

## Projektbeispiel

### Strategische Partnerschaft «Advancing inclusive education through International Sign» (InSign)

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<b>Förderzeitraum</b>	2019–2022
<b>Fördersumme</b>	293.014 Euro
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.uni-siegen.de/zew/insign/">https://www.uni-siegen.de/zew/insign/</a>

Deaf students experience difficulties in communication with non-deaf and deaf students from different nationalities due to the use of different sign languages. The InSign project establishes an innovative infrastructure to raise awareness and promote the use of International Sign as a lingua franca for deaf-deaf and deaf-non-deaf users. This innovative infrastructure will tear down barriers to communication with deaf students and open the door towards internationalisation, education and globalisation for young deaf students. InSign develops the systems and tools required to support an inclusive higher education paradigm by transferring recent research results to society.

#### What made you decide to tackle this topic?

In Europe, there are approximately 50 officially recognized sign languages used by millions of people. Sign languages, however, are different despite sharing common characteristics; similar to oral languages. The lack of a lingua franca shared by all creates communication barriers which causes the exclusion of deaf people from the globalized world and from international networks. These communication barriers are so hard to overcome that the natural reaction of the deaf is to live in their own communities with little contact to what is outside of them. This involuntary isolation is one of the main reasons for high numbers of depression and mental illness in deaf students.

Providing channels for communication and access to digital educational materials in a common sign language that all deaf students can understand will facilitate the access of deaf students to education and promote their inclusion into a globalized society. This common sign language does exist in the form of International Sign (IS), but it is not commonly used, apart from big international congresses and global events like the World Federation of the Deaf and COINES. Raising awareness of and promoting a preliminary contact with IS in academia will make a significant contribution to opening the global world of education and mobility to deaf students. This is the purpose of the InSign project.

### What are the intended results of this project?

There are three main objectives we pursue:

- ▷ An automatic translator from text to gesture in several European languages to International Sign represented by a 3D avatar
- ▷ A certified course on International Sign and a MOOC addressed to the deaf and non-deaf that want to learn a simple sign language
- ▷ A book published in five European languages describing the main aspects of International Sign as a globalized lingua franca

### What do you hope to achieve?

There are a number of things we would like to have achieved at the national, European and international level by the end of the project, particularly concerning different target groups and stakeholders. Concerning the latter, we expect – or certainly hope – that deaf students will have facilitated access to education and will obtain effective ways to communicate with non-deaf and other deaf of different nationalities. In addition, we hope that institutions adopting the InSign outputs will enhance their digital integration at various levels in learning, teaching, training and youth work and also assume a leading role when it comes to the inclusion of deaf citizens, boosting their visibility and public recognition.

At the national levels – keeping in mind that institutions from five European countries participate in the project –, deaf communities should have better access to education and find it easier to be active citizens. At the same time, we hope to raise awareness of the need for inclusive schools as well as the benefits of assistive technology for the deaf community.

Turning to the European and international levels, the European Sign Language Translator should not only be available in classrooms, but should also be utilized for public attendance services. The InSign project will produce, to the best of our knowledge, the first unique system for automatic real time translation between sign languages from different nationalities and for International Sign. This will have an impact on schools, mainly those in higher education and on vocational education schools that are focusing on the internationalisation of education as a key factor to improve students' competences in European public institutions like the European Parliament, as well as in multinational institutions like UNESCO, ONU, Amnesty International and Disabled People's International.

By encouraging widespread use of International Sign, this project seeks to establish new best practices in its expansion among educational institutions from the local to international level for the improved inclusion of deaf students into academia and society.



Die InSign-Projektpartner beim Kick-off-Meeting in Siegen  
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