General Information

Affiliation

In what capacity are you completing this questionnaire?	on behalf of an NGO of language u
Country:	Finland
Institution/governmental body:	Finnish Association of the Deaf
Address:	P.O. Box 57, 00401 Helsinki
Email:	leena.savolainen@kuurojenliitto.fi

Basic Information on Sign Languages

Please list the languages recognised by the country using their respective common name, status, alternative names and ISO 639-3 code.
Use the corresponding sheets to enter information for each language listed here.

	Name	Status	Other Names	Code
Language 1	Finnish Sign Language	recognized	FinSL, suomalainen viittomakieli, finskt teckenspråk	fse
Language 2	Finland-Swedish Sign Language	recognized	FinSSL, finlandssvenskt teckenspråk, suomenruotsalainen viittomakieli	fss
Language 3				
Language 4				
Language 5				

Observations:

If the five language spots provided are not sufficient, please use a second Excel file and attach both files to your email response.

Please only use this file to provide information on sign languages. For spoken languages, please use the "Survey of World Languages - Spoken Languages" questionnaire, also attached to the original email.

Specific Information
Finnish Sign Language

Instructions

- Answer the following questions for the language entered as "Language 1" in the General Information tab.
- Please note that some definitions are also available as tooltips by clicking on bolded data labels within each table.
- All definitions are explained in the "Survey of World Languages Instruction Manual", attached to the original email.
- If information is not available, please leave the answer box blank.
- Use the answer box only to provide the information requested. If necessary, use "comments/notes/remarks" box for explanations about data availability/unavailability, as well as for any general comments.

Part I: Language Status

1. Status of the language

Please define the status of the language:

(•) Legally/ officially recognised
( ) Not recognised

Is this a **national language**? No

Comments/notes/remarks: Sign Language Act (359/2015) is a brief general act (compared to, e.g. Language Act). It can be found at http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2015/en20150359.pdf . It has been translated into Finnish Sign Language

Regardless of its status, each language may be labelled national by authorities.

Comments/notes/remarks:

Sign Language Act (359/2015) is a brief general act (compared to, e.g. Language Act). It can be found at http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2015/en20150359.pdf . It has been translated to Finnish Sign Language https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/viittomakieli/20150359.

A cooperation group on sign language appointed by the Ministry of Justice has monitored the implementation of the Sign Language Act together with actors representing the sign language community since 2015. For further information of the background and implementation please contact the Ministry of Justice, e-mail oikeusministerio@om.fi

Sign Languages in Finnish Legislation:

A. THE CONSTITUTION of Finland (731/1999) (Sign language users' rights have been mentioned first time in Constitution of Finland in 1995; 969/1995 14 §)

Section 17 - Right to one's language and culture

1. The national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish.
2. The right of everyone to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts of law and other authorities, and to receive official documents in that language, shall be guaranteed by an Act. The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis.
3. The Sami, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Provisions on the right of the Sami to use the Sami language before the authorities are laid down by an Act. The rights of

persons using sign language and of persons in need of interpretation or translation aid owing to disability shall be guaranteed by an Act.

B. SIGN LANGUAGE ACT (359/2015) entered into force on 1 May 2015. It is a concise general act, the purpose of which is to promote the realisation of sign language users' linguistic rights. Under the Sign Language Act, the authorities must promote in their activities the opportunities of sign language users to use their own language and receive information in their own language. Substantative provisions on the linguistic rights of sign language users are found in the legislation of different administrative branches.

SIGN LANGUAGE ACT (359/2015)

Section 1: Sign language

1. In this Act sign language means Finnish and Finnish-Swedish Sign Language.
2. Sign language user means a person whose own language is sign language.

Section 2:Objectives of the Act

1. The objective of this Act is to promote the linguistic rights of sign language users.

Section 3: Authorities' promotion requirement

1. The authorities must promote in their activities the opportunities of sign language users to use their own language and receive information in their own language.
2. In this Act the authorities mean courts of law and other government authorities, municipal authorities, independent institutions under public law and Parliament offices.
3. Provisions laid down on the authorities also apply to other parties in public administrative duties.

Section 4: Linguistic rights of sign language users

1. Provisions on the right of a sign language user to be taught in his or her own language and to sign language classes are laid down in the Basic Education Act (628/1998), Upper Secondary Schools Act (629/1998), Vocational Education Act (630/1998) and in other applicable statutes on education. Separate provisions are laid down on education, research and language improvement.
2. Provisions on the right to use sign language and on interpretation and translation services arranged by the authorities are laid down in Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003), Administrative Judicial Procedure Act (586/1996), Criminal Investigation Act (805/2011), Criminal Procedure Act (689/1997), Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients (812/2000), Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (785/1992), Enforcement Code (705/2007), Imprisonment Act (767/2005), Pre-trial Detention Act (768/2005), Act on Handling of Persons in Police Custody (841/2006) and elsewhere in the law on different administrative branches.
3. Provisions of the Act on Interpretation Services for Persons with Disabilities (133/2010) apply to arrangement of interpretation services for a sign language user if he or she is not provided with sufficient and appropriate interpretation service under another act.

Section 5: Entry into force

1. This Act enters into force on 1 May 2015.

C. THE NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT, which entered into force in early 2015, is also important for sign language users (especially sections 8 and 15). See full text in English https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2014/en20141325.pdf. The translation of the Non-Discrimination Act is provided in Finnish Sign Language https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/viittomakieli/20141325

D. The Ministry of Justice is developing Follow-Up Indicators for Linguistic Rights https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/kielellisten-oikeuksien-seurantaan-uudet-indikaattorit. Sign languages of Finland are included in the project.

Part II: State of the Language

2. Materials in the Language

What is the availability of materials in the language?

	Printed Materials	Digital versions	Video Materials	Digital versions
Extended corpora	○	Availab	○	Availabl
Annotated corpora	○		●	
Corpus/corpora	○		○	
Materials/corpus	○		○	
Some materials	●		○	
No materials	○		○	

Comments/notes/remarks: The older teaching materials and glossaries/dictionaries are in a book format. In them the signs are described by photographs or drawings or are referred to by glosses (Finnish words that describe the meaning of the signs) or the production of the signs is explained in

corpus = a collection of materials, assembled for the purpose of linguistic research
material = archived and accessible example of language use

Comments/notes/remarks:

The older teaching materials and glossaries/dictionaries are in a book format. In them the signs are described by photographs or drawings or are referred to by glosses (Finnish words that describe the meaning of the signs) or the production of the signs is explained in Finnish. Only after the video technology, computers and internet connections were enough advanced, have the production of digital (online) material become possible. Only few of the printed publications are available also in a digital format.

Sign language corpora must have some kind of annotation, otherwise you cannot really use them (compare to audio recordings of spoken languages). It is impossible to make any searches on an

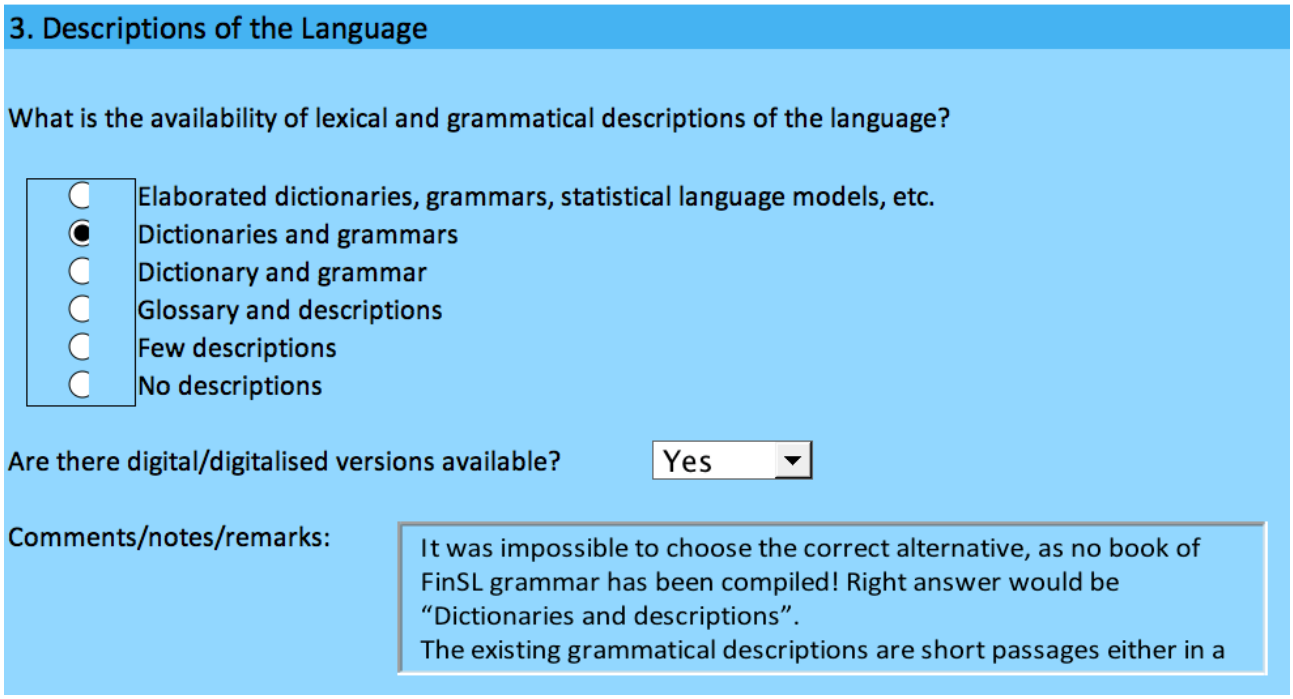
unannotated video or audio recording. We find it thus odd that we are asked whether there are other kinds of corpora than annotated corpora.

With regard to FinSL materials (materials/corpus), in 2014 was founded the Sign Language Library http://www.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi . It is an archive easily accessible to the public. Other materials (e.g. at the Finnnish Association of the Deaf or at the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle) are not on servers and not open to the public.

The first corpus of FinSL was published in 2015 (version 2, 2016) and another corpus will soon be published:

Kipo Corpus. The Language Policy Programme for the National Sign Languages in Finland 2010 Corpus, version 2. Finnish Association of the Deaf, 2016. [cited 01.11.2018]. Available: http://hdl.handle.net/11113/00-0000-0000-0000-340D-2@view.

VKK Corpus. University of Jyväskylä, (forthcoming). [cited 01.11.2018]. Will be published in the Language Bank of Finland.



Comments/notes/remarks:

It was impossible to choose the correct alternative, as no book of FinSL grammar has been compiled! Right answer would be "Dictionaries and descriptions".

The existing grammatical descriptions are short passages either in a textbook of FinSL (e.g. Viittomakieli 1–4, 2004–2006) or they are written for linguists and are not comprehensible to other readers (Jantunen 2003). Further, only parts of the FinSL grammar have been described this

way, and the descriptions are mostly based on elicitation (FinSL users have been asked to produce correct sentences or they have been asked whether one can sign this or that way or not). The more reliable, corpus-based grammatical research is very new and still very narrow, and its results hasn't yet been taken into account in any description of FinSL grammar (on the corpus-based research, see the ProGram project http://users.jyu.fi/~tojantun/ProGram/ProGram.html and Puupponen, Anna: The forms and functions of movements and positions produced by the head, body and face in Finnish Sign Language; a forthcoming doctoral thesis).

What regards the dictionaries, the situation is somewhat better. There are two online dictionaries, Suvi and a wikidictionary of FinSL https://finsl.signwiki.org . In addition to these two dictionaries there is a corpus tool for lexical data (lexical database), Finnish Signbank https://signbank.csc.fi/dictionary/. Despite of these three online sites, most of the FinSL lexicon has not yet been described, e.g. there is no description of the depicting signs.

References:

Suvi, online dictionary of Finnish Sign Language (2003, 2013). Available online http://suvi.viittomat.net [cited 01.11.2018]

SignWiki of Finnish Sign Language (Suomalaisen viittomakielen wikisanakirja, 2013). Available online https://finsl.signwiki.org [cited 01.11.2018]

University of Jyväskylä (forthcoming). Lexicon of VKK Corpus [online database]. Finnish Signbank, Language Bank of Finland. Available online https://signbank.csc.fi. Can be updated, [cited 01.11.2018].

Finnish Association of the Deaf (2018). Lexicon of Kipo Corpus [online database]. Finnish Signbank, Language Bank of Finland. Available online https://signbank.csc.fi. Can be updated, [cited 01.11.2018].

Jantunen, Tommi 2003. Johdatus suomalaisen viittomakielen rakenteeseen (Introduction to the structure of Finnish Sign Language). Helsinki, Oy Finn Lectura Ab.

Viittomakieli 1–4, Suomalaista viittomakieltä aikuisopiskelijoille (Sign language 1–4, Finnish Sign Language for mature students) 2004, 2005, 2006, 2006. Helsinki, Finnish Association of the Deaf. Available online http://aineisto.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi/vk1, http://aineisto.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi/vk2, http://aineisto.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi/vk3, http://aineisto.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi/vk4. [cited 01.11.2018]

4. Asynchronicity of the Language

What is the level of **asynchronicity** of the language?

- ○ Pervasive use by all users in a wide range of domains
- ○ Frequent use by a majority of users in several contexts
- ◉ Habitual use by a good number of users which may be limited to specific contexts
- ○ Occasional and unsystematic use
- ○ Very limited use by a few individuals only
- ○ Not used

Comments/notes/remarks:

Essential asynchronic materials (most of them are translations or some of them even interpreted material):
Sign Language Library (2014). Finnish Association of the Deaf. Open access, available online http://www.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi, [cited

Definition 5. Asynchronicity (sign languages)

Applicable to Question 4 (sign languages)

Asynchronicity: Refers to the design and use of a signed video for long-term reference, repeated (re)viewing, searching/scrolling, heightened meta-linguistic attention and explicit structuring for content other than casual conversation. Asynchronicity may or may not be linked to educational contexts. Examples of signed texts intended for asynchronous use include signed academic publications, lectures, translations of factual content into signing, bilingual libraries, children's stories and creative performances in sign language.

Comments/notes/remarks:

Essential asynchronic materials (most of them are translations or some of them even interpreted material):

Sign Language Library (2014). Finnish Association of the Deaf. Open access, available online http://www.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi, [cited 01.11.2018].

Video bulletins for the deaf (restricted access for 12 months, after that open access). Sign Language Library http://www.viittomakielinenkirjasto.fi/fi/kuurojen-video. [cited 01.11.2018].

Suomi.fi, an online service of public services and information for different situations in life, Population Register Centre. Parts of the service are available in FinSL https://www.suomi.fi/muut-kielet/viittomakieli.

Yle, Finnish Broadcasting Company:

1. Signed news (Yle uutiset viittomakielellä) https://areena.yle.fi/1-3253227

2. The week in sign language (Yle uutiset Viikko viitottuna) https://areena.yle.fi/1-3239267

3. Yle, children's programmes in FinSL or programmes which are interpreted into FinSL https://areena.yle.fi/tv/ohjelmat/30-224.

The minutes of the meetings of the Language Board of FinSL and FinSSL (viittomakielten lautakunta). Published in Finnish, FinSL and since autumn 2012 also in Swedish. Available online https://www.kotus.fi/kielitieto/kielipolitiikka/kotimaisten_kielten_keskuksen_kielilautakunnat/viittomakielten_lautakunta/poytakirja-arkisto.

The website of the Finnish Association of the Deaf http://www.kuurojenliitto.fi.

Official translations of religious texts into FinSL, Evangelican Lutheran Church of Finland. Available online http://viittomakieli.evl.fi/raamattu.html.

Official translations of pieces of legislation available online (see question 1) and at the YouTube channel of Ministry of Social Affairs and Health https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-OLP8M-umQ&index=3&list=PLhIF0UhvF7ivk1oCCaquhVIUoEWf-Ib08 . The news of Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are occasionally translated into FinSL, e.g. https://stm.fi/vammaispalvelulaki

5. Standardisation of the Language

What is the level of standardisation of the language?

- ○ **Standardised language**
- ○ **Quasi-standard language**
- ◉ **Semi-standardized language**
- ○ **Unstandardised language**

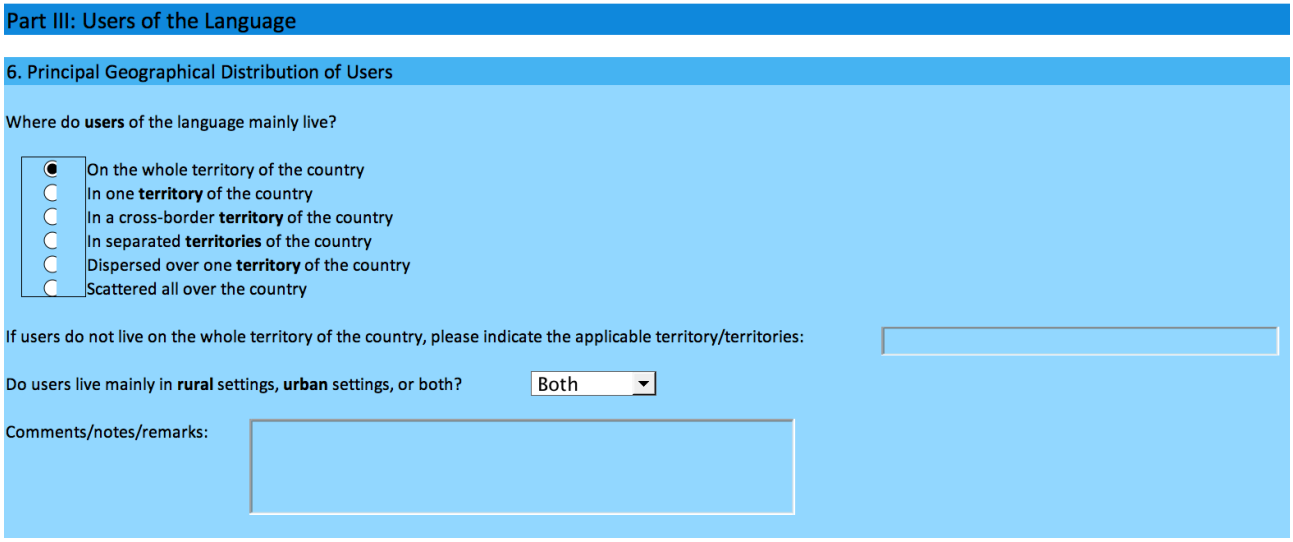
Comments/notes/remarks: There's no detailed description of the FinSL standard variety. The Advisory Board on Sign Languages (Institute for the Languages of Finland) has described the features of the standard variety of FinSL in the following way:

- Standardised language (*codified norms accepted by a majority of users)*
- Quasi-standard language (*generally accepted codified norms without legal support*)
- Semi-standardized language (*flexible norms with user specific variation*)
- Unstandardised language (*no norms*)

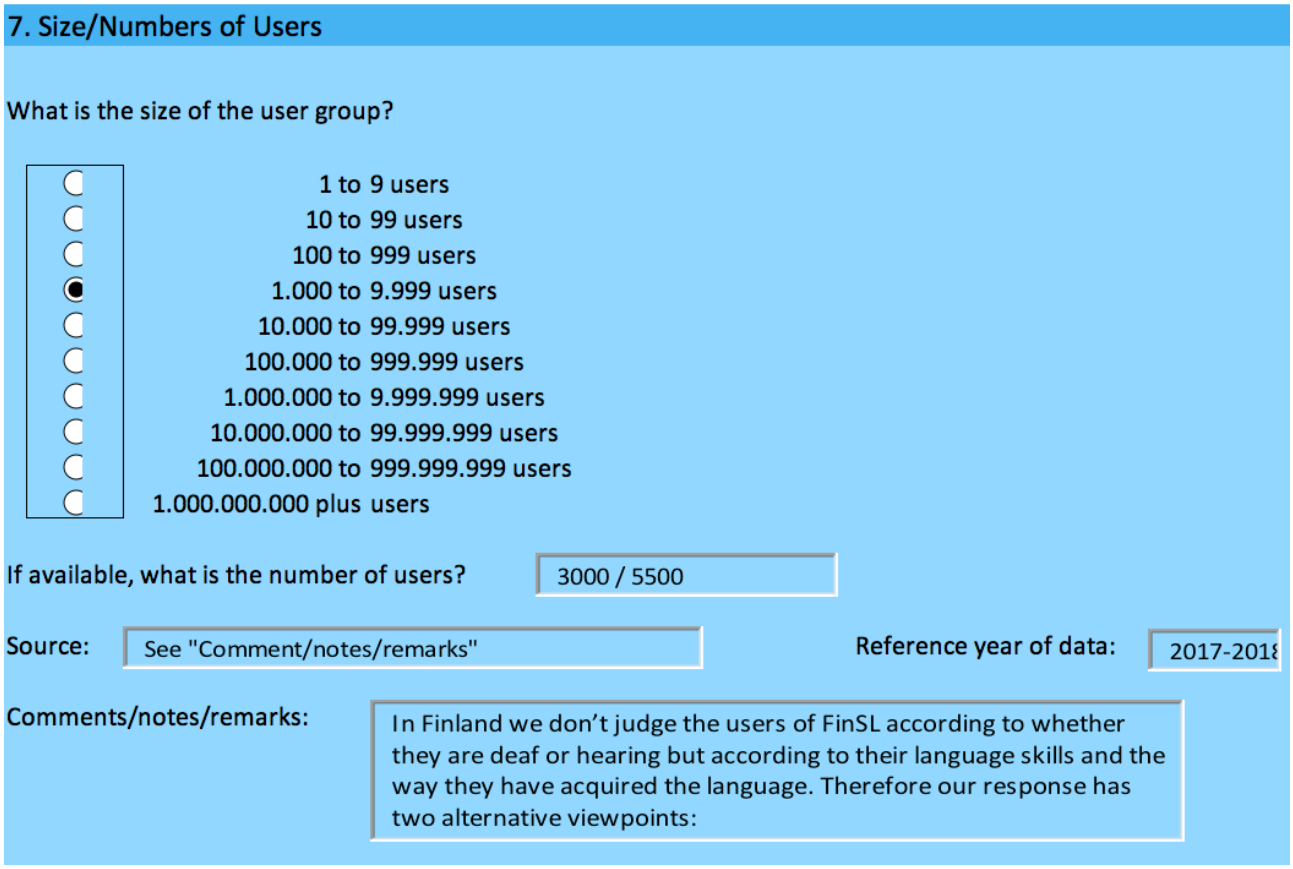
Comments/notes/remarks:

There's no detailed description of the FinSL standard variety. The Advisory Board on Sign Languages (Institute for the Languages of Finland) has described the features of the standard variety of FinSL in the following way:

"It has lucid sentence structure, signing is carefully articulated, dialectal and colloquial signs are avoided, mouthings are used appropriately (Finnish mouthings or mouth gestures depending on the sign and its usage in context). The standard variety can be adapted to different audiences (e.g. to the elderly by signing slower and with clearer mouthing). (Laatua viittomakielelle kääntämiseen [How to produce good quality sign language translations] 2015:9, 13 http://www.kuurojenliitto.fi/fi/artikkelit/laatua-viittomakielelle-kaantamiseen#.WseAxMi-lNc).



USER = everyone who uses the language regularly in everyday life no matter whether as a first or as a second language
TERRITORY = federal state or province or region or district or town or village



Comments/notes/remarks:

In Finland we don't judge the users of FinSL according to whether they are deaf or hearing but according to their language skills and the way they have acquired the language. Therefore our response has two alternative viewpoints:

a) **3 000 users of Finnish Sign Language**, if by user is meant only deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind users of FinSL.

* According to Kela, The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, there are 2 814 persons with hearing impairment or hearing and visual impairment who are entitled to FinSL and/or signed Finnish interpreting services for disabled (September 2018).
** Finnish Association of the Deaf has around 3 750 members in local deaf clubs. All sign language users are not members of these clubs, and some are members of several clubs. Further, some of the members are hearing FinSL users.
*** There are young sign language users who are not yet entitled to interpreting services (perhaps 50 persons).

b) **5 500 users of Finnish Sign Language**, if by user is meant not only deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind persons, but also codas ("children of deaf adults", i.e. deaf parents' hearing children who acquire sign language as their mother tongue or first language) and sodas

("siblings of a deaf adult"; i.e hearing siblings of a deaf child in a family in which the parents are hearing).

* By using several statistics available (Finland's birth rate, number of deaf adults who are in reproductive age and the occurrence of different family types in Finland) can be estimated that there are approx. 3 000 codas in Finland. However, it is estimated that all codas do not use sign language in their everyday life, therefore it might be reasonable to estimate that around 50 % of codas are FinSL users, i.e. there would be approx. 1 500 coda users of FinSL.
** No survey has been made of the number of soda users of FinSL. However, one can make an estimation in the following way: Approx. 2 700 of the total 3 000 deaf, hard-of-hearing or deaf-blind users of FinSL have been born to hearing parents. The average birth rate during the last 80 years in Finland is 2,13 children/woman, but one has to take account also the fact that some of the hearing parents have got several deaf children, and some of the people belonging to this group has died, and that there are siblings that hasn't acquired sign language. Altogether we estimate there being approx. 1 000 soda users of FinSL.

=> The number of FinSL users defined by the Finnish Association of the Deaf is approx. 5 500 persons.

Source:

a) Statistics by Kela (September 2018), Social Insurance Institution of Finland www.kela.fi
b) Finnish Association of the Deaf 2017
c) Statistics Finland https://www.stat.fi/index_en.html

8. Proportion of Users within the National population

What is the proportion of users within the total population of the country?

- ○ (Almost) all
- ○ More than 50%
- ○ Less than 50%
- ○ Less than 10%
- ● Less than 1%
- ○ No one

If available, what is the specific proportion (%)? 0,054 % / 0,01 %

Source:

Comments/notes/remarks: In October 2018 there were 5 521 533 inhabitants in Finland of which
... 3 000 Deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind users of FinSL is 0,054 %
... 5 500 Deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, coda and soda users of

Comments/notes/remarks:

In October 2018 there were 5 521 533 inhabitants in Finland of which
… 3 000 Deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind users of FinSL is 0,054 % (0,54 ‰)
… 5 500 Deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, coda and soda users of FinSL is 0,1 % (1 ‰)

9. Proportion of Users within Reference Community

What is the proportion of users within the **reference community**?

- ○ (Almost) all
- ○ More than 50%
- ◉ Less than 50%
- ○ Less than 10%
- ○ Less than 1%
- ○ No one

If available, what is the specific proportion (%)? 15,6 % / 28,6 %

Source: See "Comment/notes/remarks"

Comments/notes/remarks: Referring to our answer to the question 7 there are two alternative percentages:
a) 3 000 deaf or hard-of-hearing users out of potential 19 200 users -> 15,6 %

REFERENCE COMMUNITY = Community of potential sign language users, which consists of all deaf people (except those deafened due to old age), hearing relatives of deaf people, and other groups of hearing people in regular contact with deaf signers.

Comments/notes/remarks:

Referring to our answer to the question 7 there are two alternative percentages:
a) 3 000 deaf or hard-of-hearing users out of potential 19 200 users -> 15,6 %
b) 5 500 deaf, hard-of-hearing, coda or soda users of FinSL out of potential 19 200 users -> 28,6 %

Source:

Total number of the potential users of FinSL is around **19 200**. The figure is estimated in the following way:
* 4 000 potential deaf or hard-of-hearing FinSL users
* 3 000 codas (children of deaf adults)

* 10 800 hearing relatives of deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Counted as follows: 90 (95) % of deaf children are born to hearing, non-signing parents (i.e. 3 600 persons); if both parents and one of the siblings (i.e. soda) would become a FinSL user, this would mean 10 800 hearing relatives of the deaf or hard-of-hearing person.
* 1 400 persons representing other user groups, i.e. mainly different occupations in which hearing professionals are in regular contact with FinSL users (e.g., FinSL interpreters (around 800 persons), teachers, priests and other church workers and FinSL using instructors).

10. Age Distribution of Users

What is the age distribution of users of the language?*

Generation	Number of Users
Younger generations (<15 years)	100-200
Middle generations (15-65 years)	1750
Older generations (>65 years)	1050

Source: See "Comment/notes/remarks"

Comments/notes/remarks: The estimations given above include only deaf and hard-of-hearing users of FinSL.
The actual number of children under 15 years is particularly difficult to estimate, because the contact of deaf children and their families

* If the actual number is not available, please insert an approximate value.

Source:

The estimations given above include only deaf and hard-of-hearing users of FinSL.
The actual number of children under 15 years is particularly difficult to estimate, because the contact of deaf children and their families with the sign language community is weak due to the hearing rehabilitation policy (see question 11).

1. Our main source for the total number and for the age distribution is the statistics by Kela (The Social Insurance Institution of Finland). We have asked Kela for information on the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing persons who are entitled to have FinSL and/or signed Finnish interpreting services (Kela, September 2018). According to Kela's statistics there are 183 persons under age 20 who are entitled to interpreting services in FinSL or signed Finnish.
2. In Survey of teaching arrangements of deaf and sign language using pupils in basic education (Selin-Grönlund, Pirkko & Päivi Rainò & Liisa Martikainen, 2014). Kuurojen ja viittomakielisten oppilaiden lukumäärä ja opetusjärjestelyt. Selvitys lukuvuoden 2013–2014 tilanteesta. Raportit ja selvitykset 2014:1. Opetushallitus; available in Finnish only https://www.oph.fi/julkaisut/2014/kuurojen_ja_viittomakielisten_oppilaiden_lukumaara_ja_opetusjarjestelyt) it was reported, that in the schools that participated the survey, there were altogether less than one hundred pupils who used sign language as their mother

tongue (please note that there was some uncertainty in identifying the pupils belonging to this group by respondents of the school administration).

3. Finnish Association of Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children told us (7.11.2018) that they have as a member 115 FinSL users or persons who can sign some FinSL, which is about 17% of their members. The number 115 includes both children and adults, and as their members register as families (i.e. only one member of the family gets a member status), the number of people who use (at least some) FinSL is bigger than 115.
4. The Service Foundation for the Deaf told us (5.11.2018) that each year approximately 60 FinSL using deaf children attend their family courses. Children are of age "less than 1 year up to 10 years (max 13-14 years)".
5. In 2007, in the registers of regional workers of the Finnish Association of the Deaf there were around 120 deaf immigrants who had come to Finland from 20 different countries. We know that during the last 10 years the figures have risen, but it wasn't possible to gather the new figures to this document.

Comments/notes/remarks:

If one includes the coda and soda users (see question 7 for explanation) in the users of FinSL, the age distribution numbers would look approximately as follows:

Younger generations (<15 years)	300*
Middle generations (15–65 years)	3 400*
Older generations (>65 years)	1 800*

* The fact, that the age group "FinSL users under 15 years" forms only around 3-6 % of the total FinSL language community, is very alarming. Twenty years ago and prior to that the percentage has been around 13 %.
* Almost all deaf children have been operated a cochlear implant and they go to school integrated into an ordinary local school, where they don't have a FinSL using environment and no mates who would use FinSL. Only some of them have a possibility at school for using an interpreter or an assistant who uses FinSL, signed Finnish or supportive signs.
* There is not a single book, video or online product that would have been made for teaching FinSL as a mother tongue, even though FinSL users are entitled to get education in their sign language as a mother tongue (Sign Language Act 359/2015).
* In rehabilitation process, if FinSL teaching is offered, it is often in the form of supporting signs, and not as a whole language.
* All this have caused a drop in many deaf children's FinSL skills when compared to earlier times, i.e. situation 20 years ago and prior to that.
* In today's Finland, for a deaf child it is very difficult to become a FinSL user.

According to the above mentioned Survey of teaching arrangements of deaf and sign language using pupils in basic education (2014):
It was reported that deaf and signing pupils, as well as pupils with varying degrees of hearing loss were enrolled in 304 schools: deaf pupils in 16, hard of hearing in 218 and pupils with a cochlear implant in 71 schools. In addition, there were pupils who use sign-supported speech, keyword signing, etc. to either facilitate or replace

speech in dozens of schools. In total, there were 1 313 pupils in the target group, of which deaf or those with varying degrees on hearing impairment accounted for approximately 500 (see Tables 4 and 14).

In an earlier study (Jokinen 2000), it was reported that there were 258 pupils who had sign language as their mother tongue, in 14 municipal schools and in 3 state-run schools. At that time, the situation in Swedish-language schools was not investigated. During the academic year 2013–14, it was reported that there were less than one hundred[22] pupils in the participating schools with sign language as their mother tongue in 23 schools (21 municipal and 2 state-run). Of the municipal schools, two were Swedish-language, and the pupils in them were reported to have Finland-Swedish Sign Language as their mother tongue. Of the municipal schools, 15 reported that a hearing pupil had sign language as either the mother tongue or a second language. Some of them came from a family that used sign language at home. In total, there were pupils with sign language as their mother tongue in 23 schools and with sign language as a second language in 26 schools. Of these, seven had both types of pupils, and thus the total number of schools with pupils who had sign language as either their first or second language was at least 42 on the basis of this study. --- Sign language teaching was provided in all subjects in five schools, and in some subjects in six schools. Teaching was provided in sign language as a mother tongue in 15 schools. Responses were also received concerning the use of sign language as a second language, but because the difference between bilingualism and parallel language use was not rigorously defined in the study, there was some uncertainty in identifying this group. In any case, the proportion of pupils with sign language as their first or second language accounts for less than 10 % of the total number of pupils belonging to the target group in this study.
--- At present, there are only three schools with more than five signing and/or deaf pupils. The situation concerning the linguistic, cultural and, above all, social development of those pupils not enrolled in these schools can be considered extremely challenging. School and municipalities have expertise in relation to hearing impairment, but not so much in relation to sign language and the associated culture. The use of experts as a support for cultural growth is scanty. Responses concerning the academic success of the pupils were few and ambiguous due to the great individual variation, and thus this study was not able to gather reliable data on this topic. Teaching arrangements were examined from the administrative point of view. The majority of the deaf are provided special support, and have an extended period of compulsory education. For this reason, most of their teachers are clinic-type or classroom special education teachers. (Data was not collected on the teachers' sign language skills in this study.)

11. Generational Use

What is the generational language use?

- ○ All generations
- ◉ Reduced among younger generations (<15 years)
- ○ Limited to middle and older generations (15 years and older)
- ○ Confined to older generations (>65 years)
- ○ Restricted to a few elders
- ○ No use

Comments/notes/remarks:

Please see also the KEY OBSERVATION in chapter 5.2.4.4. Children's right to sign language in Report of the Government on the Application of Language Legislation 2017. Government publications 10/2017. Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki 2017. Available online

Comments/notes/remarks:

Please see also the KEY OBSERVATION in chapter 5.2.4.4. Children's right to sign language in *Report of the Government on the Application of Language Legislation 2017. Government publications 10/2017. Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki 2017.* Available online https://oikeusministerio.fi/documents/1410853/4734397/VNK_H1017_Report+of+the+Government+on+the+Application+of+Language+Legislation+2017_net_3+%28002%29.pdf/c33a5105-74ff-466d-88d3-798f54d819bc/VNK_H1017_Report+of+the+Government+on+the+Application+of+Language+Legislation+2017_net_3+%28002%29.pdf.pdf

"A child's possibility of learning sign language: The practices of different authorities that prevent or obstruct the possibilities of a child who is born deaf or with a hearing impairment to learn sign language in addition to spoken language should be examined and action should be taken to improve the situation if necessary."

[full chapter:]
5.2.4.4 Children's right to sign language

According to the preliminary work on the Sign Language Act (359/2015), the right to their own language and culture of children who use the sign language has given cause for concern among the sign language community. (HE 294/2014 vp, p. 36.) The statements submitted to the Ministry of Justice for the purposes of this Report have also brought up concerns, particularly over the right of children who are born deaf or with a hearing impairment and their parents to learn sign language and receive education provided in this language.[314]

Cochlear implants and sign language

Almost all children who are deaf or with hearing impairments today receive a cochlear implant as part of medical rehabilitation provided by the healthcare services with the aim of enabling communication based on hearing and learning spoken language. During the rehabilitation period of a child who has received an implant, the family may be urged to stop using sign language as it is no longer needed. The use of sign language is also often believed to slow down the child's process of learning to hear and speak. However, research-based information does not support this idea[315]. Not all children achieve sufficient spoken language skills with the implant, and it thus does not benefit them. Some children also need sign language or communication by signs to support their linguistic development. A child with a cochlear implant also encounters everyday situations where using the device is not possible. In those situations, sign language is a natural method of communication.[316] Simultaneous or alternative teaching of the sign language may often be in the best interests of a child who is born deaf. Otherwise the child may be left without an effective means of communication, and their learning and personality development are put at risk.[317]

Providing teaching of sign language is discretionary

Provisions on the right of the hearing parents of a deaf child to receive teaching of sign language as part of adaptation training are contained in the Act on Services and Assistance for the Disabled.

This service depends on the availability of appropriations, and a recommendation from the treating physician or other healthcare professional is often required.[318] The provision of teaching of sign language is discretionary, and there are thus major differences between the municipalities regarding the grounds for granting this services and the number of hours that are granted. Some municipalities require a medical statement, and some physicians do not recommend the use of sign language before the benefits of a cochlear implant for helping the child learn to speak have been investigated. In some municipalities, the number of teaching hours is insufficient for learning a new language, and in others, no teaching of sign language is granted as there are no appropriations.[319] Rather than teaching of the sign language, families are sometimes only offered the teaching of supportive signing[320].

Consequently, some children and families that need sign language are left without an effective common language and interaction. This means that children who have been born deaf or with severely impaired hearing and their parents living in different parts of the country are treated very differently depending on the practices and appropriation policies in their municipality.

The authorities' attitudes

The statements received by the Ministry of Justice indicate that in addition to lack of information, negative attitudes towards bilingualism in families using the sign language occur among social welfare and healthcare service personnel. They express concerns over the learning of spoken language and linguistic development in the hearing children of parents who use the sign language. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the care staff do not recommend that the parents use sign language to support spoken language with a child who has been born deaf or with a severe hearing impairment.[321] The attitudes of many authorities reflect the idea that sign language is only an assistive device.[322]

Decisions on a child's language

The Finnish Association of the Deaf estimates that only about 5% of the children who are deaf or have severe hearing impairments are born to families where the parents already know sign language. The hearing parents in around 20 new families need to be taught sign language every year. For hearing parents, learning sign language can be compared to learning other foreign languages.[323] Some parents of children with hearing impairments have felt that when assessing the child's needs related to linguistic development and offering information to parents, the perspectives of hearing technology and medicine are mainly emphasised. The parents' experience has been that healthcare units do not offer sufficient expert information on sign language and bilingualism to support the parents in making decisions on the child's language.[324]

Decisions made on behalf of a child in an early phase may have far-reaching consequences for inclusion in different life stages at home, in early childhood education and care, at school, in hobbies and in the labor market alike. Language choices and hearing aid solutions should thus be examined as mutually complementary, not mutually exclusive possibilities. A child must have the possibility of communicating with others at all times. Effective language (spoken and sign language) supports the child's psychological, social and cognitive development. Language is also a

key part of a child's identity. Families should have the right to choose the language they use for communicating within the family.[325] The Advisory Board on Sign Languages (Institute for the Languages of Finland Kotus) noted in its statement that legislation should place a clearer obligation on social welfare, healthcare and education authorities to ensure that a child who is deaf or has a hearing impairment is given an opportunity to learn one of the sign languages used in Finland.[326]

[314] http://oikeusministerio.fi/fi/index/toimintajatavoitteet/perusoikeudetjademokratia/kielilaki/kielellistenoikeuksienseuranta.html

[315] Cf. e.g. Takkinen, Ritva 2013. Sisäkorvaistutetta käyttävien lasten viittomakielen ja puhutun kielen omaksuminen (Learning of sign language and spoken language by children with a cochlear implant). In Lähivertailuja 23. (Main editor) Annekatrin Kaivapalu, (ed.) Pirkko Muikku-Werner, Johanna Laakso, Katre Oim and Maria-Marem Sepper, pp. 392–393.

[316] Statements of the Finnish Association of Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (10 June 2016), the Advisory Board on Sign Languages (Institute for the Languages of Finland Kotus, 10 June 2016) and the Central Union for Child Welfare (6 June 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

[317] Statement of the National Institute for Health and Welfare to the Ministry of Justice 31 May 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

[318] HE 294/2014 vp, p. 36.

[319] Statements of the Finnish Association of the Deaf (10 June 2016) and the National Institute for Health and Welfare (31 May 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

[320] Statement of the Finnish Association of Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children to the Ministry of Justice, 10 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

[321] Negative attitudes to bilingualism are described in such sources as Karoliina Nikula's doctoral dissertation Lapsen hyvää edistämässä. Syntymäkuurojen lasten sisäkorvaistutehoitokäytännön sosiaalieettistä tarkastelua (Promoting The Good of The Child. A Social-Ethical Analysis of Cochlear Implants in Children Born Deaf). 2015; https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/157048/Lapsenhy.pdf?sequence=1.

[322] Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice, 10 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

[323] Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice, 10 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

[324] Statements of the Finnish Association of the Deaf (10 June 2016) and the Central Union for Child Welfare (6 June 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

[325] Statements of the Finnish Association of the Deaf (10 June 2016) and the Central Union for Child Welfare (6 May 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016. See also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 30) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Articles 24 and 30).

[326] Statement of the Advisory Board on Sign Languages (Institute for the Languages of Finland Kotus) to the Ministry of Justice, 10 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

12. Educational Attainment of Users

What is the **educational attainment** of users of the language?*

Education level	Total number	Number of male users	Number of female users
Tertiary education			
Upper secondary education			
Lower secondary education			
Primary education			
Early childhood education			
No education			

Source:

Comments/notes/remarks: There is no numeric data available by Finnish Association of the Deaf nor the national Statistics Finland.
The educational system is alike but no data has been collected by the criteria of sign language use. Earlier there were statistics of deaf

* If the actual number is not available, please insert an approximate value.

Comments/notes/remarks:

There is no numeric data available by Finnish Association of the Deaf nor the national Statistics Finland.

The educational system is alike but no data has been collected by the criteria of sign language use. Earlier there were statistics of deaf and/or hearing impaired pupils in primary education, but it was not possible to derive the numbers of sign language users from that. Data collection of the hearing pupils who use sign language would be even more difficult, because it is not regular to register sign language as a mother tongue (not even among the Deaf sign language users).

13. Occupational Qualification of Users

What is the occupational qualification of users of the language?*

Occupation	Total number	Number of male users	Number of female users
Managers			
Professionals			
Technicians and associate professionals			
Clerical support workers			
Services and sales workers			
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers			
Craft and related trades workers			
Plant and machine operators and assemblers			
Elementary occupations			

Source:

Comments/notes/remarks: Neither Finnish Association of the Deaf nor Statistics Finland https://www.stat.fi/index_en.html has any data, as no data has ever been collected about FinSL users' occupational qualifications.

* If the actual number is not available, please insert an approximate value.

14. Language Competence of Users

What is the language competence distribution for users?*

Competence level	Total number	Number of male users	Number of female users
Understand all, speak fluently			
Understand all, speak well			
Understand well, speak some			
Understand some, speak little			
Understand little, speak none			
Language not used			

Source:

Comments/notes/remarks: No numeric data available.

However, we would like to remind the writers of this questionnaire that in fact it is possible to evaluate language skills (the literacy) of

* If the actual number is not available, please insert an approximate value.

Comments/notes/remarks:

No numeric data available.

However, we would like to remind the writers of this questionnaire that in fact it is possible to evaluate language skills (the literacy) of signed languages, too. Please see an example of an assessment (the summary in English) the results of which are available online at the website of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2016/02/KARVI_0316.pdf.

15. Digital Use

What is the proportion of users using the language in **digital communication**?

- ○ (Almost) all
- ● More than 50%
- ○ Less than 50%
- ○ Less than 10%
- ○ Less than 1%
- ○ No one

Source: Estimated by the employees at the Finnish Associatic

Comments/notes/remarks: In Finland new technogies are commonly used and welcomed by the sign language community, especially the video technology that enables live or recorded use of sign language.

Source: Estimated by the employees at the Finnish Association of the Deaf.

Part IV: Use of the Language

16. Socio-Geographic Dimension of Language Use

In what sociogeographic scope is the language used?

- ○ In worldwide communication (international)
- ○ In several countries or a world region (supranational)
- ○ In a country and regions of a neighbouring country (cross-border)
- ● On the whole territory of a country (state)
- ○ In border regions of neighbouring countries (supraregional cross border)
- ○ In several regions of a country (supraregional)
- ○ In a cross-border region of one country (regional cross-border)
- ○ In one region of a country (regional)
- ○ In one or more localities of a country (local)

If applicable, please provide the language's territorial application:

Comments/notes/remarks:

17. Economic Dimension of Language Use

In which socioeconomic sectors is the language used? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ **Quinary sector** - highest levels of decisionmaking
- ☐ **Quartenary sector** - intellectual activities
- ☐ **Tertiary sector** - the service industry
- ☐ **Secondary sector** - the manufacturing of finished goods
- ☐ **Primary sector** - Production of raw materials and basic foods
- ☐ No use

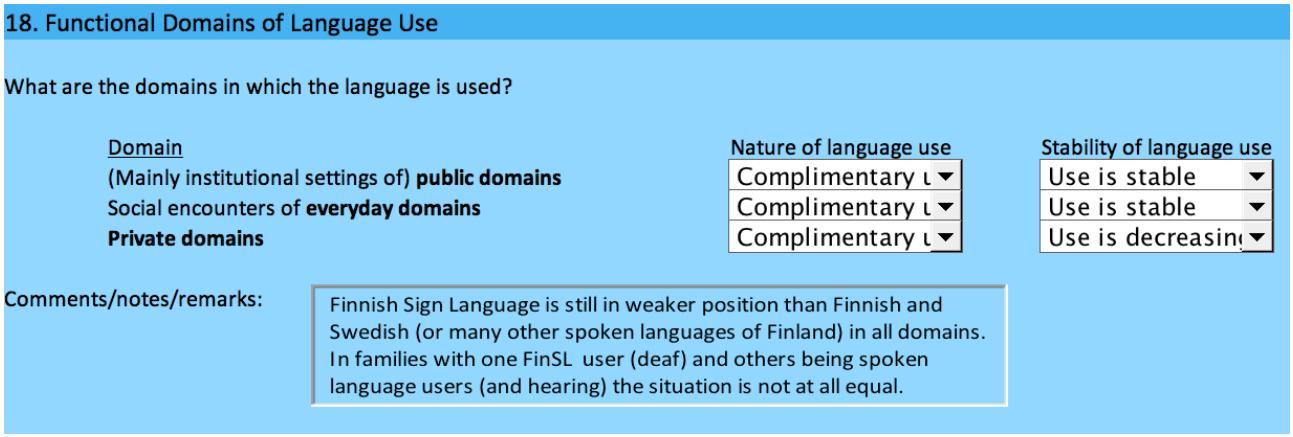
Comments/notes/remarks: We are not sure about the reasons of this question. In Finland deaf employees are entitled to use sign language interpreting at any job or working environment (see the Act of Interpreting Services for Persons with Disabilities

Comments/notes/remarks:

We are not sure about the reasons of this question. In Finland deaf employees are entitled to use sign language interpreting at any job or working environment (see the Act of Interpreting Services for Persons with Disabilities (http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2010/20100133) and https://www.kela.fi/web/en/interpreter-service-for-the-disabled?inheritRedirect=true. However there are huge problems in implementation of sign language services.

Most sign language users at workplaces communicate with written language when necessary and in some workplaces their colleagues are keen to learn sign language. There are only few organizations where sign language is one of the everyday languages (e.g. universities, polytechnic universities and non-governmental organisations).

The governmental Advisory Body of the Sign Languages of Finland (Institute for the Languages of Finland) published recommendations on the quality of sign language translations for public domain and authorities in 2015. See “Laatua viittomakielelle kääntämiseen”. It can be found in Finnish Sign Language at http://www.kuurojenliitto.fi/fi/artikkelit/laatua-viittomakielelle-kaantamiseen



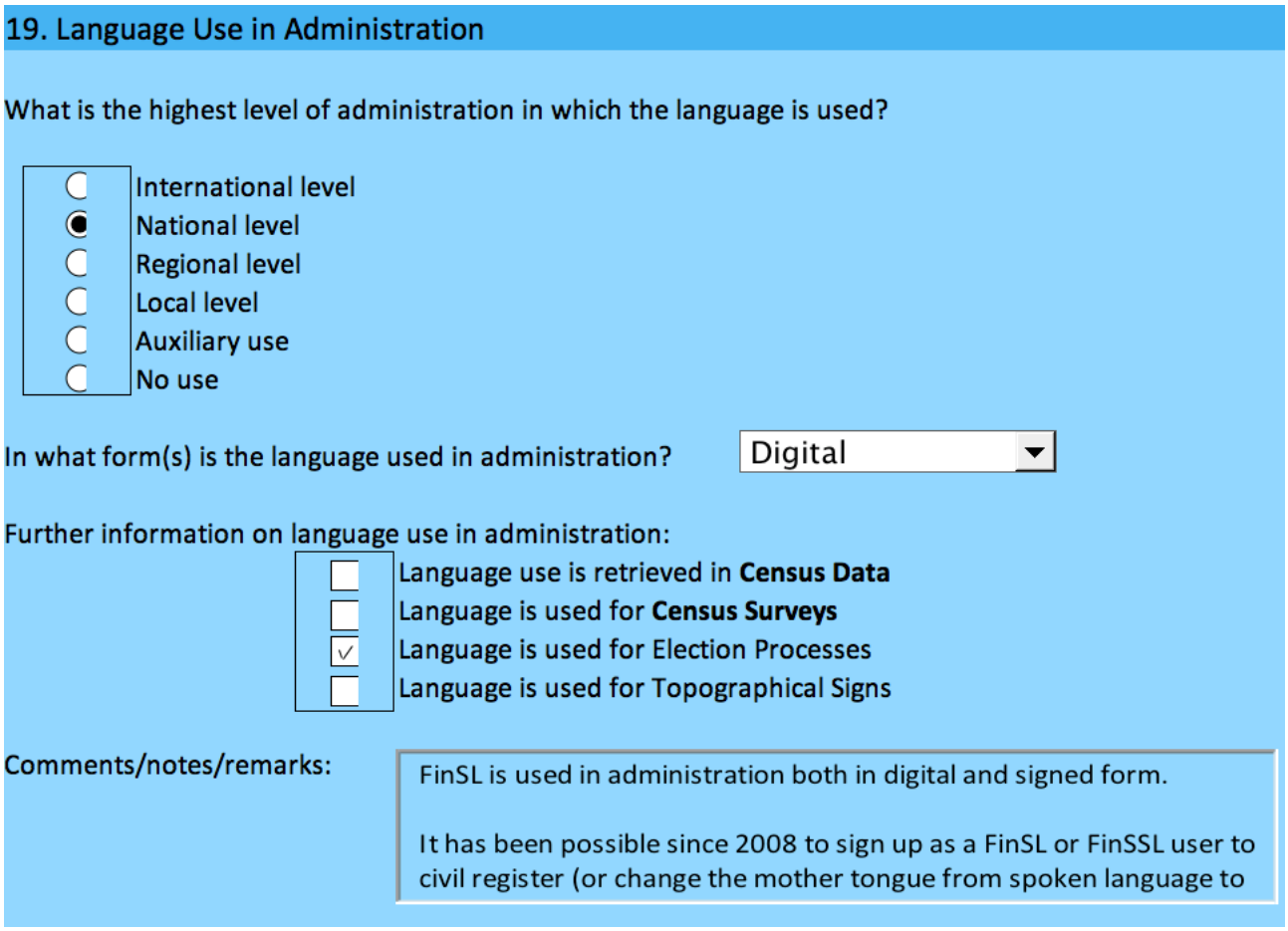
(Mainly institutional settings of) public domains = *in the public sphere (of institutional settings), in formal situations of administration, at court, in education, in the media, at the political level etc.*
Social encounters of everyday domains = *in the social macrocosm, in informal situations of social encounters in everyday life with interlocutors of the wider social environment*
Private domains = *in the social microcosm, in informal situations of private life with interlocutors of the closer social environment: partner, children, family, close friends*

Comments/notes/remarks:

Finnish Sign Language is still in weaker position than Finnish and Swedish (or many other spoken languages of Finland) in all domains. In families with one FinSL user (deaf) and others being spoken language users (and hearing) the situation is not at all equal.

One of the extraordinary features of sign language use is the misunderstanding that adding a sign language interpreter to any environment changes the environment fully accessible for sign language users. The interpreter is only a link between two people so the contact can never be as good as it would be if the two people shared the same language and cultural background.

The youngest generation of FinSL users have dramatically less opportunities for using FinSL than 20 years ago and prior to that.



- Language use is retrieved in Census Data = *Language Data are collected in the census*
- Language is used for Census Surveys = *Language is used for Census Surveys or Census forms*

Comments/notes/remarks:

It has been possible since 2008 to sign up as a FinSL or FinSSL user to civil register (or change the mother tongue from spoken language to sign language). However, the awareness of linguistic identity or awareness of the possibility to register are not high among sign language users so the numbers are not reliable. Therefore it is seldom that authorities or administrations can provide service for an individual sign language user.

In administration e.g. in governmental information services the production of materials in FinSSL is increasing thanks to Sign Language Act. Information of the Election of the President of Finland are an example of the materials translated to FinSL by ministry of Justice: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vOHkq7ugUA&list=PLBOD3s07Ie2xrtsEnxJT5gLZ6U5zBHEI-

Signed languages are not used (regularly) at the polling places.

20. Language Use in Formal Education

How is the language used in **formal education**?

Education level	Language use in formal education
Tertiary education	language is used as Medium of Instru
Upper secondary education	language is used as Medium of Instru
Lower secondary education	language as a Teaching Subject
Primary education	language is used as Medium of Instru
Early childhood education	language is used as Medium of Instru

Comments/notes/remarks:

As a comment for the questions themselves: we didn't understand why it was possible to choose only one of the options per each education level. Some of the options are used side by side and the other is not better than the other (e.g. "language is used as a medium

formal education = *institutional, intentional and planned through public organisations and recognized private bodies*

EDUCATION LEVEL	LANGUAGE USE IN FORMAL EDUCATION
Tertiary education	• language is used as a medium of instruction • language is used for immersion teaching • language as a teaching subject • language is only occasionally used • language is only symbolically used • language is not used
Upper secondary education	• language is used as a medium of instruction • language is used for immersion teaching • language as a teaching subject • language is only occasionally used • language is only symbolically used • language is not used
Lower secondary education	• language is used as a medium of instruction • language is used for immersion teaching • language as a teaching subject • language is only occasionally used • language is only symbolically used • language is not used
Primary education	• language is used as a medium of instruction • language is used for immersion teaching • language as a teaching subject • language is only occasionally used • language is only symbolically used • language is not used
Early childhood education	• language is used as a medium of instruction

	• language is used for immersion teaching • language as a teaching subject • language is only occasionally used • language is only symbolically used • language is not used

Comments/notes/remarks:

As a comment for the questions themselves: we didn't understand why it was possible to choose only one of the options per each education level. Some of the options are used side by side and the other is not better than the other (e.g. "language is used as a medium of instruction" and "language as a teaching subject").

Almost all deaf children have been operated a cochlear implant and they go to school integrated into an ordinary local school. Only some of these children have a possibility at school to use an interpreter or an assistant who uses FinSL, signed Finnish or supportive signs. Some coda children get teaching on FinSL as their mother tongue.

Sign Languages in legislation of education in Finland

A. Early Childhood Education Act (swe: Lag om småbarnspedagogik 540/2018):
in the government proposal which is an accompanying document of the bill, it is told that education can be provided in sign language. However, when passing the bill the Parliament gave an resolution which includes the demand of securing the linguistic rights of the children who use Finnish or Finland-Swedish sign language. The Ministry of Culture and Education is working on to implement the resolution.

B. Basic Education Act (628/1998)

Section 10: Language of instruction

1. The language of instruction and the language used in extracurricular teaching shall be either Finnish or Swedish. The language of instruction may also be Saami, Roma or sign language. In addition, part of teaching may be given in a language other than the pupils' native language referred to above, provided that this does not risk the pupils' ability to follow teaching. (Amendment 1288/1999)

Section 12: Mother tongue

1. As mother tongue, the pupil shall be taught Finnish, Swedish or Saami in keeping with the language of instruction.
2. As mother tongue, the pupil may also be taught the Roma language, sign language or some other language which is the pupil's native language.

Section 31: Free education

1. Teaching, the necessary textbooks and other learning materials, and school equipment and materials shall be free of charge for the pupil. A disabled child or a child with special

educational needs has additionally the right to get the interpretation and assistance services he or she needs to participate in education, other educational services, special aids and the services provided under Section 39 free of charge. (Amendment 477/2003)

C. Core curriculum for basic education 2014: mentions both Finnish and Finland-Swedish Sign Languages and the content for studies can be found throughout the primary school (from level 1 to 9). At the moment only students with hearing impairment are entitled to have sign language as a subject. See https://www.oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/basic_education

For further information see:
https://www.oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/basic_education/curricula_2014

D. According to the Act of Interpreting Services for The Persons with Disability (133/2010) deaf sign language users are entitled to educational interpreting in any educational level after primary level. See further:

https://www.kela.fi/web/en/interpreter-service-for-the-disabled-book-student-interprter?inheritRedirect=true

21. Language Use in Ethnoculture

What is the ethnocultural usage of the language? Please select all that apply.

- [x] **Traditions and expressions**
- [ ] **Expressing knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe**
- [ ] **Traditional medicine**
- [ ] **Customary law**
- [x] **Social practices, rituals and festive events [including religious practices]**
- [x] **Performing arts**
- [ ] **(Passing on skills and knowledge of) traditional craftsmanship**
- [ ] **Informal learning**
- [ ] No use

Comments/notes/remarks:

- Traditions and expressions = *encompass a variety of spoken forms including proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dramatic performances*
- Customary law = *a system of rules by a forum of community elders mostly presided by a traditional leader*

- Social practices, rituals and festive events [including religious practices] = *habitual activities that structure the lives of communities … to reaffirm the identity of those who practice them as a group or a society…*

22. Language Use in Public Healthcare

What is the language usage in **public healthcare**? Please select all that apply.

- [ ] All situations
- [ ] Doctor-patient communication
- [ ] Nursing care (including care for the elderly)
- [ ] Healthcare information
- [x] Translations
- [ ] No use

Comments/notes/remarks:

Sign language interpreting is not always provided due to difficulties in implementation (missing good practices).
It is also difficult to provide SLI services in public healthcare because of the ambiguity of the legislation.

Comments/notes/remarks:

Sign language interpreting is not always provided due to difficulties in implementation (missing good practices).

It is also difficult to provide SLI services in public healthcare because of the ambiguity of the legislation.

See the KEY OBSERVATION of the R*eport of the Government on the Application of Language Legislation 2017*. Government publications 10/2017. Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki 2017. https://oikeusministerio.fi/documents/1410853/4734397/VNK_H1017_Report+of+the+Government+on+the+Application+of+Language+Legislation+2017_net_3+%28002%29.pdf/c33a5105-74ff-466d-88d3-798f54d819bc/VNK_H1017_Report+of+the+Government+on+the+Application+of+Language+Legislation+2017_net_3+%28002%29.pdf.pdf

"Using the staff's sign language skills: Note should be taken of the language skills of social and healthcare professionals who know sign language, and their skills should be used better in work with clients and patients. Centralisation of sign language services: The situations where gathering and centralising sign language related expertise to certain social and healthcare units or branches is justified should be considered. The other units / branches could draw on the centralised expertise and language skills by such means as a video link.
Sign language interpretation: The practices and responsibilities related to organising interpretation into sign language in social welfare and healthcare services should be clarified. The quality of the interpretation service organised by Kela and the adequacy of resources should be monitored."

[full chapter:]

5.2.3.1 Sign languages

Provisions on the right to use sign language or interpretation and translation services organised by the authorities are contained in numerous statutes applicable to different branches of government, including the Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients (812/2000) and the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (785/1992). Among other things, provisions on taking the patient's mother tongue and culture into account as part of good care are laid down in these acts. In the context of the patient's right to access information, it is also stated that if the patient because of a sensory handicap or speech defect or some other reason cannot be understood, interpretation should be provided if possible.

The Social Insurance Institution (Kela) organises interpretation services pursuant to the Act on Interpretation Services for Persons with Disabilities. Those entitled to interpretation services organised by Kela include persons with hearing and visual impairments, hearing impairments or speech impairments and who, because of their disability, need interpreting services for work, study, the use of services, civic participation, hobbies or leisure. The interpretation service organised by Kela is secondary compared to other interpretation services organised pursuant to some other act. In other words, the provisions in specialised legislation on the arrangement of sign language interpretation should thus primarily be complied with.

In connection with the drafting of the Sign Language Act, the Constitutional Law Committee noted that there were significant shortcomings in the realisation of sign language users' rights as intended in the legislation of different administrative branches. For example, the right to obtain assistance from an interpreter at the cost of an authority when dealing with matters initiated by the authority is not always realised, and sign language users are forced to obtain this assistance at their own cost. Services provided under the Act on Interpretation Services almost appear to be primary, even if this Act is of secondary importance compared to other legislation concerning interpretation. Parliament has issued a statement urging the Government to take action to ensure that the rights of sign language users are realised across the country as intended when drafting the legislation on their linguistic rights.[254]

Ambiguities concerning responsibility for organising interpretation

While this Report was being drafted, it transpired that the valid provisions in the Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients and the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients on interpretation and obtaining an interpreter are causing problems for sign language users.[255] Feedback received from the sign language community indicates that no uniform practices currently exist in social welfare and healthcare services regarding the arrangement of interpretation. Both those who need interpretation and health service employees are uncertain about who is responsible for booking a sign language interpreter, in what types of situations an interpreter should be booked, and who pays the costs of the interpretation service. According to the statements received, the authorities' attitudes towards sign language users' linguistic needs often are belittling or negative. Clients who use the sign language have reported that, despite requests to do so, an interpreter has not always been booked for them, and this may have put patient safety at risk. At some hospitals, for example, an interpreter for patients cared for in the wards may only have been booked for the time of the doctors' rounds, and communication with other staff in the ward was impossible in practice. On the other hand, sometimes more than one interpreter turn up if the client has not been informed of the interpreter booked by the authority and believed that they are responsible for making the booking. At some hospitals, clients are requested in the appointment letter to inform the hospital in advance if they need an interpreter; however, this notification can only be given by telephone, which naturally is a problem for a deaf client. In a number of cities the social welfare services (for example disability services) have deemed that it is

up to the client to book an interpreter, as it is the client who wishes to contact the services.[256] The overwhelming majority of clients contacting the Finnish Association of the Deaf's advocacy service, for example, have questions about ambiguities related to the provision of interpretation services.[257]

Inconsistent quality of interpretation services

Shortcomings have also come up in sign language interpretation services for which Kela is responsible. According to information received by the Ministry of Justice, the quality of interpretation services organised by Kela has been inconsistent, especially since the booking activities related to them were centralised to Turku in 2014. The centralisation has had a negative impact on service users' possibilities of influencing such aspects as the selection of the interpreter. The client's preferences or the demanding nature of the interpretation situation have not always been taken into consideration when selecting interpreters.[258] The situation of Kela's interpretation services gives cause for concern especially regarding the Finland-Swedish sign language. The number of interpreters who know Finland-Swedish sign language is very small. In addition, deaf clients who use the Finland-Swedish sign language are sometimes offered interpreters who know Swedish, while they use the Finnish sign language and do not necessary understand the Finland-Swedish sign language.[259]

Significance of interpretation and service provided in the client's language

The statements issued to the Ministry of Justice stress that the possibility of using an interpreter should be secured, especially for children who use sign language as their mother tongue, in all social welfare and healthcare services.[260] On the other hand, it has been suggested that because of their nature, service provided in the client's language rather than interpretation would be needed in certain social welfare and healthcare services. These include services where long-standing client relationships are typical and services for vulnerable groups, including therapy services for young people, some services for older persons, mental health services, and services for children, people with memory disorders, immigrants or persons affected by social exclusion.[261]

Translations of documents into sign language

According to the Finnish Association of the Deaf[262], there are major variations in the literacy skills of sign language users in Finnish or Swedish. In a service use situation, an interpreter's fast-paced rendition is not recorded in any way, and the client may forget its contents. In some matters, a written decision is only produced after the service use situation. If the client does not understand written Finnish or Swedish, their legal protection may be at risk.[263] In recent years, the need to translate documents into sign language has been brought up in situations where the sign language user's reading skills are poor.[264]

Accessibility of social welfare and healthcare services

There remains scope for improvement in the accessibility of social welfare and healthcare services to sign language users. In some municipalities, appointments can be made by text message[265], but often the client can only make an appointment by telephone[266].

"Nykyään useat terveysviranomaistahot käyttävät takaisinsoittopalvelu-systeemiä asiakaspalvelussa. Tämä on suurin syrjintä-case meille viittomakielisille, koska viittomakielentulkkia ei voi vaatia läsnä olevaksi 24/7. Asiakaspalvelussa tulee huomioida tasavertaisesti eri kielimuodot, jolloin enemmän monipuolisuutta kehiin sähköpostin ja tekstiviestin muodossa."[267]

Reconciliation of linguistic rights and reasonable adaptations – From the perspective of deaf persons who use sign language, the organisation of services provided in the sign language or obtaining interpretation into

sign language are about the realization of linguistic rights on the one hand, and reasonable adaptations due to a disability on the other. According to the Finnish Association of the Deaf, these two perspectives are currently not reconciled effectively at the level of municipalities. In care for older persons, for example, there is often uncertainty about who is responsible for organising services for a deaf client. Additionally, when assessing the service needs of persons with multiple disabilities who are deaf, linguistic needs are sometimes completely ignored. For instance, when assessing the service needs of a person with reduced mobility, the emphasis may be on organising mobility aids and an accessible physical environment, whereas the need for services provided in, or interpreted into, the sign language receives less attention.[268]
"*Sosiaali- ja terveyspalveluissa tiedetään yllättävän huonosti viittomakielistä ja kuuroista."*[269]

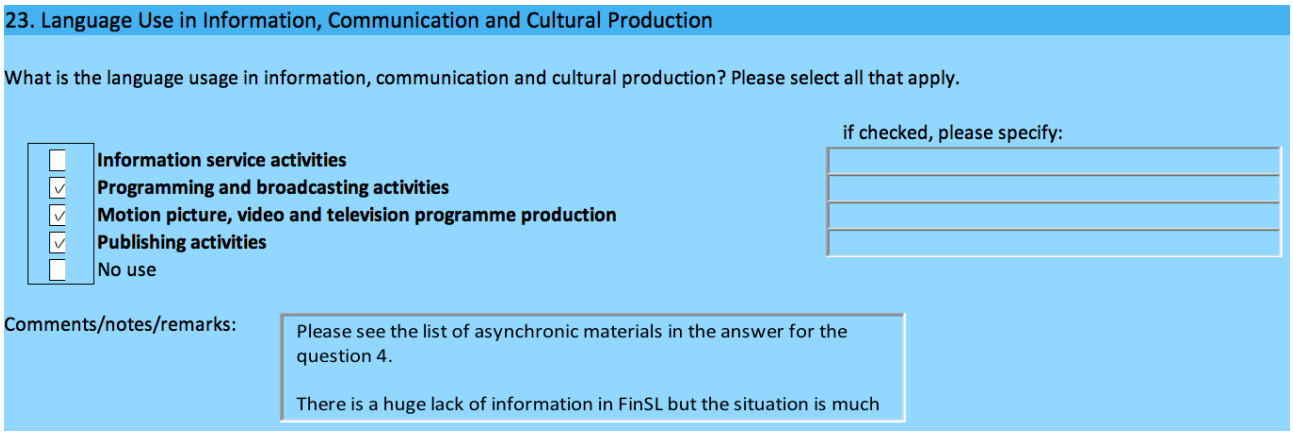
"Hörselskadade personer som är beroende av läppavläsning och som har svenska som modersmål hör bäst på svenska. Lättast att avläsa läppar på sitt eget modersmål." [270]

"Kuuleva viittomakielinen on väliinputoaja – mikäli sairastuu vaikkapa dementiaan ja viittomakieli on se oma vahvempi kieli, puhutun suomen väistyessä, ei palveluja ole tarjolla."[271]

"Jag kan använda teckenspråkstolk vid besök till läkare och hälsocentral, vilket har varit en bra lösning. De flesta hälsotjänster har också möjlighet ge svenskspråkig service, och de jag har använt har fungerat tillfredsställande."[272]

[254] PeVM 10/2014 vp - HE 294/2014 vp ja EV 346/2014 vp - HE 294/2014 vp.
[255] E.g. Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice on 9 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[256] Statements of the Finnish Association of the Deaf (9 June 2016), the Finnish Association of Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (10 June 2016) and Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi (10 June 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[257] Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice on 9 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[258] Statements of Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi (10 June 2016) and the Finnish Association of Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (10 June 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[259] Statement of the Advisory Board on the Sign Languages (Institute for the Languages of Finland Kotus) to the Ministry of Justice, 10 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[260] Statements of Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi (10 June 2016) and the Finnish Association of Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (10 June 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[261] Statements of the Finnish Association of the Deaf (9 June 2016), the Advisory Board on the Sign Languages (Institute for the Languages of Finland, 10 June 2016) and Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi (10 June 2016) to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[262] Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice on 9 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[263] See e.g. Supreme Administrative Court decision in a case that concerned processing an application relevant to taking a child into care and placing the child in substitute care (KHO:2016:73).
[264] Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice on 9 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[265] Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice on 9 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[266] Statement of Finnish Youth Co-operation – Allianssi to the Ministry of Justice, 10 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.
[267] Translation: *Many health authorities use a call return system in their client service these days. This is a major case of discrimination against us sign language users, because you cannot demand that a sign language interpreter is there 24/7. Different language forms should be taken into consideration equally in client service, and for this reason, we would like to see more diversity in the form of e-mail and text messages.* Otakantaa.fi survey, extract from open-ended responses
[268] Statement of the Finnish Association of the Deaf to the Ministry of Justice on 9 June 2016, Ministry of Justice 1/58/2016.

269 Translation: *The social and health services know surprisingly little about sign language users and deaf people.*
270 Translation: *Persons with a hearing impairment who depend on lip-reading and whose mother tongue is Swedish can hear the best in Swedish. Your mother tongue is the easiest to lip read.*
271 Translation: *A hearing sign language user falls between the cracks – if you are affected by dementia, for example, and sign language is your stronger language as spoken Finnish recedes, no services are available*
272 Translation: *I can use a sign language interpreter when I have to see a doctor or visit the health centre, which has been a good solution. Most health services can also provide service in Swedish, and the ones I have used have worked satisfactorily*. Extracts from open-ended responses to Otakantaa.fi web survey.


23. Language Use in Information, Communication and Cultural Production

What is the language usage in information, communication and cultural production? Please select all that apply.

		if checked, please specify:
☐	**Information service activities**	
☑	**Programming and broadcasting activities**	
☑	**Motion picture, video and television programme production**	
☑	**Publishing activities**	
☐	No use	

Comments/notes/remarks:

Please see the list of asynchronic materials in the answer for the question 4.

There is a huge lack of information in FinSL but the situation is much

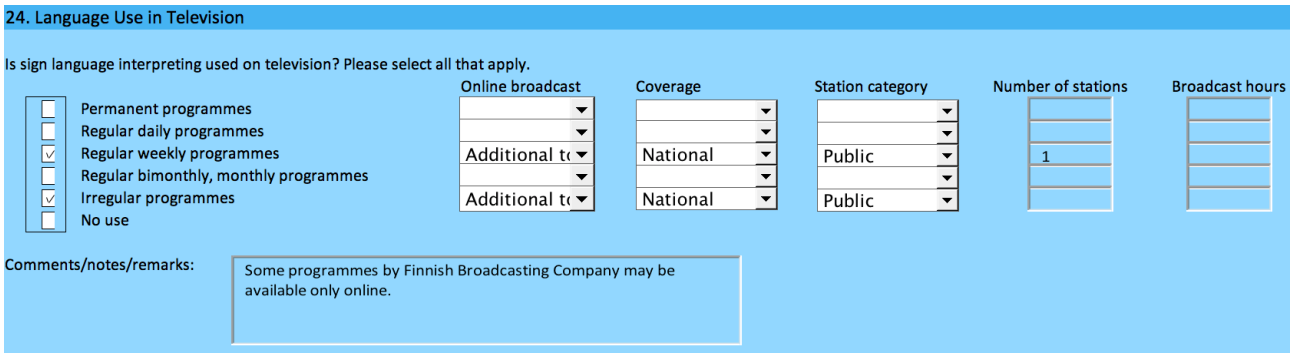
- Information service activities = *include the activities of web search portals, data processing and hosting activities, as well as the provision of infrastructure for hosting and data processing services, search facilities and other*
- Programming and broadcasting activities = *include creating and broadcasting content, such as radio, television and data programs of entertainment, news, talk and…*
- Motion picture, video and television programme production = *includes theatrical and non-theatrical motion pictures whether on film, videotape, DVD och other media, including digital distribution; supporting activities such as film editing, cutting, …*
- Publishing activities = *include the production of books, brochures, leaflets, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, atlases, maps and charts; the publishing of newspapers, journals and periodicals*

Comments/notes/remarks:

There is a huge lack of information in FinSL but the situation is much worse on the part of Finland-Swedish Sign Language. However, according to the Report of the Government on the Application of Language Legislation 2017. (Government publications 10/2017. Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki 2017.):

"A cooperation group on sign language appointed by the Ministry of Justice has monitored the implementation of the Sign Language Act together with actors representing the sign language community. The group's mandate expired at the end of 2016, and a new cooperation group was

appointed to continue its work in 2017–2018. The cooperation group prepared an implementation plan in spring 2016 with proposals for practical measures to raise awareness of the Sign Language Act and to ensure that the Act is applied in the authorities' information activities."



	ONLINE BROADCAST	COVERAGE	STATION CATEGORY
• Permanent programmes	• additional to regular • only online • no online	• local • regional • national • international	• public • private • community
• Regular daily programmes	• additional to regular • only online • no online	• local • regional • national • international	• public • private • community
• Regular weekly programmes	• additional to regular • only online • no online	• local • regional • national • international	• public • private • community
• Regular bimonthly, monthly programmes	• additional to regular • only online • no online	• local • regional • national • international	• public • private • community
• Irregular programmes	• additional to regular • only online • no online	• local • regional • national • international	• public • private • community
• No use			

25. Language Use in Legal System

To what extent is the language used in the legal system?

- ○ All legal transactions
- ◉ Court proceedings
- ○ Signed testimonies (with translation)
- ○ No use

The language is used in (select all that apply):

- ☑ Criminal law
- ☑ Civil law
- ☑ Administrative law

In what legal level is the language used?

- ○ Local level
- ○ Regional level
- ◉ National level
- ○ International level

Comments/notes/remarks:

Sign Language Act (359/2015) / Section 4: Linguistic rights of sign language users

(1) Provisions on the right of a sign language user to be taught in his

Comments/notes/remarks:

Sign Language Act (359/2015) / **Section 4: Linguistic rights of sign language users**

(1) Provisions on the right of a sign language user to be taught in his or her own language and to sign language classes are laid down in the Basic Education Act (628/1998), Upper Secondary Schools Act (629/1998), Vocational Education Act (630/1998) and in other applicable statutes on education. Separate provisions are laid down on education, research and language improvement.

(2) Provisions on the right to use sign language and on interpretation and translation services arranged by the authorities are laid down in Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003), Administrative Judicial Procedure Act (586/1996), Criminal Investigation Act (805/2011), Criminal Procedure Act (689/1997), Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients (812/2000), Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (785/1992), Enforcement Code (705/2007), Imprisonment Act (767/2005), Pre-trial Detention Act (768/2005), Act on Handling of Persons in Police Custody (841/2006) and elsewhere in the law on different administrative branches.

(3) Provisions of the Act on Interpretation Services for Persons with Disabilities (133/2010) apply to arrangement of interpretation services for a sign language user if he or she is not provided with sufficient and appropriate interpretation service under another act.

-Thank you for completing this questionnaire. If you entered other language(s) in the "General Information" sheet, please complete the next questionnaire sheet.