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**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

**ÉCOLE DE TRADUCTION
ET D'INTERPRÉTATION**

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Interpreting at the European Union Institutions: Interpretation Ad Personam

Mémoire présenté à l'Ecole de Traduction et d'Interprétation
Pour l'obtention du MA en Interprétation de Conférence
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ABSTRACT:

This thesis was conceived to present a general view of the way interpretation is provided at the European Institutions, focusing particularly on a recently created service: Interpretation ad Personam. The paper explores the place of interpretation within European policies on multilingualism, including the challenges related to enlargement. Secondly, our work describes the interpreting services of the three main institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the European Union, supported with recent data related to demand and languages. As students, we also paid considerable attention to employment, language profiles and training, with a section dedicated to the interpreting market. Finally, the chapter on IAP provides an interesting and comprehensive overview on this new individualised service, based on information collected by submitting a questionnaire to the EP. The aim here was to understand the way IAP is provided and what kind of impact it could have not only on interpretation at the EP, but also on employment policies and interpreters.

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1. Introduction

The visit to the European Institutions is a significant part of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) course. It gives students the unique chance to experience ‘how it feels’ to sit in a booth at the European Parliament and at the European Commission with professional interpreters and to learn more about the interpreting services of the European Union. It was during our visit to the EP that we first heard about the existence of a new individualized service, named Interpretation *ad Personam* (IAP). Even though IAP was only briefly mentioned during the presentation of the EP interpreting service, we immediately realized that it was rapidly becoming an established service, making us eager to find out more about its use and extent. Interpretation at the European Institutions represents one of the pillars of Multilingualism and has evolved over the years together with the development of the European Union. This paper will explore the way interpretation is provided at the European Institutions, analyze the way interpreting services have coped with increasing demand over the years, explain how interpreters are recruited and try to understand what kind of impact Interpretation *ad Personam* could have both on this established system and on the interpreting market in general. The first part of our mémoire will focus on the EU policies on Multilingualism, what they mean in regards to interpretation and which strategies the interpreting services have had to adopt in order to fulfil the ideals of a multilingual European Union, particularly given the challenges of EU enlargements. The second part of the paper will describe the interpreting services of the three main bodies of the Union: the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the European Union. This chapter will provide detailed information on interpretation at these institutions, both in terms of organization and also in relation to demand and languages, using recent official data. As students and future interpreters, we think it is important, if not necessary, to analyze the aspects related to employment and the market. Therefore, we will dedicate a considerable

section of this chapter to employment policies, training and language combinations, explaining how interpreters are recruited by the European Institutions. We will focus our work not only on the procedures but also on the current demand for interpreters, supporting our analysis with data related to the booths that work with more ‘traditional’ languages. Particular attention will be paid to B languages (see definition in paragraph 1.1.2.1), as they are the condition *sine qua non* for Interpretation ad Personam. The third and final part of this paper will be dedicated to Interpretation ad Personam. As this new individualized service was introduced only recently, gathering the necessary information meant we had to submit a questionnaire to the interpreting service of the European Parliament. Thanks to the data collected, we will be able to provide the readers of this paper with a detailed description of IAP, following its evolution from a pilot project to an established service, including interesting information on the actual demand by language. With this overview, we will examine the kind of impact Interpretation ad Personam may have on the way interpretation is provided at the European Parliament, with a particular emphasis on employment policies and interpreters wishing to work at the European Institutions.

1.1. Definitions

Throughout this paper we will employ several terms used to describe interpreting modes, techniques, interpreters’ profiles and policies related to the European Union Institutions. In order to allow the reader to better understand such concepts, we provide in this first chapter the definitions of the key terms used in our analysis.

1.1.1. Interpreting modes

Interpretation can be provided in different ways. Even if the final product is always the result of the process of conveying a message from a source language to a target language, this can

be attained by using various techniques. The following are the three possible interpreting modes, all of which are used by organizations and provided by interpreters.

1.1.1.1. Consecutive

Consecutive interpretation was used long before the introduction of simultaneous interpretation, in the aftermath of World War II (although try-outs took place as early as 1927). When interpreting in consecutive:

“[...] the interpreter sits at the table with the delegates or on the platform next to the speaker and interprets the speech into the required language once the speaker has finished speaking. The interpreter takes notes to give an accurate rendering of the speech which may be delivered in sections” (AIIC UK-IRELAND).

“Accurate rendering” means that the product does not result in a summary of the speech, “it is a complete rendition of the original speech in another language” (Phelan, 2001: 9). Moreover, “this method is time consuming as the time element is almost doubled” (Phelan, 2001: 9); in terms of length of the sections, “the speech could be as long as fifteen minutes nowadays, although in the past thirty minutes was not unusual” (Phelan, 2001: 9).

Despite its more limited use, this mode is still currently employed, particularly in situations where equipment for simultaneous is not available, as AIIC points out, “consecutive interpretation is suitable for meetings with fewer languages or for formal occasions such as dinners” (AIIC UK-IRELAND).

1.1.1.2. Simultaneous

“In simultaneous interpreting the listener hears the interpretation at the same time as the speech is made. The interpreter sits in a booth wearing headphones with a microphone. There

is a booth for each language and two or sometimes three interpreters in each booth. The interpreter hears the speech through the headphones and simultaneously interprets. [...] meanwhile the listeners are equipped with headphones that they can switch to the language they require. [...] because of the high level of concentration required for simultaneous interpreting, interpreters do not usually interpret for more than thirty minutes at a time” (Phelan, 2001: 6).

It is important that the interpreter has direct view onto the conference room and is able to see the development of the meeting, as AIIC¹ points out on its website².

1.1.1.3. Whispering

The third interpreting mode is called ‘whispered interpreting’ or ‘chuchotage’. It is used in meetings where only a few people do not understand the source language. Actually, when working in this mode, interpreters “speak in a low voice rather than whispering” (Riccardi, 2003: 112). Although the interpreter listens and interprets simultaneously, equipment is not necessary, as “chuchotage is an interpreting mode that is used to guarantee the understanding of a conference for a very small group of people, in a language into which simultaneous interpretation is not provided. Their intervention is then translated in simultaneous or consecutive for the rest of the public. An interpreter is therefore assigned to the group, providing interpretation in their language for the duration of the meeting” (Riccardi, 2003: 112).

¹ AIIC: Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (International Association of Conference Interpreters)

² Retrieved from: <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page1403>

1.1.2. Language Combination

According to AIIC³, the term ‘Language Combination’ “refers to the languages an interpreter uses professionally” (AIIC), or ‘working’ languages. It is possible to distinguish these languages in two groups: ‘active’ and ‘passive’ languages.

1.1.2.1. Active Languages

AIIC states on its website that: “Active languages are those languages into which the interpreter works” (AIIC). According to the definition⁴, active languages can be subdivided in two kinds:

An “‘*A language*’ is the interpreter's mother tongue (or another language strictly equivalent to a mother tongue), the one into which s/he interprets from all other working languages, generally in the two modes of interpretation, simultaneous and consecutive” (AIIC).

A “‘*B language*’ is a language into which the interpreter works from one or more of their other languages and which, although not a mother tongue, is a language of which s/he has perfect command. Some interpreters work into B languages in only one of the two modes of interpretation” (AIIC). As we will see later in this paper, the use of B languages is a complex and debated issue (see paragraph 2.3.3), nevertheless, to better understand the distinction, suffice to say that the main active language is the interpreter’s mother tongue, “the language in which the interpreter was formally educated and feels completely at ease” (AIIC). Acquiring the necessary skills for interpretation into a B language is a very long process that can take years of work and practice. According to AIIC, even when interpreters are able to

³ Retrieved from: <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page1403>

⁴ Retrieved from: <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page1403>

reach satisfactory standards, interpretation into one's B language is still "more suited to interpretation of technical discussions where lexical accuracy is more important than style or very discrete shades of meaning" (AIIC). Despite being able to interpret into an active language, other than his/her mother tongue, when working into a B language, "it is customary only to work into the second active language out of the mother tongue" (AIIC). This means that an interpreter with an A-B-C combination will work from B into A, C into A, and A into B, but not C into B. Nevertheless, "the very rare case of true bilinguals, i.e. people whose personal circumstances have resulted in their having two 'mother tongues', is the exception that proves the rule. Bilingual interpreters are much in demand, especially if they can offer a third language" (AIIC).

1.1.2.2. Passive Languages

"Passive languages are those languages of which the interpreter has complete understanding and from which s/he interprets" (AIIC⁵). These are what interpreters call their C languages, according to AIIC classification.

1.1.3. Relay, Pivot, Retour

Sometimes, it is difficult to find interpreters to cover specific language combinations. In those cases, various strategies are applied, from the use of an indirect interpretation (relay), to interpretation into a B language (retour). The following paragraph describes the terms with accepted definitions.

⁵ Retrieved from: <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page1403>

1.1.3.1. Relay

Relay refers to double, or indirect, interpretation into the target language of the audience. The speaker is first interpreted into one language, which is then interpreted into a second language (AIIC⁶). For the audience, the final product is a result of two interpretations.

1.1.3.2. Pivot

When relays are used, the French term *pivot* is used to designate the interpreter who interprets not only for those listening to his/her target language, but also for the other interpreters who take the relay. The pivot's role is even more demanding since he/she knows that colleagues are entirely dependent on the quality of his/her work (AIIC⁷).

“In relay interpreting the ‘pivot’ (i.e., the interpreter the other booths are listening to and taking relay from) has a very special responsibility. Apart from those delegates who are listening to the original, everybody else at the meeting is relying on the pivot to deliver the speaker’s message. When you are a pivot, all the principles of quality interpreting apply, of course, and a good pivot is, first and foremost, a good interpreter. However, the pivot must also make a special effort to interpret with the needs of colleagues in mind, and to be maximally clear and helpful” (AIIC, 2004).

1.1.3.3. Retour

The French term *retour* refers to interpretation in both directions using two languages (AIIC⁸). Interpreters working in *retour* interpret from their A language into his B language, rather than into their A language. Interpretation from a C language is rarely used, as it excludes the use of one’s native language (to work from or into), making the task extremely complex, as stated by Falbo, Russo, and Straniero (1999: 66).

⁶ Retrieved from: <http://www.aiic.net/glossary/default.cfm?ID=79&letter=R>

⁷ Retrieved from: <http://www.aiic.net/glossary/default.cfm?ID=73&letter=R>

⁸ Retrieved from: <http://www.aiic.net/glossary/default.cfm?ID=70&letter=R>

1.1.4. Linguistic Regime

The linguistic regime is the language arrangement established for a given meeting. As stated in the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, the interpretation language profile shall be drawn up at the constitution of the meeting and must be kept updated, according to the needs of the Members that make up the body in question (Bureau of the European Parliament, 2008b).

Linguistic regimes can be of two kinds:

1.1.4.1. Symmetric system

This system entails interpretation from and into all languages; that is to say, the number of passive languages is the same as the number of active languages. At the European Union, when the symmetric system is applied to all 23 official languages, it is called “full regime” (Gazzola, 2002: 24).

1.1.4.2. Asymmetric system

In this case, the number of passive languages differs from the one of active languages. The most common case is fewer active than passive languages: speakers can address the audience in their own language but they will be interpreted in a restricted number of languages (Gazzola, 2002: 24).

1.2. *Multilingualism and language policy in the EU*

“The EU now has 500 million citizens, 27 Member States, 3 alphabets and 23 EU official languages, some of them with a worldwide coverage. Some 60 other languages are also part of the EU heritage and are spoken in specific regions or by specific groups. In addition, immigrants have brought a wide range of languages with them: it

is estimated that at least 175 nationalities are now present within the EU's borders.

Due to these and other factors, the life of Europeans has become more international and more multilingual" (European Commission, 2008).

This paragraph of the 2008 Communication from the European Commission "*Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment*" perfectly describes how the European Union appears today, in terms of social, cultural and most of all, linguistic diversity. The enlargement process, together with the laws concerning the four fundamental freedoms of the European Union (the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital), has contributed to the multicultural and multilingual character of the European Union.

When the European Coal and Steel Community was created in 1951, its founding document, the Treaty of Paris, established the multilingual policy for the newly established organization. This principle went on to be a permanent element of the European Economic Community and later the European Union. The Treaty, however, was originally drafted only in French. Protocol of 24 July 1952⁹ states:

"- les décisions, recommandations et avis individuels de la Communauté doivent être rédigés dans la langue des destinataires;

- les échanges avec les autres institutions doivent se faire dans l'une des quatre langues officielles et les réponses aux courriers doivent être rédigées dans la langue de l'expéditeur;

- l'Assemblée est libre de déterminer de manière autonome les modalités pratiques de l'usage des langues pour son propre fonctionnement;

- les actes législatifs doivent être publiés dans les quatre langues officielles;

⁹ Conférence des ministres des affaires étrangères, 24-25 juillet 1952 (CEAB 2 n° 144).

- *la Cour de justice dispose d'un régime propre et détermine de manière autonome la langue de rédaction du projet d'arrêt, dont la publication doit se faire dans les quatre langues;*
- *les États où coexistent plusieurs langues officielles peuvent demander l'application des règles prévues par leur législation”.*

The language policy differs from other organizations, such as UN, OECD or NATO, as it adopts an “integral” regime. This means that all official languages of Member States are official and working languages of the organisation. First of all, a distinction needs to be drawn between “official languages” and “working languages”. According to Labrie (1993: 82), the official languages of the Community are the ones used for communications between the institutions and external organizations and states, while “working languages” are the ones used for inter-institution and infra-institution communications, which are also used in internal meetings attended by member states representatives and experts. Institutions such as NATO (English and French), OECD (English and French) and the Council of Europe (English and French) are based on a functional bilingualism, that is to say, on the active use of two official and working languages. The UN uses a simplified regime, by using two “working languages” (English and French) for internal activities, while interpretation, resolutions, minutes and important documents are provided in all six official languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic). The original four languages of the European Coal and Steel Community (French, German, Italian and Dutch) were all both “official” and “working” languages. This innovation was embodied in all languages of the signatories of the Treaty of Paris being considered as “equal”.

Article 314 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, also known as the Treaty of Rome of 1957, reiterates the principle:

“This Treaty, drawn up in a single original in the Dutch, French, German, and Italian languages, all four texts being equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the Italian Republic, which shall transmit a certified copy to each of the Governments of the other signatory States.

Pursuant to the Accession Treaties, the Danish, English, Finnish, Greek, Irish, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish versions of this Treaty shall also be authentic” (European Union, 2006b).

With the subsequent accession of new members, more official and working languages were added. The process led to a debate on the integral language regime, centered on the complex and costly nature¹⁰. Basically, the EU is an organization that operates through a supranational and intergovernmental system:

“Supra-nationalism is a deeper level of integration, meaning that the member states retain their national sovereignty, but in certain areas they transfer specific powers to common institutions (the Parliament, the Commission and the Court of Justice), which are elected democratically and represent the interest of the community as a whole” (Karoly, 2008: 130).

Union legislation becomes national law; therefore, the Union creates laws that become legally binding for its citizens and companies. In order for all to remain equal before the law, it seems only right that those persons and the judicial bodies of their countries be subject to and/or enforce laws drafted in their own language/s. The Union also entitles and encourages any citizen to play a part in its construction, which they must be able to do in their own language. The ideal of a multilingual Europe goes beyond the diplomatic sphere, to quote Jean Monnet: “We are not forming coalitions of states, we are uniting men”¹¹. Therefore, Multilingualism

¹⁰ See paragraph 1.3: Multilingualism and Interpretation.

¹¹ Speech, Washington, 30 April 1952. Retrieved from: http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/lesson_9/index_fr.htm

represents the spirit of cohesion and union that is the core of the EU, from its very embryonic stage.

The notion of multilingualism can refer both to an individuals' ability to express themselves in various languages and also to the co-existence of different languages in the same geographical region. Multilingualism represents the foundations upon which European cultural diversity is built.

“The harmonious co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of European Union's aspiration to be united in diversity, one of the cornerstones of the European project. Languages define personal identities, but are also part of a shared inheritance. They can serve as a bridge to other people and open access to other countries and cultures, promoting mutual understanding. A successful multilingualism policy can strengthen life chances of citizens: it may increase their employability, facilitate access to services and rights and contribute to solidarity through enhanced intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. Approached in this spirit, linguistic diversity can become a precious asset, increasingly so in today's globalised world” (European Commission, 2008: 3).

This idea relies on the belief that the co-existence of different languages and cultures must not be the cause of division and misunderstanding, rather it is paramount to attaining better unification and cohesion through intercultural dialogue. The Commission's policies are not aimed at creating a sort of “melting pot”, where differences are rendered down, but at attaining that “unity in diversity” that is the very essence of today's Europe. Article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty, 1997, defines the policy of the European Union concerning cultural diversity:

“1. The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time

bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore” (European Union, 1997: article 128).

Therefore, the European Union promotes and fosters linguistic diversity in many different ways. First of all, by protecting its citizens from any form of language discrimination, as stated in the article 22 on cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: “The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity” (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 22).

Moreover, another section of the 2008 Communication states that “everybody should have the opportunity to communicate appropriately in order to realise his or her potential and make the most of the opportunities offered by the modern and innovative EU” (European Commission, 2008: 3). In this way, the European Union considers knowledge of foreign languages to be an important asset in terms of competitiveness. In 2005 the European Commission adopted the New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism, the first communication dealing with multilingualism and establishing the priorities within the European Union’s multilingualism policy, while in 2007 it created a separate portfolio on multilingualism, the European Commissioner for Multilingualism. This new portfolio focuses on fostering language learning and cultural exchanges by encouraging the mobility of students and trainees, training language teachers and introducing new learning technologies (European Commission, 2005: 4).

1.3. Multilingualism and interpretation

Multilingualism, non-discrimination and the right to an appropriate communication are also reflected in the provision of interpretation and translation services. As we have seen, unlike other international institutions, in many of the meetings of European institutions (and

particularly in the European Parliament) all participating delegates should be able to express themselves in their own language, as stated in article 21 of the Treaty of Rome:

“Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to petition the European Parliament in accordance with Article 194.

Every citizen of the Union may apply to the Ombudsman established in accordance with Article 195.

Every citizen of the Union may write to any of the institutions or bodies referred to in this Article or in Article 7 in one of the languages mentioned in Article 314 and have an answer in the same language”.

The three interpreting services of the EU, for the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Court of Justice, provide interpretation within various language regimes and modes of interpretations (consecutive, simultaneous, whispering), according to the idea that countries should be able to send their best experts and representatives to the European Institutions on the basis of their expertise, rather than their linguistic ability.

Currently, there are 23 official languages of the European Union, as stated in the latest amendment of the first Community Regulation, determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community, Article 1:

“The official languages and the working languages of the institutions of the Union shall be Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish”.

When entering the EU, a state decides which language or languages it wishes to be declared as official EU languages. In some cases, when a country has more than one national language, such as Belgium, the choice is made on the basis of that country’s legislation related to the

legal status of its languages. Luxembourgish and Turkish (official languages in Luxembourg and Cyprus, respectively) have not been granted the status of EU official working languages. Providing interpretation from and into all 23 languages of the EU is very complex. Today, with 23 official languages, interpreting services have to cover 506 possible combinations (23 x 22 languages). The problem worsens anytime a new official and working language is added, the number of combinations is multiplied, as each language has to be interpreted into all the others (e.g. 1 more language equals to $24 \times 23 = 552$), making very difficult to find interpreters to cover all possible combinations. The cost of interpretation at the EU is of about 150 million Euros per year. While the EP has stressed the fact that the total cost of services for interpretation and translation combined together in 2006 (prior to the 2007 enlargement) was equal to only 1% of the total EU budget (European Parliament, 2006), and that interpretation alone costs about 0.5 Euros per citizen per year, in order to reduce the number of interpreters and consequently the costs, interpreting services apply various strategies, from interpreters with many passive languages to the use of relay or ‘pivot’, a practice that will be later discussed in this paper¹².

1.4. Language policy and enlargement of the EU

Under Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union, any European country may apply for membership if it meets a set of criteria established by the Treaty. Since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, by Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, five enlargements have taken place. In 1973, Denmark, United Kingdom and Ireland accessed the European Community (EC). During the eighties, the EC expanded to include Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986 and, in 1995, Austria,

¹² See chapter 2.3.3. B Language, retour, relay: a controversial issue and a current practice

Finland and Sweden. On 1 May 2004 the greatest enlargement in the history of the EU took place with the accession of 10 new countries: Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Slovenia. The most recent one, on 1st of January 2007 welcomed Romania and Bulgaria in the Union, bringing the number of member states to 27.

For the provision of interpretation, the enlargement of the EU represents even a more difficult task. As new countries enter the European Union, they must benefit from the same rights as the other Member States, including those related to languages. As previously explained, the addition of languages causes the number of combinations to grow exponentially. Indeed, the 2004 enlargement represented the greatest challenge for EU interpretation services, with the incorporation of nine new languages (European Union, 2004), increasing the number of possible combinations from 132 (12 x 11) to 420 (21 x 20). Changes of this scale need to be prepared well in advance in order to satisfy the demand for interpretation and translation, i.e. a 40% increase in the number of staff interpreters (European Union, 2004). The departments responsible for these services began recruiting through inter-institutional open competitions five years before the enlargement and started promoting language projects in the enlargement countries (European Union, 2004).

In response to fears (European Parliament, 2001: 2/3) that more languages would be unbearable for the budget for interpretation, the European Parliament envisioned several possible scenarios to reform the linguistic regime, in view of the 2004 Enlargement (European Parliament, 2001: 2/3). Clearly, the situation had changed substantively since the early days of the ECSC and this brought into question the original integral regime, particularly in terms of cost-effectiveness. In 2001, a report by M. Podestà "Preparing for the Parliament of the enlarged European Union" caused a stir within the interpreting world. The paper presented four different options to replace the existing linguistic regime:

- “I. Scenarios for making radical changes to the language regime,
- A. Monolingualism: abandoning multilingualism and replacing it with a single official and working language
 - B. Giving Member States responsibility for translation and interpretation into their national language or languages, if they so wish.
- II. Intermediate scenarios involving the use of a limited number of working languages, possibly in conjunction with facilities for Members speaking the other languages.
- A. Symmetrical system using 6 working languages (source and target languages)
 - B. Asymmetrical system (21 source languages and 1, 3 or 6 target languages).
- III. Controlled multilingualism: options selected by the Steering Committee with a view to maintaining the principle of the equality of languages as far as the Institution's core activities are concerned, while at the same time drawing on the previous scenarios with a view to introducing a maximum number of corrective management measures in respect of less essential activities.
- IV. The scenarios set out above may be compared with the current situation and with a 'pure' system of full multilingualism without the corrective management measures already implemented or planned” (European Parliament, 2001: 2/3).

The most popular possible option was the one of an “asymmetrical system”, based on few ‘pivotal’ languages used as bridge for the interpretation into the other languages. The plan was to use relay interpretation for the new languages first and then to extend the practice to all working languages, using from 2 to 4 “pivot” languages. The systematic use of “pivot” booths would have significantly reduced the number of language combinations to be provided, while at the same time relying heavily on interpreters’ active B languages. AIIC, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, reacted strongly to the report and pointed out that in real terms, a dramatic increase in the budget for interpretation can and should be avoided not

by reducing languages and forcing interpreters to work into their B languages, but by a more frequent use of relay and a more efficient organization of meetings, thus reducing interpreting days (AIIC, 2001). AIIC stated that it would be impossible to find a sufficient number of qualified B-active interpreters to meet the needs of the European Parliament, and that B-active interpretation should only be considered a temporary solution, used alongside efforts to enhance training policies to help interpreters learn the recently added languages (AIIC, 2001).

2. Interpretation in the EU

2.1. *Interpreting services of the EU*

According to DG-SCIC¹³, interpretation in the European institutions began with just a reduced group of interpreters providing services for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) from 1952. At that time there were four official languages: French, German, Italian and Dutch. In 1958 the president of the Commission, Walter Hallstein, set up an Interpreting Division, with 15 staff interpreters. By 1964 it was already clear that there was a shortage of quality interpreters for all required combinations, therefore a specific in-house conference interpreter training of university graduates was created. In 1973 the Interpreting Division became a Directorate. In the same year Danish and English brought the number of official languages to six. With the accession of Greece in 1981 the Directorate needed expansion, and so became the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (SCIC), providing interpretation for the Commission, the Council of the Union, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and, later, for the Committee of the Regions and the different European foundations and agencies. In 1986 Portugal and Spain joined the Union, followed

¹³ http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/jcms/c_5206/a-brief-history

by Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995, and the number of official languages rose to eleven. According to the subsidiarity principle, introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht (1997), in-house interpreter training was eliminated and replaced with a new collaborative system: SCIC started to provide interpreters for the Commissioners' multilingual internet chats. By 1998 SCIC was already preparing for the next enlargement (2004), training staff interpreters with the upcoming languages and collaborating with universities in candidate countries. New Units for the new languages were created in 2000, and free-lance accreditation tests were held for interpreters from candidate countries. 2003 was an important year for SCIC, as the Commission approved an important reorganization of the service. The Directorate General for Interpretation was created to meet interpretation needs of the European Institutions, except for the European Parliament, where interpretation was provided by the Directorate General for Infrastructures and Interpretation (DG-IFIN). In May 2004 the biggest enlargement of the EU took place, with the integration of nine new languages (Czech, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Maltese, Polish, Slovakian and Slovene). In 2005 the European Commission approved its first comprehensive framework strategy on Multilingualism. In 2007, Irish was recognised as an official language. In the same year Romania and Bulgaria joined the Union. On January 1, 2008, the Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences separated from DG-IFIN to manage the organisation of conferences for the EP¹⁴. Today the EU has 27 countries and 23 working languages.

2.1.1. Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences (DG-INTE) – European Parliament

At the European Parliament, the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (DG-INTE) provides interpretation for:

¹⁴ All information on the history of interpretation services was retrieved from:
http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/jcms/c_5206/a-brief-history

- plenary sittings;
- meetings of EP committees, parliamentary delegations, joint parliamentary assemblies;
- meetings of political groups;
- press conferences;
- meetings of Parliament's governing bodies (Bureau, Conference of Presidents, etc.).

The DG also deals with the logistical organisation of meetings requested by political groups and governing bodies of the European Parliament. This includes the reservation and preparation of meeting rooms, together with the maintenance and upgrading of technical equipment.

Rule 146 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament states that:

“All Members shall have the right to speak in Parliament in the official language of their choice. Speeches delivered in one of the official languages shall be simultaneously interpreted into the other official languages and into any other language the Bureau may consider necessary. Interpretation shall be provided in committee and delegation meetings from and into the official languages used and requested by the members and substitutes of that committee or delegation. At committee and delegation meetings away from the usual places of work interpretation shall be provided from and into the languages of those members who have confirmed that they will attend the meeting. These arrangements may exceptionally be made more flexible where the members of the committee or delegation so agree. In the event of disagreement, the Bureau shall decide.”

Under this rule, interpretation within Plenary sittings is provided in all 23 languages, while in committee and delegation meetings the number of languages provided may vary depending on the languages requested by the participants. At the Parliament, all three interpreting modes are used: simultaneous, consecutive and chouchotage. The workload of DG-INTE is 93%

Parliament meetings (Brussels, Strasbourg, Luxembourg, cities where European Institutions have their seat, and also other EU offices in the world) and 7% other institutions, such as some European Commission meetings (in Luxembourg and elsewhere), Court of Auditors, Committee of the Regions (together with SCIC), European Ombudsman or European Data Protection Officer (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences, EP, 2009: 3).

DG-INTE also provides interpretation for additional national languages (Basque, Catalan and Galician) that are eligible to benefit from official use in EU institutions under the terms of the June 13, 2005 Resolution of the Council of the European Union (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de la Vicepresidència Secretaria de Política Lingüística, 2008: 21). The expenses for this service are covered by the Member State that requires its use. The directorate also supplies non EU languages interpretation for special meetings upon request, particularly Arabic, Russian and Chinese amongst others (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2010: 9).

DG-INTE has been an independent Directorate since 2008, when it separated from DG-IFIN (Directorate General for Infrastructure and Interpretation). The Directorate employs over 430 staff interpreters has at its disposal a reserve of more than 2700 freelance interpreters (Auxiliary Conference Interpreters, ACIs). Between 800 and 1000 interpreters are needed per session for plenary sittings of the European Parliament¹⁵. The overall expenditure for 2009 was € 50.5 M (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 2).

¹⁵ European Parliament website:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/public/staticDisplay.do?id=155&pageRank=4&language=EN>

		Number of interpretation days covered by staff / Percentage	Number of interpretation days covered by ACIs / Percentage
Interpretation days for all institutions served in 2009 (2008 figures in brackets)	94,148 (103,007)	51,214 (53,377) 54.4 % (51.8 %)	42,934 (49,630) 45.6 % (48.2 %)
Interpretation days for Parliament only in 2009 (2008 figures in brackets)	87,497 (96,387)	49,571 (51,745) 56.7 % (53.7 %)	37,926 (44,642) 43.3 % (46.3 %)

(Table 1: Interpretation days covered by Officials and ACIs)

Overall, the Directorate offers some 100,000 interpreting days per year, 54% of which are covered by staff interpreters and 46% by freelancers (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 8). Although this figure is the general average, there is a considerable difference between “traditional” languages and “new” languages: 93% of posts in the EU15¹⁶ languages booths are covered by permanent staff, and 7% by temporary staff. In the EU10¹⁷ plus Bulgarian and Romanian booths, 21% of the staff interpreter posts are vacant (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 5). The lack of interpreters for specific languages entailed the adoption of the exceptions of Rule 147 of the Rules of Procedure:

“During a transitional period expiring at the end of the seventh parliamentary term¹⁸, derogations from Rule 146 shall be permissible if and to the extent that, despite adequate precautions, interpreters or translators for an official language are not available in sufficient numbers”.

One of the main reasons for this deficiency is that the EU Parliament has to face competition from other EU institutions, failing to provide the same working conditions and to appear as an attractive employer. For example, at the European Parliament the level of

¹⁶ EU15: Countries in the EU before the 2004 enlargement.

¹⁷ EU10: Countries that accessed the EU during the 2004 enlargement.

¹⁸ Extended by Parliament's decision of 11 March 2009.

the competitions has the base grade AD5, lower than the AD7 level offered by the European Court of Justice or the European Commission (for ACCC or ABC profiles) (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 5). Nonetheless, coverage by staff interpreters rose by 2.6%, specifically in 2009. Overall, in 2009, 25 permanent staff interpreters were recruited and 111 ACIs were accredited, of which 37 for EUR12 languages and 18 for non EU languages (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 8).

On November 17th 2008 the Bureau of the European Parliament adopted the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, laying down the implementation arrangements, in particular priorities to be observed in cases where language resources are insufficient to provide all the facilities requested. The assignment of rooms is based on the principles governing ‘controlled full multilingualism’, which Article 2 of the Code defines, establishing the following order of priority:

- “a. the plenary sitting;
- b. priority political meetings, such as meetings of the President, Parliament’s governing bodies (as defined in Title I, Chapter III of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure) and the Conciliation Committees;
- c. the parliamentary committees, the parliamentary delegations (during committee and delegation periods parliamentary committees and delegations shall take priority over all other users, except those referred to in point (a) and (b)); the political groups (during part- sessions and group periods shall take priority over all other users, except those referred to in points (a) and (b));
- d. press conferences, institutional media information actions, including seminars; other institutional communication events;
- e. other official bodies authorised by the Bureau and the Conference of Presidents;

f. some administrative events (competition tests, seminars, general meetings of staff, etc.)” (Bureau of the European Parliament, 2008: 3/4)

Article 7 establishes the scheduling principles. According to it a maximum of 18 meetings can be organised in parallel. Within this limit other restrictions apply:

“- at most 5 meetings may have coverage of 21 official languages (of which one, the plenary sitting, may have coverage of all official languages);

- a further 4 meetings may have coverage of up to 16 official languages¹⁹;

- a further 5 meetings may have coverage of up to 12 official languages; and

- a further 4 meetings may have coverage of up to 6 official languages” (Bureau of the European Parliament, 2008: 6).

2.1.2. Directorate General for Interpretation (SCIC) – European Commission

At the European Commission interpretation is provided by the Directorate General for Interpretation, also known as SCIC (Service Commun d'Interprétation- Conférences - Joint Service for Interpretation and Conferences). It reports to the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. SCIC also provides interpreters for the Council of the Union, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank, agencies and offices in the Member States. In 2009, the Council accounted for 54% of its workload, followed by the Commission at 36%. The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions accounted for 6% and 2% respectively (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 4). From a general point of view, SCIC is the world's largest employer of interpreters²⁰.

“DG Interpretation [SCIC] manages the allocation of Commission meeting rooms and provides support for the smooth running of meetings in many languages that are held

¹⁹ Whenever resources are available, the language coverage of these meetings may, without prior authorisation, be increased to a maximum of 18 official languages.

²⁰ Directorate General for Interpretation website: http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/jcms/c_5204/what-we-do-faq

there. It also organises conferences for Directorates-General and departments of the Commission, typically in the range of over 40 main events per year. Its mission is therefore to make possible multilingual communication at the core of Community decision-making by:

- providing quality interpretation services;
- providing an effective service of conference organisation including technical support and design management of modern conference facilities;
- helping to put the Commission's new multilingualism strategy into practice²¹.

As a rule of thumb, elected representatives (i.e., Ministers in formal meetings, plenary meetings of the Committee of the Regions or of the Economic and Social Committee) get full, symmetric language coverage, while officials and experts get a wide range of different arrangements, depending on their actual needs and the resources available. But most of the meetings organized by SCIC have reduced language coverage, meaning that interpretation is not provided for all languages. The usual scenario for meetings in the Commission presents some four active languages and between four and eight passive languages (interpretation is provided from those languages but not into them). This system is called asymmetric language coverage²² (see section 1.1.4.1.). At the College of Commissioners (the ensemble of the 27 EU commissioners) the working languages are English, German and French. For other meetings (public sector expert meetings on fishing, agriculture, etc.), the organiser makes a request to SCIC detailing the active and passive languages required, and SCIC checks availability (meeting room, booths, interpreters...) (Ranucci & Sarti, 2010: 25).

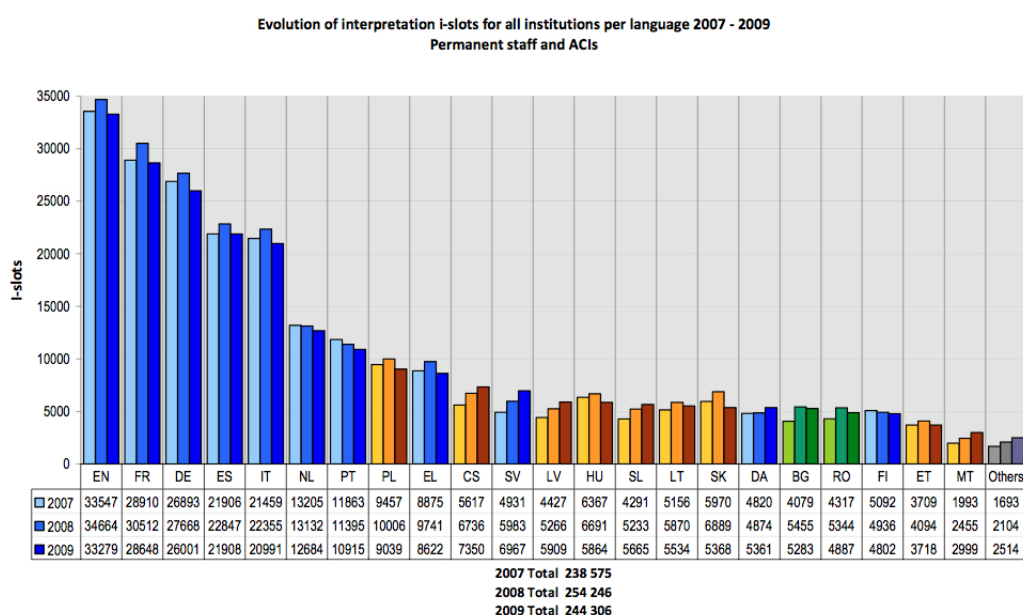
SCIC has around 500 staff interpreters, more than 2700 accredited freelance interpreters, shared with Parliament's DG-INTE (of which between 300 and 400 are hired on a daily basis), it organises sixty meetings per day, which means over 11000 meeting days per year

²¹ Directorate General for Interpretation website: http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/jcms/j_8/home

²² Directorate General for Interpretation website: http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/jcms/c_5204/what-we-do-faq

(135000 interpreting days per year), and has an operating cost of around 130M € per year (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 4). For the taxpayer, it boils down to around 0.20 € per citizen per year. The cost of interpreting is likely to increase by 20-40%, when full capacity is reached in the new Member State languages²³.

The graph below²⁴ shows the number of i-slots (unique accounting unit for interpretation services, half-day of interpretation equivalent) for each language for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009.



(Fig. 1: Evolution of SCIC i-slots per language 2007-2009)

(Yellow, orange and red colours represent the data for 2007, 2008 and 2009 for EU10 languages, and the green bars represent the data for 2007, 2008 and 2009 for Bulgarian and Romanian)

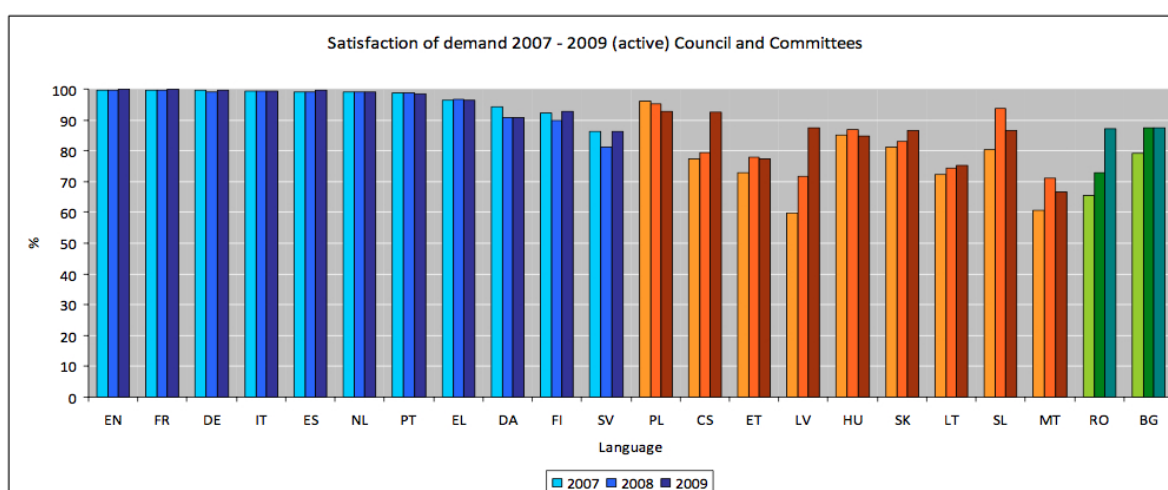
The reduction between 2008 and 2009 for most languages is due not only to the extraordinarily high number of meetings organised in 2008 but also to the decrease in activity in 2009, as terms in office came to an end in the European Parliament and the Commission (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 5). As the graph shows, English is the

²³ Directorate General for Interpretation website: http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/jcms/c_5204/what-we-do-faq

²⁴ Directorate General for Interpretation (EC): Annual Activity Report 2009, p. 5

most used language, accounting for 33,279 i-slots. French, German, Spanish and Italian follow respectively. Interpretation into Polish is the most provided amongst EU10 languages, following Dutch and Portuguese. Czech, Swedish and Slovene recorded an increase from 2008 to 2009 due to the Presidencies held by those countries in 2008 and 2009 (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 5). Latvian and Maltese also saw a rise in activity in 2009 due to the previous shortage of interpreters (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 5). Finnish comes in last of the EU15 languages accounting for only 4,800 i-slots, as delegates from Finland employ English for many of their interventions (Piehl, 2010).

As the following graph²⁵ shows, the general ability to meet demand (number of meetings successfully organised) is over 90%, and for active interpretation over 93%.



(Fig. 2: Satisfaction of demand by SCIC 2007-2009)

(Yellow, orange and red colours represent the data for 2007, 2008 and 2009 for EU10 languages, and the green bars represent the data for 2007, 2008 and 2009 for Bulgarian and Romanian)

Over the past two years there has been an increase in the number of interpreters of Latvian and Maltese, languages that had traditionally suffered shortages. Seven of the languages added in 2004 and 2007 are coming to the end of the rapid growth phase that traditionally

²⁵ Directorate General for Interpretation (EC): Annual Activity Report 2009, p. 5

follows enlargement, although this is not the case for Czech, Latvian and Slovak. Most of EU10 languages do not achieve the 90% minimum of satisfaction of demand (see Fig. 2). This applies especially to Lithuanian and Maltese, but also to Latvian, Hungarian, Slovak, Estonian, Slovene, Romanian and Bulgarian (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 6).

2.1.3. Interpretation Directorate – Court of Justice of the European Union

In order to guarantee equal access to justice for all citizens, it is essential for the parties to proceedings before the Courts of the European Union to be able to use their own language. This criterion establishes the need for Interpretation services. The Interpretation Directorate of the Court of Justice of the European Union provides interpretation in simultaneous mode for public hearings of the Court of Justice, the General Court and the Civil Service Tribunal (Interpretation Directorate of the Court of Justice of the European Union, 2010).

The Court of Justice uses French as working language. This means that French is used by the members of the Court and its staff for day-to-day internal communication and for the work produced jointly. Despite this, judges and advocates-general can express themselves in any of the 23 official languages of the EU.

When a case is brought to court the language of the case is established. It must be an official language of the EU, as stated in the Article 29 of the Rules of Procedure of the Court of Justice: “The language of a case shall be Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish or Swedish.”

The applicant has the right to choose the language of the case, unless the defendant is a Member State or a natural or legal person who is a national of a Member State. In such cases, the language of the case is the official language (or one of the official languages where there

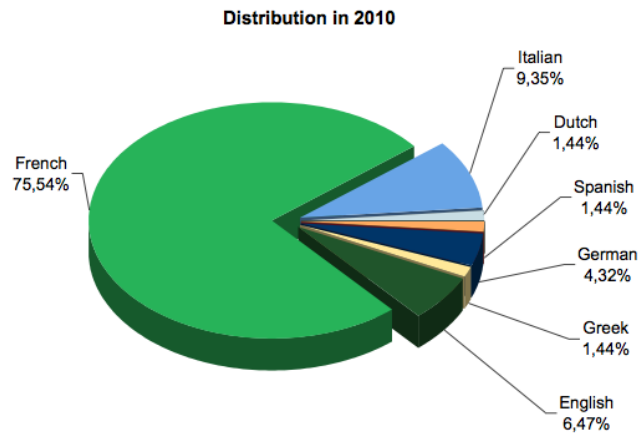
are more than one) of that State. In preliminary rulings, the language of the case is always that of the national court making the reference.

Because of these conditions, the Court requires a variety of combinations, thus a variety of interpreters, depending on the applicant, the defendant, the judges and the rapporteurs (if present) as well as other guests, such as groups of visitors. And due to the special setting in which interpretation takes place, i.e., a court room, interpreters need a specific legal knowledge as well as previous information on the case, usually provided beforehand by the Court.

The Interpretation Directorate of the Court of Justice of the European Union deals with the designation of interpreters to each case depending on the language combination needs of the trial. It has around 70 staff interpreters, but it also hires, for some cases, experienced freelance interpreters from the ACI list, who cover 40% of the workload (Interpretation Directorate of the Court of Justice of the European Union, 2010). Each interpreter is assigned to a number of cases (varying from one to four or maximum five) and they are given comprehensive documentation related to the case.

The graph below²⁶ shows the language distribution of new cases brought to the Civil Service Tribunal in 2010. (The language of the case corresponds to the language in which the proceedings were brought and not to the applicant's mother tongue or nationality).

²⁶ Court of Justice of the European Union (2010)
http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/P_63831/



(Fig.3: Language of the case of the Civil Service Tribunal in 2010)

This table⁴⁰ shows the evolution of languages of the cases from 2006 to 2010.

Language of the case	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bulgarian		2			
Spanish	1	2	1	1	2
Czech				1	
German	2	17	10	9	6
Greek	3	2	3	3	2
English	8	8	5	8	9
French	113	101	73	63	105
Italian	10	17	6	13	13
Lithuanian		2	2		
Hungarian	2	1	1		
Dutch	7	4	8	15	2
Polish			1		
Portuguese			1		
Romanian		1			
Slovene	1				
Finnish	1				
Total	148	157	111	113	139

(Table 2: Evolution of the language of the case of the Civil Service Tribunal 2006-2010)

French is undoubtedly the most used language for proceedings, 76%, 64%, 65%, 55% and 75% for 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. Other languages that have a significant coverage are Italian, English, German and Dutch (except for 2010).

2.2. Employment, inter-institutional cooperation, training

2.2.1. Employment

2.2.1.1. Staff interpreters – officials

“The European Institutions organise recruitment competitions for staff interpreters through the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) whenever vacant posts are to be filled. Competitions for those wishing to become officials of the European Parliament are announced on the EPSO website”²⁷.

Only EU citizens can apply for a staff position. There is a pre-selection process with two multiple-choice tests, one comprising a series of questions to assess the candidate’s knowledge of the European Union, its institutions and policies and one intended to assess verbal reasoning skills. The actual interpretation exam consists in consecutive and simultaneous interpretation tests.

Interpreters working as officials for DG-INTE, SCIC and the Interpretation Directorate of the Court of Justice of the European Union belong to the Administrator Function Group (AD). Different posts cover Grades 5 to 16. New staff generally enter at Grade 5. No experience is required for this level, but it is compulsory to have a university degree in interpretation (three years of education at least) or any degree and specific training in interpretation (i.e. Master’s degree or one year documented conference interpreting experience) (European Union, 2006: 3). Regarding language combination, ACC or AB (at least) are required for this level. AD7 posts require a larger language combination (ACCC or ABC) and at least four years of experience in conference interpreting (European Union, 2006: 4). AD12 to AD14 are levels granted to Heads of Unit. AD15 is for Director and Director-General and AD16 is for Director-General only.

²⁷ Retrieved from: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/multilingualism/career_of_interpreter_en.htm

2.2.1.2. Freelance interpreters – Accredited Conference Interpreters (ACIs)

Freelance interpreters routinely work alongside staff interpreters in meetings covered by the interpreting services of the European Institutions. For ACIs there is no nationality requirement and all languages worldwide may be considered (European Union, 2010a).

Accreditation as a freelance interpreter is obtained by passing an inter-institutional interpreting test. To be eligible for such a test, candidates must hold a recognised university degree in conference interpreting, or hold a degree in any subject and either have postgraduate qualification in conference interpreting or have documented experience in conference interpreting. Applications can be submitted at any time, but they are scheduled according to the actual needs of specific language units. As soon as a suitable test is planned, a selection committee examines the applications individually. The committee decides if the candidate's language combination is a priority, and invites him/her to take the exam.

According to DG-INTE (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 7), at the test, there are interpreting exams in both consecutive and simultaneous mode (around 6 minutes for consecutive and around 10 minutes for simultaneous) in accordance with the language profile offered. At least one of the speeches is on an EU-related topic. There is an additional exam where questions on the European Union and its institutions are asked. In the case of narrow failure, candidates might be eligible for an integration programme. This programme consists in a one month professional internship conceived to achieve the level required to meet the standards, re-sitting the accreditation exams at the end of that period.

Passing the exams enables interpreters to work for all interpreting services of the European Union. There is a common list to which interpretation services refer when planning meetings. Currently it counts some 2,700 interpreters. Each interpreter has an employability coefficient, a recruitment tool based on a points system, and upon examining the list, employers find

interpreters covering their needs ranked by this coefficient. The coefficient takes into account the recruitment cost in relation to the professional domicile, the number of working languages and professional competency. The employability coefficient is calculated out of a total of 12 points, divided into 4 points per section. For the first section, a local domicile accounts for 4 points, a nearby domicile accounts for 2 points, a domicile in Europe accounts for 1 point and a domicile outside Europe equals to 0 points. For the second section, points are awarded at a 0.5 ratio per passive language up to a maximum of 3 points; 0.5 extra points can be given for a consecutive retour and a further 0.5 points for simultaneous retour once the quality has been assessed by the Head of Unit. We can speculate that the reason for this difference lies in the need for quality simultaneous retour in booths acting as ‘pivot’ (see paragraph 1.1.3.2.). The third section, professional competency, is only considered for experienced ACIs who have worked at least 3 years for the EU. Professional Competency Rating (PCR) is determined by the Head of Interpreting Unit based on the regular quality reporting system (SERIF). This rating also serves as an orientation tool to assign interpreters to specific meetings, providing important feedback to individual ACI's on their strengths and weaknesses (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2010b). The point scale ranges from 0.5 to a maximum of 4 points with incremental changes of half points (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2010b). Newly accredited interpreters are considered beginners until they have worked for a total of 250 days, as established in the AIIC-brokered agreement with the European Union (Brokered Agreement AIIC-UE, March 2004). This document establishes the working conditions for ACIs and it applies to all freelance interpreters, both members of AIIC and non-members.

2.2.2. Inter-institutional and international cooperation

In recent years, cooperation between the three interpretation services has been a key element in providing full interpretation for EU institutions. Sharing the workload has proved to be useful not only in ACI management and activities with universities, but also as starter for a structured exchange of staff interpreters on a voluntary basis, an opportunity to get to know the functioning and work of the other institutions. For instance, during Parliament's recess period, or electoral periods, staff interpreters from DG-INTE who are not assigned to training or meetings are placed at the disposal of SCIC providing many interpreter days, both in Brussels and Strasbourg. In 2009, on 123 days, staff interpreters from the Parliament's DG-INTE were put at the disposal of SCIC on individual assignments in Brussels (during Strasbourg sessions) and 22 interpreters worked for SCIC in Strasbourg. In this period DG-INTE staff interpreters worked for 512 interpretation days (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 18).

Moreover, cooperation between institutions has led to the launching of the SPIRIT project. It consists in an application designed to integrate several sources of data concerning pedagogical assistance, grants, bursaries, accreditation tests and ACI candidates, and it is nearing its operational stage (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 14). The application eases the procedures for students and candidates to ACI exams and gives an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the financial support given by the Institutions to universities and ACI candidates.

Regarding international cooperation, SCIC is actively working with the United Nations, with IAMLADP²⁸ and EMCI²⁹ amongst other organisations to promote interpretation training in

²⁸ International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (UN)

²⁹ European Masters in Conference Interpreting

many different regions, such as US (Washington), Africa (Maputo and Nairobi) and Asia (China, Vietnam and Macao) (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 12).

2.2.3. Training

Interpretation Directorates (DG-INTE and SCIC) devote significant effort to training interpreters and furthering their competences. During summer periods or electoral recesses, they organise training activities, such as language courses, refresher courses and summer universities stays. They also grant bursaries for interpreters extending their language combinations. Special seminars and thematic conferences on subjects of particular relevance to interpreters are also regularly organised. Furthermore, meetings with members of Permanent Representations are being organised so interpreters can be exposed to more unusual languages and remain informed of the political, economic and social developments of Member States (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 13).

Over 130 staff interpreters take part in such training programs every year. Regarding ACI training, there is a specific point in the AIIC-brokered agreement with the European Union:

“Article 4: Perfectionnement professionnel et linguistique.

Les AIC travaillant de manière suivie pour les Institutions peuvent participer aux cours de perfectionnement professionnel et linguistique (notamment pour l'utilisation de l'outil informatique donnant accès aux bases de données terminologiques) que celles-ci organisent à l'intention de leurs fonctionnaires et agents, pour autant que cette participation soit compatible avec les exigences du bon fonctionnement des services.

Les AIC ont accès à des bourses de formation dans les conditions établies par chaque Institution. Ces conditions sont portées à la connaissance des AIC par les moyens appropriés” (Brokered Agreement AIIC-UE, March 2004).

For the first time in 2009, 18 ACIs received financial support to finalise the learning process of a new language and 13 have already added another working language (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 7).

One of the most effective resources to train professional interpreters is the creation of postgraduate courses in conference interpreting in each of the newly admitted states. For this reason there is a downstream support to student-interpreters, universities and new graduates. Interpreting Directorates give teaching assistance to about 50 universities, organise 'Training for Trainers' seminars for teachers from new Member States and for trainers from candidate countries. The benchmark of postgraduate courses is the European Masters in Conference Interpreting, EMCI. Thanks to the endeavours of DG INTE and DG-SCIC, all New Member States and Admission Countries have a postgraduate programme. DG-INTE co-sponsors and fosters the EMCI program (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 15). The courses that meet quality criteria receive various types of support, from technical to financial. A very interesting tool for giving advice and monitoring this program is the development of virtual classes by videoconference, during which experienced interpreters follow the performance of students³⁰.

SCIC also awards grants to universities which organise conference interpreting training, offers bursaries to postgraduate students and organises top-up training sessions for selected candidates of 'most wanted' A languages (Greek, Slovak, English, Maltese and Slovene) (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2009: 9). Moreover, student visits are organised by both Directorates. During these visits participants are informed about the profession and career opportunities at the EU Institutions. SCIC has developed a distance learning tool, the Speech Repository, a database which gathers speeches in all official languages . Access to this

³⁰ ETI Virtual Institute: <http://live.eti.unige.ch/>

service is granted to over 100 universities and to candidates invited to take the accreditation exams, as well as to NATO and UN interpretation services.

2.3. Current situation of the EU interpreting market

2.3.1. Language combination profiles sought by EU employers

While the training of interpreters who are native speakers coming from long-serving European Union members has managed to provide a sufficient number of professionals (except for the English booth, that constantly suffers from a scarcity of interpreters) (European Union, 2009), it has been hard to find interpreters for languages of newly admitted members or with more “exotic” or rare language combinations. This means demand for interpretation into these languages can hardly be met. In response, EU recruiters (see 2.2.1.) are constantly looking for interpreters with various passive or “C” languages, possibly including “rare” languages. Applicants for French, Italian and Spanish booths have to present an “original” combination in order to enter the selection process and employers are already looking for interpreters who are able to work from Croatian, as Croatia is the next most likely candidate to enter the Union. This situation is particularly evident in the Parliament, where a more comprehensive interpretation service must be provided, especially for the Plenary, while at the Commission, more meetings are held in one or two languages:

“C'est une règle non écrite mais bien arrêtée que le Collège des Commissaires et les services de la Commission travaillent dans trois langues : l'anglais, le français et dans une moindre mesure l'allemand. Le règlement intérieur de l'institution est muet sur le sujet, et c'est de façon pragmatique que, principalement le français et l'anglais, se sont imposées comme langues de travail” (Assemblée Nationale, 2003).

Therefore, the demand at the commission is slightly different than the parliament, and there is

a greater need for interpreters with “traditional” languages such as English, French and German.

2.3.2. Situation in different booths

Demand for interpretation in EU Institutions can depend on various factors. The increase in need for interpreters of a specific language can be temporary, for example during Presidencies (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 5), or because of new countries joining the block, or more permanent, due to structural lack of staff and general difficulty related to a particular language. Recent data³¹ published by the various services for interpretation has also pointed out a particularly serious aspect, one which will probably play a prominent role in the future recruitment of interpreters. In the next 10 years or so, a great part of the current staff and freelance interpreters will reach their retirement age, causing a significant shortfall if not adequately replaced. The data collected from communications in the past few years allow us to draw a general picture, examining the situation of some traditional booths and of languages of recent and future enlargements.

2.3.2.1. English

The major concerns regarding the coverage of interpreting services are represented by a substantive lack of English interpreters (European Union, 2009b). The problem within the English booth not only resides in the constant difficulty of recruiting skilled and qualified new interpreters, but also in the fact that a conspicuous number of English interpreters, who were recruited in the mid-seventies and mid-eighties, following the accession of the United Kingdom and Ireland to the then EC in 1973, are now approaching the retirement age.

³¹ See following paragraphs: 2.3.2.1., 2.3.2.2., 2.3.2.3., 2.3.2.4.

According to EU officials (European Union, 2009b: 1), the interpreting service will have to face a critical “succession crisis” by the year 2015, with the loss of around one third of professional English interpreters. The situation also stems from the paradox that English is increasingly becoming Europe’s *lingua franca*. As more and more people speak English, it becomes harder and harder to find English native speakers with the necessary language skills to be promising candidates to work as EU interpreters. In 2009, the European website europa.eu published a series of memo, showing data related to future needs for English interpreters (European Union, 2009a):

English active language interpreters - retirement 2009 – 2018 – three scenarios		
	Staff	Freelances
Best case	25	40
Worst case	48	75
Average Case	35	54

(Table 3: Scenarios for active English interpreter retirements 2009-2018)

Of the 70 DG Interpretation (SCIC) staff interpreters (in 2009), 25 will retire by 2018, which is the best-case scenario. If all chose early retirement, at the age of 55, this will entail the loss of 48 staff interpreters. Placing the likely scenario between the two, the actual figure will be around 35 or 50% of today’s total. Taking into account other variables (personal reasons, mobility, illness or pre-retirement part-time), the foreseeable loss equals to a minimum of 3-4 staff interpreters per year over the next decade, while in the past ten years the figure was one per year (European Union, 2009). The average age of freelance interpreters is very similar to that of staff interpreters, just over 48. Of 297 accredited freelance interpreters (in 2009), only 123 work for DG SCIC on a regular basis (due to language combinations or because of distant domicile). The data published forecasts a loss of around 45% of freelance interpreters by 2018. The problem is made even more complex by the fact that accreditation exams yield very few new interpreters, as only 30% of the candidates manage to pass the test, and between 2004 and 2008, only 10 freelancers have been added to the joint list for each year (European

Union, 2009). Assuming no increase in demand (optimistic but unlikely), the shortage of English interpreters will have three possible scenarios:

Interpreters working into English. Total shortfall in 2018 – three scenarios, assuming the average arrivals remain constant and there is no increase in demand.		
	Staff	Freelances
Best case	9	plus 10
Worst case	32	25
Average Case	19	10

(Table 4: Active English interpreters shortfall by 2018)

Therefore:

“[e]ven with no further growth in demand, if there is no increase in the average number of English-speakers who join the profession and if retirement takes place at the projected average rate, there is a serious risk that English-speaking delegates will not be able to participate in the EU-decision-making process on an equal footing with other Europeans, and that the decision-making process itself will be slowed down” (European Union, 2009).

2.3.2.2. French

Europa.eu also published the data related to the French booth:

Interpreters working into French. Total shortfall in 2018 – three scenarios, assuming the average arrivals remain constant and there is no increase in demand.		
	Staff	Freelances
Best case	14	42
Worst case	30	69
Average case	18	55

(Table 5: Active French interpreters shortfall by 2018)

In 2009, DG SCIC could count on 59 French staff interpreters and 132 freelances. 14 staff

interpreters are due to retirement by 2020, as best-case scenario, supposing all interpreters will continue to work until the age of compulsory retirement. As early retirements are frequent (European Union, 2009c), the figures are likely to be higher, which means that in order to meet demand, the French booth will need a total of 65 staff interpreters, therefore recruiting on average 2 to 3 staff interpreters and about 20 new freelancers a year. Over the past decade, only 11 staff interpreters have been recruited, together with an average of 6 new freelancers per year. DG SCIC expressed concerns related to the shortage of French interpreters, stating that:

En tenant compte de la tendance actuelle de la demande et de la construction de plus grands centres de conférence pour l'avenir, nous envisageons un besoin d'environ 200 interprètes de conférence de langue française pour les dix prochaines années (European Union, 2009c).

2.3.2.3. German

Since 2004, demand for German interpretation showed a slow upward trend in the European Commission. In 2008, demand rose by 2.4%, and is still increasing, making German the third most-interpreted language with 17,123 days in 2008, after English (22,544 days) and French (19,811) (European Union, 2009d). With the recruitment of 4 additional interpreters in 2008, the German Interpretation Unit of the DG SCIC had 62 staff interpreters in 2009. As the average age within this booth is rather high (49), in the next 10 years there will also be a need to replace a large number of German interpreters. As for freelancers, due to the previously mentioned criteria (language combination and cost factor), only 114 of 208 ACIs work regularly for DG SCIC, and their average age is even higher than staff interpreters (50). Therefore, more freelance interpreters will have to be hired, as they “currently cover just over half of the interpreter-days provided by DG SCIC” (European Union, 2009d). Even with the

optimistic assumption that demand in the next years will remain stable, the German booth will need to hire about 200 German-speaking interpreters in total (staff and freelance) by 2020 (European Union, 2009d).

2.3.2.4. Italian

Italian is the language of one of the founding member states and “has always played an essential role as an official language of the European Institutions” (European Union, 2010b). Italian interpretation is provided in 45% of the meetings organized by the Commission’s Interpretation Directorate, in 58% of the meetings organized by the Parliament’s Interpretation Directorate and in around 55% of the hearings held within the three bodies which make up the European Court of Justice (European Union, 2010b). Due to the wide range of languages covered by Italian interpreters (four to five languages per interpreter on average), the Italian booth is often taken in relay to ensure interpretation from less widely known languages (European Union, 2010b). Both authors of this mémoire have Italian in their language combination (Duccio Tanzella is a native Italian speaker and Pablo Alvar-Rozas has Italian as C language), therefore being able to find so much data on this booth was of great personal interest. Here follow the tables related to demand for interpretation into Italian at the EU institutions.

Trend in demand at the Commission’s DG Interpretation		
Year	Total number of meetings (Council, Commission, EESC, COR)	Number of meetings with an Italian booth
2007	10733	4941 = 46%
2008	11273	5189 = 46%
2009	11511	5023=43,6%
2010	6975 (period 01/01 - 30/08/2010)	2919=41,8%

(Table 6a: Evolution of the meetings with Italian booth provided by SCIC)

Trend in demand at the European Parliament's DG Interpretation		
Year	Total number of meetings	Number of meetings with an Italian booth
2007	6024	3602 = 59,7%
2008	6179	3558 = 57,5%
2009	5352	3060 = 57,1%
2010	3883 (period 01/01- 31/07/2010)	2256 = 58%

(Table 6b: Evolution of the meetings with Italian booth provided by DG-INTE)

Trend in demand at the Court of Justice		
Year	Total number of hearings	Number of hearings with an Italian booth
2007	423	250 = 59%
2008	548	269 = 49%
2009	491	233 = 47,4%
2010	352 (period 01/01-02/07/2010)	193 = 54,8%

(Table 6c: Evolution of the hearings with Italian in the Court of Justice of the EU)

Currently, there are 80 staff interpreters working for the EU institutions' interpretation services, 21 of whom will reach the age of retirement by 2020. 17 other interpreters will have reached the pensionable age of 60 and 11 the age of 55, at which an official may be allowed to retire. The common list of ACIs comprises about 170 Italian A freelance interpreters. The current data allow for the following estimates related to possible retirement of Italian A Interpreters:

Italian language interpreters in the three interpretation services – retirements 2010-2020		
	Staff	Freelances
Best case scenario	21	42
Worst case scenario	49	64

(Table 7: Retirement forecast of Italian interpreters)

Over the last three years, the accreditation tests for freelance interpreters yielded an average 6 new interpreters per year. Between 2007 and 2008, a general competition for Italian interpreters was also held, which resulted in the recruitment of 21 new officials. If it is true

that demand for Italian interpreters is stable, candidates must present an appropriate language profile, as the interpreters who are likely to retire in the near future can work from several C languages. The demand is particularly high for combinations which include French, German and English and for profiles that can offer languages of recent or future accessions or languages that will be in short supply in the next few years (e.g. Swedish, Finnish, Greek, Danish) (European Union, 2010b).

2.3.2.5. Languages of recent and future enlargements

In the 2009 Annual Activity Report, the DG Interpretation and Conferences also expressed worry regarding the lack of staff interpreters for languages of recently admitted countries (EU 10 plus Bulgaria and Romania), stating that “the difficulties encountered when recruiting remain pertinent” (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 5) and that 21% of posts remain vacant. In order to provide interpretation for these languages, the DG Interpretation is forced to hire temporary agents, a practice that critically increases the costs of the service. In 2009, 51% of the posts for these languages were temporary, as compared to only 7% in the EU 15 booths. As for future enlargements, Croatia is the candidate most likely to join the EU in the near future and in order to meet future needs, DG Interpretation has already held various accreditation tests, organized traineeships and mobilised its observers, scouting the market for qualified interpreters. In 2009, 5 Croatian ACIs were recruited through a round of Croatian accreditation tests (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 5). The same situation applies to the other candidates for the next enlargement: Iceland, Serbia and Turkey.

2.3.3. B language, retour, relay: a controversial issue and a current practice

Working into one's "non-native" language, or B language has always been a controversial issue in interpretation studies and research (Bros-Brann, 1976; Seleskovith & Lederer, 1989; Denissenko, 1989 and Gile, 2005) and strictly related to the notion of quality within interpretation. When working in retour, an interpreter listens to a speech given in his mother tongue and translates it into another target language, or B language. Detractors of this practice point out that an interpretation into a B language will never be equal in quality to an interpretation into an A language, particularly in terms of flexibility and range of expression. For example, Seleskovith & Lederer, (1989: 135) state that: "[...] on a pu observer dans d'innombrables conférences que, à qualité égale d'interprètes, la simultanée en langue A est toujours supérieure à la simultanée en langue B". In an article published in 1976, Bros-Brann writes that "true interpretation [...] can occur only into one's A language" (Bros-Brann, 1976). Despite these strong statements, there seems to be room for different points of view. First of all, as Daniel Gile notices (Gile, 2005), A and B language status can be relative. Expatriate native speakers might have lost some of the command of their mother tongue, and proficiency in specific fields can be higher in one's B language because of exposure and experience. He also insists on the fact that there are many "language-independent" variables, such as the interpreter's cognitive capacities, his or her motivation, professionalism, etc. that do not change when working into a B language. One of the arguments in favor of A into B interpretation is the fact that listening to one's mother tongue drastically reduces the effort of comprehension, therefore leaving more resources to allocate to analysis and language production. According to an article written by Denissenko in 1989 (as cited in Fernandez, 2005), understanding is the process with the highest priority, the one on which all the other activities rely when interpreting, and "comprehension of one's mother tongue is always better than comprehension of a foreign language". Therefore, a native speaker can produce a better

product when working from his native language. He also continues by arguing in favor of the fact that the limited range of choice in expression, which is typical of a foreign language, helps the interpreter saving cognitive resources. The case seems to be different when discussing working into a B language in consecutive interpretation: “both the Paris School and AIIC accept the possibility of bi-directionality into the interpreter’s foreign languages. They argue that in this case interpreters have sufficient time to guarantee a product of acceptable quality” (Fernandez, 2005). This position is mainly based on the idea that consecutive interpretation consists in a two-phase cycle: the “listening phase”, where the interpreter listens to the speech and takes notes, and the “reformulation phase”, where he or she produces a rendition of the speech in a target language (Gile, 2005). According to Gile (2005), “the critical part occurs during the listening phase, when the interpreter is paced by the speaker and note-taking [...] causes lag and high memory load”. When reformulating at his own pace, the interpreter can allocate all his or her resources to production in the target language, therefore guaranteeing a better product.

Another important factor is the continuously increasing use of English as a sort of Lingua Franca. A survey carried out by DG SCIC in 2010 showed that 72% of delegates, who could not listen to the interpretation in their mother tongue, listened to the interpretation in English (Directorate General for Interpretation (EC), 2010c). Moreover, “if English is the B language into which interpretation is offered, the fact that in numerous conferences many listeners are non-native speakers may be seen as an argument in favour of English as an active B-language” (Kalina, 2005), as a number of non-English participants seem to prefer a less idiomatic and more explicit English versions of a non-native interpreter (Kalina, 2005). Feldweg also pointed out in his 1989 article (as cited in Fernandez, 2005) that “the majority of the clients are not native English speakers either, and thus are much more tolerant of possible imperfections”.

The use of *retour* comes into play particularly to ensure the presence of a “pivot”, a booth that can be taken in relay from other interpreters, when there are not enough interpreters with a specific C language.

“If enough “pivots” working into their mother tongue cannot be found (there must be at least two per team, each working into a different language to assure back-up), translation into a language known to the rest of the team is provided via what we call a “*retour*”. An example: currently few non-Finnish interpreters master that language, so colleagues in the Finnish booth frequently have to do a “*retour*” into a more widely-known language (usually English or German, but sometimes French or Spanish)” (Gebhard, 2001a).

2.3.3.1. *Retour* and Relay at EU institutions

Regarding the position of EU interpreting services towards the use of B languages:

“While research offers very little in this respect, it can be generally said that interpreting into the A language, i.e. into the mother tongue is the dominant or in certain cases exclusive direction at major international organisations, such as the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service of the European Commission, and the Directorate for Interpretation of the European Parliament. Similarly, interpreting into the mother tongue dominates in the UN, the Council of Europe and NATO” (Szbari, 2001:2).

These organizations co-operate closely with AIIC, which has repeatedly expressed the fact that interpretation into one’s mother tongue is preferable to working into a non-native language. AIIC’s Code of Professional Ethics, states in Article 7c that members of the association “shall try to ensure that teams of conference interpreters are formed in such a way as to avoid the systematic use of relay” (AIIC³²). Similarly, Article 6 of the Professional

³² <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article24.htm>

Standards establishes that:

“Teams of interpreters must be put together in such a way as to avoid the systematic use of relay. However, when there is no alternative to the use of relay for a given language, the team shall comprise at least two interpreters able to provide a relay from that language. In addition, if the relay is provided from a two-way booth, at least three interpreters shall work in that booth” (AIIC³³)

Despite this ‘resistance,’ the practice seems to have become more common at European Institutions in recent years, as Kahane (2000) writes:

“Although there is consensus that "relay" should be avoided to the extent possible, it is actually used more frequently than we care to admit. Relay is standard procedure at the JICS (the European Commission's Joint Interpretation-Conferences Service which covers some 12.000 meetings a year) for 11- language meetings, or even meetings with fewer languages, and is well on its way to become institutionalised with the coming enlargement” (Kahane, 2000).

With 12 new countries entering the European Union between 2004 and 2007, the use of relay has become crucial in order to ensure full language coverage, “*Relay* is common: although most EP interpreters now work from at least 3-4 passive languages, it is almost impossible to dovetail individual language combinations so as to cover all languages in all booths” (Marzocchi, 1998).

2.3.3.2. B languages and employability

Due to the difficulty in finding interpreters from traditional booths who could work from the newly added languages, interpreters from countries that recently joined the EU are often asked to work from their native language into a wide-spread one that can easily be taken on

³³ <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article122.htm>

relay. In an interview before the 2004 enlargement, Brian Fox (DG SCIC) stated that: “As with almost all accessions, it is inevitable that we will have to rely on *retour* interpreting at the beginning” (Lauridsen, 2002). Most of the new member-states that joined the EU in the last two enlargements are in Central and Eastern Europe, and for interpreters of these countries, working into a non-native language has always been a standard practice, as Fernandez (2005) points out: “Up to the present, the teaching and practice of interpreting in Eastern European countries has focused on interpretation into B”. This is due both to the fact that interpretation into those languages is seldom required and also because of the lack of native interpreters of traditional languages that can work from Eastern European languages (Cenkova, 2011). Being able to offer a *retour* into English or French seems then to be an important asset for an interpreter wishing to work at European Institutions, although this really seems to apply only to interpreters of recently admitted countries:

“interpretation into the B language is definitely in demand in the market, however, its significance is conspicuous primarily in the communication between minor languages and major languages on the one hand, and among minor languages on the other hand” (Szabari, 2001).

For interpreters in general, working into a B language is a reality on the private market, as pointed out by Gran & Snelling (as cited in Martin, 2005) “No Danish, German, Dutch, Austrian or Italian interpreter could possibly survive (outside Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg, Paris or Geneva) were (s)he not prepared to work regularly into the first foreign language”. Therefore, there is a lot of pressure on interpreters to add an active language because of the needs of the market, and this sometimes goes to the detriment of the quality of a *retour*, feeding the argument that production in *retour* cannot be equal to interpreting into an A language. The attention has consequently been focused on quality, as Donovan puts it (as cited in Hyang-Ok Lim, 2005):

“Care is needed to ensure that SI into B does not become systematic regardless of proficiency in the B language, the risk being that all interpreters with relevant language combinations will come to feel obliged to work into B - or indeed bullied into doing so - to enhance their ‘market value’... [adding that] training and selection are of the essence, as interpreters or trainee interpreters must have robust interpreting skills and B language proficiency”.

Nevertheless, the general trend can be seen simply by examining the AIIC handbook. The overall proportion of interpreters, working both within the private market and for international organizations who offer one or two additional active languages in 2010 was 65%, on a total 1,467 AIIC interpreters, as compared to 57% in 2008. Here is the breakdown by market (country or city) (de Fortis, 2010):

Austria.....	73% (65% in 2008)
Berlin.....	72% (63% in 2008)
Brussels.....	48% (40% in 2008)
Canada.....	70% (72% in 2008)
Geneva.....	61% (54% in 2008)
Munich.....	84% (89% in 2008)
Paris.....	93% (82% in 2008)
United Kingdom.....	71% (62% in 2008)
United States.....	63% (60% in 2008)

In conclusion, given market trends and the growth of many international institutions a combination comprising additional active languages is currently seen as a unique selling point, provided that the retour is high quality:

“given today’s omnipresent budgetary pressures and the fact that interpreting schools continue to provide the profession with new blood which more than compensates for retirements, quality is increasingly becoming a *sine qua non*” (de Fortis, 2010).

3. Interpretation Ad Personam

So far in this paper, we have described the way interpretation is provided at the European Institutions, focusing on the policies, the services, the interpreters and the market. During a visit to Brussels, as part of the European Masters Degree in Conference Interpreting, we were briefly told about a new service available at the European Parliament. Interpretation ad Personam was now being provided to MEPs, as an individualized service entailing the use of B-active interpreters. After an initial research, the subject appeared to be widely unknown to students and very little had been written about it. For this reason we decided to dedicate an important part of our mémoire to IAP, exploring the way it is used and what kind of impact it can have, not only on the way interpretation is provided at the European Parliament, but also on the demand for interpreters.

3.1. Research methodology

In order to gather more, relevant information, we submitted a questionnaire to the division in charge of IAP assignments within the ACI recruitment unit of the Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences of the EP. We elaborated 24 questions that could help us understand the use and scope of this recently created service. The questions regarded the methodology of use, the eligibility for the provision of the service and the collection of data related to the actual demand. We submitted questions with multiple answers, together with

open ones, to allow the recipients to answer more thoroughly when needed. The first set of questions (1-4) was aimed at understanding the theoretical aspects of the service, such as the reasons behind its creation, in relation to specific needs (meetings, satisfaction of demand, budget) and retrieving information about the working and official documents concerning IAP, to make sure we could use all sources available. Secondly we enquired on the organization of the service (questions 5 to 8). Here we focused on the eligibility for the service, in order to find out who can apply for IAP and for what kind of meetings. This section also covers the Institutions where IAP is used and its possible extension, as well as the languages covered by the service. The third section (questions 9 to 14) aimed at gathering information regarding IAP assignments. For this part, we asked questions related to data and statistics, in order to explore the actual use of this individualised service (e.g. requested language combinations for meetings, number of requests and coverage and assignments distribution per mode). The fourth and last section (questions 15 to 24) covered working conditions (question 15 and sub-questions), IAP interpreter's profile (questions 16 and 17) and employment issues (questions 18 to 24), particularly regarding the importance of IAP within the recruitment scheme, employability coefficient and availability of interpreters with B languages. The following chapter is based on the elaboration of the data collected through the questionnaire³⁴.

3.2. From a pilot project to a successful service

IAP or *Interpretation ad Personam* (from the Latin “on an individual basis”) is a new, individualized interpreting service that is increasingly being used at the European Parliament. IAP was added to the existing interpreting services as it is particularly suitable for specific kinds of meetings (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.1). It involves two interpreting modes (consecutive and whispering), and, in

³⁴ See ANNEX

exceptional cases, the use of portable equipment for simultaneous interpretation. In this scenario, the interpreter is required to sit next to a MEP and simultaneously translate what is being said in the meeting, whispering into their ear. When the MEP is asked to speak, the interpreter will work in consecutive interpretation into the language chosen for the meeting. This service is only provided by the European Parliament Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences and is available in Brussels and Strasbourg. It appears to be a new trend in interpretation that may bring important changes within the organization, provision and budgeting of the interpreting service, together with new hiring policies for interpreters.

The pilot project of IAP was launched on the 30th of March 2008. The draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2008 of 25 October 2007 refers to the new pilot project as follows:

“Enhancing Members’ assistance

10. Considers that preserving the linguistic diversity of Members of the European Parliament is one of the most important challenges for the administration; welcomes, in that context, the pilot project scheduled to be launched in 2008 to respond to Members’ recurrent demands for having an individual linguistic assistance and during non-official meetings linked to the legislative work” (European Parliament, 2007).

The decision to launch the project was adopted by the EP Bureau on 10th of December 2007 for a period of six months, from March 31st until October 31st. Initially the service was restricted to few users (rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and draftspersons), within meetings related to budget and co-decision procedure. IAP was only offered for a limited number of languages: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Polish. Moreover, the service was only available two days per week and the virtual credit to which MEPs were entitled was of a maximum of 10 hours for the entire duration of the pilot project. These particularly strict

criteria did not create the ideal conditions for a broad, enthusiastic response to the project at its early stages. The Official Journal of the European Union points out in the “Report on Budgetary and Financial Management” for the financial year 2008 that expenditure related to Chapter 14 ‘Other staff and outside services’ decreased in 2008 because of the “*low demand for Interpretation ad Personam*” (European Parliament, 2009). The DG-INTE 2008 Annual Activity Report also mentions Interpretation ad Personam, indicating that:

“DG INTE had previously submitted the various criteria for the provision of this service during the pilot phase to the Secretary-General for his approval. Further information was provided to the Members in May, and a significant number of enquiries were received concerning the applicable rules” (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 9).

According to the report, at 12.12.2008, 67 official requests were made, of which 48 were confirmed and IAP was provided, employing a total of 85 interpreters.

On 17th of November 2008, the Bureau analyzed the report related to the pilot project and decided to broaden the technical criteria for the provision of IAP. The minutes of the meeting said:

“5. Evaluation of the pilot project for interpretation ad personam (IAP) - Note from the Secretary-General

The Bureau

- noted the above-mentioned note dated 11 November 2008 (PE 413.600/BUR);
 - recalled its decision of 10 December 2007 introducing an additional interpretation service for Members, including a six-month pilot scheme starting on 31 March 2008;
 - heard the Secretary-General present his note which provided statistical data for the use made of that service during that period and propose that the service be extended;
- [...]

- adopted the Secretary-General's proposals by including shadow rapporteurs for opinion in the list of Members entitled to the extended service;
- invited the Quaestors to issue a Notice to Members drawing their attention to the new service on offer;
- requested that detailed information on the matter be provided to newly elected Members at the start of the next parliamentary term” (Bureau of the European Parliament, 2008b).

The scope of the criteria for requesting IAP was widened, increasing the persons entitled to it, the number of languages available and the days in which it was offered, with the clear objective of expanding the service (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 9).

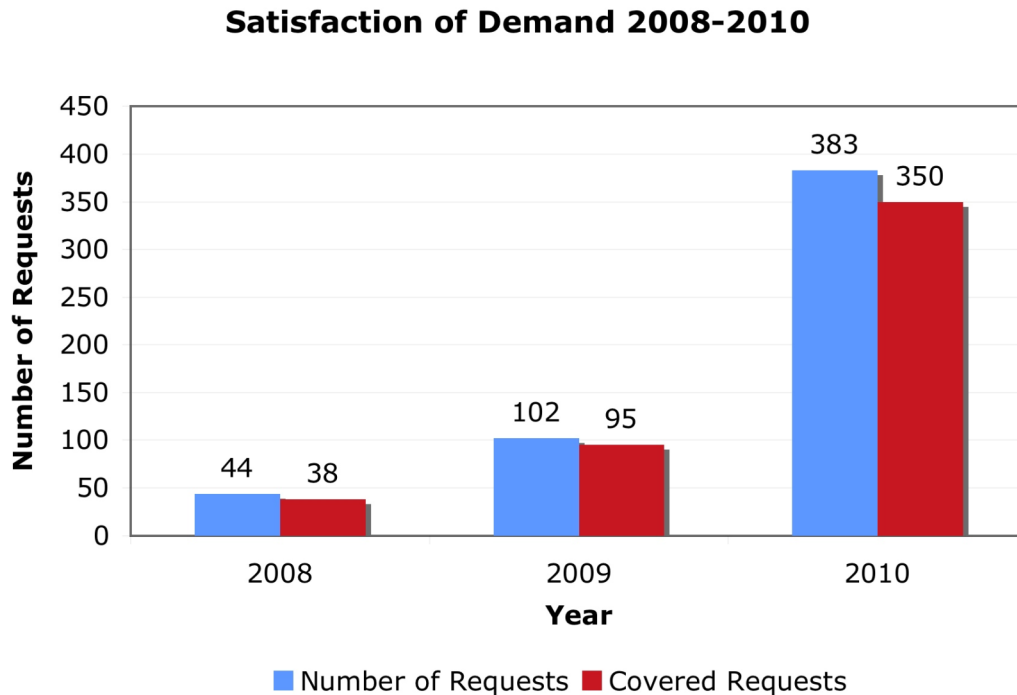
In the 2009 Annual Activity Report, ensuring Interpretation ad Personam appears as one of the main objectives of DG-INTE (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 3). The document states that the pilot project has been confirmed, together with the new criteria related to requests and eligible Members (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 4). The new, broader criteria helped the project take off, registering a considerable increase in requests in the period from the 17th of November 2008 to the end of the parliamentary term, in May 2009. The average of requests rose from 1.62 per week to 2.72 during the first six months (pilot). The report continues to show the significant increase in requests, even in the following parliamentary term, stating that at the end of the reporting period, the rate of parliamentary activity reached 4 requests per week, adding that “The trend is thus unequivocally upwards, evidencing the resounding success of the IAP service” (Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (EP), 2009: 12).

Ensuring the development of IAP service is also presented as a priority within the “Presentation of 2010 Budget” by the Directorate General for the Presidency:

“Continue to implement the second stage of the ad personam interpreting scheme, i.e. individual interpreting for Members, on the basis of the criteria for permitting it which have been expanded by a Bureau decision (17.11.2008)” (Directorate-General for the Presidency, 2010: 16).

In order to give the service a proper structure, the post of a temporary administrator within the ACI Recruitment Unit was created on the 1st of July 2009, together with a specific helpdesk, in order to manage IAP requests.

Another important factor makes it likely that the use of IAP will become an established resource, that is the impact it can have on the budget for interpretation. While an extra budget line was created for this service, IAP can be seen as a cost-cutting practice, as without IAP, more meetings would have to be serviced with simultaneous interpretation, while the service probably helps address many issues with fewer interpreters and, therefore, a smaller overall budget (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.2). At the same time, DG-INTE stresses the fact that IAP must not become a “service of last resort” (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: additional comments), used for meetings that should actually be serviced by other units, with full coverage interpretation. The following graph shows the number of requests in the past three years:



(Fig. 4: IAP requests and coverage evolution 2008-2010)

As the graph shows, 102 requests were submitted in 2009, of which 95 were served. Even if this figure is almost double the number of requests for the previous year (44 requests, of which 38 served), it has to be borne in mind that the pilot project only started on the 31st of March 2008, and lasted six months. Therefore, the most striking figures are the ones related to 2010, showing a remarkable number of requests, 383, of which 350 were serviced (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.9/10).

3.3. *IAP at the EU*

3.3.1. Meetings

The Interpretation *Ad Personam* service was created to respond to the “[MEPs] recurrent demands for linguistic assistance both at an individual level and during non-official meetings linked to the legislative work” (European Parliament, 2007). For this reason it is used “to cover meetings that require interpretation and are politically justified but do not fit into any

other category” (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: additional comments), and therefore, its usual settings are small, private meetings held in non-official meeting rooms (i.e. private offices), working meals and bilateral meetings (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.1). IAP service is only provided by DG-INTE for Members of the EP. Currently there are no plans to extend the use of IAP to other institutions; of course DG-INTE provides interpretation for bodies outside the EP (Committee of the Regions, Council of the EU, etc.) but in those cases IAP is not included (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.6/7). Given its nature, the service is only available in Brussels and Strasbourg on weekdays (except official holidays and office closing days) (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2010).

3.3.2. Users

IAP service can be requested for political meetings by Members of the European Parliament holding posts of EP Vice-president, Quaestor, Committee Chair, Rapporteur, Shadow rapporteur, Draftsperson for an opinion, Shadow draftsperson for an opinion or Political group coordinator (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2010). Users requiring the service have to fill in a written request and submit it at least 3 days before the date of the meeting. However, due to the flexibility of the service, when requests do not fully comply with all the criteria (i.e. respect of deadline) but are considered to be politically justified and resources are available, they are treated on a case-by-case basis (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.5). Each person holding a post from the list above is assigned, at the beginning of the year, a time allocation for that year. The total of working hours for all interpreters involved in one IAP

session is deduced from the requesting MEP's allowance (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2010).

3.3.3. Modes

Interpretation Ad Personam entails multiple modalities (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.11). It can involve a mixed technique (whispering and consecutive), or the use of simultaneous interpretation with the provision of additional equipment. In the first case, the interpreter is seated next to a MEP and whispers the interpretation of the speech. When it is the MEP's turn to speak, the interpreter then works in consecutive mode. Simultaneous mode is used in other cases, when the first option is not possible (i.e. more than two recipients). Since meetings that request IAP do not usually take place in regular meeting rooms it is rarely the case that booths can be used; as a result, the interpreter has to use a portable device, the 'valise', in order to interpret in simultaneous mode. Because of this, interpreters must be able to provide a 'retour' both in consecutive and simultaneous mode (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.14). In any case the delivery mode is established prior to the meeting, depending on the request made (length of the meeting, number of languages, number of participants requesting the service). DG-INTE decides the mode to be employed when processing the request (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.12).

For the pilot project, that lasted six months in 2008, 95% of the requests were covered with 'whispered-consecutive' and 5% with 'valise-simultaneous'. For the year 2009 the requests serviced with 'valise-simultaneous' increased considerably, rising to 20% of IAP assignments. The percentage remained stable in 2010 with an average of 82%/18% (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.13).

3.3.4. Languages

IAP service is available for all EU languages except Maltese and Irish (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2010). The most frequent requests, for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010, have been for the following combinations: EN \leftrightarrow FR and EN \leftrightarrow IT (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.9/10). It must be pointed out that the specific combinations requested are directly related to the linguistic profiles of the MEPs entitled to the service (i.e. President, Vice Presidents, or Committees' Chairs). Thereby, the mid-term shift of responsibilities (January 2012) and the elections to the EP (mid-2014) will entail a possible change in language demand.

3.3.5. Working Conditions

Due the nature of the service, one interpreter usually suffices for an IAP assignment. This is the case for around 80% of meetings (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.15b). However, two or more interpreters can be assigned to a meeting under the following circumstances (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.15b):

- In the case of interpretation provided from a booth or using the 'valise' system
- When the number of MEPs in need of IAP is bigger than 2.
- When there are more than 2 languages requested.
- When the specific language combination requested can not be covered with only one interpreter (i.e. if there is no bi-active interpreter to perform the task, such as ET \leftrightarrow EL (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.8b)).

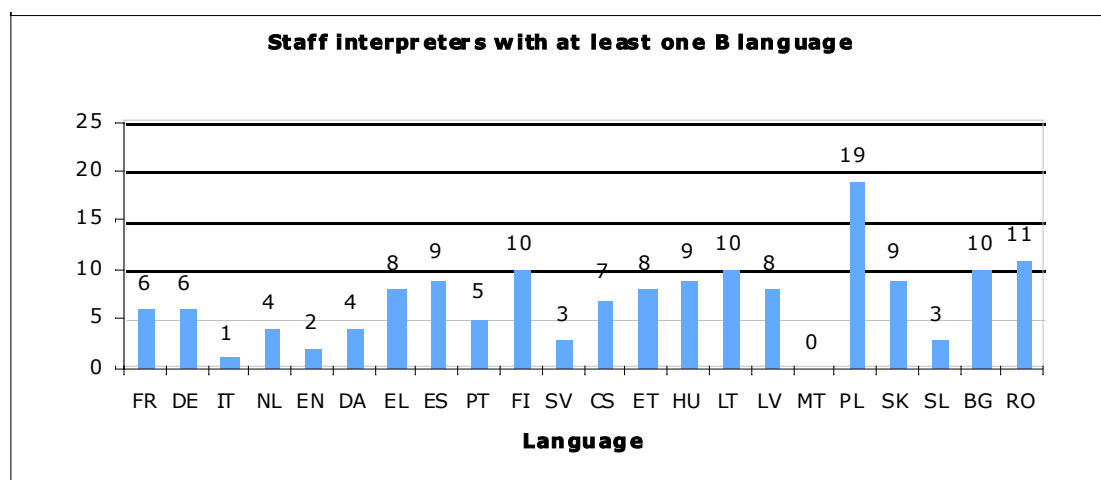
- When the duration of the meeting is longer than 1 hour.

If two interpreters are required for the task, the deduction from the MEPs' allocation is doubled (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2010). At any rate, “[o]nly DG-INTE is competent for the number of interpreters needed” (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2010).

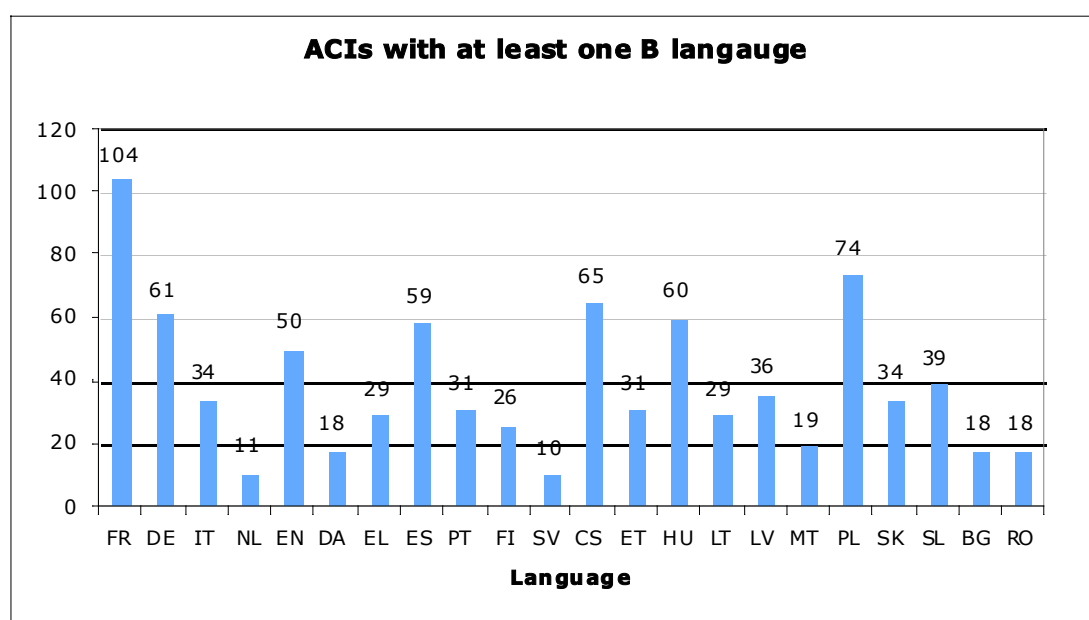
General working conditions for interpretation at the EU apply equally to interpreters working in IAP (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.15). IAP assignments are considered as ordinary assignments within i-slots (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.15d) and any fraction of an hour is considered as an hour (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2010).

3.4. Interpreting for IAP

In order to be eligible for IAP assignments, interpreters need to be able to provide a *retour* in another language. Despite the fact that only 20% of meetings where IAP is used are interpreted in simultaneous mode, “usually interpreters assigned have simultaneous *retour*” (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.14). Examining the combinations of staff interpreters and ACIs at the disposal of DG-INTE shows how many interpreters are capable of working into a B language at the EP. As a general view, according to the figures for 2010, about 35% of staff interpreters can provide a *retour* in at least one EU official language, while for ACIs, the figure is slightly higher than 30% (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.16/17). The following graphs show the number of staff interpreters and ACIs with at least one B language in their combination, broken down by booth:



(Fig. 5: Staff interpreters with at least one B language)



(Fig. 6: ACIs with at least one B language)

By relying exclusively on interpreters with a B language in their combination, Interpretation *ad Personam* adds value to the ability to provide a retour for accredited freelancers, not only for interpreters from newly admitted countries, but also from more ‘traditional’ booths. Despite the fact that the overall figures of interpreters per booth for all languages were not available, the data collected draw an interesting picture of the distribution of interpreters with at least one B language at the EP. It is interesting to notice that the French booth has the highest number of ACIs with at least one retour, while only six officials within the unit. This

could mean that the interpreting services have to rely more on ACIs when a retour is required, therefore increasing the costs. The Dutch and Swedish booths account for the lowest figure of ACIs with a B language with 11 and 10 interpreters respectively. The Polish booth presents the highest number of staff interpreters with at least one B language (19), and the second highest figure for ACIs (74). Analysing the current situation of the Italian booth (of special interest for both authors, as previously mentioned), it is possible to observe that of 80 staff interpreters, working for *all* European Institutions, only 1 staff interpreter at the EP has a B language. As for ACIs, of about 170 interpreters, only 34 can provide a retour. Given the fact that in the past three years, the most popular requests for IAP involved working in meetings with B-active interpretation EN-IT, IAP must have played an important role in the number of assignments and contracts for Italian freelancers. DG-INTE states that with the number of interpreters at its disposal, the service can currently cover all IAP requests (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.19). Nevertheless, due to the surprising increase in demand since the beginning of the pilot project, it seems likely that more interpreters will be needed in the near future (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.22/23). IAP has become an important criterion in the selection of candidates (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.24) and at the same time, interpreting services constantly encourage staff and ACIs interpreters to add an active language to their combinations (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.20/21). It seems fair to conclude that for a candidate wishing to sit an accreditation exam at EU institutions, providing a retour will be an important asset in the view of IAP, as also stated on the website of AIIC: “In addition to the more traditionally recruited

profiles, the EP is now seeking bi-active³⁵ interpreters for its IAP (Interpretation Ad Personam)”.

4. Conclusion

When we began gathering information for the drafting of this mémoire, it soon became apparent that there was little or no data published on the a subject. A Google search for “Interpretation ad Personam” would yield only one or two results, and very few lines of explanation, leaving us with more doubts than clarifications. While the feeling of exploring a previously unknown territory represented an exciting challenge, at the same time having neither references nor literature upon which to base our research sometimes proved to be frustrating. As our work progressed, the situation started to change. Within months, more documentation on IAP became available on the Internet, official documents, together with articles on websites and blogs³⁶. “Interpretation ad Personam” was quoted in social networks (Interpreting for Europe’s Facebook Page³⁷ and Twitter account³⁸), proving that more and more people were discovering the new service provided at the European Parliament.

The aim of this mémoire was to give an overview of interpretation at the European Institutions, in order to understand what kind of impact IAP could have on interpreting services and interpreters. Due to the very nature of IAP, we focused our research on language combinations and particularly on B languages, analyzing the market demand and possible future trends. As a general comment, it seems fair to say that the increasing availability of information on the service and the data collected (386 requests in 2010, against 102 in 2009)

³⁵ Interpreters capable of providing a retour

³⁶ <http://www.reflexivity.us/blog/archives/2009/02/ad-personam-int.html>

³⁷ <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=7350047&id=173122606407>

³⁸ <http://twitter.com/#!/euinterpreters>, twits on 14th/15th June 2010.

point to the fact that IAP is quickly becoming a useful and established service. As Interpretation *ad Personam* and the criteria established for its provision become more and more known by MEPs, it is very likely that more meetings will be organized with IAP in the coming years. Nevertheless, the fact that, for the moment, IAP is only provided at the European Parliament, and only for a limited number of MEPs, will probably limit the expansion of the service. At the same time, the increasing use of Interpretation *ad Personam* is monitored by interpreting services, as while it is true that IAP can solve the problem of providing interpretation in small meetings where simultaneous interpretation is not necessary, it cannot be used as a “last resort”, for meetings organized without an appropriate request for interpretation, according to the Rules of Procedure, or for meetings that should be serviced with full simultaneous interpretation (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: Comments). As for interpreters working in IAP, this new service can add more value to a B language for booths that usually work into their A language, making the ability of providing a *retour* an important asset not only for interpreters from countries that recently joined the EU, but also from more traditional booths. According to the data collected, the number of interpreters who can provide a *retour* is not particularly high. Recruiters at the EP are constantly looking for interpreters with more active languages, taking Interpretation *ad Personam* into consideration when selecting candidates (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.24). Moreover, being able to provide a *retour* is as valuable as having an additional C language within the employability coefficient. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that as far as IAP is concerned, the demand for particular language combinations seems to be strictly related to the languages spoken by the MEPs that occupy specific posts, making it very difficult to predict the future needs for interpreters before the shift of responsibilities (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.10).

It seems safe to say that Interpretation *ad Personam* is going to play an important role within interpretation at the European Parliament and that with a further extension of the criteria for its provision, IAP could really become an important service for interpretation in all European Institutions, but as of today, there are no plans for such an extension (Directorate General Interpretation and Conferences (EP) ACI Recruitment Unit, 2011: q.7). To conclude, while IAP is certainly not going to revolutionize the way interpretation is organized and provided at the European Parliament, nor solve all the problems related to full linguistic regime and future enlargements, it may nevertheless prove to be a very important tool for MEPs, helping interpreting services fulfil the ideals of a multilingual European Parliament and reducing the cost of the multilingualism machine.

5. Annex

IAP – Interpreting Ad Personam: Questionnaire

(multiple answers possible)

1) Why was IAP added to the existing interpreting services provided by the EP?

☐ IAP is particularly suitable for certain kinds of meetings (please specify which ones)

☐ IAP requires fewer interpreters; therefore it helps satisfying the demand

☐ IAP reduces costs of interpretation

☐ Other (please specify)

2) Does IAP have an impact on the budget?

☐ Yes, it increases the budget (please detail increase in percentage)

☐ Yes, it decreases the budget (please detail decrease in percentage)

☐ No, the budget is not affected by it

3) By which directorate was IAP launched?

☐ DG-INTE

☐ DG-SCIC

4) The pilot project for IAP started in March 2008. Can you provide us with working documents related to the proposal, planning and/or implementation of the project?

5) Are there further internal criteria, other than the “Rules applicable to the *INTERPRETATION AD PERSONAM* service” to decide when IAP is offered? (i.e. number of languages covered, number of interpreters needed, duration of the meeting, modality, other)

If yes, please specify.

6) For which institutions was the service provided in 2010 and/or 2009? (If possible, please provide the number of assignments broken down by institution)

European Parliament
European Commission

European Court of Justice
Committee of the Regions
Council of the European Union
European Economic and Social Committee
Other

7) Are there plans to extend IAP to other institutions in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7b) If yes, please specify to which ones

8) Is the service available for all language combinations?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8b) If not, for which languages is it offered?

9) Can you provide us with the number of requests for 2008-2009-2010? (Possibly broken down by language or with percentages for the most required language combinations).

10) How many requests were actually met? (If possible broken down by language)

11) Does IAP always entail multiple modalities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

11b) If yes please specify which ones.

12) Is the delivery mode decided before the assignment takes place?

☐ Yes

☐ No

13) Can you give us a percentage of the number of IAP assignments offered per year by

working mode?

Consecutive

Whispered

14) As far as IAP is concerned, do interpreters need to be able to offer a retour in simultaneous or only in consecutive?

15) Do the working conditions for EU interpreters also apply to IAP?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Specifically:

15b) When is it necessary to assign more than one IAP interpreter to a meeting?

15c) Does the maximum duration of an assignment depend on the modality used?

15d) Are IAP assignments considered as ordinary assignments within i-slots?

16) How many staff interpreters have at least one B language in their combination? (if possible divided in SCIC/DG-INTE/Court of Justice of the EU)

SCIC

DG-INTE

Court of Justice of the European Union

Total

17) How many ACIs have at least one B language in their combination?

18) Does a B language score more than an additional C language in the employability coefficient for ACIs? (If yes, please specify in what measure)

19) Can you meet the demand for IAP with the current number of interpreters at disposal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

20) Are interpreting services encouraging staff interpreters to add a B language?

21) Are interpreting services encouraging ACIs to add a B language?

22) Are interpreting services looking for additional staff interpreters with B languages?

23) Are interpreting services looking for additional ACIs with B languages?

24) Is IAP taken into account when recruiting new interpreters?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes:

24b) Are B and C languages weighted equally in the selection of candidates for staff and accreditation exams? (If not please specify how)

24c) Is a B language an important asset for candidates because of IAP?

Please feel free to add any further comment you may consider relevant to the topic of our research.

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