



Funded by the
European Union

ART & SIGNS

Art, Culture and Museum accessibility for Deaf audience

R1 – ART&SIGNS CURRICULUM ACTIVITY 01 – CONTEXT ANALYSIS TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

Responsible partner: TUCEP

Italy, 31/07/2022

Erasmus+ - KA220 – Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training
(Duration: 01.11.2021 – 31.10.2023)

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
METHODOLOGY	4
1. RESULTS FROM FIELD RESEARCH	6
1.1 Target group “Deaf Community”	6
1.2 Target group “Museum Operators”	11
1.3 Summary/conclusions	16
2. RESULTS FROM DESK RESEARCH.....	18
2.1 Country: CYPRUS	18
2.2 Country: ITALY	20
2.3 Country: NETHERLANDS	23
2.4 Country: ROMANIA	25
2.5 Country: SLOVAKIA	28
2.6 Country: SPAIN	31
3. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS	34



Funded by the
European Union



INTRODUCTION

ART&SIGNS project intends to train museum workers by providing the necessary knowledge and skills to offer more inclusive and accessible services to Deaf visitors.

The first result of the ART&SIGNS project is aimed at:

- **developing an educational model addressed to museum workers** aimed at transferring them basic skills on national Sign Language, International Signs, Deaf culture and communication approaches;
- **testing the educational model** through a training course addressed to museum workers (curators, museum educators, museum docents, front-office employees) involving Deaf artists and Deaf and hearing trainers.

The aforementioned objectives are achieved throughout the project life by implementing the following interconnected activities carried out in six partner countries (Cyprus, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain):

1. **Implementation of a context analysis** aimed at identifying the competences and skills expected by museum workers to ensure the accessibility for Deaf visitors.
2. **Development of Art&Signs Curriculum** addressed to museum workers aimed at acquiring basic language skills (National SL and International Signs) and sectoral skills (signs related to art and culture) enabling them to welcome and accompany Deaf visitors through the museum. The Curriculum will also include Deaf culture knowledge and communication approaches to be adopted with Deaf people, as well as other skills and knowledge arising from the context analysis results.

The context analysis is the first activity of the Result 1 and consists of two actions:

- 1) A **Field research** aimed at identifying the skills gap of museum operators in communicating with a Deaf audience through the administration of a double questionnaire addressed to **museum workers** and **Deaf community**. In this way the research takes into consideration **two different perspectives**: the first one from the museum workers as beneficiaries of the training programme, and the second one from the Deaf community who will be the recipients of a better welcome and inclusion in the places of art and culture.
- 2) A **Desk research** is a collection of existing studies and practices at national level regarding training and awareness-raising activities/experiences addressed to museum workers to make the cultural services accessible to Deaf people.

This document presents the main results from the field and desk research carried out at transnational level, pointing out the challenges related to the Deaf accessibility in the museum as well as the competences and skills museum operators should acquire in order to ensure wider enjoyment of cultural services by Deaf people.

METHODOLOGY

TUCEP, as lead partner of the first project result, provided guidelines including criteria and methodologies, tools, timing, and instructions for implementing desk and field research in each partner country.

As far as the **Field Research** is concerned, two separate anonymous questionnaires addressed to the project target groups (Deaf community and museum workers) were delivered in English language and then translated into national languages by the partners. Based on the target group the questionnaire was addressed to and the national needs, the partners administered the survey in both online and paper form by sending the link directly to the involved people, putting the link in Facebook pages addressed to the target groups representatives, arranging individual interviews and workshops.

The questionnaire for museum operators included the following items:

- general information (gender, age, role in the museum, years of experience in the museum sector)
- specific information related to Deaf visitors (personal experience/meeting with Deaf people at the museum; existing measures/plans to welcome Deaf visitors; challenges met when Deaf people visited the museum; actions undertaken to overcome the challenges)
- personal opinion about initiatives/actions museum institutions should adopt in order to make the culture more accessible to Deaf audience
- interest to learn more about Sign Language, Deaf culture and communication approaches.

On the other hand, the questionnaire addressed to Deaf people included questions on:

- general information (gender, age, country, employment situation)
- challenges and difficulties they face when visiting a museum
- the skills demanded of museum workers to achieve smooth communication
- interest to learn sectoral signs related to the art and culture.

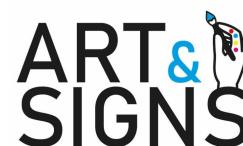
The second activity of the context analysis was the **Desk Research** aimed at collecting existing good practices at national level concerning training and awareness-raising activities addressed to museum operators to make the cultural services accessible to Deaf audiences. Each national team was asked to collect 3 to 5 good practices, based on the experiences existing in their country.

The collection of good practices considered one or more of the following criteria:

- *Territoriality*: it has been implemented, or is currently being developed in the partner country.
- *Contents*: it has to concern the implementation of services, training or initiatives addressed to museum operators aimed at helping them to offer accessible services to Deaf audience;



Funded by the
European Union



- *Innovation*: it presents new approaches or methodologies in order to help Deaf people to be more involved in the museum life;
- *Impact*: the practice is interesting if it has an impact on the inclusion of Deaf people in places of art and culture and on improving the communication skills of museum workers with Deaf visitors;
- *Target group*: the practice has to be referred to museum workers and Deaf people demonstrating their active and direct participation;
- *Effectiveness*: the practice achieved its objectives and expected effects in terms of activities carried out, participants involved, type of skills developed, stakeholders reached;
- *Dissemination* of the practice among different institutions, associations and organizations.

The selection of best practices has been implemented through desk research based on Internet literature, interviews conducted among museum institutions and Deaf people who participate in cultural life, and involving the partners' stakeholders.

After carrying out the field and desk research, each national team gathered the main results in national reports which have been summarized by TUCEP, as lead partner, in the present document, the Transnational Report in English language.

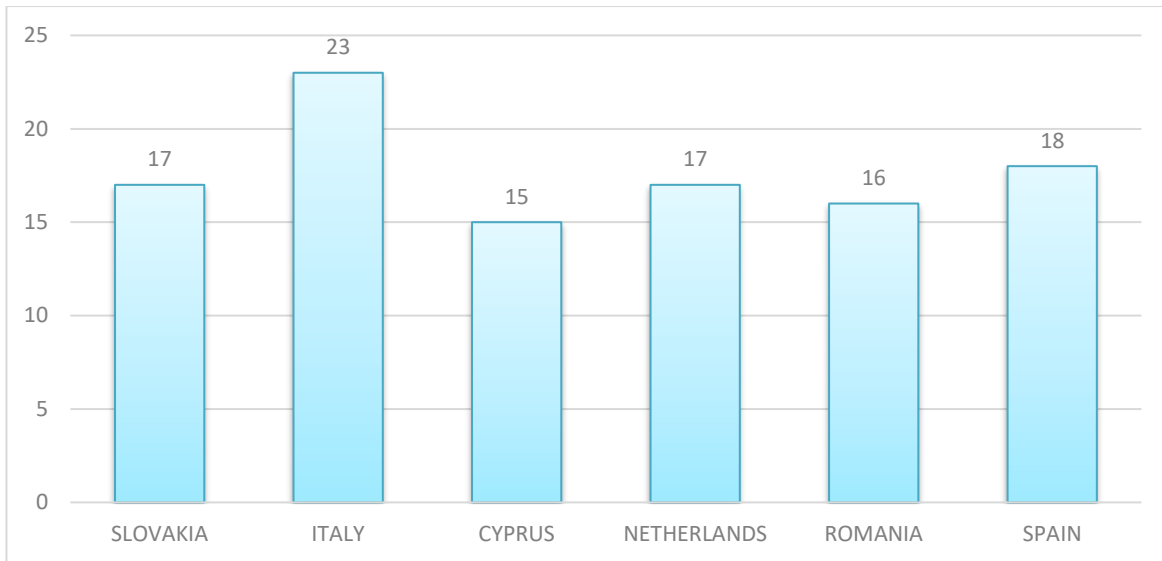
An executive summary is included in this report and it is translated into six national languages (Dutch, Greek, Italian, Romanian, Spanish, Slovak). Videos in national sign language and International Signs are available in the dedicated section of project website:

<https://www.artsignsproject.eu/outcomes-and-outputs/>.

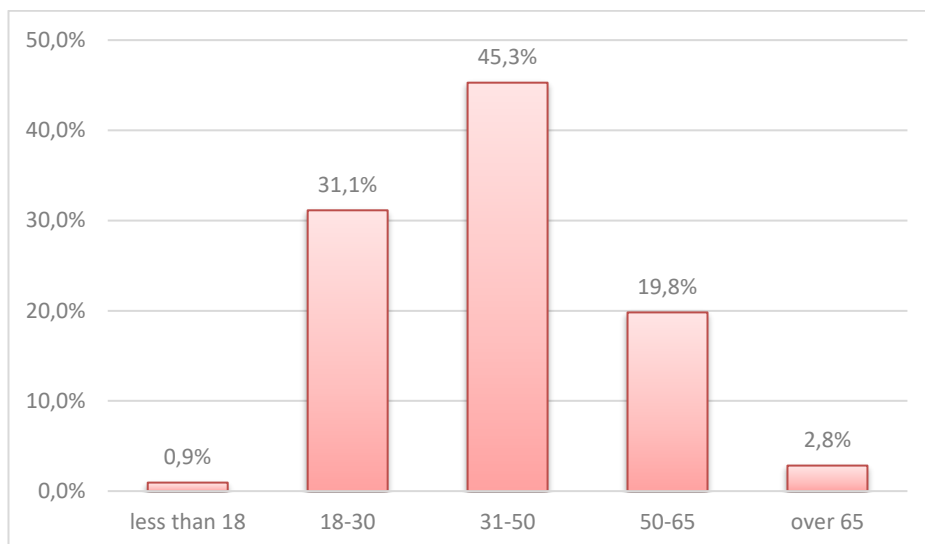
1. RESULTS FROM FIELD RESEARCH

1.1 Target group “Deaf Community”

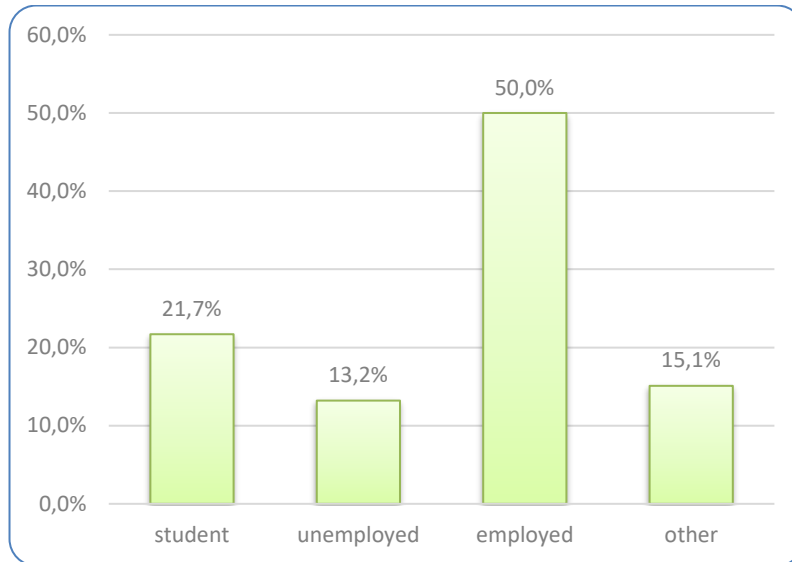
The partnership involved a total number of **106** respondents from the Deaf Community achieving the project target of 15 Deaf people per country, as shown in the figure below:



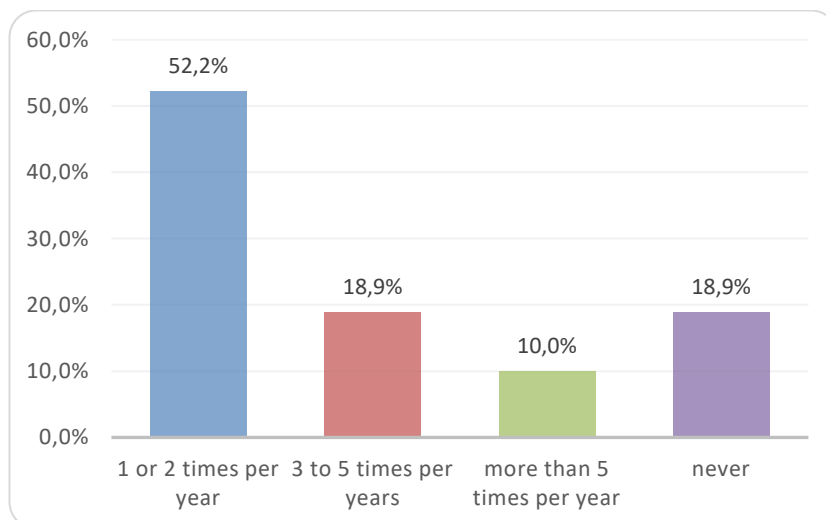
The respondents who participated in the survey were mainly from 18 to 65 years old and half of them belong to the middle age group of 31 to 50.



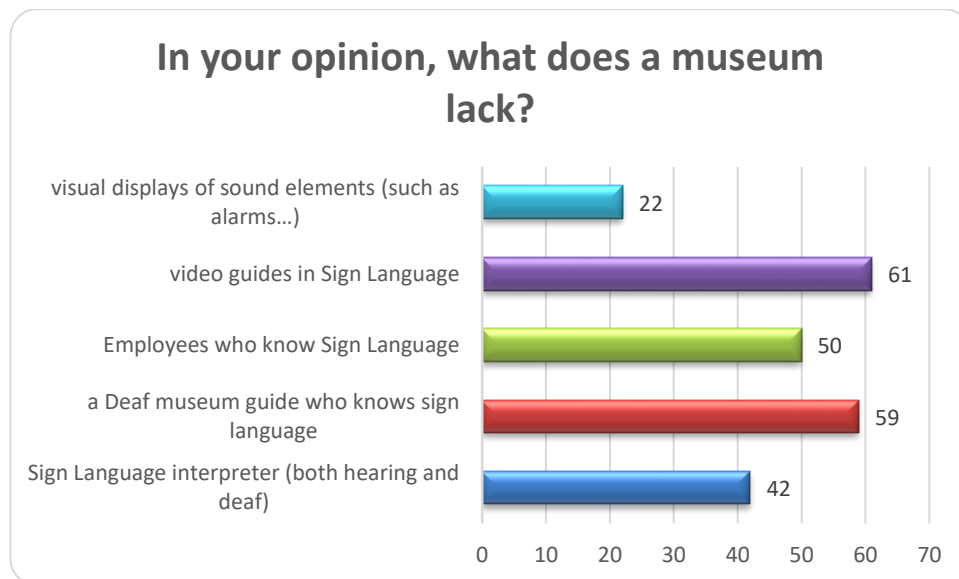
As far as the respondents' employment status is concerned, half of them are employed and more than 20% are students: this figure is consistent with the age of the majority of participants ranging between 18 and 50 years old.



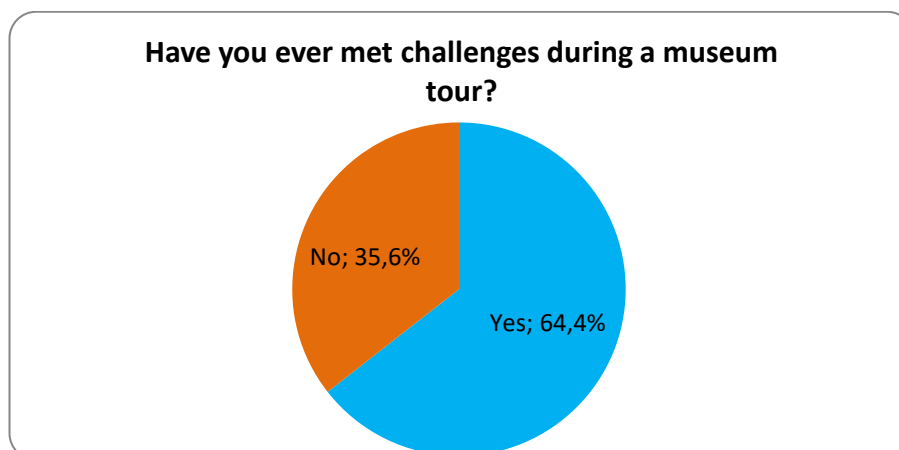
Half of Deaf people participating in the survey stated they usually visit a museum at least 1 or 2 times per year and almost 30% go to the museum 3 to 5 times per year or more. Only 18,9 % of respondents said they had never visited a museum. This figure is relevant for the results of the context analysis as the main objective of the survey was to highlight the challenges and barriers Deaf people face when visiting a museum, and the views of people who have lived this experience make the results more reliable.



The second part of the survey concerns the **challenges and barriers** Deaf people encounter when they visit a museum. Below, the main qualitative and quantitative data emerging from the respondents' statements are summarized. These data will be particularly useful in identifying what skills Deaf people expect from museum workers in order to make cultural contents and services more accessible.



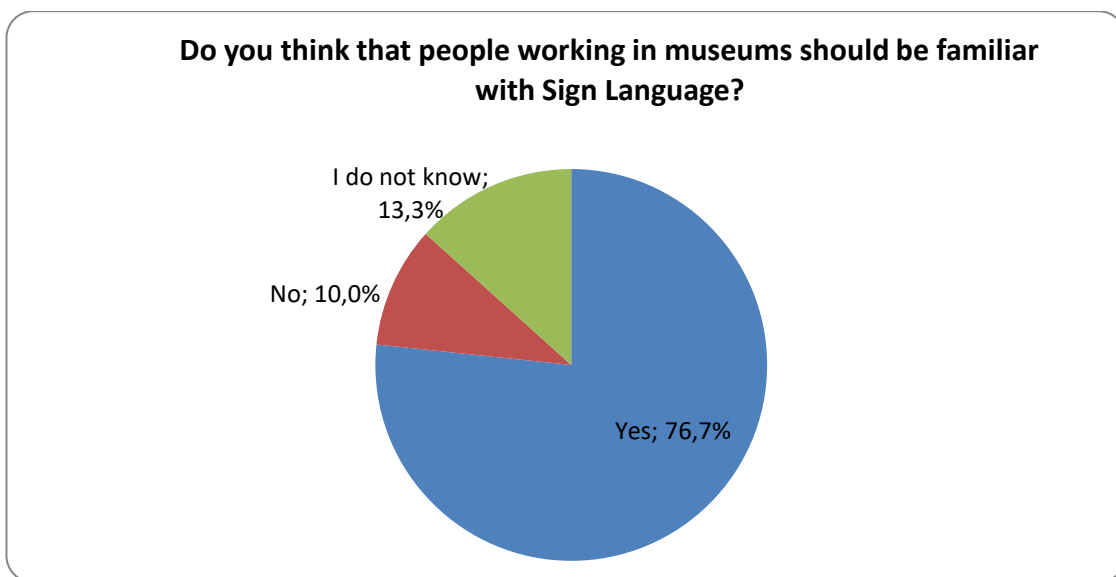
Most of Deaf people participating in the survey stated that the museums they visited lack video-guides in Sign Language, a Deaf museum guide who knows Sign Language and employees who were familiar and knew Sign Language. These opinions clearly highlight the real need to receive the information concerning art and culture in the natural language of Deaf people, namely the Sign Language.



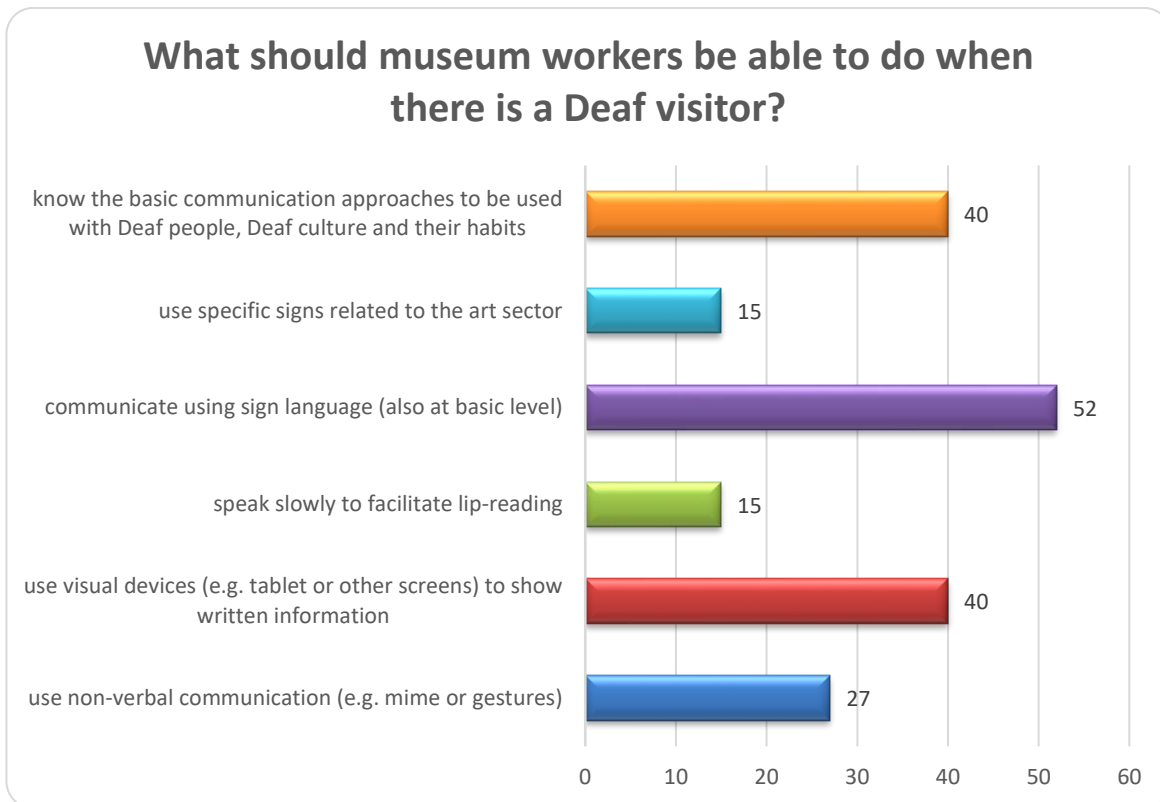
The main challenges met during a museum tour by more than half of respondents are related to:

- Communication barriers in terms of lack of knowledge about Sign Language
- lack of communication skills such as empathy, patience, problem solving
- Informative videos without any subtitled
- There are not Deaf museum guides
- No sign language video-guides

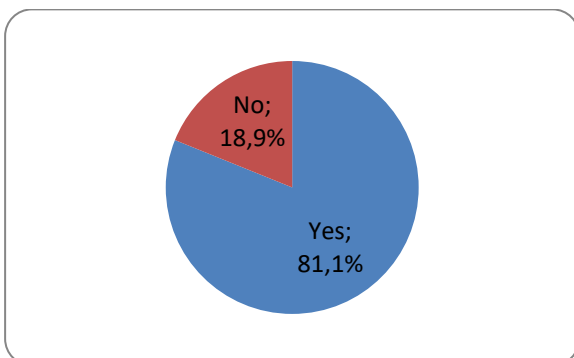
By and large, the respondents feel that there are not enough and adequate facilities for people with hearing problems.



Of course, the majority of Deaf people involved in the survey believe that the museum operators should know Sign Language at least at basic level to enable them to communicate with Deaf visitors.



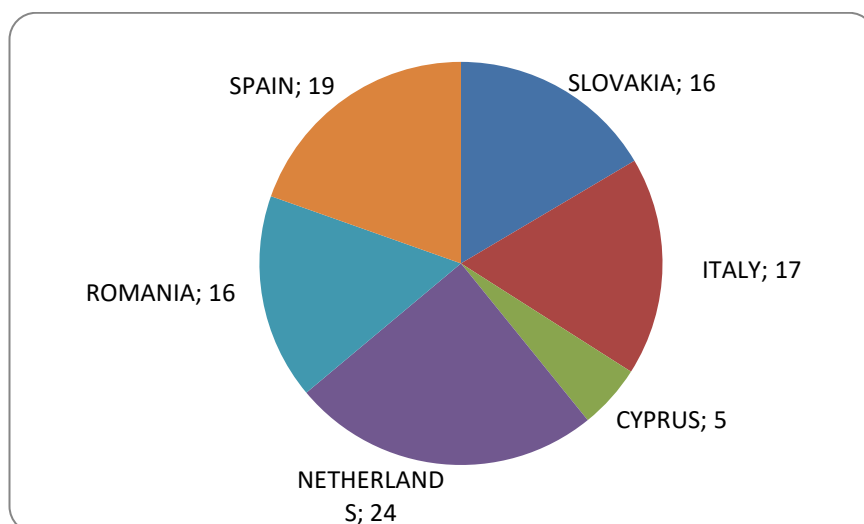
In addition to being able to use Sign Language at a basic level, museum workers who encounter deaf visitors in their work should be able to put in place communication strategies and approaches that take into account the Deaf culture and habits. Another option to communicate with Deaf people, especially those who do not use sign language, can be the use of visual devices such as tablets or other screens where the verbal message can be transferred to the text. Finally, non-verbal communication can be used by museum workers to compensate for the lack of knowledge of Sign Language even though, in this case, it might be considered a support technique to the main language used by the Deaf sign language community.



As one of the ART&SIGNS objectives is to develop video-dictionaries including specific signs related to the field of art and culture, we wanted to know the interest of Deaf people to discover these signs. The majority are willing to know it and to be involved in the discovery process.

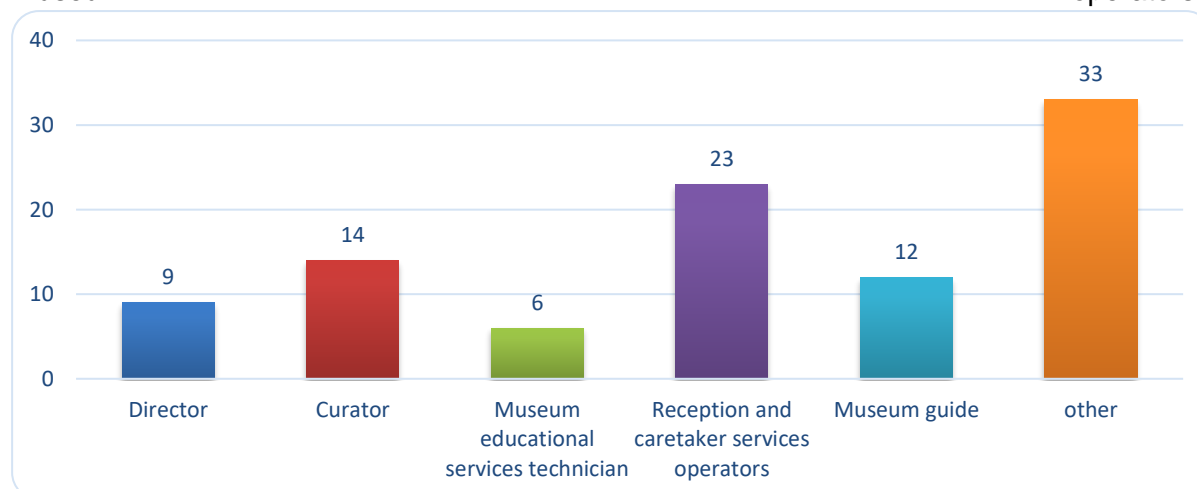
1.2 Target group “Museum Operators”

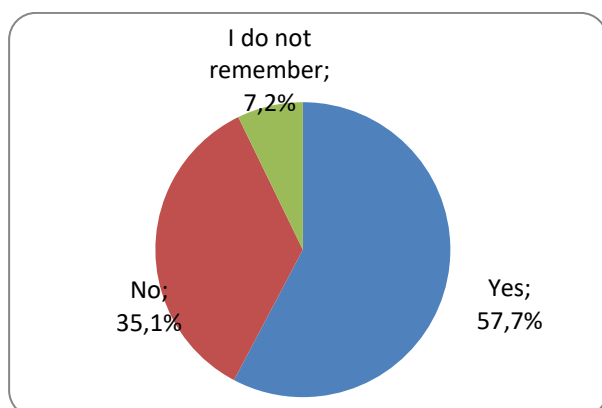
The total number of museum operators involved at transnational level is **97**.



As expected, most participating countries administered the questionnaire to at least 15 museum workers. It is worth noting that the number of operators involved in Cyprus was lower than expected due to a lack of museums that are technologically advanced and progressive, in terms of implementing methods that can transform the museum into a touristic site. Hence, the individuals that completed the questionnaire were directly contacted through partnerships and were familiar with technology, in order to complete the survey.

The respondents cover different roles within the museum: mainly reception and caretaker services operators, curators, museum guides and directors. The wide range of roles held by the interviewees allows for a broader understanding of the challenges and critical issues they face when Deaf visitors arrive at the museum. The different perspectives according to the roles held by the respondents provide a more specific analysis of the skills gap among museum operators.





More than half respondents (57,7%) stated they encountered and interacted with Deaf visitors in the museum they are working at.

By and large, the **challenges** they faced when interacting with the Deaf visitors, concerned the difficulty to communicate, both in terms of understanding what Deaf individuals wanted to say and the inability to provide specific information and make them fully participate in the guided tour.

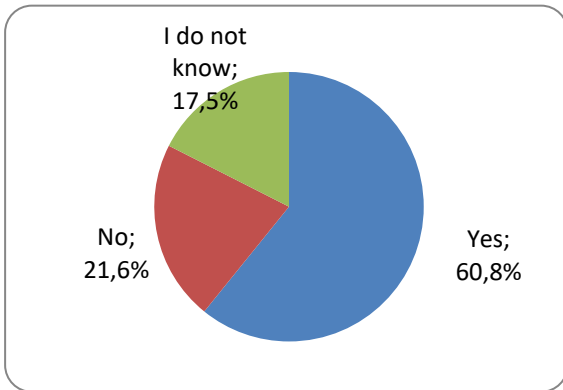
However, in order to overcome these challenges, the interviewed museum operators put in place the following actions:

- speaking more slowly to enable Deaf people to read the lips
- writing the information on a piece of paper or a mobile device
- using facial expressions and gestures
- giving a brochure with more information
- used of video guides in sign language

Almost half of museums where the respondents are working at (47,4%) have specific measures to tackle communication barriers with Deaf visitors, such as video-guides in Sign Language, information panels, guided tours with Sign Language interpreters and subtitled audio-guides. In some museums there are also visual elements to warn of dangers or alarms. The remaining respondents claimed that in the museum they are working at there are any specific measures for Deaf visitors (39,2%) and other respondents (13,4%) do not know whether these measures exist or not.

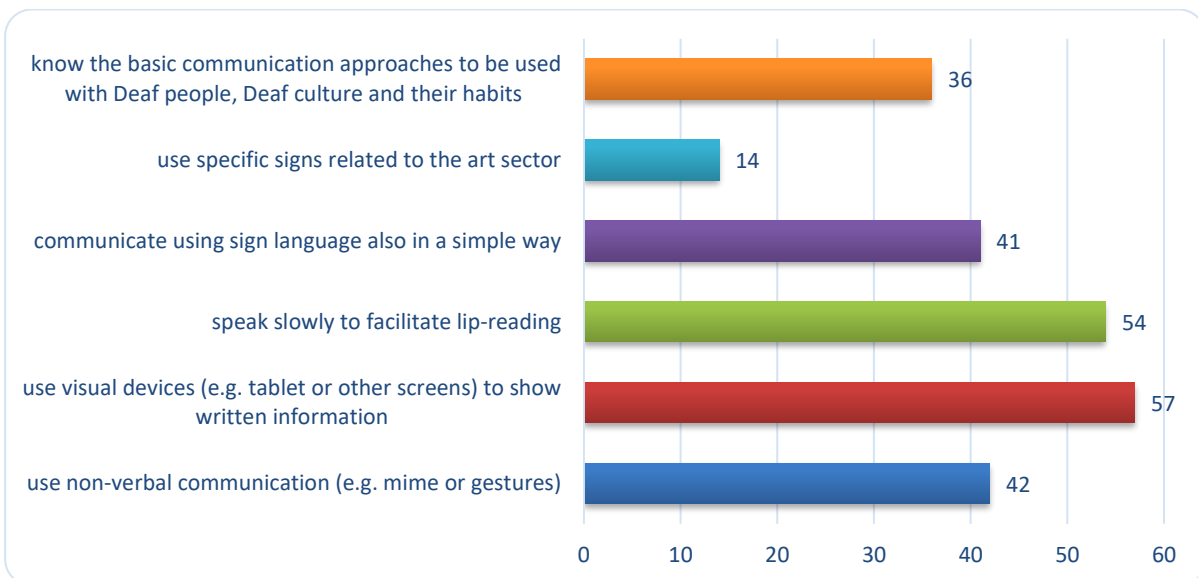
The respondents believe that the **initiatives and actions** museum institutions should adopt to ensure that culture is more accessible to Deaf people are as follows:

- learning basic Sign Language to make the visitors feel
- adopting effective communication strategies to use with Deaf visitors
- providing specific staff training on how to interact with Deaf visitors
- offering a museum guide who know the Sign Language
- providing interactive devices tailor-made on Deaf people based on Sign Language
- including more visual information (informative panels designed for Deaf people)
- organizing specific guided tours addressed to Deaf people



In this regard, 60% of the respondents claimed that museum operators should be familiar with Sign Language in order to ensure the basic communication with Deaf people by making them active protagonists in the museum life, equally with hearing visitors.

The below figure shows what museum operators should be able to do when there is a Deaf visitor:



Of course, speaking slowly to facilitate lip-reading or the use of visual devices to show written information would seem to be the easiest action to adopt in order to communicate with a Deaf visitor. However, these actions would not be the most appropriate as they do not take into consideration the language, background and culture of Deaf people. These measures are only improvised solutions that cannot ensure the full accessibility of art and culture to Deaf visitors.

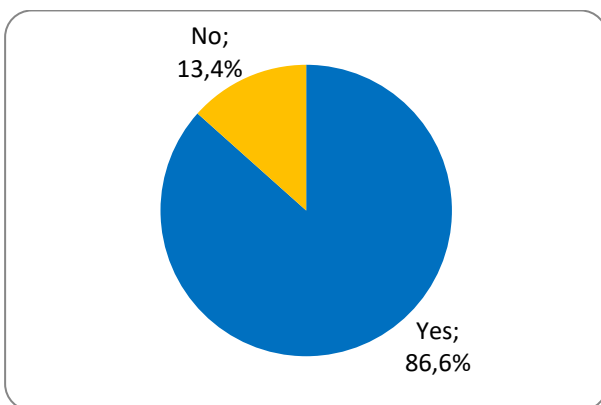
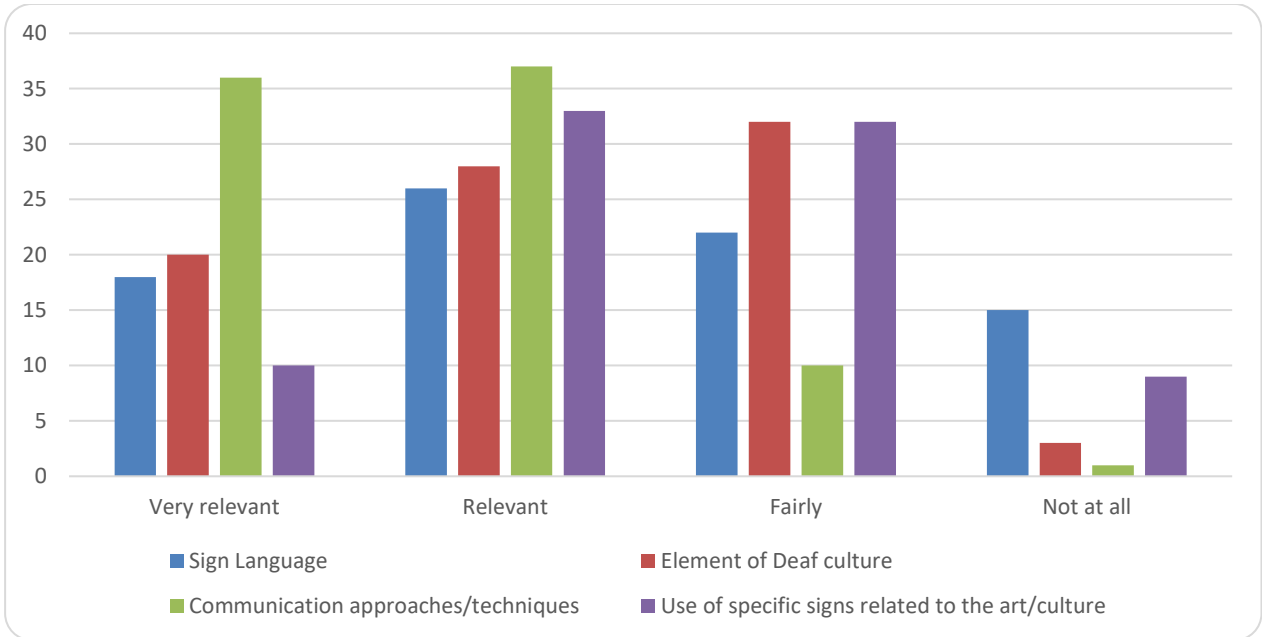
On the contrary, a good percentage of the respondents believe that it is important to learn the basic sign language which, combined with non-verbal communication and the knowledge of basic communication approaches, is more appropriate to convey information to the Deaf in an appropriate way taking into account their needs.

Concerning the importance of acquiring specific knowledge about the language, habits and culture of the Deaf, the participating museum operators mainly consider relevant for their job to know the **communication approaches and techniques** to be used with Deaf people as

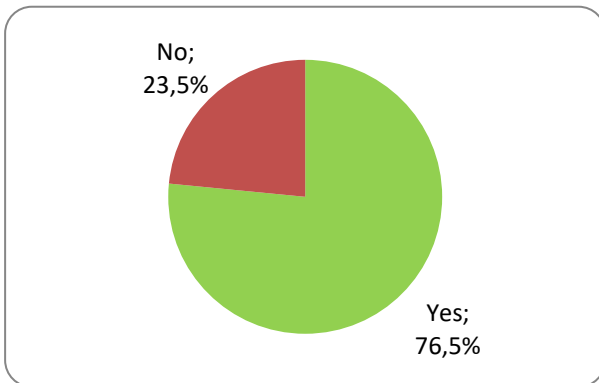
well as the **elements making up Deaf culture**, understood as the set of behaviours, customs, beliefs and values associated with the experiences of the Deaf community.

Linguistically speaking, most respondents believe that learning sign language and using specific signs related to art and culture are quite relevant in their job.

Below, the answers provided by the respondents are summarized:



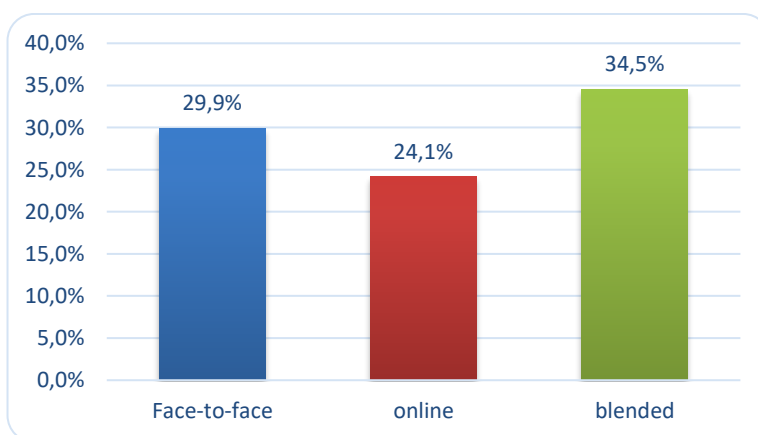
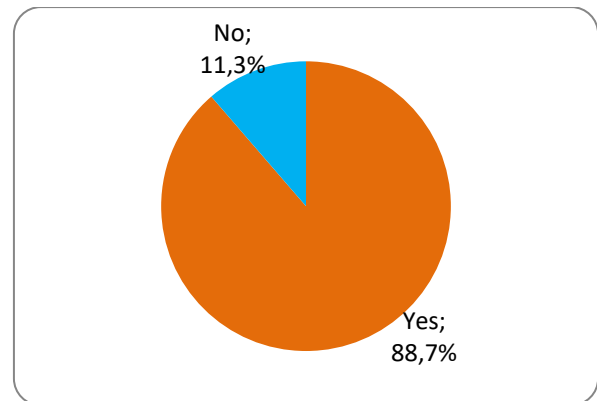
The majority of respondents (86,6%) would like to acquire basic knowledge about Sign Language, Deaf culture and communication approaches to be used with Deaf visitors.



Also, most of museum operators (76,5%) are interested to learn specific signs concerning the field of art and culture to be used when Deaf visitors go to the museum.

Almost the totality of respondents (88,7%) claimed their interest to attend the training course addressed to museum workers that will be organized within ART&SIGNS project.

Although the face-to-face and online format has been chosen by more than half of respondents, the blended learning mode is a good compromise to deliver training to the satisfaction of all participants.



1.3 Summary/conclusions

According to the analysis of the results from the questionnaires administered to the sample of the **Deaf community**, it is clear and undeniable that Deaf people wish to participate in social and cultural life, such as visiting a museum, but the lack of adequate facilities and trained human resources for their needs prevents them from enjoying history and art.

The answers provided by Deaf people concerning the challenges and barriers they encountered in visiting a museum are particularly useful in identifying the skills demanded of museum workers in order to make cultural contents more accessible.

Most participating Deaf people believe the museums lack video-guides in Sign Language, Deaf museum guides and hearing employees who know Sign Language. From these answers it is clear that Deaf people expect to receive information in sign language, claiming the right to use their natural language, although it is a minority language.

It is hence understandable that one of the **main challenges** Deaf people encounter in a museum is related to the *communication area* both in terms of language (Sign Language) and skills (such as empathy, patience, problem solving). For that reason, the majority of Deaf people involved in the survey believe that the museum operators should know Sign Language at least at a basic level to enable them to communicate with Deaf visitors.

In addition, it would be advisable for museum workers to be able to adopt specific communication strategies and approaches which take into account the Deaf culture meant as the set of behaviours, habits and values of Deaf community.

As the Deaf community often feels that activities concerning social life are not respectful of their needs, most of them would like to be actively involved in the process of discovering sector signs for arts, history and culture.

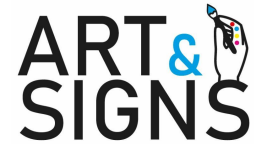
From the survey administered among **museum workers**, it is clear that they acknowledge the need to make museums accessible to Deaf audiences and that they can play a role in this.

The **challenges** they faced with Deaf visitors concerned the difficulty to communicate, both in terms of understanding what Deaf people want to say and the inability to provide specific information and make them fully participate in the guided tour. Aware of these challenges, the respondents tried to communicate with Deaf visitors by speaking more slowly to enable them to read the lips, writing the information on a piece of paper or a mobile device, using facial expressions and gestures and using video guides in sign language (if any).

However, the actions taken by museum operators in order to better communicate with Deaf people are not sufficient to ensure full accessibility to art and history. In this regard, the respondents consider that the following **initiatives and actions** should be undertaken by the museum institutions:



Funded by the
European Union



- learning basic sign language by providing specific museum staff training
- adopting effective communication strategies to use with Deaf visitors
- offering a museum guide who know the sign language
- providing interactive devices tailor-made on Deaf people based on Sign Language
- including more visual information (informative panels designed for Deaf people)

Hence, it is evident that museum operators should be familiar with Sign Language in order to ensure basic communication with Deaf people by making them active protagonists in the museum life, equally with hearing visitors. And, almost all of the museum workers that were involved, would like to be trained in basic sign language and sector signs related to art, history and culture. Although the face-to-face and online approaches have been chosen by more than half of respondents, the blended learning mode is a good compromise to deliver training to the satisfaction of all participants.

Furthermore, both Deaf people and museum workers agree that it is crucial to acquire specific skills on **communication techniques and approaches** to be adopted with Deaf people, as well as **elements making up Deaf culture**, understood as the set of behaviours, customs, beliefs and values associated with the experiences of the Deaf community.

2. RESULTS FROM DESK RESEARCH

The existing best practices collected by each national team are summarized below:

2.1 Country: CYPRUS

Partner: **Emphasys Center**

National context and legislation

Through extensive research in official websites, either University or government related resources, a variety of practices were identified that aim to enhance and increase museum workers' awareness, regarding the Deaf Culture. In addition, irrespective of the independent research that was conducted, the research methodology for the identification of the best practices included contacting relevant stakeholders. In other words, through the use of descriptive emails and calling stakeholders, we were able to detect a few practices in Cyprus that aim to help museum workers learn about the importance of accommodating the individuals with hearing impairments, with improved facilities.

The right of individuals with hearing impairments to have their own language of communication was acknowledged by the state in the case of sign language. As a result, the Cyprus Sign Language Law was passed in 2006. The basic vocabulary and a grammar book had been developed by a committee. Sign language interpreters were available, and the Department for Social Inclusion also funded the Cypriot Deaf Federation to provide sign language interpretation services. Sign language classes were conducted and were open to the public.

In other words, Cyprus introduced the "2006 Act (Act on the Recognition of Cyprus Sign Language 66(1) 2006), that recognized the Cypriot Sign Language. Apart from recognizing CSL, it also recommends that Cypriot Sign Language be taught as a foreign language in public schools (Article 6(2)(F)). CSL is also recognized as a supplementary qualification for civil service workers if they must have direct interaction with Deaf persons, according to Article 4. Currently, Cypriot Sign Language is taught at Ministry of Education training centers in Limassol, Nicosia, Larnaka, and Paphos.

Evidently, Cyprus has not adequately progressed in the field of providing services to individuals with hearing impairments, in locations such as museums. However, there has been an initial development in services that aim to upgrade current facilities, and convert leisure activities, such as visiting a museum, into more user-friendly occurrences.

Overview of best practices

1. "Personal Tours of Cultural Heritage for Deaf Museum Visitors"

The first practice that was identified is an initiative conducted by the Cyprus Interaction Lab and is called 'Personal Tours of Cultural Heritage for Deaf Museum Visitors'. This specific practice developed an online mobile application that was designed for the Deaf/hard-of-



Funded by the
European Union



hearing museum visitors. The objective of this application is to enable a museum experience without the support of a physical sign language interpreter. The application was pilot tested at the Pattichion Municipal Museum in Cyprus.

2. Emerging technologies and the digital transformation of Museums and Heritage sites

The second practice that aimed to support the development of futuristic methods to assist the individuals with hearing impairments, was conducted by the Cyprus Centre of Excellence – Museum Lab. This organization, in cooperation with a variety of institutes, scheduled a national conference to explore the current practices in the use of emerging and interactive technologies such as augmented, mixed or virtual reality, holographic models, 3D models, artificial intelligence, sensors and gamification in museums and heritage sites. The aim of this conference was to promote critical and interdisciplinary approaches and conversations between participants from diverse fields and to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue between academics and professionals from various backgrounds on digital advances, innovation and their impact on the field of cultural heritage.

3. The Visual Sociology and Museum Studies Lab

The third initiative implemented in Cyprus, with the purpose of helping leisure activities, such as visiting a museum, become more inclusive for the individuals with disabilities, including hearing impairments, was organized by the Visual Sociology and Museum Studies Lab (VSMS lab). This specific laboratory is collaborating with the Department of Technology, of the Cyprus' University and specifically conduct research in a variety of sectors such as the use of emerging technologies in museums, cultural sustainability, cultural policy, the social and political influence of museums and galleries, museums' effect on memory and identity, and audience studies are all research areas in museum studies. In other words, Museology research focuses on museum history, impact and agency, museum teaching, and audience studies and their ultimate objective is to collaborate closely with cultural groups to bridge the gap between theory and practice, making museums more relevant and inclusive.

Main conclusions

Ultimately, it is evident that a few of the practices completed in Cyprus, do not specifically target the audience of individuals with hearing impairments, and overall, the country has not yet progressed in this field, but a variety of efforts are being introduced. For instance, a strong benefit of the application from the first practice, is that according to the participants, it is easy to use and learn and allows museum tours for deaf, free from the need for support by specialized guides and interpreters.

Similarly, the study showed that the use of the application revealed high levels of user satisfaction. However, the application did not incorporate subtitles in all the videos, thus affecting the level of understanding for the user. Nonetheless, the other two initiatives do not necessarily involve specific strengths or weaknesses, they could definitely improve upon their initiatives, if they addressed the lack of services provided in leisure activities, for individuals with hearing impairments.



Funded by the
European Union



2.2 Country: ITALY

Partners: **AUSRU – TUCEP - PRAGMA**

National context and legislation

The Italian legal framework on the breaking down of architectural barriers is composed of a series of legal acts that have succeeded from 1989 to the present day, containing specific references also to places of cultural interest. More specifically, the Guidelines for the elimination of architectural barriers in cultural venues (Ministerial Decree of 28 March 2008, no. 114 of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities) constitute the most homogeneous and up-to-date provision and document of Italian legislation on accessibility in cultural spaces (and therefore also in museums). The guidelines are part of the measures to implement one of the obligations established by Art. 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular the obligation to develop and issue minimum national standards and guidelines for accessibility to facilities and services open or provided to the public.

The ministerial guidelines refer to all persons with mobility, physical and sensory difficulties (blind and visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing), as well as, persons with cognitive or psychological difficulties.

Based on this legislation, every museum, public or private, has implemented measures over time to guarantee accessibility for different disadvantaged groups. As far as deaf and hard of hearing people are concerned, more and more museums have adapted to the accessibility guidelines by providing video guides in sign language, on-demand interpreters during guided tours, deaf museum guides and other technological tools, often only in the testing phase.

On 19 May 2021, after long struggles on the part of the deaf community and the main deaf associations, the Italian government issued a Decree-Law recognising, promoting and protecting the Italian Sign Language and the Tactile Sign Language, stipulating that "...public administrations, including museums, promote the diffusion of interpreting services in LIS and LIST, subtitling and any other suitable means to favour verbal language comprehension as well as staff training initiatives".

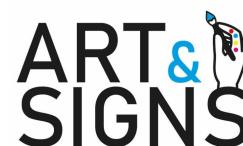
It is therefore expected that the measures to be implemented in cultural venues in order to make services accessible to deaf people will be regulated by specific legislation, in order to guarantee accessibility on a national level and not only left to the individual initiatives of deaf associations or museum institutions.

As far as the desk research methodology, the Italian team has analysed several practices undertaken by private associations often funded by local and regional public authorities aimed at ensuring the museum services accessibility to Deaf people. The research was conducted through the web as well as interviews with museum workers cooperating with TUCEP and AUSRU. Among the investigated practices, we chose 3 initiatives concerning actions aimed at training the museum staff and providing technological tools to let Deaf people enjoy the art and history.

Overview of best practices



Funded by the
European Union



1. Training course “Italian Sign Language awareness-raising addressed to museum operators”

The training course, funded by Gruppo Archeologico Perugia (no-profit association aimed at contributing to the protection, preservation and enhancement of the Italian cultural heritage) and organized by TUCEP, was addressed to 15 operators working in 9 different museums located in the center of Italy. The course aimed to transfer to museum workers the basics of Deaf culture, Italian Sign Language and sector signs related to art and culture. Through the course, participants' front-office workers are able to welcome Deaf visitors who use Sign Language, promoting a cultural and inclusive journey at the same time.

Some participants, after participating in the training course, had the opportunity to meet Deaf visitors at the museum. They found the usefulness of what they had learned and put into practice, although at a basic level, because they could communicate with Deaf visitors.

2. “ACCESSs – Accessibilità Comunicazione Cultura E Sottotitoli per le persone sorde” - accessibility, Communication, Culture And Subtitles for Deaf People

The project aims to reduce communication barriers in order to facilitate participation in public events, information, cultural activities and growth activities for people with hearing disabilities (who do not use Sign Language).

Specifically, the initiative envisages accessibility actions for the enjoyment of the cultural heritage by people with hearing disabilities through the following measures:

- Subtitling of in-person (and also remote) public events and videos
- Museum accessibility through training of staff to improve visitor reception, subtitling of videos and video-guides, adaptation of texts and explanatory panels, routes supported by printed aids (brochures, booklets or talking maps) and technological aids (QR codes or active links)
- Adaptation of public rooms with technological equipment suitable for people with hearing disabilities
- Staff and teachers training
- Cultural activities and exchange meetings for deaf people.

The actions are addressed to the museums located in the region of Emilia Romagna to improve their offer in terms of accessibility. The project is funded by Region of Emilia Romagna within the regional call for proposals to support projects for the social inclusion of deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing people.

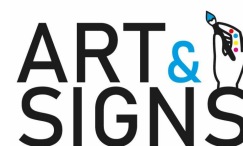
3. “Getting to know deafness: breaking down barriers to communication in cultural places”

The project aims to break down communication barriers in museums in the region of Trentino South Tyrol by providing awareness-raising training about hearing disabilities, Italian sign language and visual strategies to make exhibition spaces accessible for deaf people.

The training project, developed in collaboration with the National Deaf Association - Section of Trento, is aimed at museum educators, front-office and room guard operators of Trentino museums and it consists of two modules:



Funded by the
European Union



- BASIC course (9 h) aimed at museum educators and front office/room service staff. Contents: General information about deafness - Levels and types of hearing disorders, teaching and communication strategies with deaf people, accessibility of communication, Italian sign language - Communication with deaf people through SL, general information requests and short daily dialogues.
- ADVANCED course (9 h) addressed to museum educators. Contents: Specific training on museum accessibility - Specific training on strategies to be adopted in general for museum spaces and for the accessibility of cultural places - Basic SL course on specific vocabulary - Giving information about the museum, spaces and reception services; some signs about art, culture and nature of Trentino.

Main conclusions

The collected good practices are focused on the training of people working in the museum in order to ensure the appropriate accessibility of Deaf visitors to art and history.

The strengths of the selected initiatives to be taken into consideration for the development of Art&Signs Curriculum might be:

- o The training, at basic level, introduced museum workers to the Deaf world in terms of language and communication approaches. It allowed them to be able to welcome Deaf visitors and provide the essential information about the museum services.
- o Some initiatives are addressed to Deaf people who do not use sign language and, therefore, enables them to participate more actively in social and cultural life. These initiatives provide videos and audio-guides subtitled, accessible explanatory panels and technological applications that can also be used for the accessibility of other groups of disabled or disadvantaged people.
- o The training and awareness-raising workshops help tourism and cultural operators to understand the reality of Deaf people and overcome biases and stereotypes.
- o A part the linguistic aspect, the training takes into account both the psychological and behavioural aspects of Deaf people, essential to set up the best communication approach to be used with Deaf visitors.
- o Use of specific vocabulary concerning the field of art, history and culture.
- o The training envisages the involvement of Deaf people as trainers or experts.

On the other hand, the weaknesses of selected good practices are the following:

- o The training courses were too short to learn the Sign Language at basic level as well as the appropriate communication strategies and approaches.
- o The video or audio-guides, subtitled and visual aids providing only written text do not fit the needs of the majority of Deaf people who would prefer information in Sign Language.
- o Lack of funds to implement the practices in more museums at national level.
- o Most of the practices analyzed are at an experimental level in individual museums. Once the testing is over, the implemented accessibility activities are often not further pursued.

2.3 Country: NETHERLANDS

Partner: **DHC – Dennis Hoogeveen Consultancy**

National context and legislation

DHC is an organization which is very active in the deaf community in the Netherlands. Its director Dennis Hoogeveen is an active member of the community, having worked in various sectors, either as freelancer or as volunteer. This overview of best practices is based on his own experiences.

Two national legislations gives attention to accessibility of Deaf people in culture and arts:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UNCRPD contains an article on participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (article 30)¹. It specifies that persons with disabilities should enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats and also enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as [...] museums, [...]. In article 2 it is defined that signed languages are also languages², which form the basis of accessible formats throughout the whole convention. The UNCRPD was ratified by the Dutch government in 2016 and obliges governments, public and private sectors to adhere to this convention.

The recognition of the Sign Language of the Netherlands. This came into law in 2021 and recognises the Sign Language of the Netherlands as a full language, besides Dutch and Frisian. The government has the obligation to promote this sign language. This legislation however does not contain any new provisions in the access to sign language, as a lot of other legislation already cover different areas, such as Education for the Deaf, employment, media, crisis communication, etc.. An Advisory Council is formed to advise the government on the promotion and protection of the Sign Language of the Netherlands. It is expected by the author of this report that accessibility to culture and arts will be covered in their work.

Overview of best practices

1. Musea in Gebaren (Museums in Signs)

With regards to the accessibility of culture and arts, the project *Musea in Gebaren* (Museums in Sign Language) is the project which shows the one and truly best practise in the Netherlands. It currently has a partnership with approximately 15 different museums in the Netherlands, offering guided tours in sign language by a Deaf guide. Every museum offers a tour approximately once a month at a designated time slot.

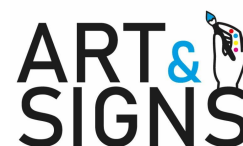
The Deaf guides are trained by Musea in Gebaren and then placed at one of the participating museums in the Netherlands. The museum guides are responsible for preparing their own tours, based on information provided by the museums.

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-30-participation-in-cultural-life-recreation-leisure-and-sport.html>

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-2-definitions.html>



Funded by the
European Union



Musea in Gebaren also produced a visual guide on a device for the *Rijksmuseum* in Amsterdam, containing different stories about around 10 world famous paintings in the museum and several other productions are in production.

2. Keurmerk DoofVriendelijk (Quality mark Deaf Friendly)³

DHC and DoofCentraal have developed a training package for people working in retail, restaurants, public bodies, etc. This package contains three lessons focused on three themes: Deaf culture, basic sign language skills in general and signs related to the theme the workers are working at. Up until now eight packages have been developed, for example: sport schools, coffee bars, clothing shops, fast food restaurants, etc. When enrolling in this training program, the shop/organization would receive a quality mark, valid for three years. This training program is still focused on the city Groningen only.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the training was not rolled out properly yet.

Main conclusions

Main strengths:

- Deaf people are most involved in the training of hearing people to transfer skills to make Deaf visitors feel welcome, they are leading and contributing.
- Sign language in the Netherlands is visible now, mostly thanks to the press conferences during the pandemic.
- There is already a strong foundation of accessible museums in the Netherlands and willingness to make museums accessible for Deaf people.

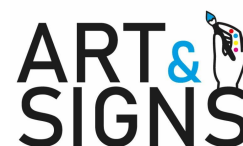
Main weaknesses:

- Knowledge about the possibility of receiving training is still too thin-spread.
- Knowledge about different forms of accessibility is still limited (accessibility is not only providing sign language interpreters or tours by Deaf guides, but also entails audiovisual materials, the first contact with Deaf visitors, etc.)
- In the Netherlands still too few Deaf trainers who are skilled to give training, they do miss a train-the-trainers.

³ www.doofvriendelijkgroningen.nl



Funded by the
European Union



2.4 Country: ROMANIA

Partner: **ANPEDA - National Association of Teachers for Hearing Impaired Students "Virgil Florea"**

National context and legislation

In order to use the best practices regarding the accessibility of art and culture for Deaf people in Romania, people from some partner institutions of our association were contacted, with whom we collaborated in the past for the implementation of projects (ANIALMG Association and Moldova Iasi Museum Complex).

ANIALMG Association is an association in which several deaf people work and which has collaborated with various museums in the country (Bucharest and Cluj) for the implementation of projects regarding the accessibility of museum information for deaf people. They provided us with the necessary information to complete the data for some examples of good practice.

The Moldova Iasi Museum Complex is a public institution with which our association collaborated for the implementation of the Erasmus + MADE project - MUSEUM AND ART EDUCATION FOR DEAF EMPOWERMENT. This institution carries out or has carried out a series of projects on the training of museum staff for inclusive practices.

In addition to the information obtained from these partners, other projects have been identified regarding the training of museum staff and the accessibility of information for the Deaf, which have taken place in recent years in Romania, through the Internet.

Overview of best practices

1. National project "ARTmobile - A Museum at Your fingertips!"

The National Art Museum of Romania has implemented the project "ARTmobile - A museum at your fingertips!", which aimed at a new approach to the museum experience, namely the virtual visit of valuable works from the collections of the largest art museum in the country. The project helped to enhance the museum's interaction with the public and to align its services with best practices in the field.

The project was implemented by The National Art Museum of Romania (2016 - 2017) and had as objective, among others, accessibility of works of fine art and information about famous painters for Deaf people through their description in Sign language.

2. National project : "Feel the art in 6 museums"

The project was implemented by ASSOCIATION FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT (2013 - 2014) and had the following results:

- introduction of equipment and services adapted to people with disabilities in partner museums (dedicated, tangible exhibits, catalogs, Braille maps, tactile carpets, electric leases, audio guides, mimetic-gestural interpreters)
- organizing 121 free visits and 119 workshops in partner museums for Deaf and Blind people

- raising awareness and promoting opportunities for access to museums for Deaf and Blind people (specialized NGOs, online, social media, print).

3. Erasmus+ project “CSR and Ethics in Training Centers for benefit of all”

The project was coordinated by Association FORMETHIC from France (2019 - 2021) and has been implemented together with 9 partners:

Ineopole (France), RIA (Bulgaria), Euphoria (Italy), Mobilizing Expertise (Sweden), Epimorphotikis (Greece), Dias Vet (Greece), Mantefiels (Latvia), Complexul Muzeal National “Moldova” Iasi (Romania), Arena I Swiat (Poland).

The project aims to develop a more inclusive educational system. The first objective is to contribute to “sustainable investment, performance and efficiency” by promoting CSR in the European educational field. The second objective is “Extending and developing educators’ competences”.

4. Erasmus+ project “Towards a Multisensory and Inclusive Museum for Individuals with Sensory Disabilities”

The project was coordinated by Muzeul Etnografic al Transilvaniei from Romania (2019-2021), and has been implemented together with 9 partners: Universitatea Babes-Bolyai/ Romania , Nicholas and Dolly Goulandris Foundation Museum of Cycladic Art, Museum of Cycladic Art/ Greece, Panepistimio Thessalias/Greece, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem (ELTE University)/Hungary, S.C. Atomo Ro S.R.L./ Romania, Istanbul Medeniyet University/Turkey, TCDD 1st Regional Directorate/Turkey, Udruzenje Balkanska mreza muzeja / Association Balkan Museum Network/ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hagymányok Háza/ Hungary.

ToMiMEUs project aims to address the following objectives:

- To enable museum staff to become aware and update their knowledge about the barriers in museums for individuals with sensory disabilities and the techniques including new technologies that can enhance their access and inclusion to museums.
- To create learning, cultural and social opportunities for individuals with sensory disabilities as well as within groups with and without disabilities in museums.
- To promote the collaboration between museums and universities.
- To point out the best practices and guidelines for the development of an accessible, multisensory and inclusive museum for visitors with sensory disabilities.

5. Erasmus+ project: “MADE - Museum and arts education for deaf empowerment ”

The project was coordinated by Association DeafStudio from Slovakia (2019 - 2021) and has been implemented together with 7 partners: TUCEP (IT), Pragma Engineering (IT), ANPEDA Virgil Florea (RO), EQUALIZENT (AT), Associazioni Unite dei Sordi della Regione Umbria (IT), Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju "Pitagoras" (PL), Equal Ireland (IE).

The results of the project focused on the following aspects:

- Production of knowledge about the best contents and methodologies to make able young Deaf people learn about art.



Funded by the
European Union



- Developing and implementing a curriculum for young deaf people to become museum guides for deaf audiences
- Improvement of young Deaf people competences about the interpretation and communication of works of art.
- Acquisition of competences by young trainers and elaboration of open educational resources.

Main conclusions

Following the data collected through this study, we conclude that:

- In recent years there have been projects aimed to make information from museums in Romania accessible to atypical visitors, but in most cases, they have been aimed mainly at the idea of inclusion in general, for all categories of people with special needs and not for the Deaf in particular.
- There are also some initiatives aimed at making the museum accessible to the Deaf public either by developing adapted video materials or by training guides among young deaf people.
- We could not identify any project/approach after which the museum operators would be trained in sign language and/or Deaf Culture.
- We believe that training activities within this project are welcome: 87,5% of the respondents in the questionnaire addressed to the museum operators expressed their desire to benefit from training in sign language and Deaf Culture.



Funded by the
European Union



2.5 Country: SLOVAKIA

Partner: **Innosign**

National context and legislation

Intending to use the best practices in the field of accessibility of art and culture for the Deaf in Slovakia, we approached people from some stakeholders with whom we have cooperated in the past in the implementation of various projects.

DeafStudio is a civic association with which our company cooperated to implement the project MADE - MUSEUM AND ART EDUCATION FOR DEAF EMPOWERMENT within the Erasmus+ programme. DeafStudio implements or has implemented a series of Slovak projects aimed at educating museum staff in the field of inclusive practices, cooperation with several museums in the country and the implementing projects related to the accessibility of museum information for the deaf. They provided us with the necessary information to complete the data for some examples of good practice.

Slovak legislation on sign language and the Deaf:

The Act on sign language for deaf persons (*Act No. 149/1995 Coll., Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the Sign Language of Deaf Persons:*

<https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1995-149.>)

The Act on the sign language of the Deaf states that the Slovak Republic respects and supports the linguistic and cultural identity of the Deaf community and values their contribution to the development of society. Section 4 of the Act states the right of Deaf persons to use the Slovak sign language, to education in the Slovak sign language, to information through the Slovak sign language in television broadcasts of public institutions and to access to information of public interest and to information relating to the rights of deaf persons.

Since 2019, the Slovak Sign Language has been included in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovakia, which is a significant step for the Slovak Sign Language. The Slovak Sign Language is not only a means of communication, but mainly a disseminator of Slovak traditions, customs, and values, which are transmitted from generation to generation, making it the most important communication tool and carrier of the cultural heritage of the Deaf.

On 23 September 2020, the important document "Codification of the Slovak Sign Language" was created, which also declares that SPJ is a fully-fledged language, and thanks to this, there has been a further step toward the inclusion of the Deaf, including the improvement of all spheres of life of Deaf citizens⁴.

In addition to the information gathered from these partners, other projects related to the training of museum staff and making information accessible to the Deaf that has been implemented via the Internet in recent years have been identified.

⁴ <https://pristupnost.spj.sk/pristupnost-z-pohladu-legislativy/>

Overview of best practices

1. National Project: Tripolitana Regional Museum: Rakociho palace Presov

DeafStudio with Tripolitana implemented barrier-free access for the deaf in their museums from 2017.

The project intends to support the cultural life of the Deaf community by making museums in the Prešov region accessible through QR technology. This process of removing the communication barrier will also positively impact the majority hearing society, who will be drawn into the life of the Deaf community in a non-violent way by seeing Deaf visitors and by seeing QR codes at the exhibits. Society will be sensitized through the culture, and a mutual pathway will be opened to get to know each other better. Exhibition Slovak videos in sign language are available on YouTube; scan the QR code to open a video of Slovak sign language.

The video guide will not only be Deaf to the guide's explanation in the museum but also the statements that relate to the individual exposures. In this way, the museum opens up to a broader range of visitors. Deaf, just the QR code with the tablet and the video guide will start. They can also use their phones and other devices equipped with a code reader.

2. National Project: Training of deaf guides for deaf visitors to cultural institutions

DeafStudio implemented this project in 2021. The project aims to support the cultural and social life in the Deaf community also towards the people directly involved in the project, whereby the trained Deaf guides will gain new competencies and learn many necessary skills to work in the cultural and creative field and also to support the Deaf community through the next phase of debarring of such institutions.

This training will focus on this for aspiring Deaf Guides who want to and don't know where to start, so we have trained them from the beginning using the quality methodology of the training materials from MADE, which was created by the DeafStudio with international partners with Erasmus+ funding in 2018-2020.

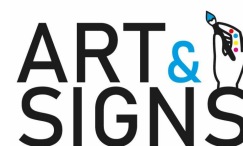
They did train more people to be Deaf guides, so we have created two professional teams: Western (Bratislava) and Eastern (Prešov) Slovakia. These expert teams have the task of training people interested in becoming a Deaf guides. It is essential to do training because young Deaf people have gained significant knowledge in the world of cultural and social events, negotiation, work management, team building, the processing of professional texts, the analysis of the context of historical facts, supervision, in intensive communication with the cultural institution because of the fidelity of the translation, etc. It is necessary to continue such training in the future. It will be important to exchange knowledge and discuss what problems have been encountered in the development of processes in museums.

3. National Project: How to become a barrier-free institution?

DeafStudio, with several partners, implemented this project in 2021. The starting point for the methodology of making institutions accessible to the Deaf were questions derived from a nationwide survey, which involved a total of 59 cultural institutions (mainly various museums and galleries) and showed that institutions do not know how to remove barriers for the Deaf.



Funded by the
European Union



The project aims to support the removal of barriers to the accessibility of cultural and artistic experiences for the Deaf by creating a guideline. This professional material will contain our know-how of debarrierising cultural institutions for the Deaf. The material will draw on our experience from several institutions that have already been debarrierised and from several transnational projects in which we have been involved in this topic.

The material draws on our experience and the experience of colleagues abroad who have been involved in the debarrierisation of various institutions for a long time. They created a website which will be easily accessible to the employees of the cultural institution. They have compiled the guidelines with nine topics, and it is available to the public.

This project provides us with significant materials for a step towards breaking down barriers for cultural institutions, finally having at least the first guidelines for Deaf people by those who have assembled hearing and Deaf experts working together. This will make it much easier for us to explain the cultural institute to the staff, and the guidelines will make it quicker to work on breaking down barriers.

4. International: Kids in Museums

How can your museum better welcome families and young people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing? At Kids in Museums, we believe museums are for everyone. But many families and young people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing might find visiting museums difficult. Heritage organizations can sign up to our Kids in Museums Manifesto, which sets out simple guidelines for making museums easy to reach for all ages. It's also beneficial for museums and heritage organizations to consider families, support all aspects of their visit and develop their staff's professional practice.

They offer a wide range of online resources and training days on a variety of themes to support your work with children, young people, and families. They also offer bespoke consultancy for individual organizations or regional groups. Kids in Museums celebrates family-friendly museums and gives young and family visitors a voice through our annual Family Friendly Museum Award. They empower children and young people to take an active role in museums through Digital Takeover Day and on Takeover Day when children and young people take over museum jobs normally reserved for adults.

Main conclusions

As a result, it is clear that the few practices implemented in Slovakia are not specifically aimed at audiences of participants at museum operators and most specifically at Deaf people, and overall, the country has not yet made progress in training museum operators in this area.

A significant benefit of the Curriculum from the second and third practices, according to the projects, is that it is easy to use and learn, then it allows Deaf people to learn how to become Deaf guides on museum tours, and museum operators can be inspired by how to make museums more accessible for Deaf people. A fourth practice offers a variety of resources for education at the museum for the Deaf, including one for hearing people who can learn about museum accessibility as well as how to welcome Deaf visitors.

2.6 Country: SPAIN

Partner: **PREDIF**

National context and legislation

In Spain, among people with hearing disabilities there is a great diversity of situations that depend on the degree of hearing loss, the time of appearance and the location of the injury in the ear. There are also other variables (personal, family, educational, social...) that intervene in the development of a person with deafness. In Spain, according to the EDAD survey, there are 1,064,600 people with hearing disabilities older than 6 years. Of these, 13,300 communicate in sign language.

Spanish and Catalan sign languages, which allow approximately 5% of deaf people to communicate, have recently been recognized in Spain by Law 27/2007, of October 23, which recognizes Spanish sign languages and regulate the means of oral communication support for deaf, hearing-impaired and deaf-blind people.

Regarding the culture accessibility to Deaf people, the vast majority of Spanish museums have technical resources for deaf people such as accessible multimedia guides in LSE, with subtitles and FM frequency headphones for hearing aids, virtual magnetic induction loops and organize workshops, itineraries or activities to bring art closer to everyone. world, regardless of their abilities.

In order to conduct the desk research, we contacted some stakeholders for the identification of the best practices, moreover we researched in the websites of organizations that work on accessibility and increase museum workers' awareness, regarding the Deaf Culture.

Overview of best practices

1. Online course: Introduction to sign language in museums

It is an online course promoted by Instituto Europeo de Turismo Inclusivo. The course is divided in 5 modules, moreover at the end there is the test part which allows the workers to make exercises and test what they learned.

Through this course museum workers will get started in sign language communication, the workers can learn to make everyday expressions in the museum in sign language.

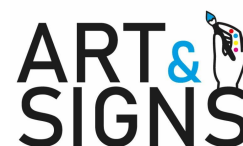
The 5 activities modules are the following:

- Module 0. Introduction to sign language in museums
- Module 1. Preliminary questions in communication with deaf people
- Module 2. Greetings, farewells and signs of courtesy in sign language
- Module 3. Sign language applied to museums and interpretation centers
- Module 4. Dactilológic alphabet

The principal aim is to teach sign language communication to museum workers so that they can communicate with deaf people and improve their experience when they visit the museum.



Funded by the
European Union



2. Manual on Accessibility in Museums for Professionals and Institutions

Museums and accessibility, ETPM, is a manual on Accessibility in Museums led by the Andalusian Association of Museologists and Museographers (AMMA). This work is based on the effort and dedication of professionals from different organizations who have shared experiences, reflections and proposals within the framework of accessibility and museums, with focus on accessibility for people with hearing problems and deaf visitors.

Depending on the area of work, the content of the training manual and the learning outcomes include:

- a) Awareness and knowledge of the meaning of human diversity, inclusion, universal design and accessibility in the context with the client, including the appropriate language;
- b) The identification of the beneficiaries of accessible tourism (in our case, Museum), and how to improve the way staff must interact with people with disabilities, specifically: how to communicate with people with hearing problems and deaf visitors.

The aim is to bring heritage closer to society, presenting a study in which experts analyze and evaluate good practices in serving the public with special needs, the design of specialized training programs for technicians and the presentation of accessibility implementation measures, especially for people with hearing problems and deaf visitors.

3. Visualfy Places – Culture Secure and Accessible for Deaf and hard of Hearing

Visualfy Places is a system that, through some devices installed at the building, is able to recognize relevant sounds -such as a fire alarm, a whistle from the shift system, door closing or services or personalized notifications- and translate them into visual and sensory alerts on any device, both common to the space -intelligent lighting that we install in the building- and personal -mobile, smartwatch or smartband

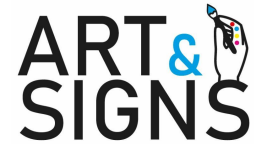
This system helps as well the workers of the museums to guarantee the accessibility in the museum installations. The main objective of the solution is to improve the safety and personal autonomy of deaf people and people with hearing loss, through an AI system that collects sound information from the environment and sends it visually and/or sensory to personal devices users such as smartphones, smartwatches or smart bands and a series of lights that we place at strategic points in the building, connect to our system and change color depending on each alert.

At the same time, we also remove communication barriers between museum workers and deaf people.

These barriers are removed in the three-way communication through magnetic loops for users of hearing aids and cochlear implants, real-time speech-to-text transcription to help people who cannot use technical aids to eliminate the new barriers caused by the use of masks that make lip reading impossible and adaptations in Sign Language for static content.



Funded by the
European Union



Main conclusions

The best practices indicated are good examples of accessibility and have been very useful for museum workers and as well for deaf people.

They address effective solutions for institutions and visitors, responding to the principles of social responsibility and fostering the appearance of new approaches and uses for the museums.

However, they should provide as well more elements about deaf culture to bring also these understanding to guarantee not only the accessibility but as well a real integration of deaf people. Moreover, they should be continuously updated following society changes and the evolution of technologies in order to continue to be really useful.



Funded by the
European Union



3. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

From the context analysis carried out in the six partner countries through a survey among the project two target groups (Deaf community and museum operators) and based on the existing good practices, it is evident that the topic of accessibility to culture, history and art is strongly felt by the Deaf community and representatives of museum institutions.

The first group, on the one hand, has always been interested in actively participating in social life and in the cultural events that are offered by the institutions in charge of culture, both public and private; on the other hand, the representatives of museum institutions, in recent years, have tried to take appropriate measures to break down communication barriers in order to make cultural content accessible to a community that is increasingly active and interested in enjoying it.

The results of the best practices show that, although there are specific measures to facilitate communication with Deaf people, mainly based on technological aids making the content accessible, there are still few projects or initiatives that provide training for museum operators to enable them to interact with Deaf visitors. More generally, it is about initiatives that enable greater usability of cultural content through the use of sign language video-guides, employment of Deaf museum guides or technological aids more suitable, nonetheless, for people with hearing impairments rather than Deaf people who use their natural language to communicate, namely sign language.

Gap identified by museum operators

The results of the best practice and questionnaires administered to museum workers clearly show that there is a significant skills gap on how to make museum services and cultural content accessible to Deaf visitors.

According to the survey, museum workers recognise the importance of knowing, even at a basic level, the sign language in their profession as well as knowing how to use sector-specific signs related to art, culture and history in order to convey information to Deaf visitors. Basically, the majority of the respondents expressed the need to acquire basic skills on how to welcome Deaf visitors to the museum, including:

- knowledge of the national sign language at a basic level
- elements of the culture of the Deaf community to understand the behaviour, needs, values and habits
- communication skills to be adopted with a Deaf visitor.

Actually, the main challenges experienced by the interviewed operators when encountering a Deaf visitor concerned the communication area: not being able to interact personally with the Deaf, they had to resort to sign language interpreters (which are not always available at the moment) or to alternative forms of communication that do not take into account the culture of the Deaf community, in linguistic and behavioural terms (writing information on a piece of

paper, showing a written text through a mobile device, using a mimic form and lip-reading to be understood). On the other hand, even though the Deaf visitor is able to broadly understand what is said to him/her, there is a real difficulty for the museum operator to understand what the Deaf person wants to say, creating discomfort for both sides.

In conclusion, 88,7% of the participants expressed the desire to receive specific training on sign language and Deaf culture as well as on the use of available tools to make museum content and services accessible. Although a part of the respondents expressed a preference for face-to-face training (30%) and a part for fully online training (24%), the remaining respondents would prefer a blended mode: the latter seems to be a good compromise to deliver the pilot training course to be developed by the ART&SIGNS partners that would allow participants to get familiar with multimedia tools as well.

Gap identified by the Deaf community

From the results of best practice and the survey administered to Deaf people, it is clear that the Deaf community would like to participate more actively in social events such as visiting a museum, but the lack of adequate facilities prevents them from doing so. They agree, in fact, that most museums lack the adequate staff to communicate with Deaf people or the assistive technology tools to help them acquire artistic, historical and cultural knowledge. Furthermore, it emerged clearly that the Deaf community has realized that many activities offered by museums are incompatible with their needs and, therefore, they cannot be as actively involved as the majority of people.

Similarly to the museum workers, the Deaf people participating in the survey pointed out the lack of preparation and skills of museum staff in order to make the contents and services more accessible.

It is well known that hard of hearing and Deaf people express and claim their right to enjoy art and museum experiences on an equal footing with all citizens. Nevertheless, they continue to find barriers, not physical, but communicative with people working in cultural spaces. Actually, in order to enrich the cultural background and knowledge, it is not enough to look at an artwork, but it is necessary to receive specific information about the meaning and history of that piece, information usually conveyed through verbal language or a written text. Although Deaf people are used to adapting to these means of communication, their main need remains to receive information in their natural language that allows them to fully enjoy art.

Thus, the majority of the respondents, representing the Deaf community who use sign language, highlighted the great lack of knowledge of museum workers, not only about sign language, but also of the meaning of deafness, the difficulties that Deaf people face, and the effective communication means and techniques suitable for Deaf people. Although not all operators can be trained on these issues, the Deaf people would wish that in every museum there are at least some operators who can welcome Deaf visitors, provide them with information about the services and contents of the museum using their natural language

(even in a basic form), and then leave them to a Deaf museum guide or a sign language interpreter, if necessary.

In conclusion, from the context analysis carried out in the six partner countries through several methodologies involving the two main target groups the ART&SIGNS project is aimed at, it clearly and definitively emerges that there is a gap in the skills of museum operators representing a barrier to communication and accessibility to culture, history and art for Deaf people.

Basically, the skills and knowledge that the Deaf community requires from museum workers concern:

- basic knowledge of national sign language
- notions of deafness and communication difficulties faced by Deaf people
- elements of Deaf Culture
- communicative approaches to be used with Deaf people
- specific vocabulary in the field of art, history and culture
- knowing how to welcome a Deaf visitor for the first time
- available tools to make museum contents and services accessible

It is advisable to include the basics of International Signs to enable the museum operator to provide welcome and basic information to Deaf foreigners visiting their museum.

Furthermore, as requested by many Deaf participants, the direct involvement of Deaf people during the development of the Curriculum, the discovery of sectoral signs of art, culture and history and the delivery of training is recommended. The involvement of Deaf trainers and experts will ensure greater social and labour market inclusion of Deaf people, and, at the same time, will be a much more formative experience for the beneficiaries of the training, the museum workers, who will have the opportunity to put knowledge and skills into practice already during the pilot training.