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ÖSTERREICHISCHER  
GEHÖRLOSENBUND

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L'Ambasciatore Eugenio d'Auria  
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May 25, 2011

**Re: Italian parliament's proposal to rename LIS (Lingua dei Segni Italiana - Italian Sign Language) as LMG (language of mime and gesture)**

Dear Mr. Ambassador of Italy,

the Austrian Association of the Deaf was founded in 1913 and is the national organization of deaf and hard of hearing people and native sign language user in Austria (Europe). We promote and protect the rights, needs, and concerns of those who are linguistically and culturally Deaf.

We refer to the recent proposal by Italian parliament originally planned to recognize Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS, Italian Sign Language) but now is planning to characterize it as LMG (sub-language of mimes and gestures). We stand in solidarity with the Italian deaf and hard of hearing community and the Ente Nazionale per la protezione e l'assistenza dei Sordi (ENS, the Italian National Association of the Deaf) to support full recognition of the native sign language of Italy, Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS).

We share our strong concern with the Italian deaf and hard of hearing community. The proposal is clearly a serious counter to human rights of deaf and hard of hearing people who use native sign language in Italy and can have unimagined negative effects on the life of the Italian Deaf community in current and future generations.

The proposal would be seen as a negative reaction to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Article 2 mandates all countries to recognize their respective native sign languages on same level as spoken languages and deserving protection and promotion among the deaf and hard of hearing citizens in the country. We call upon the authorities in Italy to endorse the UN Convention, recognizing once the Italy Sign language (LIS) as an important mean of social, education, communication, equality, and participation of deaf and hard of hearing people in all aspects of society.

Such an recognition would be a positive step towards ensuring that the sign language and culture will be respected as a basic human right, and that Deaf people in Italy will have the opportunity to participate on an equal basis in society through social, economic, political and cultural means.

We look forward to your positive response to this important issue on behalf of all the deaf and hard of hearing communities in Italy and in the world.

The Austrian Sign Language (Österreichische Gebärdensprache, ÖGS) was recognized by the Austrian Parliament in 2005. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 the Austrian Constitution was amended to include a new article: § 8 (3) "Austrian Sign Language is recognised as independent language. The laws will determine the details". Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal\\_recognition\\_of\\_sign\\_languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_recognition_of_sign_languages)

Regards,  
Mag.a Helene Jarmer  
President  
Austrian Association of the Deaf



Cc: President of the Ente Nazionale per la protezione e l'assistenza dei Sordi (Italian National Association of the Deaf), Via Gregorio VII n.120, 00165 Rome, Italy. <http://www.ens.it/presidenza@ens.it>