

CURRENT TRENDS IN THE TRANSLATION MARKET

TENDINȚELE ACTUALE DE PE PIAȚA TRADUCERILOR

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Abstract

It is obvious that the globalisation in general opened the translation market to a global level. We are talking very often about localisation, but this is not the only subdomain of the translation market. Translation tendering, especially in Europe, represents a great opportunity for translators, terminologists and interpreters. Our study observed current trends in the translation market in the area of tendering in Europe. One of the opportunities is that the European Commission and other European institutions are increasing the number of open calls for tender and expressions of interest for language services.

Rezumat

Este evident faptul că globalizarea în general a deschis piața traducerilor spre un nivel global. Foarte des, vorbim despre localizare, dar acesta nu este singurul domeniu secundar al pieței traducerilor. Licitarea traducerilor, mai ales în Europa, reprezintă o mare oportunitate pentru traducători, terminologi și interpreți. Studiul nostru a observat tendințele curente de pe piața traducerilor din zona licitațiilor în Europa. Una dintre oportunități este cea a Comisiei Europene și a altor instituții europene de a crește numărul apelurilor deschise pentru licitare și al expresiilor de interes pentru serviciile de limbaj.

Keywords: *translation market, translation tendering, terminology, globalisation, European Commission*

Cuvinte cheie: *pieța traducerilor, licitația traducerilor, terminologie, globalizare, Comisia Europeană*

1. Background

It is obvious that the globalisation in general opened the translation market to a global level. However, the increasing number of translators counterbalances the number of translation offers, so the translation market analysis & forecast is important, on the one hand for the development of translation skills and tools and, on the other hand, for the identification of translation offers.

One of the most important development direction of the translation market is the localisation, but this is not the only one. Our hypothesis is that the translation tendering, especially in Europe, represents a great opportunity for translators, terminologists and interpreters.

2. Objectives and Methodology

The aim of our study is to observe the current trends in the translation market in the area of tendering in Europe.

The research method is the corpus analysis. Since the European Commission and other European institutions are increasing the number of open calls for tender and expressions of interest for language services, we established as research corpus the EC policies implemented in calls for tenders published by the European Commission and other European institutions, in order to conduct a marketing research. The relevant data collection source was the European Commission website, and the size of the samples is limited to the calls for tenders and expressions of interest, the open calls, the planned calls and the closed calls for linguistic services.

3. Results

The research corpus of the calls for tenders and expressions of interest for language services for the European Union was grouped by the following interest sections:

- Translation
- Interpretation
- Automated translation

3.1. Translations for the European Union

3.1.1. Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission (EC-DGT)

On the website of the *Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission (EC-DGT)*, the page [Tendering for contracts](#) is the start for translation work through contracts, for translation companies and freelance translators. The call for tenders and the calls for expressions of interest are published on the website [TED \(Tenders Electronic Daily\)](#), the portal for the European public procurement, and it is the online version of the 'Supplement to the Official Journal' of the EU

The translations need are illustrated by figures: “*In 2015, we sent out 532 156 pages to contractors, about 27% of our total output*” (EC-DGT, *Tendering*). These figures sustain the idea that the EC tendering is strongly influencing the translation market.

The website of the EC-DGT published a page with [Open calls for tender and expressions of interest](#). The open call is looking for [Supply of subscriptions to periodicals](#), and a recently closed call for expressions of interest was looking for [Electronic dictionaries and databases](#), as following:

“The European Commission has published a call for expressions of interest to supply electronic dictionaries and databases which may be:

- *specialised or general*
- *monolingual, bilingual or multilingual*
- *on CD-DVD-ROM, server-based, or web-based with online access via user name and password or IP verification.*”

(EC-DGT, *Open calls*)

The recently closed call (2016) for *Electronic dictionaries and databases* is very interesting as a development direction for providers of language services.

The section [Planned calls](#) is mentioning the intention to launch a call for “low-value contracts” (max. 60 000 euros per contract), without further details.

In order to see past tendencies, we consulted the closed calls of the EC-DGT:

- 2007 - **Translation — EU policy and administration documents**, Translation — Global medical device nomenclature and Rapid post-editing work
- 2008 - **Translation — European Union technical documents**, a Study on the size of the EU language industry and Translation — **Legal and judicial documents of the EU**
- 2009 - **Economic, financial and statistical documents**
- 2010 - Supply contracts for books and e-books and CAT tools – translation memory system (No contract awarded)
- 2011 - **Translation — EU policy and administration documents** and **Translation of EU web pages**
- 2012 - CAT tools — translation memory system
- 2015 - Translation of **EU Financial documents** and **Translation of EU documents**

“The successful tenderers are awarded framework contracts (duration of 4 years max) which commit them to providing translations at a given price”. (EC-DGT, Tendering). The contracts awarded in 2009 and before have expired, and the lists of contractors are provided. The tenders from the calls published in 2015 have been assessed. We can see that almost every year, the EC-DGT launched calls for tenders for translations. However, we could not affirm for certain they will have very soon other calls for translation of EU documents, since the tenders are being assessed and the contracts are granted for 4 years. If we follow the calls launched every four years, we can see that we could soon assume a **potential call for translation of economic and statistical documents**.

Where can I find further details?

To find out more, please visit the following websites:

- European Parliament (for translation agencies only): <http://www.europa.eu/parl/procurement/tenders/invitations.htm>
- European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/workwithus/calls/index_en.htm
- Court of Justice of the European Union: http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/Jo2_10741/direction-generale-de-la-traduction-collaborateurs-free-lance
- European Court of Auditors (for translation agencies only): <http://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/PublicProcurement.aspx>
- European Economic and Social Committee: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.public-procurement>
- Committee of the Regions: <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/tenders/Pages/calls-for-tender.aspx>
- European Central Bank: <http://www.ecb.europa.eu/ecb/jobs/apply/htnl/index.en.html>
- Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union: <http://cct.europa.eu/EN/procurement/Pages/Program-for-the-year-2010.aspx>

Interested in working as a translator?

Then why not translate for the EU?

Freelance translator

Figure 1 Freelance translator for the EU (flyer, EC-DGT)

The website of the EC-DGT offers details for potential contractors for translations, like the following flyer for freelance translators with enabled links to the official websites of the European Union institutions.

3.1.2. The European Court of Justice

Like the European Commission, the Court of Justice employee translators, but “The amount of translation assigned to freelance translators is between 20% and 25% of the total volume. The

Court of Justice concludes with selected persons one-year framework contracts which are renewable three times.” (COURT OF JUSTICE, DGT).

The title of the translation notices published on their website for all EU languages, for concluding translations framework contracts is the following: EN *Conclusion of framework contracts for the translation of legal texts from certain official languages of the European Union into English / RO Încheierea de contracte-cadru pentru traducerea unor texte juridice din anumite limbi oficiale ale Uniunii Europene în limba română.*

It is interesting to know the technical capacity required for English translators:

“Minimum level(s) of standards possibly required:

Each natural or legal person and individual engaged in the provision of the services covered by the contract must meet the following minimum standards of professional capacity:

— *have successfully completed a **suitable course in law** (i.e. hold a degree in law or its equivalent awarded in the United Kingdom or Ireland, or have qualified as a barrister, advocate or solicitor in the United Kingdom or Ireland), or have both a university degree in any discipline from an English-language university and at least 3 years' experience as a translator of legal texts into English,*

— *have a perfect command of English and English legal terminology,*

— *have a thorough knowledge of the source language (per lot), duly evidenced by relevant documents or detailed information.*

Account will be taken in all cases of English-language legal qualifications and experience in the translation of legal texts into English.”

(COURT OF JUSTICE, DGT).

So, for the European Court of Justice, the translation of legal texts into English should be made by a person who “*have successfully completed a **suitable course in law**”*. A Romanian translator should have a double degree, in law and in translation studies, in order to work for the Court of Justice. It would be great to create double degrees in law and translation, in order to provide suitable translators for the European Justice.

3.1.3. Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union

The Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union published on its page about [Procurement programme](#) the translation calls for 2015 and 2016.

Programme for the year 2015:

- Provision of services relating to the **translation of texts in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution**. Source languages: All EU official languages + Icelandic, Norwegian, Target languages: All EU official languages + Icelandic, Norwegian
- Provision of services of **editing of texts into English in various fields**. Source language: English, Target languages: All EU official languages (except Irish) + Icelandic and Norwegian
- **Languages Courses**

3 other calls and their procedures were cancelled:

- Provision of services relating to the translation of texts in the **railway** field
- Provision of services relating to the translation of texts in the **scientific** field
- Provision of services relating to the translation of texts in the **legal** field

The following calls are prepared to be launched for the year 2016 (provisional guide)¹:

- Provision of translation services regarding texts in the **aviation** field, Source language: English, Target languages: Finnish, Croatian, Dutch, Slovenian, Swedish + Icelandic and Norwegian
- Provision of translation services relating texts in the field of “**General Affairs**”. Source languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, German, Greek, Spanish, Estonian, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Swedish. Target language: English
- Provision of translation services relating texts in the field of “**General Affairs**”. Source language: English. Target languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, German, Greek, Spanish, Estonian, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Swedish.
- Provision of translation services relating texts in the field of “**General Affairs**”. Source languages: Bulgarian, Spanish, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Dutch, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Swedish. Target language: German
- Provision of translation services relating texts in the field of “**General Affairs**”. Source language: German. Target languages: Spanish, French and Italian
- Provision of translation services relating texts in the field of “**General Affairs**”. Source language: Bulgarian, Spanish, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Dutch, Polish, Slovak and Swedish + Norwegian. Target language: French
- Provision of translation services relating texts in the field of “**General Affairs**”. Source language: French Target languages: German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese and Swedish.

This call programme of the TCB-EU is provisional. For the moment, the only call for tender published is a *Call for tenders for translation services regarding texts in the railway field*.

The big number of translations needed for the European Union activities are partially announced on the website of the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union. They are concerning special fields, but also general affairs.

3.1.4. European Economic and Social Committee

On the procurement page of the European Economic and Social Committee, they published for years now many calls for interpretation supplies and services. In 2015, they published a call for *Interpretation for an EESC event taking place from 6 to 8 of July 2015 in Yaoundé, Cameroon*, and another one for *Interpretation for two EESC events "Group Delegation Eastern Partnership Business Forum" in Riga*. These calls for services follow previous events, from 2014: *Interpretation for an EESC event "ECO/364 - EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian (EUSAIR) and 2013: Interpretation for an EESC event in China taking place from 18/11 until 21/11/13, Interpretation for an EESC event" ECO/342 - Towards a Strategy to develop cohesion in the Mediterranean 2nd meeting + Hearing*".

So, the European Economic and Social Committee collaborates with conference interpreters for events and short missions organised in various countries.

3.1.5. Committee of the Regions

¹ This programme is provided as a guide only, it is non-exhaustive and it is not in any way binding on the Translation Centre. It is not to be regarded, under any circumstances, as a substitute for official publication in the Official Journal of the European Union - 'S' series. Therefore, the Translation Centre accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever with regard to its content. For more information about this programme, please contact, by e-mail: tenders@cdt.europa.eu (TRANSLATION CENTRE, Procurement)

The only call for tender for translations from the website of the Committee of the Regions, the EU's Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives, was published in 2013, from 2012 onwards: *Translation of documents from English and French into Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian.*

After 3 years, there is no sign that the Committee of the Regions would publish another call for freelance translations.

3.1.6. European Central Bank

The European Central Bank webpage on tenders and qualified suppliers list does not have any linguistic services related calls.

3.1.7. European Parliament (for translation agencies only)

According to the website of the European Parliament, which published information concerning the calls for tenders from 2014, there is no call for tenders for translations.

3.1.8. European Court of Auditors (for translation agencies only)

On the website of the European Court of Auditors, any of the ongoing public procurement procedures, the procedures under evaluation, and the closed procedures available online since 2012 do not mention any call for translation services.

3.2. Interpretation for the European Union

3.2.1. Directorate-General for Interpretation (DG - SCIC)

Translation and Interpretation are two faces of the same coin, they have the same value, but one of them is the written expression of the other side. Also, to write and to speak require different skills. But these are well known considerations, and we want to complete the translation market analysis with EU interpretation market general considerations.

Let's start with figures related to the freelance interpreters who worked for the DG-SCIC.

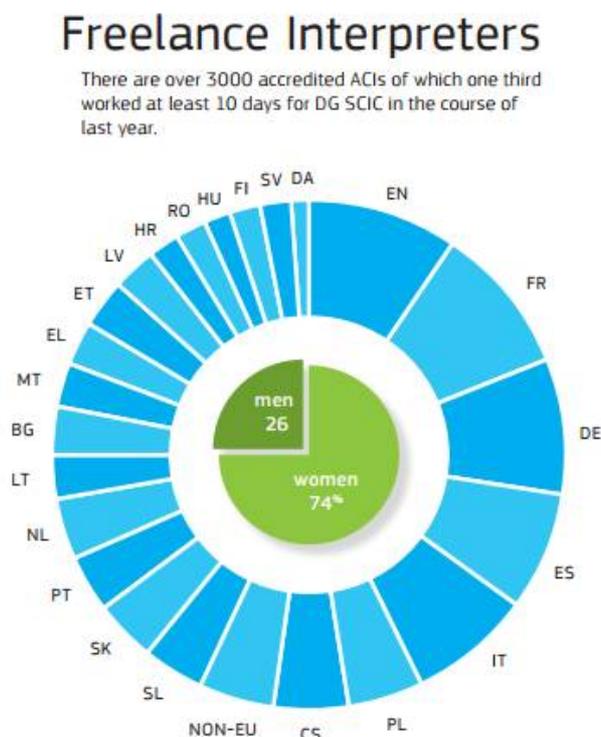


Figure 2 Freelance Interpreters (SCIC, *Interpretation in figures – 2015*, p. 3)

It is clear that if 3000 freelance interpreters worked during a year for SCIC, there is a very good opportunity for this professional category to find calls for tenders and expressions of interests launched by the Directorate-General for Interpretation.

Other figures related to the Directorate-General for Interpretation are available in the brochure [*Interpretation in figures – 2015*](#), available online. It shows the types of activities organised and financed by SCIC.

Four calls for tenders were published this year on SCIC webpage, from which three are closed. In order to understand the type of calls are launched, we will identify them: *Invitation to “One-week language enhancement and immersion refresher course for 'retouristes' into English in the UK in August 2016”*; *Invitation to tender and Invitation to negotiate for Technical rental services for the registration of participants to the event “European Maritime Day 2016” – 18-19 May 2016, Turku, Finland (1200 participants expected)*.

Like the European Economic and Social Committee, the Directorate-General for Interpretation launch calls for linguistic services and technical solutions and supplies for conferences.

There is an open call in SCIC page: *Call for proposals - Grants to universities for actions that support the organisation of Master/Post-graduate courses in conference interpreting and/or special projects aimed at supporting conference interpreter training for the academic year 2016-2017*. This call for grants is really interesting and concern only universities and interpreting schools.

3.3. Automated translation for the European Union

The *Digital Single Market strategy for Europe* for more growth and jobs, prepared to the European Commission, adopted in 2015, opened new opportunities for the automated translation field.

A call for Tools and Resources for CEF Automated Translation was recently launched, in order to sustain the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), for pan-European public digital services infrastructures (DSIs):

“This call for tender implements the CEF work programme 2015 as regards the automated translation building block. The call for tender consists of 3 lots with the following objectives:

- acquisition of MT systems and necessary processing modules and related services for CEF automated translation (lot 1),*
- deepening and extending the language resource coordination and collection effort, including related legal and technical work (building language resource repository and providing an IPR support and clearance helpdesk) (lot 2), and*
- acquisition of additional language resources and related refinement/processing services (lot 3).”*

(EC-TED, *Tools*)

We will not present all the call detail, but is good to have an overview of the linguistic services needs expressed by this call, divided into three lots, which can be tendered separately:

- *“Lot 1 Supporting the acquisition of MT systems and necessary processing modules and related services for CEF automated translation*
- *Lot 2 Deepening and extending the language resource coordination and collection effort, including related legal and technical work*
- *Lot 3 Acquisition of additional language resources and related refinement/processing services”*

(EC-TED, *Tools*)

The objective of the actions of the second lot is “to manage, maintain and coordinate the relevant language resources in all official languages of the EU and CEF-associated countries, in order to improve the quality, coverage and performance of automated translation systems and solutions in the context of current and future CEF digital services. It will also raise awareness and promote the acquisition and continued identification and collection of language resources.” (EC-TED, Tools)

For the third lot, “The short-term objective is to acquire high-quality IPR-cleared language resources (parallel corpora) in all CEF languages in topical areas relevant to CEF DSIs. The long-term objective is to contribute and complement the language resource collection in the Member States (coordinated by lot 2), in view to reach an acceptable level of automated translation quality in key areas of CEF DSIs, where multilingual functionalities are needed”. (EC-TED, Tools)

The call shows that the automated translation in all EU languages is subject to an extensive and intensive of the EC institutions, in order to sustain practically the Digital Single Market. For this purpose, technical solution and **high-quality IPR-cleared language resources (parallel corpora)** will be acquired. This is a short-term objective, and the availability of this kind of resources remains to be proven by the tenderers. This an important direction to be developed by translators, terminologists and other providers of linguistic services.

3.4. Financial overview and business opportunities

The first question for business opportunities is the financial strength.

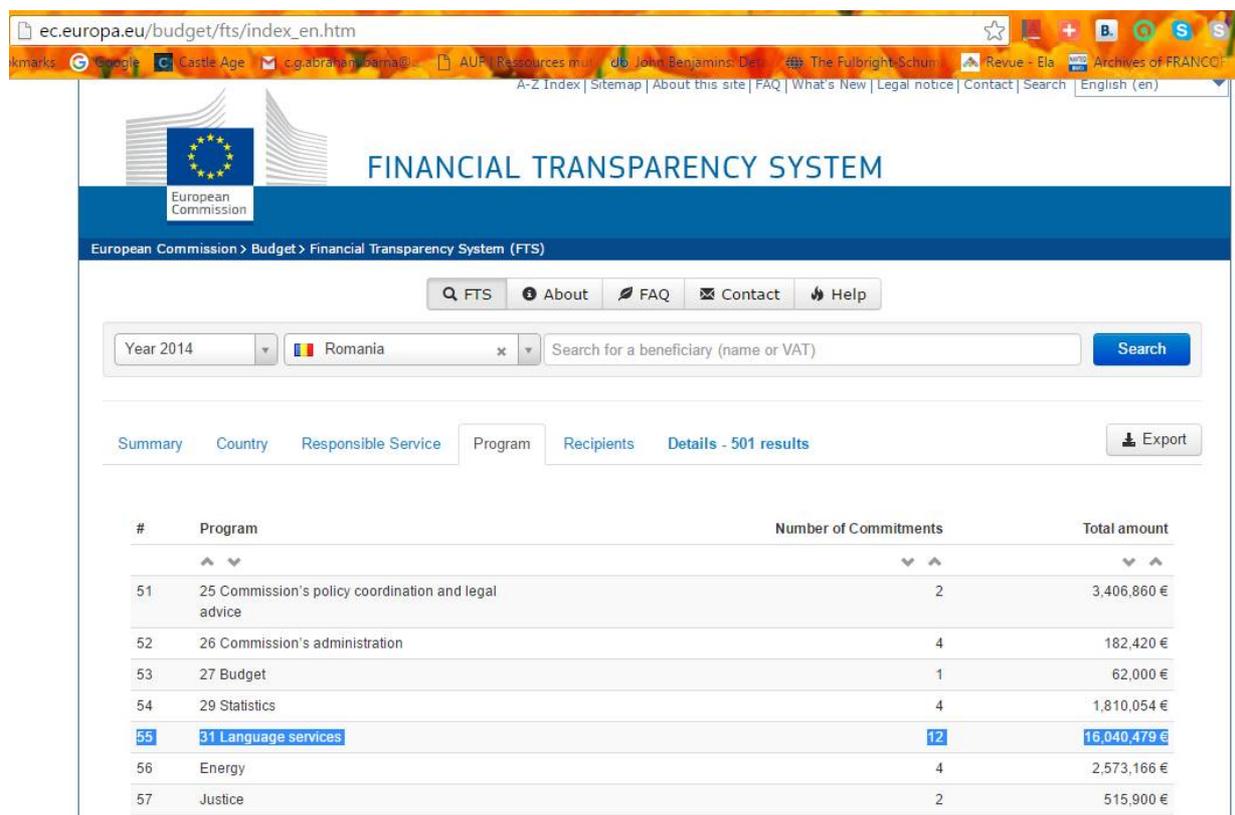


Figure 3 Language services for the European Commission in 2014 - Romania (EC Budget, Financial Transparency System)

The Financial Transparency System of the European Commission shows that the EC paid in 2014 for language services provided from Romania about 16 000 000 euros, financed through 12 contracts. This is a very interesting market for freelance translators and translation companies.

Where to find the money? “*Freelance translators and translation agencies, whether they are based in the EU or not, can respond to calls for tender, which can be found on the following websites: <http://ted.europa.eu> or <http://www.ojec.com>” (EC-DGT, *Freelance*, 2).*

If questioning about technical issues related to the translation contractors, the EC-DG Translation provides a page for translation contractors: [Contractor guides](#), for all the official languages of the European Union.

For more details, the EC - Directorate-General for Budget published a guide named [Doing business with the EU Commission](#).

4. Conclusions

The translation market analysis & forecast were subject of various studies, which shown a constant growth. In Europe, the European Union institutions are constantly employing translators and interpreters, but, by researches, we find that about a quarter of the translations are outsourced. So, in order to predict directions of developments for linguistic services in Europe, we observed the current trends in the translation market in the area of tendering. Our hypothesis was that the translation tendering, especially in Europe, represents a great opportunity for translators, terminologists and interpreters. The research method was the corpus analysis, established on the basis of EC policies implemented in calls for tenders published by the European Commission and other European institutions, in order to conduct the marketing research. The research corpus of the calls for tenders and expressions of interest for language services for the European Union was grouped by the following interest sections: Translation, Interpretation and Automated translation.

The analysis of the translation tendering for the European Commission reveals the translation strategies and develops the current trends in the translation market.

The forecast of the translation market in the area of tendering in Europe is slightly moving from the outsourced translations to the following trends:

- ✓ Acquisition and continued identification and collection of language resources
- ✓ Electronic dictionaries and databases
- ✓ Parallel corpora
- ✓ Various multilingual publications
- ✓ Tools and resources for automated translation - improving of quality, coverage and performance of automated translation systems and solutions.

Our hypothesis was tested and verified, and shows that the exploitation of digital linguistic resources is one of the solutions to be provided to the EC as tender. These resources will be the base for developing the automated translation field.

Time will show that this initiative will make the automated translations more suitable, and the human translations will be less desirable.

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