

(FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions)

FAQ - Frequently asked questions with regard to interpreting and translating and E-R-D's answers

- **Whom does E-R-D's web site address?**
 - **What are the services offered by E-R-D?**
 - **I urgently need a translation... until tomorrow morning. Is that possible?**
 - **What does "E-R-D" mean?**
 - **Does E-R-D offer other languages too?**
1. What is the difference between interpreting and translating?
 2. How can I be assured that E-R-D provides correct translations?
 3. May I rely on the deadlines agreed upon with E-R-D?
 4. Does E-R-D guarantee confidentiality of the provided information?
 5. Can E-R-D guarantee cheaper interpreting / translating than its competitors?
 6. Is there any need for interpreter / translator to know the context?
 7. At what stage of my project/s should I contact E-R-D?
 8. May I transfer the material to be translated to E-R-D via mail, fax or e-mail?
 9. Why does E-R-D strongly recommend use of the RTF-format for transmitting data?
 10. Is E-R-D able to handle / return files saved in other formats?
 11. Is E-R-D able to guarantee confidentiality in the transmission of the data?
 12. How much does my translation with E-R-D cost?

Whom does E-R-D's web site address?

The web site of E-R-D addresses entrepreneurs, managers and decision-makers in companies and institutions who have a need for language services.

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to page 1

What are the services offered by E-R-D?

Interpreting, translating, language courses are the most important services offered. We have also experience in providing organisational support with conferences, international cooperations and when exploring new markets. On request we shall as well make arrangements with regard to the technical interpretation equipment (simultaneous / multi-lingual; interpreter's booths, microphones, headsets etc.) for your conference, congress, exhibition, product launches... In case of translations we could also help you with the camera-ready manuscript - or the final print run, the burned CD, the final web site in the Internet.

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to page 1

I urgently need a translation... until tomorrow morning. Is that possible?

It depends. Do not hesitate to contact us immediately. So far E-R-D has always managed such quickies with good success.

What we recommend is information at your earliest convenience.

Often the original text requires weeks or even months to ripen. A qualified translation isn't machine work! It is important for us that all participants are happy with the results of our work. And so far we could ensure that in all cases.

====>
to page 1

What does "E-R-D" mean?

E-R-D has been derived from **E**nglish - **R**ussian - **D**German, our three main languages. At least one of the permanent team members of E-R-D has English resp. Russian resp. German as her/his native tongue. All of these team members have decades of experience in at least two of E-R-D's main languages. Such a deep knowledge and long experience with these three languages and cultures enables our team to provide high-quality results. In spite of that E-R-D does not rely on the expertise of the individual preparing a particular translation, say: As a rule all translations will be checked by another team member not actively involved in that particular work. Good work and quality control have absolute priority with E-R-D. The competence of the different team members is not entirely limited to the sphere of linguistics: it comprises experience and knowledge (including degrees) in technics, natural sciences and economics. Part of E-R-D is situated in the Midlands, Birmingham (UK), and another one in the picturesque vicinity of Heidelberg (Germany).

By the way one of our permanent team members taught Russian at Birmingham and Aston (Birmingham) Universities for about 20 years; another has about 15 years experience in teaching Russian and related subjects to students working towards degrees as interpreters, translators, Slavonic studies, economy (with Russian language and culture) at the Universities of Heidelberg and Mannheim (Germany).

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to page 1

Does E-R-D offer other languages too?

Yes. In cooperation with qualified and experienced colleagues we offer as well interpreting and/or translating with the following language combinations:

German <=> French
German <=> Croatian
German <=> Lithuanian
German <=> Serbian
German <=> Spanish

Like all parts of our web site this list will be up-dated as the need arises. If you have a particular problem, please contact us - even if "your" language is not yet included in this list.

====>
to page 1

1. **What is the difference between interpreting and translating?**

In interpreting the spoken word is transferred from one language to another one (conference contributions, at meetings, seminars, hearings at court, excursions, etc.). A translator transfers a written text from one language into another one (letters, contracts, brochures, (technical) manuals, writs, personal documents, books, etc.).

Interpreters and translators hold different degrees and represent different professions. This is readily appreciated since the demands of practical work are rather different. Please bear that in mind when asking for language support:

Not every interpreter is able to provide a good written translation and vice versa. Please specify your requirements as close as possible. In case of doubt do not hesitate to contact us to clarify the situations / your demands.

E-R-D offers interpreting *and* translating.

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to page 1

2. **How can I be assured that E-R-D provides correct translations?**

Interpreting and translating is a matter of trust - but not of being blind. Our permanent team members do not just have a good education - they all have lived for considerable time in the respective countries and thus do not just know the theory but as well reality, daily life with all its facets and shades. The team of E-R-D has for all of its main languages at least one member having it as its native tongue. In spite of these excellent presumptions E-R-D relies very much on the "four-eyes-principle": as rule each translation is checked by a team member not directly involved in the translation. In other words, with E-R-D the projects are carried out by highly qualified personell and subjected to a careful quality control by experienced team members. Up to now we always met the demands of our clients. Occasionally E-R-D was also requested to re-translate texts provided by third parties since either the customer or the receiptent (e.g. government authorities) could not accept the translation of that third party.

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to page 1

3. **May I rely on the deadlines agreed upon with E-R-D?**

In the past (and some of us have about 30 years of experience with interpreting / translating) we were always able to keep the appointments for interpreting and the deadlines for submitting translations. We shall do our best to ensure that to hold for the future too.

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to page 1

4. Does E-R-D guarantee confidentiality of the provided information?

Yes. Though the law treats physicians, barristers, tax advisors, interpreters, translator with regard to this point differently confidentiality is for all these professions a MUST. Also in the own interest. After all, who would consult a member of these professions if confidentiality could not be taken for granted?

Thus there is nothing to worry about - provided the matters do not concern obviously illegal transactions.

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to page 1

5. Can E-R-D guarantee cheaper interpreting / translating than its competitors?

"Cheaper"? No. However, we believe that you will not get better value for your money than here. In short: Cheaper - no; "worth the money" - definitely.

I think all of us have made more than once THE buy just to find soon out that the item wasn't even worth the "peanuts" paid for it; simply a waste of money. We do not sell such cheap services.

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to page 1

6. Is there any need for interpreter / translator to now the context?

Is s/he expected to deliver quality work? Then he should know the environment and the context. A speech is no web site, your company brochure is no catalogue, a novel isn't a specification of spare parts.

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to page 1

7. At what stage of my project/s should I contact E-R-D?

As early as possible. In the preparation phase things are often easily modified to save in the long run time and money. In industry it is well known that the raw / initial materials have a sustainable influence on the following steps in the production process; they significantly influence the quality of the final product. Are there any reasons for expecting a completely different situation with interpreting and translating?

With the conditions of your meeting, with the original texts for the translation you provide the raw / initial materials out of which the interpreter / translator has to produce the final product. Clients with a lot of experience in multi-lingual and multi-cultural partners and environment sometimes view things from an even more drastic point of view: the original in the source language is kept confidential up to completion of the translation and then revised bearing in mind the questions and changes due to the translator. Why? In a trustful and adequately paid cooperation the translator will be able to come up with a lot of questions and proposals that are bound to improve not just the translation but occasionally even more the original. After all the translator has to understand the original to convey then the intended meaning in a different language, in a different cultural environment. In addition to that s/he is an outsider to the company and thus not biased by the particular environment - as it is often the case by those working within the organisation. Thus open minded clients have the chance to profit a lot from translations. On the other hand it is obvious that an unqualified and / or underpaid translator is not likely to come up with (quite often necessary) queries and questions. The enormous additional efforts can not be expected from a underpaid partner; an unqualified translator will not dare to pose any questions since they might be interpreted as a lack of qualification.

Under the heading "In my experience..." Jamie Cunningham, Professional Sports Partnerships Ltd., wrote: "If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys." (Sage Guide; "Setting up and Managing Your Own Business (1998))

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to page 1

8. May I transfer the material to be translated to E-R-D via mail, fax or e-mail?

As you like it. The various degrees of confidentiality and reliability should be known - at least in theory. As far as the arrival of the material is concerned all three possibilities offer very high probabilities for a positive result. There may also be the question of time. In case of an urgent project delays with traditional mail could jeopardize the complete project. Fax and e-mail offer, in particular in combination with telephone contact, the possibilities for an instantaneous verification of dispatch and arrival of the material.

You want the layout of the translation to be as close to the original as possible? Then we believe a transfer via e-mail (or on CD or discette) to be optimal. But please only in the RTF-format.

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to page 1

9. Why does E-R-D strongly recommend use of the RTF-format for transmitting data?

This format (for text files) can be read by ALL word processors. Thus one is sure that the recipient can work with that file (in contrast to proprietary formats).

Viruses! That's another point. When you transfer e.g. a MS-WORD-document then it may also transfer (macro-)viruses. The RTF-format contains (almost) all important formatting (e.g. boldface, illustrations, etc.), however, it does not transfer macros and thus neither macro viruses.

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to page 1

10. Is E-R-D able to handle / return files saved in other formats?

Of course. Up to now we could meet all requirements of our customers.

However, there exists such a manifold of formats that specific requests and specifications are sensible when other formats (than RTF) are concerned. Even if that is considered to be a minor point. You never know. Without the pressures of time it is often a trifle to settle disagreements between different formats / program versions. However, when the project is under pressure of time then primitive formatting problems may jeopardize the whole project.

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to page 1

11. Is E-R-D able to guarantee confidentiality in the transmission of the data?

Yes; relying on your cooperation, the current status of technology and "normal" security needs.

"Normal needs" has to be seen in comparison with the front door of your home. It should serve its purpose but do you expect it to withhold an attack with explosives?

"Current status of technology": we offer our communication partners encrypted communication using PGP (pretty good privacy). According to the present knowledge this open-source-program is very secure. For private use it is freely available on a lot of CDs going with journals on computing and on the Internet. For business use it is available for a very reasonable price. Together with Hefter-Verlag we offer an internal certification based on PGP (or GNA = Gnu Privacy Assistant).

Although this program is very secure it does not necessarily fulfill the requirements of the laws on digital signatures of different countries. This is a purely formal point and not a security issue. Presumption for a secure electronic communication is the "secure" exchange of "trusted" public keys. As a matter of fact these terms imply, e.g., that you have to be sure that the public key which you take to be ours really IS the public key (relating to the identity of the person or company it pretends to belong to).

Our public key/s may be downloaded from our web site.

According to our general terms of business we are not obliged to use a securer method for returning the (translated) material to you then the method used by you when sending the original to us. When you dispatch your confidential information on a post-card then we shall not be obliged to return the translation by special delivery, say.

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to page 1

12. How much does my translation with E-R-D cost?

Your garage, your lawyer, your tax advisor - they all will respond to such a question with a "It depends."

It depends on what? On the specific details of the individual case.

Further details about topics and circumstances are required before a specific answer can be given. The measurements may also vary: in the UK, the United States etc. one expects a quotation naming a price per thousand words. In Germany one would expect a quotation per standard line (law and order: the standard line is defined in a law referring to the payment of interpreters and translators by the courts). Of course, the prices depend on the particulars of the individual case and are to some extent a matter of discussion.

However, here the same rules apply as in other branches selling products and services: If you go below a certain threshold than realistically you can no longer expect reliable craftsmanship or quality work. Good work and quality control need their time and have their price. We are proud that so far we did not lose a single customer because of questionable competence, quality, reliability, confidentiality or service. We shall do everything to ensure that to hold as well for the future. Occasionally potential clients did not want to place their orders with us because their expectations of the price deviated too much from ours. Some of them came back to us after experiencing disappointments with cheap translations. We consider quality, reliability, confidentiality and service to be the basic prerequisites for sustainable business; thus we are only able to take orders if the price allows us to devote sufficient time to all these aspects. Otherwise we prefer to decline the offer instead of discrediting ourselves by questionable results.

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to page 1

In the course of time we shall complement and improve this collection of typical questions. Be so kind to help us with your responses, corrections and proposals for improvement.
Thank you very much!

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to page 1

By the way:

If you want to print out these answers and questions *for your personal use* then please send us a short official fax with your contact data. Depending on your priorities you will then receive your version of the file allowing for print-outs / your hard copy via e-mail / per ordinary mail.

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to page 1

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