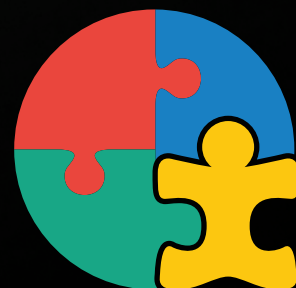




WE NEED TO UNDER- STAND

Workshop Series
Conclusion Report



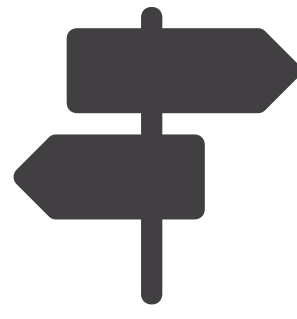
Avrupa
Birliği **sivil
düşün**



SYMBOLS AND MEANINGS



At home



On street



At work

LABELS

Health	H
Education	E
Other	O
Deaf	D
Turkish with Support	TS
Turkish	T

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Conclusion Report

With the support of the European Union Sivil Düşün (Think Like a Civilian) Programme, we - as Dem Association, have carried out workshop series consisting of six meetings held between September 8, 2020, and September 24, 2020, intending to discover and identify the problems encountered by the deaf and hard of hearing (HoH) individuals living in Turkey.

For ease of coordination, at each workshop - addressing different target audiences and each lasting two hours, we respectively gathered the healthcare professionals, representatives from the non-governmental organizations working in the field, relatives of the HoH and deaf individuals; college students, educators and individuals, who have hearing loss at different levels.

At the end of our meetings, here is the most prominent result which we have reached and which we believe should be worked on to be changed: **Not only the appropriate means of communication specific to an individual is not used when communicating with HoH and deaf persons on the street, at home and work; but also the appropriate means of communication are unknown or no effort is shown to find and apply the appropriate means of communication.**

However, **individuals with hearing loss form a heterogeneous group.** They may use hearing aids and implants to hear sounds or they may not be using any device. Using a hearing aid or implant does not mean that they hear sounds clearly and understand everything perfectly in every environment. In other words, they do not experience the sense of hearing the same way as hearing people do. Sometimes it can be more comfortable and easier for them to support their communication by lip reading or writing. And sometimes, either they only use sign language or get support from the sign language while communicating. In brief, individuals with hearing loss may have the ability to speak in Turkish, hear, and use sign language at different levels.

The key issue that emerged in every area during COVID-19 pandemic regarding all individuals with hearing loss, is the lack of awareness of such differences and absence of knowledge for different means of communication.

Even if they use different means of communication and have different needs, another common problem of HoH and deaf individuals is the **masked and online life.**

The problem of individuals, whose mother tongue is Turkish Sign Language or who choose to use that language as their primary language, is -although this is not specific to the time of COVID-19 pandemic but gained more importance during this time, **the lack of interpreters.**

In order to make this easy to read, we divided the issues highlighted during the workshops into three categories: **At home, on street and at work .**

In the scheme below, you will also see that the issues associated with the categories mentioned above have other tags:

- One of **“health, education and other”** labels,
- At least one of the following; **“deaf individual, individual with hearing loss who communicates in Turkish with some kind of support and individual with hearing loss who is capable of communicating in Turkish fully.”**

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At home, communication is an issue because:

H D TS T

- The medical staff that works and visits homes (filiation teams etc.) during the COVID-19 has no awareness of hearing loss, relevant and different means of communication.

H D TS

- Access to 112 emergency lines through a barrier-free app can be a problem.

H D TS

- ESIM - a barrier-free health communication center, and how to reach it are not known at sufficient level.

E D

- Children's education can be hindered when they are not supported by their families or communication with the family cannot be established.

E D TS

- Educators do not establish an accessible communication with their hard of hearing (HoH) and deaf students, particularly at the universities, and they do not respond immediately or never to the students' demands for equal access to education.

E D TS

- Impact of hearing loss on the student and his/her educational process is unknown and no effort is made to understand that.

E D TS

- Hearing children with deaf parents might need to communicate through speaking Turkish.

O TS T

- Online means and programs for socialization can be challenging, particularly for individuals who use hearing aids or cochlear implants, as it may take time to get used to the voices coming out of the computer.

31% of the deaf and HoH university students who participated in the workshop said they could not socialize during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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At home, online communication is an issue because:

O D TS T

- Mobile data packs may remain insufficient.

60% of the HoH and deaf individuals who participated in the workshop complained about insufficient mobile data.

E TS T

- In the course of education, it may be difficult and take time to get used to the voices coming out of the computer, particularly for individuals who use hearing aids or cochlear implants, and assistance might be needed for online communication through means like subtitles and written notes.

53% of the HoH and deaf university students who participated in the workshop stated that they had difficulty in distance education.

E D TS T

- Materials and environments for education are not always prepared by educators, who take HoH individuals' right to equal access into consideration. (Lip-reading problem on screens where the speaker looks small, giving lectures through voice recordings, videos without subtitles, sessions held without written notes etc.)

- 35% of the individuals with hearing loss, who participated in the workshops, stated that lip-reading was a necessity for communication.
- 53% of the HoH and deaf university students who participated in the workshop stated that they had difficulty in distance education.

E D TS

- Access to education in sign language is either not available or delayed, even if it is not specific to the time for COVID-19 pandemic and its consequential education process.

53% of the HoH and deaf university students who participated in the workshop stated that they had difficulty in distance education.

O D TS

- There are no subtitles to support access to information particularly for the HoH individuals who support their communication with writings on the distant education videos.

53% of the HoH and deaf university students who participated in the workshop stated that they had difficulty in distance education.

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At home, lack of interpreters is an issue because:



- A sign language interpreter is not always available on the media, particularly on TV, through which information can be accessed. (While there is a sign language interpreter available for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s speeches to the nation, there is none for the statements of the Minister of Health, Fahrettin Koca.)

100% of the deaf individuals whose native language is sign language states that they need an interpreter.



On street, communication is an issue because:



- Individuals with hearing loss constitute a heterogeneous group and therefore, different means of communication are required, yet there is no awareness.



- Applications for communication developed by various institutions and organizations (barrier-free application for 12 emergency lines, ESIM, etc.) are not known or used at sufficient level.



- Access to 112 emergency lines through a barrier-free app and service procurement can be a problem.



- People have a low level of awareness of hearing loss and they are unwilling or impatient to communicate.

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On street, wearing a mask is an issue because:

O D TS

- Someone who supports his/her communication with lip-reading and mimics of the opposite person, has trouble understanding anyone when distanced and masks are on.

· 35% of the individuals with hearing loss, who participated in the workshops, stated that lip-reading was a necessity for communication.

· 61% of the workshop participants believe that masks have become a communication barrier.

E TS

- A visible mouth area is required for effective training during the special training received at rehabilitation centers.

E TS T

- Children with hearing loss, especially at young ages need real-life experience - meaning language inputs in public areas, to develop receptive and expressive language skills.



On street, lack of interpreters is an issue because:

O D

- There is either no access to qualified interpreters or no interpreters at all.

100% of the deaf individuals whose native language is sign language state that they need an interpreter.





At work, wearing a mask is an issue because:

H D TS

- The already difficult communication can become even more difficult for the staff members with hearing loss, who work by wearing protective clothes and masks at healthcare facilities.

61% of the workshop participants believe that masks have become a communication barrier.



At work, being online is an issue because:

O D TS T

- Individuals who use hearing devices or cochlear implants in particular, may have difficulty in getting used to the voices coming out of devices like computers, etc. during the meetings and fail to make the necessary contribution.

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Conclusion

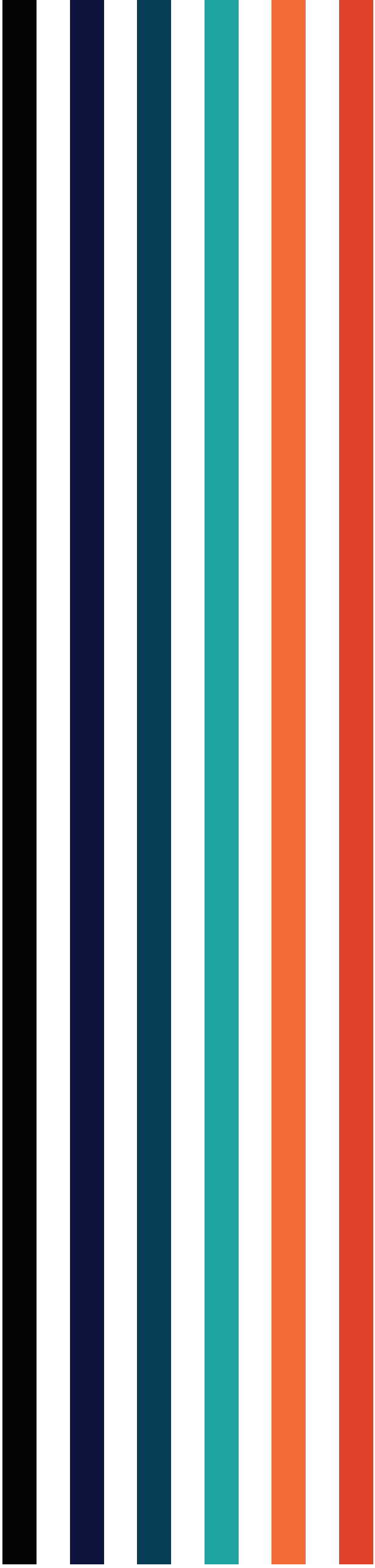
As Dem Association, we have evaluated all issues and hereby request from relevant public institutions and organizations to improve the below-listed solutions which are open for development, in collaboration with the non-governmental organizations working in this field and also with private sector if necessary:

- Carry out various and creative informative activities addressing particularly the healthcare workers and educators, but also the overall society about hearing loss, heterogeneous structure of the community and supportive means of communication exists for deaf and hard of hearing (HoH) including Turkish Sign Language,
- Provide accessible education for deaf and HoH by educators, and those educators to be supported when needed and the education given be supervised,
- Conduct studies to raise awareness for applications such as the barrier-free app to reach 112 emergency lines and ESİM among both the healthcare personnel and the deaf and HoH individuals, extend the usage of mentioned applications and therefore check the quality,
- Develop the necessary mechanisms both for hearing and deaf and HoH parents to involve them in their own children's education process,
- Support hearing children of deaf parents especially in speaking Turkish and in all other subjects needed,
- Either develop or support the technological solutions especially for individuals with hearing loss using hearing aid or cochlear implant, for them to be involved more easily in online programs,
- Provide mobile data package - which is very much needed for online video calls, to individuals with hearing loss with different and advantageous circumstances,
- Add subtitles and translators - if not available, to the distant education videos, televisions, and all media where such information transfer takes place,
- Provide the necessary infrastructure to access to a free and immediate translator at all relevant institutions and organizations, in particular at healthcare facilities,
- Accepting the compulsory use of face masks, spread the use of transparent masks even if it is not an exact solution due to condensation, and carry out necessary research and developmental activities to advance the efficient use of the already produced transparent masks,
- Create spaces where children at early ages with hearing loss can safely access real-life experiences that are required for the development of receptive and expressive language skills, or develop activities to replace such experiences,
- Without being limited to the foregoing, work to ensure that deaf and HoH individuals live equally and independently not only during the pandemic and similar exceptional processes, but also their lifetime.

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This project has been prepared with the support of the European Union Sivil Düşün (Think Like a Civilian) Programme. The responsibility of the content belongs entirely to the Dem Association and does not reflect the views of the European Union.