Sign languages in Europe

More than 750,000 deaf signers
30 sign languages

Linguistic research since the
1970s

No reference grammar yet for
any sign language

Bilingual education (signed
language + spoken language)
is the official policy since 1990
in many countries

Legal recognition is
dependently by
national governments:
recognition in the
constitution is
meaningless if there
is no connecting
detailed legislation
about interpreting
facilities, education,
et cetera

Basic facts about signed languages

Sign languages are the natural
first languages of deaf
communities

There is no single universal
sign language: 126 different
ones discovered so far
(ETHNOLOGUE)

Sign languages are not manual-
visual versions of spoken
languages, they have their
own grammar and lexicon

Lexical signs are not
transparent: neither form nor
meaning is predictable

Sign languages are young
languages (max. a few
hundred years), and do not
have a shared ancestor

No commonly used writing
system, no written tradition