The European Union institutions have to be as accessible and open as possible, to the general public as well as to government departments and official and unofficial interest groups of all kinds. The Commission sees it as its duty to foster a democratic culture in which individual, local, regional and national characteristics are respected and safeguarded. This principle is enshrined in Regulation No 1 of 1958, which is amended each time a new country joins the EU to include its language or languages. Its provisions were subsequently incorporated into the Treaty establishing the European Community (see Annex 1).

But legislation is not the whole story. The European Union institutions have to be as accessible and open as possible, to the general public as well as to government departments and official and unofficial interest groups of all kinds. The Commission sees it as its duty to foster a democratic culture in which individual, local, regional and national characteristics are respected and safeguarded. This too is reflected in Article 21 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, which stipulates that the residents of the Member States have the right to communicate with the EU institutions in their own language.

Equal status for the official languages does not mean that all texts are translated into all the official languages. A letter to an individual or an internal memo, for example, will be sent in only one language, which may or may not involve translation. A committee may decide to work in a limited number of languages until it produces a proposal for wider discussion, which must then be made available in all the official languages. In the interests of cost-effectiveness, the Commission conducts its internal business in English, French and German, going fully multilingual only when it communicates with the other EU institutions, the Member States and the public.

As the European Union grows, the practical difficulties of according equal status to the languages of its constituent nations also grow, but any approach that failed to respect the languages of its peoples would betray the very foundations of the philosophy that lies behind the European Union.
Within the language departments, translators specialise in translating documents about particular areas of the European Commission’s work. The subjects are: administration; agriculture and rural development; competition; taxation and customs union; education and culture; employment and social affairs; energy and transport; enterprise and industry; environment; external relations; fisheries and maritime affairs; health and consumer protection; information society and the media; internal market and services; economic and financial affairs; legal affairs; regional policy; research; statistics; trade.

The language departments are divided into units specialising in combinations of these subjects. The number of units in each department depends on the language.

For organisational purposes, the DGT is divided along language lines, with a separate language department (or unit, as in the case of Irish) for each of the European Union’s 23 official languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish. These departments make up the three Translation Directorates. The DGT has three further directorates: the Transversal Services Directorate (which deals with specialist areas such as web translation, editing, documentation and outreach in the Member States), the Resources Directorate (which handles staffing, IT, finance and physical infrastructure) and finally the Translation Strategy Directorate (which deals with workflow and policy issues). Each Directorate is headed by a Director, and at the top of the structure is the Director-General.
The full profile for Commission translators is published on the DGT’s website at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/workingwithus/recruitment/translator_profile_en.htm.

One vital prerequisite for a good translation is a well-written original text. Clear, concise documents written to a high standard are essential to any public authority, especially a multilingual organisation in which most of the writers are not working in their own languages. Over recent years, English has become the principal drafting language in the Commission. About three-quarters of all Commission-drafted texts are now in English, the other quarter being in French. To make sure this material is up to the required standard, the DGT has an Editing Unit whose task is to correct and edit the language of original texts and to provide advice to authors and originating departments.

The DGT has also run a number of campaigns to promote clear and concise writing in the Commission.

**Numbers**

**Translators**

There are 1,750 translators working full-time on translating documents and on other language-related tasks, accompanied by some 600 support staff in management, secretarial, communication, information technology and training functions.

However, the language departments for Bulgarian, Irish and Romanian are still being set up and are not yet at full strength.
Pages
In 2006, the DGT translated 1,541,518 pages. As the breakdown by source language shows, 72% of original texts (including those originating outside the Commission) were drafted in English, 14% in French, 2.7% in German and 10.8% in the other 20 EU languages. English and French predominate because they are the principal drafting languages inside the European Commission.

As regards output, the breakdown across the official languages is more even, as the same amount of legislation has to be translated into each. However, the breakdown by target language on the following page shows that the figures for English, French and German are still considerably higher than the average, since many texts are translated into just one or more of these three working languages for the Commission's internal use.

Graph 1 Trends

Graph 2 Source languages comparison in 2006

Graph 3 Target languages comparison in 2006

The breakdown across the official languages is more even, as the same amount of legislation has to be translated into each.
Since recruitment through the open competitions is at the basic grade within the career bracket, no professional experience is required. However, experience of working in one or more of the European Union's spheres of activity (economics, law, administration, etc.) may be useful for a placement in a particular translating unit. For management posts, previous professional experience is always required. Candidates must have a perfect knowledge of the target language (usually their mother tongue) and a thorough knowledge of at least two other official languages. Knowledge of additional languages is an advantage. Except in special, well-defined circumstances, translators work exclusively into the language they regard as their main language, generally their mother tongue. For certain languages, however, an ability to translate out of the main language is regarded as an asset.

Selection
Like other established staff at the Commission, translators are recruited by open competition. Competitions for translators at the Commission are always held to recruit staff with a particular main language. The competition notices are published in the Official Journal of the European Union and, at the same time, in the press in the EU country or countries concerned and on the Internet. The EU institutions have delegated the recruitment procedure to an EU Agency, the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO).

It takes an average of 8 to 10 months to go through the competition procedure.

The competition consists of written tests (multiple-choice questions and two translation tests into the required target language), followed by an oral test. Successful candidates are placed on a reserve list that remains valid for a number of years. The validity of the lists may be extended, but getting a place on the reserve list is no guarantee of recruitment. As vacancies arise in the various translation or support units, they are filled by appointing reserve list candidates whose personal profile matches the requirements of the post (qualifications, languages and specialised knowledge) and the DGT's needs.

Translators recruited to the Commission's permanent staff are usually appointed at the starting grade in the administrator category.

General requirements
In order to be admitted to an open competition for translators, candidates must have the nationality of a European Union Member State and must have a university-level education (in languages or in a specialised field — economics, law, science etc.). When new countries are due to join the EU, their nationals may apply to sit competitions to recruit translators into their languages before the countries join, but those who pass the tests will not be appointed to permanent posts until their countries have become EU Member States. Before accession, they may be offered a temporary or fixed-term contract post.

External translation
TO COPE WITH A LEVEL OF DEMAND that fluctuates in response to political imperatives and is to some extent impossible to predict, the Commission's Directorate-General for Translation has always called on external translation providers. Recourse to this option has increased over the last ten years, with the number of pages translated externally almost doubling to reach nearly 300 000 in 2006, the equivalent of approximately 20% of total output. The DGT has a dedicated application (TRèFLe) to manage external translation contracts and to process all requests for such translations. To ensure transparency, equal treatment and efficiency, all transactions with contractors are via a web-based portal called eXtra.

Selection
In line with the regulations governing outsourced work, the DGT periodically launches invitations to tender or calls for expressions of interest, which are published in the Official Journal and announced on the Europa website.
The need for the Commission to communicate effectively with people via the Web has led to the creation of a specialist Web unit with a small team of translators for each official language, specialised in translating and editing web texts. The language teams work seamlessly and flexibly together, with the editing of originals interwoven with translation and revision to ensure a high quality.

The unit can help with the top-level content on Commission websites, using the different registers, drafting approach, formats and processing tools required for web content. As a pioneering group, its everyday work includes testing new tools and collaborating to develop the next generation of web authoring at the Commission. In many cases, the unit collaborates closely with requesting departments even before any content is created.

Web translation

Mission
Organisation
How the Directorate-general for translation works
Work opportunities
External translation
Web translation
Traineeships
Training
Translation and workflow tools
Open to the world

Traineeships

The DGT offers five-month traineeships, in both Brussels and Luxembourg, for graduate translators of any nationality, EU or not, who wish to gain in-house professional translation experience.

The applicants selected for these traineeships are usually assigned to one of the translating units. They do the same work as their staff colleagues, translating into their main language from at least two other EU languages. Their work is revised by experienced senior staff. Some trainees are assigned to terminology work or to other translation-related tasks.

Invitations to tender and calls for expressions of interest:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/workingwithus/freelance/index_en.htm
Trainee translators receive a monthly grant to cover living expenses. The training periods at the European Commission run from 1 March and 1 October. The deadlines for submitting applications are 1 September for a traineeship starting in March and 1 March for one starting in October.

Translators have to keep up to date the skills and information they need for their work. In-house training in the Directorate-General for Translation is primarily the responsibility of the Training Unit, which is part of the Resources Directorate. The Training Unit manages and coordinates most internal training in the DGT and also acts as the go-between for a range of training courses provided for Commission staff as a whole, including language courses.

Because of the many specialist areas in which the DGT works, there is also a network of training correspondents representing all the language departments. This network liaises with the Training Unit and with representatives of the individual translating units, and is responsible for identifying needs, launching new initiatives and organising special talks or training activities relating to the subject areas in which translators work.

Other units and teams, such as the Information Technology Unit or the Translator’s Workbench-Euramis team, also give specialist training on a more modest scale. Under certain conditions, translators can also take part in various external training programmes dealing either with languages or with particular subject areas relevant to their work.

Translation tools

Translator’s Workbench & translation memories

This commercial application (TWB for short), consisting of a local ‘translation memory’ that can store and retrieve documents in all the official languages, has been adapted to meet the special requirements of the Commission. Since 1997, all translators in the Directorate-General for Translation have been able to use it for their work to search for identical or similar passages in other documents translated previously and to incorporate them as and how they wish in their own translations.

All the Commission’s translators who use the TWB regard it as an extremely valuable working tool, since a high percentage of the preparatory texts drafted in the Commission are based on previous texts or existing legislation. Re-using previously translated words or passages from these texts saves a considerable amount of time and makes for consistent terminology, which is vitally important in legislative texts.

Euramis

Euramis (European Advanced Multilingual Information System) is a system developed at the Commission. It consists of a set of web applications combined with electronic mail to give access to a whole range of services in the area of language processing. Euramis works on a common platform linking together all the DGT’s translation aid systems.

One of the most important services is the central translation memory. Whenever a translation request is accepted, the original document is sent automatically to Euramis, and any previous translations are extracted from the central memory. This service can be combined with others, such as machine translation, for any parts of the text not in the central memory. There are a range of options and parameters for refining searches. The result can be imported directly into a local translation memory for the translator’s workbench (TWB). When the translation is finished, the translator uploads the local memory into the Euramis central translation memory.

Full details can be found in our brochure ‘Translation Tools and Workflows’, also available on the Internet at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/index_en.htm
Machine translation

The Commission has been using machine translation (MT) since 1976. The MT service offers 18 operational language pairs and can produce 2,000 pages of raw translation per hour. It is available to all Commission officials via the web and internal email. The service is also used by staff in other EU institutions and by public administrations in the Member States. Translations are usually returned to the requester within minutes.

Extensive use has been made of machine translation over the past few years: for example, 860,314 pages were submitted to the system in 2005. The Commission was the main user, with 671,500 pages, some 40% of which (287,182 pages) were requested by the DGT itself. The DGT customises the results by feeding in terminology tailored to its own specific translation needs. Customisation is particularly advanced for English-Spanish and French-Spanish, which are the most popular language pairs among translators, followed by English-French. Translators who use machine translation do so in order to obtain a rough draft translation that they then edit to the quality of a human translation.

In terms of individual requesters, however, the majority of Commission users are administrators in other departments, who most often use the combinations between French, English and German. Administrators principally use machine translation as a multilingual browsing tool, but it also serves as a stop-gap when translations are required at very short notice. In the latter case, the raw machine translation should always be corrected.

For administrators who do not have the time or linguistic ability to correct machine translations themselves, the DGT offers a Rapid Post-Editing Service. This is a network of freelance translators who are experienced in revising raw machine translations. However, as the emphasis is on speed and accuracy rather than on style or terminology, this service can only be used for internal documents. If texts are intended for external distribution, administrators must always ask for a full human translation.

Further details can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/translation/index_en.htm

The DGT Library

The DGT has its own library, the DGT Library, with branches at its two sites in Luxembourg and Brussels. The Library's collection comprises dictionaries, both specialist and general, reference works, encyclopaedias, periodicals and newspapers in all EU languages plus a few more. Its collection of EU documentation consists of Official Journals, Court Reports, the various reports issued by the Commission and the EU Bulletins. The Library also has a large number of electronic dictionaries and other resources that are accessible via the DGT's intranet. The aim of the Library is to help translators find the documentation they require and to respond to their needs in this area.

The DGT has also created a multilingual virtual library called 'MultiDoc', which contains documentation — not only about the European Union — in all the EU's official languages. This documentation takes the form of thousands of links to websites and databases maintained by universities, government departments, semi-official bodies and international organisations all over the world.

Terminology

Terminology work in the DGT falls under the responsibility of the 23 language departments, whose terminologists provide support for all the official languages of the European Union. This includes:

- answering requests from translators and other officials of the Commission and the other EU institutions for help with terminology;
- pro-actively preparing terminology for technically demanding dossiers prior to translation;
- cooperating with colleagues of terminology services in other EU institutions, as well as with national bodies and terminology organisations;
- feeding and consolidating IATE, the world's largest multilingual terminology database, which contains terminological data from all the EU institutions.

At inter-departmental level, this work is coordinated by a central body, the 'Terminology Coordinating' team, which also forms part of the interinstitutional structure responsible for developing and maintaining IATE and acts as a central contact point for external terminology services and organisations.

IATE

IATE (Inter-Active Terminology for Europe), the internal successor of Eurodicautom, is an interinstitutional terminology database that has been fully operational within the European Commission since the beginning of 2005. It combines terminological data from all the European institutions and bodies, containing more than 8 million terms and 500,000 abbreviations. It covers all the official languages of the EU plus Latin. The development and maintenance of the database is the responsibility of an interinstitutional team, whereas its language-specific content is built up and updated by the language departments. The terminology contained covers all the fields of activity of the European institutions.

For further information on linguistic aids see: http://ec.europa.eu/translation/index_en.htm

Other sources of information

All staff in the Directorate-General for Translation have a PC workstation equipped with the usual range of office automation programs and access to the Internet. Translators also have access to a number of internal and external
There is widespread interest in the EU's language policy, and the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) receives many visitors who are curious to see how parity of status for 23 languages works in practice. Visitors come not only from EU Member States but from other parts of the world as well.

The DGT operates a 'Visiting Translator' scheme whereby DGT staff who know or are learning one of the EU's official languages can be sent, on official duty, to a university in a country where the language is spoken. The assignment during the visit, which lasts a few weeks, is to brief the teaching staff and students on the work of the DGT and its linguists, and to encourage graduates to apply for jobs with the translation services of the EU institutions.

The DGT also maintains contacts with professional associations of translators, and indeed all sectors of the language professions.

DGT field offices

To facilitate communication with the public, DGT has set up 'field offices for multilingualism' in the Member States. Its staff in these field offices are responsible for adapting the information communicated by the Commission in Brussels to the local context and specific target audiences. They are also engaged in developing links with civil society and thereby helping to put into practice the EU’s policy of getting closer to its citizens.

The DGT occasionally organises events such as exhibitions or congresses and has also taken part in major seminars and workshops on language questions. It encourages translator-training institutions in the Member States to consider its requirements (as set out in the translator profile and proposed curriculum for a European Master's in Translation) when designing their courses.
The legal basis for the European Union’s language services is to be found in two pieces of legislation: Regulation No 1 of 1958 and the Treaty establishing the European Community (consolidated version).

Council Regulation No 1 of 1958
determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY,
Having regard to Article 217 of the Treaty which provides that the rules governing the languages of the institutions of the Community shall, without prejudice to the provisions contained in the rules of procedure of the Court of Justice, be determined by the Council, acting unanimously;
Whereas each of the 4 languages in which the Treaty is drafted is recognised as an official language in one or more of the Member States of the Community,
HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1
The official languages and the working languages of the institutions of the Community shall be Dutch, French, German and Italian.

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 4 official languages.

Article 5
The Official Journal of the European Communities shall be published in the 4 official languages.

Article 6
The institutions of the Community may stipulate in their rules of procedure which of the languages are to be used in specific cases.

Article 7
The languages to be used in the proceedings of the Court of Justice shall be laid down in its rules of procedure.

Article 8
If a Member State has more than one official language, the language to be used shall, at the request of such State, be governed by the general rules of its law.

This regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Treaty establishing the European Community

Article 21
Every citizen of the Union may write to any of the institutions or bodies referred to in this article or in Article 7 in one of the languages mentioned in Article 314 and have an answer in that language.

In other words, citizens have the right to address the official EU bodies in any of the EU’s official languages and to receive a reply in that language.
### Annex 2 –
**Internet contacts and addresses**

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<th>Institutions, services and other EU bodies</th>
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<td>The Translation Centre</td>
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<td>Association internationale des traducteurs de conférence</td>
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<td>Association des traducteurs littéraires de France</td>
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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server ([http://europa.eu](http://europa.eu)).

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