



## Don't shoot the messenger: EU must support freelance interpreters

### ECVC stands with interpreters and demands emergency aid in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

**In light of the COVID-19 crisis, freelance interpreters working for the European Institutions have been left without adequate emergency support. The EU benefits from the cost-saving measure of employing Conference Interpreting Agents (ACIs) on a freelance basis, despite often being their only employer. As the institutions came to a standstill during lockdown, ACIs have had all their sources of income cut, yet, due to their contractual relationship with the EU, have been left with little-to-no compensation.**

The role of interpreters is essential for democratic EU decision-making and consultation. Furthermore, interpreters and translators are essential to the work of European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC). Thus, ECVC stands in solidarity with all the interpreters affected by the pandemic and specifically demands that the EU consult with ACIs, in order to put in place sufficient instruments and provide emergency support during the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite calls for solidarity from EU leaders throughout the pandemic, to date, the only support the EU have offered ACIs is a small advanced payment for future work. This comes after all daily ACI contracts were cancelled at 60 days' notice, thus avoiding the contractual need to pay compensation.

Despite the fact that discrimination on the grounds of language is prohibited by Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, ECVC wishes to stress that in the last decade, there has been a significant reduction of the number of institutional spaces that provide interpretation services, allowing only English-speaking experts and (European) citizens to participate in those spaces. For ECVC, this reduces the quality of the consultation mechanisms within the EU and discriminates against peasant organisations members that do not speak English. This has been exacerbated by COVID-19, as interpretation has not been provided for, for example, Civil Dialogue Group meetings, which would usually take place in multiple languages.

This is in clear contradiction with peasants' right to active and free participation in decision making processes, as recognized by article 10 and 11 of the [United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas](#). In particular, article 11 states that *"States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas have access to relevant, transparent, timely and adequate information in a language and form and through means adequate to their cultural methods so as to promote their empowerment and to ensure their effective participation in decision-making in matters that may affect their lives, land and livelihoods."*

ECVC therefore also underlines the important role interpreters and translators play in EU democracy and demands that the EU institutions provide interpretation whenever needed, to guarantee and respect the right of participation for all EU citizens (Article 39 of the EUCFR).

For more information on ACI interpreters' struggle for support, you can visit <https://www.euaid4interpreters.eu/>.

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