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Dealing with multilingualism in EU institutions: the implications of enlargement in a managerial perspective

Abstract

Languages have always been regarded as one of the most important assets of the European Union. But what about the languages used *inside* EU institutions? In 1951, since three out of the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community were French-speaking countries, there was no doubt that the first joint European institution treaty should have been redacted only in French. Nonetheless six years later, after some urgent request from other Member States, the EEC and EURATOM treaties were redacted in four languages (French, German, Dutch and Italian), thus marking the official start of a multilingual European Community. Whereas French dominated as the working language up until the first enlargement in 1973, the picture started to change once the United Kingdom and Ireland joined the European Community. By now, with twenty-four official languages, the European Union is famously the largest employer of translators and interpreters in the world, with an overall expenditure well over one billion Euro per year.

The delicate equilibrium between the right to have the national language recognized as an official EU language on the one hand, and the need to ensure cost-effective communication on the other came under strain more than earlier before with the 2004 enlargement. The paper focuses on assessing the organizational changes introduced in the run-up to the 2004 enlargement to address this twin challenge in the units responsible for translations and interpretations in the four main bodies of the European Union (the Commission, the Council, the Parliament and the Court of Justice); by doing so, it highlights how managerial solutions in public sector organizations can help balance the need for political legitimacy and the quest for fiscal discipline.

Résumé

Depuis toujours, les langues sont considérées parmi les ressources les plus importantes de l'Union Européenne. Mais que peut-on dire des langues utilisées au sein même des institutions européennes ? En 1951, puisque trois membres fondateurs de la *Communauté européenne du charbon et de l'acier* sur six étaient des pays francophones, il n'y avait aucun doute que le premier traité d'une institution européenne commune devait être rédigé exclusivement en français. Néanmoins, six ans plus tard, suite à quelques requêtes pressantes de la part d'autres États membres, les traités de la CEE (*Communauté économique européenne*) et de l'EURATOM (ou CEEA, *Communauté européenne de l'énergie atomique*) ont été rédigés en quatre langues (français, allemand, hollandais et italien), marquant ainsi l'avènement d'une Communauté européenne plurilingue. Alors que le français avait

prévalu comme langue officielle à partir du premier élargissement de l'Union de 1973, le cadre général a commencé à changer suite à l'entrée du Royaume-Uni et de l'Irlande dans la Communauté européenne. Désormais, avec vingt-trois langues officielles, l'Union Européenne est notoirement le plus grand employeur de traducteurs et d'interprètes du monde, pour une dépense totale au-dessus d'un milliard d'euro chaque année.

L'équilibre fragile entre le droit de voir sa propre langue nationale reconnue comme langue officielle de l'Union Européenne et la nécessité de garantir une communication rentable a été mis à rude épreuve, beaucoup plus qu'auparavant, avec l'élargissement de 2004. Cet article s'intéressera à l'analyse des changements organisationnels introduits pendant la période antérieure à l'expansion de 2004, afin de lancer ce double défi aux services responsables des traductions et de l'interprétation, dans les quatre unités principales de l'Union Européenne (la Commission, le Conseil, le Parlement et la Cour de Justice) ; ce faisant, on soulignera le fait que les solutions de gestion du secteur public peuvent contribuer à équilibrer le besoin de légitimation politique et la recherche d'une certaine discipline dans le domaine fiscal.

1. Introduction

In 2012 the Economist Intelligence Unit performed a global survey of 572 executives representing companies with either an international presence or plans for international expansion, in order to understand how cultural and communication barriers affect business. A significant part of the global workforce now appear to spend a good deal of time speaking a foreign language while doing their job: when asked the question "What proportion of your company's workforce requires some level of non-native language skills to effectively carry out their job?", 25 % of respondents answered "over 50 %", whereas 21 % answered "between 20 % and 50 %" (Economist Intelligence Unit 2012, 14). These data point out that, as a consequence of globalisation, multilingualism is turning into a valuable source of competitive advantage, even more as decision-making centres shift away from headquarters to regional departments and staffing patterns evolve from an "ethnocentric" to a "polycentric" model (Hill 2015). Academic debate is following suit, slowly abandoning the idea that "The World Is Flat" (Friedman 2007) and acknowledging instead that what we witness can be more effectively labelled as "semi-globalisation" (Ghemawat 2007).

Faced with these developments, management researchers and practitioners alike are paying more and more attention to the organisational implications of multilingualism (European Union 2011; Goodman 2013; Neeley and Kaplan 2014). International organisations provide an interesting benchmark in this respect, since for decades they had to tackle the need to grant equal status to different languages, which companies have only recently started to address.

Exploratory research based on the case study methodology provides more relevant insights when "extreme" situations are observed (Yin 2014). For this reason, our analysis focused on the European Union (EU), which with twenty-four official languages is famously the largest employer of translators and interpreters in the world, at an overall expenditure well over one billion euros per year. The delicate balance between the need to ensure cost-effective communication and the right to have one's language recognised as an official EU language came under strain more than ever with the 2004 enlargement. The paper focuses therefore on assessing the organisational changes introduced to address this challenge in the units responsible for translations and interpretations in the main EU bodies in the run-up to 1 May 2004, thereby highlighting how managerial solutions can help balance the need for political legitimacy and the quest for fiscal discipline.

2. Why is multilingualism a need?

Since three out of the six founding members of the first joint European institution, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), were French-speaking countries, there was no doubt that the ECSC treaty should have been redacted only in French. Nonetheless, after some urgent requests from other Member States, the 1956 treaties establishing EURATOM and the European Economic Community (EEC) were redacted in four languages (Dutch, French, German and Italian), thus marking the official start of a multilingual European community.

Since most of the founding members were French-speaking countries, the main European bodies are also based in French-speaking zones. Supporters of the French language have widely used this argument to impose French as the *lingua franca* of the Community, arguing that it should be the ideal choice, since by their own localisation all the institutions are embedded into French culture and, therefore, language. French did dominate as the working language up until the first enlargement, but the picture started to change once the United Kingdom and Ireland joined the EEC in 1973.

On the other hand, the fact that every act or law is made available to each European citizen in his or her own language and that every national representative in EU institutions is given the opportunity to express himself or herself by speaking his or her own mother language are guarantees of democracy and transparency in EU processes. As a consequence, the new national languages incorporated with every round of enlargement have almost automatically become official EU languages.[1]

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1   There are exceptions, though. Luxembourgish is not an official EU language since it
     was recognised only in 1984 as one of the national languages of Luxembourg, alongside

Article 24 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stipulates that every citizen of the EU has the right to write to any EU institution, body, office or agency in one of the official languages of the EU and to receive an answer in the same language. Along the same principle every delegate in, for example, the European Parliament or Community Boards has the right to speak his or her own language and to be provided with a translation in his or her own language of what other MEPs are saying. In practice, though, this way of handling the whole matter is too cumbersome to guarantee a perfect outcome. Exhibit 1 compares the relative complexity of the EU before and after the 2004 enlargement with the arrangements of other international institutions.

Exhibit 1 – The language issue in the EU and other multilingual international organisations.

International organisation	Member States	Languages	Pairs	Interpreters
United Nations	181	6	30	18
NATO	19	2	1	6
Council of Europe	32	2	1	6
EU15	15	11	110	33
EU25	25	20	380	60

Now the picture is even more complex, with 28 Member States, 24 official languages and 552 possible combinations. The problem is particularly relevant when it comes to interpretation. In practice, some alternative and somewhat more streamlined ways of handling interpretation at meetings have been developed, by introducing the distinction between "active" and "passive" languages: "active" means that public interpretation will be given in that language, whereas "passive" means that a translation in an active language will be given for that language. In principle all languages should be treated as active, but in most cases participants agree on a different setup. So two numbers, representing the number of passive and active languages respectively, define the rules of a meeting: for example, a "24–24 meeting" means that everybody could speak and receive the interpretation in his or her own mother tongue ("symmetric" or "complete" regime), whereas a "24–3 meeting"

French and German. From 1973 to 2006 Irish enjoyed a special treatment, as it was an official EU language only for the purpose of international treaties; from 1 January 2007 it has become a fully-fledged official language. Austria in 1995 accepted to use German, and Cyprus in 2004 accepted to use Greek.

means that everybody can speak in his or her own language, but interpretation is given in three languages only, usually English, French and German ("asymmetric" or "reduced" regime).

Different institutions have widely different needs. As a rule of thumb, elected representatives (e.g. ministers in formal meetings, plenaries of the Committee of the Regions or of the European Economic and Social Committee) get full, symmetric coverage, while officials and experts get a whole range of different arrangements, depending on their needs and the resources available. As an example, no interpretation is provided when European Commission officials hold internal meetings, as they are expected to be able to do without it. The weekly meetings of the Commissioners have interpretation only between English, French and German. Therefore, while legally respecting the principle of accepting all languages as official languages, reality shows us that a simpler system has been widely adopted, expecially in technical boards or committees, based on the usage of a *lingua franca* like English or French. Internal acts and working documents do not need to be translated into all official languages, also following the rule of thumb of using a shared language as a daily working language, i.e. "those used between institutions, within institutions and during internal meetings convened by the institutions" (Gazzola 2006, 396).

3. The language issue in the 2004 enlargement

On 1 May 2004 the European Union underwent its fifth enlargement, admitting ten more Member States mostly from the former Soviet bloc or even, in the case of the Baltic republics, from the USSR itself. This enlargement distinguished itself from any other for being the largest, not only in terms of new Member States, but also in terms of population, with about 80 million people becoming EU citizens.
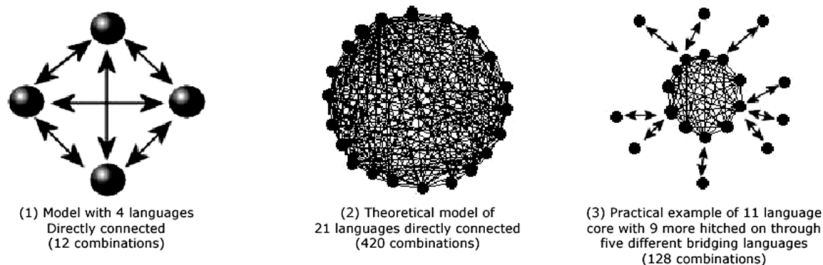
Because of its size, the 2004 enlargement holds a particular importance when it comes to the so-called "language issue". All over the world language is viewed as a primary trait of national identity (e.g., Maràcaz 1999). Eight out of the ten new Member States which formerly belonged to the Soviet bloc experienced for two generations a situation in which their own language was subordinate to Russian in international relations: this meant to those countries an unacceptable wound in their own national identity, and so none of them would ever accept another "supranational" language, as it would easily become the language of burocracy, the language of the ruling hierarchy.

Being an official language means that all the acts promulgated by the EU must be translated into that language, in order for the act to be valid. Then there is the concept of "working language": being a working language means that all the

preliminary documents before issuing an act should be translated into that language as well, in order to make them fully understandable to the speakers of that language.

In the run-up to the enlargement it became a priority to deliberate about how the EU institutional system would work after shifting, with the Accession Treaty, from an eleven-language to a twenty-language system. While it was impossible to even think of a monolingual structure, it was also difficult to imagine a perfectly symmetrical twenty-language system: as shown in Exhibit 2, a twenty-language system would take the whole translation and interpretation structure to a complexity level that would be hardly viable in terms of costs and complexity.

Exhibit 2 – Geometrical representation of the interconnections of a multilingual system.

(1) Model with 4 languages
Directly connected
(12 combinations)

(2) Theoretical model of
21 languages directly connected
(420 combinations)

(3) Practical example of 11 language
core with 9 more hitched on through
five different bridging languages
(128 combinations)

Therefore, while bearing in mind that it is not an option to deny some languages, even if spoken by very few people, the status of official language, it has been strongly suggested and applied in daily practice to opt for a more streamlined system, for example using some intermediate languages such as English, French, or German. The following sections outline how managerial solutions can help balance the need for political legitimacy and the quest for fiscal discipline by analysing how the 2004 enlargement impacted the organisation of translation and interpretation work in the main bodies of the EU.

4. The case of the European Commission (EC)

Translation and interpretation for the EC, concerning all its external and internal outputs, are provided by two different units within the EC itself: the Directorate General for Translation (DGT) and the Directorate General for Interpretation, still known as the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (JICS, also labelled as SCIC from its French acronym – *Service Commune d'Interprétation et Conferences*).

4.1. The EC Directorate General for Translation.

The DGT is the largest translation service in the world, currently employing about 1,750 linguists and some 600 support staff (i.e., around 8 % of the total staff of the EC), located in Brussels for two thirds and in Luxembourg for the remaining third[2]). All the linguistic staff is made up of LA (Linguistic grade A) grade officials, while the support staff is made up of A, B, C and D grade officials. Before the 2004 enlargement, the staff was split by language as outlined in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3 – Number of translators in the Directorate General for Translation by language as of January 2002.
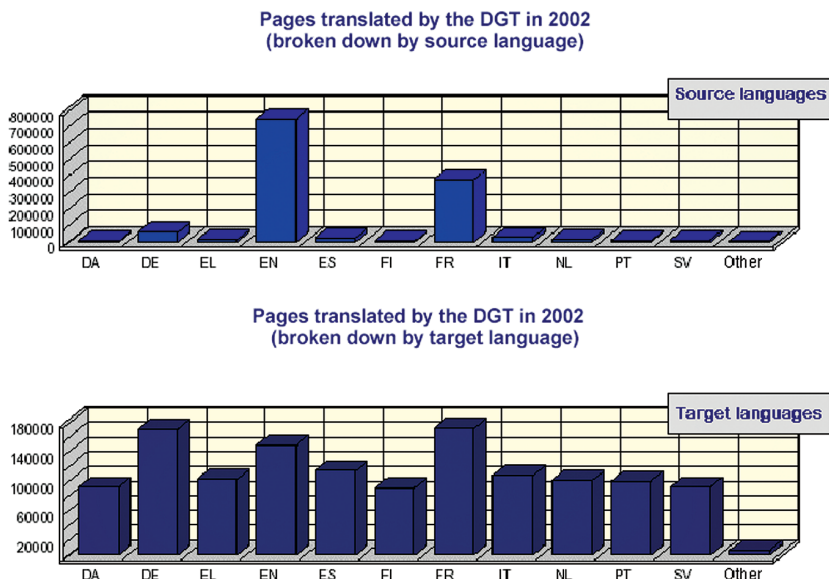
Number of translators (January 2002)											
Total	German	French	English	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese	Greek	Dutch	Danish	Swedish	Finnish
1170	154	149	132	102	97	94	93	92	88	85	84
100%	13.2	12.7	11.3	8.7	8.3	8.0	8.0	7.9	7.5	7.3	7.2

In exceptional circumstances the DGT is also responsible for translations into languages other than official ones, such as Russian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Turkish: for example, a basic set of EU legislation has already been translated into Turkish so that it would be ready in the event, which did not materialise, of the accession to the EU of the Turkish part of Cyprus along with the Greek part. These translations are usually performed by freelance translators, whose role is becoming more significant due to the EU's constant relations with non-EU countries. More recently some regional languages, such as Catalan and Welsh, have gained a status as "co-official" languages: their use can be authorised on the basis of administrative arrangements between the Council and the requesting Member State.

In 2002 the DGT translated 1,302,313 pages: 57.4 % were originally drafted in English, 29.1 % in French, 4.9 % in German, and the remaining percentage in the other eight official languages; Exhibit 4 shows the actual breakdown of its work according to a source-target criterion. Currently the DGT translates approximately 1,900,000 pages per year, of which external contractors handle almost 500,000.

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2   http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/linguistic-diversity/official-languages-eu_en.htm

Exhibit 4 – Output of the Directorate General for Translation in terms of translated pages before the 2004 enlargement.

**Pages translated by the DGT in 2002
(broken down by source language)**

**Pages translated by the DGT in 2002
(broken down by target language)**

Before the 2004 enlargement, the DGT was organised on a "topic-based" philosophy, in which translators specialised in one or more topics, thus ensuring a better understanding of the text to be translated.

*Exhibit 5 – Classification of topics in the European Commission for translation and interpretation purposes.*

❖ Administration	❖ Energy and transport	❖ Internal market
❖ Agriculture	❖ Enterprise Environment	❖ Legal, economic and
❖ Competition	❖ External relations	financial affairs
❖ Customs union and taxation	❖ Fisheries	❖ Regional policy
❖ Education and culture	❖ Health and consumer	❖ Research
❖ Employment	protection	❖ Statistics
	❖ Information society	❖ Trade

This organisational pattern had to undergo major changes to cope with the challenge of the 2004 enlargement. First of all, work breakdown switched from a topic to a language-based criterion, with twenty language departments (now twenty-four) replacing the old topic-based division. This shift guaranteed a certain degree of autonomy to the new languages staff (and a first step towards

in-depth specialisation) and independence in organising their work. Obviously the topic-based division of work did not disappear altogether: each language department established smaller units specialising in one or more thematic areas, to ensure again a high standard of proficiency when dealing with those matters. All language departments are furthermore grouped to make up the two Translation Directorates in Bruxelles and Luxembourg. Apart from these, different horizontal support units, staffed both by translation and non-translation personnel, perform a broad range of technical, organisational and research functions, including for example management, internal training, ICT development, secretarial duties and so on. All support functions are reunited in the Resource Directorate. One final support unit is the Internal Audit, which is part of the Director General staff and serves both the DGT and the JICS. The resulting organisational structure is featured in Exhibit 6.

Exhibit 6 – Organisational chart of the Directorate General for Translation adopted in preparation for the 2004 enlargement.
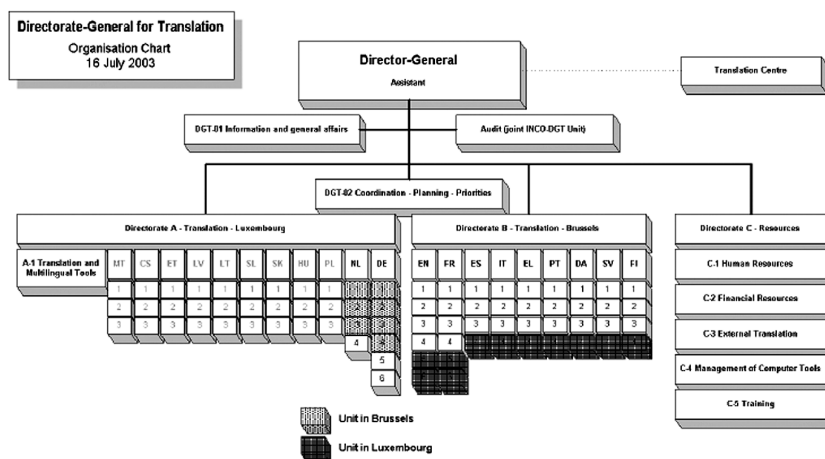
4.2. The EC Directorate General for Interpretation

All interpretation functions in the EC are assigned to the Directorate General for Interpretation, which is still known at times as the JICS (Joint Interpretation and Conference Service) or SCIC (*Service Commune d'Interpretation et Conferences*). As the name implies, the JICS is also responsible for interpretations for a number of other Brussels and Luxembourg-based EU institutions (namely the European

Council, the Council, the Economic and Social Commitee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investement Bank, plus all EU agencies).[3] Its duties are set out as follows:

- Ensure that an adequate number of interpreters of the appropriate standard are available;
- Satisfy the highest possible number of timely requests for interpretation;
- Ensure that the maximum number of meeting rooms is operational for customers' needs;
- Provide a cost-effective conference organisation and consultancy capacity to the satisfaction of Commission services;
- Provide a work environment in which staff can use their full potential to enable the JICS to fulfil its mission;
- Exploit the possibilities offered by new technologies

Similarly to the DGT, the JICS is the largest of its kind in the world, employing about 600 LA grade officials as full-time interpreters plus another 3,000 accredited ACI-grade freelance interpreters (http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/linguistic-diversity/official-languages-eu_en.htm). Exhibit 7 provides an overview of the work performed by the JICS in the years preceding the 2004 accession; the current number of interpreter days per year is estimated at about 150,000.

Exhibit 7 – Evolution over time of the work performed by the Joint Interpretation and Conference Service, 1959–2002.

Year	Meetings	Interpreter days	Freelance (%)
1959	2,081	4,438	36.9
1965	3,260	17,785	29.3
1970	5,516	29,551	28.0
1980	8,423	75,472	29.1
1989	10,270	109,279	35.3

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3   The European Council has its own "Language Service", whose main task is to provide all the translations necessary so that the documents on the basis of which the European Council and the Council hold their discussions are available to them in all the official and working languages. The Language Service is organised as 24 units, one for each language, with some 630 translators and 340 assistants overall. The Language Service plays no part in multilingual oral communication at meetings, which is a matter for the EC Directorate General for Interpretation.

| Year	Meetings	Interpreter days	Freelance (%)
1991	9,601	110,237	41.5
1993	10,558	121,122	39.5
2002	11,500	145,000	38.0

The increase in the number of official languages meant a decrease in the share of meetings where full symmetric coverage can realistically be ensured. Exhibit 8 features an example of the analyses performed in the run-up to the 2004 enlargement to understand the expected expenditure increases in two scenarios, i.e. providing full coverage or ensuring a minimum coverage to new languages (i.e. connecting them to other languages using three or five connector languages).

Exhibit 8 – Expected increases in interpretation expenditures following the 2004 enlargement.

	5 teams per day per language to ensure minimum coverage	11 teams per day per language (40 interpreters x 9)
625 € / day	27,000 days or € 16,875,000 per year	72,000 days or € 45,000,000 per year
Increase	17 %	45 %

Nevertheless, the JICS also had to undergo radical changes to be prepared to cope with the 2004 enlargement, in particular by switching to a more efficient language-based structure. Directorate A is responsible for the core work of the JICS itself; Directorate B is in charge of managing the human and financial resources assigned to the JICS, whereas Directorate C plans, organises, promotes and carries out conferences and meetings. The resulting organisational structure is featured in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9 – Organisational chart of the Directorate General for Interpretation adopted in preparation for the 2004 enlargement.
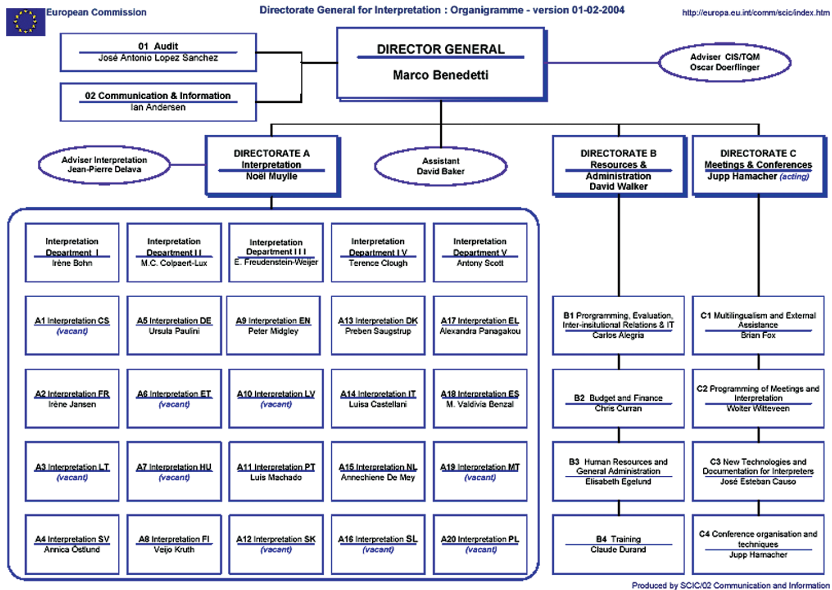
5. The case of the European Parliament (EP)

As in the EC, in the EP linguistic duties are also assigned to two different organs, i.e. the Directorate for Translation and the Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences, both based in Luxembourg.

The Directorate for Translation is an in-house translation service able to meet the quality requirements and tight deadlines imposed by parliamentary proce-dures: it has the task to produce the different language versions of all written documents of the EP and correspond with EU citizens in all the official languages. Even before the 2004 enlargement, the Directorate for Translation was organised on a linguistic basis: it was made up of eleven departments, plus the SILD unit (from its full name in French, *Support Informatique, Linguistique et Documentaire*) covering technical issues. The Directorate for Translation currently employs about 700 translators (including 75 lawyer-linguists) and 260 assistants; from 2000 on-wards it started to exploit the possibilities offered by freelance workers, mainly to cover the translation of non-EU languages, such as Chinese or Jewish.

Even when compared to its counterpart in the EC, the Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences has to face far bigger difficulties, since the EP is unique among international organisations in having to provide a fully multilingual environment. Any citizen of the EU has the right to be elected as a member of the EP, so fluency in one of the so-called "procedural" languages (English, French and German) cannot be expected, as it would be in the case of diplomats or EU officials. The Directorate is not only in charge of providing interpretation for plenary parliamentary sessions held both in Strasbourg and Brussels, but also for the meetings of parliamentary committees and political groups. In addition, it also has to provide interpretation to the various EC services based in Luxembourg. The EP's interpreters travel all over the world, accompanying delegations to overseas conferences, on visits to other parliaments and on election observation missions.

The Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences employs approximately 380 permanent staff officials, to which another 1,800 ACI-grade freelance interpreters should be added. The actual employment ratio of freelance interpreters is usually from 200 to 500 people a day. In 2002 these people provided about 50,000 interpreter days (i.e. a figure representing only one third of the correspondent figure for the interpretation service of the EC); this figure is currently around 110,000 days per year. Freelance work accounts for more than half of it, whereas in the EC this percentage shifts back to around 40 %.

From an organisational point of view, the staff of the Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences is divided into linguistic Divisions (one for each official language of the EU), under a Head of Division also known as the "head of booth". Heads of booth are concerned with all administrative matters involving the interpreters in their Division, such as work schedules, evaluation, grading, etc., but they are also responsible for the control of the performance and quality of their booth as a whole, including both staff and freelance interpreters. The Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences is led by a Director, who is responsible for all aspects of policy and internal organisation, including the budget and resource allocation. The Director is assisted by two Linguistic Consultants, to whom some of these responsibilities may be delegated.

6. The case of the Court of Justice of the European Union

The last institution of the EU provided with its own translation and interpretation structures is the Court of Justice of the EU. These organs are shared between the Court of Justice, in charge of administering all legal matters in the EU and settling disputes among Member States (e.g. on the interpretation of treaties) and

the General Court, in charge of settling disputes between private citizens and an EU institution (e.g. requesting the annulment of an act).

A distinguishing feature of the approach by the Court of Justice of the EU to linguistic issues since its foundation is that, contrary to the other EU institutions, the Court of Justice has a predominant language: French. The rationale for this choice is clear: European law is deeply rooted in the so-called "Napoleonic" administrative tradition (Peters 2008), and French therefore has a natural advantage over the other possible *lingua franca*, i.e. English. Predominance does not mean that it is the only option available, or a somewhat more "official" language; mandatory language rules state that, before starting the discussion, the Court must choose the language of the case (that by tradition is the one of the referent to the court), except in the occasion of a Member State being involved, when the language of the case automatically switches to the official language of that Member State. Translation covers all the combinations of the twenty-four official languages of the EU. While the case file is drafted also in French for internal work, the only "authentic" version of the ruling is the one drafted in the language of the case.

One of the features of any judicial body plays an important role when discussion arises about linguistic issues: the high technicality and specific competences required for legal matters. Therefore, even if undoubtedly by far smaller than its counterparts serving the EC and the EP, the Translation Service of the Court of Justice of the EU has the extra constraint of being forced to employ only lawyers as linguists. Legal works are usually written by lawyers for lawyers, and only lawyers have an adequate competence in the legal field to fully understand the rationale lying behind rulings: as a consequence, only lawyers are suitable to fulfil the task of not only translating, say, the text of a ruling into other official languages of the EU, but also of expressing the meaning of the acts and possibly slightly adapt them to the legal environment of the target language, in order to give the most truthful explanation of the act itself to everybody in the EU.

Before the 2004 enlargement the Translation Service was made up of eleven language units, each of which translated from all the languages into their own language, and a General Service Division which worked to support all other units, for example organising work distribution, providing documents to lawyer-linguists, managing freelance work and so on. As a whole, the Translation Service of the Court of Justice of the EU used to translate about 360,000 pages per year, an output not even comparable in size to that of other EU institutions. The staff of the Translation Service doubled in size since the 2004 enlargement, and it consists now of

some 600 lawyer-linguists and 110 clerical staff, plus the Head of the Service and the Heads of the 24 language units.

To ensure equal access to justice at EU level, the parties must be allowed to express themselves in their own language: the Interpretation Directorate of the Court of Justice of the EU is therefore required to perform the task of making speeches intelligible to everybody in situations like judicial hearings and pleadings. The Interpretation Directorate is the smallest among the language services of EU institutions: currently it employs only 70 people as full-time staff interpreters, but the figure has nevertheless almost doubled following the 2004 enlargement, when the figure stood at 38. They can of course be complemented as needed by the input of 350 ACI-grade freelance interpreters each year, for an average of 65 interpreter days per working week.

7. The case of the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the EU

The last key player for handling language issues in the EU is the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the EU (or CDT, from its French acronym *Centre Du Traduction*): based in Luxembourg, it is an agency ruled by European public law, and is in charge of providing high-quality translations to a wide spectrum of EU agencies and other bodies, ranging for example from the EUROPOL to the European Food Safety Authority to the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market.

The past twenty years witnessed a significant growth in the number of EU agencies, each with its own different needs regarding translation and interpretation, both in terms of quantity and quality (e.g. number of non-EU languages required). Since these agencies are made up almost entirely of high-level professionals, interpretation has never been an urgent need for them, as English and French are generally spoken and understood by their staff members. On the other hand, it was clear from the very beginning that establishing an internal translation service for each agency would have been very expensive, if not inefficient or useless, due to the small size of most agencies. Therefore, in 1994 the Council agreed on the establishment of the CDT as a support agency to help rationalise translation duties for the whole system of EU agencies, allowing major financial savings and a more efficient allocation of workload and resources, and a better outcome as the final result. The CDT is also expected to assist those EU institutions and bodies that have their own translation services at times when workload peaks.

As an EU agency, the CDT has full control of everything related to its own administration; its Board of Management is therefore in charge of managing not only translation duties through the Translation Department, but also internal organi-

sation and financial management on the one hand and ICT development on the other, respectively through the Administration and the Computer Department.

In 2002, on the eve of the fifth enlargement, the CDT was made up of over 140 full officials, almost equally divided between LA grade linguistic staff and clerical and office staff, who produced an output of more than 280,000 pages, an impressive figure if compared to the 20,000 pages produced in 1995. Today, with 200 staff, the CDT translates for 50 EU agencies, institutions and other bodies; its output in 2009 totalled 736,000 pages of translations.

The establishment of the CDT has probably been the first step towards a more rational organisation of the whole issue of translation and interpretation in the EU, made even more pressing by each following round of enlargements.

8. Conclusions

8.1. The costs of multilingualism

After presenting a brief, and therefore incomplete, overview of how EU institutions deal with multilingualism, the issue of the costs of translation and interpretation services must be addressed. One of the biggest criticisms of multilingualism is the associated financial burden: following the steep increase in the number of official languages from 2004 onwards, the cost of the language services as a whole, including translation, interpretation, documentation and staff expenditures in all EU bodies, is estimated to account for 40 % of the EU administrative budget. This figure seems very high at first sight; on the other hand, taking into account that administration accounts for about 5 % of overall expenditure, then language services use up only 2 % of the EU budget. If we set aside the criticisms that language-related expenditure is excessive for the needs of the EU, the impression inside EU institutions is that multilingualism is necessary as a matter of political legitimacy, irrespective of its cost.

The overall expenditure associated with the activities performed by the EC Directorate General for Translation (DGT) in 2001 totalled about 220 million euros. A detailed breakdown of the input involved in its processes allows an estimation of an average cost per page of 168 Euro, including both translation and editing. By that time the DGT had already successfully carried out the 1995 enlargement, demonstrating its ability to tackle the challenges posed by the accession of three new Member States.

Shifting the focus to the EC Directorate General for Interpretation, the total cost in 2001 was around 105 million euros, i.e. 0.28 euro per year for each EU citizen, while the language services of the European Parliament and the Court of

Justice absorbed less than 0.22 euros per year for each EU citizen. *Per capita* costs seem especially appropriate here, since they point out the impact of multilingualism for an average taxpayer.

Since in 2001 the population of EU15 was around 370 million people, and the cost of translation and interpretation services for all the institutions combined totalled 685.9 million euros, the resulting average cost per person amounted to less than 2 euros a year. The fact that the cost per person was negligible compared to other activities was used as one of the leading arguments by the advocates of a complete linguistic regime: they argued that the social gain to be derived from allowing all citizens to use their own language when dealing with EU institutions was far greater than such a small cost.

The rule of thumb is that each new official language increases translation and interpretation costs by about 8 % Taking into account that their number grew from 11 in 2004 to 24 in 2013, then a 100 % increase in total language-related expenditure, from 1 % to 2 % of the EU overall budget, seems broadly in line with expectations.

8.2. Final remarks

After reviewing the ways in which the EU deals with multilingualism we can observe that even an event such as the fifth enlargement did not have knockdown effects on the functioning of EU bodies, as many had feared. The EU started already in 1999 to think about how to manage the implications of such a challenging enlargement: in practice this meant kick-starting a large-scale change management programme in all the new Member States, by creating decentralised offices there, providing citizens with all the information they might need and starting a forward-looking training campaign so as to have qualified translators and interpreters ready by 2004. This programme proved quite successful, since it fulfilled its goal of providing EU institutions with the staff they needed: by 2005 more than 90 % of the posts had been filled with highly skilled personnel.

To meet the challenge of the 2004 enlargement, EU institutions also had to face the needs of this new linguistic regime: most linguistic services replaced a topic-based with a language-based organisational structure, but this is most likely not going to be the only managerial change. Even if the costs are not so relevant, taking into account the EU budget as a whole, translation and interpretation services have often been criticised as one of the most significant areas as regards waste. A way to reduce waste is to promote some forms of labour pooling across EU institutions: they can be expected to improve efficiency by sharing their human resources within their current budgetary allocations. A step in this direction is the estab-

lishment of the Interinstitutional Committee for Translation and Interpretation, i.e. a forum for cooperation between the language services of EU institutions and bodies dealing with the issues of common interest to the various translation and interpretation departments, such as Euramis, the EU's interinstitutional translation memory repository, and IATE, a database for all EU-related terminology containing over 9 million terms covering all the 24 official EU languages. If we add the effects of the growing reliance on freelance translators and interpreters, these managerial innovations can lead to significant savings.

With regard to the language issue, the managerial implications of the 2004 enlargement were tackled much more effectively than what most had feared. The fifth enlargement did imply a significant increase in the volume, and thus the costs of translation and interpretation activities, but it also served as the testing ground for innovations such as large-scale contracting out in this area. The language services proved to be up to the task of facing this challenge and stand ready for the next ones, so as to make sure that giving everyone at the table a voice and a document in their own language remains a fundamental requirement of the democratic legitimacy of the EU.

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