Translation Tools and Workflow

Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission
February 2007
Nowadays, translating is not just a matter of finding the right word, but also of using the right technology. The Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission, which is the largest and most complex translation service in the world, has therefore incorporated a unique set of translation tools into its complex workflow.

Thanks, among other things, to translation memory technology, the Directorate-General for Translation has genuine data sharing: translators can avoid re-translating what has already been done and give other colleagues the benefit of their work.

With all the requisite data at hand, translators can concentrate on their “core business”, searching for the right word in a more efficient and less time-consuming way and practising the art of translation without the drudgery of having to perform repetitive tasks.

This booklet sets out to show how, under ideal conditions, documents are processed by the Directorate-General for Translation, from the day they arrive till the day they are finalised and delivered to the requesting department.

Of course, what is presented here is the model scenario, but this is not so far removed from reality: all translators are liable to be affected by the new developments sooner or later. Indeed, there are already various tools on the market which offer some of the functions discussed in these pages, and a number of projects are being conducted along lines similar to our own.

Even at the individual level then, document management and workflow are bound to become increasingly important.

We hope that specialists interested in the computerisation of translation support functions and document workflow for professional purposes will find ideas in this booklet which they can consider adapting to their own situations. The generalist reader, too, will gain an idea of how the Directorate-General for Translation uses computers to deliver finished language products to the European Commission as quickly, accurately and cheaply as possible.

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1. THE DG FOR TRANSLATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

For a better understanding of how we work, let us first look briefly at how the Directorate-General for Translation (or DGT) is organised and at the constraints it has to work under. With approximately 1,700 staff directly involved in translation and 600 support staff, DGT is located in both Brussels and Luxembourg, and is the largest translation service in the world. Other Community institutions and bodies (Council, Parliament, Court of Justice, Economic and Social Committee, Court of Auditors, etc.) have their own translation departments, whereas the various Community agencies send their translation work to a Translation Centre.

DGT is arranged in a linguistic structure: translation units are organised in Language Departments (one per official EU language). Translators therefore work in single-language units which specialise in particular subjects. They translate out of several languages, but almost always into their mother tongue (apart from some specific exceptions up to now). There is also a central demand management unit serving all Language Departments.

2. THE TRANSLATOR’S NEEDS

Information technology is playing an ever increasing role in the translator's daily work. DGT therefore makes various computer tools available to translators who use them to fit the translation needs and their personal preferences. The main computer formats used are Word, Excel, HTML and PowerPoint.

Irrespective of their chosen working methods, all translators’ needs are basically the same:

- **appropriate terminology** (dictionaries, glossaries, terminological databases, etc.);
- **reference documents** (paper, electronic archives, aligned texts, etc.);
- **a facility enabling them to re-use previously translated texts** (copy-pasting from other applications, electronic archives, translation memories, etc.); and
- **central and local assistance.** Secretaries have evolved from pure typists into translation assistants. Secretaries and translators more than ever work hand in hand, with pre- and post-processing being handled by secretaries, and translators focusing on the real translation work. At central level, assistance is provided by the Euramis/TWB Support & Pre-processing team, and at local level, within the language units.

3. DGT LANGUAGE RESOURCES

To perform its tasks, the DG for Translation has a wide variety of language resources at its disposal:

- **terminology** in many different forms (multilingual libraries, general Internet access, etc.). At desktop level, terminology searches are mainly performed via IATE (interinstitutional terminology database) and Quest (one-stop access to a series of general-interest terminology databases);

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1 For more information about the organisation and activities of the DG for Translation see also "Translating in a multilingual community".

2 Total production is some 1,300,000 pages a year.

3 See also [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/index_en.htm).
- processing of **sentence fragments** by *TMan*, an internal subsentence-level replacement tool;
- **translation memories** held centrally by *Euramis*, thus enabling genuine data sharing;
- **texts** as such to be retrieved from DGT’s internal archiving system (called *DGTVista*) or from any other source;
- **machine translation**, which, at the European Commission, is used not only as a browsing tool but also as a genuine translation aid, and can thus be regarded as a fully fledged language resource.

4. **DGT Tools**

4.1 **Administration and Documentation Tools**

4.1.1 **Poetry**

*Poetry* is the software used for the electronic transmission of translation requests from clients to the DG for Translation. The Web interface constructs an electronic folder containing the translation request, the original document for translation, and any reference documents required, all of which can then be sent to the DG for Translation in one go. On screen the interface looks like this:

![Poetry Interface](image)

The advantages are numerous and obvious:

- faster transmission,
- integration into DGT’s electronic archiving system,
- availability of original and reference documents in electronic form,
- ability to process documents using computer tools,
- improved electronic workflow, etc.
4.1.2 Suivi

*Suivi* is the software used for the electronic management of translation requests. The program monitors the progress of a document and sends translations back to requesters.

4.1.3 Dossier Manager

*Dossier Manager* is the interface for translation management.

When the identification number corresponding to the translation request is entered in Dossier Manager, the interface gives the translator working on a particular request access to the original document and to all files needed during the translation process, including:

- reference documents,
- pre-processing files,
- document comparisons,
- on-going translations, and
- documents already released.

It also makes it possible to create a translation “skeleton” and includes an alert and note function for communication between translators working on the same translation project.

4.1.4 DGTVista

*DGTVista*, which is DGT's electronic archiving system, contains all incoming (mainly original) and outgoing (mainly translation) documents from and to every Directorate-General and Service in the Commission since 1 January 1994. A web interface offers users a range of search criteria (document number, author, requesting service, title or even contents of the text), thus enabling them to find virtually any document within a matter of seconds.
Each document has something called a notice, which is a kind of identity card containing all key information, and the various fields can be displayed and searched.

Although DGTVista was designed as an electronic archiving system, its particular features (short response time, bilingual parallel scrolling, document downloading from the database into the word-processing system, full-text search facility), have also turned it into a very powerful translation aid. The new web interface also makes it possible to send two documents directly to Euramis for alignment.

4.1.5 Eur-Lex

Eur-Lex is open to the general public free of charge, and allows them to consult the Official Journal of the European Union. It contains the treaties, secondary legislation, and also preparatory acts in all official EU languages, as well as national implementing measures and case law of the European Court of Justice.

Eur-Lex can also be used to find all documents quoting a given legal act.

The Directorate-General for Translation has permanent access to Eur-Lex via the Web, as well as indirect access through the Euramis interface (see section 5).

URL: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/
### 4.2 Translation Tools

The Directorate-General for Translation has three main types of translation aids: terminology tools, translation memory technology, and machine translation. For translation memory technology, two levels (central and local) should be distinguished, as different systems are used.

#### 4.2.1 Terminology Tools

**IATE**

*IATE* (Inter Active Terminology for Europe) is an interinstitutional terminology database, which became fully operational within the European Commission at the beginning of 2005. It combines the terminological data of all European institutions and bodies, amounting to over 8 million terms and 500,000 abbreviations. Its data cover all official languages of the EU, as well as Latin. Development and maintenance of the database is the responsibility of an interinstitutional team. However, the database is fed by the language departments themselves. Every translator has the right to insert entries into the database. The quality of the content of the database is ensured via a multistage validation system.
As long as IATE is not ready to be opened to the public, Eurodicautom, which used to be the European Commission’s central terminology database, will remain open for consultation by external users.

**Quest**

*Quest* is not a terminology database but a metasearch interface which translators can use to query several databases simultaneously. This Internet-based interface was developed in the DGT with a view to centralising, simplifying and speeding up terminology searches. Translators may select on screen the source and target language pair, and one of three available profiles determining which databases they wish to search from. A Quest button on the toolbar makes it possible to launch searches for selected terms directly from Word.

### 4.2.2 Translation Memory Technology

The Euramis Central Translation Memory

A huge central translation memory was developed as part of the *Euramis* project (see section 5), the underlying idea being to provide facilities for genuine data sharing between all DGT staff.

The *Euramis* central translation memory is not used directly during the translation process: it is merely a database layer which is accessed to retrieve or store data processed locally with *Translator’s Workbench* and/or Word as a front end.

At present, the *Euramis* central memory contains more than 84 million phrases (‘translation units’) in all official EU languages.

As source languages, English, French and, to a lesser extent, German are the most commonly used, reflecting the fact that nearly all original documents are written in one of those languages. When it comes to target languages, retrievals are more evenly distributed. Automated *Euramis* pre-processing (retrieval) is, moreover, carried out on all original documents in Word format.
Translator’s Workbench - the Local Memory

TRADOS Translator’s Workbench (TWB) is an integrated translation support tool which was selected following an interinstitutional call for tenders and was then adapted to meet the European Institutions’ specific needs.

Among the reasons why it was chosen were multilingual capability, integration with the word-processing system and performance.

TWB gives translators access to all language and phraseology resources from a local translation memory: when the user enters an original text, similar or identical segments from previously translated texts pop up as translation suggestions for the job in hand.

In TWB the DGT has defined (via project settings) a given set of attributes (translator, document number, year, and client) to allow for individual labelling of segments in the translation memory.

TWB is particularly useful since a high proportion of legislative and preparatory documents are based on previous texts or existing legislation. It is mainly used as a front end for the local and interactive processing of data which is retrieved from, or is to be saved in, the Euramis central translation memory.

4.2.3 Machine Translation

ECMT

The principle of machine translation (MT) is well known: a raw translation of a document, from a source language into a target language, is made on the basis of a system of dictionaries and linguistic programs.

ECMT (short for European Commission Machine Translation) started development in 1976 and is accessible to both translators and administrators. It has three main uses, as an aid to:

- Browsing. Capable of translating up to 2 000 pages per hour, it gives rapid access to information in languages which requesters do not know;
- Drafting in a language other than the requester’s mother tongue or main language: some officials prefer to write a text in their own language first, request a machine translation, and then correct the output;
Translating: this is the principal reason for requesting machine translation within DGT. When used as the basis for a fully fledged translation of a document, the raw machine output must be edited. The amount of correcting required varies according to the text type (letter, minutes, manual, etc.).

Total MT production was 860,314 pages in 2005. The Commission was the main user with 671,500 pages, some 40% of which (287,182 pages) was requested by the DGT itself. MT is thus used in the Commission both as a genuine translation aid and as an administrative support tool.

Currently, ECMT offers translation for 18 operational language pairs (or combinations):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From English into</th>
<th>From French into</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Italian</td>
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<td>Italian</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
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<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Spanish into</td>
<td>From German into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Greek into</td>
<td>From French into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the Commission has a number of prototypes at its disposal. Greek-English, French-Greek, Portuguese-English/French and Dutch-English/French have all been developed on a co-financing basis with the EU Member States and the Systran group, which has also provided Italian-English/French. Moreover, the Commission has just completed a project for Danish-English and Swedish-English. There have also been co-financing projects for other language pairs.

The quality of a given language pair mainly depends on length of development and language similarities. However, MT quality is also heavily influenced by the original document: if the source text is unclear, contains typing errors or is syntactically complex, the result will definitely be poor. ECMT’s main strengths are the coverage of its dictionaries - which have been adapted to cover the Commission’s areas of work - and, of course, speed.

MT can be requested via the user’s e-mail application or a user-friendly interface on *IntraComm*, the Commission’s Intranet. It can also be accessed via *Euramis* (see section 5).
4.3 Voice Recognition

More than 300 translators in DGT are currently using some kind of speech recognition tool, mainly Nuance’s Dragon NaturallySpeaking software. Speech recognition applications such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking allow users to dictate text directly onto their computer in a natural, continuous way, achieving a high degree of accuracy and efficiency. The software is a real time-saver for translators, who no longer need to type a large part of their work, or have it typed (thus saving secretaries’ time as well). The ergonomic and health benefits are also obvious, as adverse physical effects associated with intensive typing and mouse use are reduced.

Uptake of speech recognition technology by DGT has been limited by the fact that this technology has been developed by vendors for only 9 of the current 20 EU official languages.

5. Euramis Project

The Euramis project was launched in 1995 following a call for tenders for the “Development of multilingual tools and their integration into multilingual services”. The underlying idea was to relieve translators of the more repetitive work and to achieve greater consistency in language and methodology, thus contributing to better quality assurance.

Quality assurance is a major concern not only for DGT but also for the other institutions. Therefore, to further improve consistency and promote interinstitutional synergies through use of translation tools, Euramis can now be accessed by users in the Council, the Court of Auditors, the Committees, Parliament, and the Translation Centre. Technological developments are thus helping to improve communication and allowing genuine data sharing between translators working for different institutions.
5.1 **Euramis Concept**

*Euramis* (European Advanced Multilingual Information System) refers to a series of e-mail-based, client-server applications which provide access to a variety of services in the field of natural language processing.

*Euramis* is based on the following principles:

- **central storage** of linguistic resources with a view to data sharing (translation memories);
- **mass processing** of linguistic data;
- **integration** of various language applications and services with a view to giving one-stop access to, for example, translation memories, and machine translation;
- **workflow automation**.

5.2 **Euramis Architecture**

At workstation level, the user creates a request (instructions and files to be treated) by means of a Web interface. At server level, a service dispatcher reads the command files and launches the programs needed in the appropriate sequence. After going through the processes shown in the illustration, the final results are returned to the user's mailbox.

5.3 **Euramis Services**

*Euramis* services are launched by means of the *Euramis* Web interface.

*Euramis* gives indirect and more specific access to a whole range of language applications and services.

5.3.1 **Machine Translation**

*Euramis* gives direct access to machine translation. A machine translation request can also be combined with a retrieval from the *Euramis* central memory.

5.3.2 **Eur-Lex/Celex Download**

By typing *Eur-Lex/Celex* document references in the appropriate box of the *Euramis* Web interface, or by attaching a file which contains *Eur-Lex/Celex* references (or at least particulars from which an automatic reference can be constructed, such as *Regulation No.*...), the user can receive the full titles or text of the corresponding legal acts in one or more EU languages (up to 30 documents) by e-mail.
It also allows for automatic alignment of downloaded acts at server level. In that case, the user receives a TWB import file (in .tmx format).

A similar service exists for the main categories of internal Commission documents (SGVista + Alignment).

5.3.3 TMan

TMan is an automated search-and-replace tool which operates from subsentence level (repetitive elements are stored in a database). It replaces pre-defined strings (from single words up to paragraphs) in the source document, creating an initial target document which is a mix of source and target language items. TMan replacements are based on a repetition analysis of the document type in question. As there is no fuzzy search capability, TMan is at its best when a document recurs frequently and contains a large number of standard, repetitive elements.

A retrieval from a TMan database can be combined with a retrieval from the Euramis central memory.

5.3.4 Alignment

When the Euramis project was launched in 1995, commercially available alignment programs did not offer acceptable quality, hence the decision to develop a (highly customised) Euramis aligner.

Like most Euramis applications, alignment is offered via an e-mail-based, Web client-server environment: requests are launched with the Euramis Web interface.

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An operation consisting of splitting two existing texts in different languages (source and target) into sentences and then placing these sentences in parallel. The result of the operation is a single file containing the various sentence pairs which, after checking (see Alignment Editor), is fed into the (local and/or central) translation memory.
The user has to define values for a given set of attributes, which are the same as those used in TWB project settings and thus enable individual labelling of segments in the translation memory.

An alignment can be made for:

- instant use during the interactive translation process;
- storage in the Euramis central translation memory for later use.

In both cases corrections can be made using the Alignment Editor.

### 5.3.5 Alignment Editor

The Euramis Alignment Editor is simple to use and offers all the functions users might need when correcting an alignment.

Sentence cells can be deleted, merged or split. It is normally assumed that the sequence of source and target sentences is parallel. In order to deal with the cases of "crossover" translations (where two or more sentences in the source text are translated in a different order in the target text), the cut, copy and paste functions can be used.

Euramis Alignment Editor also makes it possible to change or add attribute values (project settings) to a given document.

Finally, corrected alignments can be saved directly to a Euramis database.

### 5.3.6 Central Memory Retrieval

A retrieval from the Euramis central translation memory is launched on the basis of an original document.

There are several search and selection criteria.

The search can also be extended to target entries (i.e. reverse and indirect translations are added as well).
The user can opt for two different formats:

**TWB import file (.tmx file):** a kind of “project memory” to be imported into TWB for interactive translation. This format allows for inclusion of all the most relevant documents (when a certain number of translation units come from the same document, the whole document is retrieved and added to the TWB import file).

**Word output:** corresponds more or less to the Translate function in TWB. Sentences are automatically replaced in the Word document with the best matches found. Colours are used to indicate status (perfect match, fuzzy match, original text, machine translation) and comments to display project settings. It can be seen as an alternative for translators without TWB and can serve as a visual aid for decision-makers (how much text is actually new and which tools would it be best to use for a given document?).

Translation memory retrieval can also be refined using a given set of filters corresponding to the project settings used during the translation process.
For each request, an analysis report is created, containing detailed information about the results retrieved.

5.3.7 Combined Services

As already mentioned, Euramis offers several combined services:

- Celex plus alignment,
- SGVista + alignment,
- DGTVista + alignment
- Retrieval + machine translation,
- Retrieval + TMan.
The underlying idea was to integrate various language services with each other and hence to provide for one-stop access.

The example above is an illustration of a combined retrieval after TWB import.

In this case, translation memory retrieval has been combined with a machine translation request.

When *Euramis* does not find any perfect or fuzzy matches in the central memory, it requests a machine translation, which is included at the end of the retrieval result. In TWB (see illustration above), a machine-translated sentence of this kind is displayed in grey to distinguish it from perfect (green) or fuzzy (yellow) matches.

The advantages compared to retrieval or machine translation alone are obvious: users always get a suggestion while being aware of its status, and they do not have to keep making the same changes in machine translation, since validated proposals from machine translation become perfect or fuzzy matches respectively if they reappear later in the text.

### 5.3.8 Save

*Euramis* allows for saves to the central translation memory (aligned files or TWB export files) and to *TMAn* databases.

### 5.3.9 Document Search

Document Search lets users search for specific documents in the *Euramis* translation memories. Once a document has been found, users can view it, download it, or send feedback to the database manager. Sentences with the same “Doc. No”, “Req. Serv.” and “Year” are regarded as pertaining to the same document.

In order to avoid uncontrolled proliferation of data among the various translation memories, the downloaded sentences are provided in a format which cannot be reimported back into *Euramis* (unless they have since been reused for translation in TWB).

In order to reach an acceptable degree of efficiency, queries are not performed in the actual translation memories, but in the *Euramis* inventory files, which list the contents of those memories per document, language pair etc. These inventory files are updated every night. As a consequence, users will not find documents which were imported “today”.

![Euramis Document Search](image-url)
5.3.10  Euramis on-line Concordance

Euramis Concordance searches the Euramis translation memories for the text entered in the text box (unlike TWB, it does not have fuzzy matching capabilities). If one or more matches are found, a result table is created which contains the sentences found on the left-hand side and their translations on the right-hand side.

Sentences from the same document (i.e. with the same “Doc. No”, “Req. Serv.” and “Year”) found in the same translation memory are grouped together under a heading identifying the document. Each document heading contains “Show”, “Download” and “Feedback” buttons which users can click respectively in order to:

- view all sentences from the document (source and target);
- retrieve all sentences from the document;
- send feedback on the document to the database manager.

Sentences are shown in the order in which they were imported into Euramis, which may not be the same as in the original document; moreover, some sentences of the original document may be missing.

“Advanced Search” offers more scope for fine-tuning searches, but takes considerably longer.

6. WORKFLOW EVOLUTION

6.1  Workflow

Compared to the previous situation, where translation work would arrive directly on the translator’s desk, the new workflow is rather complex - as can be seen below.
6.2 The optimal workflow scenario is here!

All translation requests are sent by Poetry/Suivi to Euramis for automatic retrieval. Results are automatically stored by Euramis in Dossier Manager. In Dossier Manager, users can select pre-processing files to be used for interactive translation with TWB. A macro launched from within Dossier Manager allows users to automatically create a project translation memory, import selected pre-processing files, and fill in project settings. After interactive translation with TWB, a macro launched from within Word allows users to automatically clean up, export and save to Euramis all translated documents.

7. OUTLOOK

As for the future, development efforts will be focused primarily on:

- further workflow automation;
- further integration of language applications and services;
- further integration at interinstitutional level;
- the creation of a new desktop environment, a Translator’s Desktop, which will make the use of translation technology easier and more logical.

8. CONTACTS

For more information on the following subjects, please contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multilingual Tools</td>
<td><a href="mailto:DGT-S-03-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu">DGT-S-03-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine translation</td>
<td><a href="mailto:DGT-ECMT-HELPDESK@ec.europa.eu">DGT-ECMT-HELPDESK@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euramis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:DGT-S-03-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu">DGT-S-03-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWB</td>
<td><a href="mailto:DGT-SUPPORT-EURAMIS-TWB@ec.europa.eu">DGT-SUPPORT-EURAMIS-TWB@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other matter</td>
<td><a href="mailto:DGT-WEBMASTER@ec.europa.eu">DGT-WEBMASTER@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. ANNEX

TRANSLATION WORKFLOW IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Software/Interface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directorate-General or Service sends a new translation request</td>
<td>Poetry⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Planning accepts it</td>
<td>Suivi⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The original document is automatically processed by Euramis in order to find relevant information.</td>
<td>Euramis⁸, Note in Dossier Manager⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If needed or desired, the pre-processing team does further pre-processing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Translation Unit receives translation request</td>
<td>Suivi,² tray system, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translator creates translation file</td>
<td>Dossier Manager⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translator translates document</td>
<td>Word¹⁰, TWB¹¹, Excel¹², DGT Vista¹³, Euramis³, Eur-Lex/Celex¹⁴, IATE¹⁵, ECMT¹⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second translator revises document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat releases document</td>
<td>Dossier Manager⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document is archived</td>
<td>DGT Vista⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation is sent to the requester</td>
<td>Suivi²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6   Software for the electronic transmission of translation requests from clients to the DGT.
7   Software for the electronic management of translation requests within the DGT.
8   Central translation memory of the DGT.
9   Interface for translation management.
10  Word-processing system in use at the European Commission.
11  Translation memory software used in the DGT for the local management of data retrieved from the central memory.
12  Spreadsheet program in use at the European Commission.
13  Translated documents repository with full-text search facility.
14  Databases of European law.
15  European Union interinstitutional terminology database.
16  European Commission machine translation system.