



Action: Developing an EU WEB portal for Webcam Public Service Interpreting to improve access to basic services for non-EU nationals — EU-WEBPSI

D 2.8: Comprehensive research report that brings together the key findings of 2.1, 2.2. and 2.3

## EU-WEBPSI: Baseline study and needs analysis for PSI, VMI and LLDI

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## Introduction of the report

### *Background and context*

In the past decade, Europe has experienced a significant increase in the number of applicants for international protection. In 2015, the number of asylum applications in the 28 EU member states, Norway and Switzerland reached 1.3 million, which was a record at the time and more than double the number from the previous year.<sup>1</sup> Figures recently published by the UNHCR show that as of 31 October 2022, nearly 7.8 million refugees from Ukraine had arrived in Europe, with over 4.5 million having registered for temporary protection.<sup>2</sup> In addition, over 131,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe between January and October 2022, via the Mediterranean and Northwest African maritime routes, which was an increase of over 30% compared to the same period in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

While the EU is developing a common approach to migration and asylum, inconsistencies remain across member states concerning the access of non-EU nationals to basic services and resources, including language support. Language plays a crucial role in accessing public services, and providing non-EU nationals with accessible information in a language they sufficiently understand is key to their protection and integration. However, current legislative provisions do not yet sufficiently address non-EU nationals' specific language needs, especially when conveying complex or sensitive information that requires professional language support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in access to elementary social services and language support. The sudden shift from on-site to online services in 2020 led to ad-hoc solutions in many public service sectors to meet urgent communication needs. At the same time, digital communication technologies such as video links have created new opportunities to access professional interpreters and to create video-mediated interpreting (VMI) services.

### *Project and Work Package 2 aims and objectives*

Against this backdrop, the **overall aim of the EU-WEBPSI project** is to intensify research and educational efforts to address the need for a common European framework for professional public service interpreting (PSI), with specific consideration given to a) leveraging the

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat: The EU in the world, 2016, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/7589036/KS-EX-16-001-EN-N.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR Europe situations: Data and trends, October 2022, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/index.php/document/3868>

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR Europe situations: Data and trends, October 2022, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/index.php/document/3868>

opportunities provided by video-mediated interpreting (VMI) and b) extending linguistic support for, and empowerment of, non-EU nationals speaking languages of lesser diffusion (LLDs) to prevent their exclusion from essential services. More specifically, the project has three **objectives**:

- Objective 1: harmonising minimal standards of (WEB)PSI competence, training and certification in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders to guarantee high-quality language support and equal access to basic services for non-EU nationals across the EU;
- Objective 2: facilitating more flexible deployment of WEBPSI services at national and EU level by means of remote solutions that are better adapted to contemporary needs and opportunities and that are easily accessible to WEBPSI providers and users across the EU;
- Objective 3: increasing the interpreting capacity for LLDs by training refugee speakers as interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion (LLDI) to reduce the current imbalance between interpreter supply/demand for these languages across the EU and safeguard better language support for and empowerment of speakers of these languages.

As one of the first steps towards achieving these objectives, **Work Package 2 (WP2) comprised a baseline study and needs analysis in relation to three areas which are particularly relevant for the development of VMI in the refugee and asylum context and for training non-EU nationals to become video interpreters**, namely:

1. Needs and minimum standards of professional competence, training and certification of public service interpreters (PSI) in Europe;
2. Needs, minimum standards and medium-specific challenges of video-mediated interpreting in Europe (e.g., technical requirements, confidentiality, unsuitability of webcam interpreting for certain types of communication);
3. Existing approaches and needs in relation to LLD interpreter training in Europe.

### *Approach to the baseline study*

The baseline study was inspired by the realist approach to synthesising and evaluating evidence (Hewitt et al., 2012) in order to understand how PSI and VMI work in specific public-sector contexts and in relation to LLDs, and what the implications for the context of asylum and reception are likely to be. Recognising that different approaches to PSI and VMI will work in different contexts, the research in WP2 has sought to identify the mechanisms, structures, processes and conditions, including the behaviours, beliefs and attitudes by stakeholders and users, that facilitate or hinder the successful implementation of PSI and VMI.

### *Structure of baseline study and reporting*

The baseline study was conducted in two stages. First **a comprehensive review of existing academic and practice-based literature, guidelines and codes of ethics** was carried out for each of the three workstreams (PSI, VMI, LLDI). The findings are reported in Part I, II and III of this report. Relevant information about the methodological approach for the reviews is provided in each part. Subsequently, **three detailed case studies** were conducted **with three NGOs (in three different countries)**, each of which having direct experience of language service provision and use in the asylum/refugee context, in order to elicit information about the practical implementation of interpreting services in this context. The findings from the case studies are reported in Part IV of this report and are complemented by a forthcoming European Migration Network report (EMN), detailing the findings of an ad-hoc query on interpreter use in reception contexts, which provides an overview of interpreting practices in 23 member states (Appendix – Compilation Report: Ad-hoc Query on 2022.63 Interpreting in Reception Facilities).

The findings included in the present report will inform the development of a harmonised EU-model for video-mediated PSI. It will also provide the basis for the development of training content that will support the implementation of the standards in the EU-WEBPSI model.

## 1. PART I. Research report of existing PSI standards regarding attainment levels, training and accreditation



## 1.1. Introduction of PSI report

The aim of Part I of the present report is to map existing research on standards, training and certification schemes, as well as existing guidelines and good practices for public service interpreting (PSI) in Europe, and more specifically in connection with migration and asylum settings. It constitutes the first of the three investigative workstreams that form the baseline study providing input for the next phases of the EU-WEBPSI project.

The aim of this literature review presented in Part I is to map existing research on standards, training and certification schemes for PSI in Europe, and more specifically in connection with migration and asylum settings. As the project focuses especially on accessing services in the context of asylum reception operations, literature focusing on this specific setting has a particular relevance. However, the scope of the review also includes other settings, such as healthcare, social services, and legal assistance: not only do these contexts apply to the initial stages of arrival, but they are also representative of the range of public services where PSI is needed.

The publications appearing in the present review have been selected for their relevance in relation to the aims of the project; The finalised review is not meant to be exhaustive. In the next section we detail the adopted methodology and then provide an overview of the themes appearing throughout the literature under review, that we discuss more in detail.

We start by presenting a literature review on PSI standards, training and certification schemes. Subsequently, guidelines and good practices will be discussed. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the key research findings concerning PSI standards, training and certification.

## 1.2. Methodology of PSI literature and guidelines review

### 1.2.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Previous to starting the literature review, a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria have been agreed with the other university partners collaborating within Work Package 2 of the EU-WEBPSI project and adopted by all. The aim of the EU-WEBPSI project is to develop minimum standards and training for video-remote PSI to enhance access to public services for non-EU speakers of languages of lesser diffusion (LLDs). This literature review therefore comprises peer-reviewed academic literature on PSI standards, certification and training, preferably in connection with migration and asylum settings. Separate reviews have been conducted on non-academic

literature, as well as on literature concerning video-mediated interpreting and interpreting in LLDs.

The literature included in the present review reports on empirical studies based on experimental data, observations, surveys and interviews, as well as studies analysing or comparing PSI standards and training curricula via documentary analysis. The settings included in the review are healthcare, education, law, immigration, social services, housing, and work. The geographical scope has been limited to EU and EFTA member states. A criterion regarding publication date was also retained: studies published since 2010 have been prioritised, with the exception of seminal works about PSI. Given that the focus of the project lies on forced migration and refugees, it was agreed to exclude studies focusing on temporary migration, expats and students. In addition, as the project deals with video-remote PSI, studies concentrating solely on conference interpreting and telephone interpreting were also excluded from the present review. We have also decided to leave out sign language interpreting studies from our review as this dimension will not be included in the development phase of the EU-WEBPSI portal. We do, however, acknowledge the relevance and necessity of addressing current needs for sign language interpreting for migrants, but given the training challenges and specificities of this interpreting mode, it will be considered for future developments of the web portal.

### 1.2.2. Keyword search

A keyword search was carried out on a selection of databases and journals, moving from more generic databases and keywords to more specific searches. The databases and journals consulted are detailed in the next section. Specific searches were carried out for the three countries where the reception authority partners taking part in the project are located: Belgium, France, Greece. After this phase, a forward and reverse snowball search was conducted from the references already selected.

The keywords searched in the databases and journals include: “public service interpreting”, “community interpreting”, “public service interpreting standards”, “public service interpreting professionalisation”, “Public service interpreting certification”, “public service interpret\* AND certification”, “community AND interpret\* AND certification”, “public service interpreting Greece”, “public service interpret\* Greece”, “community AND interpret Greece”, “PSI Greece”, “public service” AND interpret\* France”, “public service interpreting France”, “social interpreting France”, “PSI France”, “interprétariat social France” “public service AND interpret\* Belgium”,

“community AND interpret\* Belgium”, “public service interpreting guidelines”, “Community interpreting guidelines”, “public AND service AND interpreting AND certification”.

In total, sixty-seven references were considered relevant and retained according to the agreed inclusion criteria and pertinence to the aim of this study, among the 134 ones selected and analysed from the keyword and snowball search.

### 1.2.3. Consulted databases

The following databases were consulted:

- Google Scholar
- Web of Science
- Scopus
- EBSCOhost Communication Source
- MLA International Bibliography & Directory of Periodicals
- Education Resource Information Center
- GERFLINT (Groupe d'études et de recherches pour le français langue internationale)
- Cairn
- Érudit

### 1.2.4. Consulted journals

The following journals were consulted:

- Applied Linguistics
- The Interpreter's Newsletter
- The Interpreter and Translator Trainer
- Interpreting
- International Journal of Multilingualism
- Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development
- Journal of Pragmatics
- Journal of Sociolinguistics
- Journal of Specialised Translation
- Language in Society
- TRANSLation & INTERpreting

### 1.2.5. Overview of research themes

Among the sixty-seven articles that were considered relevant for the literature review on PSI standards, certifications, and training, based on the agreed criteria, a set of recurring research themes and lines of investigation into PSI standards, certification and training in Europe has been selected. The following categorisation does not necessarily correspond to the chapter division of the review, as many articles that discuss a range of themes may be referred to in multiple chapters.

Questions regarding professionalisation or institutionalisation are at the heart of twelve works that map the PSI situation in different countries. These studies report on (a) how governments or local administrations approach and influence the development and provision of qualitative PSI services, and (b) public service interpreters' perceptions of their professional status. Two comparisons of PSI certification systems have also been included in the review. A gap between practice and research on PSI is highlighted by one article. One author also points at the difficulty of gathering resources and information on PSI. The impact on PSI practice of the European directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings is addressed by four contributions. These studies analyse the adoption of the directive in different EU member states and highlight what is needed for a full, harmonised implementation of the norm. In total, thirty-eight articles in the literature under review touch upon PSI professionalisation or institutionalisation.

Questions of training and ethics make up a large part of the review, with respectively sixteen and eight studies dedicated to these themes. A number of studies on training of a general nature have been included, either mapping and comparing PSI training provision in different countries or focusing on the situation in a specific country. Furthermore, some specific themes emerge: these are the education of interpreter trainers, the need for minimum standards for PSI training, the training of profiles other than interpreters helping to diminish language barriers, and the possibilities offered by interprofessional training.

While questions of ethics appear in most of the literature in this review, eleven studies focus on specific aspects of ethics in relation to PSI. Next to two studies comparing and analysing codes of ethics, we found four contributions looking at codes of ethics in practice and how codes of ethics influence or reflect professional conduct. The gap between PSI practice and ethics is also at the core of four studies that investigate how ethical principles of impartiality and accuracy are upheld by practitioners, and what their motivations are when deviating from such requirements.

A large part of the corpus retained for the review consists of works that investigate PSI in settings directly linked with migration, asylum and integration, with twenty studies dedicated to this macro-topic that is especially relevant to the purposes of the EU-WEBPSI project. The development, provision and perception of PSI for migrants in a wide range of settings is analysed by six studies focusing each on a specific European country or region. Many studies in the present review deal with healthcare settings. Three studies in particular are dedicated to the development of national codes of conduct and training for professional PS interpreters working within healthcare, and for healthcare staff working with interpreters. Among these studies, two also interrogate the role of PSI in the integration process of migrants.

Twelve references discuss the implementation of PSI in asylum proceedings: next to two review articles, the studies selected for the period 2010 – 2023 address the role of the interpreter in asylum interviews and court hearings, or the adequacy level of the response to the sudden need of PSI in the refugee management crisis of 2015. Another emerging strand of research concerns PSI training in the asylum context, with three works dedicated to this topic.

As the organisation and availability of language mediation in public services differ across the geographical scope of this review, a number of articles in this review also deal with intercultural mediation, in particular in Italy, Spain and Belgium: eight studies covering these countries highlight a need for adding stronger PS interpreting skills to the profile of the intercultural mediator, even for intercultural mediators with significant experience and academic training in language-related subjects.

#### 1.2.6. Methodological approach for the Guidelines review

A wide range of documents has been integrated in the guidelines review, including professional codes for public service interpreters, sworn interpreters and intercultural mediators. In our selection of ethical codes and components, we have considered the objectives of the upcoming work packages. WP 3 aims to determine minimum standards for PSI. Prior to this stage, it is therefore necessary to analyse what is already included in the currently existing codes. Additionally, in WP4, we will proceed to the development of training products. Established good practices will be included in this section and considered in the future development of training materials on the EU-WEBPSI portal.

The examination of existing codes of ethics has been carried out in close cooperation between the four university partners involved in WP2 (USurrey, UVienna, UGent and KULeuven). In order to map guidelines on the three central areas of PSI, VMI and LLDI across EU Member States, each

partner has been assigned a set of countries on the basis of the following criteria: (a) knowledge of the language(s) spoken in the country and (b) connections with academics or practitioners working in the field of PSI. The examination of existing PSI guidelines per country mainly involved a search for materials on the codes of ethics, training and accreditation of PSI as published on the websites of interpreter associations, agencies and national or regional authorities working with PSI.

Under code of conduct we understand the basic ethical principles interpreters must live by in their professional capacity. This sub-theme comprises a discussion of the key components of PSI ethical codes. Codes of ethics specifically designed for conference interpreters, sign language interpreters and translators were not included in this overview as these interpreting modes and contexts will not be involved in the development phase of the EU-WEBPSI portal. Most of the codes of ethics we have consulted are only available in the national language(s). Hence, all citations in this report were translated into English unless otherwise stated.

### 1.3. PSI Literature review

#### 1.3.1. Defining PSI

Public service interpreting has been defined by Franz Pöchhacker (1999, p. 126) as “interpreting in institutional settings of a given society in which public service providers and individual clients do not speak the same language”. Among the variety of terms that have been used to address this activity, PSI and community interpreting are the most frequently used, with the latter prevailing in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and the former gaining traction in the United Kingdom and in European countries (Valero-Garcés, 2023). The European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation (ENPSIT) has also decided to adopt this term, aligning itself with the choice made by the European Language Council’s Special Interest Group on Translation and Interpreting for Public Services, also including translation in its scope (Rillof and Buysse, 2015). In line with ENPSIT, which is one of the project partners, the EU-WEBPSI project has also chosen this term.

#### 1.3.2. PSI in relation to other forms of language support

Some studies in our review investigate the boundaries between PSI and other forms of language mediation used in institutional settings, such as intercultural mediation (IM) and non-professional interpreting (NPI). A comparison of 13 ethical codes for intercultural mediators (IMs) and public service interpreters by Pokorn and Južnič (2020) shows some overlap between the tasks

attributed to the two profiles. What differs, however, is the ethical positioning prescribed: while intercultural mediators are encouraged to take up the role of advocate for the service user, public service interpreters are expected to adopt a less active and involved stance. This often creates confusion among public service providers about the mediator's/ interpreter's role. Gil-Bardaji (2020) also notes that these two types of mediation have different objectives, with PSIs aiming to facilitate communication when speakers use a different language, and IMs providing information and support in order to bridge linguistic as well as socio-cultural differences between the two parties. Pokorn and Južnič (2020) suggest, however, that the difference between the two profiles should not be reduced to ethics. IM, they argue, emerged not just out of differing ethical stances but out of practical considerations: the lack of trained interpreters and training opportunities in LLDs created a need for civil society organizations and institutions working with migrants to train ad-hoc interpreters; also, they mention public service staff calling for a linguistic intermediary that takes up a more active role, to whom they may transfer some of their obligations.

Two studies analysing IM-mediated encounters in Italy emphasise the more visible role played by IMs. An empirical study by Baraldi (2015) on IM in an Italian immigration services setting, shows that IMs' choices – such as engaging in dyadic sequences or asking or offering clarifications – are encouraged by social workers. Rather than considering the IM's active involvement as a threat to their authority, social workers report that the IM can enhance the narration and disclosure of the immigrant's personal story. Farini (2012, p. 67), looking at IMs in an Italian healthcare setting, notes that a lack of accuracy, which may characterise this type of mediation, can hinder the communication. Nonetheless, "affective formulations" that make patients' emotions explicit, help building a relation with the doctor. A study by Amato and Garwood (2011) in the same setting, however, notes that IMs who frequently engage in dyadic sequences, may be inclined to assume a more dominant role, speaking on behalf of either the doctor or the patient even when this is in contrast with the national guidelines on IM. The authors recommend the organisation of specific, research-based training, which includes interpreting skills. They also urge universities to become involved in the further elaboration of national guidelines.

Other publications on IM in a European context, highlight the need for training and testing of PSI skills and knowledge. In Belgium, Van Keer *et al.* (2020) point out that the array of tasks expected from IMs in Flemish and Brussels hospitals goes beyond their job description, and that IMs are not recruited on the basis of demonstrable skills and training. The authors recommend putting in place specific higher education training as well as a clear recruitment process. In Spain, a study on IMs in socio-educational settings in Catalonia assesses their performance as lacking accuracy

and knowledge about PSI strategies, codes of conducts and best practices. The study concludes that specialised training for intercultural mediators should include these aspects (Gil-Bardají, 2020). In Slovenia, national vocational profiles for PSIs and IMs do partially overlap. However, while linguistic and interpreting skills are more important for PSI, the focus for IM lays instead on conflict resolution and mediation, as proved by the fact IMs are not tested on interpreting skills to qualify (Južnič and Pokorn, 2021).

### 1.3.3. Professionalisation and institutionalisation

The studies included in the present review are consistent with earlier literature on the professionalisation of PSI: public service interpreting still has not reached full professionalisation and institutionalisation since the emergence of the profession in the last decades of the twentieth century. A profession is “an occupation that requires special knowledge and skills acquired through education, and consequently enjoys recognition and a certain status in society” (Pöchhacker, 2022, p. 160). Progress has certainly been made since the emergence of this particular form of interpreting: PSI has received growing academic interest since the first *Critical Link* conference in 1995, and qualification paths exists now in a number of countries, even if the provision of PSI is often not regulated through a legal framework (Valero-Garcés, 2023). In Europe, initiatives calling and operating for the professionalisation and the establishment of common training and professional standards have seen the light, such as ENPSIT, which is a key partner in the EU-WEBPSI project (Rillof and Buysse, 2015) but also the *European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association* (EULITA) (Valero-Garcés, 2022). Still, scholars agree with Ozolins (2000, as cited in Norström, Fioretos and Gustafsson, 2012; Pöchhacker, 2022; Valero-Garcés, 2023) that the slow professionalisation of PSI is due to the fact that interpreting is “institution-driven”, instead of “profession-driven”, meaning that PSI practices are often defined by institutional needs and policies rather than by a professional body. The literature highlights some of the persistent issues in European countries: a lack of specific training, especially for LLDs; a missing legal framework for PSI provision in most states; the absence of quality insurance systems like certification schemes, supported by common standards of practice and codes of ethics.

In her 2016 global survey, distributed to the professional associations of interpreters in 64 countries across the five continents, Paola Gentile shows how PSI is (a) a highly feminised profession which is (b) practiced mostly by individuals lacking specific training. In sociological models, these two traits indicate it as a “semi-profession, instead of a fully-fledged one (Gentile, 2016). A lack of training opportunities specific to this type of interpreting is indeed recognised by



a number of authors as one of the main reasons for the low professional status of PSI, especially for LLDs (Apostolou, 2012; Graham, 2012; Kadrić, 2014; Rudvin and Spinzi, 2015; Dong and Napier, 2016; Ioannidis and Resta, 2016; Sarter and Karamanidou, 2019; Angelelli, 2020; Štefková and Tužinská, 2021; Pöchhacker, 2022). Furthermore, it has been argued by scholars that governments do rarely make training and qualification a requirement for PSIs (Valero-Garcés, 2023), leading to a situation across Europe where funding is scarce and few quality control procedures are in place (Ozolins, 2010; Norström, Fioretos and Gustafsson, 2012; Sarter and Karamanidou, 2019; Štefková and Tužinská, 2021; Pöchhacker, 2022; Tomassini *et al.*, 2022). The consequences of the lack of regulation of PSI services are discussed in a number of studies that analyse the provision of PSI in different countries and settings.

Regarding **legal interpreting** in EU members states, Directive 2010/64/EU states that interpreters need to be qualified in criminal proceedings but does not, however, specify requirements for training or qualification (*Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings*, 2010). Some authors look at its effects on the professionalisation of legal interpreting and the development of certification systems. In 2011, the *Building Mutual Trust* project sought to formulate a training curriculum for legal interpreting to support the creation of dedicated training in the EU member states and lead to an harmonised implementation of the directive (Townesley *et al.*, 2011). Studies focusing on Belgium, Italy and Spain show that the implementation of the norm is at different stages of completion; while Belgium has created a *National Register for Sworn Interpreters and Translators* that must follow specific training and a code of conduct (Cascales Serrano, 2021; Vandenbroucke and Defrancq, 2021), this is not yet the case in Spain where non-qualified interpreters are employed by the authorities (Cascales Serrano, 2021). Also in Italy, no national system for training and certification has been set up yet (Preziosi and Garwood, 2017). ENPSIT has been advocating for the directive to be applied to all public service settings (Rillof and Buysse, 2015).

With regard to **healthcare**, Directive 2011/24/EU regulates patients' rights across borders. It is noticeable, however, that the Directive does not refer to translation and interpreting provisions (Tomassini *et al.*, 2022). An empirical study conducted in Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and the UK (Angelelli, 2014) as well as a more recent one conducted in Italy, Romania and Spain (Tomassini *et al.*, 2022) reveal how in the absence of regulations, the provision of PSI is inconsistent across borders, with a variety of strategies used to reduce language barriers.

Examples of the diverse levels in PSI provision across EU and EFTA countries emerge from the literature.

In **France**, the development and professionalisation of PSI has been largely the effort of civil society organisations since the late 1970s. PSI has started to enjoy some institutional recognition in the healthcare setting with the creation of national guidelines in 2012 and in 2017 (Cognet and Doutriaux, 2017; Pian, Hoyez and Tersigni, 2018; Bigot, Dallet and Rousseau, 2019). Research on this setting in France also indicates a prevalently feminised profession with low levels of specific qualifications (Pian, Hoyez and Tersigni, 2018). In addition, French interpreting services in asylum proceedings have been the object of public tenders since 2003. However, the two institutions in charge of asylum procedures, which may employ the same interpreters due to the way tenders are organised, do not share the same code of conduct (Gibb and Good, 2014)

In **Belgium**, the literature focuses mainly on Flanders, where PSI has reached a satisfactory level of institutionalisation for both PSI (social settings such as health, education, social services) and legal interpreting (cf. *National Register for Sworn Interpreters and Translators*). Interpreters working in PSI settings are trained and must pass a formal test to be included in a register of certified interpreters (organised by AgII, also partner in the EU-WEBPSI project); they also have to follow an established code of conduct, applying to all social settings. Public services must employ certified interpreters. However, several studies have pointed out that this is not always possible due to mismatches between supply and demand for certain languages (Van de Geuchte and Van Vaerenbergh, 2017; Kerremans *et al.*, 2018; De Wilde *et al.*, 2021). In healthcare settings, the Federal government supports a language assistance initiative called ‘Intercult’, which employs intercultural mediators in hospitals across the country’s three regions (Van de Geuchte and Van Vaerenbergh, 2017; De Wilde *et al.*, 2021).

In **Greece**, a study on public tenders for interpreting services issued between 2014 and 2016 by asylum and reception authorities showed that out of the 16 analysed, none included requirements of formal qualifications or define specific, necessary knowledge on asylum or interpretation. Only three calls requested that PSI providers train interpreters in core skills (Sarter and Karamanidou, 2019). A survey conducted in 2016 among interpreters in asylum settings in Greece confirms indeed that most of them are untrained (Ioannidis and Resta, 2016) (also see Appendix - Question 2. When using interpretation in reception facilities, can you indicate who provides interpretation (e.g. (certified) interpreters, (intercultural) mediators, multilingual staff, multilingual residents) and how (e.g. on-site, by telephone, by video call, etc.)?).

In the **Netherlands**, the provision of PSI is regulated for the legal field, including asylum and immigration, but not for other settings, such as healthcare (De Boe, 2015). PSI in healthcare also saw funding being cancelled, which led to a decline in the use of professional interpreters (Gentile, 2017).

In **Spain**, advances in the professionalisation of PSI are fostered by research groups and professional associations that contributed to create guidelines and specialised training (Gutiérrez, 2022). Nevertheless, Spain still lacks coordinated institutional efforts to provide PSI in healthcare (Tomassini *et al.*, 2022). In asylum settings, most interpreters are recruited as volunteers (Valero-Garcés, 2018). Legal interpreters, on the other hand, are certified, but no code of conduct exists (Cascales Serrano, 2021).

PSI receives public funding in **Sweden** and can be accessed free of charge (Gustafsson, Norström and Fioretos, 2012). Public service interpreters have been certified since the 70's; a national training programme is also available, as well as national guidelines of good practice. However, the languages covered by the certification are limited, therefore most interpreters working in Sweden are not certified. Public procurement policies also led to decreasing fees, to the detriment of quality (Norström, Fioretos and Gustafsson, 2012).

In **Switzerland**, a study by Bischoff (2020) on the provision of PSI in healthcare traces its path towards institutionalisation. While initially adopted to face the arrival of applicants for international protection, PSI is now embedded in hospital settings, thanks to local and European initiatives. An analysis of the service at *Geneva University Hospitals* reveals, however, that institutionalisation is still not complete: the author recommends further training, policy development, and addressing the needs of specific groups, including applicants for international protection.

The **UK** has one of the more advanced systems for the provision of certified PSI, featuring certification schemes, a *National Register for Public Service Interpreters* and an occupational standard, supported by national legislation (Tipton, 2012; Gibb and Good, 2014; Guery, 2014). However, as was the case for Sweden, scholars argue that public procurement policies in the UK—notably the Ministry of Justice contracting a private agency to supply court interpreters—are leading towards a de-professionalisation, due to competitive pricing strategies (Gibb and Good, 2014; Dong and Napier, 2016; Gentile, 2017).

We want to conclude this section by highlighting that existing legislations across Europe state that language cannot be an obstacle to accessing public services (Rillof and Buysse, 2015; Tomassini

*et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, absence of a clear legal framework for the provision of PSI and low levels of institutionalisation across individual Member States, can be seen as major factors in slowing down professionalisation. Additionally, scholars are also pointing at the effects of privatising PSI services, where a decrease in funding is accompanied by lower remuneration, leading to a decrease of quality and training opportunities, and ultimately leading to de-professionalisation (Ozolins, 2010; Gustafsson, Norström and Fioretos, 2012; Dong and Napier, 2016; Gentile, 2017, 2020; Valero-Garcés, 2023). According to Ozolins (2000, as cited in 2010, p. 195), a comprehensive state approach to the provision of public interpreting services should include “a certification system, a training regime, and a degree of policy planning and evaluation”. In the next two sections, we will look at scholarly contributions on PSI certification and training in the literature under review.

#### 1.3.4. Certification and Curriculum

In section 1.3.3. we have seen how the professionalisation and institutionalisation of PSI proceed at different paces across different countries and settings, and how this is linked to the establishment of minimum standards and certification systems. Scholars refer to the need of establishing more stringent quality controls on skills and knowledge, specific to PSI, as another necessary step towards a higher professional status (De Boe, 2015; Balounová, 2021; Štefková and Tužinská, 2021; Tomassini *et al.*, 2022; Valero-Garcés, 2023). In the words of Ozolins (2010, p. 209), “certification or accreditation systems are critical to establish a profession and to give confidence to users in working with interpreters, but even after several decades of their implementation there are significant gaps in the reach of certification programs.”

The establishment of qualifying certification systems for translators and interpreters has been investigated at a cross-national level by Jim Hlavac (2013, 2015) who underlines that regulatory standards do not only protect the users of a profession, but also contribute to raising its professional status. The study offers a global comparison of T&I certification systems in 21 countries, including 12 EU or EFTA countries. Its results show how in western European countries, the verification of necessary skills to become a translator or an interpreter is mostly ascertained through the possession of a high-education degree indicating extensive training. However, this does not apply to the UK and Scandinavian countries, that have certification systems in place besides training opportunities. Analysing national occupational standards and qualification requirements for PSI in the UK and Slovenia has revealed similarities with the *ISO guidelines for Community Interpreting* (Hlavac, 2015; Južnič and Pokorn, 2021). The *ISO guidelines for*

*Community Interpreting* outline the principles for quality, professional interpreting in a number of public service settings (ISO, 2014). The Slovenian standards are also in line with the *Minimally required Competences for Public Service Interpreters* established by ENPSIT (Južnič and Pokorn, 2021). This document defines specific interpreting skills and knowledge, intercultural communicative skills and attitudes that public service interpreters should possess (ENPSIT, no date).

However, a recurring problem across EU Member States is that little university training is available in LLDs, which largely include migration languages. As mentioned in section 1.3.3 the public service sector has to deal with a discrepancy between supply and demand of interpreters for these languages. The absence of training in these languages leads to a lack of qualified interpreters, low remuneration and attractiveness. This has been identified by several authors as a result of the absence of a formal certification and training process (Ozolins, 2010, 2017; Norström, Fioretos and Gustafsson, 2012; Hlavac, 2013, 2015; Angelelli, 2020; Balounová, 2021). In the next section, we will reflect on some interesting research findings and recommendations on PSI training.

#### 1.3.5. PSI training

As the first sections of this report have shown, researchers concur on the need for specific, qualifying PSI training to promote its professionalisation. However, the specific training format and approach to be adopted are still open for discussion (Valero-Garcés, 2023), something that is also reflected in the present review.

Several researchers point at the necessity for universities to adapt their curricula to the needs of PSI. This can imply adapting their training to LLDs, which are currently not represented in the training offer, either by including more language combinations or by structuring courses in a multilingual format (Apostolou, 2012; Graham, 2012; Tomassini, 2012; Kadrić, 2014; Ozolins, 2017; Bergunde and Pöllabauer, 2019). It is also highlighted that training programmes need to include skills and notions specific to the PSI setting, as most academic training focuses on conference interpreting (Amato and Garwood, 2011; Graham, 2012; Tomassini, 2012; Ozolins, 2017; Angelelli, 2020). Training should also be structured as to cater to the needs of a range of trainee profiles presenting differing levels of educations (Tomassini, 2012; Preziosi and Garwood, 2017; Bergunde and Pöllabauer, 2019; Vitalaru and Valero-Garcés, 2020). The literature also mentions the difficulty of making qualifying training attractive and relates this to the low status and remuneration of PSI (Ozolins, 2010; Angelelli, 2020). Scholars recommend developing PSI

training that is based both on research and practice (Preziosi and Garwood, 2017; Angelelli, 2020; Balounová, 2021). It has also been suggested to have trainees practicing their skills in realistic scenarios via role-plays or field visits (Valero-Garcés, 2010; Graham, 2012; Ozolins, 2017; Preziosi and Garwood, 2017; Bossaert, 2020). The development of virtual communities of practice is also put forward by scholars to put resources in common via online tools and repositories (Townesley *et al.*, 2011; D'Hayer, 2012; Graham, 2012; Ozolins, 2017). Finally, an important reflection is present in the literature on the role of national occupational standards and guidelines in forming the basis of PSI curricular design and qualification requirements (Graham, 2012).

Several studies in this review present possible training curricula, in different formats. In the context of an Erasmus+ project, conducted at three universities in Czech Republic, Poland and Slovak, an optional PSI module (a one-week, blended pilot project) was proposed to conference interpreting students. The aim was to diversify employment opportunities for students of rarer language combinations at a moment where the use of English as a foreign language has reduced the market for interpreters in business and conference settings (Bossaert, 2020; Štefková and Homola, 2021). Preziosi and Garwood (2017) present instead a face-to-face, 54-hours model course for legal interpreters for practitioners with no university training and whose main occupation may be other than their interpreting activity. The course aims to combine linguistic and interpreting training with knowledge of the Italian legal system and professional codes of conduct and guidelines. The course is now part of the permanent education offer of the University of Bologna (ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - Università di Bologna, 2023).

The University of Alcalà, wishing to cater to a wider audience, has developed a massive open online course (MOOC). This free, online 10-week initiation course is proposed as a self-learning tool for language or migration professionals, including ad-hoc public service interpreters without formal training and public service providers (Vitalaru, 2022). In Austria, the QUADA (*QUALitätsvolles Dolmetschen im Asylverfahren*) project proposed a curriculum for asylum interpreters with the aim of reaching different trainee profiles. It was designed as a 12-modules handbook, with the aim of letting the learner, or the trainer, choose the activities that are better suited to their needs. The handbook became later the basis for a full-scale training in Austria. It also provided inspiration for a UNHCR handbook and an EASO (now EUAA (European Union Agency for Asylum)) training program (Bergunde and Pöllabauer, 2019). In Flanders, a specific training program for volunteer interpreters was set up to address a lack of qualified interpreters for LLDs. This course does not replace the regular qualification path for public service interpreters in Flanders (see section 1.3.3. on Belgium). It consists instead of a two-days course that addresses

interpreting techniques and ethics. However, the volunteer's preparation proved unsatisfactory after an assessment was conducted. The course was then revised to include an entry test, a stronger emphasis on neutrality and accuracy, and role-plays that would confront trainees with ethical dilemmas when interpreting (De Wilde *et al.*, 2021).

Scholars also stress the importance of training PSI users, i.e., providers of public services, on how to work with interpreters. This may help improve awareness around the role of the interpreter and improving chances of successful communication in interpreter-mediated encounters (Graham, 2012; Kadrić, 2014; Ozolins, 2017; Štefková and Tužinská, 2021; Tomassini *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, some scholars also point out that more collaboration is needed between academia and providers of public services in order to also improve the quality of on-the-job training (Graham, 2012; Angelelli, 2020; Tomassini *et al.*, 2022).

Some attention is also given to interprofessional training for interpreters and social workers: Ozolins (2013, as cited in 2017) lists, among the possible benefits for interpreters, that they understand better how social workers approach certain situations. By organising joint role-plays, interpreters develop an improved understanding of their own role. More benefits are mentioned by Hlavac and Saunders (2021) in a study on interprofessional education sessions for interpreting and social work students. The study, which was conducted over 3 years, included role-plays of interpreter-mediated situations: students report an increased awareness of their own performance when interacting with someone from the other group in the simulated situations, and higher confidence levels to later work with professionals of the other group.

In this review, two studies contain project-based recommendations for training PSI trainers. From a review of PSIT (Public Service Interpreting and Translation) training provision in the UK, it appears that practitioners delivering training may have little or no training experience, while academics may lack practical experience, showing the importance to train the trainers and provide them with the necessary skills. This need is especially pressing for interpreting trainers in LLDs (Graham, 2012). The assessment of the *QUADA* project in Austria concluded that the creation of a train-the-trainer programme could help further improve the training quality (Bergunde and Pöllabauer, 2019).

#### 1.3.6. PSI ethics

Research on ethics in public service interpreting has extensively investigated questions related to the interpreter's role, especially the degree of (in)visibility and agency (Pöllabauer and Topolovec, 2020). A review of the literature shows a gap between theory and practice: users' expectations



appear to be at odds with the neutral ethical stance that is generally recommended in the literature (Balounová, 2021). Descriptive research approaches, however, are increasingly preferred to prescriptive ones when analysing interpreters' ethical challenges and decision making (Pöllabauer and Topolovec, 2020). These trends also appear in the present review.

Baixauli-Olmos (2017) compared different non-European codes of ethics for interpreters. These codes are published by professional organisations to define their field through to shape a certain field around notions that can bring recognition, trust, and legitimacy to the profession. Skaaden (2019) defends the value of ethics in building trust in the interpreting profession: she argues that, by defining the role of the interpreter and demanding impartiality and accuracy, codes of conduct help setting clear user expectations and avoid negative consequences stemming from interpreters stepping into an advocacy role and out of their field of expertise. Rudvin (2007) underlines how the interpreters' role is frequently defined by the specific institution that employs them, as well as by each interpreter's personal idea of professionalism and differing cultural norms. These sometimes conflicting factors make it challenging to establish a code of conduct that is universally valid. Arguably, a strong professional community is needed to back it up in front of contradicting demands and the need to apply to a variety of settings.

A few studies in this review focus on the public service interpreter's struggle in adhering to codes of conduct and to the principles of invisibility, neutrality, and impartiality. Survey- and interview-based studies show interpreters facing ethical dilemmas arising from public service providers and service user demands that imply deviating from ethical principles (Guery, 2014; Van de Geuchte and Van Vaerenbergh, 2017). Van de Geuchte and Van Vaerenbergh (2017) show how the staff in Flemish hospitals expects PSIs to perform tasks that rather fall under the scope of intercultural mediators. Guery (2014) indicates that PSIs having to regularly manage the boundaries of their profession, emotions and ethics to face these demands leads to forms of hidden work that are insufficiently accounted for in the literature as well as in PSI training and guidelines. The notions of "defensive" versus "expository" interpreting are proposed as possible frameworks to account for different stances in dealing with ethical dilemmas, stemming from opposite motivations: the first approach implies complying with the norm to protect oneself from negative consequences, often unconsciously; the second approach sees instead the interpreter acting in the best interest of the client (Turner and Best, 2017).



### 1.3.7. PSI for migrants and refugees

As mentioned before, a considerable number of the studies in this review investigate PSI in settings directly linked with migration, asylum, and integration, with twenty-one studies dedicated to this macro-topic. These studies raise important questions about the role of PSI in asylum proceedings, access to public services and the integration of migrants. A comparison of PSI development and provision in migration contexts between different EU countries, as already seen in the section on Professionalisation and Institutionalisation (1.3.3), reveals an enormous variability in the organisation of PSI services.

In multilingual, superdiverse Brussels (Belgium), the Flemish government regulates the provision of qualified PSI in Dutch-speaking public service organisations: organisations dealing with asylum seekers and mental healthcare report a preference for employing professional interpreters instead of ad-hoc ones, also resorting to remote interpreting when interpreters in a certain language combination are not available on-site. However, ad-hoc interpreters are used to face the need for lesser diffused language combinations (Kerremans *et al.*, 2018). In France, the development of PSI services has been largely the work of civil society organisations that try to anticipate and meet the urgent needs of newly arrived migrants and refugees. However, more efforts are needed at an institutional level when it comes to the professionalisation of PSI (Ben Ameur, 2010). An exception to this is the national guideline for the provision of PSI in the healthcare sector, which has been introduced in 2017 (Cognet and Doutriaux, 2017). In Spain, professionalisation efforts have been largely the responsibility of practising interpreters and academics, while the need for professional interpreting is still scarcely recognised by public services: one example is the healthcare sector, where language barriers are downplayed in comparison to culture barriers, and intercultural mediation is often confused with interpretation (Gutiérrez, 2022). Rudvin and Pesare (2015) investigate on the use of intercultural mediators in an Italian detention and expulsion centre for migrants, and especially on the challenges in interpreting for victims of human trafficking: interpreters in this setting have an ethically complex intermediary role between the victim/detainee and the authority that is also in charge of protecting victims; adhering to ethical codes proves also difficult. In Greece, only small steps have been made to put in place quality PSI services and training, despite the substantial influx of migrants (Apostolou, 2012; Sarter and Karamanidou, 2019). In the UK, where PSI has grown into a recognised profession since its first emergence in the 1980s, it has been portrayed in the media as an obstacle to migrants' integration as well as a waste of taxpayers' money (Tipton, 2012; Gentile, 2017).

A further distinction needs to be made concerning the use of interpreters in migration settings, with on the one hand settings where medical, legal or social support is provided, like described above, and on the other hand the asylum determination procedure, for which language provisions are regulated by the European directive on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (*Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast)*, 2013). It is especially relevant to take into consideration the specific dimensions of interpreting with applicants for international protection in the context of the EU-WEBPSI project, which, in its next phases, will develop and test training for PSIs working with this specific group.

#### 1.3.8. PSI in asylum settings

The works selected in the review that specifically approach PSI in asylum settings look at the role and practices of the interpreters in asylum and reception operations. Four of these studies focus on asylum proceedings and in particular on the asylum interviews necessary for the determination of the refugee status. The term “asylum interview” refers to the various in-person encounters between the applicant and the asylum authorities, from the moment of reception to the final adjudication, used to assess asylum claims based on the 1951 Geneva Convention (Maryns, 2015). The interpreters play a crucial part in this setting, helping to communicate in a language that the applicant understands, which is required by EU standards on common reception and asylum procedures (*Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast)*, 2013; *Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast)*, 2013). Research shows that, despite what is often expected of them by asylum authorities that adhere to the “conduit” view of interpretation, interpreters are active participants whose practical choices may deviate from institutional demands or ethical codes of conduct (Maryns, 2015; Pöllabauer, 2015).

Empirical studies comparing codes of conducts and requirements for asylum interpreters in France, Spain, and the UK with the actual working experience of language professionals highlight a range of challenges: institutional requirements to translate faithfully, and in full, often clash with the need to make communication possible. Interpreters have often to resort to their own judgement, on a case-by-case basis, to face situations that are either not contemplated by codes of conduct or for which there are contradictory guidelines: this is especially true when interpreters intervene to rephrase, explain or ask for clarifications. The coexistence of different

codes of conduct by which interpreters are expected to abide, is indicated as one of the reasons for the different roles and approaches chosen, also when interpreters have received some form of training (Gibb and Good, 2014; Määttä, 2015; Valero-Garcés, 2018; Maréchal, 2022).

Furthermore, despite asylum interviews being based on oral accounts and exchanges, they also present a written dimension which appears to influence the interpreter's performance. The applicants' accounts are transcribed into written texts that become of fundamental importance in the final decision of the authorities. Interpreters, finding themselves between the applicant and the official in charge of writing up this report, often produce a version of what has been said that is already adapted for the transcription, participating in its entextualisation process (Maryns, 2015; Määttä, 2015; Pöllabauer, 2015; Maréchal, 2022). Strategies adopted include omitting features of spoken language, summarising long or incoherent sentences, using features typical of the written communication such as nominalisations (Määttä, 2015), choosing to speak in first person (Maréchal, 2022), to make the applicant's speech sound more logical, fluent, and consistent in the eyes of the institution (Maryns, 2015; Määttä, 2015). Researchers point out that the reasons for these alterations are also to be found in the language ideologies that are still prevalent among asylum authorities: interpreting is often viewed as mediating between "two monolingual codes" (Maryns, 2015); moreover, the discourse of reporting that is prevalent in the institutions sees the passage from an oral to a written code as a neutral one (Määttä, 2015).

Asylum and reception organisations resort to ad-hoc interpreting when in need to translate LLDs, both in standard and emergency reception procedures, despite the preference reported by professionals in these settings for employing trained interpreters (Pöllabauer, 2015; Kerremans *et al.*, 2018; Valero-Garcés, 2018; Sarter and Karamanidou, 2019; Čemerin, 2019; Štefková and Tužinská, 2021) (also see Appendix – Compilation Report: Ad-hoc Query on 2022.63 Interpreting in Reception Facilities, Questions 1, 2, 6). Notwithstanding the challenges inherent to this field, specific training for asylum interpreters seems in fact scarce. While there is a growing interest for PSI training among universities, this is not the case for asylum settings, where non-university providers take the lead. The total number of courses is nonetheless low, and none of these are part of a certification procedure. Finally, most courses are cross-language due to financial concerns, which highlights the need for language-specific training and in particular for LLDs (Pöllabauer, 2022).

In 2014, in an effort to improve the quality of interpreting in asylum procedures through training, the QUADA project was conducted by UNHCR Austria with experts from the linguistic, legal, and intercultural fields. It resulted in the production of a certifying training curriculum in the form of

a 12-modules training handbook that can be used as a trainer resource or for self-study, and to train PSI providers. The course has been since adapted into a UNHCR handbook, which in turn was used to develop an EASO training programme (UNHCR Austria, 2017; Bergunde and Pöllabauer, 2019).

The REMILAS (Refugees, Migrants and their Languages in healthcare services) research project dealt instead with interpreting services for applicants for international protection in health and social care settings in France: drawing on extensive fieldwork and 75 hours of recorded consultations, it led to the creation of both a face-to-face training and an online, self-learning tool, aiming at giving learners a grasp of the reality of an interpreter-mediated interaction in this setting (Ticca, Traverso and Jouin, 2023).

#### 1.3.9. Research and PSI

A few works contain reflections on research about PSI, which has traditionally been most advanced in countries like Australia, USA, Canada, Sweden and the UK, while it has developed later in countries that have become a migration destination more recently (Valero-Garcés, 2010). Jiménez-Salcedo (2014), noting that PSI has followed a specific development path in French-speaking countries, calls for more research on the professionalisation and standardisation of PSI for interpreters in language combinations that include French. Wadensjö and Gavioli (2023) mention that research on PSI has moved increasingly towards the analysis of empirical data like recorded encounters, interviews and surveys. Pöllabauer (2023) notes, however, that research on asylum settings is limited by the difficulty in accessing the data, which makes it necessary to resort to “second-hand” data like official transcripts or notes. Finally, Angelelli (2020) remarks that PSI education should be grounded in theory and research findings: the scarce return on investment for students who would pursue PSI education, as well as the conceptualization of interpreting as a cognitive skill instead of a situated practice lie at the base of the observed gap between theory and practice.

#### 1.4. PSI Guidelines and codes of ethics

This section aims to provide an overview of the main guidelines for Public Service Interpreting (PSI) in Europe and the EFTA countries, i.e. focussing on interpreting in the field of public welfare, medical and asylum contexts, as well as legal interpreting. The public service interpreting landscape across EU Member States is very diverse. Different types of interpreting are used in different countries, ranging from sworn interpreters in legal contexts, public service interpreters in medical contexts, PSI or legal interpreters in asylum and migration contexts, etc. It is therefore

important to bear in mind that the perspectives covered in this section may apply to specific (national) contexts and can therefore not be generalised as standard practices across EU countries.

We divided this section into two sub-themes: *professionalism* and *code of conduct*. We will use the overarching term *professionalism* to refer to the professional attitude of public service interpreters, i.e., what interpreters need to know and be able to do to exercise their profession. In addition, this sub-theme also covers the working conditions of public service interpreters.

In this section, we will bring together some interesting perspectives on professionalism and codes of conduct and underpin them by reference to good practices identified in various EU and EFTA countries.

#### 1.4.1. Professionalism

##### 1.4.1.1. Familiarity with domains

A public service interpreter is in frequent interaction with a variety of domains: social services, the courts, hospitals, schools, etc. They are thus expected to be familiar with these domains. Nevertheless, the role of a public service interpreter is to transfer a message from the source language to the target language. Therefore, the interpreter cannot be expected to have the same expertise as the service provider themselves. That is the reason why we would like to highlight an interesting take on the interpreter's rights at the *Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Interpreting Service* (2004, p. 10, English source). The following three points are key concepts when working as a public service interpreter, stressing that familiarity with domains does not imply possessing key expertise in them (2.5-2.6), but also stressing needs for aftercare (2.7):

*2.5 To be an interpreter - not a doctor, social or community worker, secretary etc.*

*2.6 Not to be expected to be an 'expert' on medical or cultural issues.*

*2.7 Aftercare: To get aftercare support, particularly when cases are particularly distressing or difficult. As with other professionals working in the health and social services, interpreters will have the right to aftercare following difficult assignments.*

##### 1.4.1.2. Self-assessment of competences

An interpreter should be able to assess their own competences for an interpreting assignment. Different guidelines of countries such as Croatia, Finland, Portugal and the UK to name a few, agree that if an interpreter does not have sufficient knowledge of the topic of the assignment or

on the appropriate terminology, they must refuse the assignment. The interpreter must be capable of making an adequate self-assessment of their own competences.

On this topic, a Finnish code of ethics (The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters et al., 2006) specifies that an assignment can always turn out differently than expected. The code even illustrates this with a few examples of what could turn out differently: the subject or language deviates from what was initially agreed upon; there is a shift in terminology in the course of the interpreting assignment (special field language, jargon); or the mode of interpretation differs from what had been agreed before the start of the assignment. The document clearly states that if any of these situations occur, the interpreter should not proceed with the assignment and should discuss the issue with both parties.

#### *1.4.1.3. Preparation of the assignment*

Once the interpreter has accepted an assignment, they should prepare for the assignment. The interpreter may conduct their own research or may ask the service provider for additional information. Perspectives on this issue are reflected in a number of the codes of ethics we have examined.

The Finnish code of ethics (The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters et al., 2006, p. 6), for instance, suggests that the interpreter should have both parties' contact information to be able to contact them if they need additional information on the context of the interview. The document clarifies that "[i]t is in the best interests of both the commissioner and the client that the interpreter prepares for the interpreting situation". An assignment for which the interpreter cannot adequately prepare should be declined. In the case of court interpreting, the Irish code (Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association, 2005) highlights that relevant documents that are to be used in court, should be transferred to the interpreter in advance.

Moving on to the assignment itself, the *Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Interpreting Service* (2004, p. 17) has an interesting approach on the conduct of a pre-interview. The code of ethics states that some time could be set aside before the assignment to bring the interpreter up to speed on the history of the case. This 'pre-interview' as referred to in the document can be requested by the practitioner but also by the interpreter. Because this is indeed something several codes agree on: "Information improves meaningful interpreting."

#### 1.4.1.4. *Cultural background*

During the assignment, an interpreter has to consider a wide range of aspects, including the cultural aspect. The interpreter should be aware of the cultural background of both parties they are meant to interpret for. This value is reflected in various codes of countries such as Austria, France, Slovenia etc.

While the Finnish code (Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters et al., 2021) emphasises that the interpreter should convey a cultural message to the other party as clearly as possible, the Irish code (Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association, 2009) underlines that an interpreter should have an understanding of the cultural background of both speakers but should also be aware that they are not a cultural expert and should therefore be careful when offering cultural advice.

When a cultural barrier arises, the Swiss code (Association suisse pour l'interprétariat communautaire et la médiation interculturelle, 2016) requires the interpreter to indicate this when it leads to communication problems. The interpreter will not explain this themselves but is limited to pointing out the problem so that the speakers can sort out the situation among themselves.

The Slovene standards of practice (Pokorn et al., 2021) point out that the interpreter must be aware of cultural differences between speakers but must also continue to educate themselves on this aspect throughout their career.

Especially in the context of a country such as Italy where intercultural mediators are deployed, the cultural facet is vital. The *Codice Operativo V6* (Comune di Bologna, 2021) emphasises that the intercultural mediator should inform the interviewer of the cultural aspects they will need to take into account during the interview.

#### 1.4.1.5. *Feedback and reflection*

Once the interpreter has completed an assignment, the codes of countries such as Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland and the UK agree that there should be room for feedback.

The interpreter in the Belgian asylum context can give feedback to the asylum worker "about specific translation or interpretation-related problems and ask feedback about the purely technical aspects of the translation or interpretation task he performed" (Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, 2020, p. 18, English source).

The *French National Authority for Health* (HAS, 2017) recommends a feedback opportunity after the assignment. This is indicated to discuss the course of the conversation but specially to support the interpreter after emotionally charged conversations. This feedback moment also ensures that the interpreter is not left alone with the foreign speaker after the interview. The Italian code also stresses the importance of the latter (Comune di Bologna, 2021, p. 20). The document articulates a number of questions the interpreter might ask the interviewer: “Was the interview effective despite language and cultural difficulties? Is there anything you would have liked to have said but could not communicate during the interview? Were there any questions/words/other things you could not express or understand?” The Swiss code (Association suisse pour l’interprétariat communautaire et la médiation interculturelle, 2015) emphasises that in addition to feedback, the interpreter should also reflect on the performance they have delivered.

#### 1.4.1.6. *Duration*

On the duration of the assignment, the Irish code (Irish Translators’ & Interpreters’ Association, 2009) underlines that the assignment should not take longer than was predetermined, and if it does risk running out, the interpreter must agree to it before extending the agreed duration. Concerning breaks, certain codes of countries such as Belgium, Finland, Poland and Slovenia agree that interpreters may ask for additional breaks if necessary to carry out their duties appropriately. In asylum interviews in Belgium (Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, 2020, p. 16, English source), interpreters are entitled to have a “15-minute break after 90 minutes of interpreting, as well as a lunch break of at least 30 minutes and preferably one hour”. In the same vein, the Finnish code of ethics for community interpreters (The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters et al., 2006, p. 5, English source) indicates that “uninterrupted interpreting for more than one hour is not recommended. It is good to agree on the breaks beforehand”.

Some codes lay the responsibility of assessing duration acceptability with the interpreter. For instance, the Slovene code (Pokorn et al., 2021) stresses that the interpreter must be aware that long assignments have an impact on quality and can cause fatigue. They must therefore assess for themselves when they need a break.

#### 1.4.1.7. *Development of professional skills*

Another aspect of PSI that various codes agree on is continuous training. The codes of countries such as Czechia, France, Luxembourg and Spain to name a few, agree on the fact that an interpreter must continue developing their professional skills along their career.



The Croatian code (Marković and Korać, 2021) points out that interpreters may participate in gatherings, conferences and workshops to improve their skills, while the French guidelines of *ISM Interprétariat* (2018, p. 8) stipulate that the interpreter must be up to date on the different PSI contexts and their evolutions. The interpreter is advised to “follow the geopolitical, economic and social developments that have an impact on the various migratory flows”.

The code of ethics of the *Chamber of Court Appointed Interpreters and Translators of the Czech Republic* (2015) indicates the importance of lifelong learning, not only linguistically but also on an expertise level: the interpreter must keep track of the legal environment of both the languages they interpret for.

Finally, the Slovene code (Pokorn et al., 2021) suggests the option of consulting fellow interpreters to continue to educate themselves professionally.

#### 1.4.1.8. *Solidarity*

To finalise this section on *professionalism*, we would like to draw the attention to the solidarity facet. This final point is mostly reflected in the codes of interpreter associations across Europe. Various countries point out that interpreters must behave in a professional way towards their fellow interpreters and should support each other.

Interpreter associations such as the *German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators* (BDÜ, 2014) and the *Polish Translators Association* (STP, 2005) take this matter a step further and encourage more experienced interpreters to mentor their younger and less experienced colleagues. This should allow young professionals to develop themselves within their professional lives and to take on more responsibility in the future.

Focusing on the advertising facet, we notice that there are several approaches in the codes of ethics. When it concerns a document of an interpreters' association, we observe that the interpreter is often allowed to advertise their services, as long as the code of ethics is respected. This is for instance the case in the Portuguese code of *The Association of Translation and Interpretation Professionals* (APTRAD, n.d.). In the Swedish code of ethics of *Kammarkollegiet* (2019), however, we perceive a different perspective, stressing that a certified interpreter is not allowed to advertise their services.

#### 1.4.2. *Code of conduct*

In this part, we will focus on the basic ethics principles of public service interpreting. Under the basic ethics principles, we consider the following: confidentiality and discretion, neutrality and

impartiality, accuracy and transparency. For the analysis, we adopted the following approach: In a first round, we examined to what extent these basic ethics principles overlap. The overall conclusion is that all of them are mentioned in most of the codes of each European and EFTA country. After this initial phase, we examined to what extent the codes emphasise these ethics principles differently: Do some codes add relevant details when discussing basic ethics principles? Are there any contradictions?

#### 1.4.2.1. *Transfer of the message*

Different codes from countries such as Belgium, Croatia and Ireland, among others, agree that when an interpreter conveys a message from the source language to the target language, they ought to use the same register and intonation as the speaker. In the codes of countries such as France, Ireland and Slovenia, we note that non-verbal elements such as emotions, for example, must also be considered by the interpreter. The Swedish code of the *Kammarkollegiet* (2019, p. 3) agrees that “expressions of force and emotional expressions should not be toned down”. The Finnish code of ethics (The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters et al., 2006) is even more specific in its guidelines, and proscribes that an interpreter must be suited for face-to-face communication. This should be evidenced by their clear articulation and pleasant verbal expression.

It is expected that the interpreter conveys the message completely and without omissions from one language to another. Shocking messages, insults and untruths should also be interpreted in the same way as the original message. Yet the Irish code (Irish Translators’ & Interpreters’ Association, 2009) stresses that the interpreter should not mimic hand gestures from the speaker; after all, the interlocutor has already seen those gestures themselves.

#### 1.4.2.2. *Other tasks*

Several countries stipulate in their codes that an interpreter should limit themselves to the task of interpreting only, and should not perform any other tasks (France, Norway, Spain, Belgium, etc.). The Belgian (Flemish) code of ethics (Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering, 2017) stipulates that completing documents is not part of an interpreter's responsibilities. In the medical context, the *Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Interpreting Service* (NIHSCIS, 2016, p. 7, English source) underlines that an interpreter should not be occupied with “clients’ advocacy work, minding clients’ children or transport of clients”. The Slovene document (Pokorn et al., 2021) takes a similar approach in the medical context, stating that an interpreter is not supposed to comfort patients. The interpreter should not get involved with the patient and give them advice. Instead,

the interpreter should encourage the patient to address their questions to the medical staff. In the legal field, the interpreter will refrain from giving legal advice or personal opinions (Asociación Profesional de Traductores e Intérpretes Judiciales y Jurados, 2010).

The *Kammarkollegiet* (2019) in Sweden emphasises that the interpreter should decide for themselves which tasks they can perform parallel to the interpreting task, but should be aware that this may cause a conflict of interest in current and future assignments.

#### *1.4.2.3. Position*

Interpreters always position themselves in a triadic setup in order to be at an equal distance from both speakers. They should also position themselves in such a way that both speakers can hear them easily and that the interpreter is able to make eye contact with both parties (France, Poland, Belgium, UK). The Finnish code of ethics (The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters et al., 2006, p. 5, English source) stresses that the public service interpreter should choose such a place in the room that their safety at work is guaranteed and that there is no health risk. The code provides examples such as “aggressive clients and exposure to hazardous chemicals or infectious diseases”.

#### *1.4.2.4. Conflict of interest*

The Belgian (Flemish) code (Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering, 2017), like Germany, Italy and Luxembourg, describes that the interpreter should immediately inform their interlocutors in the case of a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest may be caused by a personal connection between the interpreter and the client as described in the Belgian document. The Swedish code specifies this by referring to close relatives, or by referring to the fact that the interpreter may be financially dependent on one of the parties (Kammarkollegiet, 2019). In any case, the assignment should be terminated immediately upon suspicion of a conflict of interest so as not to compromise the interpreter’s impartiality.

#### *1.4.2.5. Attitude*

The interpreter is required to be completely impartial. On the one hand, they should adopt a neutral stance towards the persons for whom they are interpreting and towards what they are saying. They do not judge the ideas, beliefs or choices expressed by the speaker (ISM Interprétariat, 2018). The interpreter gives the speakers the freedom to express themselves and make decisions on their own.

The *Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Interpreting Service* (NIHSSIS, 2004, p. 6, English source) adds that “the interpreter must NOT discriminate directly or indirectly on grounds of class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, national origin, political or religious beliefs, disability, martial [sic] status, having dependents or not, or age”. Additionally, the Finnish code of ethics (Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters et al., 2021, p. 6) stresses that “if certain situations are against the interpreter’s own ethics or morals, they don’t show it with gestures, with their tone of voice or choice of words”.

On the other hand, various countries agree upon the fact that interpreters should also not impose their own beliefs on their interlocutors during an assignment. This could include philosophical, political or religious beliefs.

Finally, the Belgian (Walloon) code (UMONS –FTI & SeTIS Bruxelles, 2021) raises an interesting point regarding the interpreter’s own origins. If the interpreter has a flight history of their own, they should be able to distance themselves from it during interpreting assignments. This must not affect the course of the conversation. This is a point that we barely saw reflected in the various deontological codes but is a reality in many European and EFTA countries.

### 1.5. Conclusions

This literature review has helped to identify key research findings on PSI standards, certification, and training. The reviewed literature highlights some of the pressing issues in PSI across European countries: a lack of specific training, especially for LLDs; a missing legal framework for PSI provision in most states; the absence of quality insurance systems like certification schemes, supported by common standards of practice and codes of ethics. These elements are considered crucial for the professionalisation and the provision of PSI.

PSI is a type of interpreting that is described in the literature as particularly complex from an ethical point of view because of the asymmetrical relation between the parties. Nonetheless, it appears that the use of ad-hoc interpreters in public service settings is widespread, due to a shortage of qualified interpreters, in particular for LLDs. Research also points to the fact that public service providers tend to view interpreters as mere conduits, which makes them underestimate the types of skills needed by interpreters in this setting. The provision of interpreting services for immigrants is also often opposed to long-term integration by the media and political rhetoric.

A lack of training opportunities for public service interpreters, in particular those working in languages most in need, is seen as one of the major causes for the low professional status of PSI

and low availability of qualified interpreters. The fact that, in most European countries, training and qualification are not legally required to access the profession, is seen as one of the main reasons for the scarcity of training programmes. Low fees are also considered to make PSI training and qualification unattractive, perpetuated by the low professional status of PSI. Research also highlights the importance of standards of practice to raise the professional status of PSI, to set clear expectations among users, and inform PSI training content. Among the challenges posed by applying standards of practice and codes of ethics is the gap between theory and practice shown by empirical research. Scholars also comment on the difficulty of establishing universally valid standards that are respected across a number of settings and countries. The existence of a strong professional community is stressed in the research as a decisive factor for upholding standards of practice and codes of conduct.

Regarding training, scholars emphasise the value of offering training that is tailored to the needs and challenges of PSI settings. Recommendations include offering training for a wider variety of languages, either by organising cross-language courses or increasing the available language combinations to add LLDs. Scholars suggest also to adapt university training with content that is specific to PSI settings, as most interpreting training currently on offer in higher education focus on conference and business settings. Adding resources and role-plays based on realistic situations from the field is strongly recommended. Sharing resources via online repositories and communities of practice is also proposed. Furthermore, PSI training should cater to a wide range of trainee profiles: a variety of possible formats to achieve this aim are presented in the literature, from weekend classes to MOOCs. Finally, setting up train-the-trainer programmes appears as an urgent issue, especially for LLDs. Collaboration between academia and public service institutions is also advised to improve on-the-job training opportunities, as well as training PSI users to work with interpreters.

In asylum settings, the asymmetry between the parties is particularly evident, with high stakes involved for the applicant. Research stresses the active role often played by the interpreter, who does not comply with prescribed conduct when confronted with ethical dilemmas. This is linked in the literature with the widespread use of ad-hoc interpreters, even when qualification requirements and procedures are in place, due to the lack of qualified interpreters in LLDs. Research also points at distorted or unrealistic institutional expectations and codes of conduct that do not account for the specificities of the setting as possible causes. Scholars also point at the written, documental outcome of the mediated encounters as influencing the interpreters' performance, who participate in the entextualisation process of the applicant's voice. Scholars

recommend the development of training specific to this setting, in order to equip interpreters with the necessary skills and knowledge. Also in this setting, it is recommended to take into account the need to train interpreters in LLDs that are most needed in the arrival and reception of applicants for international protection.

Finally, in the section on guidelines some interesting perspectives were reflected on various codes of ethics, yet we note that the PSI situation in Europe is fragmented. While some countries now have a well-established PSI framework (in certain domains), most countries still face a lack of materials and guidelines. The insights acquired in the analysis will be incorporated into work package 3, where minimum standards will be developed for the European and EFTA countries. The project will aim to elaborate a set of basic principles that can be applied by public service interpreters across borders, without losing sight of the target group (LLDs speakers) and context (asylum and migration). Additionally, the identified good practices will help in shaping the training materials that will be developed in the course of work package 4. More specifically, the e-training module on deontology will benefit from the understandings gained from the analysis.

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## 2. PART II. Baseline study and needs analysis on Languages of Limited Diffusion

## 2.1. Introduction of LLD report

In recent years, the increased number of migrants and asylum seekers in Europe has represented enormous challenges in many fronts, including access to public services and resources. Given the crucial role language plays in communication, both language and interpreting are key elements throughout the whole migration process and subsequent integration. However, as immigrants hail from all around the world, the number of languages needed to provide appropriate assistance and access to services is staggering.

Within this context, the sheer number of languages needed poses great challenges at an organizational level, which is even more difficult when considering how these languages are distributed in terms of speakers. Indeed, some languages are spoken more than others and usually, they are better covered by interpreting services, as they are deemed to have a higher degree of usefulness and importance. Under these circumstances, there is a lack of appropriate services being offered for speakers of less spoken languages, also known as languages or limited diffusion or languages of lesser diffusion (LLD). Part II of the present report will explore this topic, as a better understanding of LLDs will serve as a stepping stone to provide better services to those in need.

## 2.2. Methodology of LLD literature and guidelines review

There are myriad ways in which languages can be categorised, be it according to their inherent structure or geographical location. Each category highlights different aspects and tends to be used within a specific field, although some are more widespread than others and are commonly used in diverse areas. In the case of LLDs, this specific term appears to be mostly confined to the field of translation studies, and it still remains a rather unexplored topic. In researching for this overview, the search words “languages of limited diffusion” and “languages of lesser diffusion” bore few results and it became quickly apparent that the most fruitful way of finding academic literature, as well as grey literature and country-specific guidelines on the matter, would be snowball sampling.

We used both academic literature and grey literature, as well as national guidelines, codes and country reports for this survey. The texts used to begin with the snowball sampling for the academic literature were either texts containing the term LLD in the title, or texts already known to us that dealt with the topic. Different specialised databases were used as a start, for example BITRA (Bibliography of Translation and Interpreting) or translation studies encyclopedias and

handbooks with introductory entries on different fields of Public Service Interpreting, but especially the University of Vienna's search engine. The main topics of interest for the snowball sampling were Community Interpreting in a European context, interpreting for refugees or asylum seekers, interpreting for rare languages, training members of the community as interpreters, and training of Community Interpreters for minority languages. After careful reading and sorting out the texts, 30 academic texts were used for this report, although some grey literature was read and helped us better understand how the term LLD is used and contextualised.

As for the 30 texts reviewed for this report, most of them are concerned with training programs and offer both an overview and a review of the programs and its methods. In many cases, a survey was conducted and analyzed (Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Hlavac, et al., 2012; Lai & Mulayim, 2013), aimed not only at the interpreters themselves but also at the instructors. The perception and opinion of everyone involved was taken into consideration in most texts and so, some of them were also based on interviews. In a general sense, the texts reviewed were rather practical in nature, while none of them were entirely theoretical. For this report, the texts were annotated using Mendeley Reference Manager and the relevant information was organised using a set of categories and subcategories, which can be seen in Figure 1.

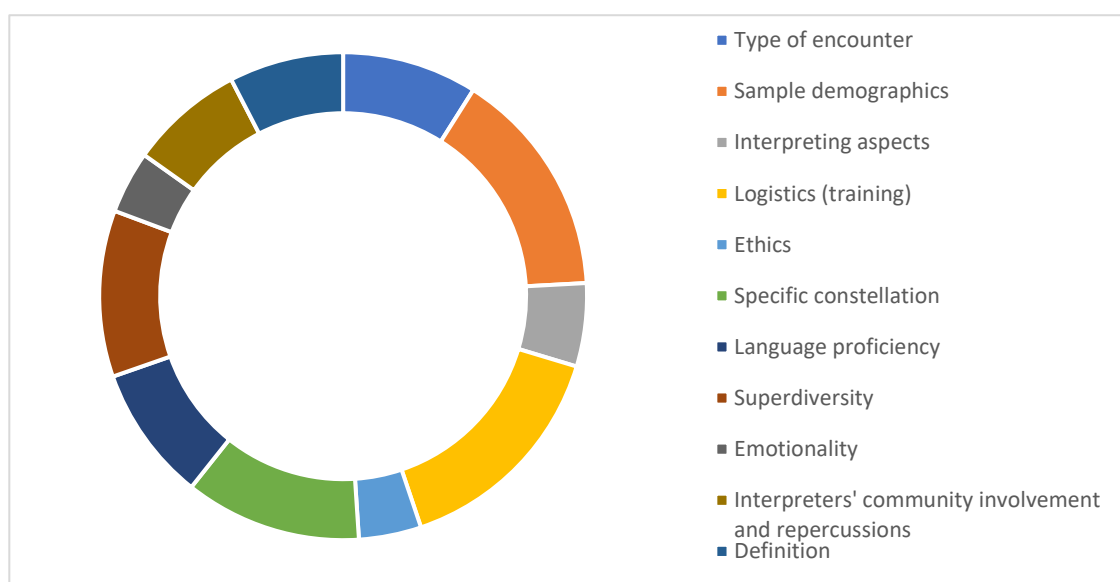


Figure 1: Main categories.

The categories were then grouped and summarised for the report, and as was briefly mentioned above, the term LLD is associated with just a few key areas within translation studies, and it does not appear to be consistently used, even within the field. As it happens, LLD is used synonymously or alongside terms like rare languages, emerging languages, exotic languages, lesser-used

languages, or even minority languages, among others. Indeed, some LLDs, if not most, might fit the definition for all those categories, but it is important to delimit and dive deeper into a definition of LLDs, without resorting to other vaguer terms.

For the review of national guidelines, codes, and country reports, a list with all EU countries, EFTA countries, and the UK was compiled, in order to distribute the research for each country into all partner universities. The research itself revolved around answering a series of questions meant to shed some light on the general landscape of public service interpreting (PSI), video-mediated interpreting (VMI), and LLDs, and each partner university provided all answers for their assigned countries. In those countries where no team member could speak the language, colleagues from those countries were contacted and in need, the relevant documents were automatically translated, with the purpose of determining the usefulness in answering the questions posed. Then, each individual partner revised the answers provided by each partner university and integrated them into their final report, thus dividing the information once more into the three main strands of research.

### 2.3. LLD Literature review

#### 2.3.1. Definition: Languages of Limited Diffusion

As was briefly mentioned above, LLDs are languages with a relatively small number of speakers, but perhaps its most important characteristic is that they are confined to a specific location and context, making it hard to generalise and apply the term to a wider geographical area (Gentile, 1993; Giambruno, 2014a; Skaaden & Wadensjö, 2014; Salaets, Balogh, & Van Schoor, 2016a; Gany et al., 2017). This being the case, a LLD might be the official language in a small country or be widely spoken in a specific location, while simultaneously having few speakers in another geographical area (Mikkelsen, 1999; Gany et al., 2017). LLDs are completely dependent of their particular context to be considered a LLD and are in constant flux, with any language being a potential LLD in a different location or a different time (Whyatt & Pavlović, 2021). It is by no means an absolute category and it is applicable to greatly variable groups of speakers, for instance recent immigrants, Indigenous peoples, refugees, or even long-established immigrant communities that still struggle to find appropriate interpreting services (Giambruno 2014a; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Salaets, Balogh, & Van Schoor, 2016b; Gany et al., 2017). Indeed, the lack of interpreting services seems to be transversal to most LLDs, as there are not many professional interpreters, if any, and there are few training options available, as well as few eligible trained teachers (Mikkelsen 1999; Skaaden & Wadensjö, 2014; Driesen, 2016; Salaets, Balogh, & Van Schoor, 2016a). As it is often

the case, LLDs rarely spread outside of their communities and have few non-native speakers, with the added caveat that they tend to be oral languages with few written resources, often lacking a standardised variety or an established terminology (Driesen, 2016; Salaets, Balogh, & Van Schoor, 2016a; Zekhnini, 2016; Whyatt & Pavlović, 2021).

Having said that, it is worth highlighting that LLDs do not necessarily fulfill all the criteria mentioned above, it just so happens that many of them share the same characteristics. Which criteria are considered relevant will depend on each particular research question and in fact, the topic is approached distinctly in both translation and interpreting. Whereas papers about LLDs in the field of interpreting tend to focus on the challenges of training or the specificities of a defined location, papers on translation and LLDs often focus on European languages and directionality, defining LLDs within a global scale rather than a particular limited context (Kufnerová, 1991; Pokorn, 2008; Pavlović, 2010; Pavlović, 2013; Whyatt & Kościuczuk, 2013; Štefková, 2020; Horcas-Rufián, 2022). To be sure, the scope of this project is limited to the European Union and as was mentioned above, it aims to improve interpreting services for the ever-changing immigrant population.

### 2.3.2. Type of encounter, demographics, community

Due to the nature of LLDs and the needs of their speakers, interpreting services tend to take place in community settings, covering a wide range of potential scenarios such as in education, social security, community services, governmental institutions, resettlement services and of course, medical and legal settings, among others (Gentile, 1993; Sammons, 1993; Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Straker & Watts, 2003; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Rienzner, 2010; Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Kleinert, Núñez-Borja, & Stallaert, 2019). Such settings usually entail a power imbalance between the actors involved and it is made even more difficult when considering that professionals in these settings might not be used to working with interpreters or might consider them unnecessary, under the assumption that any lingua franca might suffice for effective communication (Giambruno, 2014a; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018).

As for the interpreters, it is worth remembering that usually, there is a lack of professional LLD interpreters. Many training programs have been developed throughout the world to address this very need though, and it is there that we can glean the most comprehensive information about them. To begin with, one common thread is how heterogenous the interpreters are, in terms of profession, age, level of education, backgrounds, and languages (Gentile, 1993; Michael &

Cocchini, 1997; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Straker & Watts, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Rienzner, 2010; Hlavac, Orlando & Tobias, 2012; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Kleinert, Núñez-Borja, & Stallaert, 2019). Other interesting aspect is the fact that many aspiring trainees, if not most of them, are themselves migrants, refugees, or members of the community they will interpret for, often sharing some of the same concerns or difficulties adapting to the new country, or even some of the same traumatic experiences (Sammons, 1993; Slatyer, 2006; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Rienzner, 2010; Hlavac, Orlando & Tobias, 2012; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Hale & Ozolins, 2014). As a result of this dual role, many of them already have experience working as interpreters for their communities or might even work as interpreters regularly, considering that the demand for interpreting is not sufficiently covered elsewhere (Sammons, 1993; Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Rienzner, 2010; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Kleinert, 2016).

Naturally, working as interpreters while simultaneously being part of the same communities they interpret for is not without challenges and repercussions. Since LLD communities are often small, interpreters might know their clients and conflicts of interest could arise, as well as issues dealing with confidentiality or cultural taboos (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Rienzner, 2010; Hertog, 2016). Likewise, they might feel pressure to work free of charge or advocate for the community instead of taking a more neutral role in the communication process (Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Kleinert, Núñez-Borja, & Stallaert, 2019). On the positive side, many trainees joined the training programs out of a desire to contribute to the communities they belong to, valuing the training as an opportunity to both help others and also give them a voice and visibility (Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Slatyer, 2006; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Rienzner, 2010; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Kleinert, Núñez-Borja, & Stallaert, 2019). It is clear however, that each program had its own unique constellation of aspiring interpreters and communities and whereas some candidates might feel an obligation to help their communities, other might join a program to improve their wages or have access to better career opportunities (Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Lai & Mulayim, 2010).

Of course, the different needs of each country regarding LLDs will entail different approaches, as some countries have strong interpreting systems and training opportunities while others falter in that respect. However, as mentioned already, dealing with LLD is a hurdle even where interpreting services are part of the overarching system (Giambruno, 2014b). For instance, it is sometimes the case that minimum requirements for interpreters are waived away or modified to be able to



provide any service at all, seeing the lack of qualified interpreters and training options (Giambruno, 2014b). Another way in which the recruitment of properly qualified interpreters is circumvented is simply to use a lingua franca, such as English, even if no person involved speaks it proficiently (Mikkelsen, 1999; Slatyer, 2006; Apostolou, 2012). Lastly, depending on the language combination, relay interpreting might be the only viable option, in cases where there are no interpreters proficient in both the LLD and the target language (Mikkelsen, 1999; Gany et al., 2017).

### 2.3.3. Linguistic and cultural challenges

Besides the immediate need of interpreting services, there are other aspects of LLDs that warrant a closer inspection. For one, interpreting is not always a neutral interaction, as it usually entails a power asymmetry and the power relations skew towards the dominant language (Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert, 2018; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Whyatt & Pavlović, 2021). For many language pairs, interpreting evokes a colonial past, and it is intrinsically tied to Eurocentric notions and authority, besides the fact that for some speakers the role of interpreters is considered untrustworthy due to previous bad experiences (Rienznier, 2010; Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018). Speakers of LLDs might also feel their language is a source of shame, with some languages carrying a social stigma that complicates the interaction even more (Mikkelsen, 1999; Gany et al., 2017). They might be reluctant to admit they need an interpreter or might refrain from expressing the need to communicate in their own language, even if it proves to be in their own detriment (Mikkelsen, 1999; Gany et al., 2017).

Another relevant aspect is the vast cultural differences between some language pairs, as they structure thought and express themselves in fundamentally different ways (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Kleinert, 2018). This means that in many cases, there is some lack of overlap between the underlying concepts of each language and the interpreters themselves might not be fully aware of the context they are interpreting in or be able to fully grasp some concepts (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Salaets, Balogh, & Van Schoor, 2016a; Zekhnini, 2016; Kleinert, 2018). The challenge is not only cultural of course, but also linguistic, as LLDs might simply not have any vocabulary in some areas, or it might be underdeveloped (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Salaets, Balogh, & Van Schoor, 2016a; Zekhnini, 2016). Likewise, some LLDs do not have a standardised variety, and many have a stronger oral tradition, with an only recently developed written system, or none at all (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Hlavac, Orlando, & Tobias, 2012; Skaaden &

Wadensjö, 2014). In practical terms, this means that there are neither bilingual materials nor many written resources in the LLD, and its speakers might have very strong oral skills but less developed literacy levels (Sammons, 1993; Mikkelsen, 1999; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Skaaden & Wadensjö, 2014; Salaets, Balogh, & Van Schoor, 2016a; Whyatt & Pavlović, 2021). This is surely an asset for some aspects of interpreting, although it also represents an obstacle for sight-interpreting or note taking, just to give some examples.

#### 2.3.4. Training experiences

Throughout the world, some countries and institutions have worked on interpreting programs for LLD speakers, and the different reviews of those case studies allow us to glimpse into the usual characteristics of training under the particular circumstances of LLDs. To begin with, many programs had a minimum requirement of language competency in both languages, although the requirements were sometimes lowered to ensure a specific LLD was incorporated into the program (Sammons, 1993; Mikkelsen, 1999; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Hlavac, Orlando, & Tobias, 2012; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Kleinert, 2016; Blasco Mayor, 2020). As a consequence, the language level in the dominant language among trainees was mostly irregular and a great challenge to overcome, even more so for speakers of LLDs with a stronger oral tradition. Besides language however, some programs also required candidates to have achieved a certain educational level, whereas others were more flexible and had little requirements besides sufficient language skills (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Hlavac, Orlando & Tobias, 2012; Kleinert, 2016; Blasco Mayor, 2020).

As for content, what was taught varied greatly from program to program, some of them focusing more on interpreting skills and others on contextual skills, professional practices or language skills. Overall, though, the most relevant topics discussed were the code of ethics, professional behavior and role of the interpreter, terminology development and improvement of specialised language competency, contextual knowledge about specific settings, and of course interpreting skills (Sammons, 1993; Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Straker & Watts, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Hlavac, Orlando, & Tobias, 2012; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Driesen, 2016; Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Kleinert, Núñez-Borja, & Stallaert, 2019; Blasco Mayor, 2020). These skills were mostly developed in a practical way and in general, all modes of interpreting were taught, of course depending on the settings selected (Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Niska,

2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Hlavac, Orlando, & Tobias, 2012; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Driesen, 2016; Kleinert, 2016).

The language of instruction varied greatly from program to program, but a common approach was to offer non-language-specific courses with language-specific practice, in part to cover as many languages as possible and in part due to the difficulty of finding bilingual instructors for LLDs (Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Gany et al., 2017; Blasco Mayor, 2020). In some cases, a tandem method was used, where one expert in the LLD worked with an interpreting instructor in order to provide feedback and guidance for all aspects of their performance (Michael & Cocchini, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Straker & Watts, 2003; Driesen, 2016). Of course, that approach is not feasible for all training programs and when that was the case, most relied on peer-feedback to account for accuracy and equivalence in the LLD (Mikkelsen, 1999; Slatyer, 2006).

After completion of the courses, in most cases there was some sort of final examination, sometimes officially recognised by each country or accompanied by a certification or diploma (Sammons, 1993; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Kleinert, 2016; Blasco Mayor, 2020). Unsurprisingly, both the final exam and the subsequent recognition varied greatly from program to program, depending mostly on the general situation of interpreting in each country and the LLDs in question.

Here, it is worth highlighting that many programs are relatively short and, in most cases, last a couple of months, at most (Sammons, 1993; Penney & Sammons, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1999; Straker & Watts, 2003; Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2003; Slatyer, 2006; Niska, 2007; Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Hlavac, Orlando, & Tobias, 2012; Lai & Mulayim, 2013; Hale & Ozolins, 2014; Kleinert, 2016; Kleinert & Stallaert, 2018; Kleinert, Núñez-Borja, & Stallaert, 2019; Blasco Mayor, 2020). Under those circumstances, it is not realistic to expect interpreters to achieve extraordinary levels of interpreting abilities at first, even though the training might give them the necessary tools to improve eventually (Sammons, 1993; Hale & Ozolins, 2014). For some specific training tips, the NCIHC has a compiled list of useful information, available on their website (National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, n.d.).

#### [2.4. LLD Guidelines, codes, reports](#)

Of course, there is a high degree of variation within the European Union itself and each individual country will have different needs in terms of interpreting. In revising existing guidelines, codes of

conduct, and the general landscape of interpreting for LLDs across Europe, for instance, it is interesting to note that most of the documents that were included in this survey do not mention LLDs or any other similar terms. Those countries that do mention them, in one way or another, very often reflect the general challenges and experiences mentioned above. As an example, the Austrian Association of Sworn and Court Certified Interpreters (ÖVGD, 2021) allows for speakers of non-European languages to be partially certified after passing a modified certification exam, in which the written part is omitted. Successful candidates are then recognised as legal interpreters and are not considered legal translators, which can be beneficial to those that wish to only work as interpreters. Other countries resort to similar strategies to increase the number of interpreters for LLDs, although it is an approach not applied by every country surveyed.

Another aspect to consider is that of definition, as the surveyed countries mentioning LLDs do not necessarily share the same criteria for including any given language, making it difficult to compare the approaches of each country. To give an example, the German Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ, 2022) has compiled a directory of interpreters and translators for rare languages. To qualify, a language must be offered by less than 1% of all sworn interpreters and translators, tying the rarity of the language directly to the supply but not necessarily considering the demand, not to mention the fact that many LLD interpreters do not have any type of official recognition. In comparison, in Norway there is a yearly report outlining the needs of the public sector in terms of public service interpreting (Oslo Economics, 2022). The report provides many insightful data points and information about the Norwegian landscape, and yet it only analyses reported interpreting assignments and does not consider language combination with no available interpreters, perhaps due to lack of information. Indeed, one of the challenges of LLDs is identifying them and some countries that do mention them do not necessarily list the criteria that must be met in order to be considered an LLD.

Once again, it is important to remember that there is no single definition applicable to all contexts and that being the case, it is difficult to draw parallels between countries when their definitions or thresholds are dissimilar. It must also be said that even within a single country there might be several ways of determining the rarity of a language, as explained by Jääskeläinen (2022) when writing for the Austrian Interpreters' and Translators' Association. She mentions how there are different approaches to classifying a language as exotic, and each definition highlights different aspects that might be relevant within the specific context. This specific definition should be taken into consideration when analyzing interpreting needs in each particular context, because otherwise the nuance of LLDs might be lost next to languages considered exotic for other reasons.

To be sure, the topic of LLDs is not as widely discussed within guidelines or codes, in contrast to PSI or VMI, perhaps due to the highly contextual and fluid nature of LLDs. However, that in itself is insightful and points towards an area of research where there is still a lot to be done.

## 2.5. Conclusions

Now, even though it is not an easy task to generalise LLDs, considering the nature of the term as explained above, it seems clear that there are barely any professional interpreting services offered for speakers of those languages. As a result, ad hoc practices are prevalent and LLD speakers might not be getting appropriate access to available services. However, there are many challenges that arise when addressing the subject, some of them of practical nature and some others relating to language or cultural practices, among others.

The practical challenges have to do mostly with the difficulty of providing sufficient coverage for a great number of languages, as well as finding suitable candidates, trainers, and training material, not to mention that awareness about the importance of interpreting must also be raised outside of the field, so that qualified interpreters are seen as valuable assets. On the other hand, cultural and linguistic differences make for great challenges to overcome during training, i.e., different worldview or languages with a strong oral tradition, as well as imparting a greater understanding of the role of the interpreter, since many trainees have experience already and might need to readjust their way of understanding their role. Also important is the challenge interpreters face when they themselves are part of the community, as they must navigate cultural ties and relationships with their clients, as well as potential retraumatizing experiences.

To tackle some of these challenges, greater intercultural awareness might help guide interpreters to a more effective practice, helping them overcome some of the biases they might carry as well as providing the tools to further develop their linguistic skills. As for the practical side, courses taught in tandem with an interpreting and a LLD expert proved to be useful as a way of addressing the lack of qualified trainers, as well as relay interpreting for those cases where there was no suitable candidate for a language pair.

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### 3. PART III. Research report of existing needs, minimum standards and medium-specific challenges of VMI

### 3.1. Introduction of VMI report

Since 2015, Europe has experienced a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers seeking international protection. Despite the EU's efforts to develop a Common European Approach to Migration and Asylum, many challenges remain regarding the access of non-EU nationals to basic services and resources. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in access to social services, and language barriers are one of the main barriers to accessing basic social services.

Against this backdrop, WP2 of the EU-WEBPSI project was aimed at conducting a baseline study and needs analysis in relation to the project's aims and objectives. Part III of the present deliverable focuses on **current practices, minimum standards and needs in relation to video-mediated interpreting (VMI)**, with a view to their transferability to the refugee and asylum context. Specifically, **the aim of the workstream reported in Part II was to map VMI-specific needs, medium-specific challenges of VMI and current minimum standards for VMI in Europe when used in public service settings**, as emerging from relevant academic literature, practice-based reports and guidelines.

Our review of VMI literature including practice reports and VMI guidelines was inspired by a realist approach to synthesising and evaluating evidence (Hewitt et al., 2012). In particular, we used the guiding questions formulated in the realist approach as a framework for identifying and assessing the main findings regarding the adoption of VMI in the public sector:

1. **For whom** will VM work and not work in public service settings, and why?
2. **In what (specific) contexts** will VMI work and not work in public service settings, and why?
3. What are the main **mechanisms** by which we expect VMI to work in public service settings?
4. If VMI works in public service settings, what **outcomes** will we see?

### 3.2. Methodology of VMI literature and guidelines review

Consistent with the principles of the realist approach to analysing and synthesising related work, our search for relevant literature and similar materials was open to various types of evidence, such as academic literature, reports from practitioners, public-sector and industry organisations, and existing guidelines, recommendations, and codes of conduct. However, we established the following **exclusion and inclusion criteria** to ensure that the selected publications are of relevance

to the aims of this project. Studies that cover sign language, conference and telephone interpreting were thus excluded to maintain the focus on video-mediated interpreting in public service settings. A similar approach was adopted for the review of the VMI Guidelines, and we selected the guidelines relevant to VMI (see Chapter 3.4 of this report), excluding guidelines that address aspects specific to sign language, conference and telephone interpreting.

Inclusion	Exclusion
Academic and non-academic resources (studies, evaluation reports, guidelines, recommendations, standards, practice reports)	Sign language interpreting, Conference interpreting, Telephone interpreting
VMI in the public sector (healthcare, education, immigration, legal), comparative studies (VMI versus face-to-face/in-person interpreting)	

**We carried out a keyword search** on a number of databases and journals including various terms and combination of terms used to describe video-mediated interpreting setting a start date of 2010. The keywords searched included: “remote interpreting”, “video interpreting”, “distance interpreting”, “videoconference interpreting”, “video mediated interpreting”, “remote interpretation”, “video interpretation”, “distance interpretation”, “videoconference interpretation”, “video mediated interpretation”. A snowballing effect also occurred when reviewing the academic literature. As a result, we also included older studies on VMI that were mentioned repeatedly: for example, the seminal work, albeit on VMI in conference interpreting settings, by authors Moser-Mercer (2005), Mouzourakis (2006), Roziner and Shlesinger (2010). Furthermore, this review includes findings from the European-funded projects AVIDICUS 1-3<sup>4</sup> and SHIFT in Orality<sup>5</sup>, which focused on VMI and VMI training in various public service settings. The respective websites were checked for main findings and reports in case some did not appear in the previous searches.

The results of the keyword and the snowball search were assessed manually and a final selection of 93 relevant entries for the literature review and 30 entries for the guidelines review were collated in a bibliography and reviewed for the purposes of this report.

<sup>4</sup> <http://wp.videoconference-interpreting.net/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://site.unibo.it/shiftinorality/en>

We conducted a systematic search of previous academic studies and other relevant work, such as evaluation reports, guidelines and recommendations for VMI in the public sector. The search for academic studies was limited to studies published in English. However, as practice-based documents, especially guidelines, often target local/national providers and users of interpreting services and are not necessarily available in English, the search for these documents was broadened to the languages we were able to cover in the project consortium (e.g., German, Finnish, Norwegian, Czech, Dutch, Italian and Polish).

**We consulted the following databases and other sources:**

- CINAHL
- Érudit
- Google
- Google Scholar
- JSTOR
- PubMed
- Scopus
- Web of Science

We consulted journals not only dedicated to interpreting studies but also from related fields such as medicine and law:

- Annals of Emergency Medicine
- British Journal of General Practice
- FITISPOS International Journal (FITISPOS-IJ)
- Hospital Pediatrics
- International Journal for the Semiotics of Law
- International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting
- Interpreting
- Journal of Pragmatics
- Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare
- Modern Healthcare
- Patient Education and
- Revista Tradumatica
- SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation
- Telemedicine and e-Health
- The International Journal of Interpreter Education (IJIE)

- The Journal of General Internal Medicine
- The Translator
- Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS)

The labels used for VMI vary across the literature consulted for these reviews. **We will continue to use video-mediated interpreting (VMI) as an umbrella term** covering all configurations of interpreting transmitted via video feed and, depending on the distribution of participants, we will use terms as follows (Braun, 2018):

- Video remote interpreting (VRI) when all primary participants are co-located and the interpreter is remote/offsite, connected via video;
- Videoconference interpreting – A (VCI-A) when the interpreter is co-located with the authority/the speaker of the host country's language;
- Videoconference interpreting – B (VCI-B) when the interpreter is co-located with the end users/the participant who does not (or not sufficiently) speak/understand the host country's language;
- Fully remote/fully virtual when all primary participants and the interpreter are separated from each other.

### 3.3. VMI Literature review

#### 3.3.1. Overview

We adopted a **category-based approach** to analysing the literature. The categories for the VMI-related review were:

- **Type of encounter** (settings, genre, complexity)
- **Study design**: broadly, e.g. survey-based, interview-based, observation-based
- **Sample**: demographics of the sample: e.g. interpreters, others; sample size; experience of participants with interpreter-mediated communication, with RI: including exposure, training
- **Physical environment**: Equipment, technical set-up (e.g. number, position of screens) and facilities
- **Configuration**: distribution of participants incl. interpreter
- **Visual ecology**: positioning, organisation of the space, visual aspects (how are participants seen/displayed)

- **Interactional aspects:** communication management, turn-taking, embodied communication.
- **Key findings:** challenges, benefits, needs and requirements.

The corpus reviewed in this section (Part 2) consists of works that investigate VMI in healthcare settings (n = 46), legal settings (n=36), and/or the public sector in general (n=10). Only a small number of publications (n = 5) examine the use of VMI in asylum and immigration settings. Because of the differences in terms of VMI uses, challenges and needs between the medical and the legal field, we have divided this chapter into two main sections i.e. VMI in legal settings 3.3.2) which includes asylum and immigration settings and *Video-mediated interpreting in healthcare settings* (see section 3.3.3).

### 3.3.2. VMI in legal settings

#### 3.3.2.1. Recent trends

**Limited use before the COVID-19 pandemic:** Before the beginning of the pandemic, VMI was used mostly for short and simple proceedings because its additional challenges compared to in-person interpreting in legal settings made it unsuitable for more complex hearings (Braun, 2013, 2017, 2018; Fowler, 2013; Davitti and Braun, 2020; de Cotret et al., 2021; Hale et al., 2022). A lack of suitable technology to integrate interpreters, i.e. a separate channel for the interpretation which would facilitate simultaneous interpreting, also seemed to be a contributing factor to the limited use of VMI (Braun et al., 2018).

**More diversity in VMI configurations since the pandemic:** The pandemic led to a sharp increase in fully remote hearings, alongside various hybrid configurations, requiring both VRI and VCI (Braun and Hieke, 2022). In the UK, for example, longer hearings and trials were heard via bespoke online platforms such as the Cloud Video Platform (Clark et al., 2021), and in the US via Zoom (Vavonese et al., 2021). In the UK, this led to the development of a new videoconferencing platform by the Ministry of Justice - Remote Hearing Services – for situations in which all parties are remote. The platform now allows for the use of a separate virtual booth so that the interpreter can work in simultaneous mode, which has its benefits in longer stretches of speech that are mostly one-directional (Fowler, 2013; Hale et al., 2022; Singureanu et al., 2021). However, the issue of breaks for all participants (Clark, 2021) and particularly for interpreters who would be working in simultaneous mode remains unresolved. Furthermore, there are currently differing reports on the usability of the separate virtual room / booth such as the sound quality not being always adequate (Braun and Hieke, 2022) which can be particularly problematic for interpreters



working in simultaneous mode. A wealth of research suggests that interpreters become tired faster in VMI and recommends appropriate breaks or the use of VMI for shorter assignments (Braun, 2020, 2017; Moser-Mercer, 2005; Roziner and Shlesinger, 2010).

**Views about remote hearings largely unchanged post-pandemic:** However, despite these developments since the beginning of the pandemic, the views regarding the suitability of remote hearings remain largely unchanged. Researchers in the legal field recommend using remote hearings for proceedings that are likely to be less contested (Grieshofer, 2022). Adopting a similar view, members of the judiciary feel that fully remote hearings are suited only for procedural and case management hearings: directions hearings, short application hearings of up to two hours, straightforward claims and case reviews. (Clarke, 2021). This has implications for the use of VMI in legal settings, making it suitable for shorter, less complex proceedings.

**Some uses and applications of fully remote hearings considered suitable:** For example, such hearings were piloted in the UK in 2018 for tax, property and employment tribunals ('Video Hearings Service') with positive results; however, the pilot study did not include interpreters (Rossner and McCurdy, 2018). Furthermore, in the UK claimants have found civil cases being heard online (with all parties being remote) less intimidating than attending court in person (Clarke, 2021). However, the suitability of such hearings when they involve interpreters and court participants who are not proficient in the court's official language has not yet been systematically investigated.

**New interfaces:** As a notable development after the pandemic, new interfaces for video hearings were designed to replicate the formality of court and tribunal proceedings. As highlighted above, some of these allow for simultaneous interpreting (Clark, 2021). This is more time-efficient for all parties and replicates how interpreters traditionally work in in-person hearings. However, the use of these platforms with interpreters has not yet been systematically evaluated.

### *3.3.2.2. Uses and benefits of VMI configurations in legal settings*

**Practical benefits for justice sector institutions are the main driver of videoconferencing in legal settings:** In many European countries the main driver for the use of video links in legal proceedings has been the practical benefits arising for justice sector institutions, rather than benefits for interpreters or individual court participants (Braun et al., 2018). An exception to this is perhaps the use of video links to enable vulnerable witnesses, including victims or minors to give evidence as a special protection measure (Braun, 2018). However, video links and especially the different VCI configurations (VCI-A and VCI-B) have also been used widely in many European

countries to link other witnesses to court hearings including trials, and defendants to court hearings (mainly to pre-trial hearings). Police forces and prosecutors have used video links for similar purposes. These video links have often been characterised as challenging rather than beneficial for both the court users (witnesses, defendants) and interpreters (e.g. Ellis, 2004; Licoppe et al., 2018; see 3.3.2.2). The VRI configuration was less common in legal proceedings in Europe before the pandemic, but the London Metropolitan Police has used it to connect interpreters to police interviews for several years.

**Special provisions needed for vulnerable witnesses:** Research shows that special provisions are needed for the location and integration of an interpreter when a vulnerable witness requires interpretation. Ideally, the interpreter and the witness should be co-located (**VCI-B**) in these situations, as it allows for a better rapport and backchanneling between the witness and the interpreter (Miler-Cassino and Rybinska, 2012; Balogh and Salaets, 2019). The VCI-B configuration was found to be common in hearings of vulnerable witnesses across Europe (Braun et al., 2018).

**Separation of interpreter from minority-language speaker in some VCI configurations:** In contrast to the situation with vulnerable witnesses, configuration **VCI-A** is often used when defendants are linked to court (Braun et al., 2018; Singureanu, 2021). It can be beneficial for defendants, who no longer need to travel to court (Fowler, 2013) and sometimes it is the best option for defendants in high profile cases regarding organised crime or terrorism (Sanders, 2020). However, this configuration entails a separation of defendants/witnesses from the interpreter.

**Benefits of some VCI configurations:** VCI can reduce travel and associated costs for all parties, including interpreters (Ellis, 2004; Davis et al., 2015). When working in VCI-A, interpreters have also reported feeling safer as a result of not having to go to prison and work from there (Davis et al., 2015).

**Issues with VRI:** VRI leads to a separation of the interpreters from all other participants. The most important advantage of VRI is that it can improve access to qualified interpreters (Amato et al., 2018; Clark, 2021; Vavonese, et al.), whilst also offering more work opportunities to interpreters (Alley, 2012).

### *3.3.2.3. VMI challenges in legal settings*

The use of videoconferencing in legal settings has been met with some criticism mainly revolving around the human factor. According to research studies and government evaluation reports, legal practitioners raise important **issues such as fairness of the proceedings** that can impact outcomes

for their clients (Ellis, 2004; Davis et al., 2015; Gibbs, 2017; Napier et al., 2018; Clark, 2021). Legal representatives, in particular, are concerned by a lack of meaningful engagement of litigants, with studies showing it negatively impacts outcomes: immigration cases adjudicated via video link (initial proceedings, not trials) are more likely to result in removal of applicants (Eagly, 2015; Eagly et al., 2018).

Litigants appear to take the same view perceiving remote hearings in immigration adjudication proceedings as being unfair and illegitimate (Eagly, 2015), although, in this study, the interpreter was also remote and sometimes only on speakerphone. We suggest such makeshift solutions are inadvisable due to the lack of visual access and poor quality of sound for both the interpreter and the litigant.

**The use of VCI in immigration or extradition hearings** has raised numerous concerns. In the VCI-A configuration, the credibility of the litigant appears to be compromised, whilst being crucial to their case, as litigants rely predominantly on their stories with little factual evidence or documents to support their claim (Ellis, 2004; Licoppe, 2015; Licoppe and Veyrier, 2017). VCI-A can make the claimant appear less trustworthy (Ellis, 2004), leading to incorrect decisions. To remedy this, VCI-A needs to be followed by in-person hearings so that the court or judge could have a chance to meet the litigant in person.

When the interpreter was not co-located with the claimant, this led to **problems with turn-taking** and a **lack of rapport**, which could also affect procedural fairness. Interestingly, one study found that legal representatives had a preference for the interpreter to be co-located with them and the litigant to avoid frequent pausing (Ellis, 2004).

The way the interpreter manages the communication flow also impacts the defendant's credibility; when the interpreter's turn-taking technique is overt or explicit during long turns, it can lead to negative inferences regarding the asylum seeker (Licoppe and Veyrier, 2020). Less disruptive strategies would be for the interpreter to use gaze or to speak over the respective interlocutor as a cue for turn-taking. This would presuppose the interpreter to be co-located with the asylum seeker, as in VCI-B. Interpreters need to be aware of the importance of smooth turn-taking in adversarial settings to avoid potential negative inferences that the asylum seeker is uncooperative (Licoppe and Veyrier, 2020).

Furthermore, these proceedings can be emotionally challenging, and there is a **risk of psychological distancing in video hearings**. In other words, emotional information does not come through in video hearings (Ellis, 2004); furthermore, in VCI-A – a configuration used frequently in

France (Licoppe, 2015) and the UK (Rowe et al., 2019) – interpreters may struggle to read and convey emotional cues.

Perhaps even more concerning are examples of unqualified interpreters (VCI-A) offering incomplete renditions or summarised versions (at the request of the judge). On the backdrop of a questionable detention system with no time limit, the use of VCI-A can have a significant detrimental impact on remote defendants, raising questions of procedural justice (Khan, 2019; Rowe et al., 2019).

A further prominent challenge in fully remote hearings was the **lack of prior contact between participants** as it would naturally occur during onsite hearings. With no opportunities for private consultations in fully remote hearings (Vavonese et al., 2021; Clark, 2021), the interpreter would also have no detailed knowledge of the matter before the virtual court. As previously mentioned, this can affect the performance of the interpreter. Providing the interpreters ‘with basic information (e.g. jurisdiction and hearing type) about the hearing’ (Clark, 2021) has been recommended by government guidelines, but this would not be sufficient to help interpreters perform optimally.

Moreover, the judiciary and legal representatives have found that fully remote hearings led to **increased fatigue and lower concentration levels** (Clark, 2021). Notably, Judges felt unable to manage difficult defendants when these defendants were remote, feeling forced to mute them and leading to ethical dilemmas of procedural fairness (Clark, 2021). Furthermore, legal professionals agree that videoconferencing is not considered a good option for people with mental or cognitive disabilities (Davis et al., 2015).

The way participants interact with technology and **technical aspects** such as sub-standard equipment represents another important factor of VMI having a direct impact on how efficient and effective the interaction is perceived to be. **Technological literacy** is an important aspect and VMI can put some interpreters and other participants at a disadvantage if they are not tech-savvy, leading to disruptions or delays in the proceedings (Vavonese et al., 2021). Therefore, all court staff need to be up to date with how to use the equipment and software for remote hearings (Eagly et al., 2015; Clark, 2021).

Technical challenges in all configurations can be caused by **poor sound and image**, leading to comprehension problems for the other participants (Davies et al., 2015; Eagly, 2015; Clark, 2021) and affecting the performance of the interpreter (Alley, 2012; Braun, 2018; Pastor et al., 2020; Hale et al., 2022). When technical problems occur, they cannot always be resolved easily,

distracting legal professionals from the task at hand and sometimes leading to adjournments (Clark, 2021; Davis et al., 2015) or remote hearings being rescheduled as physical hearings (Davis et al., 2015; Rossner and McCurdy, 2018).

Furthermore, participants do not always have a good view of each other because of the **positioning of the equipment** i.e. the camera and screens at both ends, leading to an incongruent visual ecology (Licoppe and Veyrier, 2017; Braun, 2018). As a result, it is not clear whose speech the interpreter is conveying (Braun, 2020; Fowler, 2018; Licoppe and Verdier, 2013; Licoppe and Veyrier, 2017), which can lead to comprehension problems for the remote defendant. One particular limitation of VCI that the judiciary has highlighted is a loss of the courtroom's formality (Clark, 2021; Davis et al., 2015), which was considered particularly important in criminal proceedings (Clark, 2021).

Technical issues and limitations are often interlinked with **logistical difficulties**. Judges and court clerks found it difficult to simultaneously focus on courtroom interaction camera management and screen-mediated ecology (Licoppe and Veyrier, 2017). Particularly in VCI-A, the defendants' attempts to intervene were missed by the other participants, including the interpreter leading to a potential loss of information (Braun, 2019; Ellis, 2004; Fowler, 2016). As defendants appear less likely in VCI-A to ask for clarification compared to in-person hearings, because they would be interrupting the whole court process, this further reinforces their sense of alienation mentioned earlier (Devaux, 2018; Khan, 2019; Rowe et al., 2019). These are also some of the reasons why VCI-B was preferred over VCI-A in proceedings where defendants / litigants are (cross)examined or questioned, as it allowed for a better rapport and backchanneling between the defendant and the interpreter (Miler-Cassino and Rybinska, 2012; Davis et al., 2015).

Furthermore, in VCI-A, the **interaction between client and legal representative** has been found to be limited because of a shortage of videoconferencing booths: the consultations in prison video links are short, or they do not occur, or if they do, there is not always enough space for both the lawyer and the interpreter, making the communication very difficult (Fowler, 2017; Singureanu, forthcoming). This can have implications for the interpreter, as they are less likely to be briefed about the case in the absence of consultations in prison-court video links. A setting that would be more conducive to briefing is VCI-B, where the legal representative is co-located with the litigant and the interpreter. However, this configuration is less used in the UK than in other jurisdictions in Europe and the US (Ellis, 2004; Balogh and Hertog, 2012; Licoppe and Verdier, 2013). A lack of briefing can negatively impact the interpreters' performance (Balogh and Salaets, 2019; Khan, 2019; Braun, 2020; Pastor et al., 2020; Clark, 2021).

**VMI has also been used in police interviews with mixed results.** In one VRI study, where interpreters had a good view of the speaker, high quality of sound (ensured by headsets with microphones being used by all parties) and the possibility of using simultaneous mode due to the additional equipment, no significant differences in terms of the quality of interpreting were found between in-person interpreting and VRI (Hale et al., 2022), but an earlier study found significant differences in many aspects of interpreting quality, with VRI leading to lower quality (Braun, 2013), which did not considerably improve in a follow-up study that used better equipment and was conducted after the interpreters had received training (Braun, 2014). Similarly, other experimental studies also found that VCI-B was deemed less suitable by police officers, as they felt they had less control of the interaction (Balogh and Hertog, 2012).

#### *3.3.2.4. VMI training needs in legal settings*

When not qualified, interpreters struggle with longer chunks of information and communication management, leading to incomplete and inaccurate renditions (Fowler, 2018, 2013). This indicates that **qualified, experienced interpreters are more likely to cope better with the challenges of VMI**. However, even when interpreters have experience with or training in VMI (Devaux, 2017; Albl-Mikasa and Eingrieber, 2018; Braun, 2018; Skaaden, 2018; Braun, 2020; Hale et al., 2022), they still have difficulties with managing longer turns, the issue of reduced social presence, checking comprehension at the other end (Braun 2013, 2014, 2020; Fowler, 2017) and screen monitoring (Fowler, 2013). Research indicates that qualified and trained interpreters are more likely to intervene and ask for clarification or repetitions potentially to compensate for the lack of presence (Braun, 2017). There is also evidence that interpreters' general confidence level may also play a role in how they intervene in VMI to highlight turn taking difficulties (Singureanu et al., 2022).

Thus, it appears that in VMI, certain competencies such as **note-taking and intervention techniques are particularly important** (Mellinger, 2019) but also more challenging, as they require a continuous balancing act; interpreters also need to avoid disrupting the communication flow with too many interventions (Braun, 2017; Skaaden, 2018). Additionally, note-taking can distract interpreters from monitoring the screen (Balogh and Hertog, 2018).

Existing **training for VCI and VRI in legal settings consists of simulations, discussions and reflections** on the differences between in-person hearings and VCI or VRI (Braun *et al.*, 2012; Albl-Mikasa and Eingrieber, 2018; Skaaden, 2018). This approach can increase awareness that in VMI the following aspects become problematic: perception of interlocutors via technical channels,

absence of visual cues and equipment and communication management (Braun, et al., 2012). For interpreting trainees, VMI training can help them develop useful strategies for VRI: i.e. screen monitoring and turn taking skills (Braun and Davitti, 2018).

In terms of **mode of interpreting**, the consecutive mode currently appears to be the most common mode in VMI in legal proceedings. However, the simultaneous mode can be used in VMI depending on the configuration: In VRI, VCI-A, and in fully remote hearings, additional sound channels are required to transmit the interpretation, whilst in VCI-B, whispered interpreting can be used, as long as the interpreter's microphone can be muted while s/he is interpreting. In the absence of equipment for simultaneous interpreting, the use of the consecutive mode is recommended for VCI-A (Singureanu, et al., forthcoming), whilst the simultaneous mode (whispered interpreting) can be used for VCI-B (Braun, et al., 2012; Fowler, 2013). Therefore, interpreters working in VMI in legal settings should be skilled in both modes of interpretation.

### 3.3.3. Video-mediated interpreting in healthcare settings

#### 3.3.3.1. Recent trends

**Evolution of VMI in healthcare settings:** In countries with large territories and dispersed populations, such as Norway, VRI (video remote interpreting) trials in community settings started as early as 1990 (Hansen, 2020). VRI has been used more widely in medical settings in countries where community interpreting is already well established, such as the US (Locatis et al., 2010, 2011; Jacobs et al., 2012; Ramos et al., 2014; Marcus et al., 2020) and Australia (Mullan, 2020; Gilbert et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2022). In the US, federal subsidies and medical insurance policies have promoted the provision of language access across the US (Jacobs et al., 2012) to address the problem of non-English-speaking patients having poorer health outcomes (Martínez et al., 2021). Notably, clients' needs have changed, and providers of VRI are now expected to guarantee security and data privacy, not just qualified interpreters (Fetterolf et al., 2019). However, there are no clear rules regarding the qualifications of interpreters (Jacobs et al., 2012), as many language service providers are not always transparent in this respect (Fetterolf et al., 2019).

**Diversity of healthcare settings using VMI (especially VRI):** VRI has been used in a multitude of healthcare settings: health and social care (Albl-Mikasa and Eingrieber, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2022), maternity services (Lindström and Pozo, 2020), emergency departments (Jacobs et al., 2012; Ramos et al., 2014), cognitive assessments (Gilbert et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2022), asylum work groups (Albl-Mikasa and Eingrieber, 2018), paediatrics (Lion et al., 2015; Anttila et al., 2017) and cancer centres (Ramos et al., 2014).



**Two types of configurations predominate in medical settings:** The most commonly used set-up is when only the interpreter is remote, and the other parties are co-located in a consultation room or ward, i.e. VRI (Lion et al., 2015; De Boe, 2016; Koller and Pöchhacker, 2018; Hansen and Svennevig, 2021; Klammer and Pöchhacker, 2021). The other set-up is when all parties are remote, connected via an online platform or videoconference network (Jacobs et al., 2012; Korak, 2012; Ramos et al., 2014; Mullan, 2020). However, the use of various VMI configurations has increased due to the rise of telemedicine and the ongoing pandemic (Haralambous et al., 2019; Mullan, 2020; Sultanić, 2020; de Cotret et al., 2021).

### *3.3.3.2. Uses and benefits of VMI in healthcare settings*

**VRI preferred to telephone remote interpreting:** As a form of remote interpreting, VRI is often preferred to telephone interpreting because it enables greater interaction between patients and physicians (Azarmina and Wallace, 2005; Locatis et al., 2010; Price et al., 2012; Lion et al., 2015). While in-person interpreting is considered the best option for encounters that involve ‘substantial educational or psychosocial components’ (Price et al., 2012, p. 230), VRI can be a useful alternative to fill a resource gap when in-person interpreting is not easily accessible at short notice (Joseph et al., 2017). Unlike in-person interpreting, VRI requires advance booking, but it has the advantage of reducing waiting times for patients who appreciate not having to wait for extended periods (Stevens et al., 2011). This has proven particularly valuable in emergency care, where bringing an interpreter on-site is often not feasible logistically (Cohen, 2019).

**High acceptance of VRI:** according to Pathak et al. (2021), VRI has been well-received by patients and doctors alike. Some studies have found that patients who have experienced both modalities (namely VRI and on-site interpreting) rate VRI as equally good (Schulz et al., 2015). Nurses have reported that VRI enables them to build rapport with patients, and that they perceive an increase in the neutrality of the interpreter compared to in person encounters (Mottelson et al., 2018). In general, VRI seems to be a good solution for straight-forward information exchange (Price et al., 2012); pharmacists, for example, reported that VRI enabled them to monitor when an interpreter was having problems with the information provided – medication in particular – (Locatis et al., 2011). More importantly, VRI allowed patients to continue using medical services safely, with video interpreting appointments having increased tenfold at the Royal Melbourne Hospital in Australia. This highlights the importance of VRI for patients with limited English who were at risk of serious illness from COVID-19 due to their inability to understand or respond to pandemic-related information (Mullan, 2020).



**Home working convenient for interpreters:** For interpreters, working from home has also proved more convenient and lucrative (Koller and Pochacker, 2018; Marshall et al., 2019), allowing them to look up terminology online during the assignment (Koller and Pochacker, 2018). Notably, interpreters working remotely from hubs felt somewhat shielded from emotional involvement (Koller and Pochacker, 2018); on the other hand, the side effect of working entirely on one's own could lead to alienation (Korak, 2012).

#### *3.3.3.3. VMI challenges in healthcare settings*

**From patients' perspectives,** the human factor appears to be the biggest barrier to feeling comfortable with the social distance created by remote interpreting (Martínez et al., 2021). Thus, some studies pointed to a broader issue of mistrust where patients may not place their trust in the interpreters; as a result, maternity nurses felt pressured into accepting informal interpreting provided by friends or relatives (Lindström et al., 2020). In a medical context, the social distance caused by VRI seems to have led to an inability for patients to engage with interpreters and healthcare providers, which, in turn, has hindered their ability to ask questions and seek clarifications when they do not understand instructions or explanations (Martínez et al., 2021). This may explain why patients who do not speak English sometimes opt for a relative to interpret for them instead of a professional interpreter: for patients, language is about meaningful interaction and not just accuracy (Lindström and Pozo, 2020; Martínez et al., 2021). Other studies found that for parents of paediatric patients, VRI could be distracting because they had to look at the interpreter on screen whilst also paying attention to the collocated medical practitioner (Locatis et al., 2011; Pöchhacker, 2014).

**From the perspective of medical practitioners,** the interactional aspects were also found to be more challenging in VRI compared to in-person interpreting. Moreover, VRI presents logistical challenges and technical issues associated with connecting to a remote interpreter, further adding to its limitations. Medical practitioners have reported several challenges with VRI, including the interpreter's (de)briefing usually occurring just before the consultation, which can be problematic in the presence of the client, especially if there was a suspected diagnosis of Alzheimer's (Gilbert et al., 2022). Additionally, medical practitioners noted they could no longer obtain additional information on the patients' culture from the interpreters, and that the decalage between the original utterance and the translated message resulted in longer pauses in turn-taking, with relevant comments being heard too late and participants speaking over one another (Korak, 2012; Skaaden, 2018). To compensate at least partially for the lack of presence, doctors tried to help the interpreter by repeating key information (Korak, 2012). Unsurprisingly, there seems to be

some consensus among medical practitioners that VRI is not recommendable for more complex situations, such as preoperative consultations, explaining certain illnesses (Korak, 2012), breaking bad news, hospice (Tam et al., 2020) and emergencies or critically ill patients (Mottelson et al., 2018).

**Technological aspects:** Technical aspects were quoted in almost every publication; however, the extent of the problem and its impact varied. Technology literacy was a challenge particularly for older physicians who had difficulties learning new technologies (Ji et al., 2021). This issue has been shown to play an important role in technology acceptance (Marcus et al., 2020) and, ultimately, could impact the uptake of VRI in medical settings. Whilst this challenge could be addressed by offering training to medical practitioners and rolling out language programmes in stages, migrants are more likely to be disadvantaged by a lack of technological or digital literacy, making them unable to access primary care services online (Knights et al., 2021).

Among the most frequently mentioned **technical challenges** associated with VRI where only the interpreter is remote, are connectivity issues or unstable connection in wards (Ji et al., 2021), poor sound feed and logistical issues such as difficulty in locating equipment, low battery power (Tam et al., 2020) and spatial limitations regarding the position of devices in emergency departments and in inpatient wards (Ji et al., 2021). In situations where all parties were remote, additional technical challenges were reported: for example, the lighting being too dark for parties to see each other well, or issues resulting from inadequate equipment, i.e., no headsets or issues with the built-in mic picking up background conversation between family members (Sultanić, 2020).

**Accessing VRI services was not always easy logistically;** ideally, the client should have access to interpreting services 24/7 and be able to easily book them via an online booking system with digital shift rotas (Albl-Mikasa and Eingrieber, 2018). In other words, the booking system and, in general, the formal policies for the use of interpreters should be adapted to the needs of medical practitioners, where time is of the essence, especially in emergency care (Lundin et al., 2018). Medical practitioners also noted that VRI seemed to lengthen the duration of consultations; however, as a trade-off, no-shows and cancellation rates among patients were lower (Haralambous et al., 2019).

**The interpreters' challenges seemed more numerous than those expressed by medical practitioners** (Price et al., 2012). Qualified interpreters, who had received university-level education, – reported feeling rushed by the speakers, having frequently intervene to signal them

to pause for the interpretation (Korak, 2012). These challenges related to communication flow management or turn-taking were observed both in studies using authentic data (Hansen, 2020; Hansen and Svennevig, 2021) and in simulations (Gany et al., 2007; Pöchhacker, 2014; Koller and Pöchhacker, 2018; De Boe, 2020), with links being found between longer turns and interpreting errors and between overlapping speech and omissions in the interpreters' renditions (De Boe, 2020). The problems with coordinating turns appear to be caused by interpreters' restricted view of the other participants (Locatis et al., 2011; Koller and Pöchhacker, 2018; Hansen and Svennevig, 2021) with certain gestures being out of the shot, and the doctors looking at the screen for turn-taking cues did not appear to be effective enough in VRI (Hansen, 2020). This could be mitigated by using a swivelling computer stand to follow the participants' movements in the examination room (Wofford et al., 2013). This indicates that with some adjustments, the incongruent visual ecology can be optimised to allow parties to see each other and for the interpreter to be able to follow complex explanations or instructions during medical examinations. Notably, some interpreters felt that videoconferencing medical interpretation was unsuitable for physical or occupational therapy and family meetings (Price et al., 2012). They found medical contexts with mental health patients and paediatric chemotherapy to be the most emotionally challenging (de Cotret et al., 2021).

In terms of **interpreting accuracy**, more experienced interpreters appeared to cope better with more complex utterances and make fewer medical errors (Gany et al., 2007a). However, accuracy also seems to be influenced by the mode of interpretation used. Thus, it was found that remote simultaneous interpreting resulted in fewer errors compared to when the consecutive mode was used, both remotely and during in-person interpreting (Gany et al., 2007a). Furthermore, simultaneous remote interpreting was also associated with increased satisfaction of physicians and patients (Gany et al., 2007b), potentially allowing for a more natural interactional dynamic between the patient and the doctor as a result of not having to pause for the interpreter. It is notable however, that the technical setup for the use of simultaneous interpreting mode has also been found to be too complex and cumbersome for the main participants, who had to wear headsets (Pöchhacker, 2014). Furthermore, interpreters need considerably more training to be able to perform simultaneous interpreting (Gany et al., 2007a); however not all community courses cover this mode of interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> As is currently the case in the UK with Level 3 community interpreting (<https://dpsionline.co.uk/community-interpreting/>)

Another training aspect that may become problematic in VRI is that **community interpreters are not commonly trained in this modality**, although the pandemic may have mitigated this by increasing their exposure to VRI (Mullan, 2020; Knights et al., 2021). Various VRI training initiatives have been implemented across Europe in countries with refugees who speak languages of limited diffusion: Germany, Austria and Switzerland (Albl-Mikasa and Eingrieber, 2018), where there was an urgent need for interpreters in these languages. These successful programmes training unqualified interpreters in VRI were based on simulations and covered general interpreting skills, ethics and aspects that were more specific to VRI: desired behaviour when working on screen, simulating mutual gaze, how to begin and conclude the session, interventions techniques and technical aspects (giving candidates access to the actual interface). Other considerations of a more practical nature, such as how interpreters' fees are set for VRI, i.e., whether or not there is a minimum charge in place, could also impact interpreters' views on VRI and how appealing this modality is for them (Albl-Mikasa and Eingrieber, 2018).

#### *3.3.3.4. VMI training needs in healthcare settings*

The needs of participants revolve mainly around **technology literacy, training and interprofessional and adopting a collaborative approach to VMI communication management**.

Evidence shows that training end-users in VMI improved their attitudes towards it (Vasquez et al., 2011). Furthermore, a collaborative approach to VMI training, i.e., cross-training medical practitioners with qualified interpreters, increased their understanding of how turn-taking can be managed in VMI (Pavill, 2019) using logical chunking (Korak, 2012) signalled verbally or non-verbally. This is an important aspect, as gaze in VMI appears to be a useful cue for turn-taking, whereas gestures are less efficient, with end-users wrongly assuming they can see each other's gestures and not realising they can be out of shot (Klammer and Pöchhacker, 2021). End users can further adjust their interactional behaviour in VMI to facilitate communication via a remote interpreter by avoiding side conversations with colleagues (Korak, 2012) and encouraging patients to ask for clarification and voice any concerns (Wilde et al., 2021).

**Training on using the platform should be flexible** and offered online for medical practitioners to improve the use of VMI (Ramos et al., 2014). However, continuous feedback from medical practitioners during and after the implementation phase of VMI is needed (Marcus et al., 2020) to ensure that policies reflect the working conditions of medical practitioners (Lundin et al., 2018). For example, offline communication before the VMI encounter could be filled by using automated translation apps (Cohen, 2019). Furthermore, to ensure patient confidentiality, a secure and

encrypted connection needs to be used for VMI encounters in medical settings (Wofford et al., 2013; Haralambous et al., 2019).

Increasing awareness of **the importance of using professional** interpreters and the potential detrimental consequences when relatives or ad hoc interpreters are used is another aspect to be covered in the training of medical practitioners (Pöchhacker, 2014; Ramos et al., 2014). This contentious aspect is addressed in other countries where medical interpreting is better established (i.e.) by hospital policies encouraging patients not to rely on relatives to interpret for them, emphasising patients have the right to be informed of the medical advice and procedures in a language they can understand by a professional interpreter at no extra cost to them (Ramos et al., 2014).

Specific training for interpreters focusing on the altered proximity–distance relationships in VMI is also required (Kletečka-Pulker et al., 2021). For example, the opening phase can be a good opportunity for interpreters to suggest adjustments to the seating arrangements and visibility (Hansen, 2020).

In terms of **VMI equipment in medical settings**, particularly for in-patient procedures and advice, its mobility, i.e., the fact that it can be easily moved from room to room (Locatis et al., 2011) or adjusted (Anttila et al., 2017), and ease of operation (Wofford et al., 2013; Marshall et al., 2019) play a big role in maximising VMI's potential (Anttila et al., 2017; Mottelson et al., 2018). At the other end, interpreters' workstations also need to be VMI ready and should include: a laptop or notebook computer, an external camera (ideally attached to the top of the screen to enhance mutual gaze), professional headsets, a microphone, a quiet place (with sound insulation) and cabled (high-speed) internet connection (Koller and Pochacker, 2018; Klammer and Pöchhacker, 2021). We suggest that stakeholders consider who will bear the equipment cost when hiring freelance interpreters instead of interpreters who work out of a language hub.

### 3.4. VMI Guidelines

#### 3.4.1. Overview

In this section we focus on reviewing examples of good practices on a range of VMI aspects that could inform future standards and protocols. Thus, we researched current VMI guidelines across various EU states to identify VMI aspects – relevant to both users of VMI and interpreters – that can impact interpreting quality standards. Whilst the literature review included only publications in English, we adopted a broader approach for the guidelines review and we included guidelines in German, Finnish, Norwegian, Czech, Dutch, Italian and Polish in order to capture current VMI practices in a number of European countries. These guidelines were translated into English with Deep-L. We mention however that this review of VMI guidelines is not meant to be exhaustive. This section is structured around the following aspects: implementations and uses of VMI; needs and obligations of participants, including users' awareness of how interpreters work; technological aspects; training and cross-training for all parties; and feedback to improve VMI.

#### 3.4.2. Implementations and uses of VMI

It is quite common for VMI to be provided by a mix of providers even within a single setting, e.g. by private interpreting agencies (e.g. in Finland<sup>7</sup>), European agencies in immigration (SÉTIS Wallon<sup>8</sup>, EUAA<sup>9</sup>) or, particularly in legal settings, government agencies in collaboration with interpreting services providers (e.g. in the UK<sup>10</sup>). Whether VMI is offered directly to end users or outsourced to private agencies has many implications, including the way it is implemented in terms of working arrangements with interpreters, the type of video platform being used, quality control and technical support. Consequently, VMI guidelines reflect the specific context they were designed for.

**In legal settings**, some of the more detailed **guidelines for VMI focus on achieving equivalence with in-person hearings to ensure fairness of bilingual or multilingual proceedings** driven by the European legal framework for the cross-border use of videoconferencing in criminal, civil and commercial matters (Braun et al., 2013; Council of the European Union, 2014). These guidelines are based on extensive research and consultation with stakeholders (i.e. judicial authorities,

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<sup>7</sup> <https://tulka.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://setisw.com/interpretariat-notre-approche/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2022/4113-providing-interpretation>

<sup>10</sup> <https://slator.com/three-more-years-thebigwords-ministry-of-justice-contract-just-got-extended/>

lawyers and interpreters) and highlight the obligations of all parties. As mentioned in the previous section (see section 3.3.2), users of VMI often lack awareness of the best practices regarding the integration of interpreters in general, which is further exacerbated in VMI when they interact with the interpreter via technological means (Braun et al., 2018). Therefore, it is particularly notable that the VMI guidelines clarify the responsibilities of those who organise and/or implement VMI. Thus, the AVIDICUS2 research-based guidelines recommend that professional interpreters with experience in VMI be consulted regarding the optimal integration of interpreters, due to the multiple possible configurations when some or all parties in different locations are being connected via video-link (Braun et al., 2013). More importantly, these detailed guidelines also shed light on the limitations of VMI. Inadequate technical equipment, lack of technical knowledge or physical limitations regarding the court room layout, as well as the length and complexity of the proceedings, are factors that restrict the use of VMI (Braun et al., 2013; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022).

**In healthcare or social services settings**, the guidelines for professionals/end users are shorter and **the focus is on when and how to access VMI services providing practical information regarding the interaction with an interpreter** (Ireland National Guidelines on Accessible Health and Social Care Services, 2023; Vastaanottava Pohjois-Savo [North Savo Project], 2011). Healthcare guidelines aimed at interpreters highlight the requirement to have experience using the VMI platform and to possess sufficient technical skills and appropriate equipment (Tulkien Eettiset Ohjeet: Tulkki- ja tulkkauspalvelut<sup>11</sup>, 2016). Issues with technological access and literacy can also affect end users, but this appears to be discussed predominantly in the VMI guidelines for legal settings (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; OROLSI-JCS and UNITAR, 2020), with some exceptions (Amato et al., 2018).

**Ethical and cultural aspects appear noticeably absent in the existing VMI guidelines.** However, the types of configurations and settings entail unique challenges and ethical dilemmas that may be too specific to be included in guidelines that by nature are designed to be more general. This points to the need for appropriate protocols and good practices to fill the gap between more general VMI guidelines and VMI difficulties related to specific contexts, such as the Remote Hearing Toolkit designed by supranational organisations (OROLSI-JCS and UNITAR, 2020) and some of the NHS guidelines in the UK provided at the local level (University Hospitals Sussex, n.d.). Furthermore, some aspects, such as the need for cultural sensitivity among professionals working

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<sup>11</sup> Association of Finnish Translators and Interpreters

with migrant populations (Foreman and Ni Raghallaigh, 2015) could be reiterated in VMI protocols/good practices.

### 3.4.3. Needs and obligations of participants

The VMI guidelines point to the various needs of end users/professionals when using VMI – in addition to their needs when using in-person interpreting – and the resulting obligations of the other parties to meet these needs.

#### 3.4.3.1. *Using trained interpreters*

**VMI training for interpreters, in addition to their interpreting qualifications**, is recommended for video-mediated encounters to run smoothly (Braun et al., 2013; Council of the European Union, 2014; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). For example, Finnish guidelines for business interpreting specifically mention that interpreters should only accept remote interpreting assignments if they have the necessary skills and equipment to perform adequately in VMI (Finnish Translators and Interpreters' Association, 2013). Using qualified interpreters who are also trained in VMI would presuppose a well-established accreditation system and raise awareness of the benefits of using qualified interpreters (Braun et al., 2013). If the use of trained interpreters became a requirement, it could incentivise VMI providers to prioritise the use of qualified interpreters (HSE Social Inclusion Unit and the Health Promoting Hospitals Network, 2009).

#### 3.4.3.2. *Recording*

**The issue of unauthorised recording** must also be raised with all parties at the beginning of the interpreted encounter (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022) because this can potentially be more difficult to control in VMI, when parties are not co-located. The recording of VMI encounters should respect the right to privacy and data protection of foreign-language speakers (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.). From the perspective of interpreters, their consent must be sought as well in this regard; in business settings, in particular, copyright laws can be breached if their consent is not sought (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021).

#### 3.4.3.3. *Spatial organisation*

Some VMI recommendations acknowledge **various VMI configurations** (CIOL and ATC, 2021; Council of the European Union, 2014; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.), with one or more participants being remote (Braun et al., 2013). However, the resulting



challenges for the interpreted communication are not always covered because they would potentially require extensive explanations (IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.). **The added layer of technical and conversational complexity brought about by each different configuration is addressed by more complex guidelines/papers on VMI** based on the input of interpreting researchers and professionals (Council of the European Union, 2014; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022). The location of the interpreter needs to be considered when the foreign-language speaker requiring interpretation is vulnerable, and, ideally, the interpreter should be co-located with them. This would reduce the increased coordination effort involved in VMI when the interpreter and the target audience are in separate locations (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). **The ideal spatial organisation would allow the end user/foreign-language speaker to understand the meaning of the statements being interpreted because they can see who is speaking (to whom) at any given time** (van Rotterdam and van den Hoogen, 2012). This would be further facilitated by recreating the traditional positioning of participants in a triangle, typical for in-person interpreting, as much as possible (Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, 2020).

#### *3.4.3.4. Communication management*

**The importance of introductions in VMI is highlighted by the existing VMI guidelines**, the responsibility falling on the person who is chairing/organising the interpreter-mediated encounter (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021; CIOL and ATC, 2021). If this does not happen, the interpreter could take the initiative to introduce themselves and explain their role; however, this may raise issues of impartiality in legal settings (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). Ideally, the names of all participants and their roles should be shared prior to the interpreted encounter and displayed during the VMI encounter when it is fully remote (CIOL, 2021).

Similarly, it is important for professionals using VMI to be aware that an increased coordination effort is required and that **it is not the sole responsibility of the interpreter to manage the communication**. In a legal setting, a judge, with the assistance of an usher, tends to oversee this aspect during the proceedings (CIOL, 2021; CIOL and ATC, 2021; Council of the European Union, 2014). Communication management in video-mediated encounters that require the assistance of an interpreter is achieved collaboratively with the interpreter and preferably agreed upon in advance. Thus, at the beginning of the interpreted encounter, parties need to establish verbal and non-verbal signals for highlighting when the pace is too fast (TEPIS [The Polish Society of Sworn and Specialised Translators], 2019) or for taking turns (Council of the European Union, 2014; IMDi, 2023a). It is also helpful if the judge coordinates the order in which the parties

involved speak (Council of the European Union, 2014), reminding them to leave a few seconds between each exchange to facilitate smooth turn-taking for the interpreter (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021). Overlapping speech is more likely to occur when one or more parties are in a separate location, and this can pose problems for the interpreter. To reduce this difficulty, participants may require instructions to avoid overlapping speech and to be ready to repeat information when problems arise (CIOL, 2021). Furthermore, vulnerable end users of VMI may require additional instructions and support to segment their speech when they are separate from their interpreters (Braun et al., 2013).

On the other hand, **interpreters should feel that they are able to intervene as needed**, ask for clarifications or point out sound issues (Braun et al., 2013; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). To facilitate this, the person chairing/initiating the interpreter-mediated encounter should clearly explain at the beginning of the encounter that interpreters may need to intervene more strongly in VMI (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). This reflects existing research showing that non-verbal signals are less effective in VMI (Klammer and Pöchhacker, 2021). The Finnish code makes this point more strongly, considering that it is both the right and the obligation of the interpreter to intervene as necessary – particularly in the case of sound problems – to avoid compromising the accuracy of the interpretation (Vastaanottava Pohjois-Savo [North Savo Project], 2011).

**Communication management can become even more problematic in the case of relay interpreting** – the use of two interpreters and one intermediary language to achieve interpretation in the desired target language. The use of a video-conference link for relay interpreting has been researched and documented by the European GDISC Pool Project (GDISC, 2008) to address the shortage of qualified interpreters for rare language combinations. It was found to be cumbersome by participants due to a higher coordination effort; however, the use of qualified interpreters seemed to reduce communication difficulties to some extent. This seems to strengthen the argument that communication management in VMI is a shared responsibility (Braun et al., 2013; Council of the European Union, 2014).

#### *3.4.3.5. Users' awareness of how interpreters work*

**Assisting the interpreter to prepare for the assignment is recommended for in-person interpreting**; however, when the interpreter is remote from one or more parties, it can require additional effort to organise. Specific instructions related to the context of an interpreting assignment are ideally provided by the interpreting service provider or the initiating party. A professional interpreter, however, also bears the responsibility of proactively asking for such

clarifications prior to the assignment, if necessary (CIOL and ATC, 2021; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2023; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). The interpreter can be briefed in advance or just before the assignment starts. When the briefing is done before the interpreted encounter, consideration must be given as to how much information can be shared with the interpreter, in order to ensure patients' confidentiality in a medical setting (HSE Social Inclusion Unit and the Health Promoting Hospitals Network, 2009). If the briefing takes place at the beginning of the encounter, the chair/organiser may need to consider which participants can or should take part in the interpreter's briefing, as they may not wish to disclose certain details to the end user in the case of a disciplinary hearing, for example (IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2022a).

**If the assignment is of an emotional or sensitive nature, e.g. giving bad news, the interpreter may also require debriefing/supervision** (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). Debriefing can also be used after a VMI encounter to collect feedback on potential problems the interpreter has identified, which can be reported/recorded and, ideally, used to inform further VMI adjustments/training (Braun et al., 2013).

**Interpreters need to be able to see and hear all the other participants** clearly (CIOL and ATC, 2021; Council of the European Union, 2014; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). Appropriate lighting and the appearance of natural eye contact with the help of camera settings and positioning ensure the interpreter can clearly distinguish facial expressions (Working Committee NA 105-00-03-02 UA 'Interpreting Services and Technology', 2021). A good quality of sound for interpreters can be achieved by using high-quality equipment, professional headsets and microphones and by using a stable internet connection, while avoiding background or extraneous noises (CIOL, 2021; CIOL and ATC, 2021). Participants must also remember to put into words what is not visible to the interpreter, i.e. gestures or objects (IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.).

**VMI guidelines generally recommend the use of consecutive mode** when the interpreter is separated from the foreign-language speaker unless the VMI platform being used can support the use of a separate sound channel for the simultaneous interpretation (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; OROLSI-JCS and UNITAR, 2020; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). It is important for professionals to be aware that a consecutive interpretation presupposes that the encounter will last longer (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022). Furthermore, participants need to be aware of the appropriate length of segments when consecutive mode is being used (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; IMDi, 2023a; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion

and Diversity], 2022a), so they can segment their speech accordingly and use logical breaks (CIOL, 2021; CIOL and ATC, 2021). Interpreters working in VMI may need additional time to take notes to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation, and this should be facilitated by professionals who must allow sufficient time for interpreters to talk (CIOL, 2021; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022).

When the interpreter is co-located with the foreign-language user but separate from the other participants, the interpreter can use the technique of chuchotage (Braun et al., 2013). In this case, more frequent breaks may be needed, as simultaneous interpreting is more demanding (CIOL, 2021), and a very good sound quality (higher sound frequency) is essential for the interpreter to perform well (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022).

The topic of **breaks, or recovery time, for interpreters working in VMI** is mentioned in various guidelines (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021; CIOL and ATC, 2021; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2023); however, they do not always include specific guidance as to the frequency or the length of the breaks. When breaks for interpreters are mentioned, there are significant differences between recommendations, from a 5–10-minute break every hour (Vastaanottava Pohjois-Savo [North Savo Project], 2011) to recovery time being provided to the interpreter every 30 minutes (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). An important aspect for professionals to bear in mind is that VMI is more taxing to interpreters' cognitive capacity than in-person interpreting and, as such, interpreters will need more regular breaks when working in VMI (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021). Furthermore, the simultaneous mode of interpretation is already more demanding than the use of consecutive mode, and interpreters require more frequent breaks as a result (CIOL, 2021) and, ideally, work in pairs (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022). Thus, remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) can be particularly challenging for interpreters and raising awareness of this issue among professionals/end users is paramount for a good interpreting performance (Braun et al., 2013). As a general recommendation, interpreters' requests for breaks should be granted to ensure high-quality communication (Braun et al., 2013).

#### 3.4.4. Technological requirements

**Technical preparation for VMI before the beginning of the encounter must include testing of sound/video equipment and/or software with the interpreter** (Braun et al., 2013). Included in this section are general aspects that are applicable to most settings, and it is mentioned when they are more likely to be relevant to one configuration, set-up or setting.

**The need for participants to be able to see one another well on screen, i.e. the face, upper body and hands, is highlighted by VMI codes** (CIOL and ATC, 2021; Council of the European Union,

2014; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.). The German standard DIN 8578:2021-11 on the use of consecutive mode in VMI is very specific regarding the arrangement of the screens and cameras needed to **imitate mutual gaze** between remote parties and allow co-present participants to look at the screens without having to turn away from one another when doing so (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). Furthermore, a **forward-facing light source** is needed to ensure that the speaker's features and expressions are clearly visible (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). The principle of objectivity in adversarial settings has also been set out as a requirement for videoconferencing interpreting (VCI) and VMI, in which all participants must be shown on the screen in the same way in terms of lighting intensity, colour balance, resolution and frame rate (van Rotterdam and van den Hoogen, 2012). **Overview cameras offering a wide view of the court room** where some of the participants are co-located can help remote parties contextualise what they hear, as they are able to see the positioning of the participants and how they interact with one another (Braun et al., 2013; van Rotterdam and van den Hoogen, 2012).

**The guidelines for sound quality** are in some cases very specific, detailing the required sound frequency and pressure and hearing protection measures (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). However, the majority of recommendations in this respect are more general (CIOL and ATC, 2021; IMDi, 2023a; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2022a). **Particular attention should be paid to the quality of sound at the location of the interpreter** (Braun et al., 2013). To achieve this, all participants should have an individual professional microphone with echo and background noise cancellation (Braun et al., 2013; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021; van Rotterdam and van den Hoogen, 2012). Poor sound quality can affect the hearing of the interpreter and increase their cognitive overload, whilst potentially leading to additional interventions and requests for repetition, further disrupting the communicative event (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021; Finnish Translators and Interpreters' Association, 2013; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). To mitigate this negative impact, the **guidelines recommend performing technical checks and setting out clear procedures for resolving acoustic problems at the beginning of the encounter** (Braun et al., 2013; OROLSI-JCS and UNITAR, 2020; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). The initiating/organising party can also check with the interpreter throughout the encounter to make sure the sound is satisfactory (IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2022a). However, the interpreter is also responsible for highlighting sound problems that can affect the quality of the interpretation

(Braun et al., 2013; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; CIOL and ATC, 2021; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2023, 2022).

**If the VMI platform is web-based and all parties are in different locations, additional technical specifications need to be considered by the participants.** The web-based application should allow different views (i.e. speaker, gallery, self-image) and the institution or initiating party should be responsible for the running of the platform and any additional features, such as data security, webcasting, recording and storage of the recording (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022). The client/organising party is responsible for the speed and connectivity at their site; however, the other parties and the interpreter are also responsible for having adequate technical equipment (e.g. headsets, microphone, camera) and a high-speed internet connection on their end (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; IMDi, 2023; OROLSI-JCS and UNITAR, 2020; Associazione Italiana Traduttori e interpreti, n.d.).

Depending on the configuration, the provisions for technological support will also differ. In the case of legal settings where participants are connected via a video link, the organising institution would be in charge of the equipment and addressing any technical difficulties as they arise (Braun et al., 2013; CIOL, 2021; Council of the European Union, 2014; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022). Ideally, technical support should be available to all parties before and during the VMI encounter (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021), but this is not always possible due to limited resources. Thus, a technical test before the interpreted session is highly recommended, with an alternative solution being offered if the communication breaks down (CIOL and ATC, 2021; IMDi, 2023a; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2022; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). When interpreters work remotely from home, they are responsible for resolving technical issues (IMDi, 2023b), which will depend on their IT skills (Finnish Translators and Interpreters' Association, 2013) and their VMI experience or training (Braun et al., 2013; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021).

#### 3.4.5. VMI training

VMI training for interpreters, professionals and end users is mentioned in some of the existing VMI guidelines, reflecting the complexities of VMI and the collaborative approach required for interpreters to perform adequately in this modality (Braun et al., 2013; Consilium, 2013; Finnish Translators and Interpreters' Association, 2013; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.; Associazione Italiana Traduttori e interpreti, n.d.; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021; Vastaanottava Pohjois-Savo [North Savo Project], 2011).

**VMI training for interpreters should be part of their continuous professional development** (Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021) and should ideally cover the use of VMI in different settings and configurations, including both technological aspects and interactional challenges in VMI, i.e. the reduced sense of presence of the remote parties (Braun et al., 2013; Consilium, 2013).

**For professionals and end users, VMI training should include general aspects related to the interaction with interpreters and VMI-specific aspects:** the use of VMI equipment and platforms, simulated eye contact, speech segmentation, giving the floor to the interpreter, modes of interpretation, additional cognitive effort associated with VMI and the need for appropriate breaks (AVIDICUS 2008–2013, 2013; Braun et al., 2016; CIOL, 2021). Joint regular training using role-plays and simulations is recommended as a way of increasing awareness regarding the needs of interpreters in VMI (Braun et al., n.d.; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021). In Norway, VMI training for end users consists of online courses and materials<sup>12</sup> created in collaboration with professionals, interpreters, educational institutions, psychologists and occupational therapists. Furthermore, **discussing the limitations of VMI as part of inter-professional training** with examples as to when it would be unsuitable to the encounter (e.g. too many participants, minors or vulnerable persons being involved, lengthy or complex conversations, technological illiteracy, lack of access to resources), can also assist professionals and end users to navigate the complexities of VMI and to make appropriate adjustments as needed (IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], 2022b). To some extent, VMI guidelines targeting professionals (CIOL, 2021; CIOL and ATC, 2021; Vastaanottava Pohjois-Savo [North Savo Project], 2011) could be considered as a minimum form of training.

#### 3.4.6. Evaluation

When VMI networks are being implemented on a large scale, **evaluation of the service is required at different stages** (Braun et al., 2013; GDISC, 2008). A continuous evaluation (i.e. regular feedback from all participants) is required particularly during the implementation phase of the VMI service (Braun et al., 2013). When VMI is used as part of local public services, it becomes particularly important to engage with all parties involved and follow up with them as part of a structured feedback process (HSE Social Inclusion Unit and the Health Promoting Hospitals Network, 2009; HSE and ATC, 2021). It is also important for the interpreters to be able to report problems to the institution or to the relevant professionals they work for (CIOL and ATC). This feedback can then be incorporated in codes of best practices to reflect the specific needs of the

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.imdi.no/tolk/skjerm/>



individual setting/organisation where VMI is being implemented. Guidelines and standards with a clear aim and purpose represent a solid basis for the use of VMI; however, individualised codes of best practices are needed to guide users/professionals of VMI within the context of their work.

### 3.5. Conclusion

**We have highlighted some of the challenges that can occur during VMI interpreting, such as the incongruent visual ecology and the reduced backchanneling cues, which apply to all public service interpreting settings and VMI applications.** We have also outlined what adjustments can be made to mitigate some of these challenges by designing appropriate ways of integrating an interpreter in a video link and by adopting good practices that allow interpreters the time and space to convey the message accurately whilst monitoring the comprehension of the other language speaker.

**In legal settings, VMI appears more suitable for short assignments where the practical considerations may outweigh the disadvantages.** Nevertheless, interpreters should always be briefed about the assignment and have a moment to check the language or dialect. The usual introductory formalities in VCI and VRI would need to include introducing the interpreter and inviting a brief exchange for a language check and explanation of the interpreter's role and potentially other important issues, such as the recording of the meeting and confidentiality. For longer or more complex hearings in immigration cases or giving evidence in criminal proceedings, good practices need to include ground rules regarding turn-taking, the mode of interpreting to be used (with the relevant adjustments to be made) and regular breaks for the benefit of interpreters, in keeping with the interest of the other parties.

**It appears that interpreters are still underused in medical settings, and VMI can close this gap** (Price et al., 2012). Technological literacy and affordability, together with an increased awareness of the benefits of working with qualified, professional interpreters, remain crucial in the uptake of VRI in medical settings. A collaborative approach to configuring the virtual space and managing the communication process in VRI can reduce the problems with interaction (Hansen, 2020). Ideally, all modalities of interpreting should be available to hospitals and medical practitioners who, as a result of training (Marcus et al., 2020), can then make informed decisions as to the most appropriate method of language support depending on the circumstances: the characteristics of the patient and the service provider and topic sensitivity (Wilde et al., 2021).

**We have also highlighted examples of good practice in VMI in healthcare and legal settings** (Amato et al., 2018; Braun et al., 2013; Council of the European Union, 2014; OROLSI-JCS and



UNITAR, 2020; CIOL, 2021; IMDi [The Directorate for Inclusion and Diversity], n.d.; Standard DIN 8578:2021-11, 2021; TEPIS [The Polish Society of Sworn and Specialised Translators], 2019; Vastaanottava Pohjois-Savo [North Savo Project], 2011). However, **it is not always clear to what extent existing guidelines are based on research and systematic evidence collection**, with some exceptions (Braun et al., 2013; Council of the European Union, 2014). During the COVID-19 pandemic more specific recommendations for VMI (especially in fully virtual encounters, when all parties are remote) have emerged (CIOL, 2021; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2022; OROLSI-JCS and UNITAR, 2020). However, there is still a notable lack of guidance for interpreters working in asylum or immigration settings and particularly with LLDs. Nevertheless, **our review has revealed useful examples of good practice in VMI which can inform guidelines for VMI and inter-professional training for users of VMI in the context of asylum and immigration.**

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## 4. Part IV. Case Studies

#### 4.1. Introduction

Part IV of this report presents three case studies conducted with three reception authorities (RAs) to elicit their everyday challenges as well as existing good practices for interpreting provision. The purpose of these case studies was to gain a detailed understanding of their actual experience of working with interpreters in the context of their work. The three in-depth case studies are complemented by a compilation report which summarises and analyses the results from an ad-hoc query on ‘interpreting in reception facilities’ (Appendix – Compilation Report: Ad-hoc Query on 2022.63 Interpreting in Reception Facilities), which was requested by the Belgian European Migration Network National Contact Point on 16 November 2022 and provides additional information and insights into current practices in 23 EU member states.

#### 4.2. Methodology of the case studies

The current practices in the three NGOs were explored as part of a series of online workshops (one workshop per NGO) in February and March 2023. Before the workshops, each reception authority was provided with an overview of the topics to be covered during and the structure of each summary reflects these main topics. As part of our overall approach to the baseline study, which was drawn from the realist framework for evidence synthesis, we sought to establish with the NGO representatives their current provision of interpreting services, aspects related to interpreter demand, their practices around recruitment and quality control, and the challenges in providing interpreters for LLDs. In accordance with the aim of this project we also discussed the settings and situations in which the RAs are more likely to use VMI and/or in-person interpreting. The information extracted from the workshops was summarised, redacted where necessary and reviewed by the NGO representatives to ensure the anonymity of the RAs as far as possible.

#### 4.3. Organisation A

##### 4.3.1. Main activities

Organisation A is a federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers providing material aid to them. The organisation manages several collective and individual reception structures, and also works with NGO partners (e.g., regional branches of the Red Cross). There are three types of reception centres:



- **First-stage reception** for adults (and accompanied children) is facilitated through the **central arrival centre** (situated in country A's capital), where persons stay for a short period (in principle 1 week).
- From the arrival centre, persons are relocated to a **second-stage reception facility**, generally a collective centre where applicants stay until a decision has been taken regarding their asylum application, which takes on average 12 months.
- If the decision is negative and refugee status or subsidiary protection is not granted, applicants should either appeal or should leave the reception facility. If the decision is positive, applicants go to an **individual reception facility** (apartments, studios, or single housing) offered by the local welfare authority where they can stay for 2 to 4 months before they leave the reception network and find their own accommodation.

The procedure and phases are slightly different for unaccompanied minors (UMs):

- UMs' first stop is a dedicated Centre for minors instead of the central arrival Centre.
- UMs usually stay there for 2 weeks (instead of 1 week in central arrival Centre for adults), although in practice they often stay there for 1 month.
- UMs integrate in the collective reception facility.
- Depending on their age, minors go to specialised facilities (if aged 15 or under) or, they are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection and they move to the individual reception facilities (when aged 16 or over).
- UMs who receive a negative decision have the right to remain within reception until the age of 18.

#### 4.3.2. Background

##### 4.3.2.1. PSI overview

Organisation A currently has no specific public procedure, nor a systematic approach to the provision of PSI at the level of the organisation. Instead, PSI is arranged at the level of the individual reception centres. This is quite surprising and even illegal to some extent; organisation A would normally have to respect procurement rules. Interviewee A explains the absence of a more systematic approach in two ways:

1. historical relationships between reception centres and NGOs providing interpreting services;

2. practical issues, i.e., understaffing within the responsible department.

According to interviewee A, the lack of a framework agreement has both negative and positive consequences:

- **One of the negative consequences** is that privileged relationships with specific interpreting agencies hamper systematic and strategic use of PSI providers.
- A further **negative impact** is the increase in discretionary power at the level of local facilities leading to eclectic situations where they work with freelance interpreters, who at times might be more expensive than public service interpreters; furthermore interpreting quality is difficult to control when working with freelance interpreters (unlike the public / non-profit PSI providers, where the providing agency is expected to guarantee quality of their interpreters).
- Another **disadvantage** of not having a framework agreement is that it impedes organisation A from working with private interpreting agencies that can better meet their interpreting needs because they offer more language combinations; Their non-compliance with procurement rules would become apparent as soon as organisation A would work with private interpreting agencies.
- **On the plus side**, this allows Organisation A some level of flexibility – e.g., organisation A does not have to abide by the territorial principle according to which the location of the reception facility would imply working with agency X or Z. This allows for a more flexible approach or for maintaining historical relationships with particular providers.

With regard to the modality of interpreting that is used to meet Organisation A's needs, the organisation works towards an increase in video-mediated interpreting. On-site interpretation should, in principle, be limited to exceptional circumstances (for instance very long conversations; more than four participants during a conversation). Telephone interpreting should be limited to short conversations and not be, as has been for a lot of reception facilities in the past, the first and only choice.

#### *4.3.2.2. LLD overview*

In Organisation A, determining interpreting services are needed is typically done on a case-to-case basis, and there is no specific rule in place for this. As a general guideline, conversations deemed highly important will require an interpreter and if there are no interpreters available, those conversations cannot take place. However, in some cases, an intermediary could be brought

in with the consent of the person in need of interpreting services to ensure that the conversation takes place.

To contact LLD interpreters, Organisation A does not employ any interpreters directly but rather works with different agencies. In dealing with LLDs, there is one agency in particular they work the with most often, as the interpreters are typically volunteers and the agency can therefore offer a wider variety of languages. That is not without problems though, as the interpreters sometimes work under inappropriate conditions but since they are volunteers, there is no incentive to improve those conditions.

If Organisation A is unable to find an interpreter for an LLD, they do not do any kind of relay interpreting to circumvent interpreter availability issues, as it would add an extra step to the whole procedure, and it might be impractical and too difficult to organise. Instead, they are comfortable using English as an alternative to the national language, as it is more pragmatic and they are not particularly concerned about the symbolic importance of the national language, but rather with successful communication.

#### *4.3.2.3. VMI overview*

Until recently, Organisation A predominantly relied on onsite interpreting. Especially in the early stages of refugees' journeys through the host country's system (arrivals centres), where the demand for interpreters is very high, the demand is normally met through onsite interpreting. Remote interpreting (by telephone and video) is only used for very rare languages at that stage. Remote interpreting has, however, evolved at the next stage (reception centres), as some reception centres are in remote areas.

Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote interpreting was mostly done by telephone. At the beginning of the pandemic, many agencies began to offer remote interpreting (by telephone and video). However, there was not much interest in this mode of interpreting in Organisation A, potentially because of a lack of logistics, not having the necessary infrastructure or simply because staff needed time to adjust to not having onsite interpreters. For example, implementing video-mediated interpreting (VMI) through the established PSI providers proved to be difficult, because of the specific conditions surrounding the booking process (interpreters had to be booked days in advance whilst staff require interpreting services at very short notice), equipment issues (no integrated webcams and headsets available or unstable internet connection), infrastructure (insufficient office space) or perceptions (staff were unsure about using online interpretation and also hesitant to adopt new work methods).

A major change in interpreter provision occurred more recently in Organisation A, when the organisation was provided with interpreters from an EU organisation. The interpreters from the EU organisation are now used onsite in the reception centres where they are located but they also provide VMI to other reception centres. The EU organisation thus became the main provider for VMI. This is modelled after a well working system in the healthcare sector. The transition to VMI aligns with the long-term plans of Organisation A to prioritise VMI over onsite interpreting.

One of the noteworthy points of working with the EU interpreters is that they work between the refugees' languages and English, which causes some challenges for staff who may not be fluent in English, as Organisation A is not situated in an Anglophone country and fluency in English is not a job requirement for Organisation A. Moreover, there has been an unpredictably high turnover among the EU interpreters, and this made planning and delivering training and developing a certain expertise difficult. However, the number of EU interpreters that are available to Organisation A is due to increase, which may lead to a better uptake of VMI. VMI appears the best option for languages that are not constantly in demand and for remote areas where there is a limited supply of interpreters.

As mentioned above, VMI is now prioritised, but the decision about using VMI is based on a combination of factors: the language combination (e.g., scarce languages more likely involve VMI), location of the venue (e.g., remote venues more likely served by VMI), cost considerations, and the significance or complexity of the conversation to be interpreted. Whether or not they would choose a volunteer-interpreter as opposed to a professional interpreter for VMI will also be subject to a similar decision-making process. Whilst Organisation A's model for selecting interpreting services includes promoting videoconferencing as a priority, this is not yet fully implemented.

In addition to working with the EU interpreters, Organisation A also still works with interpreting agencies, some of which offer remote interpreting. Organisation A does not use this option very often. If it is used, then it is typically telephone interpreting.

However, Organisation A does not collect data about the modality in which agency interpreters work. Because multiple interpreting service providers are used by Organisation A and information about interpreter use is not recorded, it is difficult for Organisation A to monitor the proportion of onsite interpreting and VMI. However, the use of VMI does vary from one centre to another depending on their specific needs. For example, centres in remote locations require more VMI. Similarly, when a language is rare and there are no local interpreters available, VMI is used. In

addition, VMI is also used occasionally to maintain impartiality, especially where regular interpreters may have developed a closer working relationship with asylum seekers.

All of the interpreters and interpreting services used by Organisation A are located in Organisation A's country. There are no uses of remote interpreting technology to connect interpreters who are abroad to Organisation A's centres.

#### 4.3.3. PSI demand, practices and experiences

The organisation of public service interpreting (PSI) revolves around the differences between reception phases, because it entails differences in:

- (1) actors/responsibilities running the facilities during the phases,
- (2) way of working with interpreters,
- (3) funding for interpreters.

**In the first-stage reception**, arrival centres for adults use 10-15 onsite interpreters on a daily basis, for languages such as classical Arabic, Pashtu, Dari, Somali, and Tigrinya. PSI interpreters are supplied through 2 different local agencies: onsite interpreting service is costly (the arrival centre uses up to 60% percent of the total budget for interpreting), especially if we take into consideration that phase 1 reception is very short. Nevertheless, it is justified because first phase reception includes key conversations, such as a medical intake and a social intake.

**In the second stage**, the use of interpretation in reception facilities varies widely, in terms of frequency (resorting to an interpreter in general is the last step in a series of strategies to overcome language barriers), interpreter profile and agencies (e.g., public versus private, not/certified versus sworn), but also in terms of interpreting modality; some of the second phase centres are located in remote and rural areas, which makes it difficult to access interpreters. For those reasons staff also resorts to remote interpreting (i.e., telephone and video-mediated interpreting).

**In the third stage**, there is a clear need for remote interpretation because individual reception facilities are scattered across the national territory. However, the use of interpreting services in individual reception facilities is generally the lowest.

The centres dedicated to minors are more likely to have an increased need for interpreting services. They collaborate with PSI agencies but also with private interpreters to meet their needs.

#### 4.3.4. LLD demand, practices and experiences

According to interviewee A, all languages covered by Organisation A are considered LLDs, defined as languages for which it is difficult to find interpreters. However, Interviewee A clarifies that this category is not universal, and it is only applicable within the context of the country, aligning very closely with the academic definition of the term. Interviewee A does consider some languages to be rarer than others, and for those languages it does not make sense to have in-house interpreters, as they would not be needed with sufficient regularity. In such cases, it would be useful to cooperate with other countries and allow interpreters of those languages to work for different organisations across borders. Unfortunately, this is currently not possible due to contractual requirements.

Interviewee A is not aware of any specific cultural issues that may arise during interpreting services for LLDs, as the interviewer is not involved in the everyday operation of each centre. However, Interviewee A does mention that there are instances where interpreters speaking a different target language are sent, as it is thought there is a certain degree of intelligibility between the languages. Unsurprisingly, these interpreters had to be sent away since the conversation could not take place under those circumstances.

#### 4.3.5. VMI demand, practices and experiences

**Booking:** Organisation A has implemented a booking system which does not involve a third party and bookings can be made at very short notice (30 minutes). Staff greatly appreciated being able to book an interpreter directly at such short notice. The briefing received by interpreters covers a minimum of information, i.e., the type of assignment. Resident interpreters work both onsite and remotely through videoconferencing allowing for a balance between the two modes of interpretation during their workday. Sometimes this will, however, lead to a situation where centre staff comes to an interpreter's office to ask for ad-hoc interpreting, when the interpreter has a scheduled remote interpreting assignment.

**Configurations:** Remote interpreting (VMI in the context of Organisation A), whereby the interpreter is spatially/geographically separated from those who need the interpretation, is used for different purposes. First, it is used when interpretation is needed in a different centre than the one where the resident interpreters are based; the interpreter is connected to the requesting centre through an online platform. A second use of VMI arises when the centre residents go outside the centre, e.g., for medical appointments.

Usually, VMI involves only two locations, with the main parties (e.g., centre resident and centre worker) in one location and the interpreter in another location. Typically, only three parties are involved: the centre resident, the centre worker, and the interpreter. However, it is important to note that a family, while considered one party, may consist of multiple participants. While there are no strict rules in this regard, VMI is rarely used in situations that involve multiple participants at one site. During external medical appointments, a social worker from the centre may join the video call for administrative purposes (e.g., reconnecting the parties in case of a connection failure) but would not listen to the private conversation between the parties.

Finally, VMI has also been used when communicating with minors because resident interpreters would get to know them well and their impartiality may be affected as a result.

**Breaks:** Normally the guideline is to give interpreters a 10-minute break every half an hour, but this is not monitored, and some assignments may be short i.e., 30 minutes. This means that for long assignments it is for the interpreters to ask for breaks, particularly if they had a challenging day: multiple VMI assignments.

**Feedback:** Currently there is no system for feedback regarding the use of VMI or interpreters. However, the local centre staff would know how to communicate issues within the organisation. Site visits have revealed current issues. There is room for improvement around assessing the uptake of VMI and identifying challenges to VMI being used more widely.

#### 4.3.6. Training

##### 4.3.6.1. PSI training

Organisation A does not have a specific PSI training program as this is offered by the interpreters' agencies they are working with. As for their own staff, Organisation A has had the intention to train also their own staff in working with PSIs in the context of a joint program with a PSI agency (see also 6.2). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic this has not been realised on a systematic basis.

##### 4.3.6.2. LLDs training

Organisation A does not have any specific minimum requirements for interpreters for LLDs, as they work with various agencies, each of which sets their own language requirements. Organisation A does not play a role in assessing expertise or language proficiency, which means the standards vary from agency to agency. As an example, one agency working with volunteers offers a crash course in interpreting and sets a language requirement of B2, whereas another

agency only requires knowledge of two languages and no interpreting courses. Given this situation, there is some concern about the neutrality of interpreters.

#### *4.3.6.3. VMI training*

Because interpreters have always been supplied to Organisation A by agencies, it is difficult for Organisation A to establish the interpreters' level of training. However, the interpreters that are supplied through the agencies are considered to be professional interpreters. The interpreters supplied by the EU organisation and who are used for VMI receive basic training regarding the VMI platform and the reception centre; during this training, interpreters gain an overview of the wide range of settings they will be covering (medical, legal, social services, educational). There is a multilingual glossary with relevant terms shared among the interpreters which is available to both centre staff and interpreters. There is no assessment after the interpreters undertake this training. Nevertheless, as a result of being based at various centres, interpreters learn first-hand how the organisation works.

Using volunteer interpreters is another solution to the lack of interpreters for rare languages. They are not remunerated for their work, but they do receive basic training in interpreting. However, they cannot offer professional interpreting services, not least because they would not be able to invest in appropriate equipment for VMI (laptop, professional headsets) or a quiet space, for example.

With regard to the interpreters who do receive VMI training, more training is needed in terms of the interpreters' interaction with the technology, e.g., how interpreters position themselves towards the screen and the source of light to ensure visibility and professionalism. A further way to improve training would be to develop interprofessional training and education, and such training/education should include both technical aspects of the medium of videoconferencing and awareness of the benefits of using professional interpreters. Apart from the general linguistic, cultural, ethical and other benefits of working with professional interpreters, given the situation with volunteer interpreters, who are not normally in a position to deliver VMI, a more consistent use of professional interpreters would also improve uptake of VMI.

#### *4.3.7. Evaluation and future hopes*

##### *4.3.7.1. PSI related*

Staff of Organisation A has been working on a more systematic policy guideline or mission statement regarding how to deal with multilingualism in general, i.e., a type of overview of which



language facilitation option to use in which communicative situation and for which type of service provision. Working with PSIs is considered as one type of language facilitation. Unfortunately, to date, the mission statement has not been adopted yet as an organisation-wide approach.

#### *4.3.7.2. LLDs related*

Because of the limited supply of interpreters for LLDs, a project was carried out where residents were trained to act as interpreters. They were already acting as interpreters and were recruited in the centres. These interpreters are not normally paid, but some centres have a reward system to recognise the value of the work they do. An important aspect is that they must interpret in a different centre than where they live.

#### *4.3.7.3. VMI related*

The demand for VMI in Organisation A is likely to increase. Organisation A regards VMI as a cost-effective solution to the challenges it is facing e.g., regular demand for rare languages in remote locations, time pressure for employees to find and book interpreters at very short notice. Privileged relationships with certain freelance interpreters and favouring certain agencies are practices that may currently hamper a consistent approach to the use of VMI in Organisation A.

The plan is for Organisation A to recruit candidate interpreters and then for the training to be provided as a result of the EU-WEBPSI (Webcam Public Service Interpreting) project. For EU-WEBPSI to work, employees of Organisation A must feel they have a suitable alternative that meets their day-to-day needs i.e. professional interpreters who are easy to book and cancel. High turnover of interpreters also hampers the efforts of training and interprofessional training.

Another important aspect that may require interprofessional training is to increase awareness of the importance of using interpreters in general regardless of modality.

### *4.4. Organisation B*

#### *4.4.1. Main activities*

Organisation B has been actively working in the accompaniment of asylum seekers and integration of refugees for the last 50 years. The association serves vulnerable persons it hosts and/or accompanies, and its main activities are as follows:

- Integration of statutory refugees and assistance for asylum seekers during asylum application procedures
- Social and professional inclusion and accommodation for people in emergency situations

- Children and youth: daytime leisure activities; specialised case management for minors under child protection measures; vocational inclusion for young adults

Therefore, the organisation's work addresses a diversity of beneficiaries such as:

- (a) Asylum seekers that come to the country after passing through other European or non-European countries (both families and individuals),
- (b) Statutory refugees that have been in the country for some time but have not been integrated thus far but also resettled refugees that acquire their protection status on arrival (safe and legal arrival) both families and individuals,
- (c) Unaccompanied minors, many of whom do not speak the national language (but are fast learners),
- (d) Not all beneficiaries are foreigners, they can also be nationals in a vulnerable, marginalised, or precarious position.

Organisation B's beneficiaries who are foreigners primarily consist of individuals from Afghanistan, Syria, and Bangladesh, as well as various groups from Western and Central Africa. Notably, there has been a recent influx of Ukrainian nationals who have also become beneficiaries of temporary protection. Interpreting services are considered very important by both the resettlement teams and the 1<sup>st</sup> reception structures. Professional interpreting services are used only in cases when interpretation is considered essential (i.e., administration, medical appointments, initial reception period, signing of the hosting contract). However, interpreting services are not used on a daily basis, despite the need for them.

In situations where interpreting services are not readily available, people often resort to using tools like Google Translate or seeking assistance from neighbours or colleagues who are fluent in the language. This is especially true of colleagues, who may be relied upon to provide support in communication. The main obstacle to the wider use of professional interpreting services is their cost, which can be prohibitive for organisations with limited budgets. One important aspect driving the cost is that interpreters are paid by the hour, independently of the amount of time they actually interpret. In light of this, Organisation B recommends either avoiding the use of interpreting services for brief periods of time, or maximising the work done in an hour by working with the same interpreter across several cases within the same time slot.

#### 4.4.2. Background

##### 4.4.2.1. PSI overview

To be able to provide information on the context of PSI, Organisation B gathered input from different field teams: some of the resettlement teams and the 1st reception structure. Generally speaking, interpreting services are very important in these structures. Nevertheless, they will not always be the primary means of communication. Interpreters are mainly provided in the initial reception phase, most often in administrative or medical settings.

Organisation B frequently recruits multilingual staff. Since the start of the Ukrainian crisis last year, they have been recruiting more Russian-speaking staff. To meet their daily interpreting needs, the structures will rather use a multilingual colleague than a professional interpreter. The organisation wants to ensure that communication with beneficiaries runs as smoothly as possible. Furthermore, English as a *lingua franca* and Google Translate are also frequently used communication strategies.

##### 4.4.2.2. LLD overview

If they don't have the information, to determine the language needed for communication, social workers try to communicate in English and check the phones of the beneficiaries. They try to see which language they have on their phone, or alternatively point to a map. Google Translate may also help to identify the language they are speaking. Using a map to determine the native language can be less reliable, especially if the country of origin has several languages or if the same language has different names.

When it comes to contacting LLD interpreters, Organisation B often outsources this task to agencies. For more common languages, interpreters can usually be contacted on short notice, while rare languages may require an appointment in advance.

If an interpreter for an LLD cannot be found, Organisation B may try to locate one at the national level. In some cases, they may also reach out to a beneficiary for assistance, but it must be done carefully and never for anything related to the asylum procedure. Organisation B does not make use of relay interpreting, even if most colleagues do not speak English and must rely on the national language. They have not even considered doing relay with English and always seek to provide the combination with the national language.

#### 4.4.2.3. VMI overview

Organisation B relies on both on-site interpreting and technology-mediated interpreting services. Onsite interpreting is limited to specific situations, such as extended briefings or sensitive subjects, including risk-to-life medical scenarios, or situations when mental health issues are discussed. The interpreters providing onsite interpreting services are drawn from freelancers or volunteers. Both freelancers and interpreters provided by agencies for telephone interpreting are qualified. Volunteers, who do not have an interpreting qualification are used only for informal, less complex communications.

When a professional interpreter is needed, social workers typically resort to technology-mediated interpreting and book a telephone interpreter. Telephone interpreting is the only type of technology-mediated interpreting that Organisation B uses, and this is provided by the agencies Organisation B works with regularly. Telephone interpreting is also used to communicate with refugees who are minors or elderly to ensure the use of a professional interpreter.

Telephone interpreting is the only type of technology-mediated interpreting they use, and this is provided by the agencies they work with regularly.

The advantages of telephone interpreting, as conceived by Organisation B, are that it provides cost-effective and instant access to interpreters for commonly used languages. For rare languages, social workers need to book an interpreter in advance.

Organisation B does not have written guidelines to determine when to use onsite interpreting, telephone interpreting or other forms of language support (e.g., Google Translate). The use of one solution over another depends essentially on the cost and availability of the proposed interpreter. Social workers in Organisation B prefer working with the freelance interpreters who are familiar with the system either because they are former beneficiaries or because they have regularly worked in this context. Freelance interpreters might provide at times remote interpreting for this organisation. Occasionally, social workers may collaborate with volunteer interpreters. However, this is limited to providing information to beneficiaries about the services provided by Organisation B and daily issues and routines. Volunteer interpreters are not asked to interpret in any confidential conversations, and they can also provide telephone interpreting.

#### 4.4.3. PSI demand, practices and experiences

In the past 10 years, Organisation B has seen a significant change in the types of prospective beneficiaries they deal with. While the target audience used to mainly speak the dominant local

language, the group of beneficiaries has now become much more diverse. The budget spent on interpreting services has therefore augmented significantly. Moreover, professional interpreters have to be booked for at least a one-hour slot. In case the assignment takes less time, the anticipated hour will still have to be remunerated. Organisation B's employees are encouraged to adopt other communication strategies when they expect the interview to take less than an hour.

The decision to use professional interpreters is not always based on clear cut criteria. As mentioned in section 4.4.2.1, employees within the organisation will not often do so. The only reason why Organisation B rarely engages professional interpreters is due to budgetary constraints. If they did have the financial resources, they would probably engage interpreters on a daily basis.

Organisation B works with at least 3 interpreting agencies and sometimes with freelance interpreters. Interpreters through the agency can be requested on an ad hoc basis. For rarer languages, however, the interpreter must be booked in advance. Structures will work with a freelance interpreter when they have collaborated with that person before and are aware of their professional skills. When booking an interpreter via an agency, Organisation B requests for interpreters with experience in asylum or immigration however, this is not always possible.

When the structures request an interpreter, they will rarely ask the interpreter to come on site but will rather use telephone interpreters. It is important to mention as well that not all interpreters working for the agencies are based in within the country. When an on-site interpreter is really needed, Organisation B tries to find the closest interpreter for logistic and budgetary reasons, which can be a challenge in more rural areas. A conversation usually involves two interlocutors and the interpreter. The beneficiary can also consist of a household. In that case, questions are asked to each participant separately. Before the assignment, the structures provide the agency with some basic information on the assignment so that they can match an interpreter that fits the demand. The staff also prepares the beneficiary for the conversation to ensure that it does not exceed the allocated timeslot. Again, this is done for the purpose of budgetary efficiency. Organisation B staff will not receive any training on working with interpreters.

Organisation B does not have a formal feedback system in place to assess interpreting assignments. They assume that the interpreting agencies provide qualified interpreters for the assignments.

#### 4.4.4. LLD demand, practices and experiences

The accessibility of interpreting services varies depending on the language. For languages such as Arabic, Albanian, Dari, Russian, Armenian, and Georgian, interpreting services are readily available. There is a large pool of interpreters for languages like Dari and Pashto. However, for rare languages such as Dari Uzbek, Oromo, Bengali, Kanuri, Sango, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Haousa, Peul, and Tigrinya, it is difficult to find interpreters.

When it comes to LLDs, there may be cultural differences that could affect communication via an interpreter. In some cases, the interpreter may be expected to help bridge cultural gaps. However, while there may be challenges in such situations, there have been no incidents worth noting.

#### 4.4.5. VMI demand, practices and experiences

**Booking:** As pointed out earlier, Organisation B predominantly uses telephone interpreting, because the organisation sees it as a more cost-effective solution that is easier to organise at short notice than on-site interpreting. A further advantage of telephone interpreting highlighted by Organisation B is that it offers access to interpreters for rare languages, especially in rural areas where it is harder to find an interpreter for these languages. Although telephone interpreting is less expensive than on-site interpreting, the pricing structure utilised by agencies does not align with the needs of Organisation B. This is because brief interpreting sessions are rounded up to one hour and billed for the full hour. To reduce costs, social workers often try to schedule appointments with multiple beneficiaries within a single hour.

While some agencies providing the telephone interpreting services specialise in asylum and immigration matters, they may also provide interpreters with medical or specialisations. When social workers book an interpreter, they specify the type of appointment for which an interpreter is needed.

Organisation B does not use remote interpreters via agencies located in other countries to meet demand for very rare languages. However, they are aware that they are unable to ascertain whether the interpreter is based abroad or not when using telephone interpreting through an agency. While this is not a significant issue, there might be budgetary constraints as agencies located overseas may charge higher fees. Apart from this, there are no other impediments that would prevent Organisation B from using the services of interpreting agencies based abroad.

**Configuration:** The main configuration of remote interpreting used by Organisation B is the configuration whereby the social worker and the beneficiary are co-located, and the interpreter is connected by telephone. In terms of numbers of participants, the interpreted conversations are generally conducted with one beneficiary, though if the beneficiary is in a relationship, it is common to have both partners present.

The social workers in Organisation B normally use mobile phone/landline phones for telephone interpreting, and they put it on speaker so that both the social worker and the beneficiary (and, where relevant, also their partner) can hear the interpreter's voice.

At the start of the encounter, all participants are normally asked to introduce themselves. During an encounter, the interpreters sometimes use reported speech to explain who is speaking at any given time. (However, this happens both in onsite and remote interpreting.)

Despite its benefits for Organisation B, telephone interpreting does come with some technical problems. These include poor reception, which can vary from one region to another. Organisation B has considered video interpreting as a better alternative to telephone interpreting because of the video element which can facilitate the interpretation. However, in some cases this might not be feasible as speakers and / or webcams are not always available in every office and some members of staff may need training to use the equipment. Furthermore, the interpreting agencies Organisation B collaborates with might not be offering video-mediated interpreting. Therefore, at the moment, telephone interpreting is considered to be the easiest and fastest option for their teams.

**Duration:** Conversations in which telephone interpreting is used can last up to 2 hours and the interpreter would know this in advance. Being mindful of the costs of telephone interpreting, Organisation B staff normally tries to prepare the beneficiary so that the interpreted communication does not last longer than necessary.

**Feedback:** Staff inform their colleagues / line managers about the quality of the interpretation, and they may also collect feedback from beneficiaries in this respect but there is no formal process for regular feedback collection.

#### 4.4.6. Training

##### 4.4.6.1. PSI training

Organisation B is not involved in the training of public service interpreters.

#### *4.4.6.2. LLDs training*

Organisation B outsources the interpreting services for LLDs to agencies. There are no specific education requirements that agencies must meet to provide interpreters for these languages. The key aspect is the successful collaboration between the organisation and the agency in delivering appropriate interpretation services.

#### *4.4.6.3. VMI training*

Whilst Organisation B does not use VMI, as reported earlier, recommendations are made to staff regarding telephone interpreting, which are interesting to note in the context of remote interpreting. For example, Organisation B staff are advised to inform a remote interpreter about who is in the room together with the staff member, the goal of the communication (e.g., signing a document, discussing an incident), and then to briefly explain any relevant procedure. Occasionally, there are complex assignments involving culture-specific differences related to gender roles, such as a man responding on behalf of a woman when she is asked a question. Managing these cultural differences can be challenging for the interpreter, particularly in the remote modality (i.e., telephone interpreting). However, experienced social workers are generally aware of these issues, and are able to intervene and manage the conversation flow.

With regard to training for interpreters, Organisation B does not provide specific training in interpreting to volunteers.

### *4.4.7. Evaluation and future hopes*

#### *4.4.7.1. PSI related*

In organisation B's country, there is an ongoing debate on the use of interpreters and the best approach to help beneficiaries integrate more easily. On the one hand, it is argued that professional interpreters should be employed to facilitate communication with the beneficiaries. On the other hand, beneficiaries are expected to learn the local language as a priority and are therefore exposed to it as soon as possible. Opinions on this topic are also closely related to the geographical location of the structures, whether they are situated in cities or rural areas.

According to Organisation B, there is still room for improvement in relation to the interpreting services offered. More time could be set aside for a briefing before the assignment and debrief after the assignment, with a formal feedback system in place (e.g. a document to be filled in). Another important factor for the interpreter to successfully complete an interpreting assignment



is that they have sufficient knowledge of the context of the country (including the administrative processes) in which they perform their services.

#### 4.4.7.2. *LLDs related*

N/A

#### 4.4.7.3. *VMI related*

One of the benefits of remote interpreting, as conceived by Organisation B, is that it may mitigate potential difficulties and conflicts created by social, racial, and political bias during interpreted encounters. Refugees may feel apprehensive about sharing personal details with the interpreter, fearing that confidentiality may not be maintained. Remote interpreting may alleviate some of these concerns as the interpreters are perceived as ‘just a voice’ or a ‘tool’.

Organisation B has suggested several areas for improvement, including:

- development of more comprehensive guidelines for interpreting
- development and delivery of practical training to staff on the use of interpreters
- improvement of the organisation’s technological infrastructure (including internet and reception signal that may not always function properly)
- interprofessional-training for interpreters on key ethical constructs, such as the importance of neutrality

### 4.5. Organisation C

#### 4.5.1. *Main activities*

Organisation C was founded in 2009 to provide interpreting services for the authority dealing with applications for asylum and currently collaborates with prominent NGOs such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, The International Organisation for Migration and MSF (Doctors without Borders). Some of the primary partners that receive interpretation services from Organisation C are the asylum service, reception and identification services, alongside public hospitals and schools. Organisation C also provides assistance to unaccompanied minors in multiple ways. Legal interpreting is provided in the asylum or the refugee sector but not for courts due to the different system in place.

The predominant interpreting modality is onsite interpreting, with video-mediated interpreting (VMI) being used to meet the demand for rare languages. Interpreters supplied by Organisation

C work onsite, in refugee camps, where they are allocated assignments in relation to various services across the camp. In addition, the interpreters offer VMI when there is a need for a rare language in another site or camp. Organisation C has set up offices in each camp where interpreters need to report to between assignments. However, the coordinator also communicates with the interpreters through walkie-talkies. This set up enables coordinators to help interpreters manage their busy schedule and undertake any last-minute requests while ensuring interpreters' safety in the event of a disturbance. The coordinator, who also serves as the team leader, handles any complaints and ethical dilemmas that may arise as well as any last-minute VMI requests, when necessary, although most bookings are made centrally the week before. Interpreters are trained to refer any issues they encounter to the coordinator. Interpreters can work in a camp for two months at a time; they can also travel outside and provide interpretation services for NGOs. The coordinator keeps a detailed record of the interpreters' schedule and signs off their timesheets.

Currently, Organisation C have a register of approximately 100 interpreters working in 38 languages, and this number is expected to double in the coming months. Organisation C only works with registered interpreters and does not work with volunteer interpreters. Regular training courses are organised to cater to the languages requested by partners. These courses are open to everyone including asylum seekers who will be remunerated for their services after having successfully completed their training and achieved one of the levels of interpreting qualification. However, asylum seekers trained as interpreters work in a different camp from the camp they reside in, and they are not allowed to interpret in asylum interviews.

The demand for interpreters with varying language combinations is on the rise, and language needs fluctuate – for instance, Organisation C mobilised very quickly to train a new cohort of interpreters to cope with the influx of Ukrainian refugees. When the demand for a language decreases, the interpreters can be redeployed to other departments and, if necessary, they can be re-employed as interpreters when the demand increases again. Several training programmes are currently in the pipeline as the quality of interpreting training is of utmost importance to Organisation C to maintain consistent interpreting standards. Additionally, the organisation offers a 3-hour training course for caseworkers and employees of asylum service and of the other partners on the best practices for working with interpreters and understanding their role. Furthermore, Organisation C is committed to offering the same interprofessional training to the staff of the newly established reception and identification services.

The information included in this case study was provided by the individual responsible for training registered interpreters and for the interprofessional-training offered to partners and asylum service employees who regularly work with their interpreters. She is also trained as an interpreter at MA level and has extensive experience as an interpreter in the context of asylum.

#### 4.5.2. Background

##### 4.5.2.1. *PSI overview*

Organisation C has the double role of reception agency and PSI trainer and provider. Since its creation in 2009 they have been providing interpreting services to national authorities in charge of processing asylum applications and escorting unaccompanied minors from the borders. They also provide PSI to organisations they have an agreement with, like public hospitals, schools and NGOs or international organisations such as UNHCR, IOM (International Organisation for Migration), MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), MDM (Médecins du Monde). At the same time, Organisation C provides legal aid and social care to applicants for international protection and unaccompanied minors.

Public service interpreters do not enjoy a professional status in the country where Organisation C is based. Training opportunities are scarce, and anyone with a knowledge of the national official language and a relevant foreign one can apply for a post as an interpreter in public services. The interviewee deplores the lack of interpreting services in many public sectors who do not have an agreement with Organisation C.

Organisation C only hires interpreters via their in-house training program. Anyone can apply to be an interpreter based on their language knowledge in the national official language, English and the languages needed in the specific call. No difference is made based on previous training: individuals with a degree in interpreting will also need to follow the in-house training.

Interpreters are booked via a central office, and assignments are scheduled in advance: interpreters are sent a weekly schedule the Friday before. This is true for both on-site and remote assignments. Also, for urgent assignments, the relevant public service should contact the central office, which will then direct them to an available interpreter. A local coordinator is present on each site where interpreters are called to intervene to organise the work of interpreters, offer guidance and solve issues. Interpreters have access to a dedicated space in each site: it can be a room in an office, or a container on a camp. They are also equipped with walkie-talkies to be always reachable. They may need to be present on different sites during the same week or be present for a few months in a row on a camp in a remote area.

Organisation C ensures that they have adequate access to interpreters for all languages and that access can be scheduled in advance. In situations where a qualified interpreter for a specific language combination cannot be found, Organisation C has been collaborating with the asylum authorities in another country to provide remote interpretation for that language. The use of interpreters is most frequently required when giving information within asylum and reception operations, conducting asylum interviews, and in encounters with public services.

Interpreters intervene whenever a communication need arises, from the most basic information needs to more complex and specialised settings. These situations include information booths on camps, providing information when escorting minors from the borders to an accommodation facility in the mainland, in hospitals, schools, sessions with psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, and all along the asylum application procedure, from first reception, to interviews, to consultations with a lawyer. Interpreters also typically stand by during a session when a beneficiary wants to conduct consultations in the national language, to offer linguistic support when needed.

As a rule, three people are involved in an interpreted encounter: interpreter, the beneficiary, and the employee. However, during asylum interviews, the beneficiary may be accompanied by a lawyer, a social worker, a doctor, or a psychologist, based on the guidelines from the national asylum authorities. However, they are not allowed to interrupt the procedure: they may ask questions or add anything only after the end of the interview.

Organisation C does not employ volunteers as interpreters, nor intercultural mediators. When it comes to urgently finding interpreters for language pairs where there are not enough interpreters, either ELF or relay interpreting is used depending on what the partner requests: relay interpreting may be used for asylum procedures, since authorities do not accept the use of ELF. It is however possible to use ELF in other settings. A collaboration is in place with the interpretation service of the asylum authorities in another country to employ remote, professional interpreters when in-house capacity is insufficient.

#### *4.5.2.2. LLD overview*

When determining the need for interpreting services, the priority is to ensure a 100% level of understanding. If there are any problems with dialects or variants that arise during interpretation, the interpreters must inform their local coordinator immediately. It is not possible to know beforehand when interpretation services will be necessary, as this is typically determined during the interpretation process itself.

Interpreting services are offered whenever needed during interactions with beneficiaries, but some beneficiaries may be reluctant to admit that they require the assistance of an interpreter. This may be due to a desire to demonstrate proficiency in the national language and improve their standing. However, even when beneficiaries choose to speak English, interpreters remain in the room to provide assistance in case there is a question or word that needs clarification. This ensures that beneficiaries receive the necessary support and can communicate effectively, regardless of their language proficiency.

When providing interpreting services, Organisation C relies on the partners requesting the service to determine which language is needed. They used to have a list of languages written in each language's alphabet to help identify the correct one, but nowadays they likely rely on English to determine which language is required. Due to their experience, they are aware that some languages have different names in different countries, which enables them to find interpreters more efficiently.

To contact LLD interpreters, Organisation C makes a post on their social networks indicating the languages they need, interested individuals who speak the necessary languages then reach out to Organisation C to offer their services as interpreters.

However, in situations where Organisation C is unable to find an interpreter for a particular LLD, the approach taken depends on the partner involved. While some partners may agree to work with English, others may not (such as the asylum service). In such cases, Organisation C uses relay interpreting, where a second interpreter is used for both English and the national language.

#### *4.5.2.3. VMI overview*

Organisation C has offered VMI on a daily basis since the early days of the organisation due to a high demand for language support in remote areas. As explained earlier, VMI is mainly used between camps, enabling interpreters located in one camp to provide interpreting services to another camp when an interpreter for the required language combination is not available on-site.

The technology Organisation C uses is a hardware-based videoconferencing system (referred to as Teleconference system) with landline phones and small screens (approx. 15 cm diagonal). Dedicated rooms featuring videophones are set up in the camps. These rooms are used by interpreters to provide VMI for other sites or camps, and by social workers and refugees to receive remote interpretation from another camp. The videoconferencing system enables interpreters to see the other participants, and they can be seen by them. In the event of a weak signal, interpreters turn off the video and rely solely on audio.

A common issue is background noise because numerous videoconference interpreting stations at the premises of Organisation C are in close proximity to each other. The rooms are not soundproof, and rainfall can make it difficult for interpreters to hear the conversation. As a result, interpreters have encountered difficulties due to poor sound quality, necessitating frequent interruptions to request repetition. The equipment is now outdated, and the headsets for the interpreters are considered inadequate, though they are due to be replaced shortly.

Recently, Organisation C introduced tablets with Teams installed. Despite this, interpreters are, however, still faced with the challenge of locating a quiet space within the camp to perform their duties. Furthermore, the tablet is not mounted, requiring the interpreter to hold it, which could make taking notes challenging.

#### 4.5.3. PSI demand, practices and experiences

Organisation C works predominantly with in-house interpreters and provides them with in-house training. They occasionally use remote interpreters provided by asylum authorities in other countries who are required to undergo some form of PSI training.

Organisation C, as PSI provider, encourages the partners who use their services to provide information and brief the interpreter beforehand, especially in case of delicate or traumatic situations, or particularly vulnerable beneficiaries. However, this does not happen systematically.

Once a need for a certain language combination arises, Organisation C organises an interpreter training and announces a call for applications via their channels. The only pre-requisites are to be fluent in the national language, English and the languages needed in the specific call. Aspiring interpreters need to follow a free of charge, 60-hours training course, after which, upon successfully passing an exam, they will be hired by Organisation C as in-house interpreters.

Organisation C delivers a 3-hours training for caseworkers on how to work with interpreters, explaining the boundaries of the interpreter's role. During the training they are also sensitised to evaluating the interpreter's performance and give feedback to Organisation C. Partners are also encouraged to do so. The role of caseworkers and partners is in fact considered crucial in order to assess the quality of PSI provided. This feedback can be given on a daily basis by informing the local coordinator when this figure is present for a specific site, otherwise they can address the central interpreting service of Organisation C. Interpreters also undergo a periodic internal review by sitting a written and an oral examination. Previously, when the number of interpreters was lower, this was done once a year. However, now, a sample of 100 interpreters is selected to pass the examination and considered representative of the overall interpreting quality provided. Two

external partners are also periodically asked to collect feedback about the interpreters from the staff and the interpreters themselves on the camps in Chios and Samos.

#### 4.5.4. LLD demand, practices and experiences

Organisation C has easy access to interpreting services for Arabic, Farsi, Dari, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese Lingala, Punjabi, Urdu, Georgian, Albanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Sorani and Somali. However, it is difficult to find interpreters for languages such as Wolof, Kurmanji, Hindi, Bambara, Fula, Susu, Soninke, Chinese, Pashto, Bengali, and Creole.

Regarding LLDs, interpreters are expected to strictly interpret without any mediation or cultural interpretation, with the exception of conflicts arising from cultural differences. In case the parties are about to fight, interpreters are allowed to act as cultural mediators in a limited way.

#### 4.5.5. VMI demand, practices and experiences

**Practices in remote interpreting versus onsite interpreting:** Video-mediated interpreting (VMI) is frequently employed for very rare languages (e.g., Wolof); as mentioned in previous sections, it is used to ensure that the service covers as many remotely located sites (e.g., rural) as possible. Sound quality is often affected by weather conditions and challenging working conditions, which causes interpreters to face additional challenges when interpreting remotely, since they may not hear or see the participants they are interpreting for clearly. Despite being trained to intervene and ask for repetition as frequently as needed, interpreters may miss key information in remote interpreting without realising it, making it impossible to request repetition. If the sound quality is insufficient, the interpreter is responsible for managing the communication and intervening as necessary, despite pressure from other professionals or partners to continue the interpretation. If this occurs, the interpreter can request a break and notify the coordinator of the technical issues.

As pointed out earlier, complaints and ethical dilemmas are handled by the coordinator, who also serves as the team leader.

**Configurations:** In the context of Organisation C, VMI consists of remote interpreting involving a two-point connection and interpreting in multi-point video links. In the remote interpreting configuration, an encounter would typically feature three parties, with the beneficiary and the Asylum Service employee being co-located, and the interpreter being remote. However, at times there can be up to four parties, if the asylum seeker is allowed to be accompanied by a psychologist, lawyer or a doctor, who may join in from a remote location, leading to multi-point

video links. Although this fourth party is not supposed to participate actively in the interview, they may be permitted to speak at the conclusion of the interview to add any necessary information.

**Booking:** The designated department for booking interpreting services in Organisation C is also used to organise remote interpreting services. Interpreters receive their schedule for the following week every Friday afternoon, although *ad-hoc* assignments may also arise. In the event that an interpreter with the necessary language combination cannot be found among their registered interpreters, Organisation C collaborates with other EU countries to supply remote interpreting for rare languages. Last-minute VMI requests are handled by the coordinator, who also serves as the team leader. However, most VMI bookings are made centrally a week in advance.

**Breaks:** In terms of breaks, the same rule applies for remote interpreting as for face-to-face interpreting. Interpreters are entitled to a 20-minute break after 90 minutes of continuous interpreting.

**Briefing and debriefing:** Briefing is encouraged as part of the interprofessional training with partners especially because of potential psychological impact that, for example, serious cases of grievous bodily harm can have on interpreters, irrespective of whether they work onsite or remotely. Debriefing is possible for interpreters working in the remote modality as they are still based onsite in a refugee camp where they can have access to a psychologist, and the debriefing is facilitated by Organisation C. There have been cases where interpreters needed support because of emotional breakdowns.

#### 4.5.6. Training

##### 4.5.6.1. PSI training

In Organisation C, the mentor or supervisor for novice or beginning interpreters is fulfilled by the local coordinators and other more experienced interpreters in the same language combination. When a new interpreter is hired, they are shadowed by a more senior interpreter during their first two days on site to provide guidance and support. Aspiring interpreters need to follow a free of charge, 60-hours training course, after which, upon successfully passing an exam, they will be hired by Organisation C as in-house interpreters. The course is structured in ten six-hours training days. Interpreters are presented with Organisation C's background, mission and organisation. Training content include:

- Interpreting techniques



- Specific terminology on asylum and healthcare
- Glossary building
- Note-taking
- The role of the interpreter, neutrality
- Specific themes: asylum procedures, smuggling, trafficking, LGBTQI issues
- Interventions from practitioners in the healthcare sector, from the United Nations High Commission for the refugees.

At the end of the training, the candidates need to pass an examination consisting of a theoretical written exam and an interpreting simulation. Only candidates who successfully sit the written test are allowed to sit the simulation.

Based on their exam results, in-house interpreters will receive a level one, two or three certification that determines in which settings they can be employed, with one being the most generic basic level of information, and three covering all settings including asylum interviews and legal consultations. Interpreters with an asylum background but whose status determination procedure is not yet complete will not be employed for asylum interviews.

#### *4.5.6.2. LLDs training*

In relation to interpreters for LLDs, every potential interpreter must attend a seminar offered by Organisation C, with a duration of 10 days (6 hours per day). Upon completion of the seminar, candidates who pass an internal written and oral examination can be hired as interpreters. The examination is conducted either in the national language or English (as for some language combinations there are no interpreters that speak the national language) and includes a written theoretical section covering topics discussed during the seminar, as well as an oral component that involves role-playing simulations. Depending on the results of the examination, interpreters will be ranked on one of three different levels and based on the level, they will be sent to different assignments. Interpreters are also responsible for improving their skill set, they are expected and encouraged to attain a certificate for a higher level and for other language combinations as well.

Organisation C provides a comprehensive seminar to all interpreter candidates that covers various aspects of interpreting within the asylum and refugee sector. This includes presentations about the asylum service in general, medical field, interpreting for people who have gone through difficult situations (such as smuggling, trafficking), and interpreting for the LGBTQI community.

Interpreting techniques, such as note taking are also covered, and interpreters are given glossaries and guidance to recognise their needs and areas for improvement. The seminar aims to equip them with sufficient tools to overcome any gaps or difficulties they may encounter while working as professional interpreters.

To ensure that interpreters have adequate language proficiency, several steps are taken by Organisation C. Not only do candidates have to pass the internal examination, but they are also interviewed during the application process to determine their proficiency in either the national language or English. As for the other language, colleagues who speak that language are part of the examination. Finally, if a candidate speaks a language that is not covered by Organisation C, interpreters from other countries may be contacted to assist with the evaluation process.

#### *4.5.6.3. VMI training*

During their training, interpreters receive a short presentation about remote interpreting. In addition, as part of their initial shadowing stage, newly qualified interpreters may observe other interpreters performing remote interpreting. The training covers technological aspects of remote interpreting as well as communicative aspects. For example, interpreters are made aware of the importance of intervening to ask for repetition or terminating the call when sound quality is inadequate. If required, the local coordinator can also provide support with technological aspects.

### *4.5.7. Evaluation and future hopes*

#### *4.5.7.1. PSI related*

The number one need for Organisation C is to hire more interpreters and cover more languages in light of an increase of their engagement in first reception and identification procedures and to meet the needs of new cooperations with public services. This implies organising training both for interpreters and new partners. The interviewee stressed the challenge in increasing interpreting capacity in languages of lesser diffusion that, up until now, were not needed by their services.

#### *4.5.7.2. LLDs related*

N/A

#### *4.5.7.3. VMI related*

The WEBPSI (Webcam Public Service Interpreting) project might help resolve Organisation C's needs in response to an increased demand for interpreters, as the organisation is preparing to

train more cohorts of candidates. An important aspect for the future delivery of interpreting services by Organisation C relates to the technological basis for remote interpreting. Whilst remote interpreting via online (cloud-based) software platforms has become more common, the challenges of unreliable internet connections in remotely located camps/sites make their use in Organisation C's context difficult. As a result, remote interpreting using Organisation C's traditional videoconferencing system will remain in use, with plans to upgrade the equipment.

Briefing interpreters is another aspect that requires improvement so that it takes place consistently. This may be achieved by continuing the current efforts of interprofessional training with partners in this area.

Relay interpreting is not frequently used in the context of the asylum service, but Organisation C believes it could be relevant for the WEBPSI platform.

## Conclusion

This report has presented the outcomes of a baseline study and needs analysis in relation to three areas that will inform the development of VMI in the refugee and asylum context and the training of non-EU nationals to become video interpreters for LLDs in this context. The areas were the needs and minimum standards of professional competence, training and certification of public service interpreters in Europe; the needs, minimum standards and medium-specific challenges of video-mediated interpreting in Europe (e.g., technical requirements, confidentiality, unsuitability of webcam interpreting for certain types of communication); and existing approaches and needs in relation to LLDI training in Europe.

An ongoing problem in the provision of language assistance in the asylum and refugee context – as in other public service settings—is the lack of a language policy that attends to the challenges of language use in this setting—such as the enormous linguistic variability, inequalities in access and asymmetries between language users—and the complex skills this requires from interpreters. Still, training and qualification are not legally required to access the profession, leading to a scarcity of training programs. Furthermore, the scarcity of interpreting services offered for speakers of LLDs and the prevalence of *ad hoc* practices results in LLD speakers being less likely to have appropriate access to available services in a refugee context. To address this problem, we explored current VMI practices in the public sector as a potential language support solution for the refugee context.

Overall, the review of academic and practice-based publications, guidelines and codes of practice (Parts I, II and III) highlights the imbalances in the current practice of PSI and VMI across different parts of the public sector. This finding was corroborated by the case studies regarding VMI and in-person interpreting provision within three reception authorities (Part IV) and by the European Migration Network ad-hoc query summary, which gives an overview of the current situation of interpreting provision in reception facilities from 23 EU member states (Appendix). However, our comprehensive review also enabled us to elicit good practices. These practices will inform the development of minimum standards for interpreting in the refugee context in Europe as part of WP3 and the development training modules in WP4.

In **Part I**, we highlighted some of the pressing issues in PSI across Europe: a lack of specific training, especially for LLDs, a lack of a legal framework for PSI provision in most countries, the dearth of certification programmes and standards of practice, and codes of ethics to ensure a good-quality

interpreting provision. Despite the existing consensus that PSI is a complex profession prone to ethical dilemmas because of the asymmetrical relationship between the parties, the use of ad-hoc interpreters in public service settings remains widespread due to a shortage of qualified interpreters, particularly for LLDs. In asylum settings, the asymmetry between the parties is particularly evident, with high risks involved for the applicant. In addition, low fees disincentivise potential candidates from undertaking PSI training and qualifications, inadvertently perpetuating the low professional status of PSI.

Regarding training, scholars emphasise the need to offer training for a wider variety of languages, either by organising cross-language courses or adding LLDs. To increase the offer of training courses, a potential solution would be setting up training-the-trainer programmes, especially for LLDs that are most needed in the arrival and reception of applicants for international protection. Furthermore, the content of the PSI courses should reflect realistic situations in the field. Thus, university training could be adapted with content specific to PSI settings, using role-plays, online repositories and facilitating communities of online practice. Furthermore, PSI training should cater to a wide range of trainee profiles; various formats to achieve this aim are presented in the literature, from weekend classes to open online courses. Collaboration between academia and public service institutions and inter-professional training for PSI users are also advised to improve on-the-job training opportunities.

Research also highlights the importance of standards of practice to raise the professional status of PSI, to set clear expectations among users and inform PSI training content. Among the challenges posed by applying standards of practice and codes of ethics is the gap between theory and practice shown by empirical research. While establishing universally valid standards would be difficult, building a strong professional community can help uphold standards of practice and codes of conduct. Thus, our review of PSI guidelines revealed that the PSI situation in Europe is fragmented. While some countries now have a well-established PSI framework (in certain domains), most countries still face a lack of codes of practice and guidelines.

In **Part II**, we identified the challenges around the issue of interpreting provisions for LLDs, some of which are of a practical nature while others relate to language or cultural practices. The practical challenges include finding suitable candidates, trainers and training material. In addition, cultural and linguistic differences, i.e., different worldviews and/or strong oral traditions, can be

difficult to address during training. Furthermore, interpreting trainees who are part of the community they interpret for may face difficulties in navigating cultural ties and relationships with their clients and exposure to potentially re-traumatising experiences. To mitigate some of these challenges, interpreting trainees need to develop greater intercultural awareness, which can help them overcome potential biases they hold and guide them towards a professional interpreting practice. The lack of qualified trainers and the scarcity of interpreting programmes for LLDs could be addressed by setting up courses taught by an interpreting expert and an LLD linguist.

VMI presents a potential solution in refugee contexts when an in-person interpreter cannot be included for practical reasons. However, our comprehensive literature review showed that there are no comprehensive studies on VMI in refugees and asylum contexts. Thus, in **Part III**, we drew from existing VMI literature in legal and medical contexts to derive a core of VMI-specific challenges and good practices, which can subsequently inform approaches to VMI and VMI training in the refugee and asylum context, in line with the aim of this project.

Thus, we have highlighted VMI-specific challenges that have been identified across all PSI settings and VMI applications, such as incongruent visual ecology and reduced backchanneling cues for all participants. The literature suggests that many of these challenges can be mitigated, at least to some extent, through the design of appropriate solutions for integrating interpreter in video links and adopting good practices. For example, interpreters should always be briefed about the assignment, including about the modality (in-person, online). In VMI, the usual introductory formalities need to include introducing the interpreter and inviting a brief exchange for a language check and explanation of the interpreter's role and potentially other important issues, such as the recording of the meeting and confidentiality. For longer or more complex video-mediated encounters, good practice need to include ground rules regarding turn-taking and regular breaks for the benefit of interpreters, in keeping with the interest of the other parties.

To increase the uptake of VMI, end users will need additional support with technological infrastructure and VMI literacy. Collaborative approaches to configuring the virtual space and managing the communication process in VMI can reduce interaction problems. Inter-professional training can contribute to this. Ideally, both VMI and in-person interpreting should be available to interpreting end users who, as a result of training, can then make informed decisions as to the most appropriate method of language support depending on the circumstances, e.g. the

sensitivity of the topic being discussed, number of participants or duration of the interpreted encounter.

We have also highlighted examples of good practice in VMI in healthcare and legal settings and examples of appropriate guidelines for interpreting, although existing guidelines are not always based on systematically collected evidence. During the COVID-19 pandemic, more specific guidance for VMI (especially for fully virtual encounters) has emerged. However, we found that any form of harmonisation and standardisation of VMI codes of conduct or guidelines is still missing, as is also the case for PSI. In some countries, existing guidelines on VMI are very detailed, borne out of need and developed at the initiative of institutions responsible for assisting refugees as part of their institutional coordination efforts. Yet, there is a notable lack of guidance for interpreters working in asylum or immigration settings, particularly for LLDs. Nevertheless, our review has revealed useful examples of good practice in VMI which can inform guidelines for VMI and inter-professional training for users of VMI in the context of asylum and immigration.

The case studies (**Part IV**) we carried out showed that NGOs working in the area of refugee reception are faced with various challenges: fluctuating needs for interpreting in various language combinations, particularly LLDs, practical considerations such as the remoteness of some reception centres, time pressure and budget constraints. This leads to an uneven practice in terms of interpreting provision in refugee contexts as reception authorities and national governments must respond to different local needs. Thus, the case studies showed that the practice of VMI in refugee contexts is not fully established yet and both interpreters and end-users are still learning how to cope with the challenges of VMI. Also, telephone interpreting remains sometimes the only method of remote interpreting as the transition to VMI has not been made yet in all the countries or reception centres. Furthermore, the picture emerging from the ad-hoc query to which 23 member states responded (see Appendix – Compilation Report: Ad-hoc Query on 2022.63 Interpreting in Reception Facilities) corroborates our main finding that current PSI practice is uneven as it evolved bottom-up in response to specific needs. This seems to hamper a more strategic and systematic approach to booking and working with interpreters.

We acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all approach would not work in all countries or even reception centres, as it became apparent during our case studies. For example, the VMI/PSI ratio varies from one stage of the reception process to another, depending on the frequency of the

demand and the location of the respective centre for refugees. However, we argue that it is both necessary and feasible to work towards establishing a common core of minimum standards and a shared understanding of the minimum requirements in terms of interpreting provision quality, technological infrastructure and interprofessional training for an appropriate integration of interpreters. The next steps for the project will be to draw from the wealth of knowledge emerging from the areas of PSI, VMI and LLDI in order to propose a core of minimum standards for VMI practice and training in the context of asylum and immigration. Then, based on these minimum standards, reception authorities and relevant institutions can further develop local codes of practice that respond to their specific needs for interpreting provision.



## Appendix – Compilation Report: Ad-hoc Query on 2022.63 Interpreting in Reception Facilities

This compilation report summarises and analyses the results from an ad-hoc query on ‘interpreting in reception facilities’ requested by the Belgian EMN National Contact Point (EMN Belgium) on 16 November 2022. In contrast to the asylum legislation, especially in the context of the asylum interview, there is no obligation under the Reception Directive (2013/33/EU) to use interpreters in reception facilities. However, the use of interpretation (understood broadly as the practice of conveying a message from a source language to a target language) facilitates communication between the staff and the linguistically diverse group of residents in reception facilities.

Fedasil, the Belgian Reception Agency, aims to harmonise the use of interpreters in its reception facilities. Therefore, the query focused on the existence of formal guidelines or instructions (e.g. policy directive, administrative decree, ...), on the use of interpreting services and on how these services are provided in reception facilities in the Member States. The query also addressed the use of remote interpretation by video calls, as Belgian reception facilities have successfully experimented with them in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Online interpretation allows to overcome practical limitations, such as sanitary and distance requirements. It is also considered advantageous compared to telephone interpreting, because it allows to improve the quality of conversations. The query also inquired about the organisation of interpreting in reception facilities in EU Member States. In Belgium, reception facilities do not employ their own interpreters, but depend on external service providers or on multilingual staff and sometimes residents to provide interpretation.

This report is structured in accordance with the original questionnaire, which was composed of six questions. Twenty-three Member States have answered the ad-hoc query (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden). Where applicable and appropriate, citations have been provided to illustrate the results. In summary, six key findings can be discerned:

1. A minority of Member States have (extensive) formal requirements and guidance, including specific legislation, on the use of interpreters in the field of reception. However, this does not impede Member States from using interpretation services. All Member States use (at least)

occasionally interpreting services. When formal guidelines are provided, they are seldom comprehensive, leading many issues to the discretion of reception facilities, including the contexts which require interpreters, who can provide interpretation and how.

2. Member States generally prefer certified interpreters, but often allow multilingual staff or residents to do interpretation. On-site interpretation is equally preferred, yet remote interpretation has been developed in most Member States as well.
3. A majority of Member States provide video call interpretation possibilities, but mention that this requires precautionary and preparatory measures to ensure privacy and technical support.
4. Almost no Member States have their own interpreters. Reception authorities do however consider language skills during recruitment procedures to reduce the need for interpreting services.
5. Interpretation services are mostly provided by external agencies that have been appointed through a public procurement process on a central level. Budgets are often heterogeneous, including AMIF-funding. EUAA is also increasingly providing support through interpreters.
6. Most Member States experience difficulties in finding interpreters, especially for very rare or for very frequently requested language combinations.

Question 1. Does your Member State have guidelines, legislation, policy directives that allow and regulate the use of interpreters in reception facilities?

*(YES/NO. If yes, please attach the directives/guidelines and describe the content.)*

Eight Member States (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden) answered negatively and nine (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain) answered positively to the question of having guidelines, legislation, policy directives that allow and regulate the use of interpreters in reception facilities. Also, six countries (Estonia, France, Luxemburg, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia) did not affirm or deny the question directly. Instead, they gave a description related to the use of interpreters. Sometimes this information was related to the asylum procedure, which transcends the scope of the query. In general, the information provided by Member States who did not explicitly answer the question, was mostly negative. Therefore, we can conclude that the majority of Member States have little or no formal guidelines on the use of interpreters within reception.

For those who answered the question positively a majority has a specific legal basis to provide interpreters in reception. This is the case for Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands. In a number of Member States, the legislation on reception contains a specific article addressing the responsibility to provide interpretation. For instance, Belgium's Reception Law stipulates in article 15 that "The Reception Agency or its partners should ensure that beneficiaries of reception have access to the services of interpretation and translation agencies to enable them to exercise their rights and duties as specified in the law. The Reception Agency or its partners can establish agreements with service providers or agencies that are specialised in providing interpreting or translating services." In Finland, "the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings provides for reception services. According to Section 13 of the Act, reception services include interpretation and translation services." If not in the reception law as such, it might also be in other legal texts that the provision of interpreters is included. For instance, in Italy, it is the "Terms of reference 2021 which regulates the interpretation services in Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers".

Looking into the content of the formal guidelines, they might include information on the need for an interpreter as such. For instance, in Finland, "according to Section 27 of the Act, the reception centre must take care of interpretation or translation if the customer does not know Finnish or Swedish". Whether there is a threshold degree of knowledge of a national language, below which an interpreter should be provided to an applicant, was not specified by any of the Member States. Interestingly, a few Member States explicitly mentioned the use of non-national languages as an alternative to using interpreters. For instance, in Hungary "communication is ensured by multilingual staff, mostly using the English language." Slovakia was the only Member State that mentioned the use of translating applications "especially for immediate basic communication, while verifying the meaning and understanding as well by different expressions, if possible."

There can also be formal guidelines on the language combinations for interpretation. Some Member States explicitly mentioned other languages than the applicant's mother tongue. For instance, in Finland "the matter can be interpreted or translated into a language that the customer can reasonably be expected to understand. (...) The interpreter may not necessarily interpret into your mother tongue if there is another language that you understand sufficiently well." This is also the case in Slovenia, although a preference for the mother tongue of the applicant will always be implemented: "We could say, that in some cases, non-national languages are used as relay language. For example, if there is no interpreter for the mother tongue of the

person, and the person in question speaks two or more languages, we will make sure an interpreter is available who will translate in the other language of choice. Nevertheless, our policy is to provide an interpreter for the mother tongue of any person.”

The formal guidelines can also include information on the contexts in which interpreters should be provided. This topic is sometimes addressed at the level of reception legislation. In Greece for instance, the reception law mentions a range of specific instances that might require an interpreter, in particular “information provision after the submission of an international protection application, communication with unaccompanied minors, medical examinations, or in the context of the reduction or withdrawal of material reception conditions.” In Austria, “legal counselling and return counselling” were explicitly mentioned as contexts in which the help of interpreters can be required. It is more common however that specific guidelines on the use of interpreters are provided at an operational level. For instance in Finland, “according to the guidelines of the Finnish Immigration Service, reception centre employees may book an interpreter to help in situations where they handle important official matters that concern the customer. For example, information sessions organised by the reception centre will be interpreted into a language that the customer understands. An interpreter is often booked for visits to the nurse, the social worker or the social counsellor. (...) Reception centres will not book an interpreter for all everyday situations.” Also in Belgium, a set of internal quality reception guidelines has been validated which contains several standards on the contexts in which interpreters are required, in particular during psychological and medical counselling. In other Member States, such as the Netherlands, the contexts in which interpreters are available is regulated in the framework agreements with contracting agencies. In general, settings in which rights and obligations are discussed, as well as medical settings, psychological counselling in particular, are often mentioned by Member States as contexts in which interpreters might be required, but there seems to be less agreement on whether social counselling and daily interactions in reception facilities also require the help of interpreters.

Formal guidelines sometimes also contains information on who can(not) perform interpretation. In Finland, “according to Section 28 of the Act, the reception centre may not use a person as an interpreter or translator if he/she is in such a relationship with the customer or the matter that his/her reliability or the safety of the customer may be jeopardised. Interpreters and translators always have an obligation to maintain secrecy.” In Italy, there is an explicit requirement to have both male and female interpreters available: “The service is organised by the employment of an adequate number of male and female linguistic-cultural mediators in an instrumental manner

with regard to the other services provided in the centre”. In Belgium, a specific guideline prohibits that children are asked to provide interpretation, especially not to their parents.

In few Member States, there are explicit formal guidelines about the type of interpreter, for instance certified interpreters. In the Netherlands, “COA deploys interpreters that are provided by the external service provider ‘Global Talk’. Global Talk is required, in principle, to deploy interpreters that are registered with the Bureau of Sworn Interpreters and Translators (Bureau Wet beëdigde tolken en vertalers – Bureau Wbtv). The Bureau of Sworn Interpreters and Translators manages the Register of Sworn Interpreters and Translators (Rbtv), for certified interpreters, and the Relay List, for uncertified interpreters, respectively.” In Belgium, the type of interpreters that can be consulted is related to the type of contexts in which they have to perform. More specifically, “according to the quality guidelines, reception staff should use interpreters or (inter)cultural mediators during psychological counselling. In medical consultations, the requirements are less strict. Although interpreters or (inter)cultural mediators are recommended, reception staff can also interpret if the resident agrees. Only when no other interpreting options are available, can residents be accompanied by fellow residents or acquaintances to interpret in the medical field. For social and legal counselling, the requirements are less strict. The quality guidelines recommend to first evaluate if a reception staff member can perform interpretation. If not, either an interpreter or a resident can be used. In case there is no personal connection between the resident in need of interpretation and the resident-interpreter, the former always has to give his/her consent.”

In few Member States, there exists formal guidance on how interpretation should be performed. There was little mention in the answers about specific grounds for on-site, telephone or video call interpretation. For example, the Netherlands responded: “The manner in which interpreters provide their services to applicants for international protection or refugees in reception centres is not regulated and may be in person, by phone or by video call. In practice, the reception facility staff decides which means of communication is best suited for the situation at hand.”

Importantly, it should be stressed that the absence (or limited content) of formal guidelines does not exclude the use of interpreters in reception centres. In fact, all Member States have mentioned that interpreters are (at least) occasionally used. For example, in France, despite the absence of clear formal guidelines on whether and when to use interpreters, “the use of professional interpreting (excluding the intervention of family members) is therefore, in practice, a major budgetary priority in the centres and a fairly widespread practice in the various establishments.” In Luxembourg, “The National Reception Office (ONA - Office national de

l'accueil) has in the primary reception centres a dedicated unit of interpreters. This unit is managed by the Luxembourg Red Cross (Luxembourg reception law does not provide for such a unit) that has a yearly convention with the Luxembourg State. The service works with interpreters who speak more than 45 languages and dialects." Also in all other Member States interpreters are used. It should be investigated in more detail how the presence or absence of formal guidelines is related to the use of interpreters.

Question 2. When using interpretation in reception facilities, can you indicate who provides interpretation (e.g. (certified) interpreters, (intercultural) mediators, multilingual staff, multilingual residents) and how (e.g. on-site, by telephone, by video call, etc.)?

The second question inquired into how and who performs interpretation in practice. As was previously mentioned, all Member States use interpreters on an occasional basis, also when there is no formal guidance. In a majority of 14 Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain) interpretation was available on-site or remotely by telephone and video call. In three cases (Cyprus, Hungary, Portugal) interpretation was only performed on-site. In four cases (Czech Republic, Latvia, Luxembourg, Sweden), apart from on-site interpretation, remote interpretation was only performed by telephone, not by video call. From the answers provided by Finland and Greece, it was unclear if video call remote interpretation was available alongside phone interpreting and on-site interpretation.

Although almost all Member States offer the possibility of on-site and (a kind of) remote interpretation, this does not mean that both options are equally used in practice. As already mentioned in the case of the Netherlands, reception staff should decide by themselves which type of interpretation they prefer. A number of Member States mention that remote options are used when no interpreters on-site are available. This can be because no interpreters are present in the reception facility, or because interpreters cannot come to the reception facility for a range of reasons, for instance financial reasons or in emergency situations. In the case of Greece for example "the option of remote interpretation is used only in cases where the required language is not available by physical presence. (...) Interpreters assist all reception procedures with physical presence (which is the most common modality) or remotely (Microsoft teams, telephone) in case there is a need for interpretation in a rare language (e.g. Somali, Amharic, Tigrinya, Krio, Lingala, etc.). " In Luxembourg "in case of an emergency and if interpreters are physically unavailable a telephone call can be arranged." Also in Lithuania "at the Refugee Reception Center, interpreters

typically work on-site. Interpretation is provided by phone only as an exception.” In Slovenia, “in case of a lack of an interpreter for a specific language, remote interpretation by video call is used via application Zoom.” In Spain “before the pandemic, interpretation through telephone calls and video calls was used for some actions, especially in the case of infrequent dialects, and especially when interpreters could not travel.” Distance was also an important reason to use remote interpretation in Austria: “Apart from Vienna, there is no fixed assignment of interpreters to specific locations. All locations make use of the existing pool of interpreters. Using video interpreting, it is possible to react flexibly to existing needs by accessing this pool of interpreters.”

Although there seems to be a preference for on-site interpretation, this does not imply that remote interpretation is seldom used across the Member States. For instance, in Finland “interpreting remotely or by phone is common.” Regarding more specifically the possibility of remote interpreting by video call, it should be noted that this is the latest progress in many member states and generally lags behind. For instance in France “the use of video-conference or video-call is still not very developed (...) but is a subject that several associations in charge of reception centres are trying to promote as an alternative to phone exchanges.”

Regarding who can perform interpretation in reception facilities, seven Member States (Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal) answered that they only allow interpreters with a type of proven expertise. In the rest of the Member States, interpretation can be performed by a range of people, including multilingual staff and residents. Some Member States do have an explicit preference to use so-called ‘certified’ interpreters first. The option to include other people can be related to situations in which certified interpreters are not available. For instance, in the Netherlands the service provider “Global Talk is required to first try to match interpreters from the Rbtv [Register Register of Sworn Interpreters and Translators], if this is unsuccessful, Global Talk can relay to the Relay List. Only when this also does not lead to a desired match, Global Talk can deploy other unregistered interpreters.” Using non-expert interpreters might also be related to the context during which interpretation is to be performed. For instance, in France, the level of required expertise is related to the importance of the conversation: “Moreover, professional interpreters or multilingual staff in the reception centre are generally preferred to ensure interpretation for social, administrative, legal and health-related support. Volunteer interpreters can be mobilised for workshops and language courses. Multilingual residents can be called upon to facilitate understanding between the persons supported in the reception centre and the staff for any other situation, or as long as the confidentiality of the exchanges is assured.” Also in Belgium, the level of required expertise for interpreters is often

related to the context of the conversation. Yet, an additional factor in Belgian reception facilities is the likeliness to find someone who can interpret on-site very quickly. Fellow reception staff and multilingual residents often have the advantage of being physically available, whereas certified interpreters are at best directly available for remote interpretation.

There is no common standard across Europe that institutionalises the interpreter profession. Therefore expertise can be attested and certified in different ways. Some reception authorities have their own expertise assessment. For instance, in Austria “interpreters are subject to competence and quality control which can be proven by a demonstrable subject-specific qualification or the positive completion of the course ‘Interpreting for the Asylum and Police Sector’ as well as a positively completed competence check. External interpreters are subject to an initial competence check and/or a BBU (Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen / Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services) internal competence check, depending on whether they successfully provide evidence of a prior qualification. Interpreters with a university education in interpreting as well as official court interpreters receive an accreditation once they have provided proof of the necessary qualification.” In Greece “the Central Service of the Reception and Identification Service keeps a Registry/interpreters list/intercultural mediators who meet the following criteria: sufficient knowledge of the Greek language, optimal knowledge of the requested language, are Greek citizens or foreigners who reside legally in the country.” Reception authorities may also rely on interpreter listings drawn up by other governmental agencies, such as in the example of the Netherlands given above or as is the case in Flanders in Belgium. Member States may also rely on service providers to be responsible for the level of expertise of interpreters. In Poland “the framework agreement concluded between the Ministry of Interior and the provider of translation services applies also to translations and interpretation outside the asylum procedure (procurement/open public tender). (...) If the interpreters are from the Agency (Provider), then they are certified interpreters.”

Looking into the content of the certification, different elements can be discerned. A first element concerns the linguistic level of competence an interpreter has in the source and target language. For instance, in Greece: “Interpreters in the context described above, are certified both on the source language (or combination of languages) and the relay language (usually Greek, English, or both).” Importantly, none of the Member States have referred to the European Framework of Reference for Languages and the required linguistic levels of competence. A second element concerns the subject-specific qualification to interpret in the field of asylum, for instance



knowledge of the asylum procedure and relevant terminology. This was only explicitly mentioned by Austria. Interestingly, none of the Member States explicitly referred to interpreting skills, such as note-taking or consecutive translation. Apart from knowledge and skills, several Member States did mention that interpreters have to go through security checks before they can be employed. For instance, in Croatia “a list of translators/interpreters is published on the official website of the Ministry, and they all must undergo a detailed security check before concluding a contract with the Ministry. For all official purposes, we use people who are on that list.” Member States that also use non-professional interpreters have flagged that this might involve security concerns. For instance, in Slovakia “some of the experts working in the facilities are multilingual, at least to some extent. As we are lacking the interpreters of some languages, or we need immediate assistance, we also ask other residents for their support, bearing in mind the potential risks (so their services are not used in sensitive personal issues).” For this reason, in Belgium, applicants always need to give their consent when fellow residents provide interpretation.

In the context of who can provide interpretation, some Member States also made reference to ‘(inter)cultural mediators’ or ‘community interpreters’. In the case of Italy, a mixed category was used of “the linguistic-cultural mediation service”. As mentioned by Belgium “from a conceptual point of view, it is important to distinguish interpretation, which consists in the practice of faithfully and neutrally conveying a message from a source language to a target language, from (inter)cultural mediation, which consists in establishing a relationship of understanding and trust between people from different backgrounds. Often (inter)cultural mediation is connected to linguistic differences which is why (inter)cultural mediators are also sometimes asked to perform interpretation as well.” In the Belgian case, “in 2017, the Federal Public Service for Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment launched a platform called ‘Intercult’ for (inter)cultural mediation, including interpretation, through video call. The medical services of reception facilities which are run by Fedasil can be granted access to the platform through obtaining a special login.” Recently, the Belgian reception authorities have also started recruiting directly a number of intercultural mediators, however their official task is not to translate/interpret. Similarly, in Slovakia the Department of Migration and Integration (responsible e.g. for social work in the asylum facilities) also cooperates with two community interpreters (Arabic and Farsi speaking) upon common written agreement (per service fee applies in this case). (...) In case of “community interpreters”, they are more like (intercultural) mediators.”

Question 3. If reception facilities in your Member State make use of remote interpretation by video conference or video call, can you explain how this is organised?

As mentioned above, a majority of 14 Member States enable remote interpretation through video call. Several Member States have indicated that using an interpreter through video call requires additional precautionary and preparatory measures. On the level of infrastructure, this involves using a secure internet connection, and separate rooms which ensure privacy. For instance, in Croatia “for official purposes, we use the Ministry of the Interior network and computers with cameras. Skype and Microsoft Teams are most common internet applications that we use. Communication takes place in explicit rooms with internet connection and with minimum possible interference or disturbance from other people.” In Estonia “in case of a video conference, the official usually uses his/her laptop and additional gadgets (such as conference call speaker) in a separate room to assure privacy and better conversation quality.” In Lithuania “at the Refugee Reception Centre, the interpreter is provided with a computer in a separate room to ensure privacy.” Also in Poland “reception centres are equipped with the necessary equipment for video conference or video call, which is available to residents during the conversation. Separate rooms are available in the centres to ensure privacy and conversations are always conducted in the presence of an employee. In the rooms, conversations can be conducted in the scope of: interviews, matters regarding the current functioning of the centre, medical matters, meetings with a psychologist.” Still, not all Member States take similar measures. For instance, in Malta “all AWAS (Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers) interpreters may use an office mobile and thus the video call can be organised.” In Finland, precautionary measures are also taken on a contractual level. Interpreters who work remotely need to sign an additional clause: “Phone and remote interpretations done for reception centres require the interpreter to take a non-disclosure agreement. The duty of the Finnish Immigration Service is to protect the processed information with sufficient and appropriate measures and requirements. When interpreting for reception centres, the interpreter must be in a place where others cannot hear the interpretation. The interpreter cannot therefore interpret from e.g. a public or semi-public space and outside parties must not have a line of sight to the space during the interpretation. After the interpretation is done, the interpreter must destroy the notes he/she has taken in an appropriate manner.”

Member States have also referred to the availability of remote services through video-conference. Especially in Member States where video conference is still in its early stages and is not frequently used, it seems as if video conference interpreters are less available than for

instance phone interpreters. Reception facilities are required to plan ahead when they want to use interpreters through video conference. In Latvia, the “Office of Citizenship and Migration affairs has a contract with translation companies who provide translation via conference or video call. This service has to be ordered in advance.” However, the example of the Netherlands suggests that the availability of video calls might be equal to phone interpretation: the service provider “Global Talk has developed an app for COA. With this app COA employees can easily and rapidly request for interpreting services by telephone or video call. The connection with the right interpreter is made within 3 minutes.”

Question 4. Does your Member State employ own interpreters as reception administration or reception centre staff?

Only two Member States (Austria and Malta) answered that they recruit own staff whose explicit task it is to provide interpretation. In the case of Austria “The BBU (Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen / Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services) GmbH employs interpreters. If necessary, external interpreters are employed as independent contractors”. For Malta, no further explanation was given. Additionally, some Member States mentioned that their operating partners sometimes recruit interpreters or mediators as part of their staff. For instance, in Croatia “NGO and International organisations who provide services in reception facilities co-funded by AMIF fund have staff members for translational purposes with other activities.” Interestingly, Greece mentioned to have “a special administrative Unit (...) competent to monitor the bodies or persons who cooperate in the provision of intercultural mediation or interpretation, in order to ensure sufficient interpretation in all reception and identification procedures in a language that the third country nationals/or stateless persons can understand”. Although Greece does not have its own interpreters, it does have a specific internal service to monitor the availability of interpreters.

Instead of recruiting interpreters, reception authorities sometimes take into account linguistic skills of new staff to avoid needing interpreters. For instance, in Estonia “language skills such as Russian and English, are required when applying for a post in a reception centre so that the staff is able to communicate with residents in the facility at least on a basic level.” Also in Slovenia, the “Slovenian Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants has one social worker employed, who speaks Farsi and will have another social worker employed in the near future, who speaks Arabic.” In Italy, “when tendering for managing new reception centres, as outlined in the 2021 Terms of Reference, the presence of staff - other than the linguistic-cultural mediator -

who possess an adequate level of English, Arabic or French, is an element in favour of the managerial body that submits a bid.”

Question 5. Do the reception facilities in your Member State use external service providers to perform interpretation?

*(YES/NO. If yes, please indicate through which means you employ them (e.g. procurement/open public tender, per service fee, project funding (such as AMIF), operational support by EUAA).)*

The majority of Member States rely on external service providers to perform interpretation. The notion of external service provider covers a wide range of different actors. It can refer to interpreting agencies, to be divided into non-profit and profit-based agencies. Interpreting agencies may have a staff of interpreters or may also work with freelance interpreters or volunteers. Interpreting agencies may also be government-based. For instance, a rather unique situation occurs in Estonia, where the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) has “a special translation unit and certified interpreters are used of whom some can act as intercultural mediators at the same time. (...) Counsellor working in a reception centre (accommodation centre for asylum seekers) also has access to involve PBGB’s interpreters for performing counselling with a resident in the reception facility (legal counselling etc.).” Also in Belgium, medical services of reception facilities can use intercultural mediators provided by another government agency. Although external to reception, the mediators concerned are still recruited as part of a government agency. Also, the Flemish authorities have established their own interpreting agency. It does not employ interpreters and only takes a mediating role in connecting the demand for interpreters to the supply, provided by self-employed interpreters.

The decision on which external service provider performs interpretation is most often arranged at the central level of the reception authority. There are Member States (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain) in which the central authority establishes a public procurement process to appoint one or several external service providers. For instance, in the Netherlands “COA deploys interpreters that are provided by the external service provider ‘Global Talk’. The organisation ‘Asylum Seeker Healthcare’ (GezondheidsZorg Asielzoekers – GZA) that provides medical assistance to persons living in COA reception facilities deploys medical interpreters that fall within the agreement between COA and Global Talk. (...) The COA and GZA use the services of Global Talk on a procurement basis. In this procurement, besides a price, minimum standards for quality have also been established.” Likewise, in the Czech Republic

“interpreting is provided by certified interpreters with whom a contract is concluded at the central level for interpreting in all facilities.” In Greece, it is at the level of the Ministry that a public procurement is set-up: “Reception authorities do not have direct work contracts with interpreters. The Ministry makes contractual agreements to cover interpretation needs through open public tendering procedure.” Still, there are Member States (Belgium, Croatia, France, Portugal, Slovakia) in which no central public procurement is established. For instance, in France “some reception structures decide to contract with an interpreting company according to their operating budget within the framework of services provision and on bilateral contracts.” In Belgium, there is no public procurement as such and individual reception facilities cover interpreter expenses on a per service fee.

In terms of budget, Member States have different ways to finance interpretation services. Several Member States (Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia) mentioned that they at least partly use AMIF project-funding to cover for interpretation. Other Member States indicate they use regular state budgets. Apart from Belgium, no other Member States went into detail on the amount of resources spent on interpretation. Five Member States (Belgium, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia) mentioned that they receive interpreter support from EUAA. This is in kind support, in the sense that EUAA provides interpreters through its own sub-contractors which have been appointed by a European public procurement process.

Question 6. Does your Member State experience difficulties in finding interpreters for specific language combinations?

*(Please specify whether non-national languages are (sometimes) used as a relay language.)*

All Member States except for Sweden answered the question. A majority of 15 Member States experience difficulties in finding interpreters. The most common explanation is the absence of interpreters for rare language combinations with the national language. For instance, Austria experiences “difficulties in finding interpreters for specific language combinations, namely German in combination with e.g. Amharic, Bari, Brazilian Portuguese, Bengali, Burmese language, Creole languages, Kurdish languages (Sorani/Badhini/Gorani), Igbo, Lingala, Malay, Maay Maay, Mongolian, Nepali, Swahili, Tamil, Tigrinya, Uzbek, or Yoruba.” Similarly, in France “there are real difficulties for reception facilities in meeting specific needs for specific languages. Some languages are not always represented by interpreting providers and some languages are not represented at all. This is the case with Burmese for example, for which no provider seems to be able to offer an

interpreter. (...) The lack of or insufficient number of professional interpreters is therefore a blocking factor in the quality of care/support provided by the reception structures.” As mentioned by Italy, it is difficult to predict linguistic needs because asylum populations are changing rapidly: “Given the constant changes in the incoming flows, the nationalities/provenances and languages spoken also vary constantly throughout Italy.” Difficulties are not only restricted to exceptional interpretation needs, but can also be related to frequently requested language combinations. For example, Pashtu and Tigrinya were mentioned by several Member States as languages for which there is a high need, but insufficient supply of interpreters. As explained by Finland “sometimes there is shortage of interpreters, because the volume of customers speaking the same language is suddenly very high.” To cope with interpreter supply, all Member States try to take recourse to non-national relay languages. However, even this strategy might not always be available. In Belgium for instance, not all reception staff have a sufficient level of English to use it as a relay language.

In seven Member States (Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal) (almost) no difficulties were experienced to find interpreters. In the Netherlands this is explained in reference to the language offer of the external service provider: “Global Talk offers interpreting services in 180 languages. This includes 17 variants of Arabic, 7 of Berber, 7 of Fulfulde, 6 of Chinese, and 5 variants of Kurdish. Global Talk manages to deliver almost 100% of the requested interpreting services.” There are also Member States such as Hungary that mention they do not experience difficulties because they allow non-national languages to be used as relay language: “No significant difficulties encountered. In case of problems, cross-interpretation (using English as an intermediary language between staff and English-speaking residents mediating) is used.” In the end, Member States that indicate they do not experience difficulties, might not necessarily rely to the same extent on interpreters as do other Member States. Linguistic needs may also greatly vary across Europe, related to the composition and number of asylum inflow. It is therefore important not to confuse this self-evaluation with an objective analysis of interpreter needs.

## Project partners

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