EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERPRETATION

RESOURCES AND CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE
Corporate Meeting Room Management and Technical Compliance

SLI (Sign Language Interpreting) Technical Specifications

1. General

Sign language (SL) interpreters work in meetings as a team. When both spoken and sign language interpreting are provided, they work in a single team with spoken language interpreters.

Sign language must be listed as one of the languages in which interpreting is provided; conference technicians must be aware of the SL interpreters' needs. SL Interpreters should always be provided with meeting documents the same as for interpreters working in booths.

2. Positioning

SL interpreters work in the meeting or conference room itself, close to the speakers, ideally next to them. They must be placed so that both deaf participants and the speakers can see them. The interpreters work in pairs/groups. There must be sufficient space for the teams to work together and they must be able to see each other. The active interpreter needs a space of approximately 1.5 x 1.5 metres minimum (2.0 x 2.0 maximum). The supporting interpreter is seated approx. 1 – 3 metres in front of the active interpreter.

SL interpreters must not obstruct access to the stage or speakers' podium if they are placed next to it. The SL interpreters should also have a table for documents and water, and ergonomic chairs for when they are not interpreting.

3. Lighting

There must only be direct frontal light on the interpreters. A dedicated spotlight is nearly always required.

Light coming from the side causes shadows on the SL interpreter's face, which needs to be fully lit so that the interpreters can be understood.

There must be no bright light behind the SL interpreters as it could blind the viewers.

The light on the SL interpreters (preferably cool beam) must always remain switched on, even if the room lighting is dimmed or switched off (e.g. for a presentation or a video projection) so that the SL interpreters can be seen and possibly filmed. The light should not be too close to the SL interpreters, to avoid causing them discomfort.

4. Backdrop

The backdrop must be of a solid colour and not white, preferably a dark grey or dark blue, so that SL interpreters can be seen clearly.

5. Audio equipment

SL interpreters interpret from spoken language(s) into sign language(s) and thus may need to take relay from spoken language interpreters. When working from sign language(s) into a spoken language, they provide relay for their colleagues.

SL interpreters shall be provided with wireless headphones, of the same type as those used by spoken language interpreters, connected to a channel selector (ideally with a radio (FM) connection, **not an infra-red (IR) connection**) so that they can hear the speaker or spoken language interpreters. IR connected headphones should be avoided because signing movements can disrupt the IR signal. If in exceptional cases, a wired headphone needs to be used, then the cable connecting to the headphone needs to be extra-long to allow the interpreter to work correctly.

They shall also be provided with a microphone (ideally wireless) to be heard when working into a spoken language.

Headphones may be replaced by a properly installed loudspeaker in meetings where only one spoken language is used.
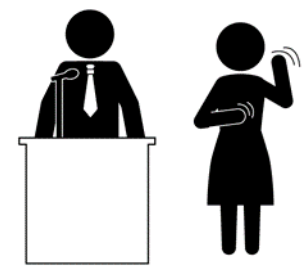
6. Video equipment

SL interpreters are facing the audience and cannot see the presentations on the main screen. A separate video display must therefore be placed in front of the interpreters so that they do not have to turn around, which could be distracting for deaf participants.

If SL interpreters are filmed to be projected, recorded or web streamed, the camera must be straight in front of the interpreters and not at their side, but without blocking the direct line of sight for deaf participants.

The camera shot must be a medium shot (MS) and immediately adjusted when interpreters change.

Videos projected during the meeting or conference must be subtitled.