

Sign languages in Europe

**More than 750,000 deaf signers
30 sign languages**

**Linguistic research since the
1970s**

**No reference grammar yet for
any sign language**

**Bilingual education (signed
language + spoken language)
is the official policy since 1990
in many countries**

**Legal recognition is
rarely well arranged by
national governments:
recognition in the
constitution is
meaningless if there
is no connecting
detailed legislation
about interpreting
facilities,
education,
et cetera**



Basic facts about signed languages

**Sign languages are the natural
first languages of deaf
communities**

**There is no single universal
sign language: 126 different
ones discovered so far
(Ethnologue)**

**Sign languages are not manual-
visual versions of spoken
languages, they have their**

**own grammar and lexicon
Lexical signs are not
transparent: neither form nor
meaning is predictable
Sign languages are young
languages (max. a few
hundred years), and do not
have a shared ancestor
No commonly used writing
system, no written tradition**