



Erasmus+ – Cooperation partnerships in the field of Higher Education (KA220-HED)

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EDUSIGN & SIGNEDU



JOINT VENTURE OF CURRICULUM STUDIES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SIGN LANGUAGE

Project Result 3	Deaf Studies and Sign Language Research Center
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One of the main aims of this project result was to raise awareness in deaf and sign language studies and support the previous two project results in terms of their dissemination and effectiveness in the society. It has a dual face covering the social and academic aspects of the project activities. The activities conducted here were coordinated by Stockholm University in the participation of all other partners. The outcomes were carried out local and internationally in both physical and virtual settings. The quantity and quality of project activities here exceeded the expectations and reached larger audiences. The activities of this result also served to the dissemination of the project outcomes concurrently. Upon receiving the funding, we discussed the possibilities of enlarging the scope of this result and update the calendar based on the consensus of the researchers. We grouped the actions here into four categories and conducted them:

1. Academic studies in the fields of deaf studies and sign language interpreting
2. Awareness raising activities
3. Introducing solutions to the problems faced by the deaf in daily life
4. Legislation proposal studies for the evaluation of current legislation/implementations.

The actions completed are as follows:

1. In 2022, the study "Saturation or shortage? Does sign language interpreter education in Finland match the demand in the labour market?" was published by T/R P. Rainò. It deals with the central theme of the project, especially supporting the WP R1. This article focuses on the development of sign language interpreter training, the present day situation and the challenges related to it. The article is included in the Humak online publication "The many faces of communication" and is openly available at <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2022101461946>.
2. In line with WP R1, T/R Rainò co-authored in 2023–2024 with other senior researchers Terhi Rissanen and Ritva Takkinen an article on the early stages of Finnish sign language research (and at the same time the training of sign language interpreters), reflecting also with the current situation in the field. The article appeared in the world's oldest and most important journal on sign language research, i. e. *Sign Language Studies (SLS)*, founded in 1972 and currently published by Gallaudet University (USA). The editors of this special issue are distinguished research professors (emerita) involved in the sign language research and interpreter education in their respective countries. The article finally appeared in spring 2024 in a special edition of SLS with a title "First generation of sign language researchers", with the following publication details.
3. Terhi Rissanen, Päivi Rainò, Ritva Takkinen (2024). Early Research on Finnish Sign Language: In the Footsteps of Great Role Models. *Sign Language Studies*, Volume 24, Number 2, Winter 2024, pp. 362-375. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sls.2024.a920116>

1



4. In line with the WP R3 theme "Introducing solutions to the problems faced by the deaf in daily life" T/R Rainò together with the Swedish project partner prof. Johanna Mesch (Stockholm University) conducted in 2022, a survey for a referee article on "The accessibility of crisis information in signed languages in Sweden and Finland". The first version of the article was sent to the publisher (Gallaudet University, USA) in 2022, requiring further editing in late 2023 and early 2024. According to the publisher's announcement, this refereed publication will be appear in August 2024 in a "Special Volume on Accessible Communication for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People during the COVID-19 Pandemic".
5. A presentation by Paivi Raino in Finnish and Finnish Sign Language on the very same topic at the EduSign Multiplier Event (ME) seminar organised by Humak on 1 February 2024.
6. The presentations given by prof. Johanna Mesch – who as Rainò earlier, represented both authors - at the EduSign closing seminar in Stockholm on 14 June 2024. The latter presentation was provided in Swedish Sign Language and translated into International Sign and English.
7. Related to the theme "Introducing solutions to the problems faced by the deaf in daily life", T/R de Weerdts delivered a paper titled as "You sign the way you reason, or theirs?" at the Humak's EduSign ME on 1st of February both at the seminar 16 May 2024. The same paper was also presented at the conference "International Days of Linguistic Accessibility (IDLA; <https://idla.humak.fi/seminaariohjelma/> ", organised by Humak and Diacony UAS - the only Finnish providers of sign language interpreter training). The presentation in FinSL is available at: https://video.humak.fi/media/De+Weerdts+-+IDLA+16.5.24/0_ewyd0v7e
8. Based on the survey mentioned in the section concerning WP R1, T/R Outi Kuvaja has prepared an article "Sign language interpreter training in Europe", which will be published on the Humak website during the Autumn Semester 2024, aimed at sign language trainers and sign language interpreters.
9. Related to the theme "Introducing solutions to the problems faced by the deaf in daily life", T/R Liikamaa has prepared during the spring 2024 a blog article in FinSL entitled "Linguistic accessibility from the perspective of a sign language professional" (working title), which will appear on the Humak website during the Autumn Semester 2024. The article will also be published in International Sign.
10. "Deaf Education in Sweden" by Dr. Ingela Holmström online at the international EYAF Expo 2022 (Accessibility Fair and Awareness Summit) on December 2nd, 2022, in Istanbul. She presented about deaf education in Sweden, special schools for the deaf, integration by deaf children with CI, and classroom study.
11. A lecture was held at the STTF annual Swedish Sign Language Interpreters' Association meeting on March 24, 2024, in Örebro, Sweden. The Swedish partners presented an overview of the SIGNEDU & EDUSIGN and project activities with the theme "Opportunities to train more qualified sign language interpreters." One of the critical aspects is that we need interpreters who research their profession.
12. "Sign Language Teaching at Stockholm University" by Mr. Magnus Ryttervik at OPM2 on 2nd May 2023. He talked about how to apply the CEFR levels to Swedish Sign Language (STS) for hearing adults in higher education and the outline of the curriculum, specifically focusing on the sign language proficiency part. He described how the CEFR levels had been applied to the six sign language proficiency courses (7,5 ECTS each) spread over the two years. Since the fall of 2013, Stockholm University has offered a BA program in Sign language and interpreting. In this three-year program, commissioned by the Swedish Government, the students learn STS from scratch and study other interpreting-related topics. The goal is for students to work as professional interpreters after completing the program. An underlying goal is to promote research and development work related to sign language interpreting and sign language as a second language through studies on student outcomes.
13. "Sign Language Interpreting Education in Sweden," written by Malin Tesfazion, Elisabet Tiselius and Johanna Mesch, in the volume tentatively titled *International Perspectives on*



Sign Language Translator and Interpreter Education, Second Edition, edited by Jemina Napier, Stacey Webb, and Robert Adam. <https://gupress.gallaudet.edu/Books/1/International-Perspectives-on-Sign-Language-Translator-and-Interpreter-Education> **Hardcover** : 9781954622425, 450 pages, November 2024 **Ebook** : 9781954622432, 450 pages, November 2024

14. Between 1-3 December 2022, as EDUSIGN&SIGNEDU project we participated in 13th Accessibility Fair & Awareness Summit. During our participation, we carried out a series of activities and could reach many local and international visitors of fair and share the outcomes of the project. At the end of the seminar activities, discussions with the participants took place. Volunteer group of the project distributed the project flyers to all the stands and invited to project stand if they hadn't seen before. Seminars conducted were as follows:
 - EDUSIGN & SIGNEDU: Joint Venture of Curriculum Studies and Artificial Intelligence in Sign Language by Ülkü Kölemen, İstinye University
 - The Twisty History of the Deaf Education in Finland by Juha Mannunen & Paivi Raino, HUMAK UAS
 - Deaf Education in Sweden by Ingela Holmström, Stockholm University
 - Sign Language and Deaf Studies in Turkey by Hasan Dikyuva, Turkish Confederation of the Deaf
 - Deaf Rights in Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Banu Türkuğur Şahin, Association of Sign Language Interpreters
 - AI Based Solution Suggestions for the Communication Problems of the Deaf, Ahmet Faruk Aslan, Osmangazi University
15. **CODA Camp:** EDUSIGN & SIGNEDU project joined in the CODA Camp organization organized by Turkish Confederation of the Deaf and hosted by Kocaeli Municipality. The event hosting a large group of Deaf and Coda included seminars by the project researchers:
 - Introduction presentation of EDUSIGN & SIGNEDU Project by Ülkü Kölemen, ISU
 - "Media Accessibility to Translation for Deaf and Hearing Impaired People" by Şirin Okyayüz, Turkish Confederation of the Deaf
 - "You are CODA, but are you an interpreter?" by Banu Türkuğur Şahin, Association of Sign Language Interpreters
16. Helsinki Deaf Club Visit (23 August 2022)
17. Swedish Deaf Club Visit (13 June 2024)
18. Presentation "Opportunities to train more qualified sign language interpreters" at the annual Swedish Sign Language Interpreters Association Meeting in Örebro, Sweden (24 March 2024).
19. Banu Türkuğur Şahin from association and Orkun Utsukarcı from confederation were invited to 7th June Turkish Sign Language Festival organized by Turkish Language Association as panelists. (7 June 2024)
20. **Virtual Event: Discrimination Experiences of the Deaf Community and Social Work:** Within the scope of the event, Dr. Fatmanur Alsancak from Sakarya University, Department of Social Work gave a speech. This important event aimed to discuss the experiences of discrimination faced by deaf individuals in society and how such discrimination can be addressed in the field of social work. The speaker and other participants emphasized the importance of sign language in social work.
21. **Virtual Event: The Importance of AI-Powered Digital Accessibility for the Deaf** was held with great interest and participation. The event was organized as part of the EDUSIGN & SIGNEDU project. Invited speaker Assoc. Prof. Dr. Özer Çelik talked about the effects of digital accessibility studies on the deaf and innovative artificial intelligence applications in this field.
22. **Virtual Event: Toward a Literature of Sign Language** was held under the moderation of Leyla Savsar from ISU. Invited speaker Dr Ekin Öyken made a presentation about the sign language literature and shared exemplary works in the field (23 May, 2023)



23. Project coordinator Ülkü Kölemen was invited to Radyo Sputnik Anlatılanın Ötesi program as speaker. She shared the project goals and objectives, activities etc in detail. This radio program has the significance as a platform being the voice of Deaf and Sign language studies, in which Deaf community has no place and accessibility. We believe it served in raising awareness objective of the project from a different dimension. Minutes (08:50- 27:00)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PhjHHLxrzye2kJ5t1wEv0egRytXIAzU4/view>
<https://anlatılaninotesi.com.tr/yeni-seyler-rehberi/>

24. **Presentation of CRPD in Turkish Sign Language:** In addition to those actions, Association of Sign Language Interpreters translated the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into Turkish sign language. They organized face to face and online meetings with the researchers. In the United Nations' 2019 Turkey report for the implementation of CRPD as a state party country, the critical warning for the sign language translation of CRPD for the access of the Turkish Deaf community was significant. Please, visit the project website to see the interpreting video.

- Banu Türkuğur Şahin from association and Orkun Utsukarcı from confederation were invited to 7th June Turkish Sign Language Festival organized by Turkish Language Association as panelists. (7 June 2024)

- **Participation in The Panel Discussion of Turkish Sign Language in the Century of Türkiye:** Orkun Utsukarcı Turkish Confederation of the Deaf and Banu Türkuğur Şahin from Association of Sign Language Interpreters invited as the speaker to “the Panel Discussion of Turkish Sign Language in Century of Türkiye” organized by the Turkish Language Association (TDK). This event offered a critical opportunity for the future of the Turkish sign language. In this context, our project researchers from NGOs made a detailed assessment of Turkish sign language within the framework of EDUSIGN & SIGNEDU project. In accordance with the Law on the Disabled, the Turkish sign language is regulated in 15 articles and the rights of sign language education and sign language translation are encouraged; However, there has not been any serious progress in the implementation of these regulations. In this context, the coordination of the issue was undertaken by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Turkish Language Association was requested to take part in the process. As of June 7, 2024, the Turkish Sign Language Day is celebrated every year by the Turkish Language Association. This participation was also beneficial to reach the target audiences and disseminate the results of the studies. The steps to be taken in order to expand the Turkish sign language and to increase the effectiveness will support our goal of achieving all segments of society.

- **Legislation proposals:** Turkish Confederation of the Deaf made legal correspondances to the Ministry of Justice in 21 June 2021 to demand the solutions for the obstacles due to insufficient sign language interpreter employment at the courts. However, we couldn't get the expected results even though the problems observed. These could be listed as:

- Problems in decision making process to determine the sign language qualification criteria by the unqualified assessors there,
- Uncertainty and problematic criterion in sign language qualification certificates,
- Sign language qualification certificate programs and quality matters about the alumnes,
- Implementation of Sign Language Interpreter Employment interviews; assessment by the interviewees who don't know sign language scandal,
- Unrealistic quotas for just 21 cities for the sign language interpreter employments



- **Participation in “Access Workshop for Disadvantaged Individuals to Media Services” organized by Radio and Television Supreme Council:** Turkish Confederation of the Deaf participated to this event to propose solution suggestions to fulfill the needs of the Deaf, required legislations and evaluation of the current implementations. Demands of the significance of existence of more people with fewer opportunities in media, increase in the quality of sign language interpreting, better representations of those people in media, their inclusion, awareness raising in the society etc were presented at the event.
- 25. Researchers from Association of sign Language Interpreters had a meeting with the Deputy Minister of ministry of Family and Social Policies Family and informed him about EDUSIGN-SIGNEDU project studies, sign language interpreters problems and told that they would have a meeting with the other project partners in their next visit. They were invited to multiply similar projects together.
- 26. **“Non-verbal Communication in Silence” and “Short film Contest at schools on "Silence in communication" theme”:** Those activities would be carried out by the support of project associate partner Kabataş High School. However, we had to cancel and update those actions due to the school administration. Even though İstinye University project coordinator send two official petition letters to associate partner school to assign teacher Birgen Işık, whom we shared the task and details while writing the project proposal as the project researcher, we couldn't get response (see the attachment for petitions sent by İstinye University). In the preliminary months while waiting for response, İstinye University researchers and Birgen Işık with her interested students came together and worked on the project task. We had decided to prepare a theater play to raise awareness for the deaf and selected the Deaf Republic literary work by a world-famous deaf writer İlya Kaminsky. We adapted Deaf Republic, however, due to manner of school administration, we discontinued this theater play unfortunately (Appendix of PR3: See the attachment for the Turkish adapted manuscript of Deaf Republic by Kabataş and İstinye University researchers).