



Legal Seat - Helsinki, Finland

WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

An International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO, WHO and the Council of Europe

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FACT SHEET

International Week of the Deaf

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) first launched International Day of the Deaf in 1958; the "day" was later extended to "week." The International Week of the Deaf (IWD) is observed annually during the last full week of September. The week culminates with International Day of the Deaf on the last Sunday of the week. The 1st World Congress of the WFD took place in September 1951, and the choice of September to celebrate the International Week and Day of the Deaf is a commemoration of this historical event.

The purpose of IWD is to draw the attention of politicians, authorities and the general public to the achievements of Deaf people and the concerns of the Deaf community. During this week, organisations of Deaf people worldwide are encouraged to carry out information campaigns about their work, and to publicise their demands and requests. This week also increases solidarity among Deaf people and their supporters, and is used as a time to stimulate greater efforts to promote the rights of Deaf people throughout the world.

WFD was established in September 1951, under the auspices of ENS or Ente Nazionale Sordomuti (the Italian Deaf Association). The first president of WFD was Prof Vittorio Ieralla, who was also, at that time, president of ENS.

Today, WFD is recognised by the United Nations (UN) as an international non-governmental organisation representing approximately 70 million Deaf people worldwide. About 80 percent of these people live in developing countries, where local authorities are rarely familiar with their needs and where few Deaf children have access to education. The WFD mission is to promote the human rights of Deaf people, including the right to sign language; and equal opportunity in all spheres of life, including access to education and information. Membership comprises national organisations of Deaf people in 129 countries, and associate, international and individual members.

What about the International Week of the Deaf? Does the Deaf community in every country observe the week? Yes, most do, although some prefer to observe the week at a different time during the year. WFD has a list of national affiliates and regional partners on its website, with links to those who have their own sites. People wishing to have information about the week in individual countries should check the website to contact the relevant Deaf organisation.

For more information about WFD:

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