



**A European Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with
European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe**

To: Ms Genoveva RUIZ CALAVERA
Director-General
Directorate-General for Interpretation (SCIC)
European Commission Brussels, Belgium

6 March 2025

RE: ACCESSIBILITY SHORTCOMINGS AT THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM 2025

I am writing on behalf of the European Union of the Deaf (EUD), a supranational organisation committed to advocating for the rights and inclusion of deaf people across the European Union through a network of 31 National Associations of the Deaf, to express our concern regarding the accessibility shortcomings experienced during the European Social Forum 2025 on 5-6 March 2025. As an organisation that actively engages in discussions on employment and social rights, it was crucial for EUD to participate in this event. However, despite International Sign (IS) interpretation being provided, several significant accessibility issues severely limited the meaningful participation of our representatives.

Firstly, the size of the IS interpreter display on screen was inadequate. Throughout the event, the interpreter was displayed in only approximately 1/8 of the screen, whereas the standard minimum is 1/4 and ideally 1/3 of the screen. This significantly impacted the readability and accessibility for the EUD delegation, making it difficult to follow the discussions effectively.

Secondly, there were technical issues during the first 20 minutes of the event, further impeding accessibility. These disruptions made it impossible for our representatives to fully engage with the opening discussions and set the tone for an exclusionary experience. These technical issues highlighted the requirement for on-site IS interpretation team, as remote interpretation introduces additional barriers that could otherwise be avoided.

Additionally, some of the IS interpreters provided were not EU-based, which meant they were unfamiliar with EU terminology, policies, and institutional contexts. This resulted in often substandard interpretation quality, further disadvantaging our delegation.

The cumulative effect of these shortcomings effectively relegated deaf attendees to passive roles, preventing them from contributing meaningfully to the debates that took place and sharing their perspectives in the crucial issues surrounding the social rights of deaf people.

In light of these concerns, we urge the organisers of the European Social Forum to take immediate

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steps to address these issues in upcoming editions of the event. Specifically, we request:

- The provision of an on-site IS interpretation team rather than remote interpreters to mitigate technical disruptions and ensure seamless communication access.
- The selection of IS interpreters who are EU-based and experienced with EU terminology to ensure the highest quality of interpretation.

Our aim in raising these concerns is to work collaboratively with the European Commission and the organisers of the European Social Forum to ensure a meaningfully inclusive environment for deaf people. We welcome the opportunity for further dialogue and would be happy to discuss potential solutions to improve accessibility for future events.

Please feel free to reach out to the EUD Policy Manager, Mr Alexandre Bloxs, at alexandre.bloxs@eud.eu, for any further discussion.



Sofia Isari
President on behalf of European Union of the Deaf iVZW

6th March 2025