



16 April 2020

An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D.
cc Regina Doherty, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

The Economic Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Inclusion of Self-Employed Translators and Interpreters in Government Support Measures

Dear Taoiseach,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association (ITIA), the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in Ireland, and the Council of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (CISLI), which together represent over 400 language professionals, the vast majority of whom are self-employed.

Translators and interpreters ensure that multilingual communication flows smoothly, oiling the wheels of business deals, political and diplomatic discussions, cultural exchanges, medical conferences and court sittings. During the health emergency, ISL/English interpreters are providing vital access at the televised HSE briefings, and translators are ensuring that information reaches different communities. However, many interpreters and translators have seen their activity decline almost to nothing, leaving them in a precarious financial situation.

Whilst the current Government support measures are very welcome, many translators and interpreters have been refused the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment on the ground that they are still doing some work. We are concerned that the continuity of service could be jeopardised if interpreters and translators stop working in order to access the Payment. Indeed, the eligibility criteria (to have completely ceased trading on or after March 13th) seem ill-suited to the reality faced by freelance translators and interpreters during the crisis: while they have seen an enormous downturn in activity, their businesses may not necessarily have come to a complete standstill.

On behalf of our members we would like to appeal to you to allow language professionals to qualify for the support measures, even if they are still able to maintain some business activity, albeit very reduced and highly uncertain. We would also welcome more clarity about the application process, as well as guidance on which payment freelancers should be applying for, in cases where they are still engaging in a very limited amount of remunerated professional activity.

Please don't hesitate to contact us should you require further information about the impact of the pandemic on our members.

Yours faithfully,

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