



WASLI Newsletter

WASLI is committed to the advancement of sign language interpreting world wide

Editorial

It is with much delight that this report can focus on what is happening for sign language interpreters in the Transcaucasia and Central Asia region. The WASLI President has recently returned from an International Conference in Moscow, Russia where she profiled the work of WASLI. We have news of a new interpreter association in Ukraine followed by a report from the 11 countries which make up this vast region.

Zane Hema (Editor)

A New Interpreter Association in Ukraine

(Report from Marine Liferova, President of the Ukraine Sign Language Interpreter Association with the assistance of Deb Russell).

The Ukrainian Society of the Deaf has existed since 1933. The Ukrainian Society of the Deaf has always trained the sign language interpreters, and they have been employed with the association. Today, 289 sign language interpreters work with the Ukrainian Society of the Deaf. Each year, the 30 interpreters graduate from this short programme of study. After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, Deaf people were able to enjoy greater variety in their employment and post-secondary education choices, and hence the standard of interpreting was also raised. There is now discussion about the need for increased standards in both training and practice of interpreting in order to meet the needs of Ukrainian Deaf citizens. The Ukrainian Society of the Deaf has 57000 registered adult members, and the estimated population of Deaf Ukrainians is over 100.000.

The status of Ukrainian Sign Language does not yet have formal recognition, however the Institute of Special Pedagogy has established the Ukrainian Sign Language Laboratory and is working closely with the Ukrainian Society of the Deaf in order to document the native signed language. At this time there is no official professional category to define the profession of interpreting.

On March 14, 2007, our association was officially registered in the Ministry of Justice in Ukraine. The Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Ukraine has elected Marina Liferova as their first president. The association has created several goals and we will be working hard to gain official recognition of our profession, and raise the level of interpreting in Ukraine. We look forward to meeting you in Spain at WASLI.

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REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON 'LINGUISTIC RIGHTS OF THE DEAF: GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT, RESEARCH & USE OF SIGN LANGUAGE'

Held by the All Russia Federation of the Deaf, Moscow, 22-23 May 2007

Over 200 representatives attended the above conference, from Russia, Transcaucasia, Europe, and the USA. In addition to the invitation extended to myself as President of WASLI, the President of the WFD, Markku Jokinen, the President of the EUD, Helga Stevens MP, and Maya de Wit, President of EFSLI were also invited to attend and make presentations. Board member and Regional Representative for Transcaucasia, Anna Komarova was ever-present, not only presenting papers, but also interpreting into & from International Sign/Russian/English and generally dealing efficiently and effectively with whatever issues and difficulties arose!

The conference was wide ranging and covered topics on sign language in legislation, the problems of sign language interpreting, sign language research, and sign language in Deaf education (see Appendix 1 for more details). As President of WASLI, I gave a lecture on 'A global sign language interpreting profession – right or responsibility?' which outlined the vision of WASLI and the profession of sign language interpreting, looked at issues of collaboration & partnership with both interpreting colleagues and members of the Deaf community at local, national & international level, and explored the ways in which equality for Deaf people can be established within the context of human rights and responsibilities.

On the final day of the Conference, I was invited to participate with Mr Valery Rukhledev, President of VOG, Markku Jokinen, Helga Stevens, and Mr Thorsten Afflerbach of the Directorate of Social and Economic Affairs, Council of Europe, and the Director of the UN Information Centre in Moscow, Mr Alexander Gorelik, in an important meeting with Mr Sergey M. Mironov, the Chairman of the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, (this is the upper chamber of the Russian Parliament). During the meeting, issues of interpreting were discussed and I offered the support of WASLI to the representatives of the Russian government & VOG in relation to the establishment of interpreter training programmes and models of interpreting provision.

The conference concluded by adopting a formal Resolution which called on a number of stakeholders, including governmental bodies to begin to implement the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Disabled People, the International Convention articles on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan. It also proposed that practical recommendations for government be formulated, using best practice experience, and that co-operation at international level with government bodies and NGOs be extended.

Liz Scott Gibson
WASLI President

REPORT FROM THE TRANSCAUCASIA & CENTRAL ASIA REGION

(By Anna Komarova WASLI Regional Representative, Transcaucasia & Central Asia)

The WASLI Transcaucasia and Central Asia region is comprised of several of the countries of the former Soviet Union or otherwise as the countries of the World Federation of the Deaf Regional Secretariat in Eastern Europe and Middle Asia.

The 11 countries that make up this region are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelorussia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

All countries have national associations of the Deaf set up between 1926 and 1937. Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have joint organizations of the Blind and the Deaf. National associations of the Deaf have branches in all regions which employ full-time interpreters from 2 in Armenia and Georgia to about 800 in Russia.

Due to political reasons it is very complicated to receive information from Turkmenistan. Most of the sign language interpreters are relatives of the Deaf.

The Finnish Deaf Association and Moscow Centre for Deaf Studies and Bilingual Education had some sign language interpreter training seminars/short intensive courses in all the countries except Byelorussia and Turkmenistan in 1999-2007.

Only 2 countries have associations of sign language interpreters – Russia (not registered in the Ministry of Jurisdiction, set up in March 2005) and Ukraine (registered in the Ministry of Jurisdiction, set up in April 2007). In Ukraine the association has big problems with the Deaf Union as it was founded against its will. Sign Language Interpreters in Armenia and Azerbaijan are willing to set up their associations, as well. The vast majority of sign language interpreters in Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine use signed Russian and ignore real sign languages. The situation is changing in Russia. Although there are different spoken languages (4 different family groups, not related), different religions and cultures, all sign languages are practically the same (preliminary research proves that this is just one sign language - Russian sign language, with dialect variations, with the possible exception of Armenian sign language)

ARMENIA

3,500 deaf people, 4 trained sign language interpreters, 8 with no qualifications or permanent jobs
2 sign language interpreters on TV (news programmes)

AZERBAIJAN

7,000 deaf people, 15 sign language interpreters, only 3 are employed

BYELORUSSIA (BELARUS)

No information available at this time

GEORGIA

3500 deaf people, 4 trained sign language interpreters, 7 have no qualifications, 2 sign language interpreters on TV (news programmes). It was good that the Ministry of Social Welfare provided 6 working places for sign language interpreters

KAZAKHSTAN

14,000 deaf people, 30 sign language interpreters

KYRGYZSTAN

Deaf people, 2 sign language interpreters with qualification, 13 no qualification, 9 have no jobs

RUSSIA

Officially there are 100,000 members of the All-Russian Federation of the Deaf (about 50,000 more unregistered Deaf people) and about 800 sign language interpreters. However, although the people are registered as sign language interpreters many of them work as secretaries, accountants or even as heads of the Deaf association branches. The average figure is 150 deaf persons per sign language interpreter. In Moscow the provision is 30 free hours for interpreter service per year and the interpreter receives about 8 euros per hour. In other regions the situation varies and is about 2 euros per hour. TV interpreting can be found on local and regional channels only.

TADJIKISTAN

20,000 deaf people, 6 sign language interpreters, 1 qualified

TURKMENISTAN

Little is known about this very closed country – about 3000 deaf people, might be 1 or 2 employed sign language interpreters

UKRAINE

Altogether there are about 100,000 Deaf people of whom 57,000 are members of the Ukrainian Society of the Deaf. 289 official sign language interpreters, about 800 people have some sort of sign language training, and there is TV interpreting

UZBEKISTAN

21,000 deaf people, 10-15 sign language interpreters who also received training from a Japanese charity agency (in signed Uzbek) TV interpreting

NEXT EDITION

The next edition of the WASLI Newsletter will come to you in a different way. As you know the WASLI 2007 Conference will be taking place in Segovia very soon. WASLI will be producing a daily newsletter covering what is happening at the conference which will be uploaded to the website each day. The newsletter will be called 'Scenes from Segovia' and will be produced by members of the WASLI Media Team.

Those unable to attend the conference will be able to read about what is happening as it happens. Remember to visit the WASLI website www.wasli.org 13-15 July 2007 to read the newsletters.

The next WASLI Newsletter after Segovia will be sent out at the end of August 2008.

The WASLI Executive Board

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WASLI BOARD

Officers: Liz Scott Gibson (President); Philemon Akach (Vice President); Zane Hema (Secretary)

Regional Representatives: Emiko Ichikawa (Asia); Jemina Napier (Australasia & Oceania); Marco Nardi (Europe); Deb Russell (North America); Anna Komarova (Transcaucasia & Central Asia); South America – to be advised; Africa – to be advised

Co-optees: Bill Moody (US); Arun Rao (India); Francois Deysel (South Africa); Daniel Burch (US); Nigel Cleaver (England); Ito Tadashi (Japan); Carol Lee Aquiline (Former WASLI Working Group); Knud Sondergaard (WFD)