



## How much will it cost

**Professional interpretation at a major conference usually costs less than just one of the traditional banquets or receptions offered. Don't let yourself be tempted to skimp on the cost of interpretation.**

The task professional conference interpreters perform is **highly skilled** and requires **intellectual prowess** comparable to that of scientists. And indeed, they have a level of education and expertise akin to that of a lawyer, engineer, surveyor, auditor, medical doctor, etc.

Interpreters also command **fees similar** to those professions. The level of fees may vary from place to place. Naturally, it tends to be higher in countries with a high cost of living.

How much does this kind of multilingual communication service cost? In relation to the total costs of a conference, **probably less than you think.**

### **Example:**

#### **A five-day conference in Bangkok.**

An individual participant's costs from another Asian country would come to about US\$2,000, allowing US\$750 for airfare, US\$150 per day for hotel accommodation, meals and incidentals and US\$500 for registration. Dividing this by five, a typical participant would be spending about US\$400 per day to attend the conference.

The collective costs of organising the conference, such as rental of meeting rooms, tea or coffee breaks, documents, field trips, audio-visual and simultaneous interpretation equipment, are usually financed by delegates' registration fees and sponsorships. The registration fee for a typical conference might be about US\$500 per participant, and will include the interpretation service in three languages.

Here are some examples of the cost per participant, per day, of providing professional conference interpreters and equipment, for meetings of varying sizes and number of languages, calculated on the basis of a five-day conference in Bangkok:

#### **Cost of Simultaneous Interpretation per participant per day, in US dollars**

##### **Participants 2 languages 3 languages 4 languages**

100	35	89	119
200	18	45	60
300	13	30	40

400	10	23	30
500	8	18	24

When spread out over the number of participants, the cost of simultaneous interpretation is not high compared to the daily cost each participant incurs in order to attend the conference. The advantages include:

- **better communication** which, after all, is the purpose of the conference;
- **higher attendance**, as a wider range of participants will come;
- **more varied** and interesting contributions from different regions and cultures;
- **less frustration** resulting from not understanding participants who are forced to speak in a language they do not master;
- **greater prestige** for the meeting.

## What are the costs involved?

When you hire interpreters, you should count on the following cost elements:

- **Daily interpretation fee:** Surveys of past market figures indicate **a range of 600 to 1,200 US dollars per day**. Since interpreters cannot accept more than one assignment for a specified period of time, they are paid by day, regardless of the duration of the meeting. The time interpreters must devote to preparing for a meeting is included in their daily fee. It is not charged separately.
- **Travel days allowance:** Often interpreters have to travel from their home to the conference venue. For each day or fraction thereof needed to travel to the venue and to return home, interpreters are paid a travel allowance to **compensate for the loss of opportunity** to take on another assignment during those days.
- **Daily subsistence allowance (DSA):** This covers the hotel accommodation, meals, local transport and incidental costs incurred when not at home. It can be based on the UN or the EU DSA scales. Conference organisers may find it is cheaper to book and pay hotel accommodation for interpreters, as they do for their own staff and delegates. In that case, the **DSA or per-diem** is reduced to a figure agreed upon with the consultant interpreter.
- **Airfares and transportation costs:** The client will either provide pre-paid tickets to interpreters or will reimburse the cost of airfares or train fares. This can be a substantial amount, depending on where the conference is held and where the interpreters come from. International organisations such as the UN, as well as most other clients, pay business class airfares for trips longer than 8 hours; economy fare for shorter trips.
- **Ground allowance:** This covers the train, taxi or bus fares from the interpreter's home to the airport of departure, from the arrival airport to the conference hotel and the same on the way back.
- **Visas:** For some countries some delegates and interpreters may need to have a visa. Visa fees can be quite high. It is customary for the client to pay such fees.

If you deal with an AIIC accredited consultant interpreter, she or he will try to find interpreters with the requisite language combinations closest to the venue, including those who actually reside in the city where your meeting takes place. This will lower the total cost of interpretation considerably.

Your consultant interpreter will also try to find the best flight connections and airfares, so as to keep the cost of travel as low as possible.