

# Working as a staff translator for the European Commission

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Maynooth University, 9 February 2021

# What is the European Commission?

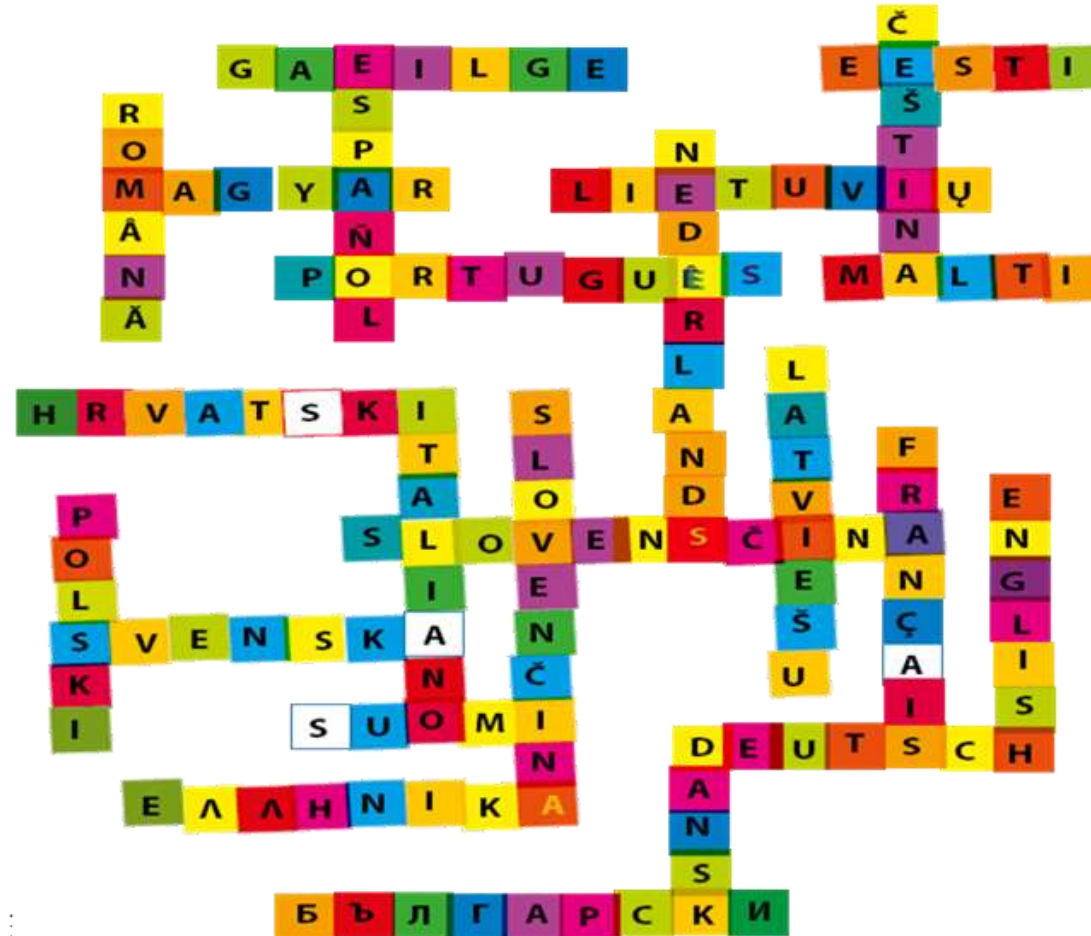
The Commission is the EU's civil service:

- it proposes new legislation to the European Parliament and the Council
- it enforces EU law together with the Court of Justice
- it represents the EU internationally
- it manages the EU's budget

All of these roles are reflected in the work of the Commission's translators.



# DGT translates from and into all 24 EU official languages





# We cover (almost!) all subject areas



# Translation makes the EU democratic

There are **24** EU official languages, and nobody knows them all. So the work of translators allows citizens of EU countries to:

- **understand the laws that they have to obey;**
- **play a full part in EU activities;**
- **contribute to the work of the EU institutions in their own language,**

and ensures that EU staff can understand correspondence from members of the public, governments, NGOs and businesses across the EU.



# Who does all of this?

Total staff: 2200

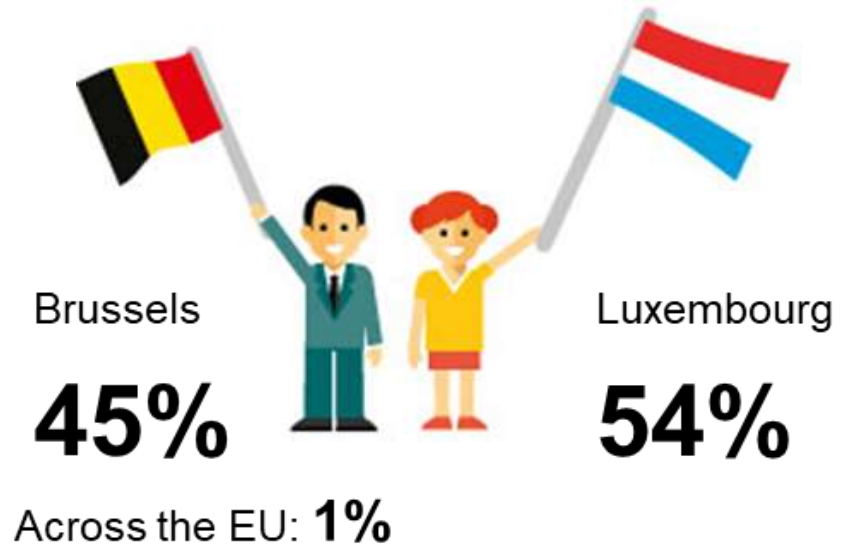


Translators  
**68%**

Assistants: **20%**

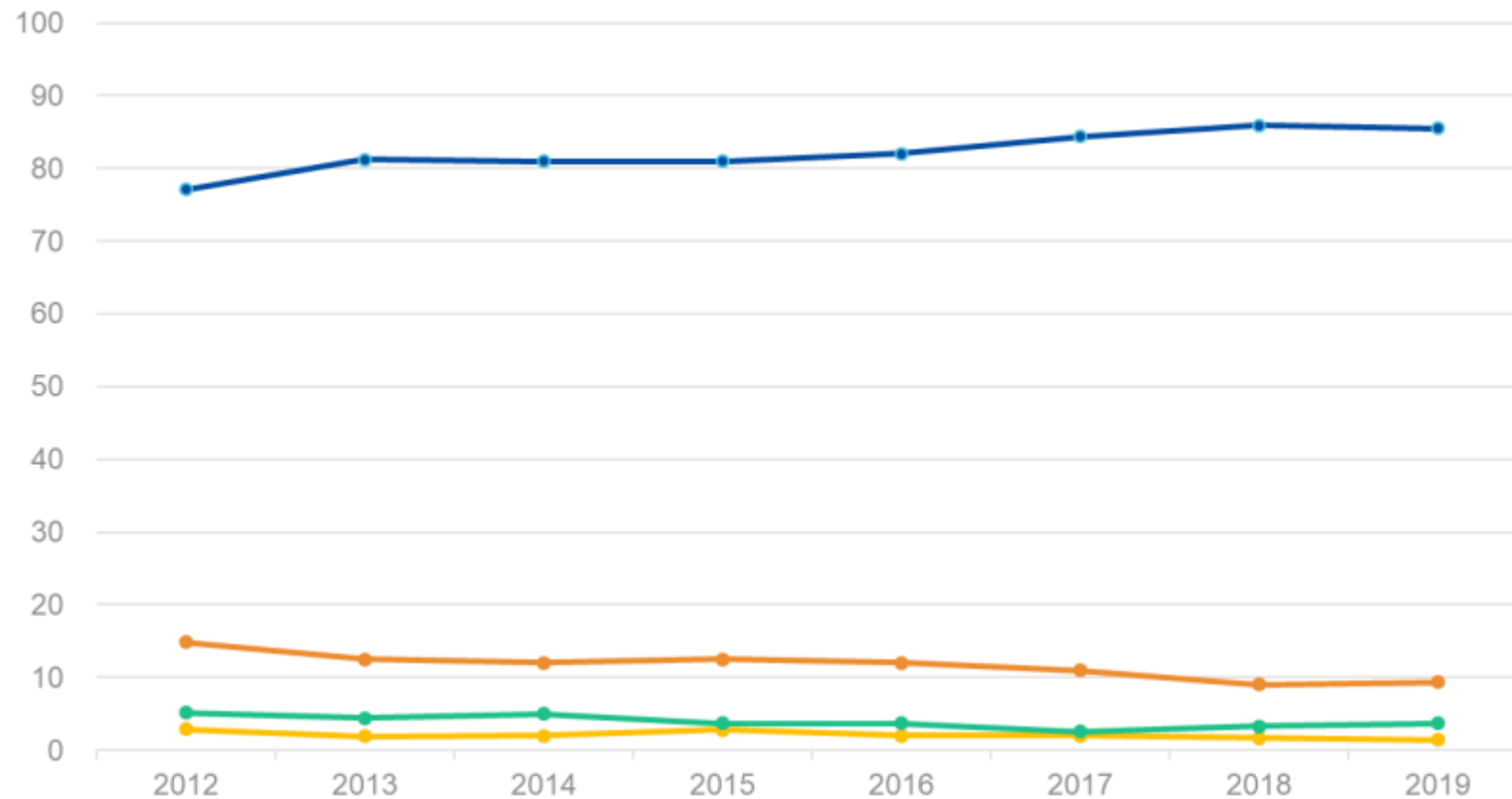
Administrative staff: **8%**

Management: **4%**





# Languages of original documents in 2019



**English 85%**

**Others 9%**

**French 4%**

**German 2%**

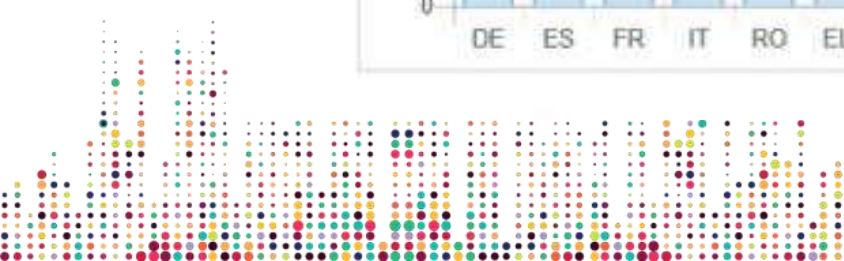


# Languages translated by the English-language department

EN LD output (official EU languages)

Period: Jan-Dec 2020

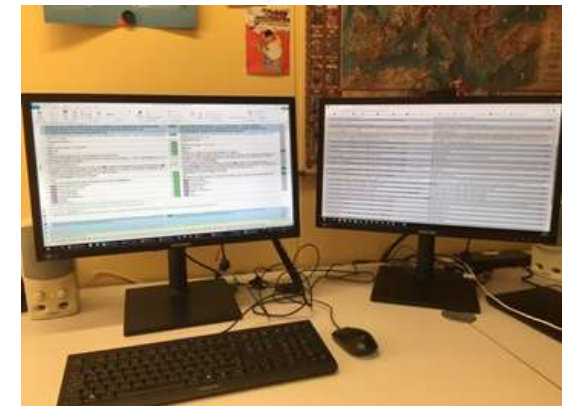
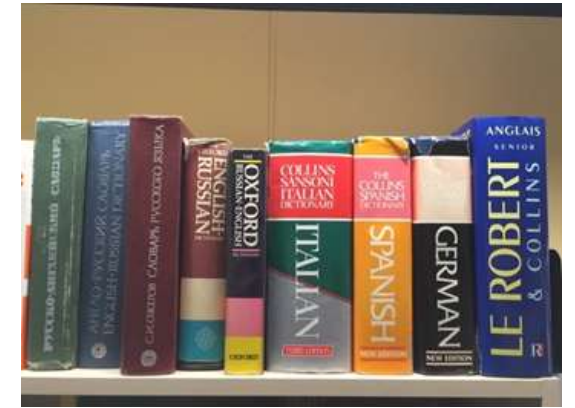
Total: 138 517 pages (Internal: 79 613 | External: 58 904)





# How do we do it?

- Online and paper dictionaries & resources – including Google!
- Very important: **the hive mind!**
- **Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT)**
- Translation Memories
- Neural Machine Translation (NMT)



# How much does all this cost?

- ▶ DG Translation: €325 million/year in 2019
- ▶ All language services (translation and interpreting) in all EU institutions cost each EU citizen **€2.50 a year** – about the same as a cup of coffee!
- ▶ The cost of multilingualism adds up to less than 1% of the annual EU budget



Vecteur créé par freepik - fr.freepik.com

OR



# What is it actually like to work at DGT?

- Work in a multicultural environment
- A chance to use your languages... and to learn more!
- Training opportunities including weekly & intensive language courses, language courses abroad, thematic and IT training
- Activities with schools, colleges and the general public



# Job opportunities

- Permanent staff (EU officials)
- Temporary agent
- Contract agent
- Trainees ('stagiaires')
- External contractors (freelancers)





# Traineeships – a great first step

- ▶ Duration: 5 months
- ▶ Two rounds per year, starting in March and October
- ▶ For university graduates only
- ▶ For EU citizens
- ▶ Requirement: be able to translate from two EU languages into your main language
- ▶ Monthly grant of €1,200
- ▶ Info: [ec.europa.eu/stages/](https://ec.europa.eu/stages/)



# Why work for the European Commission?

- €4,787 monthly starting salary (for officials) (= €57,444 per year);  
€3,462 monthly starting salary (for contract agents)
- Generous leave entitlement
- Varied and challenging work with scope to shape your own career in the Commission
- Job security
- Multicultural environment
- Flexible working-time arrangements



# Recruitment criteria for translators

- You must be an EU citizen
- You must have a university degree\*
  - \* It doesn't have to be a degree in languages or translation
- but
- You do not need any professional experience
- [ec.europa.eu/info/jobs-european-commission/working-eu/translator-profile](https://ec.europa.eu/info/jobs-european-commission/working-eu/translator-profile)
- [epso.europa.eu/career-profiles/languages](https://epso.europa.eu/career-profiles/languages)



# Language skills for translators

## Language skills

- perfect command of all aspects and stylistic levels of your target language (mother tongue/main language)
- thorough knowledge of 2 or more official EU languages — at least 1 of which must be French or German (or English)
- Knowledge of additional languages is an asset!

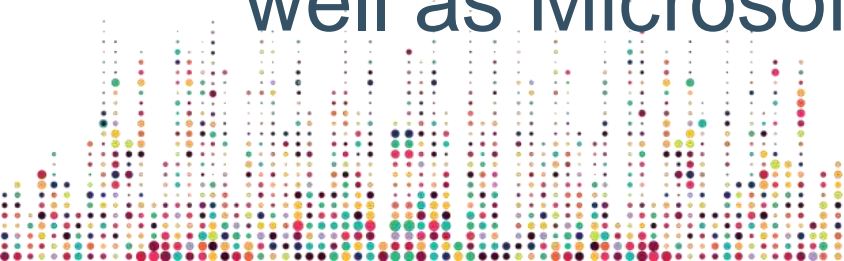




# Translator profile

## Translation skills

- understand texts in the source language and render them correctly in the target language, using a style and register appropriate to the purpose of the text
- research topics and terminology quickly and efficiently — in both source language and target languages
- master computer-assisted translation and terminology tools (or show that you can quickly learn new IT tools), as well as Microsoft Office



# Translator profile

## Additional requirements

- ability to grasp varied and complex issues, react swiftly to changing circumstances, manage information and communicate effectively
- initiative, imagination, and intellectual curiosity and motivation
- capacity to work consistently and under pressure - independently and as part of a team - and to fit into a multicultural working environment
- ability to maintain the self-discipline required to work in a large public-service organisation



# The EPSO factor – Recruitment competitions

- Selection procedure: about 9 months
- Notice of competition published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (C edition)
- Advertisements in the national press
- On the EPSO (European Personnel Selection Office) website:

[epso.europa.eu](http://epso.europa.eu)

[facebook.com/TranslatingForEurope](https://facebook.com/TranslatingForEurope)

[ec.europa.eu/info/departments/translation](http://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/translation)



# The competition stages

- **Stage 1: Create an EPSO account & apply online**
  - (submit supporting documentation required by the Notice of Competition, e.g. CV, degree, etc.)
- **Stage 2: Computer-Based Testing**
  - Reasoning skills tests:
    - verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning (in main language - English)
  - Language comprehension tests: French, German (or English)
  - Main language skills test





# The competition stages

- **Stage 3 – Revision and translation tests**
  - General nature (i.e. not specialised legal/economic/technical)
  - Often have an EU-related theme
  - Timed
  - Dictionaries allowed
  
- **Stage 4 – Assessment Centre (Brussels\*)**
  - Structured interview\*: [French](#), [German](#) (or [English](#))
  - Group exercise\*: [French](#), [German](#) (or [English](#))
  - Oral presentation: [French](#), [German](#) (or [English](#))

\* Replaced by an online Situational Competency Based Interview (SCBI) during COVID-19.



# Reserve list and recruitment

- The list of successful candidates is the basis for recruitment by institutions
- Valid for at least one year – may be extended
- Institutions check profiles of successful candidates
- Candidates invited to job interview
- Job offer
- Candidate accepts job offer or remains on reserve list



# Key takeaways

- Work on your languages – live and work abroad, soak up all you can of the culture and history of the countries, find language exchange partners, don't let your languages slip
- Specialising in a certain area or having rarer languages can make you stand out if you get on the reserve list
- The competition tests are tough but doable with practice – and the benefits are worth it!



# Web and social media



[epso.europa.eu/career-profiles/languages\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/career-profiles/languages_en)

[epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply/sample-tests\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply/sample-tests_en)

[ec.europa.eu/info/departments/translation](https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/translation)

[ec.europa.eu/ireland/about-us/job-opportunities-with-irish\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/about-us/job-opportunities-with-irish_en)



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[instagram.com/translatingforeurope](https://instagram.com/translatingforeurope)



[youtube.com/DGTranslation](https://youtube.com/DGTranslation)



Muito obrigado! Go raibh maith agaibh! Mockrát děkujeme!  
Σας ευχαριστούμε πολύ!  
Vielen Dank! Mulțumesc!  
Nuoširdžiai dėkojame! Najlepša hvala! Köszönjük szépen!  
Благодаря! Grazie mille!  
Merci beaucoup! Hartelijk dank!  
Ďakujeme vám veľmi pekne! Liels paldies! Kiitos! Níringrazzjawk ħafna!  
svur tänku! Tack så mycket! Hvala lijepa! ¡Muchas gracias!  
Dziękujemy za uwagę! Mange tak!

