



OUR REF.: EOC/CCTU/02/01  
TEL NO.: 2511 8211  
FAX NO.: 2877 7600

14 April 2014

Mr Ambrose Ho  
Chairman  
Communications Authority  
20/F Wu Chung House  
213 Queen's Road East  
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Dear Mr Ho

### Sign Language on Television

As the Communications Authority is processing the issuance of two additional domestic free television programme service (free TV) licences, and seeking public views on the renewal of licence for the existing two free TV licensees, namely Asia Television Limited (ATV) and Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), I am writing to seek your consideration on the provision of sign language interpretation service in television news programmes.

Recently the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) received petitions from individuals and organisations representing people with hearing impairment (PWHIs) in Hong Kong, including The Hon Leung Yiu-chung, who requested the licensees of free TV to provide sign language interpretation (signing) in addition to captioning or subtitling for news programmes. In particular, they requested the Government to make this requirement a part of the licensing conditions of free TV services. Attached is the press release by the parties.

According to the EOC's legal research and advice, the absence of signing on television programmes does not constitute discrimination – whether direct or indirect – under the existing Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO). Also, the sign language policy varies between countries and even within a country. Nevertheless, we believe it is important that positive steps are taken to address the needs of the underprivileged members of our society.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is applicable to Hong Kong, the rights of persons with disabilities are protected. Specifically, state parties are required to take appropriate measures, including supporting the learning of sign language and promoting the linguistic identity of the deaf community in ensuring equal right to inclusive education and equal participation in society. Indeed, organisations around the world and locally are stepping up efforts to promote the use of sign language. As you are aware, the

Legislative Council has since January 2013 introduced simultaneous sign language interpretation service to all open meetings of the Council and its committees.

According to the PWHs, many of them have difficulties in comprehending the subtitles or captions of the television news programmes. Aside from the generally lower literacy level of the PWHs, this could be owed to the fact that the captions only provide a direct translation of the audio content, which is sometimes different from the language learnt by the deaf community. For example, PWHs understand “to discuss frankly” but not the term 開門見山.

The provision of signing will therefore supplement the subtitling and enhance the PWHs’ understanding of the television news. It will also ensure that PWHs can gain information relevant and important to them in a timely manner, such as information on communicable diseases and important Government initiatives, which will certainly be conducive to their integration into the society.

As the statutory body tasked with upholding equality and combating discrimination in Hong Kong, the EOC holds great concern for the rights and well-being of PWHs. We believe that every person, irrespective of their age, gender, race, ability and their family status, should enjoy equal rights to employment, education, the provision of goods and services, as well as other social and economic aspects. Like other members of the society, PWHs should be able to lead a life of dignity and enjoy quality public television programmes. In view of such, we earnestly hope that the Communications Authority would explore the possibility of introducing the requirement for signing on TV news programmes in the licensing conditions of the two new free TV licenses, and also in those of the two existing licensees, when their licenses are due for renewal in end 2015.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions on the above. I look forward to hearing your feedback, and working closely with you and other members of the Communications Authority on building a truly inclusive society free of discrimination.

Yours sincerely,



York Y.N. CHOW  
Chairperson

cc The Hon Gregory So, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development  
Miss Susie Ho, JP, Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic  
Development (Communications and Technology)  
Miss Eliza Lee, Director-General of Communications  
Mr Stephen Siu, Commissioner for Rehabilitation

致 各大傳媒機構：

### 聽障人士要求電視新聞節目提供手語翻譯 新聞稿

2013年12月27日，三名聾人及聽障人士，由十多名聽障及健聽人士，包括立法會議員梁耀忠陪同下，到平機會投訴。他們一方面要求平機會調查現時電視台（包括免費及收費電視）新聞節目中，沒有提供手語翻譯，是否違反《殘疾歧視條例》。同時亦譴責平機會多年來，處理《殘疾歧視條例》角色被動，沒有主動調查政府部門及公營機構措施是否違反相關條例。三位投訴人與平機會投訴主任會見時，現場播放即時新聞片段，表示他們根本不能明白有關字幕及內容，若有手語翻譯則會較容易理解有關內容。

2013年10月15日，政府公佈發出兩個新的電視牌照，加上香港電視網絡最近公佈將於明年七月一日開辦流動電視服務，不少香港人都期望新的電視台加入能令觀眾有更多的選擇。

然而，對於聾人及聽障的朋友，新的電視台加入似乎未能直接令他們受惠，特別是新聞資訊方面，因為無論新電視台，還是現有的收費及免費電視台的新聞節目，只有字幕，而沒有手語翻譯，聾人及聽障人士未能明白有關資訊。因此，他們認為平等機會委員會應介入調查電視新聞報導中，未有提供手語翻譯，令到聽障人士得不到和普通市民獲得同等的資訊，獲得資訊的權利被受剝奪，是否違反《殘疾歧視條例》。同時，他們要求政府切實履行《殘疾人權利公約》，保障聾人及聽障人士獲得資訊的權利，要求電視台在新聞節目中提供手語翻譯。

現時通訊局只規管兩間免費電視台，需於新聞節目中加入字幕，讓聽障人士能夠了解節目內容，獲取新聞資訊，然而有關字幕對聾人及聽障人士未必能明白，因為聾人和聽障人士與健聽人士對文字的理解有明顯的差別，特別是一些抽象的訊息，所以我們要求政府應立例要求免費及收費電視台每日新聞節目，必須提供手語翻譯，因翻譯員的手語，動作及表情，補充了文字不足以表達的意思，讓聽障人士更容易理解，從而獲得應有的資訊。

參與投訴的聾人及聽障人士表示，現時在外國不少地方已開始在新聞節目中提供手語翻譯，以香港鄰近的地方，如日本更早於1990年已有手語新聞的節目，台灣亦已有電視台（公共電視台）提供手語新聞，由一位主播加一位手語翻譯作新聞報導，就連澳門只有幾百名的聽障人士的社會內，澳門廣播電視也每星期一至六早上七時四十五分的普通話新聞時段內推出同步的手語翻譯報導。

立法會議員梁耀忠表示，現時香港有3萬多名聽障人士，其中9000多名是完全使用手語溝通的聾人及聽障人士，但現時卻只有香港電台電視部，每星期一次的時事摘錄及識多一點點，配備字幕及手語翻譯，它不是每日新聞報導，重要的新聞消息也變成舊聞了。聽障人士因本身的殘疾，在社會上已處於較弱勢一方，倘若在接受社會資訊上也未能獲得公平的對待，他們將更難扭轉自己弱勢的處境。同時，對平機會多年來處理《殘疾歧視條例》角色被動，沒有主動調查政府及公營機構設立的制度和政府是否有違有關條例，令殘疾人士的權利未能彰顯。

因此，他們認為平機會，

1. 應入調查電視台（包括現有免費及收費電視）新聞中未有提供手語翻譯，有否違反《殘疾歧視條例》；
2. 要求政府發出新電視牌照加入適當的條款，規管他們在新聞節目中，必須加入手語的翻譯；
3. 要求無線電視及亞視電視的免費電視牌照公司自願加入手語翻譯，以及向政府提供意見，要求政府在 2015 年到期時，加入適當的條款，規管在新聞節目中，必須加入手語的翻譯

為聽障人士提供公平獲得資訊的權利。

立法會議員梁耀忠 及

一群有聽障的人士

聯絡人： 梁耀忠 98713739 邵日贊 60331813 黃潤達 97110906