Special Interest Group on Translation and Interpreting for Public Services

FINAL REPORT

DG INTERPRETATION

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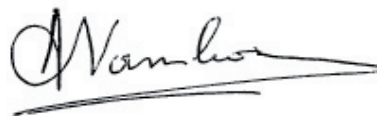
FINAL REPORT

Contents

Foreword

A European Union of 27 Member States could not function without translators and interpreters. Language is the lifeblood of our politics and public life. It is through language that we express our values and ambitions; by speaking another's language we search for understanding and cooperation.

When several hundred languages are spoken across Europe, as is the case today, this question takes on a new dimension. The large movements of people into and across Europe in recent decades mean that our linguistic diversity is greater than ever before. Translation and interpreting have become an essential part of public life, not only in our international organisations, parliaments and conference centres but also in our town halls, court rooms, hospitals and other venues where people have access to public services.

It is here, in the civic realm, that translation and interpreting also become a basic human right that every individual should enjoy. We cannot be confident of justice and equal treatment unless we are sure that every party to a criminal investigation or a trial fully understands and participates in the proceedings. The same concern applies to numerous areas of public life in a multicultural society. This is why the EU and its Member States must put in place Europe-wide rules that guarantee the right to translation and interpreting where they are essential conditions of fair and equal treatment.

I am proud that the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly supports linguistic diversity, and prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of language. The European Commission funds organisations and projects that promote language-learning and training across Europe, and we directly support the academic and professional disciplines of translation and interpreting, helping to further knowledge and raise standards. Our work responds to some of the recommendations in this valuable report.

I thank the Special Interest Group on Translation and Interpreting for Public Services for the important work it has done. This report offers a clear analysis of where we are today, and what needs to happen now; its recommendations deserve the full attention of all stakeholders. I can assure you that the European Commission will do all it can to support your efforts.

Androulla Vassiliou
Member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

Introduction

The Special Interest Group on Translation and Interpreting for Public Services was set up in 2010 by the Conseil Européen pour les Langues / European Language Council with the task to produce a report analysing the situation of translation and interpreting for public services in Europe, identifying problems to be tackled and putting forward recommendations to stakeholders as to how to address what is, without any doubt, a burning issue in Europe.

This report follows and builds on two previous reports: the Final Report of the High Level Group on Multilingualism[1] and the Final Report of the Reflection Forum on Multilingualism and Interpreter Training.[2] The former gives a comprehensive picture of the different aspects and implications of multilingualism and multilingual societies, i.e. the reality making translation and interpreting for public services in Europe a need to be met; the latter is devoted to legal interpreting, i.e. an activity closely related to translation and interpreting for public services. Both provided information and inspiration.

Point III.6 of the Commission's Communication A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism reads as follows: "Interpreters also help the institutions of multilingual societies to function. They support immigrant communities in courts, hospitals, police and immigration services. Properly trained, interpreters thus contribute to safeguarding human and democratic rights".[3]

As noted by Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, the same is true for translators: "in the multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual Europe of tomorrow, translation will play a fundamental role in ensuring peace and prosperity".[4]

However, appropriate conditions should be created for public service translators and interpreters to be able to play their crucial role.

All stakeholders should be made aware that translation is not just about instruction manuals, patents, software or literature; interpreting is not just about supranational organisations, international relations or scientific conferences. When required in public service settings, translation and interpreting are about people and, to the extent to which they may have an impact on people's lives, they are not just a matter of communication. They are, clearly and more importantly, a matter of rights – natural rights, human rights; rights to be promoted, defended and guaranteed.

"A Citizens' Europe – a Europe for and by the people – can only be built successfully if we ensure that people can exercise their rights, in full knowledge of what those rights are and how they benefit them".[5] Translation and interpreting are crucial for people to be able to exercise their rights in a fully democratic Europe. Providing them is not a choice but a necessity.

This report is addressed to supranational, national and local authorities, public service providers, higher education institutions, translators and interpreters, all of whom can help our societies to function while fostering the full enjoyment of rights by everyone, European citizens or not.

1. High Level Group on Multilingualism: Final Report. 2007. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/multireport_en.pdf
2. Reflection Forum on Multilingualism and Interpreter Training: Final Report. 2009. http://www.eulita.eu/sites/default/files/Reflection%20Forum%20Final%20Report.pdf
3. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism. 2005. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0596:FIN:EN:PDF
4. "Young talents for an ancient art", speech given by Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou at the Juvenes Translatores Award Ceremony, Brussels, 25 March 2010. http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/10/131&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en
5. Making citizens' rights a tangible reality", speech given by Commissioner Viviane Reding in Antwerp on 25 October 2010. http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/10/604

I. Multilingual and multinational Europe

Europe has grown increasingly multilingual and multinational. The enlargement of the European Union has led to considerable internal mobility across the member states whereas economic, political or family factors have fuelled a constant flow into the European Union of migrants and asylum-seekers coming from non-EU and non- European countries. What were historically emigration countries have become immigration countries. Demographic factors such as the ageing population or declining birth rates in Europe, on the one hand, and the persistence of poverty and political instability in many parts of the world, on the other, seem to suggest that the trend is going to continue. While international migration streams are by definition volatile, they are likely to remain a constant phenomenon in European societies.

1. Languages and nationalities

Official figures are very significant. On 1 January 2010, the number of non-nationals (people who are not citizens of their countries of residence) living in the 27 member states of the European Union was approximately 32.4 million or 6.4% of the total population, and in Spain, on the same date, the percentage of non-nationals was 12.3%;[6] in Prague, in March 2010, foreign residents accounted for 11.8% of the population;[7] foreigners resident in Finland in 2009 represented 172 nationalities;[8] some 750,000 people from over 200 countries migrated to Ireland over the period 2000-2007 etc.[9] As is obvious, if illegal migrants were considered, numbers would be greater.

In terms of languages, Europe is even more diverse. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages promotes and protects some 70 languages, but these are languages "traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State" and do not include "the languages of migrants" (art.1).[10] It should be noted here that languages change their status depending on where they are spoken and, for the purpose of the Charter, in any EU member state even EU official languages may be migrant languages. For example, a language such as Italian enjoys the status of official language in the institutions of the European Union, in Italy, San Marino and Switzerland, is a minority/regional language in Croatia and Slovenia, and is a migrant language wherever else Italian migrants live.

If migrant languages are considered, the extraordinary richness and diversity of the European language landscape clearly emerge. For example, a study covering 22 countries carried out in 2006 by the VALEUR programme identified no fewer that 438 languages, of which 288 were in use in the UK.[11] The situation is in constant flux, though. As a result of increasing mobility in Europe and constant migration, the number of speakers of migrant languages is steadily growing as probably is the very number of languages spoken in Europe. In February 2011, for example, officers of the Metropolitan Police gave a figure of 340 for London alone.[12]

> **Several hundred languages are spoken in Europe by hundreds of language groups and language communities**

6.   Source: Eurostat. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/

7.   Source: The Prague Post, 21 April 2010. http://www.praguepost.com/news/4214-foreign-resident-numbers-stable.html

8.   Source: Tilastokeskus. http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2009/01/vaerak_2009_01_2010-09-30_kat_001_en.html

9.   Source: National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, Advocacy Paper Number 5, Interpreting, Translation and Public Bodies in Ireland: The Need for Policy and Training. 2007. http://www.nccri.ie/advocacy.html

10. European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/148.htm

11. VALEUR – Valuing All Languages in Europe (2nd Medium-term programme, 2004-2007) was a programme carried out under the auspices of the European Centre for Modern Languages, a Council of Europe body based in Graz. www.ecml.at/mtp2/valeur

12. Clement A. and Brooker M. (2011): "Remote interpreting in the London Metropolitan Police". http://www.videoconference-interpreting.net/files/AVIDICUS_symposium_abstracts.pdf

2. The need for translation and interpreting

When they do not have an adequate knowledge of the local language(s), as is most often the case at the outset, internally mobile people, migrants and asylum-seekers need language assistance in order to be able to interact with public services: immigration authorities, the police, local authorities, education authorities, healthcare personnel, social security officials etc. Until they have acquired sufficient command of the local language(s), therefore, their communication needs can only be met through translation and interpreting. This is particularly obvious for asylum-seekers for whom translation and interpreting are needed on their arrival if only to verify their status and their entitlement to asylum.

On the other hand, translation and interpreting are often needed even just to enable public service providers to provide their services for the benefit of users with limited or no knowledge of the local language(s).

It should also be noted that resident non-nationals are not the only potential users of translation and interpreting in public service settings. Whoever happens to be abroad may find herself or himself in need of language assistance in order to be able to communicate with a public service provider.

As a result of increased mobility translation and interpreting have become a necessity that cannot be ignored

3. Legal instruments

Most international and European instruments and documents, from the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*[13] to the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*,[14] explicitly prohibit discrimination on the ground of language or recognise rights which, for people who do not know the local language(s) or cannot establish communication by using their own or a vehicular language, can only be enforced through translation and interpreting. Examples in this respect are the right to asylum or, in a medical setting, the right to informed consent.

However, while regional or minority languages and their speakers enjoy protection in accordance with provisions contained in instruments such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, migrant languages are hardly considered in international documents. An exception in this respect is UNESCO's *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights*[15] which in Article 3.2 states that "the collective rights of language groups may include […] the right to receive attention in their own language from government bodies and in socioeconomic relations".[16]

Furthermore, unlike what happens in the legal sphere where language-related rights have been enshrined in international instruments since the 1950 *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*,[17] and most recently in the EU *Directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings*,[18] there appears to be no international legal instrument guaranteeing the right to translation and interpreting when accessing public services.

At national level, the situation changes from country to country. However, while laws or recommendations concerning translation and interpreting for public services in one setting or another are not uncommon, the right to translation and interpreting in all public service settings is generally not enshrined in national legislations.

> **The proliferation of languages and language communities and groups calls for the urgent recognition,**
> **in international legal instruments and national legislations,**
> **of the right to translation and interpreting in public service settings**

13. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml

14. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

15. Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. http://www.unesco.org/most/lnngo11.htm

16. It should be noted that the Declaration makes a distinction between language communities and language groups. The former refer to "any human society established historically in a particular territorial space" (Art. 1.1), whereas examples of the latter are "immigrants, refugees, deported persons and members of diasporas" (Art. 1.5).

17. Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/005.htm

18. Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:280:0001:0001:EN:PDF

II Issues

The main issues to be addressed in the context of translation and interpreting for public services concern the availability and quality of translation and interpreting services and the training of translators and interpreters.

1. Availability

Public service translation and interpreting on a voluntary or ad-hoc basis have always existed. No specific training existed, though, and translation and interpreting for migrants were regarded as a low-status job done by unqualified people. Only in the 1960s, and only in certain parts of Europe, were translation and interpreting for migrants recognised as a service to be provided by professionals.

Now translation and interpreting services for migrants and other people requiring language assistance are unevenly provided throughout Europe as authorities and public service providers respond differently to language needs. In some countries, e.g. the Nordic countries, they have been a statutory right for decades; in other countries they are not compulsory but are often strongly encouraged by the central authorities; in yet other countries services or resources are provided by national or local authorities. When resources are not supplied, volunteer translators and interpreters may be resorted to, often made available by charitable organisations, NGOs etc. In some countries the provision of translation and interpreting for public services is centralised, in others it is decentralised or is run to some extent by private agencies.

Irrespective of the way in which they are organised, though, translation and interpreting in public service settings are only too often unavailable or inadequate.

> An area of concern in relation to all bodies handling enquiries and complaints from the public, is the failure to adequately address language issues. Where someone requires the services of an interpreter or translator, it is common for family or friends to interpret and providing professional, qualified interpreters is not yet standard practice for service providers. This can happen in various settings and includes many areas of Government service provision.[19]

This situation is not exclusive to any particular country. The reports issued by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance covering the various European countries confirm that availability of services is, to varying degrees, a common problem in Europe, in particular for less widely spoken languages.[20] Examples of good practice do exist, but in most European countries people approaching a public service provider may never be certain to receive language assistance of professional quality or to find relevant translated material in their own language.

19. National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism [Ireland]: Submission to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. 2006. http://www.nccri.ie/submissions/06JuneRacismEC.pdf

20. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Country Monitoring Work. http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/countrybycountry_en.asp

Several reasons may be given to explain such a state of affairs: lack of appropriate legislation, lack of political will, lack of awareness on the part of some public service providers, lack of resources, lack of competent translators and interpreters for the language combinations required. When translation and interpreting are provided, if at all, by untrained people or family members, even children, or through vehicular languages, communication may be seriously impaired or even impossible. The effects are potentially devastating for the health, the personal freedom, even the life of the people involved.

Unavailable or inadequate translation and interpreting services may have very serious repercussions

In addressing the availability issue, an important role is already being played by new technologies. Videoconference interpreting and remote interpreting are increasingly used in legal and public service settings.[21] Besides reducing travel costs, allowing for a more efficient use of resources and, in legal settings, increasing security and speeding up proceedings, they help overcome local shortages of qualified interpreters.

The same is true for telephone interpreting which is also becoming more and more common in public services, including health care settings where it offers advantages such as more patient privacy and, again, easier recruitment of professionals instead of using lay people, relatives etc.[22]

Technology can contribute to increased availability of translation and interpreting services

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21. The two forms of interpreting may be defined as follows: "videoconference interpreting (VCI) is the form of interpreting that is used when the proceedings take place at two different locations (e.g. court and prison) that are video-linked, with the interpreter being situated at either end of the link. Remote interpreting (RI) is the form of interpreting that is used when the proceedings take place at a single location (e.g. a courtroom), with the interpreter working via video link from a remote location (e.g. another courthouse)". Braun S. and Taylor J. (2011): "AVIDICUS results part I: The views of judicial services and legal interpreters on videoconference and remote interpreting – results of two European surveys". http://www.videoconference-interpreting.net/files/AVIDICUS_symposium_abstracts.pdf

22. A successful example of a telephone interpreting service is Ba©bel, the service operating in the Flemish Community of Belgium, which provides interpreting for over forty languages in domains such as health, integration, education, welfare, employment etc. In 2009, it responded to over 18,000 phone calls. http://www.vlaamsetolkentelefoon.be/downloads/category/3.html

2. Quality

Quality in translation and interpreting for public services may be perceived and pursued differently by the parties involved – the service provider, the client, government or local authorities and the translator or interpreter. However, if the main criterion is the satisfaction of communication needs enabling rights to be fully enjoyed, it is clear that it often remains unmet. Quality is therefore an issue to be seriously and urgently addressed.

Several factors are conducive to quality and should therefore be given careful consideration. One such factor is professionalisation. Poor quality is often due to the fact that translation and interpreting in public service settings are performed by non-professional translators and interpreters. Furthermore, the profession of public service translators and interpreters is often not recognised as such. Professionalisation, starting with a clear identification by practitioners of their role and functions, and leading to the creation of professional associations, would no doubt improve the current situation. It should be noted, though, that owing to fluctuations in demand, in particular for less widely used languages, translation and interpreting might turn out to be insufficiently remunerative and therefore not viable as a full-time professional occupation. An increase in public service translation and interpreting fees to levels comparable to those applied in other fields would help tackle the problem while at the same time contributing to making the profession more attractive and respected.

Professionalisation and adequate remuneration will undoubtedly improve the quality of translation and interpreting services

Education, training and qualifications are prerequisites to quality. However, appropriate training and qualifications are not always available and, of necessity, translation and interpreting are often provided by people who are not properly trained or qualified. Furthermore, public service providers might prefer hiring unqualified translators and interpreters in order to spend less. The issue may be addressed by promoting systems of national accreditation of translators and interpreters, as are found for example in Sweden or Denmark, and/or through the creation of national registers, as was done for interpreters in the UK, with guidelines for public service providers recommending the use of accredited and/or registered translators and interpreters as a means to enhance the quality of translation/interpreting and, as a result, the quality of the service itself.

When agencies are involved, they might also be inclined to avail themselves of unqualified or low-qualified translators and interpreters in order to stay on the market by competing on rates rather than quality. A system of official recognition/authorisation of agencies to be granted exclusively to those employing properly trained and qualified translators and interpreters would be a possible solution to the problem.

Standards need to be introduced for translators and interpreters and for agencies working with public service providers

Quality may also be improved by raising the service providers' awareness of the nature and function of translation and interpreting in public service settings. Cooperation between service providers and translators/interpreters should be actively pursued: a common understanding of the other's role, goals, expectations and constraints is a precondition for a quality service. Information about how best to use the translators' and interpreters' expertise could become an integral part of the training of social workers, police officers, healthcare personnel etc. Joint training sessions of translators, interpreters and public service providers could also be envisaged as part of the regular training.

Greater cooperation and mutual understanding between translators/interpreters and service providers will improve quality

In many countries there is a fuzzy distinction between the role of translators and interpreters and the roles played by figures such as bilingual workers, advocates, cultural mediators etc. The issue may be addressed by developing appropriate codes of ethics and professional practice which will also cover issues such as impartiality and confidentiality. Codes in use in other countries or in other fields may serve as an example.

Working conditions should also be improved, in particular for interpreters. Unlike interpreters working in conference settings, public service interpreters generally work in isolation. They may work for hours without any colleague helping them or taking turns with them. The negative impact on quality is obvious.

Special attention should be paid to working conditions when interpreting is provided via video links or over the telephone or videophone, in particular for aspects and features potentially affecting the communication dynamics (quality of sound and image, visibility of participants etc.).

Technology is bound to have an increasingly significant role and is to be seen as a resource. Key to a quality-oriented use of new technologies will be the training of interpreters and service providers and the full awareness of how best to take advantage of the available equipment in the different communicative settings as well as the development of standards.

Better working conditions and full awareness of the technical and communication needs to be met in any given setting will contribute to better interpreting services

As regards translation for public services, in particular for less widely used languages and language combinations, the use of new technologies does not appear to be playing a significant role. Resources such as translation memories or multilingual data banks, for example, are often unavailable. This reflects negatively on quality.

Quality will improve if appropriate translation tools are developed and made available to translators

3. Training

Although training is crucially important, it remains a problem area in translation and interpreting for public services. This may be one of the reasons why, with the exception of a few countries, professionalisation is still a goal to be achieved.

Most immigration countries are not yet fully aware of needs and realities brought about by massive flows of people arriving from other cultures and speaking other languages, and are still in the process of crafting responses to the new challenges. Translation and interpreting for public services do not seem to attract much attention in society at large, government institutions or academia and this is often reflected in training.

As a result of the limited availability of training programmes, on the one hand, and of the lack of information and awareness on the part of public service providers, on the other, accompanied by the widespread belief that to serve as translators or interpreters even low levels of language proficiency are enough, translation and interpreting are often provided by people who have not acquired the needed skills.

> **Multilingual and intercultural communication needs properly trained and qualified translators and interpreters**

Significant steps forward have been made, though, and training opportunities as well as research have steadily increased over the past few years. In terms of both availability and quality, however, training needs are still far from being met.

The spectrum of training programmes offered in the different European countries ranges from non-existent to fully institutionalised, the latter being obviously the exception. Courses and programmes are offered not only by universities, but also by continuing education institutions or organisations outside the university system. Training concepts are rather diverse, though, and many different approaches are being used.

As regards universities, for reasons related to lack of awareness of the competences needed in public service settings and/or lack of resources, they do not often have full-scale undergraduate or post-graduate programmes leading to official and internationally accepted BA- or MA-type degrees.

When they are offered, whether inside or outside universities, training programmes are faced with a number of difficulties such as, for instance, the lack of appropriate teaching materials or the diverse levels of language proficiency and the different academic backgrounds of the trainees. Translators and interpreters involved in training often have little or no university education or research experience. Conversely, other trainers may have a significant academic and research profile but no first-hand experience of translation and interpreting in public service settings. The availability of trainers for certain languages or language combinations is also a problem.

As regards research, even in what is by definition a multilingual field, language may be a problem. Research papers in English are not necessarily accessible to practitioners whose competence is often confined to their own language and to the language of their host country, and texts in most other languages are of little use outside national borders.

Developing training programmes based on carefully devised curricula is a necessity in order to address translation and interpreting needs in public service settings. Before actually designing a curriculum, several aspects should be taken into account, such as duration, admission procedure, competences, assessment modality etc.

Translation and interpreting for public services need properly designed training programmes

Duration may vary depending on factors such as institutional or legal constraints (in particular for university programmes), availability of funding and the profile of the trainees. The effectiveness of intensive, ad-hoc courses would have to be assessed.

Procedures put in place to identify candidates suitable for admission may envisage entrance requirements such as previous education (e.g. BA or BA-level competences), language proficiency (to be determined according to the CEFR)[23] and a successful aptitude test or entrance exam. Public service needs in terms of languages and language combinations would suggest that entrance requirements be flexible enough to allow for the admission of candidates with informally acquired skills or competences who might be very suitable trainees but do not comply with formal educational standards (e.g. persons with an immigrant background coming from countries with completely different educational systems or whose qualifications are not recognised) or who might need supplementary work (e.g. to improve their language proficiency).

For competences to be acquired, reference could be made to the set of competences developed for the European Master's in Translation[24] and/or to competences listed in the Final Report of the Reflection Forum on Multilingualism and Interpreter Training or, for medical interpreter training, in the documents produced in the framework of the MedInt programme.[25] They should include at least the following: language competence, intercultural competence, interpersonal skills, interpreting and translation skills, technological competence, information mining competence, professional ethics.

Training may be language-specific or language-independent. The choice will largely depend on availability of trainers, number of trainees and their language proficiency, not to mention the availability of a curriculum for language-independent training. It should be noted, in this respect, that to some extent languages will always be a problem, since most languages used in translation and interpreting for public services are rare and absent from the range of languages generally offered by European universities. The problem may be addressed by resorting to new technologies allowing for the creation of a virtual learning environment. Remote teaching and learning facilities will make training possible irrespective of location or geographical distance between trainers and trainees.

The local unavailability of trainers may be overcome by resorting to remote teaching and learning

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23. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

24. EMT Expert Group: Competences for professional translators, experts in multilingual and multimedia communication. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf

25. Summary Report: Workpackage 6. http://www.uni-graz.at/en/wp6_curriculum_final.pdf

Finally, training-the-trainers initiatives are important. The training of translator and interpreter trainers has so far received little attention both in research and in practice and programmes are currently offered by just a few universities.

In order to improve training quality, training of trainers should become common practice. A standards-based curriculum should therefore be designed and implemented through teaching methods taking into account the most recent research findings. Here again new technologies allowing for remote teaching and learning could be beneficially used to facilitate access.

**Training of trainers is a prerequisite
for successful training of translators and interpreters**
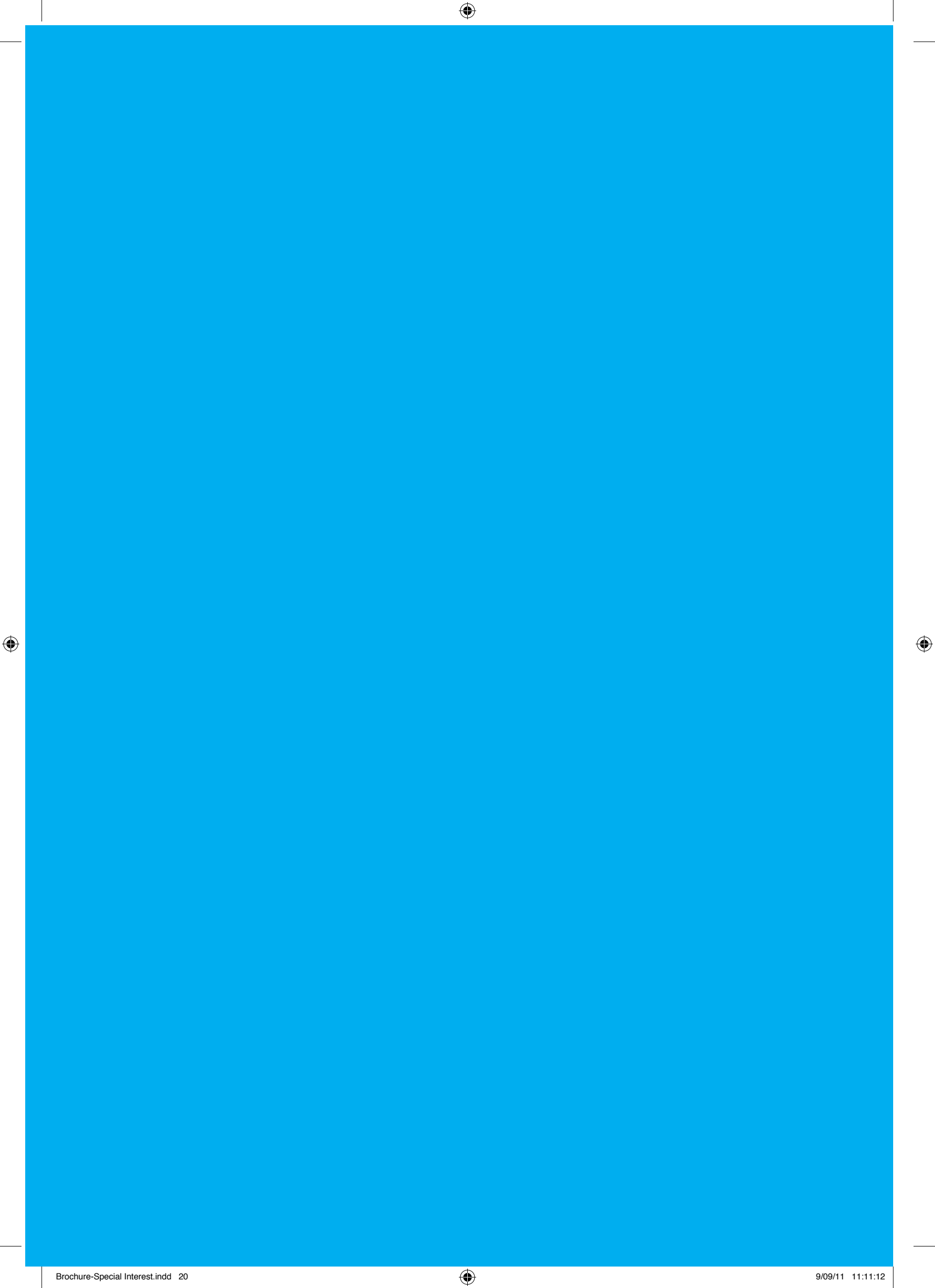
III Recommendations

Whether explicitly stated in legal instruments or not, access to translation and interpreting in public service settings is a natural, human right to be guaranteed. Failure to enforce it may endanger the life and the wellbeing of millions of people while perpetuating a social landscape where everyone is not equal.

The European Union, national and local authorities, public service providers, higher education institutions, translators and interpreters are called upon to play their part and take initiatives to change the current state of affairs.

In particular, the Special Interest Group on Translation and Interpreting for Public Services puts forward the following recommendations.

To the European Union

- a conference should be organised with the aim to raise awareness about the importance and the urgency of addressing issues related to translation and interpreting in public service settings

- the official recognition of the right to translation and interpreting in public service settings should be actively promoted

- projects should be funded for the development of core curricula for training of public service translators and interpreters and for training of trainers

- a EU label should be awarded to training programmes meeting agreed quality standards

- A EU harmonised approach to certification and accreditation should be encouraged

- projects should be funded for the translation of the most significant publications on the theoretical and practical aspects of translation and interpreting for public services

- research on public service translation and interpreting should be promoted and financed

To national and local authorities

- legislation guaranteeing the right to translation and interpreting in public service settings should be promoted

- mechanisms for the accreditation of agencies should be developed

- accreditation systems and registers of qualified translators and interpreters should be created

- the profession should be recognised

- forms of quality control and quality assurance should be put in place

To public service providers

- translation and interpreting services should be made available in all settings
- where appropriate, new technologies should be used to make translation and interpreting services available
- only properly trained and qualified translators and interpreters should be hired
- staff should be trained to work with translators and interpreters
- working conditions, including remuneration, of translators and interpreters should be improved

To higher education institutions

- training programmes based on properly designed curricula should be offered
- the admission procedure should be open to candidates lacking appropriate formal qualifications
- research aiming at developing translation tools, especially for less widely spoken languages, as well as research on videoconference and remote interpreting should be promoted and carried out
- whenever appropriate, remote teaching and learning facilities should be put in place
- programmes for training of trainers should be offered

To translators and interpreters

- professionalisation should be actively pursued
- codes of ethics and professional practice should be developed
- action should be taken to define standards for the use of new technologies

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24

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