



Improving Police and Legal Interpreting

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- **The Police Interpreter – Role and Role Perceptions**

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## The Interpreter's Role and Directive 2010/64

Directive does not legislate on role or discuss present perception but makes implicit assumptions.

(para 17) “adequate linguistic assistance”

(para 26) “quality of interpretation”

Art. 2.8 “a quality sufficient to safeguard the fairness of the proceedings”

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## Designations of the role within different contexts

For example:

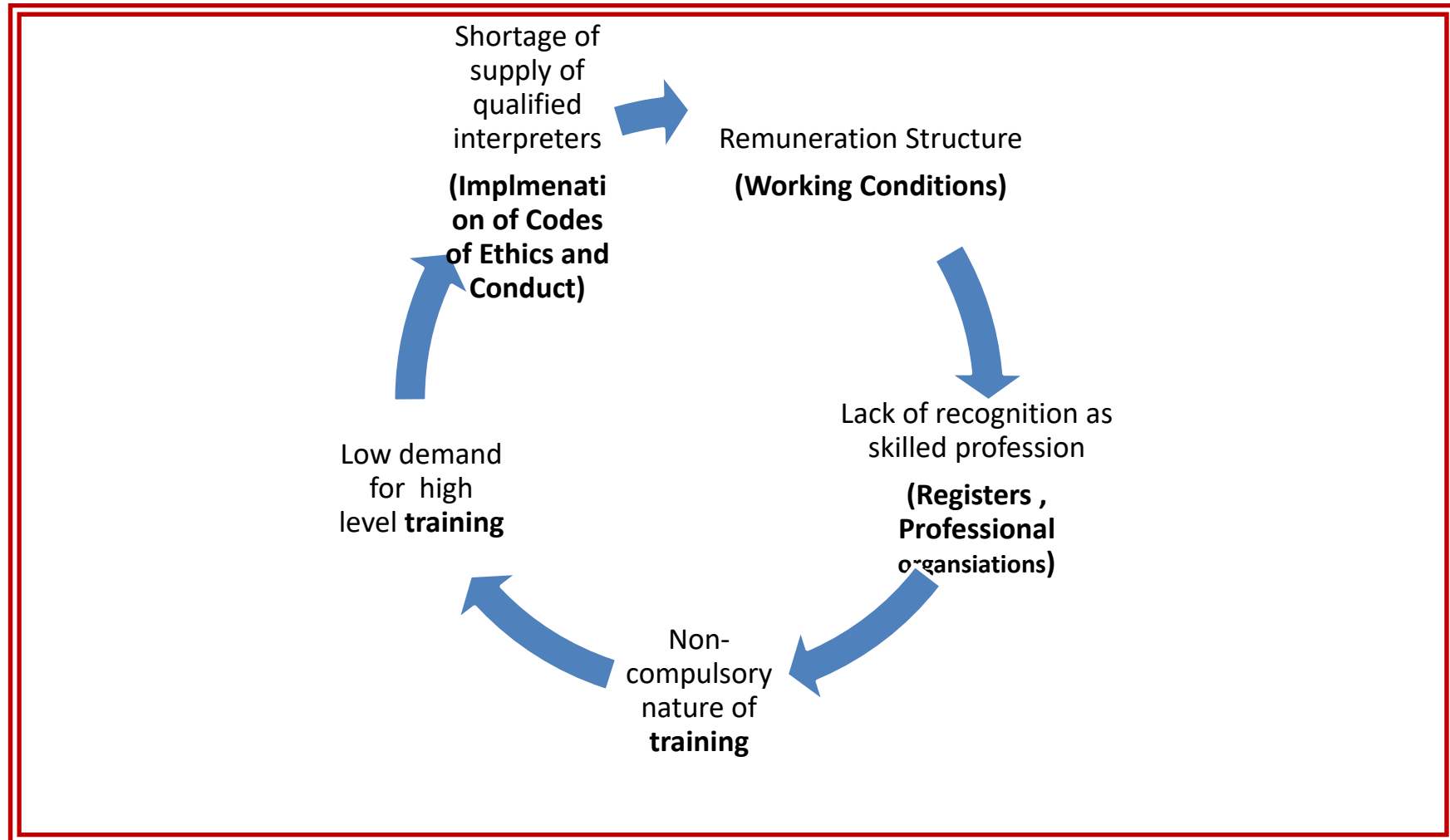
**Germany** – *sworn in* interpreters (can be undertaken on an ad-hoc basis) criteria for inclusion differ in the 16 federal states

**Italy** – designations depend on source of recruitment (*ausiliario, consulente tecnico d'ufficio, funzionari linguistici*)

**France** - use of the term “court experts”. Alternative lists of interpreters are being used by legal authorities.



## External contexts of role professionalisation





Conceptualisation of face to face Interpreting In an institutional context

**VERBATIM**

**ADVOCACY**

**CONDUIT  
VOICE BOX**

**INTERLOCUTOR  
SELF-INITIATED INPUT  
ON BEHALF OF  
SPEAKERS**

invisible

**ACTIVE PARTICIPANT  
Co-Ordinator**

highly  
visible



## Role Perceptions – the institutional user

- interpreter as “translation machine”
- interpreter as supplementary resource
- interpreter can jeopardise confidentiality and neutrality of proceedings due to in-group loyalties
- interpreter represents loss of control (content and interactional dynamics i.e. the flow of the interaction)



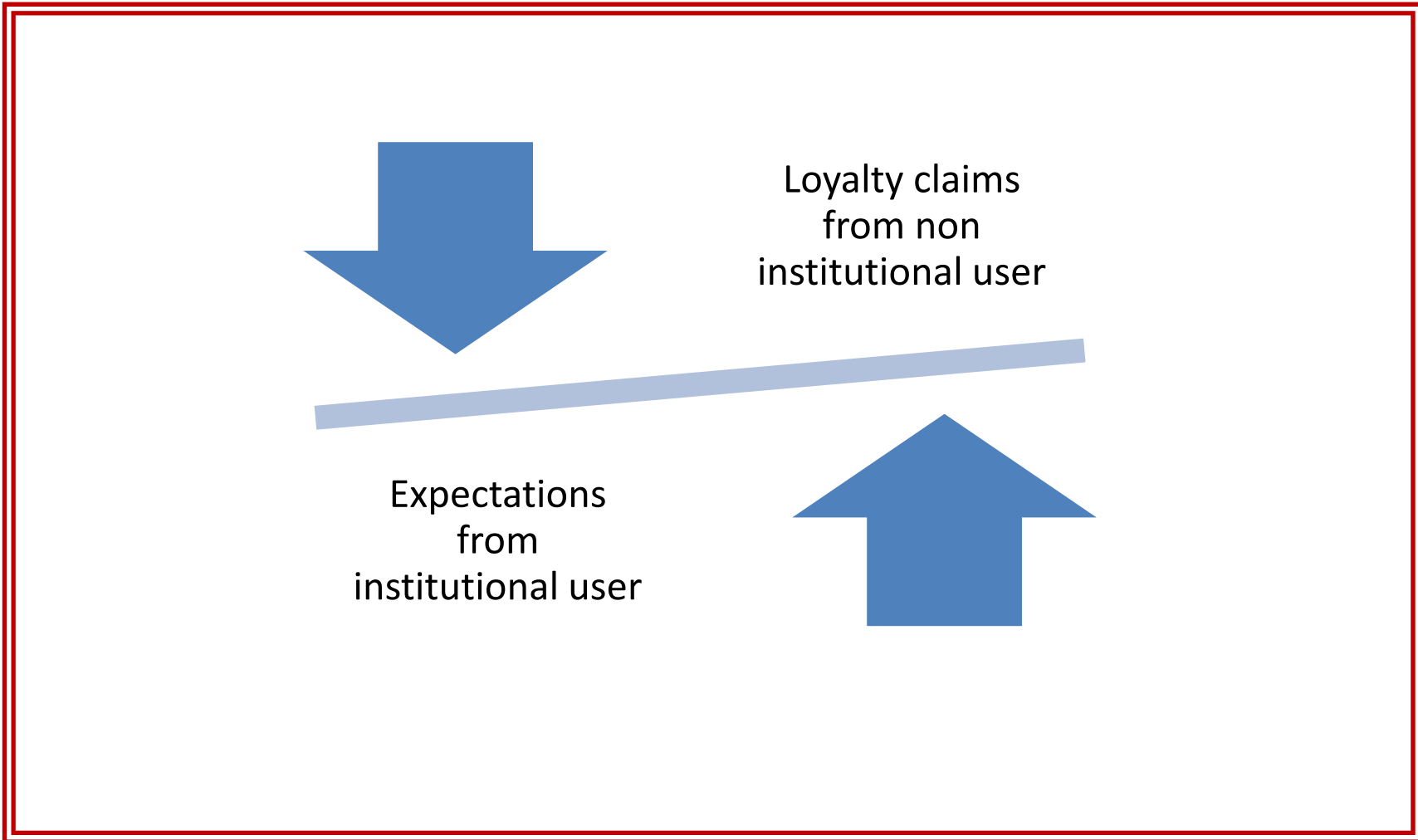
Role perception – the non-institutional user (witness, suspect, victim)

- Claiming loyalty from interpreter of shared culture/ language/background .
- Viewing interpreter as representative of oppressive regime (reflecting situation in their country of origin)
- Culturally bound expectations on appropriateness of linguistic behaviour

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The police interpreter as subject of conflicting role perceptions







## Public Perception of Legal Interpreters

### The Mohelnick Case

**No interpreter...so police asked accused's girlfriend to translate his rights –  
The Herald, 14 February 2009**

...among others...

Concerns over Court translations – BBC news, Highlands and Islands, 28 June 2006

Failure to use qualified interpreters is resulting in justice failures, Trade Union Amicus, 26 September 2006

Unqualified interpreters used by Courts & Fiscals causing miscarriage of justice – Scottish Law Reporter, 25 May 2008

Justice system compromised by unqualified interpreters – The Sunday Herald, 4 March 2009



## Recommendations

Training for Police users of interpreting services on interaction through an interpreter.

Specific and situated training for interpreting in a policing context.

Dialogue between users of interpreters, practitioners and researchers on the degree of latitude afforded within role definitions for police interpreters.



Public awareness of the socially inclusive role and function of legal interpreting should be strengthened.

Role definitions must respond proactively to the demands of new technologies