Conference interpreting in the European Union institutions

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Introduction
The European Union (EU) institutions are multilingual to a degree unknown elsewhere. Firmly rooted in the European Treaties, multilingualism is the reflection of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Union and makes the institutions more open, democratic and accessible for all citizens, which underpins the legitimacy and effectiveness of the EU’s democratic system. Furthermore, as a community of law, the practice of multilingualism in the EU is instrumental in fostering effective access to justice and the rule of law. In practice, the 24 official languages are used on an almost daily basis and interpreters are a regular presence in meetings. To meet the needs of the EU as a global player, non-EU languages are also regularly used and interpreted. The interpreting services of the EU institutions exist to enable oral multilingual communication. The interpreters facilitate communication and decision-making processes, when and where they are needed.

Interpretation services in the EU institutions
Three of the EU institutions manage interpreting services, those being the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP) and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). In fact, the EU institutions are the biggest employer of conference interpreters in the world; at the time of writing (first quarter of 2021), the European Commission (EC) has approximately 480 staff interpreters, the European Parliament (EP) approximately 250 and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) approximately 70. Both the European Commission’s and the Parliament’s interpreting service also serve other institutions and agencies; in fact, the Commission’s interpreters work more in the Council of the EU (and its highest instance, the European Council) than anywhere else. When simultaneous interpreting began at the EC in 1958, there were very few qualified conference interpreters, and they worked at both the EC and the Council of the EU. The EP always had its own service, which started with the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, and then became the Common Assembly of the three supranational communities that existed at the time, before becoming the European Parliament. In 1981, the Joint Interpreting and Conferences Service was established...
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(or Service Commun Interprétation-Conférences—SCIC—as it is better known) to ensure rationalisation of staff, budgets and administrative services. DG SCIC services all the Council of the EU meetings (and bills the Council for the service) as well as meetings of the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions (shared with the EP), the European Investment Bank and of the many European agencies, which explains why it employs almost twice as many staff interpreters as the EP. Besides their staff interpreters, the institutions work with a jointly administered list of around 3,000 freelance conference interpreters, who work more or less regularly for one or more of the institutions.

Conference interpreting has always been a distinct profession within the institutions, who also employ large translation services to implement multilingualism in the written word. The vast majority of the interpreting work is done in simultaneous, though occasionally consecutive and ‘chuchotage’ (whispering) are also used. While the institutions do provide sign language interpreting on request (see Turner, Grbić, Stone, Tester & de Wit, Chapter 38, in this volume), this chapter will focus solely on spoken language interpreting, as provided by the European Commission (whose main client is the Council of the EU), the European Parliament and the Court of Justice interpreting services.

One distinct feature of conference interpreting in the EU institutions is undeniably its scale. The languages of the Union are laid down in Council regulation Number 1 (EUR-Lex 2013) as amended with each accession to the Union. Twenty-four official languages mean a theoretical 552 possible language combinations, as each language is interpreted into the 23 others. In practice, however, Irish is a special case; in some high-level meetings, and at EP plenary sessions, interpretation is provided from Irish into the other languages, but very rarely from the other languages into Irish. This large number of languages implies not only a substantial administrative effort on the part of those organising behind the scenes, but also makes the work of the interpreters extremely complex. They have to orientate themselves within a meeting where participants speak not only an array of languages (some of which have to be taken on relay, see below) but also represent very varied national points of view, realities, and perspectives. In the Court of Justice, “the most multilingual court in the world” (Van der Jeught 2015: 192), the use of different languages in a given hearing is anything but formalistic: it guarantees the pluralism of legal cultures in the legal debate that takes place before the Court of Justice. Hence, the interpreter needs to navigate those conceptual nuances between 27 different legal systems expressed in any of the 24 official languages.

This very specific and special work context also unifies the services and makes the interpreters who work there a singular breed of conference interpreter. That means that despite some natural divisions the interpreters working for the EU institutions form a strong community:

although they are divided into various subgroups along organisational (EP/EC), administrative (Auxiliary Conference Interpreters ACIs/officials) and linguistic (A-language [see below]) lines, the specific characteristics of their work context define them than as a community of practice (Wenger 1998) with a joint professional mission.

(Duflou 2016: XX)

Nonetheless, there are more similarities between the work of interpreters in the EC and the EP, than the CJEU. While the Court of Justice interpreting service shares recruitment processes with the other two institutions and undertakes other cooperation activities with them, it nonetheless a unique workplace for interpreters. The specificities of working in this exclusively legal setting mean that the Court tends to have a more distinct group of freelance interpreters and a smaller, more specialised staff. One of the main features of conference interpreting, as
practised in the Court of Justice, is programmed preparation.² This is a key part of the work of an interpreter at the CJEU, for both staff and freelancers. As in any other court of law, an extensive written procedure precedes the hearing. And although cases vary in length and complexity, interpreters are given time to study the file of the case extensively to identify the parties to the case, the issues at stake, the arguments they put forward, the legislation and case law at stake, as well as the keywords and main legal concepts and terms involved. The committing to memory of these keywords, concepts and terms, as well as the in-depth analysis of the case (issues, arguments, legislation) are essential before any interpreter enters the booth. The Court of Justice is the only EU institution that gives freelancers a whole paid day of preparation to enable them to read up on the case or meeting to which they are assigned.

All EU interpreters, whether at the EC, the EP or the CJEU, work against the backdrop of extreme multilingualism, in large meetings with large language regimes. For pragmatic reasons (due to the constraints of physical space as well as human and financial resources), there has been a shift towards identifying ‘real needs’ in meetings. Meeting organisers are encouraged only to request interpretation when it is necessary. In the EC, this idea was formalised by Vice-President Kinnock in 2002 (Commission Européenne 2002). In the EP, the approach is called ‘resource efficient full multilingualism’ which means that the resources to be devoted to multilingualism are managed on the basis of users’ real needs, measures to make users more aware of their responsibilities and more effective planning of requests for language facilities (European Parliament Research Service 2019). This may lead to more variable language regimes, and often ‘asymmetrical regimes’, i.e. there are more languages spoken in the room than there are languages being interpreted in the interpreting booths. The Greek delegate, for example, may want to speak his own language (passive³ for the interpreters), but does not need interpretation into Greek as he can understand, say, English (active⁴ for the interpreters). In the Court, the language arrangement for each hearing has always been highly customised, since for each hearing a bespoke interpreting team is put together exclusively taking into account the language of the case,⁵ the language of the different intervening States, the linguistic needs of Judges and Advocate Generals and the language of of official visitors. The Rules of Procedure of the Court of Justice (Court of Justice 2012) establish the imperative linguistic regime of the institution. In the case of a hearing, if the Greek government is to intervene in a given hearing, interpretation must be provided and cannot be foregone.

Though the institutions work predominantly with interpreters working from a range of passive languages into their A language, for some languages and in certain situations, retour interpreting⁶ is required. Trained and tested interpreters are called upon to work from their A language into a B language. Often, this rendering will then be picked up by a number of other interpretation booths and rendered, in turn, into their language. Relay interpreting,⁷ combined with retour is a common occurrence in the institutions and is part of making multilingualism work. This way of working means that interpreters in the institutions have to work closely together as an interdependent team. It also means that the quality of each individual’s work is paramount as the team will only ever be as strong as its weakest link. So, both quality and quantity are distinguishing features of the interpreting services. It is both because the language regime is often so large and complex, that the services must have the most accomplished interpreters working for them and because the stakes are high and tolerance of error is low. Working for Heads of State and government, elected Members of Parliament and for judges and legal experts in a court of law, these interpreters must provide the highest possible quality of service (see Slaughter Olsen, Liu & Viaggio, Chapter 5, in this volume).

Behind the interpreters are large teams of administrative staff (250 staff in the EC, 170 in the EP, 7 in the CJEU, at the time of writing), to ensure that everything runs smoothly in
terms of service provision. This means programming the interpreters to ensure that all the different language combinations are covered, documents are provided, etc. Dealing with last-minute changes—such as languages suddenly being added, urgent last-minute meetings programmed, replacing sick colleagues—on a daily basis is part of their challenging job. Besides the programming and planning units, there are also freelance recruitment and training units, IT experts and meeting technicians, terminology and documentation teams and many more. Without them, the multilingual machinery would simply grind to a halt.

The fact that freelance interpreters are assimilated to staff (for payment—they receive a set percentage of the staff salary, and for programming purposes—only very few meetings in the EC are the reserve of staff interpreters, and none are at the EP or the CJEU) is also something specific to the EU context. Freelancers are referred to as ‘ACIs’ (‘Auxiliary Conference Interpreters’) and many ACIs in Brussels only ever work in the institutions, sometimes predominantly in one rather than in the other. ACIs can also benefit from the different professional support activities usually reserved for staff (language courses in Brussels and abroad, thematic training, etc.). “The fact that they [EU interpreters] belong to the relatively stable pool of staff and freelance interpreters employed by the European institutions’ interpreting services promotes the creation of a closely-knit professional community” (Duflou 2016: 16, see also Dam & Gentile, Chapter 21, in this volume).

**Recruitment**

Furthermore, the community itself acts as gatekeeper in terms of recruitment. Staff interpreters form the selection boards for both staff recruitment and freelance accreditation tests as well as being responsible for quality monitoring and reporting. Staff interpreters must pass a recruitment competition, which are sometimes centrally and jointly organised, and sometimes institution-based. Once through the competition they are recruited by one of the three institutions and become a part of that institution’s staff, working almost exclusively for that institution. On the other hand, ACI accreditation tests are managed by an inter-institutional test office (housed in the Commission but working for all institutions) and successful candidates are placed on the ‘joint list’, making them available for any of the three services.

The accreditation tests for freelance interpreters are the same for all three services, as are the open competitions for staff recruitment. This shows that the same standards and the same level of quality apply in each institution. This also fosters a sense of belonging to a community, to a rather special club of those interpreters (staff or freelance) who have met the required entry standards, and who are providing the highest possible quality of service. The legal texts governing interpreters’ status also apply to all three institutions (the Staff Regulation for staff (EUR-Lex 2016), and the AIIC-EU Convention for ACIs (Europa 1999). Without the freelance interpreters, the interpreting services would not be able to meet all the demands for the provision of interpreting. Furthermore, “the many freelancers who work for two institutions … constitute an important binding factor between the institutions, as they carry experiences across organisational boundaries” (Duflou 2016: 17). However, it is not only freelancers who work together across institutions, so too do the staff—more now than perhaps at any time in the past. There are staff exchanges, for instance, where an interpreter can spend part of every month in the other institution. In the case of the CJEU, EC interpreters spend six weeks in Luxembourg working side by side with their CJEU colleagues in hearings, participating in a structured exchange scheme that benefits both sides. Some training initiatives are also undertaken jointly, for example, selection board training. Yet, besides the Council who contracts interpreting services from the Commission, the institutions maintain separate services, each
with their own staff. These staff allow the institutions to maintain organisational independence and the ability to set their own priorities. In the case of the Court, the specialised, legal nature of the institution clearly warrants a separate service. The Commission and the Parliament are political institutions and a dedicated in-house service means that each institution has access to an agile, responsive team of experts and the capacity to act according to political needs. The in-house staff are the living memory of the service and tend to be very long-serving. In all three institutions, they act as the reference points for quality and are the standard setters.

**Outreach and cooperation**

Precisely because of the specific and special EU context and the clearly identifiable common interests, the interpreting services have endeavoured to join forces when presenting their needs and career opportunities to the outside world. Outreach activities at language shows and career fairs, for instance, are often carried out jointly. When groups of conference interpreting students come to Brussels, there are presentations of all the services at the same session, showing that while each may have their specificities, the overall context and the quality and standards required are the same.

Both the EC and the EP interpreting services have long recognised the need to cooperate with and support universities,¹⁰ which train conference interpreters, and to help aspiring new interpreters. Support may be financial in the form of grants or bursaries for students, or take the form of teaching assistance and membership of examining boards. The EC’s *Speech Repository* is a form of assistance too, making over 5,000 speeches in over 30 languages available to interpreting students as practice material. Students at partner universities have privileged access to a dedicated section with even more speeches and features, called *My Speech Repository*. In the case of the Court of Justice, two projects have recently gained momentum: the “Meet the Court” webinars and the tailor-made pedagogical tool “One Day at the Court”, both aimed at sharing with universities the Court’s unique expertise in conference interpreting in a legal setting. Each institution has its own set of priorities for succession planning and focuses its support accordingly. The EC and EP both actively support the *European Masters in Conference Interpreting* (EMCI) consortium of universities, and have collaborated extensively on curriculum design, quality standards and training for trainers’ initiatives (see Kalina & Barranco-Droege, Chapter 24, in this volume). The Court has also participated in some EMCI training and exam sessions. The EU institutions’ support does not stop at university level though. There have been several joint support programmes supported by all three services for recent graduates, such as the *Professional Accreditation Support Scheme*, with the aim of preparing promising graduates with in-demand language combinations for the accreditation test and future work with the institutions. The CJEU has also been running a paid internship for recent graduates for the past 20 years. Every year, after an extensive selection process, up to 10 graduates come to Luxembourg for 10 weeks where they work in the same conditions as staff interpreters. They prepare cases and work in the booth (with their mics off) under the supervision of professional interpreters, benefitting from their guidance and feedback. This scheme has proved extremely useful as a learning tool and in helping graduates bridge the gap between university and the expectations of the professional world.¹¹

The new *Knowledge Centre on Interpretation (KCI)* set up by the EC should be mentioned here as an important tool in the outreach and collaboration process for all types of cooperation, communication and repository. The *KCI* was set up to reach the global community of interpreters,¹² so its ambitions stretch further than inter-institutional or European-based cooperation. Whilst the community of EU interpreters has its own specificities, it is nonetheless
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part of a wider, global community of conference interpreters. But precisely because the EU interpreting services are the biggest in the world, how they respond to challenges, how they adapt and evolve to become future-proof will have a knock-on effect on the community as a whole. Therefore, while the institutional services answer to their hierarchies and provide dedicated services in their own institutional context, they nonetheless feel a responsibility towards the interpreting profession as a whole. And there are indeed challenges for both the present and future of conference interpreting, both inside and outside the institutions.

Rising to the challenges

Within the EU, resource efficiency is an obvious challenge. Budgets are constantly being scrutinised and the language services are a neatly identifiable budget item in the EU’s administrative spending. Despite the commitment to multilingualism (Commission of the European Communities 2005), the institutions have to manage “the tension between the competing interests of democratic fairness and logistical practicality” (Corbett et al. 2016: 50) as well as the constant pressure faced by all departments to reduce costs and staffing levels. In the EP, for instance, the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism (European Parliament 2019a) lays down the priorities and modalities for the provision of interpretation services with the clear aim of rationalising and streamlining service provision. However, assumptions are commonly made about everyone speaking English and the language services often become an all too easy target for those who need to cut budgets but have not considered the truth of this assumption, nor the wider value and role of multilingualism in the EU institutions (see Albl-Mikasa, Chapter 39, in this volume). In fact, according to research (Gazzola & Grin 2013), multilingual regimes are fairer, more effective and not more expensive than an English only regime would be. In the case of the CJEU where real multilingualism makes it stand out from other international courts, multilingualism is not only a defining feature of the Court of Justice but also one of its core values. Whilst the Court has a sophisticated language regime, set out in the Rules of Procedure of the Court of Justice, an “adequate [working] solution” (Van der Jeught 2015: 58) had to be found and so French became the language of internal deliberation. This means that when judges deliberate, they do it alone, without legal clerks or interpreters, using French as the common language. This means that all Court interpreters need to have a working knowledge of French, since the files will always include the translations of all documents into French. It also implies that the French booth is present at all hearings providing, almost without exception, a direct interpretation from all languages.

The future though will be conditioned largely by the response of the institutions—and of the profession—to two major phenomena: the development and evolution of language and conference technologies and the use of English as a global lingua franca.

New technologies

New language and conference technologies are, without doubt, disruptive, and have caused a huge shift in client expectations. Machine translation—instant and free—is a reality we all have in our pockets. Automatic speech recognition works in our homes and on our phones and we are promised earbuds that will instantly translate conversations into other languages. None of this will yet work adequately in the complex settings in which interpreters work in the EU, but client expectations and experiences are changing. The interpretation services have to be able to react to this and to help shape the technologies that will change multilingual communication.
Technology has, of course, already brought radical changes to the way interpreters work (see Fantinuoli, Chapter 36, in this volume). Computer-aided translation is taken for granted; ‘computer-aided interpretation’ is, however, also a reality. Every conference interpreter working for the institutions uses electronic sources of information for preparation and while in the booth. Interpreters can listen to previous speeches by the speakers in the meeting, thus familiarising themselves with accents and speech patterns. Access to terminology databases takes the legwork out of preparing documents, and soon term identification and recognition could make this process even faster (the EC is working on an ‘interpreters’ toolbox’ to do just this). Access to the internet in the booth means that facts can be checked and references identified, case law and legislation located, whilst teammates are working. All of this has given interpreters access to information in a more targeted and efficient way. In addition, since meetings and interpretation are now routinely recorded and archived, opportunities now exist for interpreters to review their own work.

The recording of interpretation alongside the original speaker is a double-edged sword. Web streaming of public meetings, with interpretation, undoubtedly serves the general public in giving them access to the work the institutions are doing in a language they understand. However, it is making interpretation into something that it is not. Again, technology is changing expectations, since people listening back and comparing an original and the interpretation tend to expect a perfect word-for-word ‘translation’ and lose sight of the fact that the interpretation is there to facilitate live communication. To clarify that interpreting is a snapshot of an utterance, the EP, for example, displays a disclaimer on its live streaming websites, stating that the interpretation does not constitute an authentic record of the proceedings. In the case of the Court, confidential speaking notes from lawyers are frequently made available exclusively to the interpreters before the oral submissions so they can prepare meticulously beforehand and provide accurate interpretation of quotes from case law, acts of law and legal concepts and terms in an exercise of ‘simultaneous interpretation with text’ or ‘sight interpreting’ (see Bartłomiejczyk & Stachowiak-Szymczak, Chapter 2, in this volume). In any case, what prevails is the original speech that is given in a specific live communication setting, whether it be a plenary session, a working group meeting or a hearing. All services work hard on managing client understanding of what interpretation can and cannot provide and endeavour to help their clients get their message across in an optimal way by providing information about the constraints faced by interpreters.

‘New’ technologies enabled the first major shift in conference interpreting, when interpreters moved from centre-stage interpreting consecutively with a pen and paper as their only tools to the back of the room in booths with microphones, headphones and consoles, working simultaneously. Will new technologies again change the way—and the place—interpreters work, with the possibilities of working remote from the conference venue, or having remote participants? Remote interpreting, where some or all of the interpreters are not in the same location as the meeting participants (see Seeber & Fox, Chapter 35, in this volume), is already in common usage in the Council. It has proven to work well with the interpreting staff cooperating very closely with the technical staff. In fact, this development has meant that more languages can be interpreted, thus increasing the level of service offered where previously physical space dictated the language regime, rather than the needs or wishes of the meeting participants.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a new urgency for the interpreting services to adapt to new ways of working and toworking with new platforms and technologies. Multilingual services were still very much required during the crisis—possibly more so than ever both to show that the EU was responding to the crisis and to enable it to do so effectively. The initial response from both the EP and the EC was to organise meetings where the vast majority of
participants were remote, connected through a platform, and the interpreters were on the premises, but either alone in the booth or in an adapted booth possibly coupled to the room where the meeting participants actually were. In other words, the interpreters used only ‘hard’ booths, as the infrastructure for them to work off premises was not in place. This meant a reduction in the number of languages that could be offered for each meeting, as instead of the usual two or three interpreters per booth, health measures meant that social distancing had to be respected. Travel restrictions also meant that ACIs could not come to Brussels, Strasbourg or Luxembourg, leading to huge upheavals in expected recruitment patterns and loss of income, which the institutions tried to mitigate in various ways. However, as early as 26 March 2020, some two weeks after Belgium went into lockdown, the EP interpreting service provided interpreting in 22 languages for a plenary session and went on to provide all 24 languages for subsequent sessions. The EC also quickly expanded its language coverage. In the case of the Court of Justice, hearings resumed in May 2020 with members of the Court and interpreters working from the Court premises in Luxembourg and some parties being allowed to intervene from their own capitals with a secure video link. This link was tested beforehand and given the green light by interpreters and technicians in every instance following a previously agreed protocol. This effort, for the benefit of all EU citizens, has continued, with 76 hearings conducted using remote interventions during the year 2020. As the pandemic wore on, new ways were explored to bring ACIs back to the booth, wherever and whatever that “booth” might be (News@curia 2020).

In this rapidly evolving situation, new protocols will be agreed and health and safety will continue to be taken extremely seriously. The services consider it important to work together to help shape technical standards and configurations and to cooperate with other international and intergovernmental organisations to identify appropriate and effective solutions to preserve multilingualism. At the time of writing, it is too early to say just how significant and extensive this move to remote working will be and whether it will serve the purpose of ensuring business continuity during a crisis or whether it heralds a paradigm shift in the institutional provision of interpretation.

These changes will also profoundly affect the profession as a whole, hence the keen interest on behalf of the institutions and their staff to ensure that they can shape the technologies and be active in setting standards and requirements.

**English as a lingua franca?**

And what of the use of English as a lingua franca in the EU institutions? First of all, it is a myth that everyone speaks English. A Eurobarometer survey from 2012 revealed that 46 per cent of Europeans do not “speak a foreign language well enough to hold a conversation” (TNS Opinion & Social 2012: 12), let alone participate in a complex negotiation or operate in a high-level political context. But it is not only participants in meetings who need to be considered; interpretation services are also there for the public at large. Democracy, transparency and accountability require that all EU citizens can understand what is being done in their name.

The use of English, in a variety of forms, is frequent but by no means the norm. Participants in meetings may choose the language they speak for a variety of reasons and indeed, may even switch language depending on the circumstances and the topic—even within the same speech. There is no rule imposed on Members of the EP (MEPs), for instance, about the language they speak, other than Rule 167 from the *Rules of Procedure* (European Parliament 2019b) which states that Members may speak the official language of their choice. There seems, nevertheless, to be a more or less widespread belief among speakers in EU meetings that English is more
direct and smoother as a means of communication. However, a study by Reithofer (2010), though on a small scale, confirmed what many interpreters would consider to be true—the communicative effectiveness of a statement is higher when it is made by a native speaker and mediated by a professional interpreter than when it is made by a non-native speaker. It is, of course, not just the speaker’s competence that is a determining factor here, but also that of the listeners, an aspect over which the well-intentioned speaker has absolutely no control. Interpreting from non-native English clearly also has an effect on the interpreters themselves. Albl-Mikasa (2010) researched the effects of non-native use of English on professional interpreters and found that it was not that interpreters feared becoming obsolete because of the ubiquity of English but rather that they feared the “adverse effects on working conditions and job satisfaction” (Albl-Mikasa 2010: 143, see also Albl-Mikasa, Chapter 39, in this volume).

The Court differs again here, as non-native speakers are extremely rare. Rather, interpreters have to deal with carefully elaborated written speeches that are given by accomplished speakers, setting the bar extremely high for the professionals in the booth but adding to the job satisfaction of working with challenging and rich native speaker input.

The interpreting services attempt to educate users and clients about the effectiveness of interpretation but many in the services feel this is an uphill battle. And of course, it remains to be seen what the effect of Brexit will be on the use of English in the institutions. It will remain an official language but how will its use and prevalence be affected? Will a new form of ‘Euro English’, based on new norms and rules, emerge unhindered by the standards of a substantial group of native speakers? Will interpreters and translators become the guardians of ‘authentic’ British English?

Conclusion

The institutions in general are also often ambivalent about their interpreters, or rather, the need for them. It is often claimed that recourse to interpretation slows down meetings and makes them less lively. But in the end, interpretation enables the EU to function; treaties are negotiated, budgets and recovery packages are debated, amended and agreed, laws are passed and justice is done—all through the medium of interpretation. The interpreters do sometimes get recognition and have been referred to as “unsung heroes” by former Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (2019).

As service providers, the interpreters, with the support staff and managers, have adapted and evolved to meet new needs and new challenges, constantly reconciling the tensions imposed by the constraints of required efficiency gains, new languages, unpredictability and unrealistic expectations with the professional requirements of top quality, innovation and guaranteeing understanding.

Notes

1 On 1 January 2007, Irish became a full EU official language, with a temporary derogation for a renewable period of five years (Council Regulation No 920/2005) stating that ‘the institutions of the European Union shall not be bound by the obligation to draft or translate all acts in Irish except for regulations adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council’. This derogation was extended until 31 December 2016 by Council Regulation No 1257/2010. It was extended again by Council Regulation 2015/2264, but it is to be gradually reduced in scope and eventually brought to an end by 31 December 2021 (the end of the Irish derogation).

2 Interpreters at all the institutions prepare thoroughly for meetings but only at the Court is preparation time systematically programmed and paid for freelancers.
Passive: the languages from which interpreters interpret (C languages).
Active: the language(s) into which the interpreters interpret (A and B languages).
The possible languages of a case are defined in Chapter 8, Article 36 “Language of a case” in the Rules of Procedure of the Court of Justice.
Retour interpreting: for example, a Bulgarian interpreter in the Bulgarian booth interprets into German (going from their own language into another active language).
Relay interpretation: for example, a German interpreter interprets from Bulgarian into German, and the English interpreter (who does not understand Bulgarian directly) takes the ‘relay’ into German and interprets the German into English.
An exchange scheme allows staff interpreters to interpret for a period of time at a different institution, and where one institution is experiencing a shortage and difficulties recruiting for a given language, interpreters can be ‘lent’ to another institution.
Joint list: the joint list was set up in 2004, until then ACIs were tested and recruited separately by each institution.
Up until the late 1990s, the Commission trained its own interpreters during a 6-month in-house training scheme ‘the stage’. With enlargement to ten new countries looming, a decision was taken to stop this form of training and instead invest in cooperation with existing universities, or in some cases in setting up new interpreting courses.
Besides the webinars mentioned above, the CJEU has also recently launched an online training module called Module de français juridique (test phase, autumn 2020).
Not exclusively conference interpreters, also interpreters working in the courts (legal interpreters) and in health and educational settings (public service or community interpreters).

Disclaimer
The views expressed in this chapter are the authors’ own and do not necessarily reflect those of their respective institutions.

References


