



Guidelines for positioning of sign language interpreters in conferences, including web-streaming

Proper spatial organization enhances communication when SLI is used in meetings. These simple steps will help you realize your goals.

Sign Language Network.

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I. IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM

Set up

Sign language interpreters work in teams of two or three per language pair. The active interpreter in each team stands next to the panel or speaker / chairperson. If there are two signed languages, the interpreters should if possible not stand next to each other, but on either side of the stage facing the audience. The supporting interpreter(s) sits facing the active interpreter.



Figure 1 shows the positioning of two teams as well as the sign language users. For each team the items listed below should be followed.

Space

There must be sufficient space for the teams to work together and they must be able to see each other. The active interpreter needs a space of approximately 1.5 x 1.5 metres minimum (2.0 x 2.0 maximum). The supporting interpreter is seated approx. 1 – 3 metres in front of the active interpreter.

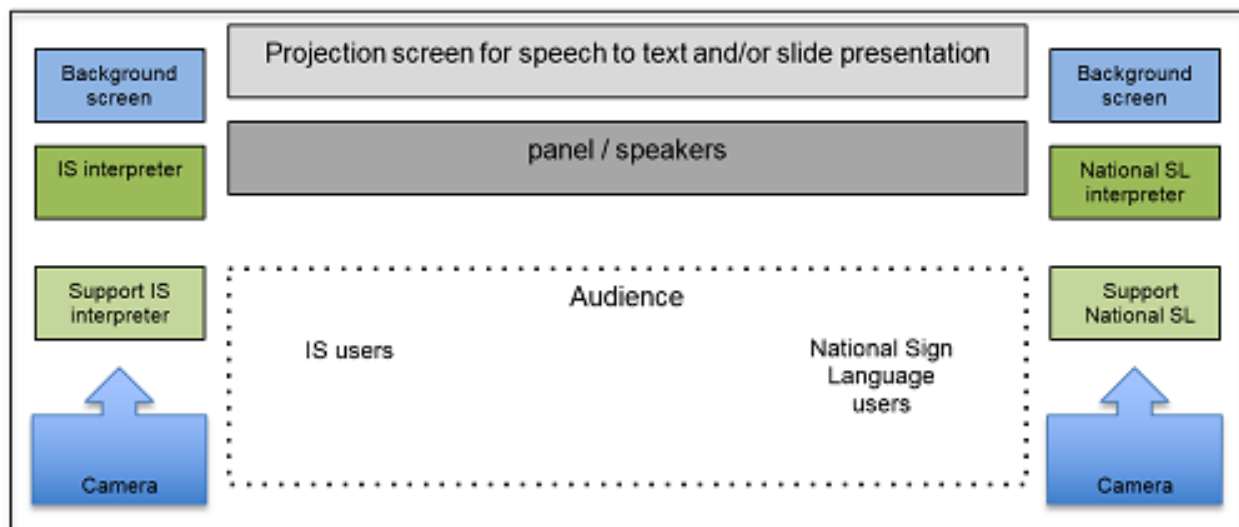


Figure 1: placement of sign language interpreter teams, cameras, monitors, screen and audience. Note: IS = International Sign

Visibility

Sign language interpreters must be able to see any sign language users in the room and the users must be able to see them:

- Distance between interpreters and sign language should be no more than approx. 10 metres.
- No visual distractions in sightline.
- **Background screen** (see also Web streaming on the following pages) **Explanation:** *it is important that the area behind the sign language interpreter is not visually distracting. For example, no highly patterned backgrounds or poor backlighting, no windows or bright screens; people should not be able to walk in front of or behind the interpreter. The background should be a solid colour.*
Platform/stage: each active interpreter must be placed on a raised platform. **Explanation:** *interpreters should be higher than the general audience so everyone can see them.*

Lighting



- **Sufficient and indirect lighting** on the active sign language interpreter, especially on the hands and face, casting no shadows on the face.
- **NB:** *for new systems we recommend installation of adjustable lights. They should ideally be cool beam to ensure the interpreter is working in a pleasant temperature.*

Monitor(s)

- **Visual monitor** should be placed where the interpreter can see it/them. The visual monitor mirrors the display of the large screen in the room, including real time captioning (also referred to as speech to text or CART). A second and third monitor is needed when interpreters are working directly from real time captioning and/or from sign language to sign language. Full setup consists of Monitor 1: Slides; Monitor 2: Real time captioning; Monitor 3: Live video feed of source sign language.
Explanation: *the interpreter will not need to turn around to see the text on the screen.*

Audio

- **Wireless headsets** for all interpreters in the team and one spare. **Explanation:** *this avoids trailing cables and ensures that the interpreters' equipment is for their use only. The headset receivers should easily attach to clothing and use for example Radio Frequency (FM) and not infra-red transmission (the latter can lead to signal distortion when signing).* **NB:** *Ensure sufficient replacement batteries are provided.*
- **Handheld microphone:** The sign language interpreter works more easily with a handheld wireless microphone (not an attached table-top microphone, lapel microphone or headset combo), as they can turn easily towards deaf signers in the audience as well as signers giving presentations at the front of the conference room. **Explanation:** *the interpreter provides interpretation from sign language to spoken language if a signer is presenting or intervening.*

Chairs & table

- **Chairs** for working and supporting interpreters: For each interpreter on the team a chair should be placed facing the position of the active interpreter. The chairs are preferably non-revolving and have either a low armrest or none at all. They should also be ergonomically adjustable to suit the working interpreters.
- **Table** for documents and water: The table should be situated next to the chairs for the interpreters to place documents, notes and water.



Documents & water

- **Documents** for working and supporting interpreters: Paper copy of all the session documents (the same documents as provided to the spoken language interpreters).
- **Water** for interpreters: Water bottles should be provided to the team of sign language interpreters working in the meeting room.

II. WEB STREAMING

Sign language interpretation is often live streamed via the Internet. For clear and quality web streaming, the following guidelines are suggested.

Background

Chroma key (preferred): called also a 'green or blue screen' the technician overlays the web-streamed picture of the event with the sign language interpretation. **Explanation:** *signers prefer this integrated form as they do not need to look at two pictures at once. NB: if two sign language interpreters are working next to each other the screen needs to be approximately 2.5 metres wide (the preferred solution is to place the two interpreters separately on either side of the screen).*



A screenshot of the website for the Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. The header includes the organization's name and logo, a search bar with the placeholder text 'Zoekterm' and a 'Search' button, and a navigation menu with items like 'Home', 'meetings', 'MPs', 'Kamerstukken', 'How does it work?', 'About the House', and 'Contact'. A 'HOME' button is visible on the left, and social media sharing options are on the right.



Picture in Picture: interpreter displayed in an inserted frame on screen: **Explanation:** if *chroma key is not used or available then the next best option is a grey-blue screen as a background.* **NB:** the interpreter frame should be placed on the right hand side (viewer's perspective).



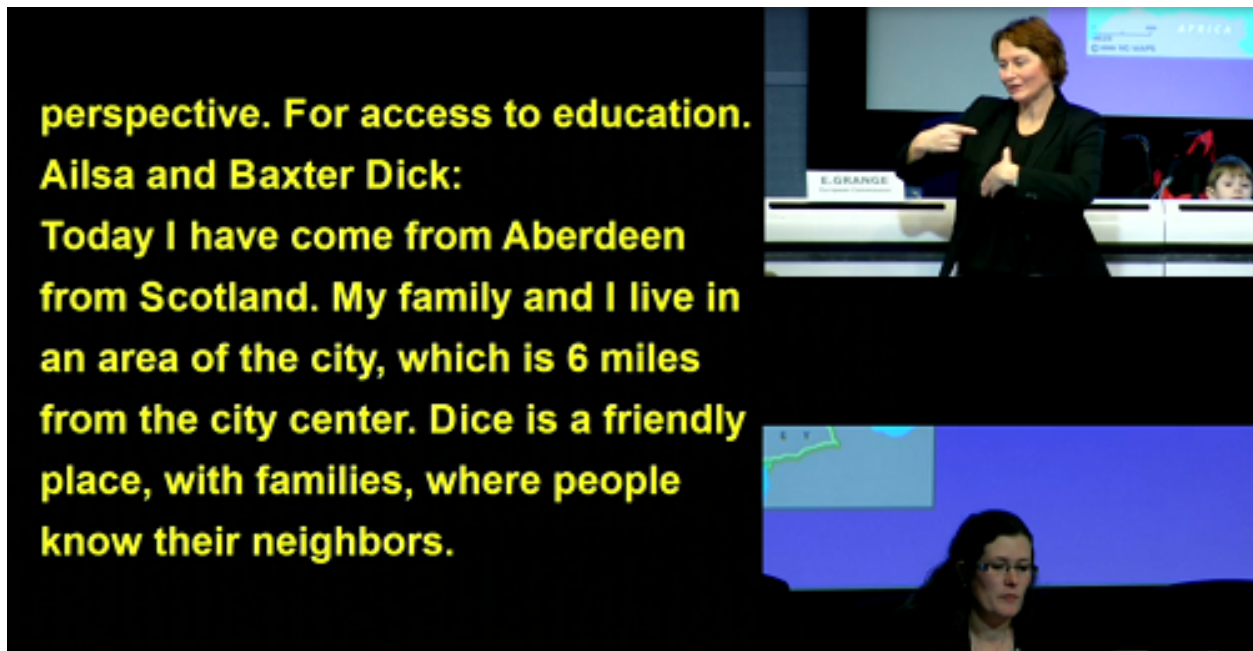
Important: if given a choice, viewers prefer Chroma key to a box or frame.

If Chroma key is not available:

Audio-visual streaming

- **Split screen:** preferably in 3 or 4 splits: speaker, sign language interpreter and speech to text with slide presentations.

Example: <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/european-day-of-persons-with-disabilities-07-12>



Technical support

- **Dedicated technician for the web camera:** the height and the focus of the camera need to be controlled by a dedicated technician. **Explanation:** *not all interpreters are the same height so when they change over the zoom and height need to be adjusted. NB: the interpreter must be on camera from the waist to slightly above the head.*

III. INTERVENTIONS BY SIGNERS

Live

A signer may intervene during the session as a presenter or with a comment or question. The sign language interpreters in the conference room will then provide interpretation into spoken language or both when needed.

- Video / Camera: The camera should be on the signer (NOT on the interpreter working into spoken language).



- Image broadcast: When the signer's intervention begins, the image of the interpreter must be removed from the screen. The only image broadcast is of the signer, unless the signer is also being interpreted into another sign language.
- Audio: a wireless microphone with good audio quality must be provided so spoken language interpreters in the booths receive clear audio input from the sign language interpreter.

Video link

At some sessions a signer may intervene remotely via a video link. The sign language interpreters in the conference room will then provide interpretation into spoken language or another sign language or both when needed.

- Video and screen: very clear screen image for the signer and the sign language interpreter to be visible in both directions (the signer must be able to see the interpreter and the interpreter the signer).
- Audio: a wireless microphone with good audio quality must be provided so spoken language interpreters in the booths receive clear audio input from the sign language interpreter.

Recommended citation format:

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