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Competences for professional translators, experts in multilingual and multimedia communication

1. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE PROJECT

A number of factors justify the search for convergence between training for translators in Europe and the concern to optimise it, if only to strengthen cooperation between institutions and mobility for students and trainers:

- the development of markets, as part of the globalisation of trade, and of technologies is driving rapid development in professional practices and the quality criteria for translation services;
- the enlargement of the European Union (in May 2004) highlighted the difficulty of recruiting qualified translators in the nine 'new' EU languages and also emphasised the need to raise awareness of and disseminate more effectively the criteria and procedures for recruitment to the institutions;
- as the exercise of the profession is not regulated, there is a clear need to search for and apply criteria of excellence;
- it is also time to upgrade the working conditions and remuneration of translators, who are essential players in facilitating all forms of exchange and integration and promoting linguistic diversity;
- finally, the diversification and multiplication of programmes requires the definition of a true framework of reference, putting forward a minimum quality profile and specifying the competences necessary. Following the Bologna Declaration, with particular reference to employability, a number of universities launched a translation programme, often with the aim of recycling or of renewing their language teaching. Question arises whether such translation programmes may exist in name only, owing to a lack of analysis of requirements, a lack of understanding of the demands of the profession, and a lack of qualified teachers. In 2006 there were at least 285 translation 'programmes' in European higher education, leading to a bachelor's and/or a master's degree, either as a

¹ The EMT expert group was set up by the DGT in April 2007. Its main task is to make specific proposals with a view to implementing a European reference framework for a Master's in translation (European Master's in Translation – EMT) throughout the European Union. For more information on the composition of this group, visit the website: <http://ec.europa.eu/emt>.

subsidiary subject in a languages, literature or linguistics programme or as part of post-graduate training.

The following is intended as a reference document to assist in planning, establishing, updating, evaluating and comparing translation training programmes.

2. DIVERSIFICATION OF MARKETS AND PROFESSIONS

Professions in multilingual communication have developed rapidly over the last 20 years, both under pressure from technological changes and as a result of the transformation of markets, linked to globalisation, outsourcing and flexibility. The consequences of this two-fold development are felt in the division of work and in the relationships between translation volume, quality control and price.

The term 'translation' itself has come to be ambiguous: sometimes it is taken to mean word-for-word transfers (e.g. 'pocket translations' which are only lexical correspondence dictionaries, devoid of context), sometimes it includes localisation (of software, websites, video games), versioning (of audiovisual documents), transediting (of information from press agencies, newspapers, television reports), multilingual and technical writing, adaptation (of advertising), revision, summary translation, etc. This ambiguity has so far made it impossible to draw up reliable statistics on the volume of 'translations', the number of 'translators' and their status and incomes.

It is difficult to anticipate all the changes still to come in the next 20-30 years (for example, software enabling the transfer from oral to written and written to oral), even though the students undergoing training will still be in the labour markets.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ORGANISATION

To respond to the challenges set out above, the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) organised a conference in Brussels (19-20 October 2006), with representatives from nearly 70 higher education institutions in the EU (including Bulgaria and Romania) and from international organisations (UN, NATO, OECD). The subject of the debates was the development of training for translators in Europe, seeking the convergence and optimisation of ambitions and of programmes, based on the European Master's in Translation (EMT) project – a common frame of reference drawn up by DGT.

Following this conference, in order to ensure continuity of effort, an integrated structure was suggested, consisting of:

- a steering committee guiding the project as a whole over the next three years;
- a working group of 23 members (one per language) within DGT, to assist the steering committee;
- a group of eight experts, tasked with making proposals to the steering committee and the 23-member working group to achieve the desired convergence and optimisation;
- a network of university programmes developing qualifications for translators and implementing the recommendations drawn up, while taking into account local constraints (institutional, legal, financial, etc.).

The speeches at the 2006 conference, the terms of reference of the four entities mentioned above and the reports from the groups are available on the internet². A follow-up conference was organised in March 2008³ (a third one is planned for March 2009) in order to evaluate progress and define actions for finalising a European reference framework for training programmes in translation which are coherent and of a high standard, comparable between seats of learning and compatible with the demands of the international environment, and particularly with those of the European institutions.

4. COMPETENCES

The following pages set out a reference framework for the competences applied to language professions or to translation over a wide semantic or professional range, including various modes of interpreting. This framework does not cover the specific needs of translator trainers or those of translation studies researchers. The training objectives, expressed in terms of competences to be acquired, appear to us to be priorities, before defining a programme in which the content also depends on the resources (human, financial, institutional and technical) available in a given context.

This reference framework should be understood within the overall context of university education for translators, which goes beyond the specifically professional competences listed below. It sets out what is to be achieved, acquired and mastered at the end of training or for the requirements of a given activity, regardless where, when and how. It corresponds to second-cycle training of between 60 and 120 credits (ECTS), presupposing mastery of the working languages (of at least level C1: 'Competent use of language (Effective Operational Proficiency)', according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages). This is intended as a basis, enabling the content of training sequences/modules/programmes/sessions to be established and the most appropriate teaching methods to be chosen. It is concerned with the ends (the competences) but in no way prejudices the means (resources, programmes, teaching).

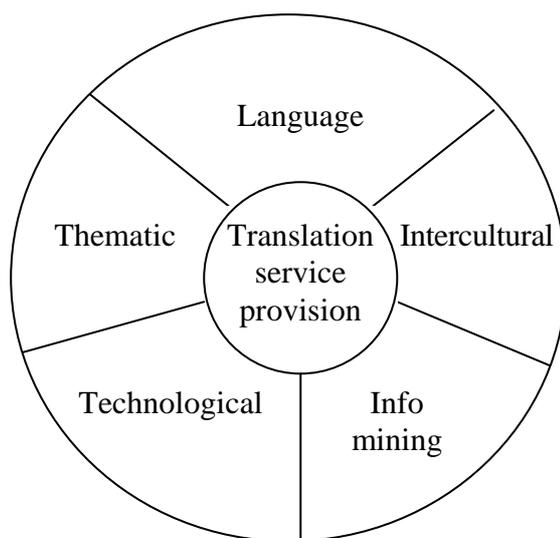
The expert group has sought to be as explicit and clear as possible to prevent differences of interpretation (from trainers with different backgrounds, experiences and constraints), in order to facilitate the implementation of these competences and the evaluation of their application and to speed up the networking of programmes complying with the framework thus defined.

By 'competence', we mean the combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and know-how necessary to carry out a given task under given conditions. This combination is recognised and legitimised by a responsible authority (institution, expert).

The competences proposed in each of the six areas are interdependent. Thus, for example, the aptitude for taking reasoned decisions is horizontal; it applies equally to the provision of a translation service and to documentary research. They all lead to the qualification of experts in multilingual and multimedia communication. Together, they comprise the minimum requirement to which other specific competences may be added (for example in localisation, audiovisual translation or research).

² http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/events/emt2006/index_en.htm

³ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/events/emt2008/index_en.htm



<i>TYPE OF COMPETENCE</i>	<i>DEFINITIONS / COMPONENTS</i>
<p>TRANSLATION SERVICE PROVISION COMPETENCE</p>	<p>INTERPERSONAL dimension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being aware of the social role of the translator - Knowing how to follow market requirements and job profiles (knowing how to remain aware of developments in demand) - Knowing how to organise approaches to clients/ potential clients (marketing) - Knowing how to negotiate with the client (to define deadlines, tariffs/invoicing, working conditions, access to information, contract, rights, responsibilities, translation specifications, tender specifications, etc.) - Knowing how to clarify the requirements, objectives and purposes of the client, recipients of the translation and other stakeholders - Knowing how to plan and manage one's time, stress, work, budget and ongoing training (upgrading various competences) - Knowing how to specify and calculate the services offered and their added value - Knowing how to comply with instructions, deadlines, commitments, interpersonal competences, team organisation - Knowing the standards applicable to the provision of a translation service - Knowing how to comply with professional ethics - Knowing how to work under pressure and with other

	<p>experts, with a project head (capabilities for making contacts, for cooperation and collaboration), including in a multilingual situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to work in a team, including a virtual team - Knowing how to self-evaluate (questioning one's habits; being open to innovations; being concerned with quality; being ready to adapt to new situations/conditions) and take responsibility <p>PRODUCTION dimension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to create and offer a translation appropriate to the client's request, i.e. to the aim/skopos and to the translation situation - Knowing how to define stages and strategies for the translation of a document - Knowing how to define and evaluate translation problems and find appropriate solutions - Knowing how to justify one's translation choices and decisions - Mastering the appropriate metalanguage (to talk about one's work, strategies and decisions) - Knowing how to proofread and revise a translation (mastering techniques and strategies for proofreading and revision) - Knowing how to establish and monitor quality standards
LANGUAGE COMPETENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to understand grammatical, lexical and idiomatic structures as well as the graphic and typographic conventions of language A and one's other working languages (B, C) - Knowing how to use these same structures and conventions in A and B - Developing sensitivity to changes in language and developments in languages (useful for exercising creativity)

<p>INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE</p> <p>(the dual perspective – sociolinguistic and textual – is in the comparison of and contrast between discursive practices in A, B and C)</p>	<p>SOCIOLINGUISTIC dimension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to recognise function and meaning in language variations (social, geographical, historical, stylistic) - Knowing how to identify the rules for interaction relating to a specific community, including non-verbal elements (useful knowledge for negotiation) - Knowing how to produce a register appropriate to a given situation, for a particular document (written) or speech (oral) <p>TEXTUAL dimension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to understand and analyse the macrostructure of a document and its overall coherence (including where it consists of visual and sound elements) - Knowing how to grasp the presuppositions, the implicit, allusions, stereotypes and intertextual nature of a document - Knowing how to describe and evaluate one's problems with comprehension and define strategies for resolving those problems - Knowing how to extract and summarise the essential information in a document (ability to summarise) - Knowing how to recognise and identify elements, values and references proper to the cultures represented - Knowing how to bring together and compare cultural elements and methods of composition. - Knowing how to compose a document in accordance with the conventions of the genre and rhetorical standards - Knowing how to draft, rephrase, restructure, condense, and post-edit rapidly and well (in languages A and B)
<p>INFORMATION MINING COMPETENCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to identify one's information and documentation requirements - Developing strategies for documentary and terminological research (including approaching experts) - Knowing how to extract and process relevant information for a given task (documentary, terminological, phraseological information) - Developing criteria for evaluation vis-à-vis documents accessible on the internet or any other medium, i.e. knowing how to evaluate the reliability of documentary sources (critical mind) - Knowing how to use tools and search engines effectively (e.g. terminology software, electronic corpora, electronic dictionaries) - Mastering the archiving of one's own documents

<p>THEMATIC COMPETENCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to search for appropriate information to gain a better grasp of the thematic aspects of a document (cf. Information mining competence) - Learning to develop one's knowledge in specialist fields and applications (mastering systems of concepts, methods of reasoning, presentation, controlled language, terminology, etc.) (learning to learn) - Developing a spirit of curiosity, analysis and summary
<p>TECHNOLOGICAL COMPETENCE (mastery of tools)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to use effectively and rapidly and to integrate a range of software to assist in correction, translation, terminology, layout, documentary research (for example text processing, spell and grammar check, the internet, translation memory, terminology database, voice recognition software) - Knowing how to create and manage a database and files - Knowing how to adapt to and familiarise oneself with new tools, particularly for the translation of multimedia and audiovisual material - Knowing how to prepare and produce a translation in different formats and for different technical media - Knowing the possibilities and limits of MT

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