

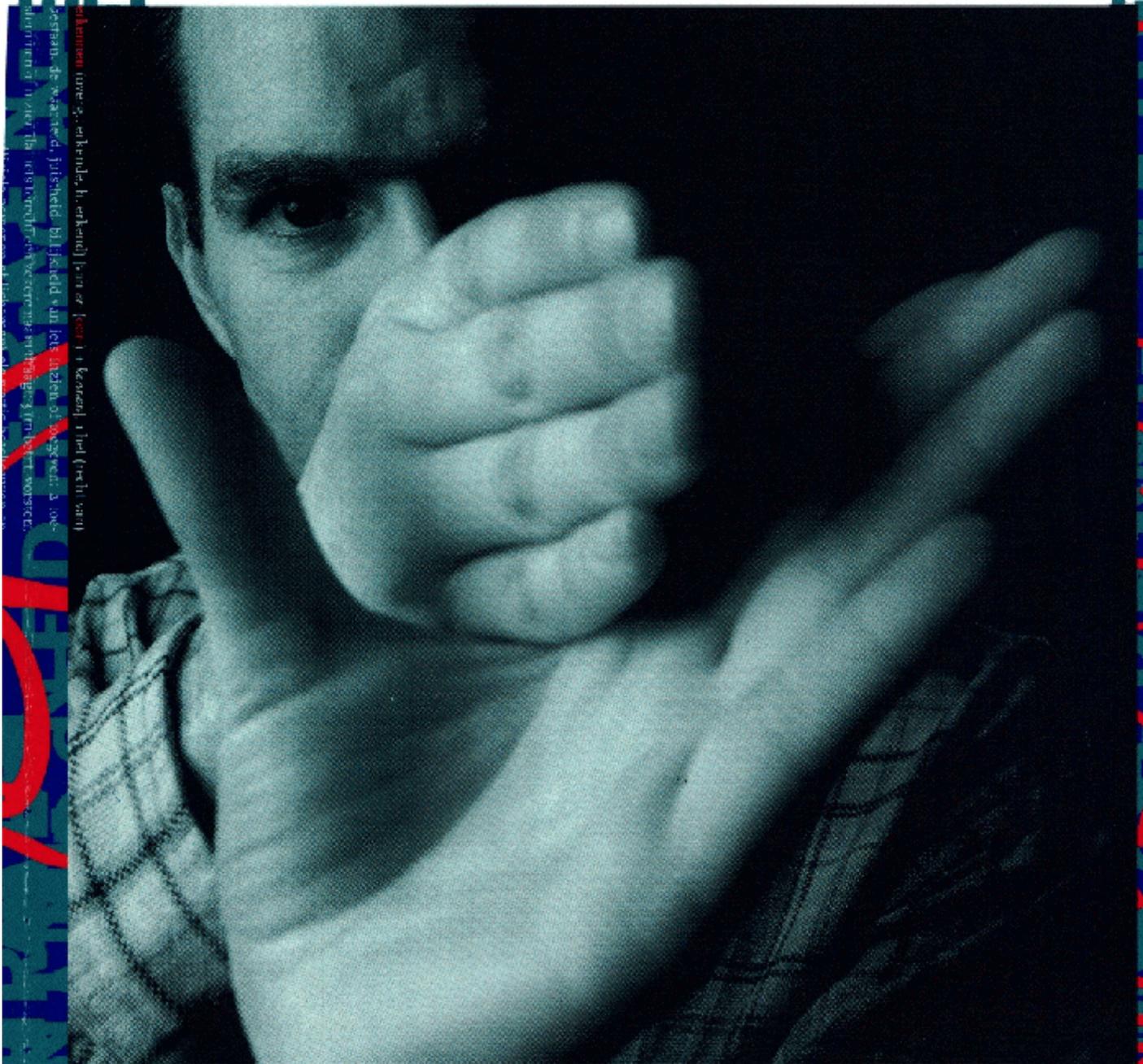
UPDATE 1997-2001

of

Méér dan een gebaar

(Report of the Committee

Sign language of the Netherlands)



Platform Recognition Sign language
of the Netherlands

UPDATE 1997-2001

OF

MEER DAN EEN GEBAAR
REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
FOR SIGN LANGUAGE OF THE
NETHERLANDS

PLATFORM FOR THE RECOGNITION OF
SIGN LANGUAGE OF THE NETHERLANDS

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Foreword

This report, Update 1997-2001 of *Meer dan een Gebaar* the report of the government committee for Sign Language of the Netherlands, is an initiative of the Platform for the Recognition of Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT)¹. The government report was written for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport. This present report is meant as a follow-up to that first report and shows to what extent the recommendations of that first report have been achieved and what problems still exist.

The Platform for the Recognition of Sign Language of the Netherlands was started in September, 2000, with the aim of developing a strategy to achieve the official recognition of NGT. All relevant organisations are represented in this platform on a voluntary basis (see list of participants). The Platform for the Recognition of Sign Language of the Netherlands has adopted a two-track approach as a result of the recent political developments: on the one hand to achieve legal recognition of NGT and on the other to offer suggestions for concrete provisions for deaf and hard-of-hearing people to stimulate their participation in society. This report is one such activity of the Platform.

This report has several aims:

- To provide insight into the developments of the recent years related to the use of NGT.
- To show that the government report's recommendations have been followed up within the organisations for the Deaf, the Dutch Sign Centre and the schools for the deaf in contrast to the minimal developments in other areas.
- To comply with the request of the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport for an overview of the problems Deaf people still have in their social functioning.

The Platform decided to provide an overview of achievements and problems in this report. This does not mean that the goal of the Platform to achieve legal recognition for NGT has become less important. Quite the opposite is true; the Platform will stress that the recognition of NGT is absolutely essential for the protection of a vulnerable minority.

The members of the Platform have done their best to present the information in their report as accurately and clearly as possible. We thank our colleagues for providing us with information. It is nevertheless possible that some information is incomplete in a few areas. Our apologies for that in advance.

This report is useful to gain insight into the current state of affairs in the Netherlands and the problems that still remain. It is also a guide to developing policy for government and society. The Deaf community and her associates show here what is still necessary to achieve equal rights for all, including deaf people.

Johan Wesemann, chair of the Platform for the Recognition of Sign Language of the Netherlands, on behalf of all members.

Utrecht, August 2001

¹ The report *Meer dan een Gebaar* is no longer available in Dutch except on the website of Stichting Dovenschap www.dovenschap.nl. An English summary is available on the website of Zentrum fuer Gebaardensprache, Hamburg University.

List of the members of the Platform for the Recognition of Sign Language of the Netherlands

Institution	Representative
Christian Institute of the Deaf Effatha	A. Mulder
Committee of school directors	F. van den Bosch
FODOK (Federation of organizations of parents of deaf children)	A. Hiddinga, T. van Bijsterveld
FOSS (Federation of organizations of parents of hard-of-hearing children and children with language problems)	G. Coenen
The Sign action committee	J.C.J. Hess
The Gelderhorst (centre for deaf senior citizens)	J. Tempelaar
Hand theatre	M. Julien
Hoge School van Utrecht	A.H.R. Stiekema.
Teacher and Interpreter training NGT	
Institute of the Deaf Sint Michielsgestel	F. van den Bosch
Royal Amman Foundation	P. van der Veen
Dutch Sign Centre	J.B. Wesemann
NSDSK (Dutch Foundation for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Child)	J.G. de Ridder
NVVS (National Organization of the Hard-of-Hearing)	R. Plomp
PPHD (Platform Psychiatric Care for the Deaf)	C. Erkens
Foundation Dovenschap (National Deaf Association)	E.Zeegers
Foundation Guyot	H. Korfage
University of Amsterdam, section NGT	A.E. Baker

0. Introduction

Background

In the framework of the present debate about the recognition of Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT) and related measures, the Platform for Recognition of Sign Language of the Netherlands has made an overview of the present situation and prepared a list of points of action in relation to the role of NGT and the accessibility of society for Deaf people.

The Platform has made this overview for two reasons:

In the first place this overview emphasizes the great importance of the five fundamental rights that underpin the Platform's opinion that NGT should be recognized as soon as possible:

1. *Deaf people have the right to use NGT and to the protection of NGT*
2. *Deaf people have the right to full membership of society*
3. *Deaf people have the right to be educated in their own language and culture*
4. *Deaf people have the right to the accessibility of public provisions through NGT.*
5. *The cultural identity of Deaf people must be recognized*

Secondly, the Platform wants to use this inventory to provide the Departments involved a clear view on the barriers to full participation of Deaf people, as well as insight into the measures that need to be taken in the shortest possible term, in order to remove these barriers. This overview by the Platform was prepared on the basis of the Commission on Sign Language of the Netherlands report "Meer dan een Gebaar", which was published in June 1997. That report contained recommendations in several areas relevant to equal participation in society. This report aims to provide insight into the developments since June 1997 and into those measures that still need to be implemented.

Guide for the reader

Firstly the developments in the group of people who use NGT (see section 6 of the report *Meer dan een Gebaar (MdeG)*). Subsequently you will find references to the division in domains as used in the *Meer dan een Gebaar (MdeG)*-report, Section III. Within this section, the specific situation of Deaf people in several domains of society has been described in 8 paragraphs, followed by recommendations to improve that situation (see: Paragraphs 10-17 MdeG). The numbering of the recommendations quoted corresponds to the one in the MdeG-report. In the last paragraph in this report you will find extensive information about recent and present developments in relation to the Sign language interpreting provision (See annex 6 MdeG).

In order to keep the size of this report manageable only the recommendations from the government report will be repeated here (in italics) before discussing the current state of affairs will be provided. The original argumentation will not be repeated. It is helpful to have a copy of the MdeG report at hand while reading this report.²

This overview will close with a list of action points which have been distilled from the text below.

² The report *Meer dan een Gebaar* is no longer available in Dutch except on the website of Stichting Dovenschap www.dovenschap.nl. An English summary is available on the website of Zentrum fuer Gebaardensprache, Hamburg University.

1. Developments in the target population

The target group in 1997 included various types of people who use NGT (see summary *MdeG*, p.54). In the group of the severely hard-of-hearing NGT was judged to be used but not on a large scale. Since 1997 it has become clearer that this group does profit from the use of NGT in education. In the experimental schools in Arnhem and Zwolle bilingual education is offered to both hard-of-hearing children and deaf children (see section 8). Increasingly hard-of-hearing people are using a sign interpreter.³ There are increasing numbers of children with a cochlear implant (CI). With good coaching such children can function as hard-of-hearing (see section 7) and therefore should be included in this group. In the education provision to children with severe speech and language impairments the role of NGT is currently being investigated.

Deaf-blind people are increasingly using an adaptation of NGT, the so-called 4-handed system. The system has recently been developed and gives deaf-blind people the possibility to learn a full language.⁴ A specialized interpreter training for the 4-handed system is offered at the Hogeschool in Utrecht for this group (see section 10).

Since the beginning of integration of deaf children in hearing schools the demand for courses on NGT for hearing pupils has increased. These pupils learn NGT as a second language.

In summary it is clear that the numbers of users of NGT have increased since 1997.

2. Governmental and legal domain (§ 10 MdeG)

Despite the MdeG-recommendations there is no formal law or regulation in relation to the provision of information and communication in NGT for Deaf citizens in the governmental or the legal domains.

Governmental information provision

Recommendation 16 MdeG 1997:92

The provision of information by the government for citizens must consider provision for citizens with a sensory/communicative impairment. For deaf citizens the government should provide information using one or more of the following means:

- *In written language, in Dutch (on paper or in digital form using for example cd-roms, internet, paying particular attention to visualization);*
- *In NGT on television*
- *In NGT, on videocassette or digitally*

In this area nothing has been regulated by the Government yet. The television-broadcasted P.O. box 51 spots (Public information from the Government) are not subtitled. Even though this information has become available on the Internet, providing a new source of information, the information is available in written Dutch. On top of the problems with Dutch as a second language for deaf people, the highly formal way the Dutch language is used often creates an additional barrier. Furthermore, we question if everybody is computer-literate. In any case,

³ Following the terminology of the report *MdeG* the term sign interpreter is used to cover all types of interpreting including interpreting using Dutch supported sign and 4-handed signs with deaf-blind people.

⁴ See recent book Balder A. et al. (2000) *Communicatie met doof-blinden (communication with the deaf-blind)* Utrecht, Hoge School .

there is no flow of information (general or specific) in NGT from the Government to Deaf citizens via cd-roms or the Internet. The information on the introduction of the Euro is a positive exception.

Sign language interpretation in the Government domain

Recommendation 17 MdeG 1997:93

In the formal recognition of NGT it needs to be determined that NGT is a language to which article 2:6 second clause of the AWB law (general law of government). At the same time through a concerted action of the Ministry of the Interior and the Deaf community rules need to be worked out for the use, quality and payment of interpreters in the area of government.

In the Government domain nothing has been formally arranged for deaf people. The Government has not yet taken appropriate measures to make communication accessible for deaf people in this domain.

Sign language interpretation and the Penal Code

Recommendation 18 MdeG 1997:96

In the guidelines for interpreter assistance in crime detection deaf people need to be explicitly named as a target group to whom these guidelines apply. In 1999, when these guidelines will be evaluated with regard to their becoming law, deaf people again need to be explicitly mentioned. Any refusal to provide an interpreter should be soundly motivated. It must be possible to formally protest against such a refusal

In the domain of the Penal Code there is no legal arrangement in relation to the provision of Sign language interpretation in court cases involving Deaf people as a suspect or as a witness. Generally speaking, judges find it self-evident that a Sign language interpreter is present for the communication with a Deaf suspect. The costs appear to be covered by the interpretation budget of the Department of Justice. In principle, however, a judge has the right to refuse the presence of a Sign language interpreter.

In the area of Civil Right no separate funding arrangement has been made. For legal procedures in this domain deaf people have to use the “Sign language interpretation provision for private use” (18 hours per year) This amount of hours is highly insufficient (see 8)

Quality of legal Sign interpreters

Recommendation 19 MdeG 1997:98

In developing law and rulings and in developing a policy for quality provision in the legal interpreting services there must be special attention paid to sign interpreters. This area requires special attention in the interpreter training.

Within the sign language interpreter training program there is no specific focus (yet) on the way sign language interpreters should function in a court setting. So far, no sign language interpreter has specialized as a legal/court interpreter. Specific requirements for this role have not yet been formulated.

3. Culture (§ 11 MdeG)

NGT and Deaf Culture

Recommendation 20 MdeG 1997:101

In the formal recognition of NGT it must be explicit that recognition also covers culture in that language.

At the time MdeG was published (June 1997) there was scarcely any provision. Secretary of State Nuis had just asked the Arts Council to advise him on an application by Vi-taal. Apart from Vi-taal, also the Handtheatre and a number of individuals were active in this domain. Vi-taal, the FODOK (National Association of Parents of Deaf Children) and the Amsterdam Association of Parents of Deaf Children had produced a number of videotapes. On these tapes stories, fairytales or children's movies were made accessible for Deaf children by using a Deaf storyteller or a sign language interpreter.

All these achievements were accomplished on a project-basis. The official 'arts circles' usually turned down project-applications using arguments referring to the therapeutic nature of the activity and to insufficient artistic quality of the performances.

Since 1997 there have been several productions. However, these were funded by a variety of Foundations and associations, and time and time again the argument had to be made that NGT is a language in which artistic expressions is possible. . For example: the first children's movie during the Cinekid Festival was interpreted 'live' into NGT, upon request of the Amsterdam Association of Parents of Deaf Children (and financed through the "Sign language interpretation provision for private use" of the Deaf children). Other activities (such as sign language interpretation of guided tours for children in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, and sign language interpretation of mainstream children's theatre plays) were organized on a local level, mainly by parents associations or individual parents and, again, financed by 'pooling' the children's rights to use sign language interpreters 18 hours a year for private use.

The Amsterdam Association of Parents of Deaf Children received funding for the production of a number of NGT-interpreted videotapes of Dutch children's movies. The FODOK, the national parents association, made three video-tapes with fairytales in NGT. All these initiatives were taken by parent associations. One exception was the 1999 Gay Games, where the organization of the Gay Games took the initiative to make a large number of theatre and music performances accessible through sign language interpretation.

A number of sign language interpreters have also been active in making musical and theatrical performances accessible; usually the funding of these activities came from the Deaf participants 'private interpreting hours'.

Political responsibility

Recommendation 21 MdeG 1997:101

The government should take steps to create financing for a stimulating policy with respect to artistic productions in NGT on the basis of a general political responsibility for NGT.

In the meantime, the Arts Council has produced a Culture Paper explicitly mentioning artistic expressions in NGT. It appears to be difficult for the Funds to assess artistic expressions in NGT. The Fund for Literary Arts took the initiative to develop assessment criteria. In May 2001 a study day was organized for the other Funds and policy makers, primarily serving as an introduction to artistic expressions in NGT, but also as a start to the formulation of these criteria. Only a few policy makers from the other Arts Funds in fact attended, but the day did provide a starting point. During the day proposals were made to install a special commission

for the promotion of NGT-projects (in several ways) and for the development of criteria for the assessment of project applications.

Minor developments can be seen. The Handtheater has received a 4-year structural subsidy, both from the national and the local Amsterdam government. Apart from theatre plays the Handtheater also realizes educational projects in cooperation with schools for Deaf children. Vi-taal is still fighting for structural funding and is continuing its activities on a voluntary basis and project subsidies. The National Reading Association has adopted the annual reading/ storytelling competition for Deaf children as a structural activity within its funding program.

Accessibility of cultural activities in Dutch

Recommendation 22 MdeG 1997:102

The government needs to develop proposals for making museums and cultural activities accessible to deaf people.

A number of mainstream (children's) theatre companies have (voluntarily and upon their own initiative) structurally planned a number of sign language interpreted performances of each new production ('Opus One', 'V.O.F. de Kunst' and 'Melody Productions', for example). In the case of Opus One, the company itself has successfully applied to the Department of Education, Culture and Science for the funding of 10 interpreted performances.

The Amsterdam Association of Parents of Deaf Children has been an important driving force behind making theatre performances and Dutch spoken movies accessible. The Association is now cooperating with two involved and experienced interpreters in establishing a non-profit organisation with the objective to provide access to theatre and film, in order to guarantee the continuity of such projects. Funding agencies provide funding to make children's movies accessible relatively easily. However, an application by the Amsterdam Association for Parents of Deaf Children for the production of a number of interpreted plays and films over a 4-year period, for children as well as adults (since 1997 a number of productions have been realised and the necessary expertise in this field has been developed), was rejected by the Arts Council and the Minister of Culture. The argument used was, that the project did not concern an original artistic expression. An appeal against this decision was turned down.

In general, there needs to be much more room for providing access to artistic productions and Dutch culture in general. Apart from the general recommendations 20, 21 and 22 from the report, the Platform signals a need for attention to the following issues:

- Structural funding needs to be made available for the development of cultural expressions in NGT. Money is needed, but also a vision.
- Needed is a coherent policy, aimed at the creation of the right conditions for the development of new art forms and the development of artistic NGT-craftsmanship. Also here training is needed as well as the transfer of know-how. Deaf students need to have the possibility of a wide orientation in the Arts during their education in order to create their own cultural place. A policy is needed which encourages the creation of a Dutch Deaf cultural tradition. Apart from funding and a vision, what is also needed is training. It is vital that foreign (Deaf) artists can be invited to give training courses, master classes, etc.
- Deaf education should pay more attention to creative subjects and the introduction of pupils to cultural expression. Most Deaf schools do teach Deaf Culture as a subject,

but both in primary and secondary deaf education there is a painful lack of creative and cultural subjects in the curriculum (not only drama, but also visual arts, film/video arts). Appropriate attention should be paid to this deficit.

- In relation to the above: theatre schools, art- and film Academies should be made better and specifically accessible for Deaf students.
- Study grants should be made available for placements and courses with foreign (theatre) companies and artists.
- A commission should be installed (following the proposals made during the study day on NGT and Arts) for the assessment of artistic expressions in NGT, with the competence to allocate funding to projects.

4. The Media (§ 12 MdeG)

Subtitling

Recommendation 23 MdeG 1997:104

The government should ensure that a high proportion of programmes from both the state and commercial broadcasting companies are sub-titled.

The situation has slightly improved since the publication of the report. At that time 20-30% of television programs was subtitled via Teletext, exclusively on public channels. No commercial provided any subtitling. Nowadays 50% of the public channel broadcasts is subtitled via Teletext and 1 program on one of the commercial channels is subtitled via Teletext. The latter was the result of a powerful lobby and demonstrations by the Deaf community. When deciding which programs will be subtitled, 'relevance' and 'popularity' are the main criteria. Also, subtitling is provided during important sport events (Olympic Games, World Soccer Championship) and news on the royal family (engagements, weddings). In relation to children programs the decision to subtitle is taken in a way that exclusively favours informative over entertainment programs.

Still, the decision to subtitle any program is taken on the basis of viewer ratings. The quality of subtitles needs to be improved. Especially during 'live'-programs the quality is often far below acceptable standards.

For years now the installation of a user panel has been requested. Deaf (and hard-of-hearing) people must be given an important say in establishing both quantitative and qualitative subtitling standards.

Sign language interpretation on TV

Recommendation 24 MdeG 1997:105

The government should make an agreement with the state and commercial broadcasting companies with regard to using a sign interpreter on screen. Any agreement should be continually reviewed in relation to technical developments.

Here we have seen a small improvement. A number of daily news programs (always the short, 5-minute ones) is interpreted. Also, the interpreted version of the daily news-for-children programs is broadcast around noon. The experimental phase ended with a positive evaluation, resulting in the continuation of the interpretation of these programs, for the time being.

Furthermore, the annual presentation of the government action plan by the queen is interpreted. Occasionally, other programs are broadcast in an interpreted version, this year's arrival of Sinterklaas (Dutch Christmas tradition, GW) for example. This programme received an immediate and vast audience (186.000 viewers). Broadcasting statistics and the audience feedback received show there was an audience among hearing viewers as well. The tv station

received many positive responses; viewers who ‘happened to zap to the station and kept watching’ expressed that the sign language interpreter had ‘additional value’.

Editing a sign language interpreter into the broadcast image is a recent technique and could be used much more widely. Also in this field there is little technical expertise. It is necessary to develop a further understanding of the specific requirements for interpreting NGT in a television setting. In this process the know-how and expertise of both the target audience and the sign language interpreters are vital ingredients.

TV Program in NGT

Recommendation 25 MdeG 1997:106

The government should agree with one or more of the broadcasting companies for a television program to be broadcast once a week on NGT and deaf culture.

There is still no NGT television program. Not only would this provide an important way to disseminate the sign language (expansion of vocabulary and a natural instrument for standardization), first and foremost, however, it would provide an important opportunity for Deaf people to make their culture and its cultural expression -partially- accessible for the hearing people in society.

In November 2001 an NGT-course for beginners will be broadcast as part of the adult education programming. In parallel, a new soap series will have a storyline including a Deaf girl who communicates in NGT and expresses her experiences in the hearing world.

These are useful programs for educating hearing people, but they cannot serve as a replacement for a special television program for Deaf people. Such a program already exist for years in the UK, *See Hear*. Secretary of State Van der Ploeg has expressed the view that a television program of Deaf people “is desirable” and there are frequent rumours that one would start soon, but there still is no final plan.

Further to recommendations 23, 24 and 25 from the report, the following issues require attention:

- Training and education of Deaf people for positions such as program maker, cameraman/woman, technician, etc. In the context of the emancipation of Deaf people a crucial and often forgotten aspect is their disadvantage in terms of professional knowledge and practical skills. Educational possibilities are either not available or so inaccessible that the result is a lack of expertise such that the target group is underrepresented in advising on broadcasting matters.
- Also in the field of ‘new media’ a (governmental) policy is needed, that specifically takes Deaf people’s interests into account in terms of the communication potential of these media. The scope ranges from the opportunities of the Internet via mobile telephones (and the possibilities for a national warning system for Deaf people via mobile phones) to video-telephones.
- The potential of Internet as a means of communication need to be better exploited in the provision of (semi-)public services: for example, ways to digitally report crimes to the police. Recently, the Secretary of State of Public Health, Welfare and Sport, Ms Vliegthart, appointed a Deaf Ambassador, in the framework of the “Remove the Barriers”-campaign, which aims at creating better access to the Internet for people with disabilities, including Deaf people.

5. Labour market (§ 13 MdeG)

Sign language interpretation on the Labour Market

Recommendation 26 MdeG 1997:109

Deaf people must be able to participate in the labour market in the widest sense on an equal footing. This entails the use of a sign interpreter in at least the following situations:

- *Job agencies*
- *Job applications*
- *Internal meetings*
- *Union activities*
- *Participation in the work council*
- *Communication with clients and external customers of the company*
- *On-the-job Training*
- *Dismissal and re-organization*

Since July 1st 1998 deaf people can use the law on the (re-)integration of people with disabilities (REA) in order to get the right to use a sign language interpreter in their employment setting, as recommended in the report. This law foresees in subsidies and other instruments for people with disabilities to stay in employment or find employment (again). Deaf people can call on this law to receive a personal budget through one of the Implementation organizations for Social Security, the so-called UVI's.

The sign language interpreting provision is restricted to situations where the communication of Deaf employees is directly related to their employment. It is not clear if the provision allows for, for example, trade-union work or similar activities.

The same law, REA, also covers the sign language interpreter provision for Deaf students in mainstream secondary educational settings (see also 7). It is not yet clear if the scope of the law includes all types of education.

Deaf people employed in sheltered workshops fall outside of the scope of the REA, based on the assumption that these workshops have sufficient facilities to enable employment.

In most cases, a sign language interpreter is made available by the sheltered workshops and funded from the sheltered workshop budget.

A deaf employee whose job is threatened has to use hours from their personal interpreter budget.

Funding of sign language interpretation in employment settings

Recommendation 27 MdeG 1997:109

The financing of sign interpreters in the labour market should preferably be organized following the new law on reintegration.

Deaf people can use a sign language interpreter for 15% of their effective number of working hours, compared to 10% in 1997. Both the regulations and the rates are decided by the LISV, the national institute for social security.

A substantial raise of the number of employment related interpretation hours

Recommendation 28 MdeG 1997:110

It is essential that the number of interpreting hours available for the labour market be quickly increased. The maximum number of hours should not be determined on the basis of a general rule but according to the amount of communication with hearing people that is necessary for the particular job.

The present legislation foresees in an appeal procedure for the amount of interpretation allowed. Under the 1997 legislation, this meant a 20% maximum, the maximum under the present REA-legislation is to date unknown.

Fast procedure for the allocation of interpretation hours for employment settings
Recommendation 29 MdeG 1997:110

The application for interpreting hours in the labour market should be possible following a short and simple procedure. This procedure should involve a marginal testing of the application in terms of the type of work involved and the amount of contact with hearing people.

In general, the current administrative procedure of applying for sign language interpretation through the UVI's is smooth compared to the previous (LISV-)route. Staff shortages within the UVI's are currently affecting the smooth implementation of the procedure.

6. Health Care and Social Services (§ 14 MdeG)

NGT in health care and social services

Recommendation 30 MdeG 1997:115

NGT should be used in the services offered to deaf clients in both the health services as in mental care and social services. This means that the most essential information must be available on video and that in direct communication with health and social service officers NGT should be used, either by providing sign interpreting – financed through the AWBZ – or by employing officers competent in NGT.

An increasing number of organizations are using sign language interpreters or NGT or NmG (Sign Supported Dutch) skilled staff members. In the provision of care to adult and elderly Deaf people a variety of communication forms is required, given the variety of educational backgrounds in terms of language and communication within the adult deaf population. In the framework of care for elderly Deaf people it is of prime importance to communicate in a way that meets the needs and preferences of the (elderly) Deaf people. There is a wide range of communication styles among Deaf people who received their education before the onset of bilingual education. Therefore elderly Deaf people need to be offered different communication forms, such as NmG, lip-reading, written interpretation, four-handed signing, etcetera. The introduction of NGT should not exclude the use of other forms of communication, on the contrary, it should serve as a facilitator. Currently, both the funding and the organization of sign language interpretation in health settings and social services are the responsibility of the individual clients. Both should become a responsibility of the care provider. Communication in health settings and social services is neither predictable nor plannable for individual Deaf clients. For many treatments the amount of 'private setting interpreting hours' (18, see also: 8) is clearly insufficient. Health information is not provided on video as standard practice. The small amount of available information has been funded by local or regional organizations.

Further to Recommendation 30 from the report, additional attention needs to be paid to the following points for action:

- Interpreting in health settings and social services requires specific knowledge and skills. Specialized training opportunities need to be created for sign language interpreters.
- A certification system needs to be developed for specialized care providers (institutions) working with a Deaf client population, in the area's of mental and general health care, nursing and social work. The next step is the formulation of

obligatory standards for both mainstream and specialized providers of services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

- A survey will result in a clear overview of care providers with specific services targeting Deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Each specialized care provider should establish basic conditions and quality criteria for certification, in close consultation with client organizations. Client organizations should enter a dialogue with the government (Ministry of Health) about criteria that need to be met by mainstream care providers in caring for and treating Deaf and hard-of-hearing clients.
- Directly related to the recognition of sign language are a number of criteria that specialized service providers must meet in order to be eligible for certification. Parts of the certification plan should at least include:
 - ❑ A communication policy and communication working plan
 - ❑ A (staff) training policy in NGT and other forms of communication, and Deaf culture
 - ❑ A protocol describing the use and required quality of sign language interpreters
 - ❑ Minimum standards for the large scale use of audio-visual means of communication and technical aids.
 - ❑ A plan demonstrating the specialized service provider's positive intention to promote familiarity with and use of NGT within and outside of the organization
 - ❑ A staffing policy encouraging the employment by the care provider of an increased number of Deaf and hard-of-hearing staff members.
 - ❑ Several research projects have demonstrated a clear correlation between on the one hand communication problems and the past lack of availability of bilingual education, and on the other hand the greater occurrence of mental health problems among Deaf people. Further research into this correlation is needed.
 - ❑ Specialized (health) care providers should evaluate the communication of clients and provide communication training as a standard practice during both research and treatment phase.

7. Family guidance programs (§ 15 MdeG)

Target group for Family guidance programs

Recommendation 31 MdeG 1997:118

Family guidance concentrates now on (the parents of) pre-lingually deaf children in the ages group 0-5 years. The guidance offered to parents whose child became deaf after the age of 2 years should continue up to the age of 7 years.

The target group has remained the same (0-5 years) and has not been extended to 7 years. The past period has shown some differentiation within the target group of 0-5 years. Deaf children are being referred at an increasingly young age. The average age of the first contact was 2 years in 1997, in 2000 the average age was around 18 months. This age shift has led to a larger number of children in the family guidance program than originally budgeted for. The neo-natal hearing screening which will soon be introduced nation-wide will further lower this age. This screening, that takes place on the 4th day of life will result in children being referred to Audiology Centres within six weeks after birth for a diagnosis of the nature and degree of hearing loss. The aim is to refer children and their parents to parent guidance programs specialized in children with a severe hearing loss at the age of a few months. It is important for the family program to start before the age of 6 months. Under those conditions, and of course efficient and effective guidance programs, the child will have the best opportunity to develop in terms of language.

Another development is the increasing number of non-Dutch-speaking families in the program. Also there seems to be an increase in numbers of children with multiple disabilities.

The provision of cochlear implants (CI) to children also has an impact on the target group. The increased focus on CI for deaf children within the Audiology Centres in the Netherlands is obviously resulting in an increased number of clients for the family guidance programs. It is their task to inform parents about CI, and they also have a role to play in the application to a CI-team. After the CI-operation has taken place, further guidance is also provided by these programs.

Developments in the area of CI have to be seen in the context of neo-natal hearing screening. Now that deafness in children can be diagnosed at an earlier age, in principle it is possible to use CI in younger Deaf children.

The increased differentiation within the target group results in a greater number of families with more complex issues requesting family guidance program services. This problem was discussed in mid 2001 with the funding agencies (the National Care Insurance Board) on behalf of the seven family guidance centres, aiming at an increase of the overall available amount of funding.

Continuing education for parents

Recommendation 32 MdeG 1997:118

It is of importance that parents can continue to learn NGT after the family guidance period has ended so that their communication with their child is optimal. For reasons of continuity it is sensible to organize this training through the family guidance services, with funding through the AWBZ.

No arrangement has yet been made for the training of parents after the end of the family guidance program (5 years).

Differentiated NGT-courses

Recommendation 33 MdeG 1997:118

The committee suggests that the Dutch Sign Centre should develop and provide a differentiated range of courses, consisting at least of the following:

- *General group courses NGT (in the form of contract teaching)*
- *Language laboratory*
- *Self teaching courses for parents advanced in NGT for the purpose of keeping up and developing their skills in NGT after the period of family guidance.*

The family guidance centres offer several courses. They offer the NGT parent modules to parents: lessons at home and groups lessons up to the age of 3 years. After that follow-up courses are provided depending on the arrangements agreed on with the school the child attends or the family guidance centre of combination of the two. The centres also provide a book-reading course up to the age of 3 years and a course "Interaction with your deaf child". Since the age of registration is getting younger due to the neo-natal screening these courses need to be adjusted to the younger child. For this purpose a course on pre-linguistic development and video observation programs are being developed within the group of Audiology Centres. The development of these courses falls outside the budget of the family guidance centres.

Since the target group is becoming more diverse, a survey needs to be carried out of the needs of the family guidance services and how these can be met in a way which meets high linguistic and educational standards. The courses offered must be suitable for parents of very young children for example.

In the context of an increase differentiation within the target group, an inventory of needs of family guidance programs is needed, as well as a linguistically and educationally responsible response to these needs. For example, the offered program needs to be adjusted to parents of very young children. With this aim in mind, the National Commission on Family Guidance

recently created a platform in order to reach this objective together with the parent associations involved.

The role of NGT in the guidance of young CI-implanted Deaf children also needs to be clarified. Programs need to be developed to meet the needs of (parts of) the target group.

The National Commission on Family Guidance (LGC) considers it her task to tackle these questions in an expert way.

Further to recommendations 31, 32 and 33 the following issue deserves attention:

- Funding needs to be made available in order to research the needs of parents and children within the increasingly diverse target group of the parents guidance programs, as well as possible forms of bilingual parent courses (in NGT and Dutch)

8. Education (§ 16 MdeG)

NGT acquisition in special education

Recommendation 34 MdeG 1997:121

Children deaf from an early age should preferably have schooling certainly in the early primary phase (4-10) in a special education setting.

Children who are deaf from an early age are eligible for primary secondary education in one of the 4 Schools for Deaf children and in the experimental schools in Arnhem and Zwolle for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. They can develop NGT-skills there. Not all parents opt for such an educational setting.

Integration in secondary education

Recommendation 35 MdeG 1997:123

Deaf children should have their secondary education wherever possible in mainstream secondary schools,. The interpreting services need to take this into account. There should also be the possibility to still take part in some classes within the special education setting for those pupils who are integrated in mainstream schools.

There are few developments to be reported here. The development of Regional Expertise Centres (REC's) is nationally taking place rapidly. These REC's will shape the cooperation between special schools for Deaf (and hard-of-hearing) children and mainstream education in a variety of ways. The experiences of the small number of mainstreamed Deaf children indicate a severe limitation in the availability of interpreter services.

Integration in primary and secondary education with a personal budget

Recommendation 36 MdeG 1997:123

When the plans for the implementation of the Backpack policy⁵ (1996) are worked out, advice should be given to schools and parents as to the possible 'packages' of care, education and supporting which the role of NGT as the native language of the deaf is made clear. The use of sign interpreters in mainstream educations should not be financed out of the Backpack budget.

As mentioned above, few developments have taken place in this area.

⁵ The Backpack policy (*Rugzak*) is a policy in which care and educational provision for a child with special needs is financed out of a budget allocation to the parents on the basis of the child's needs. The parents have therefore a choice in the facilities for their child.

Further training for teaching staff in integrated educational settings

Recommendation 37 MdeG 1997:124

For those teachers working in mainstream education with deaf pupils a program of training needs to be developed.

Nothing has been formally arranged. So far, in the few cases of integrated education information for the hearing teacher has to be searched on an individual, ad hoc basis. This situation is far from satisfactory.

Bilingualism as the guiding educational principle in deaf education

Recommendation 38 MdeG 1997:124

The concept of bilingual education must be adopted as the didactic basis for education of the deaf.

All 4 schools of the deaf and the experimental schools in Arnhem and Zwolle have a bilingual program. The Koninklijke Ammanstichting started a bilingual program in one class in 1994. Since then all other schools have worked out their bilingual policy and are now implementing it.

The NGT Steering Group started in 1998 with a number of projects funded by the Department of Education, Culture and Science. In one of these projects bilingual curricula have been developed for implementation within the Deaf Schools. All schools cooperate under the project coordination of the Dutch Sign Centre (Nederlands Gebarententrum, NGC) and supported by the Rotterdam-based Centre for Educational Services. Curricula which are being developed cover the subjects of NGT, Dutch as a Second Language and Deaf Culture. In the meantime, educational objectives have been formulated and the general educational content have been developed. At present, educational materials are being revised and developed. The current estimate is that five more years will be needed in order to finalize the design and implementation of these curricula.

In the longer term, the output of the GIDS-, Evident- and Visicast-projects will contribute to the exploitation of multimedia-techniques supporting bilingual education.

NGT as the language of instruction in Deaf education

Recommendation 39 MdeG 1997:125

NGT should be the first language of instruction in the education of the deaf, that is the language in which all subjects are given.

In the Guyot-schools, for example, NGT is the language of instruction throughout the full curriculum, including the instruction in specific subjects. Dutch is offered as a second language:

- integrated in the program for children until the age of 6, and, starting in Group 3 (age over 6), as a separate subject.
- Spoken Dutch in (classical) speech therapy starting in the first group.

Methods used are: the Language Plan for 4 and 5 year old children (lexicon), Groei ("Growth") and Leespad ("Reading Path").

NGT as a separate subject in Deaf education

Recommendation 40 MdeG 1997:125

NGT should become a subject in the curriculum in deaf education. The development of a curriculum and methods need to be developed quickly; the Dutch Sign Centre can fulfil an important part in this development.

All Deaf schools offer NGT as a subject in the bilingual groups. The Koninklijke Ammanstichting, for example, offers the subject for at least two hours per week. In some

groups for children with multiple impairments, the subject is offered more frequently. The curriculum and methods are still being developed within the Dutch Sign Centre. Deaf Culture has been included as a subject in the curriculum of all schools.

Further training staff members Deaf schools

Recommendation 41 MdeG 1997:126

An intensive training program needs to be worked out and implemented in the very near future for all staff members of the schools of the deaf.

All Deaf schools are actively involved in providing NGT-training for their staff and report a strong increase in the recognition of the need for bilingual education. The differences in In the Effatha-school, for example, almost all staff members have finished the initial modules of NGT-courses.

NGT-coaching is available in parallel to the NGT-courses. Cooperation with a Deaf colleague is proving to be an important factor for the improvement of NGT-skills and for the desired cultural transformation process.

Integration in secondary education with a personal budget

Recommendation 42 MdeG 1997:123

When the plans for the implementation of the Backpack policy⁶ (1996) are worked out, advice should be given to schools and parents as to the possible 'packages' of care, education and support in which the role of NGT as the native language of the deaf is made clear. The use of sign interpreters in mainstream educations should not be financed out of the Backpack budget.

As mentioned above, few developments have taken place in this area. The development of Regional Expertise Centres (REC's) is taking place rapidly, nationwide. These Rec's will shape the cooperation between special schools for Deaf (and hard-of-hearing) children and mainstream education in a variety of ways.

Sign language interpretation in secondary education

Recommendation 43 MdeG 1997:128

It should be a basic assumption by the mainstreaming of a deaf pupil in secondary education that a sign interpreter is essential. There must be a clear right to have such an interpreter. In collaboration with the organizations for the deaf and the Council for the Handicapped a policy should be worked out for assessing the number of interpreting hours required.

The experiences of the small number of mainstreamed Deaf children indicate a severe limitation in the availability of interpreter services.

Examination of Deaf students in secondary education

Recommendation 44 MdeG 1997:128

In keeping with the current examination regulations it must be possible for oral examinations to be taken using a sign interpreter.

No relevant developments have taken place.

Accessibility of higher education

The entry requirements (Colloquium doctum)⁷ have not yet been adapted. There is still no general regulation facilitating easier access to higher education. Each higher educational

⁶ The Backpack policy (*Rugzak*) is a policy in which care and educational provision for a child with special needs is financed out of a budget allocation to the parents on the basis of the child's needs. The parents have therefore a choice in the facilities for their child.

⁷ The colloquium doctum is a university entrance examination for students who do not have the regular examinations required for entry.

institution has its own set of rules and procedures. Student support services have different degrees of information about opportunities and difficulties, resulting in higher barriers for some students. The Faculty of Human Sciences of the University of Amsterdam is currently changing its colloquium doctum procedure to meet Deaf student needs. But, once again, there is no central coordinated policy.

Sign language interpretation in higher education

Recommendation 45 MdeG 1997:130

Applications for sign interpreting in higher education should only be tested in a minimal way without using any criterium such as profit for the labour market.

The application procedures seem to be operating rather smoothly, apart from their very long duration. A sign language interpreter can be applied for on the basis of the REA-law (See also 5). No information is available on the number of applications rejected. The greater problem is the availability of sufficiently qualified sign language interpreters.

Notetakers in higher education

Recommendation 46 MdeG 1997:130

The use of a note-taker for deaf students in higher education should be made possible.

The NGT-teacher/Interpreter training program at the Utrecht HvU has already established a one-year program to train notetakers and velotypists. 8 Students are currently enrolled and will finish their training in 2001. Next year 11 students have been admitted to the training program. The funding situation for this service has not yet been clearly regulated (see 10).

Services by institutions for higher education

Recommendation 47 MdeG 1997:131

Institutions of higher education should develop regulations, preferably in collaboration, for the provision of facilities for handicapped students; in such regulations the special needs of deaf students must be covered.

No improvements can be reported in this area. Teachers, for example, receive no instruction in how to deal with a sign language interpreter when using audio-visual materials, and no information about how the speed of speech can impact the accuracy of the interpretation, etc. Also, no prior information is given about the participation of a Deaf student in lectures.

Sign language interpretation when following a longer educational route in higher education

Recommendation 48 MdeG 1997:131

Deaf students should always be granted sign interpreting even when taking successive degrees at the same level and higher qualifications.

No funding can be obtained for a university level study after a higher education vocational training. As a result, such studies are always part-time studies. Whether problems occur in terms of the sign language interpretation provision is still unclear.

NGT-teacher and sign language interpreter training program (§ 16.5.3 MdeG)

The pilot-group at the Hoge School van Utrecht will complete its studies in 2001: a total number of 10 interpreters and 12 NGT-teachers. Specialization courses will be offered as further training programs. A further training program for interpreting for Deaf-Blind people has been fully developed. An upgrading-course for currently qualified interpreters is currently taking place, but not all currently qualified interpreters are taking part. The establishment of a Registry of Sign Language Interpreters is being developed in the framework of a project run

by the NBTG (National Association of NGT-interpreters), which is being financed by the LISV. The number of staff members of the HvU has increased considerably, and includes a large number of Deaf teaching staff members.

The HvU and University of Amsterdam programs are cooperating in order to achieve a smooth transition between the two programs. A number of HvU-students is expected to enter the UvA program in September 2001. 3 UvA-students will continue their training at the HvU from September 2001.

Sign language skills training is being provided in both institutions using the NGC-modules, which have been developed into a 42 study points-program, comparable to the instruction in any other language at University-level.

These modules should be accompanied by more instruction materials (videotapes, cd-roms etc.), but currently the means are lacking to develop these materials. The HvU can offer students the use of a video-(language-)lab, the UvA can not, given the impossibility to obtain funding so far.

Professorial Chair NGT

Recommendation 49 MdeG 1997:133

A professorial chair NGT should be created within a department of general linguistics.

This professorate has been established at the University of Amsterdam in 1999 and is called the chair of Sign Language of the Netherlands. It is a half-time function and Prof. Dr. Anne Baker has been appointed to this position.

Since 1999 the UvA has been offering an NGT specialization within the Institute of Language and Literature. This is the only program in its kind in the Netherlands. Students study General Linguistics, with a particular emphasis on Sign Linguistics. NGT language skill courses add up to 35 study points. With the introduction of a Bachelor and Masters degree system in 2002 a separate BA program will be offered at the University of Amsterdam with a Master's program in Linguistics with a specialization in Sign Linguistics.

NGT research program

Recommendation 50 MdeG 1997:134

The committee recommends the establishment of a research program for NGT within the framework of the national research school for linguistics (LOT).

The departure of one lecturer from Leiden University has endangered the continuation of this University's research program. One student is finishing her Phd. at Utrecht University. At Nijmegen University a temporary research program will start in 2002, funded by the Spinoza-funds of Prof. Muysken. This research group is primarily aiming at research into the phonology of NGT.

At the University of Amsterdam 5 Phd. students are writing their theses on varying aspects of sign languages. One university level teacher and one Professor are also engaged in research projects. The NGC is involved in applied linguistic research.

During the year 2000 the Dutch research landscape has seen a reorganization, which has shifted the emphasis from a national to a more local level collaboration. At this point in time, the initiation of cooperation is relying on the goodwill of individual researchers; no structural support is being provided. As a result of such an individual initiative a national Sign language research day was organized towards the end of 1998 (see also Crasborn et al. 1999). Another such day will be organized during spring 2002. In the summer of 2000, the

international “Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research” (TISLR-)conference was held in Amsterdam.

Research program into the sociological and educational aspects of NGT

Recommendation 51 MdeG 1997:134

Research into NGT and deaf culture needs to be supported within the social and education sciences.

The Institute for the Deaf at Sint Michielsgestel is currently involved in a project to evaluate bilingual programmes together with the Department of Education in Nijmegen. This project has been divided up into 3 partial projects: the development of testing tools measuring the communicative and language skills of young children in NGT, literacy skills of Deaf children and the decision making process of parents, specifically in relation to raising and educating the children.

Additional projects are urgently needed, also given the needs of family guidance programs (see also 7) and health care (see also 6).

Deaf teachers in basic education

Recommendation 52 MdeG 1997:135

It is important that deaf teachers be employed on teaching programmes in basic education directed at deaf people.

No relevant developments have taken place in this area.

Sign language interpreters in adult education

Recommendation 53 MdeG 1997:135

Deaf participants in teaching programmes in adult education should be able to use sign interpreters in the same way as suggested above in other areas of education.

Applications for sign language interpretation are treated in a variety of ways. A clear policy cannot be distinguished.

Remedial NGT-courses for deafened people

Recommendation 54 MdeG 1997:135

Deafened people who have no or little knowledge of NGT should be able to avail themselves of courses developed for their needs which should be provided by institutions for social services for deaf people.

Courses are being offered by, for example, the Robert Fleury Foundation for psychiatric patients. These courses are all based on the initiative of the organizations involved.

Deaf students in teacher training

Recommendation 55 MdeG 1997:136

It is desirable that one or two teacher training institutions concentrate resources to educate deaf students as teachers in amore professional way. This can be done within the framework of general care within the teaching programme and using the possibilities available in the optional subjects time.

A number of Deaf students are currently taking their training at the Tilburg teacher training program. The concentration of the students seems to be accidental, the Platform has not been able to find a specific policy within the training institution. Students at the Utrecht teacher training program now have the option of choosing NGT-modules in order to prepare for employment in special education.

9. Sign language interpreter provision for private settings (§ 17 MdeG)

Sign language interpreter provision for private settings

Recommendation 56 MdeG

It is necessary to increase substantially the number of interpreting hours available in the private setting. At the same time the application procedure and granting of applications should be made more simple and shorter. The applications made to different organisations must be dealt with in the same way.

Still, there is no increase in the number of interpretation hours for private settings. The present annual amount of 18 hours is clearly insufficient. During the spring of 2001 this issue has been raised in meetings with the Secretary of State of Health and the Directorate for Disability Issues. No explicit commitments have been made, but the Directorate admitted that 'this issue needs to be addressed'.

The application procedure is still too complex. A faster procedure is not yet in sight. The interpreter hours for private settings are financed by the so-called AWBZ-regulation. The organizations responsible for dealing with the applications are apparently using different standards in the application assessment procedure. The length of the procedure has remained unchanged: on average 3-4 months. Deaf people who are actively involved as leaders in (national) Deaf associations are not allowed a structural increase of the yearly 18 interpreting hours. The 'undue hardship'-clause (MdeG, page 175) provides insufficient possibilities. Regional variation in the standards applied are the rule rather than the exception. Once an application has been approved, this does not automatically imply that the full 18 hours are made available; in some instances the number of hours approved depends on the month of the application.

The National Deaf Association (Dovenschap) has organized a survey into the interpreting provision (application and approval procedures, familiarity with the provision, etc.). The conclusions of this report '*Quality improvement for and by Deaf people*' will be made public in September 2001 during the World Day of Deaf people. (see also:10)

The following issues need to be addressed here:

- The desired integration and participation of Deaf people in society are being seriously held back. In fact, one could say that the current policy (unintentionally) actually discourages integration and participation.
- Deaf people who are actively engaged as volunteers are limited in their opportunities by the lack of interpreting hours. There is a serious risk that this leads to a situation in which the "hearing board members" and/or staff members end up representing Deaf associations in meetings with *hearing organizations*. This seriously jeopardizes the consolidation and expansion of a critical mass of Deaf leaders in the representative structures.
- Access to cultural events is limited even further, if Deaf people have to fund their access from the currently available 18 hours (see also: 3)

10. Current developments sign language interpreter provision (Appendix 6 MdeG)

Changes after the introduction of the law on the (re-)integration of people with disabilities (REA).

The Sign language interpreter provision was financed from the AAW and now through the AWBZ. Until July 1st 1998 Deaf and hard-of-hearing people could use sign language

interpreters in the framework of one law: the “General Law on Employment Disabilities” (AAW). This law was implemented by the LISV, the National Institute for Social Security.

With the introduction of the Law on the Reintegration of Employment Disabled (REA) on July 1st 1998 the provision was split into different parts: the sign language interpreter provision for employment and educational settings is the responsibility of the LISV, the sign language interpreter provision for private use is the responsibility of the Board of Care Insurances (CVZ). The latter provision came into full force on January 1st 1999, after a 6-months transitional arrangement.

In principle, every Deaf person has the right to use sign language interpretation in educational and employment settings (with a maximum of 15% of the actual amount of working hours). For private setting 18 hours can be used annually by each Deaf individual. For Deaf-blind people a maximum of 168 hours is applied.

In order to avoid unnecessary complex procedures for the Deaf users, both LISV and CSV use the same funding system and hourly rates. The “Implementation organisations for Social Security”, the so-called UVI’s, implement the provision under the responsibility of LISV. CSV has delegated the implementation to the regional “care offices”, assigning each care office a proportion of the overall budget, calculated on the basis of the regional overall population.

The LISV is independent in adapting the regulation and the hourly rates. The CVZ is only mandated to prepare amendments in the interpreter provision for private use, however, the final decision making is a responsibility of the Minister of Health, Welfare & Sport. This has initially lead to a number of differences between the provisions in 2001:

- The regulations of the provision for private use contain a specific reference to only two interpreter agencies (TC Visinet and Riagg-Veluwe-Vallei), where the regulations of the employment and education provision leave room for other agencies. As a consequence, requests for a sign language interpreter in a private setting which are dealt with by another agency or organisation than the one explicitly mentioned, can only be reimbursed at the (lower) rate of independent interpreters.
- In work and teaching situations funding for communicative assistants and note-taker is possible (minimum rates) whereas the funding available for private settings is restricted to sign interpreting and velotypists.
- The hourly rates for employment and educational settings have already been price-indexed, the private hours have not yet been.

Proposed amendments in the procedure.

On November 15th 2000 the Secretary of State for Health, Welfare and Sport requested the CSV to prepare a proposal for a different funding system for sign language interpreting hours. (DGB/OAG-2122551). A similar request was addressed at the LISV by the Secretary of State for Social Affairs and Employment (SV/AVF/00/69051a). This letter included a request to indicate –if possible- the financial implications of the proposal.

The reasoning behind these requests involved problems with interpreter agencies as well as discrepancies between the actual amount of interpreted time and the total time and financial investment needed to enable this type of service. Especially travel expenses and the time investment in travel and ‘down time’ between interpreting assignments proved to be insufficiently covered by the hourly rates.

During the two-and-a-half year period of a separate regulation for private interpreting hours, the parties involved have had an opportunity to gain experience with the new system. Deaf people, interpreters and interpreter agencies did experience particular difficulties. Randstad,

an employment agency that mediated the greatest amount of interpreting hours, closed down its activities in this field by August 1st 2000. Shortly after, national newspapers published articles about the way sign language interpreters invoiced their work. These two facts caused the Departments involved to request a further investigation and, where necessary, amendments of the procedures.

In response to this request LISV and CVZ collaborated in a joint effort. Parties involved¹ were consulted, and CVZ and LISV entered a dialogue in search of a set of funding procedures that would best meet the interests of all parties involved. Staff members of LISV and CVZ collected information and exchanged ideas about a different rate system.

Both CVZ and LISV agree that having one rate system would be preferable. This conclusion lead to the joint development of the proposals for a different composition of the hourly rates. In this report, CVZ proposes further amendments of the funding regulations in agreement with the amended rate structure.

Furthermore, the meetings with the involved parties have lead to new insights which require further adaptations in the longer term. CVZ has included proposals to this effect.

Finally, the CVZ will address problems with the implementation and the provision of information.

CVZ proposes a differentiated rate structure:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. effectively interpreted time period | <i>differentiated by specialisation</i> |
| b. travel related expenses | <i>travel expenses, travel and 'down' time, calculated in kilometers</i> |
| c. initial fee | <i>if travel is less than 15 kilometers</i> |
| d. a mediation fee per assignment | |

The rates will be determined at a later date, after consultation with the LISV. July 1st 2001 is the target date for the new rate structure. CVZ also proposes to amend the funding regulations, enabling other organizations than the ones explicitly mentioned now to be eligible for mediation fees. In the longer term, the CVZ recommends the creation of a national registry of all sign language interpreters. A project to this effect is presently run by the national sign language interpreter association NBTG, financed by LISV.

In the longer term, research into alternative means of communication can increase the communication and self-care possibilities of Deaf people, as well as alleviate the consequences of the lack of sign language interpreters.

In cooperation with the regional care offices, CVZ intends to improve the practical implementation. Once the new rate structure has been finally approved, CVZ will publish an information brochure for the target group, in consultation with the national Deaf association and LISV.

In the meantime, the Secretary of State of Health, Welfare and Sport has announced in a letter, dated March 30th 2001 that the amended regulation is enforceable as of January 1st 2001, both in terms of rates and in terms of mediation agencies.⁸ A final decision is expected by mid October 2001.

¹ National Deaf Association (Dovenschap), National Association of Sign Language Interpreters (NBTG) and TC Visinet, an interpreter agency

⁸ (Source: Report Proposal for amendment of the funding procedures Sign language interpreter provision CvZ Report)

Unsolved problems.

- The funding of the provision is still based on two different regulations. This is not customer friendly.
- Given the great lack of sign language interpreters many Deaf people have stopped requesting interpreters, arguing that the chances no interpreter can be made available are too big. In practical terms, this results in a large underspending of the available budget for the provision
- The lack of available sign language interpreters may result in too little use of the allocated interpreting hours. The demand for interpreting situations however has not decreased, it is actually increasing.

Overview of points requiring attention and action

Governmental and legal domain

- Public information by the Government must be made accessible for Deaf people by using subtitles, cd-roms or the Internet.
- There is a need for more (specialized) sign language interpreters in the governmental and legal domain; a legal framework needs to be established for the right to this provision.

Culture

- Deaf people must have their own program on television, aimed at Deafness and Deaf Culture and, obviously, in NGT
- Arts education must be made accessible for Deaf students.
- A commission needs to be established for the assessment of artistic expressions in NGT. This commission must have a budget for funding projects.
- Dutch arts and culture must be made accessible for Deaf people on a structural basis.

Media

- A rapid increase of the amount of interpreted and subtitled programming for both young and adult people, informative as well as entertainment programs. The creation of a user panel.
- Media education must be made accessible for Deaf students.

Employment market

- The Law on Reintegration of Employment Disabled, REA, needs to be fine-tuned to the needs of Deaf people.
- A substantial increase of the amount of interpreting hours for employment settings is needed.

Health care and social services

- The funding for and organization of interpreting services in (mental) health care needs to be shifted away from individual clients to the care providers.
- Specialized sign language interpreters are needed in the field of (mental) health care.

- In consultation with client organizations, a specific quality certificate must be developed for care providers targeting Deaf people as a client group.
- Research is needed into the correlation between communication problems resulting from a lack of bilingual education and the higher incidence of mental health problems in the Deaf population.

Family guidance programs

- The age range of the target group for parents guidance programs needs to be extended to 7-year old children. The approaches used need to match the increasing diversity within the target group.
- Funding has to be made available to research the needs of different types of children and parents.

Education

- Curriculum development for NGT, Dutch as a second language and Deaf Culture needs to be funded on a structural basis for the next five years.
- NGT-training for parents and staff members needs to be funded on a structural and permanent basis via the Dutch Sign Centre (NGC, responsible for developing the modules) and the Deaf schools (implementation)
- A rapid increase of the number of Deaf teachers is needed. To this end, a formal agreement should be reached between the Department of Education, Culture and Science, teacher training programs and Deaf schools.
- A central policy needs to be formulated in relation to the admission of Deaf students into higher education.
- A national scientific research program for research into NGT and bilingual education must be developed.

Private settings

- A substantial increase is needed of the amount of interpreting hours for private settings. The application procedure needs to become simpler and faster.