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**ELF at the European Commission:
a survey-based study on interpreters' perceptions**

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AAR: Annual Activity Report

ACE: Asian Corpus of English

ACI: auxiliary conference interpreter

AIIIC: International Association of Conference Interpreters

CCAB: Centre de Conférences Albert Borschette

CDT: Translation Centre

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference

CIION: Commission

CoA: Court of Auditors

CoP: Community of Practice

CoR: Committee of the Regions

COSME: COmpetitiveness of enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

CSS: Customer Satisfaction Survey

DG EAC: Directorate General for Education and Culture

DG LINC: Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences

DG SCIC: Directorate-General for Interpretation

DG TAXUD: Directorate General for Taxation and Customs

DGT: Directorate-General for Translation

EC: European Commission

ECA: European Court of Auditors

ECB: European Central Bank

ECJ/ECoJ: European Court of Justice

ECSC: European Coal and Steel Community

EEC: European Economic Community

EESC: European Economic and Social Committee

EIB: European Investment Bank

ELF: English as a lingua franca

ELFA: English as a Lingua Franca in the Academic Settings

EMCI: European Masters in Conference Interpreting

ENL: English as a native language

EP: European Parliament

EPI: English Proficiency Index

EU: European Union

EURAMIS: European advanced multilingual information system

Euratom: European Community for the Atomic Energy

GSC: General Secretariat of the Council

IATE: Interactive Terminology for Europe

IBPG: Interpreters in Brussels Practice Group

IMR: Individual multilingual repertoires

IPE: Interpreters' perception of ELF

ITELF: Interpreting, Translating & ELF

KPI: Key Performance Indicator

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LFC: Lingua Franca Core

MEP: Member of the European Parliament

MRP: Multilingual resource pool

MS: Member State

MT: mother tongue

MT+2: mother tongue + 2

NNS: non-native speaker

NNSE: non-native speaker of English

NS: native speaker

NSE: native speaker of English

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OJ: Official Journal

RDR: relative disenfranchisement rate

RdS: rapport de séance

SERIF: Système d'Enregistrement de Rapports sur les Interprètes Freelance (Online Freelance Interpreter reporting system)

ST: source text

T&I: translating & interpreting

TED: Tenders Electronic Daily

TEU: Treaty on European Union

TT: target text

VOICE: Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English

WE: World Englishes

I. INTRODUCTION

There is one universal language.

It is called 'human language'

and it is the most perfect expression of human nature.

Birds fly, fish swim, people speak.

John C. Maher

I.1 English as a Lingua Franca and interpretation in the EU

English used as a lingua franca (ELF) is possibly becoming one the most common means of intercultural communication around the world. A remarkable aspect of this phenomenon is its unprecedented and unrivalled spread around the world, encompassing different geographical regions and a great array of domains, across all possible communication media. “ELF is simultaneously the consequence and the principal language medium of GLOBALIZING PROCESSES” (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011: 303). If it is true that it is globalization that has made the world more interconnected, shortened distances and created new economic, cultural and professional ties across geographical and conventional boundaries, it is equally true that most of these connections today are kept alive by daily spoken and written interactions, occurring to a large extent in English as a lingua franca (ELF).

ELF research, despite being quite young (see 1.2), has grown considerably in a relatively short period of time, collecting empirical data and producing evolving orientations and conceptual frameworks that aim to describe a phenomenon that is very much still in the making. The range of communicative events analysed by ELF research is mostly limited to face-to-face interactions, such as group discussions and business meetings, and does not include more complex and monologic settings, such as conferences (see Reithofer 2010: 149). Nevertheless, ELF is increasingly making way into these

communication settings as well, where language barriers were traditionally overcome solely by means of interpretation services.

Interpreting and ELF are naturally intertwined within the European Institutions, which represent a particularly stimulating scenario to investigate, as a tension is evident between language policies consensually agreed on a higher level and based on multilingualism and the daily choices on how to apply these policies, which affect the successful unfolding of communication events in various ways. The main research hypothesis of the present study is that ELF is a determining factor directly affecting how multilingualism is applied within the EU. More specifically, it affects language arrangements in meetings, the role of interpretation services, meeting participants' rights and not least the interpreters' work in the booth.

The interpreting services of the EU are the largest employer of conference interpreters in the world, both in terms of working days and language coverage (24 EU official languages plus occasionally non-EU languages). Even though the EU is ideologically multilingual and has the largest translation and interpretation services worldwide, English is frequently used as a lingua franca and ELF has become an essential component of the daily functioning of its institutions. Furthermore, the comparison between the two communication modes – ELF and interpretation - in the context of the European Union is important, when considering the broader principles of multilingualism and fair participation rights at stake, as confirmed by the results of a study conducted by Gazzola and Grin (2013). The two researchers have carried out a quantitative evaluation of the fairness of the EU language policy, concluding that, if the EU were to abandon multilingualism in favour of one lingua franca, the main consequence would be a considerable decrease in the level of communicative effectiveness and participants' inclusiveness (see 2.6).

Whereas research has already been conducted on ELF in a series of communication settings, on the cost and fairness of multilingualism vs. monolingualism within the EU (see 2.6) and on the interpreters' stance on the impact of ELF on their profession², no study so far has explored the link between all three domains. The simple fact that meetings are

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/en_print_2016.pdf (last accessed May 2019)

² Research in this field is at its infancy and data are limited both in terms of interpreters directly involved in surveys and in the number of experimental studies conducted so far (see 1.5.1).

organized within the European Institutions, where both ELF and interpretation are offered as a way to implement multilingualism (see 2.3; 3.1) suggests that such a link exists, if only by virtue of the coexistence of these elements within single communication events. The exploration of this uncharted territory implies that few references exist to this day, but also offers the possibility of shedding light on a field that has only been partially studied so far.

I.2 Research objectives

The present study mainly has an exploratory and descriptive dimension (Williams and Chersterman 2002: 65).

The research questions of the study are:

- What is the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on communicative effectiveness?
- What is the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on their interpreting?
- What is the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on multilingualism and participation rights?

The approach is therefore mainly qualitative, inductively leading to general conclusions starting from a set of data, gathered in a real-life setting, by means of a questionnaire (see I.3). Although informed guesses could be made before the data are gathered, the main goal is not to formulate strict hypotheses to be tested empirically (which would rather be the natural subsequent step of the study, see 7.5) but rather to gather information and qualitative data on a specific domain, that has not received much attention by research so far, to verify whether existing indications on ELF are corroborated or denied.

The importance of the topic of 'attitude towards ELF' is acknowledged by ELF researchers themselves:

No matter how effectively researchers demonstrate the communicative advantages of an ELF approach, unless these advantages are seen as such by those most closely involved, i.e.

English language learners, teachers and NNS users in general, then any change is unlikely. And in this respect, **attitudes towards ELF and individuals' own perceptions of its implications** for them will inevitably be the principal determining factors (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011: 307) [emphasis added]

Interpreters (and translators) are not included in the circle of stakeholders mentioned by the authors, but it is stressed that the advantages of ELF communication, if any, need to be acknowledged and willingly embraced first and foremost by those directly involved.

I.3 The genesis of the project

In a first exploratory phase, the research project foresaw the compilation of a corpus from the recordings of a selected number of prototypical events, accompanied by the possibility to interview meeting participants (both in the booth and in the room) to compare their perception and stance on ELF and interpretation as alternative modes of communications on one side and the real unfolding of communication on the other. Meeting participants and interpreters are, within one single event, both the producers and the recipients of communication. They take on different roles as the interaction unfolds, actively shaping the communicative event. Comparing and contrasting their subjective experience with the event they comment upon was expected to offer a clear picture of potential advantages and disadvantages of the different communication modes involved.

Interpreter-mediated meetings at the EU are multi-layered events. DG SCIC acts as a service provider, but the official meeting organisers are either another DG within the Commission or the Secretariat of the Council, to which DG SCIC offers the interpretation service (see 3.5). Furthermore, a very high level of confidentiality generally applies to all EU meetings. The process to obtain all the necessary authorizations to record is therefore extremely complex and dependent upon several variables and actors. There is not one single interlocutor whom to contact to authorise recordings and offer technical assistance and as meetings are not recorded by default, an ex-post authorisation is useless. Due to these organizational and privacy constraints, this approach had to be abandoned, as the conditions were lacking to video record events and interview participants thereafter, within the limited time frame of the PhD project.

The possibility was considered to resort to existing recordings. The European Commission has a streaming service³, which offers access to a series of web-streamed events, including the interpretation service, which are then stored for a limited period of time (which varies according to the type of material). One of the research objectives was to combine any language analysis with the direct assessment and opinion of meeting participants and interpretation users. Not having any information on meeting participants, though, entails that it would not have been possible to establish whether English was their mother tongue or they were using it as a lingua franca and, if so, to verify whether their mother-tongue was available in the meeting's language regime. Furthermore, failing to ascertain the reasons behind the individual participants' behaviour (e.g. is the meeting participant speaking English despite having access to the interpretation service or for lack of an alternative? Is the meeting participant satisfied with the meeting's language setting? Is the meeting participant encountering difficulties in interacting with colleagues because of the language setting? Is communication effective according to the participant?) and the interpreters' opinion on the meeting proceedings (e.g. is the interpreter encountering difficulties interpreting specific speakers using ELF? Are speakers using ELF proving more difficult to interpret than speakers using their mother tongue? Is communication effective according to the interpreter?) would limit the analysis to a source text – target text comparison, therefore restricting the scope to ELF's impact on the language dimension, with no possible insight on participants direct perception. The pragmatic dimension of the event, that is the actual use of language in the specific communication setting where it occurs, would be completely lost.

The decision was finally taken to focus on one single category, that of interpreters, in their role of “first-hand witnesses to actual language use” (Donovan 2009: 62). Their opinion on the use of English as a Lingua Franca and effective communication is relevant, considering that they are in the front line when it comes to any evolution in the language policies adopted by the EU. Furthermore, it is their task and responsibility to make sure that communication between participants runs smoothly, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of ensuring that “the European and national institutions can effectively exercise their right

³ <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu> (last accessed May 2020)

of democratic scrutiny”⁴ (see 2.4). EU interpreters are in a unique position, as they observe these phenomena from different points of view (see Chapter 3). They are agents of multilingualism, as with their services they make sure that a number of meetings at the European Institutions can be held in different languages. They participate in a great variety of meetings, in terms of formality (meetings involving Ministers, Commissioners, trade unionists, ambassadors but also students and regular citizens), topic (from environment, economy and finance, to medicine, education and sports, just to name a few), technical expertise (i.e. discussions on technical legal drafting, presentation of laboratory testing methods, debate on fertilizers and chemical compounds), communication setting (i.e. conferences, working groups, committees, debates, training sessions, and so on), language regime (from full-regime meetings to bilingual encounters). Hence, they are exposed to communication taking place in all possible forms and languages. When they are in the booth, they are both observers and beneficiaries of ELF communication, as they witness interaction between ELF speakers, and are recipients of the ELF speeches that they interpret into their mother tongue. Furthermore, they represent an extremely homogenous group, as they are active on the same market, are all bound by the same working and financial conditions, and they all have to fulfil the same quality requirements (see 3.2.1).

I.4 Material and method

The present research project is to be placed in the broader field of ITEL (ELF, translation and interpretation, see 1.5). It falls within the field of ‘applied research’ or ‘action research’, that is “research conducted by practitioners, designed to solve real-life problems that affect the researcher/practitioner” (Hale & Napier 2013: 11) and is conducted by a practisearcher (see I.4), that is an in-group member of the population being analysed (Bendazzoli 2016: 15). In particular, an ethnographic approach has been adopted, which is considered an appropriate methodology to conduct research in this field (Hale and Napier 2013: 85), considering that interpreting occurs in a specific social context and is influenced by linguistic and cultural factors.

⁴ Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0596:FIN:EN:PDF> (last accessed May 2019).

The research has been carried out by means of a questionnaire. Surveys, and more specifically questionnaires, are a common tool in interpreting research (Hale and Napier 2013: 51). They allow for a quantitative and - depending on the questions - qualitative description of trends, opinions, and beliefs of a population by studying a sample thereof. The use of the questionnaire as a research tool appears particularly appropriate as “survey-based studies in Translation Studies allow contact to be made between the academic and professional worlds, since they are both interested in the current state of the professional practice of translation in its many different shapes and forms” (Kuznik et al. 2010: 18). Questionnaires, in addition to helping determine the attitudes of respondents, also enable the formulation of generalisable statements from the information obtained.

The study relies on qualitative data, that are obtained directly by participants by means of a voluntary survey, a questionnaire, called “**IPE, Interpreters’ Perception of ELF**”, which is addressed to interpreters working for the EU and revolves around the topics of ELF, multilingualism and communicative effectiveness (see Chapter 5).

Even though it has not been possible to interview interpreters and participants on a set of meetings they both participated in, an attempt has been made to gather some information on EU meetings’ participants’ stance on these types of events. To this aim, the data from a second survey have been analysed, more specifically the latest edition of the “**CSS, Customer Satisfaction Survey**”, which is arranged every two years by the European Commission Directorate-General for Interpretation and addressed to meeting participants, in order to assess their satisfaction with the services provided. Neither CSS data nor any analysis thereof are currently published by DG SCIC⁵. Nevertheless, the practisearcher (see I.5) was granted access to the raw data in a later stage of the research. In the CSS, meeting participants express their opinion on meetings’ language arrangements and interpretation services referring to the same types of events interpreters comment upon. The two surveys have a different focus and answers are not directly comparable. Therefore a thorough analysis and selection have been carried out, to focus exclusively on the elements that could either confirm or refute IPE’s results (see Chapter 6). CSS data partially complement the IPE, adding new elements as to the communication

⁵ The Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission. informally referred to as DG SCIC.

dynamics during EU meetings and seem to confirm some of the reflections and intuitions expressed by interpreters in open-ended questions.

I.5 The role of practisearcher

Since the early days of Interpreting Studies, research has heavily benefitted from the contribution of professionals in the field. The term *practisearcher* was first used in Interpreting Research (IR) by Gile in 1994, when describing the first research activities in this academic discipline, which were mostly conducted by professional interpreters on the basis of their direct experience. IR initially developed precisely from the work of “practisearcher theorizing from their own experience” (Bendazzoli *ibid*: 14). Throughout the years, the number of active practisearchers has increased⁶ and the adopted methodological approach has extended to include empirical and interdisciplinary research. The author of the project falls within this category, being an Agent for Conference Interpreting (ACI) working for the EU institution (see 3.2) and a researcher.

Fieldwork activities are extensively used in social sciences in general, mostly to describe the social organization and activities of a particular group of people, by directly participating in the life of the observed community (Duranti 1997: 85). It is the researcher that, by establishing some kind of relationship with the community, manages to observe and collect relevant data. The very act of gaining access to the community and obtaining the necessary status of observer or even participant is a very delicate phase of the research, but it is essential to gather data that would otherwise be inaccessible. Furthermore, complete participation in the process gives the researcher “important insights into what it means to be a participant in a given situation and suggests hypotheses and further questions” (Duranti *ibid*: 100). The practisearcher has the undeniable advantage of being *already* a member of the community, which entails privileged access to data and “backstage behaviour” (Goffman, 1990) that might not be observed or noticed by members of other communities (both professional or academic ones).

⁶ In between 1989 and 1994 out of the 25 most prolific authors in the field, 23 were active professional interpreters, according to an analysis by Pöchhacker (1995: 52), a trend that is supposed to have been further promoted by the creation of postgraduate and doctoral programmes in Interpreting in Europe and beyond (Bendazzoli 2016: 14).

Indeed, having a chance to sit in a booth during meetings that usually entail a high degree of confidentiality and are at the core of the European decision-making process (see Chapter 3) offers a vantage point that is different from that of an outgroup member.

1.5.1 The challenges of being a practisearcher

The role of the practisearcher presents both advantages and disadvantages.

One of the main advantages of being a member of the group that is involved in the research is the possibility to describe accurately both the target community and the context in which it operates. There are information available on-line on the requirements to become a EU interpreter (be it ACI or official, see 3.2), on the job description, and some interpreters can even be heard in action in the occasional web-streamed event. Nevertheless, knowing first-hand what goes on behind the curtains and the main features of meetings interpreters participate in enables the practisearcher to faithfully depict the environment in which the linguistic phenomena being studied unfold. Additionally, being an ‘insider’, also implies being able to expand on interpreters’ references, making use of the ‘web of meanings’ of their ‘insider knowledge’ (Denscombe 2007: 130). Hints and allusions can be more reliably deciphered and referred to the experience of the practisearcher.

Conversely, the researcher needs to make sure to keep a certain distance from the community they are an active member of:

The relationship between the doctoral study and the professional setting raises several important issues for practitioner researchers, with the most important being the question of whether ‘insiders’ can achieve any meaningful degree of critical distance from their workplace or their colleagues. But it is the development of this critical position with respect to research and the research setting that defines doctoral-level study. Potentially this puts the insider in a place that requires the researcher to tread a fine line between the prevailing academic norms and values of the university with the norms and values of the workplace, for **the researcher must be critical of the practices revealed through their study, whilst potentially continuing to engage with them** (Drake & Heath 2011: 19). [emphasis added]

In this specific project, the potential risk of being unable to keep a ‘critical’ stance towards the professional practices being analysed is naturally overcome by the fact that the interpreting activities that the practisearcher engages with professionally are not the

object of the study. Nor is the community of professionals which the practisearcher is an active member of. Fellow interpreters are rather the source of the data being analysed. The co-workers are invited to express their opinion on one aspect of their job, which does not call into question their abilities or professionalism in any way. On the other hand, knowing that these opinions are to be analysed by a fellow interpreter might represent a guarantee as to the way in which the material will be dealt with, as the assumption is that research by a practitioner ultimately aims at possibly improving the practice and the situation in which the practice takes place (Robson 2011).

Being a member of the community also presents the advantage of having a more direct contact with the reality being investigated in merely logistical terms, that is knowing the organization's structure, 'the rules of the game' and whom to contact to have access to specific data, as well as establishing a rapport with the relevant participants. This element also calls for extreme caution when managing personal data as the practisearcher, who has access to internal databases, might be also perceived as a threat in terms of sensible data handling (see 5.1.2).

The full professional immersion in the community might also become a double-edged sword, as "any incident would have an impact on both the professional and the academic dimensions" (Bendazzoli, *ibid*: 19). In a very hierarchical structure as that of DG SCIC (see 3.1), asking for authorizations or access to specific data means contacting and making requests to and interacting directly with Management, and even though this is strictly done as researcher, it is not possible to mark a sharp distinction between the two roles, as any source of tension or misunderstanding might have spill-over effects in the other dimension.

In the specific case of meetings organized by DG SCIC, there is also the great limitation of the high degree of confidentiality of events, to which the practisearcher only participates by virtue of her role as accredited interpreter and not as researcher, and is therefore bound by her obligations as provider of a professional service, whose objectives must prevail any research interest (Bendazzoli, *ibid*: 15).

Finally, the 'insider knowledge' inspiring and sometimes guiding the practisearcher, is made both of data that are official and documented but also of a multitude of informal, off-the-record information, that are shared in conversations with colleagues or that correspond to the habits and customs of the community or are simply hearsay, that are to be carefully sidestepped in favour of a more rigorous scientific approach.

I.6 Structure of the PhD thesis

The present dissertation consists of seven chapters.

Chapter 1 is a critical overview of the studies produced in the field of ELF, which are deemed relevant to the present project. *Chapter 2* explores the topic of multilingualism within the European Union, with specific attention being devoted to the diverse application of language policies and the spread of ELF within the EU institutions. *Chapter 3* focuses on the target population for which the IPE has been developed, mainly the interpreters working for the Directorate General for Interpretation of the European Commission, and the meetings to which they are assigned and upon which they are interviewed in the survey. *Chapter 4* illustrates a few key notions related to the drafting of the questionnaire and the analysis of the results. *Chapter 5* is entirely devoted to the IPE. The results to the questions are followed by the analysis of the related comment sections. *Chapter 6* presents an analysis of the CSS data which are relevant to the IPE. *Chapter 7* summarizes all the main research results in light of the research questions and offers some considerations on future research avenues.

1. ELF AS A RESEARCH FIELD

The only languages which do not change are dead ones.

David Crystal

This chapter offers a brief overview of the main research results in the broader field of ELF – and the subdiscipline of ITELf (interpreting, translating and English as a Lingua franca, see Albl-Mikasa 2018: 369) – which are deemed relevant for this study. Despite being a relatively recent field of research, ELF has already gone through different phases and explored different avenues. No account is provided either of ELF as it relates to the paradigm of World Englishes (WE), or of ELF research in different geographical areas of the world, domains (such as ELF in the business world, the academic world or ELF in immigrant encounters) and language pedagogy and teaching material.

1.1 English and its role as a lingua franca

The meaning of the expression “lingua franca” has evolved throughout history. The term originally referred to a pidgin, a contact language used in the Mediterranean region between the 14th and the 19th centuries, which was then slowly substituted in its areas of use by national languages (Brosch 2015: 72-73). Later in time, even though there is no clear date as to when, the term began to be used to refer to vehicular languages, that is “languages which regularly serve interlingual comprehension” (2015: 74).

The most widely accepted definition of *lingua franca* is that provided by UNESCO in 1953, “a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them” (UNESCO 1953: 46). The only dimension that this definition does not include, and that is implied today in the concept of lingua franca – at least when the term is associated with English – is that of its global nature. Following the UNESCO definition, the role of lingua franca is confirmed if at least

one of the interlocutors uses it as an L2⁷ language, meaning that it infers that native speakers of that language can be involved in the communication. This approach is in line with most of the definitions broadly accepted for the expression “English as a Lingua Franca” today, such as:

- Jenkins’, which has ELF as “the common language of choice among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds (2009: 200);
- Seidlhofer’s, in which ELF refers to “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option (2011: 7);
- Mauranen’s, which characterises it as “a contact language between speakers or speaker groups when at least one of them uses it as a second language” (2018: 8); and the
- the European Commission’s, in which it is “a vehicular language which allows inter-comprehension among people speaking different mother tongues, as a neutral language or jargon of which nobody can claim ownership, but also as the mother tongue of one of the parties in the exchange” (2011: 8).

English has acted as a lingua franca in many places throughout its history, mostly in the countries of the outer circle⁸, since their colonisation by the British (see Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey 2011), and even today there are many other languages in the world which would respond to the UNESCO definition, such as Spanish, Chinese and Arabic, yet the current situation, as far as English is concerned, is quite unprecedented. The increase in mobility and the new technologies marking today’s globalised world have opened up faster and

⁷ In the field of language teaching, the term L1 refers to a first or native language, whereas the term L2 refers to a second language or a foreign language.

⁸ The definition of ELF provided in the questionnaire addressed to interpreters (namely “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice”) is inspired by this definition, as it is clear, straightforward and applies to the settings on which interpreters have been interviewed.

⁹ The notion of ‘outer circle’ refers to Kachru’s model on the spread of English, viewed in terms of three concentric circles: “The Inner Circle refers to the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English. The Outer Circle represents the institutionalised non-native varieties (ESL) in the regions that have passed through extended periods of colonisation [...]. The Expanding Circle includes the regions where the performance varieties of the language are used essentially in EFL contexts” (Kachru 1985: 366-367).

more complex ways of communicating and have offered ELF the opportunity to become not only a lingua franca, but a global one, extending to different geographical areas and domains.

There are some criteria, which are not usually disputed among scholars, to ascertain whether a language can be considered ‘global’ (Morán Panero 2018: 557-558):

- demographic information (that is the present and expected future number of speakers of a language and their distribution);
- political and/or legal status (which reveals the functions and prestige attributed to said language in different countries);
- international dimension (to what extent a language is present and promoted in international domains, be they scientific, technological or cultural); and
- economic status (not of the language itself but rather of the countries and bodies in which it is spoken).

These indicators, once assessed by different methods, are used to produce rankings. When consulting the figures referring to the English language from the 22nd edition of the Ethnologue¹⁰, a database of every recognised language, it emerges that the total users of English in all countries are 1,132,366,680 (as L1: 379,007,140; as L2: 753,359,540). The demographic information concerning a language alone or its formal status within the borders of a number of countries does not say much about its relevance in terms of global communication (see the distinction Ammon makes between *global status* and *global function*, 2010: 101-102)¹¹.

In the case of English, when compared to other languages acting as lingua franca, such as Spanish or Arabic, it is its function as a global means of communication that really makes the difference. Furthermore, a language that is considered to have a high communicative value tends to have a higher pulling factor, as it opens up many

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/eng> (last accessed May 2019).

¹¹ The author identifies two dimensions to the term ‘global’, namely the geographical distribution of the language and its speakers (*global status*), and its actual use as a means for global communication (*global function*), stressing that the latter criterion has a higher relative value when assessing how international a language actually is.

opportunities in all the fields where the language prevails, and therefore attracts more potential learners¹².

As far as Europe is concerned, in a study¹³ which makes forecasts on future demand for English in Europe up to 2025 and beyond, the British Council which understandably keeps a very marked attitude that links English to the United Kingdom, and accentuates less its dimension as an international language in its own right¹⁴ – assesses that “the demand for English language teaching among the smaller¹⁵ future population will increase.” In addition to considering the relevance of a series of socio-economic factors, the study also underlines how “the cultural belief is that English is a must for children and it is a skill that parents are willing to invest in” (2018: 37), thus confirming that the more a language is perceived as global and having a relevant function, the higher the inclination to acquire it.

The attribution of value to a language has consequences both in the choices individuals make (such as investing in language learning) and, on a higher level, in investment decisions and language policies:

Individuals worry about what kind of linguistic repertoire they need in order for them or their children to profit from current conditions, and states worry about whether their citizens have the language skills they need in order to function under those conditions. (Heller 2010: 359)

In the same study, the British Council highlights that:

¹² Much effort is expended to actively promote English learning worldwide. A clear example is the “English Proficiency Index”, produced by EF Education First – an international education company that focuses on language – which ranks more than 60 countries worldwide based on their levels of English proficiency. The final report outlines how “well” the countries are doing in terms of English learning, and carries out an analysis on the positive correlation between English proficiency levels and a series of social and economic measures, such as economic competitiveness, prosperity and quality of life. (https://media.ef.com/_/~/media/centralefcom/epi/v4/downloads/full-reports/ef-epi-2014-english.pdf)

¹³ The report is titled “#EU2025ENGLISH. The Future Demand for English in Europe: 2025 and beyond”. Available at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/future_demand_for_english_in_europe_2025_and_beyond_british_council_2018.pdf (last accessed May 2019).

¹⁴ The British Council defines English as “the ultimate connecting language for business; the vehicle for **some of the finest literature** in the world; a door-opener for **British soft power**; and **the source of a thriving culture and education sector within the UK** and beyond” [emphasis added] (British Council 2018: 5).

¹⁵ It is assessed that the number of adults wishing to study English will be smaller, because of changes in population and age, but also in consideration of an increase in the number of people who will have studied English in school, for more hours and for longer, which, in a non-ELT (English Language Teaching) perspective, means that the overall number of people in some way tied to English will increase.

There is a trend of ‘top-down’ government policies and ‘bottom-up’ social demands increasing the demand for English. National education policies have introduced mandatory foreign language learning at a younger age and made it a compulsory subject for longer. Parents want English for their children as it has become an essential skill, teens and young adults want it for social currency, and older teens and adults want it for work and study necessity and opportunities (British Council, 2018: 40).

Conversely, the ‘dominance’ of a certain language, in parallel to decisions aiming at promoting it, can give rise to policies heading in the exact opposite direction, namely the protection of language minorities or even national languages, in the fear that they might lose ground and that the identity of that specific speech community be endangered. At EU level, linguistic diversity is acknowledged as a citizen’s right in Articles 21¹⁶ and 22¹⁷ of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the European Institutions constantly insist in several documents on the centrality of linguistic diversity and the equal status of all the EU's official languages (see 2.2 and 2.3), as it is believed that

the importance of multilingualism is not confined to economic and social aspects and that attention must also be paid to cultural and scientific creation and transmission and to the importance of translation, both literary and technical, in the lives of citizens and for the EU's long-term development; and last but not least, the role played by languages in shaping and strengthening identity¹⁸.

Languages, as the European Parliament itself acknowledges, are deeply intertwined with the concept of identity, which entails that conflicts are bound to arise when local languages and ‘lingua francas’ risk overlapping and competing. For example, according to the results of the English Proficiency Index,

France, currently the weakest European Union country in adult English proficiency, appears to be making little effort to improve. Limited education reforms on language instruction have been passed, with few discernible results. Improving the country’s English skills is not a subject of national debate. If anything, public debate is aroused only when it is proposed that English take on a small measure of official importance” (EPI 2014)

¹⁶ Article 21.1: “Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.”

¹⁷ Article 22: “The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.”

¹⁸ European Parliament resolution of 24 March 2009 on “Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment”. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P6-TA-2009-0162+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN> (last accessed May 2019).

This attitude is a powerful reminder that, irrespective of any attempt to develop a quantifiable and distributional approach to ELF¹⁹ (see De Swaan 2001), it can be difficult if not impossible to isolate the notion of a lingua franca from the contextual and historical framework it develops into, as ELF communication is neither culture- nor identity-neutral (see Baker 2018). Therefore, if on one side it is true that English, when used as a lingua franca, is not strictly related to any Anglophone culture of the inner or outer circle²⁰, on the other hand language is never culturally neutral. Unlike the original Lingua Franca, which was a neutral pidgin only used for vehicular purposes, ELF does contain an ‘English’ component to it which, despite not being necessarily NS²¹-driven, is neither neutral nor culturally void,

a language such as English operating as a lingua franca on a global scale is part of the construction and negotiation of a multitude of communicative and other cultural practices and in turn becomes part of a diverse range of cultural practices in itself (Baker 2018: 29).

Conversely, the native speakers of the language, who associate their sociocultural values to it, might feel threatened and alarmed by the transformation it might undergo when being used and adapted to different communicative contexts, causing them to put up fierce resistance and battle for its ‘proper’ use (Widdowson 2018: 101).

These considerations mainly focus on the ‘E’ component of ‘ELF’, because the fact that it is English, and not any other language, which is the main lingua franca today, inevitably has consequences for the development of the phenomenon itself from a sociocultural and economic point of view. The different level of accessibility to the learning opportunities of a specific language does play a pivotal role, irrespective of whether the pedagogical approach should be inspired by an ENL²²-paradigm or rather specific ELF teaching and learning approaches should be developed, especially in a context where “its global weight is [not] restricted to elite usages in politics, international business or academia” (Mauranen 2018: 7). Similarly, the promotion of a specific language within national education programmes or its adoption as a working language

¹⁹ Such an approach would aim at capturing all language speakers connected by said lingua franca and outlining a system that could describe how the language itself evolves and expands.

²⁰ See footnote 9.

²¹ NS stands for native speaker.

²² ENL stands for English as a Native Language

within international institutions by virtue of its acquired importance as a lingua franca are also relevant to the aims of this specific study (see 2.6).

The assumption should not be made, however, that ELF speakers are in any way regarded in this study as EFL (English as a Foreign Language) speakers or English learners, whose command of the language is assessed and observed under the lens of a prescriptive ENL approach. Nonetheless, a certain level of ambiguity does emerge, as interpreters and interpreting curricula often explicitly refer to interpreters' language skills in terms of 'native speaker competence' or 'native-equivalent' (see 3.3.1), and ELF users themselves declare that they speak English, intended as one of the EU's official languages – a concept that in formal terms is completely Member State-related (see 2.2).

1.2 The different phases of ELF as a research field

The emergence of the research field of English as a Lingua Franca can be traced back to the beginning of this millennium, with the publication of two works by Jenkins (2000) and Seidlhofer (2001). The former was an empirical study which focused on pronunciation and phonology. Despite referring to English as an international language in the title ("The phonology of English as an international language", see 1.3.1), the author argues that the acronym currently in use at that time 'EFL' be replaced with 'ELF' (English as a Lingua Franca) (2000: 10-11), arguing that

this term would have a number of immediate advantages: ELF emphasizes the role of English in communication between speakers from different L1s, i.e. the primary reason for learning English today; it suggests the idea of community as opposed to alienness; it emphasizes that people have something in common rather than their differences; it implies that 'mixing' languages is acceptable (which was in fact what the original lingua francas did) and thus that there is nothing inherently wrong in retaining certain characteristics of the L1, such as accents; finally the Latin name symbolically removes the ownership of English from the Anglos both to no one and, in effect, to everyone. These outcomes are all highly appropriate for a language that performs an international function. However, it remains to see whether ELF ultimately catches on. (2000: 11).

Twenty years later, it is safe to affirm that it did catch on. This passionate plea already included some of the themes that would then characterise the debate on ELF: the relationship between NS and NNS (and the will to empower the latter and free them from

an error-centred approach, especially from a pedagogical point of view), the multilingual and multicultural dimension of ELF, and the prevalence of the function of ELF over its form.

The second work, by Seidlhofer, “Closing a conceptual gap. The case for a description of English as a lingua franca” (2001), in addition to already formally adopting the term ELF, argues for the need to study this linguistic reality, so as to move away from a conception centred on native English norms as the only point of reference for English users and learners. The author refers to a general “lack of awareness” (2001: 136) as to a pervasive ENL approach, even when referring to English as a global language, where it would not be relevant, considering that

it is highly problematic to discuss aspects of global English, however critically, while at the same time passing native speaker judgements as to what is appropriate usage in ELF contexts. (2001: 137)

In order to respond to this need for a more systematic description of how ELF is actually used, Seidlhofer announced that the compilation of the first corpus of English as a Lingua Franca was being carried out at the university of Vienna (VOICE²³, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English), later to be followed by ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca in the Academic Settings), at the University of Helsinki (Mauranen 2003), and more recently by ACE (Asian Corpus of English) by Kirkpatrick (2010), all focusing solely on spoken ELF.

The initial data that were gathered thanks to these corpora were analysed according to a World Englishes approach, describing and contextually legitimising ELF as “a number of varieties, each with its own features, as well as features that most, if not all, ELF users seemed to share” (Jenkins, 2018: 595). Stepping aside from a ‘foreign language’ paradigm, differences with ENL were considered not as errors but rather as distinctive elements of ELF itself. NNSEs were not compared to NSEs²⁴, but rather described as “skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs” (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011: 284). This phase in ELF research,

²³ The first studies on the corpus produced a series of lexico-grammatical ‘hypotheses’: features being used fairly regularly and not seeming to cause communication problems.

²⁴ NNSE and NSE stand for non-native speaker of English and native speaker of English respectively.

labelled by Jenkins as “ELF 1” (2015, 52-54), was therefore characterised by the belief on the part of ELF researchers that “it would be possible to eventually describe and possibly even codify ELF varieties” (2015: 54).

The fluidity in the use of these features soon called for a reconceptualisation of the approach adopted up until then, in order to explore which functions the identified forms were actually fulfilling, therefore putting the dimension of the “social practice” (Kalocsai 2014: 2) at the forefront and marking an important step in the evolution of the entire research field. The first researcher to advocate a shift in attention from lists of features to the processes actually determining their use was Seidlhofer (2007, 2009a, 2009b), thus opening a new phase in ELF research which Jenkins referred to as “ELF 2” (2015: 55-57). It soon became clear for researchers that, as ELF was neither linguistically nor geographically definable, by virtue of the “ad hoc, situated negotiation of meaning” (Seidlhofer 2009b: 242), any attempt at codification was doomed to fail.

In an attempt to overcome the use of the term ‘variety’, which did not seem apt to describe ELF, due to its inherent lack of a unified and easily identifiable form, Mauranen put forward the concept of “similects” (drawing on the similarities between ELF and dialects), that is “parallel idiolects of speakers with similar language backgrounds” (2018: 19):

Similects do not develop new features or new discourse practices in the same way that language communities do – in interaction, from one linguistic generation to another. They remain forever first-generation hybrids: each generation’s, each speaker’s idiolect is a new hybrid. [...] Because similects originate in cross-linguistic influence, they comprise a renewable resource for the mix that ELF is made of. (Mauranen 2012: 29)

This theorisation of ELF as a “hybrid of similects” (2012: 30), adds an important piece to the conceptualisation of ELF, as it includes in the reflections all the multilingual resources speakers have at their disposal and the complex language contact that is involved both on the micro and the macro level (the individuals interacting being mostly at least bilinguals and exchanges taking place in multilingual environments).

The multilingual nature of ELF communication led to the consideration that a new reconceptualisation attempt should be made (opening the door to an “ELF 3” phase, Jenkins 2015: 58-79), so as to investigate further “the relationship between English and other languages in respect of the multilingualism of most ELF users and the ‘multi-

competence of the community” (2015: 59). The ‘multilingual repertoires’ of ELF speakers are to be analysed in the broader framework of multilingualism, that is shifting the emphasis from how the speaker’s L1 (or other languages, if any) influences their use of English, to the mutual and bidirectional flow. ELF is a multilingual practice itself and multilingualism cannot be relegated to a mere backdrop. To this aim, Jenkins puts forward a new name altogether for ELF, which would be ‘English as a Multilingua Franca’, defined as a “multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen.” (2015: 73). The paradigm is therefore reversed as it is English that is part of the multilingual communication (it is always present, even if just as an opportunity for interlocutors to resort to) and not multilingualism that is a mere component of ELF. It would not be a new fully-fledged research area, but rather a notion to be explored within the already well-established field of ELF research.

When analysing the concept of ‘English as a Multilingua Franca’, Jenkins highlights that in this new orientation ELF, despite being always potentially available to speakers within a given interaction, is not necessarily used. She also stresses that “the reasons for its use, non-use, and partial use, however, remain for now an empirical question.”

This interpretation of ELF seems particularly fitting for this study, as multilingualism is indeed prevailing within the EU, at least from an ideological point of view (see Chapter 2). The communication events that are being analysed are most certainly based on multilingualism, as an interpretation service is provided, implying that participants have the possibility to express themselves in a variety of languages, including ELF.

1.3 The nature of ELF

Linguistic research on ELF has been mainly conducted along three levels of speech²⁵: phonology and pronunciation, lexicogrammar and pragmatics (see Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011: 286-295). The variable use of ELF forms makes it particularly difficult to capture them in categories and models that are mostly ENL-inspired, still “the attempt to ‘squeeze’ ELF into such categories also highlights where it varies from linguistic

²⁵ Research on written ELF has started only later in the field and it is therefore more limited. In any case, it has not been accounted for in this chapter as it falls outside the scope of the present study.

convention” (Osimk-Teasdale 2018: 201). In the case of interpreters dealing with ELF – when what they are mostly trained to interpret and usually expecting in the booth is ENL – this level of variation appears particularly relevant (see 3.3.1).

1.3.1 ELF and pronunciation

One of the first studies related to ELF was indeed devoted to the topic of ELF pronunciation. Jenkins (2000), analysed real data collected in interactions including only NNS. The research project concluded that there were a series of few native items, that the author referred to as “Lingua Franca Core” (LFC)²⁶, whose absence could lead to problems of mutual intelligibility in intercultural communication. In the study, particular attention was devoted to accommodation skills, enabling interlocutors to identify which pronunciations were causing problems and modifying them accordingly.

More recently, Deterding (2012) has been working on a research project focused on identifying which features of pronunciation are crucial for intelligibility and which are less important, with the final aim of “develop[ing] the LFC proposals and provide detailed guidance for teachers on what features of pronunciation they should focus on” (2012: 189). The author, working mostly with speakers of Southeast and East Asia, calls for more data involving speakers of a variety of mother tongues and a range of different environments (Deterding & Gardiner 2018: 224).

All in all, pronunciation seems to have attracted little attention on the part of ELF researchers, and most studies conducted so far mainly aim at identifying features so as to develop guidelines for teachers wishing to introduce an ELF approach into their methods (Walker 2010; Patsko & Simpson 2015; Thir 2016; Zoghbor 2018). The approach pursued focuses almost exclusively on those features which enable mutual intelligibility – and should therefore be included in any teaching method – rather on those elements which cause actual misunderstandings, and would therefore be extremely relevant for interpreters (Kurz 2009; see 1.5.1).

²⁶ Essential features for maintaining intelligibility are: all consonants, except /θ/, /ð/ and [ʔ]; vowel length distinctions; initial consonant clusters; the mid-central NURSE vowel; nuclear stress (Jenkins, 2000).

1.3.2 ELF and grammar

As is the case for the studies on pronunciation, when dealing with the grammar of ELF researchers initially focused on the identification of linguistic features, mostly recurring patterns of language use in terms of lexical and grammatical forms. The first project on the topic was conducted by Seidlhofer (2004), who drafted a list of lexico-grammatical features which were to be interpreted as a set of hypotheses of non-native use rather than objective elements. These patterns were not described as errors compared to the standard ENL norms, but rather as variants in their own right (which is why the author uses quotes in the list):

- ‘Dropping’ the third person present tense –s
 - ‘Confusing’ the relative pronouns *who* and *which*
 - ‘Omitting’ definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL
 - ‘Failing’ to use correct forms in tag questions (e.g., *isn’t it?* or *no?* instead of *shouldn’t they?*)
 - Inserting ‘redundant’ prepositions, as in *We have to study about. . .*)
 - ‘Overusing’ certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as *do, have, make, put, take*
 - ‘Replacing’ infinitive-constructions with *that*-clauses, as in *I want that*
 - ‘Overdoing’ explicitness (e.g. black color rather than just black)
- (Seidlhofer 2004: 220)

This list has represented a point of departure for subsequent studies that have then explored one or many of its items in detail²⁷. Even though the identification of non-standard uses and the creation of lists, without a deeper syntactic analysis, only allows for a descriptive approach to ELF which does not go beyond the sum of the identified recurrent features, “non-standardness in ELF seems to have a direction [...] and is not a collection of random, idiosyncratic errors” (Ranta 2018: 249).

Research has rather moved from the identification of features to the communicative purpose and the functional use of said features (Dewey 2009; Seidlhofer 2009a). From this

²⁷ Some example of studies on specific features are: Breiteneder (2005) and Cogo & Dewey (2006) on the use of present simple third person –s; Erling & Bartlett (2006) on the non-standard use of articles, prepositions and adverbs as well as time, tense and aspect markers and if-clauses; Dewey (2007) on the omission of the object of transitive verbs, use of prepositions and adverbs, non-standard adverbial position and use of relative pronouns; Björkmann (2010) on the use of articles, comparatives and superlatives, the passive voice, as well as tense and aspect and word order; Kirkpatrick (2013) mostly on articles and plurals and the basic form of the verb for the past tense.

perspective, features are not relevant *per se* as in ELF “form follows function” (Cogo 2008: 60). Basically, non-standard forms are used in order to reach a higher level of explicitness and clarity. Strategies such as accommodation, enhanced explicitness and enhanced cooperativeness might lead to the use of non-standard forms which allow for mutual comprehension, as is confirmed by the fact that “non-standard features in ELF do not, as a rule, cause misunderstandings in communication” (Ranta 2018: 250).

These claims, which seem to rule out ‘misunderstandings’ as an exception in ELF communication, are possibly dependent on the tendency by researcher in this field to verify what is effective and works and for what reason, which should be complemented by an equally thorough investigation on what does affect intelligibility and leads to less effective communication. Furthermore, in the instances in which the above-mentioned strategies cannot be applied – as is the case for interpreters – the effect of non-standard features might well be different and detrimental to intelligibility.

1.3.3 ELF and pragmatics

ELF pragmatics is probably the field that can boast the largest body of research, with data collected in a great variety of locations and domains. Initial studies explored accommodation processes and pragmatic strategies, but could rely on small-scale data collections of mainly international students. The first results pointed to the collaborative nature of interaction (see Meierkord 1996; Firth 1990):

ELF participants have a remarkable ability and willingness to tolerate anomalous usage and marked linguistic behaviour even in the face of what appears to be usage that is at times acutely opaque (Firth 1996: 247).

More recent works have shifted attention to the dimension of understanding, broaching subjects such as negotiation of meaning, idiomatic expressions and multilingual resources. Interlocutors are observed adopting proactive strategies – such as clarification, self-repair and repetition – to preserve mutual intelligibility (Pitzl 2005, Mauranen 2006, Cogo 2009, House 2009, among others).

As meaning is negotiated cooperatively, participants in an interaction might signal any perplexity or doubt in understanding, or ask for explanations, or misunderstandings could

simply emerge, leading to an unsolicited integration or paraphrasing of any opaque expression used in the first place. Many studies (e.g. House 1999, Seidlhofer 2001, Matsumoto 2011) have observed that in cases of potential misunderstanding speakers tend to adopt a ‘let-it-pass’ approach, by virtue of which an “unknown or unclear action, word or utterance ‘pass’ on the (common-sense) assumption that it will either become clear or redundant as talk progresses” (Firth 1996: 243). These patterns emerge in highly interactive environments (e.g. telephone conversations, interactions between students) where interlocutors all enjoy the same status and intervening rights and interaction is generally not bridled in tight schedules and limited time. No light has been shed so far on what strategies are used in more formal and monologic settings – such as conferences – where problems are unlikely to ‘pass’ undisturbed, and it is difficult to ascertain to what extent what is left behind is actually redundant or later explained.

Multilingual resources and linguistic creativity in ELF have also been widely investigated. Some ELF scholars consider the creative and fluid use of the language on part of ELF speakers as a way for interlocutors to exploit the elements at their disposal in order to achieve the broader goal of effective communication. They resort to “their multifaceted multilingual repertoires in a fashion entirely motivated by the communicative purpose and the interpersonal dynamics of the interaction” (Seidlhofer 2011: 108), indifferent to their approximation to standard English norms.

Linguistic creativity referred to ELF can therefore be defined as “the creation of new (i.e. non-codified) linguistic forms and expressions in ongoing interaction/discourse or the use of existing forms and expressions in a non-conventional way” (Pitzl 2012: 37). For this process to be successful, the new form needs to keep a high level of intelligibility, so as to be accessible to all participants, and to this end “cooperative convergence on shared meaning” (Seidlhofer 2009c: 195) is essential. So far, research has mostly focused on the mechanisms that lead to the creation of new idioms and metaphors (Seidlhofer & Widdowson 2007; Mauraanen 2009; Franceschi 2013, Pitzl 2018), as they lend themselves to exploring how creativity manifests itself and to what degree norms are followed or reshaped, since:

phraseology is at the interface of linguistic convention and creativity: it contains enough familiar material for the hearer to go on to ensure comprehension, thereby allowing more freedom to the speaker. In other words, by virtue of the conventional and fixed parts which

ensure recognition, phraseological units allow a measure of freedom for innovation or approximation in details **without risking comprehensibility** (Mauranen 2009: 231) [emphasis added]

“Individual multilingual repertoires (IMRs)” and the shared “multilingual resource pool (MRP)” of a specific group of ELF speakers interact and overlap in unpredictable ways, as the MRP changes from context to context (Pitzl 2018: 239) and its extent is often discovered by participants only when interacting (Jenkins 2015: 64), so much so that “metaphorical creativity is part of ELF as situationally created by multilingual speakers” (Pitzl 2018: 241). ELF users create their idiomatic expression “in the here-and-now of their conversations” (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011: 294), while accommodating each other so as not to undermine mutual intelligibility.

1.4 ELF and identities

ELF is first and foremost a medium of intercultural communication, where the linguistic dimension cannot be dissociated from other notions such as identity, community and culture. ELF researchers actually consider that ELF should not be seen as a threat to multilingualism, as it is claimed to be a culture-free code of communication (Böhringer & Hülmbauer 2010, Seidlhofer 2011, 2012, Hülmbauer 2014) not owned in any way by native speakers of English (Widdowson 1994, Jenkins 2007). From this perspective, ELF speakers are freed from the limited role of L2-users of English – who might try to achieve native speakers’ skills and possibly fail at it – and their use of the language is not expected to follow standard-language norms. On the other hand,

the dogma of “neutral” ELF has the consequence of neglecting and playing down the huge difference in effort required by L1 and L2 speakers of English to reach an acceptable level of proficiency in the language (Brosch 2015: 77-78)

In order to speak of a fully ‘neutral’ language, it would be necessary to ascertain to what degree a language can be used without any reference to its roots on one hand and to the speaker’s own cultural background on the other. Fiedler (2010, 2011) stresses that ELF

communication is by no means culture-free, questioning the notion that the isolation of language from culture is possible and that speakers actually limit the use of ELF to its communicative function, without conveying their identity through it.

The dichotomy between ‘languages of communication’ and ‘languages of identification’ was described by Hüllen (1992)²⁸, who argued that English is actually used “as a foreign language of communication”, as it “only require[s] highly unstable, floating speech communities that develop among the autochthonous communities” (1992: 314). Languages of communication are basically used for practical and functional reasons and the cultural features of the original speech community do not apply, as no integration or identification into said speech community is pursued (see Knapp 2008).

This dichotomous approach is not unanimously supported, though. In an in-depth research based on Erasmus exchange students, Kalocsai (2009) found that “cultural practices are continually renewed and cooperatively modified to create new meanings and identities” (*ibid*: 21) and that “taking up multiple identities is the norm rather than the exception” (*ibid*: 41). As “communication is a form of cultural practice” (Baker, 2018: 27), cultural identities are necessarily present in any interaction and claiming that a neutral communication is even possible disregards the very essence of communication as a social practice. In the specific case of ELF, different linguistic and cultural flows converge in a given context, where interlocutors cooperate to negotiate meaning:

ELF is not merely a language of communication, a neutral code stripped bare of culture and identity. Speakers of English as a lingua franca display an array of various identities, with the English native language and culture(s), their own primary languages and cultures and a specific ELF identity being important pillars. The degrees to which these three constituents are activated as well as their interaction depend on a variety of factors that are of influence in a specific communicative situation. (Fiedler 2011: 92)

1.5 ITELFL

ELF, translation and interpretation (T&I) are strictly related, as they are “concerned with communication across language barriers” (Cook 2012: 244). In principle, T&I and

²⁸ The author calls them ‘Identifikationssprachen’ and ‘Kommunikationssprachen’.

ELF might seem mutually exclusive as they represent different solutions to a shared challenge – that of communication in a multilingual context – yet in many instances they do coexist and have an impact on each other. The study on how interpreting, translating and ELF interact has given rise to a new sub-discipline, ITELf, in the field of applied linguistics (Albl-Mikasa, 2018: 369).

One of the main differences between these two types of communication (T&I and ELF) is that whereas translators and interpreters are trained experts in the field of communication, and more specifically multilingual and multicultural communication, ELF speakers are “untrained multilinguals” (*ibid*: 369).

The spread of ELF, despite not necessarily having led to a decrease in the number of meetings with interpretation or translation assignments worldwide (see House 2013), has had a huge impact on the number of languages being used in T&I assignments, so much so that “markets are becoming increasingly two-way – the national language plus English” (Donovan 2011: 14), thus striking a blow on language variety in formally multilingual contexts. English has now a dominant role within the European Institutions (see Chapter 2), and according to statistics from the AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters), 27% of all reported interpreting assignments are English-related (Neff, 2011).

Despite the clear correlation between ELF and T&I, this sub-discipline has not attracted much attention from researchers so far, with a total number of 26 publications on ELF and interpreting and 43 publications on ELF and translation by the end of 2015 (Albl-Mikasa 2018: 371).

1.5.1 ELF and interpretation

Research on ELF and interpreting has developed mainly along three strands: the professionals’ perception of the phenomenon, the impact on the profession itself and ELF-related problems affecting interpreters’ performance (Albl-Mikasa 2018: 372).

The stance of interpreters toward the use of ELF in meetings where they provide their service is mostly critical. Interpreters refer to ELF as ‘globish’ (Jones 2014), “bad simple English” (BSE) (Reithofer 2018: 121) or ‘desesperanto’ (Donovan 2011). These pejorative

terms by themselves are revealing of interpreters' negative attitude, which seems to contradict the results of ELF research, which describes ELF speech as clear, explicit and redundant, all features which interpreters might be expected to appreciate.

Nonetheless, in both a survey and a cycle of in-depth interviews of professional conference interpreters carried out by Albl-Mikasa (2010 and 2014 respectively), the majority of interpreters regard ELF as having detrimental effects on their actual work in the booth and their satisfaction with the profession:

there is an increasing pressure for interpreters to produce higher quality, which, in turn, is in conflict with ELF-induced difficulties to produce high quality (due, amongst other things, to problems in the comprehension phase caused by non-native speakers [...]; in an activity crucially determined by cognitive load factors, resources are additionally taxed. (Albl-Mikasa 2010: 143)

Interpreters declare that NNS require additional effort on their part in the comprehension phase and that the lack of a fully comprehensible source text undermines the quality of their own text production, as they are faced with the daunting “challenge of trying to communicate when speakers hinder communication” (Jones 2014).

A further recent global survey²⁹ on interpreters' self-perception of their professional status conducted by Gentile (2016) confirms that, as far as ELF is concerned, interpreters worldwide mostly fear:

(1) the adverse effects of the spread of ELF on market conditions, (2) a decline in interpreter status and (3) an impoverishment of communication in international encounters. (Albl-Mikasa & Gentile 2017: 56)

The detrimental effects, therefore, are not only limited to the interpreters' performance but extend beyond the booth to include the professionals' status and communication quality in general. The widespread use of ELF is perceived as a threat by professionals, who feel less indispensable or even useful than in the past (Donovan 2009 and 2011; Mackintosh 2002), “where interpreters ‘once met a clear need [they] are now seen as irrelevant to communication’” (Gentile & Albl-Mikasa, 2017: 57). On the other hand, it

²⁹ The survey also included interpreters working for the EU institutions and it was noted that, as far as comments on ELF are concerned, “there seemed to be no difference between the responses given by the interpreters working for international institutions and those who are active on the private market” (Gentile & Albl-Mikasa 2017: 55)

has been observed that this challenge could be turned into an opportunity by interpreters, who could profit from their skills as communication experts to consult and support in the management of multilingual and multicultural events:

The pervasiveness of ELF invites a rethinking of the interpreter's role and status. From the neutral voice or channel between competent native speakers to the mediator between less than competent non-native speakers, from language expert to multilingual communication consultant, a redefinition of the professional profile of the interpreter is much needed (Albl-Mikasa, 2019: 297)

The expert opinion of interpreters is that ELF tends to have a negative impact, not only on their profession but also to communication as a whole. Interpreters report “insufficient communicative power on the part of ELF speakers” (Albl-Mikasa 2019: 294), as speakers tend to “grossly misjudge their limited English language skills” (Gentile & Albl-Mikasa, 2017: 59), which often leads to misunderstandings between NNS conference participants (Albl-Mikasa 2014: 302).

Interpreting, on the other hand, seems to provide the added value of increasing communicative effectiveness. Indeed, research points to a higher level of understanding among participants having access to the ST via professional interpretation into their MT, as compared to those listening to the ELF original. Reithofer (2013a) compared the level of comprehension between an audience listening to an ELF speaker and an audience listening to the interpretation of the ELF speech into their MT (German), by means of a comprehension test administered immediately afterwards. Listeners having access to the speech through the interpretation scored significantly higher. Reithofer (2013a: 68) therefore concludes that “interpreting seems to convey content more effectively.” The experiment involved experts in the subject matter, with a good knowledge of English, which is therefore an ideal setting but does not always correspond to the reality on the ground. As ELF is increasingly regarded as an alternative to simultaneous interpreting, the author reaches the conclusion that,

Es wäre wünschenswert, dieses Forschungsmodell der Überprüfung der Wirkungsäquivalenz mittels Verständnistests in weiteren Studien mit geänderten Variablen anzuwenden, auch in Dolmetschsituationen, in denen die Verdolmetschung tatsächlich von einem Teil der Zuhörerschaft gebraucht wird (2013b:123).

[It would be desirable to use this research model for evaluating equivalence of effect by means of comprehension tests in further studies with different variables, also in interpreting settings, in which interpretation is actually needed by a part of the audience] [own translation].

The effectiveness of ELF in typical interpreters' working reality, that is mostly conferences with a predominance of monologic speech and little interaction, has not been the focus of ELF research, which has rather analysed very different communicative settings, such as "group discussions, negotiations, or business meetings, all of which are face-to-face interactions" (Reithofer 2010: 149). ITELf research, on the other hand, is only starting to explore ELF in the specific setting of conference interpreting, where meaning negotiation, let-it-pass strategies and other pragmatic means of meaning co-construction cannot be applied by interpreters.

The first stages of ELF-related interpreting research focused mostly on the impact of accent and pronunciation on interpretation. Non-standard accents are conducive to comprehension problems in the listening phase which determine loss of information in the interpreted text (Kurz 2008: 190) and a general decrease in interpreting accuracy (Lin *et al.* 2013). More specifically, Kurz (2008) carried out an experiment aimed at measuring the impact of the presentation of a ST by a NNSE with a strong accent on the performance of a group of interpreting students. Results show a "markedly higher loss of information in the interpretation of the non-native speaker" (*ibid*: 190), due to an overload of the students' cognitive resources. Lin *et al.* (2013) conducted a study aimed at assessing the impact of non-native accented English on accuracy in simultaneous interpreting by interpreting students. The results indicate that both phonemics and prosody worsened comprehension and that deviated intonation and rhythm were comprehension problem triggers.

Another ELF-related detrimental aspect is cross-linguistic transfer, causing interlocutors' language resources to surface in their ELF speech (Albl-Mikasa 2018: 375). Unable to inhibit language interferences, ELF speakers end up producing a "more or less 'L1-coloured' speech" (*ibid*: 375) which affects the interpreters' text comprehension. ELF research has shown that comprehension can be facilitated by ample shared MRP between interlocutors (see Cogo 2012, Pitzl 2016, 2018,). This is indeed one of the elements which is confirmed by ITELf research, as the "shared languages benefit" – which boils down to understanding how people of a certain language and culture conceptualise and how they

express said concepts in linguistic terms (Abl-Mikasa 2013) – has emerged both in introspective studies (Abl-Mikasa 2010, 2014) and in performance-based experiments with professional interpreters (Kurz & Basel 2009). It basically enables interpreters to decode non-standard patterns and identify interferences with other languages – provided they are in their linguistic repertoire – possibly to the point of uncovering the speakers’ communicative intentions and recovering meaning.

Findings indicate that the main obstacle, though, is not one specific ELF-related element, but rather

the combination of several ELF-specific features, including unfamiliar accents and the imprecise or irregular usage of terms and concepts, often embedded in unconventional sentence structures. (Abl-Mikasa 2018: 376)

Interpreters complain about the extra effort required to follow the line of argument of ELF speakers, due to incoherent and imprecise STs, which in turn determines an additional cognitive load and possibly a decrease in performance levels (*ibid*: 377). This cascade effect is due to interpreters’ inability, to resort to all the ‘skill-based strategies’ (Riccardi 2005: 706) which professionals develop through their training and subsequent career. The lack of standard and stereotypical parts of the text, which normally behave as triggers, prevents interpreters from tapping into automatised routines, thus determining cognitive overload.

2. MULTILINGUALISM WITHIN THE EU

La lingua dell'Europa è la traduzione.

Umberto Eco

This chapter is devoted to the topic of multilingualism within the EU, both from a theoretical and a practical point of view. There is no official and ultimate document describing organically all the main components of language policies within the EU. Numerous elements are subsumed in broader texts or horizontal policies. The building blocks fall into three main categories of documents, namely legislative texts, external studies and reports dealing directly with the topic and documents of various kinds (from online pages to internal regulations or judicial cases) indirectly related to multilingualism. In this chapter, the choice was made not to treat all these sources separately according to their nature, but rather to connect them together in an attempt to offer a more complete picture. This framework is important as it should govern the decisions concerning the linguistic regimes for the meetings organized by the European Commission. The DG SCIC has among its objectives that of putting the Commission's multilingualism strategy into practice (see 3.1), which is why it is essential to understand what this strategy consists of.

In the first part of the chapter a brief account of the concept of 'linguistic policies' and more specifically policies on multilingualism throughout the history of the EU is given, devoting particular attention to all the relevant legislative provisions. A section follows on the role and nature of translation and interpretation services, which are one of the main tools for the implementation of linguistic policies. The final part focuses on the contradictions that sometimes emerge between the ideological approach and practical implementation, the costs related to the whole EU language system and the role English, or rather ELF, plays within this scenario.

2.1 Multilingualism as a language policy

The term ‘multilingualism’ can refer both to a person’s ability to express themselves in more than two languages and to the co-existence of several language communities in one geographical area. The question of how to define multilingualism has engaged researchers for many years now and its study unfolds on many levels, such as the dynamics of language systems and language communities in contact, the functions languages have in society, the status of languages, the rights of speakers of minority languages and the speech of individuals using more than one language, just to mention a few (see Clyne 1997).

Considering that the last decades have been characterised by the rise and development of globalisation, leading to increased mobility worldwide and the spread of the Internet, the issue still remains undoubtedly topical. According to recent estimates, there are 7,097 languages spoken today worldwide in just under 200 countries (Gary & Fenning 2018). The figure is constantly changing, especially considering that many languages are severely endangered as the number of native speakers decreases, while 23 languages are spoken by more than half the world population. For English alone it is estimated that there is a total of roughly 1,121,806,280 users in all countries³⁰.

The relationship between language and national identity has been the topic of extensive literature. A number of renowned historians, political scientists and sociologists have argued that “the existence of a national language is the primary foundation upon which nationalist ideology is constructed” (Joseph 2004: 94), whereas others have stressed how “national languages are not actually a given, but are themselves constructed as part of the ideological work of nationalism-building” (*ibid*: 94). Hobsbawm (1990) describes languages as a discursive construction, “attempts to devise a standardized idiom out of a multiplicity of actually spoken idioms, which are downgraded to dialects” (1990: 51).

The same tension between the political construct and identity of the European Union and its language policies emerges, as “languages are an integral part of European identity and the most direct expression of culture”³¹. The identity of the European Union, though, is deeply entrenched in the concept of diversity – “United in diversity” (*In varietate*

³⁰ Available at: www.ethnologue.com (last accessed May 2019)

³¹ Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/142/language-policy> (last accessed May 2019).

concordia) being the official motto³² of the EU – which implies that any move towards a common language would be inappropriate and incompatible with the ideological concept underpinning the whole project. This implies that in order to function, a democratic political entity such as the European Union, which depends on communication between Member States and citizens in a large number of languages, requires a serious and reliable language policy.

Language policies can be defined as a “set of measures — usually undertaken by the State, regional and local authorities — to influence, explicitly or implicitly, the corpus, status, and the acquisition of one or more languages” (Gazzola 2016a: 15). The birth of European institutions in the 1950s concerned mostly institutional and economic issues rather than cultural ones. Even though the basic principle in terms of language policies has always implicitly been multilingualism, there is no single body of provisions on language policies consistently evolving in time. Two main attitudes can be identified through EU history so far:

The first sees language as a fundamental right, as an element of cultural inheritance tied essentially to spatially-defined linguistic or ethnic groups. As such, all languages need to be protected as guarantors of Europe’s pluralism and as a demonstration of the equal treatment of difference within overarching European institutions – a substantiation of its principle of being ‘united in diversity’ (Curti Gialdino 2005: 129-136). A second, more recent approach has focused instead on the usefulness of competence in foreign languages for economic competitiveness and thus for growth and employment. (Leech 2017 :28).

2.2 A brief history of language policies within the EU

Multilingualism was not immediately identified by the founding fathers of the then European Community as one of the values upon which to build the European project. The difficult years following World War II and the lingering tensions between countries called for a pragmatic approach, which led first to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and a few years later of the Community for Atomic Energy (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC).

It was only with the Maastricht Treaty (1992) that the first legal bases were laid concerning cultural policies at large and more specifically multilingualism. From that

³² This motto, used for the first time in the year 2000, indicates how European citizens have managed, thanks to the EU, to cooperate peacefully while pursuing prosperity and respecting different cultures, traditions and languages.

moment on, linguistic and cultural diversity became one of the pieces of the big European debate and have remained one of the ideological cornerstones of the project throughout all the years and enlargements³³, at least from a formal point of view.

When, in 1957, the EEC was founded by six Member States (Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg), there were only four official languages (French, Italian, German and Dutch). Even though the ECSC Treaty was drafted in French and contained no rules on the languages to be used by the different institutions, all the other languages (German, Italian and Dutch) were considered official languages of the Community (see Gazzola 2016b: 25).

The concept of a Community language regime was first mentioned in 1957, in Article 290 of the Treaty of the European Community (TEC)³⁴,

The *rules governing the languages of the institutions* of the Union³⁵ shall, without prejudice to the provisions contained in the Statute of the Court of Justice of the European Union, be determined by the Council, acting unanimously by means of regulations. [emphasis added]

and was later specified and applied by means of the very first Regulation adopted by the Council of the European Community in 1958³⁶. Unlike the ECSC Treaty, these two treaties were drafted in all the official languages (French, German, Italian and Dutch), explicitly attributing equal legal status to all language versions for the first time. The first Community language policy was therefore born in Rome:

Art. 55 This Treaty, drawn up in a single original in the Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish languages, *the texts in each of these languages being equally authentic*, shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the Italian Republic, which will transmit a certified copy to each of the governments of the other signatory States. [emphasis added]

Remarkably, the first Regulation ever to be adopted by the newly created EC concerned the issue of languages, thus demonstrating the relevance of the topic. From its preamble,

³³ The EU enlarged as follows: 1973 – Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom; 1981 – Greece; 1986 – Portugal, Spain; 1995 – Austria, Finland, Sweden; 2004 – Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Hungary; 2007 – Bulgaria, Romania; 2013 – Croatia.

³⁴ It was also mentioned in Article 190 of the Euratom Treaty.

³⁵ Article 342 of the consolidated version, hence the reference to Union and not Community.

³⁶ Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32005R0920> (last accessed May 2018)

it mentions all the official languages of the Community and it has been amended throughout the subsequent enlargements to include all the languages requested by the acceding countries.

The first article of the Regulation refers both to **official** languages and **working** languages (“The official languages and the working languages of the institutions of the Community shall be Dutch, French, German and Italian”). The Regulation does not define these terms – nor does it do so in the subsequent articles³⁷ - which shows that the authors of the text were not actually intending to define a language policy of any kind, but rather “the issue of language was approached in order to avoid equivocation and the possibility that any one language or languages should rise to anything like hegemonic status” (Leech 2017: 29). Furthermore, the choice of a single official language representing a state opens the door to a series of considerations concerning linguistic policies and minority languages which are undoubtedly relevant – especially when considering the level of democratic participation in political life by European citizens – but they do not correspond to the main focus of this research project, and will therefore remain in the backdrop of this analysis.

A further step towards the definition of a language policy is represented by the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), also known as the Maastricht Treaty, by means of which the European Economic Community turned into the European Community (EC) and the cultural dimension of European integration was formally acknowledged. Initiatives in this field already existed (e.g. the Erasmus programme), but it was only with the Maastricht Treaty that a formal justification for such initiatives was provided, thus paving the way for the introduction of more specific and articulated language policies and initiatives on multilingualism. Article 126.2, more specifically, provides that “Community action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States”³⁸.

The entry into force of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFUE), also known as the Treaty of Lisbon, in 2009, further enhanced the principle of linguistic

³⁷ **Article 2:** “Documents which a Member State or a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State sends to institutions of the Community may be drafted in any one of the official languages selected by the sender. The reply shall be drafted in the same language”. **Article 3:** “Documents which an institution of the Community sends to a Member State or to a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State shall be drafted in the language of such State”. **Article 4:** “Regulations and other documents of general application shall be drafted in the four official languages.”

³⁸ Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:1992:191:FULL&from=EN> (last accessed May 2018)

diversity as a value to be cherished and protected. Together with the TFUE, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union was adopted, bringing together the fundamental rights of everyone living in the EU. The Charter, introduced to bring consistency and clarity to the rights established in all the EU Member States, forbids any discrimination based on language³⁹.

2.3 Multilingualism today in the EU

Multilingualism has long been an explicit policy area within the European Union, though it had its heyday in the 2007-2010 period, when the Commission college included a fully-fledged Commissioner for Multilingualism (the post was held by Mr Orban from 2007 to 2010) (Gazzola 2016a). Before that, any language-related policy fell, though rather informally, within the portfolio of the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth, Media and Sport (between 1999 and 2004) and later of the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism (between 2004 and 2007).

In this time-span, several initiatives and declarations of intent were made, leading up to the creation of a specific portfolio for multilingualism in 2007. One of the most relevant was a Council Resolution dating back to February 2002, devoted to the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning⁴⁰. In addition to stressing that languages are an essential skill for citizens wishing to play an active role in society and profit from mobility, the Council also emphasises that “all European languages are equal in value and dignity from the cultural point of view and form an integral part of European culture and civilisation”⁴¹. Considering that language policies are primarily a competence of Member States, the Council addresses them directly, inviting them to promote the learning of languages within the limits and the priorities of their educational systems, stressing though that “the supply of languages should be as diversified as possible, including those of

³⁹ See Article III.22: “The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity” and III.21: “Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited”. (available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/charterpedia/title/iii-equality>, last accessed May 2019).

⁴⁰ Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning in the framework of the implementation of the objectives of the European Year of Languages 2001. Accessible at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2002.050.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2002:050:TOC (last accessed May 2018)

⁴¹ See footnote 40.

neighbouring countries and/or regions”⁴². The Council also addresses the Commission, inviting it to draw up proposals aiming at promoting linguistic diversity and language learning.

One month later, on the 15th and 16th of March 2002, the European Council met in Barcelona for its second annual spring meeting on the economic, social and environmental situation in the Union. Following this meeting, important Council conclusions⁴³ were published, setting specific goals in the field of language learning. More specifically, the Council recommended to the Member States that they teach at least two foreign languages to children in schools, in addition to their mother tongue (the so-called “mother tongue plus two” or MT+2), and that they introduce a linguistic competence indicator.

One of the cornerstones for multilingualism policies within the EU was the explicit inclusion of multilingualism among the tasks within a Commissioner portfolio. More specifically, under the first Barroso Commission, training and multilingualism were added to the tasks of the Commissioner for Education and Culture, and in 2004 Commissioner Ján Figel’ was formally appointed by the European Parliament as the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism. This momentum led the Commission to take an important stance on the topic in 2005 with a communication called “A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism”⁴⁴, aimed at confirming the Commission’s commitment to multilingualism and at designing a strategy and putting forward a series of specific actions (see 2.3.1).

The central role of foreign language skills as an asset for a mobile workforce and a promoter of mutual understanding was further enhanced in the Council conclusions⁴⁵ of May 2006, and later in the Council conclusions⁴⁶ of May 2008, where the Commission was called upon to draw up specific proposals by the end of the year for a comprehensive policy framework on multilingualism.

⁴² See footnote 40.

⁴³ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/barcelona_european_council.pdf (last accessed May 2018)

⁴⁴ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social committee and the Committee of the Regions - A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52005DC0596> (last accessed May 2018)

⁴⁵ Council conclusions on the European Indicator of Language Competence. OJ C 172, 25.7.2006. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52006XG0725%2801%29> (last accessed May 2018)

⁴⁶ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010. OJ C 143, 10.6.2008. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A42008X0610%2801%29> (last accessed May 2018)

Just a few months later, in November 2008, the Council also passed a resolution⁴⁷ on a “European strategy for multilingualism”. This text basically illustrates the Council positions as to the main elements that an EU roadmap for multilingualism should contain. Both the Member States and the Commission are invited, within the remits of their competences, to promote multilingualism, linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue. Language diversity is defined as an important factor to promote social cohesion and the European project as a whole. The resolution offers specific suggestions on how to promote language learning and stresses the importance of offering a wide range of languages:

[invites the Member States and the Commission to] endeavour to broaden the selection of languages taught at different levels of education — including recognised languages which are less widely used, so as to enable pupils to choose on the basis of considerations such as personal interests or geographical situation;⁴⁸

Though indirectly, the invitation implies that the selection of languages offered by national education systems is too limited and therefore contrary to the spirit of the promotion of linguistic diversity. The same concern seems to apply to the European institutions’ approach to multilingualism, as the Council expressly invites the Commission to pay particular attention to:

the relations between the European institutions and national institutions, and taking particular care to provide information in all official languages and to promote multilingualism on the Commission's websites;⁴⁹

As mentioned before, in 2008 multilingualism was no longer a competence of the Commissioner for Education as, when Romania joined the European Union on 1 January 2007, the responsibility for multilingualism was handed over to the new Romanian Commissioner, Leonard Orban. Administratively, Commissioner Orban was also in charge of the Directorate-General (DG) for Translation, the DG for Interpretation (DG SCIC) and the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, which implied being responsible for the effective functioning of the European Union's extensive

⁴⁷ Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism. OJ C 320, 16.12.2008. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32008G1216%2801%29> (last accessed May 2018)

⁴⁸ See footnote 47.

⁴⁹ See footnote 47.

interpretation, translation and publication services (the EU inter-institutional publishing house) in the then 23 official languages of the Union. In his introductory statement⁵⁰, during the hearing at the European Parliament, as well as in the answers to the questionnaire⁵¹ addressed to him as Commissioner designate by the MEPs⁵², he stressed that multilingualism actively contributes to economic competitiveness, the promotion of the social dimension of the EU and the fostering of intercultural dialogue and expressed his intention to mainstream multilingualism in all EU policies, instead of considering it as an isolated policy.

Several initiatives were taken under Orban's term of office. His mandate included the development of a European Indicator of Language Competence, which led to the implementation of the first European Survey on Language Competences – ESLC – aimed at measuring the Member States progress concerning Barcelona goal MT+2.

In those years several policy documents were published⁵³. Among these are the 2008 Commission's Communication "Multilingualism: An Asset for Europe and a Shared Commitment"⁵⁴, and the European Parliament Resolution of 2008 on "Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment"⁵⁵, which mainly acknowledged and welcomed the content of the Commission's communication. In the Commission's document, all the topics mentioned by Orban in his introductory speech are analysed more in depth: the role of multilingualism for intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and prosperity, the relation between languages, competitiveness and employability, the importance of effective language teaching and the possibilities offered by new technologies, media and translation.

⁵⁰ Introductory statement – European Parliament hearing, November 27, 2006. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/hearings/commission/2006_enlarg/speeches/speech_orban_en.pdf (last accessed May 2018)

⁵¹ European Parliament Hearings – Answers to questionnaire for Commissioner designate Mr Leonard Orban (Multilingualism). Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/hearings/commission/2006_enlarg/questionnaires/general_reply_orban_en.pdf http://www.europarl.europa.eu/hearings/commission/2006_enlarg/questionnaires/specific_reply_orban_en.pdf (last accessed May 2018)

⁵² MEP stands for Member of the European Parliament.

⁵³ As far as the European Commission is concerned, an extensive list can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2004-2009/orban/keydoc/keydoc_en.htm (last accessed May 2018)

⁵⁴ Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2004-2009/orban/news/docs/press_release/080918_Multilingualism_an_asset_for_Europe/COMM_PDF_COM_2008_0566_F_EN_COMMUNICATION.pdf (last accessed May 2018)

⁵⁵ Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment (2008/2225(INI). Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0162+0+DOC+XML+V0/EN> (last accessed May 2018)

In addition to stressing the merits of a successful multilingualism policy, the communication warns against the challenges linguistic diversity may present when adequate policies are lacking:

It can widen the communication gap between people of different cultures and increase social divisions, giving the multilingual access to better living and working opportunities while excluding the monolingual. It can prevent EU citizens and companies from fully exploiting the opportunities offered by the single market, and possibly blunt their competitive edge abroad. It can also be an obstacle to effective cross-border administrative cooperation between Member States in the EU and the efficient working of local services, e.g. hospitals, courts, job centres, etc.⁵⁶

The approach adopted in the communication is inclusive, as it aims to mainstream multilingualism across different policy areas, with the objective of raising awareness of the potential enshrined in linguistic diversity and overcoming existing barriers to intercultural dialogue and successful language learning.

The Parliament's resolution basically endorsed the content of the Commission's communication. It is worth mentioning though that Parliament also expressly regretted that "the Commission has not as yet instituted either a multi-annual programme on linguistic diversity and language learning or a European Agency on linguistic diversity and language learning" (point 16), a request that had already been expressed by Parliament in a resolution⁵⁷ dating back to 2003. As can be read in the annex to the resolution⁵⁸, Parliament believed the institution of such an agency to be "justified by the fact that our linguistic and cultural heritage will play a particularly significant role, and one which should not be underestimated, in an enlarged Union". The Agency, which never saw the light of day, was supposed to keep track of developments in the area of linguistic diversity and introduce concrete measures to promote a multilingual Europe and a language-friendly environment.

After 2010, multilingualism did not vanish but was absorbed once again by the Education and Culture portfolio and then disappeared completely from DG EAC's name

⁵⁶ See footnote 54.

⁵⁷ Resolution of 4 September 2003 with recommendations to the Commission on European regional and lesser-used languages – the languages of minorities in the EU – in the context of enlargement and cultural diversity (OJ C 76 E, 25.3.2004, p. 374). Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P6-TA-2009-0162+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN> (last accessed May 2018).

⁵⁸ Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P5-TA-2003-0372&language=EN> (last accessed May 2018)

in 2014, with the arrival of the Juncker Commission. The Council reaffirmed the importance of linguistic diversity in recent conclusions⁵⁹, dating back to 2014, inviting both the Commission and Member States to “adopt and improve measures aimed at promoting multilingualism”.

As for the Commission, the invitation on part of the Council focuses mainly on further exploring the means for assessing language competence and guaranteeing comparability of data, while the dimension of intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and promotion of a variety of languages seem to have been left behind. However, this political choice does not imply that multilingualism and language policy are less important and relevant in Europe today than they were in the past. The ‘multilingualism’ term in the European debate seems to have lost its institutional and language-policy dimension in favour of a more individual approach, that is the language skills required by a European citizen (or company) in order to succeed in the labour market or business environment.

On the other hand, in the light of recent geopolitical developments, especially migratory flows towards Europe, the topic of minority languages as an important tool for integration is pivotal. The MT+2 objective is losing relevance, considering that studies have revealed that language skills still differ significantly among Member States⁶⁰ and most importantly in light of the increasing number of languages being spoken by migrant groups.

In 2016, the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education commissioned a study on the implementation of the EU strategy for multilingualism at EU level which comes to this very conclusion. In one of the concluding recommendations (Saville & Esther 2016: 38), the authors stress that the concept of multilingualism has evolved and become more complex in a globalised world. The recommendation itself states that:

EU and national policies on multilingualism and linguistic diversity should acknowledge the new role of **English as the lingua franca** for international communication in Europe and beyond. However, **these policies also need to highlight that English on its own is not sufficient for social integration, employability and successful communication in a globalised world**. Policies should accept the complexity of this issue and encourage actions

⁵⁹ Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on multilingualism and the development of language competences. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0614\(06\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0614(06)&from=EN) (last accessed May 2018)

⁶⁰ See the “European Survey on Language Competences” (ESLC), carried out in 2012. Available at: <https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/?q=article/eslc-database> (last accessed May 2018)

targeted to each specific context at a national or regional level. (Saville & Esther 2016: 37)
[emphasis added]

The topic of English as a lingua franca being only a partial solution to the issue of communication within Europe thus resurfaces. The authors insist on the variety of languages and language communities scattered throughout Europe and advocate a more inclusive approach as “the variety of home languages, heritage/community languages and non-European languages of wider communication may coexist in many different configurations” (Saville & Esther 2016: 38).

2.3.1 The Commission’s “European Strategy for Multilingualism”

In 2005, while multilingualism was still a task falling in the remit of the then Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism Ján Figel’, the Commission adopted its first fully-fledged strategy on multilingualism, by means of a Commission communication to the Council and Parliament entitled “A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism”.

In the introduction to the text, significantly entitled “Multilingualism and European values”, languages are described as a direct expression of the cultural identity of European citizens as well as a core value of the European Union itself. Furthermore, a definition of multilingualism is provided. In the document, the term refers to “the new field of Commission policy that promotes a climate that is conducive to the full expression of all languages, in which the teaching and learning of a variety of languages can flourish” (COM, 2005/596: 3). Linguistic diversity shall be nurtured and thrive, in a context where all languages are taught: in addition to defining the term multilingualism, this text expresses in a nutshell the objective of the whole strategy.

This overarching goal is subsequently translated into more specific targets and three main areas are identified – language learning, multilingualism and economy and citizens’ access to EU legislation and information – which are dealt with in three separate sections of the text: “A multilingual society”, “the multilingual economy” and “multilingualism in the Commission’s relations with citizens”.

The first section, “A multilingual society”, focuses on language skills and their beneficial effect on the lives of European citizens, both in economic and in social terms.

The first part gives an account of the situation in Europe, offering statistical data which paint quite a heterogeneous picture. It also criticises the tendency to focus only on English as foreign language to be taught at school, while the Commission insists that “English is not enough” (COM, 2005/596: 4) and illustrates the various initiatives and financial support mechanisms that are available or are to be designed in order to promote language learning and teacher training so as to foster multilingualism amongst individuals and in society.

The second part of the strategy is devoted to the contribution of multilingualism to competitiveness and the EU economy in general. Languages are an important asset for a mobile workforce and increase mobility within the EU. Not to mention the ability of consumers to have access to vital information in all the languages. A section of this strategic area is devoted to the profession and industries related to languages and both translation and interpretation services are mentioned as growing industries and important aids to the fulfilment of effective multilingualism. More specifically, in the case of interpreters, it is stated that “interpreters also help the institutions of multilingual societies to function” and that “properly trained, interpreters [...] contribute to safeguarding human and democratic rights” (COM, 2005/596: 11), thus overtly acknowledging the importance of this profession both for the correct functioning of the EU and for EU citizens at large (see 2.4).

The last section is devoted to relations between the European Commission and EU citizens. As laid down in the first Regulation adopted by the Council, which is recalled in the strategy itself, the European Community is a multilingual entity and citizens shall be able to access the EU legislation and its institutions in their own national language as a matter of democracy and transparency, which is why all EU law is accessible by means of EUR-Lex, a public and fully multilingual online platform. A whole chapter of this section – called “Multilingualism makes the EU special” – is once again devoted to translation and interpretation services, highlighting their pivotal role in making sure that the EU remains democratic and transparent. Reference is also made to the costs of these services which at the time (2004) amounted to 1.05% of the EU budget. The benefits, however, outweigh the costs as “for this price, all citizens get universal access to all EU legislation and the right to communicate, contribute and be informed” (COM, 2005/596: 13). As for future action and concrete measures, the strategy foresees a series of initiatives to continue

to foster multilingualism online, in its EUROPA internet portal and in its publications, including high-level seminars, grants and teaching assistance for universities in order to promote language-related professions.

2.3.2 Multilingualism online

In addition to what is laid down in legislative provisions, another important source to define the EU linguistic policies is information published online. As a result of the Commission's commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability, all the essential information concerning EU activities is published and constantly updated on various official webpages, as well as social media such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The goal is involving citizens in major EU actions and initiatives as well as explaining how the Institutions work, the objectives they pursue and the values they stand for. It is therefore safe to assume that what is found on online EU pages corresponds to the official position of the Institutions and is a faithful (though not always very detailed) description of how legislative norms are translated into practice.

2.3.2.1 Multilingualism on europa.eu

The website www.europa.eu, which is the official website of the European Union, includes a page on multilingualism, in the section "EU by topic".

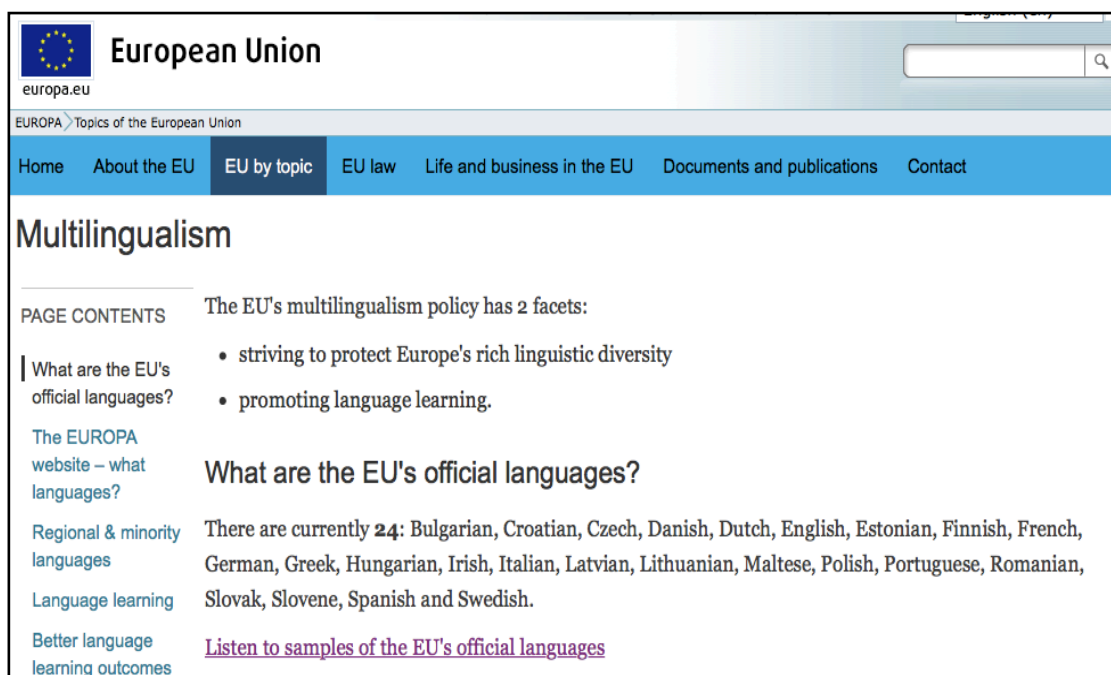


Figure 1 Multilingualism page on europa.eu

The first information provided is the objectives that the policy on multilingualism actively pursues: “The EU's multilingualism policy has 2 facets: striving to protect Europe's rich linguistic diversity and promoting language learning.”⁶¹ By means of this introduction, it is acknowledged that linguistic diversity is an asset worth preserving and the intention is declared to promote language learning, with no specific reference to any particular language. The page is then divided into five subsections⁶², which mainly provide citizens with practical information on the official languages and their right to the use of said languages. More specifically, citizens can address institutions in any of the 24 official languages and will receive an answer in the same language. Legislative texts are published in all official languages⁶³. As for internal communication, no reference is made to Commission and Council, whereas it is specifically mentioned that Members of the European Parliament can express themselves in any of the EU official languages.

As for the webpage EUROPA itself, it is specified that general content is provided in all official languages, though “more specialised content is provided in the most widely

⁶¹ Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/multilingualism_en (last accessed May 208)

⁶² The sections are called: What are the EU's official languages? - The EUROPA website – what languages? - Regional & minority languages - Language learning - Better language learning outcomes

⁶³ An exception is made for Irish, as only Regulations approved by both Council and Parliament are translated into Irish.

spoken EU languages”⁶⁴. No criteria are mentioned as to the fields or the level of content specialisation.

The subsequent section concerns regional and minority languages, which are to be regulated at national level according to the principle of subsidiarity. Nevertheless, “the European Commission maintains an open dialogue, encouraging linguistic diversity to the extent possible”⁶⁵. Reference is also made to potential funding for initiatives aimed at promoting or teaching minority languages. The Commission constantly underscores the importance of linguistic diversity and the intention to protect and foster it wherever possible, thus attributing great importance in its declarations to the values of multilingualism and linguistic diversity.

The intention to promote languages is once again confirmed by the subsequent subsection, probably the most interesting and undoubtedly the richest of the page. It refers, right from the beginning, to one of the “EU’s multilingualism goals”, namely “for every European to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue”. As education falls within national competences, EU policies only aim at supporting and complementing national actions and, in this specific case, national language learning initiatives. The most relevant part of this section is represented by the reasons listed as to why the EU firmly believes in supporting language learning:

- better language skills enable more people to study and/or work abroad, and improve their job prospects
- speaking other languages helps people from different cultures understand one another – essential in a multilingual, multicultural Europe
- to trade effectively across Europe, businesses need multilingual staff
- the language industry – translation and interpretation, language teaching, language technologies, etc. – is among the fastest growing areas of the economy.⁶⁶

All elements in the list seem to possess equal importance, though only three out of the four refer to the economic and occupational relevance of language learning. Good language skills are required in the business environment – they promote mobility, improve job prospects, enable effective trade throughout Europe, and offer access to a growing area of the economy, namely the language industry. Furthermore, languages make it possible for people from different cultural backgrounds to understand one another, which is defined

⁶⁴ See footnote 61.

⁶⁵ See footnote 61.

⁶⁶ Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/multilingualism_en (last accessed May 2018).

as an “essential [element] in a multilingual, multicultural Europe”. In order to corroborate even further these statements concerning the positive impact of language learning, the results of a 2012 Eurobarometer survey on languages are cited, confirming a positive attitude of European citizens towards multilingualism. More specifically:

- 98% say mastering foreign languages will benefit their children.
- 88% think that knowing languages other than their mother tongue is very useful.
- 72% agree with the EU goal of at least 2 foreign languages for everyone.
- 77% say improving language skills should be a policy priority.⁶⁷

European citizens seem to agree as to the crucial role played by language learning, which is considered by a vast majority as a policy priority. Once again, it is worth underscoring that, when speaking of language learning and two foreign languages in addition to one’s mother tongue, no reference is ever made to any language in particular. On the other hand, emphasis is given to the importance of the multicultural and multilingual dimension of Europe.

At the bottom of the webpage, various links are provided for those who wish to find out more on the topic. In addition to a link to the EU Portal on Multilingualism, the “stay connected” section⁶⁸, designed for offering links to EU content on Twitter, Facebook and other social media, displays links to EU Commission pages related to interpretation and translation, thus stressing the close connections existing between multilingualism and interpretation and translation services.

2.3.2.2 The EU Portal on multilingualism

The strategy on multilingualism is managed today by the European Commission’s Directorate-General on Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and more specifically by the unit in charge of Education and Training. These two fields fall within the exclusive competences of each Member State, therefore the actions and initiatives taken at EU level solely aim at fostering the values laid down in the Treaties and at supporting and promoting learning and training, from primary through to adult education

⁶⁷ See footnote 61

⁶⁸ Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact/social-networks_en#:~:i:~:t:32|s: (last accessed May 2018)

across Europe and the rest of the world. Multilingualism is one of the policies pursued by DG EAC and there is a whole section of the “Education and Training” webpage⁶⁹ devoted to this topic.

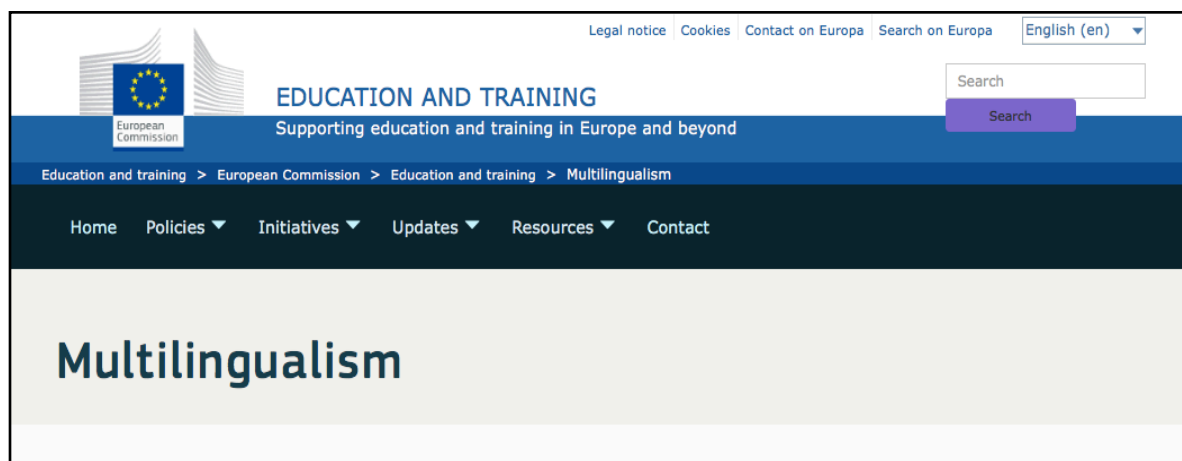


Figure 2 Webpage of the DG EAC - Multilingualism section

This portal basically compiles information on all the activities carried out and the initiatives planned by the Commission in the field of language learning and teaching and the goals that it is pursuing.

In the introductory section, it is stressed right from the onset how keen the European Commission is “to promote language learning and linguistic diversity across Europe”. This is the overarching goal of the whole multilingualism strategy considering that, as is explained further on in the text,

the European Union's aspiration to be **united in diversity** underpins the whole European project. The harmonious co-existence of many languages in Europe embodies this. Languages can build bridges between people, giving us access to other countries and cultures, and enabling us to understand each other better [emphasis added]

Language diversity is described once more as one of the cornerstones of the whole European project and languages are to be considered as a bridge and an enriching element of peaceful coexistence in Europe. Competitiveness and employability are also mentioned as crucial reasons to commit to making language teaching and learning more efficient. In order to pursue this objective, the following actions are taken:

⁶⁹ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism_en (last accessed May 2018)

- working together with the Council of Europe and its European Centre of Modern Languages, whose main focus is innovation in language teaching
- cooperating with the European institutions' language service providers, especially the Commission's Translation and Interpretation departments, to promote education and training for linguists
- awarding the European Language Label to encourage new language teaching techniques⁷⁰

The focus is mainly on training and teaching, though cooperation with translation and interpretation departments is also mentioned as an important field of action.

A similar approach is to be found in the “Linguistic diversity” section of the portal, where attention is drawn to the wide variety of languages being used within the EU and to the essential role they play in shaping both the cultural and economic dimensions of the Union:

Languages define personal identities, but are also part of a shared inheritance. They can serve as a bridge to other people and open access to other countries and cultures, promoting mutual understanding. A **successful multilingualism policy** can strengthen the life chances of citizens: it may increase their employability, facilitate access to services and rights, and contribute to solidarity through enhanced intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.⁷¹ [emphasis added]

An important aspect to be considered within the portal is the section called “Evidence-based policy”. In this part, it is carefully explained why it is essential to collect evidence on language learning methods and results throughout Europe, in order to assist Member States in taking informed decisions and improving the outcomes of language learning. To this aim, different data sources are exploited and indicators are developed in cooperation with other relevant institutions such as the OECD and Eurostat. The monitoring activities carried out also provide information on the different variables (economic, social, demographic, etc.) potentially affecting language proficiency. No indication is provided, on the other hand, about the evidence gathered, if any, to define language policies within the European Union’s institutions.

The subsequent section of the portal⁷² is devoted to the role languages play in terms of growth and jobs. As is the case for the multilingualism section of the EUROPA website, the pivotal role of languages in the European business environment at large is explored

⁷⁰ See footnote 61.

⁷¹ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism/linguistic-diversity_en (last accessed May 2018)

⁷² Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism/growth-jobs_en (last accessed May 2018)

and a “strategic approach to multilingual communication” is advocated. After providing information on ongoing studies and initiatives, reference is made to a report called “Providing multilingual communication skills for the labour market”⁷³ drafted in 2011 by the group “Languages for Jobs”, a thematic working group created in the context of the European Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET2020). It is an independent report, drawn up by experts from EU and non-EU countries and consequently does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission. The working group focused on the language skills required by the labour market, paying specific attention to employment-related aspects of language learning, with the objective of offering recommendations aimed at guaranteeing a better correspondence between demand and supply of language skills on the European labour market.

One of the recommendations of the groups seems particularly relevant to this study:

A wider offer of languages taught and learned in the educational and training systems should be promoted. **Although English is extremely important, it is other languages that will provide a competitive edge.**⁷⁴ [emphasis added]

In the report, it is argued that English is indeed a basic skill and an extremely valuable asset in international exchanges. Communication problems and language barriers do persist however, sometimes partly attributable to different levels of English competence between trading partners, which reveals “an overrating of the universal use of English as lingua franca for international trade in combination with a lack of awareness about the significance of other languages”.

The reference to English as a lingua franca is in an external and independent report commissioned by and addressed to the European Commission. Its role is acknowledged, yet caution is called for when considering how to structure and promote educational systems, as other languages are not to be overshadowed by the role of English. In the ‘Language Guide for European Businesses’⁷⁵, a 2011 guide published by DG-EAC a few months after the report was issued, there is a whole chapter devoted to this issue and titled ‘Just how serious is the language problem?’. In addition to describing language and

⁷³ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/languages/policy/strategic-framework/documents/languages-for-jobs-report_en.pdf (last accessed May 2018)

⁷⁴ See footnote 43.

⁷⁵ Available at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8a7af623-4ec8-4cf6-8632-99fad992187c> (last accessed May 2018).

communication needs in general, the specific situation of English is tackled in a section with the self-explanatory title “English alone is not enough”. Well-established assertions are made on the importance of English and the extent to which it is often successfully used in international exchanges. Still it is argued that “your language approach should be *multilingual* rather than *English-only*”.

Despite these recommendations and the acknowledgment that an English-only approach is contrary to the concept of multilingualism, ELF is never mentioned in the portal on multilingualism, it is not considered a factor or a topic to be addressed in any form – it is a proverbial elephant in the room.

2.4 Translation and Interpretation in the EU

The EU institutions employ around 4,300 translators and 800 interpreters on their permanent staff⁷⁶ (bolstered by around 3,000 freelance interpreters) in different translation and interpretation departments. Translation and interpretation services are an essential component of the system that makes multilingualism function within the EU institutions, allowing citizens to get universal access to EU law and contributing to a democratic and transparent European Union. This is the picture depicted by the European Commission itself in its 2005 communication on an EU strategy for multilingualism:

Specialist linguists in the field of translation and interpretation guarantee cost-effective communication and make **decision-making democratic and transparent**. Interpreters enable delegates to defend their countries’ interests in their own language(s), and to communicate with other delegates. In this way, citizens can be represented by their best experts, who may not be the best linguists. Similarly, the translation and interpretation services ensure that the **European and national institutions can effectively exercise their right of democratic scrutiny**. (COM, 2005/596: 13). [emphasis added]

Both services contribute to the Union’s democratic legitimacy and transparency, helping the institutions of a multilingual and multicultural Union to function properly, and are therefore praised as a central element of the multilingualism strategy. Nowhere in the text is there a reference to the possibility of using a *lingua franca* either to communicate to citizens or for the internal functioning of European institutions.

⁷⁶ Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/administration_en (last accessed May 2018).

2.4.1 Translation in the EU

The translation services of the EU are the largest in the world, both in terms of size and number of languages covered. EU translators make documents available in all EU official languages, thus allowing individual citizens, companies and national institutions to have full access to all the EU legislation and to address European institutions in their own language.

As can be read in the Commission's communication on the "European Strategy for multilingualism" (see 2.3.1),

It is [...] a prerequisite for the Union's democratic legitimacy and transparency that citizens should be able to communicate with its Institutions and read EU law in their own national language, and take part in the European project without encountering any language barriers". (COM, 2005/596: 12)

The European Parliament, the European Commission and the Court of Justice all have separate translation services, yet they collaborate on several projects. Through the EUR-Lex website, all primary and secondary legislation (the Official Journal, EU law, EU case-law, preparatory acts, international agreements and other public documents) are freely available in all the EU official languages thank to translators and lawyer-linguists working in the different services of the EU institutions. Furthermore, the European Union has also developed an inter-institutional terminology database, IATE⁷⁷ (Inter-Active Terminology for Europe) – fully operational since 2004 – which combines all existing EU databases of the EU translation services and is also freely accessible online, and an inter-institutional translation memory repository, EURAMIS⁷⁸, accessible to translation and administrative staff from all institutions and agencies participating in the project.

2.4.2 Interpretation in the EU

The interpreting services of the European Union are the largest employer of conference interpreters in the world, both in terms of working days and language coverage (24 UE

⁷⁷ Available at: http://iate.europa.eu/about_IATE.html (last accessed May 2018).

⁷⁸ Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/dpo-register/details.htm?id=41727> (last accessed May 2018).

official languages plus occasionally non-EU languages). As can be read in the 2005 Commission's communication, "translators and interpreters guarantee that citizens can communicate with the Institutions and have access to decisions in their national language(s)" (COM, 2005/596: 13).

The three main EU institutions – the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Court of Justice of the European Union – all have separate interpreting services, even though recruitment procedures are often inter-institutional (open competitions for staff interpreters and inter-institutional accreditation tests for freelance interpreters).

2.4.2.1 Interpretation in the European Commission

The Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission (informally referred to as DG SCIC)⁷⁹, provides interpreting services not just for the Commission itself (roughly one third of all working days), but also to the Council of the European Union, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and other European and national agencies and Institutions.

As can be read in the official Facebook page of the DG, the mission it pursues is the following:

The Interpreting Service of the European Commission ensures that the people working in the Institutions can communicate with each other and with the citizens of Europe. Working in Brussels and everywhere else meetings are held, **the interpreters play an essential role in guaranteeing the accessibility and transparency of the EU** [emphasis added]

⁷⁹ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/interpretation_en#latest (last accessed May 2018)

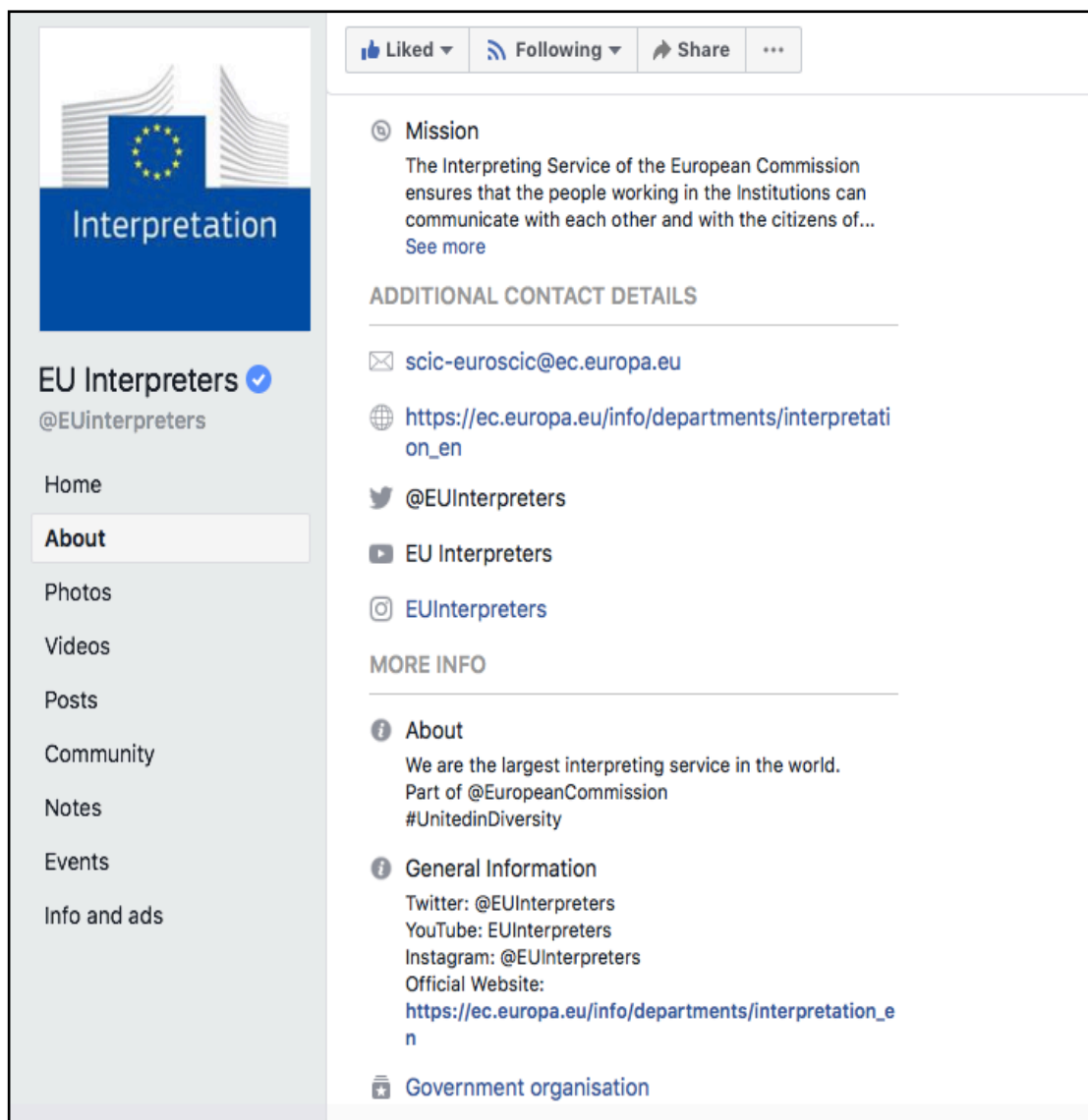


Figure 3 Facebook page of DG SCIC

Effective communication is not a goal in itself, but it serves the greater ambition of guaranteeing the legitimacy of the European project. Helping to put the Commission's multilingualism strategy into practice is actually one of the DG's task, expressly mentioned among the Directorate's responsibilities.

A more detailed account of the internal functioning of DG SCIC is provided in Chapter 3, as the interpreters working for DG SCIC are the target population for the IPE questionnaire.

2.4.2.2 *Interpretation in the European Parliament*

The Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences (DG LINC)⁸⁰ provides interpreting services for all multilingual meetings organised by the official bodies of the institution. It employs approximately 270 staff interpreters in addition to some 1500 external accredited interpreters (ACIs) who regularly work for Parliament as required to cover its needs.

The general rules for the conduct of meetings are included in the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament⁸¹, more specifically in rule 158, ‘Languages’:

2. All Members shall have the right to speak in Parliament in the official language of their choice. Speeches delivered in one of the official languages shall be simultaneously interpreted into the other official languages and into any other language that the Bureau may consider to be necessary.
3. Interpretation shall be provided in committee and delegation meetings from and into the official languages that are used and requested by the members and substitutes of that committee or delegation.
4. At committee and delegation meetings away from the usual places of work, interpretation shall be provided from and into the languages of those members who have confirmed that they will attend the meeting. These arrangements may exceptionally be made more flexible. The Bureau shall adopt the necessary provisions.
5. After the result of a vote has been announced, the President shall rule on any requests concerning alleged discrepancies between the different language versions.

All Members are entitled to speak the language of their choice, meaning that every European citizen has the right to stand for election, regardless of their proficiency or ability to express themselves in a language other than their mother tongue. The term that Parliament uses to describe this approach is 'controlled full multilingualism'⁸². No definition is provided, but the adjective “controlled” probably refers to the fact that Members of Parliament (and substitutes) are expected to request whether they want a

⁸⁰ The Directorate was formerly known as DG INTE (DG Interpretation and Conference) and was renamed DG LINC in 2018. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-secretary-general/en/organisation/directorate-general-for-logistics-and-interpretation-for-conferences> (last accessed May 2018)

⁸¹ Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+RULES-EP+20180731+TOC+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN> (last accessed May 2018)

⁸² Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/interpretation/en/interpreting-in-the-parliament.html> (last accessed May 2018).

specific language to be available in the meetings they attend. Therefore, it is almost only in plenary sessions, in which all Members participate, that full multilingualism (i.e. all official languages) is actually deployed.

2.4.2.3 Interpretation in the Court of Justice of the European Union

The Court's Interpretation Directorate⁸³ provides simultaneous interpreting during the public hearings before both the Court of Justice and the General Court. It currently has approximately 70 permanent interpreters and employs around 300 freelance interpreters (ACIs) in the course of a year.

The language arrangements are laid down in Chapter 8 of the Rules of Procedure⁸⁴, articles 36 to 42. The language of the proceedings varies and is determined according to various criteria. During the hearings itself, when simultaneous interpretation is provided, the language regime invariably includes the language of the proceeding and other languages according to the needs of the participants (Judges, Advocate-General, defendant, applicant, intervening governments, witnesses or official visitors). The Judges deliberate in closed session, without interpreters as, according to the Rules of Procedures, deliberations shall remain secret. Traditionally the language used is French, even though there are no rules stipulating which one is to be used.

Due to the very technical nature of the hearings and the complexity of the matters, the Interpretation Directorate offers advice to counsels appearing before the Court on the implications and constraints of simultaneous interpretation (“Practice directions to parties”⁸⁵); more specifically, participants are invited to send any text or document they intend to read and are given recommendations on how to speak in order to facilitate interpretation.

⁸³ Available at: https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/Jo2_12357/en/ (last accessed May 2019)

⁸⁴ Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012Q0929\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012Q0929(01)) (last accessed May 2018)

⁸⁵ Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014Q0131%2801%29&from=EN> (last accessed May 2018)

2.5 *De jure* and *de facto* language regimes

In order to apply full multilingualism, all the European Institutions have equipped themselves with in-house translation and interpretation services, to guarantee that all legally-binding documents are accessible in all official languages and that summits, meetings and Court hearings are organised so as to allow all participants to express themselves in the language they feel most at ease with (see 2.4). This statement, despite being factually correct, only describes a partial picture of what actually happens in Brussels (and Luxembourg and Strasbourg).

When talking about multilingualism, a distinction should be made between ‘official’ or *de jure* multilingualism and ‘*de facto*’ multilingualism”⁸⁶ (Clyne 1997: 301). The former, which is laid down in laws and provisions, says nothing about the *de facto* state of multilingualism which is actually practised in a country and, as is the case for the European Union, within the Institutions. In the specific framework of the EU, the question to be asked is whether the challenge of multilingualism is predominantly political or purely organisational. In fact, a contradiction exists between the principles that the EU defends and promotes and the concrete implications in practical terms, a tension between what De Swaan (2007) calls a high principle of equality and a low principle of practicality. From an ideological point of view, languages are considered as an essential marker of identity, and are therefore granted full equality. However, in the daily life of institutions where officials from 27 different Member States and with different cultural and linguistic background work, languages also take on the role of practical tools of communication. In practical terms this entails that, although the official approach is that of full multilingualism, there are different practical arrangements when it comes to “working languages” within the institutions and to the publication of non-binding documents (guidelines, official competitions, DG websites, etc.). A paradox therefore arises considering that, even though all languages are granted equal status, in practice some of them (and most notably English) end up enjoying a preferential status (Phillipson 2003: 135). Almost no official mention is made of the language arrangements within the various

⁸⁶ This distinction refers to societal or national multilingualism and is used to describe how multilingual societies function (such as Switzerland), but can be also applied to the specific context of the EU institutions.

institutions. In the section of the EUROPA website called “EU administration – staff, languages and location”⁸⁷, in addition to mentioning the citizens’ right to have access to documents in all languages and to communicate with the Commission in a language of their choice, a reference is made to the interpretation service offered to Council meetings participants and to MEPs. The cost of all language services is also added (see 2.6), but no reference is to be found as to any working arrangement within the institutions themselves. On the contrary, in the Education section of the EUROPA website (see 2.3.2.1), it is clearly declared that “the European Union has 24 official and working languages”⁸⁸. This statement is given the lie by actual practices within the institutions, as there is an evident inconsistency between official statements and objectives and daily practices within the Institutions.

In point of fact the European Commission often enforces a trilingual language regime, the three working languages being English, French and German. This implies that in order to work in any of the EC’s Directorate-Generals, prospective employees must have excellent knowledge of at least one of these languages. Yet a perusal of the various webpages that describe the functioning of the European Union reveals no reference to this aspect. Article 28 of the Commission Staff Regulation⁸⁹, which lays down all the conditions for the appointment of an official, states that:

An official may be appointed only on condition that: [...] (f) he produces evidence of a thorough knowledge of one of the languages of the Union and of a satisfactory knowledge of another language of the Union to the extent necessary for the performance of his duties.

No language is specifically mentioned, though one might acknowledge that the final part of the sentence – “to the extent necessary for the performance of his duties” – leaves the door open to argue that in order to be operational, a new hire shall already have proficient knowledge of either English, French or German. The same information – “you must have a good command of at least 2 EU languages” – is mentioned in the list of key qualifications for the post of European Public Administrator in the European Personnel

⁸⁷ Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/administration_en (last accessed May 2018)

⁸⁸ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/official-languages-eu-0_en (last accessed May 2018)

⁸⁹ REGULATION No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC), laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (and following amendments); available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1962R0031:20140101:EN:PDF> (last accessed May 2018)

Selection Office (EPSO) webpage⁹⁰. Nevertheless, when moving to the ‘sample tests’ section of the same webpage, which – as the name suggests – offers samples of test material, only English, French and German samples are provided for all test types, regardless of the role (administrator, assistant, translator, etc.). This already implies that potential candidates are actually discriminated against, as would be the case with a Bulgarian with excellent knowledge of Italian and Spanish wishing to have access to test material while preparing for a competition.

However, despite not being mentioned anywhere, the EC trilingual regime is an open secret. The Commission actually defended it in a series of judicial cases⁹¹ brought to the Court of Justice of the EU, after it had published a series of notices for public competitions only in the English, French and German editions of the Official Journal of the European Union. In the notices, under the heading ‘knowledge of languages’, candidates were supposed to have a thorough knowledge of one of the official languages of the European Union as the main language and a satisfactory knowledge of English, French or German as the second language (different from the main language).

Furthermore, all communication between EPSO and the candidates would only take place in either English, French or German and the admission tests themselves would be taken in the second language, that is to say, English, French or German. The Commission lost all the cases and the notices were annulled, but the findings of the Court⁹², which also make reference to some of the arguments put forward by the Commission, are worth a more thorough examination.

First of all, it has to be noted that the main reason brought forward by the Court to rule in favour of the appellants is the infringement of the principles of non-discrimination on the ground of language and proportionality⁹³. The Court recalls, in point 67 of the judgment, that Regulation No.1 (Art. 6) refers to the concept of “working languages” (see 2.2),

⁹⁰ Available at: https://epso.europa.eu/career-profiles/european-public-administration_en (last accessed May 2018)

⁹¹ Case C-566/10 P – Italy vs. Commission in 2012; Case T-124/13 - Italy vs. Commission; Case T-191/13 Spain vs. Commission in 2015; Cases T-353/14 and T-17/15 Italy vs. Commission in 2016.

⁹² Case C-566/10 P was taken as a reference, as it was the first time the Court ruled on the topic; Available at: <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?jsessionid=9ea7d0f130dc83a657fbb34143c3a729a341ad1b4938.e34KaxiLc3eQc40LaxqMbN4Pb3uSe0?text=&docid=130402&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=53681> (last accessed May 2018)

⁹³ Reasons must be given for any limitations in the notice, introduced on the basis of what is ‘necessary for the performance of the duties’ to be carried out, as laid down in article 28 of the Staff Regulation, but the competition notices did not comply with this rule.

allowing EU Institutions to stipulate in their rules of procedures which languages are to be used and in which cases.

The Commission, though, has never seized this opportunity and there are no “specific regulations applicable to officials or other servants or stipulations in that regard in the rules of procedure of the institutions concerned”⁹⁴. Furthermore, no other documents are available which lay down criteria governing the choice of a language as a second language for participation in a competition, nor does the competition notice contain any reasoning to justify the choice of the three specific languages in question.

In the hearing, the Commission argued that “the three languages chosen are those that are most used – and have been most used for a long time – in the institutions”⁹⁵. This argument, officially brought before the Court, confirms that the Commission is actually working in these three languages, and has been doing so for an unquantified ‘long time’. This working arrangement is presented as an un-debated and un-debatable fact, so rooted in the Commission’s working method that using the knowledge of one of these three languages as a personnel selection criterion is considered a legitimate limit to the principle of multilingualism.

The Commission did explain that the specific practice of restricted publication of the competition notices was a consequence of the translation burden following the 2004 and 2007 accessions and the related increase in the number of official languages. The argument is quite flimsy though, as these texts are standard and repetitive and therefore only require a one-time translation effort with subsequent minor changes based on specific notice requirements.

Furthermore, the problem is not at all limited to the publication of the notice but includes the obligation to take the test in one of the three selected second languages. The appellant⁹⁶ recognises that a strict application of the principle of full multilingualism would hinder the effective functioning of the Institutions, but also claims that “a candidate should be selected first on the basis of his professional competence and second his knowledge of languages”⁹⁷. The Court clearly concurs with this position:

⁹⁴ Point 68 of the judgement for the case Case C-566/10 P (see footnote 91).

⁹⁵ Point 80 of the judgement for the case Case C-566/10 P (see footnote 91).

⁹⁶ The appellant in the Case whose judgement is being analysed is the Italian Republic.

⁹⁷ Point 79 of the judgement for the case Case C-566/10 P (see footnote 91).

[...] the recruitment of officials is to be directed to securing for the institution the services of officials of the highest standard of ability, efficiency and integrity. Since **that objective can best be achieved when the candidates are allowed to sit the selection tests in their mother tongue or in the second language of which they think they have the best command**, it is, in that regard, for those institutions to weigh the legitimate objective justifying the limitation of the number of languages of the competition against the objective of identifying the most competent candidates.⁹⁸ [emphasis added]

In addition to inviting the Commission to reflect upon a scale of priorities when identifying the criteria to follow for the selection of the most competent candidates, the Court takes quite an interesting stance on the issue: one's abilities, skills and efficiency are best displayed when using one's mother tongue or, in any case, a language of one's choosing. Presumably, the same holds true after the completion of a selection procedure.

When limiting the choice to three languages – and the procedure would have been kept in place, had it not been for the Court's rulings – the Commission would therefore be deliberately excluding all those candidates unable to successfully complete a selection procedure in either French, German or English on the ground that these are the languages actually being used in the workplace.

This 'discriminating' approach could be further corroborated by another provision of the Staff Regulation – identified by the Court itself – as Article 45 thereof states that when considering the merits of officials eligible for promotion, special attention shall be paid to “the use of languages in the execution of their duties other than the language for which they have produced evidence of thorough knowledge in accordance with point (f) of Article 28”⁹⁹.

It seems safe to assume that if English, French and German are *de facto* the languages used within the Commission, it would not be efficient for officials to study any other language, as they would not be using it in the performance of their tasks and it would probably not count for promotion. Once again not all languages are equal and officials are actually rewarded for using some specific languages against all others¹⁰⁰. Languages end

⁹⁸ Point 94 of the judgement for the case Case C-566/10 P (see footnote 91).

⁹⁹ See footnote 88.

¹⁰⁰ These are general considerations, as it cannot be ruled out that officials assigned to specific duties might need to use other languages

up ‘competing’ and individuals will end up choosing the language which can bring most value to them, hence the special treatment.

Apart from the ECJ cases, there are other official documents confirming that the use of three working languages is common practice within most of the institutions. In the introduction to a special report by the European Court of Auditors concerning translation expenditure incurred by the Commission, the Parliament and the Council¹⁰¹, it is clearly stated that “for practical reasons the languages most frequently used within the institutions are reduced in number (generally English, French and German)”, the languages that later on in the texts are called “procedural languages” of the Commission.

Furthermore, the drafting language of virtually all new legislative texts is English¹⁰². The use of English as a drafting language entails that amendments and revisions as well as debates on the texts in question are mostly in English. During meetings both in Council and Parliament, where the texts are discussed and national delegates and MEPs express their positions, interpretation services are provided, but the text upon which comments and ideas are expressed is invariably in English, and the translation in all official languages is the last procedural step before formal adoption.

Despite not being formally regulated, an internal language policy within the European institutions seems to exist and to have a quite clear-cut and limited dimension, that of English, the only real exception being the Court of Justice where French maintains a dominant position (see 2.4.2.3):

In EU Institutions, despite a rhetoric of equality and multilingualism, there has been a consensus on a hierarchy of in-house languages, the hegemonic language being French earlier, and now English in precarious tandem with French [...] (English now being thought of as a universal open sesame). (Phillipson 2003: 135-136)

This approach, which might appear – though certainly is not – marginal if applied only to internal communication, actually corresponds to a wider tendency within the EU, especially as regards English, considering that “the legal position of English is clear and predetermined in the EEC Council Regulation No. 1 (1958), but the policy position of English is less clear and rather implicit” (Kreiselmaier 2011: 214).

¹⁰¹ Special Report n. 9/2006. Available at: https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR06_09/SR06_09_EN.PDF (last accessed 2018)

¹⁰² Up to 95% of all legislation adopted is drafted in English (Dragone, 2006: 100; Frame, 2005: 22)

In the Education section of the EUROPA website (see 2.3.2.1), when illustrating the topic of EU's official languages, the following statement is added:

In order to reduce the cost to the taxpayer, the European Commission aims to provide visitors with web content **either in their own language or in one they can understand, depending on their real needs**. This language policy will be applied as consistently as possible across the new web presence. An evidence-based, user-focused approach will be used to decide whether many language versions are required or not. [emphasis added]¹⁰³

No reference is made once again to any language in particular, but no objective criteria is offered either: how is the Commission going to be able to ascertain whether visitors are able to understand the language chosen for any specific content? Can it really be any of the official languages of the EU, as one might gather from the statement? An explanation is provided though as to why not all the information is provided in all languages, mentioning the will to reduce the spending of taxpayers' money, implicitly reminding readers that multilingualism does not come for free and somehow implying that it has too high a price (see 2.6).

All the Directorate-Generals have published their home pages in all the official EU languages, yet, when surfing said pages, much of the information they contain is only available in one language, namely English. This is almost invariably the case for the news section, press releases, texts of Commissioners' speeches, annual activity reports and DGs' mandates, just to name a few. All this information is *de facto* only available to those visitors who are able to understand English.

The same approach can be found in other prominent EU webpages, another example being the online version of the 'Supplement to the Official Journal' of the EU, TED¹⁰⁴ (Tenders Electronic Daily), which publishes calls for tenders and procurement notices. Certain sections of the webpage are in English only, as is the case for the page on e-tendering or, most importantly, the 'help' page, where all the essential information on the site functioning are provided. It is quite surprising that, when browsing this last page in French, the user is informed in English that "the preferred language of browsing can be selected from the drop-down list box in the top right-hand corner on the homepage. It can

¹⁰³ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/official-languages-eu-0_en (last accessed May 2018)

¹⁰⁴ Available at: <https://ted.europa.eu/TED/main/HomePage.do> (last accessed May 2018)

also be modified during the course of a session. TED is available in all 24 EU official languages”¹⁰⁵.

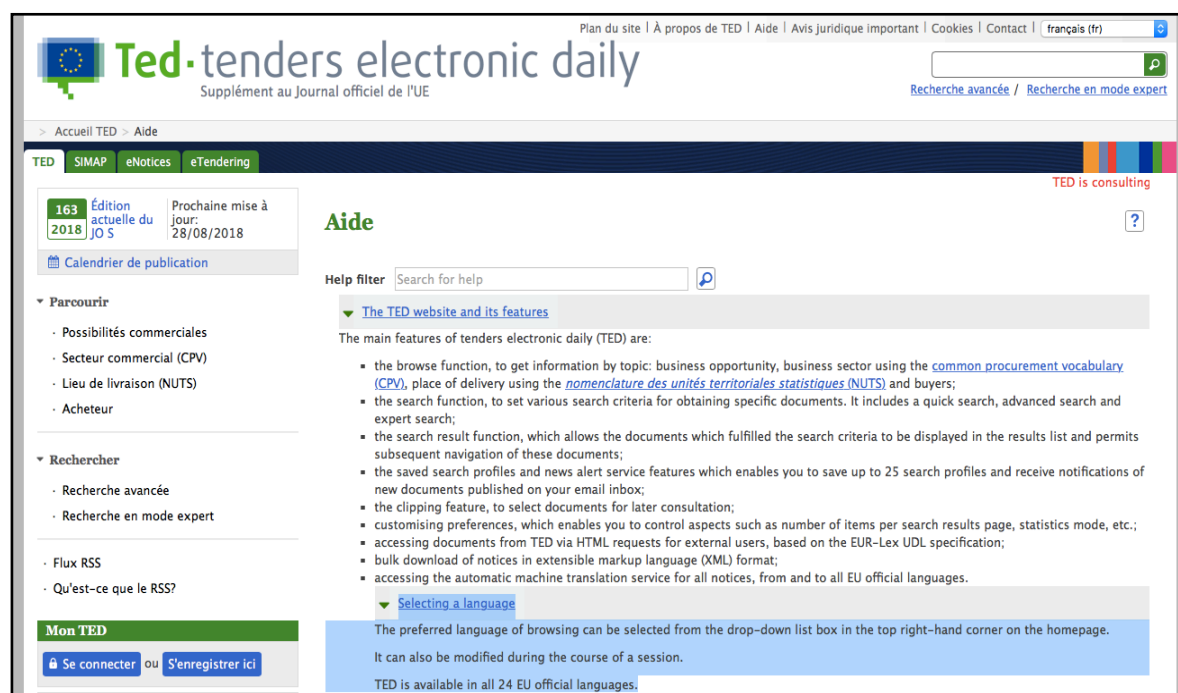


Figure 4 Help section of TED webpage (French version)

Presumably, a user actively selecting French and looking for information on how to browse, search and consult notices will not feel properly at ease receiving these instructions in English. Furthermore, at the time of consultation of the website¹⁰⁶, a banner was present on the top of the page, informing viewers that TED was consulting its users on a new publication schedule and inviting them to participate in a survey¹⁰⁷, available in English only.

The same ‘policy’ holds true for the information concerning the various funding opportunities offered by the Commission: the webpage presenting an overview of the programmes is available in all the official languages¹⁰⁸, yet of the 51 links provided, only 13 lead to webpages available in all official languages, five to webpages accessible in English, French and German, five to webpages in either French or English and the

¹⁰⁵ Available at: <https://ted.europa.eu/TED/misc/helpPage.do?helpPageId=legalNotice> (last accessed May 2018)

¹⁰⁶ See footnote 105.

¹⁰⁷ Available at: http://surveys.publications.europa.eu/formserver/po/ted_ojs_2018.html (last accessed August 2018)

¹⁰⁸ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes/overview-funding-programmes_en (last accessed August 2018)

remaining 28 (that is more than half of all the links) to webpages available in English only¹⁰⁹. This last group includes major funding programmes, such as COSME (Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises)¹¹⁰, the Consumer Programme 2014-2020¹¹¹, the Connecting Europe Facility¹¹² (a funding instrument to promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment) and Horizon 2020¹¹³ (the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever).

The picture which can be drawn from these examples is quite vivid: virtually all the information provided is always in English, much is offered in French, while only a small share is available in other languages. Providing essential information only in English determines an unfair competitive advantage in favour of those citizens fluent in this language (and it is not even the majority of the EU population, see 2.6), in addition to a covert incentive for citizens to study English, irrespective of their personal inclinations:

In establishing their own multilingual life-style, individuals will choose those languages that they perceive as most valuable to them and as generating the maximum amount of capital in the market. As a result, English obtains a special role and special treatment in EU language policy (Kreiselmaier 2011: 214).

Last but not least, in almost all official events, be they conferences, hearings in Parliament or press conferences, all the members of the College of Commissioners, representing the highest level of political leadership within the Commission, almost invariably express themselves in English¹¹⁴. Among its responsibilities, the Commission has the power to monitor the implementation of Union law, thus formally being the guardian of the Treaties¹¹⁵. Considering that multilingualism is one of the founding principles of the EU, one might argue that the Commission does not set a positive example, nor does it give the impression of attaching any great value to this principle. Possibly as a consequence, the vast majority of Commission officials during technical meetings, where

¹⁰⁹ The information was last verified on August 2018.

¹¹⁰ Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cosme> (last accessed August 2018)

¹¹¹ Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/chafea/consumers/> (last accessed August 2018)

¹¹² Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility> (last accessed August 2018)

¹¹³ Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/> (last accessed August 2018)

¹¹⁴ President Juncker possibly constitutes an exception, as he often addresses the Parliament either in French or in German, which are both official languages in his home country, Luxembourg.

¹¹⁵ Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/25/the-european-commission>

interpretation is provided, do not speak in their mother tongues even when they could (see 6.5).

2.6 The cost of multilingualism vs monolingualism

The *de jure* multilingual regime of the EU Institutions is based on the idea that all the official languages are equal. To uphold this principle, multilingual communication both within the Institutions and with citizens is made possible by linguists offering translation and interpretation services.

In the 2005 strategy for multilingualism (see 2.3.1), the problem of the monetary cost of these services had already been acknowledged and the choice to resort to specialist linguists was defended as a cost-efficient solution:

Specialist linguists in the field of translation and interpretation **guarantee cost-effective communication and make decision-making democratic and transparent.** [...] The EU institutions must strike a balance between the costs and the benefits of being multilingual. The translation and interpreting services of all institutions together cost the equivalent of 1.05% of the EU's total budget for 2004, or €2.28 per citizen per year. For this price, all citizens get universal access to all EU legislation and the right to communicate, contribute and be informed. **The system that makes multilingualism function in the European Union does, of course, have a cost attached; but, without it, a democratic and transparent European Union is simply not possible.** (COM 2005/596: 13) [emphasis added]

The cost of translation and interpretation services seems a small price to pay for having a democratic and transparent Union: communication is effective, democratic participation is granted, decision-making is transparent and citizens get universal access to the EU. Undoubtedly at the time of this Communication, the main EU enlargement had just taken place, with nine¹¹⁶ new official languages to be added to the system (Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Slovak and Slovene), and the implications in terms of complexity and additional costs were probably not completely manifest.

In the Communication itself, the Commission seems confident that “with proper planning, foresight and allocation of the required resources, the EU could in the future

¹¹⁶ The enlargement included 10 new countries, but Greek (Cyprus official language), was already an EU official language as Greece was already a Member State of the EU.

operate in yet more official languages” (COM, 2005/596: 13). Yet in slightly more than 10 years the situation has changed quite significantly.

Following the 2004 enlargements, the European Union has kept growing, with three new Member States (Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia) and three new languages (Bulgarian, Romanian and Croatian) being added to an already quite long list, which today includes 24 official languages. Multilingualism and language policies, on the other hand, seem to have lost ground, as demonstrated by the disappearance of the portfolio for multilingualism first (2010) and of the very mention of multilingualism in the competences of the Commissioner for Education and Culture (see. 2.3).

Furthermore, because of the early 2000s economic recession and the financial crisis, which hit Europe between 2007 and 2008, the EU budget, financed mainly by Member States, has become the object of heated debates, fuelled by constant requests for cuts, austerity and simplification in all possible domains. The EU is sometimes depicted in national media as a horrific creature constantly devouring public money just to nourish a gigantic bureaucratic apparatus.

EU budget constraints cannot be underestimated but, as is the case for any policy, it is necessary to assess first how much the EU language regime actually costs and what the consequences of a more limited language regime would potentially be. It is sometimes claimed that the language regime of the EU “has become economically unsustainable” (Cogo and Jenkins 2010: 272). According to 2012 estimations (prior to Croatia’s accession to the EU), the EU’s expenditure for language services corresponded to less than 1% of the European budget, totalling approximately €1.1 billion per year, that is €2.2 per person per year (€2.7 counting only citizens above 15 years old, which is slightly higher than the above-mentioned 2004 value) (Gazzola & Grin 2013: 100).

More recent estimates, published on the EUROPA website, confirm that the figure has not substantially changed since 2013, despite the increase in official languages¹¹⁷:

The estimated cost of all language services (translation and interpreting) in all EU institutions adds up to less than 1% of the annual general budget of the EU. Divided by the population of the EU, this comes to around €2 per person per year.

¹¹⁷ Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/administration_en (Last accessed March 2018).

It is true that trying to attach a reasonable price to a service that has not only an objective and quantifiable value – how much the translation of a text is worth, based on objective criteria such as word-count, the technical nature of the source text or the delivery deadline – but also an ideological and abstract value – the access the translated text offers to all citizens to vital information concerning their basic rights or the participation criteria in a public competition or in financing opportunities – is undoubtedly a very perilous exercise. Nonetheless, in merely economic terms, it seems difficult to argue that these data describe an ‘economically unsustainable’ scenario.

Although the official approach is that of full multilingualism, there are already different practical arrangements when it comes to ‘working languages’ within the institutions and to the publication of non-binding documents (see. 2.5). A limited number of languages (often one single language, English) is already being used in different contexts, causing disparities in access to information.

The dimension of fairness is undoubtedly central to the debate on which language policy the EU should pursue, a topic already dealt with quite extensively by political philosophy. Van Parijs (2011), for example, argues that using English as a *Lingua Franca* in Europe, despite being a practical and quite cheap medium for the dissemination of knowledge, gives rise to an unjust scenario insofar as native speakers are systematically privileged – both for the effortless competence they already have and the greater opportunities it brings them – and a hierarchy is created, attributing lower status to the other languages, which most of the European population identify with.

The European Union does not seem to be facing an ideological dilemma as to the value to be attributed to multilingualism, which is constantly depicted as a pillar of the European project and a source of richness (both spiritually and economically) for European citizens. It is the practical implementation of this ideological framework that is not equally clear.

Fairness is, together with effectiveness, one of the main criteria for assessing any public policy, in order to ascertain if taxpayers’ money is used equitably and does bring concrete results. If the effectiveness of a policy can be quite easily measured by comparing policy objectives with outcomes, that is results actually obtained¹¹⁸, the dimension of fairness is more difficult to frame. In order to assess fairness, it is necessary to identify “who loses,

¹¹⁸ For example, in the case of the EU language policies, to what extent citizens are fluent in one or more foreign languages as compared to the Barcelona goal MT+2; see. 2.3

who gains, and (if possible) how much, and how the costs of alternative policies are shared among individuals or groups” (Gazzola & Grin 2013: 98).

Research has been carried out on a quantitative evaluation of the fairness of the EU language policy (Gazzola & Grin 2007; Gazzola & Grin 2013; Gazzola 2016c; Gazzola 2016a), by evaluating the distributive effects of the use of a limited number of languages, and more specifically comparing a monolingual (English-only), trilingual (English, French and German), hexalingual (English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish – that is the largest EU official languages in terms of native speakers) and a fully multilingual approach. The authors use an indicator called the “linguistic disenfranchisement rate” (DR), introduced for the first time by Ginsburgh and Weber (2005), which is defined as:

the percentage of citizens who potentially cannot understand EU documents such as regulations and calls for tenders, or oral public discussions such as the plenary meetings of the European Parliament transmitted through the Internet, because they do not master any official language. The lower the disenfranchisement rate, the higher the effectiveness of a language regime. (Gazzola 2016c: 549)

The lower the disenfranchisement rate, the higher the effectiveness and fairness of the regime, as a low DR implies a higher – at least potential – participation of citizens in EU activities, which is ultimately the main objective of EU language policy. Conversely, a high disenfranchisement rate corresponds to a high percentage of people being excluded. An even more conservative indicator is available, the “relative disenfranchisement rate” (RDR) (Gazzola 2016a: 33), which also takes into account the proficiency level of citizens, as it is assumed that a high level of proficiency is required to understand all EU documents (which might reach a high level of complexity).

The data source used for calculating the rate is the AES-2011¹¹⁹ (Adult Education Survey), which offers demographic and socio-economic information on the respondents in addition to information on their native and foreign languages, their skills being self-assessed on a scale of competence (Gazzola 2016a: 4-5).

The following table shows the percentage values of the disenfranchisement and relative disenfranchisement rates for the four different linguistic scenarios. It is important to stress

¹¹⁹ The survey includes adults aged 25 to 64 from 25 Member States (Croatia, Romania and the Netherlands being excluded for lack of data).

that said scenarios are not hypothetical or abstract as they are currently being used to different extents in various contexts (see 2.5):

Monolingual		Trilingual		Hexalingual		Multilingual	
DR	RDR	DR	RDR	DR	RDR	DR	RDR
45	79	26	49	8	19	0	4

Table 1: Linguistic disenfranchisement rates in the EU (adapted from Gazzola 2016a: 33)

The data in the ‘monolingual’ column (that is to say English-only regime) indicate that 45% of residents do not know English and 79% either do not speak it at all or have limited knowledge (fair to intermediate level) and would therefore end up being disenfranchised, whereas in the multilingual scenario the rate is zero (the relative rate being 4 as it counts those minorities who are not fluent in the official language of the country where they live).

Multilingualism is by far the most effective and fair scenario among those analysed, whilst an English-only scenario would entail the exclusion of a considerable share of citizens. This is mainly attributable to the fact that “knowledge of English is not a universal ‘basic skill’ in Europe” (Gazzola 2016a: 19).

According to the 2012 special Eurobarometer “Europeans and their languages”¹²⁰, only 38% of respondents claim they speak English as a foreign language ‘well enough in order to be able to have a conversation’. Even after adding native speakers to this figure, the percentage does not go beyond 50% (meaning conversely that at least 50% of the EU population does not speak English). Furthermore, according to the same 2012 Eurobarometer data, only a fifth (21%) of those who claim to be able to have a conversation in English rate their ability as very good, this last percentage corresponding to 7% of all EU citizens (Gazzola & Grin 2013: 102).

The group of respondents claiming ‘good’ knowledge is larger (47% of those who claim to be able to have a conversation in English), but caution has to be exercised when

¹²⁰ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf (last accessed May 2018)

referring to self-reported language skills, as a perceived good knowledge of English might not be enough to have easy access to EU documents and debates.

These disenfranchisement rates, be they absolute or relative, can be further broken down according to different parameters, such as geographical distribution, socio-economic status of respondents, age group or level of education. Once again, the case of the monolingual scenario is the most evident – in addition to being the most important for this study – as knowledge of English is not uniformly spread within the EU. Taking the rates by country (Gazzola 2016a: 9), for example, the RDR is greater than 85% in 15 countries¹²¹ (at least 90% in 11 countries), whereas taking even the less conservative disenfranchisement rate, only 9 countries¹²² would be below 40% (three of them being Ireland, the United Kingdom and Malta, where English is an official language).

As for the other parameters, the data show that the disenfranchisement rate tends to be higher for residents from an older generation, less educated and with a lower income. The correlation with the level of education is particularly interesting once again for the monolingual regime as it turns out that the relative disenfranchisement rate is very high even for residents with a tertiary level education (64%), thus revealing that “a high level of proficiency in foreign languages in Europe is still not the norm, not even among the most educated people” (Gazzola 2016a: 13).

This analysis shows that if the EU were to abandon multilingualism in favour of one *lingua franca*, the main consequence would be a disenfranchisement of those groups in society already suffering from a disadvantageous status (least educated and with the lowest incomes).

These results are quite revealing when considering that today English is already the most studied language in Europe and yet choosing it as the official medium of communication (as is already the case for some of the EU on-line content) would have adverse effects on considerable parts of the EU population. Furthermore, even though a monolingual regime would reduce the direct costs for the European budget (by reducing interpretation and translation costs), said costs would not simply vanish but would merely be shifted onto the shoulders of those Europeans who do not have the necessary linguistic

¹²¹ Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain.

¹²² Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Sweden and the UK.

skills to have access to the EU documents, but are nevertheless interested in or in need thereof. They would have to pay for translation or to acquire the necessary skills and, considering that, as illustrated above, poor language skills are mostly to be found among those groups with lower incomes, in all likelihood this could substantially translate into their full exclusion.

All the supposed benefits in terms of administrative efficiency and budgetary savings would be gained by depriving citizens of their rights, “and if citizens are restricted in communication in the language of their choice, even their cultural survival could be threatened” (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh & Weber 2007: 3), not to mention their sense of ownership of the European project. For all these reasons,

The current full multilingual policy of the EU based on translation and interpreting is not only (and will be for the foreseeable future) the most effective language policy among the alternative options usually put forward in the literature; it is also the only one that is truly inclusive at a relatively reasonable cost. (Gazzola 2016a: 4)

2.7 The Brexit effect

On 29 March 2017, the Brexit procedure began as, following the result of a referendum on whether the UK should remain in the European Union¹²³, the country notified the European Council of its intention to leave, in accordance with Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union. Starting from that moment, the negotiations on the terms of separation were scheduled to last approximately 18 months, leaving then six months to both the EU institutions and the UK to ratify the agreement, provided one was actually reached.

Following a series of extensions granted by the EU, after 47 year of membership, Brexit finally took place and the UK left the European Union on 31st January 2020. An 11-month transition period then began during which the terms of a new ‘relationship’ will be negotiated.

Before any official settlement is actually finalised and then ratified by the UK and all EU Members, it is quite difficult to determine the consequences of Brexit for the future of

¹²³ The referendum took place on the 23rd June 2016: 51.9% voted to leave, while 48.1% voted to remain.

the European Union, yet much had already been written on possible outcomes even before the referendum actually took place, the language issue being no exception.

Immediately after the vote, even before negotiators were appointed, the first speculations were made as to the future status of English within the European Union. The British press¹²⁴ expressed the concern that English could be banned and disappear from the EU, especially considering that Ireland and Malta – the other two countries where English is a national official language – had already indicated that Gaelic and Maltese would be the official languages of their choosing within the European Union.

These fears were undoubtedly aggravated when the possibility arose that the EU negotiator, Michel Barnier, might wish to conduct negotiations in his mother tongue, French, and after the President of the European Commission declared – in English – that “slowly but surely English is losing importance in Europe”¹²⁵. This statement, delivered in May 2017, shortly after the formal beginning of negotiations, is probably to be interpreted as a provocation on part of the President of the Commission who, on many occasions, insisted on the importance of the EU and the disappointment with the UK choice to abandon it. On the other hand, French is an important part of the negotiations and the EU chief negotiator has often addressed the press representatives and Parliament in French, stressing the importance of linguistic diversity¹²⁶.

Not all voices, though, were sceptical when advancing hypothesis as to the future prospects of English after the UK – and its 60 million native speakers – left the EU. Some argued that the role of English within the Institutions is too robust to be threatened by Brexit and that it is the *lingua franca* for reasons that have little to do with the UK itself. Furthermore, the ‘loss’ of so many native speakers would actually confer more neutrality

¹²⁴ “English language could be dropped from European Union after Brexit” (**The Telegraph**, article by Danny Boyle: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/28/english-language-could-be-dropped-from-european-union-after-brex/>) - “How Brexit Britain can learn from the Middle Ages on getting ahead in Europe” (**Independent**, article by Huw Grange: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/brexit-britain-medieval-middle-ages-language-skills-development-europe-uk-relationship-a8262991.html>) - “The Guardian view on languages and the British: Brexit and an Anglosphere prison” (**The Guardian**, editorial: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/03/the-guardian-view-on-languages-and-the-british-brexit-and-an-anglosphere-prison>) - “Britain is leaving the EU, but its language will stay” (**The Economist**: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/05/13/britain-is-leaving-the-eu-but-its-language-will-stay>). All last accessed May 2018.

¹²⁵ “Brexit: English is losing its importance in Europe, says Juncker”, article by Jennifer Rankin (**The Guardian**: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/may/05/brexit-english-is-losing-its-importance-in-europe-says-juncker>). Last accessed May 2018.

¹²⁶ “BREXIT - Barnier refuses to speak English” – short video of Mr Barnier addressing the press in French in the name of ‘cultural diversity’, 23/03/2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBnw8ZSyzpY> (last accessed May 2018).

to the choice of speaking English, thus creating a level playing-field for all those using it as a second language¹²⁷ and making it possible for English to succeed where Esperanto failed, that is in the enterprise of uniting Europeans under one language¹²⁸.

This neutrality would actually legitimate even more the use of English as a *lingua franca*, freeing it from the scrutiny of L1 speakers¹²⁹ (see 1.1), and allowing Europe to develop “its own unique form of English” (Johnston 2017)¹³⁰. Modiano (2017) argues that in a post-Brexit world, the conditions will arise for the emergence and thriving of “Euro-English”, a second-language variety of English in the EU:

[...] by claiming ownership of the language continental Europeans would have greater freedom to use features which are characteristic of their own experience without having to defend their ingenuity against criticism from over-zealous language guardians or purist educators. It would allow continental Europeans an opportunity to claim English and in so doing form it to best suit their own needs. This vision of Euro-English, in my understanding, captures the very essence of liberation linguistics. (Modiano 2017: 325)

On the other hand, if the post-Brexit scenario is interpreted following the disenfranchisement-rate approach, the outcome is less optimistic. A reduction in the number of English native speakers within the EU would automatically increase the rate in all the limited regimes (trilingual and hexalingual) with the worst result coming out for the monolingual scenario. A language policy limited to English would exclude up to 90% of adult residents (Gazzola 2016a: 20), showing that Brexit is actually likely to increase the prominence of multilingualism.

Irrespective of one’s interpretation on the dangers or opportunities that it might bring about for the use of English as a *lingua franca* within the European Union, now that Brexit is a reality, nobody seems to question any more either the official status that English will continue to enjoy, or its *de facto* use as a working language within the Institutions. The

¹²⁷ The exception being Irish and possibly most Maltese citizens, representing though around 1% of the whole EU population.

¹²⁸ “English could be a more successful Esperanto in a post-Brexit EU” (Article on theconversation.com: <https://theconversation.com/english-could-be-a-more-succesful-esperanto-in-a-post-brexit-eu-77375>; last accessed May 2018).

¹²⁹ “Europe speaks its own post-Brexit English”, article by Skapinker, R. (**Financial Times**, February 2018: <https://www.ft.com/content/b5afd93a-0d94-11e8-8eb7-42f857ea9f09>; last accessed May 2018)

¹³⁰ “Brexit could create a new ‘language’ – Euro-English”, article by Johnston (**Independent**, September 2017: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/brexit-latest-news-language-euro-english-uk-leave-eu-european-union-a7957001.html>; last accessed May 2018)

above-described tendency to resort to English for internal and external communication is already widespread for reasons that are independent of the UK's membership to the EU.

Translation and interpretation services are still provided in English and all the considerations concerning the EU budget and the call for an efficient, cost-saving approach to multilingualism are ever more pressing after the UK's contribution¹³¹ to the multiannual financial framework is no longer guaranteed. From a merely ideological point of view though, it will be arduous to justify the central role attributed to a language that is the mother tongue of approximately 1% of the European population.

2.8 Final remarks

Multilingualism is one of the cornerstones of the European project. In the debate on the topic of language diversity and multilingualism, the EU has never questioned whether alternative approaches should be adopted as regards the official status of equal importance attributed to all (nationally-selected) languages. However, this is only one facet of a multidimensional reality, whose complexity cannot be resolved merely by the number of official languages or the *de jure* organisation of linguistic policies.

Furthermore multilingualism, as a concept, goes beyond the 24 EU official languages to embrace linguistic diversity as a whole, therefore including other languages spoken in Europe and minority languages, not to mention the dimension of integration (of EU citizens moving within Europe and immigrants alike) through languages.

When practically applying the un-debated principles laid down in Regulations and Treaties, the EU is faced with the challenge of pursuing a balance between official multilingualism policies, the wish to reduce budget spending for translation and interpretation, the *de facto* predominance of English and the mission of promoting linguistic diversity, to be interpreted in the wider sense of all language varieties and forms within its borders.

It is virtually impossible to separate the debate on multilingualism and that on English as a *lingua franca* when analysing the language architecture within the EU institutions. Multilingualism, in addition to a very deep-rooted ideological dimension, also has an

¹³¹ The UK is a net contributor to the EU budget, meaning it pays more money than it receives.

equally dominant economic and practical component. In order to abide by the rules it has given itself, aimed at providing full access and participation to all citizens, irrespective of their mother tongue, the EU has equipped itself with the largest translation and interpretation services worldwide. However, a considerable share of all the written texts (ranging from legislative proposals to on-line content) and of meetings and conferences organised by the Commission (at all levels of the hierarchy) are in English.

Even though the EU does not attribute any formal predominance to English within the circle of official languages, the reality shows that it is the language most used both in internal and external communication. “A language is a dialect with an army and a navy”, according to a famous utterance¹³² attributed to Max Weinreich: the same could be said of the official languages of the EU when compared to other European non-official languages, and stretching the quotation a little more, it could be claimed that English is the superpower of EU languages and that it has the strongest army and navy of them all.

According to a 2018 report commissioned by the British Council on future demand for English¹³³,

English will continue to be the dominant language in Europe and remain the preferred second language for most Europeans in 2025. English is the global lingua franca in business, academia, diplomacy, media, social media and technology. [...] There is no indication that this will change in the timeframe¹³⁴ covered by this study.

Undoubtedly, the role of English in Europe as the main vehicular language is indisputable, as is the objective fact that it is the most studied language in Europe:

¹³² It first appeared in Weinreich's article “Der YIVO un di problemem fun undzer tsayt” (1945) and was presented as a remark of an auditor at a lecture series.

¹³³ The report is titled “#EU2025ENGLISH. The Future Demand for English in Europe: 2025 and beyond”. Available at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/future_demand_for_english_in_europe_2025_and_beyond_british_council_2018.pdf (last accessed May 2019).

¹³⁴ The study focuses mainly on the period 2018-2025.

	Pupils learning English		Pupils learning French		Pupils learning German		Pupils learning Spanish	
	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015
EU-28 (¹)	92.7	95.8	23.0	23.2	21.6	18.9	17.5	22.1
Belgium	95.1	95.5	49.3	47.9	29.0	27.0	5.0	5.0
Bulgaria	87.4	90.3	13.9	12.2	35.1	35.8	8.6	9.7
Czech Republic	100.0	99.9	25.0	16.0	61.0	59.4	11.1	12.8
Denmark (²)	91.7	82.1	10.6	14.6	34.7	28.0	24.8	20.4
Germany	91.1	94.4	27.3	23.6	–	–	18.9	19.9
Estonia (³)	96.2	97.4	6.9	7.6	39.2	26.3	1.3	4.0
Ireland	–	–	58.2	58.5	16.4	18.9	11.1	16.6
Greece (¹)	91.4	92.0	6.9	4.1	2.9	3.2	–	0.3
Spain	94.7	99.1	22.3	24.1	1.0	1.9	–	–
France	99.5	99.9	–	–	21.6	21.1	64.6	72.5
Croatia	98.9	99.6	3.8	4.0	61.2	61.7	2.6	3.7
Italy	97.7	98.6	19.5	16.0	6.9	8.6	6.8	13.2
Cyprus	93.7	88.6	40.0	36.3	2.5	6.9	15.9	15.7
Latvia	97.4	98.3	4.5	6.2	29.7	26.7	0.4	1.4
Lithuania	92.2	96.2	3.5	2.6	16.5	7.8	0.4	0.4
Luxembourg	97.6	97.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	5.1	3.9
Hungary	76.5	83.4	6.1	5.5	45.4	46.8	2.4	3.0
Malta	100.0	100.0	6.9	19.6	1.5	5.3	2.4	5.6
Netherlands	100.0	95.4	33.2	28.4	43.5	41.7	0.0	4.9
Austria	99.4	99.9	44.2	37.7	–	–	15.1	18.9
Poland	92.4	95.3	8.6	8.3	52.4	47.0	1.8	5.2
Portugal	39.2	63.7	3.7	2.8	0.7	1.7	5.9	7.0
Romania	98.7	100.0	86.3	82.8	11.8	13.6	2.2	2.9
Slovenia	98.2	97.8	10.3	10.6	68.9	64.5	11.0	12.5
Slovakia	98.5	98.8	16.4	11.3	64.8	58.5	7.9	10.9
Finland	99.1	99.9	17.4	10.8	25.7	16.7	13.8	13.3
Sweden	100.0	100.0	21.0	15.7	27.1	20.3	43.2	39.6
United Kingdom	–	–	27.4	–	10.3	–	9.0	–
Iceland	72.7	73.0	73.0	10.3	25.1	24.1	22.8	25.4
Liechtenstein	–	92.1	92.1	84.1	–	–	–	0.0
Norway	43.5	39.1	39.1	9.5	18.8	21.3	21.8	25.0
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	–	100.0	100.0	24.0	–	25.3	0.0	0.1
Turkey	81.9	–	0.9	–	10.1	–	0.0	–

Note: refer to the internet metadata file (http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/educ_uae_enr_esms.htm).
(–) not available
(–) not applicable
(¹) 2015: definition differs
(²) 2014 instead of 2015.
(³) 2008 instead of 2010.
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: educ_ilang and educ_uae_lang01)

Figure 5 Foreign languages learnt per pupil in upper secondary education (general), 2010 and 2015 (%)¹³⁵

However, the simple fact that English is the most studied language says nothing about the proficiency level and the skills that students actually acquire. As the studies on the disenfranchisement rate of an English-only language regime reveal (see 2.6), the number of citizens actually able to fully participate in EU activities with their English skills is too limited to be able to claim that the values of democracy, transparency and accountability would be fully upheld.

Furthermore, as the argument of cost-saving solutions is often used to argue in favour of a more widespread use of English, it has to be stressed that there are also other costs to

¹³⁵Available at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Foreign_languages_learned_per_pupil_in_upper_secondary_education_\(general\)_2010_and_2015_\(%25\)_ET2017.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Foreign_languages_learned_per_pupil_in_upper_secondary_education_(general)_2010_and_2015_(%25)_ET2017.png) (last accessed May 2018)

be taken into account. In a monolingual scenario, cuts to translation and interpretation services correspond to an immediate saving in monetary terms. However, how are implicit costs accounted for? These include expenses incurred by private citizens or legal persons needing to interact with authorities in a language they do not master (including their expenses for translation and interpretation), and time and money spent to learn ‘the official language’, not to mention the symbolic costs linked to the creation of a hierarchy of languages (Gazzola & Grin 2013:100).

In this context, the topic of language arrangements in the meetings of the Commission is extremely pertinent: it is in these meetings where the EU is actually in the making, where decisions are taken, information, best practices and concerns are shared and practical implementation problems are debated, contexts in which saying what you can in a language you do not necessarily master does not always equate to saying what you want and need to say.

Still, many scholars have argued in favour of a monolingual approach. Modiano (2017) believes that:

[...] continental Europe has become one unified multilingual community dependent on English as the medium with the most utility when and where people do not share greater proficiency in other languages. (2017: 325)

The author believes that continental Europeans now have the chance to claim English, shaping it to their needs, giving rise to a ‘Euro-English’ with its own characteristics – that would therefore lose any direct link to the language of its native speakers – and making it into “Europe’s premier universal language” (*ibid*: 325).

However, this approach does not respond to the question of which road would be leading to this universality and does not seem to entail any intervention on part of the EU. Phillipson, on the other hand, warns against the risk of a *laissez faire* language policy, which could lead to the emergence of a “*lingua frankensteinia*”, claiming that:

If these [visions of and for English] do not define *lingua franca* in such a way as to ensure equality and symmetry in intercultural communication, but are essentially the one-sided promotion of English, the project tends to be more that of a *lingua frankensteinia*”. (Phillipson 2008: 265).

, In this analysis Phillipson takes into account two variables which seem essential in the debate. First of all, there is a cultural and ideological dimension which cannot be disregarded, and the EU seems to be fully aware of that. Linguistic diversity is the product of an equally diverse cultural heritage. Europe is first and foremost a community of values, beliefs and principles and languages are deeply intertwined in this underlying matrix that underpins the whole European project. Formally limiting the role and status of national languages in the EU legislative framework would considerably jeopardise the democracy and legitimacy of the whole architecture. The choices the EU makes can either promote cultural and linguistic diversity or water it down to the point of trying to – at least formally – eliminate it.

The second interesting aspect in Phillipson's warning is the normative dimension, the attempt to face the issue critically, debating it and trying to define what is happening and what actions need to be taken, if any. From a purely institutional point of view, English-only regimes are indeed used already in several instances, it being the official language (though often not the only one) of many international institutions such as the OECD, NATO, the IMF and the World Bank, just to name a few but, "these examples are not necessarily relevant for the EU, since none of these organizations has the ambition of achieving political integration" (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh & Weber, 2007: 9). Furthermore, none of these institutions produces legislative norms directly applicable within the Member States, nor do they have representatives democratically elected by citizens.

English as a *lingua franca* is almost considered by some as an unavoidable path, if principles are to be reconciled with practicality. As increasing the budget for multilingualism is not envisaged, nor is modifying the fundamental principles of the EU, the only remaining option would be for the EU to "recognize and perhaps even encourage English as pan-European *lingua franca*" (Baaij 2012). English would have the practical advantage of overcoming all the difficulties related to the implementation of a complex and costly multilingual regime, while acting as a unifying factor in the meantime.

In sum, as De Swaan (2005) puts it:

The citizens of Europe, as well as the officials and politicians of the EU, must learn to live with both English and their own native language. The diversity of Europe is indeed innate, but its unity is yet to be achieved. It requires a common vehicular language, and that is English. The task at hand is to use English as an **efficient instrument**, while avoiding

absorbing unwittingly its hidden, American and British, cultural implications (2005: 25)
[emphasis added]

Once again, the language here is considered as a mere instrument, whose ideological value is briefly acknowledged in so far as English is not a neutral language and carries cultural baggage. The author specifically refers to American and British influences, though one might argue that cultural implications, when using ELF, also include the original culture of the speaker resorting to English as a *lingua franca* (see 1.4), thus adding to the complexity.

One last consideration that cannot be overlooked, when arguing in favour of an even more prominent role to be officially attributed to English as a *lingua franca*, is that even though the European Union does have a linguistic policy in place – whose components and actions are not always straightforward and consistent though, as has been illustrated in this chapter – it lacks one essential element for a policy to be successful, that is full competence in the field.

In light of the principle of subsidiarity, education and language policies fall within the competence of Member States only, which means that the European Commission depends upon the States' goodwill when it comes to the practical application of any recommendations it might produce or to the implementation of effective actions aimed at achieving any political goal.

One of the policies in which the EU has invested most in the field of languages, both politically and financially, is the MT+2 Barcelona objective, which sets the goal of two foreign languages in addition to one's mother tongue. Yet the results achieved are far from being satisfactory as, according to the 2011-12 EU Survey on language skills¹³⁶, only 25% of 15-year-old pupils had attained 'independent-user levels' (B1/B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) in a second foreign language, 10 years after the Barcelona declaration was signed. This is just an example of how, in this field, the EU lacks the necessary incisiveness to make sure that what is disciplined formally actually gets translated into reality.

However, when it is the Commission itself that actively pursues practices which are inconsistent with this very objective, and acts so as to give English clear prominence when

¹³⁶ Available at: http://www.surveylang.org/media/ExecutivesummaryoftheESLC_210612.pdf (last accessed May 2018)

compared to other languages, it is not surprising that language plurality is not considered worth investing in, either individually or nationally.

3. INTERPRETING IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit

Harry Truman

The interpreters working for the European Commission (and for the EU institutions in general) are a close community of professionals, daily assigned to different meetings in different institutions and working in teams, which are further divided into smaller groups of two to four interpreters per language, sharing a very small working environment: the booth¹³⁷. Interpreters are mostly self-employed. The website of the AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters), a global association of more than 3,000 interpreters worldwide, lists approximately 30 ‘large employers’ in Europe, half of which are international organisations and the remainder are national organisations with limited interpreting staff¹³⁸.

It is thus quite uncommon to have such a large group of interpreters, with many different mother-tongues, working daily side-by-side, so much so that the group of EU interpreters can be considered as a single community of practice (Duflou 2016: 16-17). EU interpreters indeed match all the criteria identified by Lave & Wenger (1991) to define a community of practice (CoP):

- they interact within the same area of competence (*mutual engagement*)
- they share a common goal (*joint enterprise*)
- they share the same discourses, tools, stories (*shared repertoire*)

¹³⁷ According to ISO 2603, “each booth shall be wide enough to accommodate the required number of interpreters seated comfortably side by side, each with sufficient table space to work conveniently on several documents spread alongside each other. The booth shall be high and deep enough to provide sufficient volume of air to enable adequate temperature control and draught-free air renewal as well as sufficient space for the occupants to enter and leave without disturbing one another”. <https://aiic.net/page/587/iso-2603-fixed-booths-for-simultaneous-interpretation/lang/1> (last accessed in April 2019)

¹³⁸ <https://aiic.net/directories/interpreters/organisations> (last accessed April 2019)

It remains to be established whether the points of contact between the groups of staff interpreters working for different institutions are enough to speak of one single CoP, or whether the differences in working arrangements, meetings, customers and relations with management are so marked that the group should be divided into smaller CoPs, depending on which Institution the interpreters work for. This kind of distinction would potentially apply only to a part of the interpreter population, as freelance interpreters are employed by all Institutions, and therefore act as a “binding factor” (Duflou 2016: 17) between the two subgroups of interpreters. Another approach to define CoPs within the broader group of interpreters would be dividing them up according to the Language Unit they work for (which is informally called “the booth”, e.g. ‘the Italian booth’, meaning all the staff and freelance interpreters working into Italian). This classification would involve freelancers in the community more directly, but would not overcome the distinction between different interpretation services, as staff officials from different institutions hardly ever work together¹³⁹.

The focus of the research project is the use of ELF within the European Commission, due to the role this Institution specifically has in the application of the principle of multilingualism (see 2.3). Therefore, the boundaries of a CoP have been set so as to include staff and freelance interpreters of all booths working for the European Commission. Even though there are different working arrangements for EU staff and freelancers and the latter might also work for other employers and on the private market, when working for the European Institutions, ACIs are equated to officials and for the purpose of their activities in the booth no distinctions can be made deriving from their employment status. To the beneficiaries of the service, interpreters are all the same and there is no way for them to distinguish between officials and ACIs.

This chapter therefore aims at describing and understanding how this CoP interacts and works in the specific environment being analysed.

¹³⁹ Exchange programmes are provided, enabling officials to spend some time working for a different Institution and allowing Institutions to manage their human resources better, according to their needs (e.g. Parliament officials working for SCIC during the electoral pause).

3.1 DG SCIC, promoter of multilingualism

The Directorate-General for Interpretation (commonly known as DG SCIC after its former French name *Service Commun Interprétation-Conférences*) is one of the Directorates-General of the European Commission; more specifically it is “the Commission’s interpreting service and conference organiser¹⁴⁰”. DG SCIC has existed as a Commission service since the 1960s, when the official languages were only four (French, German, Italian and Dutch), and it has constantly grown, expanding its services and its language coverage to keep up with EU enlargements.

Today, as stated on the official webpage of the DG, its activities and responsibilities are to:

- provide **interpretation services** for the Commission, European Council, Council of the EU, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee, European Investment Bank as well as agencies and offices in EU countries
- allocate Commission meeting rooms and provide support for multilingual meetings and conferences
- advise on the construction and renovation of conference facilities with installations for simultaneous interpretation
- **help to put the Commission's multilingualism strategy into practice**
bring together partners from non-EU countries to share expertise in the field of interpretation and pass on best practices from their respective fields [emphasis added]

As can be read in the DG’s 2018 Annual Activity Report¹⁴¹,

the mission of DG Interpretation (DG SCIC) is to **facilitate the democratic EU decision-making process**, through provision of high-quality conference interpretation, corporate conference organisation services and meeting room management, including audio-visual equipment and services. [emphasis added]

The provision of interpreting services is therefore connected to the higher purpose of implementing the principle of multilingualism and consequently promoting democracy. This strategic goal is once again explicitly defined as “mission statement” in the “Strategic Plan for 2016-2020”¹⁴², where it is stated that “DG Interpretation’s mission is to support

¹⁴⁰ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/interpretation_en (last accessed April 2019)

¹⁴¹ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/scic_aar_2018_final.pdf (last accessed April 2019)

¹⁴² Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-scic_march2016_en.pdf (last accessed April 2019)

multilingual communication and to facilitate a transparent, efficient and democratic EU decision-making”. Interpreting is always presented as a service underpinning transparency and democracy.

As stated on the DG webpage, interpreting services are not confined to the other DGs in the European Commission, but also include other Institutions, namely the European Council, the Council of the European Union, rotating Presidencies of the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European Investment Bank (EIB), as well as external users (such as European offices and agencies in the Member States, and third countries in the framework of contacts with the EU).

For requests coming from other DGs, DG SCIC does not charge anything for its services, and either accepts or refuses requests based on the availability of resources (rooms within the Commission facilities equipped with interpretation equipment and interpreters) and on priorities assigned by the requesting DGs to all the meetings for which an interpretation service is demanded.

As to the other institutions, DG Interpretation invoices its external clients for the interpretation services provided¹⁴³. With those interpretation users with a significant volume or frequency of interpretation requests, SCIC has concluded Service Level Agreements (SLAs), which generally include a portal where users can find updated information related to their meeting requests and subsequent fee calculation. At the end of 2017, SCIC had 20 open-ended¹⁴⁴ SLAs in place with other Institutions, Agencies or Member States¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ For a more specific explanation of how costs are calculated see the “Strategic Plan for 2016-2020, also accessible online (see footnote 142).

¹⁴⁴ With the exception of agreements with rotating Presidencies, which naturally expire once the Presidency is over.

¹⁴⁵ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/scic_aar_2017_final.pdf (last accessed in May 2019)

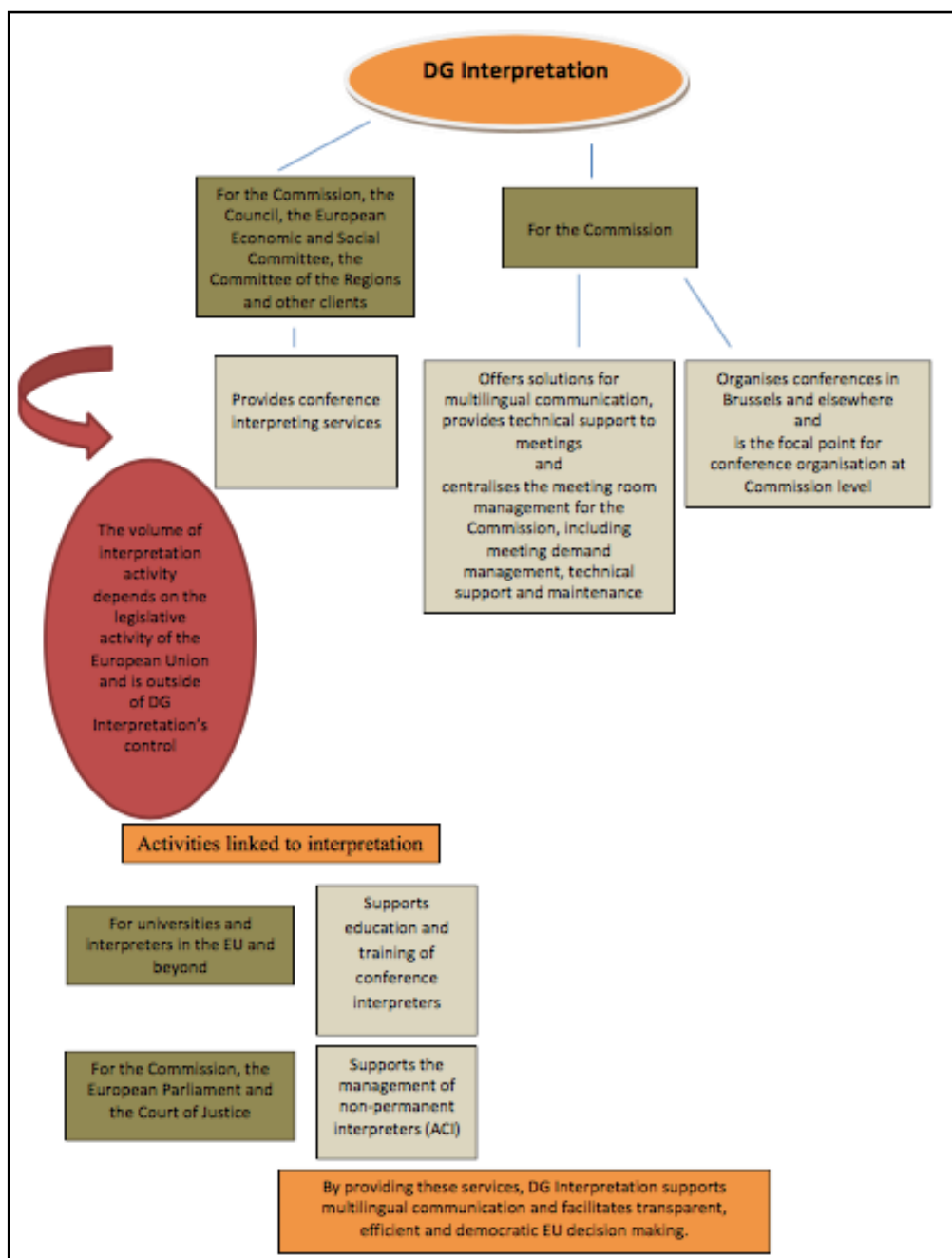


Figure 6 DG SCIC operating context (taken from the “Strategic Plan for 2016-2020”¹⁴⁶)

As can be seen from Figure 6, the activities of DG Interpretation are not limited to the providing of interpretation services, but also include technical support to meetings, education and training as well as administrative activities related to the management of the population of ACIs. All these activities are explicitly placed in a wider context of multilingual communication promotion and support to democratic decision-making.

¹⁴⁶ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/strategic-plan-2016-2020-interpretation_en (last accessed May 2019).

From an organisational point of view, DG SCIC is divided into three Directorates¹⁴⁷:

- **DIRECTORATE A**: in charge of interpreters and further divided into 23¹⁴⁸ language subunits
- **DIRECTORATE B**: in charge of interpretation services management and professional support and further divided into four subunits:
 - SCIC B1: Multilingualism and knowledge development
 - SCIC B2: Programming of interpretation
 - SCIC B3: Professional support for interpreters
 - SCIC B4: Joint management of Conference Interpreting Agents
- **DIRECTORATE C**: in charge of resources and corporate services, further divided into five subunits:
 - SCIC C1: Corporate Conference Organisation
 - SCIC C2: Budget and Financial Management
 - SCIC C3: Strategic Planning and Reporting, Internal Control and IT development
 - SCIC C4: Corporate Meeting Room Management and Technical Compliance
 - SCIC C5: Corporate Audiovisual Services and local IT Infrastructure

3.2 Staff interpreters and ACIs

Approximately 85% of DG SCIC staff is composed of conference interpreters and officials directly employed in areas strictly related to interpretation, such as professional support, meeting preparation, programming, recruitment and training. A further 10% of staff members are assigned to corporate domain services, whereas the remainder are assigned to corporate management, coordination and communication tasks (DG SCIC 2019: 3¹⁴⁹; see Figure 7).

¹⁴⁷ See the organisation chart at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/organisation_charts/organisation-chart-dg-scic_en.pdf (last accessed May 2019)

¹⁴⁸ All official languages except for Irish. Despite being an official language of the EU, Irish is currently under a derogation which, in the case of interpretation, entails that it is only interpreted passively in meetings, which means that there is no Irish booth. The derogation was extended again by Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2015/2264, but the intention was declared to bring it to an end by 31 December 2021. (Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32015R2264>; last accessed May 2019).

¹⁴⁹ Also available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/scic_aar_2018_final.pdf (last accessed May 2019)

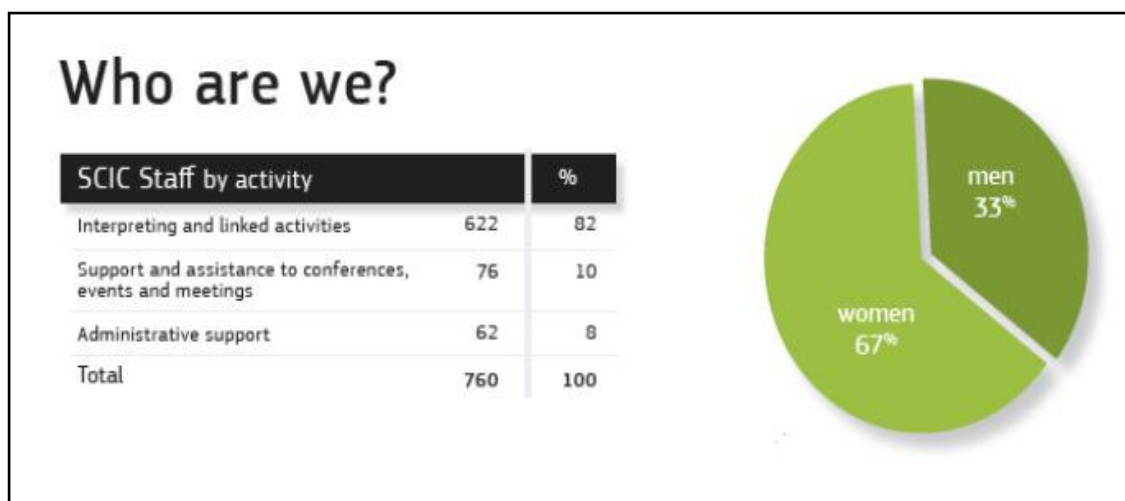


Figure 7 SCIC Staff by activity (2016). Extracted from the “Annual activity report 2016¹⁵⁰”

The interpreting services provided by DG SCIC are carried out by both permanent and temporary ‘staff interpreters’ and ‘auxiliary conference interpreters’ (ACIs). Permanent staff interpreters (see Figure 8) are recruited by means of official competitions, which are arranged depending on the needs of each specific language unit, whereas temporary staff interpreters are selected – for a maximum of 6 years – through ad-hoc procedures in the intervals between official competitions. ACIs (see Figure 9) must sit an inter-institutional accreditation test. On passing the test, the professional is entered into a joint EU database of accredited freelance interpreters and is therefore available to be given work by all Institutions’ interpreting services (European Commission, European Parliament and European Court of Justice, see 2.4.2). Unlike staff, for freelancers there is no nationality requirement and all languages worldwide may be considered.

¹⁵⁰ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/aar-scic-2016_en_0.pdf (last accessed May 2019)

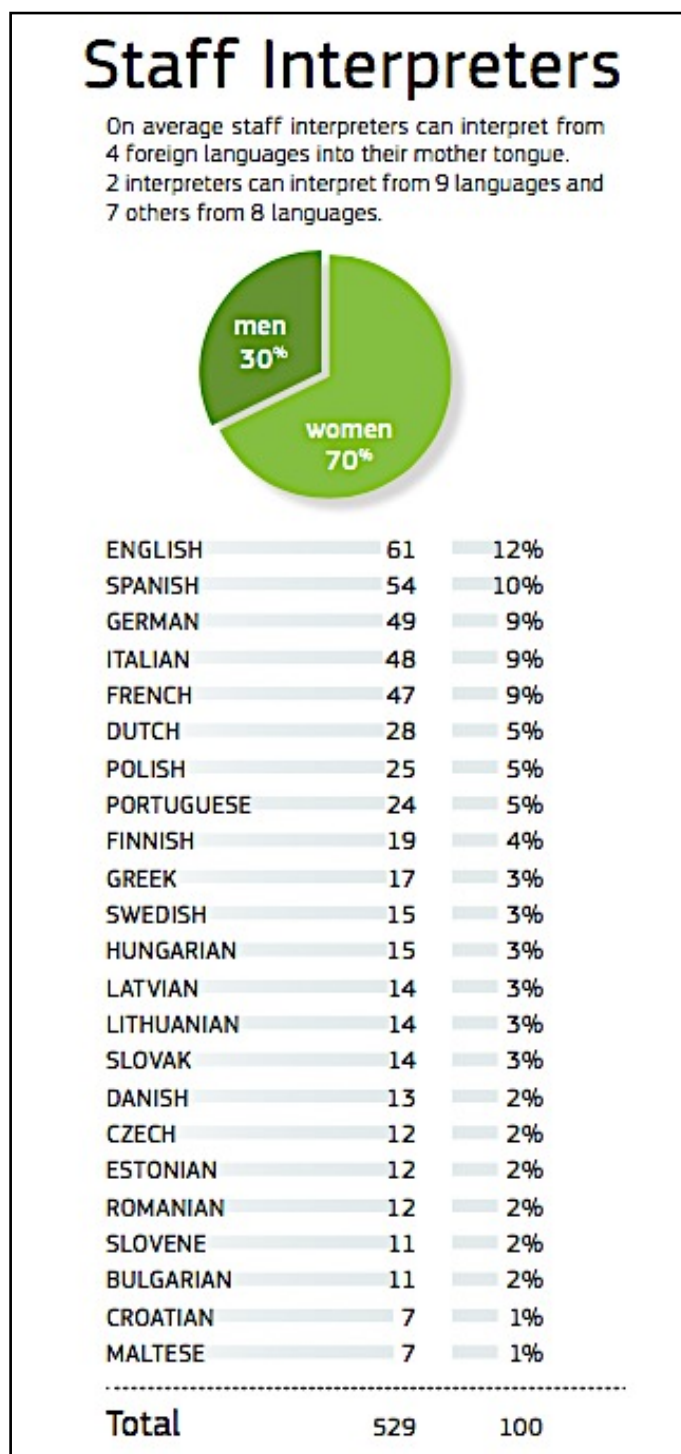


Figure 8 Staff interpreters divided by booth (2016). Extracted from the “Annual activity report 2016”¹⁵¹.

¹⁵¹ See footnote 150.

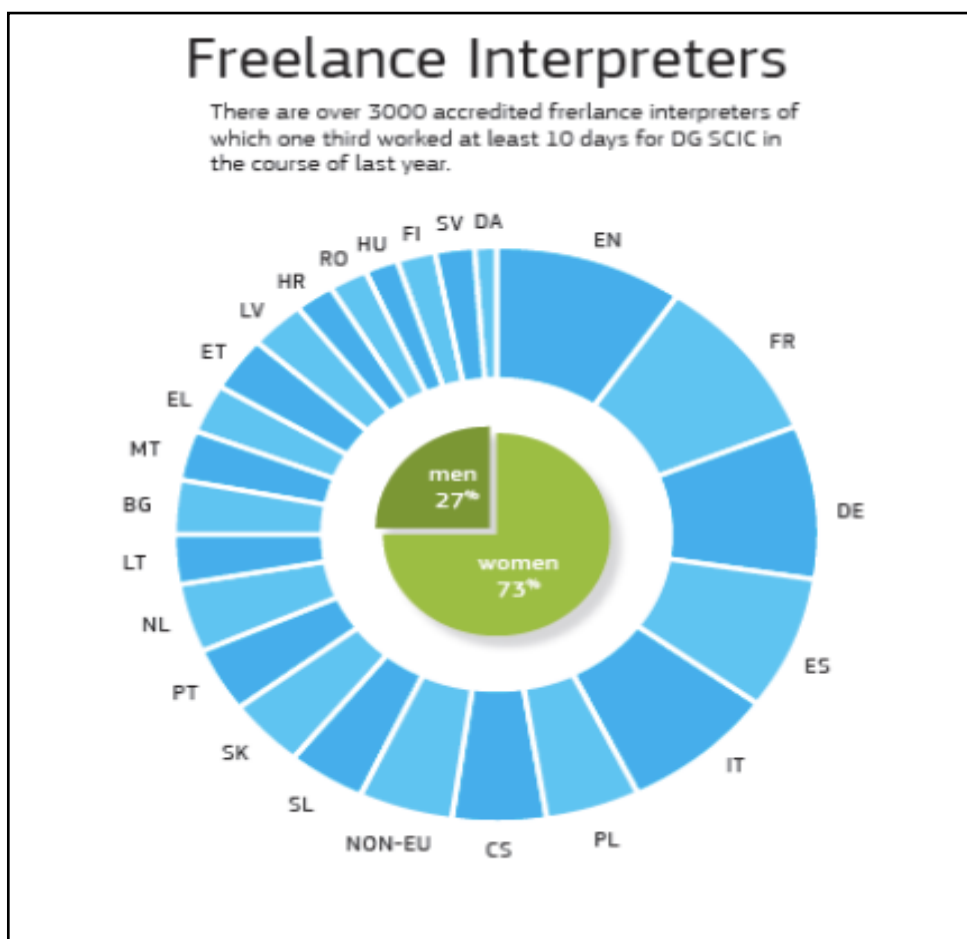


Figure 9 Staff interpreters divided by booth (2016). Extracted from the “Annual activity report 2016”¹⁵².

The ‘job description’ of conference interpreter provided by EPSO (European Personnel Selection Office) applies to both staff and ACIs:

Job Description

The EU institutions' interpreting service is the largest in the world – its conference interpreters ensure that the discussions held at meetings are correctly interpreted into an official language of the EU, using either simultaneous or consecutive interpreting. EU interpreters work in a stimulating, multi-cultural environment, and must be able to communicate effectively, grasp varied and often complex issues, react and adapt swiftly to changing circumstances, work under pressure, independently and as part of a team¹⁵³.

This job description is extremely broad and focuses mainly on describing the environment interpreters find themselves working in, stressing its complexity and extreme heterogeneity and variability. Interpreters are expected to be precise (‘correctly

¹⁵² See footnote 150.

¹⁵³ https://epso.europa.eu/career-profiles/languages/conference-interpreter_en (last accessed April 2019).

interpreting’) and effective, able to work independently and in teams and possess both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting skills.

The selection procedures for the two different interpreter profiles are different. Staff interpreters need to pass a public competition which consists of two parts. The first one, included in all public competitions granting access to the contract type of administrator (AD)¹⁵⁴, tests core competencies required of all EU officials. The second part tests interpreting skills on the basis of both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting performances in all the languages chosen by the candidate. Speeches are delivered by staff interpreters of the language tested, who have received special training in speech making.

To become a freelance interpreter accredited by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice, candidates need to pass an inter-institutional test. Required language profiles and indicative calendars for selection procedures are regularly updated and published on a dedicated page on the EUROPA website¹⁵⁵. As tests are inter-institutional, they are arranged according to the recruitment needs of all the Institutions.

The test itself consists of two phases: a so-called “pre-selection test” and the “accreditation test”. In the first phase, a Screening Committee, composed of staff interpreters of all Institutions, assesses all the applications and identifies a number of candidates – whose profile is of particular interest – who are then invited to take the preliminary test online, which consists of a simultaneous interpretation of a speech. Successful candidates might be immediately invited to sit an accreditation test or enter a waiting list, depending on the Institutions’ testing capacities and needs.

The accreditation test always takes place in Brussels. Candidates are invited to perform a consecutive interpretation (+/- 6 minutes) and a simultaneous interpretation (10-12 minutes) of a speech for every tested language. Selection Boards assessing the candidates are made up of senior interpreters from the three interpreting services. As is the case for public competitions for staff interpreters, speeches are delivered by interpreters who are native speakers of the language being tested. The same procedure applies for passive and active languages¹⁵⁶, the only difference being that the performance is assessed by a panel

¹⁵⁵ See footnote 61.

¹⁵⁶ For a definition of ‘passive’ and ‘active language’ see 3.3.

of interpreters whose A language is the one in which the retour¹⁵⁷ is provided (meaning for example that retours into English are assessed by English native speakers; see 3.3).

An indicative list of marking criteria for both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting is provided on the website, to assist candidates wishing to submit an application¹⁵⁸. For both interpreting modes, criteria are divided into three main categories: content, delivery/form, technique.

The section pertaining to delivery and form is particularly interesting, as it focuses on the “quality of the active language”:

- Knowledge of target language (**correct grammar**, appropriate register, **idiomatic expressions**, vocabulary, interferences from the source language)?
- Appropriate choice of register?
- Terminology?
- Diction (mumbling or clear enunciation)?
- **Accent (if applicable)?**
- Pace of delivery (fluent or staccato)?
- Use of the voice (prosody)? Intonation?
- Was the delivery professional? Was it agreeable to listen to and confident?
- Fluency of the delivery (“décalage”)? No abrupt or lengthy hesitations?
- Stamina?
- Microphone discipline?
[emphasis added]

Criteria are general and language-neutral, but among the specifics of the categories there are interesting elements such as ‘correct grammar’, ‘idiomatic expressions’ and ‘accent’ that seem to confirm the ‘standard language’ approach¹⁵⁹. The mention of the potentially applicable ‘accent’ criteria is also quite interesting, as no further details are provided as when this criterion does actually apply. In the case of English, as no nationality requirement applies, there can indeed be freelancers with an English A who are not European (e.g. South African, Indian or American), so having a native non-European accent is not an obstacle in any way to be recruited in the English booth. The accent criterion might therefore be applied by other booths or in cases of non-native accents.

¹⁵⁷ For a definition of ‘retour’ see 3.3.

¹⁵⁸ The marking criteria sheet is available as Appendix II (also available at: https://europa.eu/interpretation/doc/marking_criteria_en.pdf, last accessed April 2019)

¹⁵⁹ Clearly nobody would expect a professional interpreter to be making grammar mistakes in their delivery, regardless of the A or B language being used. An ‘incorrect’ grammar though can only be defined as such against clearly defined grammar conventions and rules, as is the case for standard languages but certainly less so for ELF.

Successful candidates are automatically registered into the inter-institutional joint database of ACIs and can be recruited by the three interpretation services of the European Union¹⁶⁰.

Once in the booth, staff and freelance interpreters are subject to the same working conditions¹⁶¹, which include, among others, working and rest hours, composition of teams, access to documents (see 3.5.2).

DG SCIC manages on average 40 meetings per day (totalling approximately 10,000 meetings per year), which range from high-level bilateral encounters (mostly in consecutive interpretation) to conferences in simultaneous interpretation into up to 24 EU languages and non-EU languages. In addition to its permanent staff of interpreters, DG SCIC also manages the ACI inter-institutional list, which includes about 3,000 freelance interpreters based in Brussels and all over the world. The number of ACIs working regularly in Brussels alongside permanent staff is around 1,000 interpreters, as they are based in Europe and cover the most requested languages (DG SCIC 2019: 3).

As can be seen from Figures 8 and 9, the English booth is the one employing most interpreters which, together with the data on the meetings with an active English booth (see 3.4.1), confirms the importance of English within the European Commission.

3.2.1 Being an ACI: quality as employability criterion

Once ACIs are on the inter-institutional list, they might be recruited by any Institution. For DG SCIC, ACIs represent a vital resource, as confirmed by data relating to the year 2018, when freelance interpreters provided 53% of total interpretation (DG SCIC 2019: 6). In order to inform Institutions about their availability they use a personal on-line calendar, an ICT tool called “Web Calendar” (Duflou 2016: 99), where interpreters display their availability. ACIs have full control over their time, and might even choose to

¹⁶⁰ An interpreter registered in the list does not have either the right to be recruited or any guarantee in terms of assignments. Recruitment depends on the needs of the services and on specific employability criteria which vary depending on the interpretation service. See 3.2.1 for a detailed description of criteria applied by DG SCIC. Pursuant to article 5 of the Agreement on Working Conditions for ACIs, “the institutions shall endeavour, as far as possible, to maintain some stability in their recruitment policies, to engage interpreters on a direct and individual basis and to avoid any sudden termination of service” (available at: https://europa.eu/interpretation/doc/conv_en_2008.pdf last accessed April 2019).

¹⁶¹ See Article 24 of the AIIC-EU Convention: “The rules governing the assignment of ACIs and the composition of teams shall be those applicable to permanent interpreters of the institution on whose behalf they are engaged”. Available at: <https://aiic.net/page/3540/aiic-eu-convention-march-2004-september-2008/lang/1> (last accessed May 2019).

differentiate between Institutions, offering different days to each Institution or completely excluding one of them, as each service has a specific calendar of its own, even though they are all displayed on the same page¹⁶².

Employment criteria differ also on the side of the Institutions, which consequently sometimes recruit ACIs with different profiles¹⁶³. As far as DG SCIC is concerned, interpreters are offered contracts that can either be assigned for the long term (in October for the next calendar year, provided some criteria are met, that are established at language unit level) or middle to short term, that is ranging from 6 weeks to the eve of the assignment. Once the contract proposal appears on the calendar, interpreters can choose whether to accept or reject it.

The criteria guiding recruitment from SCIC are professional domicile, language combination and professional competence (quality), all adding up to the ‘Employability Coefficient’ of ACIs¹⁶⁴. The Coefficient can reach a maximum of 12 points (4 attributed to the domicile, 3 to the language combination, 4 to quality plus 1 bonus point, awarded for a full second booth). More specifically, for domicile the categories are: local (4 points), nearby European (2 points), other European (1) and non-European (0). The Brussels-based interpreters are awarded the maximum score because the cost of their recruitment is the lowest, as no travel or accommodation expenses are needed.

As far as language combination is concerned, each language is worth 0.5 points. Obviously when specific needs arise related to a single language (e.g. an interpreter with HU in the Spanish booth is needed), an ACI responding to this need might be employed even if their language combination score is actually lower than that of a colleague (in the previous example, an interpreter in the Spanish booth with a combination EN-FR-HU>ES, totalling 1,5 in the language combination category, might be recruited before a colleague with a combination EN-FR-IT-PT>ES, totalling 2 points). 1 bonus point is awarded for a

¹⁶² There might be several reasons for choosing to work more for one Institution rather than another. In the case of the Court of Justice, for example, all assignments are in Luxembourg and the interpreter must be willing to travel (interpreters working outside their domicile are entitled to travel and accommodation cost reimbursement, in addition to a per diem allowance). The same applies to the Parliament, which has monthly sessions in Strasbourg. Working hours are also different and more unpredictable for Parliament.

¹⁶³ A striking example is the ACIs’ domicile, which is a decisive criterion for DG SCIC (“meetings outside Brussels only account for 10% of the interpretation provided by DG SCIC”, Duflou 2016: 99), and is often irrelevant for DG LINC. Parliament organises a series of meetings (such as Strasbourg sessions), where almost all interpreters have to be recruited non-locally, meaning that reimbursement costs and per-diems are to be factored in also for Brussels-based interpreters, thus nullifying the domicile criterion.

¹⁶⁴ Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/dpo-register/detail/DPO-210> (last accessed April 2019).

full second booth (an interpreter working into 2 different booths with more than 1 C/B language) and, depending on the Head of Unit's assessment, supplementary points might be awarded for *retour* (Duflou 2016: 102).

The last subcategory is the Professional Competency Rating (PCR) which, as the name suggests, is the score attributed to an interpreter based on their professional competence and the quality of their performances. As with the language combination, this scale is also from 0 to 4 and is divided into units of 0.5 points. Upon passing the test the ACI is awarded a PCR, depending on their performance. Continuous monitoring and assessment of the performance of the ACIs by staff interpreters lead to positive or negative evolutions of the PCR throughout the interpreter's career. It is the AIIC-EU Convention itself that stresses that quality criteria have to be taken into consideration when recruiting interpreters: "The institutions shall administer recruitment and draw up the assignment schedule for ACIs in such a way as to ensure quality" (Article 24)¹⁶⁵. Quality reports are drawn up by Reporting Officers (experienced staff interpreters) and filed in an electronic database called SERIF. The report contains information on the meeting for which the report was created, the Reporting Officer's overall impression and specific assessment on the quality of the interpretation, incidents, if any, and then a final section for the subject of the report to add comments within 10 days of receiving the notification that a new report has been filed. ACIs may always consult their SERIF reports online.

A section of the report is exclusively devoted to describing the characteristics of the meeting itself. In addition to the meeting details (date, title, language regime), specific questions are asked to the Reporting Officer as to the difficulty of the meeting, the type of contributions (e.g. read-out speeches, PPT presentations) and the availability of documents to prepare. Furthermore, a specific box is devoted to language distribution, including languages spoken, any language predominance, non-native English, use of relay. Non-native English (ELF) is therefore officially regarded as an element possibly having an impact on the performance of the interpreter. This section is provided as a box comment, where the Reporting Officer can express their opinion or provide a description of the meeting setting, specifying whether they believe any of the above-mentioned elements had an effect on the ACI's performance.

¹⁶⁵ Available at: <https://aiic.net/page/3540/aiic-eu-convention-march-2004-september-2008/lang/1> (last accessed May 2019).

For staff interpreters, the approach to quality is equivalent to that used for ACIs, in so far as their performance too is assessed (either by the Head of Unit or by senior officials) and outcomes are taken into account when determining the official's career development.

Providing quality interpretation to customers is considered a crucial target for DG SCIC, and the evaluation system for ACIs is the main procedure, together with a strict selection test, to assure that this aim is achieved. When recruiting, the service privileges ACIs with the highest quality score, while at the same time still recruiting less experienced interpreters to enable them to improve their skills and consequently their score. According to data related to 2018, 2 points were considered the minimum score for an ACI to be assigned to most meetings, whereas for higher level or particularly technical meetings a higher quality rating is required (DG SCIC 2019: 12). The importance of quality performances for interpreters is therefore not just related to work ethics but has a direct impact (more so for ACIs) on their employment opportunities and finally their income.

3.3 Language combinations

The term "language combination", according to the definition provided by the AIIC refers to "the languages an interpreter uses professionally"¹⁶⁶. The same definition applies to the language combination of interpreters working for the European Institutions, the only difference being that the language combination when working for the EU is not self-declared by the interpreter, but needs to be formally approved by the EU interpretation services.

To an interpreter the language combination is more than that. It is basically the interpreter's calling card; it shows, in a string of language codes, all that they can do, it indicates not only which languages, but how many of them. One of the first questions an interpreter asks a colleague revolves around their language combination. The answer might create an immediate bond with colleagues sharing the same combination, a sense of companionship linked to the mere fact of working from the same languages and possibly experiencing the same difficulties and struggles. Or it might be a source of frustration and unspoken hostility, as freelance interpreters, in addition to being colleagues, are actually

¹⁶⁶ <https://aiic.net/page/1403/how-we-work/lang/1> (last accessed April 2019)

competing for a limited number of contracts (when the supply is higher than the demand for interpretation) and colleagues with larger combinations are more likely to be recruited (see 3.3). Language combinations determine how much an interpreter works and how often they are recruited; on a different level they are also a very condensed yet revealing summary of a considerable part of their personal and professional path, they are part of their identity. Therefore, the choice of studying a specific language can be inspired both by professional and strategic considerations and by personal inclinations and dispositions.

Languages in a combination are conventionally divided into three categories: A languages, B languages and C languages, which are defined as follows in the interpretation section of the EUROPA webpage¹⁶⁷:

- The **A language** is one (native tongue or equivalent) which the interpreter masters perfectly and into which he/she is capable of interpreting consecutively and simultaneously from all his/her B and C languages. In exceptional cases an interpreter may have two A languages.
- The **B language** is one which the candidate masters at a very high level close to mother-tongue and into which he/she can provide fluent and accurate interpretation in consecutive and simultaneous from the A language. This is also called a **retour language**.
- The **C language** is one which is fully understood and from which the interpreter works into his/her A language.

A and B languages are also called ‘active’ languages, as they are the languages the interpreter works into, whereas C languages are ‘passive’ languages as the interpreter works from them into another language.

As can be observed from the above-mentioned definition, the approach adopted seems to be that of the standard language paradigm. The A language does not necessarily need to be the mother-tongue, but it should be equivalent to that of a native speaker (though no further details are offered to qualify which criteria need to be fulfilled to guarantee such equivalence). The same applies to the B language, for which the level attained should be ‘close to mother-tongue’, even though some criteria are offered in this case as ‘fluency and accuracy’ are expressly mentioned as targets to be met. The standard language paradigm is further confirmed by the fact that A and B languages are always assessed by

¹⁶⁷ Available at: https://europa.eu/interpretation/doc/language_profiles.pdf (last accessed April 2019)

native speakers of said languages. Regardless of the definitions, it is the performance during the test that determines whether an interpreter is accredited to work from/into any language, demonstrating that it is the overall quality that the interpreter is able to provide that is ultimately assessed.

Language profiles are an essential tool for candidate interpreters, staff interpreters and ACIs. According to Figure 3 (see 3.2), which shows 2016 data, the average combination for staff interpreters includes four languages, with a maximum of two nine-language combinations.

In-demand combinations vary considerably from one booth to the other and are influenced by several factors, such as customers' demand, active population within the booth (e.g. number of interpreters retiring, staff interpreters with large combinations vs. small ones), training opportunities in universities in different countries, whether a booth is a 'relay booth'. A useful document to have a general picture of how booths differ in terms of language profiles is the "Language profiles in demand with the EU interpreting services", which is offered as guidance to candidates wishing to apply for a test as ACI, and is updated every two years¹⁶⁸. The information provided is not limited to which languages are in demand for which booth, but first and foremost, how many Cs and Bs (if any) are required, to which languages priority is given for testing, and which languages are to be considered an asset. More specifically, "ACC means that on top of your A language you need two C languages which are sometimes specified in the column "Language Specifications", ABC means that you need a B language (a retour) and an additional C language, ABCC means that you need a B language (retour) and two additional C languages, and so on."

As an example, data related to the years 2018-2020 are provided for the five most and five least present booths in meetings with an interpretation service (see Figure 11, 3.4.1).

¹⁶⁸ Available at https://europa.eu/interpretation/doc/language_profiles.pdf (last accessed April 2019) (see also Appendix III).

	Admission	Language specifications	Other priority languages and comments
EN	A + CC	C1 = FR/DE	Priority will be given to an additional C language. A retour into FR/DE/IT/ES would be an asset. AR or RU are eligible as a third C language.
DE	A + CCC A + CC	C1 = EN C1 = EN , C2 = FR	Priority will be given to candidates with three C languages. A retour into EN/FR would be an asset.
FR	A + CCC A + BC A + CC	C1 = EN B = EN C1 = EN C2 = DE/PL/SV/EL/FI/CS/ET/HU/LT/LV/ MT/NL/SK/SL/BG/DA/RO /HR	AR or RU are eligible as a third C language.
ES	A + CCC A + CC	C1 = EN C2 = DA/DE/EL/FI/EUR13 ¹⁶⁹ C3 = any EU language	Priority will be given to the 3 C profile, especially to candidates with FR.
IT	A + CCC A + BC	C1 = EN /FR/DE B = EN C = FR/DE	Priority for C2 = DA/FI/NL/EL/SV/EUR13 For operational reasons the language profiles EN/FR/ES or EN/FR/PT are not a priority.
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¹⁶⁹ EUR13 = (BG/CS/ET/LT/LV/HU/MT/PL/RO/SK/SL/HR)

MT	A + CC	C1 = EN /FR/DE C2 = EU language different from languages A and C1	Additional C languages (EN/FR/DE) would be a strong asset.
	A+B	B = EN /FR/DE/IT/ES	
SV	A + CC	C1 = EN /FR/DE	DA will not be considered for admission to test. An ABC combination would be a strong asset.
FI	A + CC	B = EN /FR/DE/IT/ES	SV and ET will not be considered for admission to the test.
	A+B		
ET	A+B	B = EN /FR/DE	
	A + CC	C1 = EN /FR/DE; C2 = EN /FR/DE/IT/ES	
DA	A + CC	C1 = EN /FR/DE	SV will not be considered for admission to test.
	A+B	B = EN , FR, DE	

Table 2 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Accreditation Profiles for a sample of 10 booths [emphasis added].

Profiles in the first and the second half of Table 2 differ considerably. The five main booths are ‘relay booths’ (see 3.4), meaning that interpreters from other booths rely on them to get interpretation from languages they do not have in their combination. The French, German, Italian and Spanish booths give priorities to candidates with 3 C languages. In the French and Italian booths, a retour into EN is also considered. For the French, Spanish and Italian booths, furthermore, a list of language is provided, which includes mostly EU13 languages (BG/CS/ET/LT/LV/HU/MT/PL/RO/SK/SL/HR), as well as DA, DE, EL and FI.

English is the language that features the most in all profiles. In the complete table (see Appendix III), EN is mentioned in all profiles. In four out of the last five booths in Table 1, an A+B combination is sufficient to be invited to the test, meaning a Maltese, Finnish, Estonian and Danish interpreter might apply with one single language (both active and passive) in addition to their mother-tongue.

The EN booth profile is an exception in its group, as the required combination is A + CC, one of the Cs being either FR or DE. Priority is given to candidates with 3Cs and a retour is defined as an asset. Interpreters from the English booth are basically not expected

(at least in a recruitment phase) to cover many languages, just as is the case for smaller booths.

Interpreters are mostly bound to expand their combination throughout their career and are encouraged to do so by Institutions, in so far as larger language combinations increase the employability coefficient for ACIs and the professional career development for staff. This means that in the EN booth – as well as in other booths – most interpreters have larger language combinations than those demanded of candidates.

Nonetheless, these data show a pattern that is quite evident: when a language is used less in meetings with an interpretation service and the booth is therefore smaller (both in terms of permanent staff and ACIs), those interpreters are likely to be working frequently in relay from the most spoken languages and interpreting their own language in return. Interpreters with those A languages have a smaller comparative incentive to study other languages, both in a training phase and once in the job. On the other hand, in certain booths the pressure to study languages increases considerably, as they are called upon to guarantee full language cover.

Therefore, the distribution of languages in meetings has also an indirect effect on interpreters and their profession. Studying a language to increase one's combination is a considerable effort, especially in order to make sure that the quality that is offered remains high. The Institutions themselves invest money in training their interpreting staff (language courses, language stays and refreshers for staff interpreters are covered by DG SCIC and mostly attended during working hours) according to the needs of the service, so as to be ready to meet the users' needs. The investment, in terms of money and time devoted to the training, risks being considerably undermined if the language studied is only used in an extremely limited number of meetings.

3.3.1 Having 'EN' (and not 'ELF') in your combination

English is one of the official languages of the European Union. More specifically it has been one of the official languages since the 1st January 1973, when the Treaty of Accession of the UK to the European Union entered into force. Before the accession of the UK (together with Denmark and Ireland), the official Member States were the six founding Members (Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) and the

official languages were consequently just four: Dutch, French, German and Italian, meaning that the first interpreters working for the European Institutions did not necessarily have English in their language combination.

In the early years of the EEC, even though formally all the official languages of the participating States were official languages of the Community from day one (see 2.2), French undoubtedly was dominant, also by virtue of the geographical location of the Institutions; they were all on – at least partially – francophone countries (Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg). As time went on, the predominance of French was slowly but steadily eroded, with the fatal blow being delivered by the 2004 enlargement:

With the EEC's enlargement, the position of French as the main working language has been challenged. The first accessions did not provoke a significant shift, because, although the admission of the United Kingdom and Ireland brought mother tongue speakers of English into the group, the entry of Greece, Portugal, and Spain reinforced the francophone nature of Common Market institutions. Southern European bureaucrats and politicians in the 1980s were of a generation likely to have had French as their second language (Fosty, 1985, Wright, 2000). However, the accession of Sweden, Austria, Finland (1995), and Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Cyprus, and Malta (2004) altered the linguistic balance substantially. As the French have noted with concern, these countries proved to have a majority of politicians and bureaucrats whose lingua franca was English (Leparmentier, 2004). This together with the likelihood that younger generations of Spaniards, Portuguese, and Greeks learned English rather than French is changing the lingua franca regime in the European Union (EU; Ginsburgh & Weber, 2005). (Wright 2006: 40)

The trajectory of French as a lingua franca within the EU clearly illustrates how rapidly the linguistic scenario within the EU has changed, not simply because the number of official languages has grown exponentially moving from the original 4 to the current 24 languages, but also in terms of language distribution. One interpreter working for the EU for more than 30 years now might have started working without having English in their combination, whereas today more than half of their workload might be from EN, or rather ELF.

The standard language vs. ELF relation (see 1.1) is particularly relevant when considering what it means today to have EN in one's combination as an interpreter working for the EU. As illustrated in § 3.3, language combinations play a central role in an interpreter's professional life. English is one of the many languages interpreters can add to their combination, even though in-demand language profiles for potential

candidates indicate that in all likelihood interpreters entering the EU market (either as officials or ACIs), already have English in their combination.

Undoubtedly, interpreters are tested on English as a standard national language. No national varieties are excluded when applying to the English booth, as long as the candidate has a native or native-equivalent A, and candidates are always assessed by EN natives¹⁷⁰. Similarly, candidates from other booths applying with EN as a C language, are fed texts delivered by staff interpreters from the EN booth, who are therefore native speakers. Even the pedagogical material that can be found on the ‘Speech Repository’¹⁷¹ consists almost exclusively of speeches delivered by native speakers.

Interpreters consider languages from a standard perspective starting from their training. A languages are often defined as the interpreter’s “mother-tongue” or “native-like language”, and for B and C languages, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)¹⁷² of Languages is often used to describe students’ competence. The network of EMCI¹⁷³ universities itself defines A languages as “the interpreter's native language (or another language strictly equivalent to a native language)¹⁷⁴” and the sample audio files that are provided for interested candidates are all recordings of native speakers.

Interpreters are oral language experts, and develop a thorough command of the languages they will eventually work with throughout their professional life and to which they are constantly exposed during meetings. Understanding the path that leads them into the booth with their specific language combination, though, is essential to understand how they perceive languages and relate to them. Depending on their specific university programme, interpreting students might be more aware or less aware that they will have to deal with non-native speakers – both as speakers and listeners – and might even be exposed to live material which is closer to the working reality. When they are applying as

¹⁷⁰ Even though there are no data on the nationalities of staff interpreters in the English booth, the European nationality requirement, together with the A (native-tongue or equivalent) language level, seems to point to a British/Irish majority.

¹⁷¹ The Speech Repository is an e-learning tool offered by DG SCIC to universities, teachers and interpreters working for the EU. It is a bank of speeches with hundreds of selected videos of real-life speeches and tailor-made pedagogical material, divided by language.

¹⁷² The CEFR is a framework of reference developed by the Council of Europe “to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency” (available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/home>, last accessed April 2019)

¹⁷³ The EMCI (European Masters in Conference Interpreting) is a Consortium constituted by a network of institutions of higher education offering a training programme for interpreters and supported by DG SCIC and DG LINC (available at: <https://www.emcinterpreting.org/statutes>, last accessed April 2019).

¹⁷⁴ Available at: <https://www.emcinterpreting.org/core-curriculum> (last accessed April 2019)

university candidates, being assessed at exams, practising with available pedagogical material and finally being tested by European Institutions, it is mostly their knowledge of native languages and ability to produce native-like texts which are assessed. ELF is not mentioned in any university webpage or programme and language profiles require interpreters to have 'EN' in their combination. Nevertheless, when working for the European Institutions, interpreters are considerably more likely to be interpreting from ELF. EN is the official language of one Member State (they were two before Brexit), but the vast majority of delegates who do not have a chance to express themselves in their mother-tongue will end up speaking ELF (see 6.3), which is technically not a language in any interpreter's combination.

As the acoustic reception of the incoming message is the first step in the interpreting process, differences in terms of pronunciation and accents are an illustrative example. Native speakers can have very marked accents that might require interpreters to devote more resources to the 'understanding' phase, which is why part of any interpreter's training and professional learning entails exposing oneself to the different accents and varieties of the languages they have in their combination. Accents can vary considerably, especially for languages that are spoken by native speakers of different countries (English itself being a case in point), still it is something interpreters might practise. On the other hand, when it comes to ELF, the code might change from speaker to speaker, day in, day out, and although interpreters can find patterns based on the speakers' MT (especially as far as intonation is concerned), there are no rules to be followed or specific training resources.

Accents are just one of the many layers of complexity when working as a simultaneous interpreter for the European institutions. The variety of meeting formats and topics is extreme and over the course of one single week an interpreter might have to deal with very technical subjects, ranging from financial markets to plant health or social indicators, just to name a few. On average, language combinations are large, therefore interpreters need to work in many directions to maintain different languages, in addition to juggling with sprawling glossaries. Once in the booth, as is always the case, they might have to deal with fast speeches, delegates reading out loud complex written texts, dense presentations or simply inexperienced or inarticulate speakers. All these challenging elements are part of the job, and are to be expected by any interpreter: interpreters are trained in how to

overcome these obstacles and throughout their training years and professional careers develop strategies to cope with them. ELF represents an additional challenge, one that is relatively new and seemingly growing, and has not yet been formally acknowledged, defined and tackled as such.

3.4 The language regime

The language regime of a meeting indicates the languages that can be used during the meeting itself and the interpretation service provided. Regimes can be symmetrical (the same languages can both be spoken in the room, and the interpretation service is provided into all of them) or asymmetrical (the number of languages that can be spoken in the room is higher than the number of active booths).

The adjectives ‘active’ and ‘passive’ are therefore used with exactly the same meaning when referring to a single interpreter’s language combination and to a language regime. In this latter context, more specifically, active languages are the languages into which interpretation is provided, meaning that listeners need to understand at least one of them in order to follow the proceedings. Conversely, passive languages are the languages participants will be able to speak during the meeting.

Usually, the number of languages that can be spoken in the room is higher than the number of languages into which interpretation is provided. Here are two examples of a symmetrical and an asymmetrical regime:

Symmetrical regime: EN, FR, DE, ES, IT

EN, FR, DE, ES, IT

In this case there is a 5-5¹⁷⁵ regime with five active booths and the same five languages can all be spoken during the meeting.

Asymmetrical regime: EN, FR, DE, ES, IT, EL, PL, DK, MT

EN, FR, DE, ES, IT, PL

¹⁷⁵ These figures indicate respectively the number of active and passive languages.

In this case there is a 6-9 regime, with six active booths interpreting into these languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Polish), but in the room participants will also be able to speak Greek, Danish and Maltese, though no interpretation will be provided into these languages. Both the regimes in the example are referred to as ‘reduced regime’, that is “when interpretation is provided but from less than the full number of official languages¹⁷⁶.”

To guarantee that the language regime is covered by the interpretation service, teams need to be arranged carefully and following a set of rules established in the different Institutions’ internal documents. They differ slightly from one Institution to the other, based on the specificities of the meetings organised and the Institution’s needs.

Generally, for meetings with a language regime including no more than six languages (be they active or passive), a minimum of two interpreters per booth is required, whereas for greater regimes a booth must comprise three interpreters. This means that the number of interpreters in a team can vary greatly: from 3 interpreters for 2-2 regimes (the number of interpreters can go down to three, instead of four, by employing a ‘cheval’, that is an interpreter able to interpret in both languages and sit in either booth as required, Duflou 2016: 109) to 69¹⁷⁷ interpreters in 24-23 regimes.

A meeting with 24 official languages means that if all the 23 booths were to be able to provide the service from all languages, a total of 552 language combinations would arise. No booth is actually able to grant that kind of coverage, meaning that *retour* and relay interpreting are daily practice in EU meetings.

Working with a ‘retour’ (French term meaning ‘return’) means working from an A language into a B (see 3.3). Relay interpreting (RI), on the other hand, is “the practice of interpreting from one language to another through a third language”. (Shlesinger 2010: 276). The third language is a language that the interpreter has in their combination and into which direct interpreting is being provided by another booth. For example, taking the above-mentioned asymmetrical language regime as an example, if nobody in the Italian

¹⁷⁶ Definition taken from section of the DG SCIC web page called ‘Conference interpreting - types and terminology’: available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/interpretation/conference-interpreting-types-and-terminology_en (last accessed June 2019).

¹⁷⁷ The number could actually increase if single interpreters were added to three-interpreter booths to account for a specific language, i.e. an interpreter added to the English booth only working from Irish into English.

booth had Polish in their combination, but someone in the French booth did and was therefore interpreting live the Polish speech into French, the Italian interpreters could switch to the French channel and interpret using the French text as source text. The French interpreter in the example is called a ‘pivot’. When a language is present as a C language in several other booths it is considered a ‘pivot language’ and the booth a ‘relay booth’ (Duflou, 2016: 111), meaning that it is a booth other interpreters switch to in order to get their relay. The ‘pivot’ might also be interpreting in *retour* mode. Following the same example, an interpreter in the Polish booth might be interpreting from Polish (A language) into English (B language), meaning that when switching to the English channel, other interpreters would be using them as pivot. The English booth would still be considered as a relay booth as it is English that is used as a ‘pivot language’, even though the interpretation is actually being provided by a Polish interpreter sitting in the Polish booth.

In Article 24 of the AIIC-EU Convention, devoted to the topic of the ACIs’ rules of assignment and composition of teams, it is stressed how “the institutions shall administer recruitment and draw up the assignment schedule for ACIs in such a way as to ensure quality and **keep the number of relays to a minimum**”¹⁷⁸ (emphasis added). The use of relays is therefore not regarded as a neutral option but rather a ‘necessary evil’.

3.4.1 Language regimes in figures

As can be seen from Figure 10, in the share of meetings with an interpretation service (63%), the meetings with a 2-to 6-language regime represent the largest group, that is more than two thirds (47%) of meetings with interpreters.

¹⁷⁸ Available at: <https://aiic.net/page/3540/aiic-eu-convention-march-2004-september-2008/lang/1> (last accessed May 2019).

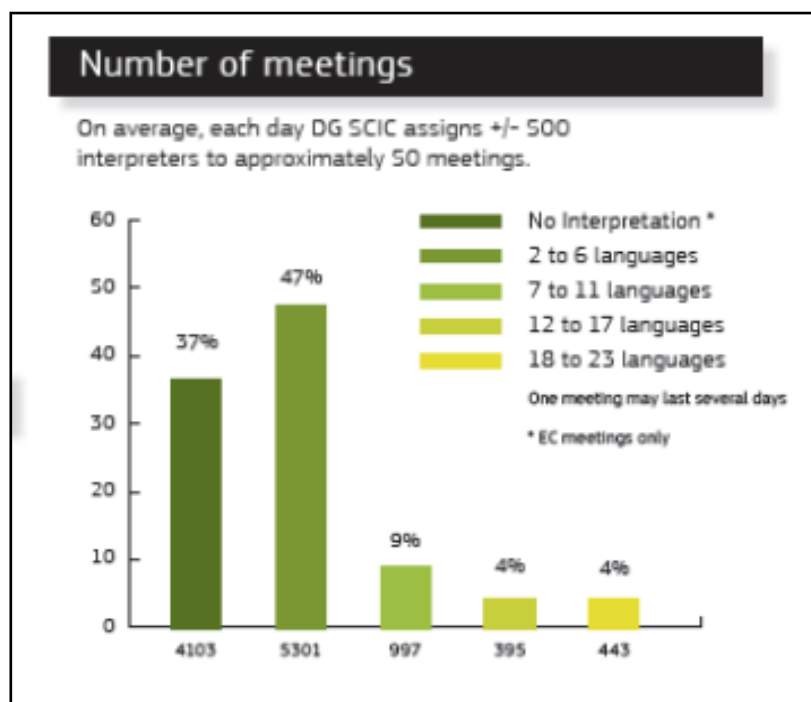


Figure 10 No. of meeting divided by language combination (2016). Extracted from the “Annual activity report 2016”¹⁷⁹.

When comparing these data to Figure 11, which shows the number of working days per year divided by active language¹⁸⁰, it is immediately evident which these 2 to 6 languages are. The first language into which interpretation is provided is by far English, which is in the language regime of 98% of the meetings with interpretation, an unrivalled primacy. In the second position is French – whose role as a lingua franca has lost considerable ground to English (see 3.3.1) – with a coverage of 74% of meetings. German, Spanish and Italian follow with 59%, 51% and 49% respectively, meaning that these languages are highly represented in the 2 to 6-language regime meetings. Following these languages, there is quite a large gap of more than 20 percentage points. Dutch, which ranks sixth with 23%, is closely followed by Portuguese (22%) and Polish (19%), meaning that these three languages do alternatively make the cut to 6-language meetings. With the exception of Greek, which has a 17% share, all other 14 booths (which account for more than half the number of official languages) are below 15%.

These data show that in at least 85% of meetings for which an interpretation service is provided, participants whose mother-tongue is Slovak, Latvian, Romanian, Bulgarian,

¹⁷⁹ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/aar-scic-2016_en_0.pdf (last accessed May 2019).

¹⁸⁰ Irish is not included as there is no active Irish booth (see footnote 148).

Lithuanian, Czech, Slovene, Croatian, Hungarian, Maltese, Swedish, Finnish, Estonian or Danish do not get the interpretation service into their mother-tongue¹⁸¹.

Percentages alone seem to prove that, at least in meetings with an interpretation service, not all languages are worth the same.

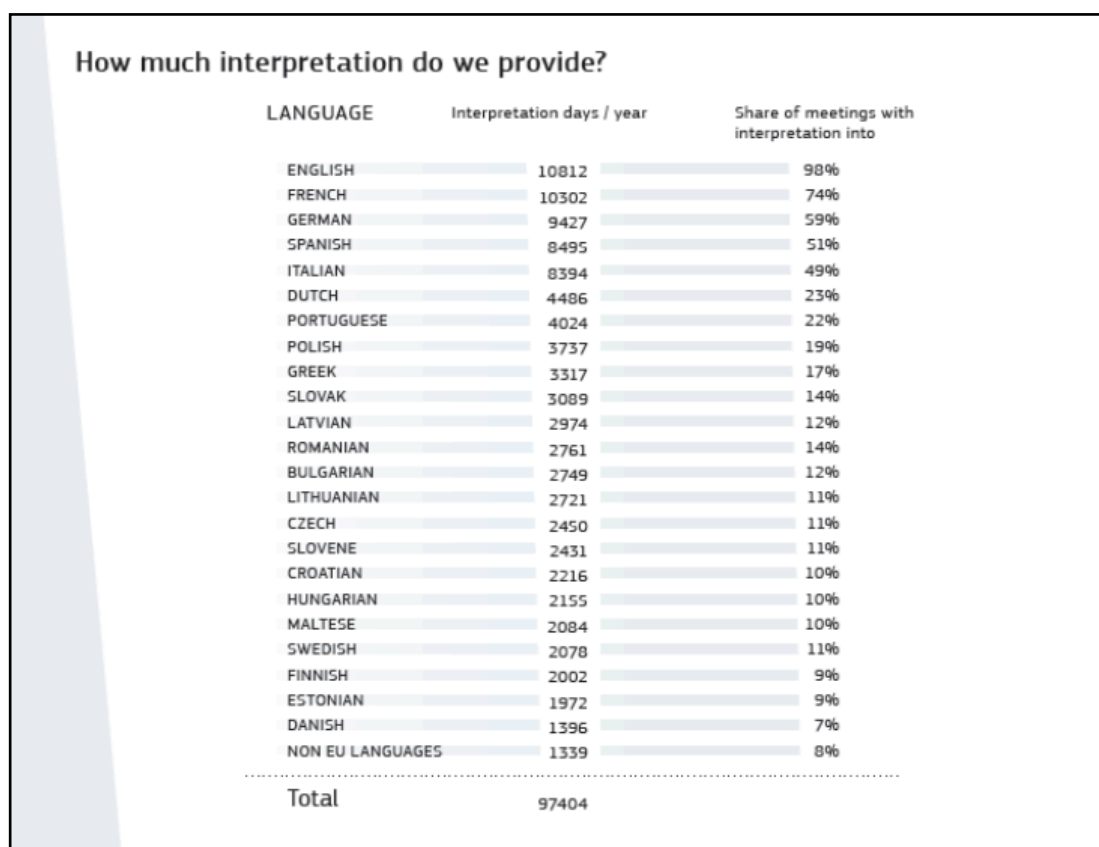


Figure 11 No. of interpretation days/year divided by language (2016). Extracted from the “Annual activity report 2016”¹⁸².

3.4.2 Participants may speak and listen to...

As language regimes vary from meeting to meeting, and there are various ways in which they are communicated to meeting participants. Information regarding the language regime might be included in the invitation letter that is sent to meeting participants to inform them on the practicalities of the meeting. Figure 12 shows an extract from an invitation letter (in English only) sent by DG TAXUD¹⁸³ to the delegates of the Customs

¹⁸¹ Considering that these data only refer to active languages, the distribution of passive languages in meetings with an asymmetrical language regime might differ slightly, even though data from Figure 11 show that regimes with more than seven languages only represent a small share of the total number of meetings with an interpretation service.

¹⁸² Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/aar-scic-2016_en_0.pdf (last accessed May 2019).

¹⁸³ DG TAXUD stands for Directorate-General Taxation and Customs Union.

expert group, informing participants on the meeting's date, venue, timetable and language regime.



Figure 12 Extract from an invitation letter from DG TAXUD to the delegates of a customs expert group¹⁸⁴.

All the interpreters participating in a meeting build up a team, with a team leader¹⁸⁵ (Head of the Interpretation Team) appointed by DG SCIC to act as an intermediary between meeting participants, the interpreting team itself and DG SCIC management.

¹⁸⁴The Commission set up an on-line 'Register of Commission Expert Groups' (<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm>), for transparency's sake, which provides valuable information on the groups' activities, as well as relevant documents which are produced and discussed by the groups (sometimes including, inter alia, invitation letters, meetings' agendas). The integral version of the invitation letter is available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupMeetingDoc&docid=29005> (last accessed in April 2019).

¹⁸⁵ Team leaders are selected by Planning (see 3.5). It is always one of the staff interpreters in the team, unless there are none, in which case an ACI is assigned the role of team leader.

They are therefore responsible for managing any communication or dealing with any situation which might arise throughout the meeting¹⁸⁶.

Before the meeting actually begins, the team leader also has the task of handing to the Chairperson an information sheet containing all the details of the interpretation service for the day, including most importantly the language regime for the meeting. The document also contains a standard sentence the Chairperson might wish to read out loud to participants in order to list all the languages offered, with a very simple formulation which begins with the languages which participants can both speak and listen to (symmetrical regime), and then lists the language that can only be spoken, but for which no interpretation is provided (asymmetrical regime). The message also contains a few instructions for participants on how to speak (natural pace, avoid reading) in order to create the best conditions for a successful event and most importantly invites all those who have the possibility to speak their mother-tongue to do so.

The Chairperson might choose when to communicate the language regime, whether to read the message out loud or speak freely and whether to add more information (language channels, reason for changes in the language regime compared to previous meetings, if any). If the communication is made rapidly when not all participants are ready and attentive, some information might get lost. Delegates who might be able to speak a language but do not physically see a booth for said language, might be prone to think that it is not included in the regime or might not be aware that there need not be a native speaker of that language for it to be covered by the regime in a passive mode¹⁸⁷. Chairpersons might even forget to mention the regime at all (especially if they themselves speak English and are not used to resorting to the interpretation service unless strictly necessary). In some cases, the channels for languages offered by interpreters are visible on a screen in the room (though this is not the case for passive languages) and other times the language regime might appear in the agenda of the meeting.

When analysing the reasons why some participants, who would have access to the possibility of speaking their language, choose to resort to ELF instead, misunderstandings or communication incidents at the very beginning of a meeting might sometimes be an

¹⁸⁶ For example, on-the-spot requests by meeting organisers concerning the language regime, technical problems arising concerning the interpretation equipment, documents being distributed in the room but not in the booths, etc.

¹⁸⁷ It is a passive mode for the interpreters as they would be interpreting from said language into their A or B (active) language.

explanation (such as the Chairperson not reading out loud the language regime). Asymmetrical regimes, on the other hand, which are the result of a choice made either by meeting organisers or by DG SCIC depending on its availability of rooms with booths (larger regimes require larger rooms with a higher number of booths) and interpreters might be playing a greater role. A delegate, having to listen to the meeting proceedings in ELF (live interventions) or English (EN booth, in order to benefit from the interpretation of what colleagues speaking other languages are saying) is likely to speak ELF when taking the floor, if they feel confident enough to do so. Depending on the language regime, they might not even have the choice between ELF and their MT.

In addition to these cases, there is another element which is the proverbial elephant in the room: the stance of the Commission representatives themselves. Though it is by no means true in all cases, Commission representatives tend to speak ELF, regardless of the language regime. This statement is hardly refutable, as Commissioners themselves in almost all public appearances and events of all kinds do speak ELF. The same tendency is confirmed all down the chain of command, both in meetings organised by the DGs themselves and in meetings the Commission is invited to (in Council and Parliament for example). French, Italian, German and Spanish¹⁸⁸ Commission Chairpersons often take the floor in ELF to open the meeting, kindly welcome their colleagues – interpreters included – announce the language regime, invite speakers to express themselves in their mother tongue, if they have the possibility to do so, and then keep on speaking ELF. The language regime of a meeting corresponds to a service that is offered and by no means imposed on meeting participants, but the choice on the part of Commission officials to often resort to ELF is worth investigating as it seems to correspond to an unspoken internal language policy, so much so that interpreters responding to the questionnaire often raised the topic of ‘ELF vs Commission’ (see 5.11).

Once the meeting is over, the team leader has to fill in a meeting report (conventionally called with the French term ‘rapport de séance’ - RdS), aimed at recording exact working times of the interpreters as well as providing feedback on the general running of the meeting and taking notes of specific requests or problems arising during the meeting

¹⁸⁸ Languages which are often available in language regimes (see Figure 11).

relating to the interpreting service provided¹⁸⁹. Team leaders might also give information on the language regime, mainly whether available languages were actually spoken during the meeting or not.

3.5 A ‘typical’ meeting with interpretation

DG SCIC offers interpretation services to a host of clients, so much so that it is actually difficult to be speaking of a ‘typical’ meeting. Nonetheless, there are a few elements that, from an interpreter’s perspective, are consistent throughout different assignments.

DG SCIC main clients are other Commission DGs, the European Council, the Council of the EU, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and other agencies and offices in EU countries (see 3.1). The great variety of Institutions entails an even greater variety of subject matters and meeting formats. Content-wise meetings basically range across the spectrum of human knowledge, as general domains regulated by EU Institutions –agriculture and rural development, climate action, communications networks and technology, competition, consumers, health and food safety, economic and financial affairs, education, youth, sport, culture, employment, social affairs, energy, environment, internal market, industry, international cooperation, justice, maritime affairs and fisheries, transport, taxation and research¹⁹⁰ – can be dealt with both in general terms and at a very deep level of specificity and expertise.

The format of the meetings too can vary significantly, ranging from high-level conferences and Councils of Ministers to press conferences, committee meetings, expert groups, workshops and bilateral meetings, just to name a few, which has a considerable impact on the type of interaction that takes place between interlocutors. Conferences, for example, are usually characterised by more formal structures, with speakers’ turns and time slots well defined in advance of the meeting, longer turns, possibly power-point presentations and read-out speeches, whereas committee meetings and expert groups are more interactive and entail a larger share of spontaneous and free speech (see 3.5.2).

¹⁸⁹ Available at: https://edps.europa.eu/sites/edp/files/register/notification_file/0560-2010-003.pdf (last accessed May 2019)

¹⁹⁰ For an exhaustive list of Commission departments and executive agencies, see <https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments> (last accessed April 2019)

Depending on the meeting format participants too change, both in terms of numbers, status and relationship. The Commission occasionally organises conferences that are open to the public or even web-streamed, meaning that the number of participants is even greater than the number of seats actually available in the room, as well as bilateral encounters between two small delegations behind closed doors. As for participants, diplomats from Permanent Representations¹⁹¹, habitually working in Brussels and participating in high-level meetings, might show a different interaction pattern from national experts, only occasionally flying to Brussels to report on a specific national issue and not necessarily being acquainted with other participants.

Working in different meeting formats and dealing with different topics is not, *per se*, a feature typical only of work at the EU, but what is peculiar about EU interpreters (as this aspect is applicable to all Institutions), is that they cannot reject a specific assignment. ACIs are offered a contract for a specific day and upon accepting it they make themselves available to work in any meeting¹⁹², regardless of the topic and the language regime of the meeting:

While freelance interpreters may (and even should, according to AIIC, 1994¹⁹³: art 3a) consider the nature and difficulty of the assignment before they accept an offer of work – and refuse it if they do not feel qualified for the job – this is impossible for EU interpreters (Duflou 2016: 114).

Furthermore, assignments may change at the last minute and interpreters might have to work in meetings for which they have not had the time to prepare, or a working day might include two different meetings on completely different topics, one in the morning session, and the other in the afternoon session¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹¹ “Permanent Representations are diplomatic bodies similar to embassies, but while embassies are linked to a single country (therefore they are called ‘bilateral’, e.g. the British embassy to France), the Perm.Reps (as they are often abbreviated) are accredited to the European Union institutions. Each EU Member State has a Perm.Rep in Brussels, and the diplomats working there are representing a Member State towards the European Commission and other institutions” (available at: <https://eutraining.eu/epso-glossary/permanent-representations>, last accessed April 2019).

¹⁹² ACIs are informed whether the contract they are being offered is for a local or non-local assignment (and, in this latter case, where will the meeting take place).

¹⁹³ The AIIC document Duflou refers to is the AIIC Code of Professional Ethics. In the most recent version (2018), the article the author refers to is 3b: “Members of the Association shall not accept any assignment for which they are not qualified. Acceptance of an assignment shall imply a moral undertaking on the member's part to work with all due professionalism”, available at <https://aiic.net/page/6724/code-of-professional-ethics-2018-version/lang/1>, last accessed April 2019.

¹⁹⁴ Interpreters, according to working conditions, have a right to a 90-minute lunch break in between the morning and the afternoon session.

There is a binding element, though, which runs through all meetings, irrespective of their format, topic and participating members: the final purpose of them all, namely the implementation of EU treaties and the management of the European project. All meetings, conferences and interactions are to a certain extent aimed at either implementing specific provisions of the *acquis communautaire*, or expanding it in a continuous process of information sharing and decision making. According to Duflou (2016: 114), the EU meetings are therefore all inscribed in a broader ‘hypertext’ (Pöchhacker 1994: 48). Pöchhacker uses the term to refer to a single conference, meant as “an overarching sort of text comprised of a number of individual texts” (2017: 35), a holistic and complex communication event that amounts to more than a sum of texts and that comprises both single text production and reception. From this perspective, all EU meetings could indeed be viewed as an all-encompassing hypertext, in which the same participants, taking on different roles according to the meeting format, all “refer to a common body of EU legal texts and shared knowledge about the nature and history of the EU as a joint project” (Duflou, 2016: 114).

From the specific perspective of interpreters, in addition to themselves being actors and co-constructors of the European project, there are several practical and logistical elements that contribute to perceiving all meetings as one single hypertext, especially when limiting the scope to meetings organised by one single interpretation service. Interpreters always have the same employer (DG SCIC in this case) and consequently the same rules apply to their assignments, irrespective of the meeting organiser. Despite changing locations and buildings, all booths offer the same standards¹⁹⁵, rooms are arranged in a similar fashion¹⁹⁶, team sheets indicating the members of the interpreting *équipe* for the day always have the same format, and documents are accessible through the same platform (see 3.5.2). Furthermore, even though each meeting entails the use of specific technical terminology

¹⁹⁵ Not all booths are exactly the same, as not all buildings date to the same period and booth refitting is mostly limited to the technological equipment. Nonetheless, basic standards are always guaranteed (“interpreting booths need to be comfortable, sound-proofed, air-conditioned, have good light and comfortable chairs, and offer a direct and complete view of all delegates”, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/interpretation/standards-interpreting-facilities_en, last accessed April 2019).

¹⁹⁶ Generally, in Commission meetings, national participants are seated around the table, following the alphabetical order of the Member States expressed in the national language of the state (e.g. Austria is not the first in line, as the name of the country in German is Österreich). In Council, instead, national representatives are seated according to the order in which the Member States will hold the presidency of the Council of the EU.

on part of the participants, a horizontal base of EU jargon¹⁹⁷ can be expected. All these elements further corroborate the CoP.

3.5.1 Requesting an interpretation service

DG SCIC operates on a demand-driven business model and can rely on limited resources. External users have at their disposal premises with rooms equipped to offer the interpretation services, therefore DG SCIC only provides the human resources needed to guarantee the service. Occasionally, it might be unable to meet some of the requests in terms of language supply, depending on the availability of interpreters on that given day. Institutions all resort to a shared pool of ACIs, meaning that they are actually competing for a limited resource. Considering that certain languages are only offered (either as C or A/B languages) by a very limited number of interpreters, DG SCIC might be unable to provide interpretation from or into a language if all interpreters working from/into said language are either assigned to other meetings or recruited by other Institutions. Furthermore, the DG, being demand-driven, has very little influence on the distribution of activity throughout the year, and often needs to react to late requests, which does not always make for an efficient use of available resources (DG SCIC, 2019:11).

For meeting requests coming from other Directorates-General within the Commission, DG SCIC provides both equipped rooms and interpreters. In addition to a conference centre (Albert Borschette Conference Centre – CCAB), meetings might take place in other Commission buildings that have equipped conference rooms¹⁹⁸. Unfortunately, though, most of the available rooms only have a limited number of booths (most are equipped with 6 to 10 booths), which sets a physical limit to the number of active languages that can be provided during most meetings. Requests are therefore satisfied to the extent that there are rooms and interpreters available. In order to improve the supply of rooms to meeting organisers, DG Interpretation is actively participating in the process for the creation of the

¹⁹⁷ The European Commission itself is aware of the widespread and sometimes unwitting use of EU jargon, so much so that tips and possible alternatives are offered on a specific webpage. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/ipg/content/tips/words-style/jargon_en.htm (last accessed April 2019).

¹⁹⁸ These include, inter alia, the Berlaymont building (headquarters of the European Commission), the Charlemagne building (which houses the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, the Directorate-General for Trade and the Internal Audit Service of the Commission) and the DG Agriculture and rural development building.

Commission's new flagship Conference Centre, for which approval by the budget authority and signature of the contract are still pending¹⁹⁹.

3.5.2 Access to documents: MEDATA

The DG SCIC intranet website (SCICnet) is the main interface to communicate with interpreters. The most important parts of the website for both staff interpreters and ACIs' daily work are the 'My Programme' and 'Medata' sections, which provide information on the interpreters' assignments and relevant documents respectively. Clicking on the 'my programme' link, interpreters are able to see to which meetings they have been assigned: the title of the meeting is provided, together with the venue, the starting hour, the language regime²⁰⁰, the colleague/s working in the same booth, and the name of the team leader (with a mention of the booth they work in). For each specific meeting, further hyperlinks are available. More specifically, the team sheet is accessible upon clicking on the meeting's title, thus enabling the interpreter to verify whether they will be acting as pivot or where to find their relays (see 3.4). Every meeting is associated to a Blog, where interpreters themselves can add information they deem relevant, to the benefit of interpreters later assigned to the same meeting. Interpreters often post information on specific terminology, unresolved controversies that might be reopened in future meetings and, most interestingly, also warn colleagues on language distribution or particularly challenging accents.

The last and possibly most important hyperlink is that giving access to 'Medata' (Meeting Documentation and Terminology Access), where all relevant documentation pertaining to the meeting and provided for by meeting organisers is published. Interpreters only have access to the documents pertaining to meetings they will actually work in, which include, depending on their availability, the meeting's agenda, minutes of previous meetings, Chairperson's notes, PowerPoint presentations, legislative proposals, working documents, and speeches. Most documents are available only in English, which is quite revealing of the DGs' policies in terms of access to documents for participants. Even when

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix I.

²⁰⁰ Interpreters are expected to be working with all their language combinations for every assignment, provided their C languages are included in the meeting language regime. For retours specific rules apply.

no documents are provided to the interpreters, the specific Medata page pertaining to the meeting gives access to general background documents, if any, or specialised glossaries compiled by interpreters. Furthermore, a specific section of SCICnet, called ‘Meeting Preparation, gives access to a list of tools related to terminology and documentation, such as Iate²⁰¹, Lithos²⁰², Eur-Lex²⁰³ and Commission and Council repositories. Additional documents might be distributed during the meeting, in which case a copy is usually distributed to the booths as well either automatically or upon the team leader’s request.

Meeting organisers might not always be able to provide all relevant documents to interpreters in advance, with the exception of Agendas which, being sent to meeting participants themselves well before the meeting, are almost invariably available on Medata. Agendas might differ considerably from meeting to meeting – some are very detailed and provide specifics on the topics to be dealt with (annotated agendas), and an indicative timetable with the time that is assigned to each slot, coffee breaks and tentative closing hours. If agendas are translated in other languages, all language versions are uploaded, but this is hardly ever the case. A quick look at the ‘Register of Commission Expert Groups’, where information on expert group meetings are published, suffices to realise that agendas and minutes are almost invariably in English. Hence, it can be inferred that even delegations asking for the interpretation service are expected to make sense of documents that are provided only in English or should in any case bear the costs of having them translated (which can only apply to documents provided well in advance of the meeting).

²⁰¹ IATE (InterActive Terminology for Europe) is the EU's terminology database, available at <https://iate.europa.eu/home> (last accessed April 2019)

²⁰² Lithos is a quick search engine used to navigate the terminology resources developed by the terminology team of DG Interpretation, mostly glossaries compiled by interpreters and terminologists (available at: <https://termcoord.eu/scic/>, last accessed April 2019).

²⁰³ Eur-lex is an EU webpage offering access to EU law, case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and other public EU documents in all official EU languages, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html> (last accessed April 2019).

4. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

*Man kann nicht nicht kommunizieren, denn jede Kommunikation
(nicht nur mit Worten) ist Verhalten und
genauso wie man sich nicht nicht verhalten kann,
kann man nicht nicht kommunizieren.*

Paul Watzlawick

The first two chapters shed light on the single areas related to this project on which research has already been carried out, namely: identifying the main traits of ELF as described by research so far (see 1.3); exploring ITELf studies (see 1.5); and finally defining multilingualism within the EU (see 2.3), which is both the *raison d'être* of the EU interpreting services and the ideological frame in which language policies and therefore interpretation services themselves are practically organised. Chapter three, additionally, provided both a description of EU interpreters – who they are and how they work – and an overview on how multilingualism is applied in EU interpreter-mediated meetings. Hence, after scrutiny of the theoretical background and the specific EU interpreting environment, the conceptual scope of this research project is presented in this chapter.

4.1 Questioning EU interpreters

As mentioned in the introduction, the main research questions of the study are:

- What is the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on communicative effectiveness?

- What is the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on their interpreting?
- What is the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on multilingualism and participation rights?

The possibility of conducting face-to-face interviews was considered, as it could have been an appropriate method for eliciting perceptions and attitudes on all the above-mentioned dimensions. Nevertheless, the quantitative approach via a questionnaire was preferred, mainly to have access to a larger number of respondents, as it is the first time that the target group of EU interpreters has been involved in a survey on ELF. Studies conducted so far on this topic have only addressed limited groups of respondents. Generally, interpreting scholars have mostly conducted small-scale surveys aiming to assess interpreters' attitudes about a very specific topic. In his analysis of 40 surveys carried out on the interpreting profession, Pöchhacker (2011: 52) notes that only ten studies on the profession obtained more than 100 respondents. More recent surveys on ELF too were quite limited in scope and only involved small groups of interpreters²⁰⁴ (Albl Mikasa 2010; 2014). An exception is Gentile's two surveys on the interpreter's professional status (2016), which collected 805 respondents (status of conference interpreters) and 888 respondents (status of public service interpreters), precisely by means of questionnaires.

In the questionnaire design, closed-ended questions were preferred to open questions because they allow a greater uniformity of responses and take less time from respondents, therefore being more likely to record a higher participation rate than open-ended question surveys. Nonetheless, in order to allow for a more in-depth analysis on the part of those respondents wishing to devote more time to the questionnaire and express their opinions more extensively, comment boxes have been included after each question, with the addition of a final open-ended question. The choice of a closed questionnaire combined with the possibility for respondents to express their opinions along the whole survey presents the further merit of ensuring complete anonymity, thus giving respondents the opportunity to freely voice their doubts and criticisms, if any.

²⁰⁴ Albl-Mikasa's 2010 study was carried out by means of a questionnaire which collected 32 responses, whereas the 2012 study was carried out by conducting in-depth interviews and involved 11 participants.

The questionnaire revolves around the interaction between ELF, multilingualism and interpretation. These macro-areas are all connected by a concept that is mentioned explicitly throughout the questionnaire itself, namely that of communicative effectiveness, that is whether communication during the meetings, be it via ELF or interpreting, may be considered effective. To define this dimension more clearly, a closer analysis of some key concepts is offered in this chapter.

4.2 Language and communication across disciplines

Language and communication are intrinsically linked as the usual purpose of language is to communicate and communication is typically – though not exclusively – achieved by using language:

One should distinguish between *language* itself, which is a device of some sort, with its own internal principles of organisation (grammar, lexicon, semantics ...) and *language use* which is the use of language in order to achieve goals, the most obvious of these being communication (De Saussure & Rocci 2016: 3)

From a scientific and disciplinary point of view, they lie at a crossroads between many disciplines, ranging from the more straightforward fields of linguistics and communication sciences, to philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience, just to name a few. They are indeed both the object of natural sciences – which investigate how humans use their brains and their motor system to send, receive and interpret signals (e.g. cognitive psychology and neurology) – and of the humanities, which study how humans share thoughts, emotions and experiences that shape all aspects of life in society (e.g. literary studies, sociology and anthropology).

Verbal communication – which is arguably the most common form of communication – can be analysed either from an ‘internal’ point of view, that is studying the functional communication abilities of the individual, or from an ‘external’ point of view, paying attention to the finished product of communication, that is the interlocutors’ utterances or discourses. Even when referring to the product of communication, it is generally the ‘language in use’ that is analysed, as knowing the language – the code – by itself is not enough to understand the fully-fledged meaning in communication.

Communication found more space in language sciences in the second half of the 20th century, with the emergence of the discipline of pragmatics, with its focus mostly on language use and communicative action, rather than language system and structure: “*Pragmatics*, with its emphasis on intentional communicative behaviour, contextual processes of explicit and implicit message understanding, shared intentions and action coordination, provides a bridge between the cognitive and the social strands of research” (De Saussure & Rocci 2016: 10).

, Dealing with language, language use and communication, T&I similarly act as a bridge between different strands of research. They borrow extensively from other disciplines to analyse complex phenomena that can only be understood by moving across several fields. By definition, the communication analysed by T&I is always multilingual, and entails the presence of a further actor in the interaction, thus inevitably altering some of the patterns identified in monolingual communication. Furthermore, in multilingual communication, the relation between language and culture plays a pivotal role, as communication might vary depending on what in language is culture-specific and what is not. Cross-linguistic research must therefore also pay close attention to this further layer, which influences how people with a different linguo-cultural background communicate.

4.3 Quality in communication

From a pragmatic point of view communication can be defined as a cooperative activity between two or more people in which the meanings of each utterance are constructed cooperatively by all actors, “not so much a game of table tennis, in which the agents alternatively exchange information, as a communal and simultaneous effort to build something together” (Bara 2010: 461). The aims and intentions of the participants may differ, but for communication to take place successfully, the responsibility of communication falls on the shoulders of each and every actor – interpreters included.

Both in a monolingual and a multilingual communicative context, three dimensions interplay: a) the transfer of information/knowledge, b) the act of cooperation between participants, and c) the power dynamic between the individuals, which has an impact on how participants use communication to pursue their own personal goals (Grin and Gazzola 2013a: 371-373).

The notion of quality, applied to communication, might seem unusual, as linguists do not generally think in terms of quality when studying language:

Linguists tend to consider all languages as basically equivalent, either because they think that they share a common fundamental structure à la Chomsky or because they consider that linguistic diversity is basically neutral in terms of richness [...]. Nonetheless, a notion such as **quality** has direct connections with at least three concerns of language sciences: misunderstandings, deception with language, and **communication in institutions where some warrants of efficacy are necessary** and where relations of dominance are established. (De Saussure & Rocci 2016: 18) [emphasis added]

The type of communication being analysed in this research project falls within the sphere of ‘institutional communication’. The goals pursued by meeting participants are mainly matters of public interest, thus making it appropriate to study them through the lens of quality. When referring to the quality of the communication taking place within the European institutions, the focus is on its effectiveness in the light of the goals that said institutional communication pursues (see 4.4).

Interpreters are quite used to the concept of quality being applied to them. As paid professionals delivering a service that needs to meet clients’ expectations, their performances are assessed first and foremost by their users (see Kurz 1993). Furthermore, throughout their training and professional career they are constantly being assessed and rated by trainers and fellow colleagues. DG SCIC itself performs periodical checks on the quality of their performances (see 3.2.1).

Interpreting Studies have always devoted much attention to the notion of quality, developing various approaches in an attempt to identify all its constituent parts in a multidimensional perspective:

Whereas a comprehensive view on quality in interpreting would also include such issues as interpreters’ individual qualifications and skills, their collective professional ethics and the conditions under which they carry out their work, the focus is often on the performance as such, that is, the discourse produced in real time as a rendering of a source-language utterance for the benefit of a target-language audience. But even this narrow focus on quality reveals the multiple dimensions of interpreting quality as an object of study. (Pöchhacker 2013: 33).

When assessing the performance of an interpreter and therefore the quality of their delivery, there are always two dimensions that come into play: the product and the service. When assessing the target text (TT), it is often the standards of “accuracy” of content and

“adequacy” of target language which are at the forefront of the analysis (see Viezzi 1996: 88-93). When focusing on the service, on the other hand, more attention is devoted to another dimension, which actually includes both the product and the event, namely

[...] the comprehensive yardstick of communicative “success”, which encompasses the entire communicative interaction and its participants, and the overall purpose of the event as well as the participants’ individual needs, resources and intentions. In between overall communicative success and the accuracy and adequacy required of the target text, and thus in between the product dimension and the service orientation, is the focus on the standard of equivalent communicative effect [...] (Pöchhacker 2013: 36)

All meetings for which DG SCIC offers an interpretation service are connected by the presence of interpreters themselves. Irrespective of the booth they work in, their language combination, professional experience or employment status, all interpreters pursue one and the very same goal: making sure that the events they work in are effective from a communicative point of view.

Assuming that all participants in the events analysed in this project wish communication to succeed, then they too must be pursuing the same goal. Therefore, to achieve high-quality communication – either via interpretation or ELF – the main criterion, to be fulfilled by all actors equally, is that of communicative effectiveness (see also Viezzi 1996: 83).

4.4 Communicative effectiveness as an indicator

In order to assess any specific language practice, a set of criteria are necessary to make it possible to identify advantages and weaknesses, compare alternatives and assess their success depending on the goals that the language policy behind the specific practices pursued. Because of the complex nature of language, the quantitative dimension – often expressed in monetary terms²⁰⁵ – of a communication practice is not sufficient, as other non-market and ideological elements might not be taken into account (Grin and

²⁰⁵ When assessing language policies, cost is a central dimension, and refers principally to the management of multilingual communication (that is translation and interpreting, plus indirect administrative costs). Other elements, though, are harder to put a price on, as is the case for misunderstandings, delays, and errors attributable to lack of proficiency in foreign languages in the institution’s activities. A further class of costs related to language policies is that of implicit costs: “limiting the number of official languages used by an institution to a restricted subset of languages spoken in a given territory, for example, implies that those who do not know (one of) the official language(s) must pay to have access to communication.” (Gazzola & Grin 2013: 375).

Vaillancourt 1997). Furthermore, there is one key dimension that is hard to measure quantitatively, namely ‘communicative effectiveness’.

Gazzola and Grin (2013b) in a study on multilingual communication (which is part of the DYLAN project²⁰⁶), applied the criteria of efficiency (in terms of resource allocation) and fairness (in terms of distributive justice), that is “distribution of (material and symbolic) resources” (*ibid*: 270). Analysing the literature on the evaluation of efficiency of language policies, the scholars noticed a common feature, namely that:

among all the possible advantages (or “benefits”) of a language policy, **one specific advantage stands out as particularly relevant for policies aimed at managing linguistic diversity in multilingual contexts**, such as international institutions or multilingual states. This benefit is **effective communication** between actors having different mother tongues (or “first languages” or “native languages”) (*ibid*: 371) [emphasis added]

Effective communication is a central factor in any analysis of language policies. More specifically, the authors recognise that the effectiveness of a language policy or practice can be assessed based on its contribution to reaching its main communication goal and that what matters is “that the approach does not imply any a priori definition of what goals are. The concept of main communicational intent always depends on the (possibly dynamic) position of actors in a given context.” (*ibid*: 373).

Similarly, the approach of communicational intent applies to single utterances within a specific interaction, as an act of communication is an utterance act which manifests an underlying communicative intention (Grice, 1969). Therefore, the communicative intention is expressed both on a macro level, as the overarching goal that the participant in a meeting is pursuing by attending the meeting itself, and also on a micro level as the backbone of every single utterance.

Therefore, communicative effectiveness is in a direct relationship with the attainment of the communicational intent of a speaker, who has a given role and status and is interacting in a specific setting. The communication goals of a language user might differ depending on the context. In some situations, a speaker might simply aim at getting the most salient parts of their message across for informative purposes, in other contexts a

²⁰⁶ DYLAN was a project funded under Framework Programme 6 of the European Union, which sought to identify the conditions under which Europe's linguistic diversity can be an asset for the development of knowledge and economy. The project embraced 20 research institutions in 12 European Countries and ran for five years (2006-2011). See http://www.dylan-project.org/Dylan_en/home/home.php (last accessed May 2020).

speaker might wish to persuade their audience, or entertain them or galvanise them, depending on which dimension of communication prevails.

It is worth adding that in order to pursue a communicative intention, a speaker may resort to both linguistic and extra-linguistic resources in a way that is accessible to the target audience. Comprehension also relies heavily on the shared context, through an inferential process that, according to relevance theory, treats the speaker's utterance and the contextual information together in order to achieve interpretation of the speaker's meaning (Sperber & Wilson 1995).

The recipient of the act of communication plays a central role to this dynamic because, for communication to occur successfully, they need to identify the intention and interpret the utterance accordingly. Their importance is not limited to their position as an active participant in the communication event. When constructing a speech and choosing the information to convey, the words to utter, or even just the tone of their voice, a speaker is initially relating to the abstract projection of the interlocutor/s. Depending on the kind of communicative event, the concept of an ideal recipient might take on specific characteristics, especially if the communication is mostly dialogic and interactive, thus enabling an adjustment on part of the speaker, if necessary. In other instances, it might remain undefined and abstract, if no feedback is provided, as could be the case with a speaker addressing a large audience during an international conference.

Communicative effectiveness can therefore be used to refer both to a single speaker and an event. In the first instance, it is to be understood as the ability of a single speaker to pursue his/her communicative intentions with the linguistic and extra-linguistic resources at his/her disposal. When referring to a whole event, it is rather the successful coding and de-coding of the participants' communicative intentions on both the production and the receiving end of the communication.

The recipients of the communicative act also play a pivotal role, considering that a speaker can only be effective if s/he is able to anticipate which resources are best placed for the listener to decode his/her intention (the ability "to produce texts comprehensibly and communicatively with the appropriate means" is considered an essential competence for professional interpreters, see Kalina 2000: 18).

Furthermore, shared cultural knowledge between speakers and message recipients is an essential component of any interaction and is fundamental to work out what the speaker

means to say – regardless of the language being used. It greatly contributes to meaning-making, in monolingual as well as in multilingual communication, and therefore cannot be considered a factor intervening only when interaction takes place in ELF. Interpreters themselves rely on speakers' and listeners' shared knowledge to compensate for any omission or correct potential mistakes and generally base their interpretation on assumptions made about the interlocutors' shared and non-shared knowledge (Janzen and Schaffer 2008; Viezzi 1993).

Shared cultural knowledge also contributes to shaping the context in which said interaction takes place:

Context includes the physical setting in which a communication takes place and everything in it; the bodies, eye gaze, gestures, and movements of those present; what has previously been said and done by those involved in the communication; **any shared knowledge those involved have, including shared cultural knowledge.** (Gee 2014: 119) [emphasis added]

A university professor of astrophysics wishing to explain to an audience of school pupils how the solar system works and choosing to use the same terminology or examples that they would use in a university classroom would make a poor judgement in communicative terms and probably fail to convey their communicative intention, despite their proficiency in and knowledge of the subject matter. Similarly, if the same person were to give a lecture to an audience of their peers and deliver a simplified apt-for-pupils version of their speech, they would possibly lose credibility and assertiveness and equally fail to effectively pursue their communicative intentions. This example is a useful reminder that the communicative abilities of one person, both in terms of properly assessing their audience and the right linguistic and extra-linguistic resources needed to pursue their communicative intentions are largely independent of their competence, knowledge or command of the topic they are dealing with. Therefore, when assessing the communicative effectiveness of communication within the EU meetings, it is neither the content of said communication, nor the participants' contributions and professional worth being analysed, but rather whether the communicative solutions being used are effective.

4.4.1 Communicative effectiveness in the IPE

When drafting a questionnaire it is extremely important to avoid ambiguous words or concepts couched in such a way that the respondent does not know how to answer (Bailey 2008: 112). To this end, in the questionnaire's introductory remarks a definition was provided of what was meant by the use of the acronym ELF (see 5.1.3). However, a definition of communicative effectiveness was purposely not included in the questionnaire. In the framework of the present project, interpreters are asked to express opinions they have already formed in their minds on the communicative events they have been participating in throughout the years. No communicational intent can be identified to fit the great variety of meetings interpreters usually participate in. Furthermore, when assigned to meetings, interpreters are never provided with explicit information as to the communicational goal of the organisers, let alone single speakers. Nonetheless they are trained to understand and convey the communicational intent of the speakers they interpret: they can infer the purpose of the meeting from many cues they might get during the event, such as the agenda (where points might be marked for discussion, for voting, for information only), the institutional setting or the status of participants. EU interpreters are active members of the broader EU hypertext (see 3.5) and therefore possess all the information and instruments necessary to identify the nature and objectives of each meeting.

When questioned on communicative effectiveness, interpreters are able to conduct the analysis on two levels: they can express their opinion on the effectiveness of the direct communication between speakers that they witness (both when working and in their rest time) and on the effectiveness of the communication act on themselves as recipients of the speeches being delivered. In the case of multilingual and multicultural communication, the situation and therefore the abilities required of the participants are extremely complex. This is true both of direct communication by means of a lingua franca and of interpreter-mediated communication. In the latter case though, the speaker outsources some of the activities to the interpreters, who are in charge of choosing new linguistic – and to a more limited extent – extra-linguistic resources to be used to reach at least one part of the audience. In order to do that, interpreters are called upon to understand the speaker's

communicative intentions for every utterance they wish to interpret. They are themselves an ‘accidental’ recipient of the original communication act that they therefore decode, before re-encoding it in a different language. Making sure that the communication goals of the original speaker are correctly conveyed to the listener of the interpreted text is the interpreter’s communication goal itself, the intention underlying their own utterances.

4.5 ELF and Gile’s Effort Model

The path leading to communicative effectiveness is paved with obstacles and all interpreters, even the most experienced and talented ones, are under pressure and occasionally struggle because of the very nature of simultaneous interpretation and the multi-tasking that is required of them.

Gile described this struggle by means of an ‘effort model’, which he graphically represented into a loose mathematical notation:

$$\mathbf{SIM = LA + M + P + C \leq A}$$

where SIM stands for simultaneous interpretation, LA for Listening and Analysis of the source speech, M for short term memory, P for production, C for a coordination function (which also requires attentional resources) and A for the ‘available processing capacity’, which, as the formula suggests, needs to be greater or equal to the cumulative effect of all the efforts for simultaneous interpretation to be performed (Gile, 2018, 4-5).

Depending on a series of factors (such as participants’ speaking rate, the possibility the interpreter has to prepare in advance, the familiarity they have with the topic, read-out texts, etc.), each single component of the equation might require varying amounts of cognitive resources. Interpreters, therefore, naturally readjust the resources they devote to each task so as to achieve the best possible result. The equation is therefore to be applied dynamically, as the relative weight of each component varies constantly.

The hypothesis concerning the direct relation between ELF and interpretation is that ELF can be perceived as an additional source of effort by interpreters. It should be explored whether it might be regarded as yet another feature demanding a readjustment of

resources on the part of the interpreter, or whether it constitutes a whole separate category of its own.

From a cognitive point of view, ELF might represent an additional effort for speakers too. The willing decision to address an audience in a language other than one's own MT, be it ELF or any other language, reveals a certain degree of confidence on part of a speaker as to his/her ability to so do. Presumably, the effort, if any, is deemed manageable on part of the speaker – irrespective of the actual consequences on communicative effectiveness.

On the other hand, when a meeting participant is not in the position to choose which language to use, and is left with the sole option of ELF, the effort required to participate in the meeting might rise considerably; it might actually lead to the participant not taking the floor and interacting as much as desired or feeling disenfranchised in comparison to fellow colleagues (see 6.6).

In order to verify this hypothesis, two specific questions have been added to the questionnaire addressing both the interpreters' general perception as to the effort required to interpret speakers using ELF in comparison to speakers using their mother tongue, and on the features of ELF that seem to be most challenging to them (see 5.7; 5.8).

5. INTERPRETERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ELF

*It remains completely unknown to us
what objects may be in themselves
and apart from the receptivity of our senses.*

We know nothing but our manner of perceiving them.

Immanuel Kant

5.1 The interpreters' questionnaire

The 'Interpreters' Perception of ELF' questionnaire (IPE) was drafted with the clear objective of offering a platform to interpreters who wished to express themselves on the topic. 'Perception' is indeed the key word, as the goal is neither to assess the proficiency of a specific set of speakers using ELF, nor to measure objectively the effectiveness of ELF in any given number of occurrences, but rather to gather valuable insight on the informed opinion of a group of professionals dealing daily with a specific linguistic phenomenon (see I.2), namely the opinion of DG SCIC interpreters on the use of ELF in the meetings organised by DG SCIC.

The opinion of interpreters on the use of ELF seems essential, considering that they are in the front line when it comes to any evolution in the language policies adopted by the EU. Interpreters are "first-hand witnesses to actual language use" (Donovan 2009: 62). Furthermore, it is their task and responsibility to make sure that communication between meeting participants runs smoothly, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of ensuring that "the European and national institutions can effectively exercise their right of democratic scrutiny"²⁰⁷ (see 3.1).

The great wave of EU enlargement that began in 2004, for example, implied a considerable effort on part of the translation and interpretation services to expand their

²⁰⁷ Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0596:FIN:EN:PDF> (last accessed May 2019).

offer and guarantee that all new official languages were adequately covered, which meant not only hiring new interpreters for the new booths but also making sure that interpreters in the already existing booths would learn all the new official languages well in advance of the enlargement date itself.

Similarly, the growing use of ELF has an immediate impact on their work, as the languages being spoken at meetings are essentially the raw materials interpreters are given to produce their output. It therefore becomes apparent why interpreters attach so much importance to the quality of the speech they are working from, as it bears immediate consequences for the quality of the speech they themselves are able to deliver.

5.5.1 Designing the questionnaire: self-selection sampling

One of the most important stages in the designing of a survey is sampling, as it bears a significant impact on the quality of the research findings and influences the type of data analysis that can be carried out with the survey's results (see also Kish 1965). The main purpose of sampling techniques is to select units from the population being studied (in this case interpreters working for the European Commission) to be included in the sample. Generally speaking, there are two types of sampling techniques: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. While in probability sampling all units in the population have known and positive probabilities of inclusion, non-probability sampling techniques rely on the judgement of the researcher, who selects units to be included in the sample following different techniques.

For this project, non-probability sampling was applied, more specifically self-selection sampling. This specific technique allow units, that is individual interpreters, to choose to take part in the research on their own accord, in this case by clicking on a link and deciding to participate in the survey online (see 5.1.3). One of the main advantages is that participants are likely to be committed to take part in the study and may display greater willingness to provide insights into the phenomenon being studied (e.g., respondents may be more willing to complete open-ended questions and leaving comments or have particularly strong feelings or opinions about the research). One of the main disadvantages, on the other hand, is that the impossibility to control who participates entails a strong self-selection bias, considering that individuals select themselves for the

survey for different reasons, that may vary from a specific interest in the study to simply wanting to help out the researcher. It is difficult to estimate the impact of any selection bias because information on non-participants is usually not available (especially if full anonymity is granted to survey participants, see 5.1.2), and comparisons between the included and the excluded samples are not feasible. In the case of interpreters working for the Commission, data are not publicly available on the exact composition of the population (e.g., total number of ACIs, number of ACIs per booth, active vs. inactive ACIs, years of professional experience), which would make it impossible to apply a probability sampling technique.

The choice to resort to non-probability sampling also entails that no statistical inferences can be made from the sample being studied:

[...] with non-probability samples, by definition, the inclusion probabilities are unknown or zero, so without further assumptions this very fact formally prevents any statistical inference calculations (e.g. estimates, variances, confidence intervals, hypothesis testing, etc.) (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmet, 2016: 332)

Even though making generalisations applicable to the population under study may be desirable, non-probability sampling can be particularly useful in exploratory research, where the aim is to find out if a problem or issue even exists: do interpreters perceive that ELF use has an impact on communicative effectiveness, participation rights, multilingualism, and their work?

Results of this exploratory study could then be further developed by DG SCIC to conduct a study based on probabilistic sampling techniques to test whether results from the present self-selected sample can be inferred to the entire population (see 7.5) and to identify any correlation between perceptions identified in this study and some variables such as interpreters' A languages, status (ACI vs. official) or professional experience.

5.1.2 Questionnaire: SCIC review process

The questionnaire was first drafted at the beginning of 2018 and then presented to SCIC management for the approval of the relevant services, so as to obtain permission to use internal channels for its distribution and offer a guarantee to all potential participants

wishing to fill it in – including EU officials – that their participation in the exercise was authorised by the SCIC hierarchy.

Originally the questionnaire included a very detailed demographic section (see Figure 13), asking participants a list of questions, such as their A language, whether English is a B or C language (see 3.3) and their status as officials or ACIs (see 3.2). In their feedback, SCIC services explicitly requested the deletion of most of these questions and the modification of others (mostly those related to professional experience), in order to guarantee full protection of data privacy for the subjects involved. They identified a risk in terms of privacy because the practisearcher (see I.5) carrying out the survey has access to the database of all colleagues (which shows all interpreters' A languages and language combinations) and might have been able to cross-reference data and consequently identify respondents.

1. What is your gender?

Male
Female

2. What is your age group?

less than 25
26 – 35
36 – 45
46 – 55
56 – 65 more than 65

3. What is your A language?

.....

4. Are you an ACI or a SCIC staff interpreter?

ACI
SCIC official

5. How long have you been working professionally as an interpreter?

1 – 5 years
6 – 10 years
11 – 15 years
16 – 20 years
21 – 25 years
26 – 30 years
31 – 35 years more than 35 years

6. How long have you been working for the EU?

1 – 5 years
6 – 10 years
11 – 15 years
16 – 20 years
21 – 25 years
26 – 30 years
31 – 35 years more than 35 years

7. Do you work with English as a B or C language?

B language
C language

8. How long have you had English in your combination for the EU?

1 – 5 years
6 – 10 years
11 – 15 years
16 – 20 years
21 – 25 years
26 – 30 years
31 – 35 years more than 35 years

Figure 103 First version of the IPE demographic section

These data were considered relevant for the research for a series of reasons. As far as the respondent's A language is concerned, even though all languages enjoy the same status within the EU, the practical arrangements for meetings and language combinations vary considerably (see 3.3; 3.4). Consequently, interpreters with specific A languages only participate in meetings with a large language regime and have no access to more restricted meetings with a five-only language regime, which tend to provide the same languages (i.e. EN, FR, DE, ES, IT; see 3.4.1) and thus imply a larger use of a lingua franca on the part of all those delegates who have no access to interpretation services. Having the chance to verify whether these interpreters have a different standpoint on ELF could have proved interesting. Furthermore, dividing respondents by their A language would have made it possible to isolate interpreters working in the English booth, thus allowing for the separate processing of their replies. English-A interpreters clearly have a valuable opinion on ELF, but they look at the phenomenon from a completely different point of view, as it is their mother tongue which is being used as a lingua franca. Furthermore, unless they have another A or B language, they are not directly working with it and do not experience interpreting it, but they do face the problem of how to express themselves as their audience is only partially made of native speakers. As a consequence of the deletion request by SCIC and considering that by striking the question it would not have been possible to isolate respondents with English A from the general population, the IPE has only been addressed to interpreters working with English as a B or C language, to guarantee the homogeneity of target population.

Similarly, having a chance to isolate interpreters working with English as a B language would have made it possible to ascertain whether clear differences could be remarked in the perception of interpreters working with English only as a C language or as a B/C. Nevertheless, as B languages do not entail a mother-tongue-like command of the language (see 3.3) and interpreters with a B language mostly work from it also as a C language, respondents with English B have not been excluded from participating in the survey.

As for the question on the respondent's status (ACI vs. official), though once in the booth interpreters do exactly the same job and are therefore substantially equal irrespective of their contractual relationship with their employer (see 3.2), the two groups are different

from a series of standpoints. ACIs are exposed to the interpreting world both within the institutions and outside them, and even though the questionnaire is explicitly referring to the EU context, respondents are not being interviewed on a specific instance or event and their perception is the result of their professional experience as a whole. On the other hand, SCIC officials are fully immersed in the EU context and the decisions taken on language arrangements, regimes and policies in meetings do affect their daily working life to a larger extent than that of ACIs. Furthermore, while ACIs might regard the European Commission as one client among others, officials are directly employed by the Commission, they are members of the same family and might feel a right to be more vocal on the choices that are taken and the policies being implemented. As in previous cases, differentiating between these data, though not essential, would have made it possible to assess the two groups' results separately and analyse whether different trends could be identified.

The questions related to the professional experience of interpreters both in general and within the EU have been kept, even though age gaps have been widened so as to have fewer and broader categories, at the request of SCIC.

Even though the above-mentioned parameters would have been expected to paint a more detailed picture of the interpreters' perspectives, it has been judged that eliminating the requested questions would not compromise the validity of the whole exercise. The only modification deemed necessary was to exclude interpreters working in the English booth from participating in the survey. The DG SCIC's concerns over data privacy were fully considered which, in turn, led to smooth cooperation and consequently the successful outcome of the whole process. Refusing to accede to DG SCIC requests would have prevented officials from participating in the exercise, thus jeopardising the sample representativeness and considerably shrinking the respondents' pool.

5.1.3 Questionnaire structure: final version

The IPE opens with a few introductory remarks. The introduction offers brief information on the PhD project being carried out, namely a definition of ELF as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice” (inspired by Seidlhofer 2011; see 1.2) and the criteria

which any respondent must fulfil in order to proceed (that is working with English as B or C language).

The questionnaire itself contains 11 questions²⁰⁸. The first three questions gather the information needed to draw a profile of the respondents (see 5.2) and the format is that of multiple-choice questions. For the remaining questions, from a methodological point of view, different approaches have been adopted.

More specifically, for three questions (Q4, Q7 and Q10), a *Likert scale* was used. Following Likert's approach, "respondents rank quality from high to low or best to worst using five or seven levels" (Allen & Seaman 2007: 64). Therefore, questions contain a statement and respondents are invited to rate their opinion thereon following a five-level scale that goes from "I strongly agree" to "I strongly disagree". Statements are factual, avoid absolutes (such as 'every', 'always', 'all') and ask for feedback on a very specific aspect.

Questions 5 and 9 ask respondents to complete a statement with alternative endings that are placed on a continuum, as in the case of the agree/disagree scale: in Q5 the options are located on a line which runs between two extremes (considerably increases to considerably decreases), whereas in Q9 there is a three-level scale and a neutral option, should the respondent believe that the factor offered (ELF) to grade actors' participation in the meeting is not a relevant criterion.

Questions 6 and 8 are traditional multiple choices, by virtue of which respondents have to either select a percentage value (Q6) or tick different options (Q8), whereas question 11 is an open-ended optional question.

All questions from 4 to 10 offer a comment box at the end, that respondents can resort to if they wish to make a comment or offer a more detailed opinion to complement their answer.

As for the content, the first three questions of the IPE (see 5.2) gather information on the years of experience as a professional interpreter (Q1), the years of experience specifically as an interpreter for the EU (Q2), and the workload distribution per institution (Q3):

²⁰⁸ Questions are indicated with a capital Q followed by the number; e.g. question 1 is Q1.

Q1. How long have you been working professionally as an interpreter?

- 1 – 10 years
- 11 – 20 years
- 21 – 30 years
- more than 30 years

Q2. How long have you been working for the EU?

- 1 – 10 years
- 11 – 20 years
- 21 – 30 years
- more than 30 years

Q3. For which institution do you work the most? (you can tick more options)

- Council
- Commission
- Parliament
- My workload is evenly spread among all institutions

As for the topics embraced, the remaining questions deal with three different yet intertwined aspects, namely ELF and communicative effectiveness, ELF and interpretation, and ELF and multilingualism and participation rights. These broader topics, though, are neither marked nor divided in different sections in the layout, so as not to influence respondents or give the impression that there is indeed a change of topic, as the idea is to be discussing only ELF.

More specifically, questions 4 to 6 invite respondents to express an opinion on *ELF and ELF speakers in meetings*. Q4 solicits respondents' opinions as to the existence of an increased tendency to resort to ELF in the meetings where they work (see 5.4), Q5 investigates the interpreters' view on the impact of ELF on communicative effectiveness (see 5.5) and Q6 asks interpreters to roughly assess the share of speakers successfully expressing themselves when resorting to ELF (see 5.6):

Q4 There is an increasing tendency to resort to English as a Lingua Franca (by speakers who could speak their mother-tongue) in meetings where an interpretation service is provided. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

Q5. According to your experience, the use of English as a Lingua Franca during meetings:

- Considerably increases the level of communicative effectiveness
- Increases the level of communicative effectiveness
- Neither increases nor decreases the level of communicative effectiveness

- Decreases the level of communicative effectiveness
- Considerably decreases the level of communicative effectiveness

Q6. According to your professional experience, in what percentage do speakers resorting to English as a Lingua Franca succeed at expressing themselves clearly and effectively?

- 100% of speakers
- around 2/3 of speakers
- 50% of speakers
- around 1/3 of speakers
- 0% of speakers

Questions 7 and 8 concentrate specifically on *the interpreters' task*, inquiring whether interpreting from ELF tends to be more demanding than interpreting from a speaker's mother-tongue (Q7; see 5.7) and then inviting respondents to identify the features they struggle with most when interpreting (Q8; see 5.8).

Q7. Interpreting speakers who use English as a Lingua Franca tends to be more demanding than interpreting speakers who use their mother tongue. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the previous statement.

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

Q8. According to your professional experience, what are the features of ELF discourse you mostly struggle with, when interpreting? (you can tick up to 3 options)

- Pronunciation/Intonation
- Lexis and terminology (general and specialised words)
- Syntax (e.g. word order, sentence structure, etc.)
- Phraseology (e.g. collocations, idioms, fixed phrases, etc.)
- Extra-linguistic features (e.g. irony, culture-related aspects, politeness)
- All of the above equally
- None of the above

Questions 9 and 10 deal with the topic of *right of participation and language policies*, asking interpreters whether ELF enables participants to fully participate to meetings (Q9; see 5.9) and whether the use of ELF as it stands represents a threat to the principle of multilingualism (Q10; see 5.10).

Q9. In your professional opinion, the use of ELF:

- Guarantees full and active participation of all actors during the meetings
- Guarantees partial and mostly passive participation of actors during the meetings

- Hinders full and active participation of all actors during the meetings
- Is not relevant when assessing actors' participation during the meetings

Q10. The unregulated use of ELF is a threat to the principle of multilingualism. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the previous statement.

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

Question 11 is an open-ended question, where respondents are offered the chance to add any comment they deem relevant on the topic in their role as professionals dealing with English as a Lingua Franca (see 5.11).

Q11. Any other comments you wish to share on your professional experience with English as a Lingua Franca are highly appreciated. Thank you!

Research conducted so far on the relation between interpreters and ELF already indicates quite unambiguously that interpreters feel threatened by it, mostly due to the detrimental effects it is exerting on the profession (see 1.5.1). The decision was therefore taken to set aside the threat ELF might pose to the survival of the profession of interpreter and shift the focus to work within the booth, in an attempt to explore yet another level of this complex relationship. Therefore, interpreters are never asked directly about the threat ELF might pose for their professional survival, but rather about the role of ELF within the meeting in communicative terms.

5.1.4 Pilot test and questionnaire distribution

As for the administration method, after a comparison of available online tools (e.g. surveyparrot, surveymonkey, smartsurvey, and google forms²⁰⁹), the platform **surveymonkey.com** was selected as it proved extremely respondent-friendly (see Figure 14). Furthermore, it offers a series of customisable features and useful tools for the analysis of results. The IPE was therefore uploaded on the selected platform and a link was created, enabling users to gain access to the survey.

²⁰⁹ Accessible at: <https://surveysparrot.com/>; <https://it.surveymonkey.com/>; <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/>; <https://www.google.it/intl/it/forms/about/> (last accessed May 2019).

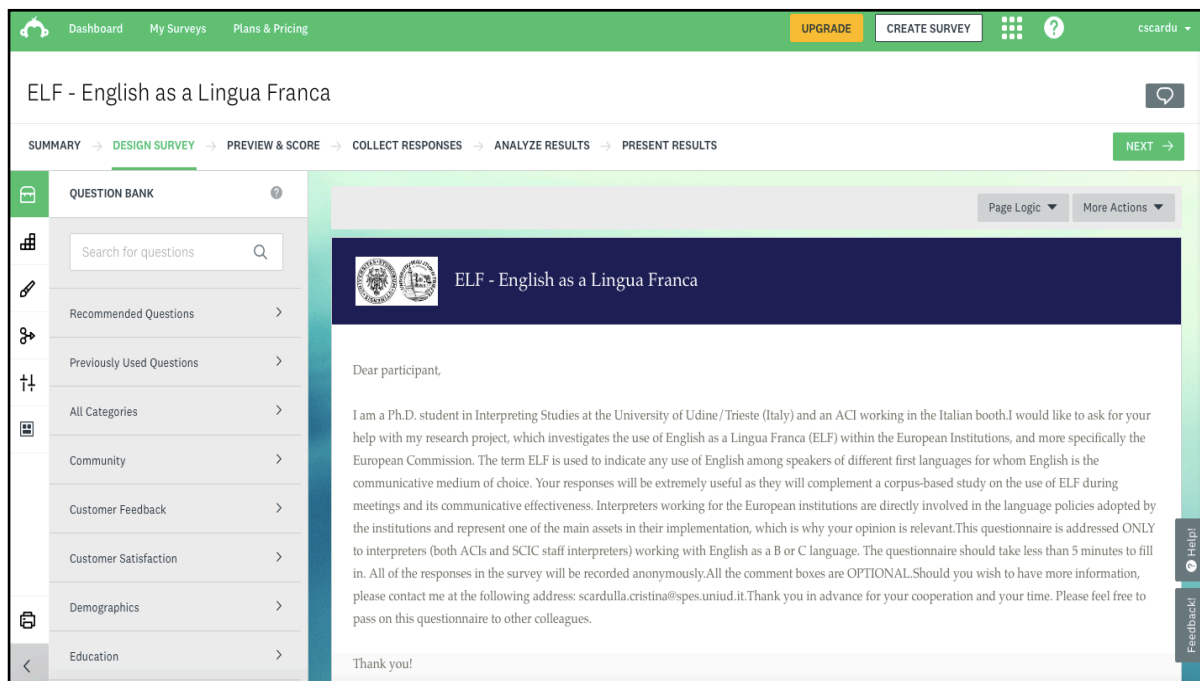


Figure 14 SurveyMonkey platform

A trial test was then performed on a pool of 5 interpreters (both ACIs and officials), before publishing it online, in order to assess the time needed to complete the questionnaire and whether instructions were adequate, questions easy to understand and adjustments of any kind needed. After the pilot run no issues were raised by participants, who declared that they had not encountered any difficulties and felt that the questions were straightforward and understandable. One respondent actually suggested a question be added on the interpreters' A languages as they felt that interpreters from different booths may have diverging opinions on the issue, but this suggestion had to be discarded, as the content of the demographic section was the result of a negotiation with SCIC services (see 5.1.2). Another respondent underlined that in the question related to the workload distribution (Q3), no mention was made of the Committee of the Regions or the Economic and Social Committee meetings, which interpreters working for DG SCIC might be assigned to. Interpreter-mediated meetings do indeed take place in the two institutions, but

their number represents a small fraction of the total of meetings organised by SCIC²¹⁰. As the question only aims at eliciting where the bulk of the respondent's assignment takes place, to make sure that participating interpreters work mostly for SCIC (see 5.2), the question was not modified.

As the questionnaire underwent the pilot phase without any amendment, the link was posted on the forum of the DG SCIC Intranet (SCICnet) by the SCIC administration itself, encouraging interpreters to participate in the survey (see Figure 15).



Figure 15 Post on the Forum Section of SCICnet

The target population is that of interpreters working for the EU, therefore both officials and ACIs. As the present project focuses on ELF within the European Commission, EU officials working for other Institutions, namely the European Parliament and the European

²¹⁰ "With 60% of the total interpretation output in 2016, the Council was again by far our biggest customer. The Commission totalled 29% of the output, the EESC 6%, the CoR 2% and the two rotating Presidencies and other clients also accounted for 2%" (see footnote 145)

Court of Justice, have been excluded from participating, as they are never²¹¹ assigned to meetings organised by DG SCIC.

With the aim of ensuring that the questionnaire would be completed exclusively by interpreters fulfilling the above-mentioned criteria, when circulating the questionnaire through other means (mailing lists, Facebook groups such as the IBPG²¹² – Interpreters in Brussels Practice Group), only the link to the SCICnet forum page was provided, since only accredited and official interpreters have access to the Intranet, which prevented non-EU interpreters from accidentally participating in the survey.

The number of responses peaked after a couple of months and then decreased steadily. The questionnaire was accessible for six months and was advertised by occasional reminders on the forum and word of mouth between colleagues. Despite full collaboration on part of SCIC and an active promotional campaign, the forum section of the intranet page does not allow to pin a specific post or highlight it in any way, which means that posts get pushed to the background when new topics arise. Furthermore, the forum is composed of several sections, ranging from strictly professional topics to social matters and only the five most recent posts appear on the intranet homepage²¹³. Not all SCICnet users might be accustomed to checking the forum section frequently but, on the other hand, those who do check the page quite often are in all likelihood those who work more for DG SCIC and therefore consult the page for professional reasons – to check their assignments or have access to meeting documents. They are fully involved in life at SCIC, in the booth and beyond, which makes them a highly representative group.

Data will be analysed in the present chapter as follows: first the results of Q1, Q2 and Q3, referring to the pool of respondents and accounting for demographic data together with an overview of the total number of comments and their distribution throughout the questionnaire (see 5.2 and 5.3). The analysis of each single question and respective comment section ensues (see 5.4 to 5.11) followed by a language analysis of all comments combined (see 5.12) and some final remarks (see 5.13).

²¹¹ Inter-institutional exchange programmes are foreseen only on a voluntary basis. Institutions also have agreements in place to pool human resources when needed, but they represent something of an exception and do not necessarily involve the whole personnel.

²¹² Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ibpg.be/> (last accessed May 2018)

²¹³ Users can always consult the full forum page, but they actively have to click on the Forum link in order to do so.

5.2 The pool of respondents (Q1, Q2, Q3)

The first part of the questionnaire elicits demographic information to characterise better the respondents participating in the survey and, due to concerns pertaining to the sphere of data protection (see 5.1.2), it is quite lean and general. The number of respondents to the survey is **185**. It is quite arduous to calculate a reliable number corresponding to the population of interpreters working for SCIC, especially for the extremely dynamic and fluctuating nature of the population itself. According to recent SCIC estimates, the DG can rely on the work of 600 full-time and 3,000 freelance interpreters (see 2.4.2.1).

While the number of officials tends to be constant over time and only undergoes minor changes (mostly due to retirements, job rotations and new hires), the data pertaining to freelancers is less straightforward. “Relying on the work of 3,000 freelance interpreters” means that said professionals did pass a test and are accredited, but the number of working days per person may vary greatly. Being accredited does not imply any obligation on the part of the institutions to offer interpreters any contract, as recruitment policies depend on several factors, such as the ACI’s professional domicile, their language combination and the language regimes of the meetings being organised (see 3.2; 3.4). On the other hand, interpreters themselves decide on their availability to the service and might only offer a limited number of days, as they might be active on other private markets or conduct different professional activities alongside that of interpreter. Similarly, they might wish to change their professional domicile over the years or only accept the occasional contract so as not to lose their accreditation status while pursuing other career paths. Furthermore, unlike Parliament, DG SCIC attaches great value to the ‘professional domicile criterion’, and ACIs based in Brussels are awarded the highest score (see 3.2.1), which further limits the pool of interpreters recruited for Brussels-based assignments to Brussels-domiciled ACIs. Therefore, the ‘3,000’ figure is not particularly telling when it comes to defining the population of ACIs daily working in Brussels.

The number of interpreters working per day, instead, is a more fitting reference population. On average, DG SCIC employs in between 700 and 800 interpreters per day (both staff and freelancers). These 700-800 interpreters are not necessarily the same every single day, but this figure best represents the actual active population in Brussels.

Consequently, 185 respondents would correspond to roughly 25% of the active population of interpreters working for SCIC.

Q1 asks respondents about their total working experience as interpreters, not limited to the EU institutions (see Figure 16).

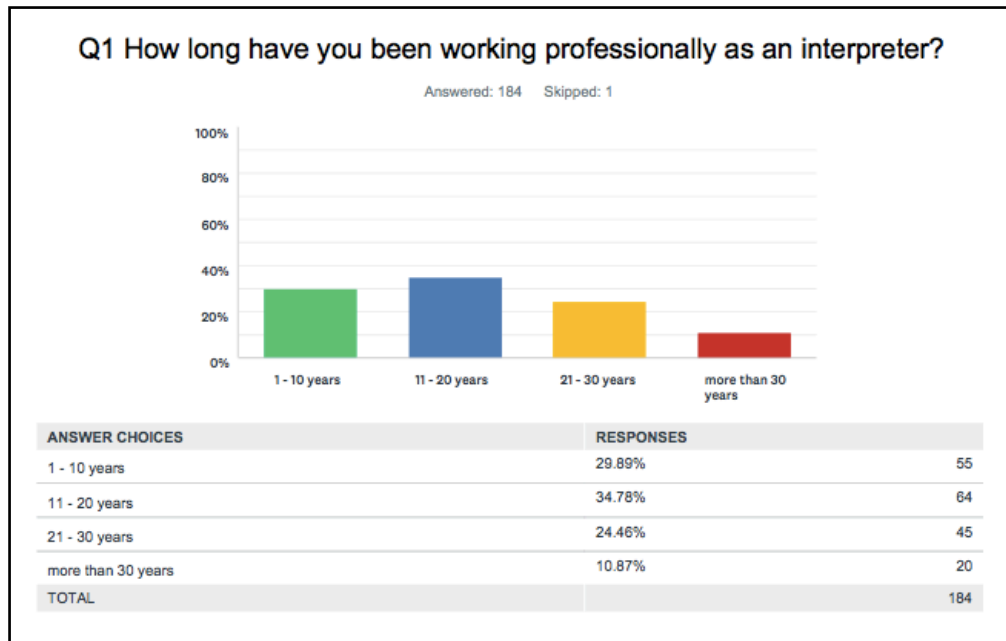


Figure 16 Chart and Table referring to Q1

Respondents are distributed in all different year-groups, with a preponderance of interpreters having worked for up to 20 years. More specifically the first group is that of interpreters with a working experience of 11 to 20 years, closely followed by the category of ‘younger’ interpreters, in the 1 to 10 year-experience group, together making up roughly 65% of respondents. The smallest group is that of interpreters with 30 or more years of experience, with approximately 10% (20 respondents).

Q2 introduces the criterion of ‘years of experience within the EU’ (see Figure 17).

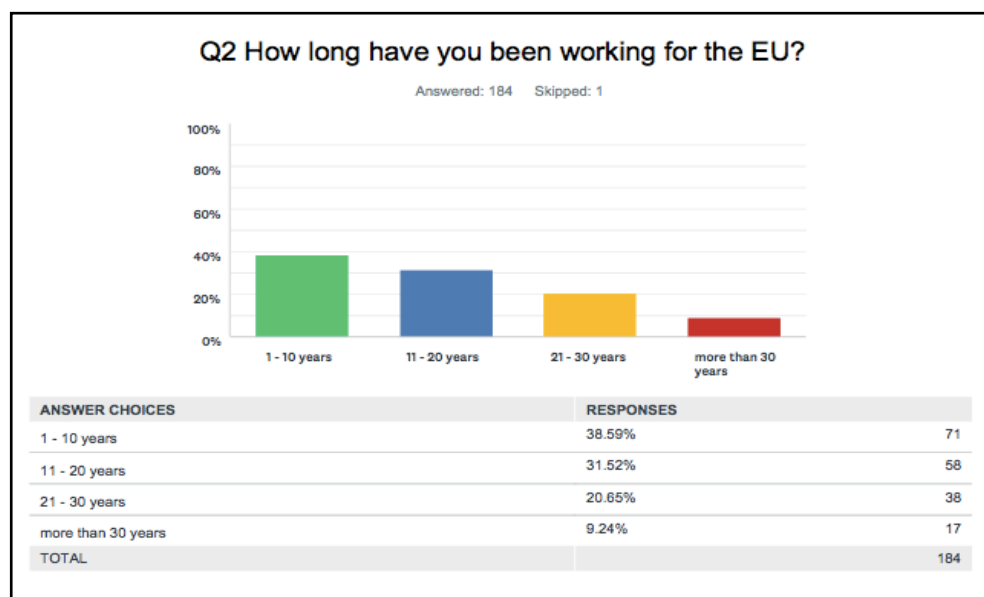


Figure 17 Chart and Table referring to Q2

Results confirm the pattern which emerged in Q1, marking a sharper difference between the two macro-categories, the 1-to-20-year-experience groups corresponding to approximately 70% of the whole population. The difference is not surprising as, presumably, many interpreters had already been working for a while before being accredited or hired by DG SCIC. The main increase is in the 1-10-year group, which grows by 30% and reaches a total of 71 respondents (38.59% of the whole sample), 6 from the 11-to-20-year group, 7 from the 21-to-30 group and 3 from the more-than-30-year group (altogether making up 22% of the group itself). This element shows that the 1-10 year group, which is also the largest one, is not simply made up of less experienced interpreters, but merely of interpreters who have a shorter experience working for the EU.

Replies to questions from four to ten are uniform across all groups, irrespective of the years of experience. The only exception is Q7, where the four groups present slightly different results. As respondents to the IPE constitute a self-selected sample (see 5.1.1), no statistical inference can be made starting from these data, which will be presented when discussing Q7 (see 5.7).

The last question of this first section (**Q3**) deals with the topic of workload distribution, dividing working assignments by Institution (see Figure 18). This question was inserted in the questionnaire in order to have an idea of what kind of meetings respondents had in mind as a reference when answering the subsequent questions. Furthermore, it represents

a further check on the subgroup of ACI respondents in terms of their main recruiter (DG SCIC vs. DG LINC), considering that EP and ECJ officials were excluded from the survey.

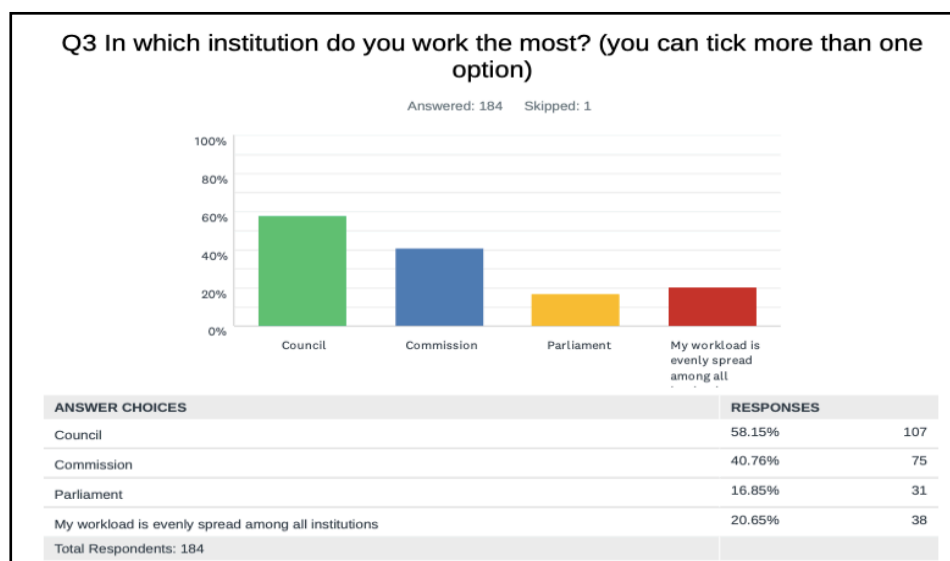


Figure 18 Chart and Table referring to Q3

Respondents could choose among Council, Commission, Parliament or select the option of an even distribution among all Institutions and could also opt to tick more than one box. This last opportunity was offered considering that interpreters working mainly for SCIC might be equally assigned to meetings in the Council or Commission. This is likely, if they have a combination whereby their A and C languages are among the most widely used in meetings (e.g. an interpreter with French as A language and English, German and Spanish as C languages), whereas other interpreters with less common languages might work almost exclusively in the Council (e.g. an interpreter with Maltese as A and English and Italian as C languages). Similarly, an interpreter who is recruited both by DG SCIC and DG LINC might only be working in Council and Parliament meetings, if their combination is not a good match for Commission meetings. The main goal is not to have a precise picture of interpreters' assignments, accounting for all meeting settings within the EU institutions (which is why some minor institutions have not even been mentioned, see 5.1.4), but rather to verify whether respondents are familiar enough with the SCIC situation, as the target group of the IPE is the population of interpreters mostly working for DG SCIC, and the research focus of the study at large is the use of ELF within the Commission.

The distribution of an interpreter's workload by institution is indeed dependent on their language combination, hence it does not come as a surprise that the box which was selected most frequently is that of the Council (107 ticks) – where language regimes tend to be larger and include more booths – closely followed by that of the Commission (75 ticks). Furthermore the Council is DG SCIC's main client, accounting for approximately 60% of the total interpretation output (see footnote 210).

A more thorough breakdown of data shows that the highest combination is that of Council and Commission (43 respondents ticking both). Furthermore, two thirds of the 38 replies in favour of the 'My workload is evenly spread among all institutions' are to be added to the Council and Commission combination, which means 25 more preferences.

Therefore, summing up the number of respondents who selected only the Council (48), those ticking only the Commission (26), those selecting the two boxes for Council and Commission (43) and two thirds of those opting for an equal distribution (25), a total share of 77 % (142) is reached.

Furthermore, out of the 31 preferences for 'Parliament', only 13 respondents have only ticked the Parliament box (corresponding to 7% of the whole sample), whereas the other answers are always a combination of either Parliament and Commission or Parliament and Council, which proves that the sample corresponds to the target set when drafting it.

5.3 The pool of 'commentators' to the questionnaire

As the whole survey aims primarily at eliciting from interpreters their overall perception on the topic of ELF from as many points of view as possible, a comment box has been included after each question (with the exception of the demographic section), so as to give respondents the opportunity to expand on every aspect touched upon throughout the survey. The last question, Q11, further invites respondents to share insights on their professional experience with ELF, offering them a platform to comment on any issue deemed relevant.

The survey has gathered a total of 270 comments (see Table 3) formulated by a total of 98 respondents, with an average of 2.7 comments per commentator²¹⁴. Respondents are not aware, as they compile their questionnaire, whether they will have a chance to express their opinion later on in other comment boxes, which might explain the high number of comments early in the survey, which content-wise are not always strictly related to the specific question (see Q5 and Q7).

Question	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	TOT
No. comments	33	51	25	40	23	25	25	48	270

Table 3. Number of comments per question

The most prolific group in terms of length of experience is the 11-20 year one (corresponding to 37% of the whole pool of commentators), closely followed by the 1-10 years of experiences (33 respondents, equalling 34% of the sample). Only five respondents from the group with a working experience of more than 30 years took the opportunity to leave a message (see Figure 19).

²¹⁴ More specifically, 34 commentators left only one comment, 19 left two comments, 15 left three comments, 14 left four comments, seven left five comments, three left six comments, four left seven comments and two left eight comments each.

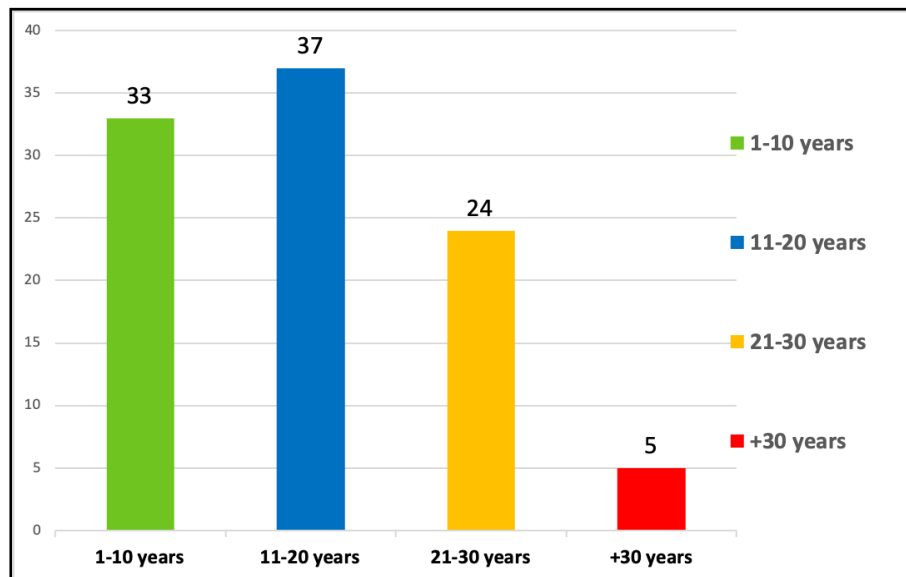


Figure 19 Number of commentators per year-of-experience group

When taking a closer look at each group though (see Figure 20), it is the 21-30 years of experience one that has the highest relative share of commentators, with 63% of respondents leaving at least one comment. The 1-10 years of experience group, which ranked second in terms of absolute numbers of respondents, slides to the third position in relative terms, with 46.5% of members leaving a comment.

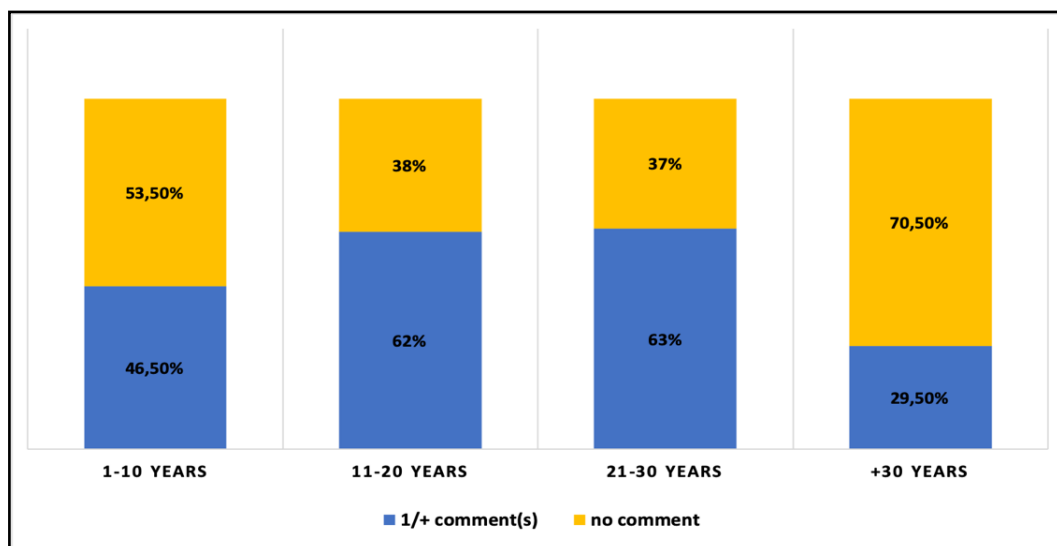


Figure 20 Share of commentators per each year-of-experience group

Comments are presented throughout the text with a code composed of a ‘C’ (for comment), followed by the number of the question it refers to (4 to 11), and a univocal number attributed to the comment following a chronological order, which corresponds to the date of completion of the IPE (e.g. C4.10 refers to the 10th comment left to Q4).

Comments are analysed immediately after the section with the results of each question they refer to (see 5.4.2, 5.5.2, 5.6.2, 5.7.2, 5.8.2, 5.9.2, 5.10.2, 5.11.2). A graph is presented for each comment group, either dividing comments based on the replies given by the author to the question they refer to²¹⁵ or dividing the comments by their content into topic categories²¹⁶. Comments are then analysed based on their content, and examples are given for each identified category, be it of respondents or topic.

Comments have also been analysed linguistically, taking them all together as if it were one single text, to sketch how interpreters speak of ELF (see 5.12)

5.4 Q4: Trends in ELF use

Q4 There is an increasing tendency to resort to English as a Lingua Franca (by speakers who could speak their mother-tongue) in meetings where an interpretation service is provided. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

Q4 introduces in the questionnaire the topic of ELF, asking respondents whether they agree that there is an increasing tendency to resort to it by speakers who could speak their mother tongue, depending on the meeting's regime. The context is clearly defined and only limited to the meetings that interpreters actually attend and to the cases in which speakers opt out of their right to speak their MT.

²¹⁵ That is the case for comments related to Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q9, Q10.

²¹⁶ That is the case for Q8, as respondents could tick more than one answer, and for Q11, which is an open question.

5.4.1 Q4: results

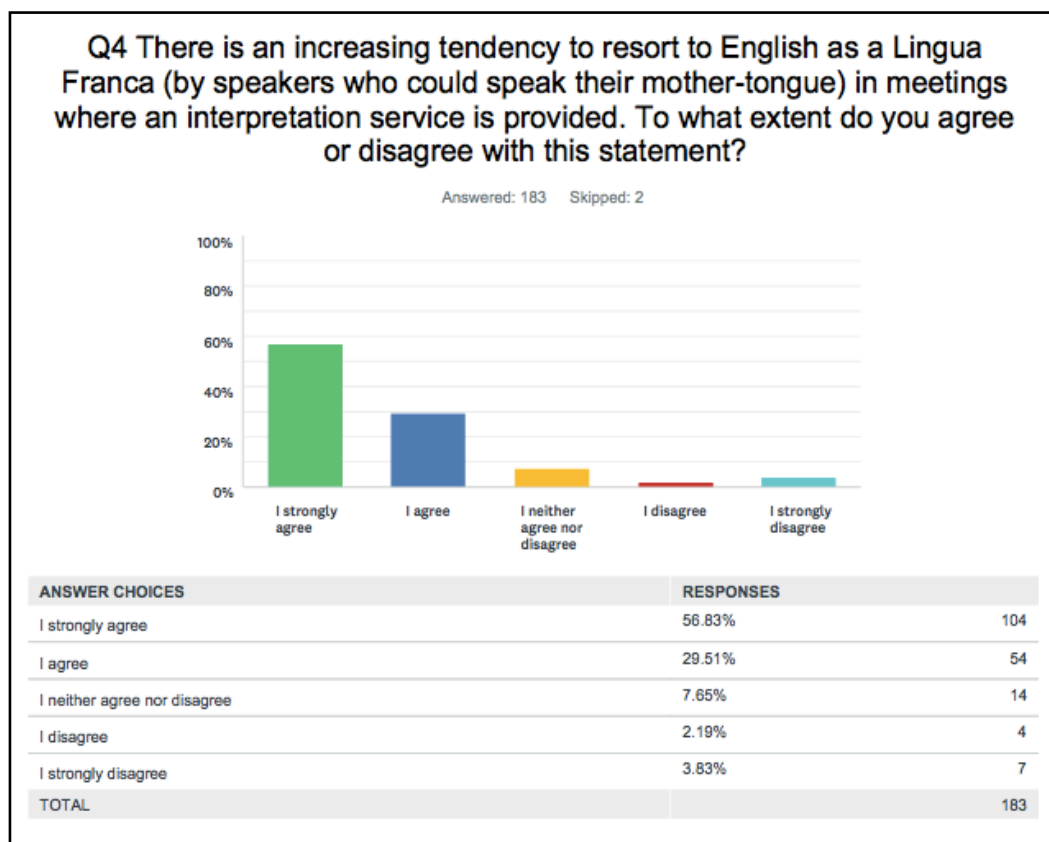


Figure 21 Graph and Table referring to Q4

The answers were offered following the Likert scale (see 5.1.3): respondents were simply asked to specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale (in this case ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Thus, the results capture the intensity of the interpreters' feelings or rather, in this case, their perception of the phenomenon being described in the original statement.

According to the data gathered, 57% of respondents (104 interpreters) strongly agree with the above statement and 30% (54 interpreters) agree (a total number of 158 interpreters, corresponding to 86% of the whole sample). Almost 8% (14 interpreters) chose the neutral option, whereas 2% (four interpreters) and 4% (seven interpreters) respectively disagree and strongly disagree (see Figure 21).

Questions following a Likert format might present the risk of an acquiescence bias (“tendency to answer in the affirmative to appear more agreeable”²¹⁷) However, such bias

²¹⁷ Available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/resources/guide-to-using-screening-questions/> (last accessed May 2019)

is more likely for topics related to social desirability or which are somewhat politically or culturally sensitive. The topic of ELF is indeed sensitive and the degree of the expressed agreement/disagreement is relevant. In this case though, as open comments to the question reveal (see 5.4.2), agreeing with the statement does not automatically imply agreeing with the tendency. The increasing tendency to resort to ELF often evokes a feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration. Additionally, the option “strongly agree” expresses a firm belief rather than a mere confirmation, and is therefore an indication of the level of respondents’ conviction, rather than an attempt to project an image of likeability.

Interpreters’ perceptions on this tendency, though, cannot be compared to objective data, as no figures on real language use in meetings are publicly available. Interpreters’ team leaders (see 3.5) compile a report at the end of each meeting and are requested to signal passive and active languages actually used (based on the regime) and dominant languages (as well as the Chair’s language), but these data are then used internally and no official statistics on the topic are published for consultation.

There are many reasons which might explain this increasing tendency in ELF use (see 2.5), provided the clear stance taken by respondents on this topic holds true, and some of the respondents offer their personal explanation in the comment section following Q4.

5.4.2 Q4: comments

A total number of 33 comments have been collected in this section (see Figure 22). Commentators are divided according to their answers to Q4: the most vocal group is that of respondents strongly agreeing (13 comments), followed by that of respondents agreeing (8 comments), which is not surprising considering that these two groups are the largest. There are then seven comments by “I neither agree nor disagree” respondents and two by both disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respondents. One comment was left by a respondent choosing to skip the question.

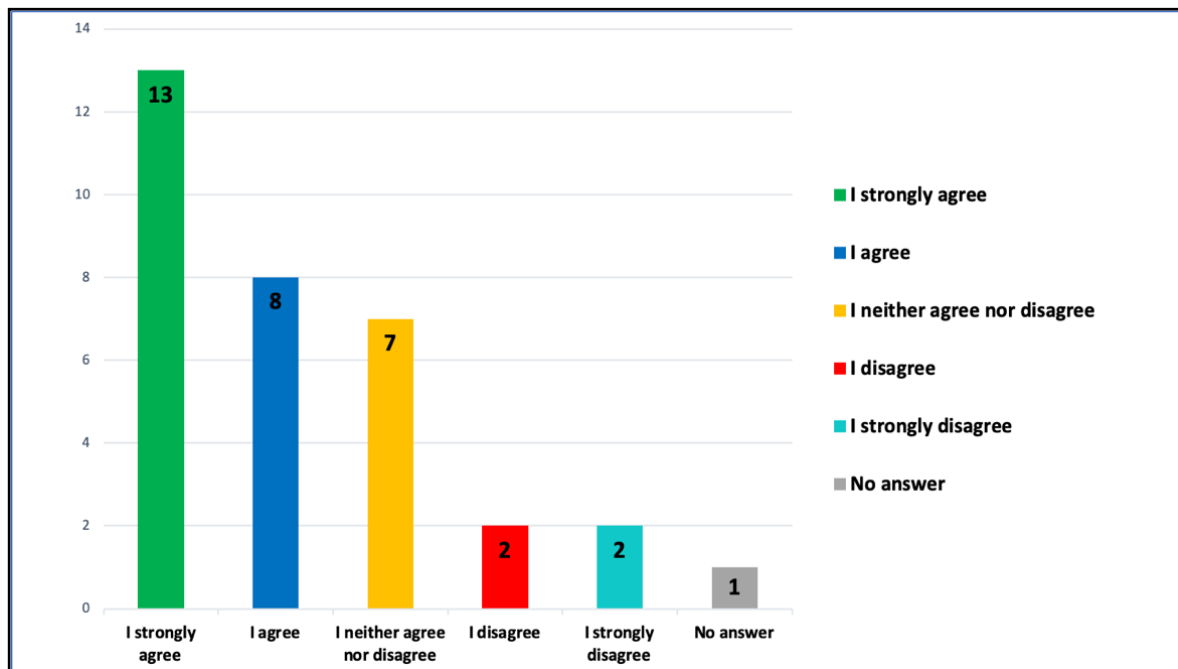


Figure 22 Commentators' distribution based on Q4 available answers

Comments touch upon different aspects, irrespective of commentators' answers to Q4, which is why they have been analysed by identifying four main categories:

- 1) the emotional response of interpreters to this trend;
- 2) the quality of ELF;
- 3) the role of Commission officials;
- 4) the inequalities this trend entails.

Examples are provided for each group.

⇒ *The emotional response of interpreters to this trend*

As to the first group, 'unfortunately' corresponds to the full text of three different comments, pertaining to respondents who have all ticked the 'I strongly agree' box (C4.2, C4.5, C4.27). Interpreters clearly want to specify that they do not have a neutral stance towards this increasing trend, they do feel it is unfortunate and wish to convey this emotion, which, in turn, further confirms that the risk of acquiescence bias is quite remote in this case (see 5.4.1).

The same level of dissatisfaction transpires from other comments, though it is not always as clearly stated:

- Many delegates seem no (sic) to even consider speaking their mother tongue even though they do start meetings by saying ‘hello to everyone including the interpreters’. [C4.15]
- [...] a peak might have been reached (at least that is what I hope) and some people, when the occasion is given to them, tend to come back to a language they are more comfortable with [...]. [C4.29].

These comments show that interpreters are clearly frustrated by the state of affairs and hope that this trend might reverse.

⇒ *The quality of ELF*

A further relevant source of frustration, in addition to the increasing volume of ELF being spoken during meetings, is its quality. Most of the comments revolve around the level of English – a thread that emerges in all comments throughout the questionnaire:

- No doubt, most of these speakers should be made aware that their English is not at all as good as they might think!!!. [C4.4]
- Their English is mostly poor. [C4.7]
- Speakers are not able to express themselves correctly and do not say what they mean to say and they do not even notice it. [C4.9]
- ...if you are so generous as to call it ‘English’.... [C4.21]
- They speak a horrible variant of English. [C4.30]

These are just a few examples of the harsh criticism and not so subtle dissatisfaction expressed by some respondents. Interpreters are not hostile to ELF *per se*, but rather to the poor quality it often entails. In C4.4, the interpreter actually expects someone to address what is described as a perception problem on part of these speakers – a proactive stance in addition to an open criticism.

⇒ *The role of Commission officials*

The role the Commission plays is explicitly mentioned by some respondents, who quite factually underline that Commission representatives tend to speak ELF more often than others:

- In the meetings I work in delegates (not Commission representatives) who can speak their language do speak it [...]. [C4.1]
- This is especially true among EC²¹⁸ officials and delegates from Northern Europe. [C4.25]
- Particularly by Commission officials.... [C4.26]

The speaker's status within the meeting should not be relevant to an interpreter. The question actually focuses on the possibility a speaker has to resort to their mother tongue, irrespective of their role within the meeting. Still it is not surprising that interpreters wish to stress this sub-trend, involving a specific category of speakers. Interpreters working for the EU are Commission staff (and contracted ACIs enjoy a similar status when working), which entails a peer-to-peer relation to other Commission officials. The various DGs that organise meetings are aware of the interpretation service, they actively request it when organising their meetings and yet they seem to be prone not to resort to it. These meetings do not take place in a vacuum, nor in a private market where actors involved and working conditions may vary considerably for every event. They are part of a wider mechanism and value system, built upon the principle of multilingualism, which in turn is enshrined in international Treaties which the European Commission is the guardian of. The choices of Commission officials during meetings in terms of language use therefore take on an additional value which goes beyond the practical language arrangements of the meeting itself: they might undervalue interpretation and multilingualism itself.

Considering that this is a sensitive topic, it is not surprising that some respondents take it a step further either by overtly criticising this behaviour (C4.9), or venturing a possible explanation for it (C4.14):

- The pronunciation of CION²¹⁹ representatives gets increasingly difficult to understand and interpreting tends to become a deciphering exercise. It sheds negative light on the CION. [C4.9]

²¹⁸ EC stands for European Commission.

²¹⁹ CION is an abbreviation for Commission

- Most official [sic] of the Commission speak English regardless of the availability of interpretation. The Commission may have an informal policy requiring their representative [sic] to speak English – perhaps this is perceived as ‘neutral’. [C4.14]

This last adjective, ‘neutral’ introduces a further dimension, as neutrality would imply a level playing field for all those involved, and not all interpreters are convinced that this is the outcome of the adoption of this approach.

⇒ *The inequalities this trend entails*

There seems to be, based on the interpreters’ comments, a distinction made among languages:

- I have the impression that the tendency is more widespread among speakers of the ‘small’ languages, who might not be used to being allowed to speak their own language, or whose language is only forseen [sic] as a passive language in the language regime, not so much the "big four" (FR, DE, IT, ES), but even there, it exists. [C4.19]
- This applies to native speakers of all languages, including important languages such as French, German and Spanish, but mostly to less common ones. [C4.33]

Terms such as ‘important languages’, ‘small languages’, ‘the big four’ reveal a hierarchy of languages and an expression like ‘being allowed to speak’ further hints at a system based on privileges rather than equal rights.

The last comment presented in this section is quite anecdotal and sheds light on an important dimension in the whole debate: some people might be struggling because of the language policies and decisions that are taken, or due to the language regime for one specific meeting:

- Sometimes when the delegate's language is not available active, they may resort to EN out of convenience [...] This happens for a number of reasons I guess, but it could also be that at CCAB²²⁰ meetings for example where the delegates mostly come from the capitals etc. they are not REALLY aware that they can speak their language as they don't see a booth/channel on display with

²²⁰ CCAB stands for Centre de Conference Albert Borschette, one of the Commission’s meeting venues.

their language. And even if the Chair reads out the languages, they may not be paying attention or understand the difference active/passive. So I presume in some cases it is even misinformation or incomplete information. It has even happened to me that they did not even know we were there working into their mother tongue and they were relieved when we contacted them during a break to find out if they were listening. They had been listening to EN all the time and struggling.... [C4.17]

Those delegates' language needs had been taken into account as they had been offered the interpretation service. Nevertheless, is it always guaranteed that no one is 'struggling' because they are not 'allowed to speak their own language' in an institution that actively promotes and protects multilingualism?

5.5 Q5: The (side) effects of ELF on communicative effectiveness

Q5. According to your experience, the use of English as a Lingua Franca during meetings:

- Considerably increases the level of communicative effectiveness
- Increases the level of communicative effectiveness
- Neither increases nor decreases the level of communicative effectiveness
- Decreases the level of communicative effectiveness
- Considerably decreases the level of communicative effectiveness

Communicative effectiveness (see 4.4) is basically the only variable respondents are asked to assess in Q5. In order to exclude any kind of bias on such an important topic when drafting the questionnaire, any statement leaning towards a possible value judgment has been avoided, such as "ELF decreases the level of communicative effectiveness. To what extent do you agree/disagree with this statement." Respondents are left alone in deciding for themselves where they stand in a continuum ranging from 'it considerably increases communicative effectiveness' to 'it considerably decreases communicative effectiveness'.

5.5.1 Q5: results

Interpreters are not called upon to express an opinion either on English being a lingua franca or on its effectiveness when used in any given context within the European Commission. The specific situation they are considering is that of meetings in which they

participate, which is a very specific and well-defined communicative event. These meetings are organised with varying arrangements which provide an interpretation service with a specific language regime including and excluding certain languages rather than others (see 3.4).

The successful result of the event – whatever the specific purpose and goals pursued – heavily relies upon speakers’ communicative effectiveness.

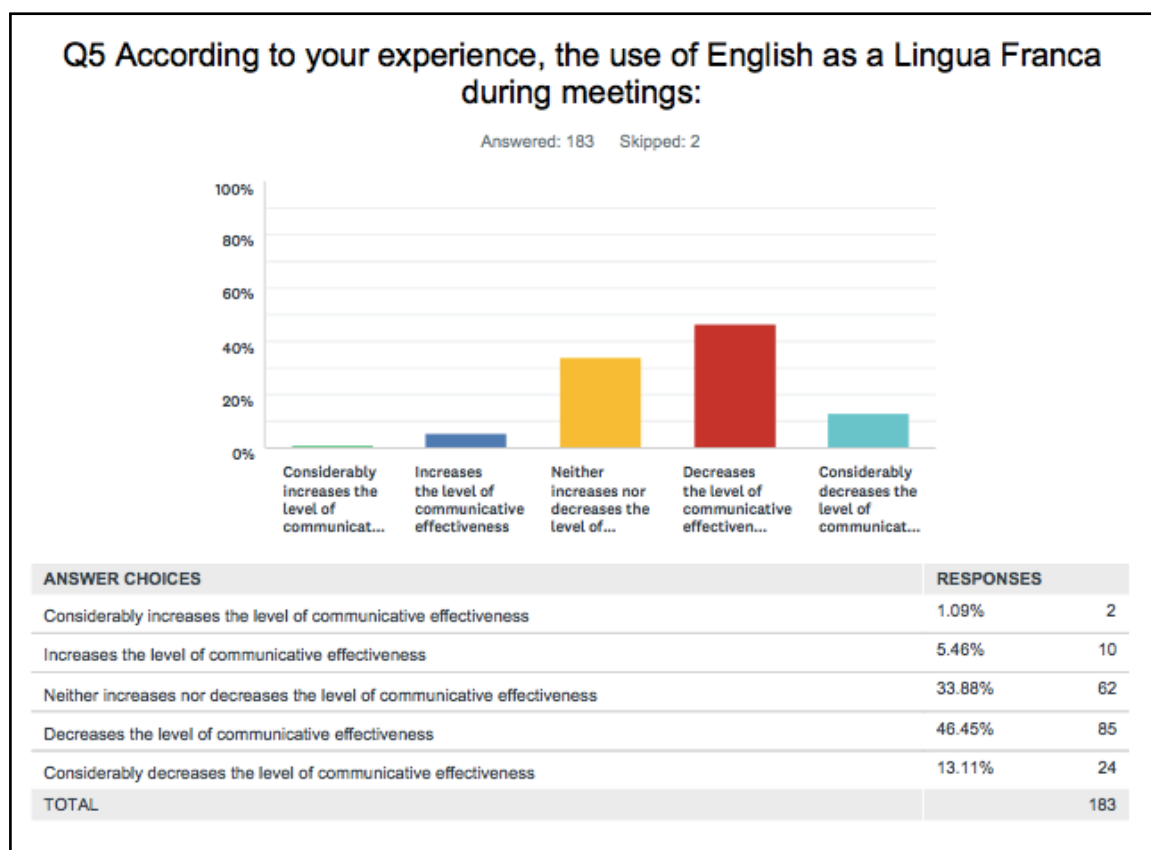


Figure 23 Graph and Table referring to Q5

As shown in Figure 23, there is a clear tendency for respondents to opt for the ‘decreasing’ side of the spectrum. 46% of interpreters (85 respondents) believe the use of ELF in meetings decreases the level of communicative effectiveness and 13% of them (24 respondents) that it considerably decreases it, making up 60% of the whole sample.

The remaining 40% are not equally distributed in the other categories, but rather concentrate in the ‘neutral’ position, as 34% of the interpreters ticked the ‘it neither increases nor decreases the level of communicative effectiveness’, meaning that only

roughly 6% opt for the ‘increasing’ side of the spectrum (5% say ELF increases the communicative effectiveness and 1% that it considerably increases it).

This picture does not seem to leave room for much doubt on the interpreters’ stance on the topic: while there is no unanimity on the use of ELF being detrimental in meetings, a clear majority points that way and only a very thin percentage seems ready to claim it is an effective solution. Once again, interpreters seem to feel strongly on the topic, considering the number of comments to this question left by respondents.

5.5.2 Q5: comments

Q5 is the question that inspired the highest number of comments (51). Even though most comments are pertinent and to the point and serve the objective of explaining one’s answer, they often tend to add elements that are not strictly connected to the question, and some are particularly broad and touch upon more general ELF-related topics.

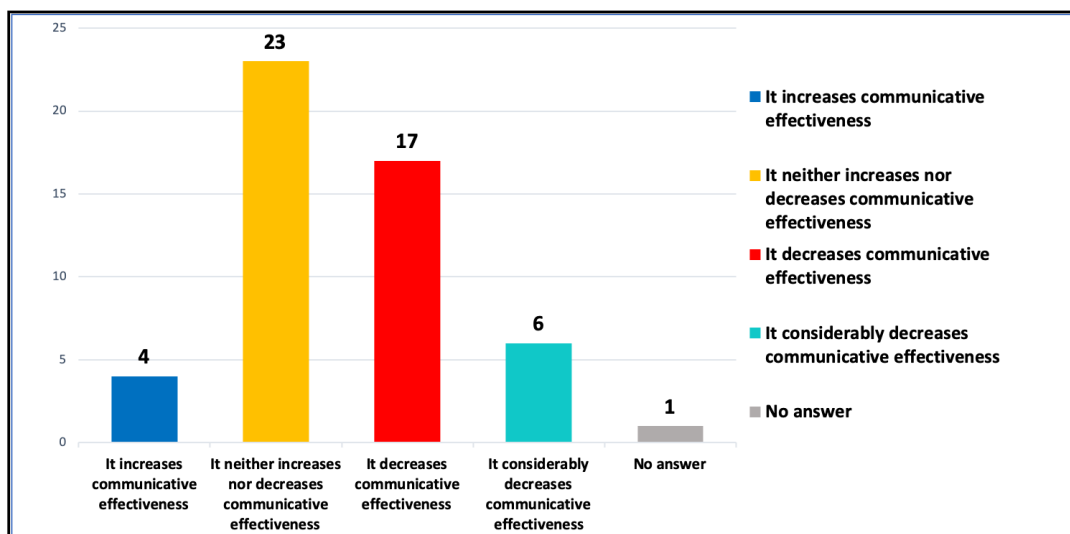


Figure 24 Commentators’ distribution based on Q5 available answers

In absolute terms the largest number of comments pertains to the group of respondents ticking the ‘it neither increases nor decreases communicative effectiveness’ (23 comments), closely followed by the ‘it decreases communicative effectiveness’ one (17 comments). Yet the most vocal category of the group is that of the ‘it increases the level of communicative effectiveness’.

⇒ *It increases the level of communicative effectiveness*

There are actually only four comments in this category, but they correspond to 40% of the respondents ticking this box (10). In the comments it is acknowledged that communication seems to be working. The interesting aspect is that interpreters in these comments do not sound like enthusiastic and convinced supporters of this way of managing meeting, but rather like reluctant witness of this state of affairs:

- For some reason, people with bad English have a miraculous way of understanding each other. [...]. [C5.9]
- [...] it seems that the use of English facilitates [sic] communication between the delegates. [C5.11]
- Although the level of English in these cases is usually mediocre, communication is established at a surprising level. [C5.21]
- If the delegates don't complain about it, then their communication goals seem to be achieved. The ELF spoken by a non-native delegate might seem awful to me as a language specialist, but I feel that's irrelevant in the room as long as the people talking get their message across [sic]. Sometimes the message doesn't even matter, just the act of saying it, with the actual content being followed up on bilaterally or by assistants. [C5.47]

This last comment depicts a particularly gloomy scenario in which delegates say something, no one complains, therefore the message has somehow come across, and even if it has not, follow-up contacts will ensue. If this were the case, one might wonder why organise a multilateral meeting in the first place, if not for merely formalistic reasons.

⇒ *It neither increases nor decreases the level of communicative effectiveness*

The second category, in relative terms, is that of interpreters ticking the 'neutral' box 'the use of ELF neither increases nor decreases the level of communicative effectiveness', with 23 comments, corresponding to 37% of the 62 respondents.

These comments reveal the need on the part of respondents to explain why they have not taken a less diplomatic stance and, in most cases, they show that the neutral option does not correspond to ELF having no impact in terms of communicative effectiveness,

but rather to the interpreters experiencing a great variety of occurrences and situations, which makes it impossible for some of them to clearly tick either one of the ‘increasing’ or ‘decreasing’ alternatives. In the majority of these contributions (16 out of 23), respondents basically argue that ‘it depends’ and it can go both ways:

- Depending very much on the level of the speakers, it may severely hamper communication, or indeed make the meeting run quite smoothly. [C5.5]
- Sometimes it makes the conversation more direct. Sometimes it makes the conversation complicated and not very effective. [C5.15]
- For some speakers/subjects, not using the mother tongue is not detrimental to [sic] the message. But in some cases it is very detrimental to communication and effectiveness. [C5.31]

For some respondents, the specific situation and the language skills of participants are decisive, and provided everyone is a proficient English speaker, communication might work. However, the result is not automatically optimal:

- If there is at least one participant who’s a poor speaker or whose understanding of English is not up to scratch, using ELF can be a hindrance and decrease the level of communicative effectiveness. [C5.50].
- I would call it a zero-sum game: some people can express themselves quite well in English (thus increasing the level of communicative effectiveness), but others are sometimes incomprehensible in English (poor formulation, heavy accent, thus decreasing the level of communicative effectiveness). [C5.22]

The ‘zero-sum game’ is an interesting expression: it justifies why an interpreter might not feel inclined to tick any other box, if they believe that the positive and negative occurrences even out. Leaving aside for a moment the interpreters’ stance and focusing on the content of their narration, it emerges that some events – or parts thereof – are indeed effective, whereas others seem to fall short of the basic ‘message transfer’ goal. This might obviously be the case for many events and due to factors other than the use of ELF, but in the specific case of speakers having to resort to ELF merely for want of an alternative (i.e. because of the language regime for the day), there might be a chance of redressing a somewhat predictable source of communication mishap.

One of the comments in this group, rather than just observing that depending on the situation the outcome might go either way, warns against the risks arising when communicative effectiveness gets lost:

- [...] It [communicative effectiveness] often decreases, but the speakers don't realize. They don't realize that when they don't know how to say, well they just don't say it! Regardless of the importance of the message [...]. [C5.1].

As was the case for C5.47, communication is limited to the message getting across, yet this time the interpreter sounds concerned that participants might not fully comprehend the risk of content loss which derives from poor communication.

⇒ *It (considerably) decreases the level of communicative effectiveness*

The last big share of comments (23) includes both those formulated by interpreters ticking the 'it decreases effectiveness' box (17) and the 'it considerably decreases effectiveness' one (6). One of the most recurring themes in this group is the quality of English as, to use the words of one of the respondents,

- Bad language, bad communication. [C5.45].

ELF itself and ELF speakers become the target of harsh criticism on the part of some interpreters:

- There is no general rule. A lot depends on the level on [sic] English of the speaker. Some foreign speakers are perfectly fluent in EN and most welcome to speak. Others have very poor EN and should avoid using it as working language. [C5.17]
- Many delegates and speakers overestimate their ability to speak English. [C5.30]
- Speakers use English applying the rules and structure of their mother tongue. In other words, they continue speaking their mother tongue but with English words. [C5.40]
- That is [it considerably decreases communicative effectiveness] because it sometimes is almost impossible to understand ELF (pronunciation, bad grammar, false friends). [C5.48]

Furthermore, the command of ELF, or lack thereof, is not simply mentioned by interpreters as a nuisance to them, but rather as a problem affecting first and foremost participants in the event:

- Delegates whose command of the English is average (95% of delegates) can't follow nor participate to meetings to the full. They often refrain from taking the floor, either because they don't get the subtleties or because of the fear of ridicule. [C5.4].

There might be other reasons for not taking the floor, but certainly the risk is tangible. Furthermore, this aspect is not mentioned in relation to its direct effect on the professional but rather as a threat to the participation rights of the delegates. The respondent making C5.4 pertains to the 21-to-30-year experience category, so the comment should at least be classified as an educated guess. Furthermore, it is not one of a kind. Another respondent too focuses on how speakers are sometimes harmed by using ELF to express themselves:

- [...] many speakers who choose English instead of their mother tongue come across as less competent/self-assured than native speakers who can effortlessly express themselves in their language. [C5.10].

Once again, this concern has nothing to do with the interpreter's work or demands, but is rather an observation that has the speaker's needs at its core.

There are other respondents who put aside what the use of ELF implies for them and their job and act as experts reporting on the linguistic phenomena they witness from the booth:

- [ELF decreases the communicative effectiveness] because speakers are not always able to convey their message as clearly in English as they would in their mother tongue. [C5.38]
- Many of the non-native speakers cannot speak English fluently or spontaneously and have to rely on speaking notes that are often quite cumbersome. [C5.27]

Some of the comments shed light on yet another element, which substantially depends on where the bar of communication effectiveness is placed: communication is not always

just about getting the message across (see 7.3). There are different levels that come into play when people are communicating, and the transfer of the sheer informative content might not be sufficient to speak of a successful communication – or at least not always:

- The fact that this lingua franca is used considerably diminishes the choice of precise words as everybody dilutes the language usage. [C5.6]
- Interventions tend to be less brilliant or detailed. [C5.8]
- Most nuances or personal traits of how a person talks, how they phrase their sentences or convey their humour is mainly lost. [C5.10]
- It tends to become too general and too vague. [C5.23]

These respondents are substantially arguing that ELF might be causing an impoverishment of the language being spoken, which in turn determines a flattening and a dilution of the content of the messages, which is an underlying leitmotiv of several comments. Speakers' communicative skills, personal traits, humour, all get lost.

One of the interpreters actually takes the time to offer a quite detailed analysis of this phenomenon and its consequences on a broader scale:

- The fact that so many different varieties of English are spoken is a problem beyond the difficult task of understanding so many different accents. Delegates often stick to the social codes and thought processes from their native cultures and merely express them with English words, which often makes little sense and can lead to misunderstandings (e.g. something that is polite in one culture can come across as rude in another). However, so-called 'Eurish' has emerged and I think it reflects the functioning of the Brussels EU bubble, which could even be considered to be a specific culture; so the cultural and linguistic differences can be overcome because the delegates share a common knowledge of the EU procedures and habits. However, I do think this 'harmonisation' of sorts does not mean we're all living in harmony with each other but rather that the differences are 'muted', so to speak, so diversity is eroding while cultural barriers are only partly overcome. [C5.36]

Substantially, multilingualism policies are there for a reason, cultural and linguistic diversity are a value and a heritage to be safeguarded, because differences define the European Union as much as similarities do. Renouncing this richness and linguistic variety when decisions shaping the EU are taken comes at a price, as interpreters seem to be confirming.

The role of the Commission is not forgotten in this comment section. One of the interpreters adds a new layer to the ones just outlined so far (speakers' difficulties to express themselves, their authoritativeness being compromised, the risk of misunderstandings), namely the difference that exists between those who have to speak ELF and those who are 'guilty' of choosing to resort to it when their command of the language is not adequate and, most importantly, when they are not forced to by circumstances. Commission officials are the usual suspects:

- A poor speaker is a poor speaker even in their own mother tongue, but it is a waste to have a good speaker who must, for whatever reason, wear the straitjacket of poor English that limits their expressive options, takes away from the weight of their arguments, can cause misunderstandings to the direct listeners of EN, but also create a multiplying effect of possible misunderstanding via the booths that have to resort to guessing in order to turn their incomprehensible EN into something at least plausible in the context of the discussion. Specifically when it is COM people with FR or DE mother tongue, which they could use even by the book, and yet they stick to English, making a fool of themselves and making our lives miserable, then this is not a waste, but a downright shame. [C5.28].

In this comment, the feeling of frustration returns quite violently, but the role of the interpreter is not the only factor taken into consideration. The 'good speaker' being deprived of their language skills seems to be just as upsetting to the respondent as the risk of misunderstandings as a whole. The interpreter clearly feels all the weight of their powerlessness before an incomprehensible English – which can only be a source of painful guessing – and the inexplicable choice of speakers, who could act differently, to stick to ELF. Having the chance to speak one's own mother tongue is fundamentally a privilege rather than a right – as not everyone enjoys it – and yet some people are turning it down, which is shameful to this interpreter. Quite surprisingly, though, this is one of the very few comments in the section to clearly mention the interpreter's role in the equation.

Another respondent spells out the effects of ELF use and the consequent decrease in communicative effectiveness (which is the option selected by the author of the comment) on interpreters:

- It forces us interpreters to first try to understand what the speaker is saying and next to figure out what he/she means. [C5.3]

In this case communicative effectiveness seems to have been assessed only considering the interpreters themselves as recipients of the ELF speeches, but this is quite unusual in this sample of comments. The only other comment that mentions interpreters is not purely interpreter-based, but rather tries to draw a comparison between ELF and interpretation:

- “Non native speakers don't express themselves very clearly and eloquently. Interpreters are professional communicators. Their output is generally accurate and easy to follow for the listener. Misunderstandings between meeting participants are always a risk, but they can be as much a result of interpreting mistakes as of poor use of English by delegates. The benefits of interpretation (richer and more accurate use of language) outweigh those of direct communication between people who don't speak English very well.” [C5.37]

Interpretation wins the comparison with flying colours, yet when considering all pros and cons, it is the final users' needs rather than those of the professional that are taken into account.

5.6 Q6: ELF speakers through the interpreters' lens

Q6. According to your professional experience, in what percentage do speakers resorting to English as a Lingua Franca succeed at expressing themselves clearly and effectively?

- 100% of speakers
- around 2/3 of speakers
- 50% of speakers
- around 1/3 of speakers
- 0% of speakers

Q6 digs deeper on the topic of communicative effectiveness, shifting the focus expressly to ELF speakers. Results from Q5 (see 5.5) show that according to a large share of respondents communicative effectiveness greatly relies on the speaker's ability to express themselves.

5.6.1 Q6: results

Interpreters are explicitly asked to assess roughly the percentage of ELF speakers that, in their opinion and based on their experience, succeed in using ELF, therefore ‘expressing themselves clearly and effectively’, choosing between 5 percentage groups (almost 100%, around 75%, around 50%, around 25%, almost 0%) (see Figure 25).

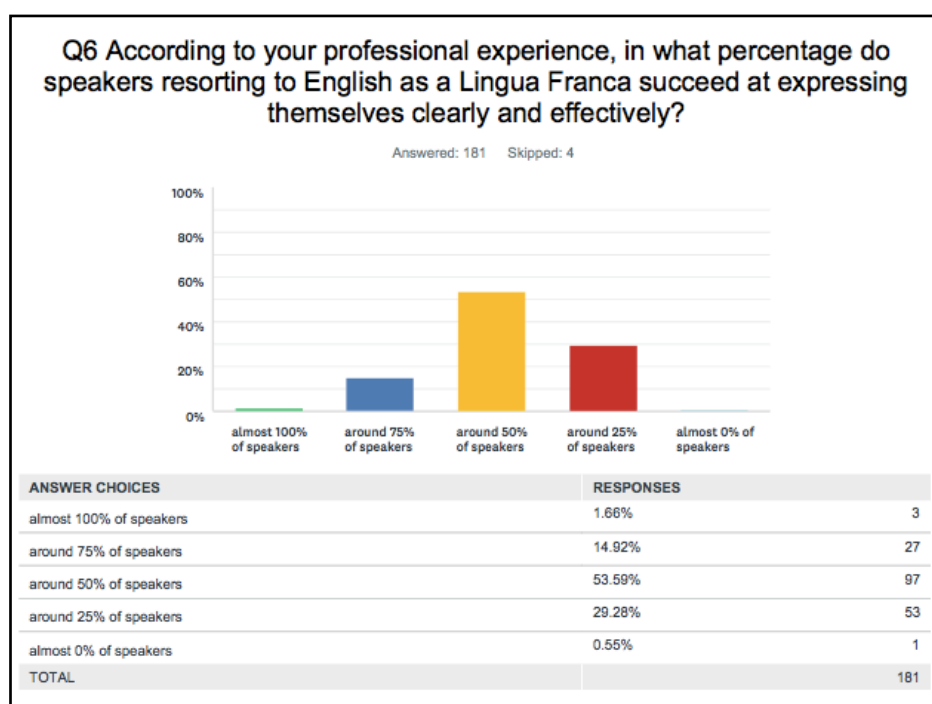


Figure 25 Graph and Table referring to Q6

The first element worth mentioning is that, understandably, the extreme values (almost 100% and almost 0%) have almost been ignored by respondents (three responses in favour of the upper value, corresponding to 1.5% of the sample, and one for the lower level, corresponding to 0.5% of the sample). Similarly, responses to Q5 (see 5.5) had already shown that no interpreter was either fully enthusiastic about ELF being used during meetings or excluding categorically that it might be effective on occasions.

The bulk of responses (97) is located in the mean value (around 50% of speakers), corresponding to 54% of the sample. As for the remaining two categories, 15% of respondents (27) opted for the ‘around 75% of speakers’ option, while 29% (53) selected the ‘around 25% of speakers’ box. For completeness, it needs to be added that two

respondents refrained from ticking any box, but then both formulated a comment, stating that they would actually estimate the percentage to be closer to 10%.

These values seem to indicate that interpreters who participated in this survey are not heavily biased. ELF represents a threat to their own professional survival (see 1.5.1), yet respondents in this case have not jumped at the chance of blindly disparaging all ELF speakers, claiming that most of them simply are not good enough. On the contrary, more than 50% of the interpreters acknowledge that at least half of them are clear and effective ELF speakers. Furthermore, the question needs to be interpreted in the specific context of the survey: it is not an inquiry on whether people are able to communicate in ELF *tout court*, but rather whether speakers using ELF in the specific context of EU multilateral meetings with an interpretation services do manage to attain an acceptable level of communicative effectiveness.

Roughly one third of interpreters in the sample take a stricter stance and claim that just 25% do so. Interpreters' high expectations can find an explanation in the value they attribute to good, effective communication and possibly also in the confidence they have that they can deliver good results to this end with their job.

As was the case for previous questions, in this case a comment box was offered to respondents, who have made extensive use of it, offering interesting insights on their position on the topic.

5.6.2 Q6: comments

The comment section to Q6 includes 25 contributions (see Figure 26) .

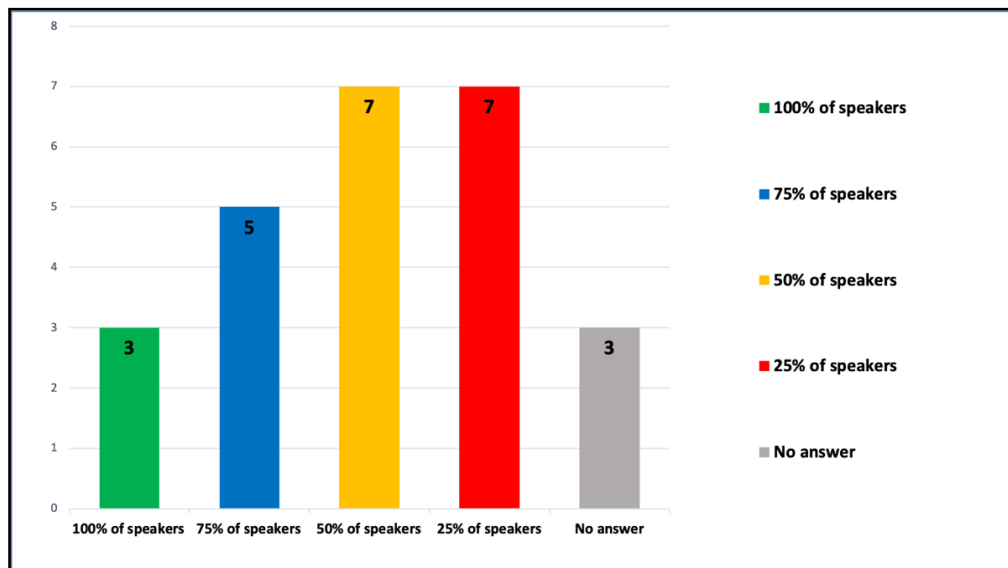


Figure 26 Commentators' distribution based on Q6 available answers

Half of the comments were left by respondents ticking the '50%' and '25% of speakers' options (7 comments each), followed by respondents in the '75% of speakers' group (5 comments). Three comments were left by the 100% respondents, meaning that all three interpreters in the group left a message, and three by respondents who skipped the question.

Some of the comments aim at providing a slightly different percentage to those offered by the multiple choices available. The corrections are mainly downwards, more specifically two respondents ticking the 25% box specify respectively that:

- [it is] perhaps 10% [C6.4] or
- possibly less [C6.12],

whereas one ticking the 75% one declares that:

- actually, I would say 3 out of 5 give or take [C6.22]

which would correspond to approximately 60%.

By contrast, one respondent ticking the 25% box corrects the figure upwards, specifying that:

- [it is] more like a third, actually [C6.23],

corresponding to approximately 33%.

⇒ *Almost 100% of speakers*

Comments in this group dwell upon the direct correlation between the speakers' competence and communicative effectiveness. As already mentioned, all three respondents ticking the 'almost 100% of speakers' box supplement their reply with a comment, in which they all introduce poignant reflections on communicative effectiveness and context relevance. The first summarises the issue in a lapidary fashion:

- As the old saw has it: they say what they **can** say, not necessarily what they **want** to say. [C6.2]

The interpreter is not questioning whether what they actually say is intelligible or not, but rather whether what they are saying corresponds to their communicative intentions. This statement focuses on the needs of the speaker, who might be deprived (or deprive themselves) of their ability to express their mind to the fullest.

Another interpreter raises the question of what communicative effectiveness is, believing that almost 100% of ELF speakers can get their message across, and yet wondering if this is really enough:

- There are some exceptions, but almost all speakers get their message across. This answer, however, only concern [sic] the basic content of the message. If we think about the message as being something that goes beyond its basic content, then the answer would look very different. If I make a plea in a foreign language, I will have some difficulties to express myself, I will look less self-confident, as if I were not convinced. How can I be convincing if I do not look convinced? In this sense, using English as a lingua franca is not very effective." [C6.7]

To this interpreter, the message almost invariably finds a way through, thus showing an open-minded and positive attitude towards ELF. Nonetheless, even though a speaker resorting to ELF might succeed in informing listeners, they might fail at persuading, warning, influencing or reassuring their audience.

The third respondent in this group introduces another dimension to this reflection, the role played by the context:

- I'd differentiate between practitioners (i.e. working group members who know the subject and are used to that kind of communications) and the larger public in case of web streamed public meetings. If in the first case I presume that the main message is understood, I'm not sure this is the case in the latter... So 100% for practitioners and 50% for non practitioners. [C6.13].

The distinction this interpreter makes is quite broad, as all meetings with practitioners are put in the same basket and only those involving the general public are isolated as potentially troublesome. This meeting grouping might be effective only if practitioners all had an equal competence level, but it is nonetheless an interesting approach on the part of the respondent, who clearly considers that the same speaker might be less or more effective depending on the context and the audience s/he is addressing.

⇒ *Around 75% of speakers*

Most of the comments in this group refer to the above-mentioned figure corrections. One respondent adds an explanation as to why communication works, which has nothing to do with speakers' language skills, but rather with context and shared knowledge:

- Communication is meeting specific. Speakers know the field, know each other, have documents: many cues to understand better than the interpreters." [C6.10]

This explanation might apply to every meeting, regardless of the language being used, but does not refer to speakers actually being either clear or effective.

⇒ *Around 50% of speakers*

Some respondents in this group stress that despite being understandable, most speakers are not as efficient as they could be, as they

- would be more, a lot more efficient and direct to the point if they used their mother tongue. [C6.5]

This comment confirms once more that reaching a *de minimis* level of content transfer does not make up for lost incisiveness and effectiveness. To this point, one interpreter adds their personal take:

- the best non-native English speakers have a strong tendency to speaking their own language [C6.15],

which seems to infer that what gets lost in the passage from one's mother tongue to a foreign language might not be compensated for by a good command of said language, so much so that proficient English speakers tend not to switch to ELF.

⇒ *Around 25% of speakers*

Respondents in this group focus on identifying an explanation as to why communication works, starting from the assumption that good ELF command is not the norm. In these cases, no reference is made to a desirable level to be attained, but rather to what factors come to the rescue of unsteady speakers. The key seems to be shared knowledge between speakers and listeners:

- It might not always be clear for us but sometimes it is clear for their colleagues who work in the same area and who know the subject as good [sic] as the speaker. [C6.24]
- The perception of what can be considered clear varies depending on how familiar the listeners (including the interpreters) are with the subject. [C6.25]

These explanations follow the same line of C6.10, in the 'almost 75%' group, thus confirming that they apply irrespective of the speakers' ability to express themselves clearly and effectively, as shared knowledge and context are always part of the communication equation.

⇒ *No answer*

Two out of the three comments in this group offer an alternative reply to Q6, as respondents had not selected any of the provided alternatives:

- 10 percent, the rest at primary school level. [C6.17]
- More or less 10%. [C6.18]

Both these comments confirm that these two interpreters, despite technically skipping the question, are in line with the majority of respondents.

The third comment in the group stresses how the experience of interpreting a non-native speaker implies a level of uncertainty in terms of really understanding what the speaker means:

- Faced with speakers who do not use their mother tongue, my reaction as an interpreter varies not according to my professional experience but according to the subjective feeling that I may have /not have understood what the speaker may have really meant as opposed to what his message conveyed for me. [C6.14]

5.7 Q7: ELF and the interpreters

Q7. Interpreting speakers who use English as a Lingua Franca tends to be more demanding than interpreting speakers who use their mother tongue. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the previous statement.

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

The research conducted so far on the relation between interpreters and ELF indicates quite unambiguously that interpreters feel threatened by it, mostly due to the detrimental effects it is exerting on the profession (see 1.5.1).

There are only two questions in the survey addressing the direct relation between ELF and the interpreter's job: Q7, investigating whether it is more demanding for professionals to interpret ELF speakers and Q8, exploring what features of ELF discourse seem to be particularly challenging to them.

5.7.1 Q7: results

For Q7, respondents are asked to rate to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement that interpreting speakers who use ELF tends to be more demanding than interpreting native speakers (irrespective of their mother tongue).

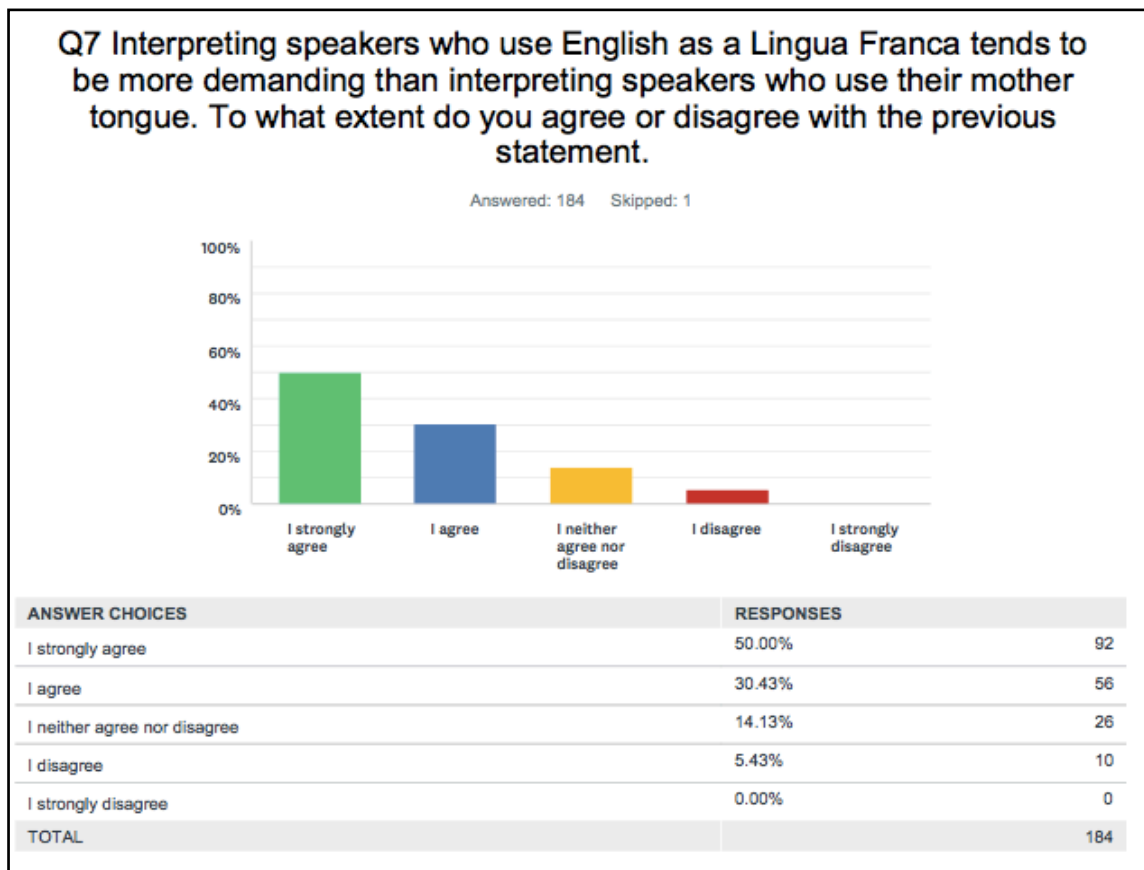


Figure 27 Graph and Table referring to Q7

When considering the whole sample, the answer is clear: 30.5% (92 respondents) agree that it is more demanding and 50% (56 respondents) strongly agree with this statement, making a total of roughly 80.5% (148 respondents).

This overwhelming majority is even more impressive when considering that on the other side of the spectrum there are only ten respondents disagreeing (5.5%) and none strongly disagreeing. The remaining 14% (26 respondents) neither agree nor disagree (see Figure 27).

When dividing respondents by years of experience working for the EU (Q2; see 5.2), the following picture emerges:

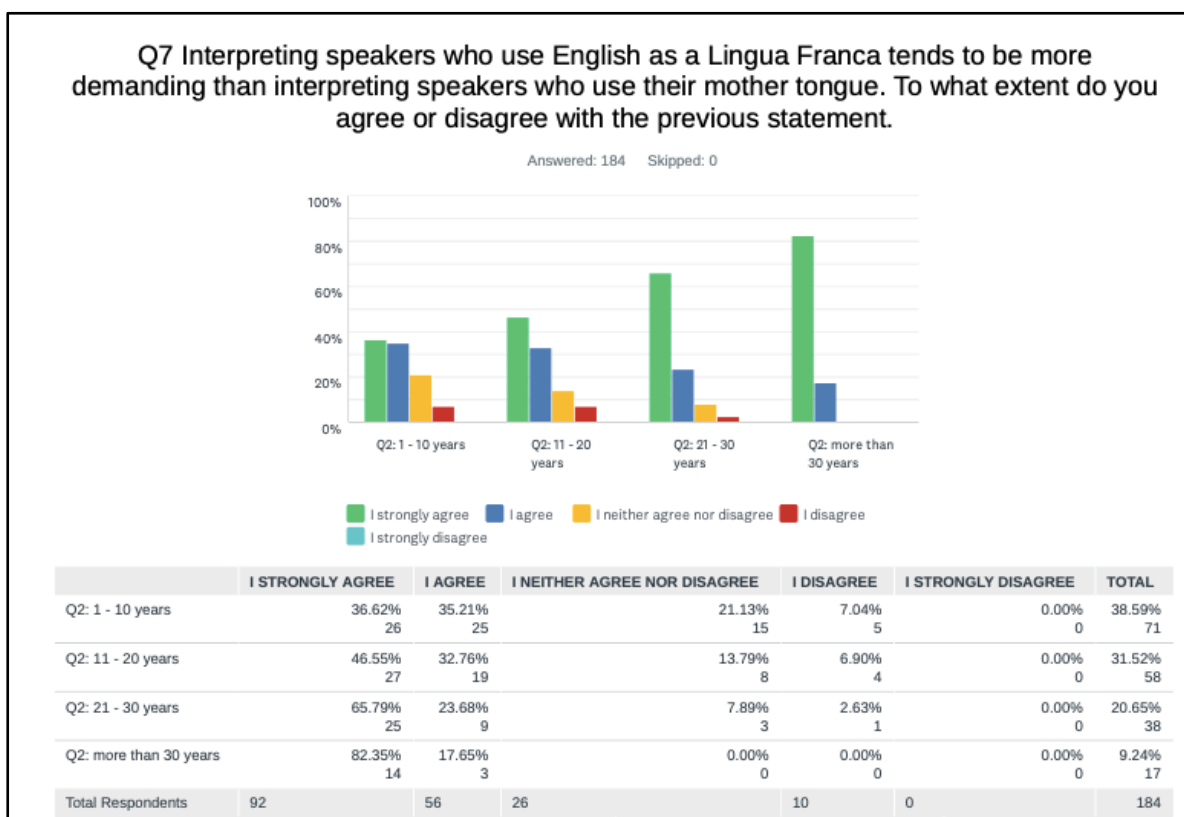


Figure 28 Replies to Q7 divided by Q2 groups

In the group of respondents with a EU professional experience of 21 years or more (55 respondents, including the last category of 30 and plus years), the tendency recorded in the general population is even more stark. 22% of respondents (12) agree that interpreting ELF speakers is more demanding and almost 71% (39) strongly agree with the statement, totalling 93% of the group sample (see Figure 28), whereas only one respondent disagrees. Those who have been in the profession longer and therefore can compare their current experience to a time when ELF was not in the picture seem to be almost unanimously agreeing that interpreting native speakers is less demanding than interpreting ELF.

This perception tones down in direct proportion with the decreasing of professional experience. In the 11-to-20-year group, the majority is still represented by respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing with the initial statement, though percentages are lower compared to those of the more experienced group and closer to those of the whole sample. More specifically 32.5% interpreters agree and 46.5% strongly agree, for a total of 79%. The number of disagreeing interpreters is higher by roughly one percentage point compared to the disagreeing group in the general population (7% vs. 5.5%). This shift in

preferences is further confirmed in the least experienced group (1 to 10 years of experience). In this case the total percentage of agreeing respondents further decreases to 71.5% (36.5% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing to the statement). The share of disagreeing interpreter is basically unchanged (7%), whereas the group neither agreeing nor disagreeing grows up to 21%.

The breakdown by years of professional experience offers a more differentiated and articulated landscape, but should not deflect the attention from the broader picture, which indicates that, to an overwhelming majority of interpreters from all categories, interpreting speakers who use ELF tends to be more demanding than interpreting speakers who use their mother tongue. There is an undeniable agreement on the part of the interpreters that ELF is not a neutral element in the equation, and that it makes the job more challenging and tiring – which also explains the level of frustration voiced by many interpreters in the comment boxes throughout the questionnaire.

5.7.2 Q7: comments

The comment section to Q7 is among the most extensive as it gathers a total of 40 contributions: 13 made by respondents strongly agreeing (equalling 32.5% of total comments), ten by respondents agreeing (25%), 13 by respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing (32.5%) and four by disagreeing respondents (10%), which means that the opinions of all groups are fairly represented.

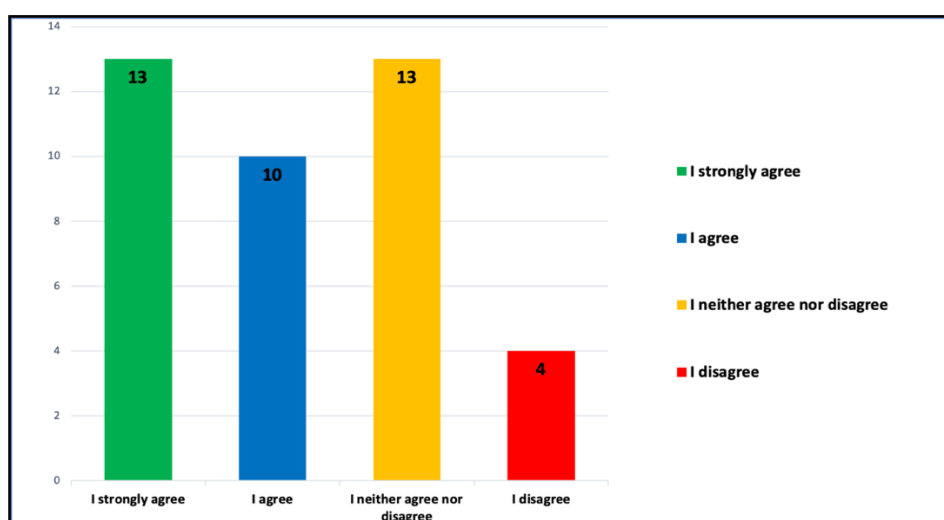


Figure 29 Commentators' distribution based on Q7 available answers

Virtually all comments offer an explanation as to why interpreters believe ELF is particularly demanding or conversely why it might not invariably be. Similar reasons might be found in all comment categories; what changes is either the relative importance attributed to the same factor or the consequences drawn therefrom.

⇒ *I (strongly) agree*

Many interpreters raise the issue of poor language command on the part of ELF speakers. Those ticking the ‘I (strongly) agree’ boxes mostly complain about the difficulties deriving from having to decipher ELF, which is by itself a task exploiting additional cognitive resources:

- [I strongly agree] You need to **decipher** first, it adds a phase in the **mental process**, thus putting **extra pressure**. [C7.3]
- [I strongly agree] Did the speaker **really mean** that? Or is it an **approximation** due to bad English? [...] Words are tortured and twisted beyond recognition. How much do we need to **remodulate** the English. Provided we recognise what the delegate wants to say. [C7.5]
- [I strongly agree] Sometimes people speak more slowly in a language that is not their mother tongue, which can be helpful to interpreters, but much more often, it increases the **mental burden**. [C7.12]
- [I agree] Often an **extra layer**: you have to **guess** what your speaker means. [C7.16]
- [I strongly agree] Requires more **concentration** and **effort**, especially when non-idiomatic language is used or the accent is very strong. [C7.19]
- [I strongly agree] This is true because I use a lot of **energy** on '**correcting**' or '**decoding**' the grammar, vocab [sic], intonation, nuances etc. before I can actually start to interpret the meaning. [C7.26]
- [I strongly agree] The **effort** already made to follow the speaker's reasoning becomes even more **energy-demanding** because of difficulties related to interpreting EFL [sic] into proper English, so that one can the [sic] interpret that into his or her mother tongue. [C7.37]
- [I agree] Their accent and lack of clarity, among other factors, make it more **demanding**. It also has to be said, however, that their discourse tends to be more elementary from the point of view of register, content and terminology use. Overall, I think that **regardless of how demanding it is for the interpreter, the result is always poorer**. [C7.40]
[emphasis added]

The list could be even longer, but despite circling around the same issue, all these comments are equally relevant because of their choice of words. All interpreters struggle, are under pressure and feel they need more energy – an entire additional mental process corresponding to a ‘deciphering’, ‘decoding’ and ‘correcting’ phase (see 7.2).

A practical example is offered in one of the comments: abbreviations. An interpreter underlines how hard it can sometimes be to recognise abbreviations or acronyms:

- [I agree] Especially with non- native English speakers it is often difficult to make out the exact number of letters and very often there is confusion with A and E or E and I (does the peake [speaker] pronounce these letters in English or in his own language?). [C7.24]

This further reasoning that interpreters have to apply to the ST, before actually producing their own text, takes up precious time and resources and might therefore lead the interpreter to making a mistake or to a loss of information due to a processing capacity overload.

In addition to identifying the reasons which might explain why ELF is particularly demanding from an interpreter’s point of view, some respondents also point to possible strategies to cope with it. The one mentioned most frequently is knowledge on the part of the interpreter of the speaker’s mother tongue:

- [I agree] Knowing the speaker's mother tongue will make ALL the difference.” [C7.9]
- [I agree] May be more demanding according to proficiency. If you know mother tongue of speaker it is easier, in fact, because you get the ‘simplified’ hybrid structure [C7.18]
- [I strongly agree] With the assumption that you Don't understand the underlying language of the speaker (e.g. If a German tries to speak English and I understand German, it's would still be hard but less than a Romanian speaking English as I Don't understand Romanian). [C7.27]
- [I strongly agree] English used as a foreign language is sometimes difficult to understand because of the interference from the 1st language of the speaker (either on pronunciation or grammar of the speaker). [C7.38]

The ‘shared languages benefit’ (see 1.5.1) assists interpreters both in understanding term interferences as well as conceptualisation patterns within one language and culture. It is rather a fortuitous circumstance that provides the interpreter with extra clues to

‘decode’ non-standard patterns (e.g. pronunciation, syntax or culture-related elements; see 1.3.3). However, interpreters cannot use this element as a voluntary strategy, because they have absolutely no control over it: they either know the speaker’s MT or they do not. Furthermore, participants in standard meetings have at least 24 different mother-tongues²²¹ and come from 28 different countries, which entails that the grammatical, syntactical and cultural juxtapositions that speakers might impose on ELF are countless.

The fact that respondents mention the importance of the speaker’s MT, stressing that it might be decisive in determining whether an ELF speaker is demanding or not, seems to indicate that it is indeed common practice for speakers to combine elements of their MT with ELF. If those interpreters, who are ‘trained multilinguals’ but do not know the speaker’s L1 and culture, find it arduous to ‘decode’ what the speaker is saying or meaning, then listeners coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds than that of the speaker might encounter similar difficulties, despite the shared contextual and topic-related knowledge.

An interesting side note is offered by one of the respondents, who distinguishes between speakers resorting to ELF because they have to, and speakers for whom it is a choice:

- [I agree] As an interpreter I have much more empathy with speakers who struggle with English because they cannot use their mother tongue, I get really annoyed with speakers who can speak their mother tongue but chose [sic] to speak poor English. [C7.17]

The interpreter’s mission is to enable communication between people who would otherwise be unable to communicate with each other. When a speaker of a given MT has no alternative but to speak ELF, regardless of their level of language command, the interpreter might find the task particularly demanding and frustrating, especially if, as a result, their output is not up to a desirable standard, but probably they will also feel ‘empathy’, as the respondent calls it, towards someone who is struggling to communicate and simply needs their help. A speaker who relinquishes their right to express themselves in their MT, only to end up speaking ELF in an ineffective way, is unlikely to inspire

²²¹ Not to mention non-official EU languages that can well be a EU speaker’s mother tongue (for ex. Catalan)

empathy. And it is not surprising that a professional might find it hard to fully embrace and endorse a communication strategy that seems prone to failure. Furthermore, even though the comment could be classified as another declaration of frustration on the part of yet another dissatisfied interpreter, this statement actually seems more than that. Not all ELF speakers are the same, and the difference does not only lie in their language proficiency, but also in their linguistic rights being granted or not, therefore raising questions over equal participation rights and over multilingualism being effectively applied (see 7.1).

⇒ *I neither agree nor disagree*

Respondents in the 'I neither agree nor disagree' box substantially follow the same line of thought. They tend to be less drastic, as they recognise that generalisations are hard to make and that some speakers, by virtue of their poor linguistic skills, might end up being more simple, redundant or at least keep a slow pace. When this is not the case though, they fully subscribe to the description of the previous group of interpreters:

- I think its [sic] impossible to generalise. It depends as much on subject matter, speed, etc. but in general, it is a bit more tiring since **language 'gets in the way' of communication.** [C7.8]
- Difficult to say. Some are much easier in EN than they would be in their native language. Others can use native or EN without any difference for the interpreter [sic] Others shouldn't really express themselves in EN and make the interpretr's job [sic] a **daunting task.** [C7.13]
- The globish English that most non-natives use is a very simplified version of the English language. So although it might be hard to **figure out what the person actually means**, the vocabulary used is very simple. A native speaker on the other hand comes with other challenges: word play, figures of speech, more information in each sentence.... [C7.25]
- It depends on the speaker. Some native speakers can be quite demanding, as they tend to speak faster and more effectively - the message becomes denser with fewer redundant parts. It can therefore be challenging to keep up with the speaker. On the other hand non native speakers don't express themselves very clearly and it is up to the interpreter to **guess what they might want to say.** [C7.31]
[emphasis added]

Respondents acknowledge that even native speakers can be challenging and that not all ELF speakers need be extremely demanding. Yet the ‘guessing’ element, with those who are, is clearly confirmed, as is the perception that ELF can have much to do with it, which emerges from the statement that ‘language gets in the way of communication’, instead of enabling it.

⇒ *I disagree*

Respondents in this group stress how speakers resorting to ELF might actually be easier to interpret:

- Difficult to say. disagree as it slows them down and, eventhough [sic] their accent can sometimes be difficult to decipher, I for one think that I can catch my breath when a non-native takes the floor. The real problem is when their command is poor and they resort to generalisations to mask this deficiency; however, for the most part they are proficient users and rather capable public speakers who express themselves in a coherent manner. [C7.2]
- Since their level of English is most of the times not that good, they are not very demanding. [C7.11]
- They usually have less vocabulary. The accent is like a code, after a while you substitute (ah, oi, is in fact ai ... ect). [C7.23]

Even though C7.2 describes participants as ‘proficient users’ and ‘capable public speakers’, all comments – C7.2 included – explain that it might be easier to interpret speakers resorting to ELF because they tend to be slower, use simpler vocabulary and generalise, therefore indirectly referring to the topic of competence levels.

Even respondents who do not find ELF particularly challenging refer to a deciphering activity, which has to be performed in order to overcome the ‘accent’ and pronunciation barrier (see 5.8.1).

5.8 Q8: Troublesome features of ELF discourse

Q8. According to your professional experience, what are the features of ELF discourse you mostly struggle with, when interpreting? (you can tick up to 3 options)

- Pronunciation/Intonation

- Lexis and terminology (general and specialized words)
- Syntax (e.g. word order, sentence structure, etc.)
- Phraseology (e.g. collocations, idioms, fixed phrases, etc.)
- Extra-linguistic features (e.g. irony, culture-related aspects, politeness)
- All of the above equally
- None of the above

Most respondents broadly agree that interpreting speakers using ELF is more demanding than interpreting speakers using their mother tongue (see 5.7). In the comment section to Q7, they have argued that there is often an additional ‘decoding’ step needed that is extremely energy demanding and increases the mental burden. This explanation sheds light on the strain ELF entails in terms of general interpretation process and use of cognitive resources, but leaves aside the specific features of the source text that lead to this processing capacity overload. Q8 investigates whether interpreters are aware of specific recurring features that tend to be particularly troublesome.

5.8.1 Q8: Results

As Q8 does not refer to a specific event or speaker, but rather asks respondents to identify general tendencies according to their professional experience, the categories are quite broad – while offering some examples for each group so as to make sure that respondents are aware of what is meant with the general label used. Five categories have been identified:

1. Pronunciation/Intonation
2. Lexis and terminology (general and specialised words)
3. Syntax (e.g. word order, sentence structure, etc.)
4. Phraseology (e.g. collocations, idioms, fixed phrases, etc.)
5. Extra-linguistic features (e.g. irony, culture-related aspects, politeness, etc.)

The question also includes two other boxes, ‘all of the above equally’, for respondents wishing to include all options and ‘none of the above’ for respondents unable to single one out – though respondents could select up to three boxes – or convinced that the categories offered were not representative.

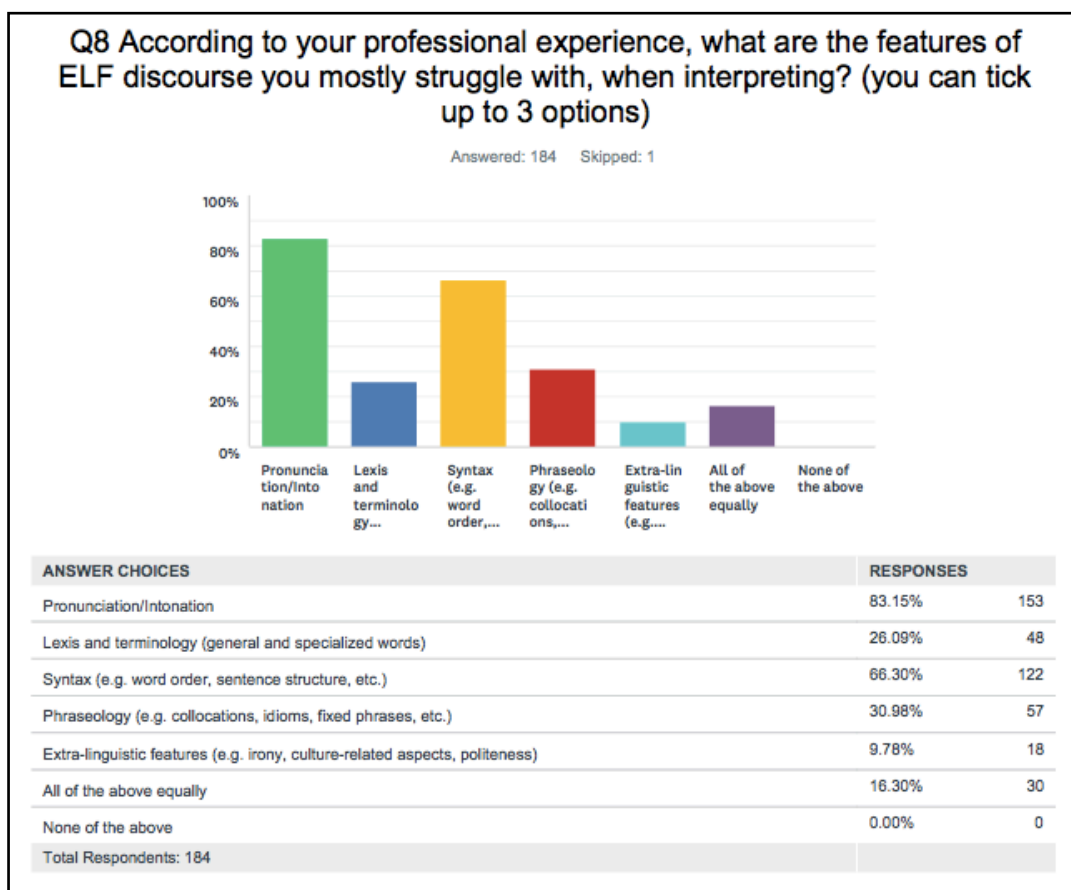


Figure 30 Graph and Table referring to Q8

The first category, ‘Pronunciation/Intonation’ is the undisputed winner. When the number of respondents clicking it (153) is added to the number of respondents selecting the ‘all of the above equally’ box (30) it is clear that virtually all respondents (99.4%) believe pronunciation to be the main obstacle. This result is not surprising as it is strictly related to the ‘deciphering’ effort that was mentioned when commenting Q7 (see 5.7.2).

A closer analysis of the responses to this question shows that only 10 respondents chose to select only one single option (in all 10 instances it was pronunciation), whereas in all other cases interpreters opted for a selection of more boxes (with the exception of those selecting the ‘all of the above equally’, which equals to ticking them all). More specifically 51 respondents (28% of the sample) selected a combination of 2 features and 93 (51% of the sample) a combination of 3 features, making a total of 144 respondents (79%).

The most popular triplet is the ‘pronunciation/syntax/phraseology’ one (41 respondents), closely followed by the ‘pronunciation/syntax/lexis’ one (33 respondents), whereas clearly the most troublesome pair is constituted by pronunciation and syntax (37 respondents) – which is also contained in both of the most selected triplets. If the share of

respondents selecting the ‘all of the above equally’ is then added, it is clear that 95% of respondents believe that it is the combinatorial effect of all these features which paves the way for what at times is perceived by interpreters as a daunting task.

Pronunciation is the first layer of the ST interpreters are confronted with and if they are unable to identify the single sounds they hear, and then group them into words and sentences, the real interpretation activity cannot even begin. Furthermore, the great variety of ‘unconventional’ pronunciations within one single event implies that interpreters constantly have to tune in to different speakers, intonations and diverging pronunciations in an endless ‘deciphering’ loop.

Close to the ‘pronunciation/intonation’ category is the ‘syntax’ one, with a total of 122 preferences (that once added to the ‘all of the above equally’, reaches a total of 152, corresponding to roughly 83% of respondents).

Interpreters are presumably not on a mission to verify to what extent NNS abide by standard language norms (see 1.4), nor do they wish to assess speakers’ correctness and competence for the sake of it. Most interpreting strategies actually depend on the interpreter’s ability to analyse the ST and predict how it is going to unfold, both structurally and argumentatively. Many of these strategies are developed at language-pair level and therefore depend greatly upon the interpreter’s ability to recognise standard morphosyntactic structures. Unexpected and atypical sentence structures therefore deprive interpreters of essential footholds.

The other options have all received considerably less attention on the part of the respondents. ‘Phraseology’ and ‘Lexis and terminology’ have been selected by 57 and 48 respondents respectively. Even adding the percentage points related to the ‘all of the above equally’ box, neither category reaches 50% (47% and 42% respectively).

Clearly both features are considered troublesome and add to the cumulative effort shouldered by interpreters, but are possibly not as pervasive as pronunciation and syntax. The same considerations apply to the fifth category, ‘Extra-linguistic features’, which was selected by only 18 respondents (10%).

The ‘none of the above’ box was not selected, meaning that all the general features offered are not regarded as neutral when it comes to ELF interpreting and it is just a matter of identifying which are the most disruptive.

5.8.2 Q8: Comments

The comment box to Q8 gathered 23 contributions. As respondents could tick more than one answer, comments have not been divided per respondent, but rather they have been grouped into categories based on the topics mentioned therein. More specifically, in addition to the categories identified in Q8, two others have been added, namely the ‘speaker’s mother-tongue’ and a residual group named ‘other’ that gathers a variety of topics mentioned only once. The following chart therefore refers to the number of ‘mentions’ of each theme within the comments as a whole (see Figure 31).

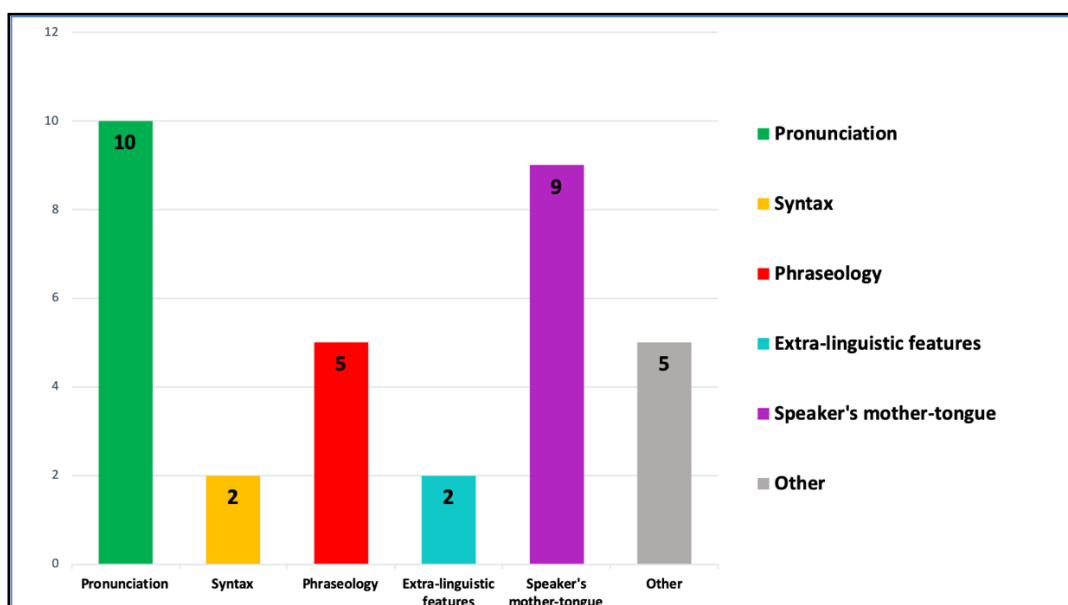


Figure 31 Q8 comments' distribution by topic

More specifically, comments have been divided into the above-mentioned categories as follows:

Pronunciation	C8.5, C8.8, C8.9, C8.13, C8.14, C8.16, C8.18, C8.19, C8.21, C8.22
Syntax	C8.5, C8.20
Phraseology	C8.2, C8.8, C8.10, C8.11, C8.18
Extra-linguistic features	C8.5, C8.7
Speaker's mother-tongue	C8.1, C8.2, C8.4, C8.5, C8.6, C8.8, C8.10, C8.18, C8.23

Other	C8.3 (precision), C8.11 (unpredictability), C8.12 (it depends on the speaker), C8.15 (it depends on the speaker/meeting), C8.17 (level of English)
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Table 4. Comments to Q8 divided by topic.

⇒ *Pronunciation*

The topic of pronunciation/intonation, in addition to being the most selected by respondents replying to Q8, is also the most frequently mentioned in comments:

- If this [pronunciation] is bad, everything is bad. [C8.9]
- Poor pronunciation is by far the number one issue for me - it just seems to steal valuable time away from my comprehension. [...]. [C8.8]
- [...] The ELF pronunciation adds a layer of difficulty that often makes it impossible to deal with the remaining challenges appropriately and to keep providing a high-quality service. [C8.13]
- Pronunciation is by far the most difficult feature to cope with, when it comes to interpreting EFL. [C8.21]

The acoustic reception of the incoming message is the first step in the interpreting process, therefore pronunciation and intonation difficulties force interpreters, right from the outset, to devote a disproportionate amount of their cognitive resources to deciphering the message (see 7.2). As one respondent claims, if pronunciation is bad, “everything is bad”, implying that the whole process, right up to the interpreters’ output, is jeopardised. The difficulties in message comprehension (from an acoustic point of view) might occur in any setting and might be attributable to a series of factors, not least technical issues. Furthermore, native speakers too can have very marked accents, which might require interpreters to devote more resources to the ‘understanding’ phase, which is why part of any interpreter’s training and professional learning entails exposing oneself to the different accents and varieties of the languages they have in their combination. Accents can vary considerably, especially for languages that are spoken by native speakers of different countries (English itself being a case in point), still it is something interpreters might practise. On the other hand, when it comes to ELF, the code might change from speaker to speaker, day in, day out, and although interpreters can find patterns based on the speakers’ MT (especially as far as intonation is concerned), there are no rules to be followed or specific training resources. ELF pronunciation is therefore an elusive X factor

which might either amplify or reduce difficulties, but the interpreter is going to find out to what extent only at the moment they are confronted with every single speaker.

⇒ *Speaker's mother-tongue*

The second most frequent topic emerging from comments is ‘the speaker’s mother-tongue’, which was not one of the available options in Q8 – as it is not technically a feature of ELF – but it is perceived by respondents as a relevant factor.

- Which is why it helps to know the real language of the speaker. [C8.1]
- Applying the logic of the mother tongue to English. [C8.4]
- The most difficult thing is trying to understand what the person meant in his/her head in his/her mother-tongue, compare with what he/she said in English and then translate. Three efforts instead of one. [C8.6]

The ‘shared languages benefit’ (see 1.5.1), as noted by many respondents, can sometimes come to their rescue to trace the meaning, as inference mechanisms that would normally be used for the speaker’s MT can be transferred to ELF, but this backtracking inevitably results in an increased use of a finite pool of mental resources (see 7.2). Furthermore, considering the great variety of speakers’ MTs, interpreters might have no recourse to this ‘benefit’, and mother-tongue interferences can rapidly turn into a detrimental factor. If knowing the “real language” of the speaker might help, not knowing it implies the interpreter can only guess or end up feeling “lost.”

⇒ *Phraseology and syntax*

The ‘mother-tongue’ factor plays a role also in relation to specific features. Several examples are offered specifically on the non-standard use of phraseology and syntax:

- Phraseology often makes it tricky too, as it is of course completely impossible to guess what a direct translation into English of an idiomatic expression in the speaker's mother tongue actually means, for instance. [C8.8]

- Many delegates translate literally idioms which do not make any sense in English (if you cannot translate back the idiom into the speaker's mother tongue and back into your interpreting language, you're lost). [C8.10]
- Speakers frequently mix idiomatic expressions or use them to mean something completely different from their actual meaning, we find ourselves having to 'double-interpret' from what they say to what they believe they are saying...extremely tiring. [C8.18]
- [...] Syntax – when the speaker collates English words over structures from languages which are unknown to me and it sounds unnatural for English [...]. [C8.5]

In all these instances, respondents refer to the 'mother-tongue' factor, stressing that in the specific context of interpretation this creative use of the language – be it in terms of idiomatic expression or sentence structure – has a disruptive effect on the interpreter's understanding. The resources that need to be allocated to deciphering the ST make the task of interpreting ELF demanding (see 5.7.1).

⇒ *Extra-linguistic features*

It might seem surprising that features such as culture-related elements, politeness and irony are left last in the list, considering that comments indicate that speakers do project their linguistic and cultural frame of reference on ELF, but either these less content-imbued aspects are harder to convey for speakers and therefore are missing in the ST or they are more easily sacrificed by interpreters needing to manage their resources under pressure:

- Politeness, irony etc. tend to be left aside. [C8.7]

Even though it is not clear by whom and in which phase of the process, it is manifest that they end up being withheld from part of the audience – at least that resorting to the interpretation service, if not from all.

⇒ *Other*

The authors of the comments to Q8 do not pass judgements of value, but rather acknowledge that they find themselves navigating in uncharted waters, as emerges in one of the comments from the ‘other’ category:

- I would describe the main problem with ‘impredictability’. When speaking in their mother tongue, I have the impression speakers resort to fixed sentences that make their speech somehow predictable. As an interpreter, you receive hints that allow you to anticipate where the speech is going. This does not or not always happen with non-native speakers. [C8.11]

Probability prediction and inference are among the strategies of simultaneous interpretation (see Kalina 1998). Hence, the lack of these important footholds (be it in terms of pronunciation, syntax or phraseology) leaves interpreters more exposed to blind stumbling and possibly free falling, which is not just detrimental to their professional fulfilment but first and foremost to the quality of the service they wish to provide and therefore the quality of communication.

Some ELF scholars consider the creative and fluid use of the language on part of ELF speakers as a way for interlocutors to exploit the elements at their disposal in order to communicate (see 1.3). Nevertheless, these comments seem to indicate that the frequent assumption that comprehensibility is not compromised is only telling one side of the story. Undoubtedly, as meaning is negotiated cooperatively (see 4.3), participants in an interaction might wish to signal any perplexity or doubt in understanding, ask for explanations, or misunderstandings could simply emerge, leading to supplements or paraphrasing of any opaque expression used in the first place. This interpretation, though, assumes that interlocutors all enjoy the same status and intervening rights and that interaction is not bridled in tight schedules and limited time, as is often the case in the specific meetings interpreters comment on. Major comprehension problems are unlikely to ‘pass’ unnoticed, but it is difficult to ascertain how much of what is left behind is actually redundant or later explained.

Comprehension seems to be facilitated by ample shared multilingual resource pools (MRP; see 1.3.3). One might guess that trained multilinguals such as interpreters, coming from different countries exactly as participants do, would share with speakers a possibly broader MRP. They might not know the speaker’s L1 (as is the case for other primary

interlocutors), but at least they can draw from their own L1 in addition to all languages in their language combination. Yet often this extensive MRP does not seem to be enough for them to decode non-standard use of language and phraseology.

5.9 Q9: ELF, promoter or barrier to active participation?

Q9. In your professional opinion, the use of ELF:

- Guarantees full and active participation of all actors during the meetings
- Guarantees partial and mostly passive participation of actors during the meetings
- Hinders full and active participation of all actors during the meetings
- Is not relevant when assessing actors' participation during the meetings

In virtually every official meeting organised within the EU there is some degree of public interest at stake, be it the Commission itself representing and safeguarding the common European interests (and budget) or representatives of international, national, regional or local authorities and bodies promoting the interests of the communities they are responsible for. The full participation of interlocutors in the debates and the decision-making processes is therefore a matter of the utmost importance, as the participants' ability to express themselves, understand and be understood has a direct impact on their right to give voice to those they represent.

Q9 aims at uncovering the interpreters' positions precisely on the topic of participation rights.

5.9.1 Q9: results

Q9 asks interpreter whether, in their professional experience, they believe that ELF enables participants to fully participate in meetings (see Figure 32). The position on this topic can be partially inferred from the replies interpreters gave to the question on ELF speakers' communicative effectiveness (Q6, see 5.6), but in this case a new dimension is introduced, that of the recipients of ELF speeches, either listening to the ELF speakers live or indirectly by means of the interpretation. Even when a speaker is fluent and perfectly understandable when using ELF, this does not automatically imply that all participants have the skills required to follow proceedings comfortably in ELF.

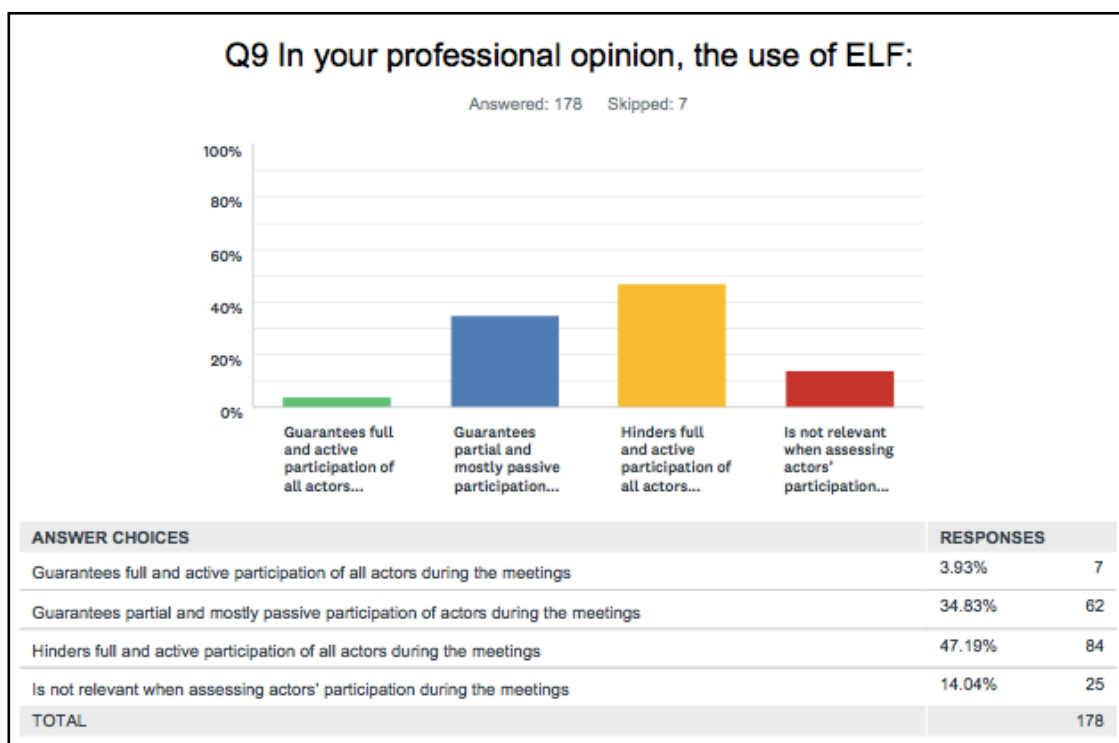


Figure 32 Graph and Table referring to Q9

Among possible answers offered to respondents, the negative extreme has been ruled out – something along the lines of ‘ELF prevents communication’ – as it seems evident that a statement of this kind is directly contradicted first and foremost by the evidence. Meetings do take place and numerous speakers express themselves in ELF, either by choice or through need; the point is rather trying to perceive whether the level of communication established is sufficiently high and uniform throughout meetings and speakers. Respondents on the other hand have the possibility to select an option indicating that ELF guarantees full and active participation, should they believe that this is the case. On the other extreme of the scale, they might consider that ELF is not relevant when assessing interlocutors’ participation during a meeting.

The other two alternatives substantially both circle around the same middle ground, as it would be very hard for an interpreter to assess the degree of participation of the average ELF speaker or listener quantitatively (either participation is full or it is not). There are two different nuances provided: either ELF does not guarantee full and active participation but is able to cater for partial and passive participation in a more constructive approach, or it is actually an obstacle to full and active participation, revealing a more distrustful

attitude on part of interpreters. Seven respondents chose to skip this question²²², indicating that it is particularly difficult for interpreters to tick one of the boxes and take a clear-cut position.

As could be expected judging from the responses to previous questions, the ‘full and active participation’ option got only 4% of the responses (7), mostly from respondents who had also declared that 75% of ELF speakers express themselves clearly and effectively and are in the category of 1-10 years of experience, therefore in line with the small part of the sample that shows a more positive attitude towards ELF being used in this context.

14% of respondents believe that ELF is not necessarily relevant when discussing the topic of meeting participation, while the bulk of respondents opted for one of the middle-ground answers, leaning more towards a less enthusiastic attitude, as 35% (62 respondents) believe it still guarantees a certain level of participation, a glass half full so to say, and 47% (84 responses) believe it is actually a hindrance to full participation. What these 146 interpreters (82%) definitely agree on is that participation tends to be partial and passive.

One might argue that the population best indicated to express an opinion on the subject is that of actual participants to meetings (see Chapter 6), as they are best placed to assess first and foremost their degree of satisfaction with their participation, the reasons they decided to be more or less vocal during a meeting, and possibly even the communicative effectiveness of other interlocutors, if only from a pragmatic point of view.

On the other hand, interpreters have a perspective to offer that is quite unique to their role within institutions, as the sample of events and speakers that they manage to collect throughout their career is unrivalled (see 3.5). They do participate in meetings with different language arrangements, with full regimes and very limited ones, with excellent speakers – irrespective of the language they use – and less talented ones, they witness what it is like when a meeting runs smoothly and is very inclusive and what the consequences can be when participants feel they are not following proceedings, misunderstandings arise, and debates go stale.

²²² Four respondents provided comments despite not ticking any box, either claiming that they find it hard to make the requested assessment or that it largely depends on the proficiency of the speakers involved (C9.9, C9.14, C9.21, C9.22).

Furthermore, there are several clues to perceive how involved participants are and whether they seem to follow the debate: the questions that are asked, whether people react to jokes, irony, indirect requests, even their body language can sometimes speak louder than words, and all these dynamics reveal themselves before the eyes of interpreters, so much so that in time they develop a sense enabling them to anticipate how successful the meeting will be on the communicative plan.

Not least, they are trained experts in this exact field, daily practising their own speech comprehension and production skills, aiming at being effective communicators themselves and therefore aware of what is required for communication to be successful.

5.9.2 Q9: comments

The comment section to this question contains 25 comments (see Figure 33), 11 from respondents opting for the ‘ELF hinders full participation’ option, six from respondents of the ‘ELF guarantees partial participation’ option and one from the ‘full participation’ group. Furthermore four respondents commented on why ELF is not relevant and four of the respondents skipping Q9 explain why they did so.

All comments contribute to outlining a clear-cut position that does not seem fuelled by the interpreters’ concerns related to their own profession, but rather by wider issues of equality and democratic participation.

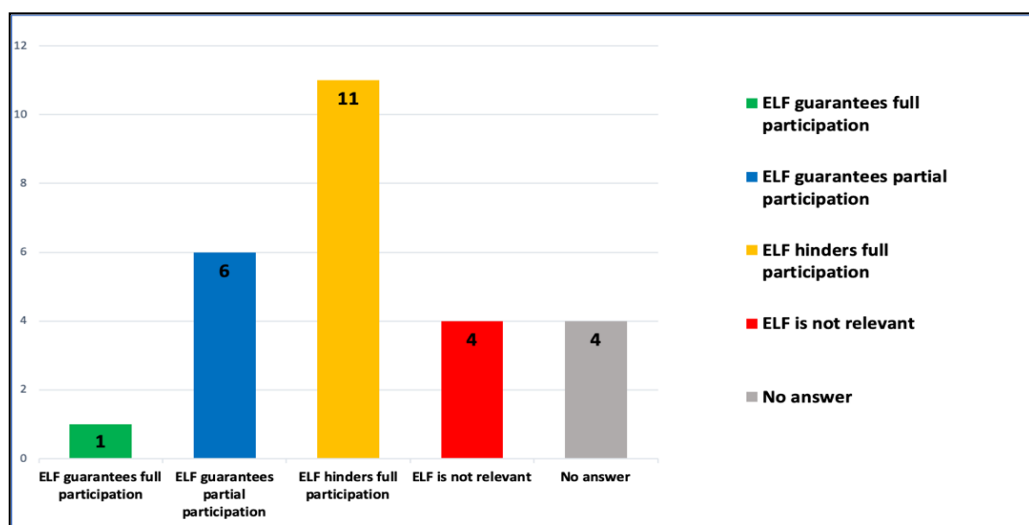


Figure 33 Commentators’ distribution based on Q9 available answers

⇒ *ELF guarantees full participation*

The respondent from the ‘it guarantees full participation’ group declares that:

- Given that (almost) all participants can follow the meeting in English, the ones who can’t will inevitable [sic] be relegated to a secondary role. [C9.3]

Even an ELF supporter admits that ELF only works for those who can follow the meeting in English, and therefore have certain language skills. The others, in a Darwinian mechanism, are bound to be relegated to a more marginal position. Full participation is only guaranteed to a limited number of participants.

⇒ *ELF guarantees partial participation*

Respondents in this group too point out that there is a risk in terms of fair participation, namely that the selection of delegates participating in the meeting could be determined according to their command of English:

- Delegates use documents in English. Therefore they probably understand English. **Delegates who do not understand English at all will not be sent to meetings.** [C9.8]
[emphasis added]

The suspicion arises that a selection could be made before the meeting even starts, thus creating a sort of barrier to entry. That is not to say that people participating in meetings are not competent or able to, but the ‘burden’ of ensuring a democratic participation to meetings is somewhat shifted to Member States, or external participants, who are in charge of ‘sending to Brussels’ someone who is not only competent on the files to be discussed but also fluent in English.

Delegations and, on a higher level, Member States themselves, are therefore not equal. Depending on the meeting and the individual participants, these differences might take on

completely different geometries and possibly even out, but once interpretation is strongly limited, it is the Member States that should ensure that their representatives are properly trained linguistically:

- **All delegations are not equal**, certainly in Commission meetings where experts from big member states have an **advantage** over delegates from smaller MS, because most of the time only 5 to 7 languages (if not less) are available. [C9.10]
- Especially at expert level in the so-called comitology²³³ meetings, the (pre)dominance of English and the unavailability of interpretation into the native languages of the experts, **prevents many of them from actively participating** in the meetings. [C9.23]
[emphasis added]

⇒ *ELF hinders full participation*

The topics raised by the comments' authors do not change depending on their answer to Q9. In this group of comments too, the different impact on participants is stressed:

- [it affects] especially the **smaller states without booth**. [C9.15]

As one respondent notes, the main problem seems to be that:

- [ELF] creates a completely uneven playing field. [C9.2]

This line of thought is embraced in equal measure by those considering ELF as a hurdle and those regarding it as a partial contributor to full participation. It is put forward as an objective condition that to some is clearly detrimental and unfair, whereas others seem to be prone to regard it as a necessary evil or, in any case, an unchangeable state of affairs:

- Often speakers who don't fully master ELF **limit their interventions**. [C9.7]
- If the speaker in a meeting is not a proficient user of English but decides to use it nonetheless, I have the feeling it sometimes **'infantilises'** their way of communicating/participating in a debate. [C9.24]

²³³ "EU laws sometimes authorise the European Commission to adopt implementing acts, which set conditions that ensure a given law is applied uniformly. Comitology refers to a set of procedures, including meetings of representative committees, that give EU countries a say in the implementing acts." (available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/implementing-and-delegated-acts/comitology_en; last accessed May 2019).

[emphasis added]

Some of the interpreters are fairly critical, and voice their concerns on the effects that the lack of full participation due to ELF has in practical terms. The *leitmotiv* is that some participants, be it because of their proficiency or because of the lack of opportunities to use their L1, end up being in an unfavourable position. They are unable to follow proceedings, partly lose their authoritativeness or even limit their interventions.

Other respondents seem to be conscious of the logistical problems that would arise in organising meetings if ELF were not to be used, but are equally aware of the price some are paying:

- Of course, **a full regime is not always possible**, but I'm sure some delegates **could contribute more fully** if they could do more than [sic] just painfully read their instructions. [C9.5]
- **If ELF is the only option** of course it helps actors participate, at the same time I believe their participation is **less spontaneous**. You can prepare your first intervention at home, but not the responses to the discussion that then follows. [C9.6]
[emphasis added]

'If ELF is the only option' conveys the idea that some participants are left with no alternative. If they can choose between interpretation and ELF they might still decide to go for ELF, but when no alternative is offered then clearly ELF enables interlocutors to interact, but only to the extent that they can.

Some interpreters go as far as to speculate on the effect this language arrangement at meetings might have on single participants and, on a higher level, on the functioning of meetings themselves:

- Yes, this is the tricky part. I suspect that in a room with a majority of people who prefer to speak English, there will be delegates who feel **self-conscious** or **insecure** about their language skills and will be **too embarrassed to speak their mind**. [C9.4]
- People **do not dare** to say they don't understand their colleagues' poor English and also **don't want to be the only ones speaking their native language**. In the end they neither understand or express themselves. [C9.16]

- I suspect that some delegates choose not to speak because **they do not feel comfortable** enough speaking a foreign language and they feel **ashamed of speaking their native language** because they fear it will come across as a sign that their English is not good enough. I have no proof of this though. **I also suspect that delegates who talk to each other in ELF without listening to the interpretation sometimes actually do not understand each other.** [C9.18]
- **I have personally heard speakers remark at meetings how much more confident they feel when they can express their opinion in their own language, whereas they feel at a disadvantage when they have to get by in English.** [C9.25]
[emphasis added]

The words selected by these respondents are particularly significant: ‘self-conscious’, ‘insecure’, ‘embarrassed’, ‘ashamed’. Interpreters seem to perceive that there is a peer-pressure mechanism building up in certain meetings. It might not be the result of a deliberate decision of participants to shame or belittle other interlocutors, who furthermore mostly enjoy the same status, yet addressing the audience while not feeling confident and fluent can easily end up having this unintended consequence.

Ample research on ELF (e.g. Firth 1996, House 1999, Seidlhofer 2001, Matsumoto 2011) has demonstrated that ELF speakers are mutually supportive and consensus-oriented. The “let-it-pass” principle (see 1.3.3), though, could be stretched to its limits, should participants feel that voicing their difficulties could make them appear unsupportive and undermine their position. In C9.25, the interpreter even reveals the content of direct conversations s/he had with participants, admitting to feeling disadvantaged when they do not have the opportunity to use their mother tongue.

⇒ *ELF is not relevant*

As to commentators believing that ELF is not relevant when assessing actors’ participation during meetings, they share the same considerations as other respondents and concede that much depends on the speakers’ skills, and that as a result participants might

be assigned to meetings based on their English proficiency – which is not a pertinent criterion – or else be left in the dark as to what other colleagues are saying.

- Very much depends on the **personal command of English**. Those with high proficiency can participate full and active, others less. [C9.11]
- [It guarantees full and active participation] Because some people have a very [high] level of english. But **that should Not be why you're sent to Bruxelles**. You should be sent because you know the files, the technical issues. [C9.12]
- Actors using ELF believe they are coming across more easily and directly, in highly technical meetings this can sometimes be partially true, but mostly **listeners are left in the dark** including English mother tongue participants... [C9.17]

⇒ *No answer*

Respondents in this group, despite not taking a position when replying to Q8, wonder whether participants actually benefit from using ELF:

- I honestly do not have a clue. I know that many participants think that communicating 'directly' will be beneficial. However, I think it all depends (again) on the quality of ELF spoken. If the speaker has a heavy Spanish accent and uses confusing vocab and grammar, I think many participants will fall asleep or get distracted by other tasks. [C9.14]
- One does not know if some delegates who do not feel comfortable speaking English do not feel intimidated by hearing all the others using ELF which makes them participating less in the discussion. [C9.22]

They suggest that based on their ability to use ELF effectively, participants might enjoy a different status: either they speak fluently and are therefore more dominant, or they end up being ignored when they speak or even refrain from participating actively in the meeting.

5.9 Q10: ELF and multilingualism, a difficult coexistence?

Q10. The unregulated use of ELF is a threat to the principle of multilingualism. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the previous statement.

- I strongly agree
- I agree

- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

The last closed question of the survey (Q10) explores the difficult relationship between multilingualism and ELF. The formal and official position of the EU on the topic is straightforward, as multilingualism is one of the founding values of the European project. This principle needs to be then applied to different contexts (official meetings, public events, production of legally binding and non-binding documents, websites, tenders, public competitions) and at different levels (contacts with the general public and civil society, relationships with Member States' and Third States' authorities, working arrangements within the institutions themselves – that is working languages).

The use of a lingua franca can have a different impact on any of these components: in certain occasions, it can prove a useful tool to avoid very complex and possible costly solutions, but if it were to completely replace the use of national languages it might render vain the principle of multilingualism.

Hence, formulating the question as a mere contraposition between ELF and multilingualism did not seem appropriate, as it would have implied too simplistic and dichotomous a representation of a very complex landscape, where the two realities are not *de facto* mutually exclusive but do coexist, often though in what seems a poorly defined and regulated environment.

5.10.1 Q10: results

Respondents are asked to what extent they agree/disagree with the following statement: “The unregulated use of ELF is a threat to the principle of multilingualism.” ELF is not presented as a threat itself, but rather an unregulated and possibly arbitrary use of it is. No hint is provided as to what could be done to regulate such use, as interpreters themselves might have different ideas in mind, and the door is fully open to any possible interpretation of the term regulated/unregulated, as long as it includes some degree of intentional decision-making on the subject.

Furthermore, the accent is shifted from the future of the profession of interpreters – which is naturally closely tied to the principle of multilingualism anyway – to the future

of multilingualism itself. The question therefore invites interpreters to broaden their reflection on language policies and rights, rather than limiting their reflections on the impact on their job.

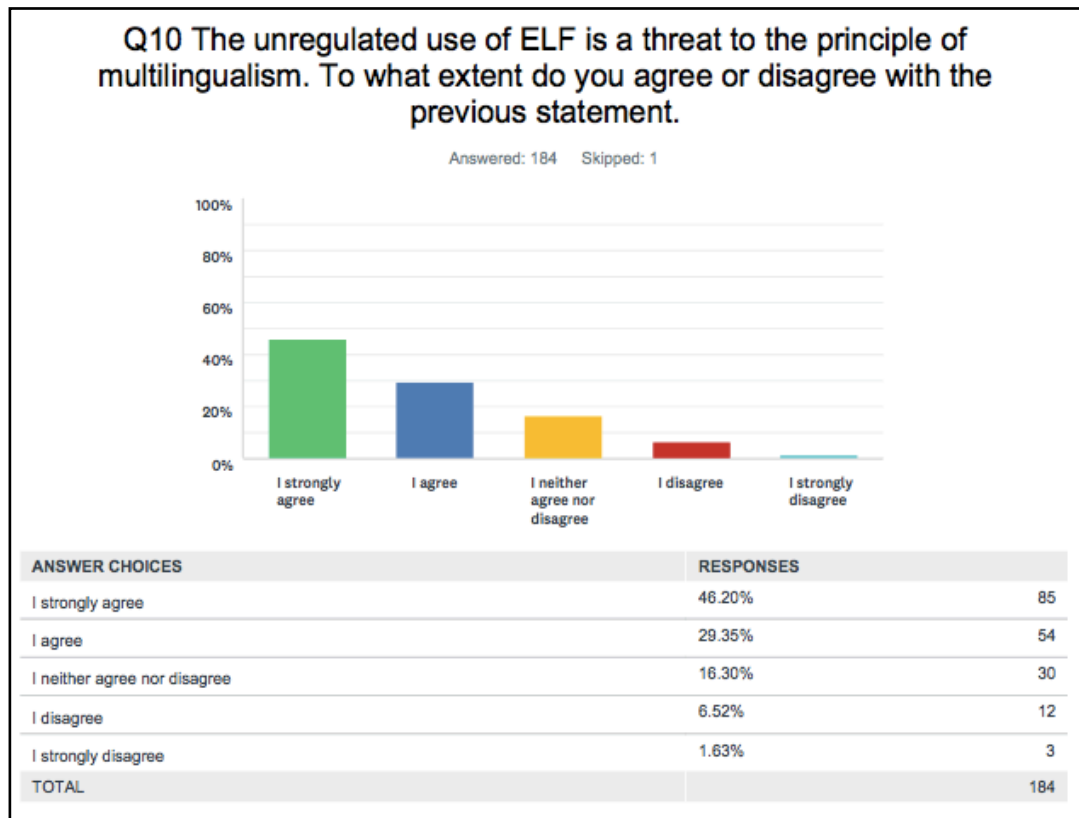


Figure 34 Graph and Table referring to Q10

There is a clear majority that agree with the statement put forward, more specifically 54 respondents agree (29%) and 85 strongly agree (46%) making a total of 75% (see Figure 34). On the other extreme of the scale, only 12 respondents disagree (6%) and three strongly disagree (2%), making a total of 8%. The remaining part (roughly 16%) neither agree nor disagree. Interestingly enough, in the section comment, five of the 15 disagreeing respondents attach quite meaningful *caveats* to their answers, either acknowledging a certain degree of multilingualism loss, or offering tentative solutions – thereby implicitly admitting to the existence of a problem.

5.10.2 Q10 comments

The comment section to this question, which contains 25 contributions, substantiates the quantitative data, as the sample of commentators includes representatives for all the different choices. More specifically, six comments were left by respondents in the ‘I strongly agree’ group, four by respondents in the ‘I agree’ group, eight by respondents in the ‘I neither agree nor disagree’ group, five by respondents in the ‘I disagree’ group and two by respondents in the ‘I strongly disagree’ group (see Figure 35).

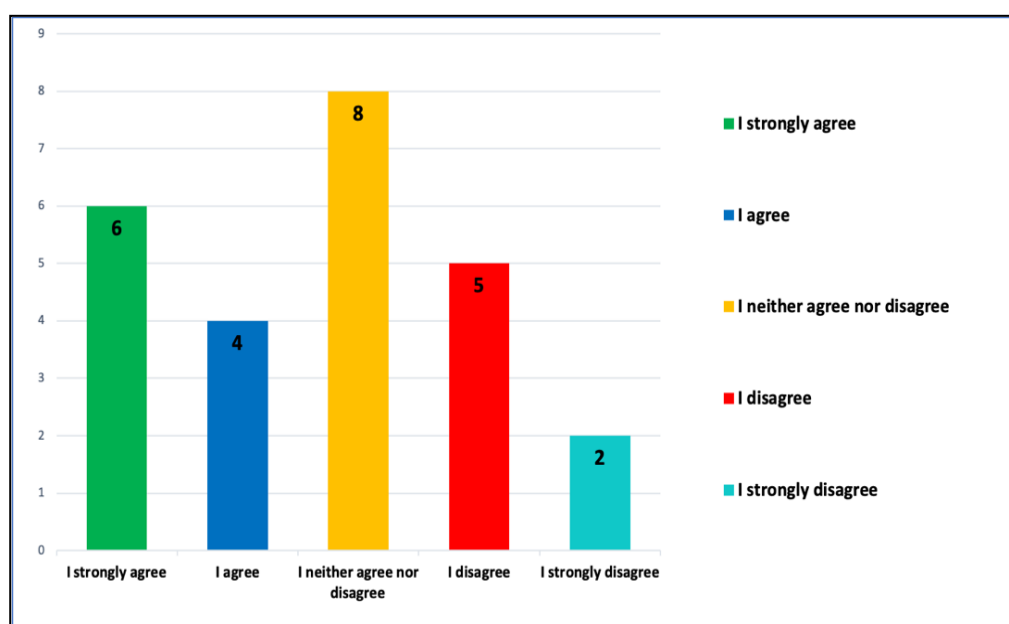


Figure 35 Commentators' distribution based on Q10 available answers

Irrespective of the replies given to Q10, commentators basically adopt two approaches: they either manifest mixed feelings on the topic, express perplexities on how to possibly regulate the use of ELF and therefore, despite agreeing that it is detrimental, do not identify a possible way out of the current situations, or they display a more constructive attitude, pointing to possible solutions. Overall, most of these interpreters seem to believe that multilingualism and ELF could coexist peacefully as long as some kind of action is taken to ensure that language diversity is promoted and safeguarded.

⇒ *I (strongly) agree*

The most sceptical voices can be found in ‘agreeing’ respondents:

- [I agree] It is a fact that it will negatively affect the principle of multilingualism. Having said that, I do not think you can 'regulate' the use of ELF as one of the advantages of multilingualism is precisely that one be able to choose what language to speak. [C10.19]
- [I strongly agree] Although I am not sure to which extent one could regulate the use of ELF. [C10.24]
- [I strongly agree] But they are free to use any language they want, you cannot impose multilingualism. [C10.10]
- [I agree] Then again, how to 'regulate' the use of ELF? By what standards? But definitely, in the long run, this will damage the principle of multilingualism, because everything will become globish. Hence, ELF is also a threat to the Queen's English. [C10.16]

The strength of multilingualism lies in the freedom that is offered to individuals to express themselves in any of the official languages of the EU, English included; therefore obliging anyone wishing to use ELF not to do so would be a violation of the very same principle of multilingualism. Still, these comments are not neutral, they express resignation and the conviction that multilingualism is at risk (all commentators agree with that), and so is the quality of communication:

- [I strongly agree] A brave new world -read limbo- is emerging where nobody speaks the language (in Union acts, uk delegates are confronted with globish that expresses notions of Roman or napoleonic law that has no equivalent in common law). Nobody grasps the nuances. Nobody feels the weight or seriousness of the words and notions they handle. [C10.2]

Furthermore, choosing which language to speak means selecting the most appropriate of two or more alternatives, within a specific context:

- I think the fact that delegates or officers speak english [sic] on top of their mother tongue IS in fact multilingualism in real life. The threat lies in the lack of linguistic awareness: one can speak elf with colleagues on the workplace, but should keep in mind that public speaking in a meeting is a different activity where they might want to focus on content rather than [sic] terminology, syntax or plurals. Also, there is a lack of awareness concerning interpreters' activity and abilities. [C10.12]

The real threat is not ELF *per se*, but rather that ‘lack of awareness’ as to the impact that its use has on the quality of participants’ performance when compared to the interpretation service. The interpreter in this comment is suggesting that participants profit from attending a meeting using their MT, and indeed this perception is confirmed by meeting participants themselves (see 6.4).

⇒ *I neither agree nor disagree*

In this group too there are some respondents who express their resignation to the current state of affairs:

- ELF is a fact of life and is there to stay. [C10.15]

Others, on the other hand, try to venture alternatives to the use of ELF or in any case argue in favour of accompanying measures, such as the promotion of language learning or a more extensive use of interpretation:

- I would be favourable to a generalized use of English among the Institutions, if English became officially the 2nd language taught [sic] everywhere in Europe. Every child should be obliged to learn English, besides his mother tongue, as of primary school. [C10.4]
- I wouldn't blame it on English. Rather, I believe that the use of multiple languages should be actively and explicitly encouraged. The German or the French delegates do not need such encouragement, but people from my country, for instance (Romania) think it's not cool to not speak English (small culture complex). [C10.5]

Interpretation – with a wider offer of languages – combined with ELF seems a reasonable way to cater for everybody’s needs, which boil down to a wider promotion of official languages during meetings. A mention is also made to the need to improve English learning at school, ‘obliging’ children to study it. The European Union is undoubtedly already promoting language learning (see 2.3), though not explicitly English, as picking one official language over the others would clearly breach the principle of equality of all official languages.

Language arrangements and solutions offered to meeting participants are part of an internal policy and the direct result of decisions taken (not) to offer an interpretation service. If the language landscape were to change in Europe, so that English were in all contexts sufficient to provide an equal playing field for all participants at meetings, one might presume that the policies would be modified accordingly. But according to some respondents, they scenario is currently different, and some participants are left with no alternative:

- Some countries don't have any other choice. Big countries like France and Germany will always speak their language. [C10.18]

The distinction here is no longer between participants who can or cannot, based on their linguistic needs, but there seems to be a distribution that is geographically or politically marked.

One comment specifically dwells on the political nature of the topic:

- I neither agree nor disagree because the principle of multilingualism is set politically, based on a certain set of socio-linguistic circumstances. But languages and their status in society evolve, partially influenced by whatever restraints the political imposes on them. Therefore in my opinion the existence of a threat is perceivable only from the perspective of a politically mandated unchanging principle, whereas from the perspective of the ever-changing nature of human language, ELF is not a threat, it's just another evolution. [C10.21]

ELF, again, is a 'fact of life', and there is little arguing with this observation. Languages evolve and the path of ELF in the last decades has been impressive and ineluctable. Multilingualism, on the other hand, is in this case a 'fact of policy'; it is to all intents and purposes a language policy, agreed between Member States of an international body and laid down in legally binding texts with the specific objective of keeping said body democratic and transparent.

⇒ *I (strongly) disagree*

The idea of ELF being unavoidable and impossible to regulate can be found in this group of comments as well:

- [I disagree] ELF will always be around. How would you regulate it? You can't force people not to use it [...]. [C10.7]

One comment seems to suggest that having the chance to listen to interpretation in one's MT while choosing to speak ELF would be enough to safeguard the principle of multilingualism:

- [I disagree] Even if participants at meetings speak in English, they could still listen to interpretation into their mother tongue to be able to take notes more easily or follow long discussions with less effort. That way the principle of multilingualism is not jeopardised. [C10.3]

C10.3, though, does not take into account that interpretation is not currently being offered for all languages in all meetings (see 3.4). Consequently, even though multilingualism is not jeopardised to the extent that more than one language is being used, some might be paying a higher price than others:

- [I strongly disagree] During multilingual meetings countries such as France and Germany will, in my opinion, never give up on the possibility of speaking their mother tongue. The use of EFL [sic] could be seen as a threat to multilingualism with respect to the use of "smaller" languages, e.g. Latvian, Estonian or Finnish. [C10.23]

These comments shed light on the effects that the current application of the principle of multilingualism actually has on the access to the supposed 'freedom of choice': some countries and some languages do get access to this right, while others do not. The use of the adjective 'smaller' to refer to Latvian, Estonian and Finnish is in itself contrary to the principle of language equality.

5.11 Q11: Interpreters take the floor

Q11. Any other comments you wish to share on your professional experience with English as a Lingua Franca are highly appreciated. Thank you!

Q11 is not really a question, but rather an opportunity that is given to respondents to add any comment they might wish to share on their professional experience with ELF, which was seized by 48 respondents (26%).

Comments consistently dwell upon and enhance aspects already mentioned throughout the whole survey. They concentrate – in line with the content of the questionnaire – on matters mostly related to communicative effectiveness, multilingualism and fair and equal participation, adding insights on how the role of the interpreter is involved in this scenario, while not monopolising the ‘debate’ with a self-referential approach. Comments reveal a widespread feeling of frustration, expressed both in relation to an environment that does not always offer all the necessary conditions for interpreters to guarantee a high-quality service and to the awareness that communication quality seems to be paying the highest toll.

While some of the topics raised had already been mentioned in previous comment sections, new lines of thought are introduced and some interpreters even take the chance to express their opinion on the role of the profession – which is never overtly mentioned in any question – and their personal feelings on the topic.

Comments vary considerably, both in terms of length and subject matter. Some are few-word exclamations, whereas others are more elaborate analyses and considerations on a series of topics. Different themes have been identified, and comments have been categorised accordingly. Some might fall within more than one category when more than one topic is raised by a single respondent.

The themes identified are: ‘frustration’, ‘language skills’, ‘no to ELF’, ‘role of the interpreter’, ‘language policies’, ‘credibility’, ‘different perceptions’, ‘culture/context relevance’, ‘role of the Commission’, ‘Brexit’, ‘other’.

The following chart (Figure 36) therefore refers to the number of ‘mentions’ of each theme within the total comments.

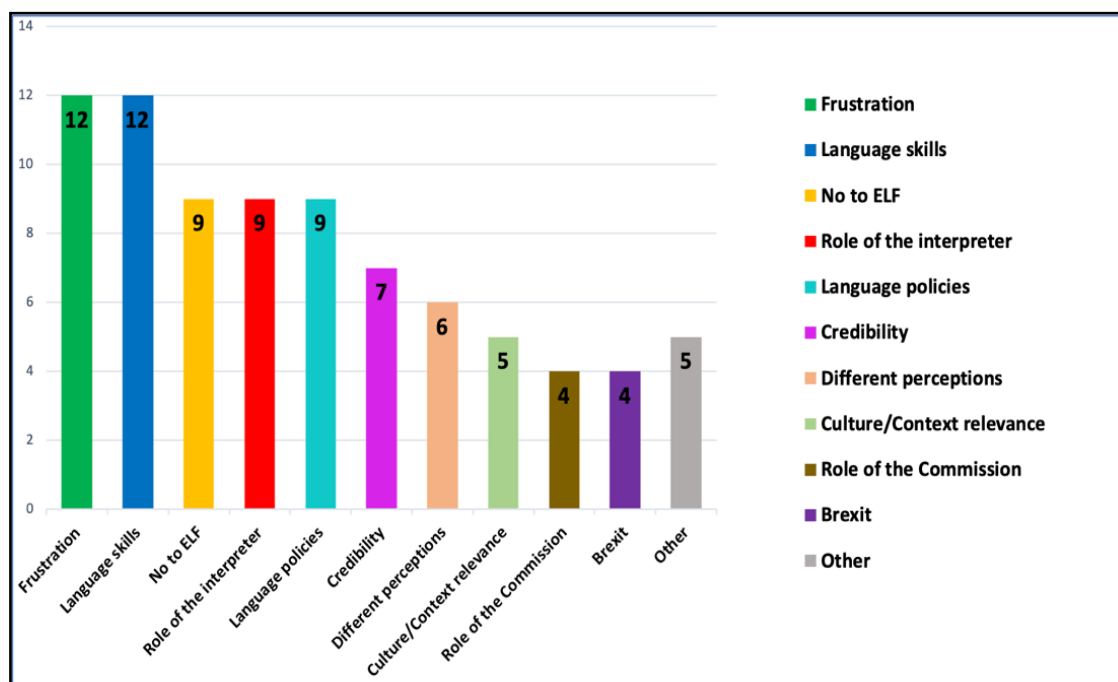


Figure 36 Comments' distribution by topic

More specifically, comments have been divided into the above-mentioned categories as follows:

Frustration	C11.3, C11.4, C11.6, C11.9, C11.16, C11.20, C11.23, C11.26, C11.27, C11.32, C11.42, C11.43
Language skills	C11.7, C11.9, C11.20, C11.26, C11.27, C11.30, C11.33, C11.37, C11.38, C11.43, C11.44, C11.47
No to ELF	C11.1, C11.5, C11.6, C11.38, C11.42, C11.43, C11.44, C11.47, C11.48
Role of the interpreter	C11.3, C11.8, C11.14, C11.15, C11.21, C11.26, C11.28, C11.31, C11.33
Language policies	C11.2, C11.6, C11.12, C11.22, C11.25, C11.26, C11.36, C11.41, C11.48
Credibility	C11.5, C11.33, C11.37, C11.38, C11.41, C11.44, C11.47
Different perceptions	C11.8, C11.13, C11.14, C11.17, C11.32, C11.46
Culture/Context relevance	C11.4, C11.19, C11.26, C11.28, C11.45
Role of the Commission	C11.6, C11.7, C11.27, C11.29
Brexit	C11.9, C11.10, C11.11, C11.18
Other	C11.24, C11.34, C11.35, C11.39, C11.40

Table 5. Comments to Q11 divided by topic.

⇒ *Frustration*

The feeling of frustration is the one which permeates by far the most comments, indicating interpreters' awareness of struggling with ELF. In addition to the increasing difficulty (see 5.8), they feel that their efforts and dedication are neither acknowledged nor appreciated:

- When will we have a week when we interpret what the speakers actually say? It would be good for them to understand how much we help them!! [C11.3]
- [...] I find it hard to cope with a language that doesn't exist and changes form from delegate to delegate. It is hard to interpret also because it doesn't betray/convey the cultural aspects of the language which usually help grasp the true meaning with native speakers. [C11.4]
- ELF weakened my English. [C.11.16]
- ELF has made the profession more challenging and less rewarding [C11.23]
- It's a losing battle. [C11.42]

ELF is regarded in these comments as a language which does not even exist as such, and has made it impossible for interpreters to understand what speakers say, so much so that they regard it as a lost battle and frustration transforms into resignation.

⇒ *Language skills*

Another recurrent theme throughout the comments (in the whole survey and not just in Q11; see 5.5.2, 5.6.2, 5.7.2 and 5.9.2) is that of language skills, preventing speakers to express themselves clearly and effectively:

- The problem is when a non English speaking audience suffers ELF spoken by non native. In those cases we would need interpreting from ELF to Native English. [C11.9]
- ELF easily kills all spontaneous, 'real' discussions because the participants just read out their speeches written in English - probably because their knowledge of English is not sufficient so as to allow them to express their ideas freely... highly frustrating to interpreters and delegates equally, I think! [C11.43]
- So often the message gets lost and even highly professional people loose [sic] their credibility while speaking poor or badly English. [C11.44]

These comments reiterate arguments already presented, namely that poor language competence damages the quality of communication, limiting speakers' ability to express themselves freely and convincingly and undermining interactive discussions.

⇒ *No to ELF*

As emerged clearly throughout the questionnaire, there is a group of respondents that is openly against the use of ELF, believe most speakers are not up to the task when expressing themselves in English and warn against the consequences for communication as a whole:

- Just say no to Globish. [C11.1]
- Le recours croissant au "globish" appauvrit les débats, complique la communication à cause des calques, des prononciations hasardeuses, des syntaxes boiteuses. Sans oublier ces orateurs qui pensent que leur message passera plus vite s'ils parlent "anglais" !!! [C11.47]
[the increasing use of 'globish' impoverishes debates, makes communication complex because of calques, random pronunciations, flawed syntax. Not to mention those speakers who believe their message will come across faster if they speak 'English'!!!]

⇒ *Role of the interpreter*

Another interesting – and so far less evident – strand of comments is that exploring the role of the interpreter in this scenario:

- **The better the quality of the interpretation provided, the better the languages will thrive during the meetings.** One leads to another, in a circular movement. The more the delegates feel they are in good hands, the more they will be tempted to think the same of the other booths (where they know they will be interpreted from) and to speak their own language. [C11.14]
- **The widespread use of ELF is also undermining the role and status of interpreters, whose professional competence is becoming less and less appreciated.** They are moreover increasingly seen as a **nuisance** by those who would wish to hold meetings entirely in "English" (hence: demand for remote), while their assistance is often perceived as something to be ashamed about (by those who need interpretation). [C11.31]

- I think a lot of people feel like they have to prove that they know how to speak English in an international context. Also many people in this institutional context need English for their everyday-work. So speak in meeting the same way the [sic] do outside of meetings. Often they don't even know the technical terms in their mother tongue because the only language they use is English. Everybody speaks the same level of Globish so there is no shame. Most people in the room make the same mistakes, have the same terrible pronunciation. So you don't have to be ashamed of your bad English. Last but not least: **not trusting the interpreters. Many I think do not understand our profession and therefor [sic] do not understand what we need to be able to deliver the best possible result.** [C11.33]
[emphasis added]

Interpreters complain about the fact that ELF is undermining their role and their status, yet they also acknowledge that a high-quality service might be the only response to regain clients' trust. Some delegates do not perceive interpreters' potential and usefulness, and even when they do they might feel that needing the interpretation service is a sign of weakness, something to be ashamed of. Even though these comments are very limited in number, they are perfectly in line with studies on this topic (see 1.5.1).

⇒ *Language policies*

In the specific case of the EU, some interpreters seem to find an explanation for the tendency to resort to ELF in the decisions that are taken at a higher level, in terms of language policies, which might be linked to financial considerations:

- How can you ensure the respect of every language if you make it easier to use only one of the 24 official languages? [C11.2]
- I think it really comes down to the budget for interpreting/translation and interpreting capacities. If all languages could be covered all the time, there would definitely be less ELF. [C11.36]
- It puts everyone who does not perfectly master English at a disadvantage and reduces their right of expression compared to others. [C11.48]

According to these comments, the EU Institutions are knowingly creating the necessary conditions for ELF to flourish, possibly to save money by limiting interpretation services. The consequence, though, is a policy that engenders inequalities in terms of participation rights. A respondent comments very emphatically on the same issues:

- Not so sure if English is a Lingua Franca. To me, at least as the UE [sic] institutions are concerned, it is more a sort of intellectual, (big word in this context I guess) apparently money saving (interpreters are so f... expensive they say) emasculation (imposed by an intransigent minority, every heard a native english [sic] speaker speaking in french or german [sic]???) and happily accepted by a complacent herd of burocrats, so unaware that they were/are giving up authority and power, ever seen a mostly pathetic ELF user bringing home some good points???) [...]. [C11.41]

This comment comprises all the above-mentioned points, namely the concern institutions feel in terms of the cost of interpretation, the unequal distribution of language rights, and the loss of incisiveness and effectiveness that ELF speakers often run into.

⇒ *Credibility*

The observations and remarks concerning speakers' credibility are frequent throughout the whole survey (see 5.6.2 and 5.9.2) and mostly focus on what the situation is like in the room rather than in the booth: the authoritativeness and incisiveness of speakers are at stake, as well as the quality of the discussions being held during meetings:

- People usually do not understand, that if you do not know a foreign language well, you look like a **fool**, when you speak it. And that may make others **doubt whether you really know what you are talking about**. [C11.5]
- One of the most worrying aspects is how **the general level of discussions is often dragged down** to the lowest common denominator, so that the poor command of many EFL [sic] speakers leads to **nuances being lost and discourse being oversimplified**. Leaving aside the intellectual dullness of the exercise, it also undermines the **political authenticity of negotiations** and the **factual accuracy of exchanges**. [C11.38]
- So often **the message gets lost** and **even highly professional people loose** [sic] **their credibility** while speaking poor or badly English. [C11.44]
[emphasis added]

According to the authors of these comments, it is not only the status of participants that is being compromised, but the quality of discussions and negotiations. The communication interpreters are commenting upon is of an institutional nature and the goals pursued are

mainly matters of public interest (see 4.3), thus implying that the loss of ‘political authenticity’ and ‘nuances’ might be detrimental well beyond the meetings.

⇒ *Different perceptions*

One group of interpreters wonders whether meeting participants might have a different perception of the phenomenon:

- I think the delegates using ELF could have a different perception of the situation. They may be more enthusiastic about it than the interpreters. [C11.8]
- I think it would be even more interesting to see what meeting participants think about the use of EFL by other participants. Do they find that communication is easier when listen [sic] to people speaking EFL [sic] rather than their own language that is then interpreted? [C11.13]

These comments confirm that interpreters are not self-absorbed. They are aware that their perception needs to be complemented by that of their clients, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of their services and might not share their point of view.

⇒ *Culture and context relevance*

Another theme addressed by respondents to Q11 is that of context and cultural relevance, which might act both as an advantage and as a barrier to communication: sharing the same context and culture can help interlocutors understand each other and overcome misunderstandings, but ELF speakers might conversely prove unable to convey culture-related elements which are an essential part of communication.

- [...] It is hard to interpret also because it doesn't betray/convey the cultural aspects of the language which usually help grasp the true meaning with native speakers.” [C11.4]
- Context dependency is the only reason why ELF has a strong foothold in the EU. Delegates understand each other in spite of rather than thanks to their deficient use of ELF simply because they can anticipate what their counterparts are likely to say. [C11.19]

⇒ *Role of the Commission*

The (negative) role the Commission has in this context and with respect to multilingualism is confirmed in this section:

- Unfortunately meeting organisers do not seem to share my point of view, certainly in the Commission, where I have the impression that many colleagues from other DGs largely overrate their English proficiency and would wish everything to take place in English. Regularly, **the Commission organises conference which "will be held in English"... with interpretation** in EN, DE, FR, for example, and **speakers who dare use another language are looked at with irritation if not mocked by the moderators**. This is not that seldom, unfortunately. [C11.27]
- The usage of English as lingua franca is, in my opinion, a big disgrace. It is the worst thing that could happen to multilingualism [sic]. I know it is **highly encouraged in the Commission services** and I guess they do it to save money. It is one of the reasons that pushed me to drastically decrease [sic] my workload at the Institutions in Brussels. I much more prefer working at the Court of Justice or simply doing something else. [C11.6]
[emphasis added]

The last comment, in addition to raising the reasonable doubt that some decisions taken on the use of ELF might be motivated merely by budgetary considerations, also voices the respondent's frustration and dissatisfaction, that was so acute as to prompt a rethink of his/her workload in favour of a more multilingual environment.

⇒ *Brexit*

Finally, some interpreters raise the topic of Brexit (see 2.7), wondering if the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU might determine a shift in the language policies:

- I am afraid that after Brexit the English used in meetings will get poorer. [C11.18]
- I am curious about English being used as a lingua franca in the EU institutions after Brexit. [C11.10]
- The Brits are leaving and we're still using their language [C11.11]

All IPE comments have been merged together in one single file and then analysed by means of the tool ‘Sketch Engine’, as if it were one single text, to identify the most recurrent terms and word associations used by respondents (see Figure 37) and thereby obtain a general picture of the interpreters’ attitude across the board.

In terms of word frequency, the most used meaning-carrying word (that is excluding articles or prepositions) is “English” (180 occurrences: 66 as an adjective and 114 as a noun), followed by “speaker” (128, plus 90 for the verb to speak), “language” (93) and then “ELF” (59). This indicates that, even subtracting the instances in which English is used as an adjective, interpreters speak more often of “English”, rather than ELF. Additionally, interpreters also use the term “Globish” to refer to ELF, which appears 20 times in the comments.

Taking the term “English” then, which is the most frequently used in the comments, following are the terms it is associated to the most (see Figure 38).

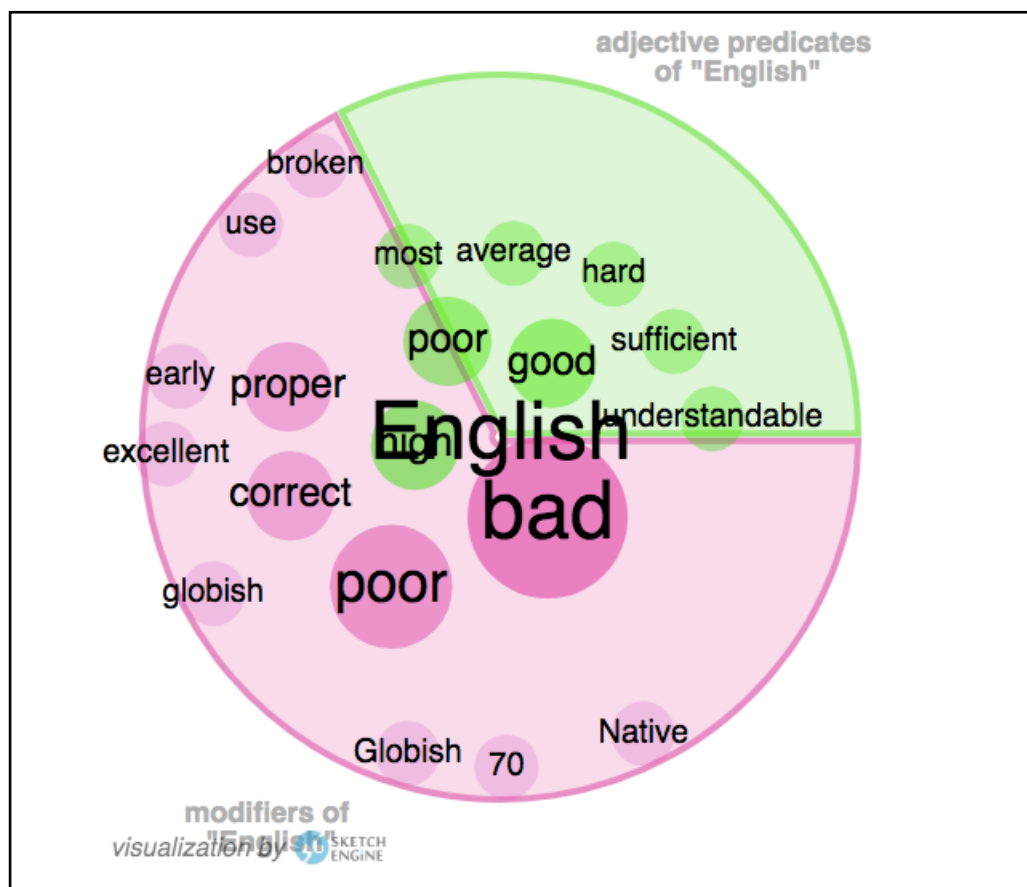


Figure 38 Adjective predicates and modifiers of the term “English”.

Figure 26 visually illustrates which are the adjectives, predicates and the modifiers of the term English, as well as how frequent they are, as indicated by the dimension of the circle surrounding them. The adjective most frequently associated to “English” is “bad” (15 occurrences), closely followed by “poor” (13 occurrences).

Following are some examples²²⁴ of sentences in which the two adjectives, respectively bad (see Figure 39) and poor (see Figure 40), appear together with the term “English”:

doc#0	ible variant of English. </s><s> Unfortunately For some reason, people with	bad	English have a miraculous way of understanding each other. </s><s> They k
doc#0	ld be interesting to hear from delegates whether they understand any better	bad	English spoken by some of their colleagues. </s><s> I think it only increases
doc#0	and can communicate well, in which case it ok; speakers whose English is	bad	, but who are experts and know their terminology - in which case they may b
doc#0	ds on the individual speaker. </s><s> The worst are people who speak very	bad	English and people who speak their mother-tongue as if everybody in their a
doc#0	Did the speaker really mean that? </s><s> Or is it an approximation due to	bad	English? </s><s> Shit on the bed and fok on the table? </s><s> Words are t
doc#0	wanted to convey Applying the logic of the mother-tongue to English If this is	bad	, everything is bad. </s><s> Depends on the speaker. </s><s> Hard to gene
doc#0	e terrible pronunciation. </s><s> So you donÖt have to be ashamed of your	bad	English. </s><s> Last but not least: not trusting the interpreters. </s><s> Ma
doc#0	. But I think it isn't. </s><s> Always depends on the circumstances. </s> <s>	Bad	English is the source of many funny situations and sentences. </s><s> Ques
doc#0	to poor English than interpreters and, alas, they often don't mind listening to	bad	English or using it themselves. </s><s> They know the subject matter, the te

Figure 39 Examples of the terms “bad” and “English” appearing together.

doc#0	th is not at all as good as they might think!! </s><s> Their English is mostly	poor	. </s><s> Speakers are not able to express themselves correctly and do not
doc#0	ave a good speaker who must, for whatever reason, wear the straitjacket of	poor	English that limits their expressive options, takes away from the weight of th
doc#0	ways a risk, but they can be as much a result of interpreting mistakes as of	poor	use of English by delegates. </s><s> The benefits of interpretation (richer a
doc#0	tly fluent in English and most welcome to speak. </s><s> Others have very	poor	English and should avoid using it as working language. </s><s> Nuances gr
doc#0	bably understood by their colleagues even if in general their English is very	poor	(and very hard for interpreters to work with) because of previous conversati
doc#0	interpreter with the other language that would be used otherwise. </s> <s>	Poor	English is one side of the problem, but the flip side is that in their own langu
doc#0	oyed with speakers who can speak their mother-tongue but chose to speak	poor	English. </s><s> May be more demanding according to proficiency. </s><s>
doc#0	ailable People do not dare to say they donÖt understand their colleaguesÖ	poor	English and also donÖt want to be the only ones speaking their native langu
doc#0	ovide added value Good luck with the rest! </s><s> It is not only those with	poor	English who are hard to interpret, but also those with excellent English who
doc#0	/s><s> P.S. Good luck with your PhD Delegates tend to be less sensitive to	poor	English than interpreters and, alas, they often don't mind listening to bad En
doc#0	ost and even highly professional people lose their credibility while speaking	poor	Or badly English. </s><s> It is high time that all Eu officials improve their lar

Figure 40 Examples of the terms “poor” and “English” appearing together.

As can be seen in Figure 26, among the most frequent adjectives there are not only negative adjectives such as bad or poor, but also positive ones such as “good”, “proper” and “correct”. A closer look at the specific examples, though, shows that in most cases the sentences are formulated negatively, so they neutralise the positive connotation of the adjective or are part of a hypothetical if-clause, as is the case in some of the following examples with “good” (see Figure 41):

²²⁴ The sentences provided in this and following boxes (see Figures from 30 to 45) are not the complete list of occurrences but rather a representative sample of the instances in which the terms appear.

st of these speakers should be made aware that their English is not as **good** as they might think!!! Their English is mostly poor. Speaker
nds on an individual speaker. There are speakers whose English is **good** and can communicate well, in which case it ok; speakers whose English is b
s Obviously it depends on the speaker's command of English. If it's **good** or excellent, I'd say it increases the effectiveness, even if it puts us out of a j
age because they fear it will come across as a sign that their English is not **good** enough. I have no proof of this though. I also suspect that c
ualism. Commission should stop talking broken English, that's only **good** for working at the office, not in a meeting Do you intend to propose a regulat
s ELF. When a speaker starts with "I'm sorry my English is not very **good**", it is usually a good sign: their English is actually understandable, and they

Figure 41 Examples of the terms “good” and “English” appearing together.

In other examples, specifically with “correct” (see Figure 42) and “proper” (see Figure 43), correct and proper English are set against ELF, as if to indicate that they are opposites:

lady from the Commission speak polish at a meeting. Globish, not **proper** English, is the lingua franca. Unfortunately :(This tendency clearly
re energy-demanding because of difficulties related to interpreting ELF into **proper** English, so that one can the interpret that into his or her mother-tongue.

Figure 42 Examples of the terms “proper” and “English” appearing together.

ig tendency to speaking their own language. It may not always be **correct** English (grammar, vocab, intonation, nuances), but I think in 75% of the ca
Again, it depends on the speaker. A non-native speaker who uses **correct**, simple English may be easier to interpret than a native who uses three idi

Figure 42 Examples of the terms “correct” and “English” appearing together.

Setting aside the term English, both as a noun and an adjective, and taking a closer look at the most used adjectives in general, “good” and “bad” are indeed the most frequent ones. “Good” is mainly used to describe speakers, revealing a critical stance as to the quality of the language being used but not necessarily of the speakers using them (see Figure 44), whereas “bad” is used for different aspects of language use, such as grammar or pronunciation (see Figure 45):

a poor speaker even in their own mother-tongue, but it is a waste to have a **good** speaker who must, for whatever reason, wear the straitjacket of poor English
on the situation. Let's say that all people around the table are very **good** speakers of English. In this case, I think they're better off using Eng
franca, without intermediaries, more specifically interpreters who 1) can be **good** or bad interpreters and 2) no matter how good they are, will always constitut
nds on an individual speaker. There are speakers whose English is **good** and can communicate well, in which case it ok; speakers whose English is b
s Obviously it depends on the speaker's command of English. If it's **good** or excellent, I'd say it increases the effectiveness, even if it puts us out of a j
in a coherent manner. Native English speakers are not necessarily **good** speakers, nor are non-native speakers bad communicators. Beside:
orty and power, ever seen a mostly pathetic ELF user bringing home some **good** points???. P.S. Good luck with your PhD Delegates tend to be less

Figure 44 Examples with the adjective “good”.

cause it sometimes is almost impossible to understand ELF (pronunciation, **bad** grammar, false friends). I would say it depends on the speaker.
s quicker, but not always since some speakers think they can make up for a **bad** knowledge of English by repeating endlessly! It forces us interprete
s increase the level of communicative effectiveness. Bad language, **bad** communication. Many delegates and speakers overestimate their al
can be such a pleasure - I'm going to miss all those Brits so much! **Bad** pronunciation and non-English structures really make it harder for interprete

Figure 45 Examples with the adjective “bad”.

A further way to analyse adjectives and qualifiers in general and have a wider perspective on the descriptions interpreters offer is to focus on the adverbs “more”, “less” and “very”, which are used for comparatives and superlatives.

The term “more” presents 63 occurrences in the comments. Apart from the instances in which it is used to refer to time or in fixed expressions (i.e. more often, more or less, etc.), three categories can be identified: more + positive adjectives, more + negative adjectives, and more + nouns.

In almost all the instances in which “more” is followed by a positive adjective it is either to describe hypothetical scenarios (speakers who would be more efficient or more confident if they spoke their mother-tongue or who only believe they are more fluent) or to refer to the advantages interpretation brings about (more effective, more accurate) (see Figure 46):

doc#0 t outside the meeting rooms. </s></s> Sometimes it makes the conversation	more	direct	Sometimes it makes the conversation complicated and not very effecti
doc#0 glish words. </s></s> Especially when the non-native speaker believes to be	more	fluent in English than s/he actually is. </s></s> It's all down to the speaker's p	
doc#0 on the speaker. </s></s> If he/she speaks well, it may turn the conversation	more	spontaneous. </s></s> But we notice if the speaker is fast, technical or has a	
doc#0 ersely, if a meeting in which everybody used interpretation would have been	more	effective if everybody had used English. </s></s> I think delegates are differe	
doc#0 e of English by delegates. </s></s> The benefits of interpretation (richer and	more	accurate use of language) outweigh those of direct communication between	
doc#0 etimes struggle to understand, but I think most of them would be more a lot	more	efficient and direct to the point if they used their mother-tongue. </s></s> Mo	
doc#0 e. </s></s> I have personally heard speakers remark at meetings how much	more	confident they feel when they can express their opinion in their own languag	

Figure 46 Examples with “more” + positive adjectives.

On the other hand there is a greater variety of instances in which “more” is associated to a negative adjective describing the effects ELF has on either the quality of communication (more stereotyped, more elementary) or on the interpreters’ job (more tiring, more difficult, more energy-demanding, more challenging) (see Figure 47):

doc#0 reases the level of communicative effectiveness and makes the exchanges	more	stereotyped and less accurate	It all depends on how well people speak Engl
doc#0 > It depends as much on subject matter, speed, etc. but in general, it is a bit	more	tiring since language "gets in the way" of communication. </s></s> Knowing t	
doc#0 the flip side is that in their own language the speakers tend to get faster and	more	complicated, throwing in idioms, jokes and stories from their hometown, so it	
doc#0 >>>> I think it really varies from one speaker to another. </s></s> Some are	more	difficult to interpret either because of a strong accent or because they do not	
doc#0 > The effort already made to follow the speaker's reasoning becomes even	more	energy-demanding because of difficulties related to interpreting ELF into pro	
doc#0 ighish. </s></s> Their accent and lack of clarity, among other factors, make it	more	demanding. </s></s> It also has to be said, however, that their discourse ten	
doc#0 ing. </s></s> It also has to be said, however, that their discourse tends to be	more	elementary from the point of view of register, content and terminology use. <	
doc#0 thout regulation) should be explored. </s></s> ELF has made the profession	more	challenging and less rewarding. </s></s> The widespread use of ELF is also	

Figure 47 Examples with “more” + negative adjectives.

When combined with a noun, “more” is once again predominantly used to describe the negative effects ELF entails, giving rise to more mistakes, problems and misunderstandings and causing more effort and trouble to the interpreters (see Figure 48):

behaviour of Commission officials will change after Brexit, and notably whether	more	individuals will speak their mother-tongues. I doubt it, but one never
the decrease effectiveness since the lack of precise vocabulary and one or	more	mistakes in the speech will make it less relevant and difficult to listen to.
press nuances or failing to understand a question posed to them).	More	misunderstandings, they need to repeat more often. Delegates who
very little experience interpreting non-native speakers.	more	experience interpreting non-native speakers. But it varies greatly fr
is easier, in fact, because you get the "simplified" hybrid structure Requires	more	concentration and effort, especially when non-idiomatic language is used or
I think pronunciation and intonation are the features of ELF that cause	more	trouble. I only struggle with syntax when the ELF speaker is reading
who can't will inevitable be relegated to a secondary role. ELF poses	more	problems to the interpreters than to the delegates. I'd like to tick bot
ation from and into one's mother-tongue is provided, I suppose ELF will be	more	an annoyance than a threat to multilingualism. Although I am no

Figure 48 Examples with “more” + nouns.

This tendency to focus on the negative side of things is even more striking in the case of the term “less”, which is rarely associated with negative adjectives (strict, demanding, see Figure 49), but rather to negative adjectives describing how ELF speakers come across as less competent, self-assured, self-confident, precise, spontaneous, brilliant and the interpreters’ job has become less rewarding and appreciated (see Figure 50).

even if interpretation is available. The linguistic policy of their MS is	less	strict at "technical" level. The behaviour of delegates is sometimes
sometimes determined by linguistic policies. Policies may be more or	less	strict, depending on the level of the conference ("political" or "technical").
one's mother-tongue. Note, though, than sometimes it can also be	less	demanding, especially if the speaker doesn't have a very strong accent but

Figure 49 Examples with “less” + positive adjectives.

speakers who choose English instead of their mother-tongue come across as	less	competent/self-assured than native speakers who can effortlessly express t
communicative effectiveness and makes the exchanges more stereotyped and	less	accurate It all depends on how well people speak English. Accordir
of precise vocabulary and one or more mistakes in the speech will make it	less	relevant and difficult to listen to. It also greatly depends on the leve
delegates understand each other perfectly even if the interventions tend to be	less	brilliant or detailed. It depends on the level and fluidity of English of
a foreign language, I will have some difficulties to express myself, I will look	less	self-confident, as if I were not convinced. How can I be convincing
idiomatic expressions, no cultural or specific references, etc ! All in all it's much	less	satisfying for professionals who get limited to translate very basic and poor
When a speaker does not use his mother-tongue, he/she tends to be	less	precise, hence transmitting often a message that is not what he/she initially
se it helps actors participate, at the same time I believe their participation is	less	spontaneous. You can prepare your first intervention at home, but r
od points??). P.S. Good luck with your PhD Delegates tend to be	less	sensitive to poor English than interpreters and, alas, they often don't mind li
I be explored. ELF has made the profession more challenging and	less	rewarding. The widespread use of ELF is also undermining the role
status of interpreters, whose professional competence is becoming less and	less	appreciated. They are moreover increasingly seen as a nuisance b

Figure 50 Examples with “less” + positive adjectives.

The last term in this group of adverbs, “very”, confirms the pattern which emerged with the previous two, as in most of the cases in which “very” is associated with a positive adjective the sentence has an overall negative meaning, as speakers who do NOT speak

English very well and are NOT very fluent end up NOT expressing themselves very clearly and eloquently and therefore NOT being very effective (see Figure 51).

tion more direct Sometimes it makes the conversation complicated and not	very	effective Even if the variety of accents and literacy affects mainly the interpr
iding on the situation. </s><s> Let's say that all people around the table are	very	good speakers of English. </s><s> In this case, I think they're better off usin
unication and effectiveness Non-native speakers don't express themselves	very	clearly and eloquently. </s><s> Interpreters are professional communicators
igh those of direct communication between people who don't speak English	very	well. </s><s> It depends a lot: it can increase effectiveness when people int
nk convinced? </s><s> In this sense, using English as a lingua franca is not	very	effective. </s><s> I'd differentiate between practitioners (i.e. working group
g the syllables is a challenge in itself. </s><s> Some native speakers speak	very	clearly but some also read their texts and/or speak much too fast. </s><s> </s>
</s><s> It depends on the subject and on the person. </s><s> And it is not	very	motivating, quite frustrating. </s><s> English is one language where native :
: </s><s> On the other hand non native speakers don't express themselves	very	clearly and it is up to the interpreter to guess what they might want to say. </s>
stead of one Idiomatic expressions are rarely used by speakers who are not	very	fluent in English. </s><s> Politeness, irony etc tend to be left aside. </s><s>
is quite demotivating. </s><s> Ideally, conference organisers should find a	very	diplomatic way to explain to any ELF user how difficult it is for other confere

Figure 51 Examples with “very” + positive adjectives.

Conversely, there is a great variety of negative adjectives being emphasised by the adverb “very”, mostly to describe ELF (the very poor or very bad English being used in meetings, the very unnatural rhythm and very flat tone or the very simple vocabulary) or the consequences it has on interpreters (making their job very hard and very difficult) (see Figure 52)

er-tongue is not detrimental to the message. </s><s> But in some cases it is	very	detrimental to communication and effectiveness Non-native speakers don't
erfectly fluent in English and most welcome to speak. </s><s> Others have	very	poor English and should avoid using it as working language. </s><s> Nuanc
e probably understood by their colleagues even if in general their English is	very	poor (and very hard for interpreters to work with) because of previous conve
erstood by their colleagues even if in general their English is very poor (and	very	hard for interpreters to work with) because of previous conversations / thro
nd white there. </s><s> The globish English that most non-natives use is a	very	simplified version of the English language. </s><s> So although it might be
e hard to figure out what the person actually means, the vocabulary used is	very	simple. </s><s> A native speaker on the other hand comes with other challe
ends on the individual speaker. </s><s> The worst are people who speak	very	bad English and people who speak their mother-tongue as if everybody in th
say. </s><s> But then again there are great differences: ELF is sometimes	very	difficult to work from because of the misuse of words, expressions, problem
in all itOs much less satisfying for professionals who get limited to translate	very	basic and poor speeches It's on a case by case basis. </s><s> English usec
y Since their level of English is most of the times not that good, they are not	very	demanding Difficult to say. </s><s> Some are much easier in EN than they
ation" option, but I find it particularly hard to interpret ELF speakers with a	very	unnatural rhythm or cadence (e.g. English with a Finnish rhythm). </s><s> </s>
nds on the speaker. </s><s> Hard to generalise. </s><s> Often, the tone is	very	flat, which makes knowing what matters most difficult to grasp. </s><s> Ver

Figure 52 Examples with “very” + negative adjectives.

One final interesting category is that of nouns. The most recurrent ones are neutral terms that revolve around the topic of the questionnaire such as “language”, “meeting”, “delegate”, “mother-tongue”, “participant” or “interpreter”. As to the latter, respondents mainly use the term “interpreters” to stress their status and their perspective when formulating their comments, as is the case in the following examples (see Figure 53):

doc#0 was such a tendency before brexit. </s><s> As I only started my career as **interpreter** in 2014, it is difficult to talk about a major change, but I do see an increasir
 doc#0 e an increasing tendency these past few years. </s><s> In my case, as an **interpreter** with German A, I also noticed that the Austrians delegations tend to resort
 doc#0 : English has increased since 2006 - which is when I started working as an **interpreter** in Brussels. </s><s> I guess that there has been a sharp "increasing tende
 doc#0 use it is something I am not able to evaluate. </s><s> My frustration as an **interpreter** is not a measure of the effectiveness of the communication between partic
 doc#0 iced with speakers who do not use their mother-tongue, my reaction as an **interpreter** varies not according to my professional experience but according to the su
 doc#0 'ten an extra layer: you have to guess what your speaker means NB As an **interpreter** I have much more empathy with speakers who struggle with English beca
 doc#0 'd sentences that make their speech somehow Predictable. </s><s> As an **interpreter** , you receive hints that allow you to anticipate where the speech is going. </s><s>
 doc#0 = which makes them participating less in the discussion. </s><s> Being an **interpreter** how can I decide that the actors have/have not participated as much as the

Figure 53 Examples with the term “interpreter”.

When not referring to themselves, respondents always use the term “interpreter” in a neutral way, referring to their role as communicators or to the effect ELF has on the profession (see Figure 54):

doc#0 speakers don't express themselves very clearly and eloquently. </s><s> **Interpreters** are professional communicators. </s><s> Their output is generally accur
 doc#0 colleagues even if in general their English is very poor (and very hard for **interpreters** to work with) because of previous conversations / thorough knowledge of
 doc#0 ndered clear varies depending on how familiar the listeners (including the **interpreters**) are with the subject. 75%, but because I make a big effort! </s><s> It wc
 doc#0 level of knowledge of EN of the speaker and the level of familiarity of the **interpreter** with the other language that would be used otherwise. </s><s> Poor Engl
 doc#0 > Bad pronunciation and non-English structures really make it harder for **interpreter** . </s><s> It really depends on the individual speaker. </s><s> The worst t
 doc#0 native speakers don't express themselves very clearly and it is up to the **interpreter** to guess what they might want to say. </s><s> But then again there are g
 doc#0 </s><s> Others shouldn't really express themselves in EN and make the **interpreter's** job a daunting task. </s><s> Often an extra layer: you have to guess wha
 doc#0 ashamed of your bad English. </s><s> Last but not least: not trusting the **interpreters** . </s><s> Many I think do not understand our profession and therefor do r
 doc#0 age skills are poor, that they are not aware of it and that they do not trust **interpreters** . </s><s> Again, this is only my subjective perception, for what it's worth.
 doc#0 > The widespread use of ELF is also undermining the role and status of **interpreters** , whose professional competence is becoming less and less appreciated.

Figure 54 Examples with the term “interpreter”.

5.13 Final remarks

The IPE offers a vivid picture of the interpreters’ stance towards the use of ELF in meetings where an interpretation service is provided. Results are homogeneous and show that there is a widespread tendency to resort to ELF, even when speakers have the opportunity to speak their own MT.

As to the EU interpreters’ stance on the impact the use of ELF has on communicative effectiveness (research question 1, see I.2), 60% of respondents think that the use of ELF decreases the level of communicative effectiveness (Q5, see 5.5). The specific situation and the language skills of participants are indicated as decisive factors, and provided everyone is a proficient English speaker, communication might work. Nevertheless, not all speakers succeed in expressing themselves clearly when resorting to this communication mode. According to the data gathered in Q6 (see 5.6.1) 84% of interpreters

believe no more than half of the speakers resorting to ELF express themselves clearly and effectively (for 30% of them this percentage drops below 25%). Comments imply that there is an invisible and elusive competence level, below which communication struggles and is sometimes well-nigh impossible. Comments contain warning calls against the flattening of the political and technical debates and the loss of authenticity in negotiations.

Communicative effectiveness is a moving target and situations that might seem equivalent might actually require different linguistic arrangements. Even the most positive interpreters in terms of replies to questions seem to agree that the effective transmission of the content of a message might fall short of a satisfactory communication level, once closer attention is paid to the real communication goals and the specific context in which said communication takes place. Interpreters themselves provide a series of examples of what is important in terms of communicative effectiveness beyond the message transfer: they warn against the lowering of the general discussion (C11.38), which risks becoming too general and too vague (C5.23) and less precise (C5.23). They witness nuances and humour being lost (C5.10) and interventions being less brilliant or detailed (C5.8). Speakers are less convincing (C6.7) and might fail to express exactly what they want to say (C6.2).

Interpreters' assessments vary depending on where they ideally place the bar of communicative effectiveness, whether they settle for message transfer or consider other factors to be just as important. Arguably, considering the significance of the topics being dealt with and the high level of decision-making (see 4.3), the higher the better.

As to the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on their interpreting (research question 2, see I.2) respondents broadly agree (80%) that interpreting ELF speakers tends to be more demanding than interpreting speakers using their MT (Q7, see 5.7), due to an additional 'deciphering' phase that ends up overloading already taxed processing resources (see 7.2). The features they struggle most with are pronunciation/intonation and syntax (Q8, see 5.8.1), which in their opinion are heavily influenced by speakers' L1, thus conferring a higher degree of unpredictability on their speeches (see 5.8.2).

As to the EU interpreters' stance on the impact the use of ELF has on multilingualism and participation rights (research question 3, see I.2) 82% of interpreters believe ELF might represent a hindrance to speakers' full participation to meetings (Q9, see 5.9.1), as

it contributes to the creation of an uneven playing field (see 5.9.2). As not all participants have access to the interpretation service, the level of active participation in a meeting is highly dependent on individual language competence (see C9.11, C9.18 and C9.22). Therefore, 75% of respondents concur that unless action is taken to redress unfairness and imbalances, the unregulated use of ELF might pose a threat to multilingualism (Q10, see 5.10). In this regard, some comments single out the Commission's role and Commission officials' behaviour as detrimental to the successful unfolding of communication, as they tend to speak ELF regardless of the language regime (see C4.1, C4.14, C4.25 and C4.26) and are supposed to be promoting its use (see C11.2, C11.6 and C11.27).

Finally, on a more emotional level, interpreters admit to a certain degree of frustration (e.g. C5.28, C11.3), as they feel they are sometimes faced with insurmountable obstacles, turning interpretation into a daunting task. They are critical of ELF, which they often refer to as 'poor English', 'bad English' or 'Globish' (see 5.12). Nonetheless respondents do not dismiss ELF communication as automatically ineffective, but rather identify the reasons why and the conditions in which it is. Furthermore, comments do not reveal a self-centred attitude on the part of interpreters, who are rather communication-centred and focus mostly on the speakers and on the positive outcome of communication, be it via ELF or interpretation.

6. THE USERS' PERSPECTIVE

Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else

George Orwell

Interpreters, despite being fully-fledged actors involved in communication at the EU, basically are indirect participants in meetings. Outside the vantage point of the booth, on the other side of the glass, are the meeting participants themselves. Each one of them might have a different status and a specific reason to participate in the meeting, but the event's communicative effectiveness is a goal they share. Despite not necessarily being experts in the field of communication, they can certainly declare how satisfied they are with the linguistic arrangement that has been offered to them and with the level of the interpretation service provided, if any.

Because of the importance of participants' perceptions when assessing communication in the EU meetings, the decision was taken to include an analysis of the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS), a biennial survey developed by DG SCIC and addressed to meeting participants with the aim of exploring their satisfaction level with the services provided during meetings. The CSS and IPE are not directly comparable, as not only do they address a different population, they also are drafted with different aims. More specifically the IPE was designed before actually knowing whether the practisearcher would have any access to the CSS data (see I.3).

DG SCIC agreed to share the 2017 CSS data once the IPE collection and data analysis phases had already been completed. A meeting was agreed with the Head of Unit C.3 in DG Interpretation, which is in charge of strategic planning and reporting, control and IT-development. During the informal talk, the practisearcher had the chance to find out more on the history of the CSS exercise, how it was first designed and how the results are then

used (see 6.1). An excel file with the data related to the 2017 edition was sent by email²²⁵, along with two documents with some overall results (see 6.2).

Consequently, the approach was adopted to analyse CSS data only to the extent that they could confirm or refute IPE's results, which had already been analysed.

More specifically, after providing some general information on the CSS and its structure (see 6.1), an overview of CSS participants in the 2017 edition is given, in terms of place of meeting, participants' role and the data on the overall satisfaction rate with the interpretation, which is the central result of the survey (see 6.2). The analysis then concentrates on a selection of topics directly link to IPE results, namely language distribution and ELF (see 6.3), so as to either confirm or refute interpreters' perceptions as to the dominant role of ELF; participants' stance as to interpretation and MT vs ELF, to ascertain which they consider more effective based on available data (see 6.4); the group of EU officials (see 6.5) which was singled out by interpreters as particularly prone to resorting to ELF (see 5.11); and users' stances on multilingualism and participation rights (see 6.6). The above-mentioned topics are not all specifically dealt with in the CSS²²⁶, therefore the data are to be considered as partial. Nevertheless, their value lies in representing meeting participants' opinions on communication in the meetings they attend and in complementing interpreters' insights.

6.1 The Customer Satisfaction Survey

The CSS exercise started in 2007, motivated by the wish to develop a mechanism to monitor quality not simply from the inside (see 3.2.1), but also from an external perspective, that of the users of the service themselves. The lack of a quantifiable quality indicator did not allow either for a thorough analysis of the DG's performance in its core tasks or an evaluation of the progression of quality over time.

The importance of the survey is such that the "overall satisfaction with interpretation" has been included in the list of the DG's 'Key performance indicators' (KPIs) and is based solely on the results of the CSS. The main results of the service (overall satisfaction of

²²⁵ Both the meeting and the email exchange took place in September 2019.

²²⁶ ELF is never mentioned, nor is the term *lingua franca*.

participants with interpretation and with DG Interpretation's support to conferences, events and meetings) are therefore accounted for in the DG SCIC Annual Activity Report (see Appendix I), which is addressed to the College of Commissioners and "constitutes the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions" (DG SCIC 2019: 4). Furthermore, the results of the CSS are shared with all the Directors-General of other DGs, the Council Secretariat, the Member States' permanent representations and all involved actors, proving to be a useful tool to show the value of the work done to the external world. Results are also provided to the Heads of the Language Units in Directorate A (see 3.1), so that they can share them with interpreters themselves and define an action plan, if needed, based on the results concerning the specific language unit.

The survey is biennial and is distributed in all the meetings – irrespective of the Institution – for which DG SCIC offers interpretation services during two consecutive weeks. Questionnaires are available in all language versions and are usually placed at the entrance of meeting rooms. The Chair of the meeting informs participants of the initiative, and they are free to decide whether to participate in the survey or not.

6.1.1 The questionnaire on interpretation services

The CSS consists of a questionnaire with multiple-choice questions revolving around the quality of the interpretation service. The text of the questionnaire was drafted by a steering committee, composed of representatives of management and mostly interpreters. One of the first concerns of interpreters involved in the drafting exercise was to make sure that it would not be possible to connect single responses to specific meetings, and therefore specific interpreting teams, as it is not meant as an instrument to assess single performances but rather the service as a whole. The anonymity of the questionnaire therefore is not only a safeguard for meeting participants wishing to express their opinions freely, but also for interpreters, who are not individually examined for their performance during a specific meeting. The mother tongue of the respondents on the other hand is required, so as to identify potential problems related to a booth as a whole.

The CSS questionnaire opens with a note to respondents:

The European Commission's Directorate General for Interpretation provides interpretation for meetings held in the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. You are our customers and we are interested in knowing whether you are satisfied with the service you receive. We should be grateful if you could reply to this satisfaction survey and help us to further to improve our service. The questionnaire takes about 5 minutes to complete.

Meeting participants are addressed directly and the importance of their role and opinion is stressed from the onset, underlying that the final goal of the exercise is to improve the service to the benefit of customers themselves.

The questionnaire is divided into 6 sections, with a total of 27 questions:

- Today's meeting (3 questions)
- Listening to interpretation (6 questions)
- Your opinion of the interpretation (5 questions)
- Speaking (7 questions)
- You and the interpreters (2 questions)
- Your profile (4 questions)

The first and last sections ('today's meeting' and 'your profile') collect information on the meeting (subject area, institution and type of meeting) and the respondent (mother tongue, employer, how often they attend meetings with interpretation, and suggestions for improvement) respectively.

The central sections are meeting-specific and gather information both on participants' behaviour during the meeting and their opinion on the service provided. In the 'listening to interpretation' section, respondents are asked whether they listened to interpretation into their MT (if provided), why they did not in the event of negative reply, which language they listened to the most, whether they listened to the interpretation into their MT even if they understood the original speech and why, and finally whether they believed that it would have been easier to participate in the meeting if the opportunity to listen to interpretation into their MT had been provided.

The 'your opinion of the interpretation' investigates the interpretation's quality from different points of view. Respondents are first asked to rate their satisfaction level in a 6-level scale ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. More specific questions follow, inviting respondents to comment on the interpretation in terms of content (further divided into subcategories such as accuracy and clarity, terminology, and language command) and

delivery (further divided into liveliness, voice quality, native speaker command of the language).

The ‘speaking’ section revolves around the respondent’s behaviour as an active speaker, asking respondents whether they took the floor during the meeting, whether and to what extent they spoke their MT, why they did not, in the event of a negative reply, and which language they opted for instead, whether respondents taking the floor had the impression that their contribution was understood, and finally whether they believed that it is easier to participate in the meeting if they are provided with the possibility to speak their MT.

Finally, in the ‘you and the interpreters’ section, respondents are asked whether they had contact with the interpreters before the meetings or would have wished to have it and deem it useful. The questionnaire ends with an open question asking respondents to provide comments and suggestions for further improvement, if any.

6.2 The 2017 edition

The most recent edition of the questionnaire dates back to 2017. The data of this edition were offered by the Unit C.3 in DG Interpretation. Data are formally public but are not published and have only been circulated among involved stakeholders (see 6.1). Upon request of the practisearcher to the relevant DG SCIC unit, in addition to the raw data pertaining to the survey, a few graphs and tables were provided, which are the result of an analysis conducted by the internal DG services and were used for a presentation to the Italian Language Unit. The graphs and tables produced by DG Interpretation carry the official European Commission logo (Figures 55, 56, 58, 59, 66, and 67). All the other graphs (Figures 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, and 72) are original and have been produced by the author of this research project²²⁷.

²²⁷ Throughout the survey, some respondents decided to skip a series of questions. As far as the original graphs are concerned, ‘no replies’ (that is respondents not replying to a question) have always been deducted from the total number of responses for each specific question analysed. Therefore, percentages always refer to the total number of active respondents for the specific question being analysed.

As for the respondents, a total of 2,372 questionnaires were collected in 230 meetings taking place at either the Commission, the Council or the Economic and Social Committee (see Figure 55).

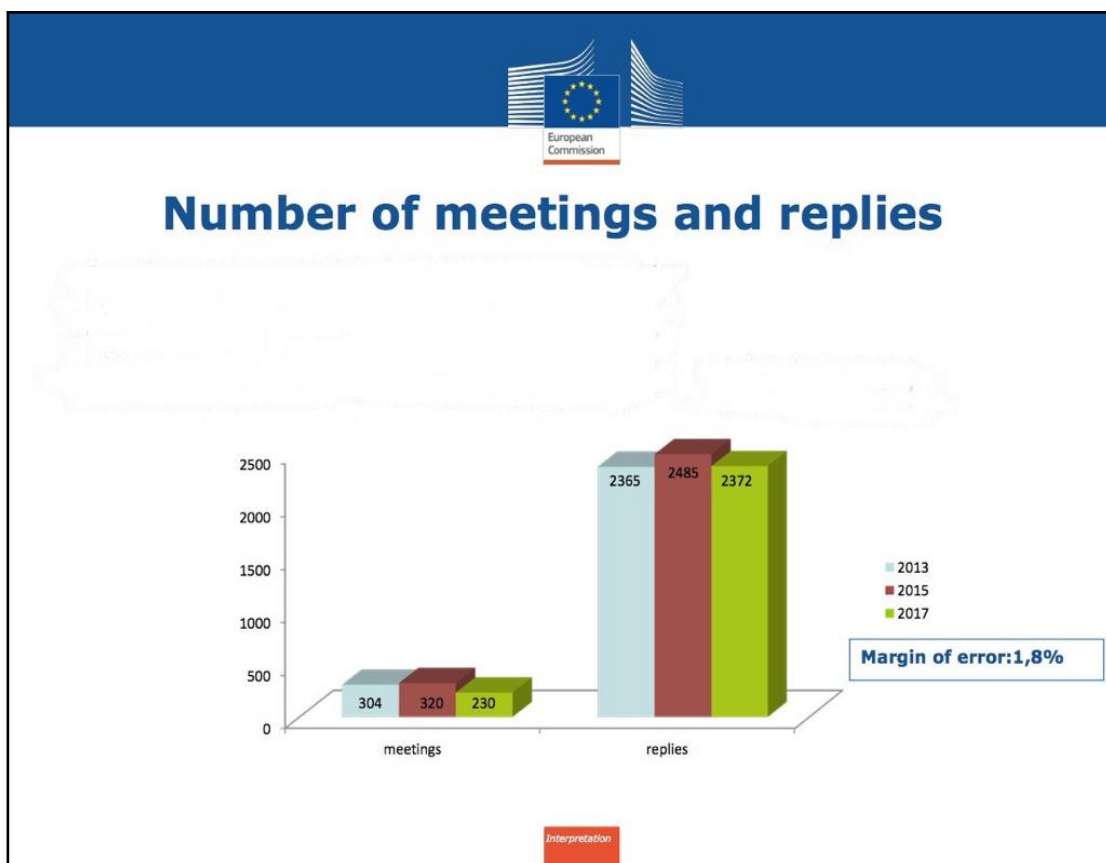


Figure 55 Number of meetings and replies (data from 2013, 2015, and 2017)

Figure 56, detailing how replies are distributed by institution, shows that the majority of responses were collected in Commission meetings (59%), followed by Council (33%) and EESC (8%). There is no way of knowing for certain how many people could have participated in the survey, as there are no records on the number of participants in each of the 230 meetings involved. Nevertheless it is possible to have an indication on the order of magnitude of potential participants: in meetings organised at the Commission and in Council, normally all Member States and the Commission itself are represented by at least one participant²²⁸. In the EESC, on the other hand, the number of participants may vary

²²⁸ Delegates might be absent on a given day, but they might also be represented by more than one representative. The Commission is usually represented by more than one official, as several people might be in charge of the different items on the agenda.

considerably depending on the type of meeting. The EESC only accounts for 8% of the 230 meetings (18 meetings), whereas Council and Commission together amount to 92% (212 meetings). The most conservative estimate, that is considering 29 participants (28 Member States + Commission) in 212 meetings and at least three participants in the remaining 18 EESC meetings, would point to a pool of at least 6,200 potential respondents, therefore making 2,372 replies a share certainly not exceeding one third of potential respondents.

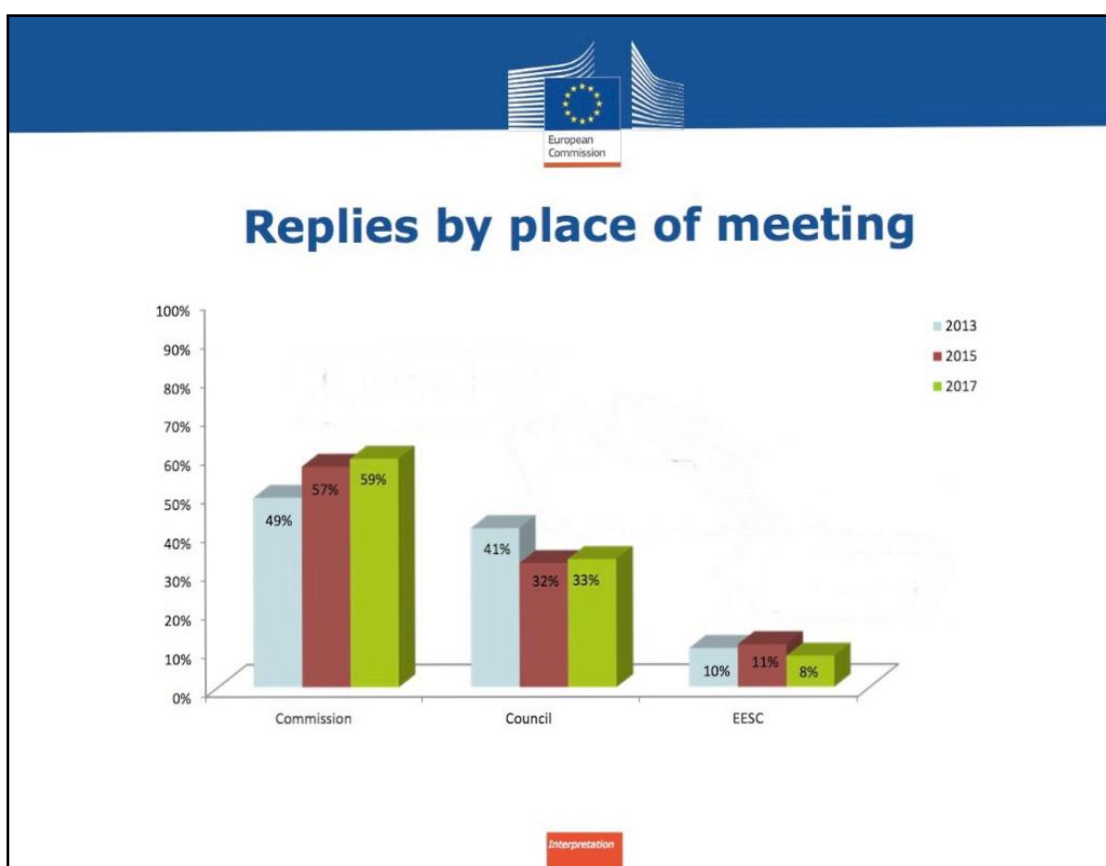


Figure 56 Replies by place of meeting (data from 2013, 2015, and 2017)

The data on the respondents' employer are also relevant, as they provide information on the participants' role in the meeting and whether they are acting on behalf of the European Institutions, national bodies or public/private entities. As can be seen in Figure 57, the largest group is that of representatives of public administrations in a Member State and Permanent Representations combined (51% and 17% respectively). These results are not surprising, as in meetings where Member States are represented, at least 28 national

officials are present, thus making them the largest group by default²²⁹. The European institutions, on the other hand, are poorly represented, as their group accounts for only 6% of the respondents' pool. This low response rate might be attributed to several factors. In meetings organised by the Commission (the main source of this survey's responses), EC representatives have an extremely active role, as they are the ones in charge of managing the meeting, and might therefore struggle to find the time to fill in the questionnaire. On the other hand, as they do not tend to profit from the service much (see 6.5), they might feel less inclined to express an opinion on the topic.

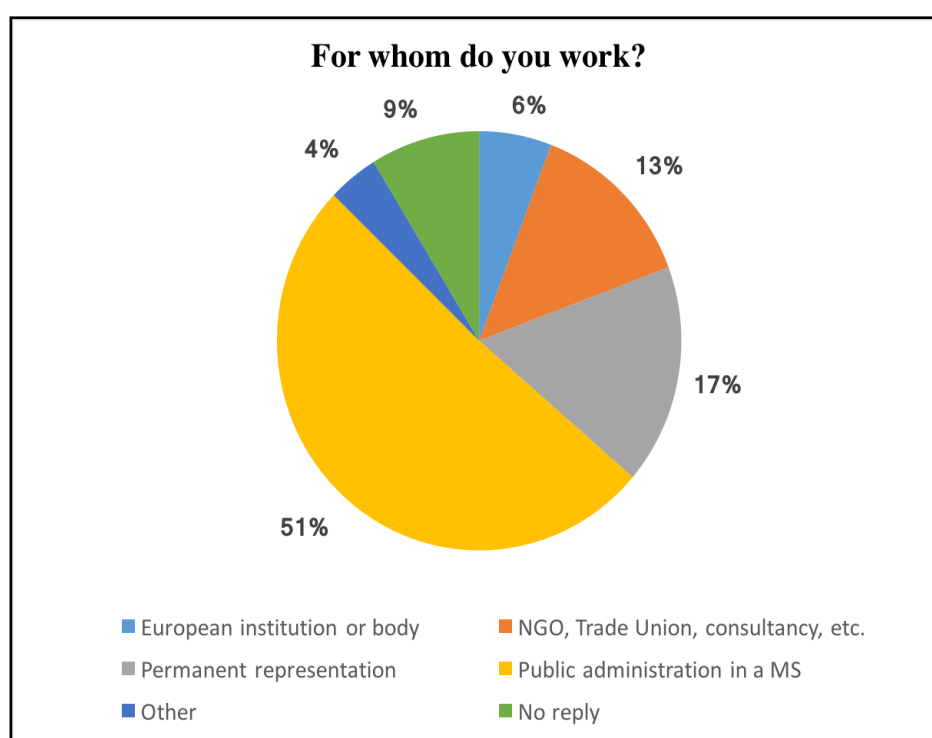


Figure 57 Respondents divided by employer (2017 data).

The most significant value emerging from the questionnaire is the overall customers' satisfaction rate, which is counted in the DG SCIC Annual Activity Report (AAR) as one of the key performance indicators. In the 2018 AAR, it is mentioned that the overall satisfaction with the quality of interpretation reported by customers in 2017 reached 90%, corresponding to a one percentage-point increase compared to the 2013 and 2015 editions

²²⁹ Commission's delegations at meetings can range from one to several members, but are always smaller than all national delegations combined.

(see Figure 58). The result is considered positively in the report, as it “reflects the constant efforts to provide high quality interpretation, thus ensuring multilingual communication in meetings serviced by DG Interpretation” (DG SCIC 2019: 8).

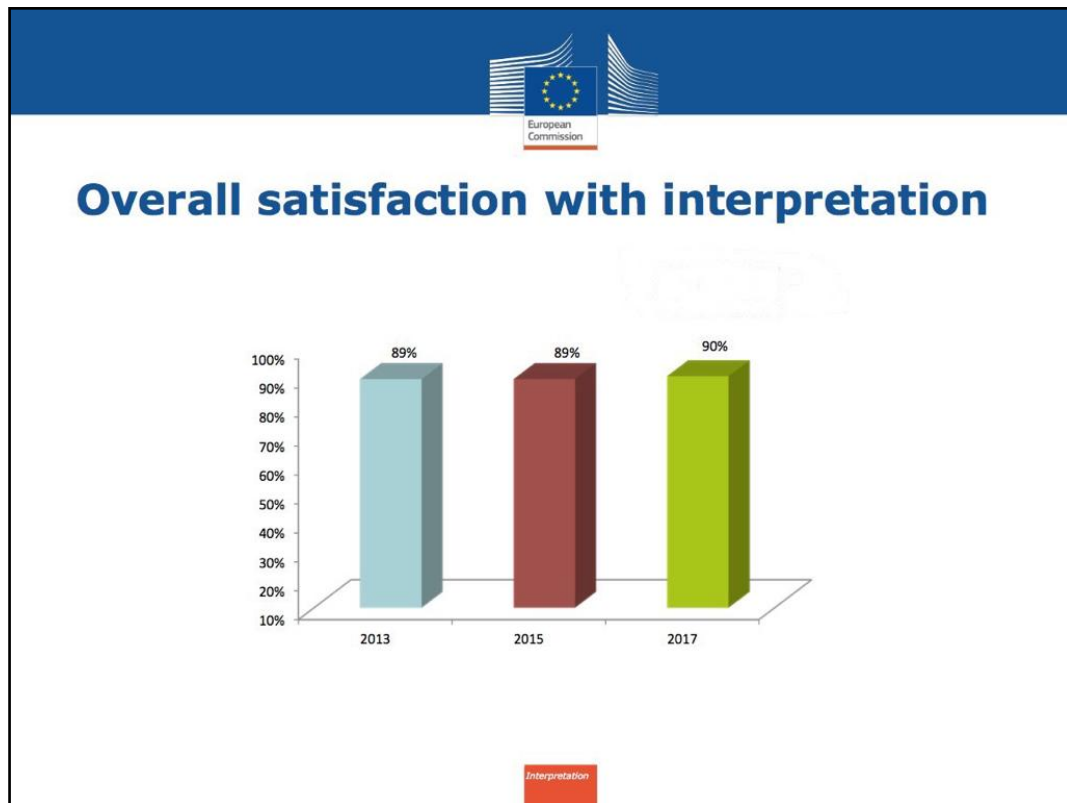


Figure 58 Overall satisfaction with interpretation (data from 2013, 2015, and 2017).

The 90% value accounts for all respondents, irrespective of the possibility of actually benefiting from the service (depending on the language regime) and their choice to actually listen to interpretation, when available. Once the pool is reduced to those respondents who had a chance to listen to the interpretation – as their MT was included in the language regime of that specific meeting – plus those respondents who declared they listened to it always or sometimes, the satisfaction rate actually increases further, reaching a total value of 93%, as shown in Figure 59.

Overall satisfaction with interpretation by language - 2017						
LANGUAGES	NUMBER OF REPLIES BY RESPONDENTS' MOTHER TONGUE		OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH INTERPRETATION (very satisfied and satisfied, excluding "no reply" and "other" language as MT).		OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH INTERPRETATION (very satisfied and satisfied, excluding "no reply" and "other" languages) with interpretation into MT available and respondents always/sometimes listening to it.	
	Number of replies	%	Number of replies	%	Number of replies	%
BG - български език	76	3%	55	92%	16	89%
CS - čeština	71	3%	62	97%	20	95%
DA - dansk	85	4%	64	91%	5	100%
DE - Deutsch	194	8%	152	94%	141	93%
EL - Ελληνικά	111	5%	80	85%	41	87%
EN - English	266	12%	208	91%	169	93%
ES - español	153	7%	127	91%	117	92%
ET - Eesti keel	36	2%	26	84%	8	73%
FI - suomen kieli	53	2%	37	79%	9	82%
FR - français	193	8%	160	89%	147	89%
HR - Hrvatski	81	4%	58	83%	14	88%
HU - Magyar	66	3%	58	95%	16	94%
IT - Italiano	168	7%	142	93%	132	93%
LT - lietuvių kalba	60	3%	47	87%	15	88%
LV - latviešu valoda	58	3%	45	90%	13	93%
MT - Malti	31	1%	27	96%	8	100%
NL - Nederlands	147	6%	120	92%	52	96%
PL - polski	68	3%	50	79%	24	86%
PT - Português	99	4%	78	89%	46	94%
RO - română	85	4%	63	88%	19	90%
SK - slovenčina	57	2%	41	87%	17	94%
SL - slovenščina	63	3%	51	93%	20	95%
SV - Svenska	62	3%	49	86%	6	67%
TOTAL*	2283	100%	1800	90%	1055	93%

NB: in 2017, "Other" languages and "no replies" had not been considered in this analysis

Figure 59 Overall satisfaction of respondents always or sometimes listening to interpretation (2017 data).

6.3 Language distribution and ELF

As far as the language distribution during the meetings is concerned, respondents confirm the interpreters' perception (see 5.4). Based on the replies to the question "which language did you speak the most?", English is indeed by far the most spoken language, with a total percentage of 56% out of 24 available languages²³⁰ (see Figure 60).

²³⁰ Irish was included among the possible choices, as passive Irish is sometimes available in meeting as a passive language (meaning participants can speak it, but there is no active booth. See 3.3).

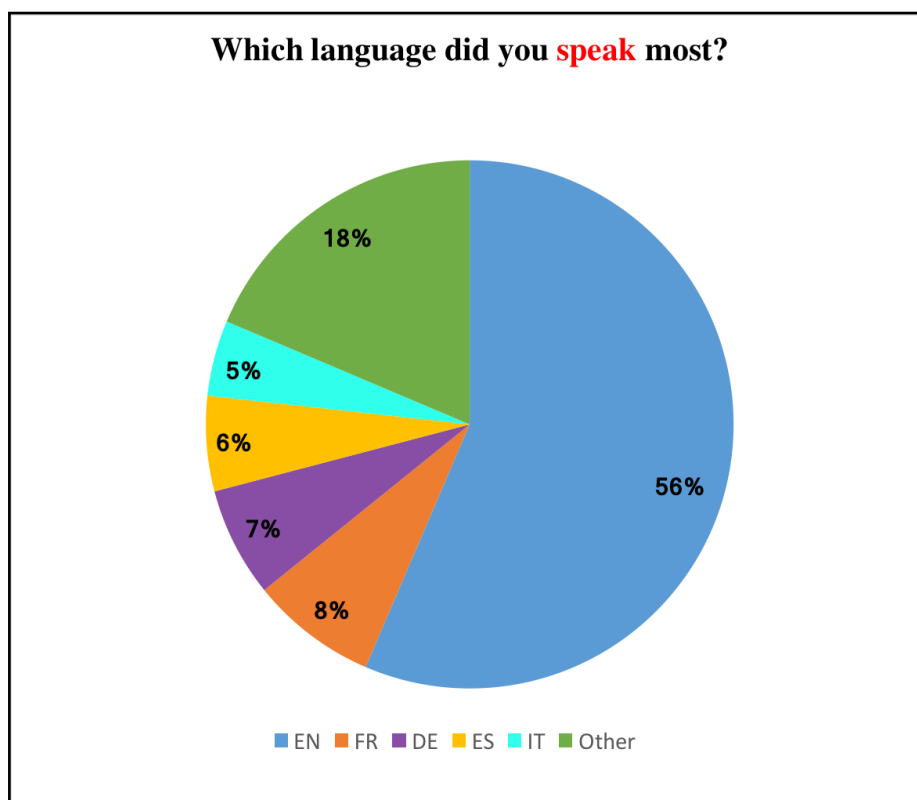


Figure 60 Languages most spoken during meetings (2017 data).

There is not a perfect correspondence between the number of languages (24) and the number of Member States (28), as some languages are official languages of several countries. But even French and German, which are both official languages of several MSs (France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria and Germany) and working languages of the Commission, have considerably smaller shares than English (8% and 7% respectively).

The pervasiveness of English at meetings is even more evident when considering which language participants listened to most. As language regimes are often asymmetrical, the number of languages participants can speak is often larger than the number of languages they can listen to (active booths) (see 3.4). When offered an even more limited choice, the number of participants turning to ‘passive’ English – 59% – is higher than the number of participants actively speaking it (see Figure 61).

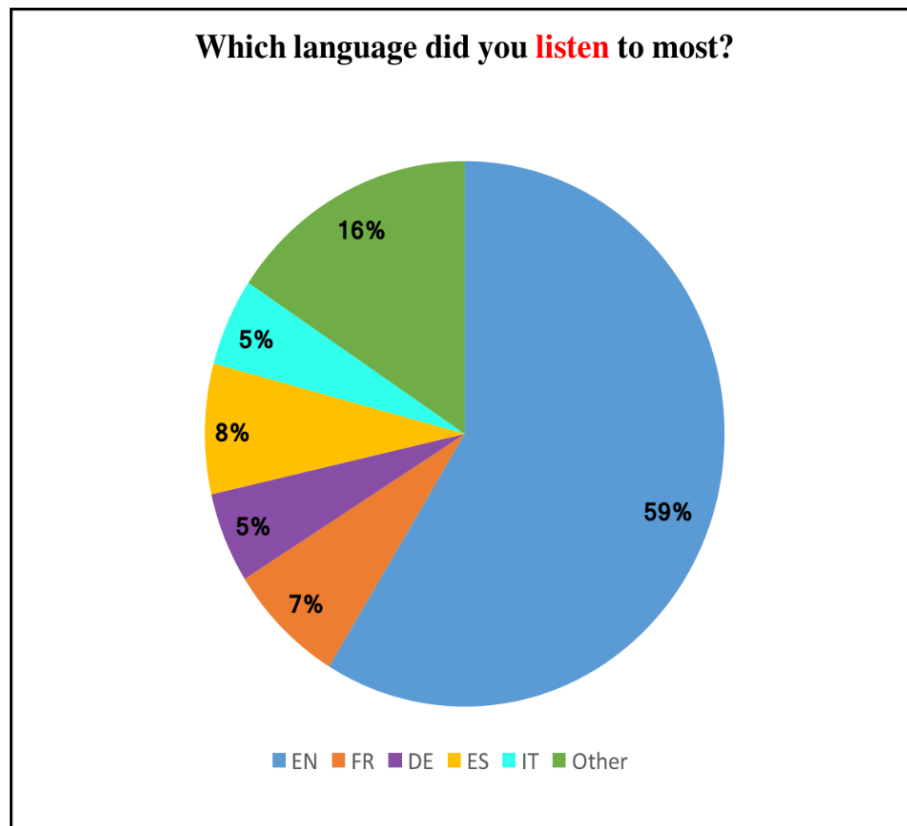


Figure 61 Languages most listened to during meetings (2017 data).

For completeness' sake, it is useful to add the data relating to the number of respondents who signalled that they did not have a choice whether to speak or listen to their mother tongue, as it was not included in the language regime. 29% of active respondents (770 out of 2,694) declared that they could not listen to their MT as it was not provided for, and 25% (500 out of 1,959 respondents) declared that they could not speak their MT. Data related to language distribution in these smaller respondent groups show considerably higher percentages of EN use (see Figures 62 and 63), as 82% of respondents spoke EN and 86% of respondents listened to it.

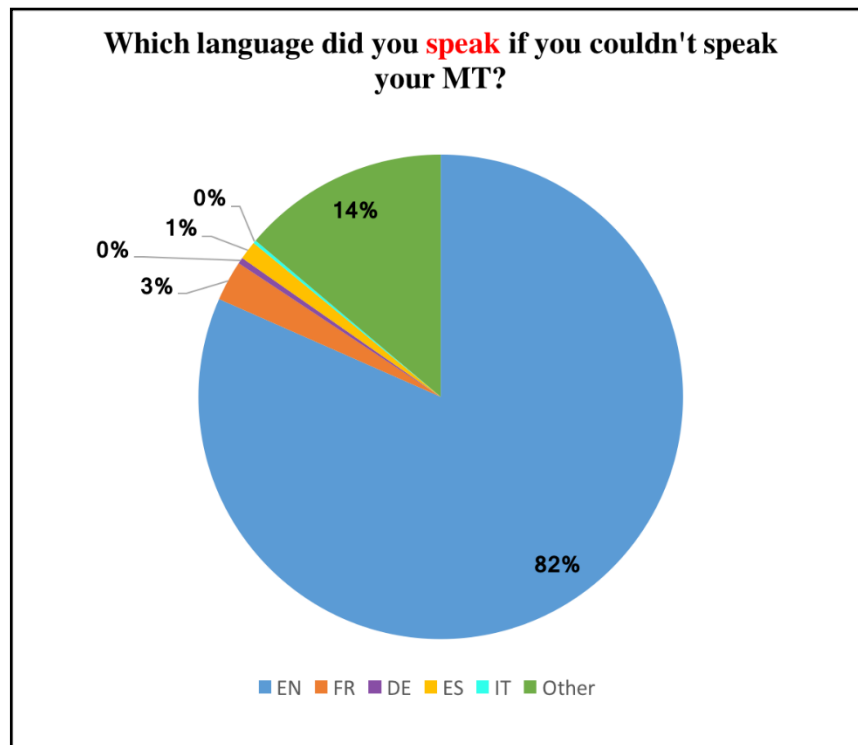


Figure 62 Languages most spoken during meetings by respondents who could not use their MT (2107 data).

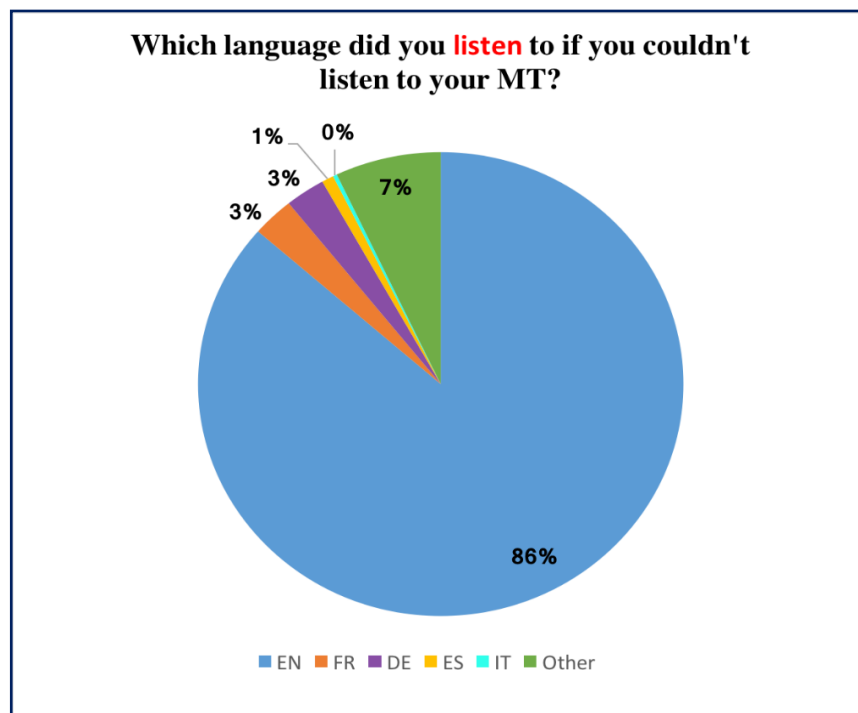


Figure 63 Languages most listened to during meetings by respondents who could not use their MT (2107 data).

The survey refers to English, as the interpretation service is offered in English as one of the official languages of the EU, in line with the official language policies. Nonetheless, from a pragmatic and communicative perspective, English is used in meetings as a lingua franca, and corresponds to the definition provided in the introduction of the questionnaire addressed to interpreters, namely “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice” (see 5.1.3). Data from the CSS seem to indicate that ELF is not simply a language of choice but a language of necessity for participants.

Irrespective of the reasons underpinning the participants’ act of resorting to ELF, data seem to confirm that ELF (and not any other lingua franca) and interpretation are the two main channels through which communication takes place during meetings organised by DG SCIC.

6.4 Interpretation and MT vs ELF

The CSS does not include any question concerning the use of a lingua franca and does not explicitly mention communicative effectiveness. As customers’ satisfaction with the service provided is the main focus of the survey, communication effectiveness is indirectly addressed in relation to interpretation. If the goal of the interpreters is “to support multilingual communication” (see 3.1), and if interpreter-mediated communication satisfies meetings’ participants, then interpreter-mediated communication is effective as it serves participants’ communication intents (see 4.3). This does not automatically imply that direct communication (without the interpreters) is ineffective, but it confirms that the choice to invest in interpretation pays off.

Another indirect assessment on the part of meeting participants on communicative effectiveness can be identified in their responses on the use of their mother tongue during meetings. More specifically, respondents are asked whether they think that having the opportunity to speak and listen to their mother tongue – therefore resorting to the interpretation service – makes their participation in meetings easier. In both cases, the majority of active respondents believe the combination MT and interpretation to be preferable. 75% of respondents believe listening to their mother tongue to be easier (see

Figure 64) and 76% prefer having the chance to express themselves in their MT (see Figure 65). Data on language distribution, on the other hand (see Figures 62 and 63), paint a clear picture of what the current alternative to interpretation is: ELF. Although no direct question on ELF is addressed to respondents, data show that participants feel that when they can attend a meeting and communicate using their MT they are more effective, and that their task (namely pursuing their communicative intentions with the linguistic and extra-linguistic resources at their disposal) is easier. If the alternative, meaning a lingua franca, were just as effective, presumably there would not be a clear majority in favour of the mother tongue.

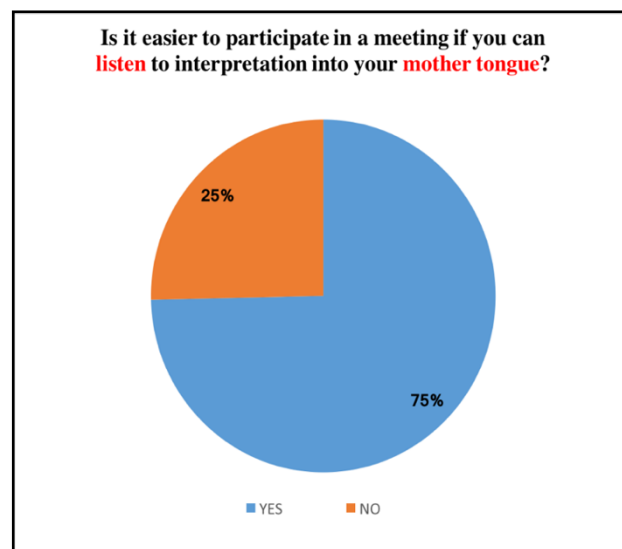


Figure 64 Participants who find it easier to listen to interpretation into their MT (2107 data).

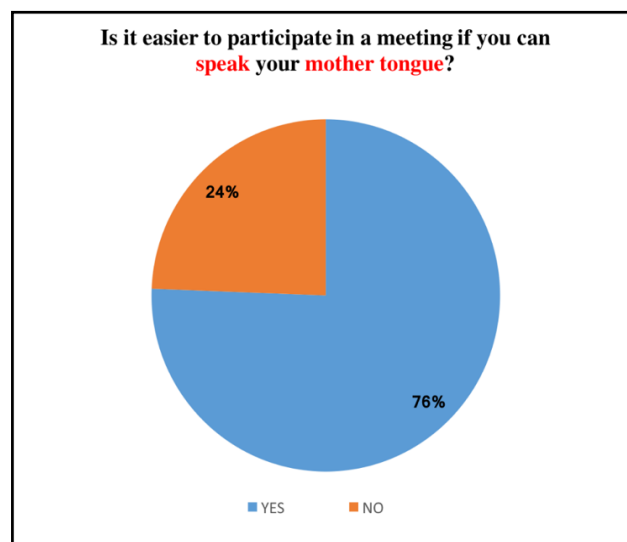


Figure 65 Participants who find it easier to speak their MT (2107 data).

A further disaggregation of data, based on participants' mother tongue, shows that this attitude is not uniform among meeting participants. Figure 66 shows that in 22 language groups out of 24²³¹, more than 50% of participants find it easier to listen to interpretation into their mother tongue.



Figure 66 Participants who find it easier to listen to interpretation into their MT, divided by language group (2107 data)²³²

Percentages vary considerably throughout the groups, from 91% 'yes' for Italian speakers, to 37% 'yes' for Danish speakers, indicating that there is not an equal perception of the added value of interpretation vs. ELF. These differences might be attributable to different elements. The experience participants have with the interpretation service might play a role, as users of the five most present booths (see 3.4.1), who are more accustomed to listening to interpretation and therefore tend to rely on it, are among the most satisfied

²³¹ An 'other' group is included to account for participants' mother tongues that are not official languages of the EU, such as Frisian or Catalan.

²³² The original table was part of a presentation for the Italian Language Unit, which is why IT-related data are marked with a red circle.

groups (IT: 91%, ES: 90%, EN: 87%, FR: 84%, DE 79%). On the other hand, different levels of English proficiency and experience might also be a determining factor. A participant might feel more or less comfortable using ELF depending on their knowledge of English. As competence levels vary quite significantly across Europe, rather than being neutral, the ‘English’ component in the ELF equation might have a considerable impact on interlocutors’ participation rights, especially in view of Gazzola’s (2016c) analysis on the “linguistic disenfranchisement rate” (see 2.6).

Data related to the “Is it easier to participate in a meeting if you can speak your mother tongue?” question paint a similar picture, with ‘yes’ percentages ranging from 93% (English speakers) to 43% (Finnish speakers) (see Figure 67).



Figure 67 Participants who find it easier to speak their MT, divided by language group (2107 data)²³³

English native speakers, who are almost invariably in a position to speak their mother tongue (see 3.4.1), are the most appreciative of this opportunity, with a 93% share of ‘yes’

²³³ See footnote 232.

responses. In this case, the 50% threshold of positive replies is reached and exceeded by 23 language groups out of 24.

6.5 EU officials bucking the trend

Although EU officials are the smallest group of respondents among the different categories (see Figure 57), they are an important category, first because interpreters often single them out in their comments (see 5.4) and secondly because CSS data show that they seem to be swimming against the tide.

As far as their use of languages in meetings is concerned, data show that the majority of the speakers in this group, more precisely 78%, express themselves in English (see Figure 68), which is more than 20 percentage points above the total respondents' value (56%, see Figure 60). French and German, which are both working languages of the Commission, only account for 7% and 3% of respondents respectively.

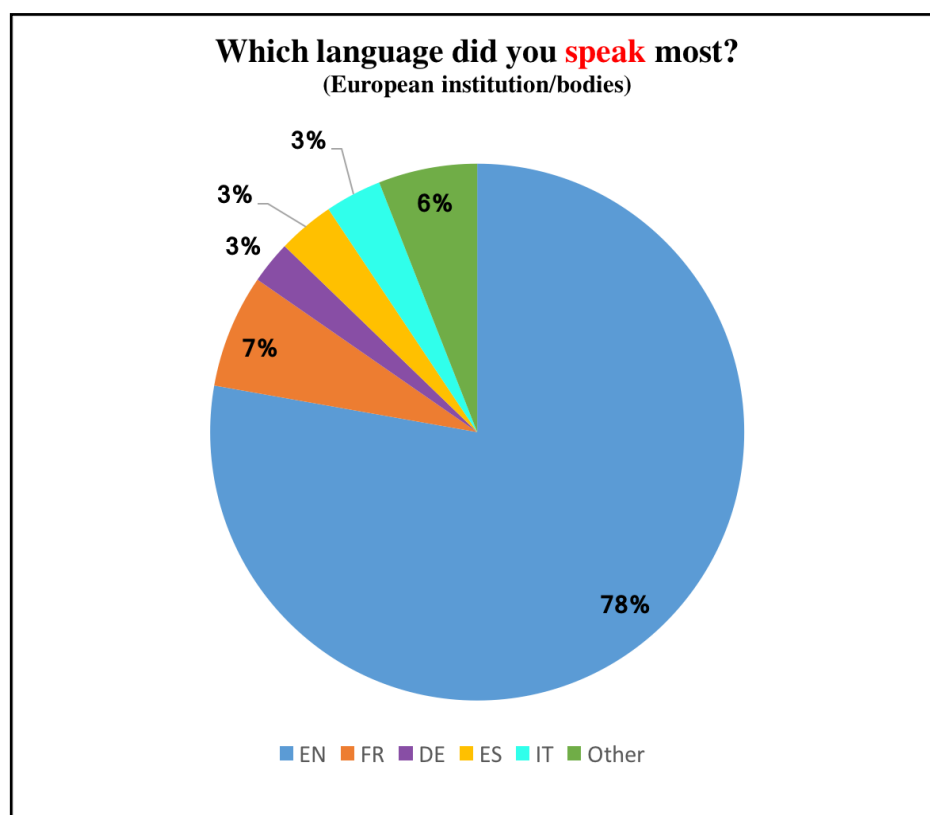


Figure 68 Languages most spoken during meetings by EU officials (2107 data).

As no interpretation service is provided for the internal daily activities of the Commission, it is not surprising that officials, who are used to working and interacting daily in ELF, would use the same language to communicate in meetings, irrespective of the possibility of resorting to the interpretation service. Furthermore, EU officials, as native speakers of different languages, are subject to the same restrictions in terms of available language regime as other participants, and might not have had the possibility to speak their mother tongue during the specific meeting they attended.

The difference compared to other groups is mostly related to the value they attach to the interpretation service. Participants can be divided into groups, based on their employer (see Figure 57). Disaggregated data show what the stance of each group is, pursuant to the usefulness and added value of the interpretation service (see Figure 69 and Figure 70).

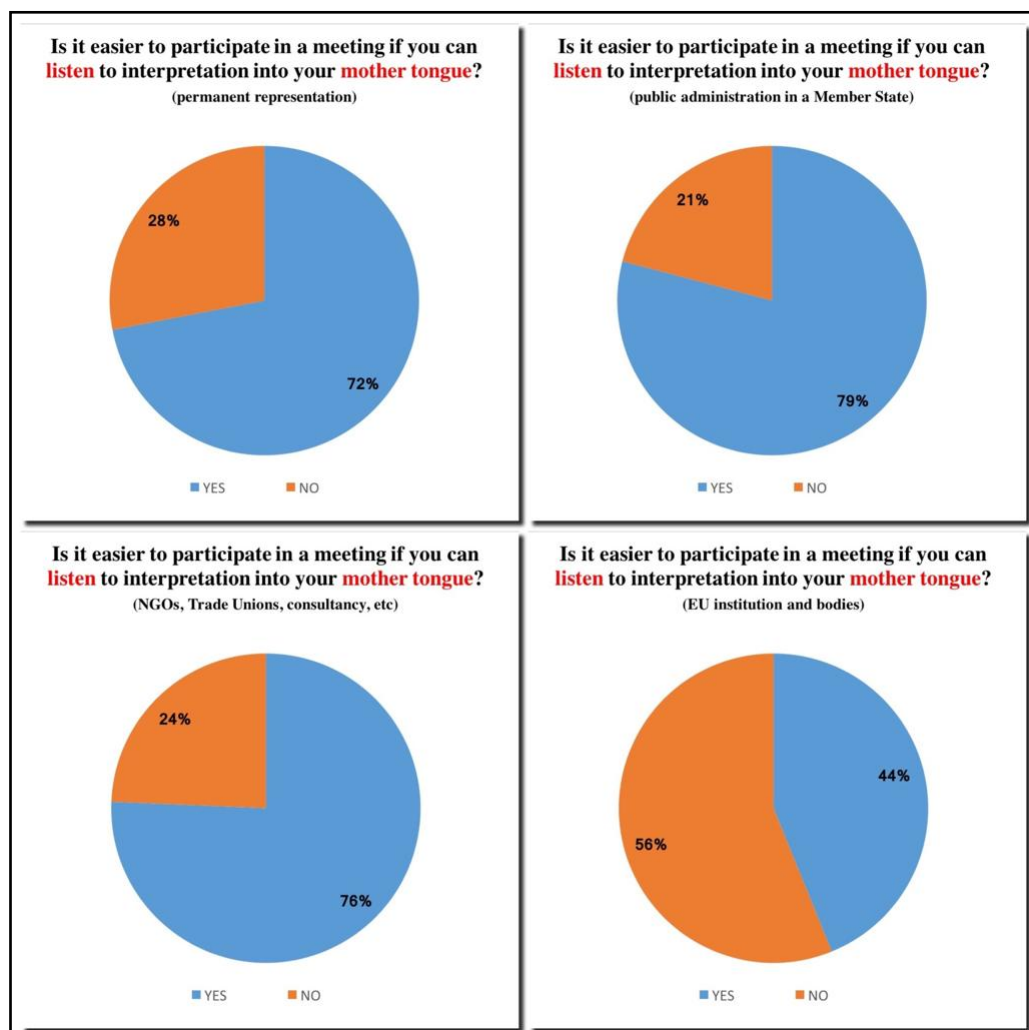


Figure 69 Participants who find it easier to listen to interpretation into their MT, divided by employer (2017 data).

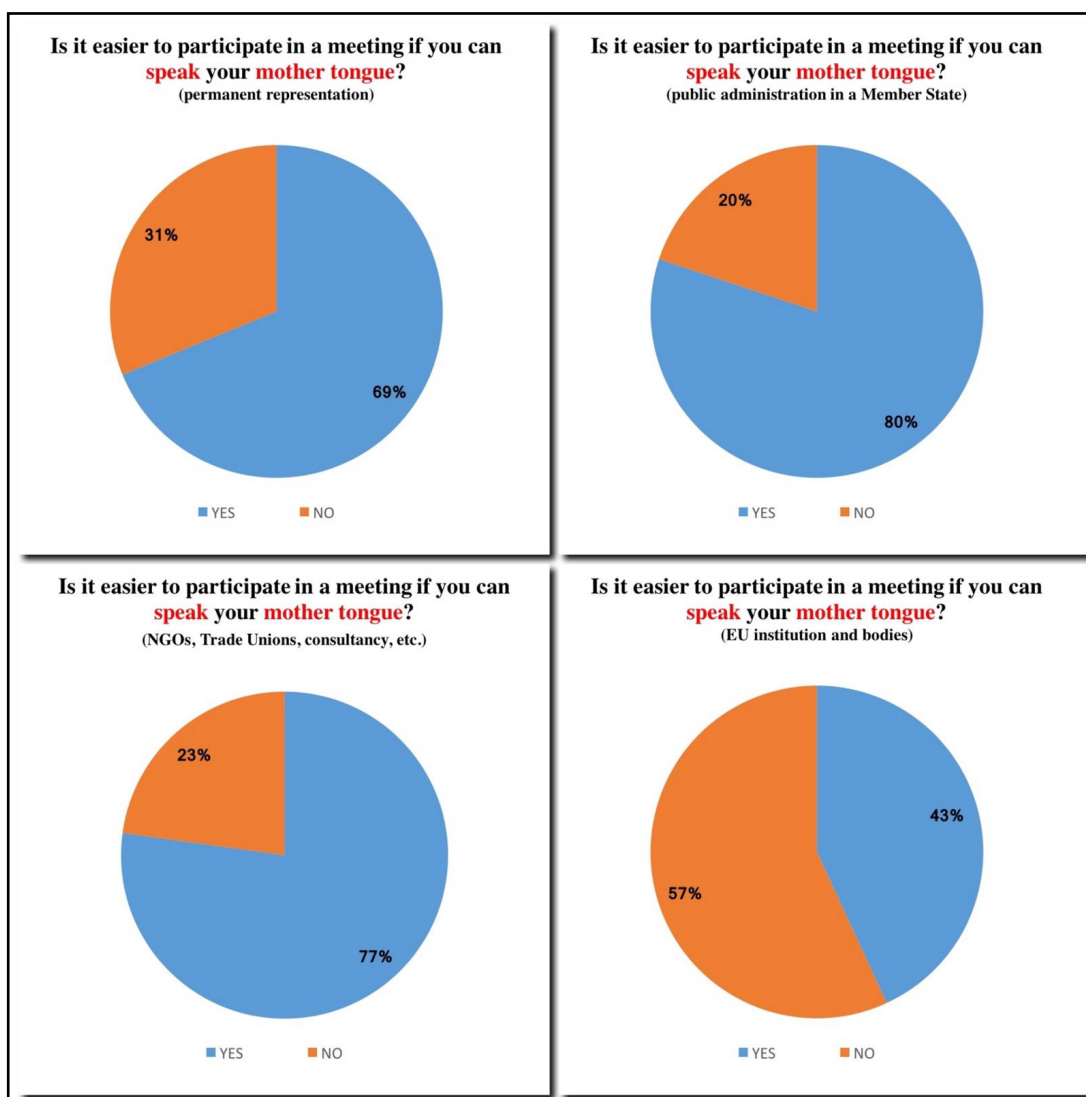


Figure 70 Participants who find it easier to speak their MT, divided by employer (2017 data).

As for the question related to the possibility to listen to interpretation into one's MT, all groups, with the exception of the EU officials, find it easier to participate in a meeting when they have access to this service (Figure 69). The groups of permanent representation delegates, public administration members and public/private organisations all express themselves clearly in favour of the MT, with 72%, 79%, and 76% positive replies respectively. 56% of the EU officials, on the other hand, do not find it easier to listen to interpretation into their MT.

Data regarding the question on the possibility of speaking one's mother tongue show a similar picture (Figure 70), with the groups of permanent representation delegates, public

administration members and public/private organisations registering a large majority in favour of the affirmative answer (with 69%, 80%, and 77% respectively), whereas the EU officials' group majority opted for the negative answer (57%).

Their stance, though, is not directly linked to their assessment of the quality of the service provided by DG SCIC. When analysing the responses of this subgroup to the question pertaining to the overall satisfaction with the interpretation service, results are extremely positive, as 90% of respondents regard the service as either being satisfactory (37%) or very satisfactory (53%)²³⁴. They therefore acknowledge the quality of the service being offered, but mostly do not regard it as essential, which might in turn explain why most of them resort to ELF instead.

It is important to acknowledge though that, in absolute terms (number of replies), EU officials' negative responses only constitute a small fraction of all negative responses (see Figure 71 and Figure 72), considering that they are the smallest group, which is why they do not really have a major impact on the final general value (see Figure 64 and Figure 65).

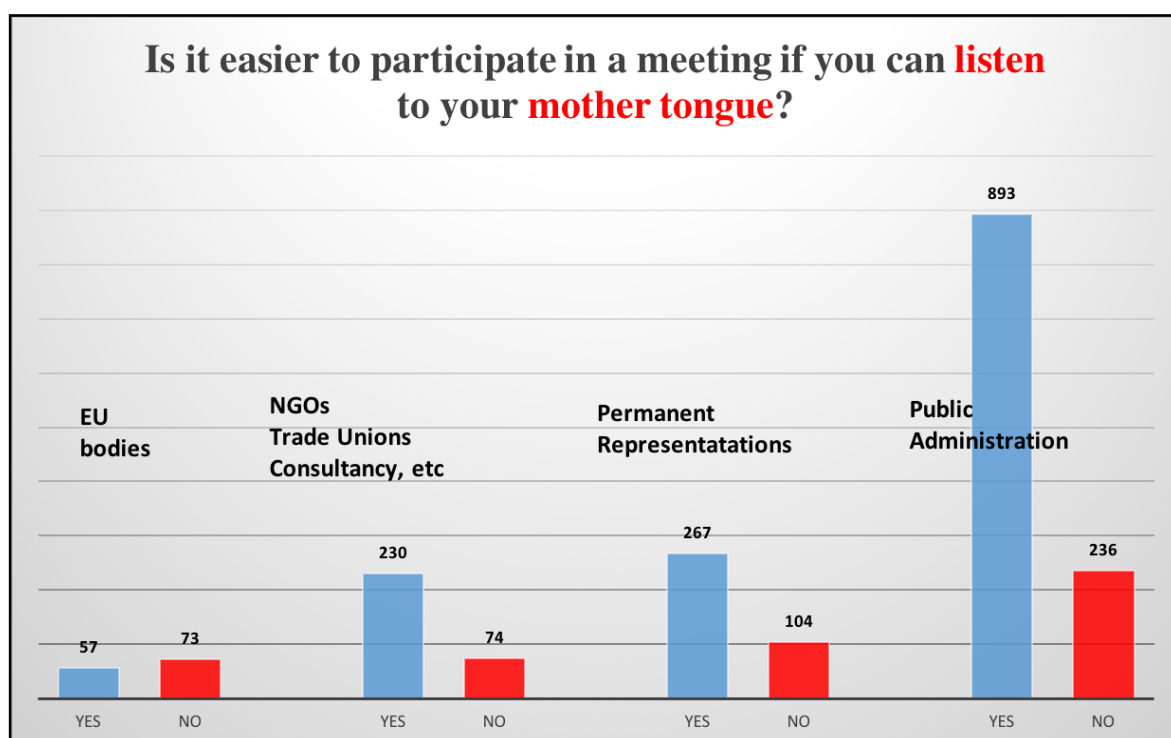


Figure 71 Participants who find it easier to listen to interpretation into their MT, divided by employer (2017 data).

²³⁴ For these data, no graph has been produced.

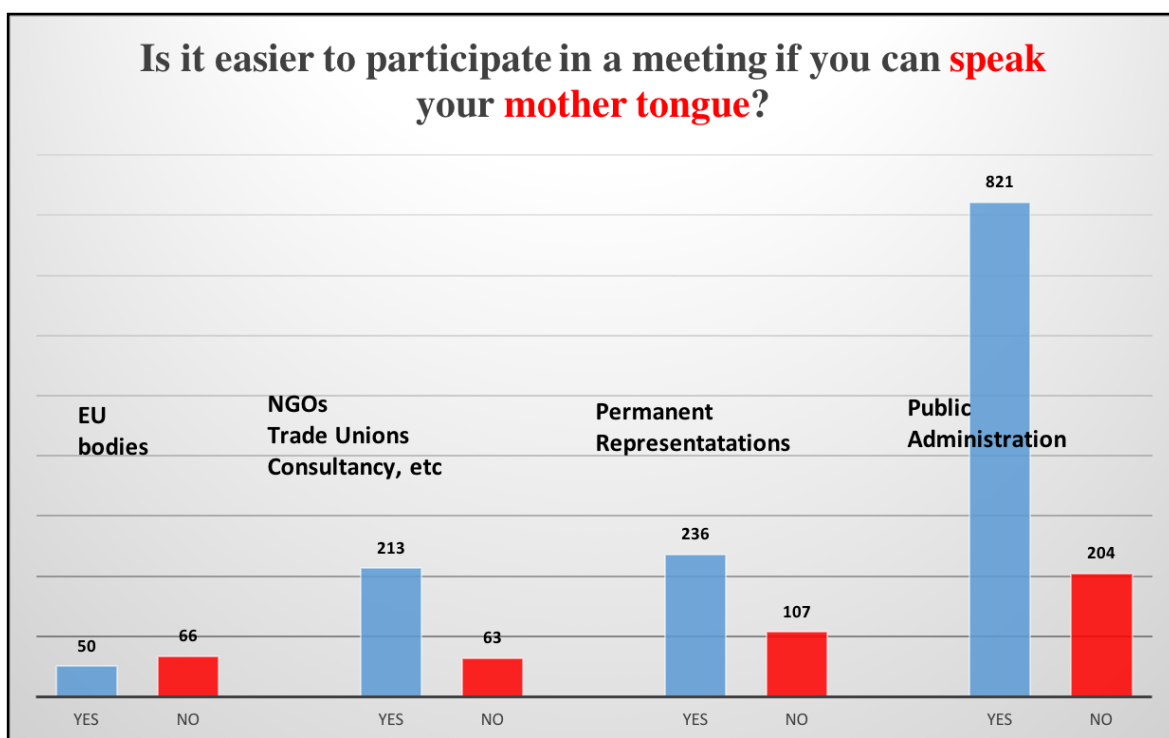


Figure 72 Participants who find it easier to speak their MT, divided by employer (2017 data).

6.6 Users and multilingualism

The last question of the CSS offers respondents the possibility to write any comments or suggestions for further improvement. Only around 10% of respondents (around 250 responses) took the opportunity to express an opinion. Several comments express participants' gratitude and appreciation for the interpreters, confirming the users' satisfaction with the service offered. Other respondents comment on specific issues, related to terminology, or to logistical arrangements (such as lunch breaks, access to documents, volume). 57 comments have been isolated as they revolve around the topic of multilingualism and participation rights (see Appendix V).

Seven respondents take an open stance in favour of EN-only meetings²³⁵. In three comments, not much space is left for explanations as to why this option would be

²³⁵ CSS5³⁵; CSS9; CSS11; CSS 12; CSS 21; CSS 43; CSS 54. Comments are marked as CSS, for 'customer satisfaction survey' plus a univocal numerical code. Spelling and grammar mistakes have not been corrected.

favourable²³⁶, whereas other three comments explicitly doubt the effectiveness of interpretation, as compared to an EN-only regime:

- Meetings should be held in English and French. A lot of information can simply not be provided throughout interpretation. [CSS12]
- All meeting should be only in English. Interpretation makes the meeting so much longer and the rules they have are so hamful. [CSS21]
- [...] It is my general impression that the message is conveyed best in the English language. [CSS43]

The quality of the interpretation service *per se* is not put into question, but rather whether it is fit for purpose.

The remaining comment in this group, making express reference to English (CSS11), raises a different perspective, namely the effect an EN-only regime would have in terms of equal opportunities for all participants:

- I think that every MS could use and listen to EN so that it would be more of the same level. [CSS11]

English-only meetings are described as a solution putting all participants on ‘the same level’. It is not mentioned whether the use of English would make communication easier or more effective, but participants would be at least on a level playing field, therefore implicitly depicting the existing system (allowing only some participants to have access to interpretation) as possibly unfair.

The topic of equal participation rights is actually at the root of all the remaining comments, which raise it either indirectly or directly. 10 respondents explicitly ask for more languages to be added to the meetings’ regimes²³⁷, openly demanding an extension of the service, which demonstrates that they do appreciate it and claim the right to benefit from it. One respondent explicitly accompanies the demand for more Bulgarian with the explanation that using one’s mother tongue is “always better”:

²³⁶ CSS5, CSS9, CSS54.

²³⁷ CSS2; CSS4; CSS15; CSS16; CSS17; CSS23; CSS28; CSS36; CSS50; CSS56.

- It would be nice to have an interpretation into my mother tongue -Bulgarian. No matter what it is always better to use the mother tongue. [CSS2]

Six respondents even extend the request, actually calling for a full regime for all meetings:

- It should be normal that each language is interpreted during all meetings. [CSS14]
- I had to speak in EN as my mother tongue was not provided. It is much easier to participate in my mother tongue and I would strongly suggest that you provide interpretation in the languages of the participating member states. [CSS34]
- It would be nice to have interpretation at least in all the languages. [CSS39]
- Interpretation should be provided for every participant so that he can express the desired content best in his mother tongue. [CSS45]
- Interpretation should obligatorily be provided in all the meetings, even the workshops. [CSS49]
- Interpretation should be provided into all EU languages. [CSS52]

The remaining comments all revolve around the topic of multilingualism, interpretation and the uneven playing field that often derives from the application of partial regimes:

- I do consider essential that every representative of member-states of EU may express himself/ herself in an official language of EU. The fact that some Member-States representative may express themselves in their mother tongue and others may not, creates discrimination. [CSS6]

Five comments explicitly use terms such as ‘fair/unfair’ and ‘equal/unequal treatment’:

- I understand perfectly the interpreters but not honing the possibility to speak my mother tongue is a little bit unfair while other MS can speak their mother tongue and express their position better. [CSS19]
- Excellent service already. A little unfair that services are provided in minority languages in the EU for example Dutch and not in Polish but that is not the fault of the interpretation services! [CSS24]
- Sometimes there is a feeling there is no equal treatment; there should be a rotation principle applied to cater also for smaller languages [CSS44]
- I believe that differentiation where translation into Greek is concerned creates issues of unequal treatment between the Member States of the EU. [CSS47]

- Provision of interpretation into both directions is a necessary procedure in the framework of equal treatment of the Member States. The purpose of participation in the relevant meetings is not the certification of language knowledge. [CSS48]

The partial language regimes offered to participants are not considered by these respondents as a merely inconvenient or unfortunate choice, but rather a threat to their rights and a source of unequal treatment. One respondent, who does not always have access to the service, actually regards it as a privilege rather than a right:

- Whenever I had the privilege to have interpretation into Portuguese I enjoyed it a lot. Congratulations to them. [CSS57]

Five respondents make a direct connection between access to the interpretation service and the possibility to actively participate in the meetings:

- I find interpretation very useful. It gives me the opportunity to participate more actively in meetings. [CSS27]
- I think it would be very useful to have interpretation in my mother tongue to help me correctly understand all the information conveyed. [CSS35]
- Interpreters working into one's mother tongue are especially important in working groups & expert groups for people who are not native English-speakers. Sometimes it is impossible to fully discuss certain issues because of that, and discussions at working parties is a job that has to be done well. [CSS38]
- It is easier to express oneself in one's mother tongue. It's easier to listen to one's own language and it livens up discussions. [CSS40]
- The interpretation is vital for a proper understanding of the meeting, especially when we are required to listen to the interpretation when available (instructions from national authorities); and its availability is a real plus in terms of understanding what is said. [CSS41]

Interpretation is described as an essential element of the system, allowing for the principles underpinning the European project – such as the equal value of all official languages – to be fully implemented, as three respondents stress:

- I need translations is fundamental, and we should keep this system. [CSS22]

- The interpreters do an excellent and necessary job for the functioning of the European institutions. [CSS31]
- There should be interpretation into all the languages of the EU. Interpretation significantly helps the work of the Member States' representatives and shows respect towards the mother tongue, which is the basis of our civilization in Europe and of each country separately. [CSS51]

Finally, two comments tackle the topic of Commission officials:

- It is much better when commission officials speak in their mother tongue and i can listen to the interpretation into English. I find it more difficult to understand when commission official speak in English when it is their second language. [CSS1]
- Commission representatives should speak their native language, whenever interpretation is offered. This would also improve the interpretation. [CSS46]

Both respondents openly complain about the Commission's officials speaking English, stressing that when they do they are not communicatively effective and that they should speak their mother tongue every time they have the opportunity to do so. Not only are they less clear when they speak English, but they make it harder for interpreters to provide a quality service.

Not all these comments are necessarily representative of the opinion of meeting participants. They are limited in number when compared to the total number of questionnaires and they address topics which were not the focus of the survey itself. Nevertheless, they are anecdotal evidence that among meeting participants there is a certain level of dissatisfaction with the language arrangements, which are sometimes perceived as distorting participation within the meetings. Furthermore, they are proof of the fact that not all participants are aware of the rules determining whether they will get access to the interpretation service, which is a source of frustration – so much so that when participating in a voluntary survey on interpretation they voice their demand for more multilingualism.

6.7 Results overview

The analysis of part of the data emerging from the 2017 Customer Satisfaction Survey, conducted by DG SCIC on a sample of interpretation service users, offers results which are in line with what emerged from the interpreters' questionnaire.

The use of English as a lingua franca is indeed widespread among meeting participants, the more so if these have no access to the interpretation service and are therefore prevented from using their mother tongue (either actively or passively). As noted by interpreters (see 5.4), Commission officials do tend to use ELF more than the average participants.

In terms of communicative effectiveness, the majority of CSS respondents believe that the possibility to express themselves and follow the proceedings in their mother tongue, via the interpretation service, is a preferable option. This majority is not evenly distributed. Speakers of certain languages show greater support, and possibly need, for interpretation services than others, thus signalling a pattern of participants' potential disenfranchisement (see 2.6) as a result of a reduced language regime. Attitudes towards the usefulness of interpretation vary also depending on the participants' role. Whereas national representatives (be they members of permanent representations, MSs' administration or private/public institutions) mostly attach great value to the interpretation service, EU officials, despite acknowledging its quality, do not regard it as essential.

This last result shows a contradiction between the role of the Commission as guardian of the Treaties and responsible for the implementation of the principle of multilingualism and its 'behaviour' in meetings. On the one hand, the service of interpretation is provided by a Commission Directorate-General, which therefore actively promotes multilingualism, while on the other hand, officials from other Directorates-General tend not to use it and to speak a lingua franca, thus contributing to a more monolingual environment.

In general, data concerning the high customer satisfaction level (90%) and the appreciation of the possibility to listen to and speak in one's mother tongue (easier for 75% and 76% of participants respectively) seem to confirm the interpreters' perception as to the limits of ELF use in meetings with an interpretation service.

Furthermore, some of the participants took advantage of the survey to actively request that the service be extended to include their language, and in some instances even all official languages. Respondents actively raised the topic of participation rights and a level playing field, even though the survey itself does not contain any explicit reference to these issues, thus confirming that some share the concerns voiced by interpreters in terms of communicative effectiveness.

These preliminary results concerning participants' stances on interpretation, ELF and communication modes during EU meetings would need to be confirmed in a more comprehensive study involving both categories. The links that were identified in the two surveys suggest that a more comprehensive approach, involving all actors, could prove useful and highly informative for DG SCIC. During a conversation with the SCIC official directly involved in the CSS project, the proposal was put forward by the practisearcher to include a specific question on ELF in future editions of the survey, but considering that the Commission has a neutral stance on languages, as they all enjoy the same legal status, it was argued that singling one out might be wrongly perceived by respondents.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

“Then you should say what you mean,” the March Hare went on.

*“I do,” Alice hastily replied; “at least--at least I mean what I say—
that's the same thing, you know.”*

*“Not the same thing a bit!” said the Hatter. “You might just as well say
that “I see what I eat” is the same thing as “I eat what I see!””*

— Lewis Carroll

After having analysed the IPE questionnaire and after presenting some relevant elements emerging from the CSS questionnaire, the present chapter summarises the findings in light of the research questions. The analysis will be structured as follows: the interpreters’ stance on the impact the use of ELF has on multilingualism and participation rights (see 7.1); the interpreters’ stance on the impact the use of ELF has on their interpreting (see 7.2); and the interpreters’ stance on the impact that the use of ELF has on communicative effectiveness, with a special focus on the elements which interpreters have provided on communicative effectiveness itself (see 7.3). Additionally, the data collected in the IPE and selected data from the CSS will be analysed jointly (7.4), to identify common elements in the replies of the two groups of respondents — interpreters and meeting participants. Finally, some considerations will be made on possible future research avenues (see 7.5).

7.1 ELF, multilingualism and participation rights

ELF at the EU is a slippery creature. It is spoken by a varying multitude of actors, an ever-changing population of EU official, delegates of national permanent representations based in Brussels, national delegates flying in and out of Brussels from all the European capitals, experts of a virtually infinite number of fields who might be based in Brussels and work for an international organization or spend most of their working life in a national context, experienced diplomats, passionate politicians, knowledgeable specialists or

newly-graduated trainees. When they meet in the same room to interact, ELF – often together with interpreters – is the glue that holds these events together. Undoubtedly, this conspicuous number of meetings and interactions take place in different settings and contexts, but they all exist within a broader context, that of the EU architecture. The EU project develops according to the principles which are set in the European Treaties, multilingualism being one of them (see 2.2). When applied within the institutions, multilingualism is not an end in itself, but it is strictly related to the equal opportunities it provides to all the actors involved. DG SCIC’s mission is precisely to facilitate the democratic EU decision-making process (see 3.1), making sure that via multilingualism all participants can contribute to the European project, regardless of their language skills. The full participation of interlocutors to the debates and the decision-making processes is therefore a matter of the utmost relevance, as their ability to express themselves and be understood has a direct impact on their right to give voice to those they represent.

Q9 and Q10 revolved specifically on the relationship between ELF and active participation and ELF and multilingualism. 82% of respondents agree that participation tends to be partial and passive (see 5.9.1). Both those respondents who consider ELF as a hurdle and those regarding it as a partial contributor to full participation seem to concur on the fact that in the end there is not an equal-playing field. They depict a scenario in which ELF can simultaneously be effective and useful to some participants and detrimental and unfair to others, to the extent that some end up being in an unfavourable position: they might be unable to follow proceedings to the fullest, partly lose their authoritativeness when they take the floor or even limit their interventions (see 5.9.2). Speakers can be ineffective even when they use their mother tongue, but ineffective ELF speakers, who have resorted to ELF out of necessity and not out of personal choice should perhaps have the right to an alternative, considering that the interpretation service is there precisely to guarantee that successful communication takes place.

This undefined scenario, by virtue of which some participants have access to interpretation and others do not, is strictly related to the concept of ‘unregulated use of ELF’, introduced by Q10 (see 5.10). The idea behind this notion is that the use of ELF does not seem to respond to an official language policy. It is not clear to which extent participants have a say in meetings’ language arrangements, whether DG SCIC itself has any guidelines concerning the use of English in meetings, or what is the reason behind

Commission officials' apparent tendency to resort to English regardless of the language regime offered (see 5.13 and 6.5). As it can be read in one of the comments, "one of the advantages of multilingualism is precisely that one be able to choose what language to speak" (C10.19), and English or ELF should not be an exception. Nevertheless, a more accurate analysis of the different contexts would help bringing more into focus which linguistic solutions to offer on a case-by-case basis, in order to assure that the use of ELF is the result of a deliberate and aware choice by participants, one that does not jeopardise the individual participation rights and consequently the broader objectives of democratic participation and transparency. Interpreters themselves do not dismiss the validity and communicative potential of ELF altogether, but they invite to some caution when taking for granted the benefits of its use.

Failing to apply multilingualism leads to a selection being made before the meeting even starts, thus creating a sort of barrier to entry. The burden of ensuring a democratic participation to meetings is somewhat shifted to Member States, or external participants, who are in charge of 'sending to Brussels' someone who is not only competent on the files to be discussed but also fluent in English. Differences in Europe in terms of language learning and disenfranchisement rates (see 2.6) are quite stark, which implies that it is difficult to guarantee equal opportunities and that, if this approach were to be further pursued, it is the very same principle of democratic participation that would suffer a severe blow.

All meetings are equally important from a communicative point of view and although they may well succeed or fail at the communicative-effectiveness test regardless of the interpretation service being offered or not, still the stakes at the EU are particularly high and creating a potential distortion right from the onset, in terms of democratic participation, seems controversial. An unsuccessful meeting, that is to say a meeting where, with the language arrangements adopted, not all participants are able to enjoy full and active participation to the proceedings, risks jeopardising the very same concept of a democratic and transparent European Union.

Interpreters are there to pursue the greater goal of effective communication and not to judge or criticize in any way the speakers and their speeches. Nonetheless, they might be able to signal when certain choices are not conducive to an ideal communication setting. Just as the legal service, the in-house legal counsel to the Commission, provides legal

advice, making sure that the Commission's decisions and texts comply with the EU law, without passing any judgment either on the content thereof or on the skills of the texts' authors, similarly, the interpretation service might be granted a greater role in providing 'linguistic advice'. Interpreters could assess the effectiveness of the language arrangements adopted for specific events, give constructive feedback to meeting organisers or provide guidance to speakers wishing to express themselves in ELF as to the features that require more attention, so as not to hinder communication. This service might be addressed especially to fellow colleagues in the Commission, should their wish to speak ELF be confirmed, irrespective of the available language regime. The finalization of a new conference centre with a higher booth capability (see 3.5.1) and new technological developments in terms of remote interpreting might allow for a greater language coverage, provided there is a political will and subsequent financial commitment. Nonetheless, it might be useful to consider whether a more direct involvement of DG SCIC and interpreters would not be advisable when organizing meetings.

7.2 ELF as an additional 'effort'

When asked whether interpreting speakers who use English as a Lingua Franca tends to be more demanding than interpreting speakers who use their mother tongue (Q7, see 5.7), interpreters overwhelmingly confirm that it does (80.5%, see 5.7.1). An even broader consensus is recorded among interpreters as to the feature they mostly struggle with: pronunciation and intonation (99.4%; see 5.8.1).

What interpreters often describe as 'deciphering' and 'decoding' activities to trace words back to a known equivalent in English (see 5.7.2) constitute an entire additional horizontal process, a reasonably distinct mental operation that, to the very least, might be conducive to a processing capacity overload, to the detriment of the other activities to be performed. It is perceived as yet another layer that requires different abilities, strategies and a pool of resources of its own, to be invested mostly in the initial phase of the interpreting process, what Gile calls 'listening and analysis' of the source text (see Gile's equation in 4.5). If the 'listening' part of the equation accounts for the pronunciation/intonation feature of ELF, the 'analysis' part includes the analytical

activities that are required on the part of the interpreter to trace back the meaning of unclear idioms or non-standard syntax (see 5.8.2). Therefore, in meetings where ELF is pervasive, Gile's effort model and notation might be modified as follows:

$$\mathbf{SIM = LA^{ELF} + M + P + C \leq A}$$

The factor by which ELF multiplies the 'Listening and Analysis' phase of the interpreting effort might be too high and therefore absorb too great a part of the interpreter's available processing capacity, leading to a result that 'is always poorer' (C7.40). The decoding activity does not always bear fruit, and interpreters might feel like they are 'guessing' what the speaker is saying (see 5.5.2). If they are not confident that they have correctly decoded the speakers' utterance, they might find themselves weighing up alternative interpretations before actually choosing one, which is yet another activity absorbing mental resources.

This notation can also apply to those cases, when speakers of ELF are perfectly intelligible: if they use a limited yet clear vocabulary and simple sentence structures, ELF might actually determine a lightening of the LA effort (which would then be translated as LA^{-ELF} , therefore reducing the absolute value of LA). In either case, it does bear a direct impact on the resources to be devoted to the listening and analysing tasks, meaning that 'ELF' in the equation might have a positive or negative value.

7.3 ELF and communicative effectiveness

Communicative effectiveness is a moving target and situations that on paper might seem perfectly congruent might require different linguistic arrangements for the same level of effectiveness to be achieved. Interpretation is not automatically preferable to ELF, and similarly ELF is not a neutral alternative to interpretation. The *raison d'être* of an interpretation service is that a group of people speaking different languages need to interact, and could not communicate otherwise. This assumption might only apply to a part of said group, as some participants may have the same MT, or be all fluent in another

language, which would allow communication even without the interpretation service. In most EU meetings, the actors involved are so many that all the above-mentioned conditions often apply within each single meeting.

When commenting upon participants' language skills, interpreters do not focus on speakers' style, proficiency or fluency as a teacher might do within a classroom, but rather on the extent to which, in their perception, said skills enable them to communicate effectively. Successful communication is the goal they have as professionals and one of the essential conditions for an effective and more importantly democratic EU machinery. Interpreters are professionals in the field of communication, and irrespective of the type of event, the mode of interpretation used, the language regime, the status of participants and the purpose of the event itself (see Chapter 3), their goal remains the same: making sure that participants can fulfil their mission: each one of them might have a different status and a specific reason to participate in the meeting, but the event being effective from a communicative point of view is the goal they most probably share.

In the introduction to the IPE no definition of communicative effectiveness was provided to respondents (see 4.3), starting from the assumption that the CoP of EU interpreters share a common set of skills and direct experience enabling them to identify meetings' communicative goals and participants communicative intents, which are the main criteria to assess communicative effectiveness (see 4.2, 4.3). 60% of interpreters believe that, in the meetings they participate in, the use of ELF (considerably) decreases the level of communicative effectiveness (Q5, see 5.5.1). In their comments, interpreters shed light on a few elements that help zoom in on their understanding of communicative effectiveness, both in general terms and when ELF is used.

On a macrolevel, their perception varies depending on where the bar of communication effectiveness is placed: communication is not always just about getting the message across. There are different levels that come into play when people are communicating, and the transfer of the sheer informative content might not be sufficient to speak of a successful communication – or at least not always (see 5.5.2). As can be read in one comment, “it is a waste to have a good speaker who must, for whatever reason, wear the straitjacket of poor English that limits their expressive options, takes away from the weight of their arguments” (C5.28). If the goal of communication were just information transfer, then ELF might represent a viable solution, but if the goal is that of being a convincing speaker

and persuading others with one's arguments, ELF might become a straitjacket. Interpreters point out that the effective transmission of the content of a message might fall short of a satisfactory communication level, once closer attention is paid to the real communication goals. Borrowing the words of a respondent, "almost all speakers get their message across. This answer, however, only concern [sic] the basic content of the message. If we think about the message as being something that goes beyond its basic content, then the answer would look very different. If I make a plea in a foreign language, I will have some difficulties to express myself, I will look less self-confident, as if I were not convinced. How can I be convincing if I do not look convinced? In this sense, using English as a lingua franca is not very effective" (C6.7; see 5.6.2)

On a microlevel, commenting on speakers' communicative effectiveness, interpreters refer to an elusive competence level, below which communication struggles. 84% of respondents believe that only 25% to 50% of speakers express themselves effectively when resorting to ELF (see 5.6.1). They claim it can go both ways, that some speakers have a good command of English and are quite effective at using it, whereas others barely reach the threshold of intelligibility. It would be virtually impossible to establish in an objective and scientific way where to set the dividing line between effective ELF speakers and ineffective ones, still tacitly assuming that using ELF automatically leads to effective communication does not seem an adequate approach either, as individual language skills play a central role. Participants are not all in the same position, not only because some of them get access to content via the lingua franca and others via an interpretation of ELF in their own language, but because the pool of linguistic and extra-linguistic resources the actors are drawing upon to encode and decode their utterances might not be uniform in the producing and receiving end of the communication, as not all participants communicating via ELF (both speaking and listening) share the same competency level. Furthermore, depending on the structure of the meeting and the kind of interaction, participants may be prevented from having full access to pragmatic tools for meaning negotiation and co-construction and goal-oriented let-it-pass strategies, that is "participants willingly ignoring grammatically incorrect, incomprehensible or dubious, i.e. incompatible with the overall goal of the talk, contributions of their interactants" (Baumgarden and House 2007: 210), that seem to characterize the "co-constructive, listener-oriented, non-normative manner in which ELF talk is produced" (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011: 292; see 1.2).

When commenting on communicative effectiveness, interpreters also notice that shared knowledge can sometimes come to the rescue and ensure that communication is not disrupted (5.6.2), and indeed it does greatly contribute to meaning-making, even in monolingual interaction, and therefore cannot be considered a factor exclusively intervening when interaction takes place in ELF. Interpreters themselves rely on speakers and listeners' shared knowledge to compensate for any omission or correct potential mistakes. Context, shared knowledge and gestures might even substitute fully an oral interaction in specific situations. Nonetheless, settling for context and general knowledge alone as a solution to communication problems might not be sufficient for ineffective speakers.

7.3.1 Interpretation and communicative effectiveness

During EU meetings, only one part of the communication, namely interpreting, is subject to frequent and rigorous quality checks, as it is a service being requested and paid for. The quality of interpretation is a topic which has been extensively studied and analysed in literature. As Gile pointed out, with reference to interpretation, "quality is a subjectively weighed sum of a number of components" (1995: 151), and the concept of quality is often described as being elusive and difficult to define (Viezzi 2007: 171). Déjean Le Féal, in a well-known quote, claimed that:

What our listeners receive through their earphones should produce the same effect on them as the original speech does on the speaker's audience. It should have the same cognitive content and be presented with equal clarity and precision in the same type of language (1990: 155).

The components of the equivalent effect entail the same level of content, clarity and style of expression. The author adds that:

[...] language and oratory quality should be at least on the same level as that of the original speech, if not better, given that we are professional communicators, while many speakers are not, and sometimes even have to express themselves in languages other than their own. (*ibid.*: 155)

When the original speech lacks language and oratory clarity, it is expected and possibly

desirable for the interpreters to actually improve the level of the original speech, even more so when it is delivered by non-native speakers:

Anticipation and conscientious guesswork may even remedy some of the shortcomings of the [NNS] original and make the interpreted version better understandable than the source text (Kurz & Basel, 2009: 193).

If the speech delivered by interpreters is of a higher quality to the users' ear than the ELF original, those who are offered a choice will possibly resort to interpretation.

In order to keep the satisfaction rates high, DG SCIC invests in interpreters' training and constantly assesses their skills and ultimately their individual quality rate (see 3.2.1), but it has no power on the behaviour of participants who could be speaking their MT and choose not to, nor on language regimes being requested by its clients. These factors, though, have a direct impact on the quality being offered by interpreters themselves. For them to be able to 'remedy the shortcomings' of the source text, a certain level of intelligibility needs to be maintained, as interpreters claim in their comments to the IPE. Once "language gets in the way of communication" (C7.8), interpreters might not be able to guarantee the expected level of quality. As a part of the audience fully relies on interpreting, to get access to the content of the meeting, an ineffective communication on part of the original speaker, might have a cascade effect that ultimately affects the quality of the whole communicative event, "regardless of how demanding it is for the interpreter, the result is always poorer" (C7.40). Interpreters' expertise in communication and their commitment to communicative effectiveness and communication quality might be exploited more so as to make sure, reverting the Déjean Le Féal paradigm, that the quality of the speeches being delivered equals that of the interpreters.

7.4 IPE and CSS compared

The IPE and the CSS, whose results have been presented in Chapter 5 and 6 respectively, when analysed together, offer a complementary description of ELF in meetings organized by the Commission where an interpretation service is provided.

The main topics that emerge from both surveys are:

- The strong tendency to resort to English as a lingua franca
- The effects of ELF in terms of communicative effectiveness and active participation
- The relationship between ELF and multilingualism
- The specific role of Commission officials

Both the IPE and the CSS confirm that the use of English is widespread among meeting participants. The vast majority of interpreters (87%) declare there is an increasing tendency to resort to ELF, and the CSS confirms indeed that 56% of meeting participants speak English. This percentage is even greater for participants who do not have a choice whether to speak their language (82%), thus confirming that English is indeed frequently used as a lingua franca.

As far as communicative effectiveness is concerned, the present research project, despite not being based on any experiment, follows the same approach adopted by Reithofer (2010; 2013a; see 1.5.1), in that it investigates perceived effectiveness by an audience who is divided in between ELF listeners and interpretation users. In this case, instead of testing the listeners' understanding, they themselves report on their perceived 'equivalence of effect'. What clearly emerges is that participants, or at least part thereof, are daily assessing the two modes and then choosing one over the other, depending on which works best according to their opinion. They are intuitively deciding which is the most effective and, when they have the possibility to do so (mostly depending on the language regime), they choose which one to resort to — a decision which might change within the same meeting or in different meetings. Communicative effectiveness and quality are presumably the main drivers of these decisions.

Interpreters describe ELF as often being a detrimental factor in terms of communicative effectiveness. They believe most speakers to lose credibility and incisiveness when resorting to ELF and question whether it might even represent a barrier to active participation, as it might determine an "uneven playing field" (C9.2). Participants seem to confirm, at least indirectly, the interpreters' perception, as the majority of respondents (75%) declare to find it easier to participate in meetings when using their mother tongue, meaning that they prefer interpreting (see 6.4). This result, despite not referring to a

specific speech, speaker or interpreter's performance, is nonetheless important, as it is the direct assessment of users who are usually exposed to both means of communication. Furthermore, even though the CSS asks no direct question to meetings' participants as to their preference between the two communication modes, the 90% overall satisfaction with the quality of interpretation reported by users, who are also exposed to English being extensively used as a lingua franca, reveals an extremely high level of appreciation of this service (see 6.2).

As to the relationship between ELF and multilingualism, approximately 75% of interpreters deem ELF might represent a threat to multilingualism (Q10; see 5.10), as "it puts everyone who does not perfectly master English at a disadvantage and reduces their right of expression compared to others" (C11.48; see 5.11). Even though the CSS does not contain a specific question on the topic, several open comments by respondents raise the same concerns, and even demand for all languages to be included in the meetings' language regimes, as "the fact that some Member-States representative may express themselves [sic] in their mother tongue and others may not, creates discrimination" (CSS6; see 6.6).

Finally, a group of respondents in both surveys shed light on the attitude of Commission officials, who seem particularly prone to resort to ELF and not necessarily with a satisfactory result. Quantitative data in the CSS confirm that the subgroup of EU officials, when compared to the other subgroups, speak English more than others (78%) and are consistently the least convinced that participating to a meeting while speaking/listening to their MT is easier (43% and 44%, respectively; see 6.5).

EU officials, and even more so Commission officials, work in a multilingual environment as they come from all the Member States of the European Union. A Unit within a Directorate might be composed of citizens of different countries, with different MTs. The only way to work effectively on a daily basis – as no interpretation service is foreseen – is to resort to a lingua franca. Even though the Commission working languages are English, French and German, it is safe to assume that ELF is the natural solution, considering that English is the language they speak most in meetings. The effectiveness of ELF use in that specific context might be completely different, as colleagues are exposed to each other's use of the language constantly, they might ask for explanations whenever they do not understand a specific word or expression, and build a code within

their community of practice that is then shared with all the members of the group. This use of ELF is possibly extremely successful, but might not necessarily work as effectively outside the boundaries of that specific context.

7.5 Future research avenues

ELF and multilingualism at the European Union are constantly struggling, and “ELF poses a real and growing challenge to the principle of multilingualism and thus interpreting in the institutions” (Reithofer 2018: 127). The challenge - or possibly even threat - to multilingualism has the ideological potential of undermining one of the founding principles of the European Union, consequently weakening the democratic legitimacy of the whole endeavour. Furthermore, it might also lead to the very tangible consequence of lowering the level of communication effectiveness in meetings, therefore reducing the quality of communication altogether.

There is an urgent need for an impact-assessment and thorough evaluation of how these two communication modes interact. A study should be conducted involving both meeting participants and interpreters, addressing the same questions on a specific set of events, representing the whole range of interpreter-mediated meetings organized by DG SCIC. Specific issues emerging from the present study could be further explored, such as the relationship between language regime and active participation or the participants’ reasons for using ELF. Furthermore, a direct comparison could be drawn between interpreters’ and participants’ assessment of the communicative effectiveness within specific events.

As far as EU language policies and the role of ELF in the communicative effectiveness of meetings organized by the Commission are concerned, a study on the part of DG SCIC concerning specifically the use of a lingua franca in meetings could represent a useful tool to identify language patterns and participants’ needs. Considering all languages equal and then failing to acknowledge that there is one which holds a dominant position creates a vicious circle: English and ELF are not addressed directly, so as not to single out one language, all the while letting the other languages slowly fade out of EU meeting rooms and future-shaping debates.

As users already seem to have an opinion on the effectiveness of both modes, a closer collaboration between them and the interpreters might be sought, so as to enable all participants to make the most out of the chosen mode of communication, for the greater good of communicatively effective events and ultimately fair and democratic participation to the discussions on the European project. In the specific case of meetings organized by the Commission where an interpreting service is being provided, in addition to analysing the stance of interpreters and interpretation users, it would be useful to investigate the stance of meeting organizers requiring specific language regimes, in order to ascertain how participation rights are granted in a given meeting.

As can be read in a comment to the IPE, “ELF is a fact of life and is there to stay” (C10.15). The present project revolves around the concept of ELF as a communication practice in a multilingual environment and more specifically it aims to raise awareness on the complex relationship between ELF, language policies, and multilingualism within interpreter-mediated meetings organized by DG SCIC. The hope is that the DG itself and the Commission at large will devote more resources to investigating the current language policies and even consider revising them, whenever needed. ELF is a multilingual practice (see 1.2) that extends over the walls of the European Institutions and that coexists with interpretation in a host of different contexts. Research in all these communication settings is necessary to broaden the existing knowledge base, to the benefit of all involved stakeholders, including professionals in the field and interpreting students, who will need to be increasingly exposed to ELF.

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2018

Annual Activity Report

DG Interpretation



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THE DG IN BRIEF

The mission of DG Interpretation (DG SCIC) is to facilitate the democratic EU decision-making process, through provision of high quality conference interpretation, corporate conference organisation services and meeting room management, including audio-visual equipment and services.

DG Interpretation assigns interpreters on average to 40 meetings per day or approximately 10 000/year, ranging from bilateral encounters between high-ranking officials in consecutive interpretation to high-level conferences in simultaneous interpretation into 23 languages of the EU and non-EU languages. DG Interpretation sends its interpreters to meetings in Brussels as well as around Europe and beyond, and covers not only EU languages but also all the main international conference languages and even sign language.

DG SCIC thereby serves not only the Commission but also other Institutions like the Council of the European Union, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European External Action Service, the European Investment Bank, as well as European offices and agencies. In this context and in order to constantly improve the quality of the interpretation provided and to cater for the availability of adequate numbers of staff and freelance interpreters through its succession planning, DG Interpretation provides continuous professional support for its interpreters and cooperates with universities, both in the EU, in candidate and other third countries.

Out of the total staff, almost 85% are conference interpreters or work in areas directly related to interpretation such as professional support and meeting preparation, programming, managing freelance interpreters' accreditation, recruitment and payments, as well as helping train future interpreters. A further 10% of staff members are assigned to corporate domain services in the area of conferences and meeting room management and the remaining staff are assigned to corporate management tasks as well as policy strategy, coordination and communication.

In addition, DG Interpretation manages an inter-institutional list of about 3000 free-lance interpreters spread all over the world, out of which around 1000 interpreters work alongside its permanent staff on a regular basis, as they are based in Europe and cover the most commonly requested languages.

Following the Communication adopted in 2016 (*Synergies and Efficiencies Review – New Ways of working*), DG Interpretation has broadened its core activities which are now based on three integrated pillars – interpretation, conference management and meeting room management. It is rolling out its technological solutions for multilingual communication in meetings, including a framework contract for audio-visual equipment and services, and its daily technical support to new facilities across Commission DGs. It is also structuring and enhancing the Commission's conference organisation capabilities, in particular with the management of the corporate "Events Database" and the launch of new innovative framework contracts for conference organisation that will be put at the disposal of all DGs.

DG SCIC operates under administrative expenditures (Heading 5), with a significant share of its budget accruing from revenues from interpretation services users outside the Commission (in 2018, 68.18% of total payment appropriations of EUR 83.49 million). These services operate also under "heading 5".

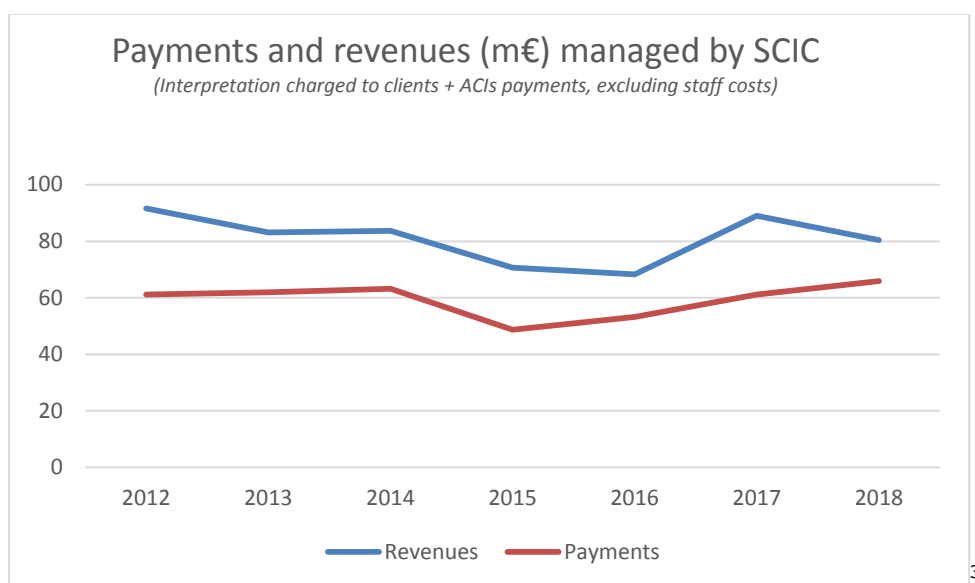
With its demand-driven business model dependant on the institutions' political cycle and priorities, DG SCIC's first challenge is to ensure optimal use of available interpretation resources, i.e. staff interpreters and non-permanent interpreters. In line with its integrated strategy and domain leadership, another challenge is to further develop DG SCIC's corporate role in providing high quality and modern conference organisation and meeting room management services across the Commission, with limited resources and in close partnership with central services (BUDG, HR, SG) and the other corporate domain leaders. Finally, as a public administration aiming to deliver services more efficiently, DG Interpretation needs to embrace digital transformation and reap its benefits.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director-General of DG Interpretation to the College of Commissioners. Annual Activity Reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitutes the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties¹.

a) Key results and progress towards the achievement of general and specific objectives of the DG (executive summary of section 1)

2018 has been an intense year for interpreters, who provided 209 602 interpretation slots (i-slots²). Compared to 2017, the global output increased by 4%. This trend was spread over all EU languages reflecting a boost in the number of meetings organised and a broadening of language regimes.



The above chart shows the evolution of the revenue generated by the invoicing of interpretation services and the total of payments executed by DG Interpretation in recent years.

For 2018, the changes in the demand pattern for interpretation of the Council, SCIC's major client, resulted in a reduction of revenue generated by reprogramming costs by more than EUR 5 million. The chart also shows that expenditure has been increasing since 2015 because more non-permanent interpreters have to be hired to satisfy growing demand with constantly reduced staff interpreters.

¹ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

² DG Interpretation invoices its external clients for the interpretation provided. The billing unit in use (i-slot) represents roughly half a day of an interpreter. The cost is calculated by dividing the expected remuneration costs for staff and non-permanent interpreters (ACIs) and indirect costs by the expected volume of interpretation to be provided. When demand is significantly different from what was expected at the time the i-slot price was set (January n-1), DG Interpretation's budget is no longer balanced, as most costs are fixed.

Although DG Interpretation sometimes reached the limits of its delivery capacity for some languages, it was able to globally satisfy the demand to last year's level of 96%.

To take full advantage of its expertise and manage knowledge in a more modern and dynamic way, and to enhance its status as standard setter, in 2018 DG Interpretation launched the Knowledge Centre on Interpretation 1.0. The Knowledge Centre for Interpretation has a vocation to become the single go-to space for (future) interpreters, industry and academia to manage and exchange knowledge, create synergies and disseminate globally followed standards on interpretation globally.

The DG further realised a number of significant achievements in the Synergies and Efficiencies Review: the new Corporate Events Database is up and running, the Network of Conference Correspondents functions well, a Framework Contract for Conference Assistants was signed and conferences with a link to Commission priorities are registered in the database and receive support.⁴ Furthermore, the competitive dialogue for the Commission's new Conference Centre is about to be completed. In addition, eight rooms have been added to the corporate pool managed by DG Interpretation, two cooperation agreements have been signed to provide support and maintenance services for non-corporate rooms, the Catalogue of meeting room services has been published and the Inventory of all Commission meeting rooms in Brussels has been established. All these achievements will lead to a more cost-effective use and a higher occupancy rate of corporate meeting rooms through a better overview and improved distribution of meetings.

Finally, DG Interpretation engaged in 2018 in Brexit preparedness by actively working on a number of contingency measures in the DG's remit in relation to the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, e.g. the financing of interpretation in Council meetings.

⁴ See more details in SER Communication C(2019)2329 and the related staff working document.

b) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Result/Impact indicator (description)	Target (or milestones)	Latest known results as per Annual Activity Report								
<p>KPI 1: Coverage of i-slot cost by i-slot price (%) (Source: Budget & Finance Unit)</p>		<p>Coverage of i-slot cost by i-slot price (KPI related to the Interpretation pillar)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Coverage of i-slot cost by i-slot price</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Coverage (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>92,4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>91,7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>90,9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Target between 98% and 102%</p>	Year	Coverage (%)	2016	92,4%	2017	91,7%	2018	90,9%
Year	Coverage (%)									
2016	92,4%									
2017	91,7%									
2018	90,9%									

The final calculation of the 2018 real i-slot cost (being a lump sum unit cost for a half day/interpreter) is EUR 537 against a nominal i-slot price set at 488€. The cost of the i-slot is thus 9% higher than the price charged to the paying customer.

The following key factors are responsible for this unbalance:

Lower income. Although interpretation output globally increased by 4%, the i-slots accounted for invoicing purposes⁵ decreased by 1.2% in total. The difference is the “reprogramming cost”, i.e. interpretation not provided and invoiced because users cancel their request so late that DG Interpretation can no longer reassign resources.

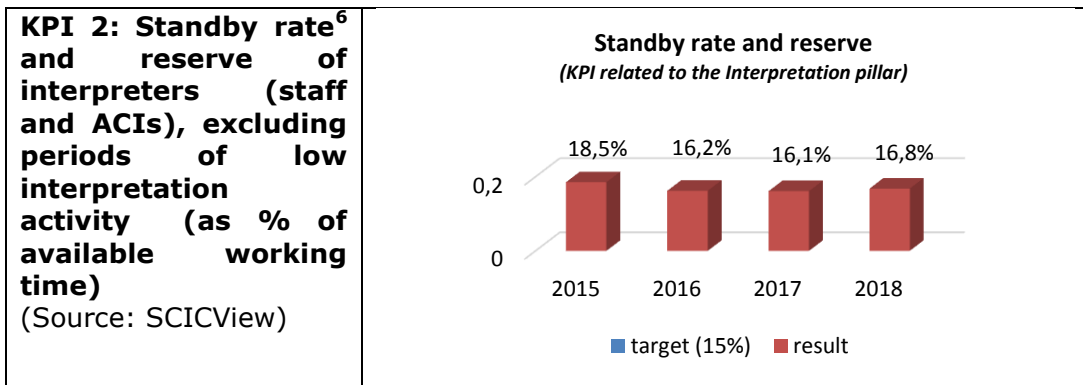
DG Interpretation observed a sharp, sudden and continuous drop in the reprogramming costs invoiced to the Council, down by some 50%. This decrease reflects a substantial shift in the patterns of cancellations and demand management from the Council, which resulted in a gap of around EUR 5 million of revenues compared to 2017.

The cost model is based on the principle of the non-profit rule and the underlying assumption that demand is stable, also as regards the share of reprogramming costs in the total invoiced amounts, as it was the case in the last decade. Such a sudden change in demand patterns cannot be absorbed naturally by the cost model.

Increased recruitment costs. Without additional staff interpreters available, this rise in demand could only be met by recruiting more free-lance interpreters (7% increase of contract days), who provided 53% of total interpretation (compared to 49% in 2017). That brought free-lance interpretation costs up 10% compared to 2017, while the average daily cost for hiring a free-lance increased by only 1%.

Further details are to be found in annex 12.

⁵ Interpretation invoiced to external clients is funded from Heading 5 (Administrative expenditure)



In order to function successfully and meet demand, DG Interpretation needs to maintain a sufficient level of available resources at all times.

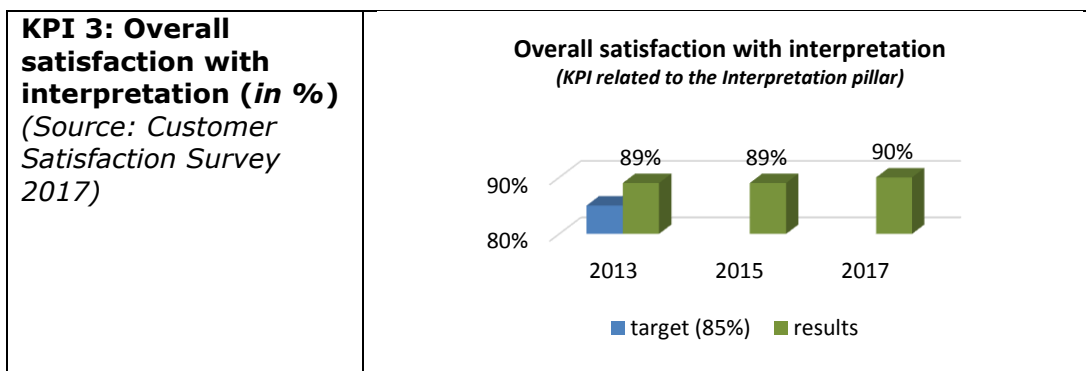
The **overall standby rate in 2018 remained stable** at a level similar to the previous two years (16.8%) and very close to the level that the DG considers necessary for its proper functioning. It is an aggregate indicator, which captures the following operational situations:

- 10% of time on standby is generated by DG Interpretation's legal obligations arising from the application of the Agreement on the interpreters' working conditions, which adapts the Staff regulation to the specific circumstances of interpretation. In this framework, interpreters can be assigned to interpretation activities for up to 18 sessions (a session corresponds to roughly half a day) over a two-week period. If the maximum number of sessions is reached, interpreters cannot be assigned to additional interpretation activities during this period. This time is used by interpreters to carry out professional activities such as preparing their meetings, learning and maintaining languages, preparing speeches for training, competitions and tests, working on terminology etc.
- DG Interpretation also expresses as time on standby the operational reserve, which is needed to respond to unscheduled last minute requests and replacement of unexpectedly unavailable interpreters.
- Finally, following demographic changes and staff cuts, fewer staff interpreters are available and freelance interpreters are more in demand and have to be recruited in advance. A share of standby is due to late cancellations of meetings by organisers or to meetings being called off earlier than planned. When subtracting from total aggregate standby (or availability for programming) the estimated aggregate standby caused by last minute cancellations and meetings finishing early, the "net standby" is 11.2%.

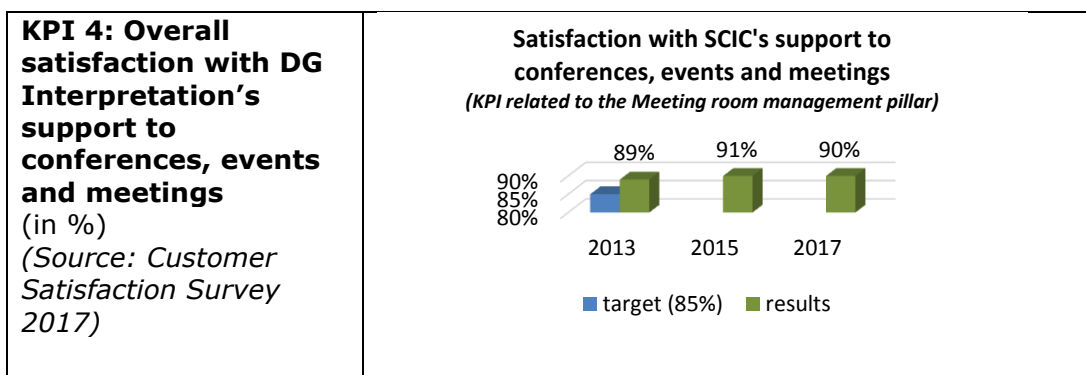
It has to be noted that the Service Level Agreements in place between DG Interpretation and its paying customers allow for non-invoiced full cancellation of meetings or modification of language regimes until two weeks before a meeting to enable them to adapt interpretation services to changing political priorities. This provision, which ensures maximum flexibility for customers, is likely to lead to an increased standby rate of interpreters in particular from less used languages. Late modifications of language regimes often make reprogramming of these interpreters impossible within a two-week deadline. As DG Interpretation invoices cancellations which occur after the two-week cut-

⁶ The standby indicator is defined in DG SCIC's Strategic Plan and Management Plan. It includes the standby of both staff interpreters and ACIs and considers only the days on which activity is above 150 interpreter-days provided. Standby is a job-specific term to define the working time during which staff interpreters and ACIs are not assigned to interpretation or other linked professional activities (travelling for missions, working as jury members for competitions and accreditation tests etc.), which by definition have to be scheduled in their programme.

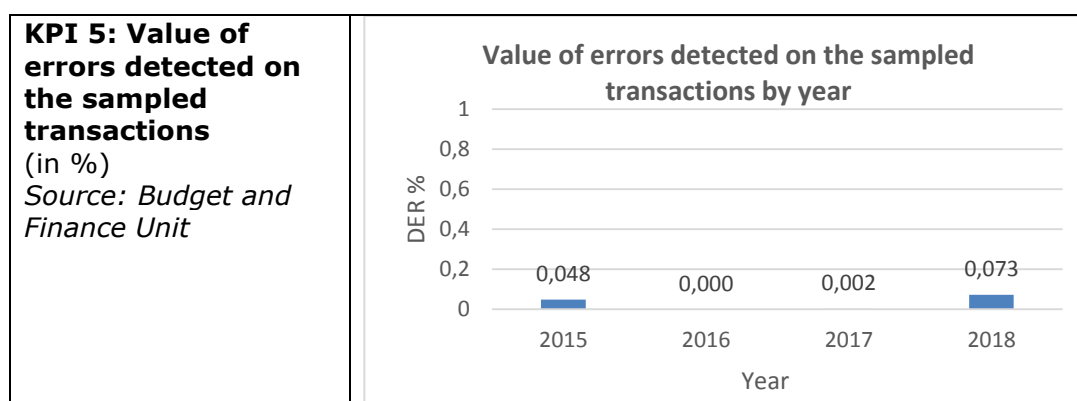
off point to the paying customers, the financial risk is partially transferred to them.



DG Interpretation carries out a **biennial customers' satisfaction survey on satisfaction with interpretation**. The most recent one took place in 2017 and the overall satisfaction with the quality of interpretation reported by customers reached 90%. This result reflects the constant efforts to provide high quality interpretation, thus ensuring multilingual communication in meetings serviced by DG Interpretation.



DG Interpretation also carries out a **biennial customers' satisfaction survey on support to conferences, meetings and events**. The latest to date also took place in 2017. The overall satisfaction rate of meeting participants remained at 90% and thus considerably above the target of 85%.



The error rate for 2018 for ex-post controls on payments to freelance interpreters was 0.073%, therefore below the indicated threshold of 1%.

c) Key conclusions on Financial management and Internal control (executive summary of section 2.1)

In accordance with the governance arrangements of the European Commission, DG Interpretation conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, working in an open and transparent manner and meeting the expected high level of professional and ethical standards.

The Commission has adopted a set of internal control principles, based on international good practice, aimed to ensure the achievement of policy and operational objectives. The financial regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems used for the implementation of the budget are set up in accordance with these principles. DG Interpretation has assessed the internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that the internal control principles are implemented and function as intended. Please refer to AAR section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, DG Interpretation has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by internal auditors and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on the management's assurance as regards the achievement of control objectives. Please refer to Section 2.1.3 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

d) Provision of information to the Commissioner

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the DG and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and the assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Oettinger, responsible for Budget and Human Resources.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DG

DG Interpretation contributed to the achievement of General Objective "To help achieve the overall political objectives, the Commission will effectively and efficiently manage and safeguard assets and resources, and attract and develop the best talents" by

- providing conference interpreting services to ensure that meeting participants can communicate effectively
- being the Commission's domain leader for corporate meeting room management and
- being the domain leader for corporate conference and event management

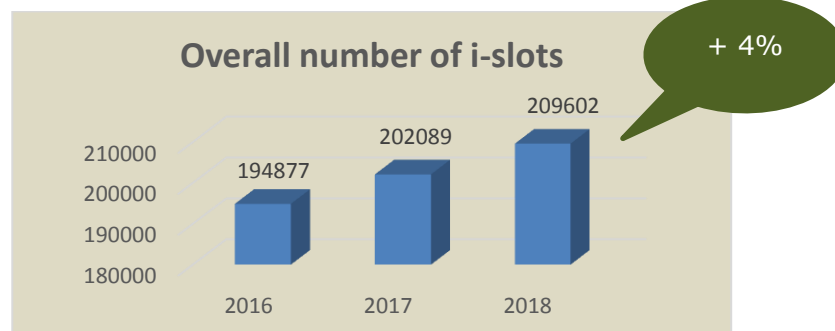
➤ Interpretation

Increased demand led to an increase in the provision of interpretation by 4% ...

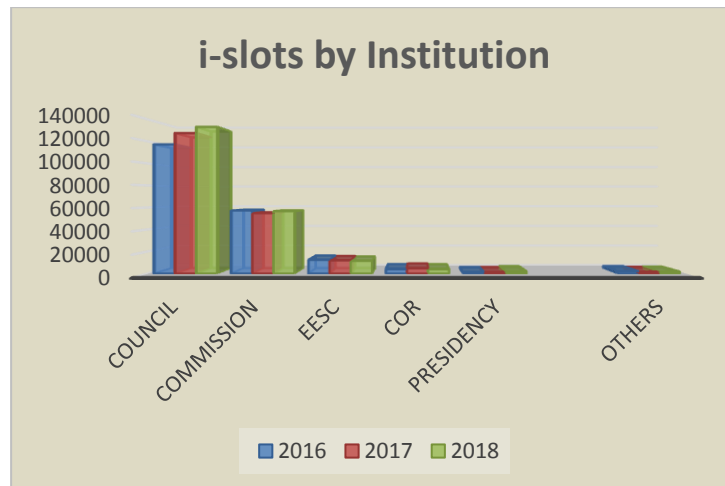


(linked to Specific Objective 1: Interpreting services meet our clients' demand and are cost effective)

As from April 2018, DG Interpretation has dealt with steadily increasing demand from its key customers. In the second half of 2018, an important factor in this increase has been the desire by the EU institutions to push through numerous legislative acts resulting from the Juncker Commission's priorities still to be adopted before the end of this mandate and the new European Parliament election. A further element of the increased demand was DG SCIC's targeted outreach to all Member States' Permanent Representations and possibly a Brexit related higher awareness of their linguistic identity among Member States. There were also more frequent leaders' meetings and corresponding preparatory work in the Council that required interpretation.



Activity in the Council, which represents almost two-thirds of DG Interpretation's overall output, rose by 4% in 2018, confirming an upward trend since 2016; an increase of almost 14% in the last three years. For the first time in many years, interpretation activity in the Commission increased as well in 2018, up 3% compared to 2017, placing additional pressure on resources, with the Commission representing more than 25% of total output.



As less interpreting staff are available and the size of the freelance pool in a number of important languages decreased due to demographic changes, the service had to make considerable efforts to match interpretation resources with requests for interpretation. This happened in a context where DG Interpretation, who is demand driven, had very little influence on the effective distribution of activity throughout the year, and often had to react to late requests, many of which carry political imperatives.

Freelance recruitment remained the key measure available to secure sufficient interpreting resources. DG Interpretation undertook two additional recruitment waves at the beginning of 2018 to increase available resources for the whole year, while concentrating on the languages and periods where it estimated that demand would be the highest. By doing so, it took added risk that recruitment overshoots actual demand, which would leave the service with high levels of standby.

Nevertheless, the standby level in 2018 has only increased slightly compared to 2017 (up 0.7%), suggesting that estimates were relatively accurate and that the service was able to cope with the new approach to interpreting requests in the Council, described under KPI 2. Nonetheless, among the five more widely used languages, English and French interpreters stood well below the target of 15%, while German (15.2%), Italian (15.4%) and Spanish (16.8%) were only slightly above.

DG Interpretation engaged in 2018 in Brexit preparedness by actively working on a number of contingency measures in the DG's remit in relation to the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. In particular, by reaching out to Member States Permanent Representations and cooperating closely with the Council Secretariat on the provision of statistical data and detailed analyses, DG Interpretation successfully contributed to the review of the 'on-request' system to finance interpretation in Council preparatory bodies, including arrangements as regards English interpretation post-Brexit. This allowed to devise a fair and balanced technical solution, formally adopted by COREPER in December 2018. To address staffing issues and succession planning, DG Interpretation also recruited 4 English language native speakers as staff interpreters through internal competition in 2018.

As DG Interpretation's information systems do not manage interactions with UK authorities or stakeholders, but rather they support the management of interpretation in the English language, they will not be impacted by Brexit.

Actions to maintain the high quality of interpretation to clients ...

(linked to Specific Objective 2: The quality of interpretation meets our clients' needs



Following the Customer Satisfaction Survey, completed in November, 2017, DG Interpretation adopted an action plan in April 2018 order to maintain the high quality of interpretation. The key measures agreed in the action plan are explained below.

Providing quality interpretation to customers is key for the service as it is crucial that customers can count on reliable and accurate rendition of the source in the target languages. One of the procedures to support this aim was the **quality evaluation system for free-lance interpreters (ACIs)**, based on a 4-point scale. When recruiting, the service thus privileged ACIs with the highest quality score, while at the same time still recruiting less experienced interpreters so that they can improve their skills. Level 2 on this scale was considered the minimum for an ACI to be freely assigned to the majority of meetings, whereas for higher level or particularly technical meetings a higher quality rating is generally required. The service thus monitored the percentage of ACI contract days given to interpreters working into the EU languages at level 2 and above. In 2018, it was possible to keep this figure significantly above the target, at 93.5% of contract days. This represents an increase of 2.8 points compared to the previous year where it stood at 90.7%.

DG Interpretation launched the **Knowledge Centre on Interpretation**: a modern, dynamic, web-based platform for managing, sharing and disseminating information on interpreting, in combination with a collaborative space for both established and new partners. As a world-wide standard setter and driver, the DG has a strong convening role to play and aims to attract and connect the relevant people from different disciplines and encourage them to **share information and knowledge and exchange best practices**.

The Knowledge Centre fits well into the Commission's approach of collaborative working and knowledge sharing and will have a positive impact on the quality of conference interpretation by pooling and publicising digital resources. By opening up an information space for other types of interpreting, such as **Public Service Interpreting** in particular in relation to migration and integration issues, it will indirectly be contributing to the Commission's priorities in the area of justice and fundamental rights and migration policy.

In addition, DG Interpretation continued to invest in **capacity development** by supporting universities which provide conference interpreting training, with a view to providing benchmarks and build a pool for future recruitments not only in the EU, but also in the candidate countries to support Commission's commitment to maintain credible enlargement perspective for **Western Balkan** countries.

DG Interpretation cooperated closely with DG Translation, the other EU linguistic services and the Irish authorities and academia to develop **Irish capacity** in the run up to the phasing out of the Irish language derogation by 2022, in line with the final decision about the derogation and the overall priorities of the service.

In 2018, DG Interpretation contributed at its level to the economic, political and cultural objectives of the EU as global actor, in line with strategic priorities including on Africa, striving to reach out to other countries, engaging and cooperating with international partners and giving visibility to EU action through its international cooperation projects in the field of interpretation.

In that respect, DG Interpretation - together with partner DGs - actively continued in 2018 to implement **international cooperation programmes** in the field of

interpretation with China, Macao, Cuba, Russia and African countries (Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation – PAMCIT), providing pedagogical assistance and helping develop interpreting capacities in partner countries, in public administrations and universities. It promoted interpreter training according to the high standards developed in EU institutions, thus contributing to increase the level of quality interpretation in the countries concerned and supporting capacity building.

DG Interpretation actively participated with DG DEVCO in the mid-term evaluation of the **PAMCIT project** carried out by external experts. The objective was to get an independent assessment of the implementation of the project so far as well as recommendations for improvement in the short and longer term, including beyond 2019 after completion of the current implementing phase.

DG Interpretation also strived to foster and develop cooperation with international organisations and their networks active in the field of interpretation. At the **“International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications”** (IAMLADP) in Montreal in June 2018, in line with the priorities identified with the Commissioner, DG Interpretation proactively secured that it will co-host in May 2019 in Brussels, with DGT and other EU institutions, the next annual meeting which is expected to be a major international event for linguistic services and for the EU.

...we also helped to increase corporate efficiency in particular in the areas of meeting room management and conference and event management



➤ **Corporate Meeting Room Management**

Since the adoption of the SER Communication, DG Interpretation had to work with limited resources to meet its new role as Domain Leader

In 2018, DG Interpretation has successfully completed a number of actions in the domain of meeting room management. The main achievements include:

- **Eight rooms were added to the pool of corporate meeting rooms**, allowing meeting organisers across the Commission to have a wider choice for their conferences or expert group meetings. The rooms were fitted with modern equipment to ensure a positive experience for meeting participants⁷. Those extra rooms also benefit from support and proximity services.

Experience showed that the occupancy rate increased by 30% for meeting rooms added to the corporate pool

Moreover, DG SCIC provided help desk and maintenance services also to non-corporate meeting rooms. This resulted in **more than 100 maintenance interventions**.

- The **new Catalogue of Meeting Room Services** was published on IntraComm. Together with the extensive implementation of the standard Incident Management system it will be instrumental for the **creation of a new One-Stop-Shop for meeting room services** for meeting organisers and end users.
- **Inventory of all meeting rooms in Commission buildings in Brussels was carried out** thanks to a reinforced cooperation with the other domain leaders. In

⁷ This refers to meeting rooms accommodating 50 participants or more. Most of the corporate meeting rooms are those located in the Albert Borschette Conference Centre. The new rooms are located in buildings Merode (3 rooms), Loi 130 (2 rooms), Breydel, Madou, Loi 102 (1 room each).

particular, two MoUs with OIB and with OIL were signed in 2018.

- **Renovating the Commission Press Room**, where the Commission communicates with the media and European Citizens on a daily basis. This project had to be completed under a short but strict timeline and required complex coordination with other services, in particular OIB. The press room now benefits from new, state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and increased interpretation facilities.
- **Increasing live streaming of events from Commission meeting rooms**. With 3500 events streamed in the last two years and the transmission of the 2018 State of the Union address (SOTEU), there was a huge increase in webstreaming by DG Interpretation from the Commission.
- DG Interpretation continued to collect relevant data on existing meeting room management resources in close cooperation with other services (in particular DG HR for staff screening and OIB for meeting room inventory) and subsequently contributed to developing a robust methodology for the calculation of related investments and savings.

Streaming increases transparency of Commission actions and reduces carbon footprint and mission costs

As announced in the 2018 MP under the heading "Example of initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities of the DG", all these achievements contribute to a Commission-wide standardisation of meeting rooms through the standardisation of technical equipment, maintenance and support. Thanks to a set of audio-visual framework contracts, significant savings on equipment and maintenance costs could already be made: taking into account the current consumption, the **Commission-wide saving for 2018 amounts to EUR 600,000**.

...the competitive dialogue for the Commission's **new flagship Conference Centre** is expected to be completed in the 1st quarter 2019...



In 2018, DG Interpretation contributed to the competitive dialogue with the suppliers for the **Commission's new flagship Conference Centre**. This competitive dialogue, which will be completed in the 1st quarter 2019, is an important step which will pave the way for the next phases including approval by the budget authority and signature of the contract.

➤ **Conference and Event Management**

Since the adoption of the Synergies and Efficiencies Communication, DG SCIC has been working to meeting its new role as Domain Leader. Some of the biggest challenges DG SCIC faced in this field in 2018 was to the **identification of contact persons and the needs of a previously less structured domain**. The approach of the DG relies on working in partnership with DGs and to identify people with expertise in the field who would be able to act as multipliers of knowledge and know-how, the objective being to ensure that all Commission DGs can rely on a professional conference organisation capability.

The calculation of savings and investments in a fragmented domain required a novel approach to domain leadership. There were no pre-existing data on staff employed and budgets used for DG SCIC's domain. DG SCIC first had to build a community of practice,

which now exists and is evolving and establish an events data base – both of which are explained in more detail below. The conferences domain does not lend itself of a centralisation of staff. SDG SCIC therefore occupies a leading coordinating role for its domain and provides key building blocks (e.g. Framework Contracts, professionalization of the conference organisers’ community and project management support, strongly advocating the greening of conferences and promoting balanced participation in panels through the “No woman – no panel” approach) at central level. In this capacity, DG SCIC provided informed input to **calculate savings and investments** to the central services, who were supportive and helped to fine-tune the approach.

DG Interpretation carried out extensive groundwork, in very close cooperation with DG COMM, to collect data and analyse the Commission’s needs for conference and event-related services, to launch a **next generation framework contract for event management services**. This modern, efficient and easy-to-use framework contract will serve around 60% of Commission conferences. In cooperation with DG COMM, DG Interpretation will coordinate the framework contracts serving the remaining need.

DG Interpretation contributes to a better knowledge of Commission events (numbers, budgets, participation) thanks to data collecting

DG Interpretation also **designed the model governance for conference management**, based on a corporately steered decentralisation:

- The corporate elements include the **database for registering all events (the Corporate Events Database)**, the **central tool for registration of participants** or the **free of charge app** to store all documents and relevant conference data.
- The decentralised part of the model aims at ensuring an adequate level of **professionalisation of the community**, by sharing best practice, expertise and tools with a **Network of Conference Correspondents**. This network of currently 130 members has led already to a considerable degree of professionalisation. The online toolkit for conference organisation is one example.

A joint note by the Directors-General of DG SCIC and DG BUDG in autumn 2018 reminded DGs of the requirement to register their events and made event registration a pre-condition for authorising the related expenditure⁸. In accordance with the central services, the requirement to ensure completeness of the yearly events planned/registered by each DG will be embedded in the instructions for the Management Plan 2020.

⁸ Reference: note Ares(2018)5156219 of 8 October 2018.

2. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL

This section explains *how* the DG delivered the achievements described in the previous section. It is divided into two subsections.

The first subsection reports the control results and all other relevant information that support management's assurance on the achievement of the financial management and internal control objectives⁹. It includes any additional information necessary to establish that the available evidence is reliable, complete and comprehensive; appropriately covering all activities, programmes and management modes relevant to the DG.

The second subsection deals with the other components of organisational management: human resources, better regulation principles, information management and external communication.

2.1 Financial management and internal control

Assurance is an objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an assessment of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

This examination is carried out by management, who monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. Its results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The reports produced are:

- the contribution of the director in charge of *Risk Management and Internal Control (RMIC)*, including the results of internal control monitoring at the DG level;
- the reports by AOSDs;
- the limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of control and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a complete coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG Interpretation.

This section reports the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into (a) Control results, (b) Audit observations and recommendations, (c) Effectiveness of the internal control system, and resulting in (d) Conclusions on the impact as regards assurance.

⁹ Art 36.2 FR: a) effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; b) reliability of reporting; c) safeguarding of assets and information; d) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and e) adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions

2.1.1 Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management that support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives¹⁰. The DG's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in the AAR Annex 4. Annex 5 outlines the main risks together with the control processes aimed to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

DG Interpretation operates under administrative expenditure (Heading 5) implemented under centralised direct management. In 2018, DG Interpretation executed payments of:

- EUR 62.7 million from budgetary chapter 31 and
- EUR 3.2 million from co-delegated expenditure related to conferences and events organisation on behalf of other Commission services.

The expenditure managed by DG Interpretation in 2018 can be divided into the following Relevant Control Systems (RCS). The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of ex-ante controls conducted in these areas is presented separately in Annex 5.

Relevant Control System	payments made	%
ACI	50.925.782,27 €	77,31%
Procurement	14.178.269,36 €	21,52%
Grants	448.809,21 €	0,68%
Staff expenditure	321.975,10 €	0,49%
Total	65.874.835,94 €	

ACI covers the recruitment, remuneration and reimbursement of non-permanent interpreters. ACIs are employed when needed by DG Interpretation on a day-by-day contract basis to ensure it can meet demand for interpretation and achieve its mission and strategic objectives. Additionally, the reimbursement of ACI candidates participating in inter-institutional tests is also included into this RCS. These payments are managed via decentralised financial circuits in Unit SCIC.B4, Joint Management of Conference Interpreting Agents.

The inter-institutional payment office in Unit SCIC.B4 processed ACI payments for a total value of EUR 102.4 million. 50.9M correspond to DG SCIC contracts, paid from SCIC budget, plus EUR 2.5 million for the ACIs recruited by the Court of Justice and EUR 49 million for the ACIs recruited by the European Parliament. Such payments are made from "Hors Budget" accounts financed from advances paid by these Institutions. All payments to ACIs are processed by applying the same internal controls regardless the recruiting Institution, via a fully decentralised financial circuit complemented by ex post controls performed by Unit SCIC.C2.

For the estimation of costs of control however, only transactions financed from SCIC's budget and resources allocated to their handling are considered. The other Institutions nevertheless contribute to the functioning of the payment office in form of detached staff and compensation for the salary of affected contract agents.

Procurement covers transactions where budgetary appropriations are consumed by procurement procedures. The most important areas of expenditure for DG Interpretation

¹⁰ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) *reliability of reporting*; 3) *safeguarding of assets and information*; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2). *The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.*

in this system are conference management, the management of meeting rooms, informatics expenditure and professional development. All of these transactions are handled through a centralised financial circuit, where operational initiation and verification of commitments, contracts and payments takes place in the responsible operational unit, while financial initiation and verification is performed centrally in the finance unit. Procurement procedures were subject of an audit by IAS in 2016. The IAS reviewed the implementation of their recommendations in 2018 and found that they were fully implemented.

Based on ABAC data, DG SCIC has a 54% share of negotiated procedures in the total of contracts concluded by DG SCIC. This represents a 16 point decrease compared to 2017.

When assessing the share of negotiated procedures, it is very important to remember that 60% of the contracts concluded by SCIC in 2018 were specific contracts on existing framework contracts for which SCIC or other DGs (DIGIT for IT contracts, DG HR for training contracts, etc.) reported the relevant procedures in earlier years. The total value of these transactions covered 84% of the procurements contracts signed in 2018.

As those specific contracts are not taken into account for the counting of procurement procedures, only direct contracts are taken into account. Based on this methodology, the overwhelming part of procedures awarded in 2018 by SCIC were negotiated. This is due to the fact 87% of SCIC negotiated procedures are very low value contracts (< EUR 15 000) not covered by existing framework contracts, and for which open tender procedure is not proportionate. As SCIC also manages the organisation of conferences on budget lines co-delegated by other DGs, SCIC takes over services – and related procurement procedures – that had previously been reported by the DGs when they were organising their conferences themselves. Usually these procedures are needed for contracting local services needed for the smooth conference organisation. On other occasions, DG Interpretation had to conclude contracts with a single economic operator for acquiring certain services. This is in line with Article 134.b of the RAP in application of art. 104(5) FR of the Financial Regulations remaining in force for administrative credits up to 31/12/2018 and Art 11.1(b) of Annex 1 to the FR 2018, applicable to operational credits as of 02/08/2018 when, for reason of technical or operational exclusivity, no open competition can be organised. In all cases, evidence of the exclusivity is fully documented and validated by the responsible authorising officer.

Following a cost benefit analysis, considering the limited number of transactions, the intensive use of framework contracts, the structure of the financial circuits and the results of the ex-ante controls, no ex-post controls are performed on procurement and therefore there is no detected error rate for procurement transactions

In the Relevant Control System for **Grants** specific transactions are encompassed: grants to universities and scholarships to students. Similarly to the Procurement area centralized financial circuits are used for the ex-ante controls.

Staff expenditure, includes transactions for the purpose of professional development of staff interpreters (and also ACI) in languages via a system of reimbursement. Similarly to the Procurement area centralized financial circuits are used for the ex-ante controls.

Income is a crucial factor in DG Interpretation's operations. Therefore a relevant Control System is dedicated to this area. Of the 93.2M€ cashed revenue reported in Annex 3, Table 7, EUR 80.4 million of the revenue was collected from external clients (under Heading 5 expenditure). EUR 78.3 million result from the provision of interpretation services, and EUR 2.1 million result from other services delivered in 2018 or in 2017. From the EUR 78.3 million interpretation related revenue, EUR 41.9 million (53.9%) were assigned to the PMO. The EUR 12.8 million balance corresponds to the taxes on revenue collected on the payment of the salaries ACIs recruited by the 3 European interpretation services and paid on their behalf by DG SCIC. Those EUR 12.8 million are part of the general revenue of the European Union.

Besides the above-mentioned relevant Control Systems that concentrate on ex-ante controls in the different areas of expenditure and on income, DG Interpretation has 2 ex-post relevant Control Systems:

- Specific **ex-post controls** on payments to non-local ACIs. As the payments are made as part of a decentralised financial circuit, a sample-based control is executed. The results are summarized each semester in a specific report. The controls also cover payments made on behalf of the European Parliament and the Court of Justice and the reports are transmitted to them for information.
- **Accounting controls** are conducted in the areas of expenditure, pre-financing, assets, guarantees, income and commitments. Their main goal is to provide the Director General with reasonable assurance on the quality of DG Interpretation's accounts.

DG Interpretation's management considers that control mechanisms implemented at the DG successfully mitigate the risks presented in Annex 5 and provide a reasonable assurance about the achievement of internal control objectives.

1. Effectiveness = the control results and benefits

Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG Interpretation has set up internal control processes aimed to ensure the adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments concerned.

The main purpose of controls in the **ACI process** is to ensure the legality and regularity with regards to the contracting and payment of freelance interpreters. With regards to the contracting phase, it can be concluded that the control target has been achieved, as all contracts signed in 2018 were fully covered by the designated budgetary commitment.

Payments to ACIs are, for the most part, a fully automated and repetitive procedure, with all relevant data managed through a single, integrated information system (Management of Interpretation and Meetings -MIM) which ensures a high level of data integrity. Within this activity, the payment of some allowances and reimbursement of transport and accommodation costs of ACIs on mission is an area where fraud and/or errors could occur with smaller, one-off payments. However, access to prepaid travel tickets, implementation of the APR system (web-based expenses claims for non-permanent interpreters) and various automated checks considerably circumvent risk of error.

Ex-ante controls on payments were conducted according to the four-eyes principle. As ex-ante controls aim at the execution of payments in the shortest possible deadlines, no statistics are noted at the time of the payment with regards to corrections or additional documents requested from the ACI. Therefore, the effectiveness of the ex-ante controls is demonstrated by results of the satisfactory results of the ex-post controls and accounting controls.

Ex-ante controls conducted in a centralized financial circuit in the **Procurement process** area are carried out with the purpose of ensuring legality and regularity with regards to the selection of tenderers, the contracting of successful tenderers and the execution/payment of the contract in an effective, efficient and economic way. The prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities is also incorporated into these controls, as all transactions are handled according to the 4-eyes principle. Control results are regularly monitored and where necessary, remedial actions are adopted and implemented without delay. With regards to the selection phase of procurement, no complaints have been received from unsuccessful tenderers and no

procedures had to be cancelled due unsatisfactory definition of tender specifications. Therefore, controls can be considered effective in this segment. In the contracting phase, there were only minor discrepancies noted, however the presence of such observations is reassuring that controls are carried out systematically and effectively. In the execution/payment phase as well, few errors were noted and adequate action was adopted before payment. Identified errors were below materiality threshold, but their identification demonstrates the ability to identify discrepancies.

Following a cost-benefit analysis, considering the limited number of transactions, the intensive use of framework contracts, the structure of the financial circuits and the results of the ex-ante controls, no ex-post controls others than accounting controls are performed on procurement and therefore there is no detected error rate for procurement transactions.

Similarly to procurement, ex-ante controls in the **Grants process** aim at guaranteeing legality and regularity throughout the awarding, granting and execution/payment phase as well as taking necessary measures against fraud. No claims have been received with regards to the awarding process of grants and the only complaint in connection of awarding scholarships was related to a simple case of non-eligibility. Ex-ante controls in the signature and execution phase did not highlight any discrepancies. Due to the presence of ex-ante controls and as 90% of the grants awarded are low value grants, on-the-spot audit missions are therefore only performed when strictly needed in order to keep a correct balance between cost and benefit of such controls and no specific ex-post controls are performed.

In the area of **Staff expenditure** ex-ante controls in the commitment phase specifically aim at ensuring that the applications accepted contribute to reaching the objective of a broader language portfolio of staff interpreters and ACI. The indicators show that in 2018 38 staff interpreters and 15 ACI added a new language after a language stay with the support of DG Interpretation. In the payment phase the legality and regularity of transactions was examined resulting in the detection of a few minor discrepancies. Due to the very low value of transactions and as 100% of transactions are subject to ex-ante examination, no specific ex-post controls others than accounting controls are performed.

Ex-ante controls in the area of **Income** aim at ensuring that the amounts due to DG Interpretation are recovered from SCIC's clients in order to be able to contribute to the DGs' budget in the form of assigned revenue. Additionally, legality and regularity of each transaction is controlled as part of the billing process and charge d amounts are confirmed by clients as part of the pre-information stage of the invoicing process. The best indicator for controlling recoveries is whether the amounts that are considered due are contested by the clients. In 2018 there was only one case where partial cancellation of a debit note was needed, but this was due to the client DG's change in needs for a conference after the recovery order was issued.

The **Ex-post controls on payments to non-permanent interpreters** have been established in order to measure the effectiveness of ex-ante controls that are performed in a decentralized financial circuit. As the payment of daily remunerations and allowances is automated, the only potential area of error is the treatment of reimbursement requests requiring the analysis of supporting documents. Therefore the randomly selected transactions to be subjected to ex-post examination were part of this population. The sample selected amounted to 1.27% of payments in value. The results of the controls executed in 2018 indicate an error rate of 0.073% applicable to the totality of transactions¹¹. This error rate is well below the 1% materiality threshold set in 2018 DG SCIC management plan for this specific area of transactions.

¹¹ As described above, the controls also cover contracts concluded by the European Parliament and the Court of Justice. For the calculation of the error rate the payments based on automated calculations are also included into the population.

In the area of **ex-post accounting controls** 2018 DG Interpretation conducted 55 different accounting controls on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis in the area of expenditure, pre-financing, assets, guarantees, income and commitments and contracts. As a result of them the DG performed 45 corrections (compared to 80 in 2017), out of which 23 (as opposed to 25 in 2017) had no financial impact on financial statements. The global impact of corrections with a financial impact represents 0.5% of the total financial statements, which is well below the 2% materiality threshold.

In addition, DG Budget performed an assessment of the DG Interpretation accounting quality programme. They stated that the accounting control framework put in place at DG Interpretation represents a low risk. They nevertheless concluded that the accounting risk for the DG was assessed as medium, only due to the fact that the European Court of Auditors has not performed a detailed audit on DG Interpretation's accounts and DG Budget has not conducted a new validation exercise of SCIC internal control since 2007. Therefore, although these factors that are out of DG Interpretation's control and do not have an actual impact on accounting quality, the medium risk is the lowest possible that can be achieved.

Total impact of the corrections made on the 2018 annual accounts				
accounting control corrections	Impact on assets	Impact on liabilities	Impact on expenses	Impact on revenue
Total	0,00	384,00	-325.900,11	-16.500,00
TOTAL 2018 financial statements	25.843.667,86	24.824.243,38	64.135.572,48	92.366.851,19
% on total 2018 financial statements	0,00%	0,00%	-0,51%	-0,02%

In the context of the protection of the EU budget, at the Commission's corporate level, the DGs' estimated overall amounts at risk and their estimated future corrections are consolidated.

For DG Interpretation, the estimated overall amount at risk at payment¹² for the 2018 expenditure is EUR 0.3 million. This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the amount of *relevant expenditure*¹³ during the year (EUR 65.93 million) not in conformity with the applicable contractual and regulatory provisions at the time the payment is made¹⁴.

The main part of 2018 DG Interpretation expenditure was subject to ex-post controls with very low reported error rate and direct correction of found errors. Therefore, the conservatively estimated future corrections¹⁵ for the 2018 expenditure are EUR 0. This is

¹² In order to calculate the weighted average error rate (AER), the *detected or equivalent* error rates have been used; see note 6 to the table.

¹³ "*relevant expenditure*" during the year; see note 5 to the table.

¹⁴ "*payments made*" or *equivalent*; see note 2 to the table.

¹⁵ Even though to some extent based on the 7 years historic Average of Recoveries and financial Corrections (ARC), which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex-post control systems implemented by the DG over the past years, the AOD *has adjusted* this historic average *from 1.2% to 0%*. Any ex-ante elements, one-off events, (partially) cancelled or waived ROs, and other factors from the past years that would no longer be relevant for current programmes (e.g. higher ex-post corrections of previously higher errors in earlier generations of grant programmes,

the amount of errors that the DG conservatively estimates to identify and correct from controls that it will implement in successive years.

The difference between those two amounts leads to the estimated overall amount at risk at closure¹⁶ for the 2018 expenditure of EUR 0.3 million.

current programmes with entirely ex-ante control systems) *have been adjusted* in order to come to the best but conservative estimate of the ex-post future corrections to be applied to the reporting year's relevant expenditure for the current programmes.

¹⁶ **For some programmes with no set *closure* point (e.g. EAGF) and for some multiannual programmes for which corrections are still possible afterwards (e.g. EAFRD and ESIF), all corrections that remain possible are considered for this estimate.**

Table X - Estimated overall amount at risk at closure

DG SCIC	"payments made" (FY; m€)	<i>minus</i> new prefinancing [<i>plus</i> retentions made*] (in FY; m€)	<i>plus</i> cleared prefinancing [<i>minus</i> retentions released* and deductions of expenditure made by MS] (in FY; m€)	= "relevant expenditure" (for the FY; m€)	Average Error Rate (<i>weighted</i> AER; %)	estimated overall amount at risk at <i>payment</i> (FY; m€)	Average Recoveries and Corrections (<i>adjusted</i> ARC; %)	estimated future corrections [and deductions] (for FY; m€)	estimated overall amount at risk at closure (m€)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Programme, Budget Line(s), or other relevant level	as per AAR annex 3, table 2	as per ABAC DWH BO report on prefinancing	as per ABAC DWH BO report on prefinancing	= (2) -/+ (3) +/- (4)	Detected error rates, or equivalent estimates	= (5) x (6)	H-ARC (as per ABAC DWH BO report on corrective capacity), <u>but adjusted</u>	= (5) x (8)	= (7) - (9)
Total budget where SCIC is AOSD for payments, excl ACIs	14.97	0.39	0.45	15.03	0.5%	0.07	0%	0	0.07
ACIs	50.90	0	0	50.90	0.073%	0.04	0%	0	0.04
TOTAL	65.87	0.39	0.45	65.93		0.11	0%	0	0.11

Notes to the table

1) [if possible] differentiated for the relevant portfolio segments at a level which is lower than the DG total

(2) Payments made or equivalent, such as after the expenditure is registered in the Commission's accounting system, after the expenditure is accepted or after the pre-financing is cleared. In any case, this means after the preventive (ex-ante) control measures have already been implemented earlier in the cycle.

In all cases of Co-Delegations (Internal Rules Article 3), the "payments made" are covered by the Delegated DGs. In the case of Cross-SubDelegations (Internal Rules Article 12), they remain with the Delegating DGs.

(3) New pre-financing actually paid by out the department itself during the financial year (i.e. excluding any pre-financing received as transfer from another department). The "Pre-financing" is covered as in the context of note 2.5.1 to the Commission (provisional) annual accounts (i.e. excluding the "Other advances to Member States" (note 2.5.2) which is covered on a pure payment-made basis).

"Pre-financings paid/cleared" are always covered by the Delegated DGs, even in the case of Cross-SubDelegations.

(4) Pre-financing actually having been cleared during the financial year (i.e. their 'delta' in FY 'actuals', not their 'cut-off' based estimated 'consumption').

(5) For the purpose of equivalence with the ECA's scope of the EC funds with potential exposure to L&R errors (see the ECA's 2017 AR methodological Annex 1.1 point 15), also our concept of "relevant expenditure" includes the payments made, subtracts the new pre-financing paid out, and adds the previous pre-financing actually cleared [& subtracts the retentions released and those (partially) withheld; and any deductions of expenditure made by MS in the annual accounts] during the FY. This is a separate and 'hybrid' concept, intentionally combining elements from the budgetary accounting and from the general ledger accounting.

(6) In order to calculate the weighted Average Error Rate (AER) for the total relevant expenditure in the reporting year, the detected error rates have been used – or equivalent.

For types of low-risk expenditure with indications that the equivalent error rate might be close to 'zero' (e.g. administrative expenditure, operating subsidies to agencies), it is recommended to use 0.5% nevertheless as a conservative estimate.

Following the recommendation given by DG BUDGET, DG Interpretation has used a conservative estimate for the error rate of 0.5%, although the actual detected error rate is 0.162% on DG's payments of non-permanent interpreters' remunerations.

(8) Even though to some extent based on the 7 years historic Average of Recoveries and financial Corrections (ARC), which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex-post control systems implemented by the DG over the past years, the AOD has adjusted this historic average from 1.2% to 0% as based on the revision of data it can be concluded that the amount stems from information encoded in credit notes, therefore the corrective capacity is not an indication of ex-post, but ex-ante controls.

Any ex-ante elements, one-off events, (partially) cancelled or waived Recovery Orders, and other factors from the past years that would no longer be relevant for current programmes (e.g. higher ex-post corrections of previously higher errors in earlier generations of grant programmes, current programmes with entirely ex-ante control systems) have been adjusted in order to come to the best but conservative estimate of the ex-post future corrections to be applied to the reporting year's relevant expenditure for the current programmes.

(10) For some programmes with no set closure point (e.g. EAGF) and for some multiannual programmes for which corrections are still possible afterwards (e.g. EAFRD and ESIF), all corrections that remain possible are considered for this estimate.

- ***Fraud prevention, detection and correction***

DG Interpretation has updated its anti-fraud strategy in 2018, highlighting that the DG remains a low risk DG with a good knowledge of staff on ethics related issues. With the HR centralization, it was recalled that Heads of units are now responsible for ensuring that new staff follows ethics training and guidance. Various awareness-raising actions were also implemented to maintain this level of knowledge among staff.

Besides, the strategy stresses that the nature and average individual value of the transactions, the types of contracting modalities and the internal control systems in place (systematic segregation of duties, effective automated monitoring tools, etc.) result in a low level of risk exposure to fraud.

No instances of fraud have been detected or reported in 2018. Each time a possible risk of error or fraud is identified as part of regular controls, especially in the area of financial management, remedial actions are adopted.

In 2018 the DG has nominated a new Anti-Fraud Correspondent and maintained its active participation in the FDPNet (Fraud Detection and Prevention Network chaired by OLAF). An additional ethics contact was appointed in Directorate A to provide guidance for interpretation-related issues.

- ***Other control objectives: safeguarding of assets and information, reliability of reporting***

With regards to control activities performed in the area of reliability of reporting, DG Interpretation follows the Strategic Planning and Programming Cycle, preparing each year the Annual Management Plan and the Annual Activity Report as requested by the Commission.

Each year the Draft Budget is prepared, which for SCIC is a complex exercise, as the DG relies heavily on assigned revenue to complement the funds received as voted budget. In 2018 68.18% of available commitment appropriations came from assigned revenues. As the billing of interpretation services constitutes the the source of this revenue, the determination of the i-slot price is also part of this process. For the provision of interpretation services, DG Interpretation has set up a uniform and automatic compensation mechanism with a unique compensation rate, the "i-slot". The i-slot corresponds to the average cost of a half day of an interpreter, making the compensation system transparent for our fee-paying users. Besides its significance for SCIC's draft budget, the i-slot price also needs to be communicated to the DG Interpretation's clients. A provisional maximum figure is calculated at the beginning of the year for year N+1, while calculations are carried out towards the end of the year resulting in a definitive figure in November. In order to be able to monitor DG SCIC's budgetary execution during the year, quarterly reports are prepared enabling management to make necessary decisions. Additionally, considerable efforts are made by an operational unit to monitor the follow-up of an inter-institutional framework contract.

In the area of accountancy, monthly, quarterly and yearly reports are document the results of the performed accounting controls. They are also summarised on page 18 of the present report. The analysis of the results of the accounting controls are then taken into account in the yearly review of DG Interpretation's

accounting action plan and in the assessment of SCIC accounting risk.

DG Interpretation is also the domain leader for audio-visual assets at the Commission. This means that SCIC is not only responsible for audio-visual equipment purchased from its own budget, but is also managing goods acquired by other DGs. DG Interpretation has implemented multiple internal procedures in order to safeguard these assets. DG Interpretation tracks the location of all items purchased as soon as they are delivered to its warehouse, after their installation and any subsequent movement, for example, when they are sent for repair. DG Interpretation performs a bi-annual tracking exercise of inventoried items in meeting rooms managed by SCIC to ensure the maximum number of such items are identified. Quantity controls of items in the DG Interpretation warehouse on assets (equipment, etc.) or on non-assets (consumables) are made regularly in order to ensure minimum disruptions in meeting rooms.

2. Efficiency = the Time-to-... indicators and other efficiency indicators

In 2018 1470 payments were processed in ABAC within an Average Payment Time of **15.8 days** excluding suspension periods. This figure does not include payments to freelance interpreters that are processed via DG Interpretation's local system (Grif) and subject to different payment deadlines. Compared to 17.09 days measured in 2017 for the same indicator, it can be concluded that DG Interpretation increased efficiency with regards to ex-ante controls on payments.

The Average Payment Time includes an average of 5.09 days (compared to 4.9 days in 2017) for the processing time of the payments in the horizontal services. It can therefore be concluded that the net decrease of payment processing time at DG Interpretation is even more considerable.

Statistics report that 55 payments were late (3.74%). Compared to the 64 (4.24%) late payments in 2017 again an increase of efficiency can be noted. It should also be considered that out of the 55 payments qualified as late 15 would have been made in time if processing time of the horizontal services had not been higher than 5 days. Instead, for these transactions the validation of horizontal services was an average of 29 days.

Additionally, for payments made on co-delegated budget lines, experience has shown that delay in payment is often the result of the payment of invoices received at the very end of the year and payable from operational payment appropriations. To avoid losing payment appropriations, SCIC requests their transfer only once the invoice is ready for payment and at the beginning of the year, with the accounting closure operations, transfers may take a bit longer.

Payments to ACIs are subject to specific payment deadlines and are processed via DG Interpretation's local system (Grif). The available payment time statistics are distorted by the fact that the system currently takes into account the first reception of reimbursement requests (or the date of the contract in case that is the triggering event) also in case additional supporting documents are received only at a later stage, or the payments are made in the framework of salary indexation. Even considering this fact, it can be stated that ex-ante controls have been executed efficiently as 97.14% of the amount paid as final settlements on contracts signed by SCIC were paid on time.

In 2018 the time-to-inform indicator was 66 days for successful applicants and 67 days for unsuccessful applicants for the grants awarded to universities. The time-to-grant indicator was an average of 92.4 days. This average results from delays

from the beneficiaries in returning the signed copy before the Commission signature.

3. Economy = the cost of controls

The estimation of cost of controls was conducted according to the bottom-up principle: each unit performing control activities was consulted to request the amount of time their staff dedicated to control activities in 2018 per Relevant Control System.

The detailed figures are presented in Annex 10. Looking at the different Relevant Control Systems, the cost of control can appear high for Grants (15.6%) and for Staff Expenditure (27.13%). In both cases the reason behind the relatively high relative cost is due to the fact that irrespective of the (very low) individual value of transactions, they are subject to the same control rules (e.g. 4 eyes principle cannot be modulated according to the transaction value) and to the same number of encoding data.

For grants, total time allocated to controls represents 0.53 FTE, to process 74 commitment files and 81 payment files, worth about 449,000€ in total (average payment of 5,541€).

For staff expenditure, total time allocated to controls represents 0.87 FTE, to process close to 200 legal commitments and 270 payments, for a total yearly expenditure of 322,.000€ (average payment: 1,192€).

Considering the very low individual value of these transactions and their limited number, automating controls by developing ad hoc IT systems would not be cost-effective. Limiting certain controls to a sample of such transactions combined with additional ex post controls would not significantly reduce the cost of controls, because to be statistically pertinent, the size of the sample would still represent a considerable part of the population. In the recent years, SCIC has therefore opted for the rationalisation of its processes for handling certain subcategories of such transactions, in particular scholarships.

The cost of ex-post controls is compared to the total value of transactions examined, which also includes the population of ACI contracts concluded by the European Parliament and the Court of Justice. The cost of controls with regards to ex-post accounting controls and reporting are compared with the totality of payments made and income cashed, as they are applicable to both populations. The cost of all controls carried out at DG Interpretation is also compared to this figure.

As an overall conclusion the level of cost of controls at DG Interpretation is considered satisfactory.

The corporate methodology for the estimation, assessment and reporting on the cost-effectiveness of controls was revisited in September 2018 and applied first time in the 2018 annual reporting. The difference of the estimated cost of controls as compared to previous years derives from this new methodology and does not reflect any substantial change in the DG's control strategy.

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG Interpretation has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the control system.

The conclusion on the outcome of controls, considering the applied materiality criteria, the estimate of the residual error rate and the overview of the cost of controls at Commission level (1.84% as presented in annex 10) demonstrate that controls are effective and that their costs are under control.

On this basis, DG SCIC reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls.

2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations

This section reports and assesses the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors in their reports as well as the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, which could have a material impact on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on assurance, together with any management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations.

In its contribution to the 2018 AAR of DG SCIC¹⁷, the IAS concluded, based on all audit work carried in the period 2016-2018, including the follow-up to the 2016 audit on procurement and the 2018 audit on synergies and efficiencies review (SER), that the internal control systems in places for the audited processes are effective.

At the same time, the IAS drew attention to two "Very Important" recommendations stemming from the new SER audit, which have implications for DG SCIC as domain leader for events and meeting room management¹⁸. Given that the elements relating to DG SCIC represent only part of much wider recommendations which are also addressed to other domain leaders and corporate services, the IAS considers that the elements related specifically to DG SCIC do not have a significant impact on its conclusion on the state of internal control in DG SCIC.

As regards four outstanding recommendations resulting from the 2016 audit on procurement, in its last follow-up (carried out in 2018) the IAS concluded that two "Important" recommendations have been adequately and effectively implemented, whilst the remaining two recommendations (one "Very Important" and another "Important") are effectively superseded by the relevant SER audit recommendations.

As a consequence, the full implementation of these latter recommendations will be verified by the IAS on occasion of the future follow-up to the new recommendations resulting from the SER audit, for which the Central Services and all the Domain Leaders (including DG SCIC) will have to draw up a consolidated action plan (with the coordination of DG HR and SG).

The Court of Auditors did not report any observation as part of its DAS controls.

¹⁷ Ares(2019)934977

¹⁸ In its new audit report on SER the IAS also issued an "Important" recommendation specifically addressed to DG SCIC, which concerns strengthening of the role of the Steering Board on Events and Meeting room management and clarifying to other DGs the operational definitions of "meeting room" and "conferences" (see audit recommendation 1.7).

2.1.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, aimed to ensure the achievement of policy and operational objectives. In addition, as regards financial management, compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.

DG Interpretation has put in place the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to the achievement of the policy and internal control objectives, in accordance with the standards and having due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

The assessment of internal control principles was carried out according to the methodology established in the "*Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission*". In order to establish the assessment, the following sources were used: DG SCIC's self-assessment; the global analysis of the register of exceptions and non-compliance events; the risk assessment; and the audit results. The results have indicated that there are improvements required for certain principles which are:

- The DG's Relevant Control Systems have changed over the last three years. The percentage of the total expenditure of procurement has increased for the third year running and now represents 21.5% of the total expenditure in 2018. Although DG SCIC has been defined as low risk, the estimated residual error rate in 2018 covers just under 80% of DG SCIC's expenditure (which correlates to the payment of ACIs), rather than covering 90% of expenditure.
- A further revision of the internal control indicators based on the recommendations for some principles in the report and more closely linked to the DG's specific activities.
- The web page on the DG's intranet site, SCICnet, dealing with Internal Control and Risk Management aspects should be created in 2019.

The internal control assessment of the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control (RMIC) examined all areas linked to the different Internal Control Standards such as the follow-up of audits, implementation of the internal control standards and a review of the actions taken related to the DG's anti-fraud strategy. No systemic weaknesses were identified or major improvements required in the DG's internal control system

Assessment of the internal control systems

DG Interpretation has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and that the components and principles are present and functioning as intended

Although principles 3, 5, 13, 14 and 15 are present and functioning overall, some actions are planned to strengthen some of their aspects.

2.1.4 Conclusions on the impact as regards assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements reported above (in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3), the sub-conclusions above, and draws the overall conclusion supporting the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations.

The information reported in Section 2.1 stems from the results of management and auditor monitoring contained in the reports listed. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG Interpretation.

DG Interpretation's assessment on legality and regularity of the activities it manages returns a very low level of error. As explained earlier, SCIC manages 2 different types of transactions:

- ACI payments (mostly remunerations), which are highly automated and subject to ex post controls where the residual error rate is is of 0.073%
- All other types of expenditure, subject to centralised financial circuit with robust ex-ante controls, where the error rate is estimated at 0.5%

DG Interpretation has implemented all possible suitable ex-ante and ex-post controls, to the extent that they remain cost-effective and do not affect the other policy/programme objectives nor abandon the financial scheme.

Therefore, under the prevailing risk environment and from a managerial point of view, DG Interpretation's AOD can sign the Declaration.

Overall Conclusion

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

2.1.5 Declaration of Assurance

DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of DG Interpretation

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view¹⁹.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls and the work of the Internal Audit Service for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.

Brussels, date 4 April 2019

(signature)

Florika Fink-Hooijer

¹⁹ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

2.2 Other organisational management dimensions

For further information regarding the indicators for 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.4, please refer to Annex 2.

2.2.1 Human Resources

DG Interpretation has reached its target for female middle managers and benefits from a gender-balanced management. SCIC organised with the AMC a Career Seminar in January 2018 informing AD staff about: the work of a middle manager; the required competencies; and how to acquire them. The purpose of the event was to inform and to accompany interested staff in their career choice and to help them prepare for future applications. In addition to the event, one-to-one tutoring has been offered to internal candidates at request.

In 2018, four new middle managers have been selected, three of them are female. SCIC has thus achieved 5 appointments in line with our quota of 6 compulsory appointments set by DG HR in 2016. Moreover, in total four colleagues have been selected to participate in the Female Management Development Programme run by DG HR.

In order to ensure adequate succession planning and to provide stable capacity in interpreting, an internal competition was organised in the conference interpreting domain for six languages (DE, EN, ET, HR, MT, SK). Given that the derogation for Irish language ends in 2021, close contacts have been maintained with Galway University in Ireland with tangible results, such as the recruitment of the first ever staff interpreter into Irish in 2018.

SCIC reinforced the internal brand as an inclusive and tolerant workplace in its All Staff Day *Creating an enabling environment, which promotes respect and inclusiveness for all SCIC staff*. In line with the theme, all staff had the possibility to engage in discussions and have their opinions listened to. One could maintain that the increase of 20% of positive responses to the statement *I feel that my opinion is valued* in the Staff Survey 2018 is partly linked to the raised awareness mutual respect and collaborative working methods.

2.2.2 Better regulation principles

2.2.3 Information management aspects

In line with the Commission's Action Plan on data protection²⁰, Objective 2: empowerment of and awareness-raising among Commission staff and Objective 3, ensure a proper record keeping and a risk-based approach, the DG undertook a number of actions during 2018..

The 2018 planning of the awareness raising and stocktaking actions are given below:

²⁰ Annex to the Communication to the Commission – The Commission's Data Protection Action Plan – C(2018)7432

18/06/2018	Initial discussion in the Senior Management Meeting concerning the new Regulation (EC) 2018/1725 and the response to request for preparedness from the Secretariat General ²¹
27/06/2018	Email to all Staff on the forthcoming Regulation and the obligations of all staff when processing personal data
28/06/2018	Response to Data Protection Roadmap sent by the Secretariat-General
17/09/2018	Review of data protection issues as part of the Risk Assessment Meeting with senior management
20/09/2018	Desk review and stocktaking of personal data processing in SCIC in line with Objective 3.2 of the Action Plan
17/09/2018	Review of Data Protection Issues as part of the Risk Assessment Meeting with Senior Management
24/09/2018	Data protection review in Senior Management Meeting
19/10/2018	Presentation to all SCIC in SCIC Breakfast Meeting of the Regulation (EC) 2018/1725 and the key principles
19/10/2018	Presentation to all management in SCIC Management Meeting of the Regulation (EC) 2018/1725 and the key principles and in particular underlining the responsibilities of Controllers
10/12/2018	Review of preparedness for Regulation (EC) 1725/2018 in SCIC
End 2018/early 2019	Check of staff basic knowledge on data protection in Internal Control Survey

In line with Objective 3.3 in the Data Protection Action Plan, legacy data protection notifications have been gradually converted into records into the new system, Data Protection Management System (DPMS). Action has been undertaken by the DG's units to ensure that the new requirements are integrated.

In addition, DG SCIC fulfils an important role as Chair of the Data Protection Working Group on the practical implementation of the Regulation. The working group assists the Data Protection Officer (DPO) and his team in establishing priorities and working on crosscutting issues.

With regards to document management, DG SCIC continued to update its information management practices by moving towards the digital management of documents and files, as the vast majority of its archives are paper based. The DG manages a large amount of personal data of interpreters and Auxiliary Conference Interpreters (ACIs), both as accredited freelance interpreters and candidates. This meant that each series of files required a manual and exhaustive review, a process, which was started in 2018 and will be reflected in the objectives for 2019 and beyond.

2.2.4 External communication activities

In line with its **2018-2020 Communication Strategy**, DG Interpretation carried out external communication activities in three main areas in 2018: the

²¹ Ares (2018)3066734

organisation of and participation in campaigns and flagship events, social media and web activities, and video production.

With regards to campaigns and events, DG Interpretation co-organised an inter-institutional **awareness raising campaign to promote interpreters' training in Denmark**. It also organised the **22nd SCIC Universities Conference** and acted as a co-organiser for the **Open Doors Day** (setting up of the programme at the Schuman room, including animation, interpretation, and a common information stand with DGT).

DG SCIC also actively participated in the **European Development Days**. Furthermore, the DG collaborated closely with DGT as well as with the interpreting and translating services of the other EU institutions to have a strong presence at the **London Language Show** and the **Drongo Festival** (Netherlands).

In the domain of social media and web activities, DG Interpretation continued to increase its online presence and reach. Views and interactions grew on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, as well as on Facebook, all under the hashtag **"#EUInterpreters"**. We managed the revision of web pages devoted to **freelance interpretation on the Europa site**. These pages are now accessible in all the official languages.

Last but not least, the strategic communication and outreach unit produced and published several **videos promoting multilingualism, international cooperation in the framework of PAMCIT** (Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation), **interpreters' involvement in the Bulgarian and Austrian presidencies**, the **Knowledge Centre on Interpretation** and the **European Day of Languages**.

Marking criteria for CONSECUTIVE (indicative only)

<p style="text-align: center;">CONTENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence/plausibility • Completeness/ Accuracy • Knowledge of passive language? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Was the logic of the original speech clearly recognizable? ➤ Was the message coherent? ➤ Were the main ideas and the structure rendered? ➤ Were there any significant omissions with an impact on the coherence of the speech? ➤ Were there any important mistakes (“contresens”)? ➤ Did the interpretation render the original ideas/information of the speech accurately? ➤ Was the content conveyed in full? ➤ Were there too many details missing? ➤ Were there any misleading or redundant additions (“embroidery”)? ➤ Overuse of redundant filler phrases?
<p style="text-align: center;">DELIVERY/FORM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of active language • Communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knowledge of target language (correct grammar, appropriate register, idiomatic expressions, vocabulary, interferences from the source language)? ➤ Appropriate choice of register? ➤ Terminology? ➤ Diction (mumbling or clear enunciation)? ➤ Accent (if applicable)? ➤ Pace of delivery (fluent or staccato)? ➤ Use of the voice (prosody)? Intonation? ➤ Was the delivery professional? Was it agreeable to listen to and confident? ➤ Eye contact? ➤ Appropriate body language?
<p style="text-align: center;">TECHNIQUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Literal rendition of speech or intelligent processing of content? ➤ Use of interpretation strategies (paraphrasing, output monitoring, ability to condense information, “telescoping”)? ➤ Ability to monitor output? ➤ Note-taking technique? ➤ Time of delivery (shorter/longer than original speech)? Was the overrun excessive? ➤ Finishing sentences?

Marking criteria for SIMULTANEOUS (indicative only)

<p style="text-align: center;">CONTENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence/plausibility • Completeness/ Accuracy • Knowledge of passive language? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Was the logic of the original speech clearly recognizable? ➤ Was the message coherent? ➤ Were the main ideas and the structure rendered? ➤ Were there any significant omissions with an impact on the coherence of the speech? ➤ Were there any important mistakes (“contresens”)? ➤ Did the interpretation render the original ideas/information of the speech accurately? ➤ Was the content conveyed in full? ➤ Were there too many details missing? ➤ Were there any misleading or redundant additions (“embroidery”)? ➤ Overuse of redundant filler phrases?
<p style="text-align: center;">DELIVERY/FORM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of active language • Communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knowledge of target language (correct grammar, appropriate register, idiomatic expressions, vocabulary, interferences from the source language)? ➤ Appropriate choice of register? ➤ Terminology? ➤ Diction (mumbling or clear enunciation)? ➤ Accent (if applicable)? ➤ Pace of delivery (fluent or staccato)? ➤ Use of the voice (prosody)? Intonation? ➤ Was the delivery professional? Was it agreeable to listen to and confident? ➤ Fluency of the delivery (“décalage”)? No abrupt or lengthy hesitations)? ➤ Stamina? ➤ Microphone discipline?
<p style="text-align: center;">TECHNIQUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Literal rendition of speech or intelligent processing of content? ➤ Use of interpretation strategies (paraphrasing, output monitoring, ability to condense information, “telescoping”)? ➤ Ability to monitor output? ➤ Finishing sentences?



ECI - «EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON INTERPRETATION»

"COMITE EXECUTIF DE L'INTERPRETATION" - CEI

Language profiles in demand with the EU interpreting services

Guidance for those wishing to take an accreditation test

The following table indicates the profiles and the specific languages that a candidate should possess in order to be invited to an accreditation test. It is intended as a guide to students and to universities, and is valid for two consecutive test cycles (2018-2019 and 2019-2020).

Please note that having the requisite profile does not confer an automatic right to be invited. Where the number of applicants exceeds the number of test slots, the authorities may decide to apply further criteria, such as the type of diploma, the nature of experience or the information provided on the acquisition of languages. Moreover, the authorities reserve the right to revise the language profiles in between the two test cycles or to select candidates with a different profile if so justified by the needs of the services.

Applying with a wider language combination than the minimum profile required for admission to the test constitutes an asset. However, please bear in mind that the authorities will select the languages to be tested according to the needs of the services. Different profiles are due to different operational needs in each individual booth.

Notes on the abbreviations used:

BG = Bulgarian, CS = Czech, DA = Danish, DE = German, EL = Greek, EN = English, GA= Irish, ES = Spanish, ET = Estonian, FI = Finnish, FR = French, HR = Croatian, HU = Hungarian, IT = Italian, LT = Lithuanian, LV = Latvian, MT = Maltese, NL = Dutch, PL = Polish, PT = Portuguese, RO = Romanian, SK = Slovak, SL = Slovene, SV = Swedish, AR = Arabic, RU = Russian.

The A language is one (native tongue or equivalent) which the interpreter masters perfectly and into which he/she is capable of interpreting consecutively and simultaneously from all his/her B and C languages. In exceptional cases an interpreter may have two A languages.

The B language is one which the candidate masters at a very high level close to mother-tongue and into which he/she can provide fluent and accurate interpretation in consecutive and simultaneous from the A language. This is also called a *retour* language.

The C language is one which is fully understood and from which the interpreter works into his/her A language.

In the table below, you will find the accreditation profiles for the different EU languages. By way of explanation, ACC means that on top of your A language you need two C languages which are sometimes specified in the column "Language Specifications", ABC means that you need a B language (a retour) and an additional C language, ABCC means that you need a B language (retour) and two additional C languages, and so on.

2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Accreditation Profiles

	Admission	Language specifications	Other priority languages and comments
BG	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE	Candidates with 2 out of EN, FR and DE may be given priority for testing.
	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE; C2 = EN/DE/FR/IT/ES	
CS	A + CC	C1 = EN, C2 = FR/DE/IT/ES	Priority to A+BC. FR/DE are considered a strong asset. SK will not be considered for admission to test.
	A + B	B = EN	
	A + BC	B = FR C = EN	
DA	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE	SV will not be considered for admission to test.
	A + B	B = EN, FR, DE	
DE	A + CCC	C1 = EN	Priority will be given to candidates with three C languages. A return into EN/FR would be an asset.
	A + CC	C1 = EN, C2 = FR	
EL	A + CC	C1 = EN, C2 = FR/DE/IT/ES/NL	DE, FR and/or a return would be strong assets.
EN	A + CC	C1 = FR/DE	Priority will be given to an additional C language. A return into FR/DE/IT/ES would be an asset. AR or RU are eligible as a third C language.
ES	A + CCC	C1 = EN, C2 = DA/DE/EL/FI/EUR13*, C3 = any EU language	Priority will be given to the 3 C profile, especially to candidates with FR.
	A + CC	C1 = EN; C2 = DA/DE/EL/FI/EUR13*	
ET	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE	
	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE; C2 = EN/FR/DE/IT/ES	

FI	A + CC	B = EN/FR/DE/IT/ES	SV and ET will not be considered for admission to the test.
	A + B		
FR	A + CCC	C1 = EN	AR or RU are eligible as a third C language.
	A + BC	B = EN	
	A + CC	C1 = EN C2 = DE/PL/SV/EL/FI/CS/ET/HU/LTLV/MT/NL/SK/SL/BG/DA/RO /HR	
GA	A + B	A = EN, B = GA	
	A + CC	A = EN, C1 = GA; C2 = FR/DE	
HU	A + B	B = EN	Priority will be given to three C languages or to ABC (preferably into EN, alternatively into FR).
	A + CC	C1 = EN, C2 = FR/DE/ES/IT/NL/EL/PL/PT	
HR	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE/IT/ES	Priority will be given to retour.
	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE C2 = EN/FR/DE/IT/ES/NL/PT	
IT	A + CCC	C1 = EN/FR/DE	Priority for C2 = DA/FI/NL/EL/SV/EUR13* For operational reasons the language profiles EN/FR/ES or EN/FR/PT are not a priority.
	A + BC	B = EN C = FR/DE	
LT	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE	
LV	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE	
	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE	

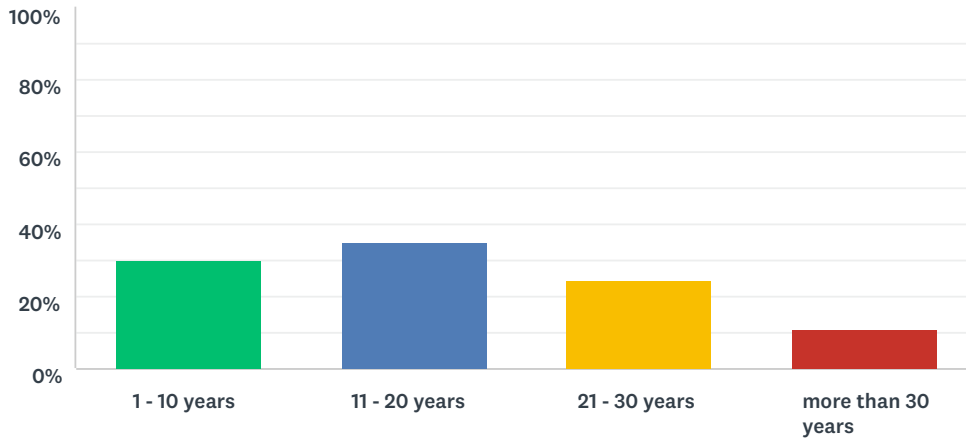
MT	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE C2 = EU language different from languages A and C1	Additional C languages (EN/FR/DE) would be a strong asset.
	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE/IT/ES	
NL	A + CCC	C1 = EN C2 = FR/DE/IT/ES	Priority will be given to three C languages.
	A + BCC	B = EN/FR	
	A + CC	C1 = EN	
	A + BC	B = EN	
PL	A + BC	B = EN + C = FR/DE/IT/ES or B = FR/DE + C = EN	
	A + CCC	C1 = EN C2 = FR/DE/IT/ES	
PT	A + CCC	C1 = EN	EN obligatory as B or C in all profiles.
	A + BC	B = EN/FR/DE	
	A + CC	C1 = EN C2 = DE	
RO	A + B	B = EN	A retour into EN/FR/DE would be a strong asset.
	A + BC	B = FR/DE/ES/IT C = EN	
	A + CC	C1 = EN	
SK	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE/IT/ES	Priority to A+BC and to A+CCC (official EU languages). CS does not count in the profiles. Priority will be given to FR in the linguistic combination.
	A + CC	C1 = EN, C2 = DE/FR/ES/IT	
SL	A + B	B = EN/FR/DE	HR will not be considered for admission to test.
	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE, C2 = EN/FR/DE/IT/ES/NL	
SV	A + CC	C1 = EN/FR/DE	DA will not be considered for admission to test. An ABC combination would be a strong asset.

/ stands for "or"

*EUR13 = (BG/CS/ET/LT/LV/HU/MT/PL/RO/SK/SL/HR)

Q1 How long have you been working professionally as an interpreter?

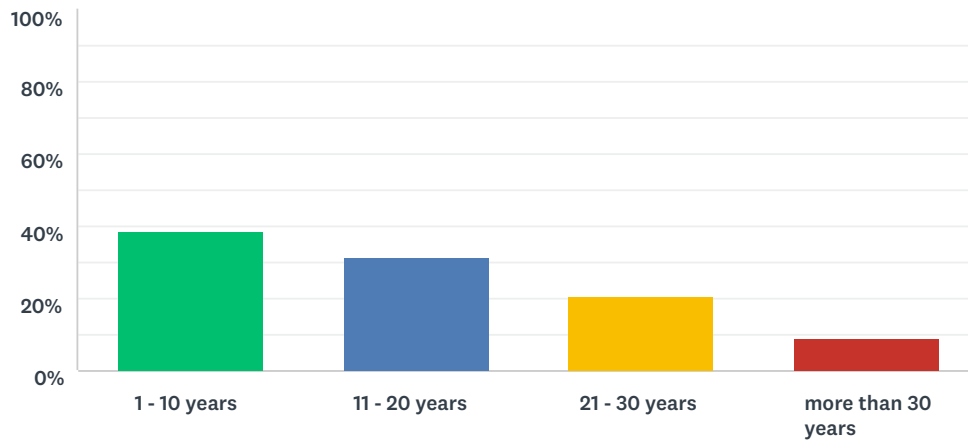
Answered: 184 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 10 years	29.89%	55
11 - 20 years	34.78%	64
21 - 30 years	24.46%	45
more than 30 years	10.87%	20
TOTAL		184

Q2 How long have you been working for the EU?

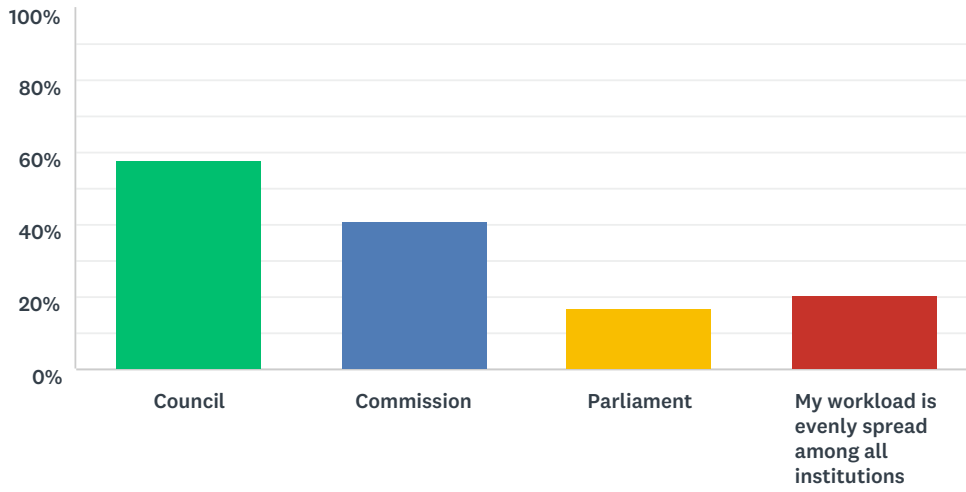
Answered: 184 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 10 years	38.59%	71
11 - 20 years	31.52%	58
21 - 30 years	20.65%	38
more than 30 years	9.24%	17
TOTAL		184

Q3 In which institution do you work the most? (you can tick more than one option)

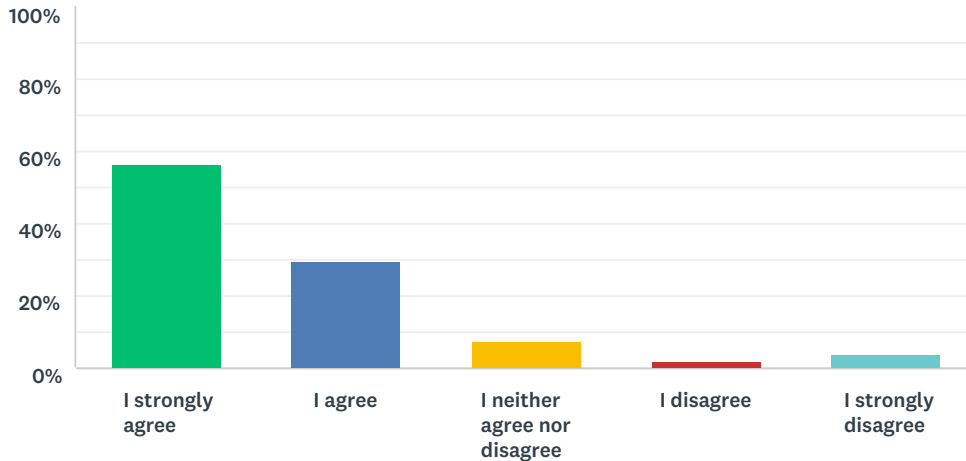
Answered: 184 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Council	58.15%	107
Commission	40.76%	75
Parliament	16.85%	31
My workload is evenly spread among all institutions	20.65%	38
Total Respondents: 184		

Q4 There is an increasing tendency to resort to English as a Lingua Franca (by speakers who could speak their mother-tongue) in meetings where an interpretation service is provided. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

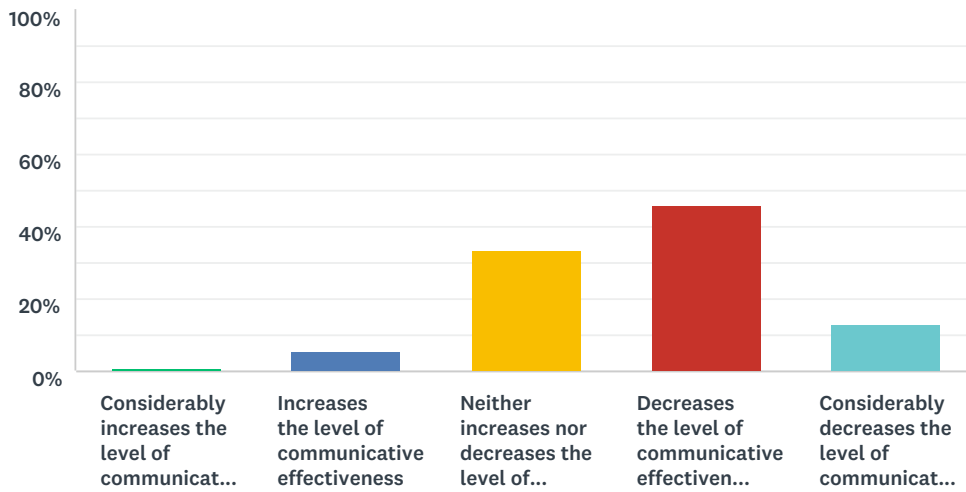
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I strongly agree	56.52%	104
I agree	29.35%	54
I neither agree nor disagree	7.61%	14
I disagree	2.17%	4
I strongly disagree	3.80%	7
TOTAL		184

Q5 According to your experience, the use of English as a Lingua Franca during meetings:

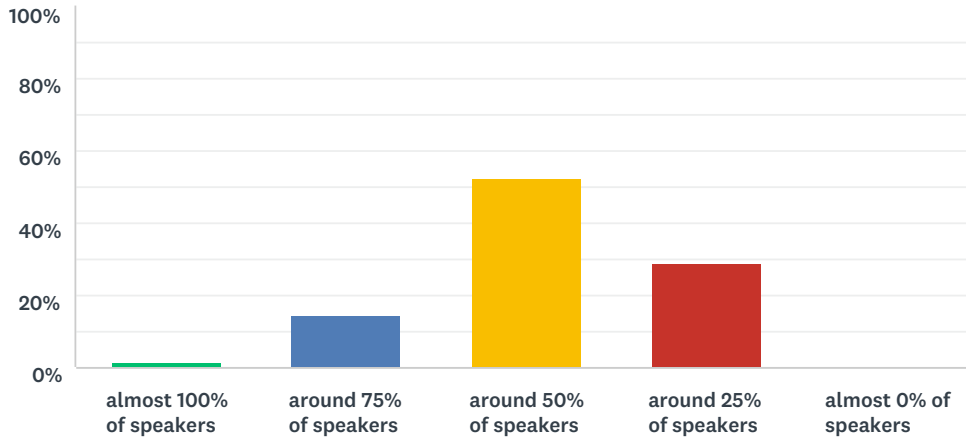
Answered: 184 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Considerably increases the level of communicative effectiveness	1.09%	2
Increases the level of communicative effectiveness	5.43%	10
Neither increases nor decreases the level of communicative effectiveness	33.70%	62
Decreases the level of communicative effectiveness	46.20%	85
Considerably decreases the level of communicative effectiveness	13.04%	24
TOTAL		184

Q6 According to your professional experience, in what percentage do speakers resorting to English as a Lingua Franca succeed at expressing themselves clearly and effectively?

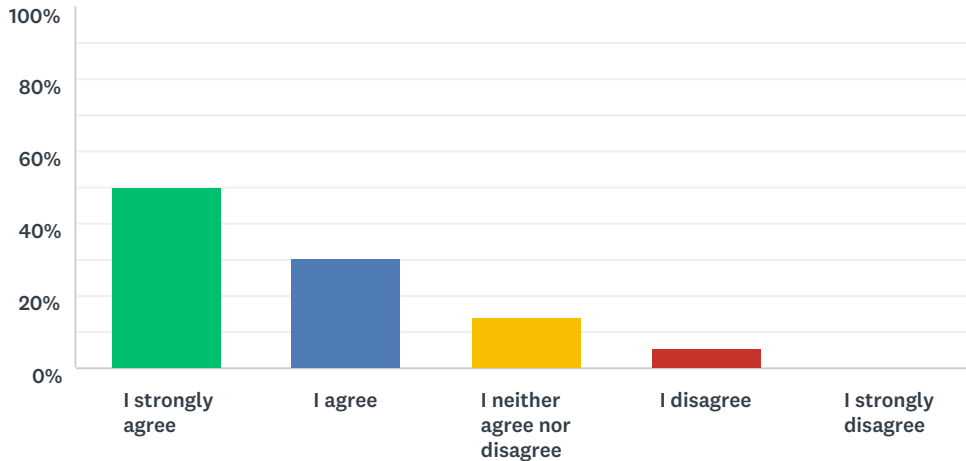
Answered: 184 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
almost 100% of speakers	1.63%	3
around 75% of speakers	14.67%	27
around 50% of speakers	52.72%	97
around 25% of speakers	28.80%	53
almost 0% of speakers	0.54%	1
TOTAL		184

Q7 Interpreting speakers who use English as a Lingua Franca tends to be more demanding than interpreting speakers who use their mother tongue. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the previous statement.

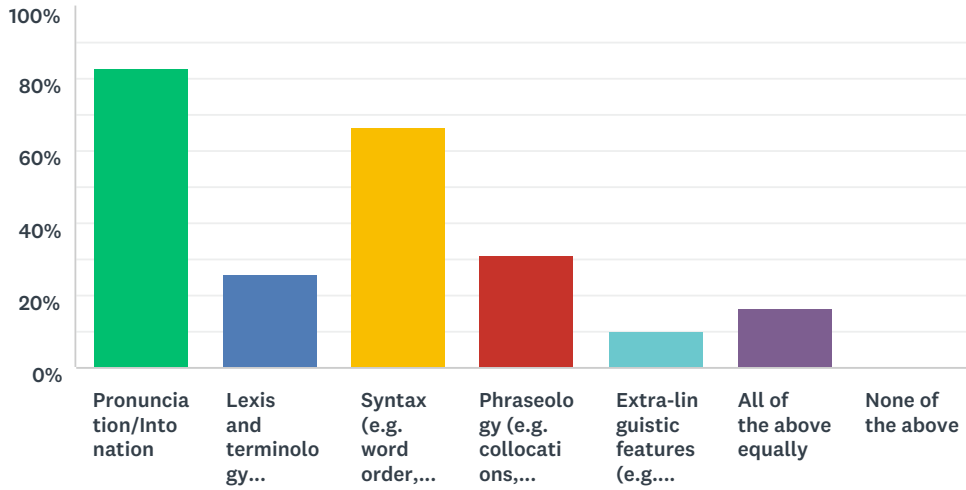
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I strongly agree	50.00%	92
I agree	30.43%	56
I neither agree nor disagree	14.13%	26
I disagree	5.43%	10
I strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		184

Q8 According to your professional experience, what are the features of ELF discourse you mostly struggle with, when interpreting? (you can tick up to 3 options)

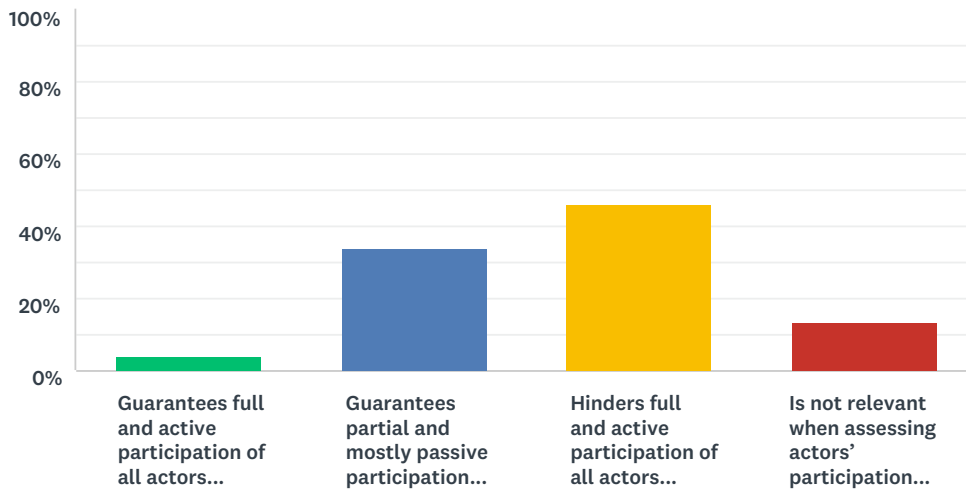
Answered: 184 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Pronunciation/Intonation	83.15%	153
Lexis and terminology (general and specialized words)	26.09%	48
Syntax (e.g. word order, sentence structure, etc.)	66.30%	122
Phraseology (e.g. collocations, idioms, fixed phrases, etc.)	30.98%	57
Extra-linguistic features (e.g. irony, culture-related aspects, politeness)	9.78%	18
All of the above equally	16.30%	30
None of the above	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 184		

Q9 In your professional opinion, the use of ELF:

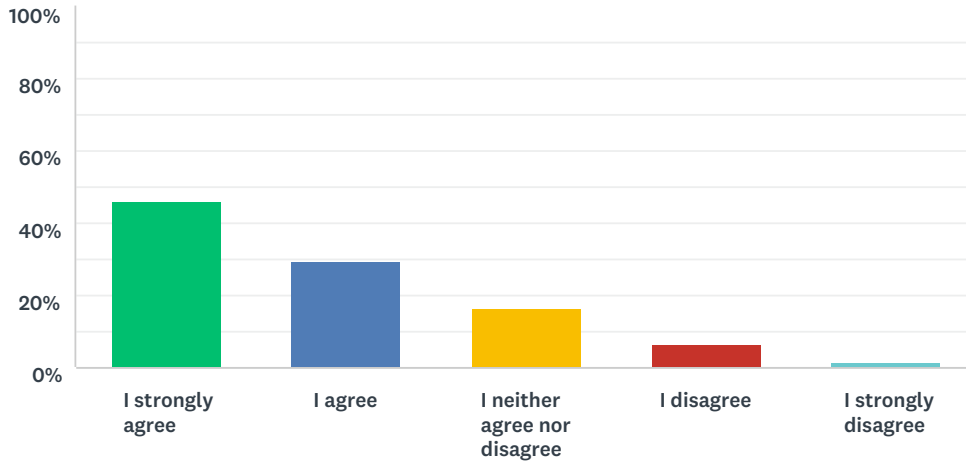
Answered: 182 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Guarantees full and active participation of all actors during the meetings	3.85%	7
Guarantees partial and mostly passive participation of actors during the meetings	34.07%	62
Hinders full and active participation of all actors during the meetings	46.15%	84
Is not relevant when assessing actors' participation during the meetings	13.74%	25
TOTAL		182

Q10 The unregulated use of ELF is a threat to the principle of multilingualism. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the previous statement.

Answered: 184 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I strongly agree	46.20%	85
I agree	29.35%	54
I neither agree nor disagree	16.30%	30
I disagree	6.52%	12
I strongly disagree	1.63%	3
TOTAL		184

**Q11 Any other comments you wish to share on your professional experience with English as a Lingua Franca are highly appreciated.
Thank you!**

Answered: 48 Skipped: 137

COMMENTS¹ BY RESPONDENTS TO THE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

CSS1	It is much better when commission officials speak in their mother tongue and i can listen to the interpretation into English.I find it more difficult to understand when commission official speak in English when it is their second language.
CSS2	It would be nice to have an interpretation into my mother tongue -Bulgarian. No matter what it is always better to use the mother tongue.
CSS3	Don't constrain speakers to speak in there native language when they are comfortable in another in particular when they are working from a bad document in another language.
CSS4	It would be, nice to have translation in au languages.
CSS5	As much as i appreciate the work of the interpreters ,all meetings should be in english. For starters interpretation into Spanish, Italian ,Portugush and dutch should be eliminated then German ,French.
CSS6	I do considerd essential that every representative of member-states of Eu may express himself/herself in an official language of EU.The fact that some Member-States representative may express themself in their mother tongue and others may not, creates discrimination.
CSS7	It's excused that all representans or delegations most express themselves in their mother language. The * to choise the languages(EN/FR/DEU/IT/NL and ES) was never explained. create discrimination not giving te same conditions to all as.
CSS8	Interpretation into language of the so colled new .European countries aught be allowed and easily avaiable ddrind meetings,smillarly as to the interpretations into the old EU countries languages;
CSS9	Remove interpretation to any language then English. Make the lunch break shorter.
CSS10	He would be nice every european language to be provided with interpetor.
CSS11	I think that every MS could use and listen to EN so that it would be more of the same level.
CSS12	Meetings should be held in English and French. A lot of information can simply not be provided throughout interpretation.
CSS13	More avaiability of great interpreters in commission services.
CSS14	It shouldbe normal that each language in interpreted during all meetings.
CSS15	I wish to use my mother tongue and it could be once one interpreter for czech and also slovak language.
CSS16	Translate in Portuguese.
CSS17	Please bring Greek language back.
CSS18	It was agreat experience to listen and speak in my mother tongue(Greek).Always i have to speak and some time it is very difficult bring the real meaning/message ina different language than maternal one.
CSS19	I understand perfectly the interpreters but not honing the possibility to speak my mother tongue is a little bit unfair while other MS can speak their mother tongue and express their position better.
CSS20	Happy that you provide this service
CSS21	All meeting should be only in English. Interpretation makes the meeting so much longer and the rules they have are so hamful.
CSS22	I need translations is fundamental, and we should keep this system.
CSS23	Try to provide an interpret for Romanian

¹ Only comments whose content was directly related to the topic of the research project have been transcribed. Spelling and grammar mistakes have not been corrected.

CSS24	Excellent service already. A little unfair that services are provided in minority languages in the EU for example Dutch and not in Polish but that is not the fault of the interpretation services!
CSS25	It is important that DG Interpretation may consider to have interpretation in more languages than now, at least in committee meetings. It is rather different if we can express our ideas in our mother tongue. The language balance will then be possible.
CSS26	EC /EU should develop a technology that would provide for automatic translation to each language of participants having only some languages spoken /translated discriminates other languages and people using them
CSS27	I find interpretation very useful. It gives me the opportunity to participate more actively in meetings.
CSS28	Providing translation in an Eastern European language may provide better balance in addressing comments and live contributions (to documents discussed).
CSS29	Don't cut the budget.
CSS30	Pronunciation should be neutral, not dialect or strongly 'English'.
CSS31	The interpreters do an excellent and necessary job for the functioning of the European institutions.
CSS32	I can fully participate in meetings in EN, DE, FR and follow speeches in IT, so this is often not relevant to me. However, I think interpretation is really important and ensures participation of people who did not have the opportunity to learn 3-4 languages the way I did!
CSS33	It's alright for me! I am happy the Dutch language is important as English.
CSS34	I had to speak in EN as my mother tongue was not provided. It is much easier to participate in my mother tongue and I would strongly suggest that you provide interpretation in the languages of the participating member states.
CSS35	I think it would be very useful to have interpretation in my mother tongue to help me correctly understand all the information conveyed.
CSS36	Make as much Slovene as possible available!
CSS37	Good that it is possible to use one's mother tongue.
CSS38	Interpreters working into one's mother tongue are especially important in working groups & expert groups for people who are not native English-speakers. Sometimes it is impossible to fully discuss certain issues because of that, and discussions at working parties is a job that has to be done well.
CSS39	It would be nice to have interpretation at least in all the languages.
CSS40	It is easier to express oneself in one's mother tongue. It's easier to listen to one's own language and it livens up discussions.
CSS41	The interpretation is vital for a proper understanding of the meeting, especially when we are required to listen to the interpretation when available (instructions from national authorities); and its availability is a real plus in terms of understanding what is said.
CSS42	I am in favour of interpretation. It should be more systematic, not so much for the purposes of understanding but rather for when we take the floor.
CSS43	Native speakers should be told to speak more slowly and less loud and to consult the speaker. It is my general impression that the message is conveyed best in the English language.
CSS44	Sometimes there is a feeling there is no equal treatment; there should be a rotation principle applied to cater also for smaller languages
CSS45	Interpretation should be provided for every participant so that he can express the desired content best in his mother tongue.
CSS46	Commission representatives should speak their native language, whenever interpretation is offered. This would also improve the interpretation.
CSS47	I believe that differentiation where translation into Greek is concerned creates issues of unequal treatment between the Member States of the EU.
CSS48	Provision of interpretation into both directions is a necessary procedure in the framework of equal treatment of the Member States. The purpose of participation in the relevant meetings is not the certification of language knowledge.

CSS49	Interpretation should obligatorily be provided in all the meetings, even the workshops.
CSS50	-Greek isn't foreseen as an active language (only today at the second part of the meeting). We recommend it be added. This year at the meetings we didn't always have translators and we couldn't express our opinions in our mother tongue (Greek) and we had to choose to speak in another language.
CSS51	There should be interpretation into all the languages of the EU. Interpretation significantly helps the work of the Member States' representatives and shows respect towards the mother tongue, which is the basis of our civilization in Europe and of each country separately.
CSS52	Interpretation should be provided into all EU languages.
CSS53	If I am supposed to speak Danish, which is possible, I need to have the documents in Danish – including explanatory e-mails, etc. – and there is only interpretation into Danish at the Plenaries – and that is really relaxing...
CSS54	ONLY need for English interpretation.
CSS55	Interpretation should be guarantee not for big countries but rather for small ones. Delegates of bigger nations who take part in the meetings possess a knowledge of English at professional level. On the contrary, small countries do not require experts to have a high competence in English.
CSS56	Yes, it would be crucial to have interpretation into Portuguese.
CSS57	Whenever I had the privilege to have interpretation into Portuguese I enjoyed it a lot. Congratulations to them.