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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

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