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# **Access to Information in Sign Languages within Television Programmes of European Public Broadcasters**

Doctoral dissertation

## **Summary**

The subject of the dissertation is deaf people who use sign languages as the first and television programs addressed to them interpreted into sign languages and produced in sign languages, used by 51 communities of deaf people living in 45 European countries, within the reach of 50 public broadcasters.

The aims of the dissertation are: a synthetic description of the causes and resulting difficulties in accessing information for functionally deaf information users and ways of overcoming these difficulties; a chronological presentation of the development of the sign language TV offerings of public broadcasters in Europe; and a description of the current state of this phenomenon; expanding the research instrumentation of social communication and media sciences by developing a methodological tool for assessing access to information in sign languages presented in television programs and assessing and comparing access to information in sign languages distributed in television programs presented on public broadcasters in Europe.

The main context of the dissertation is access to information and the related issue of equity of access to information for people with disabilities, which places the subject of the dissertation within the discipline of communication science, in particular its sub-discipline which is book studies and information science.

To achieve the goals indicated earlier, the method of analysis and criticism of the literature, the method of content analysis, as well as the statistical and comparative methods were used.

The main part of the dissertation consists of six chapters, four of which constitute the exploratory and descriptive part.

In Chapter 1, hearing disability is characterized - etiology, degrees, possible times of appearance and location of hearing impairment. The classification of people with hearing

impairments was also presented, and the terminology concerning hearing impairments and the people affected by them was disambiguated.

Chapter 2 discusses the relationship of deaf people with widely understood information. Theoretical and practical issues of access to information were defined and information barriers faced by deaf people were discussed, as well as a number of solutions were proposed to overcome these barriers. International and European documents on access to information and removing information barriers were also reviewed.

Chapter 3 attempts to reconstruct the history of contemporary communities of deaf people in Europe, describes the linguistic essence (directionality, incorporation, classifiers) of sign languages, as well as selected ways of writing them. In addition, the influence of spoken languages on sign languages is described and constitutional references and laws on sign languages in European countries are analysed.

Chapter 4 attempts to describe the chronology of the beginnings of television programs in individual European countries. Then, the obligations of broadcasters in the field of sign language in individual European countries, resulting from the media laws in force in these countries, are characterized. In addition, some issues related to the implementation of television translations into sign language and the creation of programs directly in these languages were presented.

Chapter 5, which is of a methodological nature, contains the subject of research, research questions and research aims, as well as details of the organization and course of research. The main research method (content analysis) is described. A description of the research tool (categorization key) for individual TV programs was also prepared, which distinguished such aspects as the day or days of broadcasting, time of broadcasting, type and genre, age target group, aspect of disability, source of sign language, screen layout and height of the interpreter.

Chapter 6 presents the results of the research: concerning both all programs and individual offers (i.e. groups of programs for each of the communities of sign language users in Europe) and conclusions. They show, among others, that in May 2022, 16% of communities had no access to information in their sign language from their public broadcaster at all, and another 19% of them did not have access to such information on weekends. The offers differed significantly from one another - the largest one was 76 hours and 12 minutes long (per week), and the shortest was 25 min./week (average length was 8 hours and 52 minutes). 35% of communities did not have access to information on public service broadcasting during prime

time. 42% of the offers consisted solely of news. 70% of the communities did not have programs for children. 65% of them lacked programs presented by deaf people. 70% of all programs were broadcast in an unfavorable screen layout and 60% with an insufficiently large sign language interpreter.