

## **Report: Gaps Identification of Key Terms in EU Contexts Using Content Analysis - Italy**

The Sign2Inclusion project addresses linguistic gaps in sign languages, including Italian Sign Language (LIS), particularly in technical, academic, and environmental terms, that create barriers to education, professional development, and societal participation for Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) individuals. This report integrates findings from the Italian focus group along with insights from recent academic discussions, to analyze these gaps and propose effective strategies.

### **Terminological Gaps in LIS**

The Italian focus group identified a lack of standardized signs for specialized terms in LIS, especially in fields like technology, environmental sciences, and academia. Terms such as “intelligenza artificiale” (artificial intelligence) and “sostenibilità” (sustainability) are often conveyed through fingerspelling, improvised signs, or classifiers, which are inconsistent and often misunderstood. These findings align with the broader context of sign languages in the EU. The European Parliament’s Sign Languages in the EU (2018) report emphasizes the need for harmonized sign language lexicons to ensure accessibility and inclusivity across member states. Similarly, Corazza’s (2015) research highlights how LIS has evolved over decades, often relying on community-driven solutions to fill lexical gaps. However, these spontaneous developments are insufficient for addressing the demands of rapidly advancing fields like environmental science and technology. Branchini and Mantovan’s (2020) comprehensive grammar of LIS further highlights the challenges posed by these gaps. They underscore the importance of developing standardized signs to ensure linguistic accuracy and enable effective communication across educational and professional settings.

### **Educational and Professional Implications**

In education, the absence of standardized lexicons poses significant challenges for both students and educators. As the Italian focus group noted, academic terms are often conveyed through descriptive explanations or fingerspelling, which slows learning and creates fragmented understanding. This is especially problematic in disciplines like science and environmental studies, where precise terminology is essential. Schönström’s (2021) work on second language acquisition in sign languages highlights the need for comprehensive lexicons to support effective learning. Without standardized signs, educators struggle to deliver content cohesively, and interpreters

must rely on ad hoc solutions. These issues limit DHH students' ability to fully engage with complex subjects, particularly at the university level. Professionally, the lack of standardized terminology restricts opportunities for DHH individuals in technical and scientific fields. The Sign Languages in the EU report (2018) underscores that such barriers exacerbate systemic inequalities, preventing DHH individuals from participating in critical discussions and decision-making processes.

## **Recommendations for Addressing Gaps**

The Italian focus group and existing literature propose several strategies to address these gaps. First, the development of standardized signs must prioritize collaboration among linguists, educators, and members of the Deaf community. Corazza (2015) advocates for systematic research to create lexicons that reflect contemporary linguistic and cultural needs. Branchini and Mantovan (2020) similarly emphasize the importance of aligning new signs with the linguistic structure of LIS to ensure accuracy and usability. Second, digital tools should be leveraged to disseminate new signs effectively. The Sign Languages in the EU report (2018) also highlights the potential of digital platforms like mobile applications and online glossaries to promote standardization and accessibility. The SignON project (2021) also provides a model for integrating real-time translation services between sign and spoken languages, addressing lexical gaps that hinder communication. Finally, educational institutions must actively integrate these standardized signs into curricula. Schönström (2021) underscores the importance of aligning lexicon development with pedagogical practices to support effective learning. The inclusion of Deaf educators and LIS experts in this process is crucial to ensure that new terms are both linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from the Italian focus group and the literature highlight the urgent need to address gaps in LIS terminology. These gaps hinder education, professional development, and societal inclusion for DHH individuals. By prioritizing the development and dissemination of standardized signs, leveraging digital tools, and fostering collaboration at both national and EU levels, the Sign2Inclusion project can contribute to greater linguistic equity and inclusivity. Addressing these gaps is not merely a linguistic challenge but a fundamental step toward ensuring equal opportunities and fostering a more inclusive society.

## References

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