



Recibido: 31/10/2024


Aceptado: 17/03/2025

Publicado: 04/04/2025

Gradual steps towards the professionalisation of public service interpreting in Slovenia / Hacia la profesionalización de la interpretación en los servicios públicos en Eslovenia


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Abstract: This review article details who provides public service interpreting and translation (PSIT) in the Republic of Slovenia, the training profile of practising public-service interpreters, the language needs in Slovenia and the language profiles of trained interpreters. The article also describes the national vocational qualification for public service interpreters and the first Slovene code of ethics and standards of practice for public service interpreters – both of which mark the first steps towards the professionalisation of public service interpreting in the Republic of Slovenia.

Keywords: Public Service Interpreting; National vocational qualifications; Code of ethics; Standards of practice

Resumen: En esta revisión bibliográfica, se analiza quiénes ofrecen el servicio de interpretación y traducción en los servicios públicos (ISP) en Eslovenia, los perfiles profesionales de los intérpretes en activo de esta disciplina, las necesidades lingüísticas del país y el perfil lingüístico de un intérprete cualificado. Asimismo, el artículo trata las cualificaciones NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) y el primer código deontológico y de

How to cite this article / ¿Cómo citar este artículo?

Pokorn, N.K. & Mikolič Južnič, T. (2025). Gradual steps towards the professionalisation of public service interpreting in Slovenia. *FITISPos International Journal*, 12(1), 183-200. <https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2025.12.1.388>

conducta esloveno para los intérpretes en servicios públicos. Ambas normativas constituyen los primeros pasos hacia la profesionalización de la interpretación en los servicios públicos en Eslovenia.

Palabras clave: Interpretación en los servicios públicos; Cualificaciones NVQ; Código deontológico; Código de conducta

Acknowledgments and sources of funding: The authors acknowledge the financial support received from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (research core funding No. P6-0446).

1. Introduction

In this chapter, public-service interpreting and translation (PSIT) is understood in accordance with the international standard ISO 13611:2014 for community interpreting. PSIT thus refers to a public-sector interpreting profession in which interpreters through speech or gestures provide access to public sector services for people who, due to a lack of understanding and/or knowledge of the societal language, would otherwise be unable to use or benefit from these services without their assistance. The areas in which community interpreters most often work include healthcare, education, religious organisations, asylum procedures, etc. Although court interpreting and sign-language interpreting are often considered types of community interpreting, in Slovenia the fields of sign-language and court interpreting, as well as the status of court and sign-language interpreters, are regulated separately by law and are therefore only marginally mentioned in this paper.

The term professionalisation is more difficult to define than PSIT since it is polysemous and its meaning depends on the context in which it is used. The term may be used in educational or training settings and indicate adaptations of training to the productive system. It may denote a process within organisations when employees are asked to engage in new forms of work (cf. Demazière & Wittorski 2024). In this article, however, the term refers to “a process whereby occupations have become, or seek to become, publicly recognized as professions according to the degree to which they meet the alleged criteria.” (Hoyle 2001, 15472) The term professionalisation thus covers the pursuit of status, as well as the improvement of skills. With the term professionalisation thus, on one hand, we refer to the efforts to have professional experience in the field of community interpreting recognised in order to improve the status of those who perform community interpreting, and on the other hand, to the improvements of the capacity of those who perform community interpreting to enhance the quality of service which is provided.

The aim of this paper is thus to highlight the professionalisation of public-service interpreting and translation by detailing who provides public-service interpreting and translation (PSIT) in Slovenia, the training profile of practising public-service interpreters, the language needs in Slovenia and the language profiles of trained interpreters. The article also presents the results of projects and initiatives whose aim was to support professionalisation of public service interpreters in the Republic of Slovenia, including the development of the national vocational qualification for public service interpreters and the first Slovene code of ethics and standards of practice for public interpreters.

First, we present the linguistic landscape and the existing profiles of PSIT interpreters in Slovenia. Then we outline Slovene research in the field of PSIT, and finally, we describe two attempts to elevate the professionalisation level of PSIT in the Republic of Slovenia.

2. The changing linguistic landscape of Slovenia

The Slovene-speaking population lived in multilingual and multicultural political entities for centuries: for example, in the Habsburg Empire from the 13th century until the end of the First World War and later in the Socialist Yugoslavia from 1945 until 1991. During these periods, the Slovene-speaking population lived and communicated with German- and Italian-speaking citizens, and later with Serbo-Croatian-speaking migrants. However, after joining the EU in 2004, Slovenia experienced increased immigration of speakers of languages that were not traditionally present in Slovene society (Gorjanc & Pokorn, 2013). Today, Slovenia's linguistic landscape is much more diverse than it used to be, as shown by statistics on applicants for international protection, as well as resident and work permits, summarised below.

2.1 Applicants for international protection

In the Republic of Slovenia data on applicants for international protection are collected by the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The number of applications for international protection, as well as the number of individuals granted international protection status, has been available since 1995, but early statistics do not reveal the origin of the applicants (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, 2023a). As shown in Figure 1, the number of applicants fluctuated throughout the 2000s, with a steep spike in 2000, and has been steadily increasing since 2014, with only a slight decrease in 2020 (due to the Covid19 pandemic).¹

Data on countries of origin have been available online in annual reports from 2012 onwards (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, 2020; 2023b). The latest report covers the year 2023 up to November. Collectively, between 2012 and 2023, 32,948 individuals applied for international protection in Slovenia, most of whom came from North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as over 50 other countries worldwide. Table 1 shows the applicants' countries of origin, along with their official languages and other important languages spoken in those countries.

¹ The number for 2023 is expected to be higher when the data for December are added.

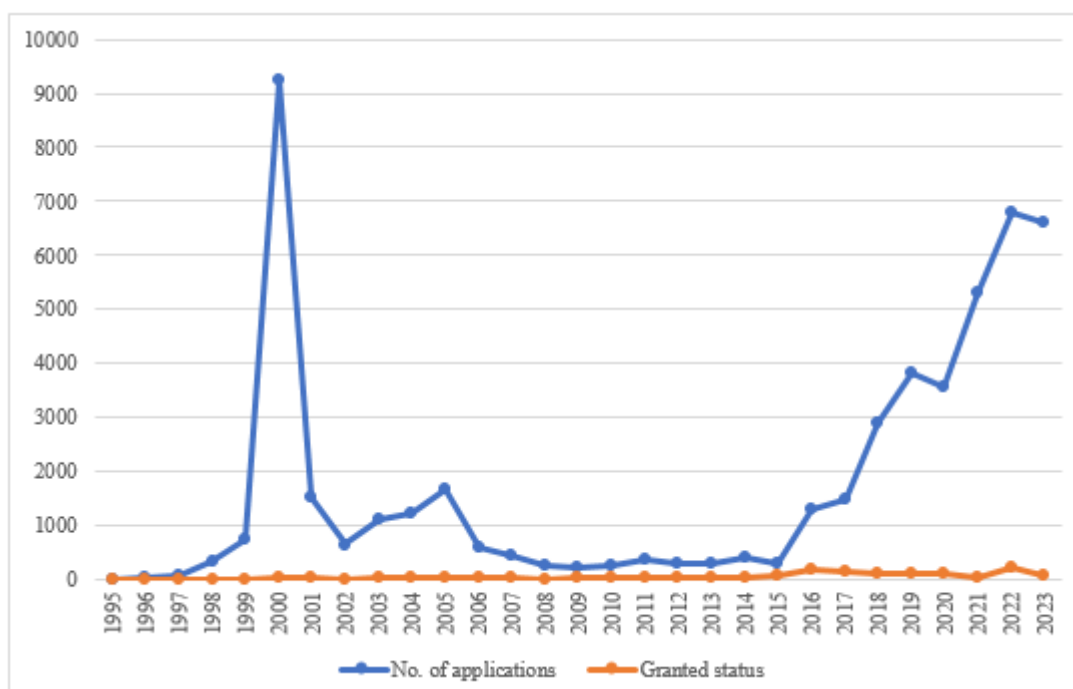


Figure 1: Number of asylum seekers in Slovenia between January 1995 and November 2023

Country	No.	%	Official languages	Other important languages
Morocco	7,983	24.2%	Arabic, Berber	Moroccan Arabic, French
Afghanistan	6,848	20.8%	Pashto, Dari	Uzbek, English, Turkmen, Urdu, Pashayi, Nuristani, Arabic, Balochi
Pakistan	3,321	10.1%	Urdu, English	Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki, Urdu, Balochi, Hindko, Pahari-Pothwari, Brahui
Algeria	2,672	8.1%	Arabic, Berber	Algerian Arabic (Darja), French
Bangladesh	1,527	4.6%	Bengali	English
Syria	967	2.9%	Arabic	
India	962	2.9%	Hindi, English	Assamese, Bengali, Boro, Dogri, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Kokborok, Lepcha, Mizo, Sikkimese
Iran	904	2.7%	Persian	Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Luri, Gilaki, Mazandarani, Arabic, Baluchi, Turkmen, Armenian
Iraq	898	2.7%	Arabic, Kurdish	Suret, Turkish, Armenian
Turkey	887	2.7%	Turkish	Kurdish, Zaza, Arabic, Circassian, Laz, Greek, Armenian, Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian
Cuba	680	2.1%	Spanish	Haitian Creole, English, Lucumí, Galician, Corsican
Ukraine	314	1.0%	Ukrainian	Russian, Romanian/Moldovan, Bulgarian
Egypt	254	0.8%	Arabic	Egyptian Arabic

Burundi	230	0.7%	Kirundi, French, English	
Tunisia	205	0.6%	Arabic	Tunisian Arabic, French
Kosovo	147	0.4%	Albanian, Serbian	
Eritrea	127	0.4%		Tigrinya, Beja, Tigre, Kunama, Saho, Bilen, Nara, Afar
Russia	121	0.4%	Russian	Abaza, Adyghe, Avar, Altai, Bashkir, Buryat, Chechen, Chuvash, Crimean Tatar, Erzya, Ingush, Kabardian, Kalmyk, Karachay-Balkar, Khakas, Komi-Zyrian, Hill Mari, Meadow Mari, Moksha, Nogai, Ossetian, Tatar, Tuvan, Udmurt, Ukrainian, Yakut
Other	3,901	11.8%		

Table 1: Official languages of the states of origin of asylum seekers in Slovenia (2012-2023)

2.2 Residents' permits

Further relevant data were obtained from the statistics published by the Ministry of Interior Affairs (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, 2023c). According to the statistics, on 30 November 2023, there were 242,961 foreigners with a residence permit or a certificate of registration of residence in Slovenia. Table 2 presents the first fifteen countries, the citizens of which officially resided in Slovenia on 30 November 2023.

Country	Permanent residence permit	Temporary residence permit	Total
Bosnia and Herzegovina	64,226	44,038	108,264
Kosovo	20,362	19,653	40,015
Serbia	11,616	12,024	23,640
Northern Macedonia	11,883	6,773	18,656
Croatia	7,646	5,726	13,372
Russian Federation	2,697	2,820	5,517
Bulgaria	2,281	2,372	4,653
Italy	1,076	2,476	3,552
Ukraine	1,967	746	2,713
China	1,162	596	1,758
Turkey	172	1,411	1,583
Germany	597	749	1,346
Montenegro	734	503	1,237
India	169	944	1,113

Table 2: Overview of residence permits in Slovenia in 2023

The overview of residence permits shows that apart from migrants from former Yugoslav republics (including Kosovo), the most frequent countries of origin of foreign workers in Slovenia are the Russian Federation, Bulgaria, Italy, Ukraine, China, Turkey, Germany, and India. The languages of these countries are therefore BCSM, Albanian, Macedonian, Russian, Bulgarian, Italian, Ukrainian, Chinese, Turkish, German, and English (and any of the languages spoken in the countries).

2.3 Work permits

When citizens of non-EU countries come to work in Slovenia, they need to obtain a single residence and work permit (Employment Service of Slovenia, 2023). In Slovenia two types of work permits are issued by the Employment Service: 90-day permits for seasonal work in agriculture, and permits for citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia based on special inter-state agreements. In October 2023 the total number of work permits issued was 14,168, and apart from ex-Yugoslav countries, the workers came from only a few other countries (see table 3).

	Jan-Oct 2023
Total	14,168
Bosnia and Herzegovina	11,063
Serbia	3,083
Northern Macedonia	13
Other	9

Table 3: Countries of origin of foreign citizens with a work permit in Slovenia between January and October 2023

Another factor that needs to be acknowledged is the possibility of asylum seekers to apply for a work permit. Statistics do not give a clear picture about the numbers of asylum seekers that obtain a residence or work permit, as not all citizens of certain countries (e.g. Kosovo) who obtain a residence or work permit were asylum seekers and vice versa. For instance, between 2012 and 2023, there were 887 asylum seekers from Turkey, while the number of residence permits for Turkish citizens in 2023 is 1,583.² Nevertheless, the combined statistics on asylum seekers, residence permits and work permits give a clear picture of the linguistic diversity that public service providers face today.

These results show that although the most frequently encountered foreign language in the Republic of Slovenia is still one of the contemporary variants of the language formerly known as Serbo-Croatian, which (because of its proximity to Slovene and the fact that it was used as a lingua franca in socialist Yugoslavia) does not represent a major linguistic obstacle, other languages have also entered the Slovene linguistic landscape, among them Albanian and Macedonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Chinese, but also Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Berber, Dari, Turkish and several others.

3. Language needs in Slovene public service provision

There are no recent studies monitoring language needs in public services in Slovenia. The last nationwide survey was conducted in 2016 and focused on healthcare settings (for details, see Pokorn & Lipovec Čebren, 2019). The results showed, first, that 94% of surveyed healthcare providers (n=564) in all regions of the country regularly encountered patients with no or little knowledge of Slovene. And second, Slovenian healthcare providers generally spoke English (77%) or the modern versions of Serbo-Croatian (70%), while their knowledge of other foreign languages was much less common. When asked about the languages spoken by their patients, providers replied that the vast majority spoke the modern variants of Serbo-

² The high number of Turkish workers in Slovenia is the result of a large contract for construction work on a railway line, carried out by a Turkish company.

Croatian and English, but that a significant number of patients spoke Albanian, German and Macedonian, as well as Italian, Roma, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, French, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Spanish, Persian, Turkish, Urdu and Pashto, which posed a significant, sometimes insurmountable, challenge to service provision. According to the survey results, in such encounters, Slovenian healthcare providers most often used a lingua franca, such as English (n=417), *ad hoc* interpreters, such as the patient's relatives (n=365), or even gestures and drawings (n=301). They also asked for help of bilingual healthcare professionals (n=256), consulted online dictionaries and used machine translation tools (n=224), were assisted by other healthcare staff, such as hospital cleaners (n=165), and only a few of them called on professional interpreters (n=179). There are two main reasons for this: first, Slovenian law stipulates that language assistance for patients should only be provided by the healthcare institution in emergency situations, and that in all other cases the patients themselves should pay for the language assistance, which means that patients rarely use trained interpreters due to their costly fees; and second, there are very few or no trained interpreters for the foreign languages the patients speak.

4. PSIT provision in Slovenia

Public-service interpreting and translation in Slovenia is sometimes, although rarely, provided by conference interpreters, more often by court interpreters and by interpreters on the internal list of the Ministry of the Interior. However, most frequently *ad-hoc*, untrained interpreters are used.

4.1 Language profiles of Slovene conference interpreters

All conference interpreters working in Slovenia have either been trained in Slovenia or abroad. In 2023 the only association of conference interpreters in Slovenia lists 55 active conference interpreters, 45 of them indicated their working languages on the website.³ In total they offer services in 13 languages: besides Slovene (n=45), they list the following languages as their working languages: English (n=37), German (n=21), Italian (n=12), French (n=10), Croatian (n=8), Serbian (n=5), Bosnian (n=3), Russian (n=3), Spanish (n=2), Portuguese (n=2), Slovene Sign Language (n=1), and Arabic (n=1).

The language profiles of conference interpreters in Slovenia show that this group of professionals mainly works with EU languages and could not adequately respond to all the needs of Slovene public services.

4.2 Language profiles of Slovene court interpreters

Candidates can become court or sworn or certified interpreters after they pass the certification exam, which in Slovenia consists of a translation task and an oral examination focusing on the knowledge of the Slovene legal system. Although there were 481 sworn or certified court interpreters in Slovenia in 2020 working with 37 languages, the majority of them only translate, and only a few of them also provide interpreting services. More than 10 interpreters are available for the following languages: German, English, Croatian, Italian, French, Bosnian, Russian, Albanian, Macedonian, Spanish and Serbian. For all other languages, there are less than 10 court interpreters on the list.

³ See <https://www.zkts.si/imenik>

In 2020 we conducted a nation-wide online survey among conference interpreters and sworn interpreters in Slovenia, and asked only those who had ever worked as public-service interpreters to answer our questions (for more details see Pokorn & Mikolič, 2021). We received 124 valid answers. Their responses reveal that the practising public-service interpreters work with 15 EU languages (Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene and Spanish), 4 Balkan languages (Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Serbian), and Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. The results of the survey also indicated that only 6% of those sworn interpreters who work as public-service interpreters and have responded to our survey had received an interpreter education or training.

The results of the survey thus indicate that while the list of certified court interpreters in the Republic of Slovenia is quite extensive, only a small portion of the individuals on the list are trained interpreters and that some languages that are in need in public service are not covered (for example, Roma, Persian, Dari and Pashto).

4.3 Interpreters on the internal list of the Ministry of the Interior

According to Article 6 of the Law on International Protection of the Republic of Slovenia, every applicant for international protection in Slovenia should be “informed of the content of the written decision in a language he or she understands. The operative part of the decision, the grounds underlying the decision and the legal instruction shall be translated into this language.” This means that the interpretation and translation are not always provided in the mother tongue of the applicant. In addition to that, the interpreters chosen for this task are asked only to “provide proof of their command of the language” and are not tested for their interpreting skills.

5. Training and research of PSIT in Slovenia

This gap between interpreting provision and the language need in Slovene public service led to a number of research projects and training efforts that started in the first decade of the 21st century. Although there is still no programme training public-service interpreters in Slovenia yet, numerous and extensive efforts have been made towards this goal (Pokorn & Mikolič Južnič, 2021; Maček & Biffio-Zorko, 2021), and several projects and initiatives have been carried out, both at national and European level, with the aim of offering systematic solutions to the need for public-service interpreters, particularly in the healthcare sector.

5.1. First projects

The first project on PSIT in Slovenia dates back to 2007, when the Department of Translation at the University of Ljubljana joined the European project “MedInt - Development of a curriculum for medical interpreters” (2007-2009) (Ertl & Pöllabauer, 2010), which aimed to outline European guidelines for the education of healthcare interpreters and to establish a network of stakeholders in the field of healthcare. MedInt produced a model curriculum and a monograph dedicated to various aspects of public-service interpreting provision in healthcare (Andres & Pöllabauer, 2009), which included also the first Slovene research from this field (Pokorn, Matičič & Pokorn, 2009). This project was followed by the national research project »Interpreting for Healthcare in Slovenia« (2010-2013), the main achievement of which was the development of a proposal for a one-year specialisation in healthcare interpreting, which did not take off due to a lack of funding and qualified teachers (Gorjanc & Pokorn, 2013).

The training proposal was based on the existing community interpreter training programmes in other countries, and the financial aspect played an important role: in 2012 Slovenia faced one of the most serious economic crises, which was followed by the state implementation of austerity measures. The biggest challenge of the proposed programme was therefore to find a way to meet the desired quality standards while maximising financial efficiency. The envisaged programme consisted of 60 ECTS credits, and included both face-to-face and distance learning via online learning platform. The idea was to create a modular programme with each module focusing on a specific area of PSIT (health, legal and administrative services, etc.), which would allow students to take each module separately and after completion also receive a partial certification. In this way, the students could complete the entire programme in stages at their own pace (Gorjanc & Pokorn, 2013, pp. 31-33). However, the programme has never been implemented due to lack of funds.

The need for community interpreters has also been recognised at the level of the University of Ljubljana's master's degree in interpreting. Although this master's degree focuses mainly on conference interpreting, since 2012 it has also included one course dedicated to PSIT.

Parallely to these efforts focused on training and education of public-service interpreters and translators, research on PSIT has intensified and in 2016 the first Slovenian monograph dedicated to PSIT was published (Gorjanc & Morel, 2016).

Simultaneously, there have also been projects and initiatives focused on establishing quality court interpreting, such as EULITA and TRAFUT (see Maček & Paolucci, 2019), which responded to the implementation of the EU Directive 2010/64 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings. In response to these initiatives, also the first short-term specialist training course for court interpreters was established at the University of Ljubljana in the academic year 2018/2019 (Maček & Schlamberger Brezar, 2019), which comprises 150 contact hours (17 ECTS credits) and covers three thematic areas: selected chapters in civil, criminal and administrative law, translation of legal texts, and interpreting techniques.

5.2. New languages, new challenges – A multilingual handbook for healthcare

In the first two decades of the 21st century, Slovenia has gradually evolved from a traditionally less attractive destination for migration (if we exclude traditional immigrants from the former Yugoslav republics) to either a destination or a transit country for an increasing number of people from linguistic groups that had previously not been present in its territory. This change was brought about mainly by two events: Slovenia's accession to the European Union in 2004 (Gorjanc & Pokorn, 2013) and the so-called European migrant crisis, which saw in late 2015 and early 2016 hundreds of thousands of migrants cross Slovene borders (Pokorn & Mikolič, 2021). During this period, research on PSIT for the needs of applicants for international protection was carried out in Slovenia in the framework of the European F9 project MIME (Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe), focusing in particular on the question of whether PSIT reduces motivation to learn the societal language of the host country and thus reduces linguistic inclusiveness. The results have showed that there is no such link, and that interpreting does not inhibit the desire to learn the dominant language of the society (Pokorn & Čibej, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2022). Research has also shown that the need for language support is particularly acute in high-risk situations, such as in police, administrative and healthcare settings.

In the healthcare sector in particular (but also in other areas of public life), Slovenia was almost completely unprepared to deal with a multitude of unfamiliar languages, which created serious communication barriers. As a result, the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the European Union (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), co-funded the project “Publishing a dictionary to facilitate communication between migrants and health professionals”, which ran between 2016 and 2018. The interdisciplinary project joined Translation Studies researchers, anthropologists, physicians, nurses and sociologists from three faculties of the University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences) and two of the most important institutions in the field of health care, the Medical Chamber of Slovenia and the National Institute of Public Health. The project had two main objectives, namely the preparation of a multilingual handbook which would facilitate communication in healthcare and the organisation of professional training of healthcare workers on how to treat foreign language patients.

The Multilingual Handbook to Facilitate Communication in Healthcare in eight languages was published in 2017 in four volumes available for free both print and electronic formats. In response to the increase in the number of refugees from Ukraine, a fifth book was published in 2022. The collection therefore contains the following versions:

- I. Slovenian-English-French (Hirci *et al.*, 2017a): http://multilingualhealth.ff.uni-lj.si/MNZ_ang_fr_ponatis_www_skupaj.pdf;
- II. Slovenian-Russian-Chinese (Hirci *et al.*, 2017b): http://multilingualhealth.ff.uni-lj.si/MNZ_kit_rus_ponatis_www_skupaj.pdf;
- III. Slovenian-Arabic-Farsi (Hirci *et al.*, 2017c): http://multilingualhealth.ff.uni-lj.si/MNZ_arab_far_ponatis_www_skupaj.pdf;
- IV. Slovene-Albanian (Hirci *et al.*, 2017d): http://multilingualhealth.ff.uni-lj.si/MNZ_alban_ponatis_www_skupaj.pdf;
- V. Slovene-Russian-Ukrainian /Hirci *et al.*, 2022): http://multilingualhealth.ff.uni-lj.si/20220603_RUS-UKR-prirocnik.pdf.

The content of the *Handbook* was prepared by the project team taking into account the standard patient/healthcare encounter flow, and was translated and reviewed by both translators and physicians/healthcare professionals, as the reliability of the content was of paramount importance.

The main chapters covered in the *Handbook* are: 1. Admission; 2. Symptoms; 3. Diseases; 4. Allergies, medications, habits; 5. Examination; 6. Investigations; 7. Instructions; 8. Women’s and children’s health; 9. Mental health; 10. Dentistry. In addition, the Handbook contains a short Introduction, Recommendations for Health Professionals, Instructions for Use, Additional Information, Common Phrases and References. In order to cater for the expected diversity of educational levels of users of the healthcare system, pictograms have also been added to the terms and phrases to help those with poorer knowledge of the language in question (e.g., when it comes to using in the conversation a lingua franca such as English) or those with poor literacy skills. Figure 2 shows a typical layout of the contents and instructions on how to use the manual.

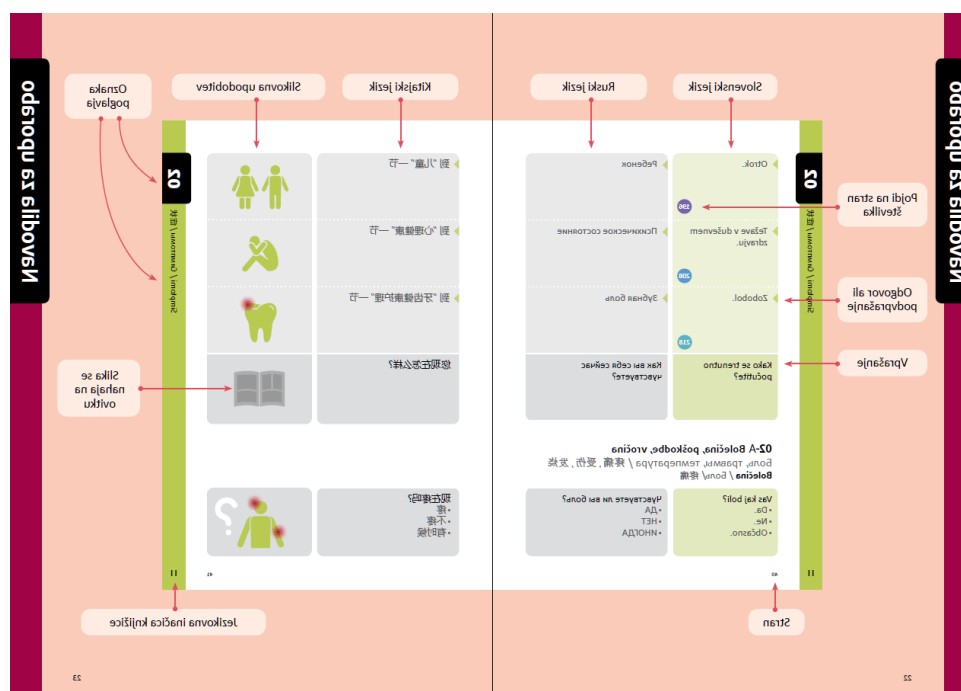


Figure 1: Instructions for use of the Slovenian-Russian-Chinese manual

The manuals are supported by the project website (<http://multilingualhealth.ff.uni-lj.si/>), which contains two short forms entitled Treatment and Follow-Up in four versions (Slovene-English-French, Slovene-Russian-Chinese, Slovene-Arabic-Farsi and Slovene-Albanian), which can be filled up with basic instructions regarding prescribed medication and follow-up appointments.

In addition to the manual itself, a separate monograph entitled *Večjezično zdravje: Komunikacijske strategije in večkulturni stiki s tujejezičnimi bolniki v slovenskem zdravstvenem sistemu* [Multilingual Health: Communication Strategies and Multicultural Contacts with Foreign Language Patients in the Slovene Healthcare System] (Pokorn and Lipovec Čebren, 2019) was published, which summarises the genesis of the manual and the results of the scientific research carried out as part of the project.

5.3. Training community interpreters and intercultural mediators

All previous projects on public service interpreting in Slovenia have identified the lack of teachers trained in PSIT as one of the main obstacles to providing quality PSIT. To this end, the Erasmus+ project "TRAMIG – Training newly arrived migrants for PSIT and intercultural mediation" brought together six institutions from four countries: the University of Ljubljana, Oslo Metropolitan University in Norway, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece, the University of Trieste, the District Health Care Administration of Reggio Emilia in Italy, and the Slovenian National Institute of Public Health.

The project aimed to improve the integration of new migrants in the host country by taking the following steps: 1. Enabling newly-arrived migrants to access public services; 2. Enabling newly-arrived migrants to work independently as community interpreters and/or intercultural mediators, especially in the field of healthcare; 3. Providing training to newly-arrived migrants to be able to work as teaching assistants in study programmes for public-service interpreters and intercultural mediators.

In order to achieve its objectives, the TRAMIG project has carried out various activities. The first major phase was a review of the activities, status and roles of intercultural mediators and community interpreters working in the healthcare sector. This overview was then used to identify commonalities and differences in training and to develop descriptions of the two profiles (Pokorn *et al.*, 2020). The analysis of the current situation in partner states showed that there was a blurred distinction between the two profiles, which often led to communication barriers, unsatisfactory services, dissatisfied users (both employees and users of the healthcare system), economic consequences and, in extreme cases, even more serious health consequences related to an incorrect perception of the health status of the foreign-speaking patient (Pokorn & Mikolič Južnič, 2020a).

The next stage was the preparation of a proposal for a national vocational qualification for community interpreters and intercultural mediators (see section 6 below). Regulating the status of these profiles at a formal level can improve migrants' chances of entering the labour market and help them integrate on a more equal basis in the host country.

In terms of training needs, the most important achievements of the project were first, the creation of a working definition of the profile of a teacher of PSIT or intercultural mediation (Pokorn & Mikolič Južnič, 2020b), second, the development of teaching modules for the training of teachers of PSIT or intercultural mediation (Pokorn & Mikolič Južnič, 2020b), third, an open-access monograph in which the description and modules for the training of teachers of PSIT or intercultural mediation were provided (Pokorn, Viezzi & Radanović-Felberg, 2020), and fourth, the training of candidates selected among those already working as community interpreters or intercultural mediators to teach in pairs in PSIT or intercultural mediation training programmes. The materials and videos produced during the training sessions are available on the project website (<http://tramig.eu/outputs/>) and include, among others, the following topics:

- Experiential and blended learning (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/knanfQREJknH>);
- Role-play as a pathway to knowledge (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/O1qCOHclKXJe>);
- Codes of Conduct and Codes of Ethics (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/g1ULZeZeQsAG>);
- Project-based learning through simulation (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/O2dKZvLTiNmM>);
- Preparing exercises using the role-play method (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/LdVcjoXU7X52>);
- Assessing activities using role-play (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/jblbHRubkmEM>);
- Observing and implementing intercultural mediation through practical training (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/QpnCPk4mxial>);
- Evaluation of practical training (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/HmpeNanXpXC4>);
- Evaluation and assessment in interpreter training programmes (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/M1UfNbrZpNZV>);
- Practical methods for assessment in community interpreting studies (<https://video.arnes.si/watch/H1NIGqJMuKfZ>).

6. Steps towards public recognition of the profession of community interpreters

6.1 National vocational qualification

In order to address the increasing professionalisation of interpreting services, particularly in healthcare and other similar high-risk situations, the TRAMIG project launched an initiative in 2019 to develop national professional qualifications for public-service interpreters and intercultural mediators in the Republic of Slovenia. In 2020, the first National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in this field were thus created: community interpreter for the Albanian language and intercultural mediator. In 2022, the NPQs for Public-Service Interpreters for Arabic, Persian and Ukrainian followed.

Significant differences between the two profiles (community interpreters and intercultural mediators) are already evident in their basic structure: the NVQ public-service interpreter is linked to a specific language and the related specific competences in interpreting and translation between Slovene and a given language, while the professional competences of intercultural mediators do not mention a specific foreign language and no specific interpreting and translation competences are required (or tested) for the practice of the profession (cf. also Mikolič Južnič & Pokorn, 2021). An important part of the NVQ is a list of competences expected of a professional public-service interpreter or intercultural mediator, which are crucially different both between these profiles and in relation to other related profiles (court interpreters, conference interpreters). The documents that are open access and could also be used for the preparation for the NVQ examination are available at the following links:

- Public-Service Interpreter for Albanian

Occupational standard: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=8048-327-0-1>

- Catalogue of knowledge standards: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=8048-327-1-2>

- Public-Service Interpreter for Arabic

- Occupational Standard: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=2842-284-0-1>
- Catalogue of knowledge standards: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=2842-284-1-2>

- Public-Service Interpreter for Persian

- Occupational Standard: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=4461-446-0-1>
- Catalogue of knowledge standards: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=4461-446-1-2>

- Public-Service Interpreter for Ukrainian

- Occupational Standard: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=5614-561-0-1>
- Catalogue of knowledge standards: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=5614-561-1-2>

- Intercultural Mediator:

- Occupational Standard: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-npkja?Data=2087-115-0-1>
- Catalogue of knowledge standards: <https://www.nrpslo.org/Pregled-NPKja?data=2087-115-1-2>

6.2 Code of ethics and standards of practice

In order to establish high standards for the provision of PSIT services in Slovenia, two documents were drafted at the beginning of 2021 and signed by four national professional and professional associations in the field of interpreting and translation (Slovene Association for Translation Studies STRIDON, Association of Translators and Interpreters of Slovenia, the Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters, and the Association of Slovene Sign Language Interpreters):

- Slovene Code of Ethics for Community Interpreters (<http://stridon.si/files/2021/02/Etic%CC%8Cni-kodeks-skupnostnih-tolmac%CC%8Cev.pdf>)
- Slovene Standards of Practice for Community Interpreters (<http://stridon.si/files/2021/03/210310-Slovenski-standardi-prakse-za-skupnostne-tolmac%CC%8Ce-1.pdf>)

These two documents, based on a number of similar documents established in countries where the provision of PSIT has a longer tradition, aim to provide answers to ethical questions that arise in community interpreting and to disseminate and promote good practice. The distinctive feature of the Slovene Code and Standards is that these documents combine the knowledge gained by Translation Studies research with interpreting practice; they move from the field of pure deontological ethics to the field of consequentialist ethics and thus guide interpreters to make decisions in a given situation by assessing the consequences of an action.

When drafting the document, also the opinion of practicing interpreters was taken into account: the conference interpreters who are members of the Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters and the court interpreters on the list of court interpreters of the Slovene Ministry of Justice, (i.e., those interpreters who performed the work of community interpreters in Slovenia at the time when the *Code of Ethics* was drafted) were asked to express their opinion on the proposed *Code of Ethics* in February of 2021. 43% percent of those invited responded to the survey. For each of the principles in the proposed *Code of Ethics*, the respondents were asked whether they agree that they be included in the final version of the *Code of Ethics*, and, if they replied that the principle should not be included, to explain why not. The results showed that an average of 98% of the respondents support each principle, and no principle received less than 95% support (the most controversial was the principle of impartiality which allowed, in exceptional cases, also some degree of advocacy).

7. Conclusion: work in progress

Although the professionalisation of public service interpreting and translation has been the subject of academic interest in Slovenia for almost two decades, we are still far from implementing quality public service interpreting in Slovene society and establishing a publicly recognised profession on the market. The biggest obstacle to professionalisation in terms of improving the skills of practicing community interpreters seems to be that there is still no comprehensive training programme for public service interpreters and translators that would include the languages of newly arrived migrants. As far as professionalisation as the pursuit of status is concerned, the new national vocational qualifications have proved to be ineffective. There is no interest on the part of practising community interpreters to acquire this qualification, as it would require additional effort on their part and some (although not significant) financial costs. As public institutions do not require any qualification from the community interpreters they employ, it seems that practising community interpreters do not see any need to acquire this additional vocational qualification. Therefore, in parallel with

efforts to develop a training programme for community interpreters, additional measures should be taken by public institutions using community interpreters to give priority to those community interpreters who have acquired a national vocational qualification, or alternatively, to set up a national register of community interpreters which would rank interpreters according to their qualifications.

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