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Deaf have vote

Final report

qualitative and quantitative data on
social participation of the Deaf citizens in EU



sin()sz



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Jakub Józefiak, *Deaf Have Vote* Project Coordinator

Pragnę podziękować wszystkim osobom, które wzięły udział w realizacji badań i przygotowaniu raportu – Głuchym, ekspertom oraz tłumaczom, dzięki którym zaangażowaniu udało się zebrać cenny i ciekawy materiał badawczy.

Jakub Józefiak koordynator projektu *Deaf Have Vote*

Szeretném ezúttal megköszönni mindenkinek, aki részt vett a kutatások és a jelentés megvalósításában. A projekt három országban készült: Lengyelországban, Szlovákiában és Magyarországon. A kutatások nagyon jó előkészítést és egy egész csapatnyi elkötelezett ember munkáját igényelték. A jelentést a kutatást végző személyek készítették illetve jelnyelvű és különböző nemzeti nyelvű tolmácsok, akik szorgalmas munkájuknak köszönhetően egy nagyon érdekes kutatási anyagot gyűjtöttek össze.

Jakub Józefiak a *Deaf Have Vote* projekt koordinátora

Rád by som sa poďakoval všetkým ,ktorí sa podieľali na realizácii výskumu a príprave správy. Realizovaný v troch krajinách: Poľsku, Slovensku a v Maďarsku, výskumy vyžadovali dobrú prípravu a nasadenie tímu. Tvorili ho osoby pripravujúce a vykonávajúce výskum, ako aj tlmočníci cudzích jazykov a posunkovej reči, ktorí prostredníctvom svojho zapojenia umožnili zhromaždiť zaujímavý výskumný materiál.

Jakub Józefiak koordinátor projektu *Deaf Have Vote*

Abstract in English

This report was prepared under the Deaf Have Vote project implemented by the Viribus Unitis Foundation and co-financed by the European Union under Europe for Citizens Programme. The report demonstrates the views, collected under the project, as expressed by communities related to deaf persons on their essential problems and barriers in communication and social integration. Moreover, the results of the research studies investigating the knowledge that deaf people have about the European Union, conducted under the project, and some proposals regarding their participation in social and civic life have also been presented and discussed.

The thematic scope of the studies and the report structure are based on the assumptions of the research request and were implemented and specified at the preliminary opinion survey stage of the pilot research studies. This suggests that within the preliminary assumptions of the project, deaf people groups had a significant impact on the thematic (objective) scope of the research being carried out and on the structure of the report, which corresponds to the overriding objective behind the project manifested in its title: *Deaf Have Vote*. Preliminary collection of the views in the deaf community helped to prepare an array of topics for the primary research that focused on the following issues: knowledge of deaf people about the European Union, education of the deaf and hearing-impaired persons, their participation in social and civic life, access (availability) to education, various services, culture, and the job market.

The report is the result of the qualitative and quantitative research studies designed and carried out in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, and provides the views collected during focus group interviews and the survey results. It illustrates respondents' knowledge and opinions on the issues being diagnosed. The report broadly refers to the specific statements made by FGI participants, which manifests to a certain extent, the identity of the deaf community. It presents opinions about the actual social reality experienced by the deaf. It also contains a generalization of the conclusions of research studies and recommendations for some proposed changes for the better, likely to be formulated on the basis of the empirical material collected.

The report emerges as the product of teamwork by people who have contributed in varying degrees to the effective execution of the project. They include deaf people participating in the research studies, experts preparing, designing, and implementing the studies, translators of sign and national languages, authors developing specific parts of the

report and expert-consultants who were responsible for the formulation of the conclusions and recommendations.

Abstract in Polish

Niniejszy raport powstał w ramach projektu *Deaf Have Vote*, realizowanego przez Fundację Viribus Unitis i współfinansowanego ze środków Unii Europejskiej w ramach projektu „Deaf have vote”, realizowanego przez Fundację Viribus Unitis i współfinansowanego przez Komisję Europejską w ramach programu Europa dla Obywateli. W raporcie przedstawione są zebrane w ramach projektu opinie środowisk związanych z osobami niesłyszącymi o podstawowych problemach oraz barierach w zakresie komunikacji i integracji społecznej, a także wyniki zrealizowanych badań na temat wiedzy Głuchych o Unii Europejskiej oraz niektóre postulaty dotyczące ich partycypacji w życiu społecznym i obywatelskim.

Zakres tematyczny realizowanych badań i struktura raportu zostały określone na podstawie założeń realizowanego wniosku i doprecyzowane na etapie wstępnego gromadzenia opinii w badaniach pilotażowych. Oznacza to, że środowisko osób niesłyszących w obrębie założeń wstępnych projektu miało znaczący wpływ na zakres tematyczny (przedmiotowy) zrealizowanych badań oraz strukturę raportu, co odpowiada głównemu celowi projektu, wyrażonemu w jego tytule: *Deaf Have Vote*. Wstępne gromadzenie opinii w środowisku osób niesłyszących pozwoliło na przygotowanie zakresu problematyki badań zasadniczych, która skoncentrowała się na zagadnieniach: wiedzy Głuchych na temat Unii Europejskiej, edukacji osób niesłyszących oraz słabosłyszących, ich partycypacji w życiu społecznym i obywatelskim, a także dostępu do edukacji, różnorodnych usług, kultury oraz rynku pracy.

Raport jest wynikiem zaprojektowanych i zrealizowanych w Polsce, na Słowacji oraz Węgrzech badań jakościowych i ilościowych, a prezentowane są w nim opinie zebrane podczas zogniskowanych wywiadów grupowych oraz wyniki badań ankietowych. Obrazuje on wiedzę i opinie badanych na temat diagnozowanych problemów. Raport szeroko odwołuje się do konkretnych wypowiedzi uczestników badań fokusowych, przez co manifestuje w pewnym stopniu tożsamość środowiska niesłyszących. Prezentuje opinie o realnej rzeczywistości społecznej, w której funkcjonują Głusi. Zawiera także uogólnienie wniosków badań i rekomendacje, będące propozycjami zmian na lepsze, które można sformułować na podstawie zebranego materiału empirycznego.

Raport jest produktem pracy zespołu osób. Zaliczyć można do nich osoby niesłyszące, które wzięły udział w badaniach, ekspertów przygotowujących, projektujących i realizujących badania, tłumaczy języków migowych oraz narodowych, autorów opracowujących poszczególne fragmenty raportu, a także ekspertów – konsultantów, którzy odpowiadali za sformułowanie wniosków i rekomendacji.

Abstract in Slovak

Táto správa bola vypracovaná v rámci projektu Deaf Have Vote realizovaného Nadáciou Viribus Unitis a spolufinancovaného z prostriedkov Európskej Únie v rámci Europe for citizens. V správe sú zhrnuté v rámci projektu názory týkajúce sa prostredia nepočujúcich osôb, na tému ich základných problémov a prekážok v komunikácii a spoločenskej integrácii. Prezentované a diskutované sú tiež výsledky realizovaných výskumných projektov na tému znalosti nepočujúcich o Európskej únii, a niektoré návrhy týkajúce sa ich účasti na spoločenskom a občianskom živote.

Tematický rozsah výskumov a štruktúra správy sú založené na základe predpokladov realizovaného projektu a upresnené vo fáze počiatočného zhromažďovania názorov v pilotných štúdiách. To znamená, že prostredie nepočujúcich malo v rámci predpokladov projektu významný vplyv na rozsah tém (predmetných) zrealizovaných výskumov a štruktúru správy, čo zodpovedá hlavnému účelu projektu uvedenému v jeho názve: Deaf Have Vote. Počiatočné zhromažďovanie názorov z prostredia nepočujúcich osôb umožnilo pripraviť rozsah problematiky pre nevyhnutné výskumy, ktoré sa zamerali na problematiku: znalosť nepočujúcich ľudí ohľadom Európskej Únie, vzdelávanie nepočujúcich a nedoslýchavých, ich účasť na spoločenskom a občianskom živote, prístupu (možnosti využitia) ku vzdelaniu, rôznych služieb, kultúry a trhu práce.

Táto správa je výsledkom vypracovaných a zrealizovaných kvantitatívnych a kvalitatívnych výskumov v Poľsku, na Slovensku a v Maďarsku, sú v nej uvedené názory zozbierané počas skupinových diskusií a výsledky ankiet. To ilustruje poznatky a názory respondentov ohľadom danej problematiky. Správa sa všeobecne odvoláva na konkrétne výpovede účastníkov skupinových diskusií, ktorá v istom stupni prejavuje identitu nepočujúceho prostredia. Prezentuje názory o skutočnej spoločenskej realite, v ktorej pôsobia nepočujúci. Obsahuje tiež zovšeobecnenie záverov výskumu a odporúčania, ktoré sú návrhmi pre zmenu k lepšiemu a ktoré možno formulovať na základe zhromaždeného empirického materiálu.

Táto správa je výsledkom tímovej práce ľudí, ktorí sa v rôznej miere pričínili k účinnej realizácii projektu. Patria medzi nich nepočujúce osoby, ktoré sa zúčastnili výskumu, odborníci pripravujúci, projektujúci a realizujúci výskumy, tlmočníci cudzích jazykov a posunkovej reči, autori vypracovujúci špecifické fragmenty správy, odborníci - konzultanti, ktorí boli zodpovední za formuláciu výsledkov a odporúčaní.

Abstract in Hungarian

Jelen jelentés a *Deaf Have Vote* projekt keretén belül készült, amit a Viribus Unitis Alapítvány valósított meg az Európai Unió anyagi támogatásának segítségével a Europe for Citizens programon belül. A Jelentésben a projekt keretében összegyűjtöttük a különböző csoportok véleményeit, akik a siketekkel állandó kapcsolatban állnak és tisztában vannak azok alapvető problémáival illetve kommunikációs és társadalmi integrációs akadályaiival. Bemutatjuk és leírjuk azoknak a felméréseknek az eredményeit is amelyek a siket személyek tudásszintjét kutatták az Európai Unió működése kapcsán illetve a társadalmi és polgári életben való részvételük aspektusait.

Az elvégzett felmérések tematikáját és a jelentés szerkezetét egy előre meghatározott végrehajtási terv alapján határoztuk meg, olyan véleményekre alapozva, melyek a kísérleti szakaszban jutottak el hozzánk. Ez azt jelenti, hogy a felmérés előkészületi fázisában a siket közösség jelentős befolyással bírt a felmért tematikára (a felmérés tárgyára) illetve a jelentés szerkezetére, ami a projekt fő céljának felel meg, ezért is a következő címmel bír: *Deaf Have Vote*. Az előzetes fázisban gyűjtött vélemények a siket közösség körein belül lehetővé tette olyan felmért témák előkészítését, amelyek a következő kérdésekre koncentráálódtak: a siketek információi, tudása az Európai Unió tekintetében, a siket és gyengén halló személyek oktatása, siketek részvétele a társadalmi és polgári életben, oktatás, különböző szolgáltatások, kultúra és munkaerőpiac elérése illetve annak lehetőségei.

A jelentés Lengyelországban, Szlovákiában és Magyarországon megtervezett és végrehajtott kvantitatív és kvalitatív kutatások eredménye, a benne bemutatott vélemények különböző fókuszcsoportokban illetve kérdőíves felmérések során kerültek összegyűjtésre. Megmutatja a vizsgált csoportok tudásának mértékét és véleményét a diagnosztizált problémákról. A jelentés széles körben konkrét válaszokat tükröz a fókuszcsoportos felmérésekből, ilyen formában mutatja a siket közösség egységes öntudatát. Igazi társadalmi valóságot mutat, mely társadalmon belül siket személyek funkcionálnak. A jelentésben található egy összegző vélemény is, mely a kutatásból adódik, ezek tanácsok a bizonyos aspektusok jobbá tételére, olyan lépések, melyeket tapasztalati anyag alapján gyűjtöttünk össze.

A jelentés egy csapatmunka eredménye, különböző személyek vettek részt munkájukkal a projekt megvalósításában. A részt vevők között voltak a felméréseken jelen lévő siket személyek, előkészítő szakértők, kutatást tervezők és végrehajtók, jelnyelvi és nemzeti nyelvi tolmácsok, a jelentés különböző részein dolgozó szerzők, szakértő-tanácsadók, akik a kérdésekért és az összegző következtetésért feleltek.

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1. Outline of research methodology

The main purpose of the research studies conducted as part of the project, was to seek the opinions held by the deaf community on their basic problems and barriers to their communication and social integration. An important aspect of the research work was also the identification of demands regarding the needs of deaf people, as well as recognition of the level of the European Union-related knowledge and designation of its scope among respondents.

The purpose of the research adopted in the project, determined, in line with methodological suggestions by S. Stanczyk, the need for applying methodological triangulation as well as data triangulation¹. Methodological triangulation was provided by using a variety of methods², techniques, and tools for data collection in the research process. When conducting the research studies, several scientific methods were exploited, thus leading to the collection of empirical material. Essentially, the basic method took the form of a diagnostic survey that harnessed two techniques: questionnaire and interview – Focus Group Interviews (FGI) were held.

In order to organize the facts, generalize, and draw conclusions from the empirical material collected, some ancillary methods were selected: the statistical method and data graphical presentation. During preliminary collection of the research material and while preparing the primary research, hermeneutical methods alongside the observation and interview method were applied. Data triangulation was made possible by conducting research in the wider community of the hearing-impaired, thus covering the following groups with its subjective scope:

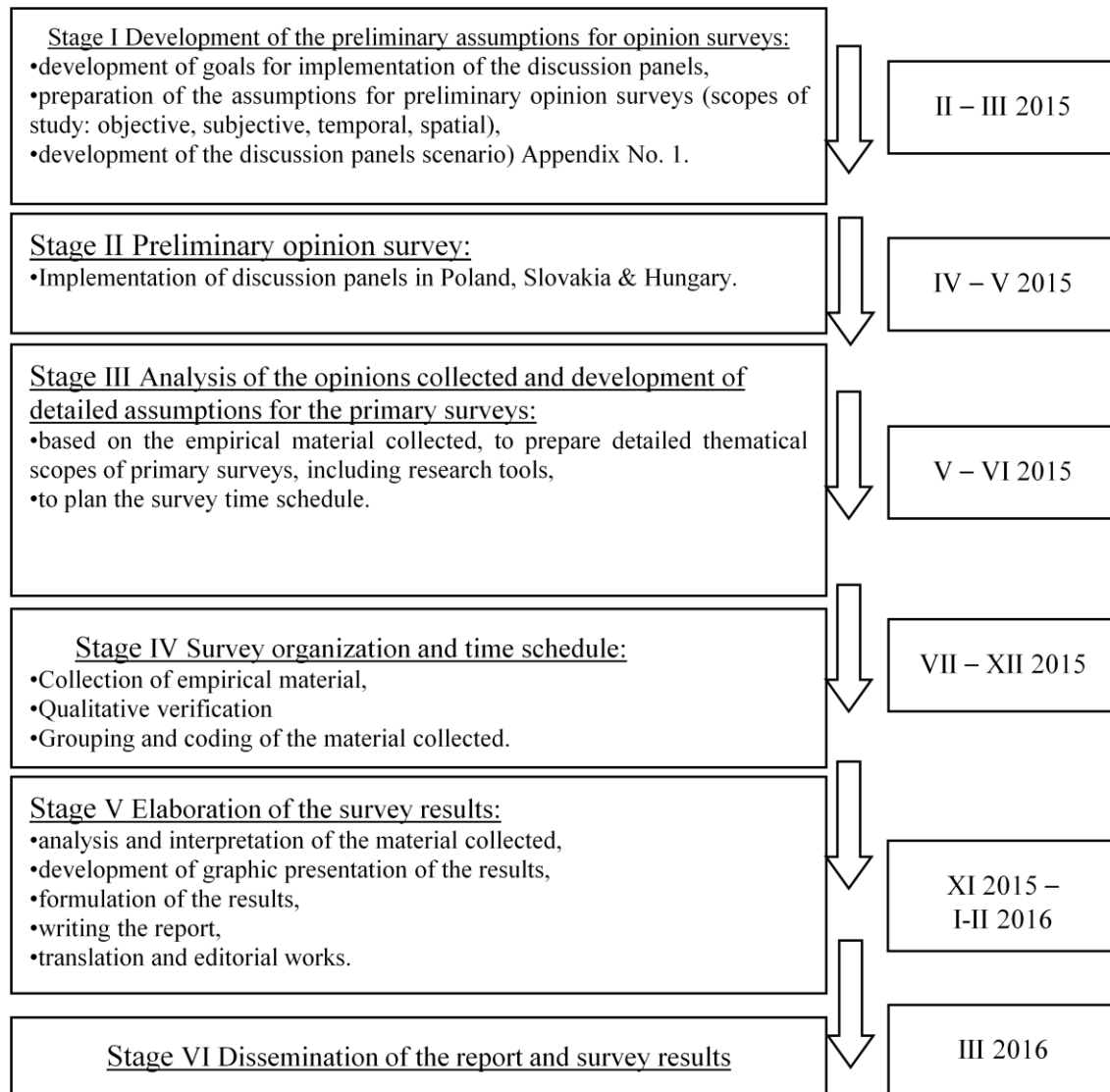
- representatives of organizations associated with the deaf,
- representatives of the deaf community, including their families, teachers, sign language interpreters, activists of NGOs operating for the benefit of hearing-impaired environment, experts dealing with education of the deaf, surdopedagogists,
- deaf people and people with hearing impairments.

The process of diagnosing the issues outlined was performed in six stages as presented in Figure 1.

¹ S. Stańczyk, *Triangulacja – łączenie metod badawczych i urzeczelnienie badań [Triangulation – combining research methods and making research reliable]* [in:] W. Czakon, *Podstawy metodologii badań w naukach o zarządzaniu, [Basics of research methodology in management sciences]* Oficyna Wolters Kluwer Business, Warsaw 2011, pp. 78–79.

² A research method adopted in the report is regarded as a manner of scientific cognition, that is conduct of behaviour in the specific research situation. See J. Apanowicz, *Metodologia nauk*, Wydawnictwo Dom Organizatora, Toruń 2003, pp. 69–71.

Figure I. Research studies implementation process under the project



The first stage of the research implementation was to develop assumptions for preliminary collection of opinions. When pursuing the adopted research goal, the literature and available secondary sources concerned with the situation of the deaf in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary were reviewed and analysed. Based on those, a scenario of discussion panels was designed. Basically, it was assumed that two discussion panels would be carried out in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary.

The second stage of the research studies involved preliminary collection of opinions, where the implementation of discussion panels was at its core. In total, the surveys were attended by 87 people representing the deaf community, organizations acting to the benefit of the deaf, families of deaf people, surdopedagogists, teachers and principals of schools dedicated to the deaf. The preliminary opinion gathering stage was further enriched with a

number of less formal meetings with representatives of institutions acting for the benefit of the deaf.

Implementation of Stage II of the research studies allowed for gathering opinions and information that became the starting point for designing the primary surveys. Thanks to the opinions collected, thematic issues that are especially important for the environment were determined and related to the scope of the objective research, i.e. including problems and barriers in communication and social integration of the deaf. At this stage of the research, deaf people's knowledge about the European Union was initially identified with regard to the EU history, its objectives, tasks and legal measures, the background enabling the deaf to participate in civic life. Also, a framework knowledge of the deaf was identified concerning volunteering, educational opportunities for the deaf, including learning sign language and sign writing. It was also defined what access³ is available to the deaf in the countries surveyed to information and communication technology (i.e. on-line translation, web-based applications to facilitate communication, social networking sites) to enable the use of materials available on the European Union and active European citizenship. Based on the empirical material gathered, a detailed thematic scope of the primary surveys was developed, including research tools: a questionnaire and focus interview forms.

The basic research problems also emerged at the stage of preliminary opinion gathering. The main problem/difficulty in the implementation of research on the diagnosed respondents at the preliminary opinion gathering stage was the great diversity of persons with impaired hearing in terms of communication capabilities. The group surveyed comprised the following persons:

- with varying degree of damage to their hearing,
- with and without implant hearing aids,
- using phonic and sign languages to various degrees,
- having diversified communication skills, including an understanding of the issues being discussed and expressing their own opinions,
- showing a diverse openness towards the researcher and varying knowledge about issues raised during their interviews.

³ Terms *accessibility/ access* in the surveys and report accomplished within the project are deemed as possibility of use, that is to what extent/ degree a specific system may be used by deaf people. The survey results concerned with access of deaf people to knowledge, education, job market do not only limit to formal capabilities or restrictions to exploit them by deaf people, but they focus on actual adjustment of these services to preferences and communication capabilities of the deaf.

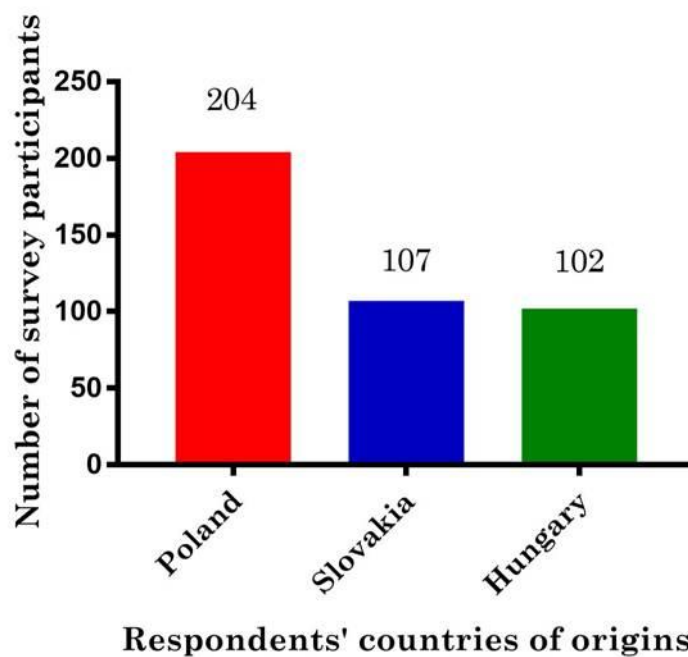
Communication difficulties during discussion panels were impossible to be fully compensated by the participating sign language interpreters. They obviously accounted for an important communication bridge between the discussion panel leaders and those who only communicate in sign languages, however due to the nature of sign languages, full communication with some of the participants in the study was somewhat limited (also due to the fact that not all deaf people were fluent in sign language to a sufficient degree). Therefore, when planning the implementation of the primary survey (Stage III) it was assumed that the important support for implementation of the FGI, apart from the interpreters, would be the participation of hearing impaired persons knowing phonic and sign language. They were to be an additional communication support and assistance for people who were using sign languages only and who had difficulties expressing their own opinion on the issues discussed. When planning a survey in the form of questionnaires, it was assumed that due to the complexity of the issues and the subjects being discussed in the study, the questionnaires among the deaf people would be completed with the assistance of the sign language interpreters. Their task was, at the request of the deaf person, to explain and interpret various individual questions and offer a variety of responses included in the questionnaire.

At stage IV of the study, four Focus Group Interviews (FGI) were held, involving a total of 171 people from three countries: Poland (66 persons), Slovakia (57), and Hungary (48 people). Persons with varying degrees of hearing loss participated in FGI as well as families and guardians of the deaf, surdopedagogists, principals and teachers working in education institutions educating the deaf, representatives of science dealing with topics related to the deaf people and NGO representatives acting on behalf of the deaf. As part of the project, some 660 questionnaires were distributed among a group of people with hearing impairments where 447 were collected, from which 413 correctly completed questionnaires were selected⁴ as part of the process to verify the quality of empirical material for further inference.

Among those whose questionnaires were qualified for deeper analysis, 49.4% of respondents came from Poland, 25.9% from Slovakia, and 24.7% from Hungary (Figure 1).

⁴ Questionnaires rejected were selectively filled out or contained answers which made it impossible to reach adequate conclusions.

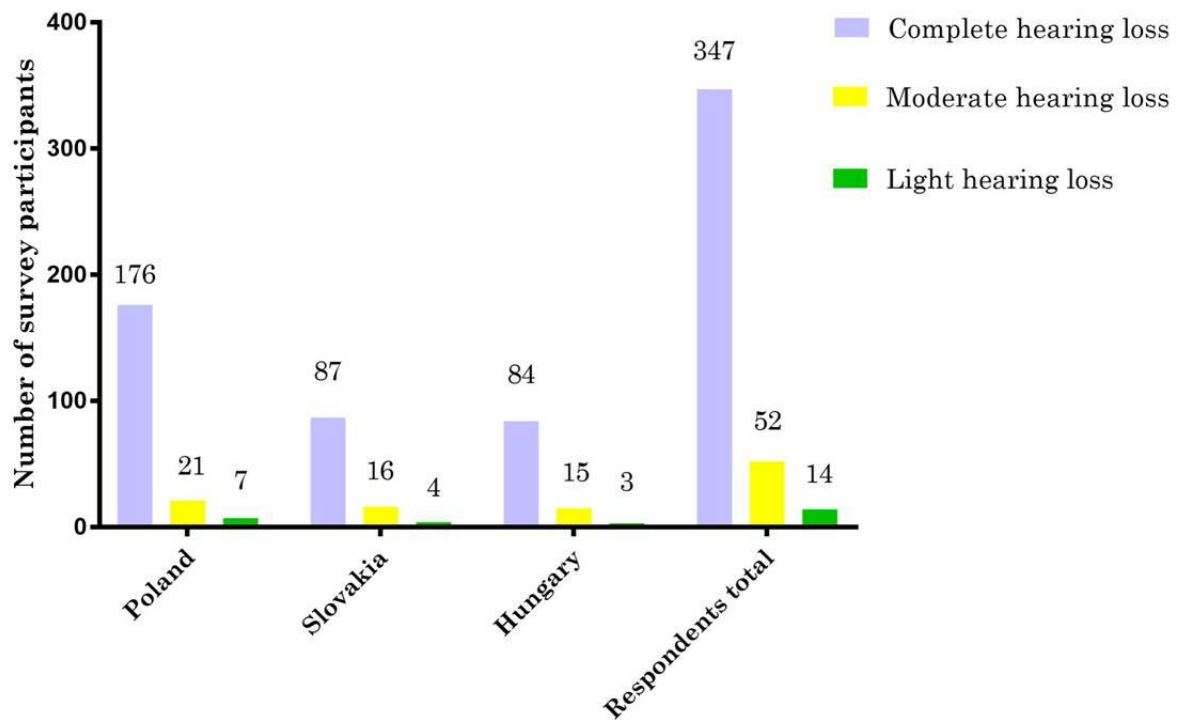
Figure 1. Structure of respondents by nationality (N=413)



Source: own research

The majority of respondents in the survey (84%) were the persons with complete hearing loss, 12.6% of respondents had moderate hearing impairment, and 3.4% of people involved in quantitative survey had light hearing loss (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by the degree of hearing loss and nationality (N=413)

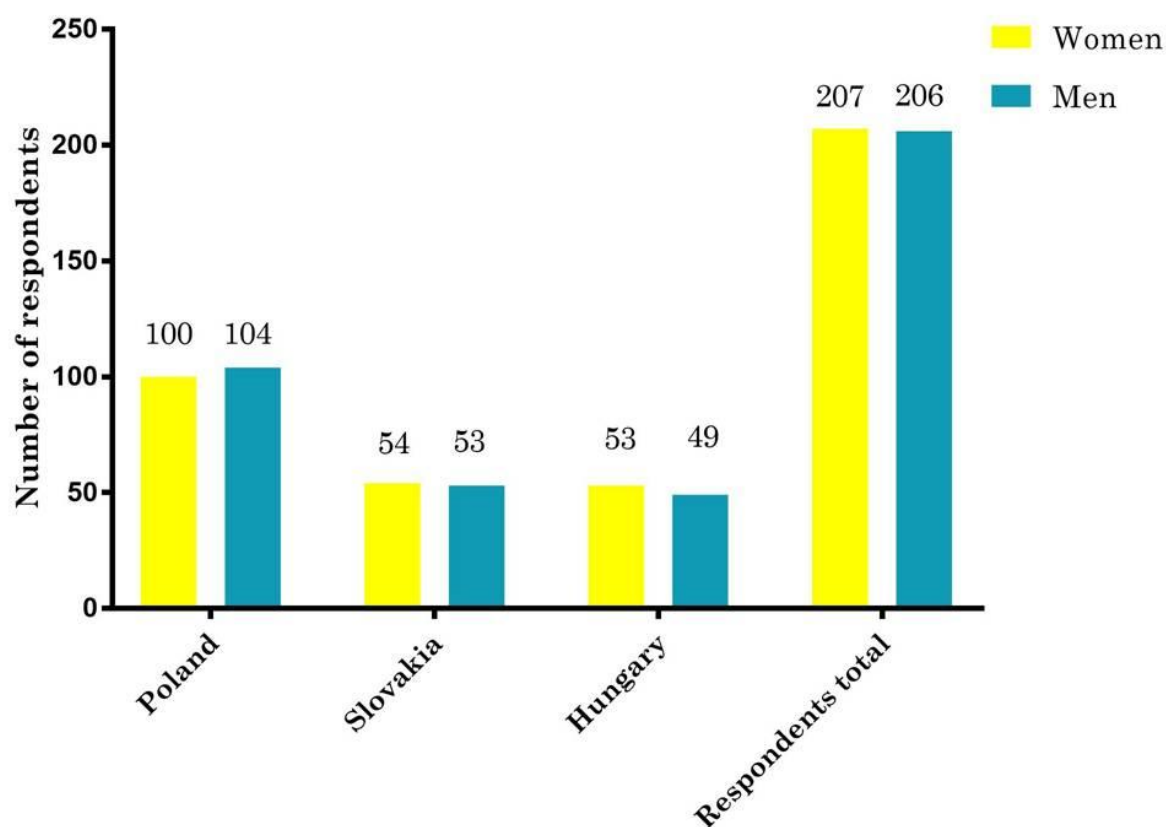


Respondents by country of origin and level of hearing loss

Source: own research

The research organizers took care that the study group surveyed should have an equal number of men and women. In the population surveyed, which was analyzed, there was only one group with more women than men, which is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by gender and country of origin

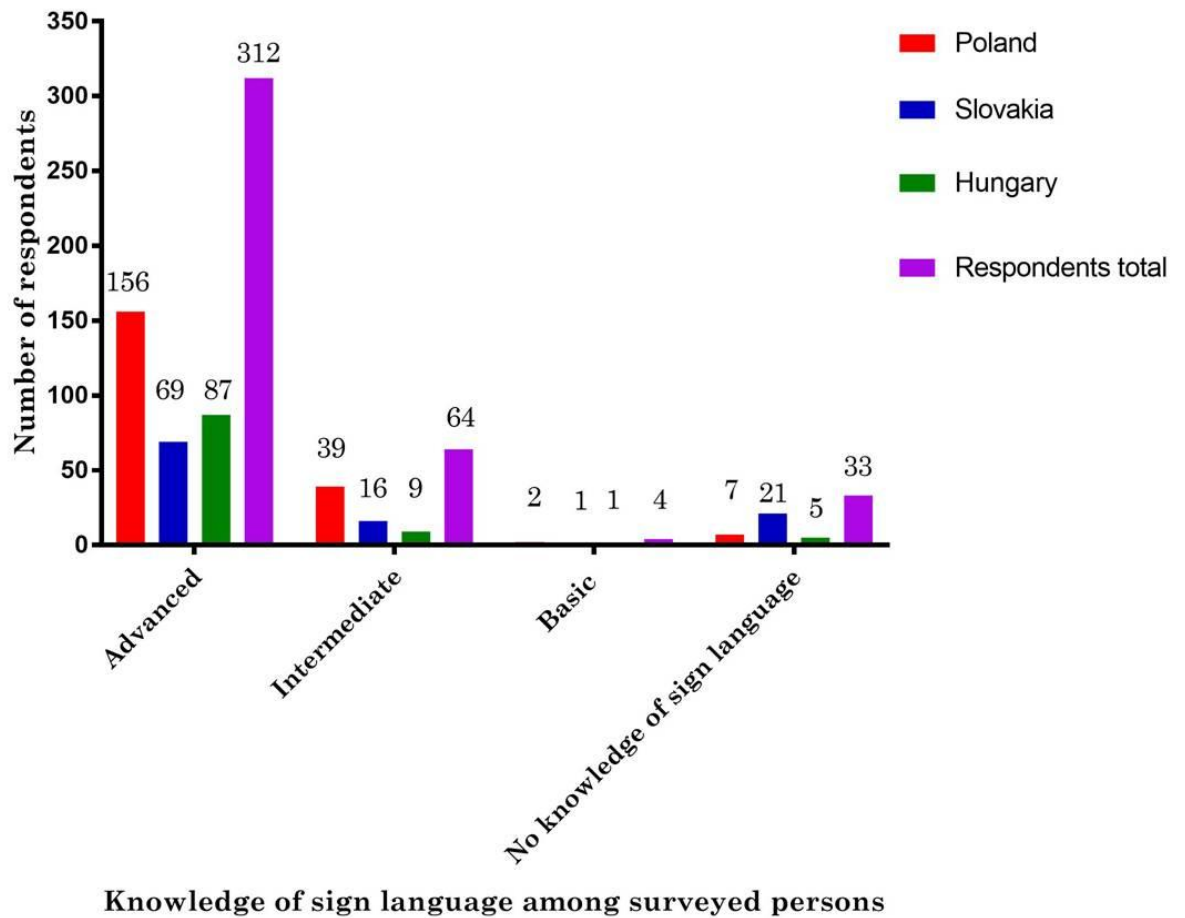


Respondents by gender and country of origin

Source: own research

This group of respondents was dominated by individuals with advanced knowledge of sign language (75.6%), and the second largest group of respondents were those with intermediate skills in their use of sign language (15.5%), which is illustrated in Figure 4.

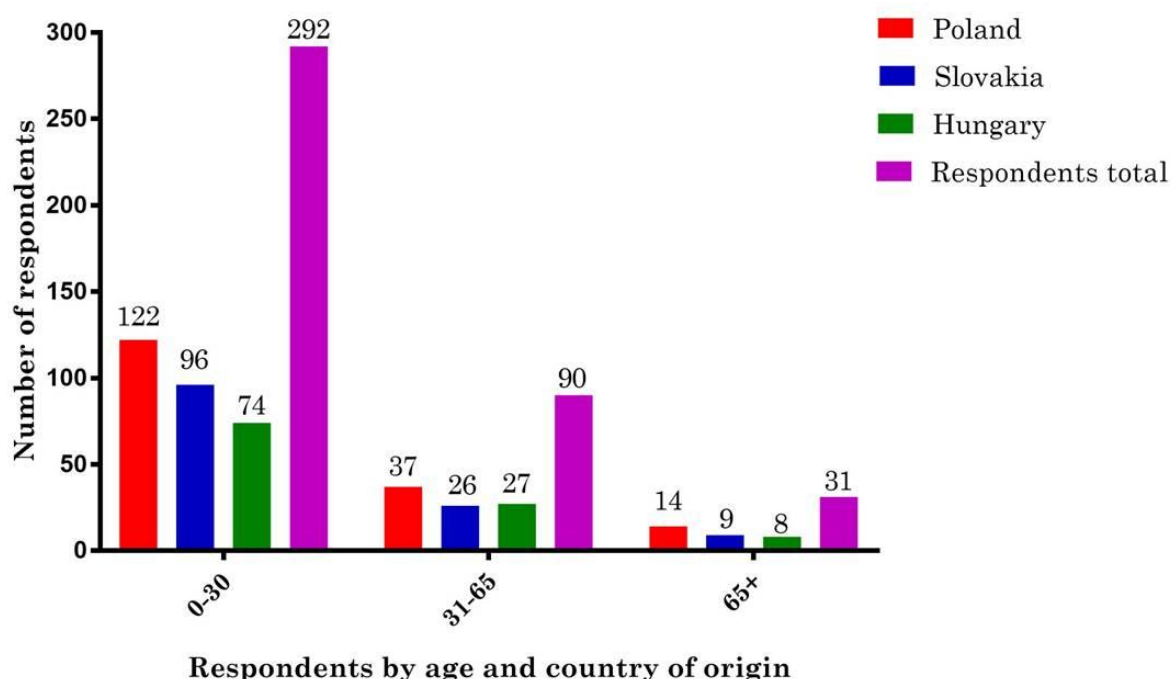
Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by their knowledge of sign language and the country of origin (N=413)



Source: own research

The largest group of respondents were up to 30 years of age (70.7%), a large group of respondents were aged from 31-65 years (21.8%). The lowest number in the studied population were those older than 65 years of age (7.5%), which is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Distribution of respondents by age and country of origin (N=413)



Source: own research

At Stage V of the research, an analysis and interpretation of the research material collected was carried out and the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the survey were formulated. Distribution of the content of the report was determined by the subject matter of the research scope adopted at the stage of drafting the project and specified in detail at the stage of preliminary collection of opinions. It was at this stage of the study when important issues that were the subject of the primary research were indicated to the deaf community.

At stage VI, activities will be launched to disseminate the report and the results of research studies completed among the deaf community and in their environment which includes project partners, organizations acting for the benefit of the deaf, schools educating the deaf, families of the deaf, surdopedagogists, sign language interpreters, decision-makers, opinion-making leaders of the deaf, ombudsman offices for disabled persons rights, as well as to make the results public. Apart from providing information about the project and the related research studies delivered, the purpose of dissemination activities will also be to develop social knowledge and awareness of the culture of the deaf, problems and barriers that they face and solutions, ideas submitted by respondents, as well as good practices that could remove or minimize those barriers. The expected result of the dissemination activities will also be an increased awareness among the deaf about their rights and opportunities to take

actions and overcome barriers. The dissemination goal will be achieved through mailing activities and the project website on which an English version of the report will be available on-line.

2. Knowledge of deaf about European Union

It is natural for mankind to have curiosity about the world and a desire to explore it. The possibility of satisfying that need depends on e.g.: acquired skills of a common language that is used by a community in which a given person lives, the ability to use a variety of media, access to education and knowledge resources. The extent to which deaf people participate in social and civic life is indirectly reflected by their knowledge about the surrounding political and social reality. Therefore, an important dimension of the research conducted under the project was to examine a group of deaf people on their knowledge of the European Union, including its goals and objectives, history, rights existing therein, and solutions in the field of social and civic inclusion of the deaf people. An important aspect of the implemented studies was also to determine the availability of information about the European Union and European citizenship to the deaf.

Already at the stage of preliminary opinion gathering, participants of panel discussions in Poland and Slovakia indicated that the general knowledge of the deaf about the European Union in their countries is lower than that among the hearing population. While the Hungarians, taking part in panel discussions, stressed that the deaf in their country have knowledge about the European Union on a par with the hearing. In their opinion, this is due to the activities performed by the Member of European Parliament, Adam Kosa who represents the community of deaf Hungarians in the European Parliament. They pointed out that his parliamentary activities encourage their interest in the EU and its institutions. The deaf community in Hungary was also included in major projects co-financed by the European community, which contributed to increased knowledge about it in the environment of the deaf people. Participants of all the discussion panels kept underlining that deaf people know what the European Union is and what the overall benefits exist for the deaf community resulting from the fact that the countries they live in are EU members.

At the stage of primary survey, the issues related to the way the deaf co-exist were examined in more detail, which was facilitated by the focus group interviews and questionnaires conducted. According to FGI participants, the deaf have a general awareness

that the country in which they live is a member of the European Union. In their opinion, the deaf community does not, however, have sufficient access to knowledge about the goals and objectives, history and laws binding in the European Union.

Deaf people, participating in the focus surveys mentioned the European Parliament and the European Commission as the EU institutions that they had heard of. However, as stressed by respondents, the knowledge of the deaf about those institutions is superficial; they do not know the competences of the institutions and their operating mechanisms, but they do know however, that those institutions have an impact on their lives.

The persons with impaired hearing involved in FGIs stressed that they were informed about the European Union during the process of accession of their country to the European community. They indicated that at that time there was a lot of information provided to the deaf community about the European Union. Currently, it is the opinion of respondents that the deaf need to seek this knowledge for themselves, although their interest in this subject is not great. During their interviews, participants pointed out that during the elections to the European Parliament they received information about the candidates running in the election. The deaf community also learns about the EU through participation in projects financed by the EU. One of the FGI participants said:

There are many projects like that and they refer to various areas of life. There are projects, such as those including the educational curriculum, enabling the running of interesting extracurricular activities which are extremely popular and there are always people willing to participate. Other projects for the deaf community that I have come across are those organizing professional internships and support for the deaf people in the job market⁵.

Deaf people claimed that they often see EU markings on information materials, road infrastructure, buildings, and they are also informed directly about the EU co-financing of projects in which they participate.

Experts, surdopedagogists, and representatives of the deaf people community participating in the focus group interviews also noted that much information about the EU is provided to the public through information campaigns carried out by various ministries of the countries in which they live. In their opinion, these campaigns are not effective enough with regard to deaf communities, because they are directed to a wide audience and do not take into account the communication preferences of the deaf.

⁵ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

Hungarian FGI participants mentioned the merits of MEP Adam Kosa, recognizing him as their representative in the European forum. Respondents from Poland and Slovakia pointed out that they are not specifically represented in the European Parliament. Also, they observed that few deaf people would be able to name any MEPs representing their country. Survey participants from Poland and Slovakia also stated that most of the deaf do not actively use their right to vote during the elections to the European Parliament, the national parliaments are more popular among the deaf. Respondents indicated that this is due to a lack of awareness in the deaf community about the role and tasks of the European Parliament and results from the fact that there is no candidate who would represent the interests of their community and run in the European elections. Deaf people from Poland and Slovakia believe that the deaf should have a representative who would represent their community in the European elections.

FGI participants tend to be aware of insufficient information about the European Union being addressed to the deaf community. They pointed out that deaf people retrieve information about the EU mostly from the Internet and to a lesser extent from TV. People involved in the focus research stated that most often deaf people receive information about the EU from the websites of:

- state institutions,
- news portals (electronic mass media),
- projects co-funded by the EU,
- social networking sites.

One of the FGI participants said that:

Information about the EU is often presented in a hermetic and complex language, hardly understood by the deaf person, even those having writing and phonic skills of the national language⁶.

Respondents argued that for the deaf to raise their understanding of the EU, a simple language, taking into account the illustrative examples, should be used towards them as the most effective form of communication.

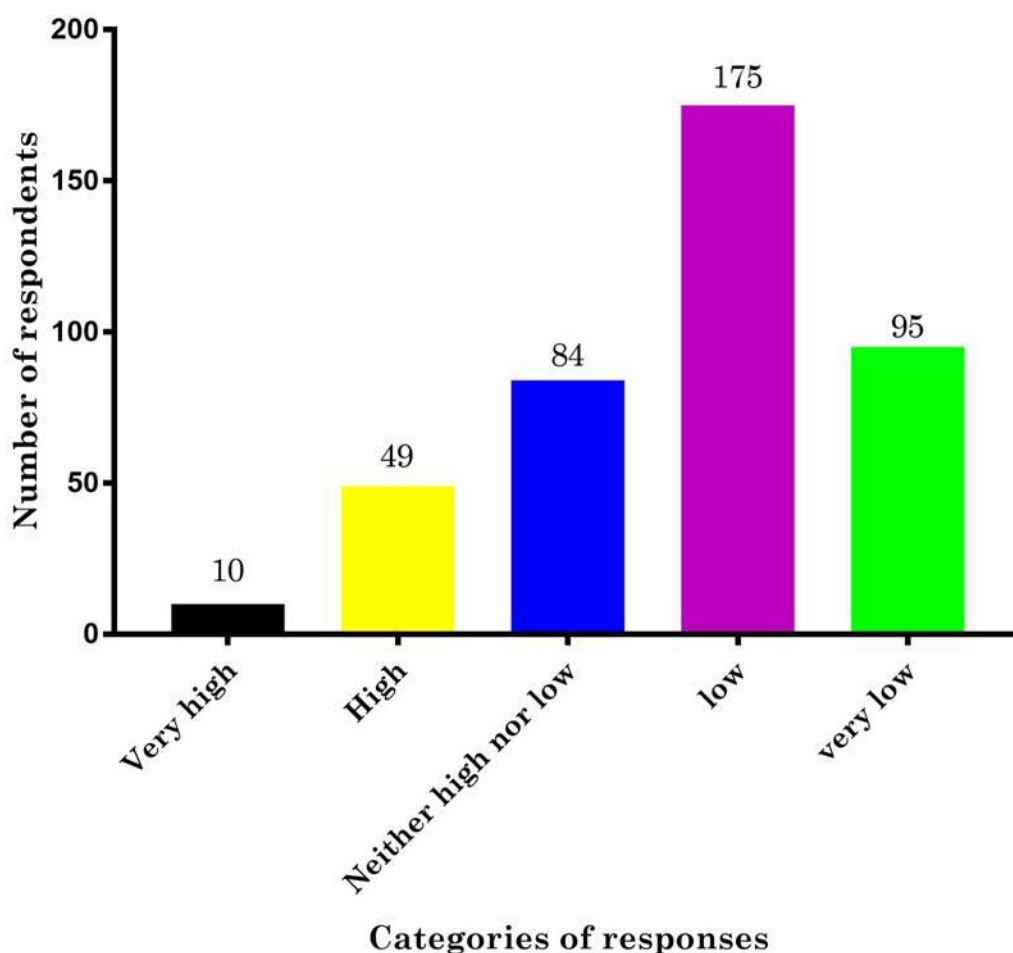
I think you should not be afraid of graphic communication. We as the deaf community often use graphic communication, we are visuals. For deaf people, eyesight plays a leading role. You cannot be afraid of any graphical markings, e.g.

⁶ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

the European Union logo catches the eye. In addition, many can be communicated in the form of comics, infographics, and collages⁷.

The deaf persons participating in the interviews, stressed that information on the European Union is missing in a sign language. These opinions have been confirmed in the survey questionnaire in which 65.4% of respondents said that access of the deaf to information about the European Union in sign language is small or very small (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Access (accessibility/opportunity of use) of deaf people to materials about the European Union in sign language in the opinion of respondents (N=413)



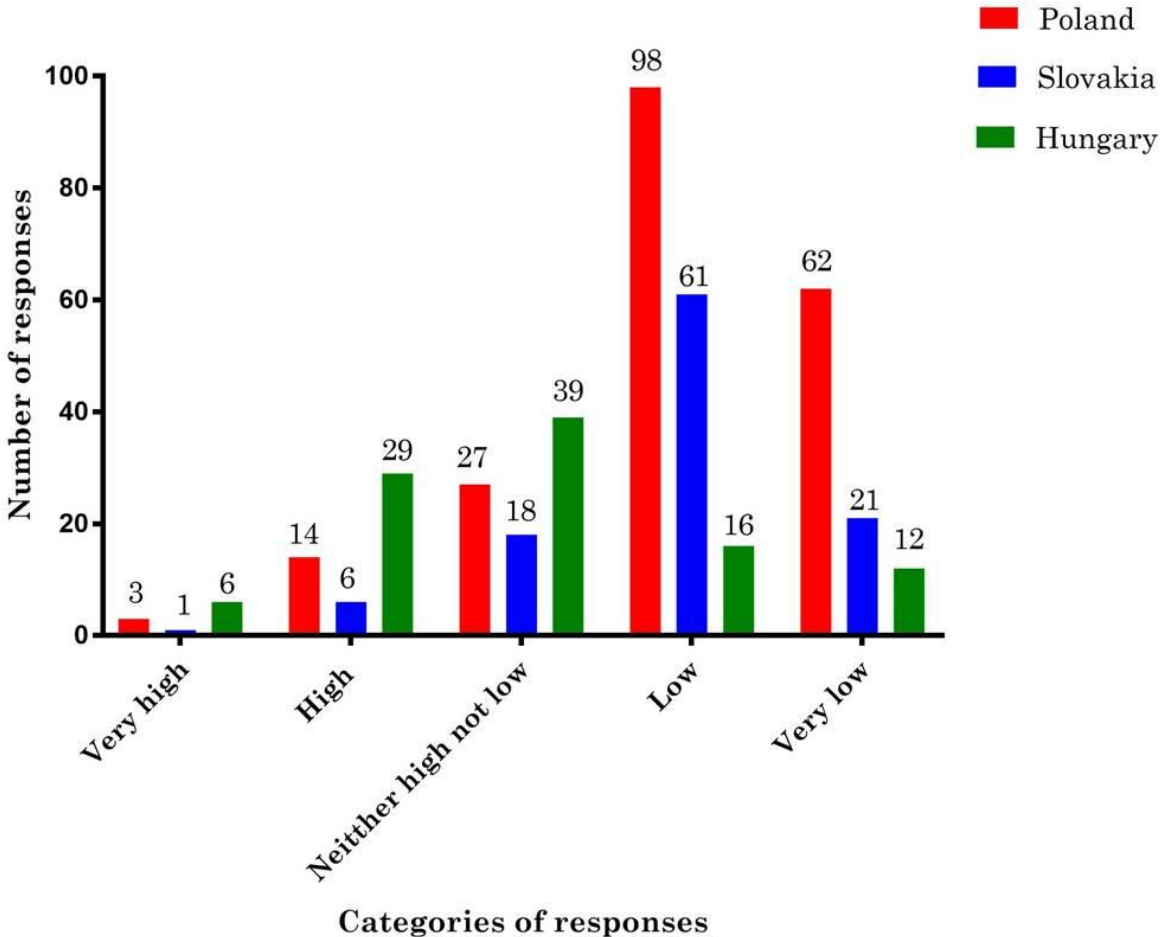
Source: own research

The percentage analysis of the collected responses indicates that respondents in Hungary were the best able to evaluate the availability of materials about the European Union in sign language for the deaf community. In Hungary, only 27.4% of respondents felt that the deaf

⁷ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary who uses a hearing aid.

community access to such materials is small or very small. Similarly in Poland, 78.4% of respondents had a similar opinion, and 76.6% in Slovakia (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Access (accessibility/ opportunity of use) of deaf people to materials about the European Union in sign language in the opinion of the surveyed Poles, Slovaks, and Hungarians (N=413)

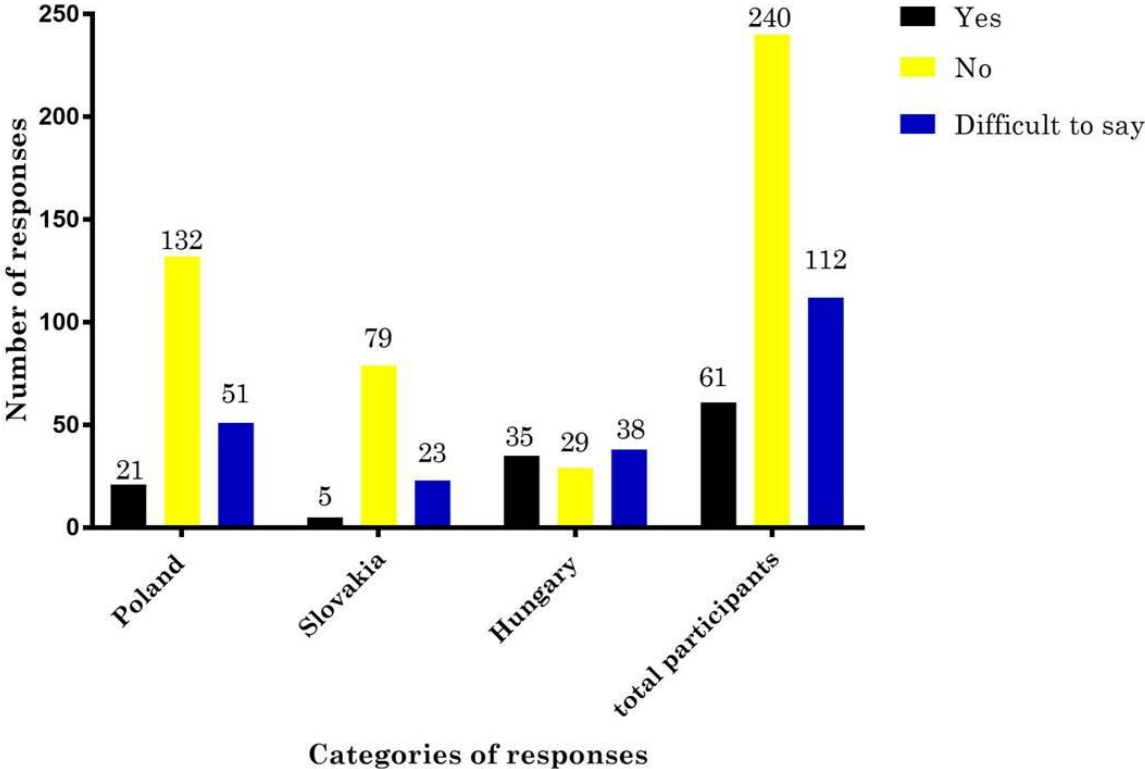


Source: own research

The questionnaire survey also confirmed that there is a dominant belief among respondents that deaf people do not have access to materials in sign language on the history, goals and objectives of the European Union (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Opinion of Poles, Slovaks, and Hungarians on the accessibility (access/opportunity of use) of information in sign language on the history, goals and objectives of the European Union (N=413)

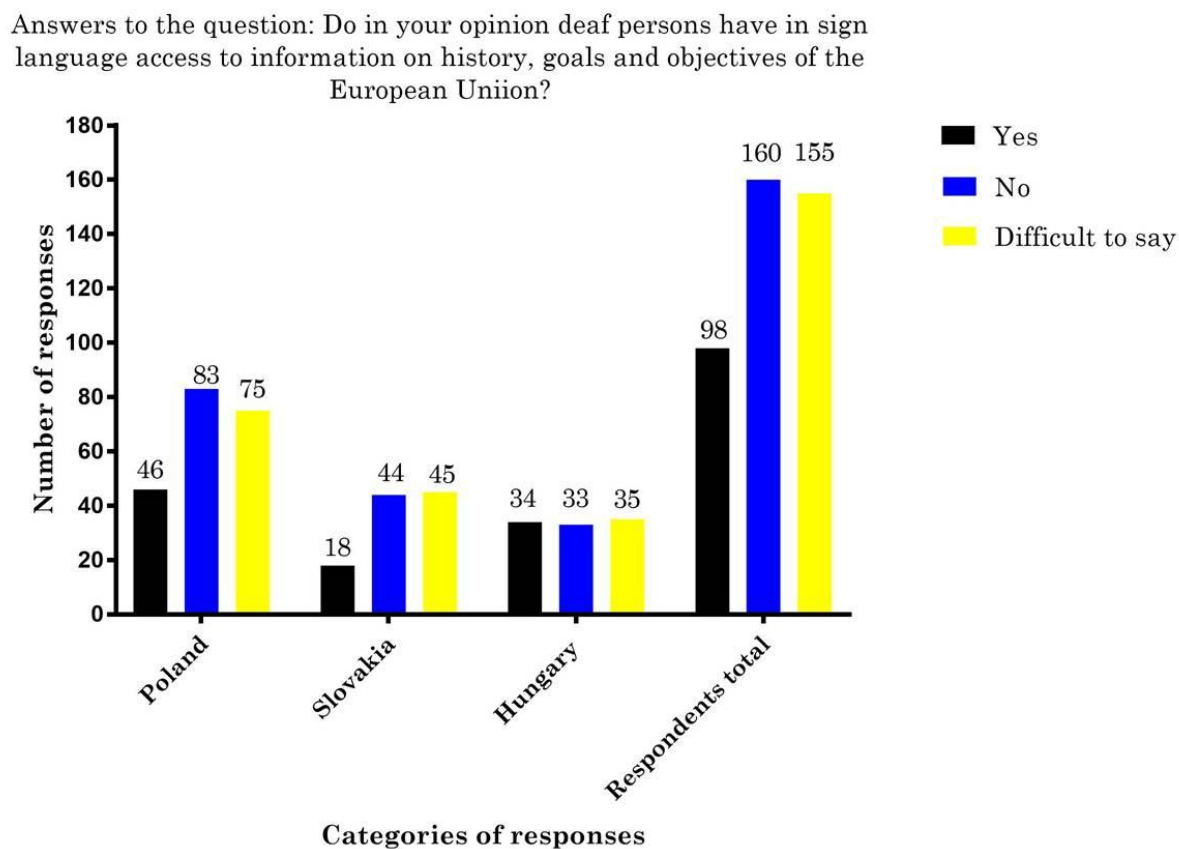
Answers to the question: Do in your opinion deaf persons have in sign language access to information on history, goals and objectives of the European Union?



Source: own research

FGI participants indicated that the missing information in sign language about the EU was the main cause of unsatisfactory knowledge on the subject among the deaf. During the interviews, it was emphasized that the limited supply of information provokes little interest in European issues. The focus research studies revealed that deaf people do not know the history, goals and objectives of the European Union but they are aware of the benefits of belonging to the European community. These opinions have been confirmed in the survey questionnaire in which only 23.7% of respondents believed that deaf people know the purposes for the existence of the European Union (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Knowledge among deaf people on the purposes underlying the European Union in the opinion of respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Participants of the qualitative surveys emphasized that the goal of the EU is the integration of its Member States, and one of the participants said:

The reason for creation of the European Union was the integration and cooperation among countries. It involves e.g. common legal regulations, free movement of people, goods, and capital. The European community is also co-financing various projects that translate into the quality of life of its inhabitants⁸.

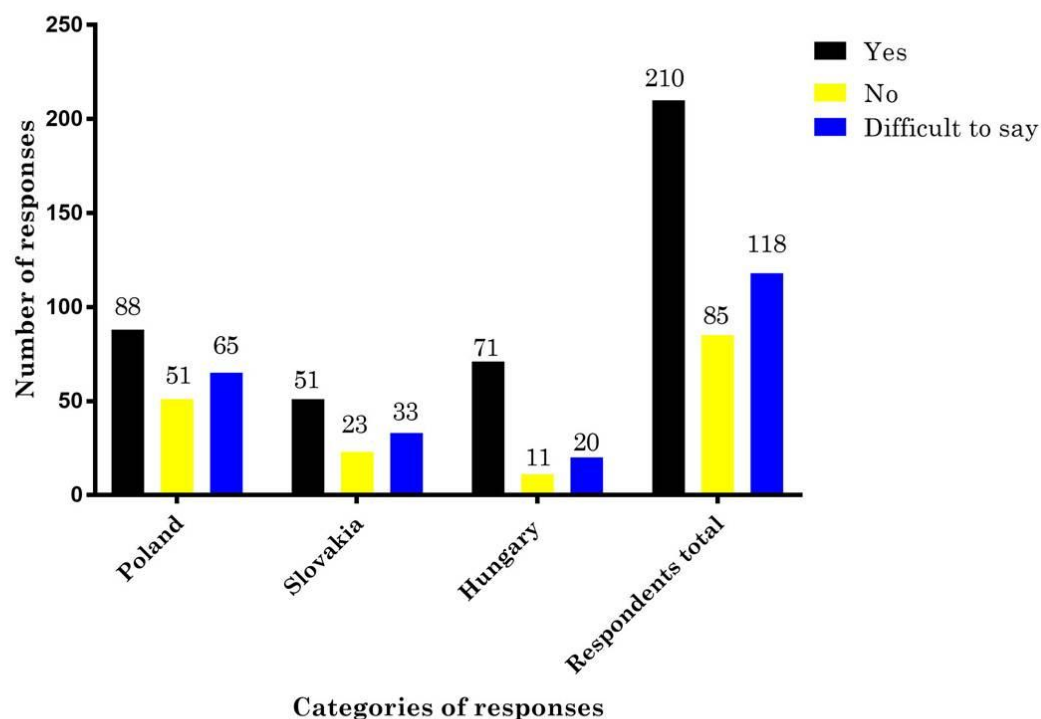
The completed questionnaire surveys also allowed to prove that deaf people have higher awareness of the EU policy on gender equality and on combating social exclusions than about its history, goals and objectives. In the group of respondents, 50.8% believed that deaf people are familiar with European policy in the field of gender equality and combating exclusion (Figure 10). The results of quantitative studies are consistent with opinions of FGI participants. One of participants of FGI held in Poland said:

⁸ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary who uses a hearing aid.

Deaf people are looking for knowledge useful from their perspective, hence the awareness that the European community creates legal solutions to protect their interests. In Poland, the deaf community believes e.g. that the Act of 19 August 2011 on sign language and other means of communication was adopted under the influence of European policy⁹.

Figure 10. Deaf people’s knowledge on the European Union policy in the field of gender equality and combating exclusions in the opinion of respondents (N=413)

Answers to the question: Do in your opinion deaf persons know European Union policy on gender equality and combating exclusions?



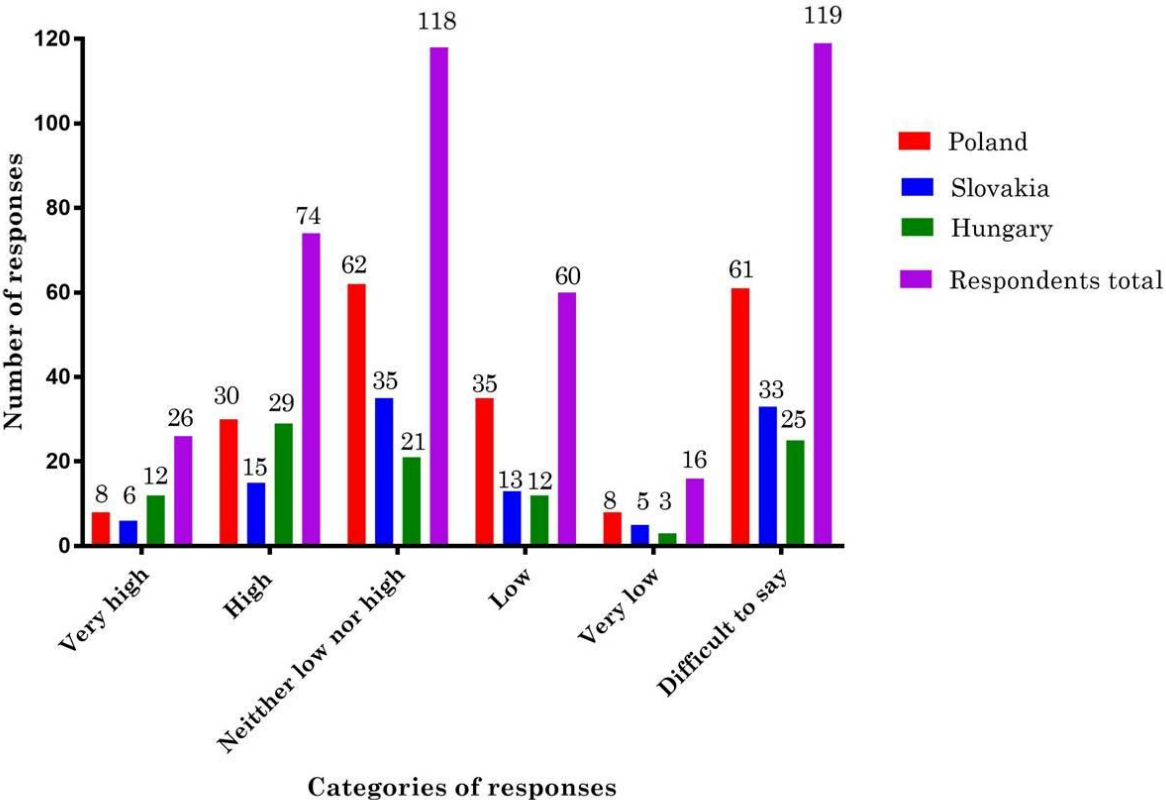
Source: own research

Deaf people participating in the FGI, confirmed this view by pointing out that they evaluate the European Union from the perspective of their own community and they also stressed that the EU delivered tangible benefits to their countries and their communities. These included the co-financing of projects addressed to the deaf community, as well as the directives and legal regulations enacted in the European Union to support the social inclusion of people with disabilities. Moreover, deaf people highlighted the tangible benefit produced by the European integration through the abolition of border controls between the EU states in the Schengen area. However, those involved in the focus group interview reported that the community of hearing-impaired persons is very diverse, resulting in varying degrees of

⁹ Opinion of the expert, female participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

awareness of the EU measures dedicated to the deaf. This opinion was corroborated by the surveys which reveal that respondents differ in their conviction of whether deaf people are aware of the EU measures tailored to the deaf (Figure 11).

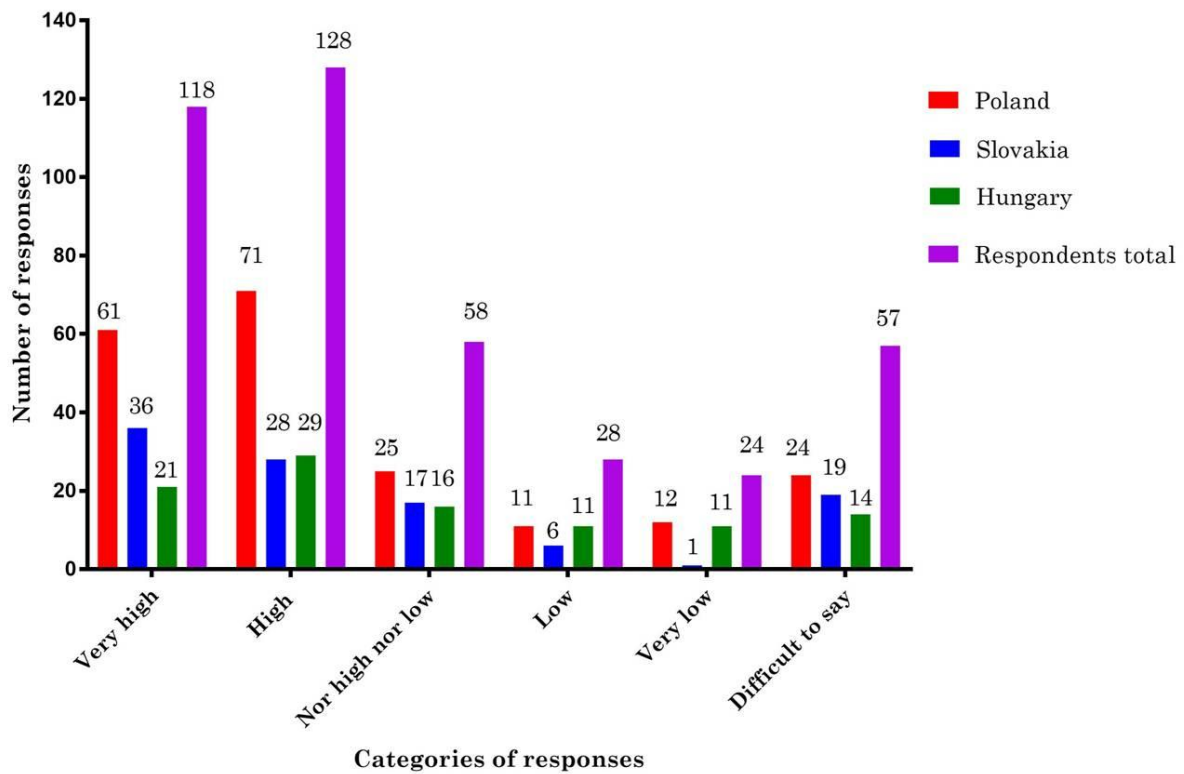
Figure 11. Deaf people’s knowledge of the European Union solutions intended for deaf persons in the opinion of the respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Those surveyed in the focus group interview underlined that persons with hearing impediments are aware that the European Union co-funds numerous projects, thus improving the quality of life of this community across specific countries. This opinion was also supported in qualitative surveys reporting that 59.6% of deaf persons surveyed had very extensive or extensive knowledge of the EU’s operations in this field (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Deaf people’s knowledge of projects co-funded by the European Union that improve their quality of life in the EU member states (N=413)



Source: own research

One participant in the FGI held in Hungary commented:

What is important is that due to the EU there are funds for accomplishment of the projects that support deaf persons. Principally, I mean those projects concerned with education, e.g. opportunities for internships abroad. This is priceless, because experiences gained in this way affect the future professional situation among students. After completing such internships, we receive certificates signed by the EU. The European Community diminishes an important barrier to travelling abroad through providing funding to deaf persons¹⁰.

Those involved in the focus group interview pointed out the need to make films about the European Community complete with a sign language commentary and audio transcription. According to the respondents they should be made available on multiple public Internet portals as well as those targeted to deaf communities. FGI participants highlighted that development of material with sign language would boost the knowledge of the European Union among the deaf community. Such materials are likely to give an impetus to nurture an interest in the social and

¹⁰ Opinion of a teacher of the deaf, participant of a FGI organized in Hungary.

political situation at both domestic and European levels. The respondents suggested that topics addressed in the materials should revolve around a few primary issues, i.e.:

- EU legal regulations supporting deaf people and EU policy on combating exclusions,
- operations of the EU institutions and their powers,
- EU history,
- values underlying the establishment and operations of the EU,
- EU policy,
- importance of civic involvement in social life and instruments used by citizens to affect EU decisions (e.g. European Citizens’ Initiative, petitions to the European Parliament, public consultations¹¹),
- benefits of the EU membership to specific states,
- demonstrating precise examples of investments co-financed by the European Community.

Participants of the qualitative surveys also brought focus on social media as a communication channel through which information on the European Union should be communicated in sign languages. Those involved in the FGIs indicated that deaf people familiar with phonic language (they can read) are increasingly using the Internet and social media.

Moreover, FGI respondents also expressed the belief that executed projects targeted at deaf communities, particularly those seeking to integrate the deaf population as well as to prevent them from social marginalization, emerge as an effective channel for promoting information on the EU. They showed the relevance of brief trainings on the EU provided as part of projects intended for deaf persons. One individual stated:

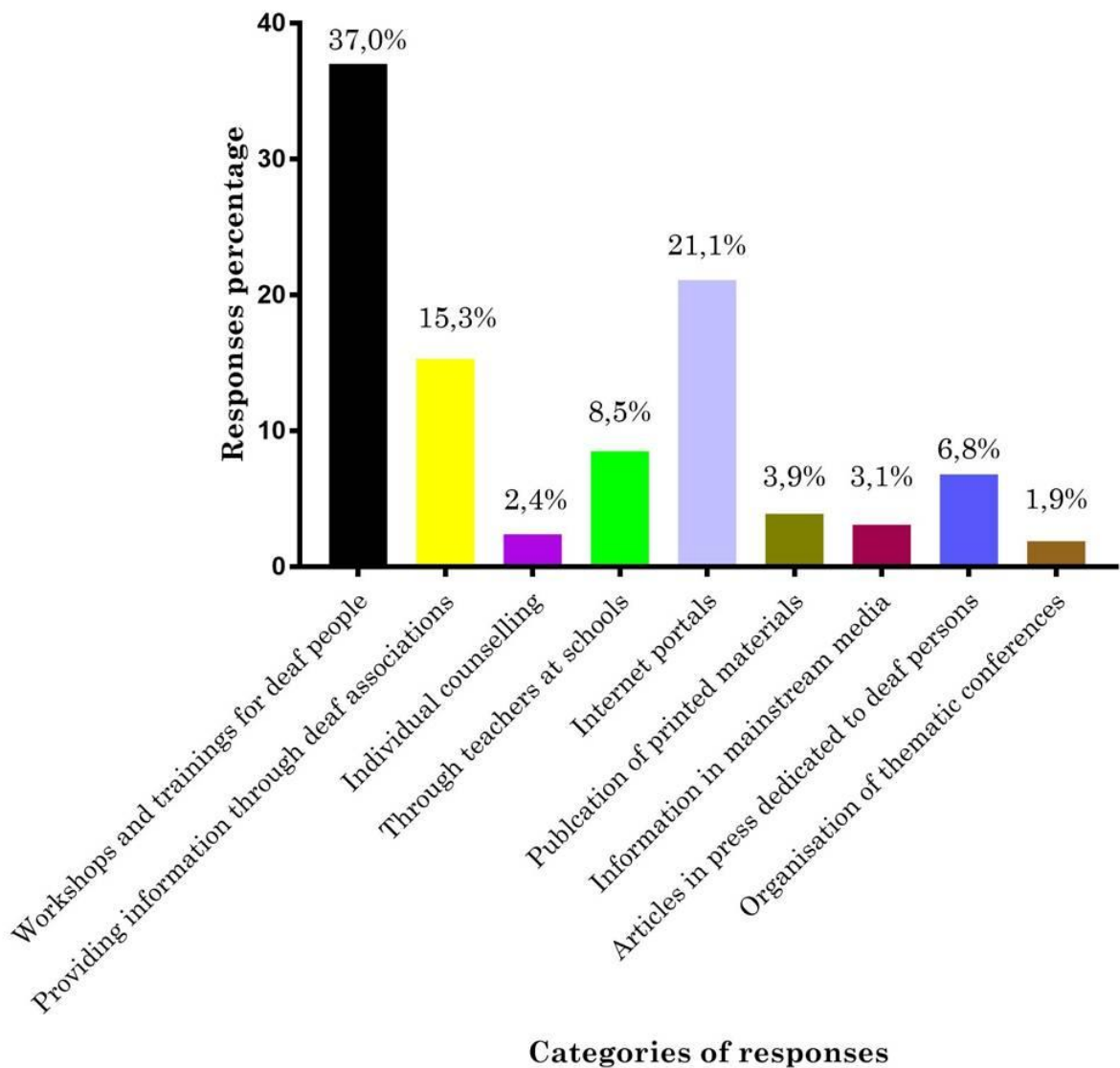
This will spur an interest in civic issues and provoke to seek information on the European Community¹².

The opinions collected through focus group interviews also echoed the surveys. The majority of the respondents reported that the organisation of workshops and training for deaf people proves to be the best way for transferring information to the deaf community about their rights, opportunities for activities and knowledge of the EU. A considerable number of those surveyed also said that placing information targeted at persons with disabilities on Internet portals and communicating it through deaf associations as well as publishing it in the press, tends to be an effective educational method.

¹¹ Suggested by the person running focus group interview .

¹² The view expressed by the woman with a hearing aid taking part in FGI held in Hungary.

Figure 13. The best methods used to provide information to the deaf community about their rights, opportunities for actions and knowledge on the European Union according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

During all the focus group interviews, a large number of individuals placed an emphasis on the fact that problems faced by people with hearing impairments come into the spotlight and new methods for their support are pursued, due to the European Union. Respondents from Hungary underlined that thanks to the EU funds, they enjoy an opportunity of using CARTs (e-translator) for sign language which, as they argued: *is a real revolution in their lives*¹³.

¹³ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

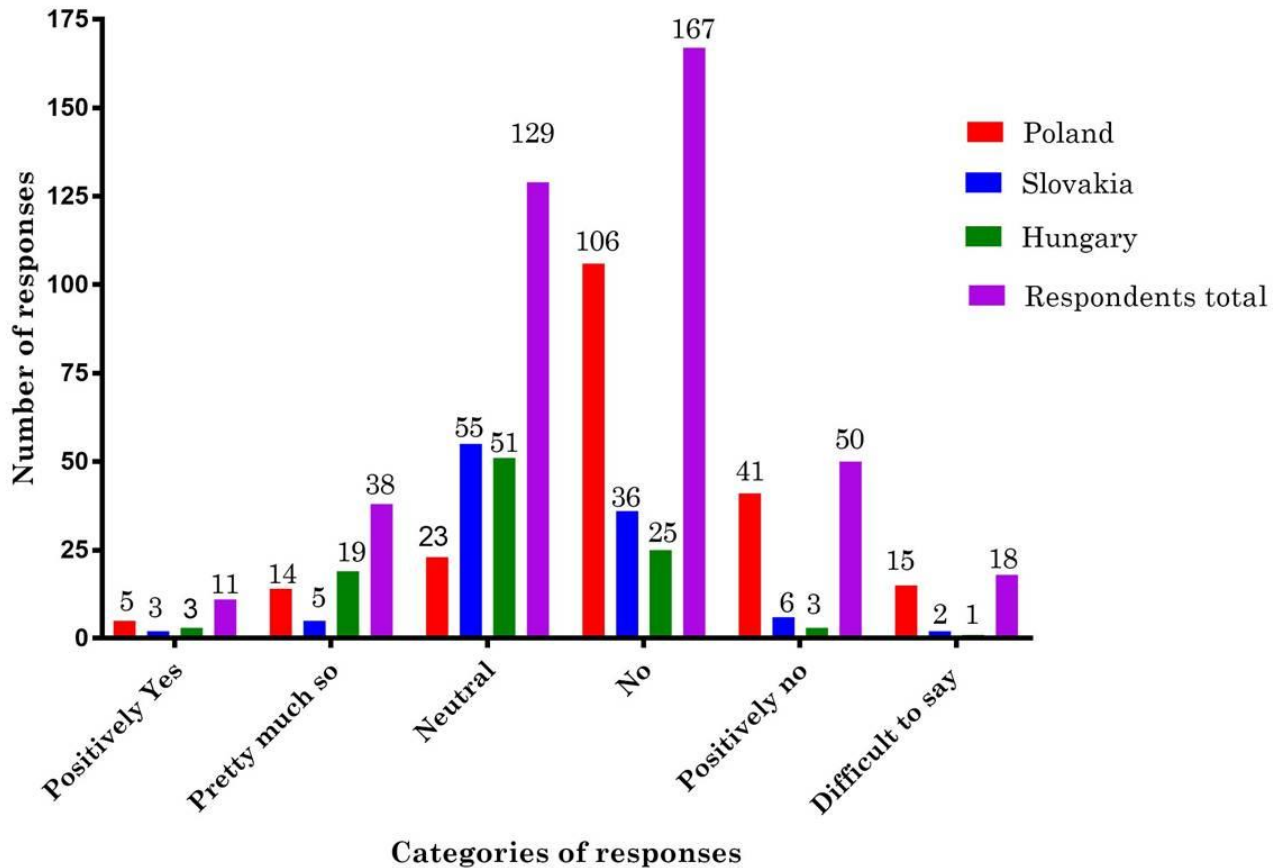
3. Education

Quality education should become an important factor in the social inclusion of, and equalization of opportunities for the deaf. As noted by many respondents to FGI studies held in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, the exclusion of the deaf often starts at school which can be unfriendly and unfamiliar with the “inclusive teaching paradigm”. FGI participants noted that, for individuals with special educational requirements, such as those with impaired hearing, support at the education phase should take a more radical and much deeper approach than the one that is being followed by contemporary educational systems. This involves personalized support for the development of each deaf student according to his/her abilities and needs.

The studies have shown clearly that the communities of the deaf in the three countries are not satisfied with the existing education systems. 52.5% of the interviewed considered the systems unfit to teach the deaf, 31.2% were neutral in their judgments and just 11.8% agreed the systems met relevant requirements (Figure 14)

Figure 14. Adaptation of the education systems to teach the deaf according to respondents (N=413)

Answers to the question: Are the education systems fit to teach the deaf?



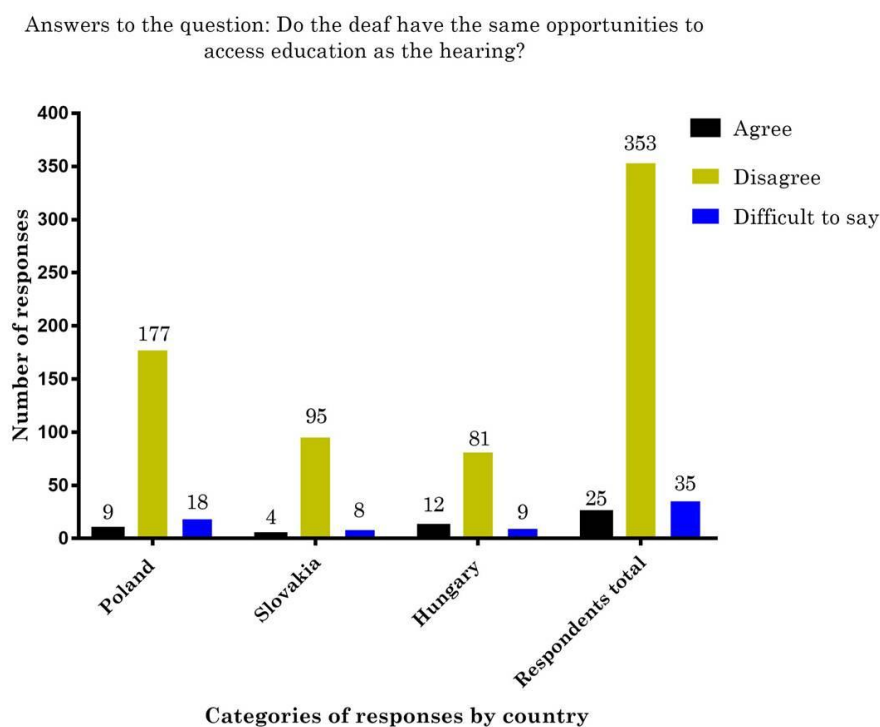
Source: own research

FGI participants emphasized that educating an individual with hearing impairment is a complex and specific process requiring comprehensive preparation and background. Experts involved in the study pointed at a need for optimizing the education for the deaf. These views coincide with the stance of M. Sak, who claims that this optimization should embrace the teaching of the deaf by both inclusive and special schools and the following three areas: structural, functional and communicational.¹⁴ The structural optimization would consist of making schools for the deaf and hearing-impaired stronger, better equipped with diverse educational packages and fully fit to do their job. The functional optimization means opposing the bias and stereotypes established in both the society and in the communities of the deaf.

¹⁴ M.Sak, Looking for an Optimum Model for Educating the Deaf and the Hearing-impaired in Poland, [in:] Education for the Deaf, conference paper, Polish Association of the Deaf, Lodz Division, Lodz 2011, p. 75.

Now, the communication fine-tuning consists of employing forms of information exchange that are diverse but also tailored to students' circumstances and preferences. As noted by M.Sak, this optimization is a prerequisite to developing a modern and personalized model for teaching the deaf.¹⁵ Regrettably, the perception of the reality unveiled by the study departs markedly from the optimized model with all its tools, means and methods for encouraging and enabling deaf students. Based on the current reality of education for the deaf, the FGI subjects said the deaf were unprivileged vs. the hearing in terms of opportunity to gain the education expected by the individuals concerned and by their families. This claim was further confirmed by questionnaire-based studies: 85.5% of the subjects said the deaf did not have the same opportunities to access education as the hearing (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Comparison of access (opportunities of use/ educational chances) to education between deaf and hearing people (N=413)



Source: own research

A teacher taking part in a qualitative study commented as follows on the access of the deaf to education:

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 75.

When talking about of accessibility of education to the deaf we need to note that this access is formally provided under the law. The Constitutions of Hungary, Poland and Slovakia guarantee common and equal access to all citizens. What is more, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the right of the disabled to learn on an equal and non-discriminating basis. These are, obviously, very important legal foundations but they fail to fully explore the matter of access of the deaf to education. Indeed, this formal access required by the law is fully provided but, in fact, the actual opportunities for benefiting from public education by the deaf are very much limited. If we compare educational opportunities of normally hearing and deaf children, we will see a huge difference. It is not the law that is to be blamed but the realities of teaching the hearing, which fail to answer the needs of deaf students. In other words, the problem is not with the law or formal requirements to be met by a child but with the public education system's fitness to teach the deaf.¹⁶

Also, another female FGI participant explained that this worse access is a consequence of the regular schools failure to properly address the specificity of educating the deaf. Referring to her experience, she said:

My education at the regular school was like climbing Mount Everest. Such schools offer quality teaching, there is a lot to be learned, the classes require you to get involved, and you need to grasp everything on the spot, which is often impossible. The teacher moves on at a pace suitable for normally hearing children and does not care about a deaf student. Also, the latter cannot count on help from the hearing because of the communication issue. These barriers emerge as a consequence of the school's inability to deal with the specificity of educating the deaf. To me, the regular school was a course in survival. I had nothing but problems: the class's attitude towards me on one hand and the teachers' ignorance of my problems on the other.¹⁷

The same mood reflects in the recollection by another male qualitative study subject based on his experience within the public education system:

I attended a public elementary school, high school and college. When I went to a post-college school for the deaf, I saw the difference. Schools for the deaf have smaller

¹⁶ Opinion of a male teacher working with deaf people, a participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹⁷ Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

classes, better student-teacher interaction but the quality of education is somewhat worse. The teaching is slower but better explained. I could hardly manage at the regular school but there are some who wouldn't manage at all. There is also the problem of intolerance and I did not see any effort towards integration. Yet another matter is aid from supporting teachers. I attended an inclusive class at high school and we had a supporting teacher but he could hardly cope with us. Those teachers did not have much experience. They tried to help but this assistance was limited. This unfitness of the regular school reflects in its education result measures. The teachers did not write any special tests for us: we were expected to take the same tests as normally hearing students.¹⁸

FGI participants emphasized that the deaf are educated in their countries by special and inclusive schools. They believed special schools were better equipped for educating the deaf but even these had their shortcomings, as noted by one female subject:

Although special schools provide a better environment for teaching the deaf than inclusive schools, they have no curricula fully compatible with the specifics of educating the deaf. When I say "deaf", I mean individuals with significant hearing impairment, wearing no hearing aids. Regarding students with such aids implanted up to the age of 3, I encountered some satisfactory results of standard public education.¹⁹

According to Polish FGI participants, the spotlight is on inclusive education that does not always work. The experts involved in the FGI emphasized that the population of hearing-impaired students fitting within the "intellectual norm" was decreasing while special schools were typically designed for children with disabilities combined with other developmental disorders. The following is a comment from a female teacher working with deaf students at a special school:

I think integration of the deaf at the regular school does not work. It does work for those with motoric deficiencies but the specificity of educating the deaf requires quite different methods to those used by the regular school. Even the supporting teacher cannot help effectively because he/she would need to deliver classes together with the subject teacher, which is not feasible if the class has 30 or 40 students. This is because the way

¹⁸ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

¹⁹ Opinion of an expert, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

of discussing topics is dramatically different between the spoken and sign languages. Sometimes more time is needed to explain an idea. What is more, there are, typically, two so-called “re-validation hours” per week and they require extra time in the end of the day when the student concerned is tired. This does not work.²⁰

Polish and Slovak FGI participants notice a clear trend towards retention of deaf students by schools located near the students’ homes. They believe it is partly a consequence of the system of financing education and related subsidies. One female quantitative study subject referred to the trend as “geofencing”, stressing that:

A deaf child and his/her parents may choose a school at will but they often prefer the one located nearby even if it may be not sufficiently qualified. In addition, local governments tend to hold such children back within the governments’ jurisdictions to keep the educational subsidy that follows the student on the path of his/her education. A deaf student represents an extra monetary value to the local government, so the government is interested in putting the student in an inclusive class of a local regular school. Where a regular school has a disabled student, it can gain an extra organizational strength, such as a full-time psychologist or educator, or certain dedicated subsidies, such as for guides or for a school bus. This approach helps inclusive schools but I believe it is pseudo-integration.²¹

According to FGI participants, it is the well-being of the child and his/her expectations, and not the money, that should come first. As one male subject said:

A hearing-impaired student wants to prepare to become self-reliant and looks for a community of his/her own. Such a community is a great attraction to this person. It cannot be that financial barriers or someone else’s interests create obstacles to development and the ultimate self-reliance of the individual. It results in the student being held at his/her own nest. He/she makes efforts to learn and integrate but often in vain. If he/she can hear well enough, a rescue is available. But if he/she is almost or completely deaf, or if the hearing problem is combined with another disability, this

²⁰ Opinion of a female teacher working with deaf people, a participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

²¹ Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

inclusive school just cannot provide him/her the necessary learning aids, such as a deaf educator, speech therapist or the extra classes that a special school can offer.²²

Also, during in-depth FGIs, participants noted requirements to be met for education for the deaf to be effective. An expert researcher dealing with the subject put it clearly:

The deaf are educated in two ways: by special schools and by inclusive schools. Where a local authority is responsible for education, it is more profitable to create inclusive schools and classes. Note that the “inclusion” can mean a single disabled child in a class, at a school near home. If I were a mother of a disabled child, I too would like to have the child attending a nearby school rather than commuting. In general, parents prefer to put their children in schools offering integration or inclusion because they want to remain in better touch with them. Regarding the requirements, I divide them into those related to contents, methods and organization. The first include competences of teachers and other school employees to work with deaf or hearing-impaired children in terms of awareness of goals, teaching content, choice of subjects and topic discussion chronology. The requirements pertaining to methods include preparation of the team of educators to work with the children in terms of means and methods of delivering knowledge, teacher and student activities, forms of, and methods for, validating learning results, and the scope of home studies. The requirements related to organization refer to adequate preparation of the work place and means of teaching. My experience is that many schools are not prepared to teach the deaf. I often visit schools as tutor to teachers and see student desks arranged in rows. When asked about the seat of the deaf student, teachers often say the student can sit anywhere, preferably in the first row. Then I ask why the desks are not arranged into a circle for the inclusive class. The answer is that it is more convenient for the teacher to have the students sit in rows. This shows the teacher is not prepared to work with the deaf for whom sight is the primary sense. I think schools give too little care to the physical environment including arrangement of desks and sound conditions. A classroom is well suited for working with deaf and hearing-impaired children when it is not too large and has carpet floor covering, tight doors and windows, and desks arranged in a semicircle. It is equally important that there is no noisy projector. Small rooms with good sound propagation are best for students with

²² Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

*hearing aids. Most such children respond bad to noise interfering with the teacher-student communication. Based on experience of parents, children can stay focused only during the first 15 minutes of a lesson. One mother said her daughter often turned her hearing aid off because various noises disturbed her.*²³

The foregoing view coincides with comments made by B.Wiśniewska who stressed that inclusive education for the deaf has to meet relevant prerequisites. These include small classes, experienced educators aware of the issues and requirements of the deaf, good desk mates and seating close to the teachers. The author also noted that success factors in the teaching of deaf students at the regular school include pre-school background (including command of the language), sufficient intellectual maturity and personality traits such as ability to focus, endurance, tolerance of stress, motivation to learn together with the hearing, willingness to take extra effort, degree of hearing loss, acceptance of the hearing aid and good sight.²⁴ Not without importance are also attitudes of parents or guardians who need to be directly involved in the education.²⁵ Regrettably, FGI participants emphasized that the current state of education for the deaf derived from the financing system. One male subject noted that:

The present situation does not give rise to optimism since schools are managed by local governments and the Ministry of Education refuses to contribute to the education for the deaf as much as it should. The Ministry used to have special education departments with most committed school community actors and parents. There was someone to talk with. Now this institution is lean, with no one to represent the deaf. The responsibility for educating the deaf was passed on to local governments, and thus blurred. In the past, special schools reported to the Ministry and its local departments. Today they depend on local governments. This is why special schools for the deaf have to capture their students from remote locations if they want to retain their supra-regional dimension and carry on with their mission. This is done by working with clinics all over the country. Our competences and experience enable us to identify student requirements. We very often invite children to visit us and we take this opportunity to diagnose them. Then, we advise clinics on the educational and

²³ Opinion of a researcher – expert, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

²⁴ B.Wisniewska, *Hearing-impaired Children: Special Educational Requirements*, [in:] *Social and Cultural Identity of the Deaf*, edited by E.Woźnicka, Polish Association of the Deaf, Lodz Division, Lodz 2007, p. 121

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 121

*developmental requirements that should be met for each child. This is how we open the way to development and treatment of children in combination with whole day care.*²⁶

FGI participants emphasized that, during a lesson, the deaf process information differently to the hearing, so it is not the putting of an interpreter in the classroom that will solve the problem but tailoring of the teaching process to address specific educational requirements of the deaf.

The participants from the three countries pointed to unavailability of comprehensive support from the central and local governments with respect to educational guidance for families with hearing-impaired children. It is important because, as B.Wisniewska says, “the decision on sending a hearing-impaired child to school is often a major challenge to the parents”.²⁷

One parent of a deaf child said:

*Parents of deaf children do not know which educational path to choose or what school send the child to for the child to have the best possible life. There is no help or guidance and the subject raises much controversy.*²⁸

Further, FGI participants noted that the so-called “early intervention” is predominantly medical, therapeutic and focused on the patient while, according to participants, it should embrace guidance and psychological support for the closest family so that they could deal with the situation and support development and treatment of the child. Participants said the early intervention team should include a deaf coach as a both therapist to the patient and guide to the whole family. One parent of a deaf child suggested that:

*The overall problem lies in delayed expert help for hearing-impaired children and their families. It happens that parents wait before sending their child to school. This is an awful mistake that can ensure from neglect by the parents, wrong diagnosis or lack of expert support.*²⁹

One female participant noted that education for the deaf would benefit from developing:

²⁶ Opinion of a headmaster of a special school for the deaf, male participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

²⁷ B.Wisniewska, *cited above*, p. 121

²⁸ Opinion of a parent of a deaf child, male participant of an FGI organized in Hungary.

²⁹ Opinion of a parent of a deaf child, male participant of an FGI organized in Slovakia.

*A centralized system, education standards and relevant requirements for schools.*³⁰

Participants from the three countries pointed to a need for developing such an all-inclusive rehabilitation program for deaf children that would involve the parents. According to a Polish expert in education for the deaf:

*We have no institution to offer reliable support to parents of deaf children and guide them about what is possible and essential. Regarding children with major loss of hearing, we can offer rehabilitation and we have implants. Some children will never cope with such rehabilitation and the parents should know that. Typically, parents have no such awareness. They want their child to hear and often refuse to accept bad news about limitations. Parents should be honestly informed, for instance about the need for introducing the sign language for communication with the child. Our school had cases of only one parent willing to teach the child the sign language. I believe the attitude and expectations of a hearing parent towards a deaf child is are a major issue. It requires effort to make parents aware of the actual rehabilitation options, sit together and think what is important for the child.*³¹

One male subject noted that the approach in providing education and care to deaf children should be changed from the one that is focused on what parents or guardians consider convenient, to one oriented on benefits to the children:

*I browse through various Web sites concerning the teaching of deaf children. For instance, the Americans have a good education system that makes hearing parents conform to the needs of their children. In Poland it is the opposite. Children are forced to learn spoken language while it is the parents who should adapt. There is a better chance that the parents will learn the sign language than that the deaf child will learn to speak.*³²

The FGIs also revealed that while studying the awareness of educational opportunities among the deaf, this awareness should be diagnosed broadly among both parents and children. According to participants, awareness of educational opportunities on the part of parents or guardians is more important. It is the relevant knowledge of the parents that decides directly

³⁰ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

³¹ Opinion of a deaf education expert, male participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

³² Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary who uses a hearing aid.

on the ultimate education of their child. And this knowledge frequently underpins motivations of the child.

*As regards awareness of parents, it is a problem: how can they know what to do? The fact is that everyone says something different. Some recommend using the sign language while others discourage the idea. We are planning to hold a conference on this subject this or the next year. We will invite parents of children deaf from the birth and try to tell them what they count on, what the realities are and where educational opportunities lie. It is about building their awareness step by step.*³³

This opinion coincides with the following personal reflection by a female participant of the Slovak FGI:

*I am a mother to a deaf child. What strikes me most is the nonexistence of an established model for helping parents make informed decisions in support of development of their children. Overall, there are many opportunities but we, parents, are lost. We do not know which is better: inclusive schools or special ones? We do not know how to communicate with the child either: there are many opinions. It is horrifying that we do not have a system or organization to guide us in everything and facilitate communication between the school, teachers, experts, pediatricians and parents. Parents are stunned hearing that their child is deaf. They want the best but, confronted with many diverse opinions, have no idea what to do.*³⁴

FGI participants believe there should be a flexible system for evaluation of educational requirements of children depending on hearing damage gravity:

The European Union should implement certain guidelines on education for the deaf. These should define the requirements of children in relation to the extent of hearing loss. Children classified for relevant support should be guaranteed tailored education. This could mean that schools would be assessed for compliance and validated as providers of special education and beneficiaries of related subsidies. I believe there should be a form of certification of schools but also care should be taken to provide such schools in many locations. It would be unreasonable to expect a child to go to school dozens of miles from his/her home. So. Let's invest in quality education but also

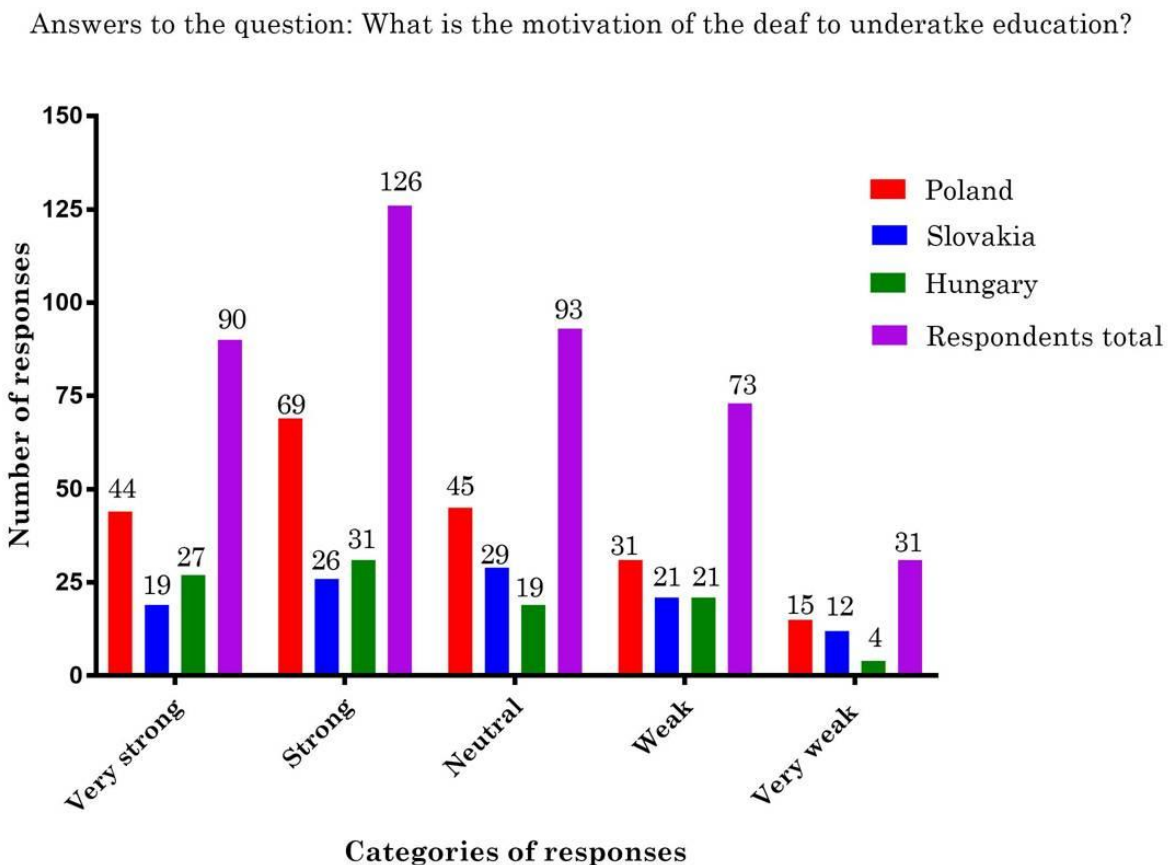
³³ Opinion of a deaf education expert, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

³⁴ Opinion of a parent of a deaf child, male participant of an FGI organized in Slovakia.

*in family ties as parents are often important contributors to the education of their children.*³⁵

Suggestions from FGI participants concerning formal specification and providing for educational requirements of children depending on degree of hearing loss coincide with the US practice that is considered optimal in terms of education environment.³⁶ Participants emphasized that the deaf want to learn but, on the other hand, face major obstacles while trying to access education. The inputs from FGI participants were confirmed by opinion polls in which 52.3% of the respondents believed the deaf are strongly motivated to learn. Only 25.2% of the subject thought to the contrary.

Figure 16. Motivation of the deaf to undertake education according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

One female FGI participant said:

³⁵ Opinion of a deaf education expert, female participant of an FGI organized in Slovakia.

³⁶ See: B. Wisniewska, cited above, p. 121-123

*The educational need of the deaf is very important and as natural as the need to play they had as children. I believe that for a deaf person to have an opportunity in education, this person has to have a language background, first of all. Because a system for early support of development has been in operation in Poland since 2005, I hope there will be no more children coming to schools without command of any language system.*³⁷

There were also qualitative study participants who claimed that the deaf were less motivated to learn than the hearing, which was a consequence of disbelief in oneself and the many hardships a deaf person had to face. One female participant in Slovakia said:

*We are afraid of school, that we will not manage. We have anxieties, we do not know what they will want from us. We fear they will not accept us at school. This is why we often decide not to take up education.*³⁸

The qualitative studies have shown that the deaf have much poorer educational opportunities than the hearing and, as a consequence, are much less educated. FGI participants named the following causes of this poor education:

- *Deaf child education based on spoken language*
- *No sign language teaching at special and inclusive schools*
- *No or poor command of the sign language among teachers*
- *Inadequate teacher preparation for working with the deaf*
- *Preference given to integration at the expense of special education*
- *No real integration of deaf children attending regular and inclusive schools*³⁹

According to participants, educational opportunities for deaf children depend on the place of their residence: ranging from good in large cities, where various forms of support are available, to poor in villages and small towns. FGI participants noted that education for the

³⁷ Opinion of a deaf expert, author of papers on issues of the deaf, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

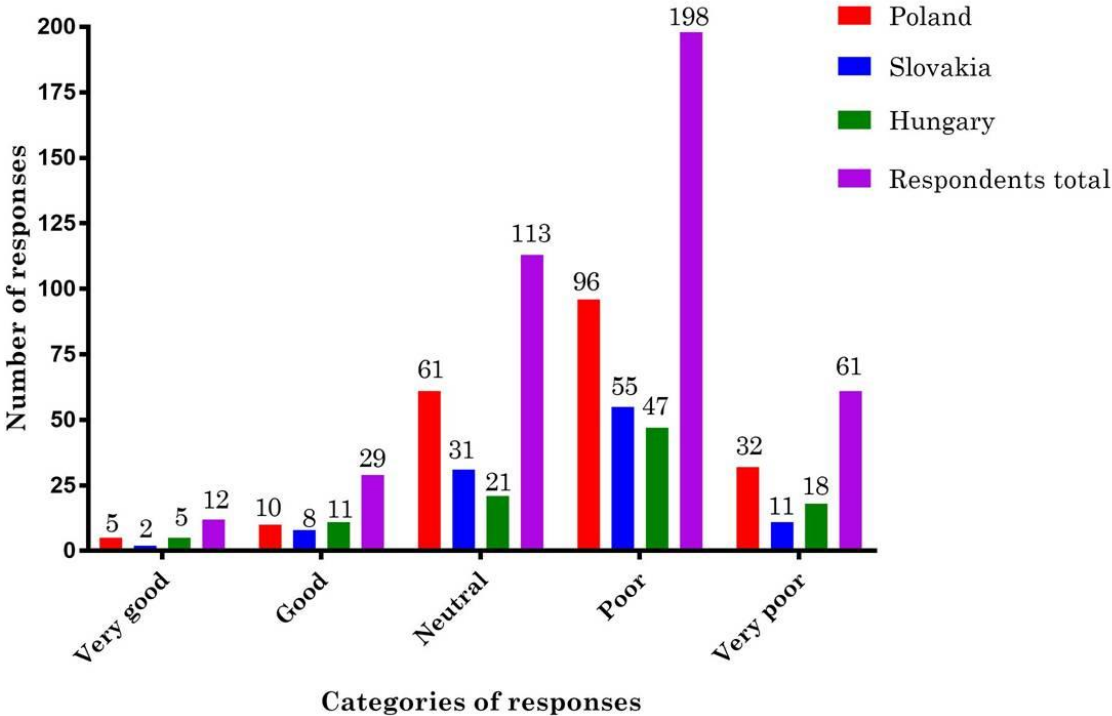
³⁸ Opinion of a female deaf participant of an FGI organized in Slovakia.

³⁹ Compiled opinions of Hungarian, Polish and Slovak FGI participants

deaf became less accessible from one education level to a higher one. They think that a small fraction of the deaf have a chance to graduate from a university. The questionnaire substantiates these results of the FGI.

Figure 17. Deaf people’s access (opportunities of use, educational chance) to secondary (post-high school) education (N=413)

Answers to the question: What is the deaf’s access to secondary (post-high school) education

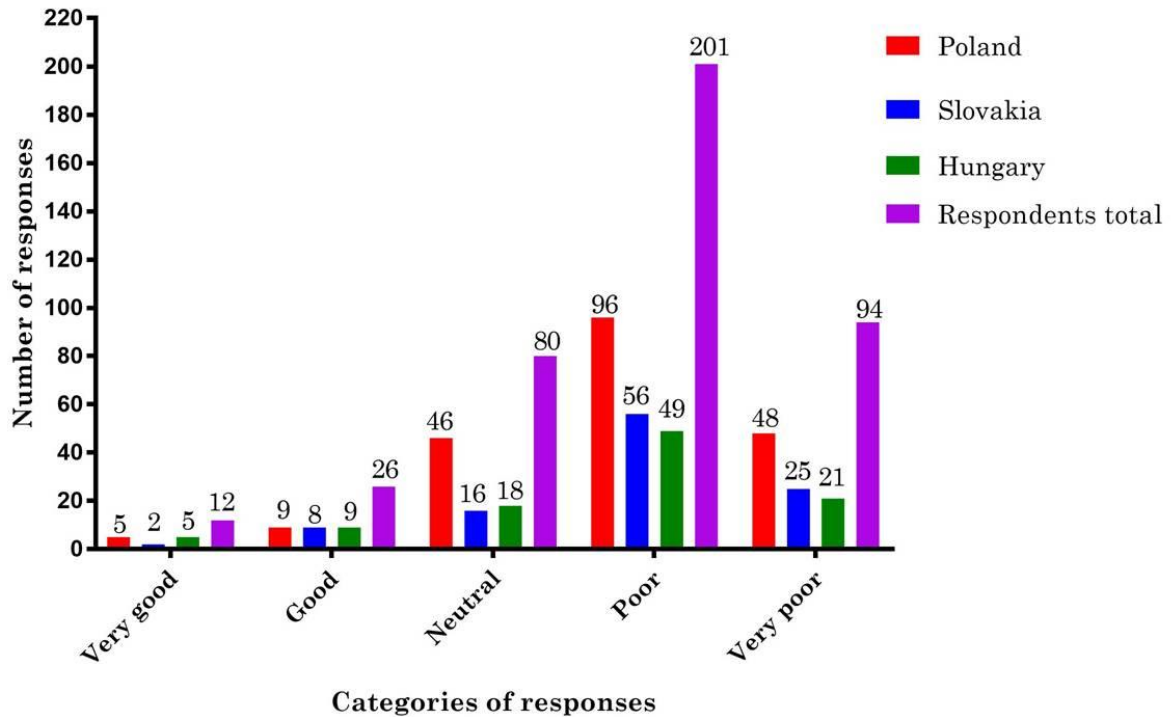


Source: own research

62.7% of the respondents in the opinion poll noted that the deaf have poor or very poor access to the secondary education and just 9.9% believed it was good or very good (Figure17). Responses on attainability of college diploma were even worse.

Figure 18. Deaf people's chances of graduating from a college according to respondents (N=413)

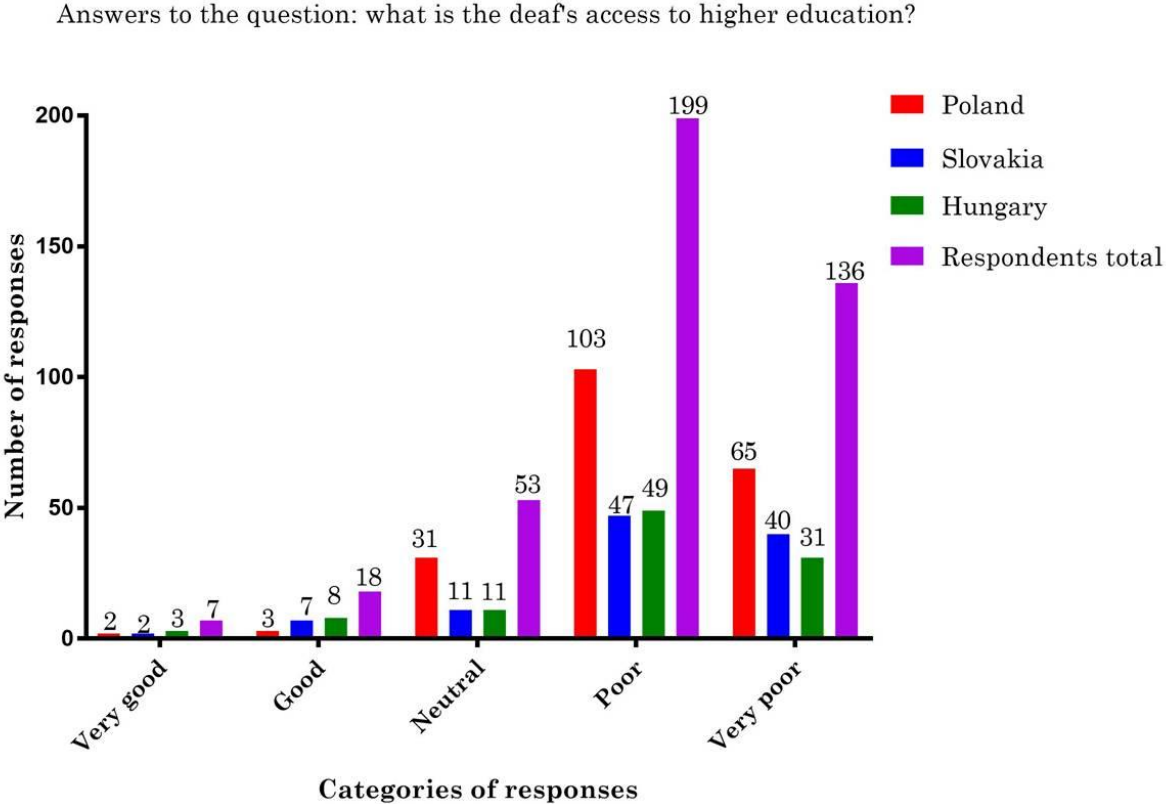
Answers to the question: What are the deaf's chances of graduating from a college?



Source: own research

the deaf had poor or very poor chances of achieving a college diploma and only 9.2% thought otherwise (Figure 18). Again, 81.1% and 6% of the respondents evaluated the access to the university level education as (very) good or (very) poor (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Deaf people’s access (opportunities of use, educational chances) to higher education (N=413)



Source: own research

Also, in-depth FGI participants pointed to a need for recognizing bilingualism as a basis in the education for the deaf. FGI participants stressed a need for teaching the sign language first, as a natural means of communication of the deaf. The spoken language should be taught later, as a foreign language. However, as noted by participants, some deaf persons do not know the sign language. This is because the spoken language prevails in education of the deaf and the sign language is underestimated or often not accepted by hearing parents. According to participants, it is important to accept and understand that the natural sign language corresponds to the cognitive abilities of the deaf, enabling them to understand ideas and grow information exchange skills. Participants emphasized that deaf children not knowing the sign language start to learn the spoken language as late as at school and the learning involves articulation, writing, grammar and literature. As noted by one female FGI subject:

It is very difficult, and often impossible, for a child that does not know sign language to learn the spoken language at school. As a consequence of this approach, the deaf cannot communicate in any language, which leads to exclusion, anxiety and emotional

*problems. But if the child learns sign language at home and has exposure to people who use it, the child will benefit in terms of cognitive qualities and ability to learn the spoken language. Therefore, it is very important that the child learns sign language at home and interacts with the environment by using it from the youngest age possible. Of course, I see the need for educating parents and overcoming their anxiety and uncertainty with respect to the sign language. Regrettably many parents see hope in advanced solutions, such as implants, and avoid the effort of learning the sign language and keep trying to communicate with their children by voice.*⁴⁰

Another male FGI participant argued that:

*For a child, sign language is the key to the learning about the world, developing ideas and developing their brains. Deaf children knowing sign language find it much easier to learn spoken languages.*⁴¹

Yet another male FGI participant pointed that:

*Command of sign language with a deaf child fulfills the basic communication needs and provides a foundation for growing cognitive skills and learning about the world.*⁴²

This statement corresponds to the stance of M.Czajkowski-Kisiel who claims that it is the language, not speech, that is essential to the learning.⁴³ The sign language, as the first and natural one, is the carrier of all thought enabling a child to internalize the world at large. The literature on the subject assumes that the sign language and the need for using it are natural and encoded biologically, which is confirmed by the experience of deaf children who were never exposed to the so-called “conventional”⁴⁴ sign language but stayed in touch with other deaf persons who did not know the language either. Within a short time, the interlocutors developed a sprout of a new, so-called “Pidgin” sign language.⁴⁵ One example of the process is the emergence of the Nicaraguan sign language (*Lenguaje de Signos Nicaraguense*) that, as a matter of practice, developed its full-fledged grammar and vocabulary.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Opinion of an expert, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁴¹ Opinion of an expert, female participant of an FGI organized in Hungary.

⁴² Opinion of a deaf educator – surdopedagogue, female participant of an FGI organized in Hungary.

⁴³ M.Czajkowska-Kisiel, *Bilingual Teaching of the Deaf in Poland*, Special School 2006 vol. 4, 267.

⁴⁴ Conventional sign language: Language used by the deaf in a country.

⁴⁵ Pidgin: Any simplified form of a language, dialect based on simplified grammar and vocabulary.

⁴⁶ P.Tomaszewski, *Deaf Children's Language. A Guide for School Education*, Special School 2005, vol. 3, p. 172.

According to participants, education for the deaf should be looked at from another perspective. As one male FGI participant accurately put it:

*First, we need to recognize the right of the deaf to have their distinct cultural identity and a language that comes as natural to them. Secondly, this recognition should be reflected as early as at the school age. This simply means that the sign language is native to the culture and the spoken language should be taught as a foreign one.*⁴⁷

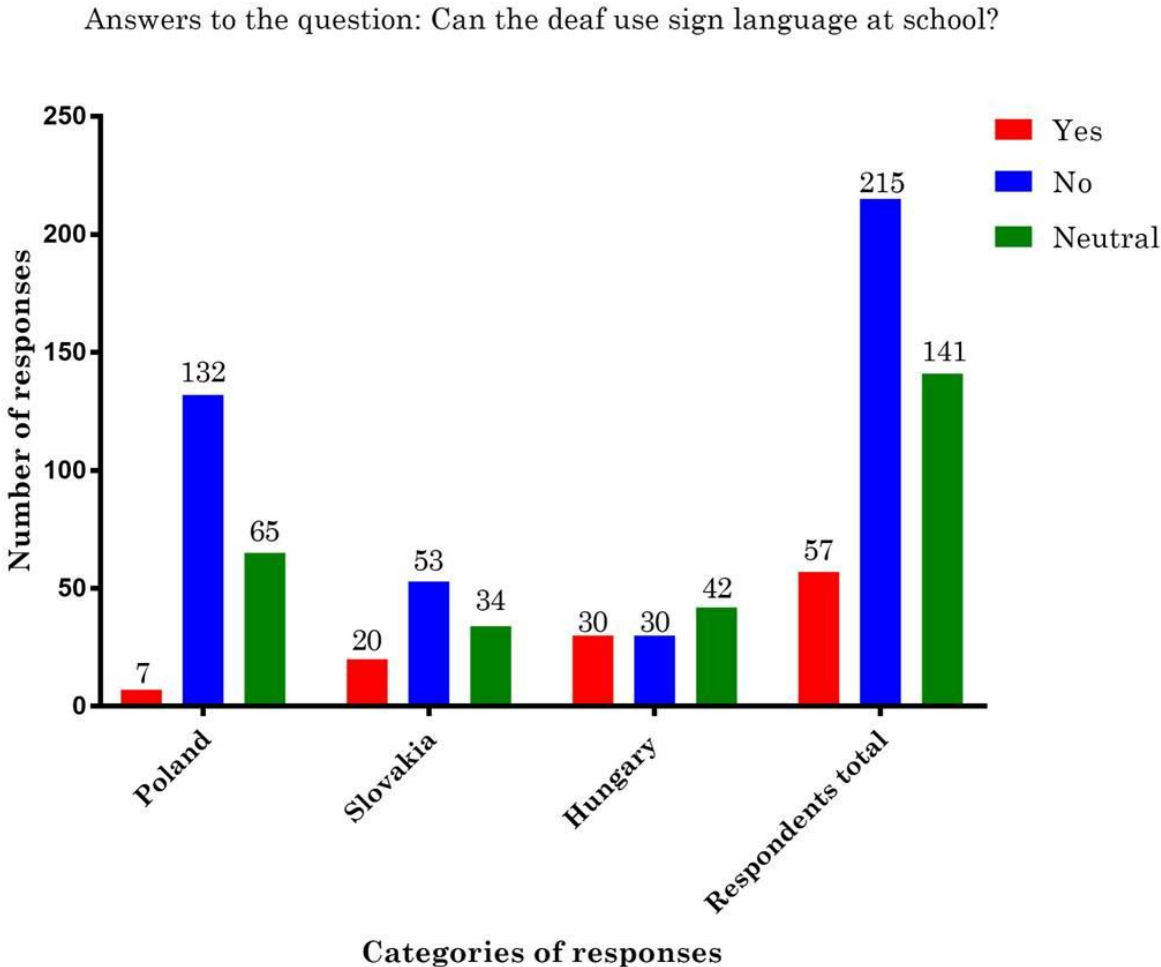
FGI participants share these views with B.Ziarkowska-Kubiak who argues that our current education for the hearing-impaired produces paradoxes that should be eliminated for the process to become effective.⁴⁸ One of them is the pressure on integrating the deaf with the hearing by teaching the former the spoken language as the first (native) one. This leads to non-integration of the deaf and gives rise to defensive responses, a feeling of incompetence, helplessness in the face of one's own limitations and, finally, an inability to use any language.

The FGI participants emphasized that schools not teaching the sign language and not using it as the language of communication, in fact teach children directly in a foreign language. Some opinion poll respondents felt the same: 52% agreed the deaf could not use the sign language at school, just 13.8% thought to the contrary and 34.2% were neutral.

⁴⁷ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

⁴⁸ B.Ziarkowska-Kubiak, About the Need for Changes in Curricula and Methods of Teaching Polish to Deaf Poles, [in:] Educating the Deaf, conference papers, Polish Association of the Deaf Lodz Division, Lodz 2011, pp. 78-90

Figure 20. Deaf people’s opportunities of using sign language at school according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

According to FGI participants, special school teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the problem and, therefore, some school managers have added the teaching of sign language as part of “re-validation” classes, which was appreciated by the students concerned. However, to improve the situation of the deaf, this practice should become common. Participants said it was important to develop curricula and objective criteria for evaluation of teaching results. One male questionnaire respondent said the following about significance of the sign language for communities of the deaf:

I represent an NGO that has been working for the community of the deaf for years. I agree with others: information about the European Union is inaccessible to the deaf for whom sign language is the basic communication medium. Simply, this information is not being translated. It is true that the sign language is rudimentary if we compare it

*to the spoken language, and it is sometimes hard to describe complex reality using this language, but it continues to grow. What university interpreters miss very much are special signs describing certain abstract notions. My foundation worked on a handbook for the teaching of vocational vocabulary. Many words did not exist and we created them based on the existing combinations.*⁴⁹

Other qualitative study participants emphasized that knowledge of sign language depends on the user community:

*The advancement of the sign language depends on the user community. In some groups or communities, the language is very rich. I believe it essential for a child to interact with sign language users and start the learning of the language at the earliest education level.*⁵⁰

According to deaf participants, the problem with the regular school is the teachers who have the knowledge in their teaching domains but no command of sign language.

*Many teachers graduated from sign language courses but, in fact, their skills can be very poor. A certificate of completion of a 60-hour course is not proof of knowing the language. I mention this issue because a systemic solution is already in place but it is deficient.*⁵¹

According to qualitative study participants, this is a consequence of not hiring qualified deaf teachers by schools. A vast majority of teachers are normally hearing individuals. According to one female FGI subject:

*An increasing number of deaf persons knowing sign language graduate from universities as teachers but cannot find employment at schools with deaf children. This is absurd because they would be very effective. In the meantime, school managers hire hearing teachers with very poor command of the sign language.*⁵²

Another female participant of the qualitative study agreed with the foregoing:

⁴⁹ Opinion of a representative of an NGO working for the deaf, male participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁵⁰ Opinion of a sign language interpreter, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁵¹ Opinion of a sign language interpreter, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁵² Opinion of a deaf expert, author of papers on issues of the deaf, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

Language skills of teachers working with deaf children is a major problem. Our education suffers from the lack of dedicated support for sign language addressed to teachers, counselors, parents and students. We have mature technologies but they are not used in Poland and Slovakia. We also lack interpreters for higher education levels because such aid is not an entitlement, as in the case of post-graduate students. There are interpreters for the 1st and 2nd degrees but if an interpreter has knowledge that is incompatible with the domain of the deaf person's study, we cannot expect their communication to be successful. If otherwise, such aid can be extremely valuable.⁵³

The subjects of the Slovak qualitative study highlighted the need for including the sign language in curricula for selected teaching faculties:

Graduates of university teaching faculties, specifically deaf educators, should have an excellent command of sign language or, otherwise, they will not be able to help the deaf efficiently. I think the language should be compulsory there.⁵⁴

One deaf female FGI participant mentioned barriers she encountered in her early education:

When I was small, I lived with my grandmother who worried about my condition. Everyone else was "normal". This grandmother enrolled me in a nursery. While I was staying there, people talked and shouted at me and I could not understand and tried to move away from them. When I was 3, I was sent to Warsaw for a hearing examination and, finally, I went to a nursery school for the deaf. They taught me the spoken language only. The teachers put much effort in the exercises: showed me pictures and told to speak. I attended the nursery until I was 7. They took me to a school in Krakow where the teachers went on talking to me and I still could understand nothing. Then all of us moved to Warsaw. I was shocked; all the teachers could sign but I could not: I was taught spoken language only before. I learned the sign language 4 years in Warsaw. Then I married and bore a son. I placed him in an inclusive school. There was a girl with a hearing implant in his 24-student class. Nobody liked her and she was very alone. It would have been better for her to enroll a school for the deaf. What I want to say is that the deaf and other disabled persons have diverse needs and issues. People with disabilities other than deafness can access aural information while

⁵³ Opinion of a sign language interpreter, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁵⁴ Opinion of an educator – surdopedagogist, female participant of an FGI organized in Slovakia.

*the deaf are at a dead spot here. The two categories of disabilities are incomparable – we sign, they speak – and this is why the deaf should be taught by other means. This is why you cannot put the two categories of students together in a single class. Another problem is that regular schools transfer deaf students to special schools 3 or 4 years too late. If they did that sooner, such students could learn much more due to special teaching methods.*⁵⁵

One expert participating in the FGI responded:

*You are talking about integration in the context of inclusive schools where there are 3 to 5 children with various disabilities and there is one supporting teacher. Usually, this teacher is a deaf educator or an educator for the “intellectually challenged”. In the latter case the deaf student is left on his /her own. We always proposed at many conferences that inclusive classes should be homogeneous, with one disability type per class. Then we could talk about preparation of teachers in terms of teaching contents and methods. But the fact is that school managers find it difficult to source a sufficient number of deaf students and the inclusion of one deaf child was introduced as an alternative. In this case the teacher is not required to be a specialist and the school does not need to provide any dedicated environment. Of course, it should, but hardly anyone observes the formal requirements. This is the cause of the problems with the deaf children’s experience with the regular school. However, if a child is qualified to attend a special school, we deal with the situation you talked about. Problems with skills and knowledge in specific subjects. It is frequently the case that a student is promoted to the next grade even if he/she lags at least 3 years with his/her knowledge and skills*⁵⁶.

One female teacher participating in the Slovak FGI said that their assignment of children to inclusive or special schools depends on communication skills:

Children who can communicate and understand things taught by the regular school (or are likely to develop such skills) can enroll in an inclusive school whereas the remaining ones are assigned to special schools, better suited to their requirements, right away. Slovak inclusive schools have assistants but they are very few, so special

⁵⁵ Opinion of a deaf female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁵⁶ Opinion of a female expert – surdopedagogue participating in an FGI organized in Poland.

*schools are more effective in educating the deaf. The problematic aspect is the subjects requiring special terminology that cannot be grasped by a child without help from a sign language interpreter).*⁵⁷

Participants of the qualitative studies emphasized that special schools are better for completely deaf children relying primarily on sign language. They pointed out the following weaknesses of inclusive schools:

- *Unknown language of the study*
- *Need for the teacher to be facing the student at all times*
- *Student's inability to write under dictation or take notes*
- *Very limited help from classmates*
- *Difficult communication and interaction with classmates*
- *Few sufficiently prepared assistants and interpreters*⁵⁸

However, participants said that inclusive education can become an opportunity for children with a high IQ, able to communicate in more ways than by sign language and able to write, provided that this education has sufficiently good quality. One expert participating in the FGI noted yet another problem:

*Intellectually mature and immature deaf children should not be put together in a single class because the former can waste their potential and develop an educational lag while the weaker students can become intimidated. Regrettably, special schools very often employ the same methods for teaching these two different groups and this is a serious mistake. With this approach, students are at a disadvantage and cannot develop at their normal pace.*⁵⁹

FGI participants reiterated that the learning environment should be related to the extent of hearing loss. This opinion reflects in the following statement:

⁵⁷ Opinion of a teacher employed at school where deaf children attend, female participant of an FGI organized in Slovakia.

⁵⁸ Compiled opinions of participants of FGI organized in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

⁵⁹ Opinion of a teacher from a special school for the deaf, male participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

I think deaf and hearing-impaired children face many barriers in education. Some facilities help the hearing-impaired but not the deaf. Take the elementary school and high school graduation examinations as the examples; these tests are not varied to address the two groups of students, which creates certain paradoxes. Children with minor hearing deficiency are asked about the favorite books of the deaf and they do not know the answer because they have no exposure to completely deaf age mates. Unfitness of teaching methods and measuring the results is another example of a barrier. A child who uses just sign language is expected to write a test without help from a sign language interpreter. Imagine someone asking you in Spanish about the formula for the area of a geometric figure. Could you give the answer? This is a huge barrier and an injustice.⁶⁰

Another thing mentioned by FGI participants was the issue of teaching aids and handbooks that should be used by the education for the hearing-impaired. Participants see a need for special handbooks for such children. The teaching aids and handbooks should address educational preferences of the deaf by using pictograms, cartoons, drawings, pictures, SignWriting⁶¹ (sign speech notation), additional illustrative and explanatory material, or even filmed sign speech in addition to plain text. Also these views held by in-depth FGI participants are reflected in the dedicated literature. These sources note that hearing-impaired students need an illustrative approach to teaching, good content visualization, individual treatment, encouragement and a strong link between the theory and the practice. This can be attained by using diversified means of teaching to impart knowledge, understanding, motivation and an emotional message.⁶²

Some of FGI participants did not hear about the SignWriting while others did or even used this sign language notation. Those with experience with the SignWriting appreciated it as useful in educating the deaf. One female teacher working for a special school that delivered workshops on the SignWriting said:

The notation can be used for educating the deaf. On one hand, it supports the learning of the sign language and, on the other hand, the users of the language finally can

⁶⁰ Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

⁶¹ Examples of implementation of the SignWriting in Poland: T.Zaclona, W.Wereda, Sing Writing as an Innovation in Educating the Deaf and the Hearing-impaired in Poland, [in:] Иновације у настави, XXV, Belgrade 2012/4, p. 116-125; T.Zaclona, SignWriting as an Innovation in Teaching the Polish Sign language in World of Silence, IV/2013, pp. 25-26

⁶² See: B.Wiśniewska, cited above, p. 124

*write. The SignWriting is not being sufficiently promoted in Poland, which is regrettable because it has a potential to support educating the deaf.*⁶³

Finally, FGI participants believe that adding a foreign language (such as English) at the very beginning of the elementary school education can be useless because in grades from 1 to 3 the learning consists of hearing:

One of the goals in the teaching of a foreign language in the three first grades of the elementary school is to get the student understand simple speech and recognize words sounding similar one to another.

This goal is unattainable for a deaf student communicating in the sign language only.

It needs to be understood that, for such a child, learning the spoken language native for the child's environment is equivalent to the learning of a foreign language.

*I think the teaching of English, German or French could be started later, which would benefit the child. You need to know one language before you can learn another.*⁶⁴

Deaf people believe that it is better to achieve a good level of their native language first, and only then start learning a foreign one. A female participant of an FGI organised in Poland underlined:

*The motivation of deaf people, who aren't using hearing aids, to learn foreign languages is low. They often have difficulties understanding the spoken language used in their own country, never mind learning any foreign languages. I think that apart from sign language, deaf people should be provided with the opportunity to learn the spoken language of their own country, and only then should they be taught another e.g. English. Sign language should be used as teaching support in foreign language education*⁶⁵.

A very important issue which is often raised by Deaf persons themselves during FGIs is the question of tolerance at school. Many have remarked that a deaf child in a group of

⁶³ Opinion of a teacher of the deaf, female participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁶⁴ Opinion of a deaf support teacher at an inclusive school, male participant of an FGI organized in Poland.

⁶⁵ Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid. Motivation for learning foreign languages in a group of deaf and hard of hearing, and using language in foreign language learning was described in Hungary by K. Csizér, K. Piniel, K. Hegybiró: See K. Csizér, K. Piniel, K. Hegybiró (Eds), *Hallássérült diákok idegen nyelvvvel kapcsolatos egyéni változóinak vizsgálata*, Magyar Pedagógia, 115(1) 2015, pp. 3–18, [Deaf and hard-of-hearing students' individual differences in foreign language learning].

hearing peers often experiences alienation, certain forms of bullying, and exclusion. Due to the major communication barrier, animated and integrating contact is impeded. The study conducted reveals that some hearing children of Deaf parents have also encountered certain forms of intolerance and lack of acceptance from their peers. One of the deaf parents said:

Children in my son's class tease him about having deafblind parents. This is a source of my anxiety, because my son feels alienated and has emotional problems. He is deeply affected by the fact that he isn't accepted because his parents are deaf, other kids laugh at him. He didn't tell the class he has deaf parents, but the children learned about it from their parents, who went to the parent-teacher conference. This also proves a kind of intolerance among parents, because it is from them that the children learned that my son comes from a deaf family. It is very hurtful to us; it affects his motivation to learn⁶⁶.

Studies carried out within the project confirmed the existence of problems in the area of deaf people's education, which have been indicated in the past by numerous authors writing about the education of the Deaf. These issues include: teaching equipment in schools which is inadequate for deaf students educational needs, school curricula not suitably adjusted to deaf students' educational needs and not enough teachers with proper training and knowledge of the sign language⁶⁷.

4. Participation of Deaf persons in public, civic and social life

In the *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe*, the European Commission (EC) clearly emphasises that the overall aim of its implementation is *to empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their full rights, and benefit fully from participating in society and in the European economy, [...]*⁶⁸. The EC has identified eight main areas of action: *Accessibility, Participation, Equality, Employment, Education and training, Social protection, Health, and External Action*⁶⁹. It has been accepted that the implementation of the strategy should be underpinned by four important instruments, i.e.:

⁶⁶ Opinion of a female deaf participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

⁶⁷ Cf. B. Wiśniewska, op. cit., p. 118.

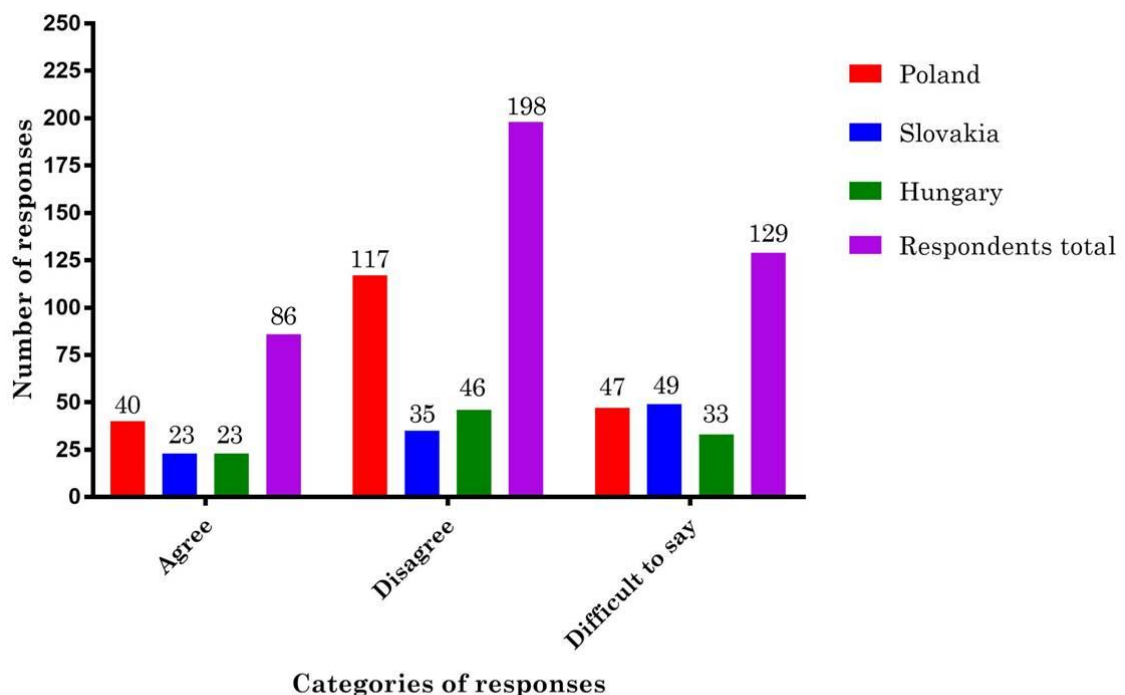
⁶⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe*, Brussels, 15.11.2010, COM (2010) 636 final, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-9.

- ✓ awareness-rising with regard to the rights of people with disabilities, paying special attention to accessibility of materials and information channels, as well as supporting public awareness campaigns on the capabilities and contributions of people with disabilities,
- ✓ financial support,
- ✓ statistics and data collection and monitoring,
- ✓ coordination of mechanisms required by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁷⁰.

Studies carried out within the project were aiming at determining the level of deaf people’s participation in political, civic and social life, as well as indicating the main barriers to them, and recommendations to improve deaf people’s participation in the social sphere. The important aspect of the study was diagnosing whether deaf people are interested in public life. Quantitative surveys revealed that according to 47.9% of respondents, deaf people are not interested in public life; only 20.8% believe otherwise, and the remaining group did not give a clear answer on this subject (Figure 21).

Figure 21. Deaf people’s interest in public life according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

In order to interpret the survey results, we can refer to the opinions collected during focus group interviews. The participants said that the interest in the public sphere among the deaf

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 9-11.

varies. Respondents claimed that deaf people are interested in contemporary problems, they have numerous hobbies and in this respect they do not differ from the hearing population. FGI participants emphasised, however, that it is the lack of information prepared in the format preferred by the deaf that impacts their low interest in many issues, including public and civic life. An FGI participant in Slovakia remarked:

Politicians, journalists and commentators in Slovakia use complicated words which aren't always understandable to deaf people. There are no opinion portals addressed to the deaf community. Few materials are broadcast with subtitles or sign language support. Therefore, the deaf community is insufficiently informed about major public and social events. As a result, the alienation of deaf people increases. Yet I believe deaf people are interested in what goes on in public life, so the obstacle here is the low information supply⁷¹.

A female participant of an FGI carried out in Poland spoke in a similar vein:

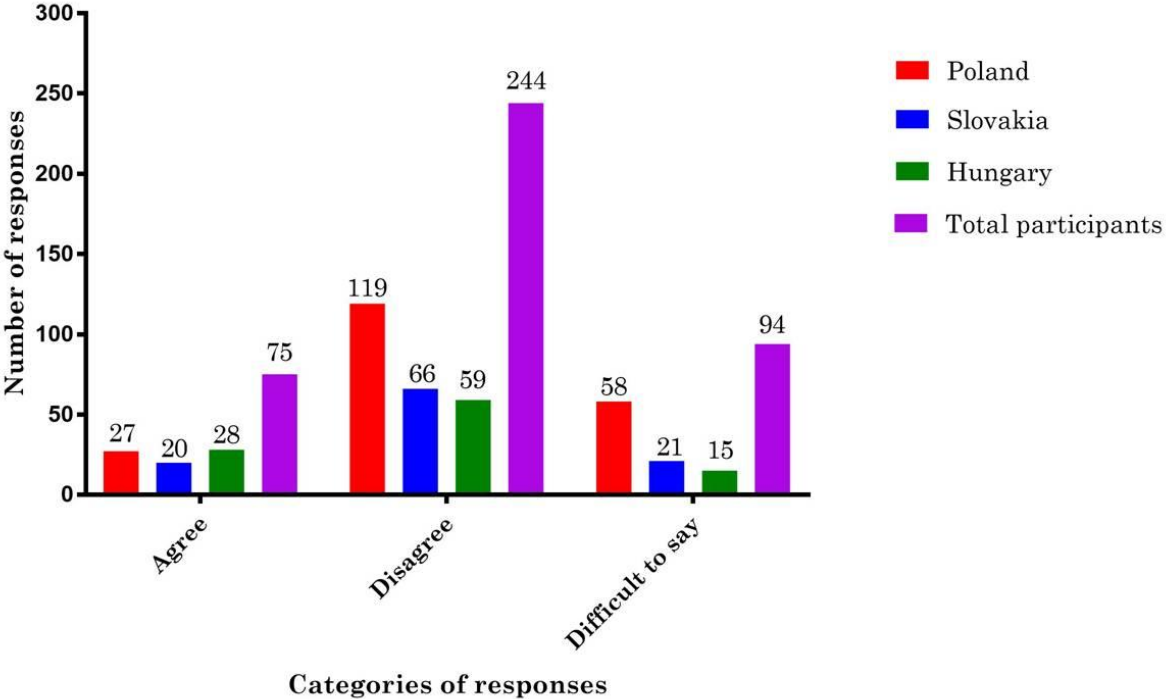
The language of media is unintelligible to the deaf, and video content translated to sign language broadcast in media is very scarce. As a result, Deaf people often themselves interpret images they see e.g. on TV or online. Then they exchange this information in direct communication or via image-based internet messaging systems. Consequently, information is often distorted and functions as gossip. It does not come from reliable sources, but is distorted and subjected to interpretation. A deaf person gains some information on major current affairs in public life and transmits it to others by signing, who in turn pass it on with further modifications. Thus certain faulty beliefs, stereotypes and prejudices develop. Moreover, when I observe the communication of deaf people, I notice that they are more trusting of one another than of hearing people, even experts or teachers; it's a kind of horizontal trust towards one's own culture. Some deaf people unquestioningly accept information coming from their community, while being very distrustful of any information from the hearing community. This is where I see an enormous need to run an objective and current information service in the form of video footage interpreted to sign language. It should be available online, so that deaf people could access it even after some time. Such a video library would be an excellent tool for deaf people's education. Unfortunately, in my opinion there are no materials on public life and political affairs available in sign language at the moment⁷².

⁷¹ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

⁷² Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

This opinion is confirmed by surveys which show that 59% of respondents believe that deaf people do not have sufficient access to information on public life and political affairs. Only 18.2% of those polled think such access is sufficient, whereas 22.8% did not express a clear opinion on this subject (Figure 22).

Figure 22. Respondents’ opinion on the accessibility of information on public life and political affairs to deaf persons (N=413)



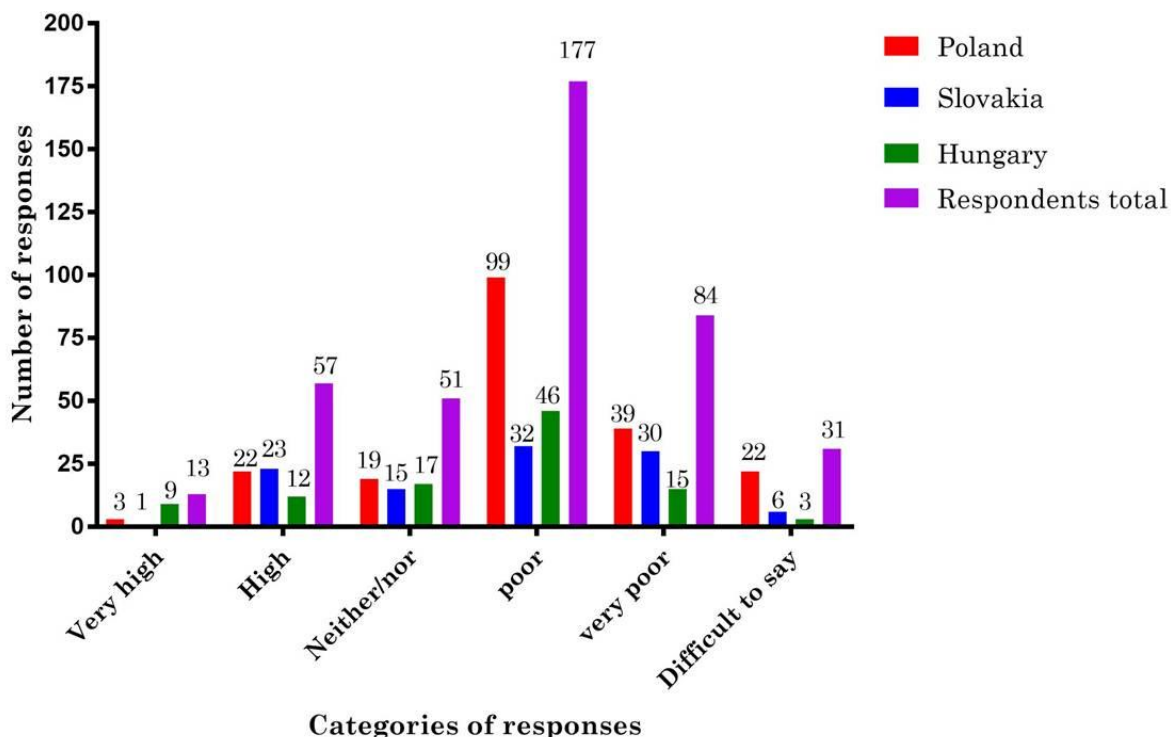
Source: own research

The evaluation of deaf people’s motivation towards political activity reveals that according to 63.2% of those polled it is low or very low (Figure 23). As we can surmise on the basis of the conducted in-depth interviews, it stems from deaf people’s lack of belief in the effectiveness of their activities in the political sphere. One of the FGI participants expressed his opinion on the subject of deaf people’s involvement in political life in the following way:

In Hungary, we have excellent examples of a deaf person’s involvement in public life on the European and national level. EMP Adam Kosa is a very well-known person in the Deaf community; he is the representative of the deaf community at the European level. Another recognisable person is Mr. Tapolcai Gergely, a member of the National Assembly, who was the first to use Hungarian Sign Language in the Hungarian Parliament. These two deaf deputies, through their involvement in public life, have done a great deal for the entire deaf community. And I don’t mean just their work for the community, but their exemplary attitude of involvement in politics. They are both perfect

role models who convinced the entire deaf community that they can and should become involved. Thanks to their attitude, deaf people's approach to politics has changed. But in general I still note certain play-safe behaviours; Deaf people support their representatives, but they are less willing to actively engage in political activity than hearing people⁷³.

Figure 23. Respondents' opinion on deaf people's motivation to engage in political activity (N=413)



Source: own research

This opinion was confirmed by other respondents participating in qualitative surveys, who noted that even if deaf persons are interested in public life and politics, they do not engage in it actively.

Few Deaf people have the courage to actively participate in public and civic life. Even if some of deaf people are interested in political affairs, it does not translate into their active political involvement. This is noticeable in the example of exercising the right to vote. Even if we make an optimistic assumption that 50% of deaf people exercise their right to vote, I haven't noticed a candidate for deaf people or having their own representative. Even if there are exceptions, it is not a common occurrence⁷⁴.

⁷³ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary who uses a hearing aid.

⁷⁴ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

Another participant of a qualitative survey organised in Poland emphasised:

It's true that deaf people have reservations against engaging in political life. But here in Poland we also have good examples of standing as a candidate in the elections. There is a candidate I know, Mr. Adam Stromidło. He ran in local elections and for the Senate, with a very good result, around 20% support in his constituency. His campaign was focused on sports and problems of people with disabilities. Although he didn't win a seat, he set a good example and proved that a deaf person can stand for elections just like hearing people. But in Poland we lack a distinctive example of a deaf politician who has stood in elections and won a seat in the parliament, like in Hungary. I strongly believe that one such role model would encourage the deaf community to greater involvement and interest in politics⁷⁵.

The surveys also revealed more extreme opinions on the subject of deaf people's involvement in public and civic life. One of the FGI female participants argued:

Deaf people don't participate in civic life; I suspect that they don't even vote. They don't vote because they don't understand for whom they should vote, who represents what, and what their policies are – they only know what other Deaf people sign to them. So there is an interest in public life, but there's no ability to receive the information. Unverified information, often distorted, circulates in the deaf community, but they are not sufficient to make voting decisions⁷⁶.

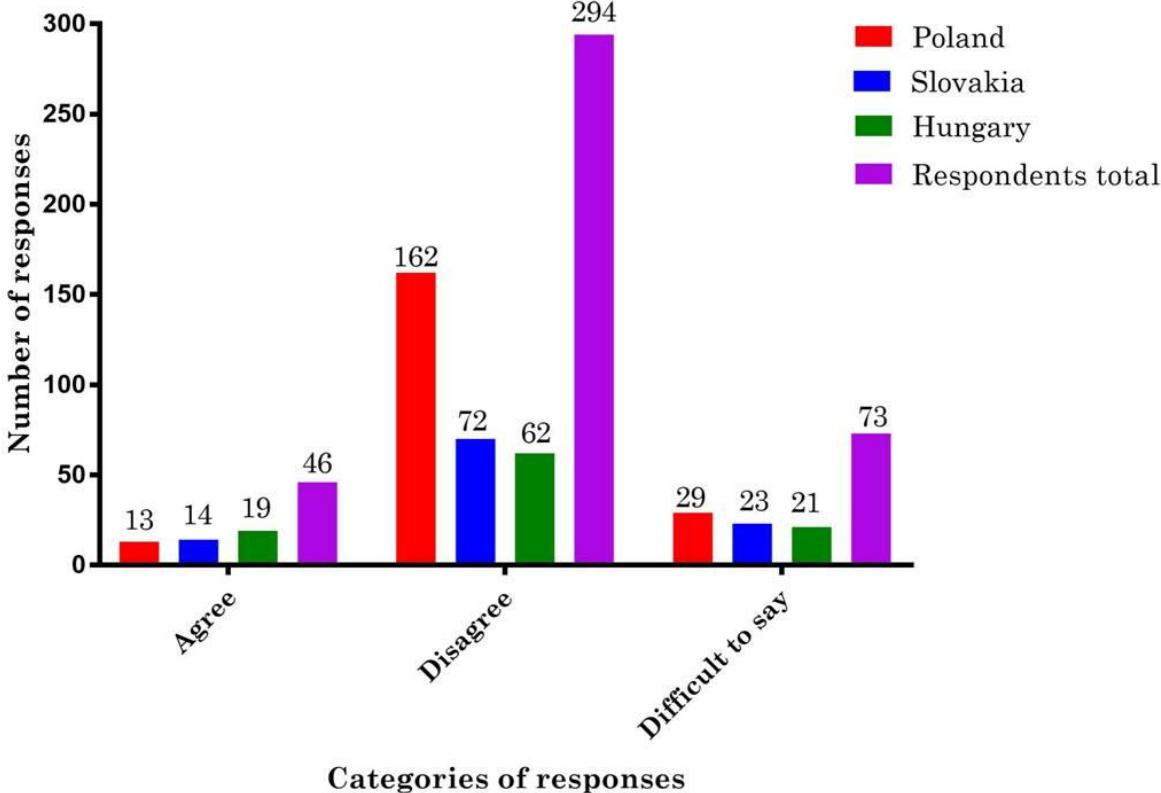
The opinions presented above were to a certain extent confirmed by quantitative surveys, in which 71.2% of respondents answered that deaf persons do not participate actively in civic life (Figure 24).

⁷⁵ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

⁷⁶ Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

Figure 24. Respondents' opinion on deaf people's active participation in civic life (N=413)

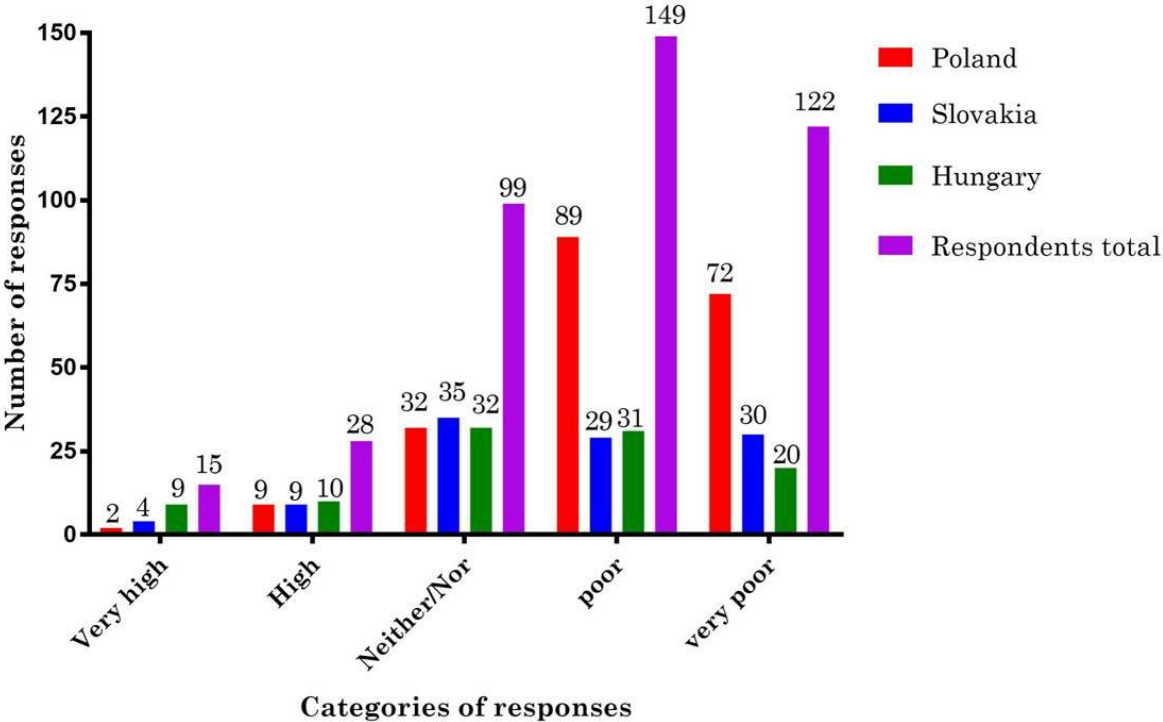
Answers to the question: Do you think deaf people actively participate in civic life?



Source: own research

Also the majority of respondents answered that deaf people have difficult or very difficult access to political activity (65.5%). Only 10.4% of those polled think that such access is easy or very easy (Figure 25).

Figure 25. Access/realistic possibilities of Deaf persons undertaking political activity, according to respondents (N=413)

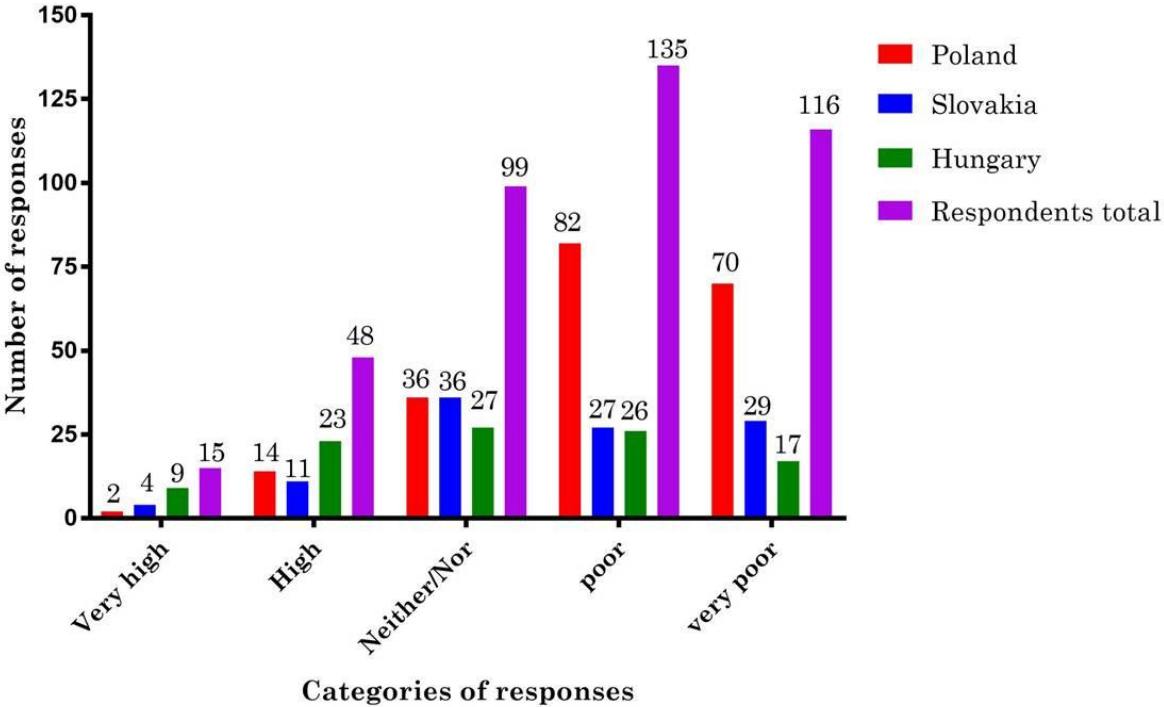


Source: own research

Focus group studies showed that deaf persons have significant difficulties in accessing political activity. In the opinion of the interviewees, these stem mainly from communication barriers and lower civic awareness and motivation for taking relevant action among the Deaf. In some of the in-depth interviews, participants claimed that the situation could be improved by parities which would guarantee persons with disabilities a certain number of places on electoral registers. However, there was no shortage of voices opposing this solution, and indicating that such an action would not produce the expected results.

Only slightly more favourable were the respondents in their evaluation of deaf people’s access to participation in the local government. 60.8% answered that such access is difficult or very difficult, while 15.2% said it is easy or very easy (Figure 26).

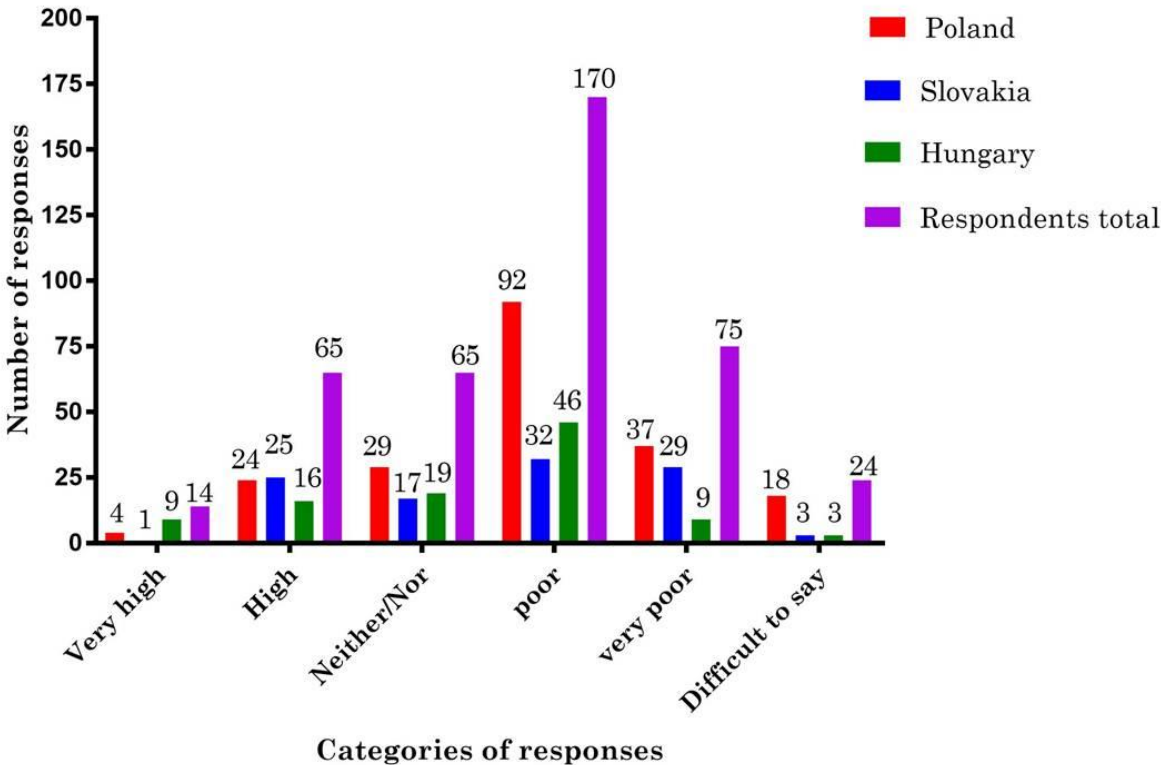
Figure 26. Access/realistic possibilities of Deaf persons’ participation in the local government, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

When referring to the participation in the local government, FGI participants noted that this is the easiest available way for the deaf to become involved in politics. They stated that the involvement in the local government should be the first step to political activity at the national and European levels. However, they claimed that deaf people’s involvement in local government is insufficient, and therefore their interests are not adequately represented at the level of local governments which possess the relevant competences and carry out tasks which impact the functioning of deaf people in the public sphere. Participants of the qualitative surveys listed, among others, such tasks as: education, signage in public spaces, support for deaf persons in local government institutions and financial support for people with disabilities. This is why respondents concluded that various collegial bodies of the local government require the presence of deaf people’s representatives. However, they concluded that the motivation of deaf people to undertake political activity is low. These opinions are reflected in the results of quantitative surveys: 59.3% of respondents judged the motivation to participate in local government activity by the deaf to be low or very low, 15.7% described it as average, and 19.2% a strong or very strong. 5.8% of those polled did not express an opinion on this matter (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Respondents’ opinion on Deaf people’s motivation to participate in the activities of the local government (N=413)

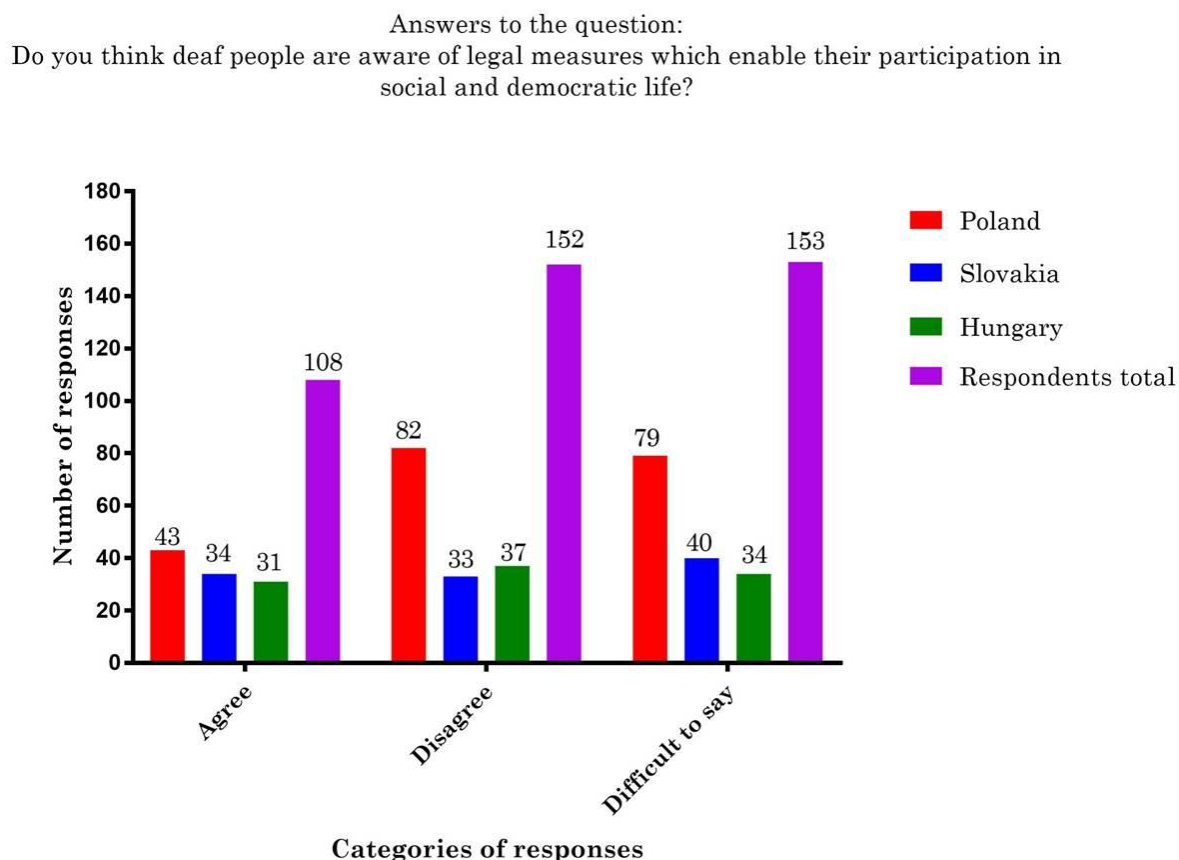


Source: own research

Assuming that inclusion and social participation of deaf people are affected by their awareness of their rights, an evaluation of this awareness among respondents and FGI participants was carried out as a part of this project.

Quantitative surveys revealed that respondents varied in their opinions with regard to Deaf people’s awareness of legal measures which enable their participation in social and democratic life. 153 interviewees did not express a clear opinion, 152 answered that deaf people are not aware of such measures, and 108 said that quite the opposite is true (Figure 28).

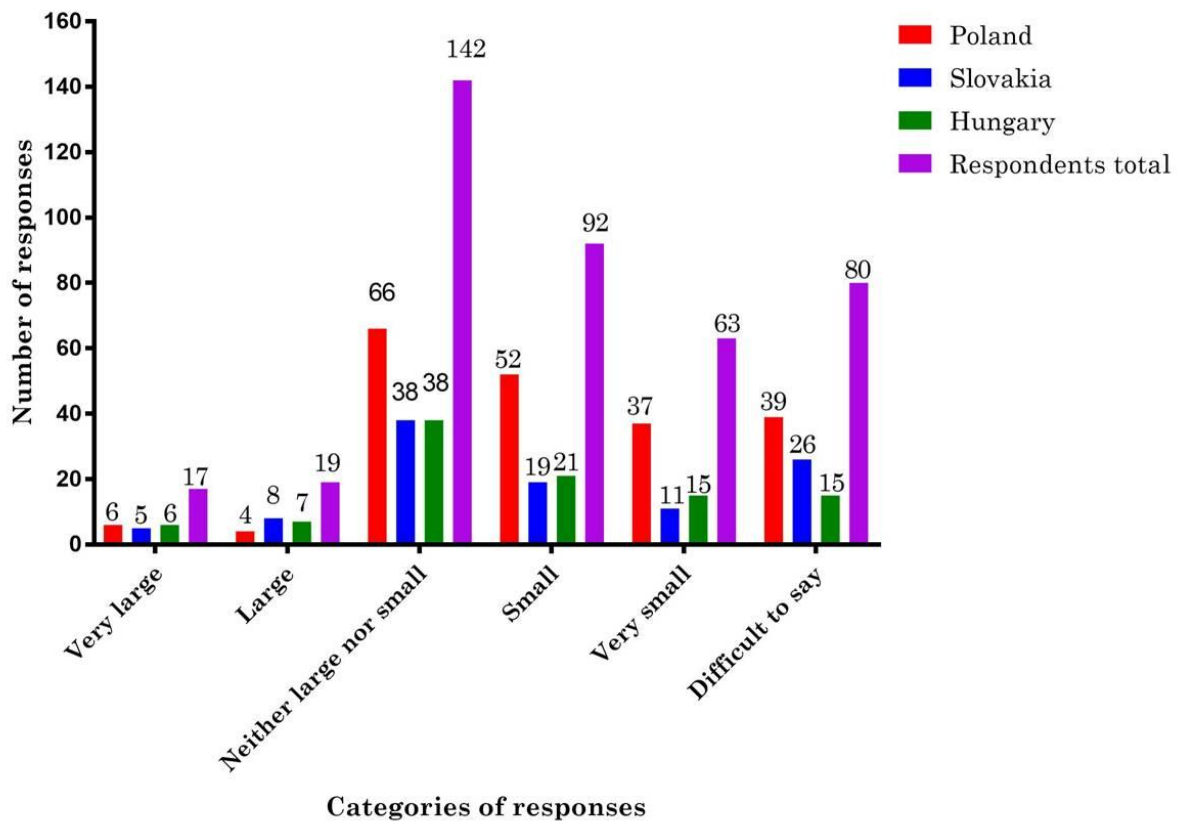
Figure 28. Deaf people’s awareness of legal measures enabling their participation in social and democratic life, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Similar survey results were obtained after evaluating Deaf people’s knowledge about their rights – even more respondents (142) answered that it is neither large nor small. However, what should be a cause for concern are the numerous answers, from 155 respondents in total, which confirm that in this group the knowledge of deaf people’s rights is either small or very small (Figure 29).

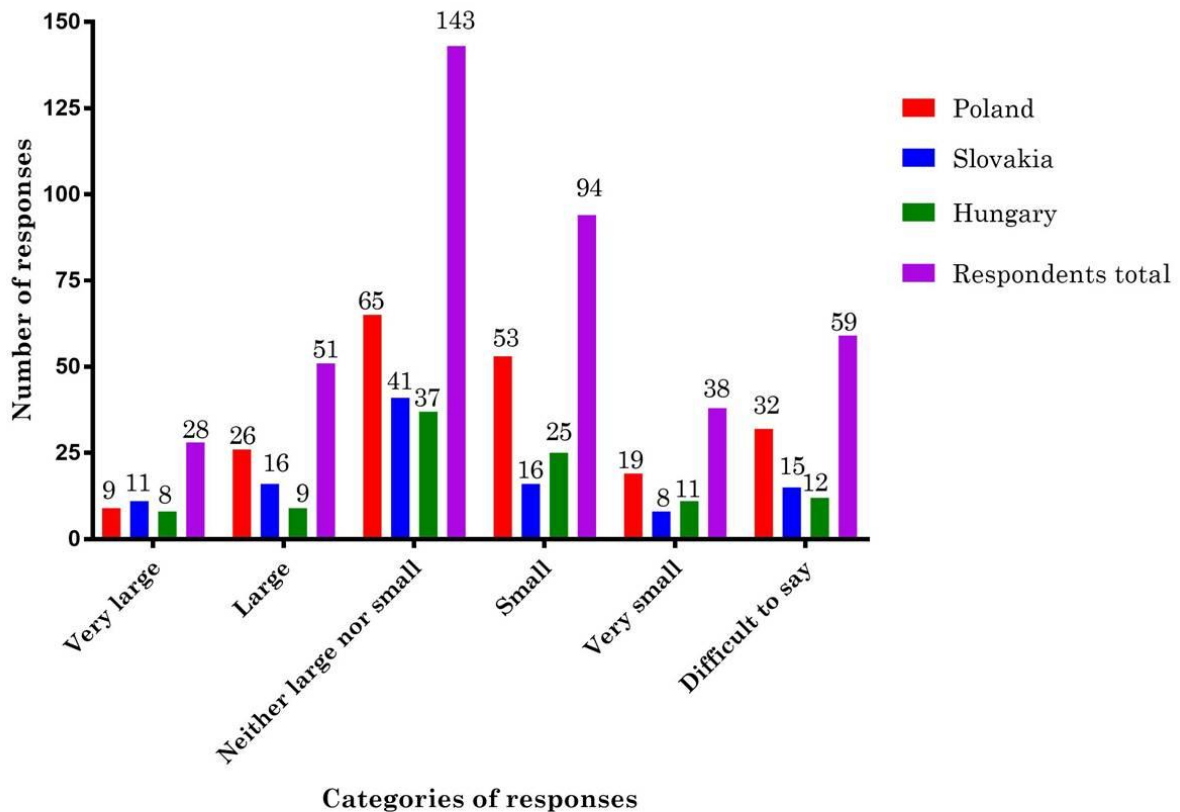
29. Deaf persons' knowledge of the rights to which they are entitled, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Furthermore, respondents indicated deaf people's moderate awareness and knowledge about the possibilities of participation in social life. The most numerous group among those polled – 34.6% – believes that this knowledge is neither large nor small, 31.9% describes it as small or very small, and only 19.1% concluded it is large or very large (Figure 30).

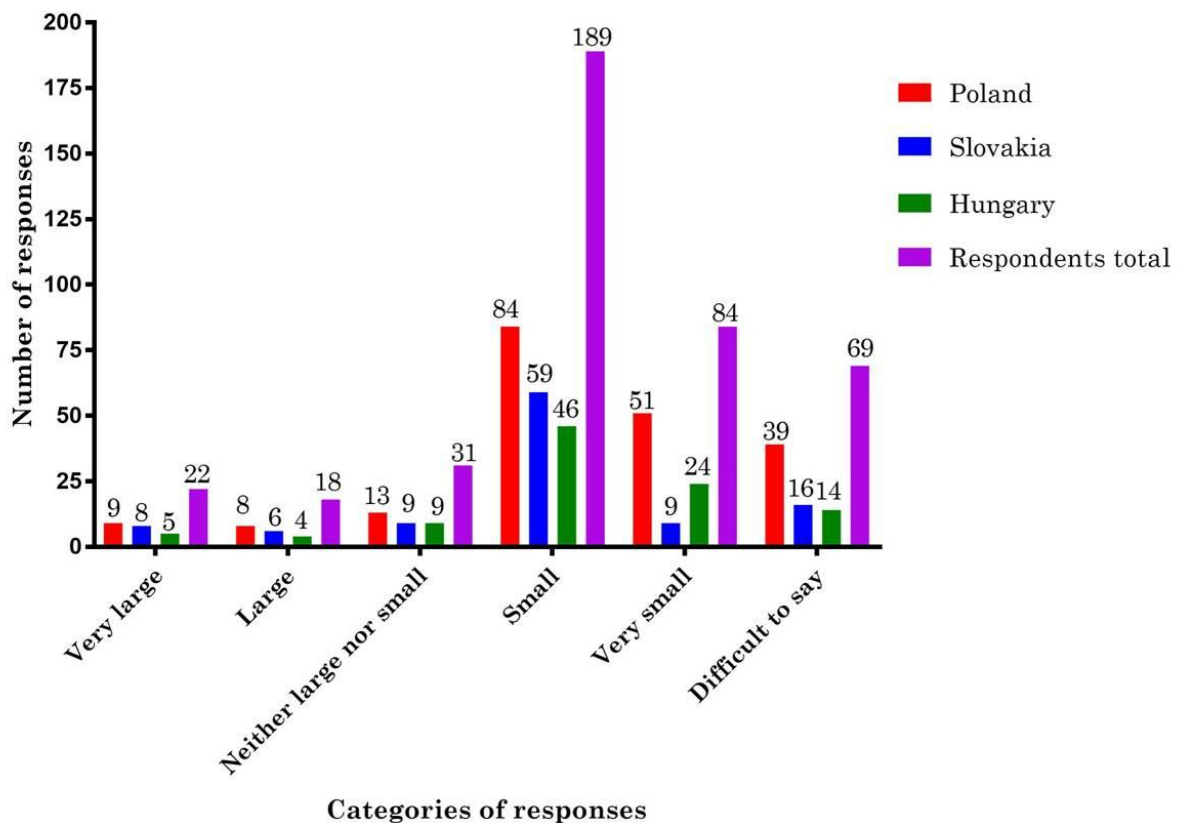
Figure 30. Deaf people’s knowledge about the possibility of participation in social life, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Survey analysis completed and unambiguously confirmed the results obtained from in-depth interviews. During these interviews, respondents emphasised that deaf people are often unaware of many forms of social activity. They do not know that they can form associations, actively participate in civic initiatives, or establish third sector organisations. These remarks are in accordance with the results of the survey, in which as many as 66.1% of respondents answered that deaf people have small or very small knowledge about the possibilities of establishing third sector organisations (NGOs), and only 9.6% was of the opposite opinion (Figure 31).

Figure 31. Deaf people’s knowledge of the possibility of establishing third sector organisations (NGOs), according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Qualitative and quantitative surveys reveal that deaf persons understand the idea of volunteering, as they are often its beneficiaries and frequently become involved in such activities themselves, in order to support their community or people in need. One of the female participants of an FGI organised in Hungary described the issue in the following way:

Deaf and hearing impaired persons, due to their own problems, have a great social sensitivity. They experience many hardships, but also other people’s help, which makes them realise the value of human relationships and selfless help offered to those in need. I’m convinced that although the deaf often benefit from others people’s help, they are just as willing to invest themselves in helping. They receive, but they can also give; they readily volunteer and willingly share what they have. I also see a strong internal bond within the deaf community, in which people support and motivate one another to action. It’s an example of the tremendous sensitivity and empathy of deaf people who may not be able to hear sounds, but they do listen with their hearts⁷⁷.

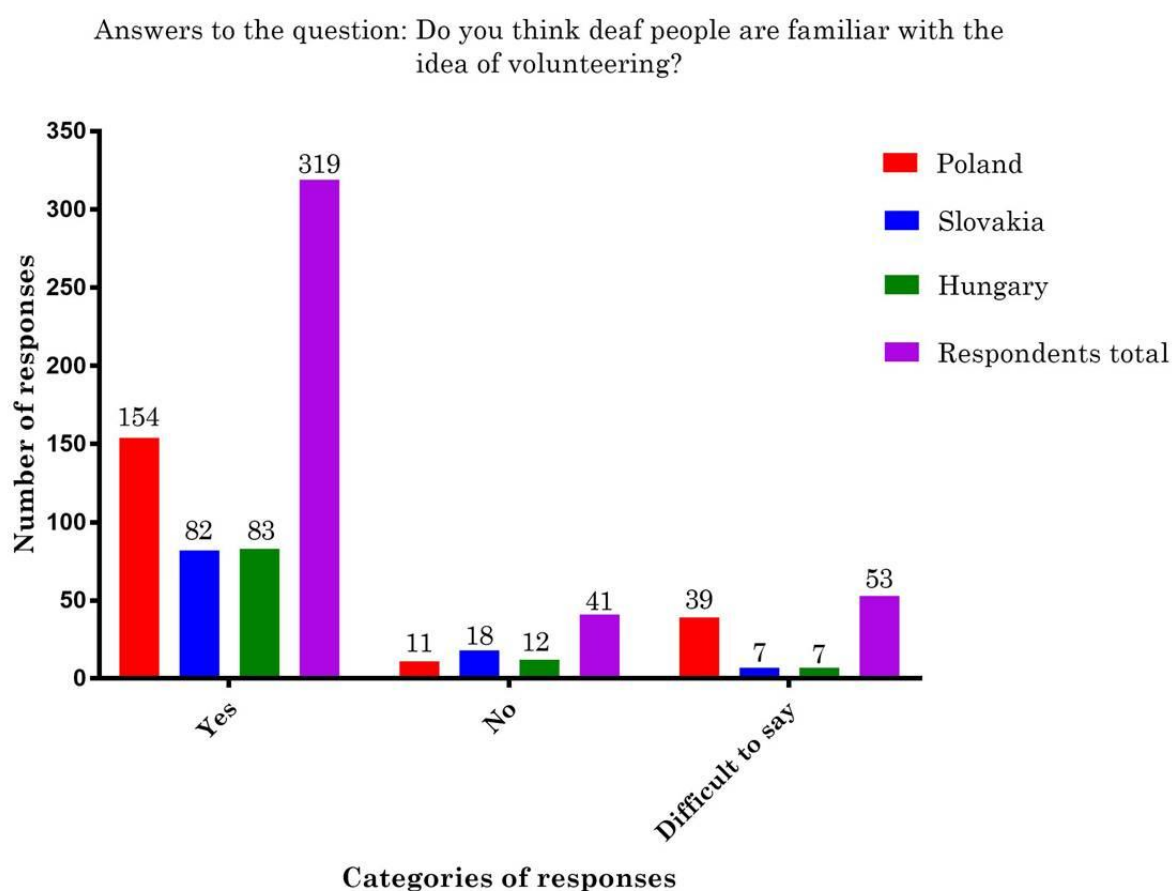
This opinion corresponds well with another statement of an FGI participant from Slovakia:

⁷⁷ Opinion of a female teacher working with deaf persons, a participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

Deaf people want to help and they do help others, while often requiring assistance themselves. I don't know if they all know what volunteering is and what it involves. But I'm convinced that a straight majority of deaf people understand the need to help others selflessly. Although Deaf people can't hear, they are very sensitive to the needs of another human being, and I believe that this sensitivity is what we should learn from them⁷⁸.

Collected quantitative data revealed that according to respondents, deaf people are familiar with the idea of volunteering – it was the opinion of 77.2% of respondents (Figure 32).

Figure 32. Deaf people's knowledge of volunteering, according to respondents (N=413)



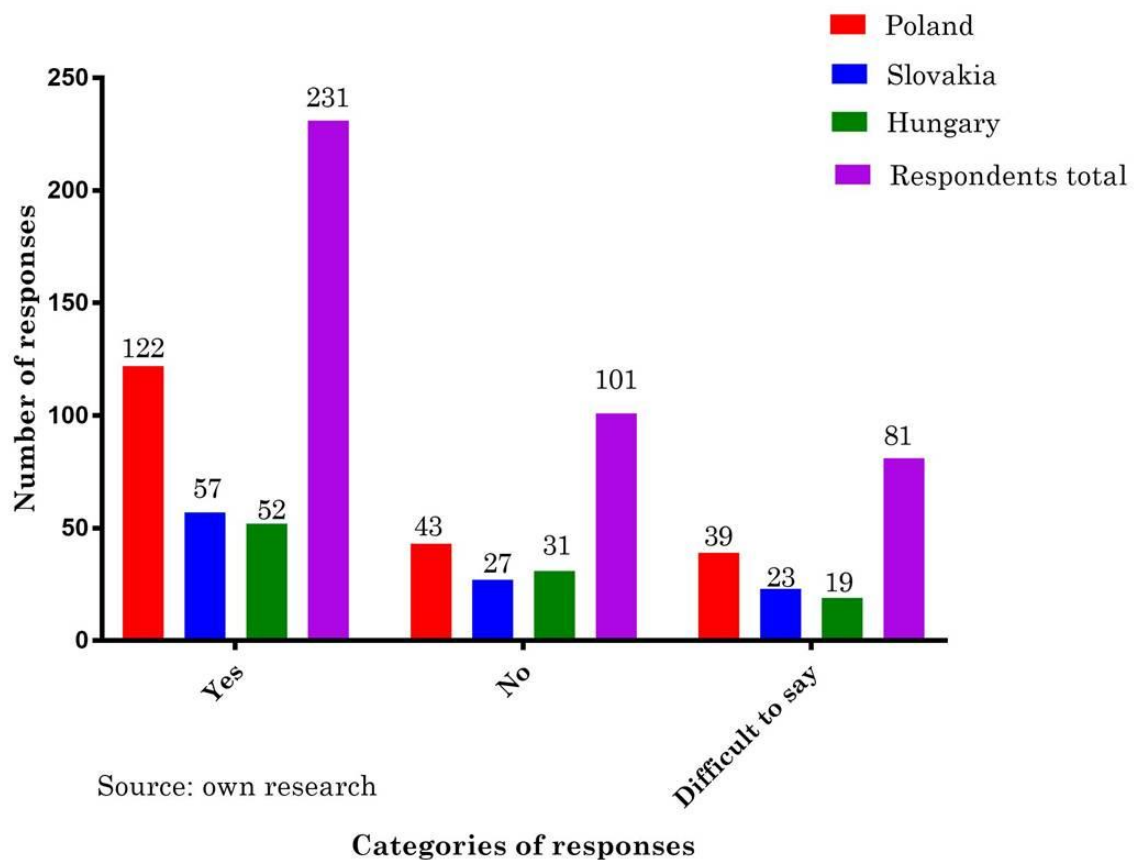
Source: own research

Quantitative surveys confirmed that the majority – 55.9% of respondents – answered that deaf persons actively volunteer, and only 24.4% of those polled were of the opposite opinion (Figure 33).

⁷⁸ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

Figure 33. Deaf people’s involvement in volunteering, according to respondents (N=413)

Answers to the question: Do you think Deaf people become involved in volunteering?



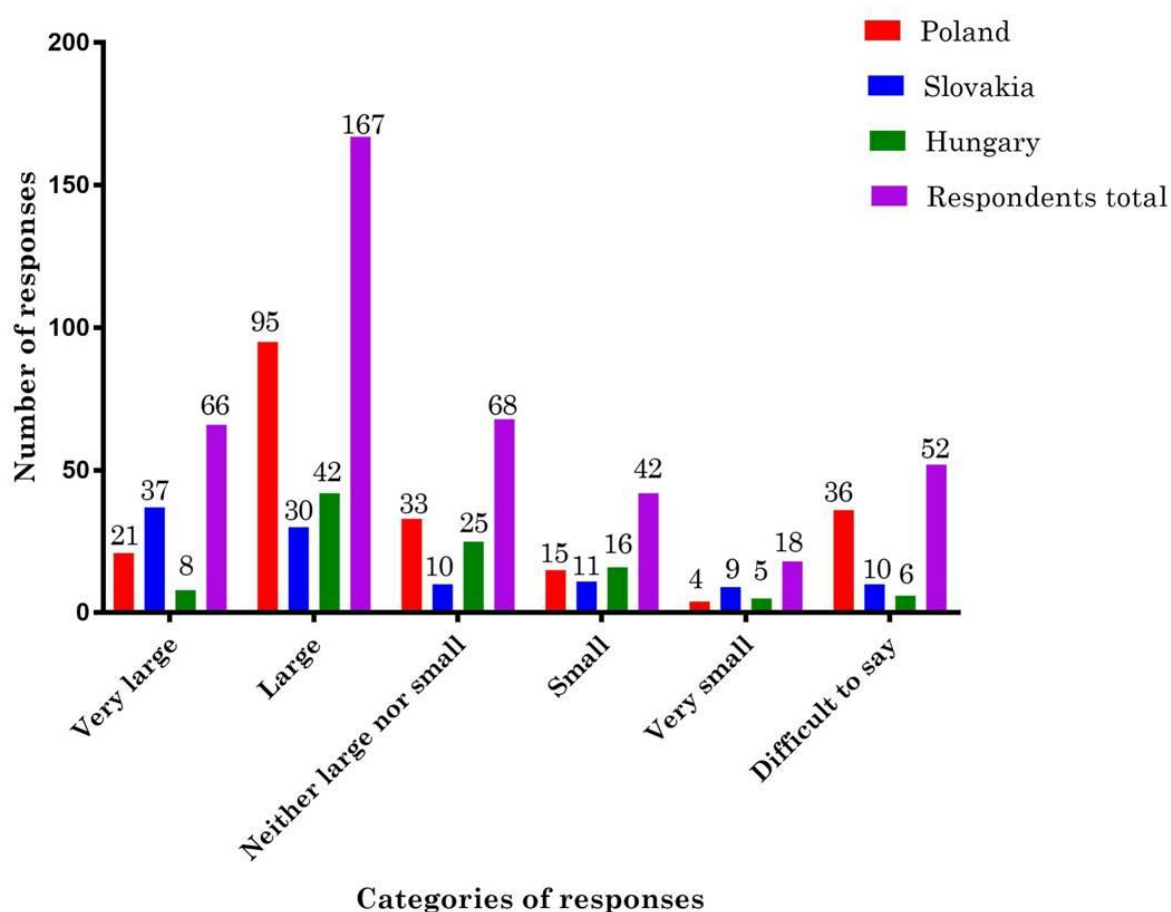
Differences between the answers about the familiarity with the idea of volunteering and active volunteer activity was aptly explained by one of the participants of a qualitative survey:

Deaf people frequently have active contact with volunteering, because they are its beneficiaries themselves. Undoubtedly they are more often recipients of volunteer activities than performing such activities themselves, but this example is also an inspiration for them. Seeing the help offered to them selflessly, they try to help others as well. Deaf persons in general have significant social sensitivity, they willingly help one another, and they are also ready to help hearing people. Yet very often this doesn't take the form of official volunteering, but it's rather an expression of personal concern for the good of another human being. This is why deaf people, even if they help others, do not necessarily consider themselves to be volunteers. I believe that the official aspect of volunteering can constitute a kind of obstacle here. Often no one asks deaf

people to become involved in such activities. I'm sure that if asked, they would not turn down such an appeal⁷⁹.

The analysis of the quantitative material shows that this assessment is accurate, as 56.6% of respondents answered that deaf people's motivation for volunteering is high or very high; 16.5% said that it is moderate, 14.5% described it as low or very low, and 12.5% did not provide a definite answer (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Deaf people's motivation for the participation in volunteer activities, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

When referring to the familiarity with the idea of volunteering and deaf people's active participation in it, respondents said that school is the place which often shapes such pro-social attitudes and influences the interest in volunteering. A participant of an FGI in Hungary underlined that:

⁷⁹ Opinion of a male teacher working with deaf persons, a participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

In schools, young people come into contact with the idea of volunteering very frequently, because often students and teachers volunteer. For example, in our school there are special compensatory classes organised to help students who have problems with their school work, and more capable students help out us well, which helps to promote good role models. Apart from that, youth participates in organising various events held at the school. In our school there are around 40 very active student volunteers on whom we can rely. I've also heard that volunteering is particularly active in high schools, where organised groups of volunteers exist, and deaf students participate in them as well⁸⁰.

A participant of a qualitative survey conducted in Poland spoke in a similar vein:

The idea of volunteering is carried out from the elementary school through middle school, so it's quite familiar in the adult life. This idea is promoted by action, not by theory. It should be familiar to young deaf people. I think they are perfectly capable of separating the fact that they are beneficiaries of the assistance from the fact they become volunteers for other people in need. I think that the idea of volunteering certainly contributes to the integration. Students are very open. They do not fear contact with the hearing community; they want to be present, show themselves, prove to be useful. Their volunteer work is often more solid than that of their hearing peers. And there are many occasions for two-way help, because we have many activities inside and outside of the school, due to the character of education we provide, we benefit from various workshops and classrooms in other public schools and other schools use ours. These contacts benefit our students due to their sincere involvement. Our students' sincerity is much more spontaneous than in the hearing community. They are honestly involved, no matter their health, strength and devoted time⁸¹.

Referring to this statement, another teacher of deaf persons said:

I agree with the opinion expressed by the Headmaster. I think the sincerity of actions is a significant trait of deaf people. If procedures are clearly stated and the objective of the action is specified, then deaf people concentrate on that and they do it in a very honest and diligent manner, because they don't have additional sources of information to distract them. If I was to select a volunteer with respect to attentiveness and diligence, these are traits of deaf people. What is more, young people are very eager to engage, and as a matter of fact – older people as well.

⁸⁰ Opinion of a headmaster of a school attended by deaf persons, a participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

⁸¹ Opinion of a male deaf persons' teacher, a participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

A female deaf student active in the School Volunteering Club formed in the Special Purpose School and Education Centre for the Deaf in Cracow also spoke on the subject of deaf people's involvement in volunteering:

In our school and boarding house, there have been two volunteers clubs formed, with around 30 people: students, but teachers as well. Examples of students' involvement include: support for the International Day of the Deaf which was organised in 2015 in Myślenice, mountain clean up actions, participation in the organisation of a sporting event – a marathon, promoting the social initiative addressed to runners entitled “Let them see you after dark”, taking care of abandoned graves at the cemetery next to our school, and at the moment we are working on a film on the harmfulness of designer drugs; we are also preparing to participate in the recording of a multi-media handbook for volunteers. The examples of participation testify to the fact that the actions of school volunteering clubs go beyond the deaf community⁸².

An important dimension of the conducted study was determining deaf people's motivation for participation in social life. The collected empirical material leads to a conclusion that such motivation is moderate. According to the participants of qualitative surveys, it depends on the place of residence, age and education of the deaf person. Among younger, better educated people living in big cities, the motivation is higher:

Younger, better educated inhabitants of big cities are more willing and motivated to become socially involved. This stems from good role models which deaf people have around them, as well as the openness of the community. What is more, via the Internet young people have contact with global culture, they observe what the situation of deaf people looks like worldwide, and they want to draw on the best practices and change their reality. This is a new generation of deaf people, with their own ambitions, created to a certain extent by the educational boom and job market expectations.

During in-depth interviews, respondents put much emphasis on diversity within the deaf community:

A significant group of deaf people very eagerly become socially involved, they have this internal drive to participate. They are interested in what's going on around them, they are curious about the world and its people, and they want to interact with the world. But the deaf community isn't uniform. There are also people who don't want to participate. Their experiences in the social sphere aren't positive, because they

⁸² Opinion of a female deaf persons' teacher, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

*encounter obstacles, often discrimination, so their motivation for social involvement isn't high. They shut themselves in their comfort zone and don't interact with the hearing. These people often prefer the company of other deaf people and only feel comfortable with them. This is why the deaf community is very diverse when it comes to their motivation for social participation*⁸³.

As one of the female participants of a qualitative survey conducted in Slovakia underlined:

*Deaf people's motivation and participation in social life often depends on having a leader, a good role model, an organisation or a person who would be an inspiration to the deaf. In Slovakia, father Robert Colatka is certainly quickly becoming such a leader. He is a social activist working for the deaf community, he heads a social cooperative, publishes "Gaudium" – a magazine for the deaf, and sits on the board of the Christian Deaf Centre. "Gaudium" is a news magazine which also publishes information and articles sent in to the editorial office. The deaf community in Slovakia is a group vividly interested in what is happening in their community. Such activities are an inspiring, excellent example of involvement for the deaf community*⁸⁴.

Participants of in-depth interviews also emphasised that they carried out their social activity in the area of sports or handicrafts, which is well illustrated by a statement from one of the participants of a qualitative survey conducted in Slovakia:

*If deaf people have such opportunities and inspirations, they often participate in sporting activities. They frequently work with sports clubs or form their own organisations in order to practice sports. So their social activity is carried out via their involvement in sports. Often they are also active in tourism, mainly local, they benefit from trips organised by various tourist associations and they eagerly visit new places. A large group of deaf people finds fulfilment in handicraft: sewing, cooking or building things – they have great manual skills and they like to use them*⁸⁵.

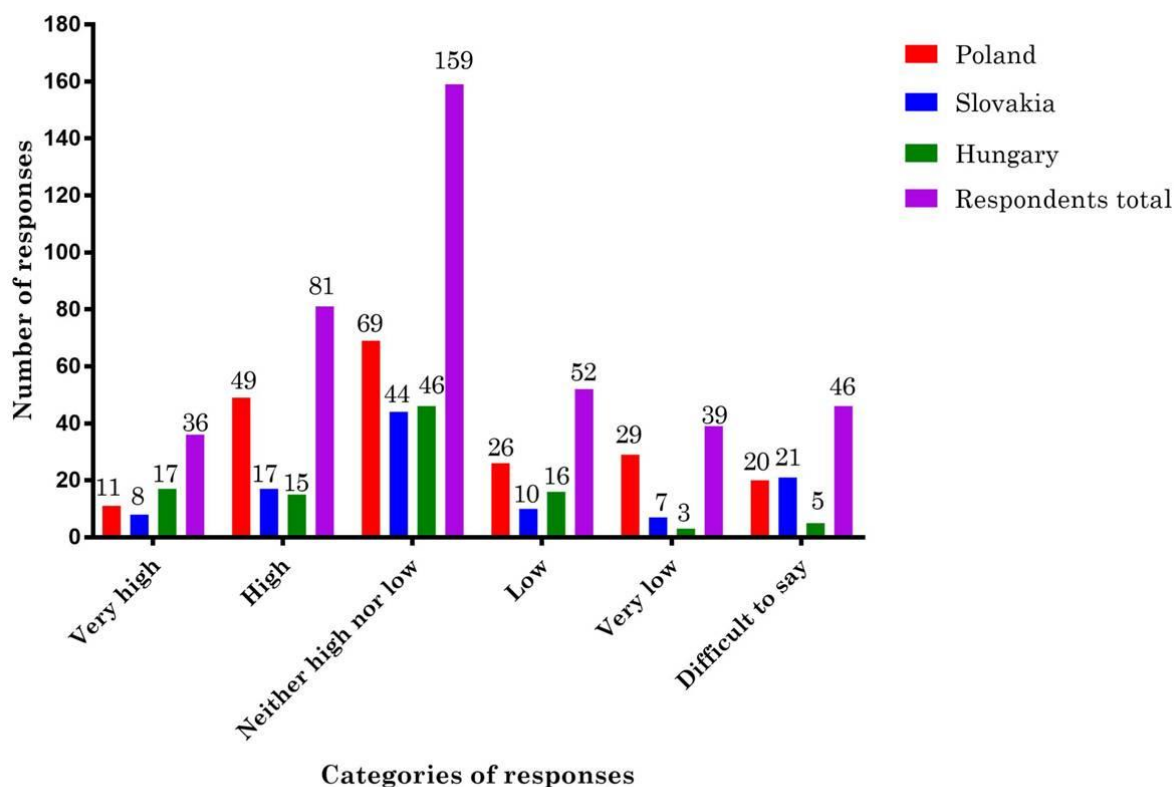
The collected quantitative material indicates that according to the most numerous group of respondents (38.5%), deaf people's motivation for their participation in social life is moderate, 28.3% described it as high or very high, and 22% of those polled answered that it is low or very low (Figure 35).

⁸³ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf persons, participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

⁸⁴ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf persons, participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

⁸⁵ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf persons, participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

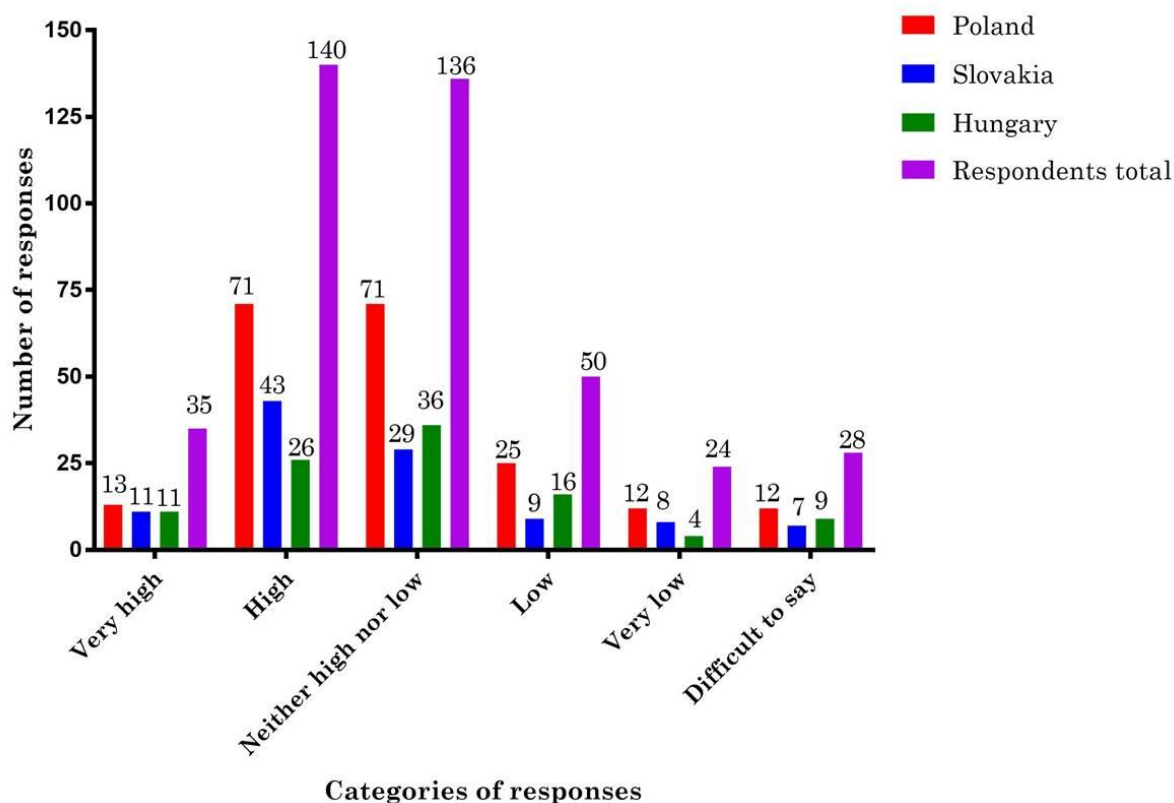
Figure 35. Deaf people’s motivation for the participation in social life (N=413)



Source: own research

A slightly different distribution of answers is evident in the survey on Deaf people’s motivation for integration with the hearing community. A numerous group of respondents – 42.2% – answered that such motivation is high or very high, 32.9% that it is moderate, and only 17.9% of those polled answered that it is low or very low (Figure 36).

Figure 36. Deaf people’s motivation for the integration with the hearing community (N=413)



Source: own research

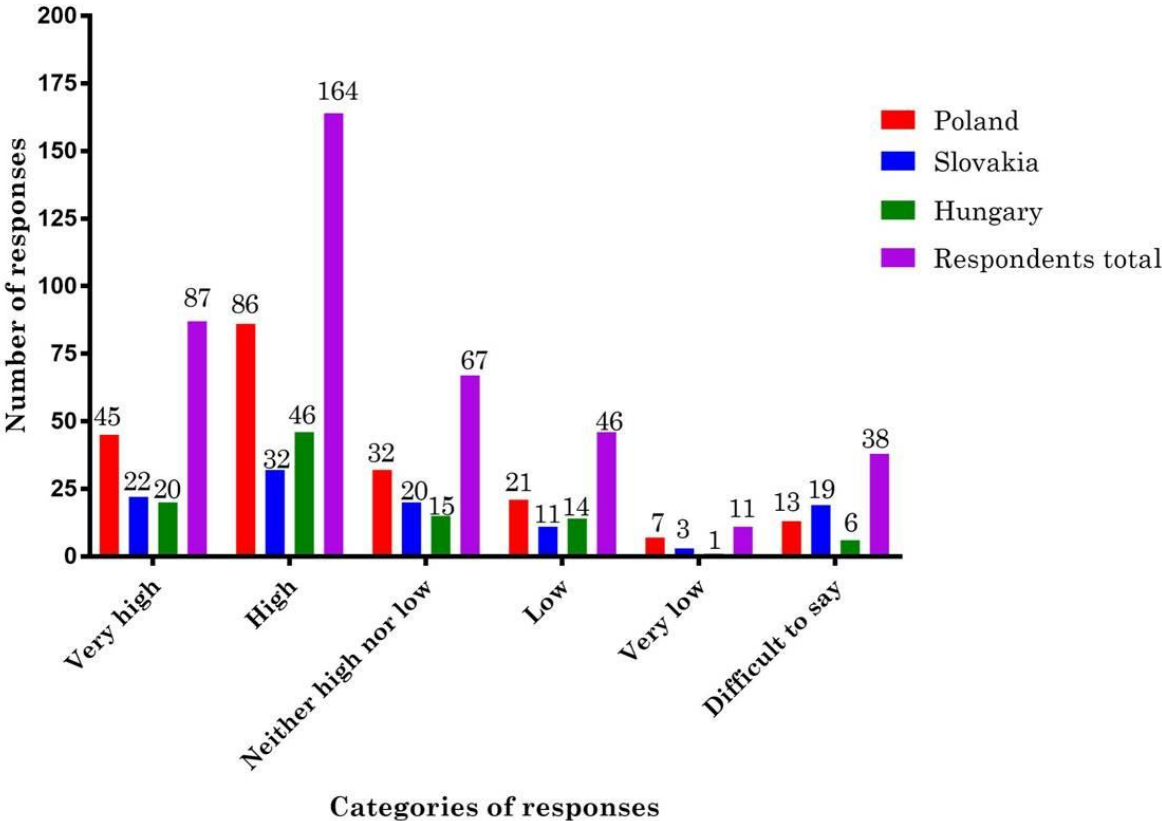
In the interpretation of the quantitative surveys results, it would be beneficial to refer to the opinions collected during qualitative surveys. Interviewees emphasised that deaf people’s motivation for integration with the hearing community varies, but in this case it is possible to distinguish a clear tendency and aspiration of a large group of deaf people to expand such integration. According to a participant of an FGI organised in Hungary:

Numerous deaf persons aim at a full integration with the hearing. A large number of Deaf people does not treat their hearing impairment as a disability. They often find that the only difference between them [and the hearing] is the language, but this is not an obstacle to social integration. Deaf people aim at integration and social participation, particularly in terms of access to education and job market, access to culture, including cinemas, theatres, TV, new technologies, accessibility of various services, and qualifications universally granted to the hearing people, e.g. a driving licence⁸⁶.

⁸⁶ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary who uses a hearing aid.

This argumentation is confirmed by quantitative surveys, which indicate that according to respondents, deaf persons want to benefit from mass culture. 60.7% of those polled answered that deaf persons have high or very high motivation to access mass culture, and only 13.8% was of the opposite opinion, saying such motivation is low or very low (Figure 37).

Figure 37. Deaf people’s motivation to access mass culture (cinema, theatre) according to respondents (N=413)



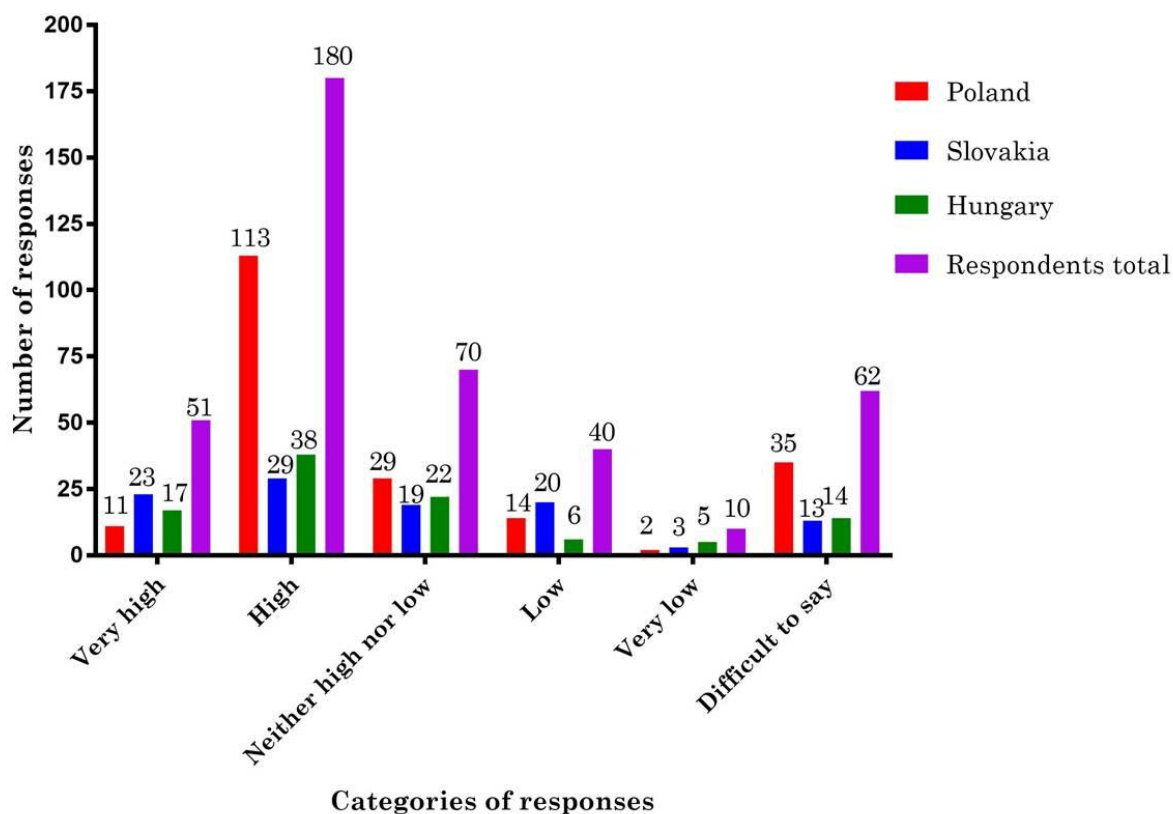
Source: own research

A very similar distribution of answers was noted in the survey concerning deaf people’s motivation for using new media, i.e. the Internet or social media. As many as 55.9% of respondents answered that such motivation is high or very high, 16.9% said that it is moderate, and 12.1% that it is low or very low (Figure 38). Similarly, FGI participants indicated that new media and new information technologies compensate for the loss of hearing. One of the study participants noted that new media and technologies:

Enable getting information, and communication using the written word and video calls. This is why deaf people are very interested in using these media and technologies. Undoubtedly there are deaf people who don't want to use such solutions, in my opinion this results from a fear of something new and unknown, or from a lack of

*technical knowledge. This is why we should teach and show how to use such technologies. They can only serve to help and they're very useful. We can't allow a situation where a deaf person is also digitally excluded*⁸⁷.

Figure 38. Deaf people's motivation to use new media (Internet, social media) according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Quantitative surveys revealed that the majority of deaf persons possess the knowledge to use new communication and information technologies, i.e. tablets, other mobile devices, CARTs (e-translators). As many as 71.9% of respondents answered that deaf people's knowledge on the possibilities of using these technologies is large or very large (Figure 39). However, the opinions collected from in-depth interviews indicate yet another significant aspect of the study. Deaf people under 45 are better at using these technologies. Older people often need detailed instructions to use them. These remarks are well illustrated by a statement from a female participant of a qualitative survey organised in Poland, who commented on the proposition to receive the newsletter of the project in the following way:

⁸⁷ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf persons, participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

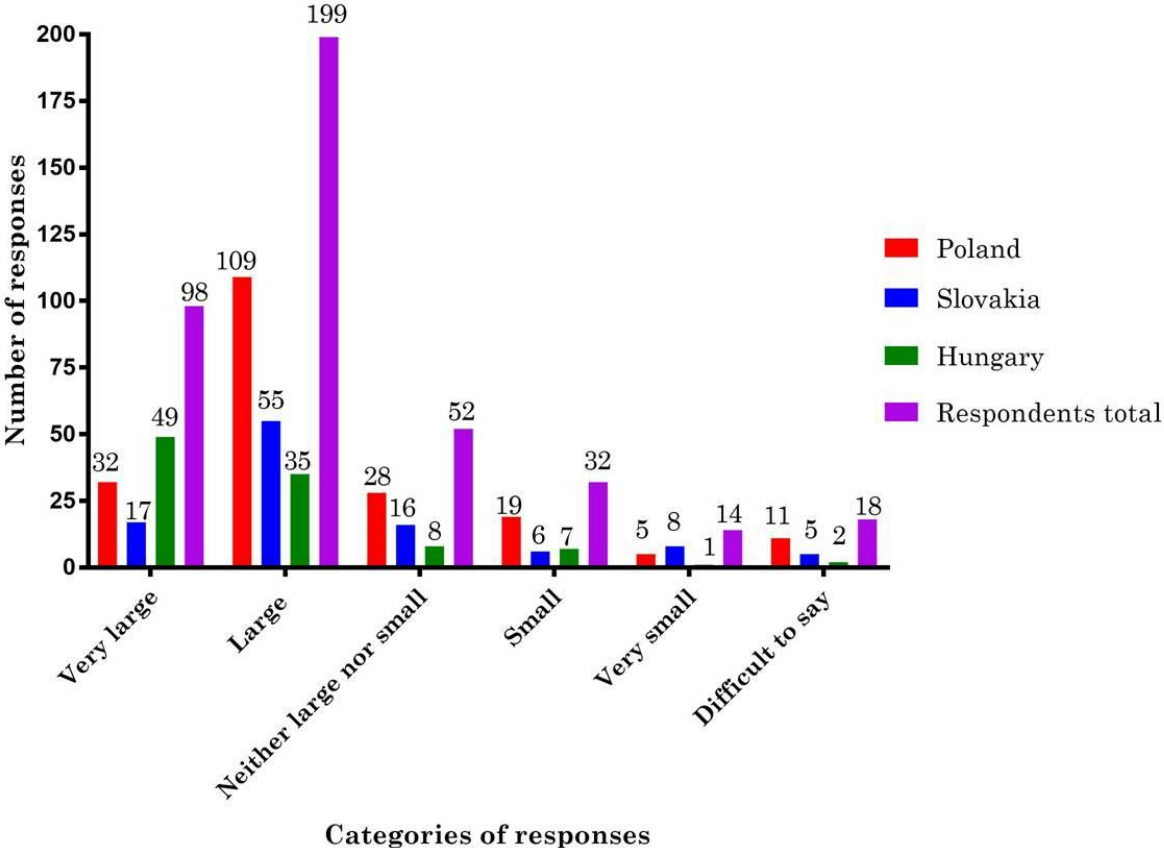
I am Deaf, I only sign and I'm over 50 years old. I don't use a computer. I don't read much. I don't understand long texts. I prefer to watch films in sign language. My friends and I rarely use e-mail. We mostly keep in the company of other Deaf people and we don't need e-mails. We want to see one another, sign, not read. Give us films. A newsletter is a waste of time when we understand signing better⁸⁸.

As participants of qualitative surveys carried out in Hungary emphasised, thanks to the universal access to CART, interest in new technologies increased also among older deaf people who quickly learned how to use mobile devices, given their obvious advantages. They underlined that:

Benefits of using CARTs are huge, there is no need to read, you can sign. If you know the sign language, you don't have to know how to read and you will be able to communicate. Almost every Deaf person can sign, but not everyone can read.

⁸⁸ Opinion of a deaf female participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

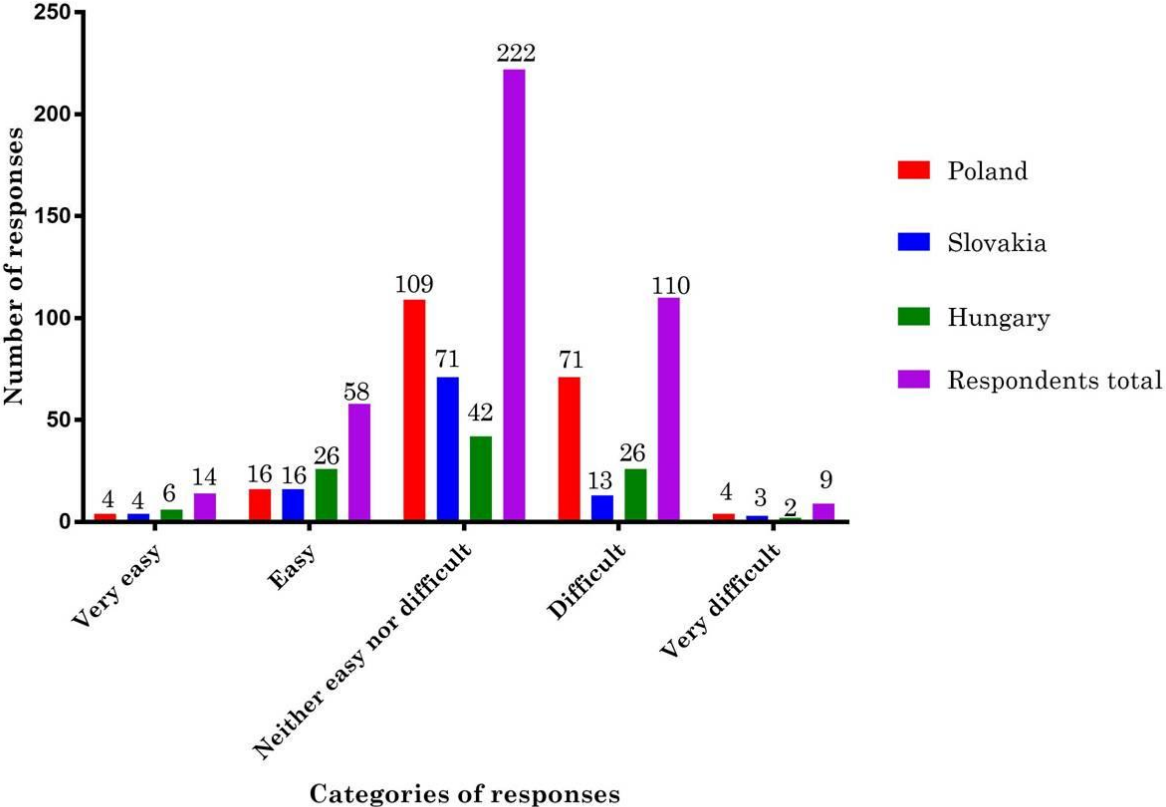
Figure 39. Deaf people’s knowledge about the possibility of using CIT (tablets, CART) (N=413)



Source: own research

However, surveys revealed the fact that despite the satisfactory motivation to enjoy mass culture, deaf people have difficulties in accessing it. Participants of in-depth interviews explained that the main barrier is the language and communication differences between the communities of the hearing and the deaf. The analysis of survey results allows for a conclusion that the majority of those polled (53.7%) assessed deaf people’s access to mass culture to be neither easy nor difficult, 28.8% of respondents described this access as difficult or very difficult, and only 17.4% as easy or very easy (Figure 40).

Figure 40. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to enjoy) mass culture according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Detailing the issue of deaf people’s access to mass culture, their access to films translated to sign language was studied. Participants of qualitative surveys emphasised that: *Very few films have been translated to sign languages, there are more films with audio description (subtitles). Furthermore, the access to films translated to sign language is limited due to copyrights and broadcasting rights protection. It would be beneficial to create a database of films translated to sign language and provide sign language translations of major cinematic works, so that deaf people have access to them. There are isolated projects which enable watching films with audio description and subtitles for free, but there are still too few of them to make culture universally accessible and provide full access*⁸⁹.

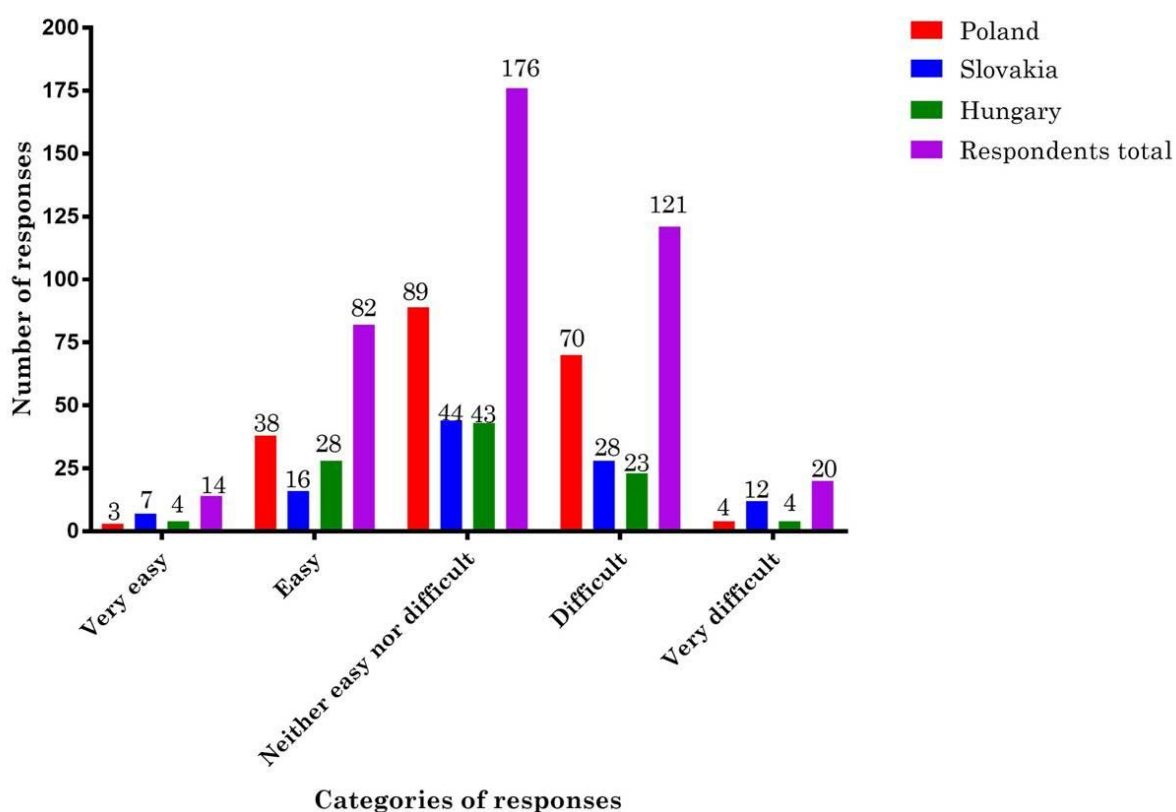
Certain deaf FGI participants remarked that some of the films on DVD and Blu-Ray have the possibility of displaying subtitles in foreign languages, but they often lack the option of emitting sound with captions in the native language. Survey participants suggested that:

⁸⁹ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

Subtitles for the hearing should be different to subtitles for the deaf. The latter, apart from the transcription of dialogues and the spoken language should include the content reporting the audio layer of the movie. Moreover, films on the Internet don't have captions or sign language translation. And these are not only feature films, but also training videos prepared e.g. as a part of professional activation initiatives. It's a serious omission, because if the video is to assist in professional activation of excluded social groups, it should maintain high quality inclusion standards⁹⁰.

Surveys conducted for the study allow us to note that the largest group of respondents (42,6%) answered that their access to filmography translated to sign language is moderate (Figure 41).

Figure 41. Deaf people's access to (accessibility/opportunity to see) films translated to sign language, according to respondents (N=413)



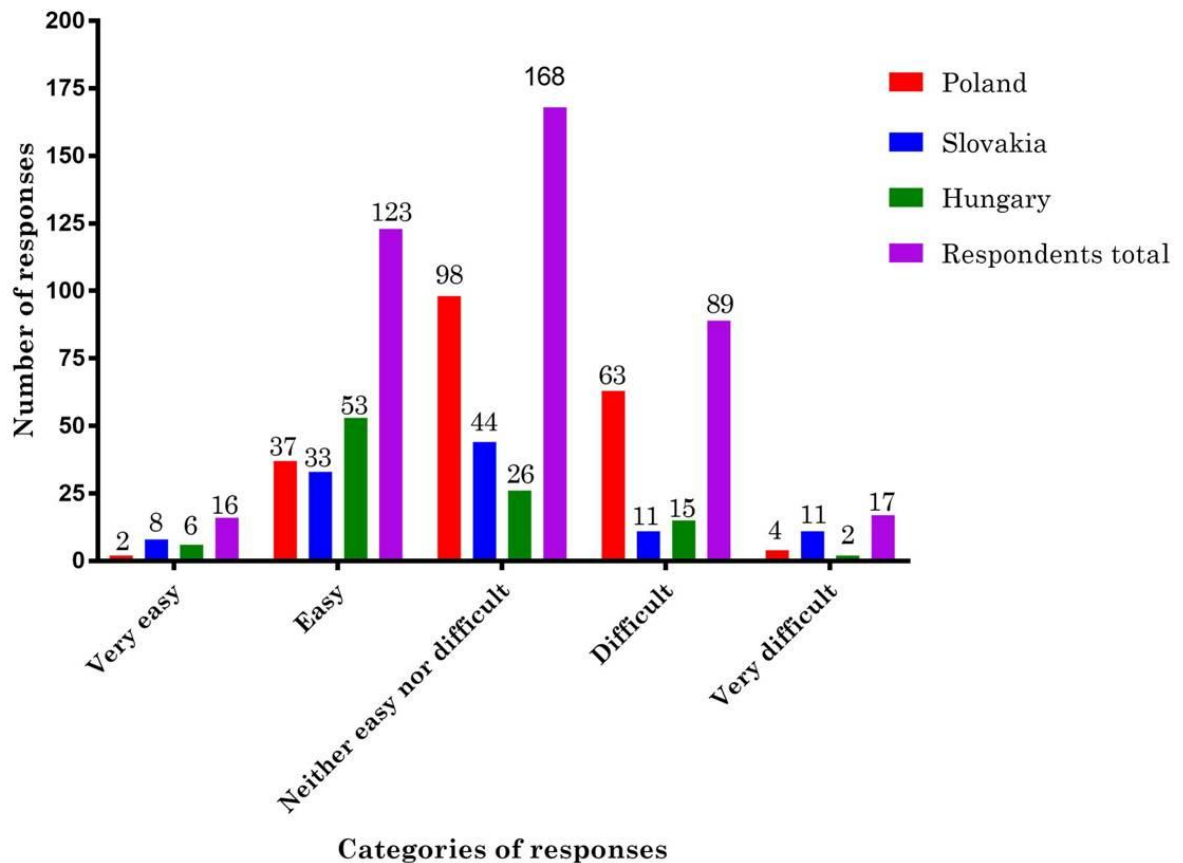
Source: own research

Surveys asking (inquiring) about deaf people's access to TV programmes translated to sign language yielded very similar results. However, it should be noted that respondents from

⁹⁰ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

Slovakia and Hungary assessed such access much more favourably than interviewees from Poland. 19.1% of Polish respondents answered that such access is easy or very easy, and the same response was given by as many as 38.3% of Slovak and 57.8% of Hungarian participants of the survey (Figure 42).

Figure 42. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to see) TV programmes translated to sign language, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Commenting on the accessibility of TV programmes in Slovakia, one of the qualitative survey participants said:

On STV2 there is such a thing as „the deaf Club” which is broadcast on TV every two weeks. There is also a short news service on the same TV station, and there are films with SDH subtitles for 50% of the public television programming, they are in the form of closed captions, so one needs to turn them on via teletext. Sometimes there are subtitles also on commercial TV stations, on a voluntary basis. Of course it would be

*better if there were more of these programmes, but we can't say that there aren't any*⁹¹.

Interviewees were also asked to evaluate the accessibility of cinemas for deaf people. According to a female participant of a qualitative survey organised in Poland:

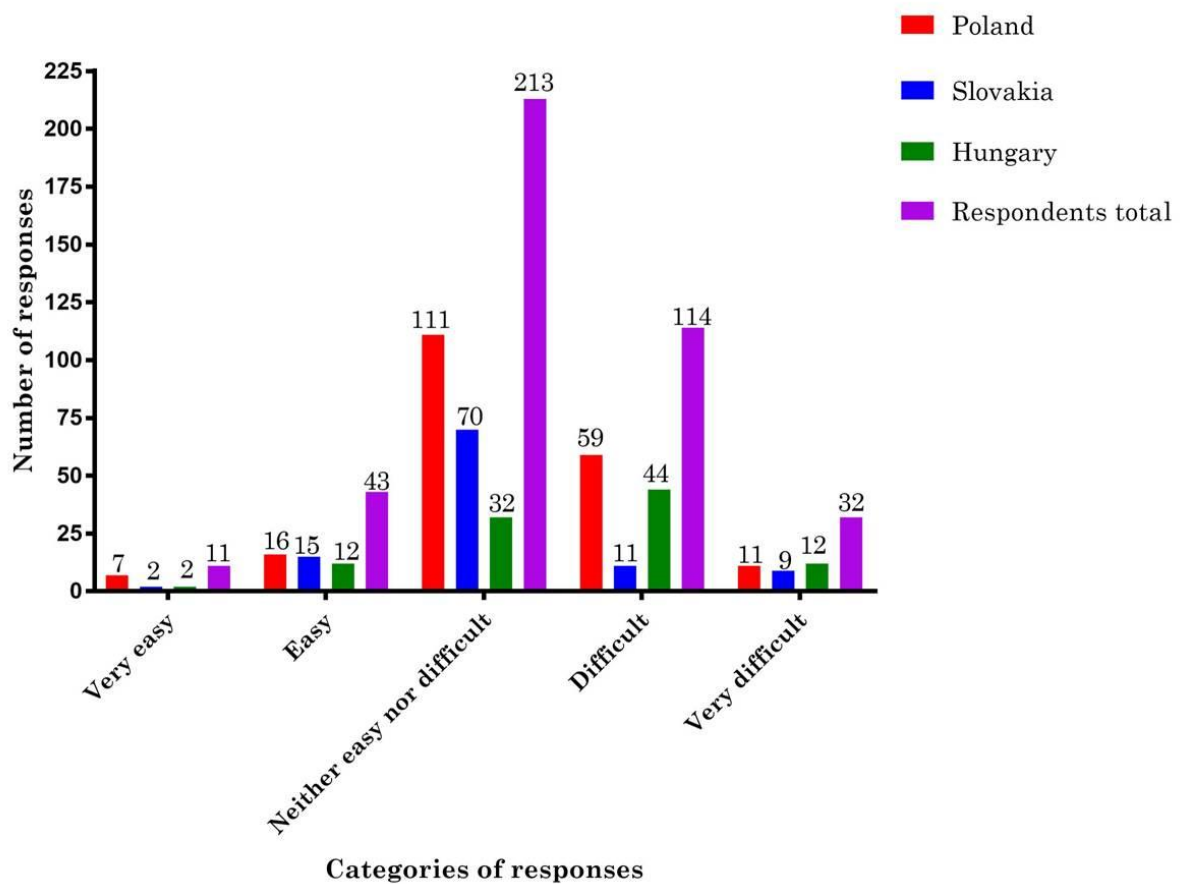
*More and more cinemas are equipped with devices and new technologies for audio description. Unfortunately, they aren't universally used. For instance, there are no screenings just for deaf people. Yet another issue is ticket pricing. Most deaf people don't work, so their financial means are limited, and thus a visit to the cinema is often considered an unnecessary expense*⁹².

Quantitative survey results show that the largest group of respondents (51.6%) said that the accessibility of cinemas for deaf people is moderate (Figure 43).

⁹¹ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

⁹² Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

Figure 43. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to visit) cinemas, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

A statement from one of the female FGI participants sheds an interesting light on the interpretation of qualitative survey results:

For years I've been following how the level of accessibility of cinemas, theatres and cultural venues is adjusted to the needs of deaf people. I must say, that in big cities the situation is improving, actions are taken to ensure deaf people's access to culture. Unfortunately, these initiatives are not always received enthusiastically by the deaf community. Let me give you an example. Sometimes I read that an institution has been equipped e.g. in screens for displaying subtitles, volume enhancing headphones, induction loops, sometimes there is even a sign language interpreter employed. But the results of these actions aren't spectacular, and sometimes the equipment isn't used, because there is no one willing to use it. Technical barriers are not the only problem, there are also mental ones. What is required is not just support, but also education of deaf people, and the promotion of broadly understood culture and art in their

community. So tech support on its own isn't enough, but plays, shows in theatres and cinema screenings dedicated especially to the deaf yield much better results⁹³.

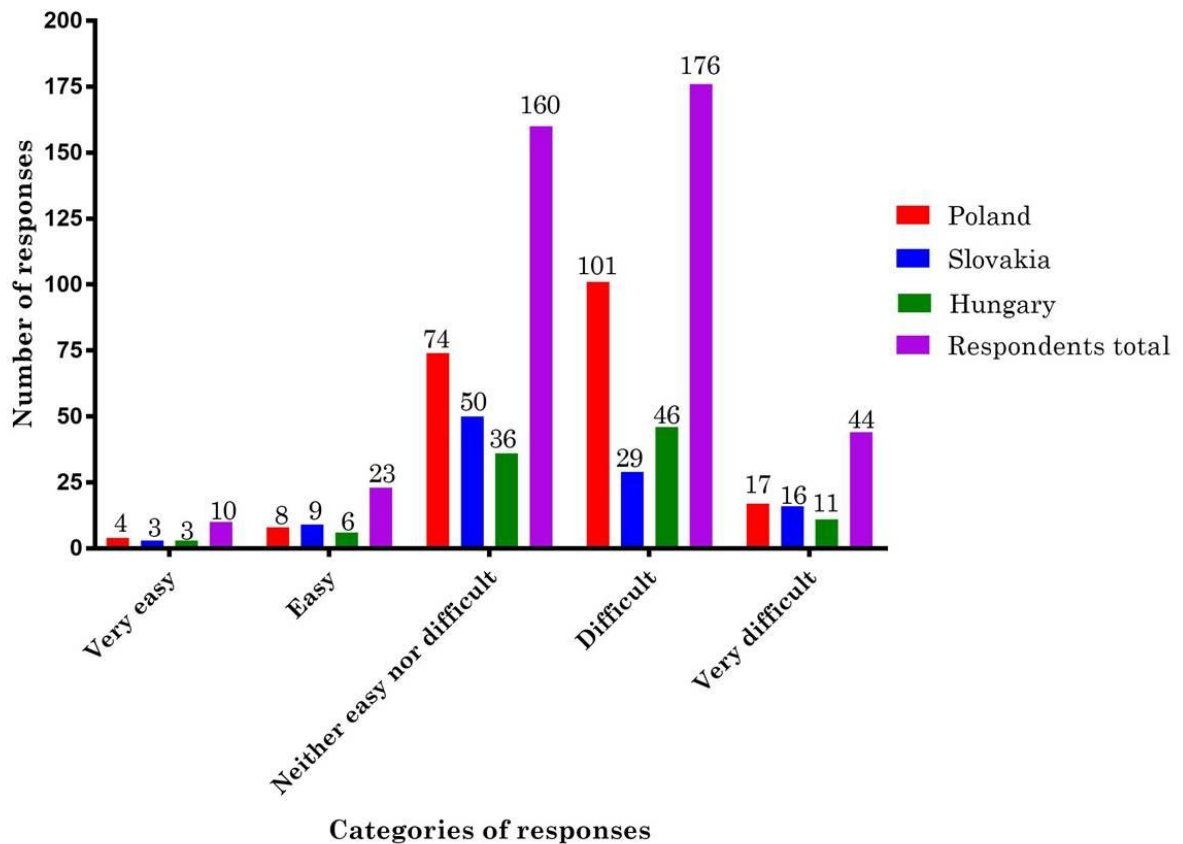
Respondents of quantitative surveys were less favourable in their assessment of the accessibility of museums and exhibitions: 53.3% of those polled said it is small or very small, 38.7% that it is moderate, and 8% that it is large or very large (Figure 44). Referring to this issue, in-depth interview participants stated that more and more exhibitions and museums are equipped with multimedia devices suited to the needs of deaf people. But they emphasised that it is a trend which has appeared only in the last few years, and more time is required for the accessibility to reach a satisfactory level.

I also notice that some of the museums care about the accessibility, but there are those which still have a lot of catching up to do. But when we are evaluating major museums, we should note that they invest in proper visiting conditions for various needs. Another question is the promotion of culture and art among the deaf, and I believe that in this area effective steps should be taken⁹⁴.

⁹³ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

⁹⁴ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

Figure 44. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to visit) exhibitions and museums (N=413)



Participants of in-depth interviews indicated also the need for dual preparation of exhibitions and museums for deaf people’s visits. A female FGI participant formulated her opinion in the following way:

On the one hand, exhibitions and museums should be equipped with multimedia content translated to sign language, induction loops and headphones for people who use hearing aids; in addition, the exhibition should be accurately described in simple words, using universally understandable terms. What is more, captions should include extra information about the sounds in the background of the exhibition. On the other hand, there should be a person working at the museum who can use the sign language. A deaf person should have the opportunity to use their assistance as a guide for the museum. An exhibition prepared in such a way gives a chance for evoking a deaf person’s interest⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

The conducted qualitative survey allowed us also to note that deaf people's knowledge about their rights and the opportunity to participate in social and democratic life is superficial and depends on the age and place of residence of a deaf person and their contact with other Deaf people. Respondents underlined that the deaf intuitively know their rights, but they are often unable to point to any particulars or exercise them. Deaf people are aware that the EU supports their equal treatment within society, but this knowledge rarely translates to exercising particular rights. As one of the FGI participants stressed:

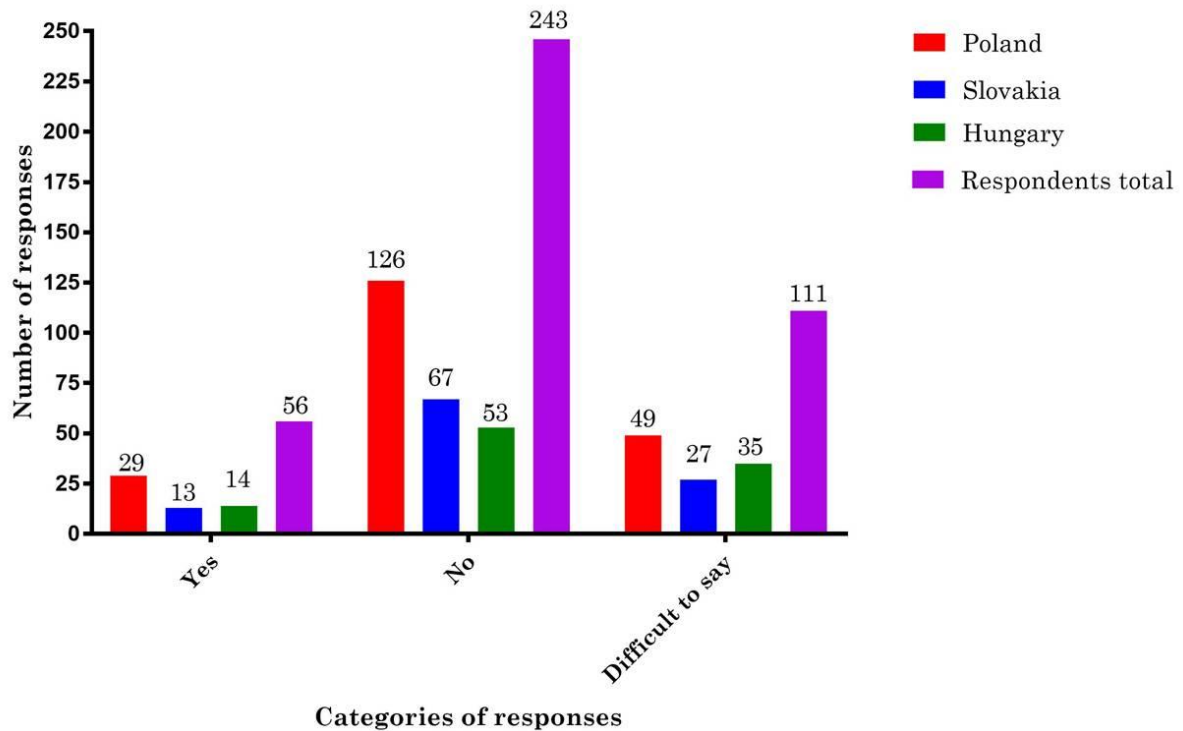
Deaf people are moderately aware of the rights to which they are entitled in society, but they rarely exercise them. For example, they know they can stand for elections and be elected as deputies or councillors and that they can vote, they know their civic rights, but very often they decide not to vote. Similarly, they can't execute their rights with regard to equal treatment or the right for sign language support. In my opinion there are several reasons for this: Firstly, they don't believe that their civic actions, efforts and voting choices can change anything. Secondly, they feel alienated, their self-esteem is often very low due to the multiple challenges and barriers they encounter. There is also the question of pseudo-tolerance. If you asked people on the street if they were tolerant towards the Deaf, everyone would say yes, of course, but the reality is different. All you need do is look at the situation of deaf people on the job market, respecting their cultural identity, or conditions of the support for deaf people in government institutions. Objectively speaking, these realities do not fill your heart with optimism⁹⁶.

According to numerous FGI participants, the awareness of social and civic rights depends on a deaf person's age. Younger people who are still in school, or those who have finished their education in the recent past, are much more aware in this regard than older people. Qualitative survey participants remarked that equally significant is contact with other deaf people and good role models they can observe in their community. According to the interviewees, an important factor in improving the awareness with regard to deaf people's rights, apart from school education, should be training courses devoted to this subject, which would include and reach out to deaf people of various ages. Unfortunately, the results of quantitative surveys show that deaf people do not have access to training concerning their rights. The majority of respondents answered that deaf people do not have access to training concerning their rights (Figure 45).

⁹⁶ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

Figure 45. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to use) training courses concerning their rights, according to respondents (N=413)

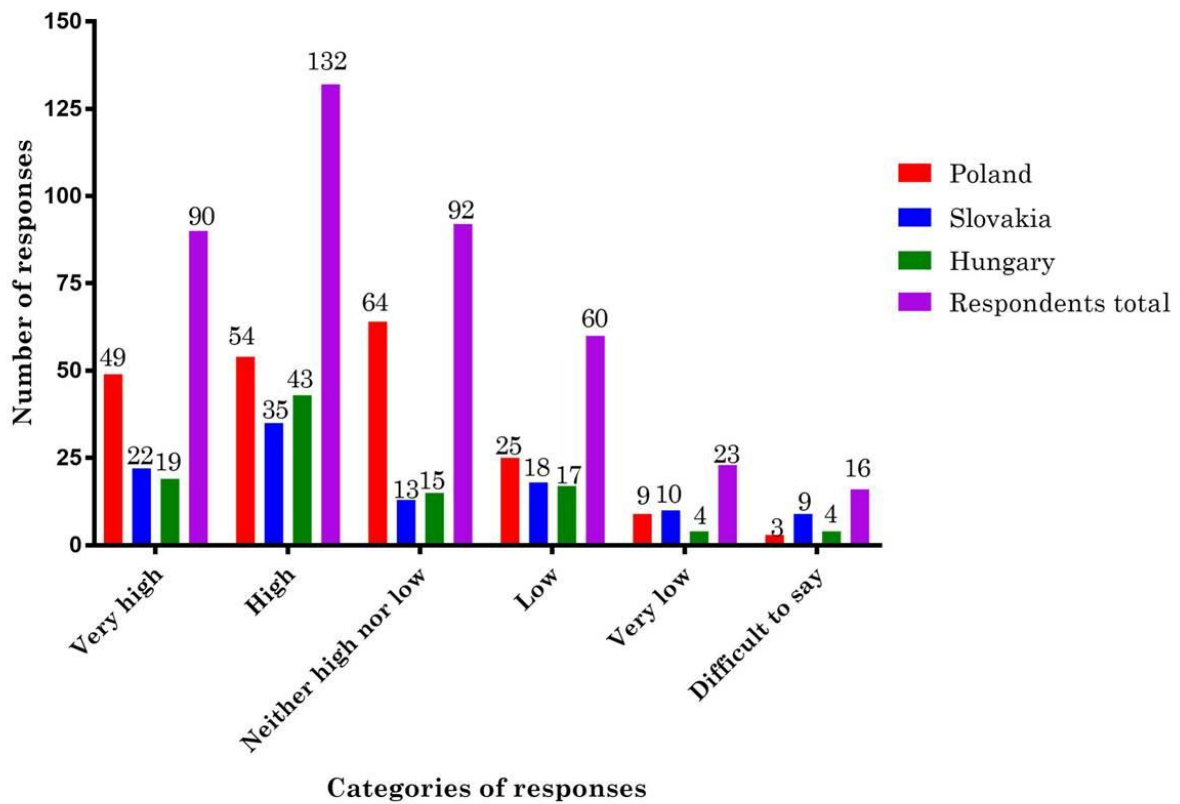
Answers to the question: Do you think deaf people have access to training concerning their rights?



Source: own research

Survey results also indicate that 53.7% of respondents believe that deaf people are highly or very highly motivated to participate in training courses, and only 20.1% were of the opinion that their motivation is low or very low (Figure 46).

Figure 46. Respondents' opinion on deaf people's motivation for the participation in training (N=413)

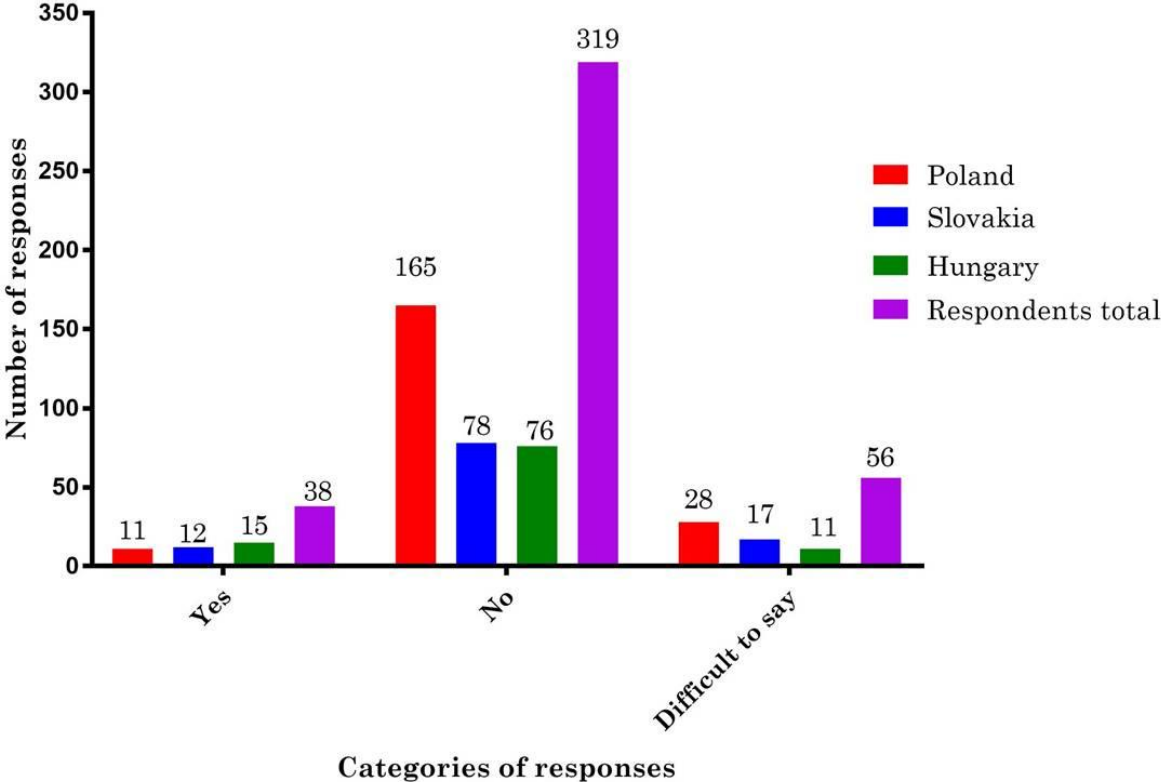


Source: own research

FGI participants indicated that deaf people in their countries are not covered by specialist legal assistance. This state of affairs was confirmed by quantitative surveys which revealed that according to respondents, there is no form of free legal assistance for deaf people in place (Figure 47). FGI participants underlined, of course, that deaf people may use paid legal help available on the market, but these lawyers usually do not know sign language and provide assistance in more serious matters, e.g. they represent their clients in courts.

Figure 47. Free legal assistance for deaf people, according to respondents. (N=413)

Answers to the question: Do you think deaf people can rely on free legal assistance?



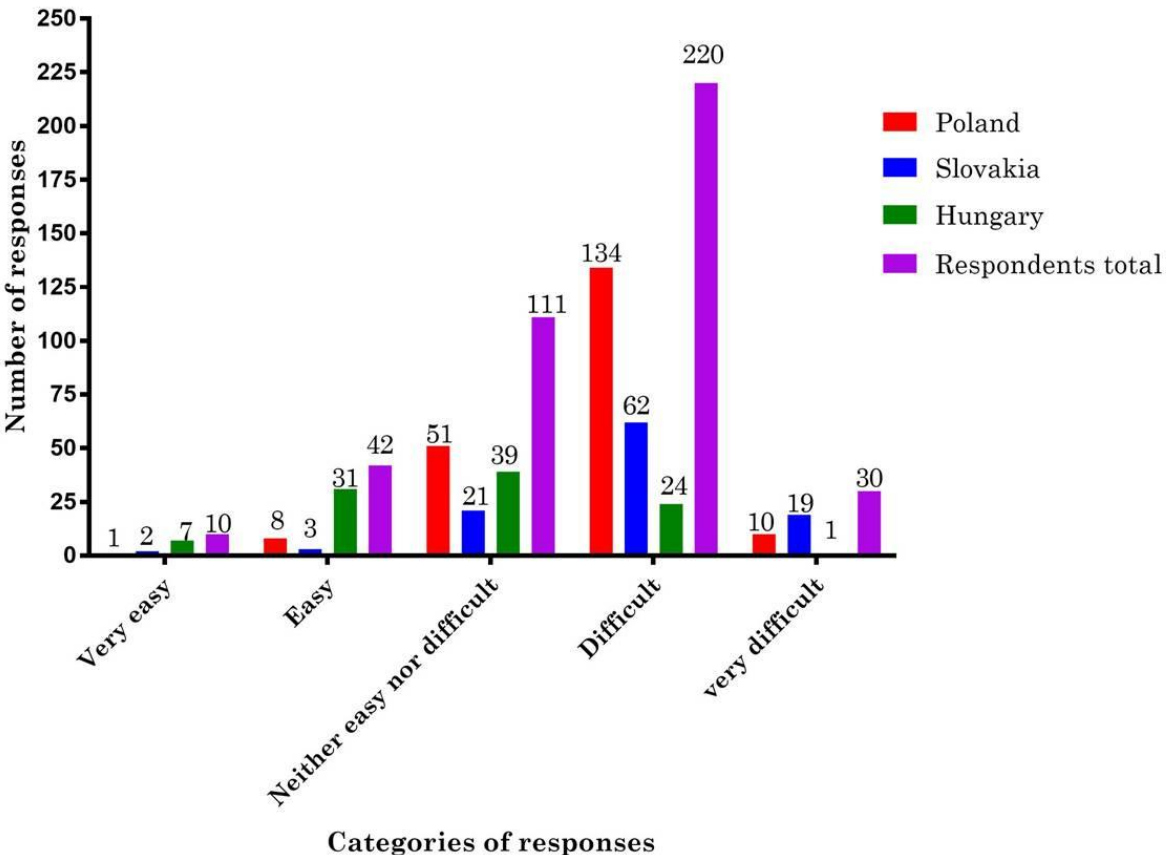
Source: own research

FGI participants claim that free legal assistance provided, among others, in sign language would be a huge support and facilitate the life of deaf people who often have problems with simple civil law contracts, which they do not understand. It results from the complicated legal language used to draft all kinds of agreements. During FGIs, it has been also remarked that legal assistance for deaf people should focus on various aspects of civil law, as well as the rights of deaf people in society and promoting civic attitudes. Interviewees stated that due to the financial situation of deaf people, such assistance should be provided free of charge and within the activities of deaf people’s associations and organisations. Certain voices in the discussion reasoned that the logistics of organising this type of help should be the task of such associations and organisations, but with external financing, due to the limited means these entities have at their disposal.

Participants of qualitative surveys often emphasised that what determines the participation, inclusion and social involvement of deaf people, is mainly communication barriers, including the access to sign language interpreters. Participants of all the carried out FGIs claimed that the number of sign language interpreters is insufficient in the face of

enormous needs of the deaf community. However, respondents remarked that through the application of new technologies this access can be greatly improved, which is the case in Hungary, thanks to the universal access to CART. The conducted survey revealed that according to 60.5% of respondents, deaf people’s access to sign language interpreters is difficult or very difficult, 26.9% answered it is neither difficult nor easy, and only 12.6% were of the opinion that it is easy or very easy (Figure 48).

Figure 48. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to use) sign language interpreters, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

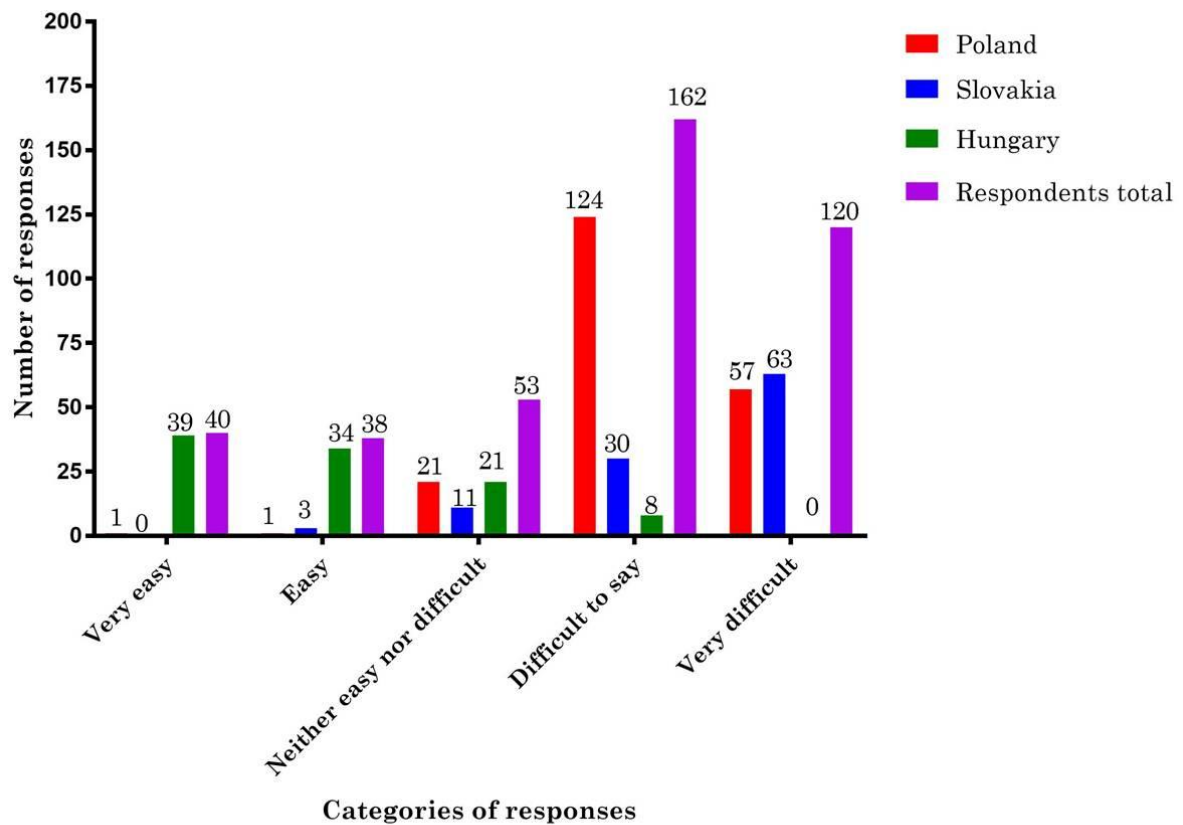
Deaf people’s access to on-line sign language interpretation (CART) was assessed even less favourably. 68.3% of respondents stated that it is difficult or very difficult, 12.8% that it is average, and 18.9% of those polled were of the opinion that it is easy or very easy (Figure 49). In this case, however, responses differ significantly depending on the respondent’s country of residence. As many as 71.7% of Hungarians described deaf people’s access to online sign language interpretation as easy or very easy, 20.5% were of the opinion that it is average, and only 7.8% said it is difficult. Whereas in Poland, 88.7% of respondents

said that such access is difficult or very difficult. Similarly, in Slovakia as many as 86.9% of respondents were of the same opinion. Differences in assessment between the countries results from the universal accessibility of mobile devices in Hungary, which enable using online sign language interpreting. A female participant of an FGI organised in Hungary stressed that:

There is good help available for the deaf in Hungary. A hearing person with a tablet connects via the Internet with an interpreter. It has an enormous importance during many social activities, e.g. doctor's appointments. If I'm going to see a doctor, I start up my tablet and I sign – the translation is instant, no need to wait for an interpreter to find time and go with me to the doctor. In Hungary, the European Union allocated large financial means for the development of this programme and it turned out to be very helpful and necessary. It is mainly thanks to the MEP Adam Kosa – it was him who sought this money⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ Opinion of a deaf female participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

Figure 49. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to use) online sign language interpreting (CART), according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

A Slovak FGI participant who took part in the qualitative survey emphasised that:

There is an enormous need to provide free online interpreting support for deaf people. In Slovakia, a project is being developed with deaf people’s associations and a telecommunication company as partners, aiming at assisting deaf people online. I think that it will increase the accessibility of many services and enable better social participation of deaf people⁹⁸.

Polish participants of qualitative surveys pointed out that the Polish Act of 19 August 2001 on sign language and other means of communication is very necessary, but its execution does not fulfil all the hopes that have been pinned on it. One of the female participants said:

The reality of providing support for deaf people in some institutions is not satisfactory. For instance, I know of an institution where you need to inform them 3 days in advance that a deaf person is coming. I went myself to another institution, where the clerk after a 60-hour sign language course didn’t understand what I’m signing, and

⁹⁸ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

finally she took a piece of paper and started writing, asking me to write down what I need as well. I know Polish and I can write, but there are Deaf people who can't, what are they to do in that situation? A good solution would be a system of online interpreters operating in public institutions, but not all of them have appropriate contracts, because it involves financial issues. Deaf people in Poland would like to have free access to online interpreting on their own mobile devices. It would streamline the services in public institutions and enable using this benefit also in other situations. Unfortunately, in Poland you can buy such support online, but it is a paid service and deaf people can't afford it. We need to create a central system, coordinated from several large cities in Poland, and provide this service to the deaf for free. Then we will be seriously able to talk about access for deaf people, then the communication will exist for sure⁹⁹.

Another female FGI participant shared her experience with public institutions:
In a registry office, I asked for a copy of a birth certificate. The lady said that she'd bring an interpreter in a moment. It turned out that the interpreter didn't understand what I was signing. When I asked about the sign language course, she responded: "I'm sorry, I learned a little, a short course". But she had a certificate. Often officials attend courses, because it entitles them to some benefits and they improve their qualifications, unfortunately often only on paper. On the other hand, I've also had very good experiences, an official who was excellent at signing, so I asked where he'd learn it. He answered that "it's very interesting, it started from a course," but now he learns online by himself and he has contact with deaf people. Another time I was in an institution with an online interpreter, and I did all I needed by signing at the screen¹⁰⁰.

Participants of FGIs conducted in Poland drew attention to the need for the promotion and mass implementation of interpreting via the Internet:

Online interpreting would be good, but on one hand not everyone knows how it works, and whether it can be used for free. I don't know if I can, and if I have to pay for it, I can't afford it. But the deaf are very open to new technologies, we even sign via a computer, or a tablet. Often our devices are obsolete. So it would be beneficial to implement such solutions in Poland, while providing interpreting and devices free of

⁹⁹ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹⁰⁰ Opinion of a deaf female participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

charge for all deaf people. This would be a huge help in many spheres of life. Systems like that would help in many tasks, like visiting a public institution or a doctor¹⁰¹.

Referring to this statement, another female FGI participant said:

I know that there are institutions in Cracow which paid for access to online interpreting, but when I asked an employee of one of the institutions, I heard that so far no one had requested such a service. I think it results from deaf people's lack of awareness that this system exists and that they can use it in institutions. On the other hand, such solutions should be accessible to deaf people on their own mobile devices, not in public institutions. It would enable them to use the interpreter's help in many situations, even less official ones¹⁰².

Qualitative survey participants in Hungary and Slovakia remarked that in order to facilitate the support for deaf people in public institutions, they should be employing deaf people. A participant of a survey carried out in Hungary stressed that:

The number of deaf people who graduate from universities increases and often it's extremely difficult for them to find work. With the support of public funds, including those coming from the EU, they are included in various professional activation programmes. It's a pity that often there are no ideas concerning how to use their communication skills in deaf customer support. After all, they know sign language perfectly well, sometimes they have auditory implants, so they can work also as online interpreters. But this is the issue of employing deaf people, and their access to the job market, which for the people with hearing impairment is very discriminatory¹⁰³.

A female participant of a qualitative survey organised in Slovakia expressed a bold opinion on tolerance and equal rights in the context of deaf people's situation on the job market:

In my opinion, as a young and deaf person, the measure of tolerance and equal rights for the deaf takes the form of two very important areas. The first one is granting equal rights to the sign language; if a deaf person can't communicate in their native language, if there are obstacles in this respect, it means that we only talk about accessibility, tolerance or participation. There is no participation without communication, there is no involvement, no inclusion. The second area is access to the job market. So what if we give money to Deaf people and provide for their material needs, if they often don't have any opportunities for professional development, gaining

¹⁰¹ Opinion of a deaf male participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹⁰² Opinion of a deaf female participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹⁰³ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Hungary who uses a hearing aid.

experience or employment. The need for self-development, the feeling that I am needed, that I matter, that I can work, often gives more than financial support. Deaf people in my generation don't want pity, they don't want to receive money, they want to work to support themselves and to be professionally fulfilled¹⁰⁴.

Other survey participants noted that the professional potential of deaf people remains unused, that there are professions in which people with hearing impairments could work, yet the market reviews their professional position, often condemning them to unemployment.

If we talk about work for the deaf, it's usually cleaning – the worst jobs. But deaf people are very industrious, diligent, often very devoted to their work, and very grateful to have it. I know employers who employ deaf people and have a very high opinion of them. The problem often lies in communication and psychological barriers, prejudices, and stereotypes. Communication can be facilitated thanks to new technologies, which have already been mentioned today. Social reception is more difficult, here we need to display good practices, particular role models, create a social campaign informing employers that employing deaf people is worth it¹⁰⁵.

On the subject of deaf people's situation on the job market, respondents indicated on the one hand its increasing requirements, and on the other hand – opportunities which await deaf people in connection with the transformations of the job market. A female FGI participant from Hungary expressed her opinion, stating that:

Work requirements undergo dynamic changes, which in certain respects can improve the situation of deaf people. Modern technology enables sending information, sounds or images over a distance, which contributes to the emergence of new forms of remote employment and deaf people could work from home. The physical presence of an employee often doesn't matter, as long as the task entrusted to them is performed. In my opinion deaf people are good at working remotely, at jobs which require concentration. For the performance of many jobs, hearing isn't of much importance¹⁰⁶.

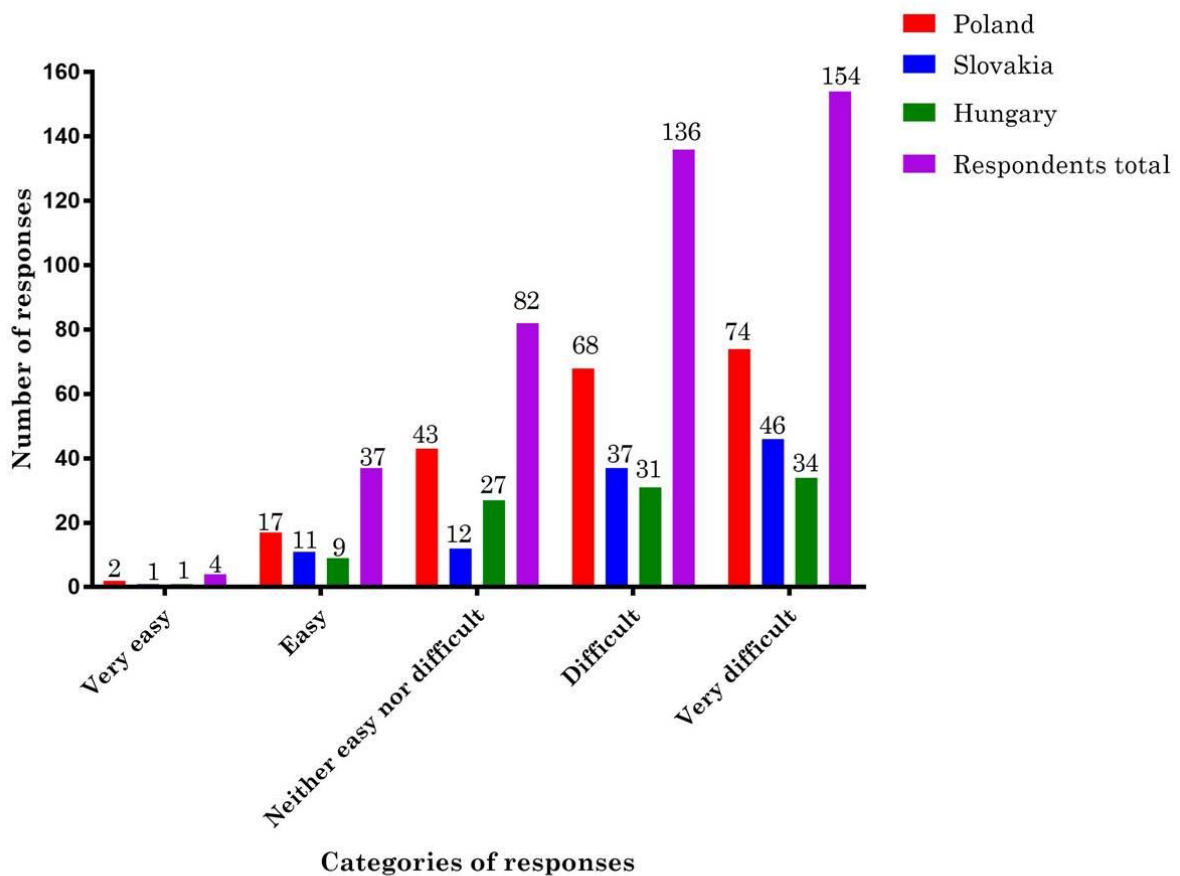
The conducted quantitative surveys allow to surmise that the majority of respondents (70.2%) are convinced that deaf people's access to the job market is difficult or very difficult, 19.9% that it is average and only 9.9% said it is easy or very easy (Figure 50).

¹⁰⁴ Opinion of a deaf female participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

¹⁰⁵ Opinion of a female participant of an FGI organised in Hungary who uses a hearing aid.

¹⁰⁶ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

Figure 50. Deaf people’s access (realistic possibilities of finding employment) to the job market, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

As one of the main reasons for deaf people’s impeded access to the job market, a female participant of a qualitative survey carried out in Hungary indicated psychological barriers:

On the one hand, the problem is created by psychological barriers on the part of deaf people themselves, which can include: low self-esteem, lack of knowledge of the job market, inability to evaluate one’s own professional predispositions or choice of a profession, fear of discrimination and rejection. This is why, in my opinion, it’s so important to provide career counselling in sign language for the youth attending school. On the other hand, there are prejudices of employers who assume that a deaf person will cause various problems. They assume that they will incur additional costs, the work won’t be performed efficiently. These are of course stereotypes and prejudices which are rarely reflected in reality. In my opinion there is a group of deaf people very highly motivated to work, who want to work and are ready to make sacrifices in order

*to make this dream come true. My experience proves that such an employee is invaluable, works diligently and performs their tasks perfectly*¹⁰⁷.

Another participant of a qualitative survey argued that the main problem of deaf people on the job market is employers' prejudice and the lack of knowledge about how to work with deaf people and unlock their potential:

*Deaf people's problems on the job market result to a large extent from the prejudices of employers. They are afraid of the contact with deaf people, or they think they won't be able to communicate with them, or that Deaf people will work less efficiently, which is not true. It's a form of discrimination based on hearing impairment. Moreover, there is a shortage of properly prepared workstations. The hearing don't understand the world of the deaf*¹⁰⁸.

Opinions collected during focus group interviews correspond with those already existing in the literature. C. Bartha pointed to the fact that in Hungary many young deaf people are unemployed or perform menial jobs. This stems partly from employers' negative opinions and notions concerning deaf people. They often identify hearing loss with mental disability, and are convinced that deaf people will leave their workstations or work negligently. It should be underlined that according to C. Bartha, deaf people don't have access to promotions, training and professional development equal to the hearing people¹⁰⁹.

Survey participants reasoned that in order for deaf people's situation on the job market to improve, a better mutual understanding should be fostered:

*We should promote the knowledge about the deaf in society. This could be achieved through integration meetings between the two communities, employer training with regard to communication with deaf people. And by convincing employers of the benefits of employing deaf people, i.e. their industriousness, diligence in performing tasks, high motivation for work, and commitment*¹¹⁰.

Quantitative survey results proved that according to the most numerous group of respondents (35.4%), deaf people's motivation to take up work is high. The second largest

¹⁰⁷ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

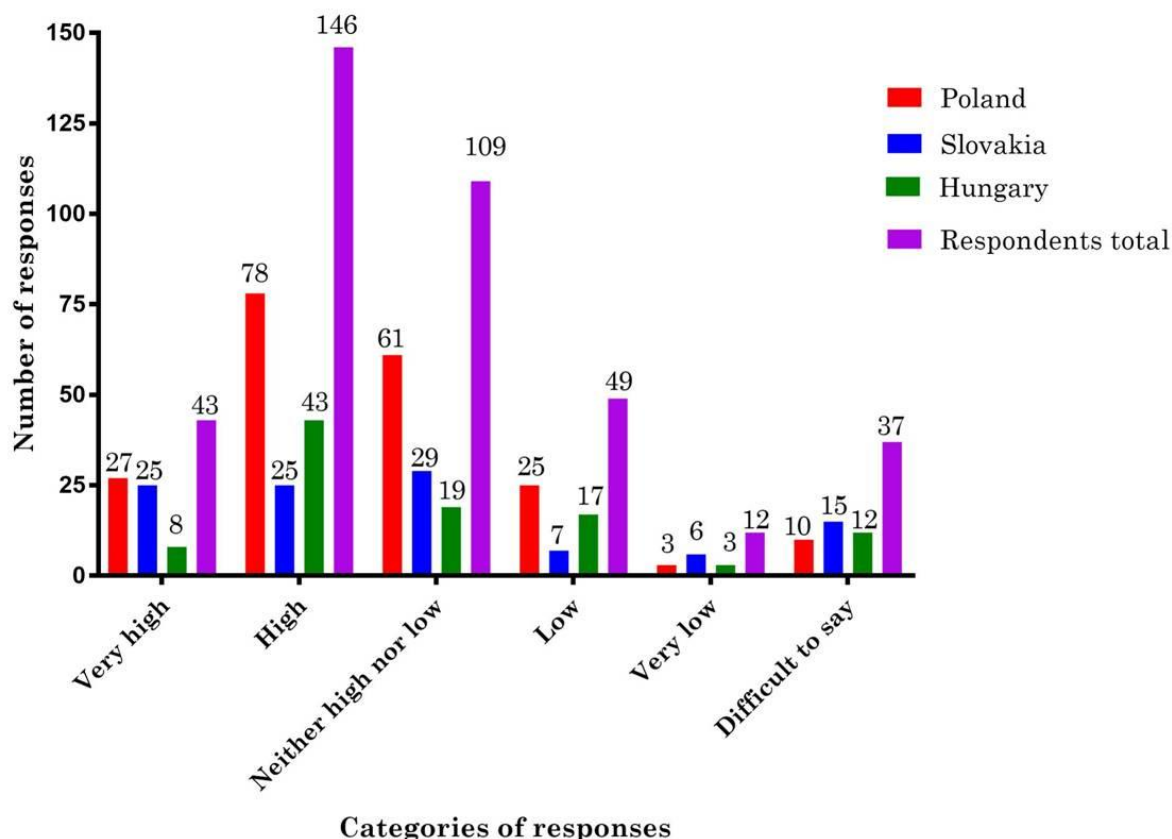
¹⁰⁸ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

¹⁰⁹ C. Bartha, Language Ideologies, Discriminatory Practices and the Deaf Community in Hungary, in: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism, eds. James Cohen, Kara T. McAlister, Kellie Rolstad, and Jeff MacSwan, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, 2005, p. 214.

¹¹⁰ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

group (26.4% of those polled) answered that their motivation is at the average level, and only 14.8% of respondents were of the opinion that it is low or very low (Figure 51).

Figure 51. Deaf people’s motivation to take up work, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

Quantitative survey results were reflected also by numerous statements from quantitative survey respondents. They remarked that deaf people want to work on the one hand in order to have their own financial means, and on the other hand because of their ambition and the need for self-fulfilment through professional work. One of the participants of an in-depth interview carried out in Hungary noted that:

In the group of young deaf Hungarians, a strong interest in taking up work is clearly visible. They want to work, want to develop and fulfil themselves through work. Unfortunately, on their own, they are often lost on the open job market, so they are in a way doubly excluded. On one hand they have a hearing impairment and communication barriers, on the other hand, they need professional career counselling. Luckily, they can count on certain career activation programmes, which give them the opportunity to gain experience and improve qualifications which employers expect.

These programmes often involve career counselling as well as employment support through various forms of financial support¹¹¹.

Young FGI participants pointed also to the need to make deaf people's career counselling more international. One of the respondents said:

Many deaf people who study in Poland would like to go to work in other EU countries, but during their education they don't have any contacts abroad. It's often due to psychological barriers, the fear of the unknown. I think that the school is preparing us to do our job very well and work-wise we would do well abroad. My fears concern the lack of experience, e.g. work internships abroad, that would be an excellent solution¹¹².

Another respondent emphasised that:

More and more young people move abroad, all the time we learn that our hearing friends work there as well. We want to go and try to work abroad too, but for us it's harder due to the communication barrier. Making our education more international can help a lot: arranging internships, trips or youth exchanges. That could help¹¹³.

Numerous participants of qualitative surveys underlined the need to introduce the evaluation of professional predispositions and job counselling at all stages of deaf people's education. It has been remarked that a deaf person entering the job market should have an assistant or a job coach who would help in finding and holding a job. The scope of support from such an assistant should depend on beneficiaries' individual needs. In the opinion of qualitative survey respondents, this support, as well as job counselling, should certainly be provided in the form preferred by the particular deaf person, e.g. if necessary, in sign language or with the support of online interpreter¹¹⁴. Unfortunately, as quantitative surveys indicate, Deaf people cannot count on easy access to job counselling in sign language. 62.9% of respondents described deaf people's access to job counselling in sign language as difficult or very difficult, 24.9% were of the opinion that it is average, and only 12.2% answered it is easy or very easy (Figure 52).

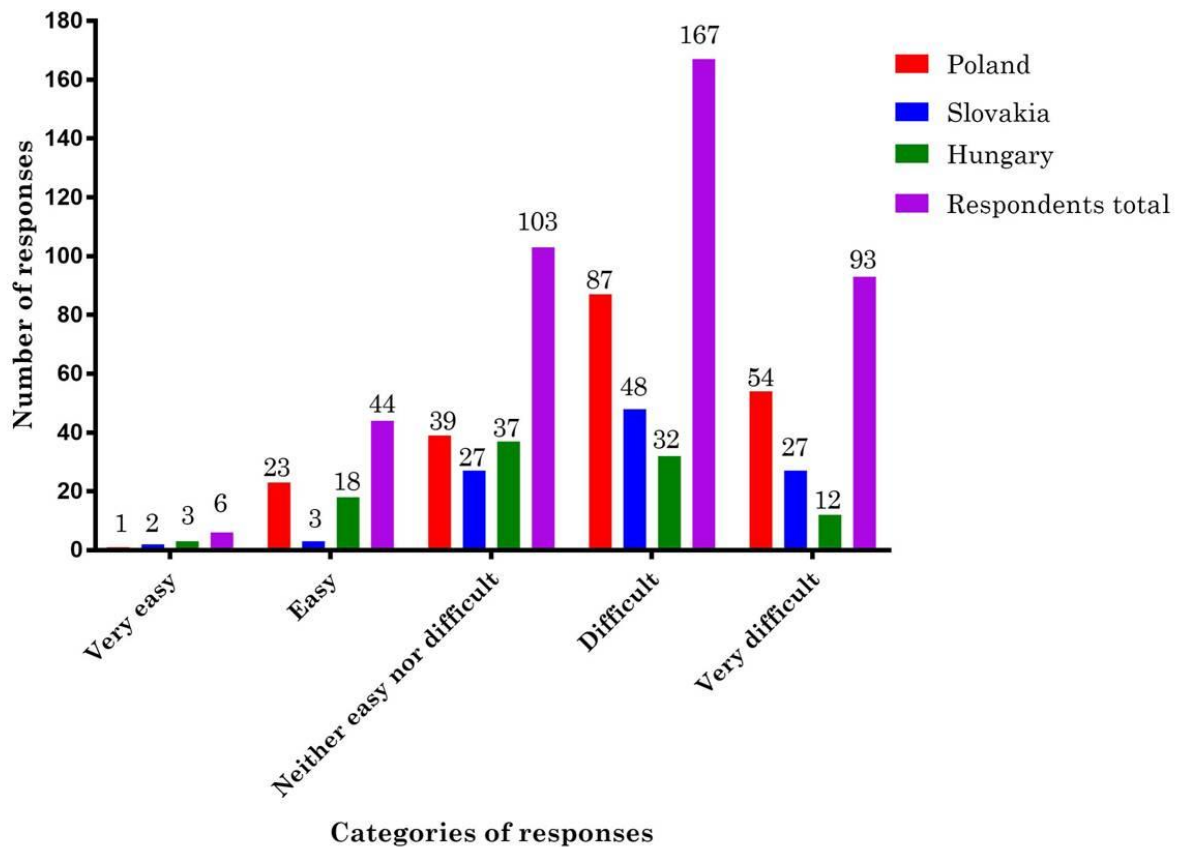
¹¹¹ Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

¹¹² Opinion of a deaf male participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹¹³ Opinion of a deaf male participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹¹⁴ To learn more about using new technologies in job counselling and supporting deaf people on the labour market, see: Zaclona Z., Zaclona T., Early social intervention as a preventing tool against the social exclusion of deaf youth, [in:] *Specialny Pedagog Casopis pre specialnopedagogicku teorii a prax*, Vydavatelstvo Presovskej Univerzity, 1/ 2014 Rocnik 3, pp. 3-8.

Figure 52. Deaf people’s access to (accessibility/opportunity to use) job counselling in sign language (N=413)



Source: own research

Results of quantitative surveys are well illustrated by a statement of a female participant of an FGI conducted in Slovakia:

Needs with regard to job counselling among deaf people are enormous. If such a need exists, counselling should be provided in sign language by a highly qualified specialist – professional guidance expert with a good knowledge of the specifics of deaf people’s circumstances. This person should also be well oriented in employment opportunities and job market requirements. Unfortunately, there aren’t many of these specialised job counsellors. There are of course projects where deaf people can get job counselling, but I believe there aren’t enough of them and even if there were – the scope of support is insufficient, hence the opinion frequently expressed by deaf people that they don’t have satisfactory support in terms of job counselling¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁵ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia.

Qualitative survey participants underlined that job counselling should also address developing enterprising attitudes in the deaf community:

There are opportunities for obtaining financing e.g. from job centres, but deaf people are afraid to start a company. They aren't prepared for running a business activity. So the assistance for deaf people should be concentrated on enterprise training and counselling. Young deaf people have ideas for their own businesses, but they often lack courage and support. I think that such actions could help the lot of many deaf people¹¹⁶.

Participants of in-depth interviews emphasised in great numbers that in order for deaf people's situations to change for the better, they must be "heard" by society. Problems of deaf people, alongside deaf culture, should be presented to the general public. Respondents emphasised that there is a need for a representative of the deaf community in public discourse:

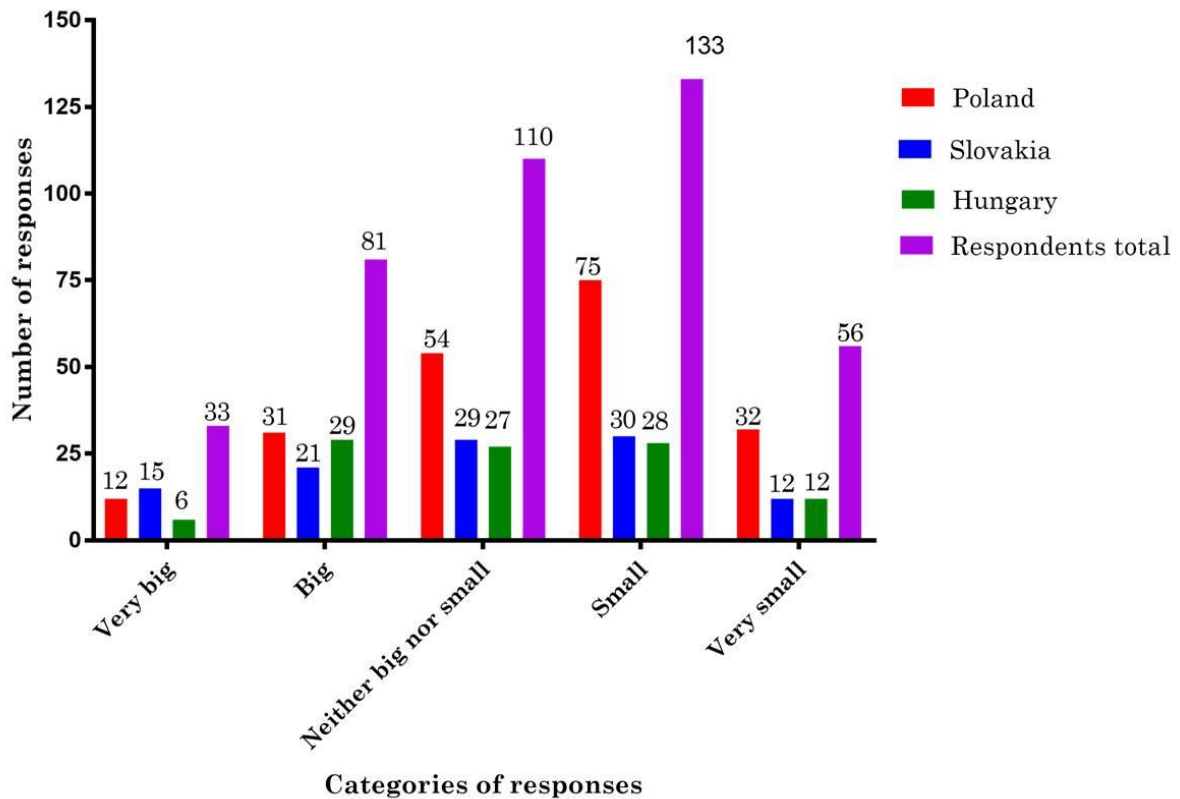
The deaf community should have its leaders, as in Hungary. These people have to be politically or socially involved, they should also be recognisable and respected by public opinion. In Poland there are experts, specialists with great knowledge of the community, but they aren't bold enough to represent the deaf community in public discourse. Besides, it would be better if they were deaf themselves, and I think there are a few people who could manage it. The problem is that they haven't yet penetrated to the public consciousness, they aren't invited by media as experts. The entire deaf community suffers from it¹¹⁷.

Survey results indicate that the most numerous group of respondents (45.8%) thinks that the opportunities to promote and popularise deaf culture in society are small or very small, 26.6% of those polled believe they are moderate, and 27.6% were of the opinion that such opportunities are large or very large (Figure 53).

¹¹⁶ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹¹⁷ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organized in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

Figure 53. Opportunities to promote and popularise deaf culture, according to respondents (N=413)



Source: own research

During in-depth interviews there was no shortage of voices indicating the need for a stronger integration within the deaf community in order to act more effectively.

Recently deaf people themselves become divided within the community, and instead of a unity we have several different groups who can't reach an understanding. It's a negative development which won't help this community in the next few years. The lack of strong organisation makes it more difficult to promote deaf culture and carry out activities building social awareness of the needs of this community¹¹⁸.

The need for close cooperation of the deaf community with media was strongly emphasised during in-depth interviews:

Quite a lot of space in the media is devoted to the problems of people with disabilities. Yet the media output is dominated by the problems of people with mobility impairments. There is much discussion concerning architectural barriers, physical

¹¹⁸ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

access to public institutions. Alas, very, very rarely do we see reports concerning deaf people¹¹⁹.

Survey participants pointed to various reasons of the small number of media reports on the issues of deaf people. Some indicated that it is partly due to the specifics of deaf people's communication:

The small amount of information about the problems of the deaf in the media may be partly the result of deaf people's communication specificity: deaf people concentrate on the image, as opposed to certain types of media, for instance radio, but also to some extent television, where both images and sounds count. It's difficult to present an opinion of a deaf person on the radio, unless it's done through a sign language interpreter. There are of course people with hearing impairments who could give interviews for the radio, it is also possible that a hearing expert could speak on behalf of the community. The lack of information about the deaf community on the radio may also result from the fact that deaf people don't see the need to present their problems in a medium they don't use themselves. So we need to convince the community that their voice needs to be heard, that it's worthwhile to reach all mass media. I believe that an excellent form of the promotion of deaf culture is the Internet and specialised portals, but deaf people shouldn't forget about other mass media and learn to cooperate with them¹²⁰.

Survey participants pointed also to the specificity of media, as the reason for small interest in the issues of deaf people:

I think there is a problem with the mission of journalism in Poland. As an organisation of deaf people, we can organise a great event, but the media won't show up, because they are busy sensation seeking and looking for scandals. We send out e-mails to all editors and TV stations with information when we organise something major, we invite them to these events, but very often there is no response.

Another qualitative survey participant remarked:

In the case of PZG (Polish Association of the Deaf) we try to be present in the media on the occasion of anniversaries. For instance, last year it was the 50th anniversary of the counselling service, so some information got through to the public consciousness. Next year we'll have the 70th anniversary of the association of the deaf; I think we'll

¹¹⁹ Opinion of a male participant of an FGI organised in Poland who uses a hearing aid.

¹²⁰ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

be talking about it more. And the Foundation “Between the Ears” does a lot of cool things in the media, as does the glusi24.info website. It serves as television for deaf people, it gained some recognition and enabled effective broadcasting of news from around the world for the deaf. What is the most important factor, is that news broadcast by the website glusi24.info is in sign language. But I believe that the entire deaf community lacks professional knowledge about cooperation with the media¹²¹.

Interviewees decided also that it would be worthwhile to consider social campaigns presenting the culture and issues of deaf people. During an FGI, a representative of the Polish Associations of the Deaf said:

At the Association, we considered launching a social campaign addressed to the wider public, aiming at the promotion of deaf culture. But every campaign generates costs, and we don't have extra funds for that. This is why I believe that such a campaign should be organised at the level of the entire EU, with its funding. It could help to overturn many false stereotypes concerning deaf people¹²².

Whereas a participant of an FGI conducted in Hungary emphasised the need for systematic work for the promotion of deaf culture:

I see the need for taking further action in the area of the promotion of deaf culture. In my opinion there is no need here for any extraordinary measures, but what we do need is consistent work over several years, because this brings effects. For example, the question of civic involvement of the deaf themselves in mailing, the promotion of their culture, or training an expert who would represent the community in the media¹²³.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

When summing up the findings of this research conducted within the project, it seems relevant to refer to the views demonstrated by respondents when asked to express their own subjective opinions on the changes occurring in the situation of deaf people over the last decade. Based on the qualitative survey, it might be concluded that according to respondents, the conditions for deaf people in society improved, though they still fall short of the community's expectations.

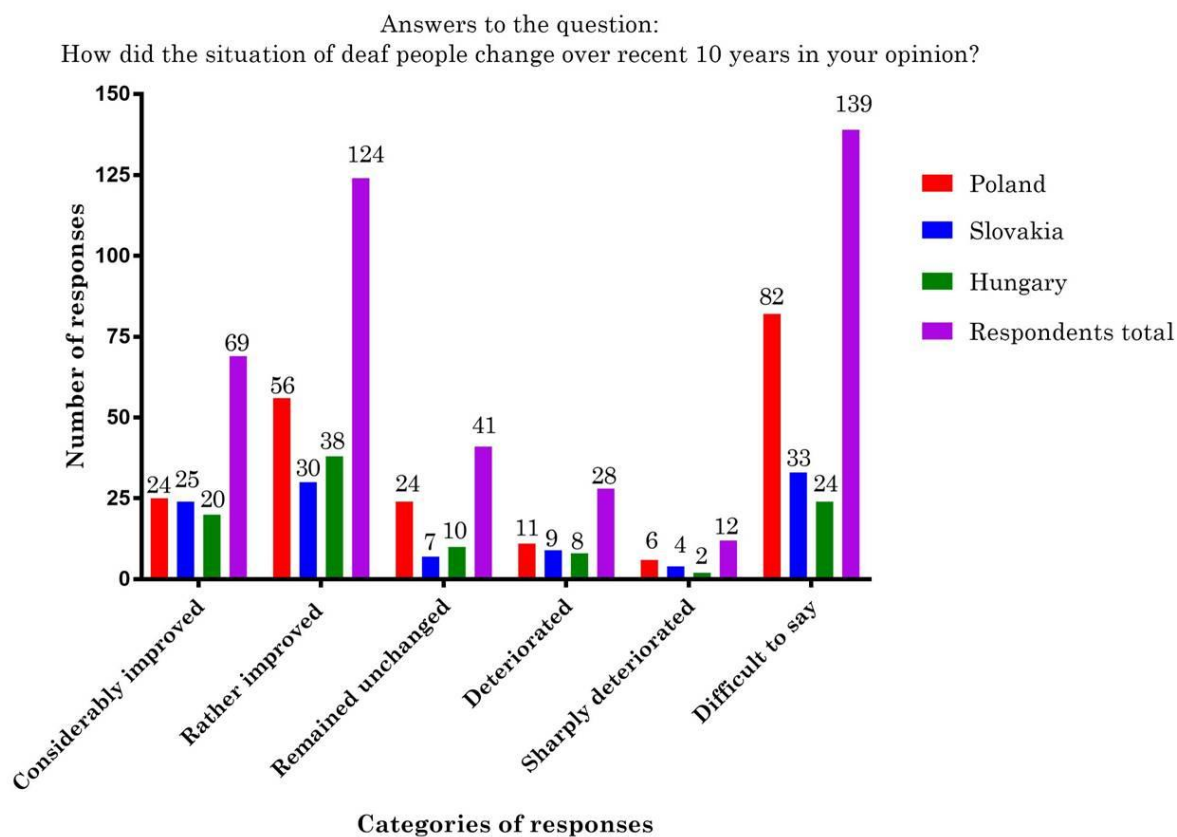
¹²¹ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹²² Opinion of a female representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Poland.

¹²³ Opinion of a male representative of an NGO working for deaf people, participant of an FGI organised in Hungary.

Questionnaire surveys revealed that respondents found it more difficult to assess the previous decade than the recent five years in terms of the changes taking place in the status of deaf people. Basically, this may result from the majority of young people aged up to 31 years among those surveyed lacking any well-established view on the status of deaf people over a longer 10-year time frame. Numerous respondents – 33.7% found it difficult to evaluate changes to the situation of deaf people over recent 10 years. 30% of those surveyed held the opinion that the situation of the deaf rather improved during that time, 16.7% argued that the situation improved considerably. Whereas 9.9% of participants said that the situation of deaf people remained unchanged, 6.8% reported deterioration, and 2.9% indicated a sharp deterioration (Figure 54).

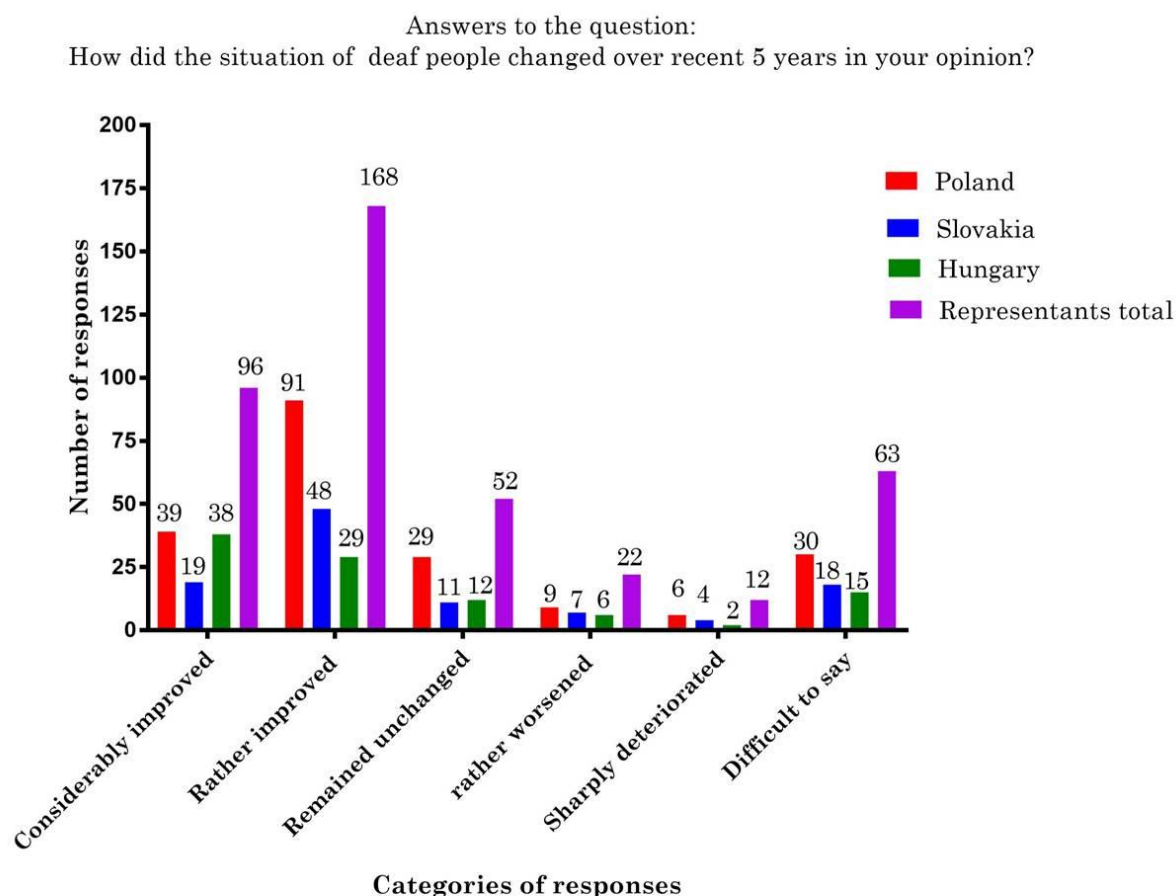
Figure 54. Views held by respondents on the changes occurred in the situation of deaf people over recent 10 years (N=413)



Source: own research

Respondents assessed the shifts in the condition of deaf people over recent 5 years with more certainty. The highest number of those surveyed – 40.7% argued that the situation of deaf people over that period rather improved, 23.2% of respondents claimed that it significantly improved. Meanwhile, 12.5% of participants believed that the situation remained unchanged, 5.3% said that the situation rather deteriorated, and barely 3% reported that it profoundly deteriorated. Overall, 15.3% of those taking part in the survey held no opinion on the issues discussed (Figure 55).

Figure 55. Respondents' views on changes in the situation of deaf people over recent 5 years (N=413)



Source: own research

Participants in a qualitative survey emphasized that the situation of deaf people over recent years improved due to the EU policy. On one hand they profited from numerous diverse projects, on the other hand, membership of the EU led to the harmonisation of legal regulations towards equality and social inclusion of deaf people. Respondents in Hungary argued that improvement in the situation of deaf people was attributed to the projects co-funded by the EU and performed over recent years, thereby contributing to the digital inclusion of deaf people and their immense support in communication. While Slovakian participants in a qualitative survey indicated support provided to deaf people entering the job market, enhanced accessibility of the deaf to TV programmes translated into sign language with audio transcription, as well as planned measures designed to support deaf people with information and communication technologies. Individuals taking part in a qualitative survey organised in Poland paid attention to legal changes, handling matters in sign language on an equal basis in public

institutions. They also appreciated educational and training support available to deaf people due to the European Community.

The studies completed helped to learn the views held by deaf people and the widely defined deaf community composed of representatives of organisations comprising deaf people, the environment surrounding deaf people including their families, teachers, sign language translators, NGO representatives operating in favour of deaf communities, surdopedagogists, deaf people and people with hearing impairments. Based on the research, it was made possible to diagnose the situation of deaf people and discover respondent's views on: deaf people's knowledge about the European Union, deaf people's education and their participation in social and civic life.

Together these results provide important insights into deaf people's knowledge about the European Union, thus giving rise to the following conclusions:

- deaf people have lower knowledge about the EU than hearing people,
- a majority of deaf people are aware of the fact that countries where they live affiliate to the European Community,
- a majority of deaf people have knowledge about projects co-funded by the European Union,
- a majority of deaf people see benefits arising from the membership of their countries in the European Union,
- the deaf obtain knowledge about the European Union chiefly from the Internet,
- information about the European Union is communicated in obscure and overly complicated language,
- the deaf lack sufficient access to materials about the EU in sign languages,
- deaf people have knowledge to a certain extent about the EU policy on equality and combating social exclusion,
- the deaf seek knowledge about the European Union which is useful from their perspective and show an interest in what the European community may offer to them.

By consulting experts on the views on deaf people's knowledge about the European Union collected during studies, the following recommendations were formulated:

- more information on the European Union should be translated into sign languages,
- information on the European Union should be communicated in a simpler language and reinforced by a graphic message,

- in an attempt to enhance deaf people’s knowledge about the European community, it is worthwhile preparing and sharing short information films about the European Union in mass media and the Internet, the films should contain information in sign language and soundtrack transcription,
- topics tackled in information materials tailored to deaf people, as suggested by respondents, should include:
 - ✓ EU legal regulations in favour of deaf people and EU policy on combating exclusion,
 - ✓ operations of EU institutions and their powers,
 - ✓ EU history
 - ✓ values underlying the establishment and operations of the EU,
 - ✓ EU policy,
 - ✓ importance of civic involvement in social life and instruments used by citizens to affect EU decisions,
 - ✓ benefits from European integration,
 - ✓ demonstration of precise examples of investments and projects co-financed by the European Community.
- social media should be leveraged more effectively for educating about the EU,
- more time should be devoted to cultivating knowledge about the European community during training funded by the EU in which the deaf community is involved.

This research also allows for the formulation of conclusions and recommendations in the area of education among deaf people. Based on the empirical evidence, it may be noted that in respondents’ opinion:

- good quality education proves to be an important driver and aspect for social inclusion and providing equal opportunities to deaf people,
- the broadly understood deaf community is not satisfied with the current functioning of the education system for deaf people.
- education of deaf people is a complex process that requires preparation and adequate conditions for its execution,
- optimization of the deaf people’s education should be pursued,
- frequently actual situation of deaf people’s education differs from the optimal model harnessing all available tools, means and didactic methods,

- deaf people have less opportunities than hearing people,
- some schools that provide deaf education lack the appropriate conditions,
- there is an absence of full support from public institutions with regard to education counselling provided to families or guardians of deaf children,
- knowledge and awareness of families or guardians regarding the educational opportunities offered to deaf children has an impact on their education,
- deaf children living in large agglomerations enjoy better educational opportunities than those living in other locations,
- during the education of deaf people there are cases when great emphasis is placed on integration with the hearing through learning an audio language as their first (native) language, however this is far from delivering benefits,
- sign language at numerous schools, particularly at mass schools where deaf children are educated, is not included in the curriculum,
- according to respondents, some schools educating deaf people employ teaching staff without necessary qualifications and skills to educate the deaf, e.g. they do not know sign language,
- basic courses of sign language do not provide adequate knowledge and skills sufficient to educate deaf people,
- according to respondents, hearing teachers are more easily employed at schools where deaf children study,

The surveys conducted and their results enabled, following consultations with experts, to formulate recommendations with regard to education of deaf people:

- sign language is a natural communication means for deaf people and corresponds to their cognitive process, and hence, it should be included in education of deaf people, bilingualism should be regarded as an education method tailored to deaf people,
- sign language should be taught at schools where the deaf study,
- the right to cultivate their own cultural uniqueness and natural corresponding sign language should be recognised as early as the education stage,
- when educating deaf people, the priority should be given to the best interests of the child rather than financial aspects,

- in order to effectively educate deaf people and those with hearing impairments, it is essential to ensure the relevant substantive, methodological and organisational conditions for education,
- when educating deaf people, it is central to adequately prepare a classroom, including suitable seating arrangement in semi-circle and ensure adequate acoustic conditions,
- it is necessary to establish a comprehensive support system for education counselling to be provided to deaf child's families and guardians,
- early intervention should be extended by consultancy and psychological support services encompassing families and guardians of deaf children,
- deaf instructors tasked with taking therapeutic measures and supporting families or guardians of deaf children should be incorporated into early intervention,
- it is necessary to design a central system for education standards and define conditions to be provided by educational institutions,
- it is necessary to develop a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for deaf children in which their families and guardians should be involved,
- schools educating deaf people should employ teaching staff with qualifications and skills suitable to teach the deaf, e.g. they have very good knowledge of sign language,
- the scope of sign language courses should be extended so as to ensure adequate knowledge and skills sufficient to educate deaf people,
- Deaf people with adequate qualifications should be increasingly employed as teachers for deaf people (increased employment opportunities for deaf teachers),
- special schools should not place deaf children in the same class with intellectually disabled pupils,
- textbooks, didactic materials should be adjusted to deaf pupil's needs,
- measurement of education effects should be adjusted to the communicational specifics of deaf people.

The surveys helped to identify the underlying problems and barriers to communication and social integration encountered by deaf people, with particular emphasis placed on the issues of deaf people's participation in public, civic and social life. The empirical material collected allows for the formulation of the following conclusions:

- surrounding environment of deaf people is diverse in terms of their interests in public life, numerous deaf people are not interested in this topic, though there are some who attach great importance to these issues,
- politicians, journalists and columnists use complex vocabulary which is hardly to be understood by deaf people in many cases,
- there is a shortage of information on public life translated into sign language,
- deaf people have limited access to information on public life and political affairs,
- a majority of deaf people are scarcely motivated to undertake political activities,
- deaf people typically participate, to a lesser extent, in social and civic life than hearing people,
- generally, deaf people, as compared to hearing peers, face obstacles in accessing to political activities and local governments,
- deaf people have limited awareness of legal measures which enable their participation in social and democratic life,
- deaf people have only a moderate knowledge about the rights to which they are entitled,
- a majority of deaf people are willing to engage in volunteering, some of them have a background in volunteering,
- young deaf people mostly come into contact with the idea of volunteering at school,
- deaf people's motivation to engage in social life depends on their age, place of residence and education,
- a majority of deaf people exhibit motivation for the integration with the hearing community, though the motivation level is highly diversified,
- an extensive group of deaf people want to benefit from mass culture (cinema, theatre),
- an extensive group of deaf people want to benefit from new media (Internet, social media),
- a majority of deaf people have knowledge of the possibilities of using cutting-edge CIT (tablets, CART)
- deaf people only have moderate access to mass culture,
- deaf people have only moderate or poor access to films translated to sign language,

- the deaf have only moderate access to TV programmes translated to sign language,
- deaf people's access to sign language interpreters is limited,
- deaf people recognise the need of mass, free-of-charge use of services provided by CARTs for sign language,
- deaf people have impeded access to the job market.

The analysis and discussion over survey results with the experts made it possible to specify the following recommendations likely to boost deaf people's participation in public, civic and social life:

- it is worthwhile making further efforts to enhance awareness of rights vested to disabled people through increased accessibility of materials in sign language and their distribution channels,
- knowledge about deaf people's cultural identity, their culture and language should be fostered,
- much more information on social, public and political life should be communicated to the deaf community in sign language,
- transmission of information to the deaf should be tailored to their needs and communication capacities, it should rely on simple vocabulary and offer explanations facilitating the understanding of specific content,
- individual countries covered by the survey should set up Internet television, broadcasting national and world information on a daily basis in sign language with the use of transcription of soundtrack,
- better civic education should be provided to deaf people, it may be effected as part of the training cycle, open meetings as well as through new media, internet TV channels dedicated to the deaf,
- leaders of the deaf community should be persuaded to become involved in social and political life, e.g. standing in the election,
- examples illustrating deaf people's engagement in social, political and economic life should be highlighted in the deaf community in an effort to break down psychological barriers and provoke activity by showing affirmative cases (role models),
- efforts should be made so that the voice of deaf people may be heard in collective bodies of state institutions and local governments,

- education of deaf people should be reinforced,
- deaf people should be educated about the establishment of third sector organisations and encouraged to set them up,
- educational activities committed to deaf people's entrepreneurship – establishment of companies - should be launched,
- involvement of the deaf in volunteering should be continued and encouraged,
- there is a need for forming volunteering clubs at schools, educational institutions and NGOs where deaf people could make their contributions,
- suitable conditions for fostering deaf people's passions and interests, including sport and leisure activities, should be created,
- it is important to increase accessibility of deaf people to mass culture through better and more effective exploitation of new technologies, and adjustment of culture to means by which deaf people receive information,
- mass culture should be promoted through creating a specific cultural offers for deaf people,
- major cinematic works should be translated to sign language and equipped with soundtrack transcription, and they should be made available to deaf people,
- more content of TV programmes should be translated to sign language and equipped with soundtrack transcription,
- museum exhibitions should be customised to deaf people's communication preferences,
- focus should be brought to wider access of deaf people to training that fulfils their needs and interests,
- it is advisable to increase free-of-charge legal assistance for deaf people,
- in countries which fail to deliver such assistance it is necessary to enable all deaf people to gratuitously use CARTs (e-translators) through mobile devices as part of a systemic approach,
- occupational guidance and support for deaf people on the job market should be boosted,
- emphasis should be placed on internationalisation of education and internships performed at that stage, likely to contribute to enhanced professional mobility among deaf people,

- educational and promotional efforts concerned with the employment of deaf people should be made among employers,
- deaf people's opinions and problems should be reported in mass media,
- attempts should be made to create opinion leaders originating from the deaf community and making known its expectations to the wider public,

When summarising the surveys completed within the project, it is beneficial to cite the statement voiced by a participant of the qualitative survey. By referring to the activities he took part within the project, he said:

Thank you for the participation in the project and I am delighted that we could reveal the realities of our life and difficulties we face on a daily basis. I think that the activities you embarked on are very precious, and I hope they will change the conditions we live in. What is important and priceless is that finally somebody wanted to listen to us. Sometimes we manually show what hurts us, what we dislike, but the hearing do not understand us. The hearing have their own problems and do not show any interest in us. Our problem starts here, we are marginalised (discriminated) not only by the lack of outside information, but also by the fact that nobody is interested in our problems. Thanks to this survey, we could talk about ourselves, our affairs, and we hope that the situation will change, that you will understand and listen to us¹²⁴.

Across the board, it should be stated that implementation of the inclusive education paradigm is not only a challenge but also an expectation of the today's world which sets new tasks for lifelong education in the heterogeneous society. The validity and urgent need of offering high quality education for all people while respecting their diverse needs as well as psychological and physical features has moved up the agenda when discussing education compared to differences and inclusions contained in academic papers and life practice. Currently this emerges as one of the principal problems in the European social policy and inclusive education open to the needs represented by different environments and entities¹²⁵, including deaf people.

Taken together, the findings of the empirical studies revealed in the Report perfectly fits in the model of a contemporary and multidimensional approach to deaf people's needs. By

¹²⁴ Opinion of a female participant of FGI organised in Slovakia who uses a hearing aid.

¹²⁵ Z. Zaćlona, Związek teorii z praktyką pedagogiczną w kontekście paradygmatu edukacji inkluzyjnej [Relationships between teaching theory and practice in the context of the paradigm of inclusive education], [in:] Inkluzyja, terapia, wspieranie rozwoju jako problemy współczesnej edukacji [Inclusion, therapy, support for development as problems faced by present-day education], ed. T. Senko, J. Bugajska-Bigos, B. Lisowska, wydawnictwo NOVA SANDEC, Nowy Sącz 2014, pp. 21-22.

offering diagnosis of their situation they may principally trigger better quality solutions in the immediate perspective.

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