FOREWORD

Translating unity in diversity

The European Union is in essence a pluralist union. The basis of our unity lies in the diverse and multilingual nature of Europe's culture, which has ever been open to assimilating elements from the cultures of others. European unity is clearly not, therefore, the result of some kind of uniformisation or levelling, but of a productive inclusiveness of differences, of contrasts, and, to a certain degree, even of tensions. In this way, the diversity of languages and cultures which co-exist side by side at the heart of the European Union are in no way exclusive, in the sense that they do not mutually exclude each other but instead reciprocally strengthen one another.

The European Union is thus a place where we hear many languages being spoken; it is also a place in which equality between its languages is ensured by translation, because not a single one of these is deemed to be a minority language. As Umberto Eco once stated wisely, “the language of Europe is translation”.

It gives me great pleasure to see that Domenico Cosmai and David Albert Best have drawn inspiration from this citation for the new edition of a book which allows us to discover the many features and issues that characterise the challenging and exciting work of the translators of the European institutions. Translators' work requires precision and exactness of meaning in the selection of every single word. Furthermore, translators' work is in perpetual motion, because all languages are subject to new influences and undergo constant metamorphosis, reflecting the continuous evolution of our political, economic and societal spheres.

More fundamentally still, the work of the translators of the European institutions contributes to reinforcing a European cultural identity, or, to put it another way, to living together in a space where there are no boundaries between our different cultures. This is an essential task for the future of the European Union. Indeed, it is not enough to say that we, as Europeans, share a common destiny. In order to forge this common destiny we have also to develop a feeling of belonging to Europe, to a community of values, cultures and shared interests. This, too, is part of the contribution made by translators, and the reason why we owe them our full esteem and gratitude.

José Manuel BARROSO
President of the European Commission

September 2014

To Edoardo, Gianmario, Vittoria Cosmai and Emily Martina Best
Living proof that multilingualism works

Introduction

In recent years, the increasing impact of the European Union's institutions on the lives of Member State citizens and the keen interest with which the national media and public opinion alike follow their activities has helped to generate curiosity in what is surely one of the most controversial yet captivating features in the functioning of the EU: the policy of multilingualism. What is meant by this is the possibility for EU institutions to carry out their work in a wide range of different languages, each of which enjoys the same official status. This topic has been closely scrutinised from the perspective of legal doctrine and a substantial corpus of technical literature has therefore built up on the subject. However, significantly less space has been devoted to the main practical outcome of this political choice: namely, the importance that translation activity and, accordingly, the language services of the European institutions have attained over time. As Roger Goffin states:

> Translations, given the law-making role of the institutions, are transformed into binding regulations; in this context, the role of translators is important because of their involvement in the exercise of official authority. [1]

The daily work of translators, revisers, lawyer-linguists and interpreters working in the official centres of European administration is one of the cornerstones of EU activity and represents a real link between the EU institutions and Member State citizens, since it aims to mediate and reconcile the various positions expressed within the Union, if only in terms of linguistic transfer. At the same time, however, this activity remains largely unknown to those outside the Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg institutions.

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[1] Goffin 1990, p. 14. "Les traductions, par suite de l'activité juridique des institutions, deviennent des règlements ayant valeur contraignante et, dans ce régime, le rôle dévolu aux traducteurs est important puisqu'ils participent à l'exercice de l'autorité publique".

In this light, the present study has been conceived with a dual aim: first, to recognise the pivotal importance of translators to the activities of the EU and, second, to close an obvious gap in the spectrum of scholarly work carried out in translation and language studies. On the latter point, the phenomenon of EU translation still remains to be treated as the subject of a comprehensive study to reveal the full extent of its complexity and impact from theoretical and practical standpoints. With this end in mind, this volume is the result of 15 years of practical experience at the Italian translation unit of the EU's European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and Committee of the Regions (CoR) (among the two institutions' joint services), which has given an insight into some of the evolutionary paths followed by the work of EU translators in recent years (such as the constructive but at times disruptive entry into the field of ICT tools). It has also led to the identification of a number of scenarios that can be explored regarding the present and the future development of this area of practice, not least in view of later prospective rounds of enlargement and the challenges posed by these for the EU. It is undeniable that such a reflection on issues pertaining to EU multilingualism is necessary and should come primarily from within the administrative services of the EU institutions themselves. At the same time, perhaps the main finding revealed by this focus on translation issues is arguably the hiatus between the theoretical and the practical levels of translation activity. Unquestionably an attitude of suspicion prevails in the way that many professional translators – and the officials of the European Union language services are no exception – receive scholarly thought on these issues, especially when it seems not to match the practice. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to negate the fact that many studies offer results that are a far cry from the reality which is translation "on the ground" and display only an approximate knowledge of the actual difficulties faced by translation practitioners in their daily work.

It is, therefore, fitting to emphasise from the outset that the observations presented in this volume, in particular those related to translation, far from being the outcome of a purely intellectual exercise, and still less of the application of a prescriptive framework of any kind, are to be considered the results of an *ex-post* theorisation carried out empirically on the author's own work, along with a constant research activity aimed at its potential for continuous improvement. Any observations presented are, therefore, highly subjective, which naturally produces several consequences: primarily, they underscore the crucial importance of real-life examples to show the validity of an assumption stated at the theoretical level. The examples put forward in each case are to be considered the point of departure and not of arrival: here it is useful to reiterate that the objective of this study is not to set out from preconceived ideas and attempt to demonstrate their worth by somehow bending reality or referring to suitable textual or phrasal models. Rather, the tendency has been to aim for theoretical abstraction and universal exploration of situations encountered in real practice on the ground.

The second major point to note in analysing situations experienced in daily practice is that the observations made in these pages are an attempt to explain and at times categorise or classify the elusive reality which is translation, where a variety of purely subjective elements come into play, such as the degree of knowledge of the source language, translators' sensibilities as to their own mother tongues, and the extent to which they actually employ them (it should not be forgotten that most EU translators work and live in a country where their own mother tongue is not spoken), but also criteria such as the degree of interest they show in current affairs, their personal choices in terms of reading and self-education in general, and so on. This, in substance, means that the result of a speculative analysis on a phenomenon which is so hard to pin down necessarily involves subjective conditioning influences which are clearly not shared by all officials of the EU language services equally. But this does not mean that it is not worth attempting to theorise these points: following Federica Scarpa's assumption, whereby

> more rigorous reflection on translation processes inevitably leads to a greater increase in the quality of the final product,[2]

and from the conviction that self-assessment of one's own work can, at least, spare one from the risk of falling into a routine mechanical and repetitive working life, the observations presented here are also intended as a starting point for discussion, aimed at raising translators' awareness of their role and value – so often overlooked – within the mysterious depths of this great ocean which is the world of the EU institutions.

It follows that the primary readers targeted by this volume, or rather those to whom it will be of greatest interest, are colleagues in the language services of the EU institutions. However, an "in-house" study, carried out by an EU official and addressed to other EU officials, may be thought-provoking to a limited extent only. Moreover, its appeal is likely to lapse, sooner or later, into self-gratification or, worse still, hagiography. In view, therefore, of the recent and growing interest in the phenomenon of EU multilingualism and translation by those who work in the field or aspire to do so, by scholars, teachers and students of translation, and by the public at large, an awareness which is underlined by the rapid increase in the number of candidates signing up for EU open competitions for linguists, it seemed pertinent to take a broad-ranging approach in the present study and address as wide a readership as possible. The starting point for the outline of EU translation is, therefore, anchored in an observation of everyday reality, banal as it may seem to practitioners, where it is possible to refer directly to accurate information and data which provides the reader with an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of the field before delving deeper into specific themes within the topic.

The end result is a work comprising nine distinct sections, subdivided for clarity, but inevitably interconnected through issues which revolve around the same overarching theme. Since no discussion on the multifaceted nature of translation in the European institutions would be complete without a preliminary explanation of the legal framework that governs and indeed imposes certain practices and choices on this field of activity, the volume opens with an introductory chapter on the way in which multilingualism is organised and administered in the European Union. The analysis takes into account both the historical and political circumstances that led to the definition of this policy area, as well as its impact on the daily work of the EU language services. The introduction is closely linked to the first part of the volume, which focuses on the language[s] of the European Union and mainly concerns the idiolect of EU official texts, the so-called "Eurospeak", its creation and the mechanisms with which it is incorporated into the standard vocabulary of official languages, but also some outstanding syntactic and stylistic features. The second part of the volume, comprising Chapters 4-7, looks more specifically into the formal set-up of translation activities within the European Union institutions. Chapter 4 describes the organisation of translation services in the various institutions, while Chapter 5 focuses on translators' daily work routine, with an overview of the main operational issues, the most significant text types, and the professionals involved in the translation process, with particular emphasis on the relationships and interaction between translators, revisers and lawyer-linguists in dealing with a text. Chapter 6 is devoted entirely to the inescapable role of ICTs in translation, while Chapter 7 has been conceived from the perspective of translation criticism. Setting out from some of the problems observed in the transfer that takes place between languages in EU texts, this particular chapter identifies the operational strategies adopted, whether consciously or not, by translators striving to remedy or at least mitigate these difficulties. Chapter 8 looks at the current situation and future prospects for EU multilingualism and translation in the light of all the enlargement rounds that have taken place in the last decade (since May 2004) and future accessions to the Union. Chapter 9, finally, gives readers the opportunity to peruse a selection of translated texts differing in terms of source language, topic and degree of importance which serve to illustrate the main subjects covered in the book.

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[2] Scarpa 2001a, p. III.

Due to the variety of the text categories produced within the European Union institutions, to the multiplicity of the EU official languages, and to the at times significant differences in the working practices of the various institutions, the phenomenon of EU translation cannot be treated in an exhaustive way within the boundaries of a single volume, no matter how much it may aspire to be comprehensive. Although examples have been drawn from a broad range of documents originating in the various EU institutions, it has sometimes been preferable to opt for documents produced within the two EU bodies in which the Author and Editor have direct experience: the EESC and the CoR. But this choice is also a potential advantage: in fact, the analysis of the EESC and CoR texts offers the reader a chance to come into direct contact with the widest possible variety of both working languages (in contrast with most of the other institutions, which work almost exclusively in English or French) and subjects alike, since their consultative role means that they deal with virtually all policy areas covered by the EU.

The examples used are mainly limited to passages in the most widely-spoken official languages, except where the nature of subjects and available material necessitates the use of examples in lesser-used EU languages. To facilitate the reader's retrieval of documents, the texts from which examples have been drawn are listed in the bibliography under their official English title, irrespective of which language version has been employed.

The idea to publish this work would never have materialised without some people to whom I owe my public thanks: David Snelling and Lorenza Rega, Paolo Martino Cossu and Maria Teresa Sabbi, for their friendship and the constant attention with which they have been following my research, Jane Nystedt and Rita Trampus Snel, for the material kindly placed at my disposal, Stefano Ondelli, to whom I owe some ideas reworked in the section on language interference and contamination, Silvia Caporali and Henk Baes, and in general all the colleagues of the EESC/CoR Italian translation unit, for the ideas, insights and suggestions provided in many years of working together.

I am likewise indebted to all colleagues from across the EU institutions who contributed in various ways to the preparation of the second Italian edition, making it a small example of interinstitutional cooperation. I am particularly grateful for the support given by: Dieter Rummel (Translation Centre), Giancarlo Piovanelli (EESC/CoR), Elisabetta Palla (Court of Auditors), Giovanni Gallo (Court of Justice), Donatella Bruni and Pollux Hernúñez (European Commission), Marinella Cinque and Sergio Magri (European Parliament). Throughout the drafting I have taken into account many of their suggestions for improvement, except when they contrasted with my personal beliefs or experience. In these cases, it has seemed only right to reiterate my positions, by qualifying them with examples. Obviously, I should be held solely responsible for the result.

My special gratitude goes to Tito Gallas, for his authoritative revision of the pages relating to legal issues, to Eugenia Ponzoni, for her valuable and detailed comments on most of the draft, and to Federica Scarpa, for the immediate enthusiasm with which she greeted this project, her countless words of advice and, above all, for having kindly agreed to review the entire manuscript.

Lastly, I wish to pay tribute to my father Mario, historian and linguist, whose teachings have always been my intellectual and moral guiding light, who died a few months after the publication of the first Italian edition of this book.

Domenico COSMAI

Introduction to the English edition

> If translation was a tapestry, I was at the back with the hanging threads and dangling clutter of knots. In fact the tapestry was all back and no front (...).
>
> Patrick McGuinness,
> *Other People's Countries*

It was not always this way: achieving EU multilingualism

Europe's language question stands out for its lack of a single major unifying or dominating tongue and for the absence – ignoring those who advocate for the use of English as a *lingua franca* – of any significant movement that endeavours to impose one or, indeed, to generate the myth of one. [1] In stating that "the language of Europe is translation", as Umberto Eco once did, the speaker implicitly identifies our continent as being solidly embedded in its *plurilingualism*. Where languages are required to interrelate, what is more, translation can never be far away and, as David Bellos notes, "Europe has built a radically new kind of translation world", one where (as this volume will illustrate) "[n]othing is a translation – except that everything is translated". [2] To say that translation and multilingualism are "the language of Europe" is, thus, the clearest way of asserting unified Europe's ethos which holds that this continent – old and arthritic though it may be – is "united in diversity".

At this post-election time of writing, marked by recent political arm-wrestling to form European parliamentary groups which have just compromised their way to consensus on installing a new Commission president, there would appear to be a tidal surge of scepticism against such logic and sentiment, suggesting that perhaps this book is even timelier than it seemed at first. Indeed, another facet of the EU language question, although it falls outside the scope of these pages, is its inevitable and frequent use as a prop in fuelling Euroscepticism, as Christopher Rollason remarked some time back on the UK scenario in particular: "irrespective of the quality of the translation and the accessibility or otherwise of the terminology used, the content of any EU text will, quite possibly for the majority of the public, be refracted through the distorting mirror of a largely Eurosceptical, if not indeed hostile, press – in which positive language tends to be muted while negative language is frequent".[3] Ultimately, however, whether we are enlightened or even hesitant language users, it is hard to negate the fact that the one feature marking out Europeans the most is, perhaps, their discernible cultural *and linguistic* differences from one another. Yet they – or we – are doing our level best to muddle along by at least trying to speak the same language, that is, all 24 versions of it.

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[1] While the central themes treated in this volume are closely related to the debate on EU multilingualism versus English as a *lingua franca*, a topic that would merit its own book-length study, we do not intend to treat it in any further depth than the short sections included here and where it crops up specifically in relation to topics treated within some of the chapters that follow. For a broad-ranging and exhaustive analysis of this subject, see Gunnel Melchers & Philip Shaw (2011), *World Englishes*, 2nd edition, Hodder Education, London.

[2] David Bellos (2011), *Is that a fish in your ear? Translation and the meaning of everything* Particular Books, London, p. 244; p. 238.

Bluntly making the case for translation, Bellos proclaims: "[t]ranslating is the first step towards civilization (...). It is translation, more than speech itself, which provides incontrovertible evidence of the human capacity to think and to communicate thought".[4] Few who have worked with languages in any way would disagree: to translate means to read closely. It means to get to the very bottom of understanding before even putting down a word. And it means striving to render concepts in the clearest, most elegant, and most faithful possible way. Translators, because they are mediators searching for clarity, for this reason often seek out what has been dubbed a "third code", a sort of middle-path-dialect that is the outcome of mediation between L1 and L2.[5] This might be considered the safe (read: bureaucratic, dull) path, yet there was a time when translators could be burned at the stake or hanged, drawn and quartered, or even stoned in the desert:[6] for translating controversial material; for failing to faithfully or plainly reproduce the message contained in a source; or, conversely, for excessive zeal in *too*-faithfully reproducing it, for which they, sometimes along with the authors, could end up either being grilled, partitioned, or with heads a-rolling, literally.

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[3] Christopher Rollason (European Parliament, English Translation Division) (1999), "On the Reception of EU Texts in the UK, Standard Terminology and Computers and Translation", *Translation & Terminology*, 1, p. 53-58 (p. 54).

[4] Bellos, p. 352-353.

[5] Bellos, again, explains: "Translators therefore tend to write in a normalized language and are more attentive to what is broadly understood to be the correct or standard form. In fact, anyone who has personal experience of translation knows this truth. Translation tends towards the centre – to whatever linguistic regularities are conceptualized as belonging to standard language, irrespective of what native speakers typically say", p. 198-199.

[6] A Lutheran-Reformist's interpretation of the infidelity of biblical translators in reference to the Old Testament (Leviticus, xxiv: 16: "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him"), cited in George Faludy (1970), *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, p. 229.

One such example was Louis Berquin, “French reformer and talented writer”, who, as the curtains were being drawn on the Renaissance in the mid-1520s, translated several of the works of the great European unifier and pacifist, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, into French. With reactionary inquisitions going on about them and the impending doom of all-out religious war across sixteenth-century Europe, Erasmus expressed concern for Berquin’s welfare but the translator worked on, even in the face of public burnings of his Erasmian translations, proceeding to embellish the Dutch humanist’s texts in a French that did not belong in ultra-Catholic France. Erasmus warned Berquin to “desist before they both found themselves in serious trouble”. But the scribe refused to cease his activity as an honest and animated mediator of texts, seeking the best match, breathing life into and reproducing – warts and all – Erasmus’s best works, and so he was condemned to death by the doctors of the Sorbonne and burnt at the stake. With his garments smouldering, he heroically – through blistering lips – addressed the crowd on the importance of writing the truth. It is a sobering anecdote and makes it understandable, perhaps, that so many translators preferred anonymity due to the risks incurred by engaging in translation of certain authors and thinkers, Erasmus included: a hundred years after his death it was still a dangerous business to translate his work.[7] Translators have died for their faith to the authenticity of written words, while others have had to go to extreme lengths to preserve their lives or conceal their identities while conducting none other than what would seem to be the quiet life of pen-pushers. One wonders whether EU translators have to be constantly looking over their shoulders in the same way.

It baffles that there is still no shortage of doubters among the non-affiliated as to the importance and role of translation and revision today. It is not difficult to see, however, not only how far we have come, but also how similar the problems met by Humanist philologists in the 1500s are to those encountered by linguists in the service of the EU institutions today. On a daily basis, these people strive to make sense of 24 different tongues so that one European message can be carried forward via a linguistic compromise between the many social, legal and cultural spheres residing in each EU official language. EU translators do not, admittedly, live like the slaves of the Ottomans – the *dil-oğlan* (“language boys”) – obliged to translate for their upkeep in an empire where many languages were spoken but where most subjects were illiterate and the only bilinguals were either [imported] brides or [captured] slaves who were, in truth, “enforced bilinguals” making up a sort of “translation caste”. Disloyalty to their Sultan, naturally, meant death, hence the origin of the play on words related to different levels of fidelity in translation, be it to the Sultan or to the message contained in the source. Thus, to translate is to betray, a translator may be a traitor, and translation equates to treason or treachery.[8] It can still, as the present volume will reveal, be perceived a little like this in EU translation circles.

Besides their associations with nation- or empire-based treason, translations have been likened to geographical territories. What could be more appropriate, then, when setting out to consider the role and politics of language in the context of what is undeniably a socio-spatial entity such as the European Union (physical, political, but also to a degree imagined and, while not the result of coercion, somewhat urged by human culture) than considering the reception of a translated text as the perception of a landscape? "When we propose **to translate**", notes cultural geographer João Sarmento,

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[7] Anecdote loosely adapted and related citations from Faludy, p. 222.

[8] See Bellos, p. 122-125 and p. 128-129.

> we summon the various dimensions: the object of translation, the translation in and of itself, who translates it, who will read the translations, and in which environments and contexts. Each one of them conveys subjectivities.[9]

Just as there is no "single way" to translate, "[t]he **territory** has no beginning, no middle and no end (...). The territory does not exist, it happens, being more of a process or an expressive occurrence than a set of materializations." Sarmento associates translation with the idea of territory as "metaphor for an infinite number of cultural 'crossings' which can guide some ideas. In the territory, there is little temperance for cultural reverberation, which naturally causes problems in reading. While an echo makes its translation, a coming and going in circles, the reverberation, also overflows, comes and goes in a multiplicity of angles and confrontations, unstoppable and disconcerting."[10]

Clearly the European Union is many different things to many different people and translation serves to exacerbate our awareness of this simple fact: our registering what we gain through language mediation. Like any writer, the translator relies constantly on the good will of the reader, on this relationship between interlocutors: givers and receivers, where many things go on but a lot is unseen, like the work-in-progress of a tapestry, an image of translation originally depicted by Cervantes and dusted off by Belgian-British writer Patrick McGuinness, "with [all] the hanging threads and dangling clutter of knots" at the back. At the front none of this is visible: we simply view, or read, a seamless illustration in cloth.[11] Is that a reasonable comparison to the EU administrative machinery?

Although the EU's official stance and politics on language are unprecedented, both in the legal provisions set in place for linguistic expression within a supranational organisation and the scale of their application, we should not fall into thinking that the practice of "multilingualism" is either a new phenomenon or one restricted to these shores. The Indian subcontinent is home to a plethora of languages where a degree of inter-comprehensibility between Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Kannada, Tamil, Marathi and others has long permitted them to function side by side without the need for official translation. Merchant, maritime and literary Europe in the late-Middle Ages may have been similar. Columbus is purported to have written his notes in Italian, Portuguese and Castilian Spanish, while he used Latin for formal writing and Greek for his secret diary. Furthermore, Hebrew came into use in his reading of astronomy, as well as a *lingua franca* "contact language" called *Sabir*, made up of Arabic, Italian and Spanish, to speak with Mediterranean sailors and traders.[12] On slave ships bound for the Americas in the 1700s, the human cargo from a multitude of backgrounds communicated using the above sailors' language (with *Pidgin* English later on), but historians have noted that most African slaves would already have known "at least three languages and it would not have been unusual for them to know six. They were (...) among the most accomplished linguists in the world".[13] Another example takes us to the former Soviet republics, where hundreds of languages are spoken from Slavic, Turkic, Caucasian, Altaic and other families, though Russian was (and often remains) a *lingua franca*.[14]

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[9] João Sarmento (2012), "Translation and reverberations in the territory-stage dialogism", in *Um mapa para cinco (ou mais) caminhantes. Observatório serviço educativo Guimarães 2012 CEC*, Fundação Cidade de Guimarães, Guimarães, p. 34-39 (p. 34) [author's use of bold].

[10] Sarmento, p. 34-35 [author's use of bold].

[11] Patrick McGuinness (2014), *Other People's Countries. A Journey into Memory*, Jonathan Cape, London, p. 38.

Throughout history there have been many attempts to establish a "contact vehicle" or *lingua franca*: Latin, French, German, Italian and English have held sway in Europe at different times for different reasons: religion, science, letters, law, music, politics, military activity, and maritime dominance.[15] During the eighteenth century a three-language system emerged in Europe, whereby educated people tended to read English, French and German, as well as now finding the time and space to use their mother tongue. This can be explained by the fact that the mother tongue was gaining in status for two reasons: increased nationalism (language was symbolic of national pride – this was quite a new phenomenon) and the Romanticist movement's interests in the mother tongue. The predominance of English, German and French could be further explained by the industrial and technical leadership that was at home in Britain; the superior German education system which made Germany the centre of science and scholarship; and finally, the status of French as the language of diplomacy and culture, making it the default language in any situation requiring a *lingua franca*. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the growth of US industry, technology, research and scholarship added to the importance of the English language. Furthermore, the two "world" wars destroyed any support for the intellectual basis for German as an international language and, at the same time, weakened French. The Treaty of Versailles was written in English and French, but, American power being decisive, the standing of its language, English, was raised as a result. Throughout the twentieth century, the rise of English was often the consequence of US military power, US popular culture, and US technology, science and scholarship. At the same time, the spread of knowledge in former colonies continued in English, which replaced French as the *lingua franca* where it had formerly been established, even in Europe.[16]

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[12] See Bellos, p. 7-20.

[13] Melvyn Bragg (2003), *The Adventure of English. The Biography of a Language*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, p. 189-190.

[14] See Bellos, p. 10.

[15] Melchers & Shaw explain that "[a] lingua-franca situation is one where communication is mainly with people who speak some other language but have also learned the lingua franca. Russian is useful in central Asia, and Swahili in Central and East Africa, because many speakers of other local languages have learnt Russian and Swahili respectively as lingua francas to communicate with others. In the last half of the twentieth century English became very widespread as a lingua franca throughout the world", p. 188.

There have been invented languages, too, upon which topic Umberto Eco elucidates in his *La ricerca della lingua perfetta*,[17] and much hope invested in others, such as *Esperanto*, devised by Polish intellectual Lejzer Zamenhof in the nineteenth century to "rid the world of muddles and horrors caused by multiple tongues".[18] Today's Europe, fortunately, does not see multilingualism as "muddle and horror" and what is enhanced in the context of the European Union, finally, is that "multilingual" is not just synonymous with "speaking or using many languages": EU multilingualism is, instead, a fundamental democratic principle with the additional social and political meaning of "equal rights for all official languages" (and by extension those that utter them). This goes to the heart of what the European Union is all about: "language is part of national and personal identity," recall Wagner, Bech and Martínez, "and the languages of Europe are part of its immense and diverse cultural heritage".[19]

Entrenched in the context and historic emergence of what has been dubbed the EU's "mother-tongue-plus-two" multilingualism policy,[20] therefore, perhaps the most important aspect of the present volume is its focus on key language issues that have arisen through the bloc's strategy for harmonised communication at the level of the Union's bedrock: its founding Treaties, legal instruments, and cumulative body of laws known as the *acquis communautaire*. Language parity is the hard-and-fast rule at the foundation of EU multilingualism, enshrined in Regulation no. 1, 15 April 1958 determining the languages to be used by the European Communities/EU. All language versions of European legal instruments that emanate from its institutions, thus, unquestionably, have equal force of law. But how can this work when scholars in the field of legal drafting concur that – in translation terms – no fully equivalent parallels exist? "Law is the very model of the untranslatable text, because the language of law is self-enclosed," claims Bellos, "however, laws do get translated, because they must". Can "language parity" and "equal force of law" across different-language legal systems be achieved if equivalence evades us? Clearly this represents a stumbling block of sorts: so what "levelling" devices can drafter-translators or, indeed, the elite sphere of practitioner (lawyer-)linguists resort to in order to overcome the alleged incommensurability of legal language when it is incorporated into the EU lexicon, where not only do we see 24 "official" languages in use but also the conjoining of 28 – often disparate – legal systems, all pivoting on language signs as a means of making Europe and European laws more interpretable for 500 million citizens?[21] We leave it to the reader to find out, at least in part, over the following chapters.

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[16] On the seemingly inexorable contemporary spread of English as a *lingua franca*, see Melchers & Shaw, p. 187-190.

[17] Umberto Eco (1993), *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea*, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

[18] Bellos, p. 15.

[19] Emma Wagner, Svend Bech and Jesús M. Martínez (2014), *Translating for the European Institutions*, Routledge, Abingdon/New York, p. 1.

[20] The ambitious project of the European Union has, since the early 2000s, been for all its citizens to know fluently at least two languages beyond their mother tongue; so in every walk of life and in every generation each of us should be at least trilingual. In European documentation, we read the following: "The first area of action is life-long language learning. For this area the action plan identifies the following specific objectives: learning a **mother tongue plus two** other languages from a very early age; continuing language learning in secondary education and vocational training; continuing language learning in higher education; encouraging language learning among adults; developing language learning for persons with special needs; widening the range of languages offered in education." See: "Action plan on language learning and linguistic diversity", Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 24 July 2003 – Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity: an action plan 2004-2006 (COM (2003) 449 final – Not published in the *Official Journal*).

About the present volume

A book *on translation, in translation*, that is, a book on the policy of multilingualism and translation for the EU institutions in all its ramifications which is simultaneously a work translated and adapted from the Italian into English, has something slightly irrational and something equally special about it. It is also remarkably apt, given the setting.

Its preparation has represented a challenging process, involving not only the obvious IT > EN translation operations for the different chapters and thematic sections, but also the fundamental – and inevitably delicate – reorientation of a text to suit the diverse cultural reference points of its new target readership: competent English-language users, even though not necessarily native speakers. It has thus necessitated particular care: permanently-open communication lines and constant revision back and forth between the Author (an "insider" at the EESC) and Translator (an "outsider" at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Law Faculty), revision by Italian-speaking experts, translators and revisers, and by English-speaking translator-revisers, and the integration of the comments and corrections of these in-house specialists along the way, not to mention a lot of fact-checking and background research on the part, again, of both Author and Translator, to keep up to speed with this ever-evolving supranational entity and its laws and policy areas.

Translating and adapting a text based on the topic inherent to the process that it both *describes* and is simultaneously *a product of* is not only paradoxical, therefore, but also has a peculiarly narcissistic quality, and the Translator-Editor, with the Author's presence and assistance, has never been able to lose sight of the relationship between the original drafter-drafted words, the trajectory they take once uttered (and penned) in a source language, and their reception by readers and end-users in a target language. In a sense, however, the outcome – what might be deemed a hybrid amalgam of source text/translation – is perhaps the best possible mirror-image in which to assess the issues that are treated in the following pages, not least through the close analysis and fine-tuning that has been required to keep faith with and build upon the original Italian version, which was inevitably geared mainly towards an Italian readership, though it necessarily tackled language issues that were not the exclusive concern of the citizens of a single Member State. Its new shape is still, admittedly, produced in a language which is officially spoken in only three of the 28 Member States (the UK, Ireland and Malta), but has been adjusted or opened up to broaden its pertinence and appeal to a multilingual readership through the medium of English.

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[21] Bellos has described the work of lawyer-linguists as "the manipulation of the law as language and language as law", p. 244.

The book also does its bit, though it is hoped with the customary reserve of translators and revisers, to explain, via practical examples, how the EU's blended approach to multilingualism (in other words, its different degrees of multilingualism visible in "official", "working" and "procedural" or "vehicular" languages) might be cited as the most socially-advanced, transparent and democratic way of dealing with communication issues in institutions and communities of States that use different tongues. This can help us as Europeans to get past an entrenched historical trend where, as Gunnel Melchers and Philip Shaw explain,

> The languages of Europe have a long association with their respective nations. In particular, each of them has been the focus of a struggle to "gain domains" like higher education, religion and science from Latin or to gain these and the political and school domains from the language of the politically dominant group.[22]

This first edition in English builds on the success of its two preceding Italian editions (published respectively in 2003 and 2007 with the title *Tradurre per l'Unione europea*), which have met widespread acclaim over the last ten years and are currently used as textbooks on various translation courses in universities across Italy. It was this, among other reasons, which persuaded the publisher to embark on the present project which has closely followed the European Union's evolution through its enlargements to the North, to the West, to the South, and more recently to the East, and the impact of these multiple accessions on the politics and practice of translation for the EU institutions.

It proposes a fully updated exploration into the direct relationship between EU Member-State languages and the issues and knock-on effects created by knowledge transfer between the diverse idioms and cultures that make up the patchwork that is the European Union. Enriched throughout with genuine examples from many among the 24 official languages of the Union, selected and closely examined for a multilingual readership, *The Language of Europe* features detailed studies ranging from the background to, and political (and legal) reasons for, EU multilingualism (Chapter 1); the different types of language used in EU documents (Chapter 2); the issues faced in EU drafting and text production (Chapter 3); the variations in translation practice between the different EU institutions, agencies and consultative bodies (Chapter 4); the day-to-day practice of translators and lawyer-linguists (Chapter 5); the impact of ICT on translation practice in the EU (Chapter 6); the distinctive genres of EU translation (Chapter 7); to a contemplation of what the future holds for EU translation (Chapter 8). The volume incorporates (in Chapter 9) a range of sample texts from a variety of EU official languages, provided in the source language original and target-language translation (EN), in order to give the student and specialist an insight into and overview of the rigour and procedural expertise which are demanded and can be seen at work from initial (co-)draft to final version in the rendering of a multilingual EU document.

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[22] Melchers & Shaw, p. 191.

While the volume is principally orientated towards students, peers and specialists in Translation and Interpretation Studies, Language Studies and Cultural Studies, it is likely to arouse an equal level of interest in those working in adjacent scholarly domains: Cultural Geography, European Studies and Law, Political Science, and Sociolinguistics, for a start, as well as those currently pursuing or prospecting a career in the European institutions. For these and other readers, *The Language of Europe* offers a fresh perspective and a comprehensive new analysis of the EU's policy of multilingualism and the "architecture" and "machinery" developed by this supranational entity to optimise multilingual translation practice and interlingual mediation within and between its institutions and between the latter and the "citizens on the ground" across the Union. If it is true that the purported gulf that exists between the EU institutions and the citizens they serve is down to communication, it is hoped that this volume will play a small part in helping to bridge that gap.

David Albert BEST
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