



Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

Translation Service - LING
The Deputy Director-General

2019 ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE AUTHORISING OFFICER BY DELEGATION

For the attention of the Secretary-General of the Council

I. INTRODUCTION - MISSION STATEMENT

The Translation Service provides timely and high-quality translation and editing services to ensure the smooth running of the European Council and Council decision-making process and, ultimately, to serve the citizens of the European Union. Its highly skilled staff work in a flexible manner, using state-of-the-art tools and working methods, safeguarding confidentiality and facilitating multilingual communication among Member States and EU institutions in a complex political environment. The Translation Service places a high value on both client satisfaction and the work-life balance of its staff, and strives to build ever closer ties with internal and external stakeholders.

II. PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

A) PERFORMANCES/ACHIEVEMENTS

Permanent core activities		
Objectives	Action	Performance
I. Efficient planning and preparation of translation activities	- Plan and coordinate translation jobs	Ongoing (permanent objective)
	- Make technical preparations for use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools	Ongoing (permanent objective)
	- Streamline and improve translation planning and coordination procedures	Ongoing (permanent objective)
	- Anticipate terminological problems and find solutions	2019 terminology activity indicators produced

Permanent core activities		
Objectives	Action	Performance
(cont.) I. Efficient planning and preparation of translation activities	- Anticipate linguistic and content-related problems and find solutions	- Ongoing work by various File Coordination Teams (FCTs) in 2019 (completed: 4; ongoing: 2; new: 4) - Quality monitoring for one FCT (Q1: Schengen Information System legislative package) - Process improvements initiated by the projects coordinator to ensure informed decision-making on FCT-worthiness of files and optimal use of resources: • annotated files overview in cooperation with the policy Directorates-General (follow-up meetings with DG Justice and Home Affairs (JAI) and DG Agriculture, Fisheries, Social Affairs and Health (LIFE): Q3 and Q4 2019/Q1 2020); • paper on new approach to cooperation between Functional Group coordinators and the Terminology Coordination Team (TCT) within the framework of the Terminology Planning Group (TPG) (approved in Q3 2019) - Draft task list for preparation of plenary TPG meetings (Q4 2019)
	- Anticipate domain-related problems and find solutions	- Ongoing work in the various Functional Groups (FGs) with a focus on file-based projects (File Coordination Teams, Collaborative Terminology Projects, Follow-the-File Scheme and activities (mostly training) - Revamped FG website - Process improvements initiated by the projects coordinator: • information flow: endorsement of "collective subscription" principle by management; guide on collective subscription available and published on the new FG pages; • mechanism for consultation and follow-up: Team of FG Coordinators' meetings and minutes (published on the new FG website)
II. Timely delivery of translations from and into the official and working languages	- Translating documents within the deadlines set by clients	In 2019, the Translation Service (LING) delivered 196,693 translations. Of these, 195,343 (99.3%) were delivered within the deadline set. Of the 1,350 translations that missed their deadline, about 50% did so by 7 minutes or less
III. Delivery of quality translations from and into the official and working languages	- Translating documents in line with client requirements and expectations	- Horizontal tests carried out: 3 random sampling tests and 4 targeted tests. All necessary follow-up action taken - 1 justified complaint received centrally in 2019 regarding 1 document (in 3 language versions). Corrigendum issued - Client satisfaction survey conducted and results presented to the Permanent Representations at the Permanent Representations' event
IV. Participation in the Interinstitutional Committee for Translation and Interpretation (ICTI)	- Regular and active participation at the various decision-making levels of ICTI (Coordination Committee for Translation [CCT], Executive Committee for Translation [ECT] and ICTI itself) and in the various ICTI preparatory bodies (networks, working parties) - Participation in the development and financing of common tools that facilitate the organisation and/or quality of translation work - Implementation of projects decided on at ECT level - Implementation of initiatives to enhance interinstitutional cooperation decided on at ICTI/ECT level - Council Presidency of the ICTI in 2019-2020 (Council will chair ICTI, ECT, CCT, the Advisory Group on Human Resources (HRAG), the Quality Network, the Ordinary Legislative Procedure Cooperation Group and the Advisory Group on Finances (AGF). Council will also be actively involved in the work of the other sub-bodies including, in particular, the Interinstitutional Language Technology Group)	- All of the ECT working groups submitted their activity reports for 2018 in the first half of 2019. - Activity reports for 2018 were also submitted for each of the IT tools jointly financed by the translation services of ECT members. - All the activity reports (working groups and IT tools) were endorsed by CCT and adopted by ECT. - In 2019, the CCT met five times, the ECT four times and ICTI twice. All agendas were drawn up by DG LING's internal ICTI team. All meetings were chaired by DG LING as holder of the rotating presidency of the ICTI structures. - Reinforcements (in the form of additional commitments by staff from the central level) were enlisted to provide LING's presidency of the CCT, ECT and ICTI with secretarial and logistical support. - As holder of the rotating ICTI presidency, the Council also took over the chair of a number of ECT working groups including the HRAG, the AGF and the Interinstitutional Quality Network. - Specifically in relation to financial contributions to IT tools used in common by ECT members, the Chair of the AGF was tasked by the CCT with reviewing the interinstitutional agreement on access to the machine translation (MT) tool to reflect the cost and legal implications of the switch in 2018 from MT@EC (statistical MT technology) operating in DG DIGIT's data centre to eTranslation (neural MT technology) operating in the cloud. - A revised agreement on the financing of machine translation was duly adopted by the ECT in December 2019.

Priority projects		
Objectives	Action	Performance
1- ICTI Presidency for 2019 and 2020	1. Maximise benefit from neural machine translation (NMT) and technological process support 2. Secure a high level of quality in internal and external translations 3. Optimise interinstitutional work sharing 4. Cooperate on HR issues, in particular with a view to drawing up interinstitutional job profiles for linguists and assistants.	The ICTI Presidency work programme covers two years (2019 and 2020) and its implementation has been planned accordingly. In addition to the details given under IV above, a number of key deliverables have been achieved: - the procurement procedure for the new CAT tool has been successfully concluded; - Interactive Terminology for Europe 2 (IATE) is fully operational with work continuing interinstitutionally on further enhancements; - the new competency profile for translators proposed by the Advisory Group on Human Resources was adopted in June 2019; - a method for coordinating requests at interinstitutional level for training in less common languages has been agreed; - the use of inclusive language was presented, discussed and endorsed at ICTI in June 2019. Work on many other elements of the work programme is ongoing in the various working groups. In particular, the mandate of the Ordinary Legislative Procedure Cooperation Group has been extended to cover the implementation of its recommendations (adopted December 2019) on work-sharing in the context of OLP files and coordination and cooperation in the area of terminology; experiences of NMT are currently being shared in the Machine Translation User Group; the Interinstitutional Language Technology Group is working proactively on the joint tools; and the Interinstitutional Quality Network is addressing the quality objectives set under the work programme.
2 - Tapping into a resourceful Translation Service: versatility and flexibility	1. Office space consolidation and New Ways of Working (NWOW) 2. Update the profiles of translators and translation assistants 3. Translation Research Network 4. Pilot project for Moving Resources To Tasks (MRTT): pool of AD volunteers from LING - MRTT incubator	1. Office space consolidation (consolidation of language units on single floors of the LEX building) and New Ways of Working (NWOW) • new office space arrangements were defined in conjunction with the Language Units (LUs) so that, instead of being dispersed over more than one floor, each of the Language Units would be grouped together on the same floor in order to ensure improved team cohesion; • new multipurpose rooms (one per floor) were created to facilitate more collaborative work; • by the end of the project; two floors (LEX 02 and LEX 03) will be freed up to be rented out by ORG 3 with a view to achieving cost savings; • in 2019, moves were completed on six floors (LEX 04 to LEX 09), with 570 relocations taking place (about 75% of the total), which meant that by end 2019, a total of 16 units had been relocated to single floors. - NWOW - pilot project • three Language Units (LUs) took part between January and October 2019 in preparatory work for the pilot project; • however, for budgetary reasons, two LUs (NL and FR) were ultimately excluded from the pilot project and the third unit (MT) dropped out in view of changed circumstances 2. Updated translator profiles Throughout 2019, the ECT Advisory Group on Human Resources (HRAG), chaired by LING, worked in conjunction with EPSO on designing a new template for a generic competency profile for translators. Following interinstitutional discussions and negotiations, the new joint competency profile was finalised and endorsed by the ECT in mid-2019 with certain skills (revision of machine output, drafting, summarising, localisation and digital or IT abilities in general) given greater prominence than before. In December 2019, the ECT approved a proposal submitted by the HRAG for a revised EPSO competition format for translators with new elements (a localisation challenge integrated into the L2-L1 translation test, a revision test, a digital skills test and a summary test). An L1 test at the CBT stage, approved by the ECT in February 2019, is another element proposed for future EPSO competitions for translators. 2. Updated profiles for translation assistants Between February and November 2019, the LING Reflection Group on Future AST and SC Profiles focused on analysing and mapping the tasks currently performed by ASTs and SCs in language units and also harvested ideas and tested assumptions

Priority projects		
Objectives	Action	Performance
		about the optimal use of translation assistance resources in the future. The intermediary report was published in November 2019. The reflection group has become a working group within the framework of LING's Strategic Approach for an Evolving Service 2020-2024. The working group will now work on: • preparing recommendations, including different scenarios for future AST and SC profiles; • defining the optimal staff mix for the transition period and beyond (ASTs and SCs); • rethinking the place of ASTs and SCs in LING and assessing staffing needs; • finding ways to evolve towards a more harmonised implementation of the assistance tasks defined in the Common Working Procedures. 3. The Translation Research Network was established with the following aims: - mapping of sources (GSC monitoring and search tools and interesting country-specific reports); - training on Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) specific to linguistic work; - preparation of an automatic website monitoring tool. - Topics followed: artificial intelligence in translation, translation quality, evolution of translators' tasks with the development and increased use of technology in translation, future of translation, etc. 4. Pilot project for Moving Resources To Tasks (MRTT): pool of AD volunteers from LING - MRTT incubator established. For the MRTT, 18 translators from LING were seconded to 15 different GSC services with assignments that combined learning and work experience over a period of 6 to 9 months.
3 - Preparations for a new computer-assisted translation environment	Modernise LING's IT environment and introduce, in particular, the following: - a new translation management system (TMS) - more content-oriented working methods (relying on XML-based formats based on the eXtensible Markup Language (XML) specification, among others) - a more integrated and collaborative computer-assisted translation (CAT) tool	- TMS 1 project is ongoing (expected completion in Q3 2020); - TMS 2 project is planned from Q3/2020 to Q3/2021 - Content management system (CMS) analysis is planned for 2020 - CAT tender project has been successfully completed
4 - Translation quality management in a changing environment - focusing on feedback	- Pilot a new, more efficient quality-assurance system (through horizontal quality assurance and individual feedback and assessment) - Set common priorities for quality controllers in the language units and update their job description - Establish arrangements for obtaining relevant and systematic feedback from our clients	- A new quality assurance system has been implemented (regular Quality Plenary and Operational meetings, horizontal tests and individual feedback system) - Priorities for quality controllers have been set; job description to be updated in 2020 - Client feedback system established (to be fine-tuned and finalised in 2020)
5 - Translation Planning Calendar	- Provide a comprehensive basis for planning translation work by building a shared online tool to keep track of all meetings (Coreper, Council, etc.) and milestones that drive the translation process - Provide constant input for the planning tool on the basis of planning documents (e.g. Presidency programme) produced by the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) and information obtained directly from clients by planning staff from the Operations Unit - Provide translation and translation support staff (language units, Terminology Coordination, Quality Policy Coordinator) with access to the planning tool	The structured list of legislative files that constitutes the backbone of the shared online tool has been compiled and is in the process of being populated with real data. A prototype calendar has been set up. The dynamic link between the structured list of files and the prototype calendar is pending

Priority projects		
Objectives	Action	Performance
6 - Diversification of language services, adapted to the needs of LING's clients	- Media Monitoring correspondents project: - agree with COMM on converting the pilot project into a regular collaboration project, possibly expanding the available language cover and/or product range (according to clients' needs) - Pilot Social Media Monitoring and collaborative web drafting: - set up a network of linguists who would follow and analyse language-specific social media channels and help with translation, editing and localisation of social media posts produced by COMM including national day video clips - Express Translation Service: - offer GSC clients a service to fast-track the translation of short texts (up to half a page) from EN and FR into one or more languages with very short deadlines and no involvement by central planning (simple DOMUS template for submitting requests, available to the whole GSC) - Stay on the lookout for options to expand the current set of services and languages at the request of the GSC clients, particularly the President of the European Council, DG Communication and Information (COMM), DG Foreign Affairs, Enlargement and Civil Protection (RELEX) and the Council presidencies.	- Pilot project turned into a business model; the range of languages offered can be extended on an ad-hoc basis (e.g. to cover elections in member states) - Social media seminar and workshops held in June 2019; collaborative web drafting piloted for national day videoclips and other audiovisual material; - Express Translation launched and presented to GSC Directors in November 2019 with a view to extending the offer beyond the services that had taken part in the pilot; - Spotify playlists x 2 (Finnish Presidency and Christmas); Web Style Guide translated and localised by LING; discussions started on the Social Media Landscaping Study for 2020; issue-tracking table drafted by the WEB Functional Group and shared with COMM to help to look out for and resolve technical issues on the Council website.

Specific objectives		
1. Consolidation of the reorganisation at central level (Operations Unit and Resources Unit)	- Consolidation of reorganisation within the newly created Operations Unit - Consolidation of the team-based structure within the Resources Unit including, in particular, the most recent additions (Language Library, Statistics, Human Resources and Legal Advice) - Further development of the Operational Assistance Team	Both central units are now fully operational. There was a reduction in the number of members in the Operational Assistance Team in the Resources Unit in 2019. Recruitment is ongoing to restore numbers.
2. Planning for the future 2.1 Impact of IT and workload developments on business models for organisation of translation work	Consult stakeholders and provide analysis and reports with a view to drawing conclusions and establishing new models	During 2019, LING prepared a new Strategic Approach for an Evolving Service 2020-2024, which was submitted to and approved by the Secretary-General of the Council. Planning for the future as described in Specific Objective 2 of the 2019 Work Programme was a central part of the reflection process as a result of which the Strategic Approach was shaped. Work to identify and define more concrete business models will continue under the auspices of the Working Group "A Flexible LING", one of the working groups set up in 2020 to take forward the implementation of the Strategic Approach.

Specific objectives		
2.2 Testing outsourcing as a means of injecting flexibility into the management of fluctuating workload	- Participation in the European Parliament's pilot project for the outsourcing of translation services to accredited freelancers in 6 languages to determine whether accredited freelancer arrangements might be a more flexible option for the Council in dealing with FTE deficits than the alternative of hiring contract staff	The outsourcing procedure under the tendering specifications published by the EP was (i) analysed in-depth against the backdrop of experience gained during a mini outsourcing project conducted in 2017 under Translation 2020 and (ii) mirrored on paper in the form of a step-by-step workflow with all possible permutations. Two IT platforms were developed to support the process as mapped, the first (internal) to manage tasks, facilitate communication and quantify effort internally and the second (external) to facilitate communication and file exchange with contractors. In coordination with EP and the other participating institutions, a methodology based on the rules set out in the tendering specifications was developed to assess the quality of outsourced translations strictly from the perspective of compliance by contractors with their contractual obligations. Assistants from the six participating units were trained in how to prepare translation packages for uploading to the external platform and on how to retrieve completed translations and put them back into the workflow. Regular meetings were held to update the participating units on progress. The outsourcing process as supported by the IT platforms was documented in guides and user manuals. The IT platforms were demonstrated to colleagues in 'static mode' on screen and pilot-tested in 'dynamic' dry runs to simulate steps live. An information pack with the essentials of translating as a service provider for LING was drawn together from various sources and uploaded to the Council's section of a website set up for all contractors by the EP. The GSC's accounting and procurement coordination departments were kept in the loop and asked for advice on specific questions as they arose. Administrative delays at the EP pushed the start date of the project back to 23 February 2020.
3. Modernising tools		
3.1 Studio upgrade	- Technical preparation (testing and adaptation of existing applications), documentation, user information and training	- Studio 2017 Service Release 1 was upgraded in September 2019 (the upgrade was delayed because the initial software releases were not satisfactory)
3.2 New training modules for CAT tools	- Preparation and organisation of new training modules for CAT tools	- The training modules for CAT tools in EU Learn are currently up-to-date
3.3 Upgrade to IATE 2 (Milestones 2+3)	- Milestone 2: final testing, monitoring migration of user accounts, training of users - Milestone 3: testing, training of advanced users	Milestone 2: completed Milestone 3: actions completed but continuing in 2020 with further testing (new features), training and feedback to developers
4. Safety, security, business continuity (BC)		
4.1 Update the questions/answers platform with relevant information	- Improve existing SharePoint platform	Completed
4.2 Review LING's BC plan in light of the outcome of the annual BC exercise	- Integrate lessons learned into the BC plan	Completed subject to further fine-tuning to ensure that key BC concepts inform LING's response to unexpected events that reduce LING's capacity to provide the Council and the European Council with normal levels of service. Although not specifically part of LING's Annual Work Programme for 2019, revisiting the BC plan in light of the outcome of the annual BC exercise organised by the Council's central BC team was deemed to be a priority by LING's senior management.
4.3 Implement guidelines, instructions and notes received from central services and prepared by LING's safety and security team	- Analysis of each document received with possible feedback provided to the requesting services - Communication of relevant information to LING	Completed. In addition, an updated version of the 'Crisisolution' checklist (what to do in an emergency) was produced for heads of unit.

Specific objectives		
4.4 Develop assistance provided to LING staff by the existing network of local security correspondents	- Make sure that local security correspondents can better inform staff in the language units	Efficient collaboration developed through the network of local security correspondents
5. Statistics and data analysis	- Develop new ways of visualising statistics using interactive dashboards - Statistics regarding the translation management system (TMS) - Further action on the questionnaire sent to Heads of Unit	Visualisation of daily workload implemented in Q2 2019 but awaiting refinements following delivery of the new TMS.
6. Coordinate the activities of the local ergonomics correspondents network, cooperate with the central-level ergonomists from DG Organisational Development and Services (ORG) and with the Healthcare and Safety Unit	- Maintain awareness of the importance of ergonomic measures and individual ergonomic behaviour - Focus on practical interventions (in cooperation with ORG central ergonomists)	- Active cooperation and sharing of ideas on healthcare with ORG - Cooperation with Language Technology Team to address flickering screen problems - Active support for the two-screens initiative in the office and advice on how to place screens vertically - Installation of yoga room - Awareness-raising about more frequent use of resting chairs during breaks between long shifts and during summit stand-bys - Meditation and breathing space sessions organised in LING - Successful completion of the 'Take the Stairs' initiative - Organisation of the Walking Week competition - Encouragement of staff to make use of the Ergo Corner in the Language Library - Participation in Health and Safety Week: giving stretching demonstrations, Qi Gong, broomstick exercises and yoga sessions - Info campaign about the availability of electric desks in the context of moves and relocations within the LEX building

B) HUMAN RESOURCES ALLOCATED FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE

Authorised posts

LING had 930 authorised posts as of 31 December 2019 compared to 945 authorised posts as of 31 December 2018.

The difference (minus 15) is attributable to the impact of SC (Secretary/Clerk) staffing adjustments, the freezing and returning of AST (Assistant)/SC posts, redeployments and transfers to other departments under the scheme 'Moving Resources To Tasks' (MRTT)

Total headcount

As of 31 December 2019, LING had a total headcount of 878, which broke down as follows:

- Administrators (ADs): 647 (600 officials and 47 temporary agents)
- Assistants (ASTs) and secretaries/clerks (SCs): 231 (212 officials and 19 temporary agents)

Full-time equivalent headcount

Of the total headcount of 878, 121 ADs and 33 ASTs and SCs were working part-time and 11 ADs and 3 ASTs were on leave on personal grounds, secondment or other types of absence. As a result, as of 31 December 2019, LING had a full-time-equivalent headcount (excluding contractual agents) of 839,1, as shown in the table immediately below.

	Permanent staff	Temporary staff	Others	Total
Administrators (ADs)	568.15	47		615.15
Assistants (ASTs)	185.55	3		188.55
Secretaries (SCs)	19.4	16		35.4
Subtotal	773.1	66		839.1
Contractual agents		15		15
National experts				
Subtotal		15		15
Total	773.1	81		854.1

Source: Council Staffing Office

Compensation for the difference between the total headcount and the full-time equivalent headcount

To compensate for the difference of 38.9 between the total headcount (878) and the full-time equivalent (FTE) headcount (839.1) in 2019, LING had at its disposal 15 contract agents as of 31 December 2019, giving a compensation rate for FTE deficits of 38.5%. The difference between the compensation rate in percentage terms and the numerical deficit in real terms is explained by the fact that LING resorts to contract agents only in the case of long-term absences. Short-term absences are absorbed by the units themselves with internal resources.

Result of use of available human resources

The above human resources enabled LING to ensure efficient preparation of translation work and to deliver translations of high quality within the required deadlines, taking care in particular to ensure that all the language versions are equally authentic.

C) FINANCIAL RESOURCES ALLOCATED FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE

Table 1: Overview of the implementation of the budget 2019

Fund	Commitment item		Funds Center	1	2	3	4 = 3/2	5	6
				Initial Budget 2019	Final Budget 2019	Commitments 2019	Outturn rate on final budget (%)	Carry-over to 2020 Commitments-payments	Carry Over to 2020 on Decision
				EUR	EUR	EUR	%	EUR	
1	1204	Supplementary services for the translati	A3	Translation Service	200.000,00	200.000,00	163.971,50	82	6.797,00
1	ART-120	Other staff and external services	A3	Translation Service	200.000,00	200.000,00	163.971,50	82	6.797,00
1	CHAP-12	Other staff and outside services	A3	Translation Service	200.000,00	200.000,00	163.971,50	82	6.797,00
1	TITLE-1	Persons working with the institution	A3	Translation Service	200.000,00	200.000,00	163.971,50	82	6.797,00
1	2101	Outside assistance for computer systems	A3	Translation Service	555.000,00	525.000,00	524.939,89	100	93.132,30
1	ART-210	Computer systems and telecommunications	A3	Translation Service	555.000,00	525.000,00	524.939,89	100	93.132,30
1	CHAP-21	Computer systems, equipment and furniture	A3	Translation Service	555.000,00	525.000,00	524.939,89	100	93.132,30
1	TITLE-2	Buildings, equipment and operating expend	A3	Translation Service	555.000,00	525.000,00	524.939,89	100	93.132,30
1	EXPENSE	EXPENSE	A3	Translation Service	755.000,00	725.000,00	688.911,39	95	99.929,30
1	COUNCIL	Council Legal Reporting	A3	Translation Service	755.000,00	725.000,00	688.911,39	95	99.929,30
Overall Result				755.000,00	725.000,00	688.911,39	95	99.929,30	

BUDGET LINE 120400 'Supplementary services for the translation service'

The original 2019 budget for this budget line was EUR 200 000, with a commitment by ORG 4 (Finance Directorate) to add to it if the allotted appropriations were insufficient to cover needs in 2019.

At 31 December 2019, the implementation for this part of the budget line was EUR 163 971.50 (82%) which is a high implementation rate in comparison with previous years.

LING recalls that the implementation of this budget line is subject to unpredictable changes in the political activity of the Council and of the European Council.

BUDGET LINE 2101-LING 'Outside assistance for computer systems'

The original 2019 budget for this budget line established at the end of 2017 was EUR 555 000. EUR 30 000 was returned to the Council's general budget during the procedure of the year-end transfer in 2019. This was due to lower costs than forecast for the Euramis and Machine Translation IT tools.

Table 2: Overview of the implementation during 2019 of appropriations carried over from 2018

Fund	Funds Center	Commitment item	1	2	3 = 2/1	4	5
			Carry-over from budget 2018 EUR	Paym 2019 on carry-over 2018 EUR	Outturn rate (%) %	Cancelled appropriations EUR	Carry-over-from 2019 to 2020 EUR
4	A3	Translation Service 1204 Supplementary services for the translati	4.415,00	4.415,00	100	0,00	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service ART-120 Other staff and external services	4.415,00	4.415,00	100	0,00	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service CHAP-12 Other staff and outside services	4.415,00	4.415,00	100	0,00	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service TITLE-1 Persons working with the institution	4.415,00	4.415,00	100	0,00	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service 2101 Outside assistance for computer systems	102.941,16	57.020,56	55	45.920,60	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service ART-210 Computer systems and telecommunications	102.941,16	57.020,56	55	45.920,60	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service CHAP-21 Computer systems, equipment and furniture	102.941,16	57.020,56	55	45.920,60	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service TITLE-2 Buildings, equipment and operating expend	102.941,16	57.020,56	55	45.920,60	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service EXPENSE EXPENSE	107.356,16	61.435,56	57	45.920,60	0,00
4	A3	Translation Service COUNCIL Council Legal Reporting	107.356,16	61.435,56	57	45.920,60	0,00
Overall Result			107.356,16	61.435,56	57	45.920,60	0,00

For the budget line 120400, the underspending was mostly due to the two IT tools mentioned immediately above (Euramis and Machine Translation).

The final amount to be paid for Euramis was lower than forecast because of:

- the lower than anticipated costs of hosting and external personnel;
- the Euramis infrastructure cost, which decreased due to the decommissioning of unused stress test infrastructure and
- the Euramis Next Generation costs, which were below estimates because of a delay in the planning phase of the project.

For Machine Translation (MT@EC), the underspending was due to the migration of computing capacity to the cloud as part of the switch from MT@EC to eTranslation, which was not covered by the agreement in place on interinstitutional access to MT@EC.

The switch from MT@EC to eTranslation resulted in a new financing arrangement which will avoid substantial budget variations in the future.

III. FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM

A) EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

The internal control framework (ICF) applicable at the GSC is based on the internationally accepted standards by COSO (see www.coso.org). The goal of the ICF is to provide reasonable assurance as to the achievement of objectives.

The ICF for the GSC consists of five components and 17 principles, to which LING adheres and contributes.

The efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems in place at LING are assured, inter alia, by:

- the demonstration of commitment to integrity and ethical values by management;
- an appropriate organisational structure, communication channels and reporting lines;
- a centralised financial circuit (see B below);
- the planning of work and the assessment of achievement of objectives; and
- the accountability of individuals by means of delegation of authority and segregation of duties

B) ASSESSMENT OF THE ESTIMATED COSTS AND BENEFITS OF CONTROLS

LING has in place an organisational structure that complies with the ICF and that takes due account of the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

The financial circuit is a centralised system of initiation, verification and authorisation. One full-time member of LING's AD staff has been assigned to deal with financial matters concerning LING and to liaise as appropriate with the competent departments in the Directorate-General for Organisational Development and Services including, in particular, the procurement coordination and budget management units. The arrangements in place are those which best reflect the size of the service, the budget, the number and value of transactions, as well as the availability of human resources.

There is no exact estimation of the total cost of internal controls. However, LING's control measures are efficient and effective, as corroborated by the fact that reports by the Internal Auditor, reports by the European Court of Auditors and opinions of the Audit Committee make no mention of misuse of funds or irregularities in the way in which LING has managed or manages its financial transactions.

The benefits of controls in non-financial terms include better value for money, efficiency gains, system improvements, compliance with regulatory provisions and stakeholder satisfaction.

C) RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OPERATIONS

The main risk arising from the activity of the Translation Service is the risk of late delivery of translations and/or of unacceptable quality disrupting the political or legislative process.

In 2019, LING delivered 196 693 translations. Of these, 195 343 (99.3%) were delivered within the deadline set. Of the 1 350 translations that missed their deadline, about 50% did so by seven minutes or less. As for quality, seven horizontal quality-control tests were carried out (three based on random sampling tests and four targeted). The necessary follow-up action was taken. In 2019, one justified complaint was received centrally regarding one document in three languages. A corrigendum was issued as a result.

IV. CONCLUSIONS ON ASSURANCE

Reasonable assurance on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions can be provided for the following reasons amongst others:

- Transactions at the General Secretariat of the Council are related to administrative expenses only, which is a minor part of the general budget of the EU;
- Positive assurance on administrative expenditure given by the European Court of Auditors for several years and again for 2018;
- A highly effective integrated IT financial management system, which facilitates the control and monitoring of operations;
- The selection by authorising officers of adequate workflows (so-called 'financial circuits') to exercise ex ante controls with varying numbers of control steps depending on level of risk;
- A centralised Finance Directorate that provides specific assistance and advice to all financial actors on procurement, budget management and accounting;
- A centralised Procurement Coordination Unit that must be involved when the amount of a procurement exceeds EUR 15 000 and is in the lead for procurement procedures in excess of EUR 135 000;
- An Internal Audit Unit that provides (i) a guarantee as to the degree of control over activities carried out in implementation of the budget and (ii) advice on improving the conditions under which those activities are carried out and on encouraging sound financial management;
- An Audit Committee which monitors the work of the Internal Auditor with a view to ensuring that the Internal Audit Unit carries out its functions efficiently, effectively and independently. The Audit Committee also monitors the implementation of the recommendations set out in internal audit reports and in reports by the Court of Auditors. It makes recommendations to the Secretary General on any issues concerning internal audit and the effectiveness of internal control systems.

V. DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

I, the undersigned,

Deputy Director-General of the Translation Service (LING),

in my capacity as authorising officer by delegation,

declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view¹;

state that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions;

confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.

Brussels, 31 March 2020

[Signed]

Máire KILLORAN

LING Deputy Director-General

LING Authorising Officer by Delegation

¹ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the service.