



WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF



**GUIDELINES ON FEES & CONDITIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL SIGN INTERPRETERS WORKING FOR THE WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF (WFD)**  
Approved Date: 13 March 2015  
WFD Board and WASLI Board  
[www.wfdeaf.org](http://www.wfdeaf.org) / [www.wasli.org](http://www.wasli.org)

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**1) BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 International Sign (IS) interpreters have been working at major international conferences and events facilitated by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) (and other organisations, such as the ICSD) for many years. Whilst the WFD asserts a positive stance towards linguistic diversity, emphasising the rights of deaf people to use their own sign languages, it is recognised that IS interpretation may be an efficient and economic response to the challenge of providing a number of interpreters of different sign languages to meet the needs of deaf people from different countries, who may either be present at meetings or potentially watching interpreted web cast transmissions.
- 1.2 It is acknowledged that IS interpreting is more complex than that associated with interpreting into and from a national signed language. It is cognitively demanding and physically tiring. IS uses highly visual/iconic signs and does not have a standardised vocabulary. It is essential that interpreters have the ability to use their knowledge of different signed languages and cultures to bridge communication among deaf people from very different sign language using communities.
- 1.3 WFD policy is that IS interpreting teams should always comprise deaf and hearing interpreters. It is our experience, and supported by evidence<sup>1</sup> that deaf interpreters are the most adept at this specialised type of interpreting, having native extra linguistic knowledge and abilities, contrasted with non-deaf interpreters who normally have learned a signed language as a second or other language as an adult. This is particularly relevant should interpreted presentations be web cast, enabling deaf people from countries across the world to gain information without having to struggle with a written account. Such interpreted material should ideally be presented by those with native language skills, significant travel and cross cultural experience, and knowledge of multiple sign languages.

<sup>1</sup> Stone, Christopher (2009). *Towards a Deaf translation norm*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press  
Stone C, & Russell, D. (2011). *Interpreting in international sign: Decisions of Deaf and non-Deaf interpreters*. WASLI 2011 Conference Proceedings.  
<http://www.cit-asl.org/members/proceedings.html>

1.4 Pending the development of formal accreditation and certification procedures currently in process under the auspices of the WFD and WASLI, organisations such as the WFD and WASLI may be asked to give advice regarding the employment of International Sign interpreters.

## **2) FEES AND WORKING CONDITIONS:**

- 2.1 Problems may arise when there are no recognised guidelines for an appropriate fee structure for IS interpreters, or agreed budget provision to ensure that the best possible standard of service is delivered. It is recognised that fees must be set at a realistic standardised level to ensure funds for daily living, thereby determining that more IS interpreters become available to meet growing demand. (*We are aware that currently many engage in other types of employment in parallel with freelance IS work*) It is important to note that the level of skills and experience required from IS interpreters is equivalent to that required of spoken language interpreters who are members of AIIC (Association Internationale des Interpretes de Conference - the international association of conference interpreters), and in negotiations with sponsors or external funders this should be highlighted. (See AIIC – <http://aiic.net/page/6394/aiic-United-nations-agreement-2012-2017/lang/1>). Accordingly the baseline fee for IS interpreters should be pegged to the AIIC framework, currently set at approx. 700 USD/500 Euro per six (6) hour day, with the acknowledgement that flexibility is essential dependent on circumstances.
- 2.2 In some cases (e.g. where travel time is in excess of 6 hours/ where an interpreter may have to give up a day's work) a half day fee rate may be payable for travel days.
- 2.3 In some instances (e.g. a lengthy and complex conference) an ex-gratia payment of a day's interpreting rate may be paid to cover preparation time in reading/studying background papers and materials.
- 2.4 Fees for 'feed' interpreters working with deaf interpreter colleagues must also be budgeted for. There should be no differentiation between interpreters within an agreed interpreting team; all members of the team are performing an essential element of the interpreting process which leads to successful interpretation. This complex task must be done to the highest standard to enable the deaf interpreter to simultaneously process and interpret the message into International Sign for deaf participants.
- 2.5 The WFD firmly believes that its events should be provided with the best quality IS interpreting. Currently the pool of interpreters recognised by WASLI and the WFD as having the necessary skills to work at high level conferences and meetings is comparatively small and may not easily be found locally. Budget provision should be made to enable travel/subsistence costs to be met to bring in the most appropriate interpreters for the assignment in order that quality standards are maintained.
- 2.6 Should it be agreed that interpreted proceedings will be webcast, this must be made clear at the time of contracting interpreters and made explicit in their contracts.
- 2.7 Budget provision should be made to ensure that optimum physical conditions (appropriate recording booth/cameras/lighting) are put in place to ensure quality transmission of signed interpretation.
- 2.8 Whilst the above is the optimum fee standard, it is possible for conference/meeting organisers to negotiate a fee rate appropriate to the country and budgets. At times, it is recognised that pro bono work will be provided but this must not be at the expense of quality interpreting services

### **3) ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

3.1 WFD events provide an ideal opportunity for new interpreters to have a safe place to volunteer to practice/develop their skills in a supported environment, working in "simpler" assignments without compromising the integrity of interpreting provision. By facilitating structured mentorship with experienced practitioners, steps may be taken towards increasing the pool of IS interpreters. It is recommended that conference/meeting organisers give this serious consideration.

### **4) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This document has been put together by the joint WFD-WASLI Task Group on the Guidelines on Fees for International Sign Interpreters. The task group was comprised of the following people:

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