Sharing ISO Knowledge with TC 37/SC 5: A Collaborative Step Forward for the Language Services Industry

By Carina Balbo, ATC ISO Committee

In a significant initiative to bridge knowledge gaps and foster collaboration within the language services industry, in October 2024, the European Union of Associations of Translation Companies, EUATC, hosted its first collaborative webinar with ISO/TC 37/SC 5, the ISO committee developing standards for language services. Welcoming attendees from across the industry, the Association of Translation Companies' CEO Raisa McNab opened the session by underscoring the importance of industry cooperation in understanding and advancing ISO standards. This event marked a vital opportunity to deepen awareness of ISO's structure, purpose, and the ongoing projects within the language services sector.

Purpose and Objectives of the Webinar

The vision of the new collaborative webinar series is to share knowledge about ISO standards and strengthen collaboration among national associations. This knowledge exchange is essential for industry participants who may be unfamiliar with ISO developments and unaware of how they can contribute to this evolving landscape. The event aimed to address the evident gap in ISO engagement, especially as over 30% of national associations under the EUATC reported a lack of ISO activity in their countries. With this in mind, the EUATC and ISO/TC 37/SC 5 hope to increase awareness and drive more active involvement across Europe.

The webinar agenda featured a carefully structured lineup of presentations from ISO project leaders, with 620 registrants and 380 attendees from across the language services industry..

The Basics of ISO and TC 37/SC 5 by Christine Reichhardt

ISO/TC 37/SC 5 Committee manager Christine Reichhardt's presentation provided a foundational understanding of ISO and its role as a global network of national standards bodies. She explained how individuals and companies can engage with ISO through their national bodies and highlighted the stages of standard development, from proposal to publication, emphasising the rigorous process of consensus-building across multiple countries.

Christine further provided a detailed overview of the ISO/TC 37/SC 5 committee, which focuses on standards relevant to terminology, translation, interpreting, and interpreting equipment. The committee's structure includes dedicated working groups for each focus area, which enables subject-matter experts to address sector-specific needs effectively.

Spotlight on Current Projects in TC 37/SC 5

Among the ongoing projects within TC 37/SC 5, Christine highlighted several critical initiatives:

- **Guidelines for in-House translation departments:** Offering frameworks for quality and efficiency in corporate translation.

- **Certified translations for judicial settings:** Establishing guidelines that support the legal sector.

- **Interpreting services revisions:** Updating standards related to interpreting services to meet modern needs.

These projects reflect ISO/TC 37/SC 5's commitment to addressing industry-specific challenges, ensuring that standards remain relevant and responsive to evolving market requirements.

Deep Dive into Key Standards: ISO 5060, ISO 18841, and ISO TS6253

The webinar featured three key standards, presented by the standards' project leaders:

- **ISO 5060 (Dr. Christopher Kurz):** Dr. Kurz introduced this standard, designed to provide guidance on human evaluation of translation output. The standard focuses on fairness and objectivity, with ready-to-use scorecards that enable assessors to measure translation quality accurately. Dr. Kurz emphasised the need of adhering to project specifications and avoiding automated quality estimation, advocating for a human-cantered approach in translation quality evaluations.

- **ISO 18841 (Verónica Pérez Guarnieri):** Verónica Pérez Guarnieri discussed ISO 18841, which establishes requirements and recommendations for interpreting services. She highlighted recent updates in the draft, particularly in the areas of remote interpreting and interpreter competencies. This standard has been updated in response to industry changes and technological advancements since its initial publication in 2018.

- **ISO/TS 6253 (Angela Sasso):** Angela Sasso provided insights into ISO/TS 6253, which specifies requirements and recommendations for training programmes in community interpreting. By addressing gaps in interpreter training, this standard aims to enhance the quality and consistency of interpreting services in community settings, supporting interpreters' preparedness for diverse and often complex environments.

Navigating the Standards Development Process

In a collaborative discussion, the speakers together with ATC CEO Raisa McNab and EUATC General Secretary Geoffrey Bowden explored the complexities of developing ISO standards, particularly the challenges in coordinating global consensus. This intricate process can involve hundreds of pages of feedback and multiple rounds of revision, as Verónica noted, highlighting the thoroughness required to align the perspectives of diverse stakeholders.

Future Engagement

This first ISO/TC 37/SC 5 webinar has set a strong foundation for deeper ISO knowledge sharing across Europe and globally. Through continued engagement, national associations and industry stakeholders can further contribute to ISO's mission of setting quality standards that elevate the global language services industry.

Stay at the forefront of industry standards by joining the next EUATC ISO/TC 37/SC5 webinar on November 25th. Register to the webinar today to deepen your understanding of ISO developments and learn how you can play a role in shaping the future of language services.

Let's build a stronger, more standardised industry together!

Read more about ISO standards development for language services at

https://atccertification.com/about-iso-standards/