

Communication of Public Organisations for People with Hearing Disabilities: Challenges on Facebook

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Abstract: Social media platforms provide public organisations with important opportunities for information dissemination, audience participation, and implementation of accessibility-orientated communication practices. As legal entities advancing public interests, public organisations are responsible for ensuring that their social media communication is accessible to various social groups, including persons with hearing disabilities. This study examines the communication challenges facing a public organisation in ensuring accessible communication for people with hearing disabilities on Facebook from an organisational perspective. Using a mixed-method research design that combines quantitative content analysis and semi-structured expert interviews, the study analyses empirical data from the Facebook account of the Lithuanian Sign Language Interpreting Centre and insights from its communication experts. The findings reveal irregular and inconsistent communication practices, limited use of accessibility-orientated content formats, and fragmented implementation of video captioning and plain language principles. The study concludes that although accessibility is emphasised as a core communication objective by organisational representatives, a persistent gap remains between the intended strategies and their practical implementation in daily Facebook communication.

Keywords: Public Organisations, Communication, Hearing Disabilities, Social Media, Facebook

1. Introduction

Public organisations increasingly integrate social media into their daily communication practices as a key channel to spread information and engage with citizens. Through these platforms, public organisations seek to ensure timely, transparent, and effective communication between diverse social groups, including people with hearing disabilities. Ensuring accessibility of public communication for this vulnerable group is critically important, given the growing prevalence of hearing disabilities. According to the World Health Organisation, more than 1.5 billion people worldwide currently experience some degree of hearing loss, and projections indicate that this number may increase to nearly 2.5 billion by 2050 (WHO, 2025). In this article, we define hearing disability as hearing loss with a hearing threshold of 20 decibels (dB) or more in both ears.

For people with hearing disabilities, the communication provided by public organisations often constitutes a primary and, in some cases, the only source of information related to public services, health, safety, and civic participation. Despite its critical social role, communication by public organisations has long been underexplored in scholarly research. As noted by Graber (2003), empirical studies focussing on public sector communication are scarce, even though such communication is vital for democratic governance and social inclusion. Only in recent years scholars have begun to address communication between public organisations and persons with hearing disabilities. Katulo et al. (2024), for example, investigate communication challenges in accessing public services, highlighting the importance of public employees' knowledge of sign language. Similarly, Almutairi (2025) highlights communication barriers faced by deaf individuals in government organisations, while Djatmiko et al. (2025) examine digital literacy as a factor influencing effective communication in public administration.

Although social media have become an integral component of contemporary public communication, research on the relationship between social media use and hearing disabilities remains limited. Existing studies demonstrate that social media can offer significant benefits for people with hearing disabilities when adequate support and training are provided (Baumgartner et al., 2023). At the same time, scholars have identified a range of challenges faced by this group in social media environments, including accessibility barriers, content design limitations, and insufficient organisational awareness (Hemsley et al., 2024; Kožuh & Debevc, 2020; Martzos et al., 2021; Patrick et al., 2020; Sweet et al., 2020). Accessibility is not an inherent feature of social media platforms; rather, it refers to adapting both the content and the form of information so that individuals with hearing loss can access and understand the message, often requiring systematic and sustained efforts from organisations (Botelho, 2021). Empirical evidence further indicates that inaccessible communication restricts social and economic participation, reduces access to public services, and contributes to the social exclusion of persons with hearing disabilities (Katulo et al., 2024; Maaß et al., 2024; Saepudin et al., 2024).

As social media remain a key digital environment for people with hearing disabilities (Botelho, 2021), public

organisations occupy a unique position in promoting accessible communication practices. Although a growing body of empirical research is focused on the experiences of people with hearing disabilities, there is still a notable lack of studies that examine these challenges from the perspective of public organisations responsible for ensuring communication for all social groups. Addressing this research gap, the present study focusses on the Lithuanian context and examines the Lithuanian Sign Language Interpreting Centre (hereinafter LSLIC), a public organisation responsible for providing Lithuanian sign language interpreting services and ensuring the accessibility of information and communication for persons with hearing disabilities at the national level.

The study aims to analyse the communication challenges faced by LSLIC in reaching people with hearing disabilities on Facebook. The research pursues several objectives: to examine the Facebook content of LSLIC and assess it in terms of information accessibility for persons with hearing disabilities; and to reveal the perspectives of LSLIC communication experts on communication practices and the challenges they face when communicating with this target group on Facebook. The study employs analysis of the scholarly literature, quantitative content analysis, and semi-structured expert interviews.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Role of Public Organisations in Ensuring Communication Accessibility for People With Hearing Disabilities

Public organisations play a crucial role in ensuring communication and information accessibility for persons with hearing disabilities, since equal access to public information is a prerequisite for social inclusion and civic participation (Cazenave & Bellantoni, 2022). For this social group, accessible communication is not merely a supplementary feature but a fundamental condition that allows participation in public services, decision-making processes, and community life.

The communication needs of people with hearing disabilities require public organisations to adapt both the content and the form of information delivery. Social media platforms offer public organisations effective tools to address these needs by enabling visual-based communication and accessibility features such as captions, subtitles, and adaptable video formats. These features are particularly relevant for people with hearing disabilities, as they directly compensate for barriers present in traditional audio-based communication (Kožuh & Debevc, 2020). Using social media, public organisations can reach people with hearing disabilities more effectively and facilitate their continuous participation in public communication. However, ensuring accessibility on social media requires organisational commitment, strategic planning, and awareness of the specific needs of this group. Public organisations must therefore recognise accessibility as an integral part of their communication responsibility rather than as an optional addition.

Despite the opportunities provided by social media, public organisations continue to face challenges in meeting the diverse communication needs of different social groups, including people with hearing disabilities (Graber, 2003). These challenges highlight the need for targeted communication strategies that prioritise accessibility and inclusion.

2.2 Challenges Faced by Public Organisations in Communicating With People Having Hearing Disabilities on Social Media

Although social media are often associated with enhanced accessibility due to their visual and multimodal capabilities, public organisations continue to face substantial challenges when integrating these platforms into their daily communication practices. While social media provide opportunities to distribute information in formats that are potentially suitable for persons with hearing disabilities, their effective use requires organisational adaptation, strategic planning, and accessibility-orientated competencies. As McAllister (2012) notes, social media remain underutilised in public sector communication, often due to institutional inertia and limited organisational capacity. In line with Graber (2003), communication in public organisations has become increasingly complex, as organisations must translate specialised and often bureaucratic information into comprehensible messages for diverse audiences while simultaneously navigating technological, legal, and organisational constraints. These challenges become particularly pronounced in social media environments such as Facebook, where communication is continuous, interactive, and publicly visible.

One of the central challenges facing public organisations is related to organisational culture and readiness for innovation. Sobaci (2016) emphasises that the primary difficulty lies not in the availability of technological

solutions, but in the' limited ability of public organisations to adopt and institutionalise innovative communication practices. Organisational cultures that are resistant to change hinder the integration of accessibility-orientated communication strategies into routine practices. In this context, employees' awareness of the role and benefits of accessible communication on social media becomes a critical factor. As Riza et al. (2025) argue, organisational performance and innovation capacity improve when employees are motivated, supported, and encouraged to engage in continuous learning. Without a shared organisational understanding of accessibility as a public value, efforts to ensure inclusive communication on social media remain fragmented and inconsistent.

Human resources and competency-related challenges further constrain the ability of public organisations' to ensure accessible communication. Although accessibility is increasingly recognised as an institutional responsibility, many public organisations lack employees with sufficient expertise in accessibility standards, plain language principles, or sign language communication (Cazenave & Bellantoni, 2022; Katulo et al., 2024). The absence of such competencies often results in communication practices that are not adapted to the needs of persons with hearing disabilities. Moreover, limited familiarity with deaf culture within organisations restricts empathetic and audience-orientated communication, as language competence is closely related to cultural understanding. Addressing these challenges requires skilled communication professionals capable of managing the complexity of public sector communication while integrating accessibility considerations into content creation and dissemination processes (Graber, 2003).

In addition to human resource constraints, public organisations face structural and resource-related challenges when implementing accessibility measures on social media. Integration of accessible communication practices into everyday workflows requires investments in technology, financial resources, time, and specialised staff (Almutairi, 2025; Kopp et al., 2023). Bureaucratic procedures and rigid organisational structures often slow decision-making processes, limiting the ability of public organisations to respond flexibly to accessibility needs. In this regard, inter-institutional cooperation among public sector organisations, municipalities, and non-governmental actors can play a supportive role by facilitating knowledge exchange, sharing resources, and developing common accessibility standards.

Technological and design-related challenges further complicate public organisation' communication. Despite the rapid development of social media technologies, public organisations often fail to fully exploit platform features that support accessibility, such as captioning, subtitles, or adaptable video formats. Scholars point to persistent shortcomings in the design and management of public organisations' social media content, including an overreliance on text and image-based posts without accessibility adaptations, videos published without captions or sign language interpretation, and limited consideration of platform usability (Botelho, 2021; Djatmiko et al., 2025; Sweet et al., 2020). These deficiencies reflect organisational limitations rather than technological constraints and highlight the need for clearer guidelines and accountability mechanisms within public organisations.

Finally, public organisations face challenges related to content complexity and language use on social media. Ensuring accessible communication requires the application of principles of plain language, including clear structure, concise wording, appropriate information volume, and alignment between text and visual elements (Cazenave & Bellantoni, 2022; Kopp et al., 2023). However, empirical research indicates that public organisations often publish content that is too complex, lengthy, and insufficiently adapted for diverse audiences (Hansen-Schirra et al., 2021; Maaß et al., 2024). Such practices reflect organisational priorities that favour administrative completeness over accessibility. To fulfil their public mandate, organisations must recognise that accessible communication is not just a technical adjustment, but a strategic responsibility that requires systematic organisational commitment.

3. Methodology

Research Design and Case Selection. The research design is based on a mixed-method approach combining quantitative content analysis with semi-structured expert interviews. Integration of quantitative and qualitative components enables a comprehensive understanding of public organisations' communication practices, as the numerical patterns derived from the content analysis are complemented by in-depth qualitative insights obtained from experts. As emphasised by McChesney and Aldridge (2019), mixed-method research improves analytical robustness by creating synergy between different methodological perspectives.

The study adopts a case study design focusing on the Lithuanian Sign Language Interpreting Centre (LSLIC), selected due to its unique institutional role as the only public organisation in Lithuania responsible for providing

Lithuanian sign language interpreting services and ensuring accessible information and communication for people with hearing disabilities. Given this mandate, LSLIC represents a critical case for examining the accessibility of public communication on social media. The organisation's official Facebook account was chosen, as Facebook remains the only social media platform widely used by public organisations in Lithuania and reaches a large audience of people with hearing disabilities. Moreover, LSLIC is active on this platform, whereas its presence on other social media channels is limited; therefore, the study focuses exclusively on its Facebook communication. LSLIC employees directly involved in communication activities were selected as experts for the semi-structured interviews. Data analysis for both research components was conducted using MAXQDA 24 software, enabling systematic coding and data organisation.

Quantitative Content Analysis. A quantitative content analysis was conducted to systematically examine LSLIC's communication on Facebook. This method enables an objective, systematic and replicable examination of communication content by quantifying specific features and patterns that, based on the scholarly literature, are related to accessibility. The analysis covered a 33-month period from January 1, 2023, to September 30, 2025. The research sample consisted of 266 Facebook posts published by LSLIC. The coding scheme was developed deductively based on research objectives and relevant scholarly literature, allowing posts to be coded according to predefined variables. LSLIC's Facebook communication targeting people with hearing disabilities was analysed using five main codes and corresponding subcodes (see Table 1).

Table 1: Research instrument for LSLIC communication on Facebook

Code	Subcode
Date	Month
Form	Photo, Text and photo(s), Text and video, Sharing other users' posts
Video captioning	With captioning, Without captioning
Communication accessibility features	Plain language, Video(s) with translation into Lithuanian sign language
Theme	Ongoing activities

To ensure the reliability of the coding process, intercoder agreement was assessed through independent coding by two researchers, who coded 15% of the dataset (40 Facebook posts). Agreement across codes ranged from 0.81 to 1.00, indicating high reliability and consistency.

Semi-Structured Expert Interviews. To complement the quantitative findings and gain deeper insight into organisational communication practices, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with LSLIC employees. Expert interviews are well suited for obtaining detailed, experience-based knowledge from individuals with specialised competence and long-term professional involvement (Döringer, 2020; Bouncken et al., 2021). The semi-structured format was chosen for its flexibility and capacity to encourage reflection and discussion, allowing themes to emerge that may not surface in structured interviews. The study included all LSLIC employees working in communication; in total, three communication experts participated. To ensure confidentiality, each informant was assigned an anonymised code (G1, G2, G3) based on interview order. The interview guide was developed from the scholarly literature and structured into thematic blocks: LSLIC's communication strategy and Facebook use; communication practices and target audiences; and challenges in communicating with people with hearing disabilities on Facebook.

4. Results and Discussions

The analysis of LSLIC's Facebook communication focusses on how the organisation conceptualises and implements accessible communication for persons with hearing disabilities in its everyday practices. During the interviews, an LSLIC communication expert emphasised that *"Our main goal is to provide as much information as possible to people with hearing disabilities and to reduce the exclusion caused by a lack of information"* (G2). This statement reflects the organisation's normative orientation toward accessibility as an important communication objective. At the same time, research on public sector communication emphasises that accessibility is closely linked not only to the availability of information, but also to its regular and consistent provision (Rus et al., 2021; Huang & He, 2025).

From an organisational perspective, the analysis of LSLIC's actual communication practices on Facebook reveals challenges related to maintaining consistency in content publication. The number of posts varied considerably, ranging from 1 to 16 posts per month (see Figure 1). These fluctuations do not appear to be driven by seasonal

factors: for example, seven posts were published in August 2023, compared to only one post in August 2024 and two posts in August 2025. Similarly, ten posts were published in January 2023, whereas only two posts appeared in January 2024 and three in January 2025. Such variations in comparable periods indicate difficulties in implementing a stable and systematic communication routine.

These empirical observations contrast with the strategic self-assessment expressed by LSLIC communication experts. An informant stated that “*We have a communication strategy <...> how often we communicate*” (G1). However, the discrepancies between planned communication and actual posting frequency suggest challenges in translating strategic intentions into consistent practice. From an organisational standpoint, irregular communication can hinder sustained audience engagement, weaken routine content consumption patterns, and affect perceptions of organisational reliability in the digital environment.

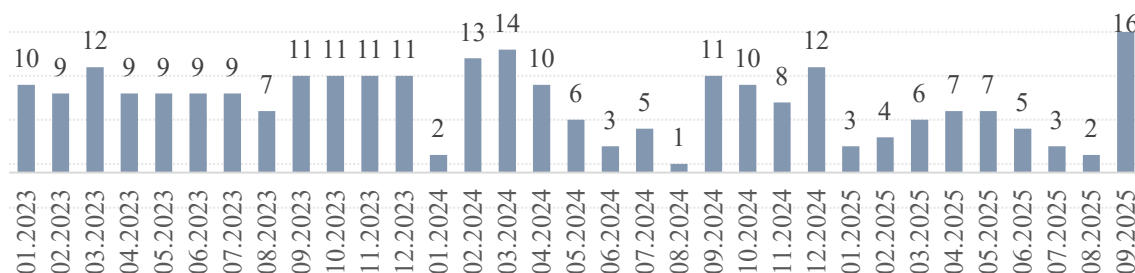


Figure 1: Dynamics of publishing posts on the LSLIC Facebook account, N=266

The thematic structure of LSLIC’s Facebook communication reflects the organisation’s operational focus and communication priorities. Communication experts emphasised that they “<...> *definitely share the most relevant information*” (G1, G2), which guided the thematic analysis of published content. The content analysis identified seven main themes (see Table 2), with “Information about LSLIC activities” emerging as the most dominant theme (N = 95), followed by “Information about events” (N = 48). The third most frequent theme, “Greetings and thanks for cooperation and assistance” (N = 40), illustrates the efforts of the organisation to maintain positive relationships with its Facebook audience.

At the same time, the findings indicate organisational challenges related to thematic balance. Content addressing legal regulations, policy changes, and measures related to the protection of rights and social inclusion was largely absent. From an organisational perspective, this suggests limitations in the integration of broader systemic and policy-related information into routine communication practices. Given the increasing emphasis on accessibility in recent legislative developments, the limited presence of such content can restrict the organisation’s capacity to use Facebook as a channel for proactive information support beyond the promotion of its own activities. In general, LSLIC’s Facebook communication appears to prioritise organisational visibility, while content of broader informational relevance receives comparatively less attention.

Table 2: Themes of posts published on the LSLIC Facebook account, based on interviews and Facebook data

No.	Thematic categorisation	Posts Count
1.	Information about LSLIC activities (Lithuanian sign language interpreter’ training, seminars, conferences, meetings with territorial department employees and project partners).	95
2.	Promoting the profession of Lithuanian sign language interpreter (meetings with high school students, participation in study fairs).	26
3.	Information about events (Lithuanian sign language interpreters’ work at public events and conferences, city festivals).	48
4.	Information about legal acts (translation into Lithuanian sign language).	3
5.	Greetings (employee’ anniversaries, holiday greetings), thanks for cooperation and assistance.	40
6.	LSLIC employees’ social activities (elections of the most beautiful gesture, national mobility challenge, celebration of Mental Health day, volunteering in animal shelters, Cake day, Christmas wreath weaving evening, and other traditions in the work team).	13
7.	General information (changes in working hours, procedure for ordering translation services, other relevant information important to persons with hearing disabilities).	41

In addition to thematic choices, the analysis examined how LSLIC operationalises accessibility through content formats. According to communication experts, the organisation seeks to prioritise video content with Lithuanian sign language translation when disseminating particularly important information: *“When there is a very important informational message, we always translate it into Lithuanian sign language <...> and upload the content in video format”* (G1, G2). However, the quantitative content analysis identified only 38 video posts during the entire research period. This finding points to organisational constraints in consistently implementing video-based communication, despite its acknowledged importance. The academic literature emphasises that video content with sign language interpretation represents one of the most effective formats for accessible communication (Cazenave & Bellantoni, 2022; Hansen-Schirra et al., 2021; Kopp et al., 2023; Kožuh & Debevc, 2020; Maaß et al., 2024). Nevertheless, text- and photo-based posts remained the dominant format on LSLIC’s Facebook account (N = 190; see Table 3), indicating that accessibility-orientated formats are applied selectively rather than systematically.

Table 3: Post formats, published on the LSLIC Facebook account, N=266

Formats of Published Posts	Number of Posts Published
Text and photo(s)	190
Text and video	29
Video	9
Cover and profile photos	2
Sharing other users’ posts	36

Further organisational challenges emerge in relation to video accessibility practices. Previous studies highlight that public organisations frequently publish videos without sign language interpretation or captioning, reflecting gaps in accessibility implementation (Baumgartner et al., 2023; Kožuh & Debevc, 2020; Maaß et al., 2024). The analysis of LSLIC’s Facebook account shows similar inconsistencies: only 14 of the 38 video posts included captions, while 24 did not. In addition, qualitative evaluation revealed that subtitle quality was often insufficient, with issues related to font size, contrast, and legibility. In 13 of the 14 captioned videos, the subtitles were difficult to read, indicating shortcomings in technical execution rather than platform limitations. The video published on April 9, 2023 (see Figure 2) illustrates these challenges, as accessibility considerations were overshadowed by aesthetic design choices. These findings point to organisational gaps in practical knowledge related to accessible video production and platform-specific accessibility standards.

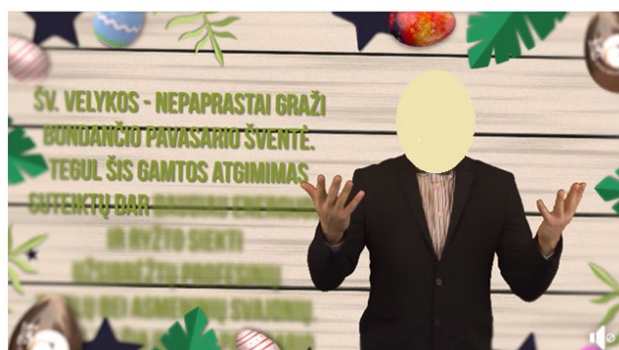


Figure 2: Picture of LSLIC Facebook video with captioning, post from April 9, 2023

Another area in which organisational challenges become evident concerns the application of plain language principles in text-based communication. Although LSLIC communication experts acknowledged that Lithuanian language can be difficult to adapt to accessible communication, particularly for older audiences (G2), content analysis revealed recurring textual issues. These included overly long and complex sentences, the use of inappropriate grammatical forms, abbreviations, specialised terminology, irrelevant symbols, and spelling errors. Twelve posts contained excessively long texts, indicating difficulties in balancing informational completeness with clarity and simplicity. From an organisational perspective, such practices suggest challenges in operationalising plain language guidelines within everyday communication workflows.

Human resource constraints further shape the communication capacity of LSLIC. Communication experts emphasised the lack of specialized staff, noting that *“We are in dire need of sign language interpreters <...>”* (G1,

G2, G3). Although sign language interpreters are essential for video translation, their availability is limited due to competing institutional priorities, as “<...> priority is given to direct work” (G1, G2). The interview data also indicate that this issue reflects a broader national shortage of Lithuanian sign language interpreters, driven by a low enrolment in relevant study programmes (G2). These structural human resource constraints directly limit the organisation’s ability to expand and improve accessible communication on Facebook.

Financial limitations represent an additional organisational challenge. LSLIC communication experts reported the absence of a dedicated communication budget: “We do not have a budget for communication” (G1, G2). According to the informants, greater financial resources would allow a wider audience reach and increased investment in accessibility-related practices, such as video production and manual captioning. The lack of financial support therefore restricts both the scope and the quality of LSLIC’s Facebook communication.

Finally, LSLIC communication experts identified challenges related to audience reach, particularly when trying to communicate with individuals who have limited digital skills: “It is difficult for us to reach older single people who do not know how to use a computer or social media platforms” (G1, G2, G3). While these factors extend beyond direct organisational control, they nevertheless affect the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication channel and require public organisations to consider complementary communication strategies. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the accessibility of LSLIC’s Facebook communication is shaped by interconnected organisational, resource-related, and contextual challenges that influence how accessibility goals are translated into practice.

5. Conclusions

The study shows that LSLIC’s Facebook communication is predominantly oriented towards publicising organisational activities, while content of broader informational and systemic relevance, such as legal regulations, policy changes, and rights-related information, receives limited attention. This indicates that social media is used mainly as a tool for organisational visibility rather than as a comprehensive channel for public information and empowerment.

The study indicates that accessibility-oriented communication formats and practices are applied selectively rather than systematically. Although the importance of video content with Lithuanian sign language interpretation is recognised, such formats are used infrequently, while captioning practices remain inconsistent and often of low quality. The application of plain language principles in text-based posts is likewise insufficient, pointing to gaps in practical competencies and internal guidelines for accessible communication.

The study also highlights the influence of organisational and resource-related constraints on communication accessibility. Limited human resources, particularly the shortage of specialised staff, and the absence of a dedicated communication budget restrict the organisation’s capacity to consistently implement accessibility measures on Facebook. These structural limitations, together with challenges related to audience reach, underscore the need for sustained organisational support and strategic investment in accessible public communication.

Overall, the study shows that ensuring accessible communication on social media requires more than declarative commitments to accessibility; it requires systematic organisational planning, adequate resources, and the integration of accessibility principles into everyday communication practices in order to fulfil the public mandate of inclusive digital communication.

6. Limitations

The expert interviews involved only three specialists responsible for communication at LSLIC, reflecting the organisation’s limited communication staff. In addition, the study does not examine Facebook users’ perspectives on LSLIC communication. Future research could address this through user surveys.

Ethics Declaration

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical research principles. The quantitative content analysis used only publicly available data published by a public organisation and analysed exclusively for academic purposes. All interview participants provided informed consent and agreed to the use of the data for research purposes.

AI Declaration

Artificial intelligence technologies were used to support translation, language editing and stylistic refinement of the manuscript. The authors retain full responsibility for the content, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions presented in the article.

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