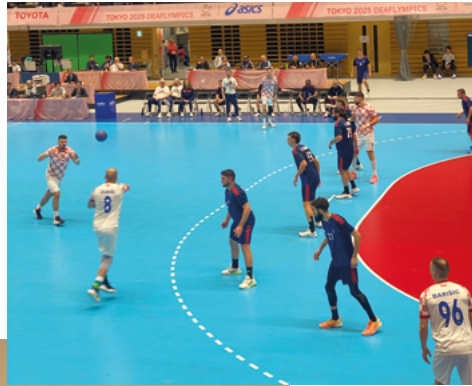




Meeting with Japanese Deaf Federation leaders.



Japan vs Argentina Deaf basketball game.



France vs Croatia Deaf handball match.



Conference with Deaf students at Tsukuba.



Meeting SoftBank team on sign AI.



AI avatar translating interview into sign language.

JAPAN HIGHLIGHTS



# Bridging the Deaf and Hearing Worlds through Inclusive Technology

Spokhand, a US-based nonprofit, is working to close one of the world's most persistent accessibility gaps: communication between Deaf signers and the hearing majority. With more than 70 million Deaf signers worldwide, the organization sees a pressing need to make emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, truly accessible in sign languages.

At the heart of Spokhand's work is a clear insight: the main barrier to automatic sign language translation is not the sophistication of algorithms, but the scarcity and fragmentation of high-quality sign language data. Spokhand is therefore building what it describes as the world's largest Deaf-led sign language database, designed as a shared infrastructure for researchers, developers, educators and institutions. "We are not just building an app, we are building the data foundation that others can use to create tomorrow's tools," explains Florian Méloux, Chief Communications and Business Officer.

showcase how this vision can translate into real-world impact. With ARCHIMED's logistical and financial support, the team traveled to Japan and produced fully accessible interviews with Deaf athletes, combining sign language, International Sign and subtitles to ensure "360-degree accessibility" for both Deaf and hearing audiences.

Spokhand's short-form video interviews with Japanese, French and American athletes reached around 40,000 to 50,000 views each, demonstrating strong engagement. A distinctive feature of these videos was the use of an International Sign avatar, a visual ambassador designed to make content understandable across national sign languages and to reach a truly global audience. This innovative format positioned the Deaflympics not just as a sporting event, but as a live laboratory for inclusive digital communication.

Beyond content production, the Deaflympics served as a strategic accelerator for Spokhand's development roadmap. Over three weeks, the team held 30 to 40 meetings with universities, major technology and media companies such as Google, NHK, and SoftBank, as well as startups and organizations from the Deaf ecosystem, with particularly strong interest around Japanese Sign Language data. "My time in Japan was highly productive, with many opportunities to connect with ARCHIMED team members. I am deeply grateful for their logistical support and for generously opening their Tokyo office as a base for meetings and relationship-building. I hope to continue touching lives through Spokhand and to foster greater awareness and integration of the Deaf community," Méloux concludes.

Méloux first heard about ARCHIMED in 2024, through an academic relationship he held with Antoine Farguer, ARCHIMED's Partner. "The synergies were obvious," Méloux notes. "We were impressed by ARCHIMED's mission, network and global reach. It also aligned with our ambition to expand in Japan, where the deaf face significant communication hurdles and societal challenges."

During the Deaflympics in Tokyo, Spokhand partnered with the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD), the equivalent of the IOC for Deaf sports, to