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Identifying the Gap: Continued Professional Development of Sign Language Interpreters (Australia, Croatia, Denmark, Singapore)

Introduction

The demand for credentialed sign language interpreters has been steadily increasing worldwide, driven by commitments to accessibility and increased recognition of signed languages and Deaf Communities (Haualand, De Meulder & Napier, 2023). This research paper aims to examine the availability, quality, and challenges of continued professional development (CPD) opportunities for sign language interpreters. We take a deeper look at the current landscapes in each country and review the gaps that need to be addressed to enhance interpreters' skills, knowledge, and abilities throughout their careers. Through this research, we aim to contribute to improving the overall quality of CPD for sign language interpreters.

Importance of Continuing Professional Development

Formal education provides the essential foundation for sign language interpreters, equipping them with core linguistic, ethical, and cultural competencies needed for effective practice (Bontempo, 2015). However, learning does not end upon completion of training. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is crucial for interpreters to stay up to date with evolving language use, interpreting practices, and professional standards (Enwedo et al., 2025). It also demonstrates an ongoing commitment to personal and professional growth, ensuring that interpreters remain competent and responsive to the needs of the Deaf community and the wider society (Sheneman & Robinson, 2020).

Continuing Professional Development Activities

CPD is broadly understood within the industry as including both formal, structured opportunities, as well as informal learning activities that can enhance a practitioner's competence, adaptability to differing contexts and demands, and alignment with

community expectations (Bontempo, 2015; Hlavac et al., 2014). As interpreting work has become increasingly complex and mediated via technology, CPD is a key mechanism for maintaining currency in the profession, ensuring ethical practice, and supporting the needs of Deaf clients in an evolving world.

The literature identifies a wide variety of CPD activities. Attendance at workshops, seminars, conferences, and webinars is the most common form of CPD, offering practitioners the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills and strengthen existing knowledge and skills (Bontempo, 2015; Hlavac et al., 2024). Mentoring, peer supervision, and collaborative learning are also mentioned in the literature as important pathways for supporting decision making, ethical reasoning and reflective practice. Peer-based structures provide guidance and feedback, and can also reinforce practitioners' professional identity, collegiality, and accountability to the Deaf Community (Bontempo & Napier, 2014; Webb & Napier, 2015).

Technological literacy has become increasingly important in the current interpreting landscape, with the expansion of remote interpreting platforms and services, video relay platforms and services, and other digital tools integrated into the sign language interpreting process. Practitioners are encouraged to develop their competence in technology to maintain effective and ethical practice in a rapidly changing environment (Enwedo et al., 2025). Enwedo et al (2025) also note that domain-specific training in areas such as legal and health interpreting is important to ensure practitioners are up to date with their knowledge of terminology, procedures, processes, and ethical considerations. This reinforces the idea that CPD must be responsive to the demands of different interpreting settings.

Reflective practice and self-assessment are other critical parts of CPD. Webb and Napier (2015) note that internally motivated practitioners engage more deeply with reflective practices, which supports higher levels of professional responsibility and adherence to best practice. The importance of research engagement, whether through participating in studies or staying abreast of new research findings, has been found to strengthen the

profession (Bontempo, 2015).

In addition to the above, sign language interpreting practitioners also benefit from CPD that deepens their knowledge and engagement with Deaf Communities (Bontempo, 2015; Enwedo et al., 2025). CPD also includes activities focused on language maintenance and linguistic development, essential for sustaining high-quality interpreting performance (Napier, McKee & Goswell, 2010; Enwedo et al., 2025). The literature also recognises the increasing importance of well-being focused CPD, including learnings around emotional regulation, stress management and resilience, skills that are vital for practitioners to manage the demands of the profession (Bontemp & Napier, 2014).

Current CPD Opportunities

Australia

Australia has a national credentialing body, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI, n.d.), which provides certifications for all languages, including Auslan-English interpreters, Deaf Interpreters, and Deaf translators. Once practitioners have completed their qualification through a training provider, they must pass a certification test to receive their NAATI credential, with certification testing provided at the entry level (Certified Provisional Interpreter) through to advanced (Certified Conference Interpreter). CPD is a compulsory part of maintaining all NAATI credentials, requiring certified practitioners to demonstrate both work practice and ongoing professional development over a three-year recertification cycle. NAATI requires interpreters to complete 120 hours of work practice over three years, and a minimum of 120 CPD points, with required minimums in each category. According to the NAATI recertification: Professional development catalogue (NAATI, 2021), CPD activities are grouped into three categories to allow for a balance of interpreting skills, language maintenance and contribution to the profession. CPD points can be gained by completing formal training, attending workshops, mentoring or being mentored, and self-directed study, as well as through professional contributions such as teaching, presenting or publishing. While NAATI provides some opportunities to gain CPD points, its core

business is testing and credentialing. Provision of CPD itself is mostly left to training organisations, professional associations, and language service providers.

The Australian Sign Language Interpreters and Translators Association (ASLITA, n.d.) is the primary professional association for Auslan-English and Deaf Interpreters and Translators. As such, ASLITA takes responsibility for coordinating and delivering CPD through the national body, as well as through its state branches. CPD opportunities include workshops delivered both face-to-face and online, recorded webinars, and a national conference held every two years. Attendance at the national conference typically fulfils most of the required CPD points for a three-year cycle.

Practitioners can also receive CPD points through language service providers and interpreting agencies, training providers, specialist bodies such as health or legal organisations, and via individual practitioners offering niche workshops and training (NAATI, n.d.). International CPD opportunities, such as webinars from the USA, UK, or Europe, can also be used to gain CPD points, provided they are aligned with the NAATI CPD logbook requirements.

Overall, research shows high levels of practitioners accessing CPD in Australia, with over 80 percent of interpreters self-reporting participation within a two-year period (Hlavac et al., 2025). However, the same research noted significant barriers that are structural in nature rather than individual, such as cost, timing and geographical constraints. In Australia, CPD is one of the defining elements of being seen as a professional interpreter. The overall system is one that is mandatory for certification, mostly structured, but also driven by practitioners and able to align with the needs of individuals as well as the industry.

<u>Denmark</u>

Training program

The Danish Interpreter Training Program (ITP) was established in 1986 (Epinion, 2010). From 1996 to 2013, it was a 3.5-year short-cycle higher education program, after which

it was accredited with Professional Bachelor's status (Den Nationale Tolkemyndighed [The National Interpreting Authority], 2023; Københavns Professionshøjskole [University College Copenhagen], n.d.; Smerlov et al., 2007). Other Professional Bachelor's degrees give access to further "relevant Master's degrees" (Uddannelses- og Forskningsstyrelsen [Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science], 2024), but none have been established for Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs), and there is no further academic avenue at the national level.

Service sectors' requirements

Service sectors are responsible for making their services accessible for deaf citizens, for example, by providing SLIs (Den Nationale Tolkemyndighed [The National Interpreting Authority], 2022). One of the most influential authorities funding interpreting services is Den Nationale Tolkemyndighed (The National Interpreting Authority - hereafter DNTM), which funds interpreting services in social settings. Most authorities only require that interpreters hold a diploma from the ITP to be able to interpret in their respective fields, such as the labour market and hospitals (Smerlov et al., 2007). However, on January 1, 2022, DNTM and Styrelsen for Undervisning og Kvalitet (The Danish Agency for Education and Quality, STUK) implemented CPD as an additional requirement for SLI's taking assignments under their auspices (Den Nationale Tolkemyndighed [The National Interpreting Authority], n.d.). DNTM was made aware of CPD by five interpreters, who learned about CPD on a course abroad and afterwards arranged a private course on CPD with the instructor, Robert Adam. DNTM then implemented CPD as a tender requirement, and while there was a round of public consultation, the broader interpreting community was not involved in the process (C. Dohm, personal communication, September 17, 2025, C. Dohm, personal communication, January 16, 2026).

CPD

DNTM's aim is not only that interpreters participate in diverse ongoing professional development activities to improve their interpreting practice, but also that they reflect on the content learned during these activities and, no later than three months afterwards, report their activities and reflections on the DNTM website, where each interpreter has

their own private entry. Interpreters who wish to interpret in social settings must obtain a minimum of 20 CPD points annually. Activities are categorised as formalised/non-formalised and related/non-related.

Formalized activities are planned, such as supervision or courses, whereas non-formalised activities occur spontaneously, for example, listening to or watching a podcast or receiving feedback from a client. Related/non-related refers to whether the content of the activity is directly related to interpreting or concerns more general topics, such as communication or hearing loss. A minimum of 10 CPD points per year must come from formalised activities.

Time consumption varies according to the type of activity, and to reach 20 CPD points, interpreters must complete 40–80 hours of activities (see Figures 1 and 2 below) (Den Nationale Tolkemyndighed [The National Interpreting Authority], 2023). Interpreters calculate CPD points according to the following two tables:

Days/ECTS points converted to CPD points:

	Formalised	Non-formalised
Related	1 day gives 4 points 1 ECTS gives 4 points	1 day gives 1 point
Non-related	1 day gives 2 points 1 ECTS gives 2 points	1 day gives 1 point

Table 1: Den Nationale Tolkemyndighed [The National Interpreting Authority], 2023, p. 11.
Note: Translated by the authors.

Conversion table of hours to CPD points:

Time	At 1 point a day	At 2 points a day	At 4 points a day

1 hour	0,125	0,25	0,5
2 hours	0,25	0,5	1
3 hours	0,375	0,75	1,5
4 hours	0,5	1	2
5 hours	0,625	1,25	2,5
6 hours	0,75	1,5	3
7 hours	0,875	1,75	3,5
8 hours	1	2	4

Table 2: Den Nationale Tolkemyndighed [The National Interpreting Authority], 2023, p. 11.
Note: Translated by the authors.

Course providers and content

Two different public stakeholders provide courses or other activities specifically for SLIs: the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (Foreningen af Tegnsprogstolke, FTT) [Association of Sign Language Interpreters], n.d.) and a workers' union (HK, 2024). Their activities are typically presentations on interpreting related topics and ethics, and reflective practice. Every other year, FTT holds a two-days general assembly where professional topics are presented and discussed (Foreningen af Tegnsprogstolke, FTT) [Association of Sign Language Interpreters], n.d., HK, 2024). Events at the Deaf Association or other organisations, as well as activities arranged by interpreting companies or individual interpreters, may also provide opportunities to earn CPD points.

Croatia

Even though the Republic of Croatia, in 2015, recognized Croatian sign language (Hrvatski znakovni jezik – HZJ) under the Croatian Sign Language Act (and other methods of communication – aimed at the Deafblind community) that guarantees the right to communication support and access to Deaf and Deafblind persons (Hrvatski sabor,

2015), there is still no national credentialing system of mandatory CPD for sign language and Deafblind interpreters. Some forms of introductory training or education are offered by a small number of institutions and Deaf/Deafblind-led associations, but are mostly focused on teaching sign language rather than interpreting or other relevant skills related to sign language/Deafblind interpreting. The Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons Dodir offers two-years (four-semester) long Croatian sign language course, specialist training for communication mediators (in Croatia, there are no Sign Language or Deafblind interpreters in the official and legal nomenclature – it all falls under the category of communication mediators and/or communication mediators for the Deafblind), and occasional workshops – also available on demand. The Croatian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HSGN) provides some training through international collaborations and Erasmus+ projects such as DEAFSLI, aimed at developing accessible training modules for Deaf and hearing interpreters (Dodir, 2011; Dodir, 2021; HSGN, 2023). The Croatian Association of Sign Language Interpreters also organises occasional workshops, forums, and professional events, and participates in cross-border projects to improve teaching materials and strengthen interpreter education (HDSLPHZJ, 2022–2025).

Regardless of the existing initiatives, it is all still within an informal framework, and there are no unified, certified programs, which means that CPD still remains voluntary. The interpreting service provision is regulated within the 2023 Law on Personal Assistance and with the 2024 Rulebook on Teaching Assistants and Communication Mediators, but no re-certification or CPD obligations for interpreters are established (MRMSOSP, 2023; MZOM, 2024). Despite the will and growing initiatives, the lack of formalised pathways for professional standards development leaves CPD decentralised within an informal, civil-society-driven framework and based on EU project funding or international partnerships, rather than through a coordinated national system.

Singapore

The Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf), as the national body representing deaf

people, houses an Access Department that includes a team of sign language interpreters (SADeaf, n.d.). The department offers Interpreter Training Programmes (ITP), lasting approximately 3 months, primarily for those who wish to become Community Interpreters (CI) (SADeaf, 2025). However, there are no clearly defined criteria for entry into the training programme. SADeaf also has a group of Educational Interpreters (EI) who are assigned to schools with Deaf students (SADeaf, n.d.), however, there are no interpreter training requirements for this role.

In addition to SADeaf, there is a social enterprise called Equal Dreams, which offers a 20-hour foundational course titled "Dipping Into Singapore Sign Language Interpreting" (DIP) (Equal Dreams, n.d.). This programme serves as an introductory or “taster” course designed for individuals interested in exploring interpreting as a potential career path.

Previously, regular CPD programmes were organised for interpreters by SADeaf. However, these activities were somewhat discontinued around 2019 (SADeaf Terp, n.d). Since then, there have been no consistent or structured CPD opportunities for interpreters in Singapore. Sporadically, SADeaf invites overseas interpreters or experts to conduct presentations or workshops, although these sessions are infrequent and the intended target audience is often not clearly defined (SADeaf, 2025). The past CPD sessions tended to focus on basic interpreting skills, with limited opportunities for advanced or specialised training (SADeaf Terp, n.d).

Apart from interpreters employed by SADeaf or Equal Dreams, Singapore also has some freelance interpreters who work independently, however, this group currently lacks a coordinated support system or a formal framework for ongoing professional development.

Research Questions

The goal of this research is to identify the gaps and development needs in the education and professional growth of sign language interpreters. It seeks to explore the current state

of CPD opportunities, as well as interpreters' perspectives on their learning experiences. The research questions below will guide the development of our survey, helping us determine what to ask interpreters regarding their needs, experiences, and preferences for future professional development.

1. What training opportunities currently exist for sign language interpreters in the respective countries?

2. What types of continued professional development (CPD) opportunities are available?

3. How do interpreters perceive the relationship between their initial education and ongoing professional development?

4. What gaps or challenges exist in the continuum from training to practice to CPD?

Methodology

Research on interpreters' perception of CPD has only been carried out in Australia, and to be able to make a cross-national comparison, a survey was made. The survey was conducted using Microsoft Forms, allowing for easy distribution and data collection. A separate survey form was created for each country. However, the questions remained the same across all four country-specific surveys to ensure consistency and comparability of responses. The survey was open to both Deaf and hearing interpreters currently working or training as sign language interpreters. The target number of participants was approximately 10 interpreters per country.

The survey included multiple-choice questions to gather structured responses, as well as optional open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences, challenges, and specific needs related to CPD. The survey was structured into four sections to address the research questions: demographics and background, CPD in your country, perceptions and barriers, and additional comments. The response

options for question 17 was modelled after options in Hlavac et al. (2025)'s survey. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix A. Surveys were distributed through our networks, collated as a summary of each country, and then compared cross-nationally.

Individual Country Findings

Australia

The majority of interpreters were hearing, female, and mid to highly experienced practitioners. While no published data is available on the current demographic status of Auslan interpreters in Australia, this profile is similar to findings in other Western countries. Most of the practitioners were completing approximately 30 hours of CPD each year in a variety of ways, with workshops, webinars and mentoring being the most common forms of CPD. Motivations for completing CPD ranged from the obvious mandatory requirements by NAATI, to more intrinsic motivations such as improving the quality and accuracy of interpreting skills, supporting Deaf consumers and staying current with best practice.

While respondents were motivated to attend CPD, a number of barriers were noted. Primarily, time constraints and finding time to schedule CPD around a busy workload and other commitments. Cost was also a factor, with CPD being a personal cost by practitioners, rather than provided by employers. Limited availability of options was also noted by many respondents who commented that CPD was frequently provided for novice interpreters, but less CPD was aimed at specialist and advanced practitioners. Regional factors were also discussed, which is unsurprising in a country as large as Australia, with preferences for online webinars, hybrid delivery and on-demand recordings a possible solution for bridging the huge distances inherent in Australian life.

When asked about their views on the current CPD system, respondents wanted more opportunities for regional interpreters and funding support to attend CPD, more Deaf-led training and evidence-based practice sessions, and a centralised and automated recording system for attending CPD to reduce the administrative burden in collating CPD logs for NAATI recertification.

Denmark

67 responses were received, which constitutes approximately 20% of the Danish interpreting community that according to C. Dohm, personal communication (September 17, 2025) comprised 334 interpreters, including an unknown number of text-to-speech only interpreters in 2024. Respondents were predominantly hearing (96%), women (91%) and mid to highly experienced with 70% between 26-45 and 82% had more than 8 years experience as interpreters. The vast majority of respondents had formal training at either bachelor's level or a 3.5-year full-time education that was available prior to the bachelor's degree, and one respondent has an MA degree. Employment was dominated by self-employed practitioners, with a majority working full-time.

CPD participation was reported as quite regular, with about once a month the most common attendance rate, adding up to 21-60 hours per year. The CPD system was noted as being point-based, with most respondents referring to a 20 point criteria. However, even with strong and regular engagement, the majority of respondents said that there were not enough CPD opportunities available. Reported CPD providers were: The ASLI, The union HK, employers, Castberggård (A Folk High School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing), individual interpreters and courses abroad.

Barriers to CPD were reported as due to limited availability of the CPD, time constraints, cost, and family and work commitments. Relevance of the CPD was also flagged by 37% of respondents, with a similar percentage flagging distance/transport.

When asked what they would like to see improved, Danish respondents repeatedly noted CPD as burdensome, and called for a less strict system, with fewer points, less time-consuming and more CPD options with higher-level or specialist content, preferably conducted by the current training program or DNTM. They also raised concerns about the administrative burden of documenting the CPD, especially the non-formalised points. Several mentioned that it is problematic, that there are no repercussions if the demand of 20 points is not met. Some mentioned that professional development is important, but

that the current system is demotivating. Common suggestions included CPD that is professionally relevant, financially and logistically realistic, and simpler systems for documenting participation.

Croatia

In the Croatian sample, interpreters were primarily hearing and female, with most reporting several years of experience; a smaller number of Deaf interpreters were also represented, and all respondents worked full-time. Significant variation in training backgrounds reflects the absence of a standardised national interpreter education pathway; most respondents had completed sign language courses or short workshops, but no formal interpreter training, as none is currently available. Participation in CPD was generally consistent, with interpreters engaging in training whenever opportunities arose; however, most reported investing only a small number of hours annually (0–20 hours). Because there are no mandatory CPD requirements, participation remains entirely voluntary. More than 80 percent agreed that there are not enough CPD opportunities available for interpreters, even though most considered CPD extremely important for their professional development. The lack of interpreting-specific CPD emerged as the most significant barrier, alongside time constraints, family and professional obligations, and activities scheduled at inconvenient times. Cost and geographical limitations were also frequently mentioned, with many respondents noting that opportunities are heavily centralised in the capital, Zagreb, and therefore less accessible to interpreters elsewhere. A lack of information about available CPD, limited advanced or specialised training, and the perception that most education remains basic or introductory were also recurring themes.

When asked about improvements, respondents expressed a clear desire for more structured and widely available CPD opportunities, including training focused specifically on HZJ and Deafblind interpreting. They also emphasised the need for CPD to be offered in multiple cities, for greater Deaf-led training, and for formal recognition or certification of completed CPD hours. Several respondents suggested that employers—particularly state institutions and associations—should send interpreters to training at least annually.

Overall, practitioners are motivated to participate in CPD, but current access remains limited by structural and organisational constraints.

Singapore

Eleven interpreters responded to the survey, with the majority of respondents hearing females. Most respondents did not have formal interpreter training, but had completed short courses and workshops, while one respondent had trained outside of Singapore. Significantly, most responded that they participated in CPD only a few times a year, with a similar majority also indicating that undertaking CPD activities was “not applicable” to them. This likely accounts for the low participation rate in CPD activities if interpreters believe that it is not required.

While there is no interpreter association in Singapore, it is interesting to note that one respondent selected “interpreter association” as a provider of CPD; this raises uncertainty about whether respondents understand what CPD means in their local context, or whether the survey questions were too vague for the respondents to answer effectively. Similarly, two respondents indicated that they are required to study specific subjects for CPD, this may be specific to their workplace rather than an industry requirement, or may be due to a misunderstanding of the survey.

While there were some inconsistencies in responses, as described above, the majority of respondents felt that CPD opportunities were insufficient, not very accessible and identified barriers to participation. On a positive note, they also considered CPD important for their career development and expressed hope for major improvements in the future.

Overall Findings

Demographics

Across all four countries included in the survey, the results show a higher number of hearing interpreters and a notably low number of Deaf interpreters (92.2% hearing vs

7.8% Deaf) as seen in Figure 1.

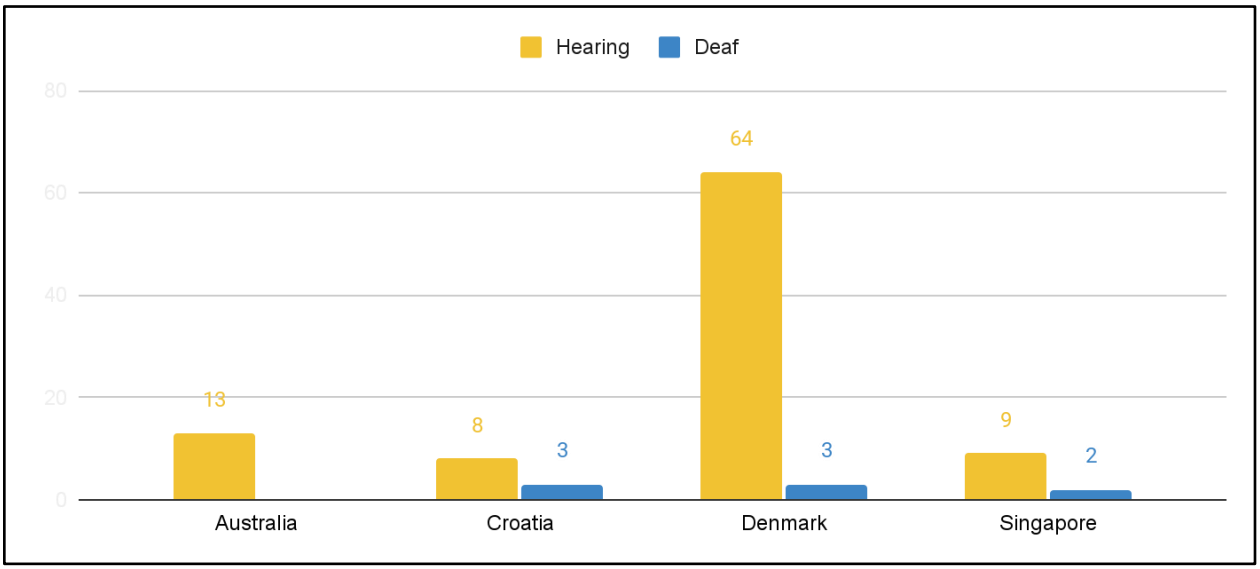

Figure 1: Number of Respondents

Respondents were also predominantly female across all countries (86.3%), with 11.8% male, plus one 'gender diverse' and one 'prefer not to say' (Refer to Figure 2).

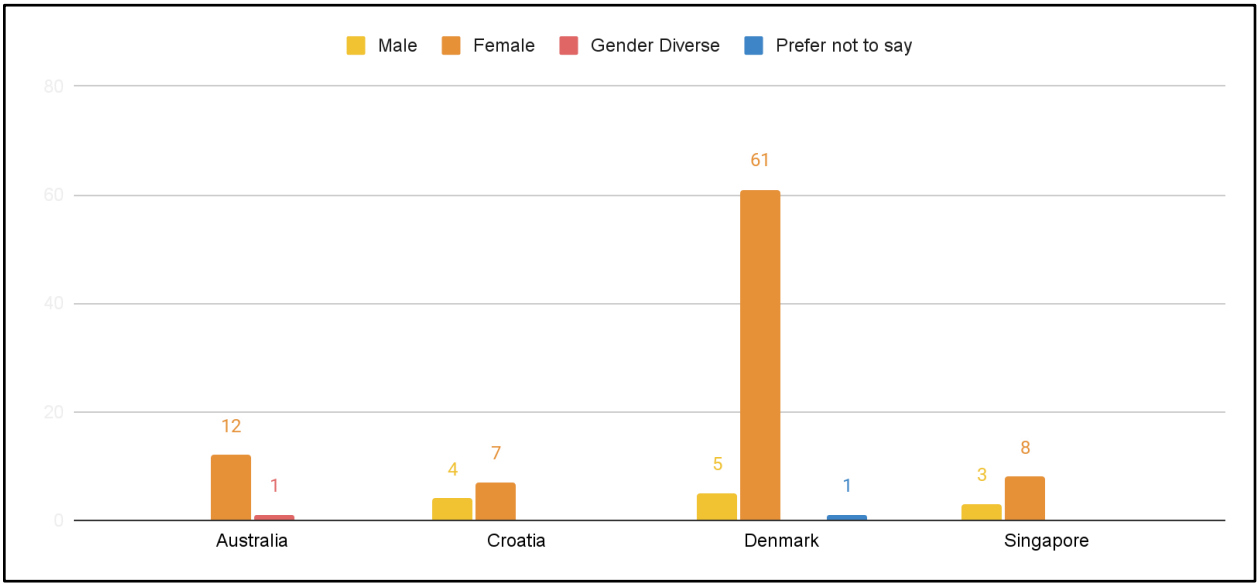

Figure 2: Gender

Approximately 70% of respondents were aged between 26 and 45 years (Figure 3). These demographics reflect the female-dominated trend in the interpreting profession

(Napier et al., 2021).

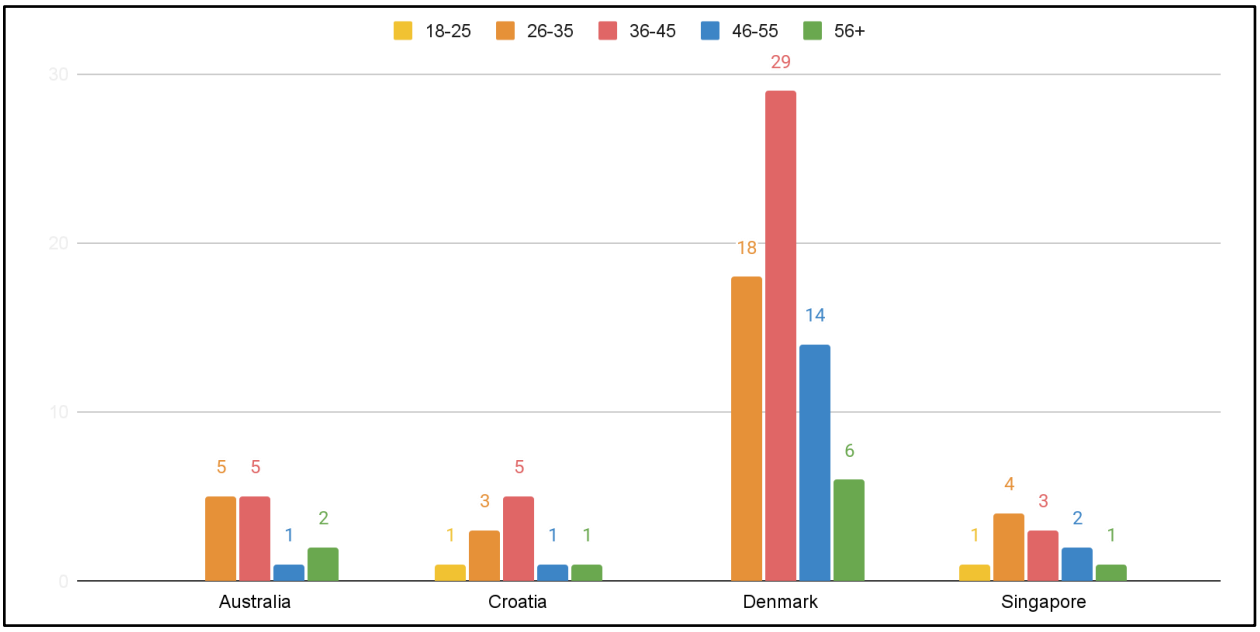

Figure 3: Age

Respondents' years of working experience varied widely, however, the largest group across countries was senior practitioners with more than 15 years of experience (See Figure 4).

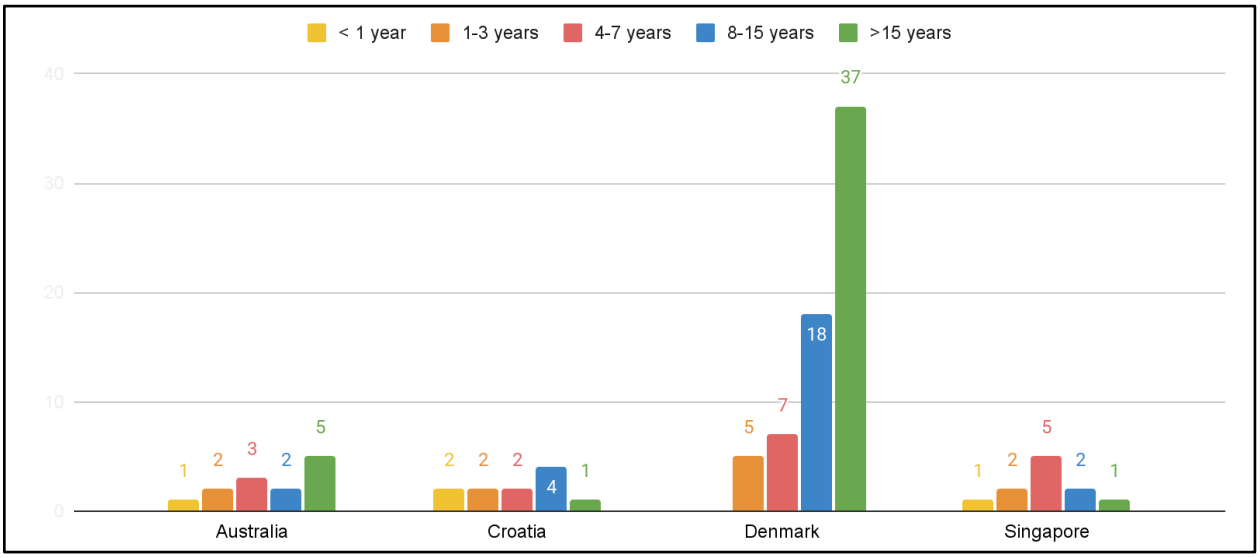

Figure 4: Years of Working Experience

The four countries have different academic and vocational training systems, which makes direct comparison difficult. Most interpreters have completed short courses or workshops

rather than full degree programs. In Australia and Denmark, a significant number of respondents have formal training, although Australian respondents were more likely to have a vocational degree compared with professional bachelor's degrees held by Danish respondents. In contrast, many respondents in Croatia and Singapore have no formal training. Very few hold advanced degrees (MA or PhD), indicating limited higher-level academic training in interpreting. See Figure 5 for a graphic representation.

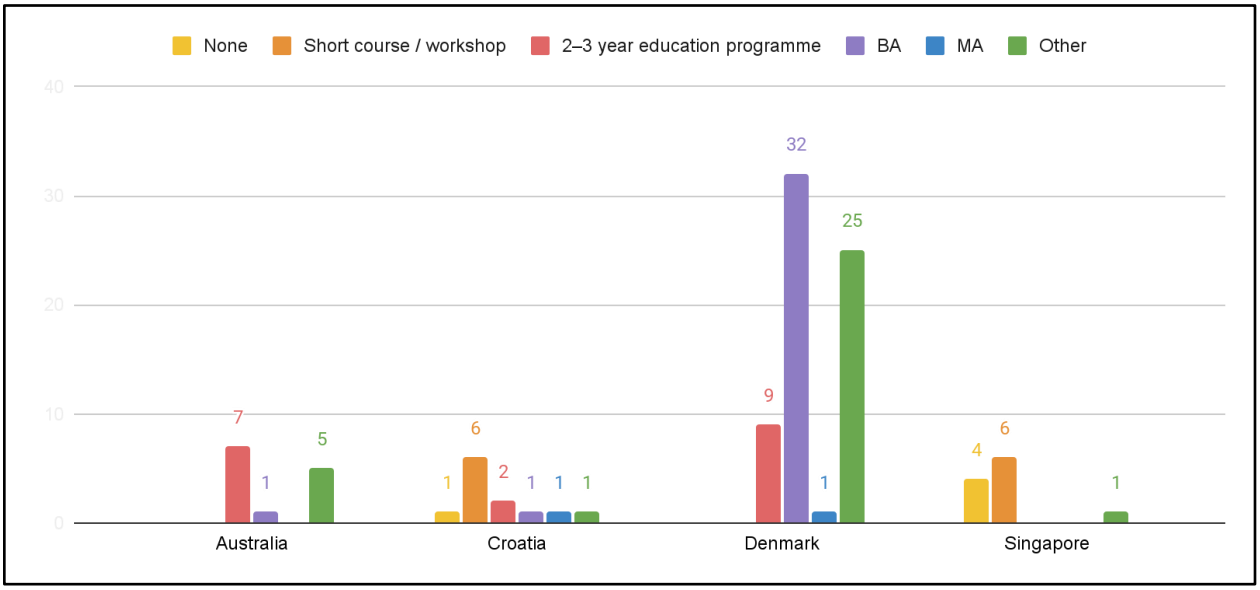

Figure 5: Level of Interpreting Training

Employment patterns were also country-specific with the majority of Croatian respondents working as full-time employees, and the majority of Danish respondents as full-time self-employed interpreters. Australian and Singaporean respondents showed more diverse arrangements, including self-employed and part-time roles. It is also important to note that some respondents had multiple simultaneous job roles. Figure 6 shows this spread of employment status.

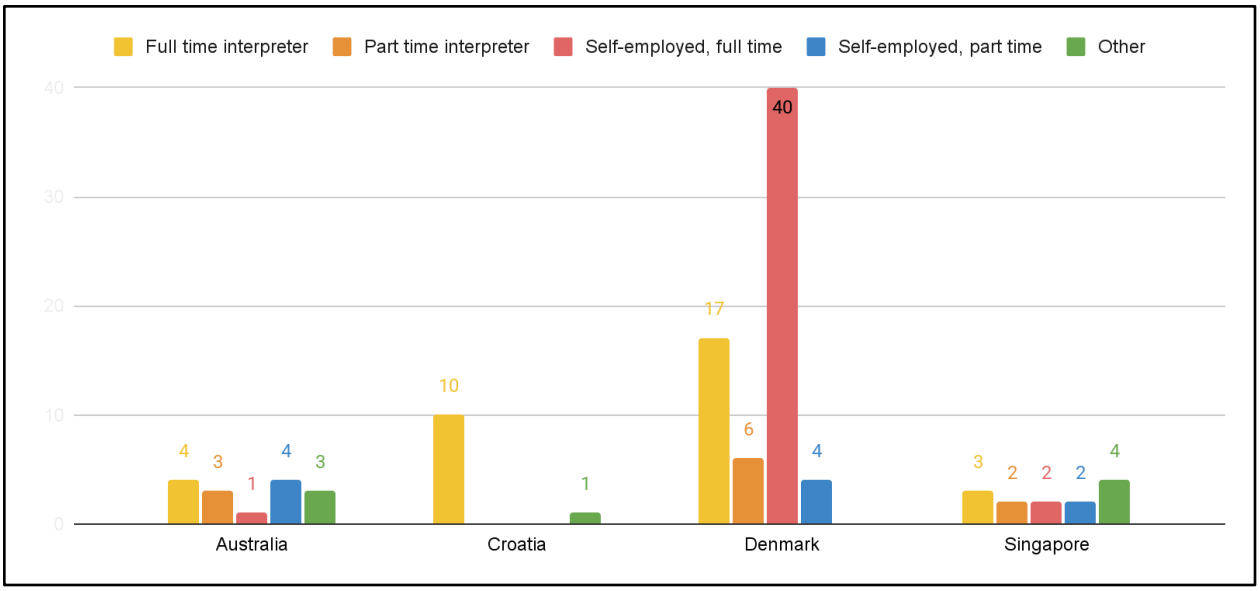

Figure 6: Employment Status

CPD Availability

The result reveals notable differences in CPD requirements and participation among interpreters in all four countries. Figure 7 shows the CPD requirements by organisations and authorities.

Australia	Croatia	Denmark	Singapore
1 ASLITA	1 Employers	60 DNTM	2 SADeaf
12 NAATI	10 NA	6 DNTM/STUK	9 NA
		1 DNTM/STUK/ myself	

Figure 7: CPD Requirements by Organisation or Authority

Figure 8 highlights the CPD requirements for all four countries. In Australia, CPD is largely mandated and structured, with interpreters required to document their CPD hours and study specific subjects that cover professional, ethical, and language skills (See figures 9a and 9b). This structured approach ensures consistent engagement in activities that support professional growth. Danish respondents also described a points-based CPD expectation, a split between formal and informal activities, and a demand to not only participate but also reflect on the content and register it on an online portal. However, the responses reveal that the demands are not clearly understood.

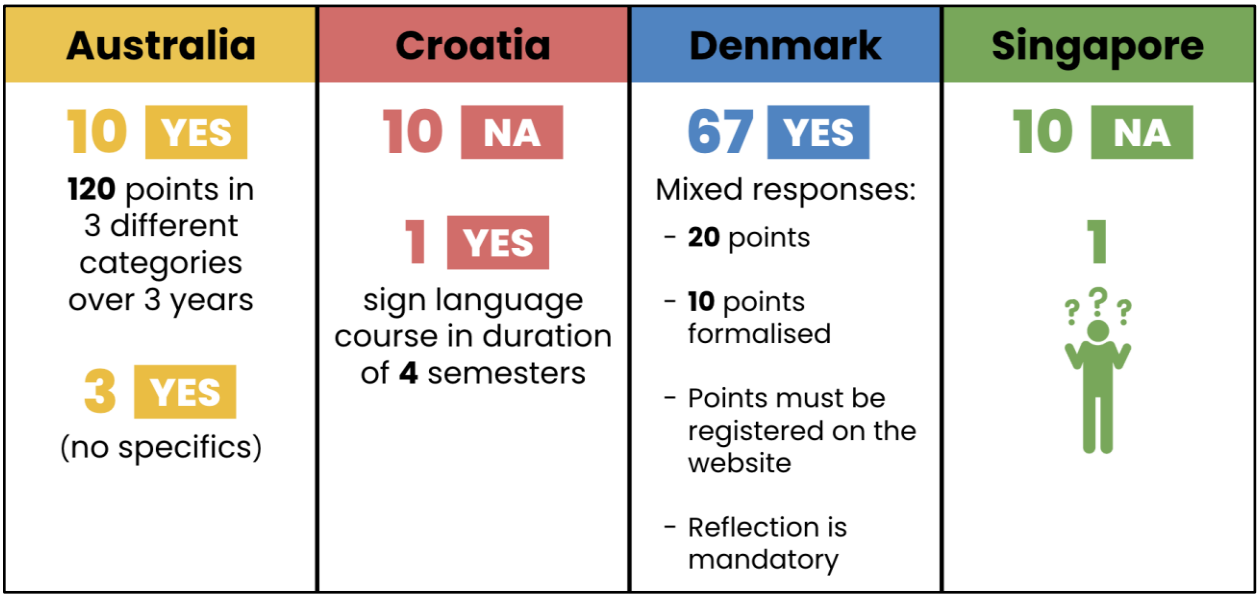

Figure 8: Requirement to Provide Proof of CPD

In contrast, CPD was described by respondents in Croatia and Singapore as far less formalised. Few employers or associations mandate CPD, and most respondents indicated “Not Applicable” when asked about requirements, highlighting the lack of structured professional development obligations. As a result, interpreters in these countries may have fewer opportunities for systematic skill development. Figure 9a and 9b highlight the subject-specific requirements.

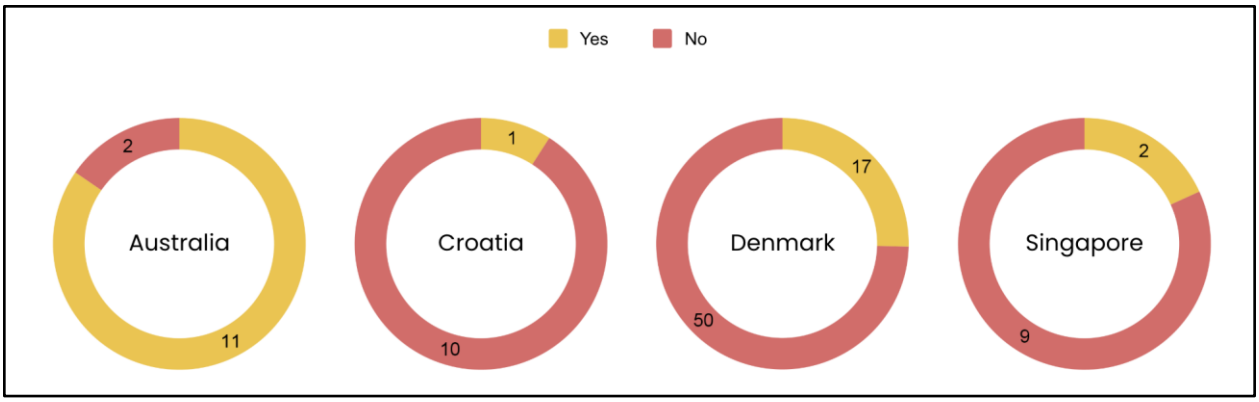

Figure 9a: Subject-Specific CPD Requirements

Australia	Croatia	Denmark	Singapore
• Skill Development and Knowledge • Industry Engagement • Language Maintenance • Ethics	• Ethical codex for Deafblind interpreting	• Subjects/activities specified by DNTM. • Core Interpreting Skills • Language Skills Development	• SgSL • Teaching Deaf students in a mainstream school

Figure 9b: Subject-Specific Topics

Participation patterns further illustrate these differences. Australian and Danish interpreters tend to engage in CPD more regularly, typically monthly or a few times per year (Figure 10), and most report completing 21–40 hours annually (Figure 11). Conversely, participation in Croatia and Singapore is less consistent, with interpreters attending fewer hours overall.

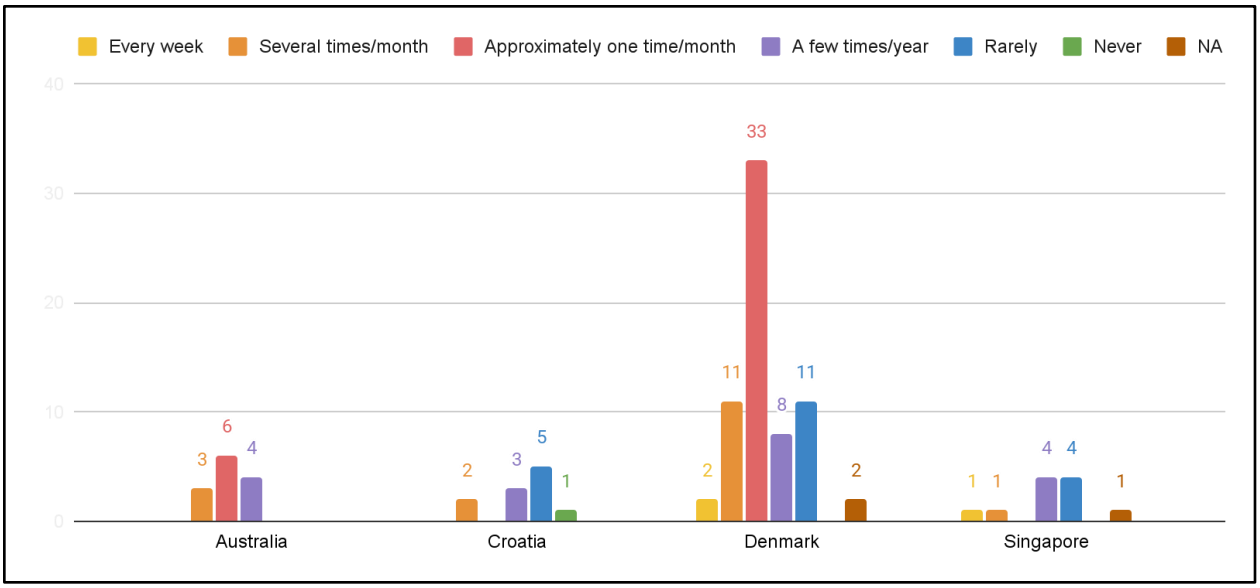

Figure 10: Frequency of CPD Participation

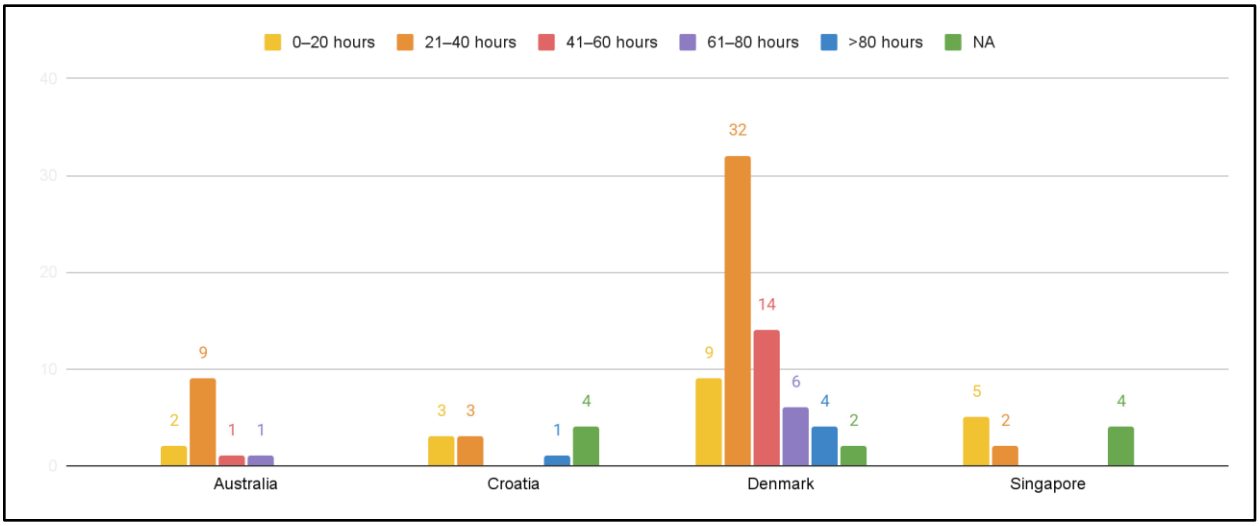

Figure 11: Annual CPD Hours

The providers of CPD also differ across contexts. In Australia, Denmark and Croatia, interpreter associations are the primary providers, ensuring access to structured, community-focused learning opportunities. In Singapore, CPD is mostly delivered by individual interpreters, with little involvement from formal organisations. This reflects a reliance on informal or individual initiatives rather than centralised, standardised CPD infrastructure. Figure 12 shows the various ways that CPD is provided.

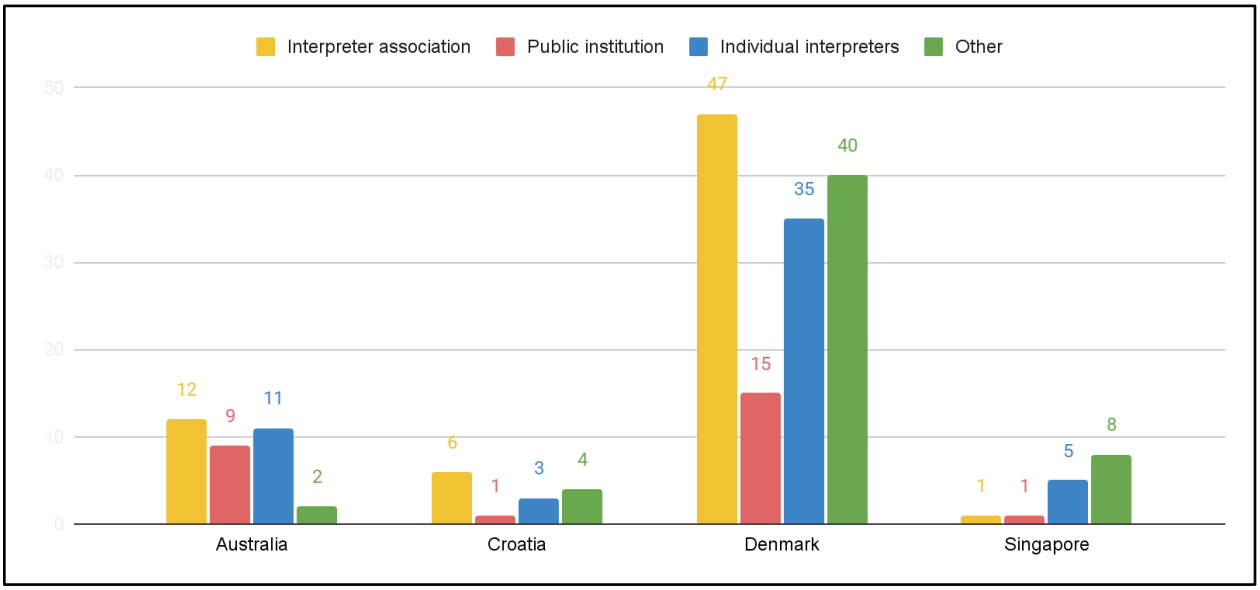

Figure 12: CPD Providers

Perception and Barriers

Across all four countries, respondents generally rated CPD as important (Figure 13), although Denmark's median importance was lower than the other three countries. A high rate of “not enough CPD” from Denmark indicates a higher importance than respondents may have initially indicated. There seems to be a desire for professional development, but the bureaucracy surrounding the current system is perceived as too extensive and demotivating.

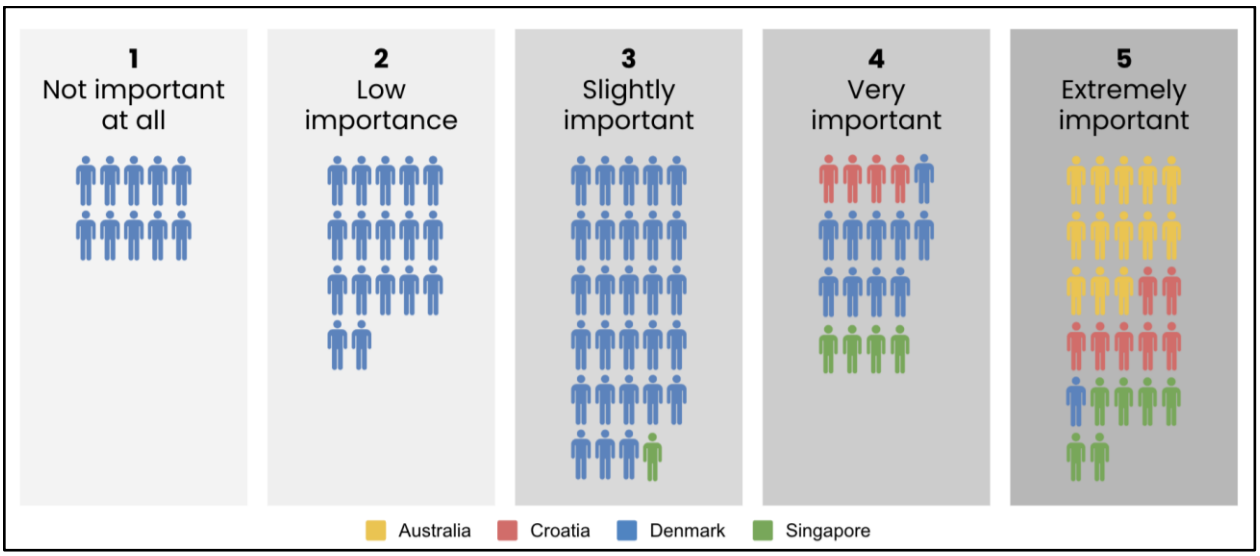

Figure 13: Importance of CPD for Professional Development

Significant differences were observed in the structure and accessibility of CPD (Figure 14). Australian respondents noted the most structured and extensive CPD system, due to a mandatory certification system. The NAATI requirements are a key external motivator for practitioners to engage with CPD, and for providers such as training providers, professional associations and interpreting agencies to deliver CPD. In Singapore, CPD access appears moderate but inconsistent, with practitioners relying on international webinars and informal learning. Croatian respondents reported the lowest availability of CPD, due to a lack of national infrastructure. The majority of Danish interpreters reported CPD to be partially or moderately accessible. Since the CPD requirement is fairly new in Denmark, a lack of sufficient CPD activity providers still exists.

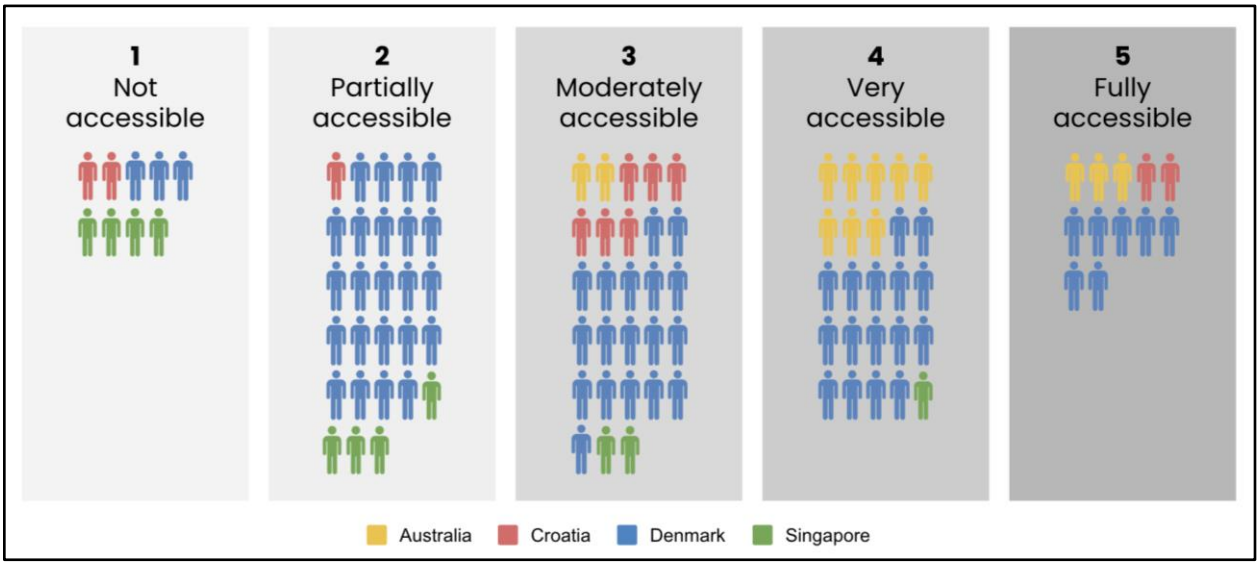

Figure 14: Accessibility of CPD

Several perceived barriers were common across all countries, with time and life logistics (timing, commitments, time constraints) showing up repeatedly. Cost was also identified by respondents as a major barrier to CPD participation. Availability was less of an issue for Australian respondents, but was noted by respondents from the other three countries. There was also a shared concern about the relevance of CPD, particularly for those practitioners who were more advanced in their careers or wanted specialist CPD content. Respondents across all countries noted a need for skills-focused, practice-relevant

training. See Figure 15 for a full breakdown of barriers.

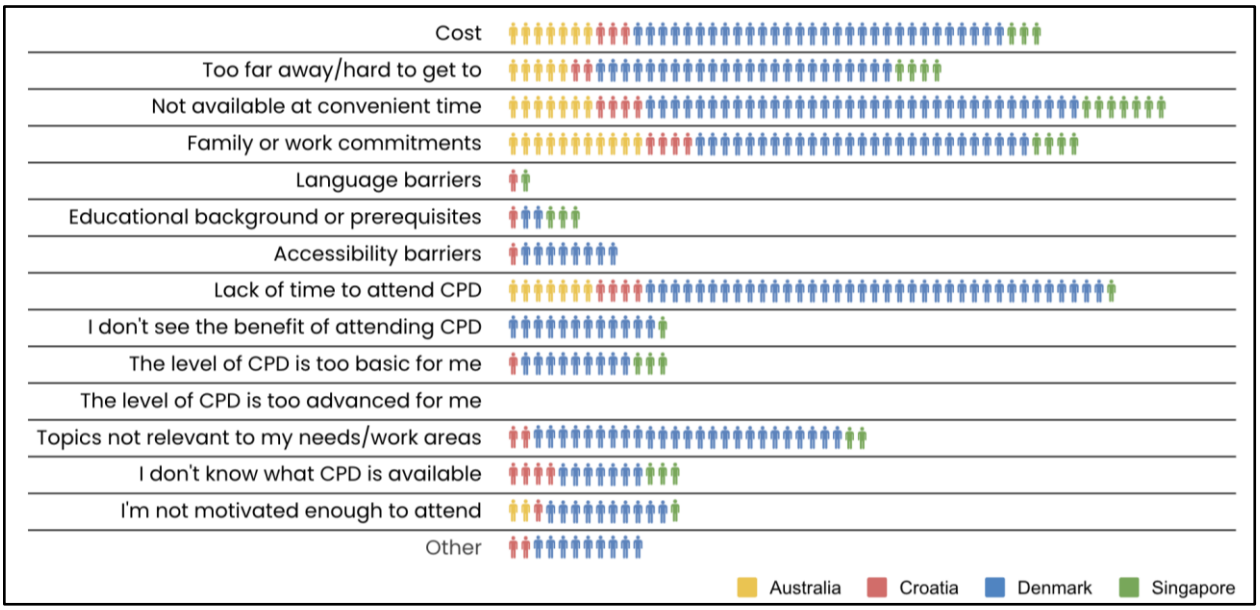

Figure 16: Barriers to CPD

Themes for Change

The following themes were found amongst respondents' desired changes for their respective country's CPD systems.

Leadership, Quality, and Professional Standards: Interpreters in Australia and Singapore expressed a desire for CPD to be led by Deaf professionals, with a focus on social justice, ethical practice, and community responsibility. Participants across all four countries emphasised that CPD should support professional certification and contribute to raising national interpreting standards. They also noted the importance of clear standards to ensure that only qualified individuals are recognised as interpreters.

Structure, Content, and Relevance: Respondents indicated that CPD should be well-structured, incorporating hands-on practice, mentorship, and constructive feedback. Many noted the need for more intermediate and advanced sessions, as current offerings are often basic or repetitive. Interpreters also highlighted specific topics that should be covered, including ethical

decision-making, storytelling, role-shifting, freelancing, finance, and domain-specific skills. Additionally, there is a call for more sign language courses and bridging programs to better prepare learners for interpreter training.

Accessibility and Availability:
Survey participants stressed the need for CPD to be offered more frequently and in more locations, including international opportunities. Flexible delivery formats, such as online, hybrid, and on-demand sessions, were recommended to accommodate diverse schedules, time zones, and professional contexts.

System, Funding, and Organisational Support:
Respondents highlighted the importance of greater government support as well as stronger backing from employers. Employers should fund, approve, and encourage CPD attendance. Suggestions were also made for a better-organised CPD system, including automated tracking of participation, certification of hours, and mandatory training at least once per year.

Community and Collaboration:
Interpreters expressed interest in CPD that brings together participants from different organisations, freelance backgrounds, and professional sectors. Group learning, sharing perspectives, and collaborative teamwork were identified as valuable opportunities to strengthen the profession and build a supportive community.

<u>The Gaps</u>

Limited Availability:
While only 7.7% of Australian respondents noted availability as a concern, 75-90% of respondents in Denmark, Croatia, and Singapore reported a lack of CPD availability, which restricts interpreters' ability to engage in regular professional development.

Inconsistent Structure and Requirements:
Australian and Danish respondents described point-based expectations and referred to a

structural requirement, while Croatian and Singaporean respondents frequently indicated that there were no clear requirements. This suggests that there is a lack of a centralised framework for CPD in those contexts, resulting in inconsistent expectations and limited formal guidance for interpreters. Australia and Denmark aside, there also seemed to be no uniform system to record CPD hours, achievements, or certification across the two other countries, making it difficult to track professional development consistently.

Relevance and Quality of CPD:
While more visible in Danish responses, there was an overall suggestion that the available CPD often does not align with interpreters' practical needs. Topics may be repetitive, basic, or unrelated to real-world interpreting scenarios, and this can be seen by practitioners as limiting their usefulness for skill development (Tobias et al., 2020).

Accessibility Barriers:
As discussed above, respondents from all countries noted challenges such as cost, timing, location, and lack of information, which make it difficult for many to attend CPD activities.

Professional Recognition and Support:
Respondents also noted that CPD was not recognised as a formal pathway for career advancement. As there was also a lack of formal qualifications and training, this is a serious concern in how interpreters are considered 'work ready' overall, as well as in specific settings and contexts. A lack of recognition and career advancement can lead to a lack of motivation to undertake CPD if it is not required (Hlavac et al., 2025).

Conclusion & Recommendations

Analysing the results from the four countries, a general and persistent theme emerges: interpreters across all contexts recognise the significance of continuing professional development (CPD) as essential for maintaining high-quality and ethically responsible interpreting practice. Although this understanding is shared, the structure and accessibility of CPD differ considerably between countries.

Australia has the most formalised system, where CPD is embedded within a national certification framework that requires regular participation, documentation, and clearly defined development pathways. It is also the only country where respondents reported that enough CPD was available. The recent implementation of the formal Danish CPD system may be one reason for the dissatisfaction among interpreters, as change takes time. Another possible reason is that FTT, the association of Sign Language Interpreters, was not involved in the drafting of the system, since it was implemented through a tender round conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs for DNTM and STUK. Had interpreters been involved in the process, the conditions and requirements might have been more realistic and achievable for most interpreters, and overall satisfaction might have been higher. The survey shows a call for changing the requirements for CPD. In contrast, Singapore and Croatia represent contexts where CPD remains largely voluntary, occasional, and tied to informal or externally funded initiatives.

Across all four countries, interpreters identified similar barriers: cost, timing, limited availability of specialised or advanced training, and, in some cases, limited accessibility or insufficient information about existing opportunities.

Despite these barriers, interpreters remain strongly motivated to continue learning and express a clear preference for training that is relevant, community-informed, and aligned with the increasingly complex demands of interpreting. The findings therefore suggest that CPD needs to be strengthened at a structural level to ensure that interpreters can remain current in their practice and effectively meet the needs of Deaf communities. Overall, more coordinated and sustainable approaches to CPD are required to support the ongoing development of the profession and to ensure equitable, high-quality access for Deaf communities.

General Recommendations:

Strengthen structural and organisational support for CPD:
Clearer national or organisational expectations for ongoing professional learning, along with financial or logistical support from employers and institutions, would help ensure more consistent and equitable access to CPD across countries. This is supported by research from Tobias et al. (2020), which argued for clear expectations around CPD as well as structural support to make access more equitable.

Industry and community involvement in CPD systems:
The Australian CPD system under NAATI has significant involvement and consultation with translators and interpreters, as well as LOTE and Deaf Community input. This then creates a buy-in by the industry and language communities, which can be seen by the uptake of CPD within Australia. This model should be replicated in the other countries to redevelop and boost their current systems or to establish a system where one currently doesn't exist.

Improve accessibility through flexible and diverse delivery modes:
Offering CPD through online, hybrid, and on-demand formats can help address barriers related to cost, timing, and geography, making opportunities more accessible for interpreters in varied professional contexts. Tobias et al. (2020) explicitly make the same recommendation in a report commissioned by NAATI, calling for more online offerings and improving CPD offerings in regional and remote areas.

Expand specialised, Deaf-led, and advanced CPD opportunities:
Increasing the availability of community-driven, domain-specific, and higher-level training would better support interpreters at different stages of their careers and align CPD with the complex demands of contemporary interpreting work. This aligns with research by Bontempo et al. (2014) that highlights the value of Deaf-led, community-based CPD and specialist modular training designed for community needs.

Promote sustainable peer-based learning:
Mentoring, peer supervision, and reflective practice groups provide accessible ways to

support ongoing development, particularly in contexts where formal CPD is limited or inconsistently available. Supervision has been shown to be successful for reflection and mutual support, with group supervision strengthening professional standards, learning, wellbeing, and collegial relationships (Gebruers, 2019), while Stone (2018) describes peer-based learning activities such as mentoring and reflective practice groups as beneficial forms of CPD for sign language interpreters.

* Note - Used ChatGPT 5.1 for checking sentence structure and grammar

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Appendix A - The survey instrument

Interpreter CPD Opportunities (Singapore)

Thank you for taking part in this short survey on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for sign language interpreters.

The purpose of this survey is to understand interpreters' knowledge, experiences, and attitudes toward CPD, as well as to gain insights into the CPD systems for sign language interpreters in four countries: Australia, Denmark, Croatia, and Singapore.

We are four students from the EUMASLI (European Master in Sign Language Interpreting) program, one from each of these countries, and we are writing a paper comparing how CPD is implemented in each country.

Your responses will remain completely anonymous, and the survey should take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete.

SECTION 1: Background Information

1. Are you a Deaf or hearing interpreter?

Deaf	Hearing

2. Your Age Group

18 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 +

3. Gender

Male	Female	Non-binary	Gender diverse	Prefer not to say

4. How many years have you been working as an interpreter?

< 1 year	1 - 3 years	4 - 7 years	8 - 15 years	> 15 years

5. What level of interpreter training did you complete? [Please put NA if not applicable.]

None	Short course/workshop
2-3 year education programme	Bachelor's degree (BA)
Master's degree (MA)	Doctorate (PhD)
Other:	

6. What is your employment status?

Full-time interpreter	Part-time interpreter
Self-employed, full-time	Self-employed, part-time
Other:	

SECTION 2: CPD in Your Country

7. Which organisation or authority requires interpreters to undertake CPD activities in your country? [Please put NA if not applicable.]

8. How often do you participate in CPD activities?

Every week	Several times a month
Approximately one time a month	A few times a year
Rarely	Never
Not applicable	

9. How many hours of CPD do you typically attend annually?

0 – 20 hours	21 – 40 hours
41 – 60 hours	61 – 70 hours
80+ hours	Not applicable

10. Who provides CPD activities in your country?

Interpreter association	Public institution
Individual interpreters	Other:

11. Do you have to collect a certain amount of points, credits, hours, certificates, or other means of proof for your CPD activities? If yes, what are the requirements? If no, please put NA if not applicable.

12. Are you required to study specific subjects for CPD?

Yes	No

13. If you answered yes to the question above, please specify which specific topics are required.

14. Do you think there are enough CPD opportunities available for interpreters in your country?

Yes	No

SECTION 3: Perceptions and Barriers

15. How important do you consider CPD for your professional development?

1	2	3	4	5

Not Important Extremely Important

16. How accessible are CPD activities for you?

1	2	3	4	5

Not Accessible Fully Accessible

17. If you face barriers to accessing CPD, what are they? (Select all that apply)
    - Cost Too far away/hard to get to
    - Not available at a convenient time

- Family or work commitments
- Language barriers
- Educational background or prerequisites
- Accessibility barriers
- Lack of time to attend CPD
- Lack of CPD opportunities available
- I don't see the benefit of attending CPD
- The level of CPD is too basic for me
- The level of CPD is too advanced for me
- Topics not relevant to my needs/work areas
- I don't know what CPD is available
- I'm not motivated enough to attend
- Other

18. In the future, what changes would you like to see in CPD for interpreters in your country?

SECTION 4: Additional Comments

19. Any additional comments or suggestions?