

Judiciary Interpreting: State of the World (abstract)

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The judiciary interpreting profession has matured considerably since it first began to emerge as a separate field of interpreting in the 1970s (González, Vásquez & Mikkelson, 2012). The earliest specialists provided interpreting services in the courts of a few states in the United States, in Canada and Australia, and in Northern Europe. Standards were usually set by the legal profession and were not necessarily compatible with those of the existing conference interpreting profession. In the latter two decades of the 20th century, judiciary interpreting became increasingly professionalized with the emergence of stricter standards, specialized training programs, professional associations, and credentialing procedures (Hertog, 2015; Morris, 2015). In addition, globalization and large waves of migration increased the demand for judiciary interpreters throughout Europe and Asia, and later in Africa and Latin America. In addition, recognition of the rights of indigenous language speakers was strengthened by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). Today almost every country in the world has some sort of law or regulation governing language services provided for linguistic minorities in the legal system, even if it is merely a general provision guaranteeing translation and interpreting as part of due process. In addition, international tribunals have proliferated during this time, and they rely heavily on the work of professional linguists. Moreover, a growing number of universities worldwide have launched programs in translation and interpretation, and many of them feature coursework in judiciary interpreting (González et al., 2012).

Does all that progress mean that a competent interpreter will be available to anyone who appears in a court that conducts proceedings in a language he does not understand? Unfortunately, no. Despite the formulation of standards such as the European Directive 2010/64/EU and ISO Standard 13611:2014, much remains to be done to increase public awareness of the critical need for quality interpreting services; to expand training opportunities for prospective judiciary interpreters, especially in minority languages; and to strengthen regulations and enforce them uniformly (Blasco Mayor & Del Pozo Triviño, 2015).

This paper traces the recent history of the judiciary interpreting profession, analyzing key motivating forces and trends and culminating in a snapshot of the current situation across the world. It highlights promising initiatives and charts a course towards the ultimate goal

of establishing a robust profession that can assure language access to all those who come before the courts of every nation, regardless of the language they speak.

References

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