Interpreting markets: Rome

Italy's centrally located capital merits consideration as as base of operations for conference interpreters.

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Rome is often forgotten among the European cities traditionally considered ‘international’. It does, however, host three UN agencies, various NGOs and sundry international conferences attracted by its historical and cultural attractions.

Lifestyle

Rome enjoys a sunny Mediterranean climate, with mild winters and hot, dry summers and over 200 sunny days per year. The weather during summer (June to August) can be hot, with temperatures often exceeding 35°C (95°F) at midday. Winter (December to February) is mild, with the average temperature in December around 13°C (55°F).

The cost of living in Rome is comparable to other major European cities. Try inputting the key words “cost of living comparison” into any Internet search engine and you will see that on average it is comparable to Brussels and lower than Paris or Geneva. In addition there is excellent food, stunning historical monuments, proximity to sea and mountains (including skiing within a 90 minute drive), as well as beautiful villages and countryside.

Market

A quick look at the 2014 AIIC directory shows that there are no Arabic, Chinese or Russian booth freelance colleagues based in Rome, nor English or French with passive Russian and very few two-way English/French booth colleagues.

The freelance interpretation market in Rome includes the three UN Rome-based agencies (FAO, WFP, and IFAD), the NATO Defense College (NDC), the Italian Parliament (Chamber of Deputies and Senate) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Vatican and a “religious market” as well as the private market. As the above-mentioned organisations frequently call upon interpreters with the above-mentioned languages, they would like to encourage professional, qualified colleagues to reconsider their professional domicile in light of shifting markets in Europe.

Organisations

We encourage you to contact organisations to find out additional information on the actual opportunities in each.
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that works to achieve food security for all. Additional information about the FAO may be found at: www.fao.org

The Interpretation Group provide interpretation in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. As there are currently only three full-time staff interpreters in the group, the FAO hires many freelance interpreters to service meetings both at headquarters and in the field.

Please contact Michelle Keating, Chief of the Interpretation Group, if you have any further questions about freelance opportunities with the FAO: michelle.keating@v2kycrbr.fao.org

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

IFAD is a specialized agency of the United Nations, established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference. IFAD does not have staff interpreters and freelance interpreters are relied upon throughout the year to service IFAD’s meetings. Additional information about meetings may be found by clicking here.

Please contact Ms Andreina Mauro, Manager of the Strategic and Support Unit and Ms Flavia Antonelli, Meetings Assistant at the following email addresses: a.mauro@kjejuyn1.ifad.org and f.antonelli@ykqnqbdw1.ifad.org

Interpretation Units of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate

The two Houses of Parliament have set up separate Interpretation and Translation Units to meet the linguistic requirements of the various parliamentary bodies engaged in international activities. Italy’s geopolitical position is such that, besides its long-standing relations with the European Union and the G8 countries, it has been traditionally active in the Mediterranean.

Obviously, as far as the needs of the Parliament are concerned, the language combinations mentioned above should include Italian, at least as a passive language. For further information contact: interpreti@mjk3ffbczw.camera.it and interpreti@axycb1pzk.senato.it

NATO Defense College

The NATO Defense College is the Alliance's premier academic institution. Additional information may be found on its website.

The languages used at the College are the two official NATO languages: English and French. NDC has a small linguistic section, made up of a team of four staff interpreters who interpret into French and English; they only rarely require external support.

Middle-East Faculty – NATO Regional Cooperation Course (NRCC)

The College has a Middle East Faculty (MEF) that organises a 10-week course (NRCC), twice a year, involving participants from countries of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Course members are split into two committees, each of which is supported by FR-EN and AR-EN interpretation (4 booths in total). This is the context in which the NATO Defense College would welcome the arrival on the Rome interpretation market of interpreters who work both into and out of English and Arabic, but also of English and French.

World Food Programme (WFP)
WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. WFP is part of the United Nations system and is voluntarily funded. Additional information can be found on its website.

Please contact Katharina Gola, Head, Conference Servicing Unit, for further information: Katharina.gola@s1rtr.wfp.org.

The Religious Market (Holy See)

A stable market in and around Rome is what is known as the religious market, which depends both directly and indirectly on the presence of a sovereign state within the city limits of Rome. Insofar as a sovereign state, the Holy See has its ministries (Congregations) and its specialized agencies or offices (Pontifical Councils) that make up the Roman Curia. These Councils cover a wide range of areas of concern to the Vatican (Laity, Justice and Peace, Social Communications, Inter-religious Dialogue, Health Care Workers, Family, Culture, Promoting New Evangelization, and Cor Unum) and are flanked by a series of Pontifical Academies (Sciences, Social Sciences, Life, etc.).

There is no such thing as a centralized interpretation service in the Holy See and the aforementioned Councils and Academies avail themselves of AIIC interpreters as pseudo-PCOs to assist them in staffing their meetings (annual assemblies, special encounters, etc.). This also applies to the Synod of Bishops, which meets whenever deemed necessary by the pope. The basic languages used at meetings are English, French, Spanish, and Italian (frequently passive alone) with the addition of Portuguese, German, Polish and other languages as required.

On an annual basis this religious market could well be close to the second largest market for conference interpreters, and substantial indeed is the amount of translation work for those colleagues who do not disdain that art. No, being a Catholic is not a prerequisite for working on this market, but just like any other market it demands respect, preparation and professionalism.

The Private Market

Rome is the capital and a large share of the conference as well as most other types of interpretation work has obviously been related to the political life of the country. Some of that work continues because of institutional obligations, but there have been major cutbacks. Also, the newer generation of politicians and ministerial civil servants tends to speak much better English than in the past. The same holds true for medical conferences, or finance-related events, which are increasingly held only in English. Rome still attracts some major international conferences of professional associations and the like, which should be a source of multi-lingual interpretation work, but it is an expensive city, and the infrastructure really isn't the greatest. The new Auditorium is used a little, and the building of a new, exciting, very large and contemporary conference center (la "Nuvola" by the architect Fuxas) is indefinitely on hold. The big hotels are not very practical and the newish Fiera di Roma is definitely unattractive.

The author would like to thank the many Rome-based colleagues who contributed to this article

Recommended citation format:
