

# Sign language interpreting on TV and media: sharing best practices

## *A report of the first European seminar*

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### **Abstract**

**This paper provides an insight into current topics on sign language interpreting on TV and media. They topics encompass best practices and challenges collected before and during the first European seminar on signed language interpreting on TV and media, which took place in the fall of 2019. The seminar was attended by nearly ninety sign language interpreters and experts from Europe and elsewhere. It is apparent that interpreters on TV are faced with multiple and complex demands. These demands are outlined along with research findings on audience preferences, such as how the interpreter is displayed on the screen, preparation methods by interpreters, and specific interpreting strategies for interpreting on camera. Overall, the main outcome of the seminar was that there is an urgent need for a specialized training for sign language interpreters working on TV and media. In 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic, which resulted in a spike of sign language interpreters on TV and media shortly after the seminar only made that need more pressing.**

Keywords: TV interpreting, training, sign language interpreter

During the last decade, sign language interpreting has become increasingly visible in the media, especially interpreting the news on TV. The raised awareness of providing accessible information appears one of the reasons for the increased visibility (McKee, 2014). For example, during global events, infamously the interpreter during Nelson Mandela's memorial service in 2013<sup>1</sup>, and recently in 2020 the sign language interpreters at press conferences during the Coronavirus pandemic around the world. The increased visibility is also driven by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons of Disability (UNCRPD)<sup>2</sup>, which requires countries to provide professional sign language interpreting services during public events. Having the national news interpreted in sign language also seems how some governments indicate that accessible information is available.

The provision of sign language interpreters on TV and media is commendable but in itself does not ensure a high-quality service that gives optimal access for sign language users. There is no formal training available for sign language interpreters in media nor is there much information on the optimal provision of sign language interpreted media. The interpreters appear to learn by doing, some are mentored by senior colleagues, and others have attended a short course on the topic.

Until today only a few studies have investigated sign language interpreting on TV and media (Dal Fovo, 2016; De Meulder & Heyerick, 2013; Del Vecchio & Franchi, 2013; Gendrot & Gebert, 2016; Kellett Bidoli, 2009, 2010; Kellett Bidoli & Sala, 2011; Kurz & Mikulasek, 2004; McKee, 2014; Neves, 2007; Stone, 2009; Wehrmeyer, 2014; Xiao et al., 2015; Xiao & Li, 2013). In this article we will not provide a summary of these aforementioned studies but readers are encouraged to use these as a resource. The emphasis of this article is to present the outcomes of the first European seminar, held in the fall of 2019, to explore the demands and requirements essential to providing quality sign language interpreting services on TV and media.

## **1. Setting the Scene**

Sign language interpreting on TV is in many countries a relatively recent development (Roberson & Shaw, 2018). Sign language interpreting on TV started in some countries in the middle of the nineteen eighties (Neves, 2007). The ubiquity of TV and newer visual media, such as web streaming, have increased the sign language interpreting supply all over the world, especially in Western countries. Over the years, multiple methods, provisions, and technologies have proliferated as broadcasters and interpreters gained experience with the new media. In each country, and sometimes even within these countries, the broadcasters use different methods of broadcasting and displaying the sign language interpreter on screen. For example, some public TV stations do not want the sign language interpreter displayed on the main TV channel therefore, only stream it via an internet channel. Others broadcast the interpretation on an alternative TV channel that is run simultaneously with the main channel. Meanwhile, there are limited guidelines on how to provide access in national sign languages for public information and news broadcasts.

## **2. Profile of interpreters on TV and media**

The 2019 seminar provided a first platform for experts to come together and share best practices. The seminar was organized following a special request from the Vilnius County Sign Language Interpreters Center in Lithuania. They had received funding from the European Commission for a training for interpreters on TV and asked Maya de Wit Sign Language Interpreting Consultancy to organize a seminar on the topic. The seminar took place during two days in November 2019 in London, United Kingdom, in collaboration with Red Bee Media, who provide the daily live sign language interpretation of the BBC news.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://limpingchicken.com/2013/12/13/10-lessons-fake-terp/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html>

At the seminar, eighty-four participants representing twenty different countries (annex 1) came together to discuss the current state, development, and challenges concerning sign language interpreting in TV and media. The participants were a mix of deaf<sup>3</sup> and hearing sign language interpreters and translators, trainers, managers, and policy makers. Broadcast and media professionals, interpreters and scholars presented insights and experiences as well as research findings touching on a variety of pressing topics (annex 2). Topics ranged from the available and developing technologies within the field of TV and media interpreting, the logistics of this complex setting, the intricacies of translation and preparation strategies of interpreters working in this genre, audience preference and understanding of TV and media interpreted content, TV and media interpreting team composition, and an overview of established TV and media interpreting agencies. The seminar was highly interactive, allowing all participants to engage via a special app in the discussions following each presentation, with an overall aim towards collecting best practices in sign language interpreting on TV and media.

### **3. Method**

As the seminar was the first known event to address specifically sign language interpreting on TV and media, the aim was to collect participants' experiences and share as much best practices as possible. Prior to the seminar all registered participants were invited to fill out an online survey (annex 3). The survey consisted of questions regarding their profile, their interpreting experiences on TV and media, and the challenges and best practices in their country with interpreting within this setting. The survey results were presented at the seminar and used to frame the discussions and presentations. In this article we discuss selected outcomes of the survey and report on the highlights of the presentations and the topics discussed at the seminar. Finally, the article will provide a discussion and recommendations on how to further the development of sign language interpreting on TV and in the media.

## **4. Survey**

### **4.1. Background profiles**

Prior to the seminar the participants filled out the online survey on their personal background and experience and were invited to submit the best practices and challenges on sign language interpreting on TV and media in their country. The survey was open to all registered participants for six weeks till the beginning of November 2019. Out of eighty-four seminar participants, seventy-two people provided input, representing seventeen mostly European nationalities: Belgium, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Survey respondents were not required to answer all survey questions, therefore, some respondents left questions blank resulting in the difference in total number of respondents per stated figure presented in this article.

The respondents were mostly sign language interpreters, with the exception of trainers, researchers, students, and managers that participated as well. Thirty percent of the respondents are native signers, who acquired sign language before the age of twelve. Of the seventy-two respondents, sixty-three (sixteen deaf and forty-seven hearing) have working experience as a sign language interpreter and/or translator on TV and/or media. The survey did not aggregate the data to identify if interpreters were nationally qualified or accredited as an interpreter.

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<sup>3</sup> In this article lowercase 'deaf' is used to refer to any deaf person regardless of community or cultural affinity.

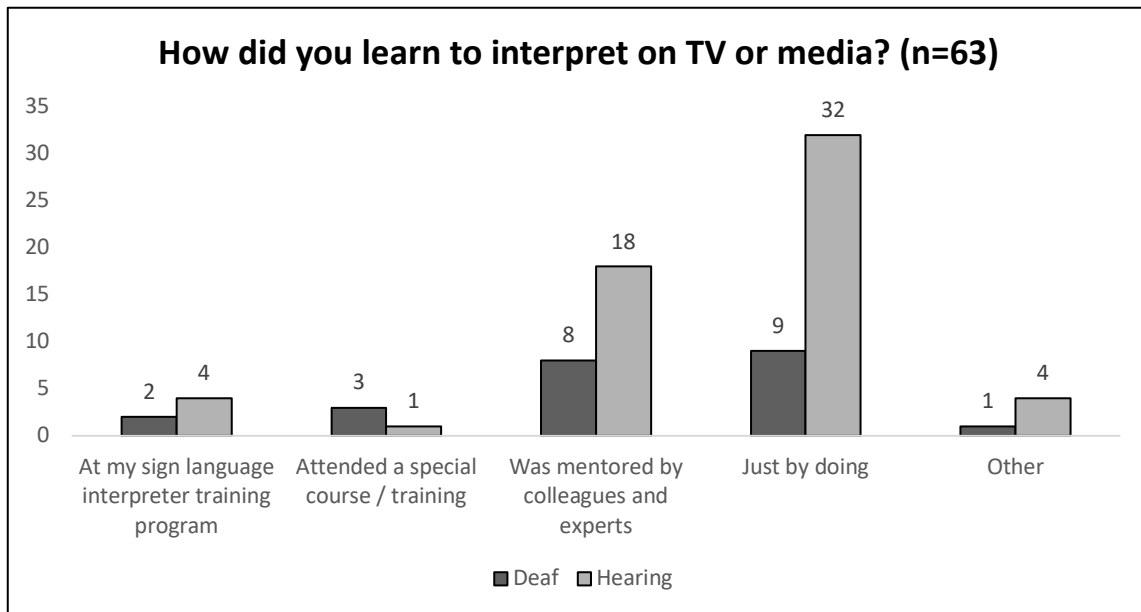


Figure 1

Figure 1 indicates how the interpreters (deaf and hearing) learned to interpret on TV and media. The majority learned by just doing, while some also mentioned that they had used a combination of one or more ways to acquire the skills. Other methods (n=5) included doing an official internship and observing the work of experienced interpreters.

The respondents represent a variety of years of experience on interpreting on TV and media (figure 2). Regardless of their experience interpreting on TV or media, only a few reported to have attended a special course on interpreting on TV, and the majority learned just by doing or by being mentored.

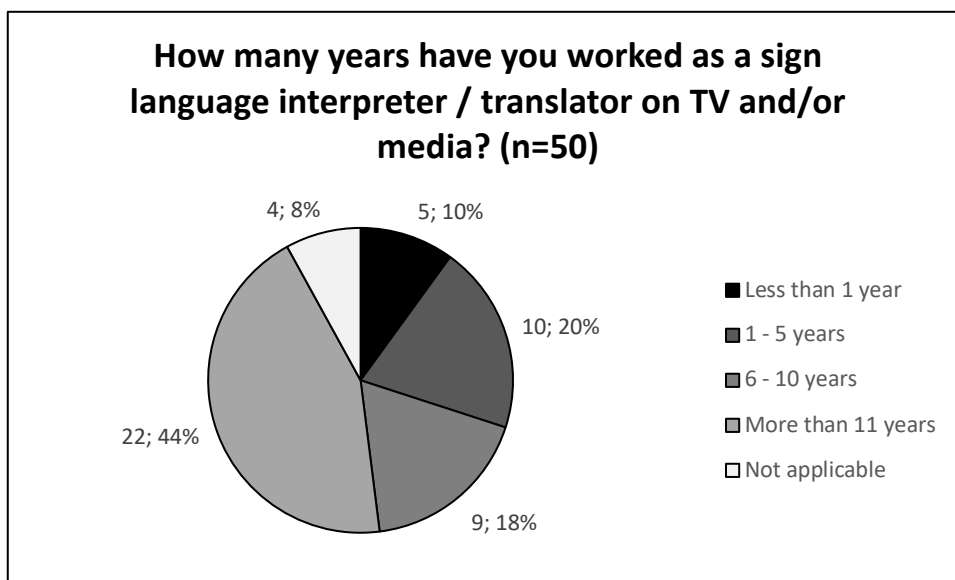


Figure 2

All respondents work in different areas of interpreting and translating on TV and media (figure 3). The two largest areas of work are interpreting TV programs and interpreting the news. In the 'Other' category, respondents give examples such as presenting the sign language news, parliamentary speeches, signed stories for children, interpreting interviews and court cases.

### What type of sign language interpreting and translating do you do in regard to TV & Media? (n=61)

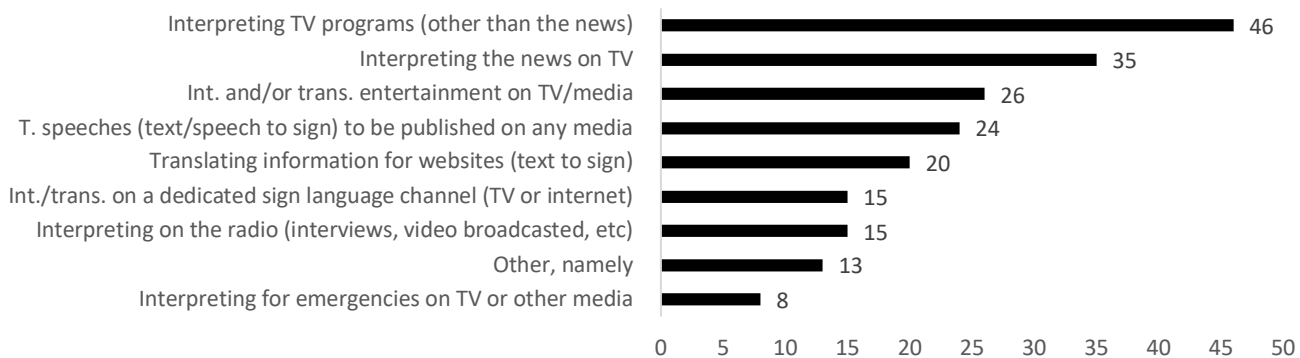


Figure 3

For the two largest areas of work interpreting TV programs and interpreting the daily news, figures 4 and 5 show how often an individual interpreter typically interprets. This frequency may vary according to the season or topic. The majority of respondents interpret TV programs a few times a month (figure 4) and the news a few times a week (figure 5) indicating that, overall, the news is more frequently interpreted than other programs on TV.

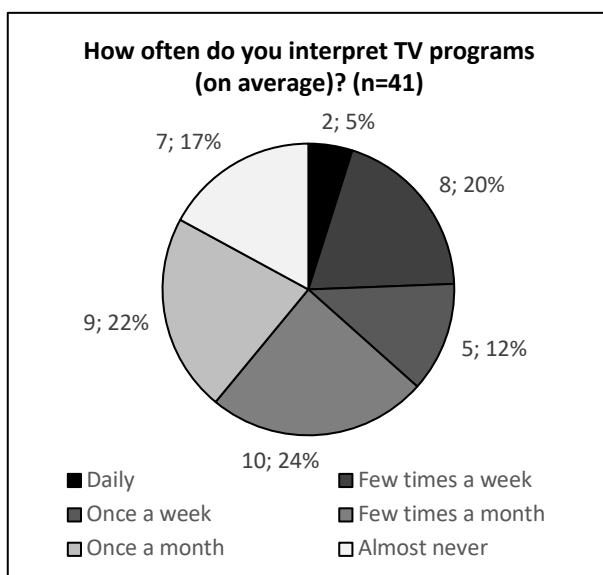


Figure 4

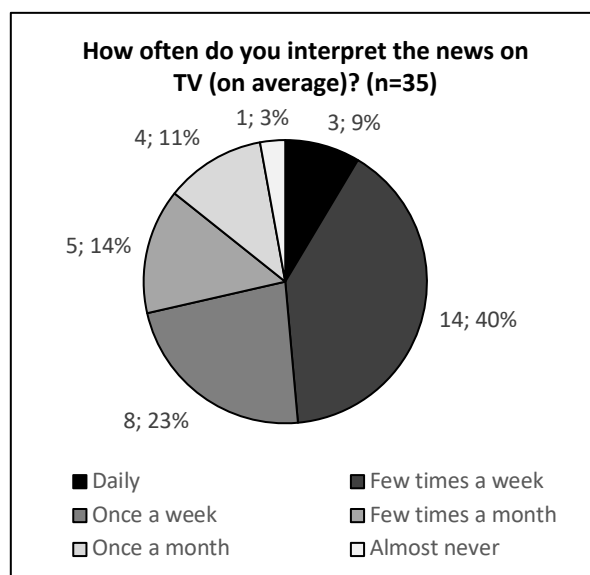


Figure 5

## 4.2. Best Practices

Following the survey questions pertaining to the individual interpreter's background, the respondents were asked in an open question to share best practices from their country in regard to interpreting on TV and media. The respondents' results show that in nearly all countries, the way the daily news is interpreted on public channels is considered to be a best practice. For example, in France the daily news is interpreted on TV. The same is true for the Netherlands but only in the morning, when four live broadcasts on the public channel between 7.00 and 9.00 hours are interpreted. In addition, sign language interpretation is provided once a day during a special TV news show for youths between nine and twelve years old. In Belgium the news for children is interpreted specifically by deaf interpreters. However, exactly when, how, and how often the news is interpreted varies greatly across different countries according to survey results.

Next to the daily news, most countries have only few other programs interpreted into sign language. In Cyprus, for example, almost all TV channels have a ten-minute interpretation of the daily news, but hardly any interpretation of other programs or series. In some countries, such as Cyprus and Germany, important electoral events, such as live debates, are interpreted. In addition, the debates in the German parliament at federal level and sometimes at state level are live interpreted and streamed. Following protests of deaf citizens, the government in the Netherlands decided in the fall of 2019 that from then on national emergency announcements will be interpreted live on TV. Portugal streamed the sign language interpretation of the Eurovision Song Contest via the internet, similar to what is done in the United States of America (USA) for the Superbowl halftime show. The respondents from the USA report that in general there is little regard for sign language interpreting on TV and media in their country. However, they are beginning to see more frequent sign language interpreting for emergency broadcasts, especially with deaf interpreters.

In Costa Rica by law, all commercial TV channels must have at least one time slot of news with sign language interpretation. In addition, the public university TV channel must have sign language interpretation in all internal programs. In Norway, as one of the very few countries, there is a public sign language channel which provides live interpretation daily, including children's programs, news and programs of public interest. In total, approximately twenty-three hours are interpreted live each week. These interpreted programs can be watched on demand on NRK TV<sup>4</sup>.

Another elaborate best practice example comes from Finland during the Independence Day reception at the Presidential Palace. This event, known informally as *Linmanjuhlat* ("the Castle Ball"), is broadcast on national television and is a perennial favorite of the viewing public. The interpretation is booked by Yle, a public service broadcasting company. The interpreting team (five members: four working and one on standby) work in cooperation with Yle's deaf journalists (they assist with the language). The interpreters receive a lot of material to prepare such as the music and background information including make-up and wardrobe consultation for the event. Two interpreters at a time interpret a dialogue live and are each displayed in one inset with a co-worker supporting them during their interpretation. The show lasts approximately four hours.

The respondents from Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom all stress the successful collaboration and support from their colleagues, not only from the interpreters in the team but also from the staff at the TV station. Many Swiss Sign Language interpreters, for instance, say they are content with the provisions that are put in place for them to deliver optimal work. There are fixed interpreting teams per program which actively discuss and exchange expertise. The interpreters have a dedicated room and desk to prepare and they can seek clarifications on jargon directly with the news team. They also work together with deaf experts on new signs and receive all related documents on time to prepare. In addition, they receive payment for their preparation time.

The Dutch Sign Center (Gebarencentrum)<sup>5</sup>, which is responsible for the provision and supervision of sign language interpreters on the public national news in the Netherlands, puts a lot of effort into mentoring. The center mentors the interpreters and supervises the interpreter who is interpreting the news that day. In addition, the center organizes regular meetings for all the sign language interpreters who interpret the news to discuss

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<sup>4</sup> <https://tv.nrk.no/programmer/tegnpraak>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gebarencentrum.nl/>

challenges and new terminology. They also have a dedicated deaf viewers' panel which provides the interpreters with feedback on their interpretation.

### 4.3. Challenges

The next open survey question asked respondents about the challenges they encounter in regard to sign language interpreting on TV. Almost universally mentioned are the following: the lack of guidelines or standards on TV interpreting, the non-existence of training for interpreters to learn how to interpret on TV and media, the unwillingness of the TV stations to hire deaf interpreters, the incorrect display of the interpreters on the screen, and the lack of interpreted programs. Another issue is the type of programs that are interpreted. Typically, the news or political programs are interpreted while the vast majority of entertainment programs are not. In Cyprus and Finland, for example, deaf persons have requested a greater variety of programs to be interpreted but to no avail. In the Netherlands, in spite of repeated requests by deaf viewers, the news is interpreted only in the morning and not during prime time in the evening.

The lack of a formal and comprehensive training of sign language interpreters on TV and media is reported by the respondents to be one of the most pressing issues. The interpreters state that they mainly learn on the job and by being mentored by colleagues. Many respondents from various countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, United Kingdom) mention the (increased) need for deaf interpreters on TV. Deaf interpreters are seldom recruited and there is no training available for them to become proficient interpreters in this setting.

The display of the interpreter on the screen is another challenge reported by the respondents. There is an enormous variety across countries, from an in-vision interpreter (through the use of a chroma key screen, figure 6) to an interpreter in a box embedded on one of the sides of the screen (figure 7). Each seminar participant was asked to submit a sample clip of their on-screen interpretation. This resulted in a ten-minute compilation which showed the various sizes, colors, and position of the interpreters on screen.<sup>6</sup> As can be seen in the video compilation, the image of the interpreter is often so small that the interpretation is by and large incomprehensible to the deaf viewer.



Figure 6: Interpreter displayed via a chromakey screen



Figure 7: Interpreter displayed in a separate box

Challenges are not only present at the national level, individually, the interpreters struggle as well. Respondents mention that simultaneous live interpreting in television settings is one of the most demanding and stressful forms of translation. The challenges are related to the nature of the setting. The communication is unidirectional, and the interpreter receives no visual feedback from the audience. In most other settings the sign language interpreter and deaf person can see each other, and interaction can confirm understanding. The TV programs that the respondents say they interpret typically have dense content and fast speakers, especially in debates where there is rapid turn taking between speakers. Speed is one of the most frequently

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<sup>6</sup> <https://vimeo.com/373984719>

mentioned challenges among respondents. Other issues flagged included: speeches read from text, distracting noises in the studio, little time to prepare, no team member to provide support, acquiring all the appropriate signs, and staying informed of the latest news. All of these elements have an impact on the interpreters' cognitive capacity and thus on their interpreting performance. Several participants mention the pressure and vulnerability they experience as they are live on TV. Excerpts of their interpretation on TV are at times discussed on social media, by the deaf and interpreting communities or the general public as a whole. These discussions taking place in the public eye can be confrontational and can have significant impact on an interpreters' performance, confidence, and at times their reputation and career.

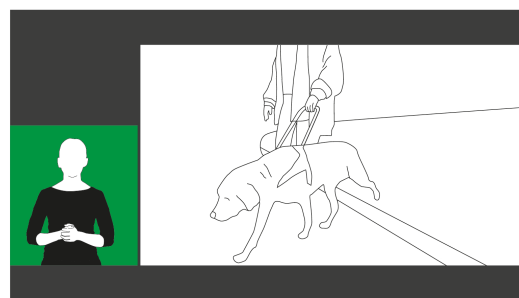
This concludes a selection of the online survey results which was conducted prior to the seminar. The results give an impression of the participants' profiles, and their individual best practices and challenges in their countries in regard to sign language interpreting on TV and the media. These main results were presented at the start of the seminar to frame the presentations and the discussions at the seminar.

## **5. The seminar: identifying main issues**

During the seminar, several experts from various countries were invited to present on topics related to sign language interpreting on TV and media which were followed by discussions with the participants. The topics that came forward during these discussions, as well as from the survey, provide an insight into the most prominent and current issues in sign language interpreting on TV and media: deaf viewer's comprehension, size, and position of the interpreter on screen, use of new technologies, interpreter's tactics and preparation, diversity in the team, and the training of interpreters on TV, specifically deaf interpreters. In this section, details of these presented issues at the seminar are described.

One of the seminar discussions revolved around how deaf viewer's comprehension of the interpretation on TV is essential. Sign language interpretation on TV and media can be challenging for deaf audience members. Watching TV and viewing the interpretation simultaneously, is more demanding for a deaf viewer. As is evident, audience members that can hear use both the auditory and the visual input. However, for persons who are deaf the TV content visually competes with the sign language interpretation. As a consequence, the deaf viewer sometimes must choose between focusing on what is visually presented on the screen or on the interpretation.

To ensure legibility and readability the size and the placement of the interpreter on the TV screen is important. Marta Bosch-Baliarda presented her preliminary doctoral research results in which she conducted a reception study with thirty-two deaf persons using Catalan Sign Language. In her study she checked for the size (twenty versus twenty-five percent of the screen width) and the horizontal position of the interpreter (on the left or right side of the screen). She found that the larger screen display of the interpreter twenty-five percent is better received. In addition, it matters on which side of the screen the box with the interpreter is placed (Bosch-Baliarda et al., 2020). Her research results show that the optimal placement is on the left side of the screen, seen from the viewer's perspective (figure 8).



*Figure 8: Optimal interpreter placement*

There are also new technological solutions, such as TeckenPOP<sup>7</sup>, which allows the deaf viewer to select the placement of the interpreter on the screen. Matilda Bergman Bergkrantz from Sweden presented TeckenPOP, a web broadcasting technology that allows the viewer to choose from a menu their personal optimal parameters. Some of the choices include interpreter placement, size, and transparency on the screen.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://teckenpop.com/>



TV broadcasting generally provides extensive visual information. To enhance viewers' comprehension, sign language interpreters should reflect on how to provide an interpretation which optimally uses the visual information presented. Christopher Stone explored how interpreters can make better use of the visible resources, i.e. the strategies pointing, telling, showing, and watching. Stone gave concrete examples suggesting that interpreters could make more use of the visible source by for example pointing to the screen when it is clear what the news reader or reporter is referring to.

Robert Skinner discussed how the deaf audience best comprehends names and places during live broadcasts. Factors such as ambiguity, keeping up with the speaker, and the wide reach of audience members that comes with this particular setting can greatly affect interpreting decisions such as fingerspelling. Broadcast news, for example, is considered to be a neutral entity, thus questions were posed as to the impartiality and bias of sign choices. Christopher Stone mentioned also the explicit decisions made by Red Bee Media, the company that provides the interpretation of the BBC news in the UK, to fingerspell for example the name of American presidents Trump and Obama. The notion being that the sign name for Trump could be considered negative as it pertains to an 'undesirable' physical feature, while the sign name for Obama could be considered partisan as it resembles the political party's logo. This discussion sparked debate among the seminar participants over etymological knowledge versus connotation, including the assumption of the audiences' ability to understand fingerspelling at all.

The interpreter on TV works alone or in teams of two or more, which has a direct impact on the possibility of taking turns interpreting. At Red Bee Media, for instance, the interpreters never switch while interpreting the daily news, and, depending on the length of the program, can end up interpreting alone for one hour. In other countries the interpreters tend to take turns every fifteen minutes. Some countries have a second interpreter present to provide support and continuously stays in the support role. The seminar discussions showed that there was no common agreement among the participants on the acceptable length an interpreter could work alone.

As was also apparent from the responses to the survey, there is concern about the interpreter's exposure to a mass audience and the inherent social media scrutinizing regarding the interpreter's performance. Questions were raised by participants on how the interpreter can be protected from these discussions on social media. An example was provided from France where on Facebook the question was posed whether or not deaf viewers could understand a specific interpreter. This social media inquiry resulted in nearly two hundred comments and exposing the interpreter to more than four thousand views. During the seminar discussion it was suggested that these questions should take place elsewhere, such as live meetings, instead of on social media platforms.

To ensure high quality service and to alleviate part of the stress of interpreting on TV, the majority of the respondents emphasize the importance of preparation. Aleksandra Kalata-Zawlocka presented the preliminary results of her European study on how sign language interpreters prepare for interpreting on TV. Her seventy-five respondents from twenty-eight European countries reported that their three most important preparatory activities are: getting familiar with the content and context of the program, consulting with deaf or hearing colleagues, and vocabulary work (terminology in both languages). The most frequently mentioned on-assignment activity she found is the interpreter doing background research on the broadcast's topics.

As terminology is a large part of the interpreters' work, in Norway the Language Council established a sign terminology group. If there is no existing sign available in Norwegian Sign Language for a specific term the sign terminology group proposes a new sign. The group consists of deaf professionals with different expertise. Once proposed, it is up to the Deaf community in Norway to accept or reject the proposed sign. Paal Richard Peterson and his colleagues from Norway stressed in their presentation that interpreting on TV comes with a great responsibility. The interpreter should be a fluent signer and highly knowledgeable of the sign variations. The sign choices that the sign language interpreter makes has a direct influence on the deaf viewers and their use and perception of Norwegian Sign Language. Thus, the interpreters should be cautious in the sign choices they make.

Overall, the seminar participants stressed the need for access to information on TV in their national sign language. They also emphasized that to achieve proper interpretation in the national sign language, deaf interpreters should be an integral part of the interpreting team. Having a mixed team of deaf and hearing interpreters would ensure sign language variations and avoid the team to develop an 'interpreter's sign language.'

Working with deaf interpreters on TV and media means that there should be viable methods in place allowing them to work successfully in this setting. A deaf interpreter could for example interpret from a live text<sup>8</sup> or through a relay provided by another interpreter. Lesley McGilp presented how Red Bee Media uses a specially developed digital tool called InterSub<sup>9</sup>. A captioner listens to the audio feed of the broadcast and produces captions by re-speaking. The captions are then reformatted through InterSub and then displayed on the teleprompter in the studio. The deaf interpreter uses these captions to produce the sign language interpretation which is then recorded and broadcast.

Lesley McGilp stated that it is important to note that many countries offer a bachelor's degree for people who can hear to become sign language interpreters. This, however, is not nearly the case for persons who are deaf and who want to train as sign language interpreters. Therefore, strengthening the education for deaf interpreters should be considered.

Lastly, with new technologies come also opportunities for interpreting teams. A team in Sweden, for example, report that they have incorporated technology that allows for an interpreter team to 'do it all themselves'. The team uniquely functions in the roles of interpreting, editing, and recording all thanks to their existing technology.

## **6. Discussion**

The participants' survey results, the seminar's presentations and discussions confirmed that practices across Europe are diverse and shared resources of best practices are scarce. The issues broadly concern two categories. First there are issues related to the deaf viewers preferences and comprehension, including the related technicalities, of sign language interpreting on TV. Second, there are individual interpreter requirements that need specific attention.

The technical issues revolve mostly around the display of the interpreter on the screen. As reported, there are differences on how sign language interpreters are displayed on screen across countries, and sometimes even within a country. It is crucial that the display fits the requirements, otherwise it defeats the purpose of providing sign language interpretation. The preliminary findings and ongoing research by Marta Bosch-Baliarda will be crucial to ensure providing the preferred display in the future. Other innovative tools that enhance the self-control by the deaf viewer may add greatly to user satisfaction. Overall, little is known so far about the audience's comprehension and preferences of the sign language interpretation on TV, making it vital to conduct further research in this area. As has been shown in practice, simply displaying the sign language interpreter during the broadcast is insufficient.

Interpreters consider sign language interpreting on TV a very demanding task. The interpreters encounter many elements which are considered to be challenging for interpreters in general. Firstly, interpreting on TV requires training and practice. In Europe there is currently no formal training in place and the majority of the interpreters learn interpreting on TV just by doing or while being mentored by a colleague. Moreover, deaf interpreters have little opportunity to receive any form of training. Secondly, the topics on TV are often highly specialized with inherent specialized terminology. Providing a quality interpretation requires the interpreter to stay informed of the latest developments and to study materials prior to interpreting. These materials are not always available or provided, nor is the time required to prepare always remunerated. Thirdly, when interpreting the daily news, one of the most frequently interpreted programs, the news anchor often reads out a written script. Interpreting a read-out statement is more challenging than a natural spoken text. In addition, speakers tend to speak faster when reading a text which is an additional challenge for the interpreter. Fourthly, the interpreter on TV is interpreting for a large invisible audience which adds some unique challenges. The interpreter does not receive any confirmation of understanding by the audience and has to assume the interpretation is understood. In addition, the interpreter's work is subject to being scrutinized by viewers, laymen and non-laymen as they are in

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<sup>8</sup> Also referred to as closed captioning or live subtitling

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.redbeemedia.com/news/red-bee-media-enables-sign-language-translation-for-live-broadcasts-with-deaf-translators/>

the public eye leaving them exposed to recording, mass sharing, and public discussions across social media platforms. In summary, these multiple demands on the individual interpreter are extensive and should not be taken lightly.

In early 2020, just four months after the seminar, the Coronavirus outbreak called for urgent action regarding these guidelines. Worldwide numerous national and international press conferences and news broadcasts were held to inform the public of the latest information regarding the pandemic. Several European countries provided a sign language interpreter straightaway at these televised events. As the virus spread, the call from national organizations for the deaf (and individual deaf persons) for live sign language interpreting services on TV became more pressing. To support this call and provide guidelines and best practice examples, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) rushed to publish guidelines on providing access to public health information in national sign languages during the Coronavirus pandemic<sup>10</sup>. In addition, the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) compiled an overview of all the countries that during the crisis were providing accessible information in their national sign language on the news and press conferences<sup>11</sup>. At the same time the EUD called on the European Institutions via an official statement to provide access in international sign on all their communications regarding the Coronavirus pandemic<sup>12</sup>.

The WFD and WASLI guidelines are a first step. Developing standards that can be sustained outside of an urgent need means involving the educational and academic world for further research, courses, and training in TV and media interpreting. As was clearly shown at the seminar prior to the exasperated needs as a result of a global health crisis, all countries share an urgent need for a training of sign language interpreters working on TV and media. It is imperative that this training be developed in close cooperation with the users of the service, the deaf audience. A careful analysis of the current situation and the experience of service users should serve as a basis to guide the further development of the field. Overall, the strengthening of educational opportunities for deaf interpreters in general and in the field of TV and media interpreting should be leading.

Furthermore, with technological advances and the expansion of web-based accessibility come further pressing questions such as who holds copyrights of streamed content. The participants of the seminar agreed that this is not currently at the forefront of the field in their countries, however, there is interest in exploring such topics.

## **7. Limitations**

This article reports on the discussions and presentations of the first European seminar on sign language interpreting on TV and media. It does not pretend to provide a full representation of the actual situation across Europe especially given the rapid development of TV and media interpreting brought upon by the Coronavirus outbreak following the seminar. This article is limited to the experiences and expertise as presented by the experts at the seminar and their discussions with the participants. There was no selection of seminar participants. Seminar registration was on a first come, first serve basis. Although there were participants from twenty countries, including two non-European countries, the participants are a limited representation of how sign language interpreters work across Europe. For various speculative reasons, some countries were not represented, and other countries had more representation than others.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://wfdeaf.org/news/resources/18-march-2020-guidelines-on-providing-access-to-public-health-info-in-nat-sign-language-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://eud.eu/news/covid-19/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.eud.eu/index.php?CID=2098>

## 8. Conclusion

The seminar was the first European event addressing sign language interpreting on TV and media. Although a diverse range of relevant topics was discussed, many issues remain unanswered, most importantly how deaf viewers optimally access TV programs through sign language interpreting. Thus, standards need to be developed based on users' experiences which will provide guidelines, among other things, on the optimal display of the interpreter on screen.

Creating international spaces for collaboration such as this seminar is a first step in developing comprehensive and systematic best practices for interpreters on TV and media. Especially as there is no dedicated training, it provides an opportunity to exchange existing methods, technology, and ideas across different countries. Ideally all interpreters working on TV should be formally trained for interpreting on TV and media, and not just through peer mentoring or learning by doing as is the case now. Therefore, as a next step, developing the training and designing the curriculum for sign language interpreters on TV and media is highly recommended.

## Acknowledgments

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## **Annex 1**

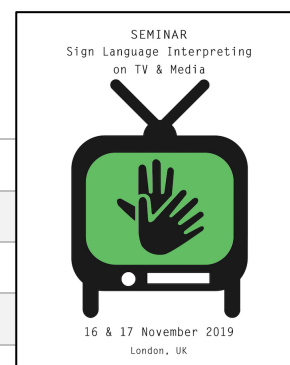
### ***Represented countries by individual participants at the 2019 seminar in London, UK***

Austria	Lithuania
Belgium	Netherlands
Costa Rica	Norway
Cyprus	Poland
Finland	Portugal
France	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Greece	Switzerland
Italy	United Kingdom
Latvia	United States

## Annex 2 – Seminar program

### Saturday 16 November 2019

<b>8.30</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>9.30</b>	Welcome & housekeeping
<b>9.45</b>	<b>Setting the scene - <i>Maya de Wit</i></b>
<b>10.00</b>	<b>Historical developments of interpreting for the news - <i>Lesley McGilp</i></b>
<b>10.45</b>	Coffee break & networking
<b>11.15</b>	<b>Sign Language interpreting on TV – challenges and reflections on solutions</b> <i>Paal Richard Peterson</i>
<b>12.15</b>	Getting ready for ‘BarCamp’!
<b>12.30</b>	Lunch
<b>13.30</b>	BarCamp I
<b>14.00</b>	<b>Fingerspelling - strategies and usage - <i>Rob Skinner</i></b>
<b>15.00</b>	Tea break & networking
<b>15.30</b>	<b>Utilising the skills of Deaf interpreters with new technology - <i>Lesley McGilp</i></b>
<b>16.30</b>	End of Day 1



### Sunday 17 November 2019

<b>8.30</b>	<b>Doors open</b>
<b>9.00</b>	Welcome back
<b>9.15</b>	<b>Preparation for interpreting in TV settings - methods and strategies employed by sign language interpreters across Europe - <i>Aleksandra Kalata Zawlocka</i></b>
<b>10.00</b>	<b>Size and position of the sign language interpreter on TV: A reception study</b> <i>Marta Bosch-Baliarda</i>
<b>10.30</b>	Coffee break & networking
<b>11.00</b>	<b>Pointing, showing, telling - <i>Christopher Stone</i></b>
<b>12.00</b>	BarCamp II
<b>12.45</b>	<b>What is next? - <i>Paal Richard Peterson &amp; Maya de Wit</i></b>
<b>13.00</b>	End of the Seminar

## **Annex 3 – Participants’ survey prior to the seminar**

### **1. Profile & wishes participants Seminar 2019**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

At the 'Seminar Sign Language Interpreting on TV & Media' there will be participants from at least 18 countries. That is a lot of expertise and experience in one room!

We would like you to **tap in to all this expertise and ask you to share your wishes and profile** for the seminar by filling out this survey. Your answers are used anonymously. By filling out this survey you agree that the answers are used to share anonymously with other participants during the training and for any future research needs and sharing best practices.

#### **1.2. Your profile**

##### **1.2.1.1 Your country?**

##### **1.2.1.2 Your main occupation:**

Interpreter/Translator

Student

Trainer

Researcher

Manager

Policy maker

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

##### **1.2.1.3 Your audiological status:**

Deaf

Hearing

Hard of hearing

Prefer not to disclose

##### **1.2.1.4 At what age did you acquire your first sign language?**

12 or younger

13 to 18

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

75 or older

Not applicable

##### **1.2.1.5 Do you work, or have you worked, as a sign language interpreter / translator on TV and/or media?\***

Yes

No



**1.2.1.6 How did you learn to interpret on TV or media?**

*Tick all that apply*

- At my sign language interpreter training program
- Attended a special course / training
- Was mentored by colleagues and experts
- Just by doing
- Other, namely: \_\_\_\_\_

**1.3. Your work as an interpreter / translator on TV and media**

**1.3.1.1 How many years have you worked as a sign language interpreter / translator on TV and/or media?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- More than 11 years
- Not applicable

**1.3.1.2 What type of sign language interpreting and translating do you do in regard to TV & Media?\***

*Tick all that apply*

- Interpreting the news on TV
- Interpreting TV programs (other than the news)
- Interpreting for emergencies on TV or other media
- Interpreting on the radio (interviews, video broadcasted, etc)
- Interpreting and/or translating entertainment on TV and/or media (music, poetry, arts, etc.)
- Interpreting / translating on a dedicated sign language channel (TV or internet)
- Translating information for websites (text to sign)
- Translating speeches (text/speech to sign) to be published on any media
- Other, namely: \_\_\_\_\_

**1.3.1.3 How often do you interpret the news on TV (on average)?**

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Almost never

**1.3.1.4 How often do you interpret TV programs (on average)?**

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Almost never

**1.3.1.5 How often do you interpret for emergencies on TV and/or media (on average)?**

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Almost never

**1.3.1.6 How often do you interpret radio programs (on average)?**

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Almost never

**1.3.1.7 How often do you interpret and/or translate entertainment on TV and/or media (music, poetry, arts, etc.), on average?**

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Almost never

**1.3.1.8 How often do you interpret or translate for a dedicated sign language channel (on average)?**

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Almost never

**1.3.1.9 How often do you do translation work to be published on media?**

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Almost never

**1.4. Your views - Sign language interpreting on TV and media in your country**

- 1.4.1 What is arranged well in your country? Share best practice examples
- 1.4.2 What are the challenges in your country? Or where are possibilities for improvement?

**1.5. Your experiences & wishes**

- 1.5.1 What do you enjoy most as a sign language interpreter / translator on TV and media?
- 1.5.2 What are the challenges you have as a sign language interpreter / translator on TV and media?
- 1.5.3 What question(s) or issue(s) would you specifically like to discuss at the seminar?

**1.6. Comments or suggestions?**

- 1.6.1 This is the final page. If you have any other comments or suggestions, please write them here.