EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERPRETATION

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT DIRECTORATE
Management of Technical Infrastructure

Brussels, 23 January 2013
M/516 EN

REQUEST ADDRESSED TO CEN, CENELEC AND ETSI FOR STARDARDISATION ACTIVITIES REGARDING FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT FOR INTERPRETATION SERVICES

1. SCOPE

This request ("mandate") addresses the elaboration of voluntary European standards supporting facilities and equipment for interpretation services. It covers European standards specifying the functionality, interoperability and ergonomic principles of interpretation booths, whether built in or mobile, of audio and video equipment used in interpretation booths, the layout and equipment of conference halls in which interpretation will be used, and matters related to audio and video transmission and the choice and quality of images transmitted to interpreters.

Building codes, legally binding occupational health and safety levels as well as environmental aspects are outside the scope of this mandate.

2. MOTIVATION

- **Directive 98/34/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council, as amended by **Directive 98/48/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council, lays down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations, and of rules applying to Information Society services. According to Article 6 the Article 5 Committee of 98/34/EC must be consulted by the Commission before sending standardisation mandates to the European standardisation organisations (ESO).

- More recently, the Commission, in its Communication **Europe 2020, a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**[1] highlighted the need to leverage European and international standards – whose primacy is recognised by the European standardisation system – for the long-term competitiveness of European industry and to contribute to a wide range of policy goals. In its Communication "**A strategic vision for European standards: Moving forward to enhance and accelerate the sustainable growth of the European economy by 2020"**[2], the Commission states that European and other standards are indispensable in the digital society to ensure the interoperability of networks and

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[1] COM(2010)2020
[2] COM(2011)311

systems, especially in the field of ICT. In a digitally driven society, ICT solutions are used in any economic sector as well as in our daily lives. ICT solutions, applications and services have to be able to communicate

- The construction of meeting and conference halls with interpretation facilities is most often time subject to public procurement procedures. This is equally true for the procurement and/or rental of mobile interpretation booths and equipment.

  Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council[3] lays down the procedure for the award of such public contracts. Art 23 sub 3 (a) of Directive 2004/18/EC states that the technical specifications of the object of the public procurement shall be formulated preferably by reference to national standards transposing European standards; hence the need for European standards for facilities and equipment for interpretation services.

- Voluntary European standards requested by this mandate do not compromise Member States' competences to set appropriate national legal requirements according to Directives 89/391/EEC and 2009/104/EC and Article 2 (2) of TFEU. Voluntary European standards requested by this mandate should be regarded as specifications providing good practices and reflecting available technical progress but without assuming that legal requirements are automatically fulfilled though application of these standards.

3. BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING STANDARDS

An international standard on built-in interpretation booths and equipment (ISO 2603[4]) was first issued in 1974; its latest revision dates from 1998. An international standard on mobile interpretation booths and equipment (ISO 4043[5]) was first issued in 1981 and reviewed most recently in 1998.

ISO 2603 is, in our opinion, still valid as far as the major construction elements are concerned, i.e. siting of the booths in relation to the conference hall, size, doors, size of the windows, working surface.

ISO 4043 remains valid as far as the points on conference halls and the place of the booths in the conference hall are concerned, the minimum size of the booths, doors, cable ducts, windows. Specifications for acoustics and soundproofing might be already obsolete and in any case that is the fact for ventilation and lighting.

Normative references to other standards in ISO 2603:1998 and 4043:1998 should be updated and the standards should be revised to add new references to other existing standards as appropriate.

As far as sound equipment and controls are concerned (in both standards), some aspects remain valid but many are obsolete. The same goes for interpreters' headphones.

All new sources of input for interpreters (sound and image transmission to interpreters and the choice and quality of images relating to videoconferences with simultaneous

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[3] Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 March 2004 on the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts.

[4] ISO 2603 Booths for simultaneous interpretation -- General characteristics and equipment
[5] ISO 4043 Mobile booths for simultaneous interpretation -- General characteristics and equipment

interpretation, remote interpretation and similar) are missing in these standards and should be standardized.

In order to ensure a high quality of interpretation services, the revised and new standards have to be in accordance with today's level of technological progress.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE MANDATED WORK

CEN, CENELEC and ETSI are requested to prepare new European standards or to review existing standards to meet the requirements set out in this mandate.

Where appropriate, alignment with equivalent activities in the ITU, ISO and/or IEC should be ensured and reference made to existing standards applicable to certain elements of the subject matter.

Following subject matters should be standardized (by developing new standards or by revising existing standards) in one or several separate standards:

A. Interpretation booths (see Annex, chapter A)

Interpretation booths are designed to meet three requirements:

a) Acoustic separation between different languages spoken simultaneously, without mutual interference between languages interpreted or with the speaker in the hall;

b) Efficient two-way communication between booths as well as between the booths and the conference hall;

c) A comfortable working environment enabling interpreters to maintain the intense effort of concentration required by their work.

The main features of mobile booths, distinguishing them from built-in facilities, are that they can be dismantled, moved and set up inside conference halls not equipped with built-in booths.

B. Interpretation equipment (see Annex, chapter B)

The overall sound system in booths consists of microphone input at the speaker's position, amplifier stages, level controls, output terminals and interpreters' control panel for headphones. Screens in the booths relay images of speaker(s) and presentations; size, place and ergonomics of these screens are very important.

C. Conference halls (see Annex, chapter C)

When designing new conference halls, interpretation booths should be optimally integrated into the structure so that the conference hall and the booths constitute a well-balanced unit.

The layout and equipment of conference halls and meeting rooms, where simultaneous interpretation is used, influences the quality of interpretation, and should be specified, both for halls with built-in booths and halls where mobile booths will be used.

D. Sound and image input for interpreters (see Annex, chapter D)

More and more new technologies are used to transmit sound and image to interpreters from sources outside the conference hall or meeting room where the interpreters are located. The quality of this sound and image determines the conditions for the interpreters' work. The transmission mode of sound and image is therefore vital and requirements should be standardized.

5. EXECUTION OF THE MANDATE

The Commission hereby requests CEN, CENELEC and ETSI to fulfil the tasks as described in clause 3, while taking into account the rationale of these standardising activities stated in the current mandate.

CEN, CENELEC and ETSI shall inform the Commission if they accept this request and which arrangements will be adopted during its execution, within 2 months after receipt of this mandate.

As existing aforementioned standards are issued by ISO and standardisation of facilities and equipment for interpretation services is of global interest, it is essential that work is carried out in close collaboration with ISO, IEC, and ITU.

CEN, CENELEC and ETSI are requested to take into account any on-going pre-and co-normative research and development (including work done by relevant stakeholders) and co-ordinate their activities in order to avoid any duplication of work.

Furthermore, the Commission requests CEN, CENELEC and ETSI:

1. To present, 4 months after acceptance of this mandate, a comprehensive list of already existing EN, ISO or national standards (published or under development) and other relevant documents (e.g. technical reports) corresponding to the objectives of the present mandate, and a detailed proposal for the Work Programme indicating clearly to what extent each of the current standards has to be redrafted, which new standards need to be drafted and by which date these tasks could be delivered.

2. After the Commission has accepted the Work Programme, to develop and adopt, according to the tasks described above, a set of basic principles and rules and an overall structure covering all standards related to simultaneous interpretation, in order to ensure that the standards pair a maximum of consistency and transparency with a maximum of applicability. This mandate shall finally cover only those work items as approved and agreed with the Commission[6].

3. To indicate in the Work Programme which standards will be developed by ISO, if cooperation is intended, in order to avoid duplication of work, as well as, how it would be guaranteed that an ISO lead in case of common work items would not delay the delivery of the tasks.

4. To report annually on the execution of the Work Programme until all work items identified in the final programme have been published as European standards, or failing that, as other European standardisation deliverables.

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[6] Note: This approval makes reference only to selecting work items to be covered by this mandate. The relevant European standardisation organisation is free to start voluntary European standardisation on topics not approved by the Commission and not covered by this mandate.

5. The text of the European standards shall be delivered to the Commission in all the respective working languages of the ESOs.

Acceptance of this mandate by the responsible standardisation organisations starts the standstill period referred to in Article 7 of Directive 98/34/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 June 1998.

6. BODIES TO BE ASSOCIATED

As appropriate, the relevant European standardisation bodies shall inform and invite the representative organisations of small and medium-size enterprises (NORMAPME) and of workers (ETUI) as well as the representatives of the authorities of the Member States to take part in the standardisation work.

Relevant European standardisation bodies are also requested to consult with the European Commission Directorate-General Joint Research Centre in order to explore if the Commission's research institutes dispose of specific competence to support the standardisation work.

The execution of the mandate should be undertaken in cooperation with the widest possible range of relevant interested groups which should be invited to participate in the standardisation work according to established rules of relevant European standardisation organisation. Such groups include:

- The interpreting services of the European Institutions

- Other international organisations with interpreting services

- International Association of Conference Interpreters

- Manufacturers of:

    – Mobile interpretation booths

    – Interpretation and conference equipment

    – Audio and video equipment

- Data transmission industry

- Architects

- Construction sector

- Congress and Convention Centres

- Professional conference and event organizers

- Occupational health and safety organisations

Annex

A. Interpretation booths

<u>Built in booths</u>

– Revision of ISO 2603:1998

– Specifications for booths in two-tier construction

– Definition technical control booth (position, visual contact)

– Access for wheelchair users

– Doors: automatic closure, no latch or striker, no sliding doors

– Glass technology: update on sound insulation and optical characteristics

– Air conditioning: update on technology

– Lighting: update on technology

– Place of 230V outlets

– Sufficient cabled and wireless network connections

– Colours

– Document storage

– Screens for presentations / videoconferences / remote interpretation

– Screens and ergonomics/view angle

– Ergonomics

– Electro-magnetic radiation level (Wi-Fi, GSM, 3G)

– Specifications interpreters' room

<u>Mobile booths</u>

– Revision of ISO 4043: 1998

– Minimum distance between booths and participants

– Booth table top surface

– General lighting in booth

– Reading lights

– Ventilation

– Screens in the booth

– 230V connections

– Glass technology

– Sound insulation between booths/between booth and hall

– Ergonomics

– Electro-magnetic radiation level (Wi-Fi, GSM, 3G)

– Access for wheelchair users

– Platform below the booth: size and safety measures, access.

B. Interpretation and conference equipment

– Revision of ISO 2603:1998

– Only single-user control consoles are acceptable

– Size of interpreter's control panel

– Number of single button relay preselections

– Indicator of relay quality

– Monitoring loudspeaker with volume control and channel selector

– Number of outgoing channels

– Frequency response: update

– Specifications headphones

– Specifications headsets

– Maximum sound level in headphones/headsets

– Headphone/headset connections

– Specifications for interpreter's microphones

– Specifications for delegate's microphones

– Ergonomics

– Monitoring and logging of conference equipment functioning

C. Conference halls

– Type of screen(s)

– Place of screen(s)

– Place of booths in the hall

–   Presence of ambient microphone

–   Specifications for projectors

–   Ambient temperature and air quality (air supply, air humidity)

–   Acoustics

–   Day light

–   Lighting

D. Quality and transmission of sound and Image input for interpreters

–   Quality of images delivered to interpreters (resolution, reference quality, minimal signal to noise ratio, contrast, refresh rate, persistence, HD)

–   Quality of audio delivered to interpreters: reference for digitally encoded audio

–   Remote interpretation/videoconferences with simultaneous interpretation: choice of images delivered to interpreters

–   Lip synchronization

–   Transmission of sound and image parameters

–   Capacity of data connections (quality of service)