national organizations of the Deaf, thereby enabling them to pursue a much stronger policy of representation of their members.
  - ☛ Extended co-operation between organizations of the Deaf, administrative authorities, social partners and Non-Governmental Organizations on a national level.
  - ☛ Co-ordination of activities in all EU members countries.
  - ☛ Promotion of Deaf art and Deaf culture.
  - ☛ Accessibility to political and cultural life of the country (through interpreters) by:
    - accessibility to entertainment and sport events
    - translating the constitution and relevant legislation in sign language in order for the Deaf to be able to further participate in society as citizens
    - translating of religious texts in sign language in order for the Deaf to participate in the religious life of their country.
  - ☛ Abolishing legislative acts that comprise or cause discrimination against the Deaf.
  - ☛ Increased participation of Deaf representatives in important European bodies and consultations.
- The majority of the members of the hearing community are poorly informed about the Deaf.
- ☛ Inform the hearing community and people of political power about the Deaf community, of the “language problem” and Deaf culture (through the Deaf clubs, schooling, etc).
  - ☛ The Deaf community should contribute towards attracting attention and triggering the interest of society in Deafness and the need for the special types of communication in order to secure better co-existence between Deaf and hearing people.

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Improving the social reality for the Deaf and eliminating all forms of discrimination depends on the improvement of accessibility and other factors that are now preventing rather than encouraging social inclusion. Social inclusion will become reality only through the adoption of a full and integrated approach consistent with several aspects of everyday life including education, transportation, structured environment, technical assistance and the Society of Information.