CJEU - Court of Justice of the European Union

The Court of Justice in Luxembourg is the judicial authority of the European Union

Staff Interpreters.
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Mission

The Court of Justice of the European Union, in cooperation with the courts and tribunals of the EU Member States, ensures the uniform application and interpretation of European Union law. In order to guarantee equal access to justice at EU-level, it is essential to enable the parties to express themselves in their own language. Simultaneous interpretation is provided during the public hearings before the Court of Justice and the General Court.

The Institution

Since 1st September 2016, with the reform of the Court of Justice and the dissolution of the Civil Service Tribunal, the Institution consists of two separate courts: The Court of Justice, composed of 28 judges, one per Member State, and the General Court, which is currently composed of 44 judges,
but this will eventually increase to 56, two per Member State. It ensures the uniform application and interpretation of European Union law through the preliminary ruling procedure in cases referred to the Court of Justice by the national courts, or through direct actions.

All the cases dealt with concern some aspect of EU legislation and cover a wide range of subjects, such as free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, competition, state aid, trade mark litigation and asylum and immigration policy.

You can find out more about the Court of Justice on the multilingual website Curia.

Interpreting

The Court’s Interpretation Directorate provides simultaneous interpretation during the public hearings before the Court of Justice and the General Court. Its mission is to assist in the jurisdictional activity of the Court of Justice and the General Court by providing very high quality interpretation during hearings and other meetings organised by the Institution.

Under the rules of procedure, any of the 23 official languages of the EU may be used as the language of the case. However, the number of languages used in the courtroom varies from one hearing to another, depending on the choice of the parties, the Judges sitting in the chamber, the number of intervening governments, who always speak their official language, and the needs of official visitors attending the hearing.

The rules of procedure require the Judges to deliberate in closed session, and they do so without interpreters. The Court deliberates and drafts its judgments in French, which is the common working language of the institution.

Staffing

The Interpretation Directorate currently has about 70 staff interpreters assigned to 22 language booths (all except Irish and Maltese), and employs around 300 freelance interpreters (ACIs) in the course of a year. On average, 43 contract days are awarded each judicial working week to freelances.

Nature of the work

Conference interpreters must have a thorough knowledge of all their working languages, but the ability to analyse and understand the speaker’s argument is equally important. Precision is essential, and prior study of the case-file, which is available in the language of the case and French, is an
integral part of the interpreter’s work - so a good reading knowledge of French is usually necessary to be able to study case documents. Staff and freelance interpreters alike are assigned to a particular case; all interpreters are bound by the strictest secrecy with regard to information disclosed before and during the hearings.

Recruitment

Staff interpreters (permanent officials) at all the European institutions are recruited through open competitions, organised and published by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). The notices for these competitions are published by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) in the Official Journal of the European Union on the EPSO website. To be admitted to competitions, candidates must, as a general rule:

- have a university degree (in conference interpreting or any subject);
- provide evidence of training as a conference interpreter or equivalent experience;
- have a thorough knowledge of at least three official languages of the European Union, one active (A) language and two passive (C) languages. Where necessary, for certain less widely-spoken languages, knowledge of two official languages will be sufficient, provided that one of them is a second active language (A* or B language).

Conditions of admission are different for each competition. Only the competition notice on EPSO is authentic. See the EPSO site.

No formal qualification in law is required to work at the CJEU, but legal knowledge or training is an advantage.

Where the need arises, accredited interpreters may be recruited as temporary staff, on contract for up to six years.
Freelance interpreters who have passed the EU accreditation test (ACIs), a test organised for the three institutions, Commission, Parliament, and Court of Justice, are placed on the joint list of the three institutions, and are recruited according to the specific language needs of the service. Since those needs are quite specialised - the subject matter being complex and demanding - previous interpreting experience is desirable, though not formally required. Knowledge of French at a sufficient level to study case files is generally necessary, since some documents may not be available in other languages.

It should be noted that interpreting at the Court of Justice calls for in-depth and concentrated prior study of case files. That is why freelance interpreters are always given a contract for paid preparation time at the Court, which is considered to be an essential part of the interpreter's job.

Freelance interpreters are recruited under the same terms and conditions by all three EU interpreting services. For the duration of their ACI contracts, they are considered to be agents of the institution.

For further information and to apply for the inter-institutional accreditation tests for freelance interpreters, please refer to the "Interpreting for Europe" page of the Europa website.

Trainee interpreters

The Court of Justice offers a limited number of interpreting traineeships, which last from 10 to 12 weeks, and are primarily aimed at newly qualified conference interpreters whose language combination is of particular interest to the Interpretation Directorate. The aim is to enable newly qualified interpreters to be supervised as they perfect their interpreting skills, particularly in legal interpreting, which involves the preparation of case-files, terminological research and practical exercises in a ‘silent booth’. The ability to read French is a requirement.

To apply for a traineeship, go to interpret@satunya3ce.curia.europa.eu

Luxembourg City

- Luxembourg general information
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Recommended citation format: