

## Video remote interpreting

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**Organisation:** Innsbruck Municipal Authorities

**Country:** Austria

**Level of government:** Local government

**Sector:** General public services

**Type:** Communication, Public Service

**Launched in:** 2015

**Overall development time:** 6 month(s)

**Link to the innovation's website**

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# Description

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The project “video remote interpreting” provides quick and non-bureaucratic access to interpreting services in 14 different languages at several public service offices in Innsbruck, e.g., the social welfare office, the registrar’s office, the housing office and the public health office. The service is based on video conferencing technology and is available within 120 seconds. Its main goal is to promote integration of citizens with no or little knowledge of German and facilitate communication between service providers and their users. About 21.6% of people living in Innsbruck are foreign nationals and more than 28% come from a migration background. Moreover, the number of refugees is increasing. The project eliminates language and “hierarchy” barriers and helps to avoid misunderstandings and confusion based on communication issues or insufficient translations. This is often the case when children, relatives or friends act as interpreters. By resorting to a pool of 750 interpreters, the use of lay interpreters has decreased. All interpreters meet high quality standards, have the necessary technical knowledge and cover a wide range of subject fields. Innsbruck is the first public administration authority in Austria to launch this project that helps to process requests and applications more quickly and

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## Why the innovation was developed

- The increasing number of foreign nationals, including refugees, with little or no knowledge of the national language has made it more difficult to provide professional services at public offices, as professional interpretation could not always be ensured and the language barrier sometimes led to misunderstandings, confusion and insecurity.
  - Moreover, the time required to process requests and applications was rather long due to potential communication issues and related errors. The provision of professional interpreting services in 14 languages (Turkish, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Russian, Arabic, Polish, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Czech, Slovakian, Hungarian, Slovenian and sign language) via video conferencing technology within 120 seconds makes communication easier and fosters integration. It also eliminates the need for family and friends to act as interpreters.
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## Objectives

Improve social equity

- Promoting integration by making it easier to visit public offices and access related services
  - Facilitating communication by avoiding misunderstandings due to insufficient language skills and providing quick and non-bureaucratic access to interpreting services
  - Promoting equality by eliminating the perception that there are “hierarchy” barriers based on different language levels
  - Embracing diversity by overcoming language barriers and living up to the challenges that come with different nationalities living in one country (interpreting services are currently provided in 14 different languages)
  - Increasing quality and output of services by reducing the time required for processing requests and lowering the risk of errors
  - Supporting employees in their daily work by reducing the risk of arising insecurity, confusion and misunderstandings, giving employees more confidence in their work and making it easier for them to deal with difficult situations
  - Enhancing documentation by introducing an easier follow-up procedure and providing a good overview of statistics and evaluations
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## Main beneficiaries

Ethnic or racial minorities, General population, Government bodies, Government staff, Other

- Foreign nationals with little or no knowledge of German (21.6% foreign nationals, more than 28% with a migration background, an increasing number of refugees)
  - Public officials/service providers/employees (enhanced communication, easier and faster processing of requests, support in their daily
  - Family and friends/acquaintances of foreign nationals (reduces the need for them to interpret/translate and eliminates related consequences)
  - Administrative structures (no additional administrative effort required, easier follow-up and documentation)
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## Existing similar practices

### Video remote interpreting

In the private sector, civil society or elsewhere

AKH Wien (Vienna General Hospital), Justizanstalt Wien (prison in Vienna)

n/a

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# Results

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## Efficiency

- Higher number of processed requests and applications
  - Lower number of errors
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## Effectiveness

- Higher number of processed requests and applications
  - Lower number of errors and misunderstanding
  - Better and easier communication
  - Support of employees
  - Less insecurity and confusion
  - No additional administrative effort required
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## Service quality

### Accessibility:

- Better access to (professional) interpreting services for people with little or no knowledge of German. Service available within 120 seconds in 14 languages.

### Responsiveness:

- Faster response time to deal with people's requests and shorter waiting times for users of services.

### Reliability:

- Significantly more reliable interpreting services. Professional interpreters ensure consistent quality and confidentiality. The quality of communication has increased and the number of errors and misunderstandings has been reduced.
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## User satisfaction

- Easier communication, no perceived "hierarchy" barriers based on different language levels. Reduction of psychological strain for both service users as well as lay interpreters (children, relatives, friends, acquaintances).
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## Other improvements

- Improved employee satisfaction as their daily work has become easier. The service supports them in processing requests and dealing with difficult situations.

# Development

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## Design

The department for urban planning and development, along with the office for integration, first suggested using video remote interpreting at Innsbruck City Administration offices. Following thorough research on existing methods and technologies in this field, the office for integration identified the company SAVD as a cooperation partner for implementing the project.

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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- Technological system IT prepares, installs and monitors the system (including cameras on computers).
- The new video remote interpreting service is evaluated on a permanent basis. Following a test phase, the project was transferred and expanded to other offices and service providers. If necessary, the service can be extended further, also in terms of languages offered.

### Resources used:

- Budget and calls The required budgetary resources strongly depend on the number of calls/how often the service is used. During the 2015 test phase, for example, a total of 115 calls were made (including 44 for Arabic and 22 for Turkish).
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## Challenges and solutions

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### Partnerships

#### Sprachdienstleister SAVD Videodolmetschen GmbH

Private sector

The partnership gave access to the interpreter pool needed to implement the project.

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# Lessons Learned

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## Lessons Learned

- Well functioning technological system The system is fast and straightforward, no technical issues
  - Positive perception Employees quickly adopted the system and consider it to be a useful tool Citizens/users perceive it as a helpful service
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## Conditions for success

- Necessary technical equipment (computers, cameras, internet connection)
  - Installation of video remote interpreting tool
  - Access to interpreter pool
  - Technical knowhow of staff
  - IT support
  - Processes and procedures (to obtain consent by the user, for follow-up, etc.)
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## Other information

The service is paid for by the Municipal Authorities of Innsbruck.

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