

## Resolution

### The Joint General Assembly of Translators and Translation Assistants of the European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 13 of the Rules governing the Translators' Delegation,
  - having regard to Rule 13 of the Rules governing the Translation Assistants' Delegation,
  - having regard to Article 20(2)(d), Article 24 and Article 342 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
  - having regard to Regulation 1023/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 amending the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union ('the Staff Regulations') and, in particular, Articles 11, 12, 17a, 21, 22a and 55 thereof, regarding the rights and obligations of officials,
  - having regard to Rule 158(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament,
  - having regard to the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, currently under revision,
- A. whereas **translation is intrinsic to the democratic nature of the European Parliament** and whereas the institution has an obligation to ensure the highest possible degree of **multilingualism**;
- B. whereas **all language versions of EU legislative acts have the same binding legal value**, and whereas the European Parliament, therefore, also has a duty to ensure the flawless linguistic **quality of all legislation adopted**, in all official languages;
- C. whereas both translators and translation assistants, as highly skilled professionals, have proved their commitment to multilingualism and their loyalty to the institution by always striving to deliver the highest quality of services, even within a changing work environment and under ever-growing pressure;
- D. whereas translators' and translation assistants' technical expertise is indispensable in any discussion on all translation-related matters;
- E. whereas translation is an intellectual demanding task that requires an appropriate working environment and suitable working conditions; whereas translation can be helped and supported by digital tools, but not be replaced by them;
- F. whereas **citizens' perception of the EU is partly shaped by the language it uses in its written documents**; whereas texts that are difficult to understand or are not idiomatic undermine the EU's image as an open, accessible body;
- G. whereas outsourcing has helped to partially alleviate the systematic increase in translation workload but cannot substitute in-house expertise and still requires in-house revision for the purposes of quality assurance;
- H. whereas, in recent years, the workload has increased to levels that are detrimental to the wellbeing and health of staff; whereas the statistics used by management do not reflect the actual workload of translators and translation assistants;
- I. whereas DG TRAD management has acknowledged on several occasions (notably in its management meeting minutes of 4 October 2018) that the workload experienced by staff in DG TRAD since September 2018 is unprecedented; whereas this **unprecedented workload** was entirely predictable (as confirmed by the regular planning forecasts) given that the end of the 8th legislative term coincides with the end of the 2014-2020 MFF; whereas this situation was further — and equally predictably — exacerbated by Brexit and the reduction in staffing numbers in DG TRAD;
- J. whereas no lessons seem to have been learnt from the final years of the previous legislative term which ended in 2014;

- K. whereas management in DG TRAD, rather than taking timely measures to alleviate the burden all this inevitably placed on staff, added to the workload by **launching new projects that are unconnected to the translation of EU legislation**, such as Audio Capacity and a new subtitling project;
- L. whereas the persistently high workload and the gradual shift from translation of legislative documents to other activities make it increasingly difficult to deliver the requisite quality;
- M. whereas an 8-month period (September 2018 to April 2019) should not be treated as an exceptional circumstance during which staff can be stripped of their right to normal working hours and their right to take leave, as DG TRAD's management has done;
- N. whereas the **imbalance between workload and staffing numbers** will be temporarily obscured as a result of the inevitable decrease in the volume of legislative texts to be translated after the EP elections in May 2019; whereas the relief to staff will only be short-lived, given that workload will increase again with the need to translate MEPs' CVs and internal administrative documents, among others, and due to the start of a new legislative cycle in the second half of 2019;
1. Calls for a **capacity limit** to be set for the overall workload of translation units, which could be expressed as a number of pages prepared, translated and revised – and which also takes account of all the additional tasks performed, including evaluation of external translations – to replace the full capacity statistics method that has been in use until now and which is utterly misleading;
  2. Calls for **clearly defined measures** to be triggered well before the capacity limit is anticipated to be reached, in particular measures related to the recruitment of staff;
  3. Calls for measures to ensure **strict compliance with the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism**, also in view of the considerable and continuous reductions that have been made to staffing levels and of the ever-increasing workload;
  4. Calls on DG TRAD's senior management to make sure that the **working conditions of staff** are matched to the type of work they perform, **translation being an intellectual task** requiring high levels of concentration over long stretches of time, which is also true of the work of translation assistants; points out that these needs must be given due consideration when implementing the forthcoming move to the new premises;
  5. Calls on the Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work (CPPW) to **follow up on its risk assessment study of 2013**; calls for a new risk assessment study to be carried out, preferably by an independent external body;
  6. Reminds DG TRAD's senior management of its **duty to safeguard the health and well-being of translators and translation assistants**, which includes their work-life balance;
  7. Is highly alarmed by the plans to change the job descriptions of translators and translation assistants, rebranding them in order to include new missions such as Audio Capacity and new subtitling tasks; urges management to refrain from adopting any measures related to job descriptions without prior consultation of the Staff Committee and the professional delegations;
  8. Demands that any introduction of new tasks in the language units be accompanied by the addition to the language units of the human resources necessary to accomplish the tasks;
  9. Is alarmed by the new contracts for externalisation that will come into force in the near future and will result in a huge increase of workload to be performed in-house;
  10. Calls for a **meaningful dialogue** yielding tangible results between management and elected representatives of staff;
  11. Instructs the President of the Staff Committee to forward this resolution to the President of the European Parliament, the Members of the Bureau, the Vice-Presidents (and in particular the Vice-President responsible for Multilingualism), the Members of European Parliament, the Secretary-General, the Directors-General and DG TRAD's Directors and staff.

Adopted unanimously on 2 April 2019 by the Joint General Assembly of Translators and Translation Assistants of European Parliament