



European Association of Career Guidance



**Communication challenges in inclusive education faced by
deaf and non-deaf people**

National Report – Cyprus

**Authors:
Roula Kyrillou
Diamanto Zisimopoulou
Gregoris Makrides**

January, 2021

Abstract

This report offers an overview and sets the scene in Cyprus about the state of living of the deaf, their education, their way of communication with the other deaf or non deaf people, the use of the national sign language, their social and cultural constraints and the prospects for learning and using the international sign language.

The two surveys that follow, one online and the second in the form of personal interview, reveal the characteristics and the advantages and disadvantages of the international sign language, and the way the deaf communicate in the national sign language and the knowledge they have or don't have of the international sign language.



This book is published under a Creative Commons 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0). This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work even for commercial purposes, as long as they credit you and license their creations under identical terms. This license is often compared to “copyleft” free and open source software licenses.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

This report was published as part of the Advancing Inclusive Education Through International Sign (InSign) project Intellectual Output 1, which was funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Statistics	2
1.2. Support System	3
2. Cypriot Sign Language	4
2.1. Characteristics	5
2.2. Policies and Legal Status	6
2.3. Learning.....	7
3. International Sign in Cyprus	9
3.1. Characteristics	9
3.2. Policies and Legal Status	9
3.3. Learning.....	9
4. Communication Challenges between Deaf and Non-deaf in Education	9
4.1. Survey on Communication between the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Cyprus.....	11
4.2. Guided Interviews on International Sign in Cyprus.....	19
5. Discussion and Conclusion	26
References.....	27

List of Figures

Figure 1	Online Survey Question 1
Figure 2	Online Survey Question 2
Figure 3	Online Survey Question 3
Figure 4	Online Survey Question 4
Figure 5	Online Survey Question 5
Figure 6	Online Survey Question 13
Figure 7	Online Survey Question 6
Figure 8	Online Survey Question 12
Figure 9	Online Survey Question 7
Figure 10	Online Survey Question 9
Figure 11	Online Survey Question 10
Figure 12	Online Survey Question 12

List of Tables

Table 1 Deaf Associations/ Schools/ Clubs in Cyprus

List of Abbreviations

CSL	Cypriot Sign Language
SL	Sign Language
IS	International Sign

1. Introduction

Unfortunately, no research has been carried out in Cyprus on the general characteristics of the Cypriot Deaf Community, but in general, it appears that these are not particularly different from those of other Deaf Communities, and it seems that they face similar problems and obstacles, such as those faced by deaf people in other European countries, in particular.

Although, in recent years, the treatment of people with hearing loss has been improved in order to provide opportunities for access to information (mainly through The News Bulletins in Sign Language), these are not enough, since the time offered is little. In addition, some TV shows and series use subtitles, however, no other help for access to entertainment is offered.

Another huge problem the Deaf Community in Cyprus is facing is the increased unemployment rates. This is because most employers know nothing about the abilities of deaf people, and also there is an outdated perception that Deaf people are only good for manual work.

An important role, in the achievement of the above objectives, is also played by the Organizations or Associations for the Deaf (under the umbrella of the Federation for the Deaf in Cyprus and the Cyprus Sports Federation for the Deaf), which through their trade union actions, but also of their general activities (organization of entertainment, sports, etc. of events, seminars / updates, excursions, festivals, etc.), have as general objectives the promotion of the culture of the Community of the Deaf, whose main characteristic is the sign language. Also they claim for the rights of deaf people for equal access and participation in the society.

However, although some steps have been taken towards the acceptance and integration of the Deaf people, in various aspects of the Cyprus Society, the road is very long for the deaf community to feel satisfied with the provisions so far. There is still a lot to be done.

1.1. Statistics

There is no recent official survey with statistic results, where we can find the population of Deaf people in Cyprus. Based on empirical calculations, it is estimated that the number of Deaf Sign Language users is around 700-750 people, while there is a large percentage of people with hearing loss (deaf non-sign language users); the deaf people who have lost their hearing in old age and do not use Sign Language.

As for the Deaf Teachers, who are appointed either in the School for the Deaf or in the General public or private Schools, they are not obliged to know the Cypriot Sign Language (CSL) and those of them who have knowledge of it, it is because they were personally interested to learn it. Some of them, because of the frequent contact with the Deaf students or people, learned the basics so as to communicate with them. Others had to learn how to communicate with their Deaf students because the students were using very well the sign language. As far as the High school Teachers are concerned, they are appointed in the School for the Deaf, based on the Regulations that apply to all the schools of the Secondary Education, where the knowledge of the CSL is not a precondition. That is why, during the lessons, there is an interpretation of CSL.

Finally, there is no information whether any teachers know the International Sign Language.

There is no clear evidence about the number of deaf in the total population but it is estimated that the deaf people in Cyprus are between 750 and 1000 individuals. There are no numbers of deaf students by level and year of studies. As for the number of children 1-18 years of age there are 250 deaf, either two sided or one side, from which 130 are students. The number of qualified teachers is small and most teachers for the deaf do not necessarily know the CSL because the students can communicate by lip reading or they partly can hear by use of ear aid.

1.2. Support System

Name of Organization	Address	Contact Email	Phone
Cyprus Deaf Cultural Centre, C.D.C.C	9, Ay. Kendea St., 2055 Nicosia, Cyprus		357 22 389997
Cyprus Federation of DEAF/Omospondia Kofon Kyprou	Avenue October 28, 1943 2414 Engomi Nicosia	cyprus.deaf.federation@gmail	357 22464197
Pancyprian Organisation of the Deaf	P.O BOX 1014, Nicosia, Cyprus		357 2 356767
Somatío Kofon Pafou	P.O. BOX 64721 – P.C. 8078 Πάφος		
Cyprus School for the Deaf	Makedonitissis 21, 2417 Engomi	deaf.school@cytanet.com.cy	357 22 305 422/5
Deaf Club of Limassol	METON 2 3080 Limassol		357 25388091
Deaf Club of Larnaca	10 Antiope Lambros Kort Cat 3, 6053 Larnaca		357 24633082
Kentro Neotitos Atomon me Apolia Akoes	43 Avenue October 28, 2414 Engomi Nicosia		
Cyprus Deaf Sports Federation	P.O. Box 27880, 2406 Nicosia		357 22803125

Table 1. Deaf Associations/ Schools/ Clubs in Cyprus

2. Cypriot Sign Language

The Cypriot Sign Language (CSL), based on Legislation Law 66(I)2006, was officially recognised as the language of the Deaf Community in Cyprus. Prior to its recognition, the CSL was still in the stage of dialectological distribution, during which various local linguistic varieties (or dialects) coexisted (Papasprou et al., 2009).

Substantial development and information of the CSL is available after completion of the project: *“The Cypriot Sign Language Recording Project (2007-2010)”*, which was implemented, after the recognition of CSL, by the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture with the collaboration of the Cyprus School for the Deaf and the Cyprus Federation of the Deaf. Its aim is to develop a systematic and complete documentation of CSL lexicon and grammar by means of theoretical and applied linguistics.

This project produced three manuals below:

- I. The Traditional type Grammar, published in October 2009, describes and interprets in a systematic, simple and strictly supervisory way the structure and function of the Cypriot Sign Language:
http://www.moec.gov.cy/eidiki_ekpaidefsi/kypriaki_noimatiki_glossa/documents/paradosiaki_grammatiki.pdf
- II. The Conceptual Dictionary, that was published in April 2010, and where are presented, through pictures and examples, all the words that will be included as meanings, in the Records of the Cypriot Sign Language:
http://www.moec.gov.cy/eidiki_ekpaidefsi/kypriaki_noimatiki_glossa/documents/ennoiologiko_lexiko.pdf
- III. Communication Grammar published in October 2010 and is an educational tool that transmits in a live, communicative way, in the form of theatrical dialogue, the structure and function of the Cypriot Sign Language.
http://www.moec.gov.cy/eidiki_ekpaidefsi/kypriaki_noimatiki_glossa/documents/epikoioniak_grammatiki.pdf

The objectives of the “Cypriot Sign Language Recording project”, as mentioned in the introduction of the above 3 manuals, are the following:

1. To be a reliable reference point for the cultivation of the instrumental (communicative-functional) and symbolic (socio-cultural) value of the Cypriot Sign Language.
2. To provide the background for the reliable and effective education of Deaf students in Cyprus, according to the findings of the bilingual pedagogical approach (via CSL and Greek).
3. To offer a documented educational basis for systemic and methodical teaching and learning of CSL.
4. To offer a stable reference point for the reliable training and education of CSL/ Greek interpreters as well as CSL trainers, to adults.

2.1. Characteristics

Regarding the range of vocabulary of the Cypriot Sign Language, in addition to the meanings / vocabularies, which are included in the Conceptual Dictionary (2.5 thousand), there is a large number of Meanings, which are not included in it and some of them are borrowed from other Sign Languages (mainly Greek, English and American).

Regarding the Grammar of the Cypriot Sign Language, reference is made to it in 2 of the three manuals of the project above.

The textbook *Grammar of the Traditional Type* (Papasprou et al., 2009) presents basic elements and Rules of Grammar of the Cypriot Sign Language, which, in general, do not deviate from those of other Sign Languages (e.g. hand parameters, two-word words, non-manual elements, etymology, production, etc.), which are then utilized to present the Rules of Syntax, mainly in terms of the structure and communication of the sentences.

The textbook *Communication Grammar* (Papasprou et al., 2010), has a student-centered perspective using the form of dialogue in the presentations, thus projecting elements of Grammar, which relate to the correct use of CSL words, to create sentences, to enrich the sentences, the reasons and the ways in which the words of CSL are used and may change.

The main connoisseurs and users of the Cypriot Sign Language are the members of the Community of the Deaf (around 700-750 people - there is no official registration), but also listeners, who are employed in related fields (e. g interpreters, teachers, etc.), but also hearing people who have attended CSL lessons, for their own interest and use.

It is noted that the CSL has borrowed sign meanings from the Greek Sign Language, while now the young Deaf, due to their contact with Deaf people from other countries, adopt and sometimes use, as part of their communication on the CSL, loans, mainly from English and American Sign Language.

2.2. Policies and Legal Status

The specific policies applicable to Cyprus , as voted by Cyprus parliament, are the Recognition of the Cypriot Sign Language (66 (I) 2006) and in 2008 the Law on the Recognition of the Cypriot Language (Amending) Law (36 (I) 2008), that followed.

The above Legislation defines the Cypriot Sign Language, as the:

"visual code of communication, used, either as the only, or as an adjunct to speech, communication between Deaf and other persons, based on the Greek Sign Language, as it has evolved and used in Cyprus, regardless of the native language of these persons, and which code is based on either various finger movements, including finger or hand or head or body movements, or various facial expressions or and in combination with such movements and expressions, which symbolize different, corresponding meanings".

In addition to the above definition, similar definitions for the Deaf are also given by the Federation of the Deaf and the School for the Deaf.

Also, this Legislation announces the Registration of the Cypriot Sign Language and a timetable is set for its completion.

It is also mentioned that the knowledge of the Cypriot Sign Language is recognized as the main qualification for employment, while the Ministry of Education and Culture has the exclusive jurisdiction to issue a Certificate of Knowledge of the Cypriot Sign Language.

Finally, measures and legal frameworks are defined for the implementation of the Law, such as:

- 1) Facilities for the use of CSL Interpreter

- 2) Recruitment in the School of Deaf teachers SL
- 3) Publication of manuals for the Registration of the Cypriot Sign Language and their free provision
- 4) The CSL should be taught optionally in Public Schools

2.3. Learning

The Cypriot Sign Language, even before its Recognition, has been taught mainly during Training Programs (correct translation) by the CY Ministry of Education and Culture, on a national scale and its instructors were mostly Deaf people. These programmes may be attended by either Deaf or non Deaf people, and with the completion of each programme, the participants obtain a Certificate of attendance.

The trainees may attend Training Programs in four Levels, for learning the Cypriot Sign Language. But their completion is not presupposed as a criterion for the practice of the profession of “CSL Interpreter”.

In addition to the Training Programs, CSL learning courses are also offered in Higher Education Institutions (Public and Private), as elective courses for students.

It is noted that in general, in Cyprus, there is not any official curriculum for the teaching of the Cypriot Sign Language. As a result, each instructor teaches based on his own Program, unless there is cooperation and consultation between some instructors, based on a combination of a specific Teaching Program, which they prepare themselves, before the beginning of the academic year (October to May).

The same applies to the teaching of CSL in Higher Education Institutions and Universities in Cyprus, so far by 2 Public and 1 Private. However, some teachers use the Common European Framework of reference for Languages, in order to adapt the levels of learning of the CSL to the standards of the framework and accordingly indicate the levels of knowledge received.

There is one special School for the Deaf in Cyprus where teachers do not necessarily speak the CSL but instructors for the Deaf are used, instead, for interpretation. Inside of the service of Interpretation to the CSL provided, during the courses, the CSL is not taught. The teachers of the

Secondary education, mainly, are not obliged to know the CSL. As a result, the interpreter sometimes plays a dual role (interpreter and trainer of CSL), since the sweeping majority of Deaf students, comes from hearing parents, and they come in contact for the first time with the CSL, within the School.

3. International Sign in Cyprus

International Sign Language is very new in Cyprus. Only very few Deaf know about it (mostly young Deaf) and even less tried to use it. They learned about it through the use of the social media and the internet. Some Deaf people used the IS in video calls with other deaf friends and colleagues, when travelling to other countries for education reasons or entertainment but also when they participated in seminars with the presence of an ISL interpreter.

3.1. Characteristics

The only thing expressed about the International sign language is that many of the signs are borrowed from various national sign languages

3.2. Policies and Legal Status

No policy or legal status in Cyprus as far as the International sign language.

If one considers that the Cypriot Sign Language has only recently been recognized by the Parliament of the country and after a few years the Manuals of its Recording were issued, it is to be expected that no action has been taken by an official body, for the International Sign Language.

3.3. Learning

Following the above point, apart from the knowledge that the Deaf acquire, after their own initiative and due to their own interest, there is no report on actions or anything else related to the training or learning of the International sign language in Cyprus.

4. Communication Challenges between Deaf and Non-deaf in Education

- Communication between people from some nationalities

Based on today's data, at the Cyprus School for the Deaf, communication between those involved (staff, teachers, students) is based on the holistic way of communication (oral – Sign language in combination with other assistive methods, e.g. lip-knowledge, written speech, etc.). This helps Deaf

children, hearing parents, to learn Sign Language, in interaction with their peers, to such an extent that they are considered familiar with its use.

However, it is a fact that in recent decades and following the integration of the majority of children with hearing loss into general schools, based on the Education and Education of Children with Disabilities Act 1999, both children with hearing loss themselves and their teachers, as well as their classmates, face challenges, which they are called upon to overcome, so that the integration of children with hearing loss into the regular classes is "smooth".

This is preceded by several preparations, such as informing pupils and school staff, preparing the classroom, purchasing the necessary equipment, etc.

In addition to the above, it is important to give appropriate instructions and guidance, both to teachers and to hearing students, on how to contact their students or their classmates with hearing loss, in order to bring about the necessary degree of awareness, and understanding, but without, becoming protective or reducing the dignity of their student or classmate, respectively. Some of the ways that will help us to get the desired result, for example, in the case to get the attention of any individual with hearing loss, is by a soft touch or by a meaningful sign. Also, by constant eye contact with him/her and then by speaking naturally and clearly. In addition, during teaching, the teacher makes sure that students speak one at a time and not all together at the same time (Lampropoulou, Hatzikakou & Vlachou, 2003).

In their research, Hadjikakou, Petridou & Stylianou (2008) conclude that the majority of hearing-impaired children, who communicate exclusively with the oral method, have achieved a level of good communication within their school environment (general schools) and that based on the participants' responses, the children had received fairly good communication skills, both with their teachers and with their classmates. In addition, the majority of parents who participated in this survey believe that their children with hearing loss, communicate relatively well or very well with the hearing teachers of their schools. Finally, on the basis of the general findings of this survey, it is found that the majority of students with hearing loss, prefer to socialise with hearing students or both with hearing students and other deaf students. The same view is expressed by some parents of the children with hearing loss, where the majority believe that their children socialise relatively well or very well with hearing children. In combination with this belief, the majority of parents believe that their hearing-impaired children did not experience or have experienced very little difficulties in their social association with hearing children.

- Communication between people from different nationalities

There is no information as far as the above.

4.1. Survey on Communication between the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Cyprus

In June 2020, each partner of the “InSign Project” launched an Online Survey, addressed to University students and teachers (deaf or not), with the aim to collect information about their familiarity with their National Sign Language and the International Sign Language (IS). The Survey Questionnaire was developed by the project partners and was translated in their national language. In Cyprus, EACG prepared a bilingual google form, for the Online Questionnaire (both English and Greek) and shared the link in our monthly Newsletter, our network, social media etc.

In total we received 40 responses, 15 from teachers (62.5 %) and 25 from students (37.5 %). From the people responded 16 (40%) are deaf and 19 (47.5%) responded that they have contact with deaf people. Only 5 (12.5 %) responded that they do not have contact with deaf people. Notably, of the 16 deaf responders the 2 are teachers and 14 are students. Among the 19 non-deaf responders, who have contact with deaf people, 13 are teachers and 5 are students. As for the 5 responders that have no contact with deaf, they are all students.

Below is the analysis of the questions in the survey:

1. Do you have contact with deaf people?/Έχετε επαφή με κωφούς;

40 responses

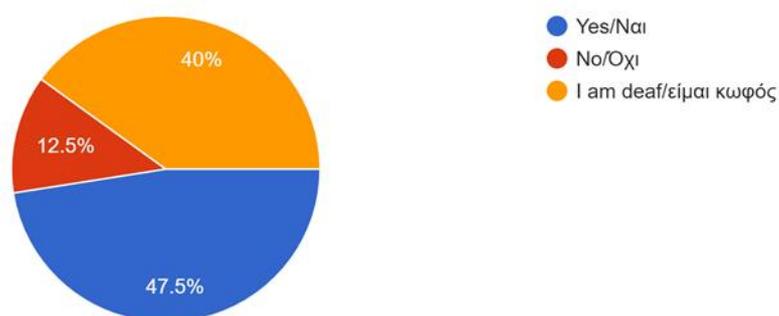


Figure 1. Online Survey Question 1

The significant participation of deaf people in the Online Survey or people that have contact with the deaf, is very useful for our survey, due to the lack of sources and data regarding the deaf community in Cyprus. Our research managed to collect very useful data regarding the **ways/means**

deaf people use to communicate with other deaf and non-deaf people, as well as, **their familiarity with the IS.**

➤ **Communication**

In these sections, we present the result for five questions referring to communication. The level of understanding the national language by deaf people, the way deaf people communicate with other deaf and non-deaf, the ways non-deaf people communicate with deaf colleagues and friends and how the non deaf can support deaf students in their life and academic education process.

2. Do you think deaf people can read fluently and understand written Greek?/Πιστεύετε ότι οι κωφοί μπορούν να διαβάσουν άπταιστα και να κατανοήσουν την γραπτή ελληνική γλώσσα;
40 responses

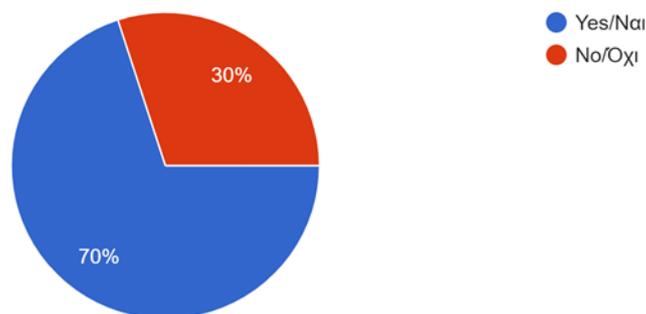


Figure 2. Online Survey Question 2

3. How do deaf people communicate with each other? (Multiple answers are possible)/Πώς οι κωφοί επικοινωνούν μεταξύ τους; (Περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις είναι δυνατές)
40 responses

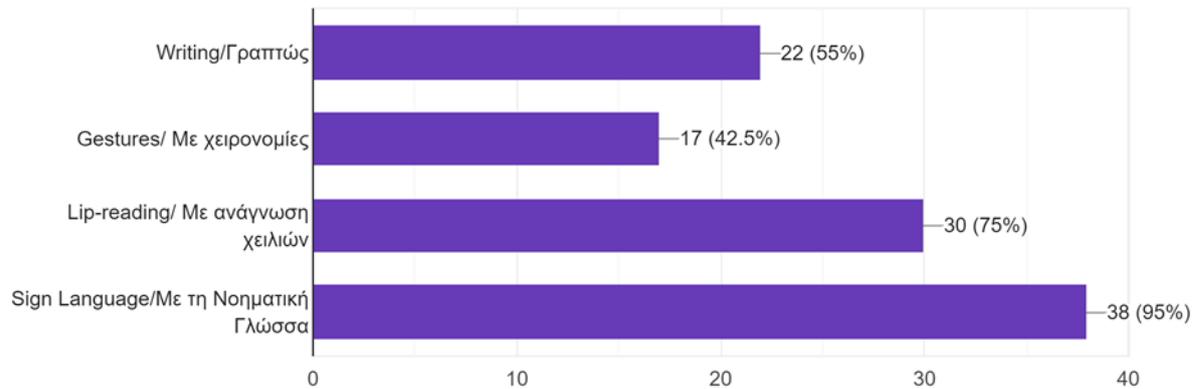


Figure 3. Online Survey Question 3

4. How do deaf people communicate with non-deaf? (Multiple answers are possible)/Πώς οι κωφοί επικοινωνούν με τους μη κωφούς; (Περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις είναι δυνατές)
40 responses

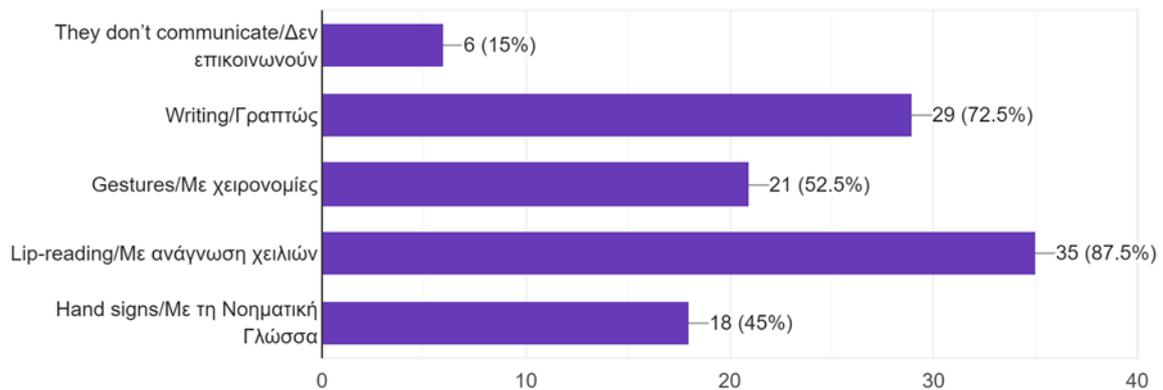


Figure 4. Online Survey Question 4

5. How do you communicate with a deaf colleague/friend?/Πώς επικοινωνείτε με έναν κωφό συνάδελφο/φίλο;

40 responses

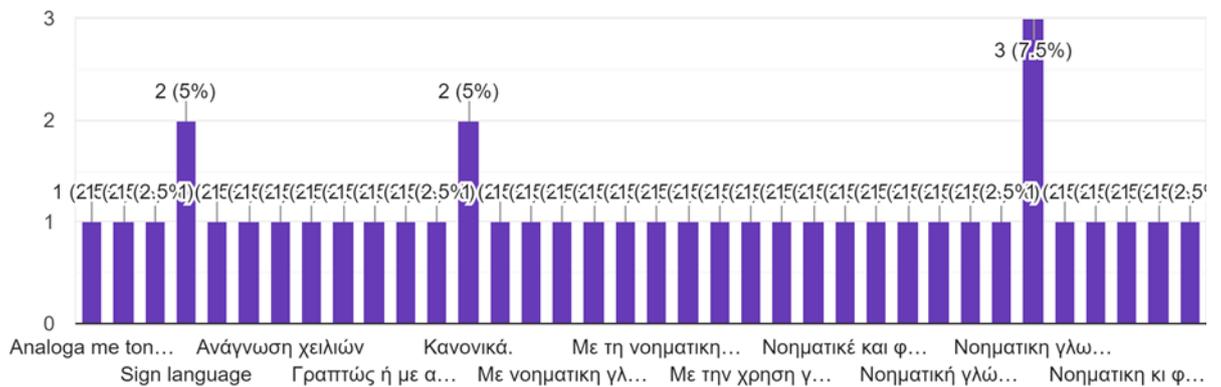


Figure 5. Online Survey Question 5

Based on the tables above, most of the people on the question **“Do you think deaf people can read fluently and understand written Greek?”** 70% replied **“Yes”**. Including 10 out of 16 deaf people who answered the questionnaire.

At the multiple choice the questions **“How do deaf people communicate with each other?”** and **“How do deaf people communicate with non-deaf”** the most popular answer respectively was **“Sign Language”** and **“Lip-reading”**. It’s worth mentioning that Lip-reading was a very popular answer for both questions, considering the possibility for multiple answers, between 75 – 87.5 %. Further down, for the question **“How do deaf people communicate with non-deaf”** only 15% chose the option **“They don’t communicate”**.

In addition, for the open question **“How do you communicate with a deaf colleague”**, the most popular answer was Sign Language, followed by lip-reading, writing and gestures.

13. How can we support deaf students in the classroom and their academic life?/Πώς μπορούμε να υποστηρίξουμε τους κωφούς φοιτητές στην τάξη και την ακαδημαϊκή τους ζωή;

40 responses

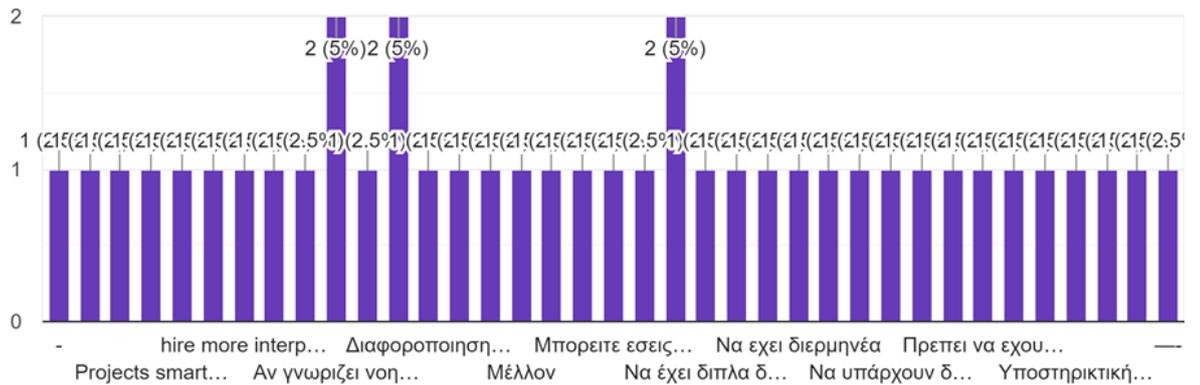


Figure 6. Online Survey Question 13

The communication section is concluded with the open question **“How can we support deaf students in the classroom and their academic life?”** the most popular answer, despite the different wording, was by **assistance of a translator (a person or electronic)** and **proposing that the teacher should have at least some basic knowledge of SL**. Other answers refer to **private way of learning** and **simpler curricula** that would allow the use of SL.

➤ **Knowledge/ Familiarity with Cypriot Sign Language**

Due to the fact that most of the responders are deaf themselves or have contact with deaf on the question **“Do you Know Sign Language?”** a percentage of 77.5% responded **“Yes”**. However, we do not believe that this is true for the population in Cyprus because the majority of the participants in the survey are deaf and people that have contact with the deaf.

6. Do you know Sign Language? /Γνωρίζετε τη Νοηματική Γλώσσα;
40 responses

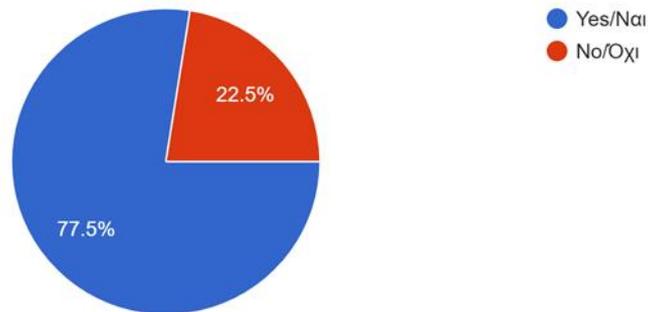


Figure 7. Online Survey Question 6

12. In comparison with the Greek/Cypriot vocabulary, Cypriot Sign Language has: / Σε σύγκριση με το ελληνοκυπριακό λεξιλόγιο, η Κυπριακή Νοηματική Γλώσσα έχει:
40 responses

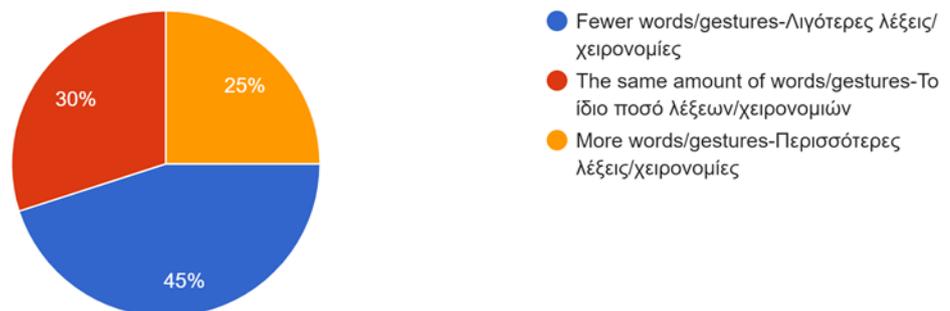


Figure 8. Online Survey Question 12

Further down, most of the responders knew that the SL is not the same in every country, since 92.5 % answered “**Yes**” to the question “**Do you think that Sign Language is different from country to country**”. Regarding the comparison on the question between Cypriot Vocabulary and Cypriot Sign Language, **45%** answered that **CSL has fewer signs than Cyprus Vocabulary**, **30%** answered that **it has the same amount of signs** while **25%** believe that **it has more signs**.

7. Do you think Sign Language is different from country to country?/Πιστεύετε ότι η Νοηματική Γλώσσα διαφέρει από χώρα σε χώρα;

40 responses

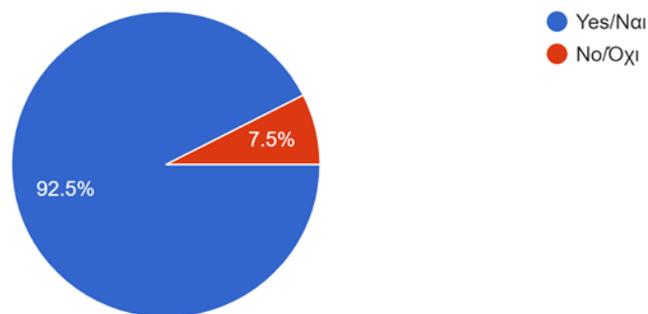


Figure 9. Online Survey Question 7

It is very encouraging that 7 out of 9 people who do not know CSL, are willing to learn the CSL.

➤ Familiarity with International Sign Language

In this section, we examine the familiarity of the local community (deaf and non-deaf), with the International Sign Language, based on the responses of the Online Survey.

9. Are you familiar with the International Sign Language?(International Sign (IS) is a sign language intending to be a lingua franca, much like English... επικοινωνούν χρησιμοποιώντας μια κοινή γλώσσα.)

40 responses

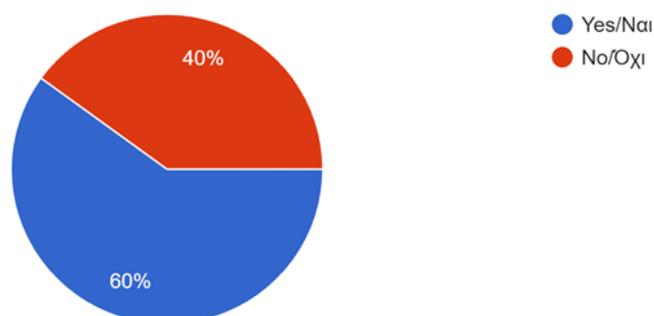


Figure 10. Online Survey Question 9

10. Would you like to learn International Sign?/Θα θέλατε να μάθετε τη Διεθνή Νοηματική;
40 responses

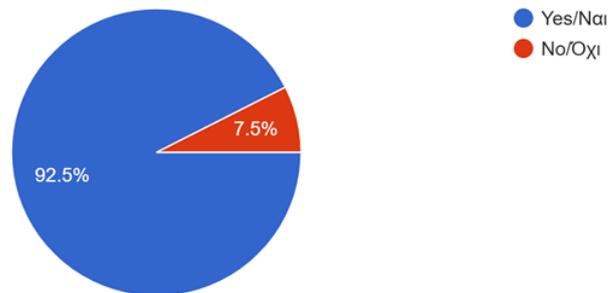


Figure 11. Online Survey Question 10

11. If available, would you be interested in taking an elective course in International Sign?/ Εάν είναι διαθέσιμο, θα σας ενδιέφερε να πάρετε ένα μάθημα επιλογής στη Διεθνή Νοηματική;
40 responses

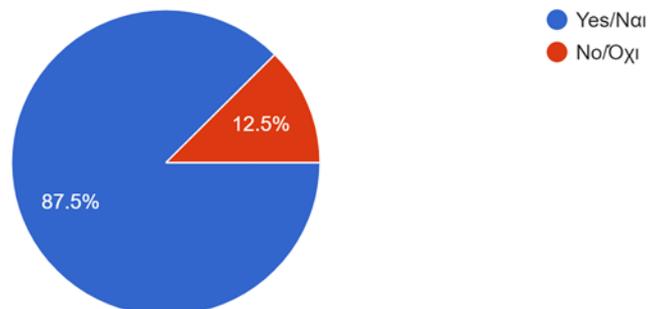


Figure 12. Online Survey Question 12

Based on the replies in the question **“Are you familiar with International Sign”** it is obvious that there is awareness of some level of IS, since 60% replied **“Yes”** but from the question we cannot define if the responders know the IS or they are aware of its existence. However, based on the answers of questions 9 and 10, it is safe to say that there is willingness in learning IS both from people who know about IS as well as from people who do not know about IS.

4.2. Guided Interviews on International Sign in Cyprus

The interview was attended by 10 deaf / blind people, 9 women and 1 man, all aged 20 and over, who agreed to participate in it, after being informed that they were part of a deliberate sampling and after being informed about the purpose of the interview and for the type of questions included in the questionnaire (open type). Two people were 50 years old and over, 1 person 42 years old, 3 people 35 years old, 1 person 30 years old, 2 people 24 years old and 1 person 22 years old. Their choice was not made by chance, since the goal was to include deaf / deaf people with different characteristics in the population. 8 people participated in the interview in person (face to face) while for two people a simultaneous interview was arranged in the Cypriot Sign Language.

All 10 have severe to very severe hearing loss, two of whom have cochlear implants and 4 of whom have hearing aids (which they do not wear on a continuous or daily basis, but use on an optional basis, depending on their environment. Specifically, 2 people have very severe hearing loss and 2 people have severe hearing loss. It is also noted that 2 of the interviewees also come from Deaf parents.

So, 5 of them communicate in Sign Language from the age of about 5 and then, when they started attending the School for the Deaf, 2 of them communicate in Sign Language, from the moment they started to master speech (they come from Deaf parents, Semantics) and the other 3, from the age of 18 onwards, when they sought to associate with other Deaf people and since then, to be trained, mainly through their contacts, in communication through Sign Language.

Three people have worked or are working as Sign Language Teachers, at the level of Training Institutes or in private schools (in Greek in particular), two people come from Deaf parents, when the Cypriot Sign Language is considered their mother tongue, while one person, sought his involvement in the Community of the Deaf, at a relatively old age (about 25 years old), when his knowledge / experience of Sign Language is quite limited and the other participants know Sign Language, due to their association with other Deaf people. Also, 9 of them are active and recognizable members of the Deaf Community, while 1 of them has been active and trade union within the Community for the last 7-8 years.

In terms of their work, 6 people are unemployed, 2 work in the public sector and 2 in the private sector.

Both methods of communication were used to obtain the answers. For 9 people, the interview was conducted through Sign Language (in the presence of a Cypriot Sign Language interpreter), while one person wanted to record their own answers, feeling more secure, through the written word.

In addition, due to the fact that 3 people come from provinces outside Nicosia, their interview was conducted online (one via ZOOM and the other two via Viber).

Below is the analysis of the questions in the interview:

1. Are you aware of International Sign? Do you use/know IS?

From the 10 persons interviewed 4 persons answered YES, 3 persons answered NO and 3 answered that they know some basic signs.

2. How popular is IS in your country?

How popular is IS in the country, in the local deaf community, approx. % of deaf that know IS? Where and how do they learn it?

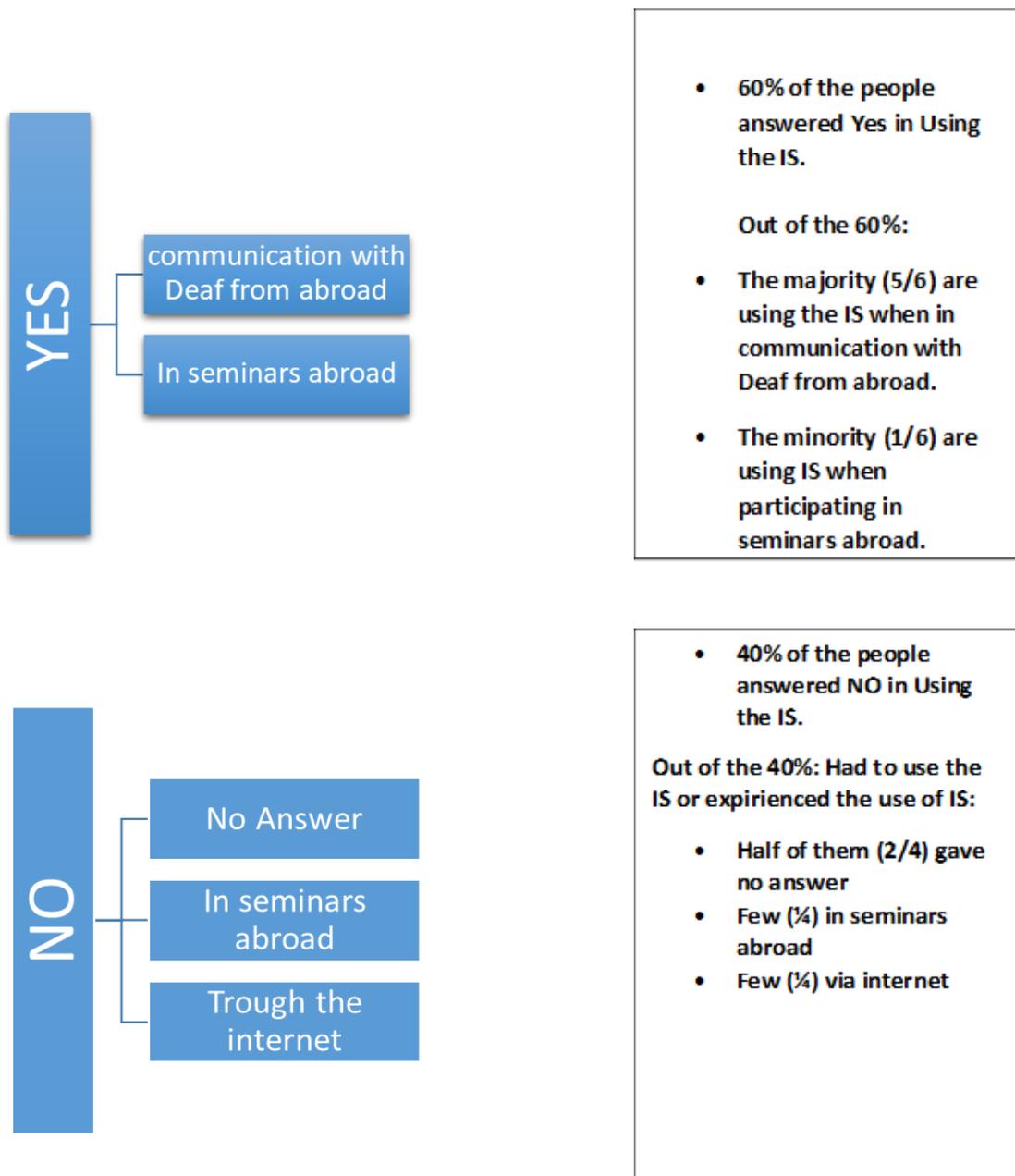
All the interviewees agreed that IS is not popular among the deaf community in Cyprus, especially among the older deaf. In addition, it was mentioned repeatedly, that only a handful of deaf people know IS very well while less than 50% know IS well. The majority of people who know IS, is younger deaf persons who learned IS through travelling and their interaction with deaf from other countries, since there are not any schools or courses provided, where somebody can learn IS in Cyprus.

3. Does the interviewee use the International Sign language?

Do you use it? Where? In which cases/circumstances

From the 10 people interviewed, 6 answered "Yes" and 4 people answered "No". Among those who answered positively the majority (5 people) said that they use IS when communicate with deaf abroad, from other countries, whilst one person said that uses IS mainly when participating in seminars abroad.

In addition to the above, even the 4 persons who answered that they do not use IS, some mentioned that they experiences the IS in seminars abroad or in videos, online.



4. How do you learn International Sign language?

If you want, how/where can you learn it?

In Cyprus, unfortunately there are not any schools or courses offered, where someone can learn IS. Therefore, the majority of people who know IS have learned it empirically though their interaction with deaf from other countries or online.

5. How do you communicate with foreign deaf if you don't know IS?

In these question 3 people gave no answer. Among those who replied the answers are the following with popularity ranking:

1. Lip reading, writing, messaging, etc.
2. By recognising and understanding the Signs
3. With descriptive semantics and pantomime
4. Asking from friends who know IS to assist, as interpreters

6. How easy is it to understand International Sing language for someone skilled in national sign language?

The majority (80%) believe that it is much easier for someone who is skilled in national sign language to understand IS, because they know the basics and an understanding of how SL works. Only one person replied that trying to use both CSL and IS was confusing, therefore he/she stoped trying and another one who prefers to use Lip reading as a more convenient way to communicate.

7. Have you ever seen International Sign language in use?

Have you ever seen it in use? When?

As mentioned above all the interviewees, regardless if they know IS or not, witnessed at least once the use of IS in the occasions mentioned below:

- In communication with other Deaf from abroad, which is the most frequent case (70%)
- Educational Seminars and conferences (20%)
- European and International Organizations for Deaf people/ European parliament (20%)
- On the Internet (30%)
- In parties, festivals, events (30%)

8. How difficult do you find International Sign language compared to your national sign language?

Those who know it find it difficult in comparison to your national Sign Language

Out of the 10 persons interviewed, 4 did not answer this question whereas among the 6 persons who answered this question, there was a variety of viewpoints. In more detail, 3 people believe that IS is easier than CSL, because the signs are simpler and contain mime elements as well. On the contrary, 2 people answered that the CSL is easier in comparison to the IS, because CSL is their mother language and they are more familiar with the meaning

of the signs, the movements of the fingers and hands. Only one person answered that the level of difficulty is the same in both languages.

9. Do you think that it would be an advantage if only International Sign language would exist?

If only IS existed, would it be better for everyone? If everybody knew it, would it be better?

Only 2 persons answered that it would be better if only IS existed. Instead, the majority believes that national sign languages are important for the deaf communities in every country because they are their mother languages and they are the way to distinguish the various cultures and identities. Just like with the spoken languages. However they believe that it would be beneficial to use both CSL and IS because they have different usage and if IS was widely used as lingua franca the communication would be easier, among them.

10. What are the advantages/disadvantages of the International Sign language?

Pros and cons of IS in comparison to other sign languages

The advantages and disadvantages of IS as collected from the interviews are the following:

Advantages/Pros:

- Many signs are the same or similar to regional signs of the Language
- Easier communication within the Deaf of different sign languages, and the Deaf from other Countries
- Accessibility of IS to all as it is a common language
- Has beautiful meanings and is very understandable
- A way of initiating contact with Deaf from abroad

CONS:

- those who do know the IS are a minority
- young Deaf people include elements of the IS in the national Sign Language and it changes its form
- Too much use leads to deterioration of your own Sign language
- Different meanings can be used for the same word leading to confusion
- communication misunderstandings may arise as IS is not widely known

11. Does International Sign language have any legal standing in your country?

The majority (80%) answered that they know about the legislation for the recognition of the CSL as an official language and nothing more. There is no legal standing for IS in the Country. All of them also believe that many things in the law are not implemented and nothing significant has happened.

The remaining 20% know nothing about the subject.

12. Do you know of any variations in the International Sign language?

Do you know if IS is the same all over or if there are local IS dialects

The majority, 80% answered that IS has different dialects because it borrows elements from the local Sign Languages and differs accordingly and also by the person using it . Furthermore, IS often borrows signs from English or American Sign Languages. Also, one person claimed that there are differences, however they are not considered dialects.

13. Do deaf people use IT courseware and digital content frequently?

Do deaf people use IT courseware and digital content frequently

As indicated by the interviews deaf people in Cyprus use technology to a great extend. It is a common belief , among the interviewees, that the younger generation of deaf people use technology more than the older generation. On their daily life deaf people use technology mainly for communication, with other deaf and non deaf, since there are many helpful tools and applications available online. Other uses of technology is online searching in order to be informed and answer questions, for educational and entertainment purposes.

14. Are technological solutions (e.g. cochlear implants) well accepted?

In general the use of technological solutions like cochlear implants are well used and accepted.

70% of the questioned answered YES ☑ out of the 70% of people who answered 'Yes' a proportion (3/7) supported that:

- These solutions are acceptable only if they will actually be helpful
- It depends on each Deaf person's needs
- They have advantages as well as disadvantages (e.g. some private companies have the misconception that people with cochlear implants cannot work)

And 30% answered NO

15. How difficult is it to learn International Sign language to a point where you are able to communicate?

What are the basics of IS? What do you need to know to get A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 level?

How many signs do you need to know?

None of the interviewees had the knowledge to answer the question.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In Cyprus the national sign language is well known by the deaf community, however, a great number of deaf individuals use the lip reading method because the number of teachers for the deaf that know the national sign language are not many and the development of lip reading makes it easier for them. However, in recent years mostly and by use of technology, the sign language is more widely used among the deaf and also the need for an international sign language has been created due to more frequent travelling of the deaf for education, but also for entertainment and for socialising and communicating with deaf friends coming from all over the world.

It is unfortunate that in Cyprus there is not a strong formal education system to help the development of the deaf, however, it is very promising the fact that the Cypriot young deaf individuals have easy access to the means and tools of technology. Furthermore, the educational system and the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus has been developing the methodology and means for the education of the deaf, although there is a lot more to be done in this direction.

On the other hand, the associations for the deaf and the “school for the deaf” in Cyprus provide the necessary additional help and assistance to the families, parents and children of the deaf in order to receive the necessary education and acquire the skills and competences for their employability. Furthermore they provide support to them for socialising and be integrated in the society.

The survey and interviews showed that the deaf in Cyprus are well aware about the education and social environment they live in and that they are open to knowledge and wish to learn and develop more skills to integrate in the society and the world.

The project in general will add value to the development of their communication skills and help them to communicate with other people in the world for their personal and professional wellbeing.

References

- 1) V. Lampropoulou, K. Hatzikakou and G. Vlachou, 2003, Η Ένταξη και η Συμμετοχή των Κωφών/Βαρήκων Μαθητών σε Σχολεία με Ακούοντες Μαθητές, Παιδαγωγικό Τμήμα Δημοτικής Εκπαίδευσης (Π.Τ.Δ.Ε), ΠΑΤΡΑ.
- 2) C. Paraspyrou, N. Galanis, G. Christodoulakos and P.Makris, 2009, Γραμματική Παραδοσιακού Τύπου, Λευκωσία: ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ. ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ.
- 3) C. Paraspyrou, N. Galanis, G. Christodoulakos and P.Makris, 2010a, Εννοιολογικό Λεξικό, Λευκωσία: ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ. ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ.
- 4) C. Paraspyrou, N. Galanis, G. Christodoulakos and P.Makris, 2010b, Επικοινωνιακή Γραμματική, Λευκωσία: ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ. ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ.
- 5) K. Hadjikakou, L. Petridou and C. Stylianiou, 2008, "The academic and social inclusion of oral deaf," *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, vol. 23 , no. 1, pp. 17-29,