

FACT SHEET

REGISTRATION AND WARRANTING OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS BILL, 2025



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR INCLUSION
AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

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BACKGROUND

- In 2016, Malta adopted Maltese Sign Language (LSM) as an official language, alongside spoken Maltese and English.
- The Maltese Sign Language Council (KLSM) was created as a body that would oversee outreach in respect of Maltese Sign Language (LSM), and the rights and culture of the Deaf community in Malta and Gozo.
- Article 8(i) of the Maltese Sign Language Recognition Act (Chapter 556 of the Laws of Malta) directed the Council "to prescribe and establish regulations about the standards of competency that a person who is to act as an interpreter of Maltese Sign Language must attain and keep a register of recognised Maltese Sign Language Interpreters".

THE BILL – REGISTRATION TYPES AND EXEMPTIONS

- Further to this, it was decided to create a two-tier system in the legislation:
 - Registration would be open to sign language interpreters working with any sign language, not just Maltese Sign Language (LSM), as well as with International Sign
 - Warrants would be additionally available to Maltese Sign Language (LSM) interpreters who, following registration, would have demonstrated additional competency and experience requirements.
- This would follow the example of European Economic Area Member States Ireland, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Italy, Hungary and Norway, which adopted legislation and similar regulatory structures.
- Additionally, the possibility of interpreters from across the European Economic Area and Switzerland to engage in temporary or occasional work in Malta, further to EU law, was provided.
- A practical exemption is provided for interpreters accompanying Deaf persons travelling to Malta for short stays, of up to three months, such as to attend a conference or for a holiday.

THE REGISTER

- All interpreters registered, holding a warrant or performing temporary or occasional work in Malta would be listed in a Register, kept constantly updated by the Council, made publicly available, and published annually in the Government Gazette.

INTERPRETER REGISTRATION AND WARRANTING BOARD

- Decisions on registration and granting of warrants are to be handled by an independent Interpreter Registration and Warranting Board, appointed by the Minister responsible for the disability sector, on the advice of the Council.
- The Board would be composed of persons with suitable qualifications and experience, as well as warrant-holders, enjoying the confidence of the Council and of the Association of Maltese Sign Language Interpreters (AILSM).

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- Given the specific nature of this legislation, the local Deaf community was consulted, by reaching out to the Deaf People Association (Malta) and the Gozo Association for the Deaf. In doing so, the Ministry coordinated with the Council, AILSM and Aġenzija Sapport, which hosts a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service and Maltese Sign Language Interpreting Service.

NEXT STEPS

- The Act would enter into force two months following its publication in the Government Gazette, as required by the Small Business Act (Chapter 512 of the Laws of Malta), thus allowing all stakeholders an adaption period in respect of putting the new system being introduced into place.
- Explanatory Notes will be published in the Government Gazette alongside the eventual Act once adopted by Parliament, while User Guidelines will be made publicly available by the Council.
- Government is proud to be supporting the rights of the Deaf community through this initiative, on the eve of the tenth anniversary of Maltese Sign Language (LSM) becoming an official language.
- This initiative was also positively received by the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD).

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