



WASLI is committed to the development of the profession of sign language interpreting worldwide

## The Netherlands

### General information

The population of the Netherlands: 16.683.638

Capital City: Amsterdam

Sign Language: Dutch Sign Language (NGT)

Spoken Language: Dutch

### The Deaf community in the Netherlands

The Deaf community mostly faces the same issues as the interpreting community, but from a different point of view.

- National Association of the Deaf: Dovenschap
- Number of Deaf people: 15,000-20,000
- Laws to protect their rights: WIA (law of labour and income), WAJONG (law of work and labour support for the young disabled), Law of other grants by the department of Education, Culture and Sciences, Re-integration Resolution, Resolution of educational provision for the young disabled.
- Deaf Education: we have four regional expertise centers for students who have problems regarding hearing, speech, language or communication. The schools for the deaf and hearing impaired are part of the expertise center divided by region.

### Sign language interpreting in the Netherlands

In general, interpreting services and provision are well organised. Unfortunately, however, policy makers do not always understand what our profession is about. This sometimes results in differences of opinions, for example with the need for team interpreting.

- Number of sign language interpreters (2011): 369
- Interpreter Association: Nederlandse Beroepsvereniging Tolken Gebarentaal (NBTG) – Dutch Association for Sign Language Interpreters. In 2011 the NBTG had 81 newsletter subscribers, 11 sponsors, 95 student members, and 329 interpreter members.



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### **Details of interpreter training**

There is a four-year Bachelors programme (part-time and full-time) at the College of Utrecht. The programme officially started in 1998. The 10 pilot students of this new programme graduated in August 2001. Main subjects in the programme are Dutch Sign Language, interpreting or teaching skills and Deaf culture. Graduates receive a SLI certificate accredited by the government and get listed in the Registry of SLI (RTG). The College of Utrecht also offers a Masters programme in Deaf Studies, which is open to interpreters who hold a BA degree.

### **Important achievements since 2007**

- Recently interpreters, represented by the Dutch Association for Sign Language Interpreters, have become much more involved in discussions amongst the various stakeholders.
- Society has become more aware of our profession. More people know that sign language interpreters exist and understand what we do.
- There was a lawsuit regarding payment of interpreters, as a result of policy changes by government agencies.
- In November 2011 we celebrated the Dutch Sign Language Interpreters' 25th anniversary.

### **Major challenges for the sign language interpreting community in the Netherlands**

- We are now facing the challenge of interpreting provision changes for primary and secondary education. The budget available for using interpreters in schools will be transferred from the government agencies to the schools and institutions themselves.
- We need to achieve a better cooperation with the Deaf community and other stakeholders.

### **Goals for the future**

- Better cooperation with the Deaf community and other stakeholders.
- Continuous improvement of the quality of sign language interpreters.
- Recognition of sign language interpreting as a profession.



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**What the Netherlands can offer WASLI in the next 2-4 years**

We have enthusiastic interpreters willing to contribute to the WASLI conferences.