Emma Wagner, Svend Bech and Jesús M. Martínez: *Translating for the European Union Institutions*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing. 2002.

We all know that the European Union employs a large number of translators. The question is why? What do they do and what sort of problems do they have to tackle? This book, written by three experienced translators from the European Commission, attempts to answer these and other questions in a didactically sound way. The authors intend the book to be an aid to translation students, freelance translators and general readers to understand the European Union institutions and their work, including the effects on the language policy of the European Union by the inclusion of new member states.

According to the authors, "The book is about translation for the European Union institutions and it is intended for all translators, in-house, freelance and aspiring, whose translation work may touch on the activities of these institutions" (page ix).

The authors have written a book that has the features of both a course book and a reference book. Some chapters are fact-oriented, some deal with specific problems affecting translation for the institutions, and some are devoted to interesting and relevant anecdotes. As a result most readers are sure to find something that appeals to them.

The European Union works on the principle of multilingualism, hence the need for translators. The EU institutions, including various agencies, employ approximately 3100 in-house (or staff) translators as of January 2000, the largest translation service being that of the European Commission, which employs approx. 1300 in-house translators (Ch. 2). Some institutions, for instance the European Parliament and the European Commission, send 20-25% of the workload to freelance translators and agencies, whereas the European Court of Auditors sends about 5% of its workload to freelance translators.

The very first Council Regulation adopted on 15 April 1958 provides the legal basis for multilingualism. Its provisions ensure that there are (in the year 2000) 11 official languages and 11 working languages, and that the Official Journal of the European Union must be published in all these languages. Furthermore, any person or institution subject to the jurisdiction of a member state may communicate with EU institutions in any one of the official languages selected by the sender; the reply must be written in the same language (Ch. 1).

Chs. 1 and 2 provide a basic introduction to the selected EU fundamentals. The authors describe the principle of multilingualism in a clear and approachable way, the reason for its existence, and its effect on the work of the EU institutions. They also give an introduction to the roles of the institutions and their

translation services and explain how they interact. Ch. 2 is essential reading for anyone who needs to familiarise himself with the basics of the EU institutions as it deals with the function, composition, location, translation service and official and unofficial names of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, the Court of First Instance, the European Court of Auditors, the European Central Bank, the European Ombudsman, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank, and the Translation Centre. These chapters will most likely be more beneficial to a beginner than to someone at an intermediate or advanced level, but they may serve to refresh most memories.

Anyone interested in working as a translator for the European Union institutions should read Ch. 3. It is divided into three sections called How to become an EU staff translator, How to work for the EU institutions as a freelance translator, and How to get placements and other help with translator training (for instance paid and unpaid placements for students and recent graduates). This chapter also refers to Internet addresses that contain relevant information about staff translators, freelance translations and translation training.

The middle section of the book describes the types of texts translated in the EU institutions, what problems the translators face, and what the job as a translator involves. Ch. 4 opens with a brief introduction to the texts of primary and secondary legislation that have to be translated and goes on to explain the interaction between the translators and legislators as the proposals for new legislation pass through all the relevant stages. Sometimes legislation is issued by a single institution, e.g. Commission Regulations and Directives, and sometimes legislation involves several institutions, e.g. a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council; the latter illustrates the involvement of translators from different institutions.

Legislative texts are not only subjected to the scrutiny of translators. They are also subjected to political, judicial, public and administrative scrutiny, so translators never work alone. Ch. 4 closes with a brief introduction to Community legislation and factual information some might call trivia. For example, the number of pages translated from Danish into English in the Commission in 2000 totalled 5099, whereas 53609 pages were translated from English into Danish. An indication that some official languages are more equal than others.

Ch. 5 deals with a well-known problem met by professional translators and translation teachers at university level: There is no one-to-one relationship between languages or the cultures involved. The people who struggle with communication across linguistic and cultural gaps on a daily basis are acutely aware that translation is sometimes impossible and frequently approximate. The authors present examples of some of the difficulties translators encounter when

translating for EU institutions, ranging from the non-translatability of concepts, over supranational concepts and Eurospeak, to slogans and puns. The authors occasionally explain how they solve these problems.

One example illustrating cultural differences involves the adjective "green". For the Spanish and the French, a journal with the title *L'Europe verte* and *Europa verde* (literally: *green Europe*) would be about agriculture; a German would assume that *Grünes Europa* is about the environment and its conservation; a British or Irish reader would probably think that the journal deals with gardening or politics (page 66).

Under the present system all EU institutions require translators to translate into their mother tongue (Ch. 6). Almost without exception, translators work in teams, usually called units or divisions, made up of translators working into their native language, and managed by a head of unit or division who has spent most of his or her career working as a translator into that language. The teams provide easy administration and supervision of translation work, assistance from experienced colleagues, easy access to library and documentation facilities in the relevant language, and maintenance of the mother tongue.

The Internet and in-house Intranets are now the main research tool for translators in most institutions. EU translators are living and working in the computer age. Translators use various databases such as Eurodicautom, full-text databases (e.g. CELEX and EUR-Lex), CD-ROM dictionaries and translation memories. In this modern IT age combined with the translation of fairly standardised legislative texts, translation memories are important as they contain matched sentences from past translations, in source and target languages. If a given sentence has been translated previously and stored in the translation memory, it can be retrieved and injected into a new translation. This saves time and improves consistency.

The last substantive chapter (Ch. 7) deals with enlargement and what it means for translation within the EU. With every enlargement, the EU has upheld the right to multilingualism on the ground that every EU citizen should be able to understand what is going on and at the same time see himself or herself as part of the Union. As the authors put it: "For the banker in London, the EU is a political animal that speaks fluent English … yet at the same time, a farmer in Crete can communicate with the EU institutions as if they spoke only Greek" (page 105). So preparing for enlargement means making the necessary arrangements to enable the EU institutions to communicate in any official language after the enlargement. And the new or prospective member states must prepare themselves for joining the union by translating all the relevant documents into their own languages.

This is a process that involves both pre-accession and post-accession needs. First of all any prospective member state needs to translate the *acquis communautaire*, i.e. the primary legislation, consisting of the treaties, the secondary legislation derived from the treaties, e.g. directives, and (the most important parts of) the case law of the Court of Justice. In the final stage of the pre-accession procedure, the translations of the *acquis communautaire* produced in the applicant countries are revised by the institutions. The revision is usually shared by the Council and the Commission, but is partly carried out in the applicant countries themselves where, for practical reasons, qualified staff are recruited.

Enlargement is a bilateral process that also requires adaptation by the EU institutions. In the run-up to an expected enlargement, the translation services of the institutions will all have to prepare for translation out of the new languages that will become official languages. This demand has traditionally been met by training existing staff to translate out of more languages and into their mother tongue, but experience shows that eight or nine foreign languages seem to be the maximum any translator can absorb. Therefore, the translation services are considering abandoning the "mother tongue" principle and introduce two-way translation, allowing translators to translate in two directions: into and out of their mother tongue. In addition to providing language training, the translation services have to adapt their computer systems, computer-aided translation tools and terminology bases to cope with new languages.

Ch. 7 concludes with some practical information on the recruitment of translators and a schematic summary of pre-accession and post-accession translation needs. These are exemplified by a virtual accession case, where the best practices to be copied and the mistakes to be avoided by the prospective member state are listed.

Ch. 8 consists of interviews with translators, ex-translators and translation users. The persons interviewed are from different member states and work or worked for different institutions. The translators and users are affiliated with the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, and the Court of Justice, and also include a freelance translator. The interviewees explain their background, how many languages they master, their work, and which institution they work for, if they are translators; if they are users, they also explain the need for translation and how they have experienced the translation process and products in the multilingual work environment. The chapter is generally a good read, but the reader may easily be left with the impression that the interviewees are all members of the same mutual admiration society.

Most chapters are followed by a section called "Exercises for students", which is intended for students of translation who have English as their mother tongue or first foreign language. The exercises are designed to be typical of the

skills ideally required by the EU institutions and easy to access. The authors also promise that they are fairly enjoyable – you will have to take their word for it. The exercises are particularly helpful for self-learners and help them consolidate their knowledge about translating for EU institutions and provide them with regular opportunities for self assessment throughout the book.

The book is part of the *Translation Practices Explained* series of course books designed to help self-learners and teachers of translation. With its contents and the clear writing style adopted by the authors, there is no doubt that the book appropriately complements the publishers' *Translation Theories Explained* series on a general level, as it does not go into detail with specific text genres etc. The website addresses also help individual learners gain further insight into the realities of professional practice. This book will undoubtedly find many readers on a beginner's or intermediate level who will greatly benefit from its information about translating for the European Union institutions. They may also see it as a guide to future career opportunities.

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