

Framework and objectives for the handbook for working with the Bulgarian Deaf community

This Listen Up handbook takes into account the fundamental human right of Deaf people to communicate, educate, and live a full life through Bulgarian Sign Language (BGS�). The handbook for collaboration is based on these key international documents:

- [WFD Charter on Sign Languages rights for All](#)
- [The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), which seeks equal opportunities, taking into account human diversity and the acceptance of persons with disabilities. The Convention also includes a position on the equality of sign languages, which have the same value as spoken languages.
- [Working Together Manual for Sign Language Work within Development Cooperation](#)

The objectives of the handbook are:

Objective 1: Raising awareness among the representatives of the Bulgarian Deaf and hearing communities about the linguistic value of the BGS� and its role in the education of Deaf people.

Objective 2: Developing sustainable projects related to the preservation, documentation, and research of BGS� in order to introduce it in all spheres of life in order to achieve real inclusion of Deaf people.

Objective 3: Creating and disseminating information about activities, initiatives, and projects related to the development and preservation of the BGS�, its inclusion in the education of Deaf children and youth, and its role in the full inclusion of signing Deaf people.

Objective 4: Promoting skills among Deaf people in Bulgaria for self-advocacy and for human and linguistic rights in BGS�.

According to the World Federation of the Deaf, the existence of human rights for Deaf people depends entirely on their access to sign language. If the Deaf person does not have access to sign language (for example at school or through a professional and qualified sign language interpreter), he/she cannot fully participate in society in the same way as everyone else. This is discrimination based on disability and violates the human rights of Deaf Bulgarians.

The governments that signed the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, including the Bulgarian one, in 2012 were charged with promoting the participation of Deaf people in society on an equal footing and facilitating the use of sign languages. In particular, they explained, governments must:

- Recognize and encourage the use of sign languages.
- Provide education through sign languages for Deaf children.
- Ensure the availability of qualified sign language interpreters.
- Ensure that Deaf people have access to information and services through sign language.
- Support the culture and identity of Deaf people, including their belonging to linguistic minorities with sign languages.

Societies that are open to their Deaf citizens and that provide full access without discrimination reap more dividends. Where Deaf people are placed in a situation of being passive recipients of support and help provided by hearing people, these Deaf citizens cannot be participants in the development of society by sharing skills, knowledge and ideas.