

“Flemish Sign Language [vgt] (A language of Belgium)

- **Alternate Names:** VGT, Vlaamse Gebarentaal
- **Population:** 5,000 (2014 EUD). 6,000 (2005 M. Vermeerbergen). 5,000 sign language users (2014 EUD).
- **Location:** Scattered in northern Belgium.
- **Language Status:** 5 (Developing). Recognized language (2006, Parliamentary decree, 15 February).
- **Dialects:** Antwerpen (Antwerp), Limburg (Limburg), Oost-Vlaanderen (East Flanders), Vlaams-Brabant (Flemish Brabant), West-Vlaanderen (West Flanders). These regional dialects developed in different deaf schools. Also intra-regional variation, some related to gender and age. Most similar to French Belgian Sign Language [sfb]. Influence from spoken Dutch [nld], particularly in mouthing. Limited influence from Signed Dutch (used for some communication with hearing people). Fingerspelling system similar to French Sign Language [fsl].
- **Typology:** One-handed fingerspelling.
- **Language Use:** 7 schools for the deaf in Flanders but only a few use VGT for instruction. As of 2008, deaf children increasingly put in regular schools, with occasional interpreting into VGT. In some schools Deaf students use written Dutch [nld] in classrooms (Van Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen 2003).
- **Language Development:** Videos. Dictionary. Grammar.
- **Other Comments:** Some courses and training programs for L2 users and interpreters. 160 sign language interpreters (2014 EUD). Legal provision of free sign language interpreting since 1993. Christian (Roman Catholic).”

Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.)
2015. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Eighteenth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL
International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

Related Readings

Van Herreweghe, Mieke, and Myriam Vermeerbergen
2009 Flemish Sign Language Standardisation. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 10(3):
308-326.

Cosyns, Marjan, Annemieke Van Herreweghe, Griet Christiaens, and John Van Borsel
2009 Stutter-like Dysfluencies in Flemish Sign Language Users. *Clinical Linguistics &
Phonetics* 23(10): 742-750.

Akach, Philemon, Emily Matabane, Myriam Vermeerbergen, and Mieke van Herreweghe
2007 Constituent Order in Flemish Sign Language (VGT) and South African Sign Language
(SASL): A Cross-Linguistic Study. *Sign Language & Linguistics* 10(1): 23.

Last Updated: April 13, 2015