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Legal confusion leading to practical insecurity: a public service interpreter in a new member state

In view of the ever greater migration of representatives of different ethnic and linguistic groups not only within the enlarged EU, but also from the communities outside European borders, the issues regarding establishing communication in social services is becoming one of the most pertinent problems of contemporary societies. The challenge of establishing successful communication in public sector is seen as the most burning issue in the majority of the EU member states, especially after the last enlargement. Since Slovenia became the member of the EU, it has turned into a country of increasing immigration (economic and political). The migrants now come from the linguistic environments that are not familiar to Slovene general public, and consequently, also the Slovene public institutions in order to function well require interpreting services on a more regular basis. The proposed presentation shall focus on the issue how the rights of an individual for an interpreter are defined in official documents, regulations and laws in Slovenia and argue that there is some basic misunderstanding of the role and function of public service interpreting in Slovenia that reflects the “denial of translation and interpreting”, and that the ill-defined issues have direct consequences in everyday practice of public service interpreting. Method: In order to answer this question all relevant legal documents in the Republic of Slovenia defining the rights of an individual for an interpreter in criminal cases, asylum hearings and medical settings shall be critically assessed. Also all Slovene legal documents defining the profile of public-service interpreters and the instances when the interpreting service is provided shall be reviewed. Finally, a case study, focussing on the interviews with interpreters for Arabic in Slovenia that work in asylum hearing procedures shall be made to. The interviews shall show that confusing legislation has direct influence on the insecure status of public service interpreters in Slovenia. Since Slovenia is hosting the first workshop of EULITA/TRAFUT on the new directive on court interpreting, the proposed presentation will mention also this topic.