

# Interpreting and Translating for the Courts, the Police and Public Authorities in Austria

by

Österreichischer Verband der  
Gerichtsdolmetscher





**Willkommen beim ÖVGD**



**Welcome to the AACI**



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Wien, 11. September 2009  
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**Krammer – Schmidt**

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**Sachverständigen-  
und DolmetscherG  
GebührenanspruchsG**

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MANZsche Große Gesetzausgabe  
3. Auflage

MANZ 

Since the year 1975 we have had a special law on expert witnesses and court interpreters, the so-called „Sachverständigen- und Dolmetschergesetz“ (SDG) which is linked to the “Gebührenanspruchsgesetz“ (GebAG = law on court fees), in the version of the “Berufsrechtsänderungsgesetz” (BRÄG = law amending professional rules and regulations), elaborated in collaboration with the Austrian Association of Court Interpreters whose president I have the honour to be since 1981.

# Court interpreters/translators

**Official designation** (protected by law):

“Allgemein beeideter und gerichtlich  
zertifizierter Dolmetscher”

(court-certified interpreter/translator sworn-in  
for a limited period of time of 5 years and for all  
procedures)

vs. ad-hoc court interpreters/translators

# How do you become a court interpreter/translator?

- A federal law regulates the admission of expert witnesses and court interpreters/ translators and the exercise of their professions
- A second federal law regulates the fees that expert witnesses and court interpreters/ translators can charge for their services.

# Competencies of court interpreters/translators

- Language skills - mother tongue and foreign language(s)
- Interpreting skills – whispered / simultaneous, consecutive interpreting
- Translating skills
- Cultural competencies
- Special vocabulary – legal, economic, medical, technical vocabulary, slang
- Code of ethics

# **Objectives of certifying and swearing in court interpreters / translators**

- Main objective: providing the courts, the police and the public authorities with a pool of qualified interpreters/translators (efficient administration of justice)
- Additional objective: helping private individuals, companies, etc. to find a qualified interpreter/translator for translating documents (birth/death certificates, contracts, etc.) and/or interpreting at official administrative acts (marriages, notarial deeds, etc.)

# Admission procedure for court interpreters/translators (1)

- Interpreter/translator files application with competent court (in Austria 16 courts administer a list of sworn-in and certified court interpreters/translators)
- Proof of qualifications (university diploma and two years of professional experience or no diploma and five years of professional experience)
- Austrian nationality is not a requirement
- Proof of absence of criminal record, legal capacity

# Admission procedure for court interpreters/translators (2)

- If all requirements are met and there is a need for additional court interpreters/translators the application is forwarded to Certification Commission (1 presiding judge, 2 language experts)
- Certification test (oral and written to test legal competencies, interpreting and translating skills duration: 1.5 to 2 hrs.)
- Successful candidates take oath, are allowed to use official seal and are certified for a period of 5 years (then renewal for additional periods of 5 years)

# **When does a court interpreter/translator lose his/her certification?**

- If he/she fails to apply for re-certification
- If the certification is not renewed (complaints by courts, police, public authorities about availability and/or quality of work)
- Death, unlawful acts

# Practical procedure

- Court interpreter/translator receives summons (by mail, telephone) – often at very short notice, etc. (flexibility required!)
- Court interpreter/translator provides interpreting/translation service (in line with judge's instruction) observing code of ethics of the profession (issued by our association)
- Court interpreter/translator submits invoice

# Conclusion and Summary

Interpreting / translating for the courts, the police and public authorities is a highly responsible and very diversified professional activity requiring integrity, professionalism, stamina, flexibility, proper appearance and manners, as well as high moral standards. Court interpreters/ translators contribute to the proper functioning of the administration of justice.