



Quality Handbook

**for the External Contractors of DG Translation of the
European Parliament**



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Welcome to DG TRANSLATION's Quality Handbook for External Contractors

This Quality Handbook for External Contractors:

- provides an overview of the **quality and linguistic requirements** of DG Translation; and
- contains **practical recommendations and guidelines** to follow for delivering linguistic products and services requested by DG Translation.

We hope it will be a helpful tool providing
you with the information you need.

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1. ORIGINALS

The quality of linguistic products is dependent on both the linguistic and the technical quality of source content.

1.1 Technical quality

The technical quality of source content has become increasingly important due to the continuous optimisation and automation of processes around translation and language technologies. Authors in the European Parliament have a guide at their disposal, **The Technical Vade Mecum for Authors and Requesting Services**, to help them correctly prepare their documents, which are to be translated. Some documents also go at the beginning of the translation process through an internal service that checks whether the original document complies with the relevant technical requirements.

1.2 Linguistic quality

A range of documents undergo editing¹ before they are sent to the next step, be it translation, adaptation or any other linguistic service.

Editing services cover the following document categories:

- own-initiative (INI) texts (draft and final reports and opinions) drafted in any official language;
- written and oral questions in any official language;
- non-legislative session motions for resolutions, joint motions for resolutions and amendments;
- any non-legislative text drafted in English or in French (editing on request).

In 2020, the European Parliament adopted the Citizens' Language policy. In our services, we apply the principles of clear language that have the reader at their core. The aim is to improve the clarity and readability of all of Parliament's content, and make it more accessible and engaging.

¹ Editing (also called 'MeF' or 'mise-en-forme') – a language check carried out on a text to ensure it complies with the grammar, punctuation and spelling rules of the source language. Where appropriate, the text may also be improved in terms of fluency, register and style.

2. QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Definition of quality

QUALITY means the degree to which the linguistic product or service is **suitable for its intended use** and **complies with specified and/or implied requirements and professional standards**.

Specified requirements accompany the assignment (information in the notes accompanying the assignments, as reference documents or via email) and the **implied requirements** can be deduced from the translation request's standard data, such as job type, requesting service, procedure type.

The **professional standards** we apply for all linguistic services are based on the principles of professional translation outlined in 5.3.1 of **ISO 17100 Translation services – Requirements for translation services**.

This means the following:

- creating target language content in accordance with the purpose and target audience of the project;
- following the relevant linguistic conventions and project specifications;
- complying with specific terminology and any reference material provided, and ensuring terminological consistency;
- ensuring semantic accuracy of the target language content;
- applying the syntax, spelling and punctuation conventions of the target language;
- complying with any proprietary and/or client style guide;
- applying the correct formatting.

2.2 Contractual quality requirements

As a contractor, you must ensure that the **delivered translation assignment is ready for use** and does not require further correction. It should not include any notes, marking in track changes or highlighting.

Furthermore, it means ensuring that the delivered translation assignment fulfils the following requirements:

- accurately reflects the meaning of the source language content;
- is fluent, clear, consistent and tailored to the intended use and the target audience(s);
- is consistent with grammar, punctuation and spelling rules;

- uses correct terminology consistently and complies with any naming conventions;
- adheres to relevant document models or templates;
- uses and quotes correctly references to documents already published or any reference material, including the terminology of the reference material quoted;
- complies with any accompanying instructions;
- is produced in the agreed-upon format;
- complies with any technical requirements regarding, in particular, settings, formatting, tags, style sheets, parsing and segmentation;
- takes into account feedback provided in respect of previously delivered translation assignments;
- is complete.

You must **thoroughly revise the entire translation** before delivery.

2.3 Handling of translation memory matches

As a contractor you are responsible for the quality of the entire content, including the segments already (pre)translated into the target language or coming from the translation memories provided by DG TRAD. You must ensure that these parts of text are checked and corrected, if needed.

When translating documents that contain two-column amendments that are based on reference documents, you must take into account the segments already translated into the target language and not modify them in the left-hand column. In the case of errors, you should correct these in the right-hand column in ***bold italics*** (see [RdM chapter 06.00, point 3](#)). When translating final documents without columns it means ensuring that segments that have been (pre)translated or come from the translation memories are checked and corrected, if needed.

3. LINGUISTIC REQUIREMENTS

The linguistic requirements applicable to DG TRAD products and services fall into three categories:

- general linguistic rules and recommendations;
- DG TRAD rules and recommendations;
- specific recommendations for some frequent job types.

3.1 General linguistic rules and recommendations

Source	Description
Interinstitutional Style Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part One: rules to be strictly applied in the editing of acts published in the Official Journal• Part Two: main technical and editorial norms for general publications• Part Three: serves as a basis for closer harmonisation between all languages and all institutions• Part Four: individual language rules
Joint Practical Guide of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission for persons involved in the drafting of European Union legislation (JPG)	A platform of general drafting principles. Each institution uses the Guide alongside other instruments, which contain specific standard formulations and more detailed practical rules.
Joint Handbook for the presentation and drafting of acts subject to the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP)	The purpose of the Joint Handbook is to supplement the Joint Practical Guide with guidelines for presentation and standard wording for acts subject to the ordinary legislative procedure. The Joint Handbook has been drafted by the legal and legal-linguistic services of the three institutions and focuses on the final version of legislative acts, as adopted at the end of the ordinary legislative procedure.
Language-specific conventions	Part Four of the Interinstitutional Style Guide, as well as other conventions of each language community.

3.2 DG TRAD rules and recommendations

General	
Recueil des Modèles (RdM)	The RdM models must be applied. In the event of discrepancies between the original and an RdM model, you can contact the ETU functional mailbox to check whether the deviation from the RdM is intentional.
Consistency and terminology	<p>Terminological consistency is essential within a document.</p> <p>In the case of repeated phrases, consistent wording should be used. In the case of orthographic variants, consistent spelling should be used.</p> <p>The main terminological reference database for EP translations is IATE.</p>
Guidelines on gender-neutral language in the European Parliament	These guidelines, available in all official EU languages, are meant to raise awareness of the importance of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language and to foster their use in parliamentary publications and communication.
Glossary of Sensitive Language for Internal and External Communications (language versions are provided by respective language units)	These guidelines, made up of 3 glossaries, available in all official EU languages, are meant to help the European Parliament communicate correctly in the areas of disability, LGBTI+ issues and matters pertaining to race, ethnicity and religion.
Specific	
Titles quoted in the text	<p>A search should be carried out to ascertain whether the title of a publication quoted has already been translated into the target language. If an official translation of the title of the legislative/judicial publication or international instrument cannot be found, the title should be rendered in the original language followed by a translation or vice versa (i.e. translation or original title in brackets).</p> <p>In the case of titles of books and other publications, the language-specific rules should be applied unless specific instructions are provided accompanying the translation assignment.</p>

Titles of INI reports	In case of own-initiative reports (INI procedure), the translation of the title has to be checked in the decision to draw up own-initiative reports (search for the decision by procedure number in the minutes of EP plenary).
Quotations	In the case of quotations (e.g. from national legislation, international instruments or ECJ judgments) for which there is no official translation ² in the target language, the quotation should be translated either without the use of quotation marks, without formatting indicating direct quotation, or by inserting '[unofficial translation]' at the end of the quotation.
Hyperlinks	In the case of hyperlinks, it should be checked whether the document or website, which they point to, exists in the target language, in which case they should be localised. Should there be no target language equivalent, the original link should be kept unless it is considered appropriate to refer to another language version which is more likely to be understood by the reader than the original (e.g. EN instead of FR).

² 'Official translation' means a translation published by the body/institution/entity claiming to be the author of the text or a translation published in the official journal of a Member State.

3.3 Specific recommendations for some frequent job types

The recommendations below are based on the priority levels of the EP documents.

	Code	Document type	Recommendations for translation
A. Session documents			
A1	PF, AM	Agreed texts pursuant to Rule 75(4) of the Rules of Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal • use the standard wording for recitals on subsidiarity and proportionality, Schengen recitals and the references to the implementing and delegated acts • pay special attention to maintaining internal consistency (especially terminology and phraseology) and external consistency (basic act(s) and any parallel texts) • pay attention to the conceptual scope of terms • the translated version should follow the source text, but changes (bold and italics, deletion marks) should be indicated in relation to the target language • corrections or technical adjustments to the source text must be reflected in the target language but must not be marked • source-text 'sentence boundaries' must be preserved
A2	RR, AM, MA	Legislative reports and amendments thereto (COD, CNS, NLE, APP + BUI, DEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal • use formal style
A3	RR, AM	Non-legislative reports and amendments thereto (INL, INI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal • use formal style
A4	RE, AM, RC	Final motions for a resolution, joint resolutions and amendments thereto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal • since resolutions address a broader public, a freer, more communicative style should be used
B. Administrative texts for governing bodies			
B1		Letters, notes, internal regulations, speeches, agendas, minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use formal style • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal • speeches may be translated using freer style

C. Committee documents			
C1	AM	Compromise amendments to draft reports and draft opinions (AM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use formal style • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal
C2	PR, AM, PA, AD, RD	Draft reports (PR), amendments (AM), draft opinions (PA), final opinions (AD), draft motions for resolutions (RD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use formal style; explanatory statements and justifications may be translated using freer style • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal
C3	DT, SR	Working documents (DT), executive summaries (SR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use formal style • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal
D. Other documents for translation			
D1		Competition and vacancy notice texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow the source-text meaning without being too literal • use formal style • ensure consistency between all documents relating to the same competition / vacancy notice
D2		Calls for tenders (MP), contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check for the existence of a model or recent similar jobs
D3	DI	Speeches (DI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify texts intended for oral delivery and adapt style accordingly
D4	QE, QO, QH, QZ, IK, IG	Questions (QE, QO, QH, QZ), interpellations (IK, IG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rephrase text into a question if the original is couched as an assertion • avoid jargon
D5	ST	Studies (ST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use descriptive, informative and/or scientific style, depending on subject-matter • make sure it is fluent and readable
D6	FT	Factsheets (FT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • combine fluency and readability with accuracy • observe reference terminology

4. EVALUATION

We carry out quality checks before payment on all externally translated assignments.

The purpose of these checks is to **determine whether the delivered translations meet the quality requirements set out in the contract**. When evaluating the translations we follow common evaluation guidelines. For each evaluation assignment, the quality evaluation process comprises two main steps:

- **error annotation** (identifying errors and assigning the type of error and its severity) and
- **quality score calculation** that is automatic and based on the number of identified errors, their weighting and severity in relation to the number of characters of the evaluated sample in the source language.

The evaluation process leads to the attribution of a **quality mark** that determines the **acceptability level** of a given translation: acceptable, unsatisfactory or unacceptable. The acceptability level has financial implications: unsatisfactory translations result in the reduction of payment by 50% and unacceptable translations in non-payment.

For additional information about evaluation, consult the following material: [evaluation of translation assignments](#) and [calculation of the quality mark](#).