

**Video message by Věra Jourová
Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality**

Final Conference, LIT Search project, Antwerp, Belgium, 9/10 November 2015

Mr. Dean Kockaert,
Mrs. Katschinka,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I may not be with you in person today but rest assured that you have my full appreciation for the excellent work you have been doing.

When people are held in custody, understanding what charges are held against them, rightly or wrongly, is a basic right. It is the right to a fair trial.

In some cases, the fact of understanding may also depend on speaking the same mother tongue. As we all know, however, it is not always as straight-forward as it sounds. This is where our EU law on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings takes on full significance. This is also where your project, the database of legal interpreters and translators, plays a vital part.

I am convinced that your database will be a game changer in the way our law is implemented across Europe. Of course, with 24 official languages spoken in our Union, misunderstandings are bound to happen. But language barriers are utterly unacceptable when they hinder the proper delivery of justice to citizens. Thanks to your database, finding a competent translator or interpreter in the EU will be possible wherever translation is required and whatever the case at hand.

I am not thinking about criminal cases only, I am thinking about all types of cases and judicial processes, including police interviews and court hearings.

Along these lines, I also wish to congratulate you for including the Dutch register of sign language interpreters in the database. Very well done. No type of disability should hinder judicial proceedings, either. The register of sign language interpreters addresses this issue most appropriately.

We will need to tackle some additional issues before the database is up and running. The digitization of national registers is one of them. Member States having to agree on qualification criteria for legal interpreters and translators is another. But I firmly believe that nothing can stand in the way of our strong cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen, your project can and will contribute greatly to the Commission's effort for fair access to justice for all European citizens, no matter their country of origin, the charges held against them, or their command of other languages.

I wish you a very fruitful conference today and let me once again reaffirm my full support to your outstanding project.

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