EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERPRETATION

RESOURCES AND CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE
Audiovisual Solutions and Sound Quality

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.

SL must be listed as one of the active 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 spoken language 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 them 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 metres maximum). The supporting interpreter(s) is/are 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. SL interpreters should also have a table for documents and water, and ergonomic chairs for when they are not interpreting.

3. Lighting

Key, Fill and Backlight shall be provided to illuminate the SL interpreters and/or backdrop with adjustable colour temperature 3200-9200K and adjustable brightness, and with barndoors and height adjustable stands. Light coming from the side causes shadows on the SL interpreters' faces, which need to be fully lit so that the SL interpreters can be understood.

The lights should not be too close to the SL interpreters, to avoid causing them discomfort. The backlight shall not be too bright as it could blind the viewers.

The lights on the SL interpreters 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.

4. Backdrop

The backdrop (2.0 x 2.0 metres minimum) 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 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 must be avoided because signing movements can disrupt the IR signal. If in exceptional cases, wired headphones need to be used, then the cable needs to be extra-long to allow the interpreters 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 speaker or presentation on the main screen. They must not be forced to turn around, which could be distracting for deaf participants. Therefore, they should be provided with 3 HD displays of at least 32" to show the active speaker, the presentation and a self-view on stand(s). The displays' upper edge shall be at 1 m above the SL interpreters' floor or platform level. The displays may be joined on a single horizontal bar.

In order to be projected, recorded or web streamed, a camera must be installed 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.
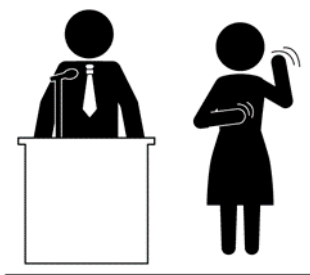
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