

## Portrait

### Tess for barrier-free phone calls

#### Telephone interpreting service allows calls for hearing impaired people

**Rendsburg. If deaf or hearing impaired people want to make phone calls, they call the Tess Relay-Dienste. The nationwide telephone interpreting service mediates conversations between hearing impaired and hearing people. With two relay services, it overcomes communication barriers, because the telephone calls are simultaneously translated from German sign language or written language into German spoken language and vice versa. The Tess – Relay-Dienste are certified according to DIN ISO 9001: 2015.**

"With Tess, hearing-impaired people can make independent telephone calls in their desired form of communication: in written language, German sign language or even spoken language", Sabine Broweleit, Managing Director of Tess – Relay-Dienste GmbH, explains one advantage of the telephone interpreting service. "Before Tess existed, telephoning was not possible for many people with hearing and speech impediments without outside help," continues S. Broweleit.

For this reason, the German Society of the Hearing Impaired - Self-help and Professional Associations and Deutsche Telekom AG launched the combined Tess project in 2005. With the expertise of the Hearing Impaired Association and Telekom's technical know-how, both project founders created a unique service that addresses the special needs of hearing impaired people. Two interpreting services simultaneously translate telephone calls from German sign language or written language into German and vice versa.

The test phase of the project lasted four years and was so successful that Tess was able to start its regular service in 2009. Since August 2012, the Tess Relay Dienste for the areas of telephone interpreting in sign language and written language for private and professional use as well as for the provision, operation and further devel-

opment of an internet-based communication platform have been certified by the DEKRA according to DIN ISO 9001: 2015.

The constant improvement of the service and a high-quality awareness are a matter of course for the hearing and deaf employees of the Tess – Relay-Dienste. For example, the free emergency call service has been improved. Since December 2013, Tess has been offering a free registration for anyone interested in arranging emergency calls. "We can direct emergency calls 110 or 112 via our services throughout Germany directly to the responsible emergency call center and provide barrier-free travel, which is why we offer it, of course," explains S. Broweleit.

The company receives its public contract from the Federal Network Agency and leading providers of public telecommunications.<sup>1</sup> The commission is based on § 45 Telecommunications Act (TKG) and includes the necessary provision of a telephone exchange service for disabled end users in order to take their interests into account in the planning and provision of telecommunications services to the public. The Federal Network Agency also determines the opening hours of the interpreting service. He is available 24 hours a day for private calls. Professional telephone calls can be made Monday through Thursday from 8:00 to 18:00 and on Fridays until 17:00.

### **Relay services TeSign and TeScript for special requirements**

With two services, the Tess – Relay-Dienste cover the different needs of deaf and hearing-impaired people. The video interpreting service TeSign is suitable for deaf and antecedents. They communicate mainly in German Sign Language (DGS), which differs in grammar and sentence structure from the German spoken language. For many deaf people, DGS is their native language. With the help of TeSign relay service, they can make calls in DGS. The interpreter simultaneously translates the contents of the conversation from DGS into German and vice versa.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2019: 1 & 1 Drillisch AG, 1 & 1 Versatel GmbH, 1 & 1 Telecom GmbH, Communication Services TELE2 GmbH, EWE TEL GmbH, freenet AG, M-net Telekommunikations GmbH, NetCologne Gesellschaft für Telekommunikation mbH, QSC AG, Telefónica Germany GmbH & Co. OHG, Telekom Deutschland GmbH, Unitymedia NRW GmbH, Vodafone GmbH, Vodafone Kabel Deutschland GmbH

Tess offers translation into written language for people who are late-deaf, hearing-impaired and speech-impaired people. These people grew up in a noisy language and usually do not use sign language. Tess has developed the TeScript service for them. They can use it to make written phone calls. The interpreter translates the contents of the conversation simultaneously from written language into German and vice versa.

However, calls in which the written or sign language interpreter only interprets on one side are also possible. With 'Voice Carry Over - Self Speaking' hearing-impaired people with good phonetic competence can speak directly to their hearing participants. The answers will be interpreted for the hearing-impaired participant.

'Hearing Carry Over - Listening & Writing' can be used by voice-, speech or language impaired people. They write while the interpreter reads this out loud for the other participant in the conversation. The answers can be heard by themselves.

The interpreting services can be called by the users via an Internet connection with PC, smartphone, tablet PC and various SIP telephones (telephone for Internet telephony: SIP = Session Initiation Protocol).

**More information is available at [www.tess-relay-dienste.de](http://www.tess-relay-dienste.de).**

Reproduction free of charge, proof requested

**Editorial contact:** Nadine Brohm, Tel. 0 43 31/ 58 97-58, [brohm@tess-relay-dienste.de](mailto:brohm@tess-relay-dienste.de)

**For information about Tess-Relay-Dienste, contact:**

Tess-Relay-Dienste GmbH

Johannes-Wilhelm-Geiger-Weg 8

24768 Rendsburg

Tel.: 0 43 31/ 58 97-23

Fax: 0 43 31/58 97-45

Email: [info@tess-relay-dienste.de](mailto:info@tess-relay-dienste.de)