

**SYDISE PRESS RELEASE ON THE INCLUSION OF INTERPRETERS  
AMONG THE PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES  
WHOSE OPERATION WAS SUSPENDED  
AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC**

**Athens, 14 May 2020**

The rapid increase in cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) has had a serious impact on all branches of the global economy, with particular emphasis on tourism and event and conference organization. Therefore, since March of 2020 the International Federation of Translators (FIT), of which the Hellenic Association of Conference Interpreters (SYDISE) is a member, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) have appealed to governments around the globe to include conference interpreters within the relief measures for professions severely impacted by the pandemic. At the request of SYDISE, in collaboration with the International Association of Conference Interpreters Region of Greece-Cyprus, the Greek government included the Professional Tax Code Number 7430 Translation and Interpretation Activities in the professional categories impacted by the pandemic and professionals included in that Tax Code were entitled to relief subsidies for the months of March and April. However, with regard to the new benefit being prepared by the Greek Government, only those professionals whose operation was suspended by virtue of state order appear to have been included in the relief measures of May.

As a professional category, we conference interpreters express our strong opposition to this. Although the professional activity of conference interpreters was not formally suspended by state order, since all conferences and scheduled events, as well as any meeting attended by foreign guests, at which we conference interpreters work, were banned, the activity of conference interpreters was *de facto* suspended. We do not understand how the Professional Tax Code Number 8230 Conference Organizers and Trade Fairs is among those activity code numbers that were closed down by state order, while the activity code number 74301200 "Interpretation Services" was just included among those who were impacted. The truth is that international conferences cannot be held without the presence of interpreters. Conference interpreters are a necessary prerequisite for conducting conferences, seminars etc. when guests attend from abroad. Since our activity is inextricably linked to conference tourism and tourist activity has been suspended, with flights and travel banned, conference interpreters are at a complete loss; have no income, and are among those professional categories that have been hardest hit by the global pandemic. In fact, if the most ominous predictions are confirmed, conference interpreters will not recover before 2021, without having of course any certainty about anything as yet.

Our professional category has already been hit hard by the economic crisis of 2009. As with other freelance professionals and self-employed, the austerity measures in Greece have deprived our enterprises, individual or not, of every possibility to create a reserve, which makes it impossible for us to deal with this new blow.

Conference interpreters are not only an affected/impacted category; we are a category whose activity was *de facto* suspended by state order and we kindly ask the government to include us in all additional measures taken for enterprises dealing with conference organisation. We appeal to the Greek government to include us in the categories that are entitled to receive the May benefit, as well as any other anticipated benefit or measure providing support because we absolutely need it to survive.

**The Executive Board of SYDISE**

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