Remote Simultaneous Interpreting (RSI) – Recommendations

Chambre Belge des Traducteurs et Interprètes

Belgische Kamer van Vertalers en Tolken

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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRANSLATORS

As a result of social distancing measures and the cancellation of physical meetings, part of the interpreting market has shifted to remote interpreting. In such cases, the interpreters work in remote interpreting centers (called hubs) or, if they have no other possibility, from home via online interpreting platforms. These new practices have special consequences for our profession.

In this context, the Belgian Chamber of Translators and Interpreters has decided to create several documents to help interpreters **and** clients to address the new challenges involved.

You will find these documents in Dutch and in French here: https://www.cbti-bkvt.org/fr/publications/isd.

- RSI Manual
- RSI Platforms Comparison
- Post-Covid19 Safety Recommendations for T&I

To make your life easier, we have also summarized below, in English, the main recommendations related to businesses which are likely to need remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) services.

1. GETTING TO KNOW THE TOOL:

Ensure that the interpreters get enough training to become familiar with the online interpreting platforms used.

2. TECHNOLOGY:

Ensure the technical quality of the equipment (acoustic shock prevention, sufficient audio-visual quality) and software used (interpreter/teammate/moderator/technician interactions, possibility of relaying, handover of microphone, possibility of balancing two sound sources, etc.)

3. ASSISTANCE:

Interpreters are trained to interpret; they are neither sound engineers nor technicians. Make sure that technical support is available.

4. WORKLOAD:

The cognitive workload and fatigue occasioned by remote interpreting are markedly higher than for in-person interpreting. This has been documented. Breaks must be scheduled so that the interpreter's level of concentration remains optimal, despite poorer working conditions. The cognitive workload is likewise increased by the fact that the interpreter has to learn to work with a growing number of interpreting platforms and must do additional tasks while interpreting.

5. QUALITY:

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The audio-visual source is the interpreter's raw material and will determine the quality of the rending. The participants must therefore be briefed and equipped accordingly: The camera must focus on the speaker, professional-quality headset with microphone must be used by all speakers, speeches and communications must be made in a closed room without background noise, and so on.

In addition, just as for physical meetings, the interpreter must have access to documents ahead of time in order to be able to prepare for the meeting properly.

6. RECORDING:

Recording the interpreter's work in RSI is technically easy. If this is necessary, the interpreter must give prior written consent. Broadcasting the interpreter's work outside the direct context of the meeting (for example, streaming it) gives rise to intellectual property rights.

7. LIABILITY:

Liability in the case of interruption of the RSI service (a) if the interpreter deems the quality of the input to be insufficient or (b) in the event of a technical problem in the communication chain must be apportioned ahead of time.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY:

Be mindful of the fact that RSI involves the transmission of content via a series of technical links – online platform, the Internet, the cloud, etc. – that offer variable guarantees of confidentiality over which the interpreter has no control.

9. INTERPRETING AT A HUB DURING A PANDEMIC:
   a. Disinfect the booths and consoles before and after each assignment.
   b. Ventilate the booths correctly.
   c. Place two individual booths side by side with a side window between them or, if this is not possible, separate the two interpreting stations by means of a transparent partition.
   d. Provide hand sanitizer for use each time a person enters/leaves a booth.

10. RSI AT HOME

Check that the interpreters have the requisite equipment (professional headsets with microphones, broadband Internet, an Ethernet connection) and are familiar with the online platform used. Do a general test of connections, microphone handover, and use of the relay half an hour before the meeting starts.

11. BILLING RATES

Contractual freedom notwithstanding, avoid invoicing by the hour or minute. The probability of the interpreter's being able to carry out several assignments the same day is extremely low.

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The interpreter must prepare for the meeting and be ready to go at least half an hour before it is scheduled to start; then meetings may sometimes run late and an interpreter needs more than an hour to rest and recover after a meeting before preparing for another assignment.