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THE PROBLEM OF MULTILINGUALISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND EVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The reality of multilingualism in the European institutions is a more complex issue than its motto: United in Diversity. The increasing penetration of English in the everyday use of European citizens and its establishment as the language of choice in international business and communications threatens to push other languages aside. The issue is not new and different countries, notably France, have developed strategies to preserve multilingualism and, with it, the position of their language. Day-to-day life with 27 countries is costly and time-consuming, which is why more and more voices are calling for practicality. However, this calls into question the future of a union of different countries, each with its own language and culture, who want Europe to protect them and not threaten their continuity. This dissertation examines the contradictory realities and strategies that have developed in recent decades in relation to this multilingual condition of the Union.

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1. Goals of the work

The European Union has now 27 State members and 24 official languages apart from the ones that are not considered official but still have millions of speakers. The political criterion of the European alliance is reflected in its motto "United in Diversity", which maintains the right balance of national interests. This tension is expressed daily in the use of the languages of the respective countries. Although the aim is to maintain, protect and strengthen this diversity, some languages are more widely used and even recognized as having a superior functionality. The goal of diversity is confronted with difficulties and costs (economic, time), which encourages to think about the idea of using one or more common official languages among all Europeans. This way, the European multilingualism would be on the line, but it would also bring the EU closer to reality. The purpose of this work is to determine in which direction the latest decisions are being taken and which of the two objectives - multilingualism or a unique language - has more possibilities and a better future. First, the interests and strategies shown by different states in one direction or the other, as well as their results, will be analysed.

2. State of the question

The current question has been approached, above all, from sociolinguistics, more than from history, as this issue is subsidiary to the central themes it deals with: the construction of European institutions and their evolution and dynamics over time. The authors concerned by this issue, generally support the continuity of the policy of protecting linguistic diversity; many of them are language professionals (sociolinguists, translators). Their vision is often somewhat pessimistic, because the setbacks of this policy stand out. This opinion is represented, for example, by Climent-Ferrando or Gorter, who are particularly concerned about the future of minority languages, without official protection by the EU. Other times it is politicians or technicians from some states, such as France, who try to protect the position of their language by defending linguistic plurality against the unifying threat of English (i.e., the Herbillon report).

On the contrary, other less academic voices, usually from people professionally related to the economic activity of the European institutions, stress the advantages of an accepted lingua franca, which would help reduce costs and make work easier, more dynamic and faster. With all the information gathered from these newspaper interviews and chat rooms

of users of the European institutions, its spirit has been taken up and transferred to these pages. In that sense, the first option is more important in the academic literature. But it is an open issue as it is evolving and changing at this very moment.

3. Methodology and sources

The European institutions have high quality websites that give us access to a great deal of up-to-date information on their actions and strategies. Nevertheless, there are many studies from experts on the development of an effective and practical multilingualism in the European Union. In addition to official documents referring to treaties, agreements, programmes and general regulations, the different entities publish materials or post expert reports on their websites on the problems of multilingualism in the EU and, on the day-to-day translation and interpreting into the different languages (with very complete statistical information).It should also be mentioned the official websites of the two Directorates-General for Translation and Interpreting, which are essential for this work. Methodologically, the work will be carried out with two materials - documentary sources based on information from European institutions and academic literature - critically analysing them and incorporating them into our work. There are some statistical sources that we will also make use of, referring mainly to the reality of the use of different languages in Europe today. Press articles have also been analysed where one can find the opinion of advocates of a functional lingua franca, which are less echoed in the academic output.

4. The process of the creation of the EU

The current European Union (EU) is one of the most prosperous entities –if not the only one- who has been able to maintain peace and prosperity between countries among several decades. It all started with the aim to seek a long-lasting reconciliation mostly among France and Germany after all the damages caused by the World War II. These western European countries looked for a closer relationship between them so that they could discuss economic, social and political issues and achieve economic growth and military security.

In1951, the leaders of Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany accepted the Schuman declaration and signed the Treaty of Paris that came into force on July 1952, founding the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC created a free-trade area for several key economic and military resources: coal, coke, steel and iron ore. Some supranational institutions were created to manage the ECSC like a High Authority to administrate, a Council of Ministers to legislate, a Common Assembly to formulate policy, and a Court of Justice to interpret the treaty and to resolve related disputes. A series of further international treaties and treaty revisions based largely on this model led eventually to the creation of the EU.

On March 25, 1957, the six ECSC member signed what is called “the Treaty of Rome” creating the European Economic Community (EEC). In that same year, the European Atomic Energy Community established the Euratom Treaty. His initial purpose of the Treaty was to create a specialist market for nuclear power in Europe and to facilitate cooperation in atomic energy development, research and utilization. The EEC was a regional organization that aimed to bring about economic integration among its member states, and it created a common market that featured the elimination of most barriers to the movement of goods, services, capital, labour, the prohibition of agricultural policy (CAP), and a common external trade policy. The treaty called for common rules on anticompetitive and monopolistic behaviors and for common inland transportation and regulatory standards. The CAP was implemented in 1962.

Like the ECSC, the EEC established four major governing institutions: a commission, a ministerial council, an assembly, and a court. To advise the Commission and the Council of Ministers on a broad range of social and economic policies, the treaty created an Economic and Social Committee. In 1965, members of the EEC signed the Brussels Treaty, which merged the commissions of the EEC and Euratom and the High Authority of the ECSC into a single commission. It also combined the councils of the three organizations into a common Council of Ministers. The EEC, Euratom, and the ECSC—collectively referred to as the European Communities—later became the principal institutions of the EU[1].

In February 1992, the Maastricht treaty was established, and it came to force in November 1993. This treaty announced, "a new stage in the process of European

[1] “The history of the European Union” (retrieved from https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history).

integration" and a single internal market was created[2]. The treaty consisted of three main pillars: the European Communities, a common foreign and security policy, and enhanced cooperation in home (domestic) affairs and justice. The treaty changed the name of the European Economic Community to the European Community (EC), which became the primary component of the new European Union. In 1993, a complete single market was achieved, known as the internal market, which allowed for the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people within the EEC. In 1994, the internal market was formalized by the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement.

The Maastricht Treaty established the need for future revisions and improvements. These took the form of successive renewals in Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001) and, finally, Lisbon (2007). Today, the latter Treaty, which entered into force at the end of 2009, is the EU's highest standard of operation. The aim of these changes was to adapt the Union to the new entry of countries (up to 28) and to increase citizens' legitimacy in the whole process of EU construction. In this attempt, the European Constitution failed with the opposition of the French and Dutch citizens in their respective referendums. To mitigate its negative effects, in the Treaty of Lisbon some of the elements discussed for the failed Constitution were added, referring to joint decision-making, legislative powers of the Parliament and greater democracy. It also established a new system for the distribution of competences between EU bodies and the member states.

5. The more states, the more languages

The main rule of this organization which stands out from any other one created before, is that enhances diversity as is shown in their motto "United in diversity". All countries that conform the actual EU have the right to speak in their mother language and to be translated so that there is a fluid communication among all the member states. When the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1952, the Union was already a place formed by six countries with five languages. Multilingualism was the day-to-day of each worker, and it was not that hard to handle.

[2] Council of European Communities and Commission of the European Communities, *Treaty on European Union*, ECSC-EEC-EAEC, Brussels-Luxembourg, 1992, p. 3 (retrieved from https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/treaty_on_european_union_en.pdf).

The first enlargement happened in 1973 when the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark joined the EC. That meant a big change due to the strength of the English language at that time as it was not only spoken in the UK and Ireland but in the United States which was a political, military and economical "superpower".

In 1981, Greece became an EC member which meant that Greek would become a Treaty language and Regulation language. This was a problem because the Greek alphabet was not yet in the EC´s contemporary typewriters or word processors that were designed for the Roman script and they had to adjust to it. In 1986, Portugal and Spain joined, and Portuguese and Spanish were added as both Treaty and Regulation languages. No provision was made for any of Spain´s other languages such as Basque, Catalan or Galician[3].

Later on, Luxembourg joined with their official language at that time but afterwards when the Luxembourgish became the national language no request was made to the EU to enter the Luxembourgish, so it is the only country which does not own the right to use its national language. A major enlargement occurred in 1995, where Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the EU. Finnish and Swedish were consequently added as Treaty and Regulation languages (Finnish became the first non-Indo-European language used in the EU).

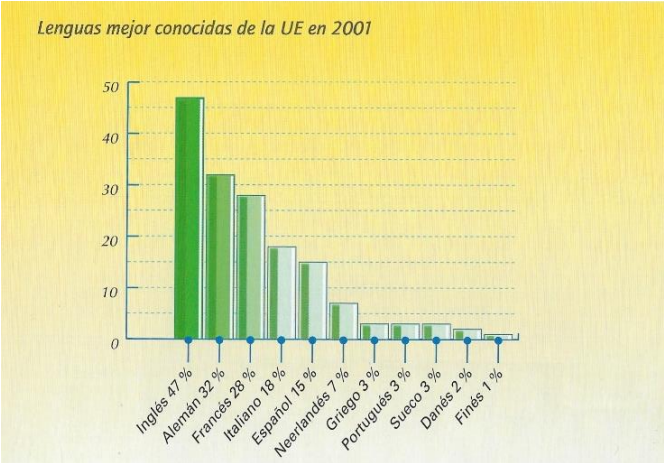
In 2004 Eastern Europe and Mediterranean Islands joined the EU. Eight eastern European states that had spent the Cold War under Communist control: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak republic and Slovenia- and Cyprus and Malta. That meant ten new languages "in theory"[4]. After many trials, Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007 and lastly, in 2013 Croatia joined under many restrictions.

The idea of promoting linguistic diversity and the right to speak each one in their own language might sound perfect. Nevertheless, with the number of countries that have been joining in the past until now with 27 countries (and all those that are on the waiting list to come), it really needs to be a perfectly regulated process to cope with that many

[3] Creech, Richard L., *Law and language in the European Union. The paradox of a Babel "united in diversity"* Groningen/Amsterdam, Europa Law Publishing, 2005, p. 17.
[4] *Ibídem*, p. 19.

members and guarantee the proper communication among all the member states. Not to mention the amount of work, money and staff included to guarantee that.

Furthermore, not all the languages have the same impact and power in the EU. There is a distinction between the non-official and the working languages being English, French and German the most used ones. It is important to outline that there is a high percentage of people in the EU whose second language is English .When there were fifteen countries in the European Union, 47% of people had English as their second language, followed by German (32%) and French (28%)[5].



Percentage of people in the Europe of the fifteen (in 2001) that states to speak each of the languages, either as mother tongue nor enough to be able to have a conversation in it. Source: Comisión Europea, encuesta Eurobarómetro especial 54. (Dragged from Comisión Europea, *Muchas lenguas, una sola familia*, *op. cit*., p. 6)

6. Diversity or functional monolingualism?

The debate that arose in the European institutions to deal with the linguistic diversity had two main possibilities: to keep up with the diversity of languages or to choose one or several languages and use them as lingua franca or working languages. Another possibility was to combine both solutions, which is what was done in the end. In regards of this debate, two historical processes of particular importance should be highlighted.

The first one has been the progressive replacement of French and, to a lesser extent, German by English as the lingua franca of the future Union. This began with the first enlargement of the European Community in 1973, when the United Kingdom and

[5] Comisión Europea, *Muchas lenguas, una sola familia. Las lenguas en la Unión Europea*, Oficina de Publicaciones Oficiales de las Comunidades Europeas, 2004, p. 6.

Ireland joined. As we will see, in the debate for multilingualism or for one or several functional languages, such as English, the first possibility was carried out, although it had important nuances.

In consequence, the second process consisted of transferring the management of language policies from the European institutions to the different Member States. The aim was to guarantee linguistic diversity and to give strength to the languages of each country in order to limit the tendency towards monolingualism in supranational communications, which endangered their linguistic and cultural heritage. This transfer took place in 1992 with the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity - what can be done from the local territory is better than doing it from afar - established by the Maastricht Treaty. According to this principle, the European Union only regulated communications within its institutions. Language policy outside was a matter for each Member State[6].

The first of these matters was raised early on. Although he advocated a strong Europe vis-à-vis the United States or the Soviet Union, French President de Gaulle was never convinced of a politically united Europe. For him, French sovereignty was non-negotiable. His initial resistance to Britain's entry into Europe also had to do with a linguistic issue: the powerful English would compete with French as the lingua franca of the European Community. It was not until after de Gaulle's resignation in 1969 that Britain joined Europe[7].

In the early years of the EEC, France was the natural leader of this political union for two main reasons. First, Germany and Italy had lost the war and were still recovering from their Nazi or Fascist stigma. Second, the Benelux countries were small compared to France. The status of the languages corresponded to the power of their respective states. Although Council Regulation No. 1 established that the four languages of the six founding states were the official languages of the Community, the most widely used working language was French. It is estimated that, in 1962, 85% of the Community's institutional communication was in that language. This fact is also explained by two other reasons. The first one, because the headquarters of the European institutions were in three cities -

[6] Esteve García, Francina, "El nuevo estatuto jurídico de las lenguas cooficiales en España ante la Unión Europea", *Revista de Derecho Comunitario Europeo*, 24 (2006), pp. 478-479. Another aspect of this principle –the mechanisms of legislative codification and consolidation- studied by Ordóñez Solís, David, "Cuestiones lingüísticas y normativas del Derecho Comunitario europeo", *Revista de Derecho Comunitario Europeo*, 4 (1998), pp. 593-618.

[7] Fernández Vítores, David, "El francés como lengua franca de la Unión Europea: luces y sombras de una estrategia fallida", *Revista de Filología Románica*, 27 (2010), pp. 179-205.

Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg - with most native French speakers. The second one, because French was the official or co-official language of three of the six founding states (France, Belgium and Luxembourg)[8].

An important change may have occurred when Denmark joined the European Community in 1973. He proposed not to use Danish and thus facilitate the functioning of the EEC with only two official languages (English and French). However, in exchange, it proposed that the French-speaking representatives speak English and the English-speaking ones French. The United Kingdom and France rejected his proposal.

The initially dominant position of French as the lingua franca of the Union gradually weakened in favour of English until the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. From that date on, the position of the two languages is similar within the EU, but in different spheres: within the institutions, French prevails, and outside the institutions and in the most common social use, English has advantage[9].

This new critical situation prompted an urgent strategy to help French, based on the philosophy of multilingualism. The aim was to protect French while protecting the other languages of the different States of the Union. The Délégation General de la Langue Française et aux Langues de France (DGLFLF) expressed it in the following terms:

> La politique en faveur de la langue française et du plurilinguisme repose sur la conviction que pratiquer une seule langue, à l'échelle de la planète, conduirait à une dommageable uniformisation de la pensée, tandis que préserver le multilinguisme –chaque langue portant en elle une vision du monde– garantit au contraire la pluralité des points de vue et des expressions. À cet égard, la défense de la langue française et l'ouverture aux autres langues font système : c'est en permettant à nos concitoyens d'être bien dans leur langue, que nous les persuaderons de s'ouvrir plus largement encore aux langues des 'autres' à l'inverse, la pratique des autres langues peut 'décomplexer' l'usage du français.

The Maastricht Treaty secured the new strategy for the defence of the French language. French politicians were convinced that French would only maintain its status if it was supported by policies to promote linguistic diversity that were supported by the rest of the countries. Thus, a series of strategies were deployed since 1992 aimed at trying to reform the language regime, the training of European civil servants and professionals, and the elaboration of a guide on the use of French in the European institutions. In

[8] Fernández Vítores, David, "La fuerza institucional del inglés en la Unión Europea: Crónica de una lucha por la posición de lengua franca", *ES*: *Revista de Filología inglesa*, 31 (2010), pp. 111-137.
[9] Fernández Vítores, David, "El francés como lengua franca de la Unión Europea", *op. cit*.

December 1994, the French Minister of European Affairs, Alain Lamassoure, proposed reducing the number of working languages to five (French, English, German, Italian and Spanish), or even to four, but this provoked a great discontent, especially from the Netherlands and Greece. Perhaps the Danish solution of 1973 would have been more beneficial to them, but it was rejected then[10].

France continued to try other methods to maintain his language and, in February 2002, the Multiannual Action Plan in defence of French was signed. It also tried to extend its language among the ten new Member States (Bulgaria, Romania) and even among those awaiting future membership (Croatia). However, reports indicate that French is regressing in the EU. Moreover, it has been doing so since 1995, when the policy of promoting linguistic diversity in the Union was launched. The reality and the potential of English prevailed over strategies and legal norms. In a final effort, France tried to establish French as the language of the legal area of the European Union, the only area in which still holds a privileged position. The proposal was made in 2004 and has not yet gained the unanimous support of the other members.

7. Promoting linguistic and cultural diversity: the Erasmus Program

To enhance linguistic and cultural diversity among the citizens of the European Union, more successful programs have been launched than those attempted by France. The Erasmus Program is undoubtedly the best example. This Program is widely known not just in Europe but around the world. A big reason is the good results achieved in the linguistic field and the linguistic diversity. There has been a big increase in the knowledge and use of languages in Europe, especially among young people, by promoting learning a second or even a third language in countries that are lagging in this matter, such as Spain.

France was the responsible of the Erasmus Program, along with Spain. Presidents Mitterrand and Gonzalez strongly supported this Program, which was led in its early days by the European Commissioner for Education, Manuel Marín. It was created in 1987 and, although it bore the name of the famous Renaissance philosopher, it was an acronym of its official English name: European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University

[10] Fernández Vítores, David, "La fuerza institucional del inglés en la Unión Europea", *op. cit*.

Students. The initiative was proposed by the student association AEGEE Europe[11], founded by Franck Biancheri, future president of the trans-European party Newropeans.

The aim is to build a bridge between countries and educational centres so that their students can take courses or make stays in universities other than their own. In this way they get to know other university realities and learning models, in addition to learning or becoming familiar with other languages used in the European Union. It was initially created to "improve the quality and strengthen the European dimension of higher education by fostering transnational cooperation between universities, stimulating mobility in Europe and improving transparency and full academic recognition of studies and qualifications throughout the Union". The Program facilitates the movement of both students and university professors from European Union countries and other countries such as Switzerland, Iceland, North Macedonia and Turkey. There are currently more than 2,000 academic institutions involved in more than thirty countries. Another objective of the Erasmus is to develop a European view and its way of thinking. Based on the university program, others were created for other educational fields, such as Comenius for Baccalaureate, Leonardo for Vocational Training or Grundtvig for adult students.

The Erasmus Program has generated a genuine "Erasmus culture" among several generations of students. Multilingual communication and mutual knowledge of the cultural realities of different countries are the key point. The use of different languages becomes normalized and thereby multilingualism ceases to be a problem and becomes a great opportunity for development. The so-called "Erasmus Generation" thus becomes one of the most solid pillars of cohesion and of the Europeanist culture[12]. In addition, in this context, multilingualism is one of the most successful resources and instruments so far. As the official objectives of the Program state:

> Multilingualism is one of the cornerstones of the European project and a clear symbol of the EU's aspirations to unity in diversity. Foreign languages play a prominent role among

[11] Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe

[12] About the Erasmus Programme, see *Celebrating 30 years of the Erasmus Programme* (https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/library/library-blog/posts/celebrating-30-years-of-the-erasmus-programme/); *From Erasmus to Erasmus+: a story of 30 years*, Brussels, 26 January 2017; and *The Erasmus+ Generation Declaration* (http://sepie.es/doc/30-aniversario/Generation-declaration_Flyer_V4_WEB-LD.pdf). About Eramus Generation, Feyen, Benjamin and Krzaklewska, Ewa (eds.), *The ERASMUS Phenomenon - Symbol of a New European Generation?*, Peter Lang edition, Frankfurt Am Main, 2013. A theorical analysis in Radl Philipp, Rita, "O programa erasmus. Unha oportunidade para reflexionar sobre a cultura e a lingua nunha cultura global", en X. Rodríguez Rodríguez (coord.), *O programa Erasmus na construción da cidadanía europea. Unha mirada dende Compostela*, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Santiago, 2010, pp. 49-62.

the skills that will help to better equip people for the labour market and to make the most of the opportunities available. The EU has set a target that all citizens should have the opportunity to learn at least two foreign languages from an early age[13].

8. Official languages vs. working languages

Regarding the Regulation n.1/58 (art.1) there is no difference made between official and working languages but, there is an operational distinction between them. "Official languages" of the EU are generally defined as those used in communication between institutions and the outside world, and "working languages" of the EU as those used between institutions, within institutions and during internal meetings convened by the institutions[14]. In the Commission, the term "procedural languages" is used to refer to English, French and German, because the documents for the work of the College of Commissioners need to be produced in those languages. The other twenty "non-procedural" language version still need to be produced but they have a longer period to make them (usually up to 48h after the meeting). Nonetheless, the same happens with these last terms as they do not have any basis in law either but are used for practical reasons of the internal workings of the Commission.

TABLE 1

Official and working languages in the EU institutions, advisory bodies and ECB.

Institution or body	Official languages	Working languages
European Parliament	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
Council of the European Union (Ministers' meetings)	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
European Commission	All 20 languages	English, French, German
Court of Justice	All 20 languages + Irish	French
Court of Auditors	All 20 languages	English, French, German
Economic and Social Committee	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
Committee of the Regions	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
European Central Bank	All 20 languages	English

Source: "Managing multilingualism in the European Union" Michele Galozza (2006)

This table 1 shows us how the EU manages multilingual communication. All the institutions have the 20 official languages but just a few of them manage to use all of them also when working. Instead, English, French and German are used. It is in communication towards citizens and the Member States that full multilingualism is tried to be used and which is managed through language services. For its internal activities, in general, two different approaches have been adopted. The first one concerns the activities

[13] Comisión Europea, "Erasmus +. Guía del programa", Versión 3, 2020.
[14] Galozza, Michelle, "Managing Multilingualism in the European Union: Language Policy Evaluation for the European Parliament", *Language Policy*, 5 (2006), pp. 393–417.

of representative institutions and bodies, namely, the European Parliament (EP), which represents the European peoples; the Council, representing the interests of the national governments; the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, representing, respectively, the forces of European economic and social life, and regional and local authorities within the Union. Here multilingual communication in the 20 working languages has generally been implemented, although different solutions can be adopted within the same institution, as we will see hereafter. On the contrary, for a second group of institutions and bodies, which includes the Commission, the Court of Auditors, the European Central Bank and to a certain extent the Court of Justice, multilingual communication is usually managed through a limitation of the number of working languages.

9. Communication through many languages

We know that multilingualism is one of the fundamental principles of the EU. So states the Article 1 of the consolidated version of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) "creating an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen"[15]. Along with all the enlargements that the EU has faced, each time a new country was introduced, the Treaties were translated into the language of the country and that way it began to have legal force as the four original languages.

It might seem that the multilingual status of the EU has always been there since the beginning, but the reality is that even if it might have been in fact as an idea or thought, it was not until 2005 that the first policy of multilingualism was instituted by the first Barroso Commission (2004-2014)[16]. That same year, the first communication on multilingualism was signed. Multilingualism became even more significant, so the European Commission decided to pursue a policy focused exclusively on languages,

[15] "Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union", *Official Journal of the European Union*, 59, 7 June 2016, p. 16.
[16] Commission of the European Communities, "Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism", Brussels, 22.11.2005 (retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0596:FIN:en:PDF).

cultural diversity and the promotion of multilingualism in a way to preserve that difference from other institutions.

In 2009, due to the growing awareness and importance of the matter of languages the policy of multilingualism, which first was part of a bigger portfolio, ended up being a unique portfolio fully devoted to the policy of multilingualism under the control of a separate Commissioner, Leonard Orban[17]. Looking for a solution to the bigger problem of the vast number of languages used in the EU has always been a major concern. Not only by the high costs it means keeping up with all the languages but also the amount of work it carries. In the 90s, many hypotheses were studied by the services in charge but they ended up choosing the "supervised/controlled multilingualism" above all the other options[18].

The first thought was to go towards monolingualism. Working with a unique and main language for every aspect of the EU would reduce significantly the number of interpreters and translators (it would mean the omission of 1300 jobs). Nevertheless, leading with a unique language wouldn´t necessarily mean the disappearance of the linguistic services as they still would be necessary if the rule of translating to the national languages remained and if the Court of Justice decided to keep the pluralism of the languages of procedure. To add up to all the reasons mentioned above, it would be difficult to reach an agreement on which language to be used as the main one when France and the United Kingdom, with their respective languages, have been repeatedly trying to give their language a higher status inside the EU.

The second hypothesis was the so called "the nationalisation of the linguistic services" this would mean to give the state members the possibility to oversee the translation and interpretation to their own language. In economic terms, many states would be ready to reduce translation or interpretation into their language. This way, the costs would be reduced by 25 million euros per year. In view of this hypothesis, a possible option would be to transfer only the financial burden to the States whereas the other would

[17] European Commission, *Translation at the European commission- a history*, Luxembourg, European Communities, 2010.
[18] Herbillon, Michel, "Rapport d'information déposé par la délégation de l'assemblée nationale pour l'Union Européenne sur la diversité linguistique dans l'Union Européenne", nº 902, 2003 (retrieved from https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/europe/rap-info/i0902.asp#P670_95860).

be to transfer to them the entire workload, i.e., also the management of the interpretation and translation staff.

"Asymmetric multilingualism". In this case, each member could speak and write in his mother tongue, but the interpretation and translation would be done in a limited number of languages. All institutions should reach an agreement on which languages they should use in each case.

Therefore, in the end the "supervised/controlled multilingualism" seemed to be the more coherent. This proposal was first made in 1999 by the vice president of the European Parliament M. Cot in a plan of action in view of a future enlargement. In 2001, the report of M. Podestà announced that there would be a linguistic regime with three pivot languages being those French, English and German. According to the rights, each member has the right to speak, to read and to write in their mother tongue but this supervised multilingualism would resort to pivot languages in written documents and the bi-active interpretation system so that there would be no need to use more translators and interpreters than what it is necessary, and of course that would reduce the costs. In case of translation, that appeal to pivot languages would be used to cover languages aside from French, English, Spanish, German, Italian and Polonaise which mean just the 10% of the volume of works as the 90-92% (2002) are mainly in those languages (except Polonaise)[19].

10. Bodies for institutional multilingualism

Talking about multilingualism in the European Union, we have to mention the Directorate General of Interpretation (DG Interpretation) and the Directorate General of Translation (DGT), which have been the core of this institution. These directorates have been growing and evolving next to the EU since its beginnings as an essential part of the process.

10.1 Directorate General of Interpretation (DG Interpretation)

DGI, previously known as Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (SCIC for its former French name *Service Commun Interprétation*-Conférences) has been in the EU's

[19] *Ibídem*.

developing process from the beginning. It started with well-known Treaty of Paris where 4 languages were involved. Later, in the conference of Venice (1956) that would become the Treaty of Rome (1957), just two interpreters were involved. At that time, there were not enough interpreters in the meetings to ensure a good communication. After the Treaty of Rome came to force, the President of the commission Walter Hallstein stablished an Interpreting Division with 15 interpreters.

In the 1960's it got harder to find new interpreters as the union was developing at a fast speed. Next to the enlargement of 1973, the Interpreting division became a Directorate. After the accession of Greece and dealing with seven official languages, the Interpreting Directorate upgraded to the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (SCIC). It provided interpreting services for the Commission, the Council of the Union, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and for the Committee of the Regions. Many trainings were made to recruit new interpreters but that changed with the adhesion in 1997 of five new countries were the SCIC had to put their focus on interpreting.

Nevertheless, ten new countries were about to join so, in 1998, SCIC organized special extensive language teaching of future official languages and training future freelance interpreters. After this extensive preparation, in 2002, the SCIC created the now called Directorate General for Interpretation even though the acronym SCIC continues to be used. Three years later, the focus of the EU was put on enhancing multilingualism by creating a comprehensive framework strategy which supports language learning both in the field of economics and with relation to European citizens. During that time, the minority and regional language parts were an essential part of multilingualism. However, coping with so many languages (many conferences were held in twenty languages) was not an easy task and the DG Interpretation had to face several challenges during his development process.

Separate bodies for the main institutions were also created. The European Parliament's Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences was created for the European Parliament, the European Commission Directorate-General for Interpretation for the Commission and the Court of Justice Interpretation Directorate for the Court of Justice. The Directorate General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences is responsible for the linguistic, technical and logistical support for the organisation of

parliamentary meetings and conferences. Besides plenary sittings, interpretation is also provided in committee and delegation meetings from and into the official languages used and requested by the Members. Sign language interpretation is also given in Parliament's plenary debates, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the EU in December 2010.

When we talk about interpreting, we know the most used ways which are simultaneous and consecutive interpreting[20] but there are more modes of interpreting, such as relay, retour, pivot, whispering, asymmetric, cheval or the sign language mentioned above[21]. The relay method stands for interpreting between two languages but with the help of a third one which usually serves as a bridge between the first two languages. This third language is used when the language of the speaker is not active for any of the interpreters in the booth so that way, they create a connection with the booth that is interpreting the third language and take the relay of the interpreting[22]. An example would be for instance if the speaker was talking Bulgarian and they needed to interpret from Bulgarian to Spanish, but they had no interpreters who work directly from Bulgarian to Spanish. But there are those who work from Bulgarian to English and from English to Spanish. In that case, English interpreters would interpret to English and then the Spanish booth would take English (relay) and would interpret it to Spanish.

The retour happens when an interpreter speaks a second language well enough that it can translate or interpretate into that language. It is the inverse interpreting, when the interpreter works from his mother tongue into a foreign language. Cheval is reciprocal interpreting, where there is one interpreter, who masters one language to such an extent that he can interpret it. This interpreter sits astride two booths, moves between them according to need, and in the second booth provides retour. Asymmetric interpretation happens when the delegates use their mother tongue, but interpreting is provided only into a few languages. It is assumed that the delegates understand at least one language. Lastly, chuchotage or whispered interpreting is generally used at small meetings with few participants because in this case the interpreter sits next to the delegates and interprets directly into the ear of the delegate.

[20] Simultaneous interpretation: the interpreter paraphrases into the target language parallel to what he is hearing in the source language; consecutive interpretation: the interpreter first listens the entire speech and then translates and paraphrases into the target language.
[21] Burešová, Silvie, "Interpreting services within the EU", Západočeská univerzita v Plzni Fakulta filozofická, 2015, p. 11.
[22] Speaker-> 3rd language-> relay.

10.2 Directorate General of Translation (DGT)

Speaking nowadays about the Directorate General of Translation, settled in Luxemburg and Brussels, we know it is one of the most valuable departments of the union if not the most important one[23]. According to the European Commission (2014) the DGT forms one of the largest and most important translation services worldwide and its main goals are: first, to provide the European Union with high-quality linguistic services; second, to support and promote multilingualism by ensuring the publication of documents by the European Commission in all official languages; and finally, to report all citizens about policies within the union.

The DGT has faced many challenges and has gone through many procedures to get to where it is now. Back in the first years of the construction of the EU, there was a language service who formed part of the "general services" where diverse functions were carried out. Between the years 1952 and 1957 the fast-increasing workflow made the High Authority to set rules about the deadlines and the reproduction of documents and great focus was put also to the length of the translations. In the year 1953, 38 855 pages were translated, in 1954, 57 295 pages and in 1955, 61 568 pages[24].

The departments working in translation, reproduction and dissemination continued having several problems so, in 1957, the High Authority adopted an internal agreement that stated the following:

> First, requests for translation into Dutch, German, Italian and English must be reduced to a strict minimum (French was generally the language of the original). Secondly, the divisions (or technical departments) themselves were asked to carry out less important translations, since their staff were expected on recruitment to speak at least one official Community language in addition to their mother tongue. They were also asked to reduce as far as possible the length of texts for translation by the language service. Lastly, they were called on to schedule meetings requiring translation work only after receiving a guarantee from the head of the language service that the documents could be delivered by the desired date[25].

In the following years, many Treaties were signed, and all were drawn up in the four official Community languages so that each version was to be authentic. At that time,

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[23] Official page DGT (Directorate-General for Translation): https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/translation_en

[24] European Commission, *Translation at the European commission- a history*, Luxembourg, European Communities, 2010, p. 13.

[25] *Ibídem*.

a Head of Division oversaw the language services that were made up of five language groups (Dutch, French, German and Italian and English) and each of them had about ten translators.

In the early 60's the language services of the three Communities had around fifty translators and with the increasing workload, new posts needed to be released. Two years later, new rules were applied in the EEC to standardise the work of the language services. The translation services started to take more control and in 1968 the Permanent Delegation of Translators was created with the intention of studying a reorganization of the translation services. During those years, many changes were made to the point we see the DGT as it is today. For example, in 1973, the Euratom and the EEC language services finally became one with a head of division in charge of all Commission translators in Brussels. The greater change happened in 1989 when the translators, tired of being moved from one building to another decided to go on strike. This way, they managed to have more recognition and got a status of independent service called "Translation Service" (SdT) and they also got the assurance that all the members would be housed in a single building. Along with these changes, the Director-General set up seven thematic departments with language units with ten to twenty-five translators.

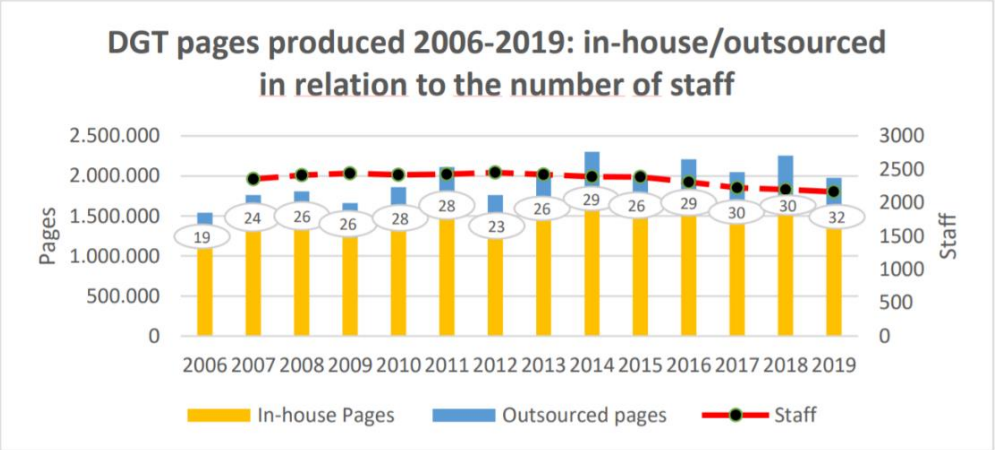
Years later, the EU had to face many changes such as the increasing presence of the technology or the introduction to the Euro. In 2002, the new Director-General, Michael Vanden Abeele wanted the Translation Service to refocus its activities and to be more productive and it became the Directorate-General of Translation (DGT). Nevertheless, the adhesion of the new countries with so many languages in 2004 was not an easy task to handle for the Directorate. The DGT budget had increased by 30%, whereas the number of official languages had doubled. The Commission adopted a new regulation for translating.

> First, demand needed to be managed: fewer documents should be translated, and they must be shorter. Temporary staff then had to be recruited to establish an operational workforce as quickly as possible. Finally, the need to plan the workflow was highlighted.

The situation was getting unbearable, so the focus was more on the documents that were considered essential and policy documents and they were translating mostly into the working languages. The DGT suffered several changes during its story but nowhere as tough as the ones mentioned above so, from that moment on, the working environment of translators managed to stay stable.

Translators cope with many different types of texts such as websites, political statements, administrative information… so there are many specialisations where a concrete translator is in charge. A big example is legal translation but there are many others: agriculture; health; transport; external relations, etc. The DGT is divided into three directorates depending on the area of expertise: The Transversal Services Directorate, The Resources Directorate, and the Translation Strategy Directorate. The original texts are usually drafted in English, French and German and they are only translated into other languages when it is necessary to address the other institutions and States. When the amount of work is too much for the intern translators, external or freelance ones are hired. The DGT relies a lot on those translators (up to 26% of the total number of translations). During all the creation process, the DGT has grown a lot until today were there are more than 2500 workers.

The European Parliament employs about 600 translators and when the demand is too high, the Directorate-General outsources the translation of some texts which are based on the type of document and workload. Documents of the highest priority, i.e., legislative documents and documents to be put to the vote in plenary are translated in-house. Other types of documents, especially administrative texts, are frequently outsourced.



Source: the Anual Activity report of the DG Translation of the EU https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/dgt_aar_2019_en.pdf

11. Minority languages fallen into oblivion?

Apart from the official languages, a lot of European Citizens speak minority or regional languages. It is stimated that there are around 60 minority languages and aproximately 46 million of europeans who speak them (around 10% of the european population)[26]. In 1992, the Council of Europe signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to promote these languages and to let the speakers use them in their everyday life. Thirty one countries signed this document[27]. To deal with this big number of dialecs and regional languages, the European Union decided to maintain them in this category and each country was put in charge to guarantee the maintenance of these languages. For this reason, the Chart stablishes the basic principles and the objetcives were the States need to make policies, legislations and the practice which is considered to be the tool to keep the preservation of these languages. In contrast, the European Commission does take part in the support of the minority languages by cooperating with the governments of the member states and it also supports their efforts in this area by financing many projects and increasing awareness about minority languages. One example is the Euromosaic Study which was first carried out in 1992. This study contains an inventory of the minority languages in the twelve member states that belonged to the European Community at that time and a general report was then pusblished in 1996[28]. With the introduction of new countries more reports were done in 1998 and in 2004.

This study seeks to develop a comparative analytic perspective. The focus of the subject is on the "reproduction" and "production" of language groups as the two main variables. In other wordss, the "reproduction" happens by language learning between parents and their children (were the language is being reproduced) and "production" happens when that language requires to be learned by those whose parents did not speak that language. This last exercice happens mainly at schools as an acquisition of a second language. At the same time, this exercice happens in different contexts such as family, education, the community, media, etc. which have consequently diverse impacts.

[26] Consejo de Europa, *La protección de las lenguas minoritarias en Europa: hacia una nueva década*, Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2011, p. 7.

[27] Nowadays up to 41 states have signed this document. The Charter available in https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680695175

[28] European Commission, *Euromosaic. The production and reproduction of the minority language groups of the EU*, Brussels-Luxembourg, 1996.

Nevertheless, other factors such as language group endogamy (smaller chance to continue in handing the language) or migration are important to be considered.

Lastly, the Euromosaic Study also analyzes the relationship between the language groups in front of the economic system which is to say "the value of a language for social mobility" or said in simpler terms, the "language prestige". And finally, the institutionalisation and the legitimation (the direct legislation and the language policies) are analyzed[29].

This European Charter is organized in many categories to guarantee a proper funcinction and communication among the countries. For instance, some of the principles of the Second part of this Chart are the recognition of regional or minority languages as an expression of cultural richness, respect for the geographic area of each regional or minority language, the need to resolute action to promote such languages, the encouragement of the use of these languages in speech and writing, etc. More detailed rules are draffted from these general principles and are separated in seven different paragraphs[30]. Regarding the best solution for the maintenance of these minority languages, education is considered to be the most effective one, thus, it must be strongly encouraged. To make this possible, and regarding the third part of the Chart, a ratifying state must apply a minimum of 35 out of near 100 different measures that correspond with each regional or minority language. This system can vary deppending on the neccesities and they can include from pre-school education to higher education or university, including also teacher training or adult courses. It is also called "la carte menu" as some of the "dishes" are mandatory and you can choose something from each "meal"[31].

Languages are constantly moving and they are spoken in several places at at time so we can clasify another reality about these minority languages. Starting with the first one, it can happen that some languages that are minority in one State can be national languages in another one and they do not risk to disappear but they do not have the recognition of a national language in the other country. This happens for example with macedonian in Romania. Secondly, there are autochtonous minority languages that are spoken in two or more States but they are not the national language of neither of them.

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[29] Gorter, Durk, *European Minority Languages: Endangered or Revived?*, 2007 (retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/2122948/European_minority_languages_endangered_or_revived).
[30] (1) education, (2) judicial authorities, (3) administrative authorities and public services, (4) media, (5) cultural activities and facilities, (6) economic and social life and (7) transfrontier exchanges.
[31] Consejo de Europa, *La protección de las lenguas minoritarias en Europa, op. cit.*, p. 31.

Agood example is what happens with Basque that is spoken both in Spain and in France. Lastly, there are those minority languages that are spoken in just a State such is the case of Scottish and Gaelic in United Kindom but they have a major risk of falling behind as it has suffered a big decline in the number of speakers of this languages.

In regards of the Treaties, it is important to note that there are no versions in the minority languages because what are denominated as official languages are indicated by the States in question during the negotiations[32]. In fact it is the Member States themselves who decide. When an enlargemen is about to happen, each candidate of the countries states its wishes concerning the language or languages to be used in contacts between that country and the institutions. And it is then the Member States as a whole who, under the regulation No 1, decide to unanimously add another language to the official languages of the European Union. Nevertheless, these minority languages can aquire the status of official language, not of the Union, but of the State member were they are used. Such is the case of Catalan in Spain, which is spoken by more than 10 million people. In a plurilingual policy, the teaching of regional languages should be strongly encouraged insofar as the State commits to enhance the compulsory teaching of two foreign languages.

12. What will happen with English now that United Kindom has left?

Since the United Kingdom entered the European Union in 1973, English has just been getting more powerful and stronger until these days where is the working language and the biggest second language used by the members of the EU. In 2016 started the first thoughts about leaving the EU and, after many negotiations and disagreements, the 31st January 2020 the UK began its transition period to leave the UE which finished on 31 December 2020.

In a place like Brussels where multilingualism is the daily routine, English has become essential to live there. The vast majority of parliamentarians and workers know English very well and that makes daily communication much easier, although it should be noted that, when we talk about the English used in the European Union in Brussels, it

[32] "Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union", *Official Journal of the European Union*, 59, 7 June 2016 (See "Languages and formats available").

is not exactly the same as the one used by the British. On many occasions they use neologisms taken from a mixture of all the countries.

Even though legally nothing has changed after the exit of the UK, it is not the same situation: 67 million english speakers have left the EU and so has the strong state that represented them. Many questions arose from the whether English is going to disappear from the EU but like what has been exposed so far in this it is clear that English will remain in the EU (or as many say, "English is here to stay"). Somehow and despite the repeated efforts of French to have its place in the EU, English has become the vehicular language between people (lingua franca of communication) and in the advanced state in which it is, it would be useless to waste this advantage or help and try to create another new language as it was thought at the time with the "Europeanism". In any case, this does not indicate that the European Union is heading towards a unified monolingualism. The EU will remain faithful to its logo and will continue to translate documents into the 24 official languages, thus maintaining the cultural richness that characterizes it.

13. Conclusion: is multilingualism a reality in the EU?

One question that needs to be pointed out is the EU's policy actions on multilingualism which seem to be going down. Unlike what it might seem, there has been a decreasing political interest towards multilingualism in the last years. The Commission has gone from having one entire portfolio on Multilingualism over the period 2007-2010 (Commissioner Leonard Orban) to a Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth (Androulla Vassiliou, 2010-2014), to the final elimination of the portfolio of Multilingualism with the current Commission (Commissioner Tibor Navracsics 2014-present). Furthermore, the Commission's Multilingualism Unit has been getting weaker and the former unit dealing with Multilingualism Policy has been removed expressing this way the political intentions of the Directorate-General on Education and Culture to instrumentalize languages for market-oriented purposes[33].

Another important point to add is the one concerning languages directly. At this point, it is clear that even though there is not a specific rule that states a difference between

[33] Climent-Ferrando, Vicent "Linguistic neoliberalism in the European Union, politics and policies of the EU's approach to multilingualism", *Journal of Language and Law*, 66 (2016), p. 3.

working languages and the rest of the official languages, we know that there is everything except equality in regards of managing with the twenty four official languages of the EU. English, French, German and Spanish do not have the same impact as it can have Croatian for example. It is easy to understand that being so many official languages in the Union and trying to be equal with all of them is hard, but the languages mentioned above have acquired another superior status due to political, economic and social reasons to strengthen the Union. There is also different treatment of some other languages. The European institutions reached an agreement at the request of Spain and the UK on granting specific language provisions to Catalan, Basque, Galician, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic. In July 2005, the EU Council created a new category of languages, next to the existing category of "official languages" and called these "co-official" languages and they received certain services such as interpretation during meetings, translation of final legislation or the possibility for citizens to correspond with EU institutions in the language (but the costs are managed by the government of the Member State concerned)[34].

Lastly, there are the before mentioned "minority languages" that the Council of Europe defines as "languages traditionally used by part of the population of a state, but which are not official state language dialects, migrant languages or artificially created languages" and which have no legal recognition at EU level. The Commission is responsible of supporting education and supporting activities of the Governments to keep up with the cultural activities to keep those languages alive.

Taking into account all the points mentioned above, it is no longer a secret that even though the EU might seem very prosperous and implied with the multilingualism it represents their body, other economic, political and diverse interests play through when trying to maintain that diversity and can sometimes go against their logo. Many other interests go sometimes above the policies of linguistic diversity becoming multilingualism an economic asset.

We have seen how the Union has adapted to the incorporation of all the new countries with their respective languages and the work that that required. But it is not only the difficulty of languages that has arisen: the EU was built in the midst of major changes, such as the digital age, and had to adapt to all new technologies and an increasingly

[34] *Ibídem*, p. 5.

connected world. It also had to addapt to the rapidly increasing workflow in a very short period of time. In my view, even though I think the EU really tries to stick to it's logo "united in diversity" it is an unreal goal to maintain with so many countries and so many languages. Therefore, even though some of the measures taken are not in harmony with their idea of multilingualism, there are necessary to maintain an order and it can not be denied that English has been taking more power over the years and it is slowly getting to be the lingua franca of the Europeans and all over the world. We should take that advantage to help us in some situations but always maintaining the languages of each country and keep on translating and interpreting because that is the only way to maintain the richness and culture of each country.

14.- Resources

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