

International Certification Study: Czech Republic

By Jiri Stejskal

Last time we ventured quite far afield, if not linguistically, then certainly geographically, and reviewed the fairly complex Australian National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd. (NAATI) certification system. This time we will look at the Czech Council for Translation and Interpreting (ČERAPT) certification system in the

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Czech Republic. While the two systems are quite similar, there is one crucial difference: the NAATI system has been officially recognized by the Australian government, whereas the ČERAPT system is, for all practical purposes, still in the realm of wishful thinking. For once I am treading familiar turf, as Prague is my native city and I am a member of the Union of Translators and Interpreters (Jednota tlumočnicků a překladatelů, JTP). JTP, a member of FIT, with offices in the capital cities of the Czech and the Slovak Republics, serves the needs of both Czech and Slovak professional linguists. I am indebted to my distinguished friend and colleague, Kateřina Martonová, the Union's officer for international relations, for providing me with detailed information on the certification efforts in the Czech Republic.

While JTP does not offer any certification or comparable program, applicants for JTP membership must prove that translation and/or inter-

preting is a source of livelihood for them, at least on a part-time or freelance basis. JTP was also instrumental in setting up the Czech Council for Translation and Interpretation (Česká rada pro překlad a tlumočení—hence the unwieldy acronym ČERAPT above), which administers certification tests for translators and interpreters. The Council is a body composed of JTP representatives, the Institute of Translation Studies of Charles University in Prague, the Association of Conference Interpreters (ASKOT), and a major translation company based in Prague. It is chaired by Andrej Rády, who is also the chairman of JTP.

The ČERAPT certification is designed for both beginning and accomplished translators and interpreters. The examination tests the candidate for a professional level of translation and/or interpretation skills. The texts used in the translation tests are authentic, and real conditions are simulated for the interpretation tests. Given the specific market conditions in the Czech Republic, candidates must prove their capability in bidirectional translating and/or interpreting, i.e., both from and into their native language. Two types of qualification tests are offered: translation and translation/interpretation.

Qualification for Translators

The first part of the test involves the translation of a general, but difficult, text from a foreign language into Czech and vice versa. For the translation into Czech, the candidate may write a commentary. The length of each text is approximately 350 words. The second part of the test involves specialized translation, again in both directions. The candidate can select one text in the field of social sciences and one in the field of natural and technical sciences. Each part of the test takes 3.5 hours, with a one-hour break. Dictionaries and references provided by the candidate are allowed.

Qualification for Translators/Interpreters

This test also consists of two parts: translation and interpreting. The translation part is identical with the one described above. The interpretation part takes place the next day and includes a short conversation in a foreign language, bidirectional consecutive interpreting, and bidirectional sight interpreting. The consecutive interpreting test is a sequence of two five- to seven-minute sections in both language directions, one section being of a general nature and the other specialized. The specialization of the candidate will be considered for the interpretation test. For the sight interpreting, approximately 30 lines of text are used, again in both language directions. No dictionaries or reference materials may be used during the interpretation test. The test is open to the public and representatives of translation companies or governmental bodies may be present.

The prerequisites for either qualification test include at least one of the following:

- University diploma in the given field of philology;
- Certification of state language examination;
- Other recognized language certification (e.g., TOEFL);
- Proof that the candidate lived and worked in the foreign country for a considerable amount of time;
- University diploma in the given foreign language, in a field other than philology; or
- Proof of long-term use of the given foreign language on a daily basis in a job requiring a high-level language competency.

The evaluation of the qualification assesses the professional competency and performance of the candidate. The basic criteria of the evaluation are factual correctness, semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and functionally communicative adequacy of the rendition of the message from one language to another, as well as cultural appropriateness. The optional commentary prepared by the candidate shows his or her ability to notice and solve translation problems. The certificate issued to the successful candidate is not a truly official document. Nevertheless, holders of this certificate can use it to prove their skills to third parties, for their personal promotion, and so forth. As ČERAPT is a fairly young entity without independent legal standing and because its certification does not carry an official seal, only a handful of candidates have passed the test to date.

Currently, most professional translators and interpreters in the Czech Republic present the official state language examination as their credentials. The state examination, while it carries an offi-

cial seal and is generally recognized as a basic prerequisite for many entry-level positions, tests for language proficiency but not for issues specific to translation and/or interpretation. The ČERAPT initiative, on the other hand, is tailored to the needs of professional translators and interpreters, is organized by the most prestigious entities in the field of translating and interpreting, and promises to provide certification of a much higher and uniform standard.

Further information on certification and related procedures in the Czech Republic can be obtained from the JTP main office in Prague at JTP@JTPunion.org and from Zuzana Jettmarová (ČERAPT) at zuzana.jettmarova@ff.cuni.cz. In the next issue we will look at the certification process of the Canadian Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec.

As the editor of this series, I encourage readers to submit any relevant information concerning non-U.S. certification or similar programs, as well as comments on the information published in this series, to my e-mail address at jiri@cetra.com.

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Upcoming Conference & Educational Programs **NAJIT Eastern Regional Conference**

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, along with the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI) and the Department of Foreign Languages of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, is pleased to announce the Eastern Regional Conference at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York City, February 2, 2002, 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. This one-day conference will feature presentations on issues in interpreting, translating, education, and law given by some of the top professionals, educators, and legal scholars in the field. On February 1, 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m., NAJIT will be holding the written component of the examination leading to the credential of Nationally Certified Judiciary Interpreter and Translator: Spanish. The examination will be followed by a pre-conference seminar, 6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m., on court interpreter ethics and procedure, which will feature a panel composed of some of the leading authorities on court interpreting.

For more information, please contact: National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3025, New York, New York 10176; Tel: (212) 692-9581, Fax: (212) 687-4016; E-mail: headquarters@najit.org or Website: <http://www.najit.org>.