

OUR COMMON TERMINOLOGY: THE LINGUISTIC PASSPORT FOR A UNITED EUROPE

**1st International Conference
Europe in Discourse: Identity, Diversity, Borders
Athens, 23 to 25 September**



Rodolfo Maslias

28 COUNTRIES

24 LANGUAGES

ONE LAW

The European Union is the largest union of states, with a common body of legislation which is applied in numerous areas of life.

EU legislation is transposed into national law and applied in the official language of each country.

In most domains, a big number of the laws of the Member States are based on European legal acts.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

‘EU legislation’ is based on a codecision system between representatives of the Member States: Commissioners, Ministers and Parliamentarians. At the Institutions, each of them reflects the culture of their own people.



COMMON IDENTITY

Will these constant efforts to arrive at a common way of thinking produce a legislation based on common principles, common customs and common interests?



Can the EU cease to base its action on a cooperation between governments who represent **unavoidably** also the national interests of the individual countries?

SOME POSITIVE TRENDS...



Common cultural projects, such as the European Capitals of Culture, or subsidy schemes for research projects, e.g. Horizon 2020, are examples of the efforts taken to create a common culture.

European
Capitals
of Culture

SOME POSITIVE TRENDS...

The Erasmus programme and the changes made in educational procedures, such as 'Bologna'.



Erasmus
programme

THREE CULTURES IN THE LEGISLATURE

The Commission

The Commission has the special role of initiating laws in various fields and then guaranteeing their application.



The Council

The Council of Ministers and the European Council, together with the EP, decide to implement a policy based on common principles and rules, combining all national interests.



The Parliament

The Parliament has the 'last word' in the legislative process, with more than 700 Members from many different countries, regions and political parties



NORTH - SOUTH

The disparities in the styles of government of countries in Northern and Southern Europe are huge, which is mainly due to the different cultures and attitudes of their peoples. Even within the same country, different mentalities can often be found in the North and South, which also leads to an economic gulf.

EAST - WEST

The simultaneous accession to the EU of many States of Eastern Europe has created an additional challenge to adapt different structures and different mentalities. Between the Western culture and the Eastern one.



OLD AND YOUNG

States and languages
before 2004

For nearly 40 years, 10 and then 15 members adopted and shaped EU legislation. They decided on the ground rules and procedures for cooperation. Their cultures and their languages determined the community character of the European family.

States and languages since 2004

Since then, the number of official and working languages has increased.

The new Member States are trying to assert their own culture. There is a long path to integration but this is an enrichment: the EU and the New members mutually absorb their respective language cultures and policies. One of the objectives of the EU's language policy is, therefore, that every European citizen should master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.



ONE STATE, MULTIPLE CULTURES

The cultural diversity of the continent of Europe is also visible in each individual country. Over time, the 'Europe of Regions' will replace the 'Europe of States'. The more crises caused by the imposition of common rules, such as the Euro crisis or the refugee crisis, the more languages and cultures will want to assert themselves.

This regionalisation is gradually bringing about a transfer of many powers from central governments to local decision-makers, and is accompanied by an intensification of autonomy movements and their reinforcement by democratic procedures, as the elections in Spain (Catalonia) or France (Corsica) have shown.



ONE STATE, MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

The diversity and challenge presented by multilingualism within a number of States is reflected in the European Union as a whole.

Examples of national multilingualism: Belgium (regional division), Spain (special status), Luxembourg (new official language).

Minority languages are also gradually gaining a foothold in education.



DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL STRUCTURE

States with central administration

The political power of the regions is secondary, and the regions are not clearly defined. All decisions are made by the central government, and the cultural and education policies are uniform.

States with a regional structure

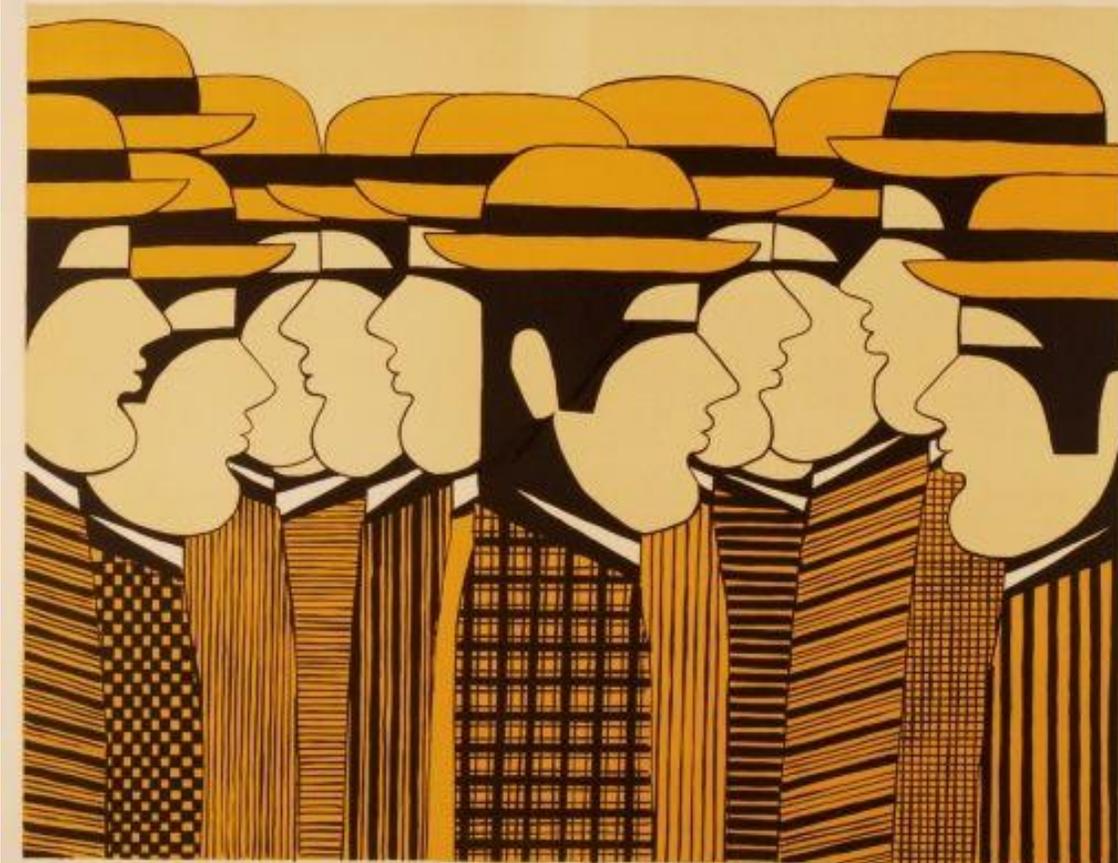
The regions, autonomous territories or federal states have strong political influence and powers of decision based on political institutions, particularly in the fields of culture and education.



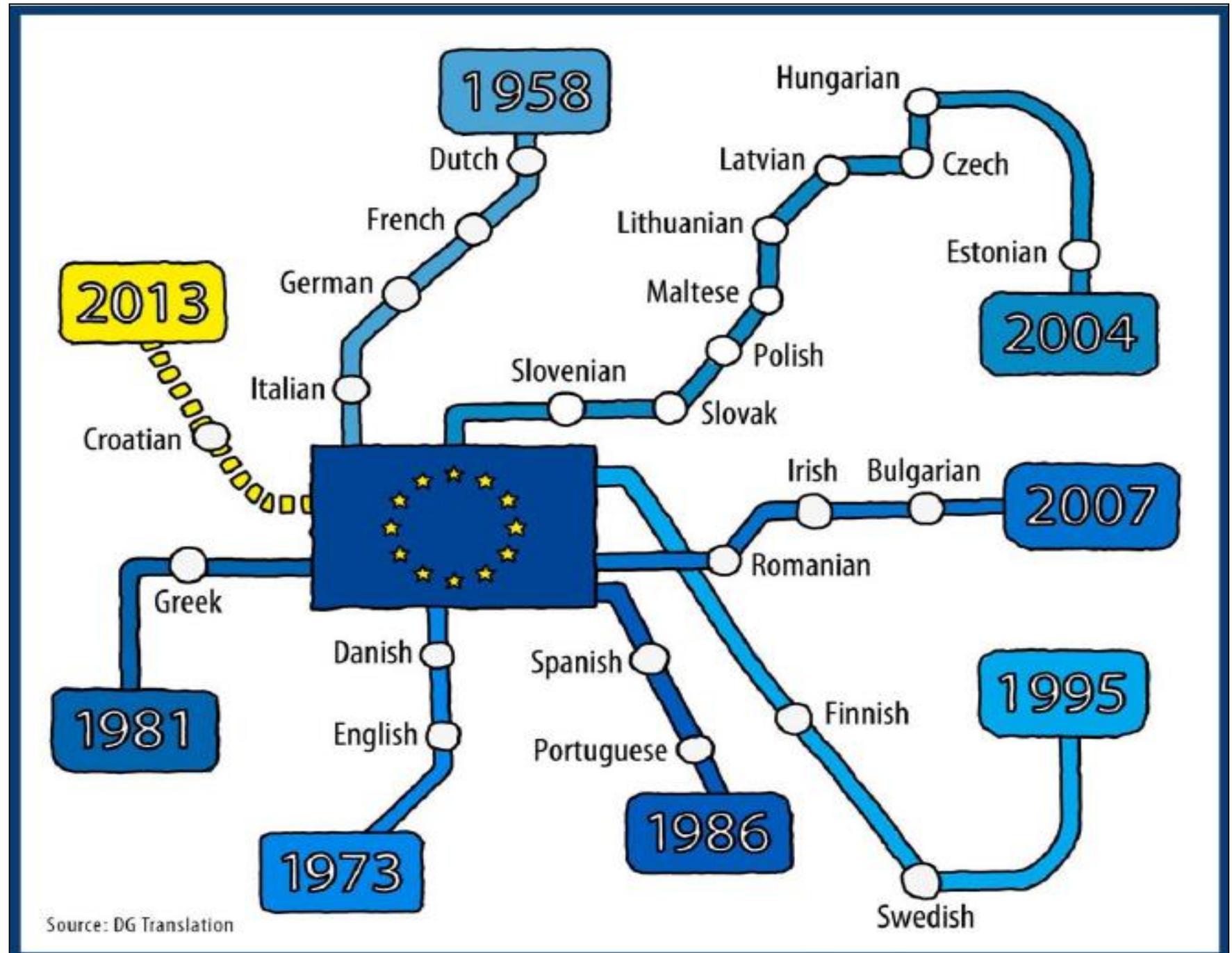
THE EU AND MULTILINGUALISM

The very first regulation of the European Union stipulated that all official languages, of which there were 4 at the time, were to be treated on a footing of equality and that all documents should be translated into those languages. This meant that each official language was recognised as original for each legal act.

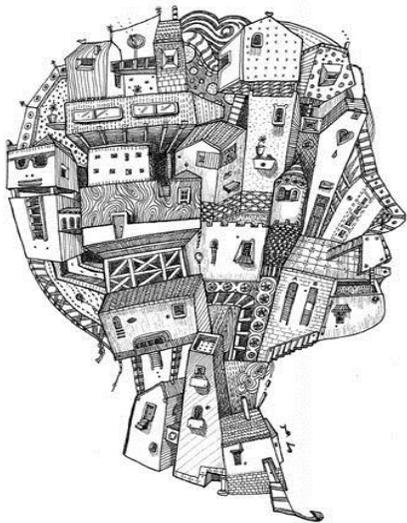
Symbolically, the multilingualism regulation has retained its number – 1 – while the number of official languages has gradually increased, with the addition of further 20 languages.



THE EU AND MULTI LINGUALISM



THE CONCEPT OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

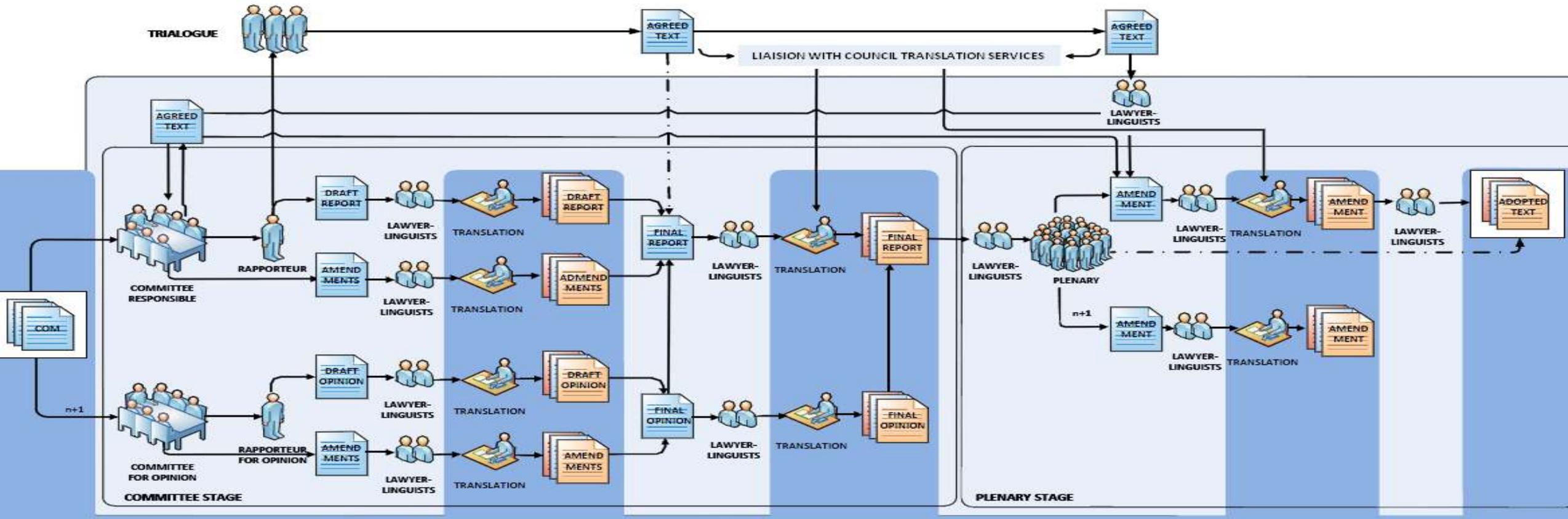


An 'official language' is the language officially used by a State for legislation and administration and in courts and schools. The identification of an official language gives citizens the right to expect the State to communicate with them in that language. In many countries, the national languages of ethnic minorities are also legally guaranteed as 'additional official languages'.

The official national language of a country becomes an official language of the EU only if the Member State concerned seeks that status for it.

THE WAY THROUGH TRANSLATION

Translation is present at every step in the legislative process; from the first draft, which originates with the Commission's experts, through all the negotiations with national departments and with the Council and Parliament, to the ultimate legal act, on which a vote is taken in each national Parliament, and which then becomes an 'original law'.



THE 'PIVOT' LANGUAGES

Since the most recent massive enlargement of the EU, it has become impossible for practical reasons to use the 552 language combinations which ought to be used on a footing of equality for the unrestricted application of EU Regulation No 1.

Most texts are first translated into English, French and German, so that these translations can then be used as originals and translated by relay.

552

language

combinations

THE ROLE OF TERMINOLOGY

In implementing the same legal acts in all States and in all the languages of the European Union, the most important point is that fundamental **linguistic concepts** should be understood in the same way everywhere.

This is only possible thanks to a shared and consistent terminology.

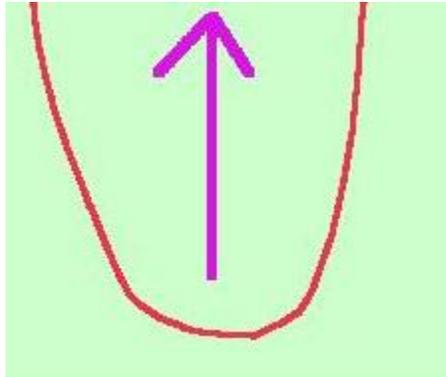
IATE is a concept-oriented database covering more than 100 fields.



DESCRIPTIVE

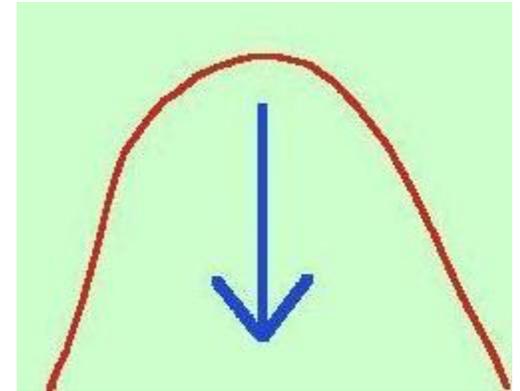
OR

PRESCRIPTIVE



Many EU Institutions concern themselves with descriptive terminology, as they collect terminology from national databases: the Central Bank, Court of Justice, Translation Centre (with the terminology of the agencies)

The Commission and the Council rather produce their own terminology (Eurojargon)



IATE: ONE CONCEPT MULTIPLE TERMS

One language

A law which enters a national legislative system from the European Union must use standardised terminology.

Multiple countries

But how do we address the issue of different terminologies in the same language, which is used in administration in different States?



LATE: 'PREFERRED' ACCORDING TO WHAT CRITERION?

Is there a dominant country for
one and the same language?

Language as a medium of culture
and communication

Language as an official
language



QUESTIONS?

Do you have any questions?

Or... answers to my open questions?

