New ISO standards relating to conference interpreting

Three new standards related to conference interpreting and 2 updated standards on interpretation booths and equipment are now in place.

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In December 2016, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) published three new standards relating to conference interpreting (spoken languages and signed languages). The updating of the two standards relating to permanent and mobile interpretation booths (ISO 2603, Simultaneous interpreting — Permanent booths — Requirements and ISO 4043, Simultaneous interpreting — Mobile booths — Requirements), as well as the new standard on technical equipment in simultaneous interpretation booths (ISO 20109, Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements), are aimed at interpreting booth manufacturers, companies hiring out technical equipment, events agencies and meeting room architects, as well as at conference interpreters themselves. Representatives from various AIIC Regions made a significant contribution to the drafting and updating of these three standards.

New and updated standards relating to interpretation booths and technical equipment

The review of the standards applying to interpreting booths, which are almost 20 years old, focuses in particular on architectural and functional requirements as well as sound insulation. Technical equipment requirements are now specified separately. These four restructured technical standards, will allow architects, sound installation designers and manufacturers to create improved next-generation interpretation booths. Members from several AIIC Regions were involved in the expert group ISO/TC 37/SC 5/WG 3 (“Facilities and equipment for interpretation services”), where they contributed their specialist knowledge as well as their experience gained from working in many different situations.

Permanent interpretation booths (ISO 2603:2016 or DIN EN ISO 2603)

As far as permanent interpretation booths are concerned, advances have been made, for instance on improving the interpreters’ view of speakers, the podium and presentations, as well as their access to an Internet connection (WLAN) and a sufficient power outlets for laptops, tablets, etc.

Mobile interpretation booths (ISO 4043:2016 or DIN EN ISO 4043)
The new standard is directed at interpretation booth manufacturers as well as companies hiring out technical interpretation equipment and their clients, meeting organisers and events agencies. The new version provides improvements to the quality of the workplace and ensures that requirements needed for interpretation quality and excellence can be even better met in future. In concrete terms, this means high air quality and optimal acoustic conditions in the booth due to sensors measuring CO2, quieter fans and better sound insulation from other booths in the meeting room.

**Technical equipment for simultaneous interpretation (ISO 20109)**

This new standard contains rules on the technological equipment used in the booth and other interpretation facilities (e.g. interpreting consoles, microphones and headphones), and provides an essential basis to guarantee the quality of the service provided and protect the health and safety of interpreters. This review provides improvements to microphone requirements and microphone management; sound input and output switching; speech intelligibility; image quality, image projection and lip synchronisation; video screen features including quality, and interpreter selection of video inputs; technical management of the interpretation facilities, disability compliant of interpreting desks, hearing protection and appropriate seating. There is now a requirement for a display in the interpretation console showing when the interpretation is being broadcast (television, radio, webstreaming, video conference) or, more generally, when it is being recorded for future use.

**Quality of audio and video signals for simultaneous interpretation (ISO 20108)**

This standard defines the basic parameters applicable to the quality of audio and video input signals for simultaneous interpretation. It also sets out for the first time requirements on simultaneous interpretation in situations where the interpreters, the audience and the speaker are not all present in the same place (distance interpreting/remote interpreting). The final version of this standard was published in October 2017.

**First standard on conference interpreting: DIN 2347**

In March 2017, the German Institute for Standardization – DIN (Deutsches Institut für Normung e.V.) – published a new standard, DIN 2347, *Translation and interpreting services – Interpreting services – Conference Interpreting*. This standard is aimed at professional conference interpreters, and addresses the subjects of qualifications and working procedures. Internationally, the DIN 2347 standard is the first on conference interpreting. It was drafted by the DIN Standards Committee Terminology (NAT) working group “Translation and interpreting services”. Several members of AIIC’s German Region have supported the development of the DIN 2347 standard within this Committee over the last years.

The criteria included in the DIN 2347 standard cover requirements on language skills and conference interpreter training, as well as current important topics such as data protection or the responsible management of sensitive content. The work steps which are carried out before and after an interpreting assignment are also taken into account.

**Certification is now possible**

This new standard provides freelance conference interpreters with the possibility of demonstrating that they are certified according to the DIN 2347 standard, particularly to their clients certified according to the ISO-9001 standard, thereby proving the professionalism of their working methods. The audits verify the qualifications that are required to practice conference interpreting and inspect...
organisational procedures, the degree of standardisation and the level of information security. However, the inspection does not cover actual interpreting assignments.

AIIC requirements provide the basis for assessing qualifications and language skills. Today a university degree in conference interpreting is commonly the first step into the profession, and admission to the Association rests on proof of professional experience based on a minimum number of days worked in line with AIIC’s rules and standards, and endorsement by three AIIC members who have worked with the candidate and thus are able to assess his or her language qualifications in situ.

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