
Interpreting services — Legal interpreting — Requirements

*Services d'interprétation — Interprétation juridique et judiciaire —
Exigences*



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2. www.iso.org/directives.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received. www.iso.org/patents.

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword — Supplementary information.

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document was developed in response to a worldwide and growing need to accommodate the interpreting needs of persons deprived of liberty, suspects, accused, defendants, plaintiffs, claimants, complainants, witnesses, victims, parties in different legal settings during spoken and signed communication as well as judicial stakeholders such as judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers, court administrative staff, notaries as well as private persons requiring interpreting services during communicative events related to the law.

The right to legal interpreting services has been enshrined in several international documents (see [Annex A](#)). Legal interpreting needs to be of a sufficiently high quality to ensure equal access to justice to all persons as well as fair trials.

Legal interpreting has become established as interpreting services provided by professional interpreters. There are various codes and standards (protocols) for specific settings (e.g. for the police or in court) but they vary from country to country, and there are no universally agreed rules or standards for the provision of legal interpreting services.

NOTE For the purposes of this document, a professional legal interpreter is an individual that meets the requirements of [Clause 5](#).

Legal interpreting is distinct from legal translation and involves the communication of spoken or signed messages in real time.

Standards of legal interpreting training and practice vary widely, and are subject to change with remarkable fluidity. In practice, current trends in several countries go in the direction of de-professionalism due to shortage of financial means, absence of specialized training and lack of awareness of the risks of using non-professional legal interpreters.

Interpreting services — Legal interpreting — Requirements

1 Scope

This document establishes the basic principles and practices of legal interpreting services, and specifies the competences of legal interpreters. It also describes the various legal settings and provides recommendations for the corresponding interpreting modes.

It is applicable to all parties involved in facilitating communication between users of legal services using a spoken or signed language.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 20108, *Simultaneous interpreting — Quality and transmission of sound and image input — Requirements*

ISO 20109, *Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1 Terms related to interpreting — Modes of interpreting and persons involved

3.1.1

interpret

render spoken or signed information from a *source language* (3.2.5) to a *target language* (3.2.7) in spoken or signed form, conveying both the register and meaning of the *source language content* (3.2.6)

[SOURCE: ISO 18841:2018, 3.1.1, modified - “in oral or signed form” is replaced with “in spoken or signed form”.]

3.1.2

interpreting interpretation

rendering of spoken or signed information from a *source language* (3.2.5) to a *target language* (3.2.7) in spoken or signed form, conveying both the register and meaning of the *source language content* (3.2.6)

[SOURCE: ISO 18841:2018, 3.1.2, modified - “in oral or signed form” is replaced with “in spoken or signed form”.]