

GERMANY

Name of Association: BGSD

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1. What is the current situation in your country for Sign Language Interpreting?

The BGSD – our German Sign Language Interpreter Association – has ceased working as of January 2010 due to extremely diverse expectations of the various member associations. Germany consists of 16 federal states and in each of those states the development of our profession progresses at extremely varied rates. The national body could not implement necessary political changes for the poorly advancing federal states without lowering standards of the others and could not comply with the demands of the further developed states when half of the members wished they had even 70 % of the other state's standards. With the association at rest there is a powerful coaching process in motion to re-establish the national body with a mission statement than the old association. This is progressing nicely as I have heard and we are looking forward to a renewed BGSD soon.

Under the old association we had a one year mentoring program set up which ran successfully for about 10 mentors and mentees. Since it consisted of non-paid volunteering mentors there was a great demand on the mentee side that could not be met. After the first successful completion of the one year cycle it sadly could not continue for lack of mentors.

Our rate of pay had, due to a newly passed law, increased in 2007 and this method of payment has been adopted also for medical interpreting assignments in 2008. This has given us the advantage of a relatively high standard plus travel time payment from the moment we leave our home until we return. As in many European countries our universities have taken the old Diploma as graduating certificate and aligned themselves with the international Bachelor/Master system. Now we expect the first graduating bachelors in Hamburg next year. Since not all of them will be able to do the Master program we are expecting some new BA colleagues on the market with about half the training the old certificate demanded. What impact this will have for us as a profession in the future remains to be seen.

2. What is the current situation for the Deaf community in your country?

I will stress one point concerning the Deaf community: the University of Hamburg has had its first run of a deaf interpreters program ending with a state examination. It consists of 6 modules over 2 weekends each. So now we have about 10 or 12 deaf relay interpreters and have not yet established a strategy whether to include them in our new Association's body or encourage them to have their separate association. There has been very limited experience with deaf interpreters so far and therefore we will learn grow as time goes on.

3. What are 2 important achievements for the sign language interpreting community in your country since 2007?

As mentioned above: secured standard payment for medical assignments and the Mentoring Process.

4. What are the 2 major challenges for the sign language interpreting community in your country?

As mentioned above: Dealing with the new BA certified colleagues when they will join us next year and rebuilding the National Association.

5. What one thing can you offer WASLI in the next 2-4 years?

What I personally can offer WASLI is continued cooperation and the willingness to push our profession to an ever higher level; What we as German Association can offer is open for discussion once we have a National Body again.