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**Simultaneous interpreting —  
Interpreters' working environment —  
Part 1:  
Requirements and recommendations  
for permanent booths**

*Interprétation simultanée — Environnement de travail des  
interprètes —*

*Partie 1: Exigences et recommandations pour les cabines  
permanentes*

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Language and terminology*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/SS A07, *Translation and Interpretation services*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

This first edition cancels and replaces the fourth edition of ISO 2603:2016, which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

- the document has been generally updated due to technological developments;
- requirements have been formulated in a technology-neutral way;
- the structure of the various parts of the ISO 17651 series has been aligned;
- booth partitioning for health reasons has been included.

A list of all parts in the ISO 17651 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

This document concerns permanent booths for simultaneous interpreting which have a direct view into the room in which the communicative event takes place.

There are a number of things to be taken into account when designing and building permanent booths. Interpreting is an activity that requires high levels of concentration, therefore the working environment has to meet the highest standards to minimize stress.

This document addresses the following:

- a) workplace setting of interpreters;
- b) visual communication between interpreters and participants at an event;
- c) sound insulation from the noise transmitted from the booth's environment to a booth.

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# Simultaneous interpreting — Interpreters' working environment —

## Part 1: Requirements and recommendations for permanent booths

### 1 Scope

This document specifies requirements and recommendations for the design of permanent booths for simultaneous interpreting in new or existing buildings. This document also ensures the usability and accessibility of booths for all interpreters.

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with ISO 20109, which contains requirements and recommendations for the equipment necessary for simultaneous interpreting. For requirements and recommendations for permanent booths which do not have a direct view into the room in which a communicative event takes place, see ISO 17651-3<sup>1)</sup>.

### 2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 717-1, *Acoustics — Rating of sound insulation in buildings and of building elements — Part 1: Airborne sound insulation*

ISO 717-2, *Acoustics — Rating of sound insulation in buildings and of building elements — Part 2: Impact sound insulation*

ISO 1182, *Reaction to fire tests for products — Non-combustibility test*

ISO 3382-2, *Acoustics — Measurement of room acoustic parameters — Part 2: Reverberation time in ordinary rooms*

ISO 7730, *Ergonomics of the thermal environment — Analytical determination and interpretation of thermal comfort using calculation of the PMV and PPD indices and local thermal comfort criteria*

ISO 8995-1, *Lighting of work places — Part 1: Indoor*

ISO 11925-3, *Reaction to fire tests — Ignitability of building products subjected to direct impingement of flame — Part 3: Multi-source test*

ISO 16283-1, *Acoustics — Field measurement of sound insulation in buildings and of building elements — Part 1: Airborne sound insulation*

ISO 16283-2, *Acoustics — Field measurement of sound insulation in buildings and of building elements — Part 2: Impact sound insulation*

ISO 20109, *Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements*

ISO 21542:2021, *Building construction — Accessibility and usability of the built environment*

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1) Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/CD 17651-3:2023.

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

#### 3.1 interpreter

person who interprets

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, <sup>2)</sup> 3.1.13]

#### 3.2 interpreting

interpretation

rendering spoken or signed information from a source language into a target language in spoken or signed form, conveying both the meaning and language register of the source language content

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.1.11]

#### 3.3 signed language

language which uses a combination of hand shapes, orientation and movement of the hands, arms or body, and facial expressions

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.1.7]

#### 3.4 signed language interpreting

*interpreting* (3.2) between two *signed languages* (3.3) or between a signed language and a spoken language

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.4.3]

#### 3.5 simultaneous interpreting

mode of *interpreting* (3.2) performed while a speaker or signer is still speaking or signing

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.4.12]

#### 3.6 booth

simultaneous interpreting booth

self-contained unit enclosing the *interpreter's* (3.1) workspace

Note 1 to entry: One of the purposes of booths is to provide insulation, both from the noise transmitted from the booth's external environment into the booth itself and vice versa, and from noise passing from one booth to another.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.2.1]

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2) Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/FDIS 20539:2023.



**3.7****permanent booth**

permanent simultaneous interpreting booth  
*booth* (3.6) structurally integrated into a facility

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.2.2]

**3.9****control booth**

room from which technical equipment and the quality of audio and video signals are managed

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.2.5]

**3.10****interpreter interface**

equipment containing controls used by the *interpreter* (3.1) to facilitate *simultaneous interpreting* (3.5)

EXAMPLE Controls for listening, viewing, speaking, signing.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.2.8]

**3.11****video display**

electronic device which represents information in a visual form

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.2.43]

**3.12****overlay**

substitution of part of an image by another image

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.2.44]

**4 Location****4.1 Room characteristics**

When new rooms are designed, booths shall be integrated into the structure so that the room itself and the booths constitute a well-balanced unit in terms of layout, people flow within buildings, accessibility and usability in accordance with ISO 21542.

Rooms and booths shall be located away from any sources of disturbance, such as kitchens, public corridors and passageways.

In order to facilitate speech intelligibility, the room should not cause reverberation or echoes exceeding the values recommended for the type of room in accordance with ASNZS 2107.

NOTE ASNZS 2107 also specifies methods of measuring the background sound level and the reverberation time in unoccupied spaces.

Booths shall receive as much indirect daylight from the room as possible.

Specialized entities or interpreters with expert knowledge of booths shall be consulted from the earliest stages of planning, together with suppliers and specialists such as architects and project engineers.

**4.2 Siting and visibility**

Booths shall be placed in such a way that the interpreters have a direct view of the entire room, including the rostrum, speakers, signers and all visual aids, such as projection screens and displays. Booths shall also be situated in such a way that no columns or pillars obstruct the interpreters' view.

Booths shall be raised above the floor so that the interpreters' view cannot be obstructed by people standing in the way. Accordingly, the booth floor shall be no less than 60 cm above the room floor, assuming a level floor.

Booths shall be grouped in such a way as to facilitate visual contact, as well as cabling, between them.

If the booths are located to one side of the room, the angle of the interpreters' line of vision towards a screen should be no less than 35°, taking the edge of the booth as a reference. The purpose of this is to give the interpreter a clear view without having to bend forward or sideways.

For extended language regimes, booths on two levels may be used.

In very large rooms, where the rostrum and/or projection screen are more than 20 m away, video displays (see 6.8) shall be used to provide a view of the speakers if the distance between the booths and the screen is  $\geq 3$  times the screen's diagonal measurement.

If booths are situated behind the speakers, video displays (see 6.8) shall be used; these should be used in booths situated on the upper level.

### 4.3 Accessibility

It shall be possible to quickly, easily and safely access:

- one booth from another booth;
- all booths from the room;
- all booths from outside the room.

A minimum of 10 % of the booths, rounded up to the next whole number, shall be accessible to persons with a disability, in accordance with ISO 21542.

### 4.4 Technical control and technical support staff

The technical control should be placed close to the interpreting booths so that:

- technical support staff can access it easily;
- visual communication between the technical support staff and the interpreters is possible;
- technical support staff have a clear view of the entire room, including the rostrum, speakers, signers and all visual aids such as projection screens and displays.

The technical control may be installed:

- on a table;
- in a rack;
- in a booth that conforms to the requirements and recommendations of a permanent booth for simultaneous interpreting.

If not present in the room, a central technical control should be available in the venue.

Interpreters shall be able to communicate directly with the technical support staff, who shall have safe, quick and easy access to the booths and the room.

## 5 Design

### 5.1 General requirements

Each booth shall accommodate interpreters comfortably seated side by side, each with sufficient table space to work on (see 6.4) and space to spread documents and place electronic devices.

Permanent booths providing space for no more than one interpreter do not conform to this document.

### 5.2 Dimensions

The size of a permanent booth (see Figure 1) is governed by the need to provide each interpreter with sufficient workspace, while at the same time allowing them to enter and leave the booth without disturbing one another. The booth shall also be high enough and deep enough to provide the required volume of air to enable adequate temperature control and draught-free air renewal (see 5.6).

The following minimum internal dimensions shall apply:

- width: 2,50 m;
- depth: 2,40 m;
- height: 2,30 m.

Different dimensions can apply for a booth for signed language interpreting.

NOTE 1 Good results for this case have been obtained with the following internal dimensions:

- width: 5,00 m;
- depth: 4,00 m;
- height: 2,30 m.

Signed language interpreters with expert knowledge of booths shall be consulted.

For rooms with up to six booths, one or more of them should be at least 3,20 m wide to cover the need for the continuous presence of three interpreters.

For rooms with more than six booths, all booths shall be at least 3,20 m wide.

To avoid resonance effects, the three dimensions of the booth should be different from one another. To avoid standing waves, the two side-walls should not be exactly parallel.

NOTE 2 Where feasible, additional height can assist draught and temperature control.