



Improving Police and Legal Interpreting

Funded by the EU Commission

# Professional status and recruitment of police interpreters

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## Interpreter recruitment in **Directive 2010/64**

Interpreting as a service provision, dealt with under the heading “Quality” (Art. 5)

Categories used:

- **demand and supply**
- **stakeholders** and their specific
  - interests/requirements
  - expectations/perceptions

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## Interpreting **demand** in (pre-trial) investigations

### difficult to assess:

not foreseeable in detail

mostly urgent

24/7 (extended working hours, shift length ...)

### all together: **high**

aliens among suspected offenders, up to 22%

aliens convicted of criminal offences, up to 26%

(European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics 2010, data for 2006)

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## Stakeholders 1 - Service users and their specific interests/requirements

police (wo)man,  
public prosecutor > ascertain the truth, fair trial/procedure

lawyers > their defendant's interest

persons under investigation,  
persons reporting a crime/making statements  
> their own interest

private agencies contracting interpreters on behalf of the former  
> make profit by their activity, keep their clients



## Stakeholders 2 - Service **suppliers** and their specific interests/requirements

### **in-house interpreters**

- > fulfill their job requirements
- > keep their impartial role

### **freelance interpreters**

- > earn their living: satisfy/keep their client
- > access to information

o role in guaranteeing fairness of proceedings

o advantages vs. risks (e.g., accumulation of expertise, ethical aspects)

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## Interpreter profiles available

experienced professionals (few, esp. for languages of lesser diffusion)

persons with a specific degree

persons with a general degree/academic background

cultural mediators

interviewed person's relatives

housewives, students

just anyone

sworn interpreters

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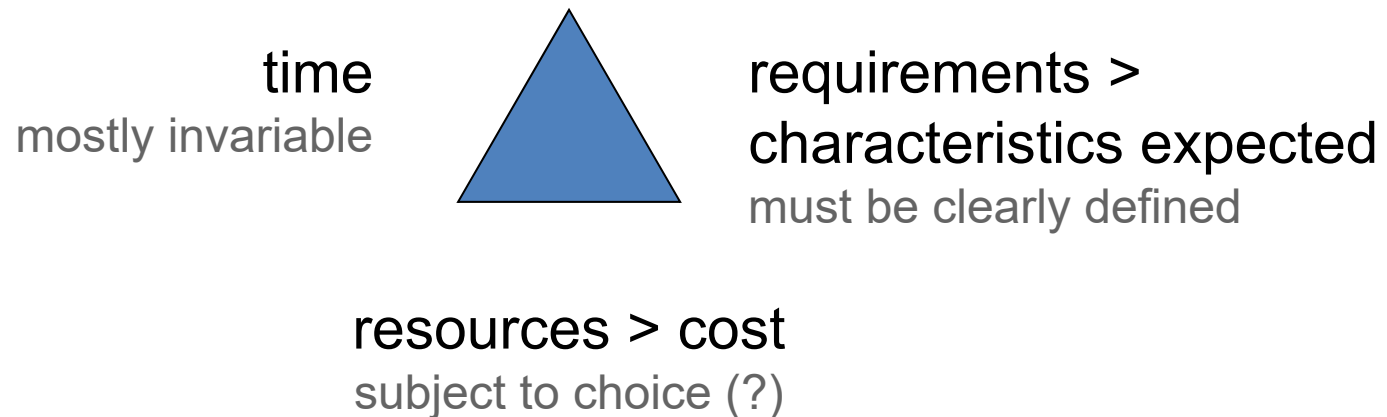
## Who selects freelance interpreters?

- user directly
- designated person/unit within the internal structure  
(assistant, service centre)
- external intermediary (agency)
- existence of internal provisions?



## Quality in interpreter recruitment

Quality of a service:  
the perception of how expectations are met





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The “iron triangle”



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## Resource “Interpreter” - Legal requirements

- in-house: mostly examination
- freelance: membership in a (public) register or list  
(never mandatory; few, mainly diverging prerequisites)



Directive 2010/64/EU provides for registers  
to be set up in all EU Member States



de facto (till now): no general binding requirements  
in case of urgency

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## Specific requirements 1 (situation driven)

- language combination
- (immediate) availability
- gender (e.g., in cases of sexual offence or a specific community)
- origin/knowledge of a specific community/culture



## Specific requirements 2 (experience/research)

- sufficient competence in 2 languages and cultures & intercultural competence (goes without saying?)
- basic & further training in interpreting techniques
- legal background and knowledge of terminology
- knowledge of interviewing techniques
- abidance to a code of ethics
- role awareness > absolute confidentiality, ...
- physical & psychological resistance

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## Specific requirements 3 (users' requests)

verbatim translation ('robot'/'conduit'/'black box' metaphor)

empathic translation ('lend ears, mouth and eyes to the interviewee; convey also what is said between the lines')

give supplementary information, e.g., on cultural specificities ('bring in intercultural knowledge')

help putting persons in difficult circumstances at their ease

...

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## The big challenge: obtaining a service

- granting “adequate linguistic assistance” (recital 17 of the Directive) under the given circumstances
- granting “a quality sufficient to safeguard the fairness of the proceedings” (Art. 2 (8))



## Recommendations for interpreter recruitment

- ❖ Map out requirements precisely and match them with interpreter qualifications, experience and reliability
- ❖ Use EU-wide the same minimum accreditation criteria, including basic and further training in specific interpreting techniques, knowledge of interviewing techniques and legal background, and compliance with a code of ethics
- ❖ Introduce systematic quality monitoring, involving user, professional interpreter organisations and experts in the field of public service interpreting
- ❖ Tap into existing best practices and in-house interpreters' experience where available