

How to Work with Sign Language Interpreters

The European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efсли) is proposing the following recommendations when working with sign language interpreters:

Provision

1. Communication accessibility should always be provided. Depending on people's communication needs, sign language interpreters might need to be provided.
2. Qualified, trained and professional interpreters should be hired.
3. Each country has their own national sign language, or more than one. Interpreters' linguistic competences and professionalism should match with the combinations of working languages as needed.
4. Depending on the situation, one or more interpreters, co-working in teams, might be needed to provide the required interpretation services. Some examples:

1. The assignment is in an international setting, or there are more than two spoken or signed languages used in the setting.
2. The duration of the event is two or more hours.
3. At conferences or large events.
4. A deaf person has a leading responsibility during the event, e.g. president, presenter.
5. The content is highly technical or at high academic level.
6. Participants have different communication needs (e.g. people with deafblindness).
7. Highly interactive settings.

Interpreters need regular breaks during the event, comfortable working positions, water supply. Meals and coffee should be preferably served in a separate room from participants.

Preparation

1. Interpreters will be able to deliver a higher quality service when they receive preparation materials and full information prior to the event - this will benefit all participants.
2. If the event programme includes artistic performances (e.g. songs, theatre play), please make sure you provide interpreters with texts and scripts beforehand to allow sufficient preparation time.
3. Also provide interpreters with a contact person that they can rely on for all their questions related to their interpreting services.

During the event

1. Sign language interpreters need to be well visible. This means that there should be indirect clear lighting on the interpreter, especially on his/her face and hands. There should be no source of light behind the interpreter, e.g. a window. In addition there should be no visual barriers in between interpreters and deaf participants.
2. In most situations the placement of the interpreter is next to the presenter, speaker or chairperson. Please check with interpreters and presenters different placements according to their respective needs.
3. Comfortable arrangements need to be provided for to interpreters.
4. The responsibility of interpreters is to interpret between the different working languages they are requested for. Interpreters are not responsible for any other task.
5. Interpreters might interrupt the speaker for clarifications or if the speaker is inaudible.