



Improving Police and Legal Interpreting
Funded by the EU Commission

Working conditions in police interpreting

Prof. Dr. Barbara Ahrens

Cologne University of Applied Sciences

barbara.ahrens@fh-koeln.de



Reference to working conditions in **Directive 2010/64/EU**

Article 2 – Right to interpretation

1. Member States shall ensure that suspected or accused persons who do not speak or understand the language of the criminal proceedings concerned are provided, **without delay**, with interpretation during criminal proceedings before investigative and judicial authorities, including during police questioning, all court hearings and any necessary interim hearings.



Reference to working conditions in **Directive 2010/64/EU**

Article 4 – Costs of interpretation and translation

Member States **shall meet the costs of interpretation** and translation resulting from the application of Articles 2 and 3, irrespective of the outcome of the proceedings.



Crucial aspects of working conditions in police interpreting

- remuneration
- working hours and initial organisational matters
- disclosure of personal data
- safety
- welfare

ImPLI



Remuneration

- in all partner countries: paid per hour
- hourly rates tend to be very low
- in some countries: framework agreements with agencies

interdependence between price and quality:

- availability and proximity
- sworn vs. non-sworn interpreters



Working hours and initial organisational matters

- 24/7: at any hour of the day and at short notice
- many hours in a row
- working alone

- identity check
- briefing is often insufficient due to time constraints and mistrust



Disclosure of personal data

highly sensitive topic, especially for free-lance interpreters:

- introduction at beginning of interview
- personal data case-related documents
- personal data in public interpreters' registers/lists

interpreter can easily be identified → safety risks

ImPLI



Safety

not only disclosure of personal data, but also

- physical integrity:
 - being left alone with suspect...
 - seating arrangements
 - weapons
- offences and threats
- ethnic aspects



Welfare

stress management = essential skill for police interpreters

differences between in-house and free-lance interpreters:

- psychological support for members of police bodies
- access to psychological counselling for free-lance interpreters?



Recommendations

- **appropriate remuneration** for highly specialised and professional service
- working hours: **not too long** because quality can suffer
- **briefing as indispensable part of interpreting:**
case, persons involved in interview situation, interviewing strategies, emergency signals, etc.
- personal data should **never be disclosed**
- police's **welfare measures** also open for interpreters