

Chapter 2

2. Translation and the European Union

Learning Objectives

In this unit, you will

- read about the EU translation services
- match the official EU languages and their codes
- look for a document and its translation into multiple EU languages
- use language codes to translate a phrase into multiple languages
- read about the EU translation bodies
- start a directory with important contact details
- check your understanding in a series of self-evaluation tests

Keywords

- translation services
- EU official languages
- Directorate-General for Translation
- Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union
- language codes

EU Translation Services

In this chapter, you will read about translation services that the EU provides to ensure understanding across the EU. You will check your understanding by answering yes/no questions which follow the text.

Translation and the European Union

The EU communication policy in 24 [official languages](#) (multilingualism policy) is unique worldwide. All official languages enjoy **equal status**. EU citizens in the 27 member countries can use any of them to communicate with the European institutions, which helps to make the Union more open and effective.

Translation services

A multilingual organization like the EU needs high-quality translation and relies on professional linguists to keep it running smoothly. The role of language services in the various EU institutions and bodies is to support and strengthen multilingual communication in Europe and to **help Europeans understand EU policies**.

The Directorate-General for Translation (DG Translation) is the European Commission's in-house translation service. The DG Translation works **in all the official languages** of the European Union, and as new countries join, their main languages are added to the number.

Other EU institutions and bodies ([Council](#), [Parliament](#), [Court of Justice](#), [Economic and Social Committee](#), [Court of Auditors](#), etc.) have their translation departments. In contrast, the various agencies spread around the EU have a translation center in Luxembourg to handle their translation work.

Now you know

- that there is an EU language policy in place
- how many official EU languages there are
- what some of the roles of EU language services are
- that the European Commission has its own in-house translation service
- that there are translation departments of other EU institutions
- that there is a translation center working with EU agencies

EU Language Legislation

In the previous chapter, you learned an EU language policy was in place. Now you will find out more details about it. You will work with a website explaining the policy in the official EU languages. You will learn to recognize the language codes of the EU languages and use them in translation.

The EU currently has **23 official languages**. The basic principles underlying its language policy are that EU citizens should:

- be able to contribute to the building of the EU
- be informed about what the EU is doing in their name
- have access to EU law in a language they can understand.

The EU's first legislation, Regulation No. 1 of 1958, lists the official languages and specifies how they should be used. New languages have been added as new countries have joined the EU.

The [EU's founding treaty](#) states that EU citizens have the right to communicate with the EU institutions in the official language of their choice and to receive a reply in the same language.

Task

Go to the website *EU Languages and Language policy*

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/>

[languages-of-europe/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages-of-europe/index_en.htm)

and create a table with all official languages in English and Czech and corresponding translations of the document title *Official EU languages* in the particular language. The language codes above the article will help you. A drop-down menu provides the language options on the toolbar in the top right-hand corner, which you could also use.

<i>Official language in Czech</i>	<i>Official language in English</i>	<i>Document title</i>
bulharština	Bulgarian	Официални езици на ЕС
čeština	Czech	Úřední jazyky EU
dánština		
angličtina	English	Official EU languages

- **recognize language codes that the EU uses for the official and working languages**
- **use these codes to quickly look up the translation of a term, phrase, or even a whole article when a document is translated into multiple languages.**

EU Translation Bodies and their Functions

This chapter presents more information on the official translation bodies within the EU, namely the Directorate-General for Translation and the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union. Their functions and goals are presented here. Working with the bodies' web pages, your task will be to find contact details for possible future access. If interested, you can also learn more about what it is like to work in such institutions.

- **Directorate-General for Translation**

DG Translation is the European Commission's in-house translation service. It translates for Europe — working in all the official languages of the European Union.

The European Commission's in-house translation service

The Directorate-General for Translation (DG Translation) translates texts for the European Commission — into and out of the EU's 24 [official languages](#) and a few others when needed. They deal exclusively with written texts. The spoken word is interpreted into other languages by [DG Interpretation](#).

With a permanent staff of around 2,500 people, DG Translation is one of the most extensive translation services in the world. It is based in Brussels and Luxembourg, with small outposts in other EU countries.

Translating for Europe

The main function is to:

- translate laws, policy papers, reports, correspondence, and other written texts drafted by or sent to the Commission
- help the Commission communicate with the public in all EU official languages
- edit original documents drafted by Commission authors, who routinely write in languages other than their own
- advise other Commission departments on linguistic matters and on managing multilingual websites.

Local offices

The EU Commission has offices — called representations — in all the EU countries. There is a language officer from DG Translation in most of these.

The language officers:

- translate or draft press releases and other documents aimed at informing people in your country — in your language — about what the EU is doing and what its policies are
- act as a point of contact for language issues via conferences, debates, seminars, exchanges with schools, universities, language associations, freelance translators, public administrations
- provide information on job opportunities, freelance work, and translator traineeships at the European Commission.

You may read the following article **if** you are **interested** in more. Otherwise, go over to the article about CdT.

Working for the Directorate-General for Translation

As far as working for DG Translation is considered, there are several options:

- [Staff translator](#) — permanent in-house staff are all recruited through open competitions, but it is possible to join the temporary or [contract staff](#) instead.
- [Contractor](#) — contracts are awarded through periodic public tenders and are open to individual freelance translators and agencies. For practical reasons, all contractors are recruited through the tendering procedure.
- [Trainee](#) — twice yearly, a small number of graduate interns who wish to gain professional translation experience are taken on.

Translator or interpreter?

The European Commission has two separate language services, DG Translation and [DG Interpretation](#). They recruit staff independently of each other and on different criteria—linguists at the Commission work exclusively for one or the other.

Translators work with written text and interpreters with the spoken word. So these are two different careers.

Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union (CdT)

The Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union was created in 1994 as a rational response to the translation needs of many European agencies and offices.

The Council of the European Union enlarged this role in 1995, considering it necessary to strengthen interinstitutional cooperation in translation.

An amendment to the Founding Regulation involves the active participation of the Centre in interinstitutional cooperation with a view to "rationalizing working methods and making overall savings." The Centre is, therefore, a full member of the Interinstitutional Committee for Translation and Interpretation (ICTI) and contributes to activities in the following fields: resources, terminology, administration, external translation, new working methods, techniques, etc.

The Centre is established in Luxembourg. It is an agency governed by European public law and has a legal personality. A Management Board governs it with representatives from all Member States, its customers, and a Director.

Now you can

- name the EU translation bodies
- present the essential roles of DGT and CdT
- contact the relevant person/institution in case you need more information/advice/want to apply for a job