



## PRESS INFORMATION

### About BDÜ

The Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ)) is Germany's – and Europe's – largest association of professional linguists. BDÜ represents the interests of about 80 percent of all interpreters and translators who belong to professional associations in Germany vis a vis commerce and industry, academia and research, policymakers, the judiciary system and society. To attain BDÜ membership, candidates must prove their professional qualifications. Since there are no legal restrictions on the use of the terms "interpreter" and "translator" in Germany, BDÜ membership is seen as a mark of quality. Membership in the association is reserved for individual interpreters and translators (rather than translation companies).

#### Goals and objectives

One of BDÜ's primary goals and objectives includes educating the public about the profession, since perceptions of the profession are often obscure. There are various reasons for this. For instance, the designations "interpreter" and "translator" are often interchanged, but they are two entirely different professions. While translators work with texts and transfer them from one to another language, interpreters work with the spoken word and transfer it orally – for example at conferences or during trials. For this reason, both the training and the professional practice of the two professions differ.

Additional factors contribute to the unclear perception of the profession. In Germany, courses of study, examination regulations and degrees for interpreters and translators vary by state. There are also regional differences regarding the regulations and terms for interpreters and translators working for official bodies or courts. This situation makes it difficult for clients commissioning interpreters and translators to know what qualifications to look for and what remuneration is appropriate. There are no regulations for rates or remuneration practice as is the case for professions in which members belong to a chamber. For this reason, BDÜ is committed to achieving the following objectives:

- informing the general public about the work of interpreters and translators and the importance of these professions for the nation and society in general
- promoting appropriate rates and working conditions
- standardizing professional interpreting and translation examinations
- achieving Germany-wide standardized regulation of the certification, accreditation and public appointment of interpreters and translators
- Germany-wide guidelines for translating official documents and certificates
- improving relevant legislation of the German Federal Government, such as the German Judicial Remuneration and Compensation Act (JVEG)

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*Bundesverband der  
Dolmetscher und  
Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ)*

*Member of  
Fédération Internationale des  
Traducteurs (FIT)*

*Register of associations:  
VR 22468 B / Amtsgericht:  
Berlin-Charlottenburg /  
President: André Lindemann*

*Information is provided to the  
best of knowledge and belief,  
however is not legally binding  
and with the exclusion of any  
liability.*

Regarding remuneration, BDÜ conducts a rates survey every two years and publishes the results in its rates index (Honorarspiegel).

### **Industry**

In Germany, interpreters and translators are considered "liberal professions". The conventional path to the profession involves a course of studies as an interpreter or translator. Some individuals enter the profession non-traditionally via an examination taken at the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) as a state-approved translator or interpreter. According to a microcensus by the German Federal Statistical Office, there were about 41,000 interpreters and translators in Germany in 2012, 25,000 of whom were self-employed. The percentage of women in both professions is high – of the previously mentioned 41,000 interpreters and translators, 27,000 are women. The female membership of the association is at nearly 80 percent.

### **Market**

Globalization is continually increasing the need for language services. Studies assume a yearly growth of about 10 percent – not just in Germany, but worldwide. Germany is an export nation, with an estimated 80 percent of German companies requiring translations. BDÜ estimates an annual market volume for the German translation market of 750 million to 1 billion euros. Well over half of interpreters and translators are self-employed, since full-time positions are rare. As of June 30, 2013, the German Federal Employment Agency listed a total of 7,071 employees with regular fulltime or part-time positions in Germany. Of the employed interpreters and translators, 3,666 had an academic degree and 1,375 had a recognized qualification. These numbers reflect the trend towards the academization of both professions. Self-employed translators and interpreters work directly for clients from commerce and industry, for official bodies and institutions or as subcontractors for commercial translation companies. The bulk of the translation and interpreting services performed in Germany is provided by self-employed small business owners.