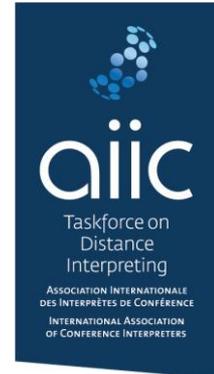


TFDI Newsletter: Issue 1



Introduction by the AIIC President

The global outbreak of Covid-19 constitutes an immense and very acute challenge of unprecedented proportions for all professions, including that of conference interpreting. We are all in the same boat. Institutions, political decision-makers, conference and meeting organisers, technicians, conference support staff, participants, presenters, panelists and of course those ensuring seamless multilingual and cross-cultural communication for all these stakeholders – conference interpreters. In AIIC we are committed to navigating a passage through these rough seas we all face together.

As physical meetings have become an impossibility, videoconferencing technology seems to offer a partial solution at least for the most urgent of meetings. Fortunately, over the past few years, in AIIC we have been not only following but also steering the distance interpreting debate. AIIC's Taskforce on Distance Interpreting (TFDI) was set up set up by the Executive Committee in recognition of the new seismic shift occurring within the profession, a shift akin to the technology-enabled dawn of simultaneous interpreting itself, which would affect all members of the Association, the profession, and indeed the very notion of what conference interpreting was and will be.

The advent of new technologies has set an ever-increasing pace of technical and societal change, and Covid-19 has only accelerated this further, bringing a new future to our very doorstep. AIIC must take the lead, and in order to do so, a coordinated response is more critical now than ever. The TFDI, in collaboration with the other AIIC groups represented therein, has been at the forefront in leading AIIC's response to the distance interpreting paradigm: coordinating and articulating an Association-wide position; providing members with practical and immediate guidance; and proposing new avenues of DI research.

Faced with the accelerating Covid-19 pandemic it was clear that more needed to be done. In order to help conference interpreters, consultant interpreters, conference technicians and interpreter recruiters and employers grapple with distance interpreting in these challenging times, AIIC's Executive Committee tasked the TFDI with issuing guidelines, recommendations and advice specific to the Covid-19 scenario, including the new [AIIC Interpreter Checklist](#). It has been produced by the TFDI in cooperation with groups and regions who put their own activities on hold to make this happen. It represents AIIC cooperation at its best.

The Checklist, along with AIIC's other Covid-19 distance interpreting guidance is a body of documentation intended as a helping hand to all conference interpreting stakeholders in a time of need. Collaboration and cooperation are essential elements at this time, and we as a profession are happy to share the unprecedented store of knowledge and expertise we have built up over the years with our clients and employers, so that together we may emerge from this crisis as even stronger partners than before. Together we can weather this veritable storm we are all bravely facing together.

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AIIC's Covid-19 distance interpreting guidance

AIIC's primary concern is the health and well-being of interpreters and, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the protection of public health. AIIC recognises that, in light of the pandemic, face-to-face interpreting scenarios may constitute a public health risk and, as such – as an interim measure while physical distancing remains in force – specific forms of distance interpreting (DI) may be the only way to enable multilingualism whilst protecting the health of conference interpreters, technicians, participants and the public at large during this challenging period.

Such forms of DI interpreting include interpreters working from institutions operating as remote interpreting (RI) hubs during Covid-19, from individual RI hubs or even, *in extremis*, from their own premises (e.g. via a cloud-based platform) where no other options are available due to public health, legal and/or official restrictions.

AIIC's guidance is based on the following AIIC principles:

- The health and wellbeing of interpreters and the protection of public health
- Commitment to multilingualism
- Quality of service
- Effective teamwork and booth partnering
- Respect of ethics and confidentiality
- Compliance with ISO standards
- Information and data security
- Respect for AIIC's Professional Standards

AIIC's guidance should also be taken to include relevant documentation produced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- [AIIC Position on Distance Interpreting](#)
- [AIIC Guidelines for Distance Interpreting \(Version 1.0\)](#)
- [AIIC Best Practices for Interpreters during the Covid-19 Crisis](#)
- [AIIC Covid-19 Distance Interpreting Recommendations for Institutions and DI Hubs](#)
- [Covid-19: Advice on performing interpreting assignments from home in extremis](#)
- [AIIC Interpreters Checklist: Performing Interpreting Assignments from Home in extremis during the Covid-19 Pandemic](#)

Institutional responses to Covid-19

Two patterns seem to be emerging among interpreter employer organisations for the provision of multilingual meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. Using existing infrastructure combined with other technology (cloud-based or other) to turn employer premises into a teleconferencing or remote interpreting hub (with interpreters onsite at the premises);
2. Using cloud-based platforms to enable entirely virtual meetings with remote interpreting (with interpreters working from remote, offsite locations).

AIIC's preference is unequivocally for option 1 in locations in which it is possible to travel to work safely and every measure has been taken to ensure the safety of onsite interpreters, technicians and participants. The Association's Task Force on Distance Interpreting (TFDI) has set out a non-exhaustive list of measures that employers should adopt to help ensure the health and safety of interpreters in the workplace.

Option 2 is obviously the lowest risk in terms of the Covid-19 virus but it does raise a considerable number of other, non-negligible issues: it relies on the individual work space/environment (for instance, soundproofing) and ICT setup of each interpreter and speaker in their home, the quality of their personal audiovisual equipment, available bandwidth as well as raising issues of security, encryption, system vulnerability to loss of service or unauthorized access to personal or confidential data, etc.

Whichever option is adopted, the individual ICT/ AV setup of each active speaker connected to the virtual or hybrid event is critical. The system is only as good as the weakest link. The use of sub-standard AV equipment (e.g. microphones) and sub-standard simultaneous interpreting delivery/videoconferencing platforms will have an immediate effect on audiovisual input to interpreters. Sub-standard audiovisual input will require the interpreter to make an additional comprehension effort that can lead to an earlier onset of fatigue and possibly to impaired performance.

Working individually from one's home environment also hampers effective teamwork and booth partnering, key elements of conference interpreting that contribute to the overall quality of interpretation.

Taking the above into account, employers and clients need to be aware that not only does distance interpreting require an additional cognitive effort from interpreters, but that all forms of distance interpreting are not equal, with some producing a far greater additional cognitive load on interpreters than others, both due to the available sensory inputs (or lack of them) and the need for the interpreter to take on additional roles and responsibilities before, during and after the interpretive process.

There is a need therefore not only for contractual arrangements and agreements to set out shorter meeting durations, longer and/or more regular pauses and breaks, or increased manning strength than for conventional face-to-face interpreting scenarios, but also for such arrangements or agreements to be tailored to the respective DI modality in question (e.g. videoconference, remote hub, remote from home *in extremis*) to take into account the relative available sensory input and additional responsibilities expected of the interpreter in each. AIIC negotiating delegations, groups

and regions can contact the [TFDI](#) for information on working conditions specific to various DI modalities.

We hope the new TFDI checklist, which represents the combined efforts of not only of the TFDI's members but also the many AIIC members, groups and regions who have worked with the TFDI, will be of use to you in these difficult times.

Remote interpreting hubs

The TFDI recommendations were made both to institutions needing to set up their own remote interpreting hubs at their headquarters and to remote interpreting hubs, given that the content is equally valid. At a time when face-to-face meetings have completely stopped, remote interpreting hubs may be set up by interpreters or interpretation service providers in certain locations to ensure multilingual meetings can continue.

RSI hubs can be of temporary or permanent nature and shall include at least two full size booths (allowing for social distancing between interpreters even for bilingual meetings) compliant with ISO 4043:2016, simultaneous interpreting equipment and system compliant with ISO 20109 (hardware consoles) or ISO PAS 24019 (soft consoles), screens for displaying the required views of active speaker(s), slides and other material projected live, as well as peripheric AV equipment and facilities. RSI hubs shall be serviced by qualified technicians. If soft consoles and RSI platforms are being used, additional measures need to be taken to assure hearing protection for interpreters according to ISO 20109.

About the AIIC Taskforce on Distance Interpreting

The representative focal point within AIIC for all forms of distance interpreting

New information and communication technologies have brought about paradigm shifts in most professions and conference interpreting is no exception. With the advent of teleconference and remote interpreting, the field of conference interpreting is undergoing a seismic shift akin to the technology-enabled dawn of simultaneous interpreting itself. Notions such as remote speakers (teleconference), remote interpreters (remote interpreting), “virtual presence”, “virtual booths”, “virtual teams”, “virtual co-location” challenge the very nature of what traditionally has been known as conference interpreting. AIIC’s Taskforce on Distance Interpreting was set up by the Executive Committee in recognition that these new interpreting modalities affect all members of the Association, and indeed the very notion of conference interpreting itself. Given the pace of technical and societal change generally, and with the immediate impact of Covid-19, AIIC needs to take the lead. The TFDI, in collaboration with the other AIIC groups represented therein, is at the forefront in leading AIIC’s response to the new paradigm: coordinating and articulating an Association-wide position; providing members with practical and immediate guidance; and proposing new DI research.

Consultative body

In addition to advising ExCo on DI policy and strategy, the TFDI provides advice and assistance to AIIC members, groups, and regions on technical, physiological, psychological and practical aspects of distance interpreting, including making evidence-based recommendations for relevant working conditions in each DI modality. AIIC values of collegiality, teamwork, quality, interpreter wellbeing and a firm commitment to the promotion of multilingualism underpin the DI guidance offered by the TFDI.

Coordination

The TFDI is made up of representatives of the following groups: the Private Market Sector (PRIMS); Consultant Interpreters; Staff Interpreters (CdP); the Technical and Health Committee (THC); the ISO Group; Training and Professional Development Committee (TPDC); the Sign Language Network (SLN); the Research Committee (RC); the Advisory Board (AB); and the Executive Committee (ExCo).

The TFDI coordinates joint DI activities with the Technical and Health Committee and the Research Committee in particular, and intends to coordinate regional DI activities in the future.

Research

The TFDI can propose research and carry out surveys in cooperation with the Research Committee and the Technical and Health Committee, both of which are represented in the TFDI. The TFDI’s research to-date has included an AIIC-wide survey of members’ engagement with DI modalities. Further evidence-based research is also urgently needed into DI impacts, based on members’ real experiences of remote interpreting, including during Covid-19. As always, the issues of quality, health and wellbeing remain paramount considerations in any research.

Awareness-Raising and Outreach

The TFDI provides a platform whereby AIIC's voice can be heard at DI-interpreting related workshops, conferences and other events worldwide, and on related social media. The TFDI also needs to be engaging with members on DI issues, providing them with the necessary toolkit for accepting RI offers or negotiating with employer organisations and clients whilst adhering to AIIC core values, encouraging AIIC interpreters to form RI teams in accordance with AIIC values and guidelines. The TFDI also supports AIIC groups and regions wishing to hold their own DI-related events. So far in 2020, the TFDI has supported DI events for the UK, Brazil and the AB, and the TFDI documentation produced during Covid-19 greatly helps in getting the message out to all members and beyond.

How do we work?

The TFDI has worked and will continue to work with remote meetings and virtual discussions. However, given the increasing importance of DI, alongside technical, societal and environmental developments (including Covid-19), the TFDI will also be holding annual face-to-face meetings, in addition to developing other activities to support AIIC members, groups and regions, such as training and webinars on organising remote meetings, setting up remote hubs, etc.

AIIC Values

The TFDI leads and coordinates the DI debate within AIIC, promoting the AIIC values of teamwork, quality, interpreter wellbeing and a firm commitment to the promotion of multilingualism.

TFDI Members

- Andrew Constable: Coordinator (AB, CdP, THC)
- Barry Slaughter-Olsen (TC)
- Bettina Ludewig-Quaine (ND Coordinator, Coordinated sector, TFDI WG working conditions)
- Christopher Stone (RC)
- Denise Tschager (AB, ISO)
- Francisco García Hurtado (ExCo, CdP)
- Haris Ghinos (ISO, Consultant Interpreters, SLN)
- Isabelle Olesen (USA Contact Group on Distance Interpreting)
- Klaus Ziegler (AB, THC)
- Manuela B. Wille (PRIMS, Consultant Interpreters)
- Oliver Pouliot (SLN)
- Patricia Heintz (Consultant Interpreters)

Contact the TFDI: taskforce-distance-interpreting@aiic.net

Additional material

- [DI Definitions and Diagram](#)
- [TFDI Survey Report](#)
- [AIIC Position on Distance Interpreting](#)
- [AIIC Guidelines for Distance Interpreting \(Version 1.0\)](#)
- [AIIC Best Practices for Interpreters during the Covid-19 Crisis](#)
- [AIIC Covid-19 Distance Interpreting Recommendations for Institutions and DI Hubs](#)
- [Covid-19: Advice on performing interpreting assignments from home in extremis](#)
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