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Interpreters and Translators — Costs and Cost Coverage

Certified translations (20–50 €/page), how to find sworn translators, and when costs are covered.

Deutsche Begriffe: Dolmetscher | Übersetzer | beglaubigte Übersetzung | beeidigter Übersetzer | Apostille | Urkundenübersetzung

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When Do I Need an Interpreter or Translator?

In Germany, you need **beglaubigte Übersetzungen** (certified translations) of your documents for many official procedures. The distinction is important:

• **Übersetzer (Translator):** Converts written documents from one language to another

• **Dolmetscher (Interpreter):** Provides oral translation in real-time (at government offices, courts, doctors)

Beglaubigte Übersetzung — What Is It?

A **beglaubigte Übersetzung** (certified translation) is prepared by a **publicly appointed and sworn translator**. The translator confirms with a seal and signature that the translation is accurate and complete.

When Is a Certified Translation Required?

• **Applying for a residence permit** (birth certificate, marriage certificate, diplomas)

• **Recognition of foreign qualifications** (anabin, IHK, KMK)

• **Marriage registration** in Germany (certificate of no impediment, birth certificate)

• **Court proceedings** (all foreign-language documents)

- **Driver's license exchange** (license from non-EU country)
- **Naturalization** (all civil status documents)

Translation Costs

Beglaubigte Übersetzung

Document Type	Cost (approx.)
Birth certificate	**20–40 €**
Marriage certificate	**25–45 €**
Diploma/Certificate	**30–50 €** per page
Driver's license	**20–35 €**
Work certificate	**30–50 €** per page
Court judgment	**40–70 €** per page

Additional charges for:

- Rare languages (Dari, Tigrinya, Urdu): +20–50%
- Urgent orders (24–48 hours): +50–100%
- Apostille certification: 20–50 € additional

Interpreter Costs (Oral)

- **Hourly rate:** approx. 60–120 € (depending on language and qualifications)
- **Half-day rate:** approx. 300–500 € (court, notary)
- **Phone interpreting:** from approx. 1.50–3 € per minute

Finding a Sworn Translator

- **Justice Portal:** justiz-dolmetscher.de — official database for all federal states
- **BDÜ** (Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer): bdue.de
- **Google search:** "beeidigter Übersetzer [language] [city]"
- **Tip:** Compare at least 2–3 quotes — prices vary significantly

When Are Costs Covered?

Cost Coverage by Authorities/State

• **Court proceedings:** The state covers interpreter costs if you don't speak German (§ 187 GVG)

• **Asylum procedures:** BAMF provides and pays for interpreters

• **Police:** Interpreters are provided during questioning

• **Youth welfare office:** Cost coverage often applies in child protection cases

Cost Coverage by Jobcenter/Employment Agency

• **Translation of certificates** for job applications — may request cost coverage

• **Interpreter for consultation meetings** — organized by Jobcenter

• **Recognition of foreign qualifications:** Translation costs may be covered

No Cost Coverage

• **Immigration office:** You pay for translations yourself

• **Civil registry office:** Translation costs for marriage registration are your responsibility

• **Landlord:** Rental agreement translation at your own expense

Money-Saving Tips

1. Collect documents: Ordering multiple translations at once is cheaper

2. Ask your community: Facebook groups of fellow expats often have recommendations

3. Don't translate everything: Ask the office which documents really need translation

4. Online services: Some sworn translators work via email — often cheaper than in-person