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Crisis management: Developing PSIT structures for Ukrainian displaced persons in Slovakia / Gestión de crisis: Desarrollo de estructuras TISP para los desplazados ucranianos en Eslovaquia

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Abstract: The way in which PSIT services are provided to national government institutions in Slovakia, the opportunities for professionalisation, training and social recognition of translators and interpreters differ from the standards of quality set by theory (e.g. Giambruno, 2014; Valero-Garcés & Tipton, 2017). The country has significant problems in the availability of PSIT in minority language combinations and fluctuation in the quality of the services provided (Štefková & Bossaert, 2019). Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, lay interpreters had to step in in the absence of formal PSIT structures. In the face of a major increase in demand for PSIT in the current crisis situation related to the transfer of a large number of displaced persons from Ukraine the paper (1) reports on an initial research on the state of PSIT provision in this crisis situation by lay interpreters and (2) on the basis of the needs analysis, describes the foundation for setting up a sustainable PSIT translation and interpreting model.

Key words: training of lay interpreters, the war in Ukraine, PSIT needs analysis, sustainable PSIT model

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Resumen: La forma en la que se proporcionan los servicios de TISP a las instituciones gubernamentales nacionales de Eslovaquia, las oportunidades de profesionalización, formación y reconocimiento social de los traductores e intérpretes difieren de los estándares de calidad establecidos por la teoría (por ejemplo, Giambruno, 2014; Valero-Garcés & Tipton, 2017). El país tiene problemas significativos con la disponibilidad de TISP en combinaciones lingüísticas minoritarias e inestabilidad en la calidad de los servicios prestados (Štefková & Bossaert, 2019). Tras el estallido de la guerra en Ucrania, los intérpretes legos tuvieron que intervenir en ausencia de estructuras formales de TISP. Ante el importante aumento de la demanda de TISP en la actual situación de crisis relacionada con el gran número de personas desplazadas desde Ucrania*, el artículo (1) informa sobre una investigación inicial acerca del estado de la prestación de TISP en esta situación de crisis en Eslovaquia por parte de intérpretes legos y, (2) basándose en el análisis de necesidades, describe las bases para establecer un modelo sostenible de traducción e interpretación de TISP.

Palabras clave: formación de intérpretes legos, la guerra in Ucrania, análisis de las necesidades de TISP, modelo sostenible de TISP

Information on author contribution: The situation of PSIT in Slovakia and the proposal of a project for the creation of a sustainable PSIT model in Slovakia was mainly addressed by Author 1, the description of the didactic grasp of the course in particular by Author 2, who also evaluated the questionnaire research among the participants of the training. The authors' contribution to this study is 50%-50%.

1. Introduction

As Meylaerts (2011) points out, one of the biggest challenges of participatory democracy and inclusive societies is the establishment of a fair language and related translation policy regime. This requires a clear consensus not only on which languages can/cannot or must be used but also on what can/cannot or must be translated in a given territorial and institutional context and how to ensure the sustainability of interpretation and translation services and their quality in the provision of public services to all their users. Communication between citizens and public and governmental authorities is one of the biggest challenges that requires the implementation of a fair translation policy. This communication necessity is even more pronounced in a period of crisis when incoming displaced persons rely on governmental and non-governmental services to provide for their basic needs (Meylaerts 2011, p. 10).

The way PSIT is delivered in public services, the opportunities for professionalisation, training and social recognition of translators and interpreters are very different from translation and interpreting in large international institutions, and there is a significant gap in institutional translation in the public sector between the quality standards set in theory and the reality on the ground. It is clear that fundamental change in this area cannot be achieved by PSIT translators and interpreters alone. The experience of countries with well-developed PSIT systems (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Sweden) shows that the decisive change has come from the top - by establishing an effective model of translation policy in this sector.¹

¹ See reports on PSIT models in Spain, Belgium, Austria in Štefková, Marketa, Kerremans, Koen & Benjamin Bossaert (2020), Pöllabauer, S. (2004), Hale (2007), Valero-Garcés, C., Tipton, R. (2017).

The socio-political situation regarding immigrants and refugees and, in the last year, in particular, the military conflict in Ukraine was and remains to be the cause of the increasing demand for translation and interpreting in the inclusion and integration processes in Slovakia. Research on interpreting and translation in refugees and asylum procedures experiences to progress because of the ensuing migration crisis. In tandem with academia, international, regional, and local organisations also consider and analyse PSIT, particularly when it comes to asylum-seekers, refugees and seekers of temporary protection, issues of inclusion and integration, and the provision of social services. These organisations have practical experience and data, and they highlight serious issues regarding the coverage, quality and professionalism of interpreting services in these sectors. A handful of them is trying to solve the most challenging problems, publishing analyses concerning the most pressing issues and actively training ad hoc interpreters.²

Given this significant increase in demand for PSIT in the current crisis situation related to the transfer of a large number of displaced persons from Ukraine, the paper reports on first research on the state of PSIT provision in this crisis situation in Slovakia. Our research is methodologically based on the analyses of PSIT needs presented by Hale (2007), Ozolins (2010) and Hertog (2021) and was carried out in the form of a survey and qualitative interviews with providers of first contact services and the Legal Counselling Service, as well as with immigrants and beneficiaries of temporary protection working as volunteer interpreters. The second part of the article describes the specific results of two consecutive courses for interpreters working as community interpreters for displaced persons from Ukraine in Slovakia, which the authors of the article designed based on the above-mentioned needs assessment. The participants in these trainings were at the beginning originally mostly volunteers, lay interpreters from the ranks of Ukrainian refugees and students of the TIS at the Comenius University, with no practical experience in community interpreting. All participants however gradually started to work as part-time remunerated PSIT interpreters for the Human Rights League towards the end of the first course.

The article concludes with a discussion of the sustainable model of PSIT service provision in Slovakia, based on the experience of the crisis situation, reflecting the background knowledge of the trainees and the rapidly evolving needs of the integration of the new Ukrainian community into the labour market and the legal and social service delivery system.

2. PSIT structures in Slovak Republic: weak and blind spots

So far, the issue of PSIT has received minimal attention in Slovak translation studies research. Research on community interpreting in recent years has focused mainly on refugees and migration, especially in law enforcement and court settings (e. g. Tužinská 2019, 2020; Štefková 2018, 2021). Studies on translation and interpreting in the context of health care, social services, education and other areas of integration and inclusion are almost completely lacking. This is most likely due to the lack of official recognition of the role of public service interpreters in all settings, with the exception of the legally established position of official (sworn) interpreters for law enforcement and court proceedings.³

² See the findings by Številová (2011) [https://www.hrl.sk/userfiles/files/Odporucania%20tlmocnici_FINAL\(1\).pdf](https://www.hrl.sk/userfiles/files/Odporucania%20tlmocnici_FINAL(1).pdf)

³ Provision of legal translation and interpreting is regulated by the Act No. 382/2004 Coll. on experts, interpreters and translators as amended. <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=190994> (7) Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social services <https://www.epi.sk/zz/2008-44>

Sociological studies of the translation and interpreting market in Slovakia (Djovčoš & Šveda, 2017) show that the basis for making the necessary adjustments to institutionalisation, professionalisation and education is a needs analysis concentrated on mapping various sectors and language combinations. Such an analysis determines which combinations are needed at a particular time and place⁴. In order to set an effective translation policy, it is necessary to observe these variables from the short-/medium-term perspective. In this respect an effective translation policy has to be closely linked with the language policy (Maylaerts & González Núñez, 2018). Nevertheless, systematic needs analyses in PSIT are generally relatively rare. Slovakia is no exception. PSIT needs are evolving quite rapidly due to changes in international migration, global sentiment, and the growth of certain industries. For example, Slovakia's health and social care, automotive and transport industries are experiencing an influx of foreign workers and, particularly in the last year, an influx of Ukrainian refugees.⁵

A cursory look at PSIT providers and recipients shows that interpreting takes place across a wide linguistic spectrum, consisting mainly of languages of lesser diffusion. These are inadequately covered by interpreters who lack basic interpreting skills, as reported in Tužinská's (2011, 2017, 2019, 2020) experience and field research findings. Številová (2011) and Tužinská (2011, 2020) point to serious shortcomings in the quality and availability of PSIT in the asylum and legal sectors. PSIT in Slovakia has not yet undergone the same process as conference interpreting, which enjoys accredited training at universities, scientific research and professional organisations that have defined examples of good practice, set quality standards and established ethical principles. Translation technologies play a key role in terms of efficiency, quality, cost savings and consistency of terminology, but they are not sufficiently used in Slovakia. This fact has been confirmed by recent research on translation and interpreting in Slovakia (Djovčoš & Šveda 2017). PSIT lacks a transparent remuneration system, a general definition of the term by the binding legal regulation and professional, not to mention educational institutions.

In their research report on interpreting for foreigners, Tužinská and Štefková (2021) identify areas that radically influence the quality of interpreting, such as the circumstances and context of a conversation, the time and place of the conversation and its participants: the institutions represented, the interpreter, the foreigner, the presence/absence of a qualified interpreter, the interpreting standards in the given institution, the interpreter's linguistic competence in legal terminology, the interpreter's communicative and intercultural skills, the institutional influence and the interpreter's independence, the legal consequences of inaccurate interpretation for the interpreter/foreigner, and the influence of the way the interview is conducted on the interpretation. They also identify the causes of problems in interpreting and list the benefits of quality interpreting for all concerned. Tužinská (2011) formulates the key competencies of stakeholders as *text appeals*, which, if applied, can significantly improve the quality of PSIT in the context studied (Tužinská, 2011, p. 5-14). Particularly thought-provoking are Tužinská's (2020) findings based on observations of interpreting in asylum court proceedings and the subsequent confrontation of the parties involved with the findings. According to her observations, many PSIT interpreters often lacked necessary training and in some cases even caused ethical conflicts. The results of Homola's (2021) study in the health, administration and education sectors show that service providers in these sectors are not aware of the need for effective, professional communication through

⁴ See the results of the analysis of the market with translation and interpreting services by Djovčoš and Šveda (2017) and the implications for the didactics of interpreting by Djovčoš and Šveda (2021, 100 – 120).

⁵ See <https://www.iom.sk/en/migration/migration-in-slovakia.html>

an interpreter, nor do they have the resources to provide this type of service. This situation could change if the provision of translation and interpretation services for foreigners who do not understand the official language (Slovak) is included in the Social Services Act.

As noted by Šveda and Tužinská (2021), Slovakia is lagging behind in the professionalisation of PSIT. One of the possible reasons can be found in how the majority population reacts to 'otherness', which may be influenced by the more visible ethno-populism in Slovakia but also other post-communist countries in the wider region (ibid.). Consequently, as Bossaert (2018, p. 11; 2020, p. 20) states, it is necessary to raise the general public's awareness and the relevant translation policy participants about the necessity and condition of PSIT. This is necessary in order to expose the improvised, even unprofessional, state of PSIT. In Slovakia, non-profit organisations such as CVEK, Marginal and Human Rights League, through projects such as KapaCITY and Integration Forum⁶, are actively helping to create a common platform for clients, training experts, translators, and interpreters. As part of their work, they compensate for the need for PSIT in several sectors by mobilising volunteers from among already integrated Slovak-speaking immigrants. They serve as 'first aid' in sectors and situations where foreigners do not receive any language support.

3. Neighbouring war: Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia

The latest major armed conflict in Europe is widely acknowledged to have started on the night of February 24, 2022. The world was shocked by Russia's aggressive attack against Ukraine. The nations of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) see this conflict with much deeper emotions and degrees of worry due to the proximity of the war and their shared experience with Russian (Soviet) military aggression and imperial ambitions throughout the 20th century (see Globsec 2022). When Russian military breached the Ukrainian border and a major conflict broke out, a massive influx of refugees and displaced persons (DP) started to move from the Eastern parts of Ukraine to the West. One month after the invasion began, the UNHCR reported that 4 million people fled Ukraine in search of safety and refuge, raising the total number of displaced people to an estimated 6.5 million. The number of refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe reached the value of 7.99 million people in January 2023, of which 4.9 million have asked for Temporary Protection, out of which 107 203 asked for Temporary Protection in Slovakia (UNHCR, 2023). This population is however only a fragment of the number of people who crossed the Slovak-Ukrainian border, which is 1 127 957 according to UNHCR data.

Ukrainian refugees have been a growing presence in Slovakia in recent years, even before the conflict, with many fleeing conflict dating back to 2014. As with any refugee population, there are unique challenges and needs that need to be addressed in order for these individuals to successfully integrate into their new communities. Many of these individuals may not speak the local language or have limited ability to do so. Displaced persons who arrived in Slovakia after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine are a specific case of migrants. A significant part of them does not plan to stay and does not know how long they will be in exile, as evidenced by the very low number of those who have applied for asylum compared to those who have applied for temporary protection (a total of 101 065 applications for temporary protection compared with 547 asylum applications in 2022)⁷.

⁶ See for CVEK <http://cvek.sk/en/home/>, for HRL <https://www.hrl.sk/en>, Marginal <https://marginal.sk/>, project KAPAcity <https://www.kapacity.sk/>, Forum for integration <https://www.hrl.sk/en/vyhľadavanie?vyraz=integration+forum>

⁷ <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/slovakia-displacement-surveys-refugees-ukraine-and-tcns-round-06-09-march-11-november-2022>

Therefore, a part of these displaced persons has no immediate motivation to learn the Slovak language or to integrate permanently. However, they inevitably need to find work, accommodation, schooling for their children and social and health care. Without the help of trained interpreters, refugees may find it difficult to communicate with doctors, teachers and other service providers, making it difficult for them to get the support they need. The demand for community interpreting among Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia is clear.

In addition to addressing the practical needs of Ukrainian refugees, community interpreting can also play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and integration. By providing a means for refugees and members of the host community to communicate with one another, interpreters can help to break down barriers and promote understanding between different cultural groups. This can help to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion for Ukrainian refugees and can also help to prevent the development of social tensions within the community.

To meet this need, it is important for the government to provide adequate funding and support for interpreting services and to ensure that there are enough trained interpreters to meet demand. To date, however, initiatives in this area have been almost exclusively undertaken by NGOs, with the Human Rights League (HRL) doing the most intensive work with interpreters. The authors of this article worked with HRL to conduct a needs assessment, which was used to design an initially improvised and then certified training for interpreters working with refugees in First Contact and Integration Support Centres.

4. The ad-hoc interpreters: analysis of training needs

In March 2022, the authors of this paper, together with other TIS scholars from Slovak universities, organised improvised networks of volunteer community interpreters to provide services to the growing number of Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war through Slovakia. We worked closely with several NGOs, including the Human Rights League. As the situation began to stabilise and the number of new arrivals decreased, we decided to move from a short-term solution to medium- and long-term planning. At the same time, the provision of services to Ukrainian refugees became more structured and organised. The need for a reliable pool of Slovak-Ukrainian public service interpreters became apparent, and in April 2022 we started the first impromptu training of interpreters and interpreter candidates working for the HRL in the largest high-capacity refugee centre in Bratislava.

The first phase of the training was characterised by a high turnover of participants due to their changing personal situations. A more detailed report can be found in our paper published in 2022 (Štefková & Šveda, 2022). The training was partly delivered via distance learning and partly on-site. At one point, the number of participants reached more than 70 people. In the 72 responses to our questionnaire distributed in May 2022, 77.78% of the respondents were female, with an average age of 34 years (the range was 18-67 years). 20.8% of the volunteer interpreters had completed secondary education, and 79.2% had a university degree. When asked about their mother tongue, 41.7% said Ukrainian, 31.9% said Russian, and 22.2% said Slovak. When asked what other languages they could actively communicate in, 84.7% said Russian, 65.3% said Slovak, 63.9% said English and 44.4% said Ukrainian.

Only 10% of them had studied or were studying translation and interpreting, 8.6% had studied language teaching programmes and 14.3% had studied other language programmes. When asked about their previous experience of interpreting, 45.8% said they had done it

a few times, 29.2% said they had done it frequently and 8.3% said they had listened to interpreting as a client. They were also asked about their own reasons for wanting to become an interpreter. 53.3% of respondents said they saw interpreting as a temporary need, 31% said they wanted to provide it on a permanent basis, 29.6% said they wanted to try it out and 11.3% said they saw it as a business opportunity.

The first eight courses focused mainly on theoretical aspects of public service interpreting (legal framework, ethical and professional aspects of PSI), technical aspects of interpreting (introduction to note-taking, dialogue interpreting and whispered interpreting) and terminology courses covering certain common areas of thematic fields (asylum procedures, employment arrangements, social services and basic health care terms). Due to the large and constantly changing group, and also because of the pandemic restrictions still in place, most of the training was delivered online, with limited active participation of the course participants. After the summer break, this large group was gradually transformed into a smaller group of about 18 interpreters who worked routinely for the HRL. It should be emphasised that these interpreters were employed at this point and their work was remunerated from the grants and subsidies received by the NGO. While in the spring of 2022 and during the first wave of our training we worked mainly with enthusiasts, volunteers and only a few employed interpreters, by the autumn all the interpreters had some experience and were part-time employees of the NGO. In response to the NGO's request, we agreed to run a second, more structured series of trainings for a smaller and more stable group of participants.

Based on our experience from the first improvised training sessions in the spring, we identified some key takeaways that defined the structure of the training course.

1. Terminology-focused practical training: Participants emphasised their acute need to understand and decipher subject-specific terminology, jargon and abbreviations used in certain areas of their work. This problem was reported by both Ukrainian and Slovak interpreters.
2. Sensitivity to the language of communication: The Russian war in Ukraine caused a high sensitivity to the language of interaction used by public service interpreters. Many Ukrainian citizens, although fluent in Russian, refused to use this language when communicating with interpreters. However, interpreters of Slovak origin spoke only Russian, as did some displaced persons.
3. Psychosocial and ethical aspects of professional training: Physical and emotional stress and sensitivity to the interpreter's own mental well-being were among the issues identified in discussions with course participants.

5. Training course: design, structure, and first reflections

Based on the above principles and within the task specification by the sponsoring organisation (NGO Human Rights League), we designed a 12-week course for part-time public service interpreters. Initially, the group consisted of 18 people, 12 Ukrainian nationals from different backgrounds and 6 Slovak students or graduates of TIS programmes. The content and format of the course were adapted to the needs and requirements of the host organisation.

Inspired by the findings and recommendations of the imPLI, trailLLD and QUALITAS projects and the UNHCR Handbook on Interpreting in Asylum Procedures⁸, we designed a 12-week course with a weekly 90-minute training session consisting of practical role-playing exercises, with the trainers acting as facilitators. In addition to in-class role-plays, we also used pre-recorded speeches by course organisers and external experts (e.g. medical professionals, asylum lawyers). After warm-up exercises, facilitators introduced key terms and explained the context of the simulated exercise. During the practical phase, both consecutive and dialogue interpreting techniques were used and, to a lesser extent, sight translation exercises were introduced. Three sessions were dedicated to professional ethics, counselling and terminology preparation.

The themes selected for the course respected the brief from the course sponsor and also reflected the lessons learned from the first phase of training and discussions with course participants. The key areas of interest included: medical settings (standard interactions with GP, paediatrician and in-patient registration interview), employment relations (job interview, Labour Code terminology, occupational health and safety interview), asylum and temporary protection proceedings, police interview and other topics.

The course was concluded with an examination using the tandem method (Gianbrunno 2014; Skaaden and Felberg, 2020) to assess the drafting of recommendations for further development. Given the continuing need to train public service interpreters and also to better understand the specificities of PSI provision for Ukrainian displaced persons in Slovakia, we conducted a survey and ten structured interviews with those course participants who decided to take the final exam. The purpose of the survey and interviews was to better understand the satisfaction with the course, the applicability of the acquired knowledge and also the areas for further development.

One of the first preliminary findings is a better understanding of the modality of interpretation employed by course participants in their practice of public service interpreting for Ukrainian nationals.

⁸ See the final report of the project imPLI: https://www.isitinternational.com/app/uploads/2014/11/IMPLI_Final_Report.pdf, the educational video's from the project imPLI: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx15JSWFqoqCm5ycG6CKzxAQHE-Yfrglj>, the results from the Qualitas project regarding testing and evaluation of the candidates published by Gianbrunno (ed.) (2014), the recommendations of the trailLLD project: <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/tolkwetenschap/projecten/trailld/training-in-languages-of-lesser-diffusion> and the UNHCR handbook on interpreting in asylum procedures: https://www.bfa.gv.at/402/files/01_Broschueren/AUT_Handbook-Asylum-Interpreting_en.pdf

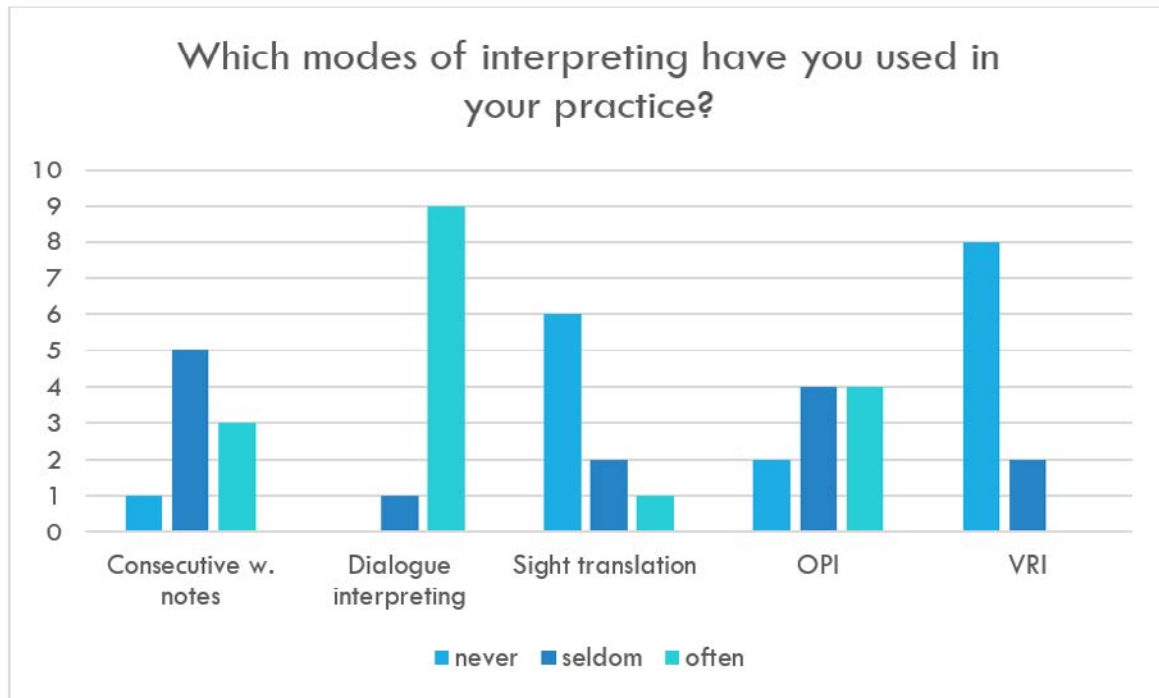


Figure 1. Usage of modes of interpretation as reported by course participants (OPI – over-the-phone interpreting and VRI – video remote interpreting)

As demonstrated in Fig. 1, despite the fact that consecutive interpreting with note-taking regularly featured in all the classes and the time allocation was the same as in the case of dialogue interpreting, it was employed in practical interactions to a lesser degree. On the other hand, sight translation featured less prominently but was also covered less substantially in the course. As regards those topics identified by participants as most complex and critical for their further professional growth, medical topics featured prominently. When asked about areas requiring further terminological training 7 respondents were interested in general medical terminology (e. g. GP and paediatrician visit) and 6 respondents were interested in more specialised medical terminology (hospital and specialist visits). Other topics included: employment contracts (5 respondents), rental contracts (2 respondents), business registration and administration (2 respondents), and insurance and banking terminology (2 respondents).

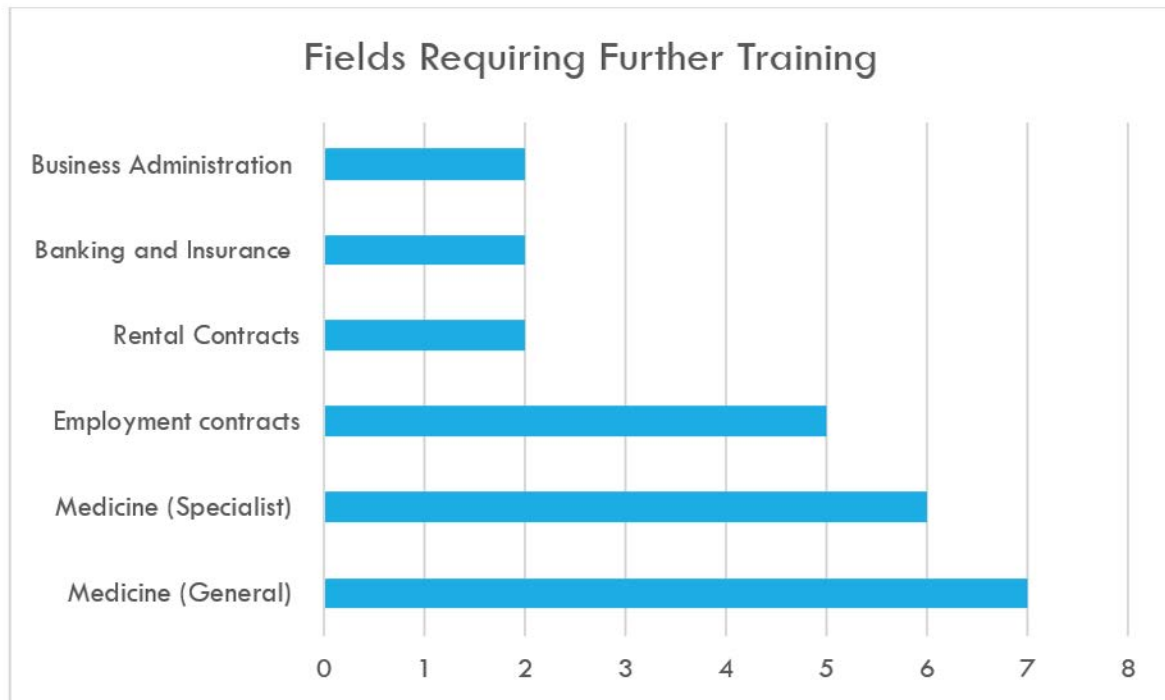


Figure 2: Terminological fields requiring further training

Structured interviews with course graduates show that 90% of them are interested in providing full-time interpreting services in the long term or alongside another profession but do not know how to do so outside the structures of NGOs. The course participants also recognise the need to combine interpreting with translation, as their interpreting assignments are often directly linked to the translation of texts before or after interpreting. They are aware of the need for longer-term training in interpreting techniques and a deeper knowledge of the terminology in which they interpret, as well as the need for specialisation.

6. On the way to a sustainable model of PSIT service provision in Slovakia

The experience gained over the past year has led us to consider new ways and means of developing a functioning and efficient PSIT regime that would not only serve the needs of Ukrainian refugees, but also form the critical backbone of an effective translation policy. The lessons learnt from the pilot initiatives discussed above, the assessment of the lack of institutional structures at the national level and the observation of working and functional models abroad inspired a large-scale project aimed at bringing together PSIT actors from state authorities, NGOs and migrant organisations and taking decisive steps towards the creation of a sustainable PSIT model in Slovakia, which does not yet exist. The main objective of the project would be to streamline communication between the state administration and local self-government in the process of integration and inclusion of foreigners and minorities in the territory of the Slovak Republic through the development of a sustainable professional set of tools for public service translation and interpreting (PSIT) based on the application of international standards, proven procedures in the field of PSIT and based on the specific needs of clients.

Individual institutions alone would not be able to address PSIT at such a professional level, as they lack knowledge of interdisciplinary research in the field and of computer-

assisted translation and interpreting technologies, and they lack experience in developing professional translation and interpreting tools. Moreover, experience from other countries (Belgium, Austria, Spain) shows that the involvement of educational institutions with expertise in translation studies significantly professionalises PSIT, and the complex solution brings significant cost savings.⁹

According to Ozolins (2010), a number of factors influence the provision of PSIT services, including society's general attitudes towards immigration, the degree to which so-called official translation and interpreting are professionalised, society's general attitudes towards communication through an interpreter, and so on. He describes the patterns of translation policy in public services as a spectrum ranging from neglect to full service, with categories such as ad hoc interpreting or the provision of essential interpreting and translation services in between these extremes. (Ozolins 2010, pp. 195-197). González Núñez advocates a so-called inclusive model of translation policy, which ensures that new minorities are able to interact with public service providers to the extent necessary. He sees interaction with public institutions as crucial to the integration process. Foreigners without knowledge of an official language are excluded from public services if they do not have the means to overcome the language barrier. In terms of full integration, it is important to stress that PSIT is seen as a short-term compensatory measure, not as a long-term communication strategy (see Pym 2012, p. 8).

However, creating an effective PSIT model requires rigorous research and needs analysis that can only be carried out by an interdisciplinary team of experts. The sub-objectives, which will ensure the feasibility of the framework objective, are based on in-depth research into institutionalised communication contexts in the public sector where there is a need to communicate with foreigners and to map the situation and demand in the field of public service translation and interpreting (PSIT) by means of a needs assessment at the level of local authorities, local governments, the Migration Office and the Foreign Police in specific sectors of PSIT such as education, health care, social care, migration and asylum, etc.

The most important practical steps we intend to take in the coming years to professionalise PSIT in Slovakia are:

1. The creation of an information platform on public service interpreting and translation, which will provide the public with information on PSIT and access to tools for professionalising PSIT (courses, code of ethics, register of translators and interpreters, repository of translated documents, remote interpreting application, needs assessment and a model for sustainable provision of PSIT in the Slovak Republic);
2. The creation of an auxiliary register of public service translators and interpreters based on the needs assessment, especially for languages that are insufficiently covered or not covered at all by the existing register of sworn translators and interpreters of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic;
3. To create a repository of relevant documents translated into the languages of integration and inclusion, in which translations of frequently used forms and documents in contact with foreigners will be available, in order to reduce the need for the presence of an interpreter, in the relevant languages of integration and inclusion in Slovakia, on the basis of a needs assessment, in the light of current European initiatives regarding the

⁹See Valero-Garcés, Carmen, Lázaro Gutiérrez, Raquel (2016) and Hertog (2021). This system is described in greater detail by Štefková and Bossaert (2019) as well as Bossaert (2020).

communication of rights in an understandable way, in cooperation with legal experts and representatives of the institutions concerned;

4. To create an application for the provision of community interpreters for remote interpreting, through which public and state administration bodies and third sector organisations working with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants will be able to contact interpreters and arrange interpreting by telephone or videoconference, in order to cover the entire territory of the Slovak Republic with interpreting services and to significantly reduce costs.
5. To provide specialised training in interpreting skills with an emphasis on the specifics of PSIT, culminating in an examination and a certificate of PSIT qualification. An important part of this training will be techniques for dealing with difficult situations and maintaining neutrality, cultural and social norms of Slovakia, as well as the specific terminology and jargon used in the public service sector. This will help interpreters to understand the context of the conversations they are interpreting and to provide accurate and nuanced interpretation.
6. Provide opportunities for interpreters to gain practical experience through internships or mentoring programmes with experienced interpreters, and offer continuous professional development opportunities, such as workshops and seminars, to keep interpreters abreast of the latest developments in the field and enable them to continuously improve their skills. This gives them the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations and receive feedback from experienced professionals, ensuring that they are able to provide high quality interpreting services to the public.

In line with Pöllabauer (2021, p. 56), we believe that in order to build a stable base of interpreters, it is important to allow semi-professional and lay interpreters to become members of professional organisations of interpreters in Slovakia. However, in addition to training, material equipment and technical support, the recognition of this profession, its inclusion in social services and the transfer of responsibility for the operation of these tools from the hands of NGOs to the state are essential for the sustainability of the model.

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