POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS EXPLAINED

AI and deaf communities: two rulebooks, one goal

What the EU AI Act and the Council of Europe AI Convention mean for sign language users.

THE BASICS

What does AI mean for deaf people?

AI is already part of the services deaf people use every day.

Public services | Schools | Jobs | Communication tools

Sign language AI is being built and used right now in the form of:

Automatic sign translation | Signing avatars | Gesture recognition

The promise is real. So are the risks.

THE TWO RULEBOOKS

Who protects what?

EU LAW

EU AI Act

- Binding law in all 27 EU countries
- The first full AI law in the world
- Mentions the rights of persons with disabilities
- Says very little about sign languages
- Your government decides how it is applied and enforced in your country, through national authorities

HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY

Council of Europe AI Convention

- Covers countries across wider Europe, not only the EU
- Puts human rights, democracy and the rule of law first
- The EU ratified it on 15 May 2026
- Does not name deaf people or sign languages
- Protects them through disability rights

Not an EU country? Your National Association of the Deaf follows the Council of Europe track.

COMMON GROUND

Both rest on the UN disability rights convention (CRPD)

Three principles guide EUD's position



PRINCIPLE 1

Informed choice

You choose: an interpreter, AI, or both. Never the institution.



PRINCIPLE 2

Complementarity

AI supports interpreters. It never replaces them in court, hospitals or emergencies.



PRINCIPLE 3

Co-creation

Nothing about us without us. Deaf people shape AI from the first design decision.

KEY DATES

The time to act is now

1 August 2024
The EU AI Act enters into force

15 May 2026
The EU ratifies the Council of Europe AI Convention

27 July 2026
The AI Omnibus changes the Act and delays most high risk rules

2 August 2027
National AI sandboxes are due in every EU country

2 December 2027
High risk AI rules start to apply

National systems are being designed right now. Early input has the most effect.

Read the full EUD AI Policy Recommendations

eud.eu

All the publications from 2026 to 2028 are co-funded by and produced under the European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission's CERV Programme. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.