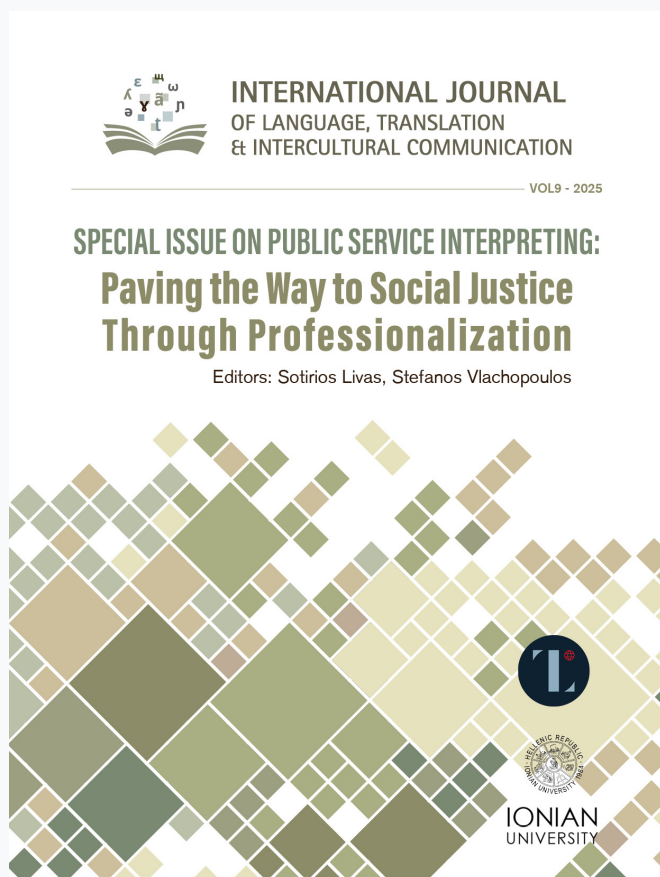


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Quality assurance in public service interpreting

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Quality assurance in public service interpreting: An overview of the Greek Registry of Public Service Interpreters

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Abstract

Ensuring the quality of interpreting services in various public sector environments is a complex and often challenging issue. Despite legislative provisions and various measures implemented worldwide to maintain high standards, instances of poor or inadequate interpreting services continue to be reported both in Greece and internationally. To address this issue, the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, in collaboration with Ionian University, has recently undertaken a project to establish a national registry of qualified interpreters. This paper discusses the main aspects of the registry, emphasizing its potential to offer a sustainable solution to quality challenges and to enhance the effectiveness of interpreting services in Greece.

Keywords: *public service interpreting, quality assurance, Greek registry of public service interpreters, Ministry of Migration and Asylum*

1 Introduction

Interpreting is a complex interlingual and intercultural process that involves interactions between people who not only speak different languages but often come from different social backgrounds, hold varying positions of power, and pursue different interests. Interpreters who facilitate communication between these individuals must possess advanced cognitive skills that allow for the simultaneous reception, processing, and transfer of information from one language to another, as well as the ability to communicate and interact effectively in various contexts. Interpreting Studies scholars outline a set of essential knowledge and skills that interpreters must possess to meet these demanding requirements of the profession. These include knowledge of language and culture, the ability to convey messages (interpreting techniques), familiarity with specific terminology in particular fields, and an understanding of the practice and ethics of the profession (see Kautz 2002: 428 ff.).

Language knowledge, for example, encompasses familiarity with both the grammar and structure of a language, including vocabulary, syntax, phonology, coherence, and speech patterns. It also involves understanding the language's various pragmatic functions and sociolinguistic dimensions, such as dialects, varieties, style, idioms, and cultural elements (Skaaden & Wadensjö 2014: 19-20). Language knowledge for interpreting purposes requires, therefore, a different approach and greater depth than learning a foreign language, for instance, in a school setting. Interpreters must respond immediately to the demands of oral speech, be aware of multiple meanings or renderings of words, and understand all levels of language, including the particular style and subtleties of the speakers' expressions. They must also know how to transfer these meanings, including which interpreting techniques to apply, how to manage the flow of discussion, and what behavior is ethical and what is not.

The above highlights the particular requirements of the interpreting profession and suggests that interpreters need specialized training and skills to provide high-quality and effective services. However, this is not always self-evident, especially in contexts such as public services, courts, and asylum settings. In these settings, non-professional interpreters or unskilled volunteers, such as friends or relatives of the parties involved who lack formal training or certification, often serve as interpreters, raising serious concerns about the quality of their services. This issue will be examined in greater detail in the following sections of this article. After reviewing the relevant legal framework in the European Union, we will explore different approaches to quality assurance, present examples of best practices from several European countries, and describe the registry proposed by the research team of Ionian University to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum as a means of ensuring the quality of public service interpreting in Greece.

2 The EU legal framework for quality assurance

Ensuring high-quality interpreting services in public sectors has been a significant concern for European Union institutions legislating in areas related to human rights protection, as evidenced by various pieces of legislation. An illustrative example is Directive 2013/32/EU on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection. According to Article 15, paragraph 3, Member States are required to ensure that personal interviews with asylum seekers are conducted under conditions which allow applicants to present the grounds for their applications comprehensively. The Article further specifies that Member States should select interpreters capable of ensuring appropriate communication between the applicant and the interviewer, emphasizing, thus, the crucial role of high-quality interpreting services required in this context.

However, in practice, such quality is not consistently guaranteed. According to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, formerly EASO) report of 2020, deficiencies such as inadequate interpreter training, inaccurate renditions of the applicants' utterances, insufficient language skills, and poor quality of interpreting services have been documented across various EU countries (EASO 2020: 130). The 2022 report also records similar shortcomings:

Civil society organisations in Ireland reported deficiencies in training for interpreters in the asylum setting. UNHCR also pointed out the variations in the quality of interpretation in Ireland and stressed the need for a regulation on interpretation services [...]. A study in Sweden revealed an urgent need to improve the quality of interpreters in asylum determination procedures, ensuring specific training modules and knowledge and sensitivity about the subject matter (EUAA 2022: 202-203).

Directive 2010/64/EU on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings also underscores the need for high-quality interpreting services as mandated by the European institutions. According to Article 2, paragraph 8 of the Directive, interpretation must be “of a quality sufficient to safeguard the fairness of the proceedings, in particular by ensuring that suspected or accused persons have knowledge of the case against them and are able to exercise their right of defence”. The significant importance that the European legislator places on this issue is also evident from other provisions, which require Member States to provide the accused with the opportunity to complain if the quality of the interpreting is not sufficient to ensure the fairness of the proceedings. Similarly, Article 5 stipulates that Member States “shall take concrete measures to ensure that the interpretation [...] provided meets the quality required” and “establish a register or registers of independent [...] interpreters who are appropriately qualified”, which will be accessible to all interested parties.

However, practice shows that the measures taken by several Member States of the European Union to incorporate these requirements, particularly the establishment of a register, fail to effectively address the issue of quality (Giambruno 2014a: 9). An indicative snapshot of the situation as of September 2014 is presented in a study conducted by the European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association (Eulita). The study asked representatives from fourteen professional associations of interpreters or translators and two universities from various EU countries to complete a questionnaire on the implementation of Directive 2010/64/EU. As shown in Figure 1, in response to the question of whether there is a registry of independent interpreters with appropriate qualifications, nine bodies answered affirmatively and seven negatively. Regarding whether these qualifications are clearly defined, the picture is not particularly encouraging: eight responses were positive and eight negative.

eulita TM

Survey on the transposition of Directive 2010/64/EU (as of September 2014)

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3. QUALITY OF THE INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION

Name of association / Country	3.1. Is there a register of independent translators and interpreters who are appropriately qualified?	3.2. Are the qualification prerequisites/conditions clearly established?	Comments on registers:
Replies from 14 associations (13 countries) and 2 universities	9 Yes, 7 No	8 Yes, 8 No	
Austria, ÖVGd, Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher	Yes	Yes	Electronic register is maintained by the Federal Ministry of Justice, accessible to the public.
Croatia, AGIT, Association of Court Interpreters and Translators	Yes	Yes	Register is comprehensive and user friendly. However, not always up to date.
Denmark, Aarhus University, The Research Group for Translation and Interpreting	No	No	There is a register, but about 80% of the independent translators/interpreters listed are not appropriately qualified.
Denmark, Translatørforeningerne	No	No	
France, UNETICA, Union Nationale des Experts Traducteurs-Interprètes Près les Cours d'Appel	Yes	Yes	In France, LITs are court experts and therefore, prerequisites are established on a general basis for all fields of expertise. For instance, it is not required to be a translator/interpreter to register.
Germany, BDÜ, Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer	Yes	Yes	
Germany, VVU e.V., Verband allgemein beeidigter Verhandlungsdolmetscher und öffentlich bestellter und beeidigter Urkundenübersetzer in Baden-Württemberg	Yes	Yes	In most federal states authorities are not obliged to choose interpreters or translators from the register. The directive was transposed without the word "qualified" or something equivalent.
Greece, PEEMPIP, Panhellenic Association of Professional Translators/Graduates of the Ionian University	Yes	Yes	There is a register (actually a number of lists) of translators/interpreters with qualifications established. However, these qualifications are extremely low and basic (no past experience required, even high-school level LITs are accepted, or people who just went to school abroad etc.). Since the standards are so low, we do not consider that they are 'properly qualified' and the register requirements should become stricter, because currently they do not ensure a quality service. In fact, it is necessary that the register is reorganised and the services of proper professionals are used. Furthermore, the register is actually

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Figure 1: Extract from the Eulita survey on the implementation of Directive 2010/64/EU.

A more recent survey by Eulita, which applied the same methodology (questionnaires completed by associations of translators and interpreters), reveals similar trends. While seven out of ten participating countries have a registry system in place, the survey highlights a shortfall in the quality assurance mandated by the Directive. For example, the Finnish association of translators and interpreters observes that “the actual purpose of the Directive - the obligation of judicial authorities to use registered interpreters and translators with sufficient competence to improve the quality of translations and interpretation needed in criminal proceedings - is not fulfilled with the

current legislation” (Eulita 2020: 7). Similarly, the corresponding association in France points out that “the admission criteria are not precisely defined, and many sworn translators/interpreters are admitted because of the needs of the jurisdictions rather than any real qualification on their part” (Eulita 2020: 10). Likewise, in Greece, despite the existence of a basic registry, the requirements for registration are minimal (e.g., a high school diploma), resulting in nearly anyone being able to be appointed as an interpreter in courts, compromising the quality of interpretation and the rights of the accused (see Eulita 2020: 17 and Ioannidis 2017: 4).

3 Quality assurance approaches

The findings described above highlight the urgent need for a more effective approach to ensuring quality interpreting in public services. Defining “quality” is, however, inherently challenging in this context. Interpreting scholars utilize various theoretical and methodological approaches to identify the criteria that distinguish good from poor interpreting. Even a cursory review of the literature reveals diverse perspectives on assessing quality, encompassing various measurement criteria, such as achieving the intended outcome (Honig 2002), adherence to established quality standards (Déjean Le Féal 1990), compliance with ethical principles (Kurz 1998), meeting client expectations (Schmitt 1998), and bridging the gap between expected service and actual delivery (Kurz 2003), among others.

Without delving into the specifics of each approach, all these perspectives on interpreting quality can be categorized into two main groups based on their evaluation criteria. The first group focuses on the perceptions and expectations of the stakeholders involved in the process. These stakeholders may include the interpreters themselves, the end-users of interpreting services (i.e., the audience), or even third parties who may use different criteria in their evaluations. For example, the employer of the interpreting services may consider the cost-to-service ratio, while an academic researcher observing the communicative context may assess quality from a scientific standpoint (see Pöchhacker 2001: 411-412). Guliana Garzone (2002) highlights that “the basic problem is that quality is the sum of different, heterogenous aspects, some of which involve different subjects – each with a different view and perception of quality” (Garzone 2002: 107). Moreover, it is important to note that the subjective opinions of these individuals are often influenced more by the impressions and emotions elicited by the interpreter’s personality traits than by their actual skills. Edwards et al. (2005) demonstrated that the interpreter’s character and behavior play a crucial role in assessing the quality of their services, especially in the context of public service interpreting.

The second approach to quality evaluation focuses on objective criteria rather than subjective perspectives. These criteria assess interpreting both as an end-product and in terms of its functionality within the given communicative situation. Since interpreting involves producing a product –a spoken text– and facilitating communicative interaction, interpreters must be able to accurately convey the content of the original message in the other language and contribute to the achievement of communication. From this perspective, Pöchhacker (2001) defines a series of evaluation criteria that range from the lexical-semantic core to the socio-pragmatic aspects of the interaction. They specifically include (a) accuracy in rendering the original utterances, (b) adequacy in transferring them to the target language, (c) equivalence of the intended effect in both languages, and (d) the successful conduct of communication (Pöchhacker 2001: 413).

The various methods or systems adopted by countries worldwide to ensure the quality of public service interpreting are based on this second approach to quality evaluation. These systems may

focus “on training programs ranging from short workshops to full academic degree programs; on qualifications-based registers which often require experience, training and some proof of moral integrity; on oversight and sanctioning schemes for misfeasance; and in some cases on testing schemes, either free standing or in conjunction with training” (Giambruno 2014b: 13). Subsequently, we will focus on *one* of these quality assurance systems, which, as noted in the previous section, is also a mandate of the European legislator: the interpreter registers. Specifically, we will examine the registers of three European countries with a long-standing tradition of hosting migrants and refugees and substantial experience in certifying interpreters for public services: Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

3.1 Germany

In Germany, the federal system – characterized by the distribution of responsibilities between a central administration and the sixteen regional administrations that exercise authority in the respective states – affects the regulation of court interpreting. On one hand, the right to interpretation in criminal proceedings is secured through several federal legislative texts. These include Article 3 of the German Constitution, which prohibits discrimination based on language, as well as Articles 185-189 of the Court Organization Act and Article 259 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which guarantee the right to interpretation in court. On the other hand, the certification process for court interpreters is governed by the legislation of each federal state, resulting in a fragmented and diverse landscape of requirements, criteria, and procedures.

To address this issue, the federal Court Interpreter Act was enacted in 2019 and took effect on January 1, 2023. The law aims to standardize judicial interpreting across all German states by establishing high-quality standards and specifying the qualifications required for prospective court interpreters. According to Article 3, prospective court interpreters in Germany must possess two essential qualifications: (a) basic knowledge of German legal language and (b) interpreting skills. To demonstrate these knowledge and skills, candidates must successfully pass specific exams organized in certain German states by competent authorities and bodies. These states are Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saarland, and Saxony. The examinations consist of both written and oral components and include various tests, such as: (a) translation of legal texts, (b) translation of general texts, (c) oral assessment of interpreting techniques, including consecutive interpreting, dialogue interpreting, and sight translation (i.e., immediate oral translation of written texts), (d) a written report and/or oral discussion on cultural or current affairs topics, (e) evaluation of legal knowledge through oral discussions and/or written tests, such as multiple-choice questions, and (f) oral discussion on issues related to the specific requirements of interpreting (see BDÜ & Dolmetscher- und Übersetzerdatenbank).

German states	Legal translation	General translation	Interpreting skills	Cultural knowledge	Legal knowledge	Discussion on interpreting issues
Baden-Württemberg	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Bavaria	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Hessen	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no

Saarland	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Saxony	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no

Table 1: Certification Exams in German States

As shown in Table 1, Hessen and Saarland have the most comprehensive examination systems, including all six tests. Bavaria and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania require candidates to undergo all tests except the oral discussion on interpreting issues (five tests). Finally, Baden-Württemberg and Saxony do not include the legal translation and the discussion on interpreting issues (four tests). In other German states, where there is no official body responsible for conducting exams, court interpreters are appointed based on the recognition of passing official exams from other states or other state-recognized bodies. Once an interpreter has been sworn in through these procedures, they become eligible to work in the courts of the state that issued their certification. Their name is then listed in the *Dolmetscher- und Übersetzerdatenbank*, an electronic database that functions as a unified online registry of court interpreters and legal translators of Germany. This database consolidates all lists of certified interpreters and translators maintained by the authorities in each state and allows for searches by name, language, or region.

3.2 Norway

Norway has implemented a systematic immigration and integration policy since the 1990s. As Tatjana Radanović Felberg and Gry Sagli highlight,

the comprehensive governmental approach in Norway includes several measures, such as a certification system – an accreditation exam (since 1997), the establishment of university-level professional training (sporadic since 1985 and permanent at the Oslo Metropolitan University [OsloMet] since 2007), with a bachelor's program in public service interpreting (since 2017), and the Register (since 2006). One of the most important initiatives [...] was the proposal of a law regulating public institutions' responsibility for the use of interpreters in Norway (the Interpreting Act) (Felberg & Sagli 2019: 144).

Similarly, Hlavac (2013) reports that an official Norwegian Interpreter Certification Examination was introduced in 1990 to meet the increasing demand for community interpreting services in immigrant languages. Initially, the certification exams were administered by the Linguistics Department of the University of Oslo. However, since 2005, the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, a government agency which is responsible for implementing public policy concerning refugees, has taken over the coordination of interpreter testing and registration. The registry categorizes interpreters into different levels, from those who have provided documentation of their educational and professional background but have not yet undergone formal testing (or for whom formal testing is not yet available), to those who have completed short-course training and certification exams (Hlavac 2013: 51).

The Interpreting Act of 2022, mentioned above, along with the accompanying Regulations that specify its provisions, regulated and updated the registry. According to Chapter 3, Section 11 of the Interpreting Regulations, the Norwegian Registry of Interpreters categorizes qualifications as follows:

- Category A: Interpreting certification and bachelor's degree in interpreting
- Category B: (i) Bachelor's degree in interpreting, or (ii) interpreting certification and the basic course in public sector interpreting (30 credits)

- Category C: Interpreting certification
- Category D: Basic course in public sector interpreting (30 credits) and
- Category E: (i) Bilingual proficiency test and completion of the course “Responsibilities of the interpreter”, or (ii) government-authorisation as a translator and completion of the course “Responsibilities of the interpreter”, or (iii) technical translation qualification and completion of the course “Responsibilities of the interpreter”.

The registry aims to include candidates with all levels of qualifications: those who have completed university-level training or a short interpreting course, those who have passed an accreditation exam or a bilingual proficiency test, etc. These requirements help ensure effective communication in public services and promote the delivery of higher-quality interpreting services. Notably, the certification exams required for Category C are particularly challenging. According to Chapter 4, section 18 of the Regulations,

the certification examination in interpreting determines whether a candidate meets the professional requirements for certification as a certified interpreter [...]. The examination shall consist of a screening test and an oral interpreting examination [...]. The screening test shall examine candidates’ general language proficiency and knowledge of terminology and civic matters in both language regions. Only candidates who pass the screening test may proceed to the oral examination. The oral examination shall test candidates’ practical interpreting skills, including the use of appropriate language, important civic matters in both language areas, and the professional conduct of interpreters. The oral examination shall include dialogues and monologues in Norwegian and the interpreting language. Candidates shall also be examined in interpreting technique and interpreting ethics.

3.3 United Kingdom

Since the 1990s, the United Kingdom has maintained a unified registry of interpreters, known as the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI a). The creation of this register was driven by instances of miscarriage of justice that underscored the necessity of employing only trained and certified interpreters in the country’s courts. To register, candidates must provide evidence of both professional experience and certification in interpreting. Based on the duration of prior experience and the type of certification, applicants can be registered in one of the three categories of the registry: (a) full status, (b) intermediate status, and (c) rare languages Status (see NRPSI b).

To obtain full status, applicants must demonstrate that they have completed over 400 hours of professional interpreting experience within UK public services and have recently been tested and certified in their translation and interpreting skills. This certification requirement can be met in one of two ways: either through formal studies in interpreting, which can range from postgraduate programs to lifelong learning courses, or by successfully passing the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) exams, which assess the applicants’ proficiency in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, sight translation from and into English, and translation from and into English. The criteria used to evaluate candidates’ performance in interpreting reflect the quality standards that should be expected in the profession. These criteria are as follows:

1. **Accuracy:** The candidate must accurately convey all information from the original speech without omissions, additions, or distortions and must be knowledgeable about the specific subject matter.

2. **Delivery:** The candidate must quickly switch between the two languages, accurately convey the tone, emotions, and non-verbal elements of the speakers, manage cultural issues appropriately, intervene strategically in the communication process, and remain impartial.
3. **Linguistic Competence:** The candidate must have a thorough command of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, specialized terminology, phonology, and the various registers of the respective language (see DPSI).

The second category in the United Kingdom’s National Register of Public Service Interpreters is the intermediate status, which is further divided into subcategories (a) and (b). Interpreters in *intermediate status (a)* hold the same certification in interpreting as those in full status but are not required to demonstrate a minimum number of professional experience hours. Conversely, *intermediate status (b)* includes interpreters with at least 400 hours of verified professional interpreting experience in UK public services who have only passed some of the modules required for full status. In other words, this category includes novice interpreters who have not yet acquired the necessary professional experience or experienced interpreters who lack full status certification. Finally, the rare language status is designated for languages for which no formal qualification is available in the UK. Candidates for this status must provide acceptable evidence that they can speak both the rare language and English sufficiently. Additionally, they must provide evidence of 100 hours of interpreting experience in public service interpreting in the UK.

4 The Greek Registry of Public Service Interpreters

To ensure high-quality interpretation services, the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum implemented the project “Enhancing and building-up national capacity of migration and asylum strategic planning” from May 2023 to April 2024. Conducted in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation, and Interpretation of the Ionian University (Greece) and funded under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, the project aimed to establish a national register of interpreters to meet communication needs in asylum processes and the wider public sector. According to the relevant Ministerial Decision, the registry is expected to

increase efficiency, availability, and quality of interpreting services, for which the Ministry of Migration and Asylum has so far relied exclusively on external providers. It will constitute a permanent and quality solution in the field of interpreting, which will contribute more effectively to addressing the increased needs of both the Ministry of Migration (Asylum Service, Reception and Identification Service, etc.) and other public sector services. Within the framework of the National Registry of Interpreters, an evaluation system of registered interpreters will be established to improve the services provided. Simultaneously, the Registry will be able to serve other public sector services where communication with asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection is required, such as in public health, education, and ministries like the Ministry of Health, Education, Justice, the Hellenic Police, and the Coast Guard (YA 8000/20/76/5-οστ’/01-12-2021: 4).

The Ionian University was tasked with preparing and presenting a comprehensive plan to the Ministry for establishing the National Registry of Public Service Interpreters. Drawing from best practices in other countries and considering Greece’s unique context, the research team developed a registry featuring four distinct levels or categories of interpreters (see Table 2). To qualify for each level, applicants must meet specific criteria, primarily a combination of educational qualifications and professional experience in interpretation. Candidates must demonstrate the required academic credentials and relevant work experience to be registered. This dual criterion

aligns with systems used in other reviewed countries and mirrors the classification practices of many professional associations of translators and interpreters worldwide. For example, the Hellenic Association of Conference Interpreters (SYDISE) classifies its members into full and associate members according to their qualifications. Interpreters can then advance to the next level or category of the registry after meeting the specific requirements of that category. Based on these considerations, the Ionian University research team recommended the following structure for the interpreter registry:

Category D

The lowest tier of the register includes:

(a) Candidates who first pass a language proficiency test (in Greek and one foreign language) and then participate in a brief intensive training seminar focused on professional ethics, interpreter responsibilities, and the role of the interpreter; or

(b) Holders of a university degree in Translation, Foreign Languages, or Applied Languages, with Greek as the mandatory working language, who must also complete the aforementioned intensive seminar on ethics in Public Service Interpreting.

Candidates in subcategory (b) are exempt from the language proficiency test, as it is assumed they have gained this competence, at least to some extent, during their studies. However, they are still required to attend the ethics seminar. During the pilot phase of the registry's implementation, both the language examination and the seminar were designed and conducted by the Ionian University team, while in the future the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum will take over this responsibility.

Category C

This category includes candidates who meet the requirements of Category D and have successfully completed a general seminar worth 30 ECTS credits in Public Service Interpreting. This seminar must be provided as part of lifelong learning by a Higher Education Institution specializing in Interpreting Studies. Additionally, candidates in this category must demonstrate a minimum of 40 hours of professional experience in Public Service Interpreting, acquired after their registration in the previous category of the registry.

Category B

This category includes candidates who meet the educational qualifications of Category C and have successfully completed a specialized seminar worth 30 ECTS credits in interpreting techniques (consecutive interpreting with note-taking, sight translation, and/or simultaneous interpreting). This seminar must be provided as part of lifelong learning by a Higher Education Institution specializing in Interpreting Studies. Additionally, candidates in this category must demonstrate a minimum of 160 hours of professional experience in Public Service Interpreting, acquired after their registration in the previous category of the registry.

Category A

The highest tier of the register includes:

(a) Holders of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in Public Service Interpreting who have successfully passed the language proficiency test of Category D of the register, if their degree is from a foreign institution; or

(b) Holders of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in Conference Interpreting with Greek as the mandatory working language who have successfully completed the training seminar on ethics required by Category D of the register; or

(c) Holders of a university degree in another discipline who have successfully passed the language proficiency test of Category D of the register, if their degree is from a foreign institution, have completed the training seminar on ethics required by Category D of the register, and have a minimum of 150 days of professional experience in Conference Interpreting.

(d) Candidates who meet the educational qualifications of Category B and can demonstrate a minimum of 320 hours of professional experience in Public Service Interpreting acquired after their registration in the previous category of the register, and/or at least 40 days of experience in Conference Interpreting, or a combination of hours and days totaling 320 hours or 40 days.

Category	Educational qualifications	Professional experience
<i>D</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> language proficiency test and short seminar on ethics in Public Service Interpreting; or a university degree in translation, foreign or applied languages with Greek as the mandatory language and seminar on ethics in Public Service Interpreting. 	<i>no prerequisites for proof of work experience</i>
<i>C</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requirements of Category D and general seminar on public service interpreting (30 ECTS) 	<i>at least 40 hours of Public Service Interpreting gained within the context of the Register</i>
<i>B</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requirements of Category C and specialized seminar on interpreting techniques (30 ECTS) 	<i>at least 160 hours of Public Service Interpreting gained within the context of the Register</i>
<i>A</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in Public Service Interpreting and language proficiency test if the degree is issued in a country other than Greece; or an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in Conference Interpreting with Greek as the mandatory language and a short seminar on ethics in Public Service Interpreting; or any bachelor's degree, language proficiency test in case of a degree issued in a country other than 	<i>no prerequisites for proof of work experience</i> <i>no prerequisites for proof of work experience</i> <i>at least 150 days of Conference Interpreting</i> <i>at least 320 hours of Public Service Interpreting within the framework of the Register and/or</i>

	<i>Greece and a short seminar on ethics in Public Service Interpreting; or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>requirements of Category B</i> 	<i>40 days of Conference Interpreting or combination</i>
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Table 2: The Greek Registry of Public Service Interpreters in a nutshell

By establishing these four categories, the register ensures multiple stages of professional advancement available to interpreters. This approach was proposed deliberately by the research team of the Ionian University because having a fewer number of ranking levels, as seen in countries like the United Kingdom, could restrict interpreters' opportunities to progress to a higher category and reduce their motivation to continuously improve their skills and qualifications. However, as the conditions for all categories to become fully operational are not yet in place, a gradual implementation of the register is proposed so that all requirements are met progressively. For example, Greek universities have yet to offer the general training seminar required for Category C or the specialized training seminar needed for Category B. On this basis, the research team recommended initially activating only Category D (renamed as Category B) and Category A, while the intermediate Categories C and B will be activated after a transitional period of three years. This transitional period will give responsible bodies adequate time to implement the specific requirements for each category and allow interpreters to accumulate the required work experience within the register. Thus, the two main categories that can be put into effect during the initial stage of the register's implementation, until it reaches full capacity, are as follows:

Category B

This tier of the register includes:

(a) Candidates who first pass a language proficiency test (in Greek and one foreign language) and then participate in a brief intensive training seminar focused on professional ethics, interpreter responsibilities, and the role of the interpreter; or

(b) Holders of a university degree in Translation, Foreign Languages, or Applied Languages, with Greek as the mandatory working language, who must also complete the aforementioned intensive seminar on ethics in Public Service Interpreting.

Category A

This tier of the register includes:

(a) Holders of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in Public Service Interpreting who have successfully passed the language proficiency test of Category D of the register, if their degree is from a foreign institution; or

(b) Holders of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in Conference Interpreting with Greek as the mandatory working language who have successfully completed the training seminar on ethics required by Category D of the register; or

(c) Holders of a university degree in another discipline who have successfully passed the language proficiency test of Category D of the register, if their degree is from a foreign institution, have completed the training seminar on ethics required by Category D of the register, and have a minimum of 150 days of professional experience in Conference Interpreting.

5 Conclusion

In the previous section, we discussed the national Registry of Public Service Interpreters in Greece, developed by the research team from the Ionian University and proposed to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. The primary objective of the Registry is to establish and maintain minimum standards for the provision of quality interpreting services within the public sector – a domain challenged by significant shortages and deficiencies, not only in Greece but also across Europe, as previously noted. Drawing from the experience of other professions, Cynthia Giambruno (2014b) points out that “it has been recognized that the most effective means of ensuring quality is to determine the skills that are required, define acceptable performance levels, and develop evaluation instruments that will distinguish those who have achieved the required standard of performance from those who have not” (Giambruno 2014b: 13). With this in mind, the research team from the Ionian University developed the registry described above, aimed at improving the overall quality of interpreting services within the Greek public sector, thereby professionalizing the field.

To achieve this objective, the registry is structured around several key principles. First, it emphasizes structural simplicity and flexibility, ensuring that it is easy to navigate and adaptable to various needs. Second, it encompasses all professional categories involved in interpreting activities in Greece, including individuals who have not formally studied interpreting. This inclusive approach acknowledges and values the diverse backgrounds and experiences of those working in the field, ensuring that the registry reflects the full spectrum of interpreting professionals and their varied pathways into the profession. Finally, the registry offers the opportunity for advancement within its levels through continuous improvement and lifelong learning for interpreters, promoting ongoing professional development and skill enhancement. As shown above, each category within the proposed registry is linked to a set of graduated qualifications, typically encompassing both educational credentials and professional experience. Interpreters can advance to a higher category by meeting the specific criteria associated with that level. These criteria may include additional training, a certain number of hours of professional practice, or other skills.

Moreover, advancement to a higher category should be accompanied by a corresponding increase in remuneration to provide strong incentives for interpreters to continually enhance their skills and qualifications. By linking career progression with improved compensation, the registry aims to motivate interpreters to engage in ongoing professional development and maintain high standards of service. To this end, the research team from the Ionian University recommended setting a base hourly rate of 30 euros for interpreters in the entry-level tier of the registry. This rate would be subject to a 10-euro increase during urgent situations requiring immediate interpretation services. Additionally, remuneration would scale with higher tiers in the registry, increasing by 20% for each successive category. Importantly, the policy proposes that interpreters must be compensated for a minimum of two hours of work, regardless of the actual time spent on the assignment, ensuring fair payment for their availability and preparedness. Finally, the research team recommended that the final remuneration calculation include consideration of any travel expenses incurred by interpreters when working outside their primary location.

Regarding the required work experience in interpreting, the research team noted that experience in public service interpreting is typically measured in hours, whereas experience in conference interpreting is generally calculated in working days. Specifically, one day of conference interpreting is equivalent to eight hours of work. Consequently, when the registry requires a combination of hours and days for some categories, the calculation should be performed cumulatively. To validate the required experience in conference interpreting, the research team recommended that candidates provide a comprehensive list of their interpreting assignments. This list should be supported by documentation from employers, such as official certificates or other relevant evidence (e.g., invoices), that confirm their participation in these assignments. Regarding the verification of required experience in public service interpreting, the research team proposed an alternative approach. Specifically, they recommended that only professional experience gained exclusively within the framework of the registry be considered valid. This means that experience must be documented within the registry's framework, ensuring that all accepted experience meets the registry's specific standards and criteria. Otherwise, applying the same approach outlined for conference interpreters would hinder the efficient operation of the registry and place an undue burden on its administrators. This is because they would face significant challenges in verifying the authenticity of the certificates submitted by candidates, potentially disrupting the registry's functionality and adding complexity to its management.

To ensure that the importance of the registry's tiered categories is upheld and to keep interpreters motivated to advance steadily through these categories, the research team recommended implementing a policy whereby relevant authorities are required to employ interpreters from the highest tier of the registry whenever feasible. In the event that locating available interpreters at the highest tier of the registry is not feasible due to reasons such as the unavailability of the required language combination, the relevant authorities will be permitted to extend their search to interpreters in the immediately lower tier of the registry. This approach ensures that, despite potential challenges, there remains a viable pathway to secure qualified interpreters, thereby preserving the effectiveness and hierarchical structure of the registry.

In conclusion, all the above highlights the research team's effort to meticulously consider and address all potential challenges that could arise during the implementation of the registry, ensuring that it is not only flexible and inclusive but also functional and effective. By incorporating these essential characteristics, the registry aims to meet the objectives of the Greek public administration, which seeks to enhance the quality and accessibility of interpreting services. It aspires to provide a permanent and sustainable solution to the complex issue of public service interpreting, ultimately contributing to the professionalization of the field and ensuring that interpreting services adhere to high standards of excellence.

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