

# **'Flexible' Trilingualism in practice : the Cement of the European Union**

**Presentation, users' guide, argumentation**

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***Following the two last enlargements, the number of languages spoken in the European Union has doubled. How to communicate without fear of misunderstanding in a Europe that might get even larger?***

**Two solutions are currently promoted:**

- **Either each one uses his own language** or the one he masters best; **he is then translated in all the others**. This, if systematically applied, would rapidly reach an increasing cost for the European Union budget and possibly that of each diplomatic delegation (for  $n$  languages we need  $n \times (n-1) / 2$  translators<sup>1</sup>, which equals 10 for 5 languages, 28 for 8 languages and 231 for 22 languages).

- **Or else, the multiplicity of languages**, the cultural wealth of our continent, **is disregarded** and only one language is generalised for all communications. This is what is happening with the currently dominating monolingualism, insidiously or openly imposed, always and everywhere. Consequently, in the European space, English-speaking people have an overwhelming advantage to expressing their point of view, imposing their methods and technical solutions, over all others who, if they do not master English **perfectly**, as it is most often the case, are disadvantaged in both the implementation of European programs and projects, and in the access to the public procurements or private tenders<sup>2</sup>. In the same time, the European Union deprives itself of the advantage of being able to negotiate, everywhere in the world, in one of its official languages that could be both the most appropriate to the preferred practice of such of its counterparts, and consequently as well an appreciated courtesy - a positive point in the negotiation, rather than imposing them one language only.

A good example of this derivation towards monolingualism, and of the unequal treatment it creates between all players according to their mother language, is given by this so frequent consultation practice from Commission services to the national authorities: these consultations, about Commission's directives and communication drafts or Council's resolutions, generally prepared in a poor International English, take place in "actual time" with a fast *come and go* system. In such a context, the aforesaid administrations do not have time enough, through their permanent representatives, to get these communications translated. They must forward, in this same English and without delay, their amending proposals, which otherwise might be disregarded. In these conditions, one must not be surprised by the quality and inspiration of such texts. This practice has been so thoroughly integrated into their system by the national administrations that they go to impose this (generally poor) International English to the daily work of their agents at all levels, including the lower. So, it is

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<sup>1</sup> One must not make the confusion between translation and interpretation. Going from 20 to 22 (23 with the Gaelic) official languages, the number of interpretation combinations rises up to 462 ( $462 = 231 \times 2$ , the translations from A to B and from B to A being counted two distinctive interpretation combinations).

<sup>2</sup> There is also an enormous financial advantage for English speaking countries, which have few to translate, while the cost of translation is extremely expensive for the non-English speaking countries.

vain to hope that the European Parliament would vote this resolution without revising the work methods of the Commission in its regulatory activities.

**Is such an evolution desirable and rightful?** We do not think so, as it disadvantages the majority and leads, at mid-term, to a cultural impoverishing of Europe

**Thought is not indifferent to the language that carries it. The language is not a simple vehicle for thoughts; it is their support and, maybe, their nutriment.**

This is why Esperanto or the Lingua Franca Nova, so easy to learn and politically neutral, were unable to impose themselves as a practical solution to European communication<sup>3</sup>.

**We then need an intermediate solution** to simplify the intra–European dialogue without wiping out the cultural diversity which forms the identity and wealth of Europe.

**Our solution is grounded on a “flexible trilingualism”.** This would, in a practical way, enable us to escape the generalised monolingualism, **reductive**<sup>4</sup> and potentially **dangerous**<sup>5</sup> and the multilingualism, technically and financially too heavy to manage. It relies on:

- The **speaker’s mother tongue** (German, Polish, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Dutch ...) associated with
- **At least two out of the three so called “pivot languages” for communication in Europe: English, French and German**, which are also the **official working languages** of the European Commission.
- **Or at least one of these three plus another EU official language at his/her choice if regarded more convenient to the context.**

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<sup>3</sup> Lingua Franca Nova is an artificial language conceived from 1965 onward by Doctor C George Boeree, of the University of Shippenburg – Pennsylvania, who wanted to create an international language, simple and similar to Creole, inspired by the lingua franca used around the Mediterranean Sea between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Based on a combination of Latin languages (Spanish, French, Italian, Occitan, and Portuguese) its pronunciation is phonetic and uses 21 letters, in Latin or Cyrillic alphabet. LFN appeared on the net in 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Communication is not uniform. To ask for his way or the price of a room, one does not need to know all the grammar tenses; even the most basic Globish is enough for the case. But, to convey the richness of its sentimental, philosophical, mathematical or metaphysical reflections, man needs to use all the tools of grammar and syntax of the language that he knows best or that is best suited to the thinking he wants to build up and transmit. For most people it is their mother language. This is why, to communicate as clearly as possible, we must keep the diversity of languages, so that people will be able to express the fullness of their thoughts and not exclusively what they can communicate in an imposed language or in the one they think most valorising, even if they are far from mastering its subtleties.

<sup>5</sup> Many examples show that all-English can be catastrophic. Health damage (such as patients’ over-irradiation in Epinal’s hospital in France, due to misunderstandings of the new equipment technical notice); economical damages: such as the delays in the Airbus A 380 program, which were linked to a bad coordination in the work between France and Germany. To make things simpler and save time, Airbus work was carried on in English. So, all those who did not speak English perfectly were passive. Technical reports were reduced to their simple expression. Had they been written in the mother tongue of French or German technicians, they would have allowed, later on, a better translation into English and would have avoided misunderstanding. The prior All-English, supposed to give a better coordination, provided only a false security by letting the various interveners think they spoke the same language.

- Thus **the need for translation goes down from  $[n \times (n-1)/2]$  to  $[2n - 3]$** , equalling for 5 languages: 7 translators instead of 10, for 8 languages: 13 translators instead of 28, and for 22 languages: 41 instead of 231.

**Joining efficiency and plurality, this *flexible trilingualism* should be retained for all the working and decision-taking levels of the European Union.**

- **Why English?** The question is superfluous, the reasons of its expansion after the Second World War and then the entry of United Kingdom in the European Union are well known. Nowadays this evolution seems unavoidable. We must also notice that the roots of English, by its origins, are akin to German and many other northern languages. This makes it easy to learn and use by natives of those languages.
- **Why in this case choose German and French as reference languages, when it is said that they are receding everywhere<sup>6</sup>?** Why not Italian or Spanish or any other language, also important due to the number of their national users?
  - Because these two languages are already recognised as working languages, at pair with English, by official decisions previously taken by the highest instances of the European Union.
  - Because, as for French, it has long been the international language, especially in Europe, where many people still speak it, while the other Latin languages, although they are of high culture and obviously respectable, are of lesser use in Europe. Furthermore, French is also the official or vehicular language in other European countries and elsewhere in the world<sup>7</sup>.
  - Because French represents an ancient part of the European culture of the Middle and post-Middle Ages, based on the use of Latin, so that all people whose native language is of Latin origin can learn and use it as easily as northern people can learn English.
  - Because, as for German, it is akin to many northern languages, it is also a language of frequent use for many people in Central Europe. Furthermore, it is, with French, the other founding language of the European Union.
  - Another argument to which jurists would be sensitive is that German and French, as legal languages, are more accurate than English (where in the same word might have several meanings according to the text, which is not the case in German and French.)
  - Eventually, French and German are the two languages spoken by the greatest number of people in Europe, as for the number of users.
  - But, since we want to propose a flexible trilingualism, we accept the idea that, beyond those three traditionally used working languages, it is possible to choose as the third language, if intervention's context so justifies, another E.U.'s official language (Latin, Slavic or Nordic) beside one of the three above said.
  - As a conclusion to this point, it must be noticed that our proposal, in addition to a trilingualism based on the EC pivot languages, makes it compulsory for everybody

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<sup>6</sup> It is said that French and German are "receding everywhere" in spite of the fact that the number of French-speakers increases and that German is still an important language in Central Europe.

<sup>7</sup> French remains an important International language. In number of countries it is the official language, even if not all their nationals really speak it. It is the second most spoken European language in the world. It is the national language, or of the official language, of more than 30 countries. It is the second working language of the penal international court of The Hague and one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe, etc.

to speak first his/her own language, the reference one to express his thoughts. Thus it cannot be said that our proposition is arbitrary in its choices.

**How can this flexible trilingualism work in practice and prove that it does not disadvantage anyone, but, on the contrary, facilitates intra-European communication, while preserving the use of all national languages?**

### **Our proposal – Trilingualism:**

- 1/ makes it compulsory for the actors of the European Union to present all their written or oral interventions in their own language. It is the minimal measure for all those for whom the word 'democracy' makes sense. It is the *sine qua non* condition for the survival of the cultural diversity and equality of the European languages.
- 2/ Makes it compulsory to every intervening person (at a European level) to deliver all their documents and interventions **in at least three languages: their own one<sup>8</sup> plus two others, either selected out of the three pivot working languages, or one of these plus another EU official one**. Thus all the actors are at equal level to express their thoughts, whatever their mother tongue.
- 3/ Upholds the learning of at least two foreign languages, this being essential for developing and optimising bilateral exchanges in Europe.

It seems highly desirable that, up from now, the Governments should appoint to European responsibilities only people able to express themselves in at least three languages.

### **A few practical examples of how it can work:**

**1/ Wojciech KIECZKOWSKI is jurist in a Polish ministry. He prepares a note from his ministry to propose to the European Council a draft amendment to a directive within the competence of his ministry.**

- Wojciech will first write this note in Polish, his own language, so that when the proposal is submitted to the Minister, it will clearly and precisely express all the niceties and subtleties he wishes to convey.
- It is, of course, in this language that he has a perfect mastery of his legal expertise and that he can produce a good text; not in English, neither in French nor in German: even if he has a good knowledge of one or another of them, he obviously does not master them as well as his mother tongue.
- His government will thus present the project (first in writing, then orally) in Polish. This will insure the visibility of Polish language at European level
- But the written version of the project will have to be forwarded to Brussels in German and/or in French and/or in English (i.e. in two of these languages at his/her choice) as well, or again in one of these plus another regarded relevant to the studied case (which

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<sup>8</sup> As we said before: when the mother tongue of the intervener is one of the pivot languages, he must provide a translation in another pivot language and also in one of the other languages most used in Europe or in that one, which best fits with the subject he is treating.

results in three languages including the mother tongue), in order to insure its transmission to the members of the Council who will have to debate about it.

- During this debate, if a problem of divergent interpretation arises about the content of the project, the original Polish version only will be taken into account (neither any of the pivot languages versions, nor the possible other one) because the mother tongue only guaranties the respect of all the niceties of thought, general or legal, that Wojciech wanted to express in name of his ministry and government.

**2/ Lazlo PAPP is Hungarian. For his ministry of Environment, he will take part in a conference in Vienna about the pollution of the Danube, in view of an agreement between the riverside States to reduce that pollution.**

Lazlo prepares a presentation for the conference in order to explain the measures that Hungary has already taken, and those he will propose on behalf of his ministry to be included in further discussions:

- He prepares his communication in Hungarian and will then forward it in Hungarian and two of the pivot languages, the translation having been done by the official translation service of his government. It is there from that he will get the best guaranty that the translations will be as conform as possible to the Hungarian text.
- During the conference Lazlo's intervention will be in Hungarian but it will be interpreted in at least two of the pivot languages for the other participants, unless, for instance and given the geographical context, a Slavic official language, like Bulgarian, was considered more appropriate than one of the pivot languages.
- The other participants, Hungarian, Serbian, Romanian or Bulgarian, will have communicated their interventions to the organisers of the conference in their own language and in at least two of the pivot languages. They will also intervene in their own language (presentation and debates), except, maybe, the Serbians who are not yet in the European Union, but the interpretation will be given in the three reference languages.
- Like all senior civil servants of an EU Member State, Lazlo speaks three languages: Hungarian, French and Italian. He will follow the debates in the French interpretation.
- **His Austrian colleague Hans REICHEL** speaks two languages besides his German mother-tongue, English and Italian. He will attend the debates in German but may intervene in German, English or French, as he will consider most convenient, depending on the circumstances.
- **Ion CALINESCU, the Romanian delegate**, speaks French and Italian. He will have produced his original paper in Romanian (with copies in two of the reference languages) but will follow the sessions in the French translation.

The final proceedings of the conference will be first written in German, English and French, which will be the versions of reference<sup>9</sup>, before being translated into the other languages for the needs of national circulation in each concerned country.

**3/ Walter NUDDS is English. His own language is one of the reference/pivot languages but, for being a high-ranking civil servant of the United Kingdom, he must have an**

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<sup>9</sup> But it must be clear that for all written communications it is the original version in the language of the author that will be retained in case of doubt as to the meaning of the text.

**acceptable mastery of at least two other European languages.** He speaks quite well French and Spanish.

- When preparing a document on behalf of his administration in a European context (document to be submitted to the European authorities, draft of a normative act, diplomatic note or communication for a conference) he will of course write it in English. If he shall have an oral presentation, he will do it in English;
- But his documents will be translated into German and/or French and possibly in another relevant European language according to circumstances.

**4/ Angelo CORIPPELLI is Italian. Historian of laws and institutions, he is a professor and researcher at the Bologna University. He is a reference expert about consular cities in the Middle Ages. He recently came to discover and study a so far unpublished manuscript about an unknown aspect of the organisation of the consular towns in Tuscany in the 13th century and he is going to present his work to a medievalist conference in Bruges, organised by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.**

- His communication has been prepared in Italian and it is in this language that it will first appear in the conference proceedings but he had it also translated in two of the pivot languages (he favoured German in this particular context, then had to select between English or French to respect the rule of trilingualism).
- However, since a large number of German medievalists must participate in the Conference, he wished that the German version comes first in the documentation provided to the participants, given the strong presence of German scientists announced.
- During the conference, he will present his communication in Italian but it will be interpreted in the reference languages.
- Each working committee will operate in one of the three or four languages retained and their members will be chosen according to their language affinity. In this case, the committee members will either speak in the language they have elected, or in their own native language, if the logistics of the committees so permits it, but they will be interpreted in the pivot languages.
- The plenary sessions will operate on the trilingualism basis.

**5/ European patents: this is also an important area for international competitiveness where the all-English monlingualism is problematic and leads to serious inequities, not to mention the unfair situation it is. For the drafting of a European patent, the London Agreements provide, for, the use of English or French or German, at open choice. These Agreements, on the one hand exclude all other languages and on the other, they strengthen the ultra-hegemonic position of English. In so doing, they excessively favour the North-Americans.**

- In the spirit of the 2004 Cracow proposals, which our approach is grounded upon, the patents to be validated in the European Union should be trilingual, including the inventor's language, thus preserving the legitimate interests of all European languages and those of their users.
- This means that the patent has to be submitted first in its inventor's language and then translated in two of the reference or pivot languages. If the inventor's mother tongue is one of the reference languages, he should have to translate his patent in the two others.

- This would avoid controversies associated with bad translations, the original version in the inventor's language being the only receivable one.
- Moreover, in so doing, all countries would be placed on equal footing, each having to translate at most into three languages instead of 22 (23 with Gaelic as it is now today).

This rule would also place, beyond dispute, the European inventors on equal footing with the foreign inventors outside Europe.

**6/ Sign-posting, commercial labelling and instructions manuals in Europe: Regarding the road, railways and airport sign-posting, as well as the labelling and instructions for use of commercial products, here also it is possible to think about a regulation, based on the proposed trilingualism that could be applied with some flexibility. This is a case of general interest:**

- On the roads:
  - In general, the indications and distances of towns do not need to be translated, except when the name of a town or a place is different in a foreign language from the native name (thus authentic): Londres/London, Genoa/Genova, Lisbon/Lisboa, Warsaw/Warszawa, and so on.
  - The question becomes primordial when the alphabet is different: Latin/Cyrillic. For example, Bulgaria and Serbia often use the double signalisation. This practice should be extended, at least in some given contexts:<sup>10</sup>
    - In the railways stations
    - In the airports
    - In the tourism information centres, the museums and on the urban tourism information panels.

In addition to the various advantages that we have evoked, applying all the above suggested rules, either concerning the working languages to be used in the European institutional space or concerning patents, signposting and so on, could certainly lead to substantial savings in time and money.

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<sup>10</sup> This remains to be discussed in terms of convenience/complexity: in fact, to insure the reciprocity and to facilitate the life of Cyrillic-user people coming to the West, would it be necessary in all Latin countries to transcript in Cyrillic their road panels? And the reverse for Westerners in the countries using Cyrillic alphabet?

## **A HISTORICAL REMINDER OF THE CRACOW PROPOSAL AND OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ICEO'S APPROACH**

1° On April 23 and 24 2004, during the Montpellier-Poland Days organised by the European University Pole of Montpellier and Languedoc-Roussillon, in partnership with the Institute of Cooperation with Eastern Europe (ICEO), Professor Franciszek ZIEJKA, Rector of the Jagiellonian University of Cracow and Chairman of the Conference of the Institutions of Higher Education in Poland, declared before His Excellency Jan TOMBISKI, Ambassador of Poland in France:

*“... Today, when we think about our future in a Europe of 25 or 27, or perhaps 40 countries, I think we should think about the language problem. In the era of globalization and economical supremacy of the USA, English becomes the only language. In sciences it is almost the rule and more and more in politics as well, but should we follow the same path in the fields of culture, literature and art?”*

*Three weeks ago, in Marseille, I attended a meeting of 250 presidents of European Universities. A few personalities of the city, and also the Presidents of the Marseille Universities delivered their speeches in French! Suddenly a president from Maastricht and some others, have argued that only English should be spoken! For me it was a very painful situation!*

*I think we must defend the French language in Europe! We must think of a Europe with two official languages: English and French. We must fight for French in the European Union! This language is the privileged daughter of Latin and must have the same rights as English. It is our European wealth! At a time where Europe expands, it is a unique occasion to recall the cultural roots of our continent... it is the duty of the French but also of all those who think of the future of Europe “.*

2° On June 3, 2004, at Rector ZIEJKA's request, ICEO drafts the proposal of a generalized trilingualism in the European Union, based on the use of two reference languages: English and French.

3° On June 26, at the Cracow Conference of the Rectors of the Polish Universities (also attended by a delegation of French University Presidents), Rector ZIEJKA proposes to vote on ICEO's proposals, which are unanimously adopted.

4° On September 20, 2004, Professor Bronislaw GEREMEK faxes:  
*“Thank you for your proposition about the rule concerning the use of languages in the European Union. It is an initiative that I support with pleasure. I hope that you will manage to convince the largest possible number of Europeans to go along with you”.*

5° On November 15, 2004, ICEO sends the Cracow proposal to all the recently elected French European MPs. Only 12 out of 78 replied. 5 supported the position without reserve and 7 argued of multilingualism to reject trilingualism.

6° On July 11 and 12, 2007, during the International Congress on the Enlightenment held in Montpellier's Corum, several members of ICEO held a stand to present their proposition of trilingualism in Europe and collected widespread and prestigious supportive signatures from well know academics (over 120): Germans, Italians, Spanish, British, American and others.

7° On September 9, 2007, during the *Associations Festival* in Montpellier, and with the help of the *Maison de l'Europe* officials, several ICEO members renewed the operation of promoting trilingualism in Europe previously done in July.

8° On November 27, 2007, in Budapest, during the World Political Forum organised by Andrei Gratchev and chaired by Mikhail Gorbachov, ICEO's proposals about trilingualism and the European languages were presented.

9° On September 14, 2008, during the next *Associations Festival* of Montpellier, ICEO renewed the promotion of trilingualism as defined by the Cracow protocol in June 2004. Many people signed the proposed petition. It must be noticed that almost all those who took the time to listen to the argumentation signed.

10° On May 9, 2009, during the *Journée de l'Europe* held on Montpellier Esplanade, ICEO was again present to promote trilingualism and collected in situ more than 300 signatures.

11° The original proposal was then debated within ICEO. Advices received from many personalities and from other organisms also implied in the problems of languages in Europe were taken into account before the final formulation here presented, of a flexible trilingualism based on the three pivot languages in Europe, was adopted.

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**Appel des Présidents d'Universités polonaises et françaises au Parlement européen  
en vue de définir les règles d'usage des langues  
au sein de l'Union européenne (25-26 juin 2004)**

The Rectors of the Polish and French universities, meeting in **Krakow on 25-26 June 2004**, appeal to the European Parliament for a clear definition regarding the use of the various languages within the European Union structures.

The Rectors wish to draw attention to the fact that, as a result of the enlargement of the European Union, the number of languages used by the Member States has doubled. All these languages deserve equal respect. However, in order to avoid the linguistic cacophony threatening the EU, they propose that the Parliament adopt the general principle of trilingual communication in all the working and decision-making units of the Union.

In particular, the Rectors and Presidents propose that all work papers and official texts be drafted in **at least three languages**: in the mother tongue of the document's author as well as in English and in French. If the person is a native French or English speaker, the third language to be used should be another language that the author masters, or one dictated by the content or recipient of the document.

The Rectors also propose that the Parliament adopt the rule stating that all the interventions must be translated into English and French. It is from those two languages that translations would be made towards the other languages of the Union.

All politicians and European Union officials should be fluent in three languages: their mother tongue, English **and/or** French (the English or French speaking officials should additionally know – and be able to practice - two other languages).

Les présidents et recteurs d'universités polonaises et françaises, réunis à **Cracovie les 25 et 26 juin 2004**, sollicitent le Parlement européen de définir les règles précises d'usage des langues au sein des structures européennes.

Les Présidents attirent l'attention sur le fait que suite à l'élargissement de l'Union Européenne le nombre de langues pratiquées dans les États membres a doublé. Toutes ces langues sont dignes d'un respect égal. Néanmoins, afin d'éviter la cacophonie linguistique qui menace l'UE, les présidents postulent l'adoption du principe général de communication trilingue au sein de tous les organes opérationnels et dans toutes les instances de décision de l'Union.

Ils proposent en particulier que l'ensemble des documents de travail et des textes officiels soient rédigés **au moins en trois langues** : dans la langue maternelle de l'auteur ainsi qu'en anglais et en français. Lorsque le rédacteur est anglophone voire francophone de par son origine, la troisième version linguistique doit être composée soit dans une autre langue étrangère que celui-ci maîtrise, soit dans la langue dont l'usage est dicté par le contenu du document ou par la nature de son destinataire.

Les présidents préconisent l'adoption du principe qui veuille que l'ensemble des discours et des communications soient toujours traduits en anglais et en français. C'est à partir de ces deux langues que les discours seraient traduits ou interprétés vers les autres langues communautaires.

Tous les hommes politiques et tous les fonctionnaires de l'Union européenne devraient se prévaloir de la maîtrise de trois langues : leur langue maternelle, l'anglais **et/ou** le français (les personnes étant anglophones ou francophones de par leur origine, seraient censées également connaître deux langues étrangères).

## Answer to the criticism most often voiced against the proposition of trilingualism as established by the CRACOW Conference of the Polish Rectors in June 2004

“This proposal would give too large a place to the French language”

### Answer:

That the prevailing situation gives too large a place to the sole English language seems less disturbing than the thought that French should be distinguished among other European languages. Obviously a certain jealousy enters in this reaction and, by resentment, some people prefer the all-English.

What is the present situation?

Among the three working languages of the European Union:

- English is used in 80% of the initial documents,
- French in 17%,
- German in 3%.

Let's recall that the rule being multilingualism, all documents written in English, French or German are **quickly** translated in the three reference languages and then the other main languages: Italian, Spanish, Polish.

Therefore the documents are quickly available in several languages after the working languages.

This is why, going beyond the Cracow Call based on two reference languages, we recommend the keeping and the effective and controlled practice of the three pivot and working languages already established by several decisions of European authorities

The respect of the Cracow proposal, extended to German, makes it possible to have from the beginnings three versions of the documents( two of the tree reference languages + one national language).

### Let us compare the two situations.

Present situation

Mother tongue	language in which the document is written	initial	Translation		
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 3
13%	English	80%	100%	100%	100%
19%	German	3%	100%	100%	100%
9%	Spanish	0%		100%	100%
14%	French	17%	100%	100%	100%
12%	Italian	0%		100%	100%
8%	Polish	0%		100%	100%
4%	Romanian	0%			100%

### With the new protocol (3 languages)

Mother tongue	language in which the document is written	initial	Translation		
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 3
13%	English	100%	100%	100%	100%
19%	German	73%	100%	100%	100%
9%	Spanish	9%	9%	100%	100%
14%	French	73%	100%	100%	100%
12%	Italian	12%	12%	100%	100%
8%	Polish	8%	8%	100%	100%
4%	Romanian	4%	4%	4%	100%

### What the practice of other European Institutions?

As a point of comparison one shall notice that the **Council of Europe**, which also sits in Strasbourg and whose competence area overreaches that of the European Union (47 members states and roughly 40 languages) practices a linguistic system which seems convenient and efficient: in the functioning of its administration, the Council uses only 2 working languages, French and English.

On the one hand, all officers are required to master both languages (orally and in-writing) and all the documents are produced in those two languages.

But on the other, the meetings of the elected bodies (the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Committee of Ministers, the European Committee for Local and Regional Democracy, as the European Court of Human Rights) are however held in several languages. All the languages of the Member States are consequently accessible to members of the Assemblies and of the Court.

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