



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Translation

The Director-General

## EUROPEAN MASTER IN TRANSLATION (EMT)

### 1. BACKGROUND

The Bologna Declaration, adopted by European Education Ministers in 1999, sets as primary objectives, *inter alia*, the "promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regard to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes" and the "promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies of study, training and research".

While many European countries have a long tradition of translation training and, consequently, well-established training programmes, some others still lack such programmes or have begun to develop them only recently. Those planning or developing their programmes often need support and assistance in their efforts. In particular, future Member States of the EU would benefit from EU support and advice in assessing and catering for their possible training needs.

There is a manifest interest in international cooperation among the translation training institutes. Several universities are currently developing a European Master's programme (see [http://www.asb.dk/programmes/emt/default\\_en.htm](http://www.asb.dk/programmes/emt/default_en.htm)), and joint translation training projects involving old and new Member States have been carried out (e.g. the involvement of the Aarhus School of Business in translation training in the Baltic States).

There already exists a European Master's in Conference Interpreting programme (EMCI).

The EU is a major employer of translators and an important player on the European translation market. It is therefore in its interest to follow the developments in translation training in Europe closely and contribute to them, in order to make sure that there will be an adequate supply of highly-qualified translators available to meet its requirements and those of the wider translation market.

Lately, a number of institutions developing their translation training programmes have sought assistance from the European Institutions, not only for the financing of their projects but also in terms of giving advice on their curriculum and other training aspects and/or providing assistance in assessment and teaching. Existing national programmes, even long-established ones, might also need to be reviewed to see if they should be updated and/or harmonised.

In the light of the above considerations, this paper presents the desiderata of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) with regard to a European Master's in Translation programme, to serve as a reference for curriculum planning, assessment and comparison

## **2. OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED EMT PROGRAMME**

### **2.1. Type of training programme envisaged**

The suggestions in this paper presuppose an intensive training programme along the lines of the EMCI programme. The exact scope and duration of the programme are left open for discussion, but the basic assumption is that the programme should correspond to some 60–100 credits (under the European Credit Transfer System, ECTS) and take a maximum of 2 years to complete. Obviously, such a programme must focus primarily on the translation component of the training, and not on the language skill / language acquisition component which plays an important role in more extensive university-level translation training programmes. Also, the fact that the following suggestions reflect the Commission's/EU's needs and requirements has some implications for the proposed programme contents, especially as regards the proposed studies in specialised fields. However, bearing these limitations in mind, the desiderata defined apply basically to any translation training programme.

### **2.2. Objectives of the programme**

The main objective of a European Master's in Translation programme should be to produce highly qualified translators who possess all the basic skills required of a professional translator and who are capable of carrying out demanding translation and translation-related tasks and of acting responsibly as members of their profession. Secondly, from the Commission's point of view, the programme should produce – in sufficient numbers – translation professionals who meet the special requirements of the Commission and the other EU institutions.

### **2.3. Translator's skills profile**

According to a paper setting out the profile for Commission translators, the Commission is looking for "high-calibre graduates" who – in addition to the basic professional requirements, such as initiative, intellectual curiosity and motivation – should have the following specific skills:

#### ***Language skills***

- Perfect command of all aspects and stylistic levels of the first language.
- Thorough knowledge of two or more other languages, preferably English, French or German, or – if only one of those – of that language plus one of the other official EU languages.

#### ***Thematic knowledge***

- Familiarity with economics, financial affairs, legal matters, technical or scientific fields.

### *Translation skills*

- A capacity to understand texts in the source language and to render them correctly in the target language, using the register and other language conventions that correspond to their intended purpose.
- A capacity to obtain rapidly and efficiently, in both source language and target language, the background knowledge (facts, terminology, language conventions) necessary to produce a translation of professional standard, even in less widely known fields. This includes the ability to use research tools and to become familiar with research strategies.
- A capacity to master computer-assisted translation and terminology tools, as well as standard office-automation software.

Hence, a professional translator is expected to have sufficient **language skills, communication skills, thematic proficiency** (including expertise in the acquisition of knowledge), and **technical skills**.

There are yet more skills that can be added to the list. Firstly, since the source material for translation is usually related to a cultural context other than that of the translator and his/her target audience, the translator should also be familiar with means and strategies for identifying and solving culture-bound translation problems. In other words, s/he needs **cultural skills**.

Further, as a communication specialist, the translator should:

- be able to analyse communicative situations and their component elements in a systematic fashion, as well as the features of the – often linguistically complex – texts pertaining to these situations (source text(s), parallel texts); and
- be capable of explaining and describing the linguistic and other problems encountered during the translation process, as well as explaining and making a case for the choices made in the translation product.

S/he therefore needs to display **proficiency in analysis and the presentation of arguments**.

Finally, a professional translator, like any qualified professional in other specialist fields, should have a sufficient understanding of his/her profession, including its history, ethics, principles, practices and institutions, i.e. **profession-related knowledge**.

## **2.4. Recommended basic components of the programme**

To enable students to acquire the skills and knowledge listed above, it is suggested that the curriculum include the following components.

- Translation as a profession
- Translation theory
- Text/discourse analysis and translation assignment analysis
- Intercultural communication
- Terminology work
- Information technology for translation
- Linguistic awareness and language cultivation
- Special fields and their languages
- Practical translation (including more than one language combination).

Each component may be divided into one or more modules/courses. A more detailed description of the objectives and the indicative content of the components is given in the **Annex**.

The recommended components do not include any “pure” language learning courses. This is because, for the purposes of the suggestions made in this paper, it is presupposed that those embarking on the programme have a thorough knowledge of at least three languages (the "A" language included). If considered necessary, language courses may be added on top of the required minimum of credits (ECTS). This may, of course, affect the duration of the programme.

What is particularly important is that the curriculum components listed above should be **closely integrated**. This means, for example, that the students should produce their translations using the information/translation technology supplied, that conceptual tools provided by translation theory, text/discourse analysis and cultural analysis should be used to identify, describe, solve and comment on practical translation problems, that the texts translated should relate to the specialist fields which form part of the curriculum, that terminology work should be integrated both into the study of specialist fields and their languages and into practical translation, and so on.

The exact structure of the programme remains for the training institutes to determine. However, it is evident that some of the components listed above and some of their sections have to precede others. For instance, some sections of the information technology component should be offered right at the beginning of the programme so that IT tools can be used. Similarly, “Translation as a profession”, “Text/discourse analysis”, “Intercultural communication” and “Terminology work” would by their nature be better placed in the early part of the programme. It is also recommended that practical translation courses be started very soon after the beginning of the programme, so as not to separate them too much from the other components.

## **2.5. Admission criteria**

The admission criteria should be similar to those applied in the EMCI programme. In other words, to be eligible for admission an applicant must:

- hold a recognised university degree or equivalent and have an excellent command of his/her mother tongue (A-language) over a wide range of topics and registers;
- have an in-depth knowledge of his/her working languages (at least 2 languages, B and C);
- be well-informed about the economic, social and cultural background of the countries in which his/her working languages are used.

In addition, s/he should have:

- good powers of concentration
- an ability to grasp varied and often complex issues swiftly
- a high degree of motivation and intellectual curiosity
- an inclination to show initiative and imagination
- an ability to work consistently and under pressure, both independently and as a member of a team
- a readiness to accept advice and an ability to give feedback
- basic computer skills.

Admission should be subject to an aptitude test..

## **2.6. Practical implementation**

The programme may combine different modes of teaching/learning (contact teaching, remote learning, e-learning). However, personal contact between the trainees and the trainers and among the trainees is vital, especially in teaching practical skills such as those related to document handling and the use of terminology tools and translation tools. It is equally important in practical translation courses where discussion and debate among the participants serve a fruitful purpose.

Study visits and, if possible, familiarisation with professional translation through a practical training period should be encouraged.

The involvement of experienced professional translators in the programme is recommended. For instance, experienced professionals could play a role as guest lecturers, assessors, outside tutors, teachers and staff trainers. The DGT's Visiting Translator Scheme could make a useful contribution in this respect.

The possible training needs of the teaching staff should be charted well before the practical implementation of the programme.

## **2.7. Assessment**

The students' progress should be monitored closely. In addition to tests related to the individual courses/modules, collections (or “portfolios”) of selected student work representing an array of performance could be used. These portfolios could also include “work in progress” illustrating, for instance, the evolution of translations through various stages. Student self-evaluation could also be used.

As to the final assessment of the students, several options are available, including final translation examinations, a demanding translation project with commentary (which could be used as a substitute for a final thesis), or an assessment based simply on the student's results in the different modules/courses of the programme. As far as translation examinations are concerned, attention should be paid to avoiding artificial test situations where, for example, the candidates may not have sufficient access to information sources.

## **European Master's in Translation**

### **Detailed description of the suggested programme components**

#### **Directorate-General for Translation, European Commission**

##### **Translation as a profession**

*Objectives:*

To familiarise the students with various aspects of translation as a profession and thereby help them in developing a strong professional identity and in making career choices.

*Indicative content:*

The history of translation and the translation profession, professional developments and trends, professional ethics and codes of practice, translators' organisations and networks, copyright matters, career opportunities in translation, remuneration, the translator as an entrepreneur, etc.

*Additional remarks:*

The involvement of experienced professional translators in this component is desirable. For instance, the component could include a series of presentations given by visiting translators on various fields and aspects of translation.

##### **Translation theory**

*Objectives:*

To provide a solid theoretical foundation for professional expertise and a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental questions underlying practical translation work.

*Indicative content:*

The key questions and “bones of contention” in translation theory, the main approaches and concepts of translation theory, the main developments in thinking in the field of translation theory, the most important literature and publications in the field.

##### **Text/discourse analysis and translation assignment analysis**

*Objectives:*

To equip the students with conceptual tools that are useful in analysing the texts involved in translation assignments, as well as the various component factors of the translation

assignments and situations themselves, so as to enable them to produce texts that are fit for purpose; to enable the students to identify and describe potential linguistic, textual and text strategic problems and to justify their linguistic, textual and strategic choices.

*Indicative content:*

Basic concepts of linguistics and text/discourse analysis; basic characteristics of textuality; the thematic, functional and argumentative structures of texts; characteristics of text types and genres; analysis of translation situations, assignments and functions.

*Additional remarks:*

Text/discourse analysis should be translation-oriented.

## **Intercultural communication**

*Objective:*

To make the students sensitive to cultural differences and the role of cultural factors in translation and more generally in international communication, and to equip them with conceptual tools for interpreting cultures.

*Indicative content:*

The relationship between language and culture; culture-specificity and its manifestations in texts; the translator's role as a "cultural mediator", translation problems caused by cultural differences, contrastive approaches (e.g., contrastive rhetorics), translations as a source of cultural influence.

## **Terminology work**

*Objective:*

To introduce the basic principles of terminology work and to give the students a working knowledge of and sufficient practical skills in terminology management and the use of terminology tools.

*Indicative content:*

Fundamental principles of terminology work, term banks and other terminology resources, computer-based terminology tools, terminology management, basic lexicography.

## **Information technology for translation**

*Objective:*

To give the students a working knowledge of and sufficient practical skills in computerised document handling and the use of information networks, and translation tools and technologies.

*Indicative content:*



Electronic document handling and management, translation management systems, networks, the Internet as an information source, search tools, electronic databanks, computer-assisted translation (electronic dictionaries, language checking software, translation memory software, computerised translation aids, such as voice recognition systems), machine translation.

### **Linguistic awareness and language cultivation**

*Objective:*

To make the students sensitive to questions of linguistic, stylistic and textual correctness and “naturalness”, especially in their first language, and particularly from the point of view of translational communication.

*Indicative content:*

Basic principles of language preservation and cultivation, current developments in (first) language, translations as a source of linguistic influence, linguistic interference and translationese, revision and language checking of translations.

### **Knowledge of special fields and their languages**

*Objective:*

To give a basic understanding of special fields and their key concepts, as well as their (culture-specific) linguistic and pragmatic conventions (text genres) in order to build up the students’ thematic and communicative competence.

*Indicative content:*

Introduction to various special fields and their conceptual systems, as well as their LSPs (languages for special purposes) and terminology. Such fields may include, *inter alia*, law and administration, economy and commerce, science and research, technology, medicine and international organisations.

*Additional remarks:*

Together with “Practical translation”, this element should play a major role in the programme so that the two would account for at least some 50 % of the total credits.

Due to the vast scope of the special fields, a limited number of domains (1-2) should be focused on. Possible earlier studies completed in relevant special fields by the students should be made good use of in this context. Studies on international organisations, and especially on the EU and its institutions, would be useful for aspiring EU-translators.

### **Practical translation (including more than one language combination)**

*Objective:*

To combine the acquired translation-related knowledge and skills and refine them further through guided translation assignments, to enable trainee translators to develop into translation professionals who are capable of producing functionally adequate and commercially acceptable target texts.

*Indicative content:*

Various types of translation assignments demonstrating different translation functions, text types and subject fields, as well as different ways of dealing with source texts (e.g., translation under strict equivalence constraints, manipulative translation, summary writing, etc.); revision of translations, translation analysis and commentary, terminology work related to the translated texts.

*Additional remarks:*

Together with “Knowledge of special fields and their languages”, this component should play a major role in the programme so that the two would account for at least some 50 % of the total credits.

There should preferably be several translation modules, and at least one (i.e., the first) of them should be limited to texts of a thematically general character, whereas others could/should deal with texts from more specialised domains (preferably the ones included in the “Knowledge of special fields and their languages” component). A course in EU-translation would be useful for aspiring EU-translators.

All translation assignments should be realistic, meaning that the texts to be translated should be ones which are or could be translated in real life, and for which a proper translation assignment and target text function may be defined. Some translation tasks could include an explanatory part containing the student’s comments on his/her work. The students should also revise and comment on translations produced by their fellow trainees or by other translators. When appropriate, experienced professional translators should be involved in translation teaching and assessment.

With a view to potential future employment by the EU, courses in translation from at least two Community languages into the translators’ first language are desirable. Similarly, translation from the first language into at least one (foreign) language would be useful. As far as such translation from language A into B or C is concerned, the object of the training should be an ability to produce translations which with reasonable ease can be checked/ revised by a native speaker to be used as functionally adequate and commercially acceptable target language texts.

When producing their translations and other written course work, the students should make active use of the electronic tools mentioned above under “Information technology for translation” and “Terminology work”.