Directorate-General for Translation
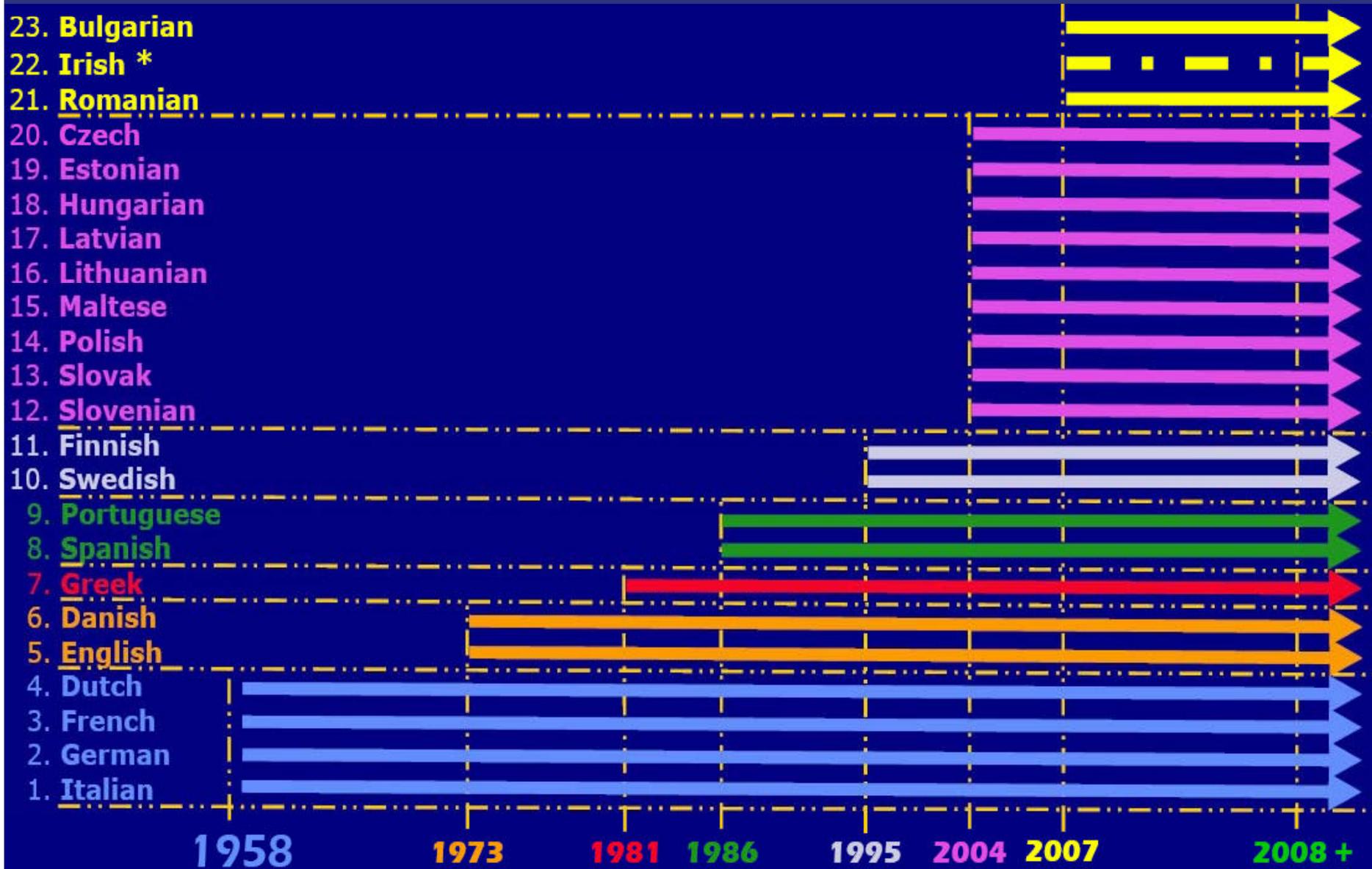
Translating for a Multilingual Community

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EU official languages

23. **Bulgarian**
22. **Irish** *
21. **Romanian**
20. **Czech**
19. **Estonian**
18. **Hungarian**
17. **Latvian**
16. **Lithuanian**
15. **Maltese**
14. **Polish**
13. **Slovak**
12. **Slovenian**
11. **Finnish**
10. **Swedish**
9. **Portuguese**
8. **Spanish**
7. **Greek**
6. **Danish**
5. **English**
4. **Dutch**
3. **French**
2. **German**
1. **Italian**

1958   1973   1981   1986   1995   2004   2007   2008 +

* **Irish:** 'Treaty Language' from 1973 onwards, official language status since 2007.

Why do we translate?

To enable citizens of the EU Member States to:

- understand the laws that they have to comply with
- play a full part in EU activities
- contribute to the work of the EU institutions without having to learn a foreign language for the purpose

The logic behind it

- Citizens have the right to their language in a multicultural society - this is essential to communication

- Communication helps maintain peace and contributes to development

- The language services contribute to the EU's
  - openness
  - legitimacy
  - effectiveness

The legal basis

- ## Council Regulation No 1/58
  - Regulations and other documents of general application shall be drafted in the official languages

- ## Treaty establishing the European Community
  - Citizens have the right to address the official EU bodies in any of the EU's official languages and to receive a reply in that language
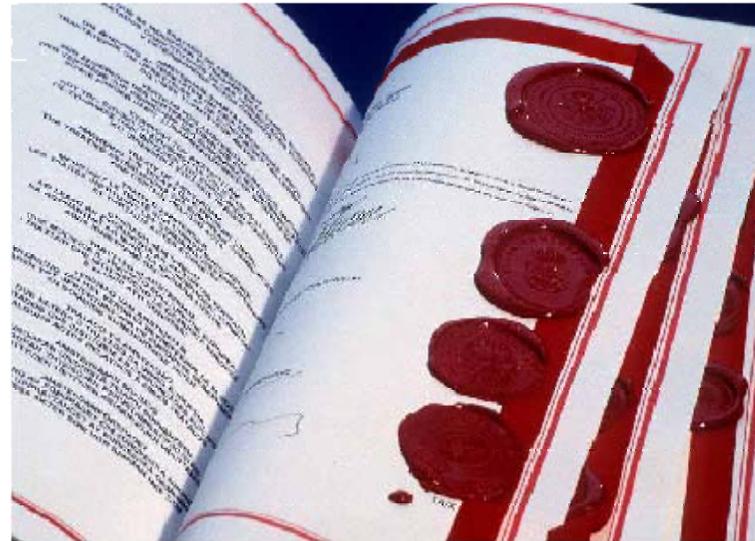
The Commission's multilingualism policy

- Promotion of linguistic diversity and lifelong learning
- Economic competitiveness, growth and better jobs
- Social cohesion and intercultural dialogue

Multilingualism: the political framework

- Shared competence for education

- Member States organise their own education systems and priorities

- Role of the European Commission is to support and complement their actions

- Encourage co-operation between the Member States

- European Commission's Communications on multilingualism

DGT's staff

- Some 1 750 translators and 600 support staff

- 50% in Brussels,
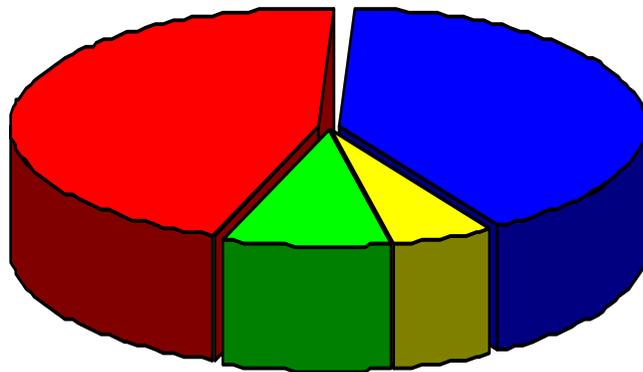 50% in Luxembourg

- Field Offices
  in Member States

Trends in translation at the Commission

	1997	2004	2008
Total output in pages	1 125 709	1 270 586	1 805 689
Proportion freelance	16%	23%	26%
Source text written in English	45%	62%	72%
- in French	41%	26%	12%
- in German	5%	3%	3%
- in other languages	9%	9%	13%

Breakdown by source language

1997: 1 125 709 pages

2008: 1 805 689 pages

Source languages:

EN   FR   DE   Other
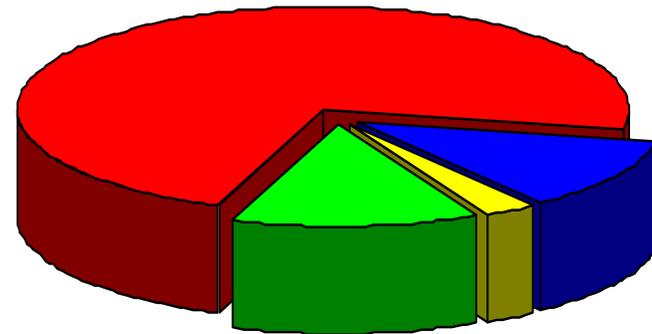
Breakdown by target language (2008)

ET 3% GA 0%
LT 3%
SL 3%
LV 3%
SK 3%
CS 3%
FI 3%
DA 4%
HU 4%
BG 4%
RO 4%
PL 4%
SV 4%
MT 4%
PT 4%
EL 4%
NL 4%
IT 4%
ES 5%
DE 8%
FR 9%
EN 13%
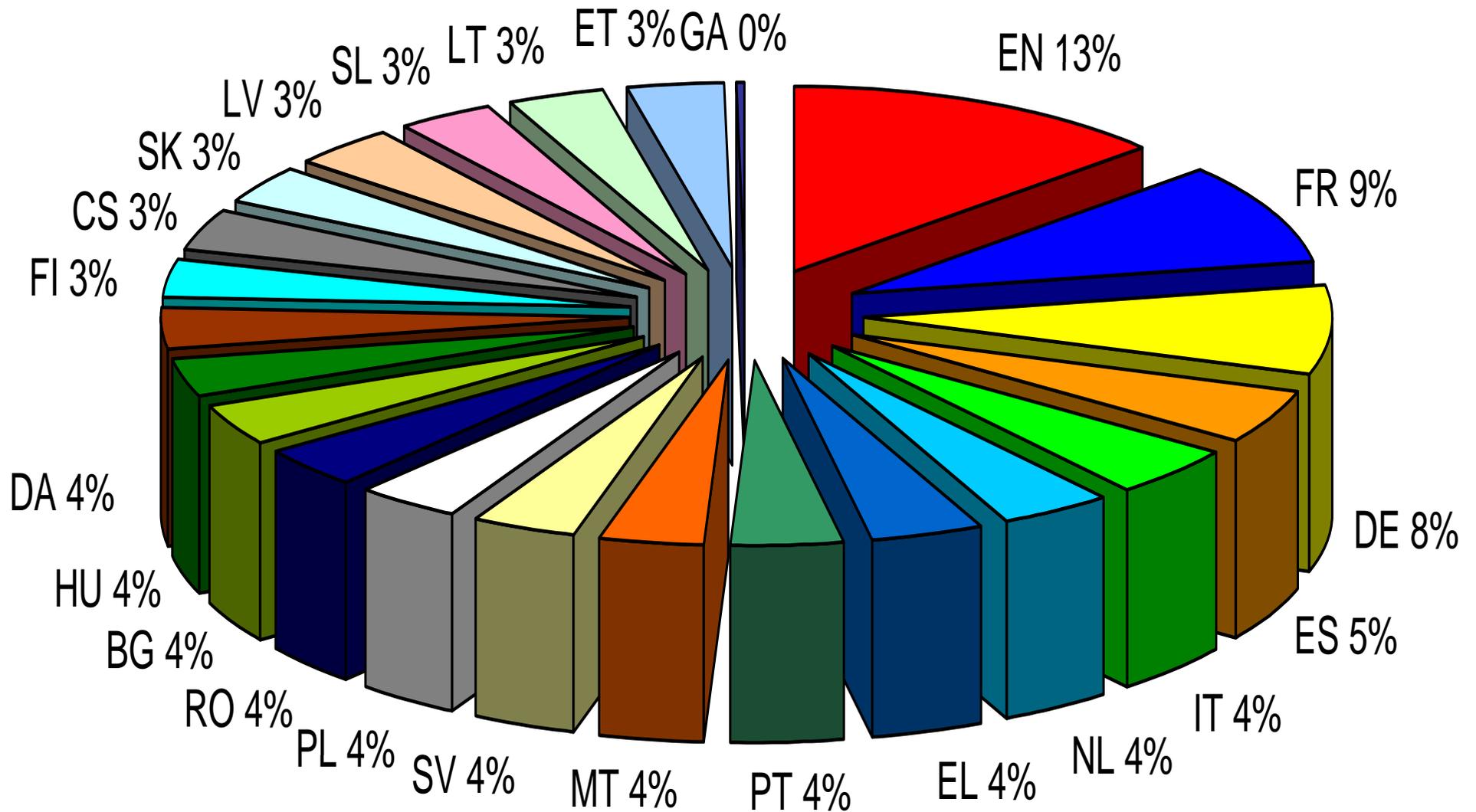
What we translate

- Legal acts and preparatory documents
- Commission decisions and communications
- Publications
- Correspondence
- Speeches, minutes
- Reports
- Working documents
- Web pages

Traditional translation aids

- Reference works
- Libraries (Brussels and Luxembourg)
- Contact with customers/other translators
- Contact with experts in the Commission, the other institutions or the Member States

Quality assurance

- Specialisation
- Translation memories
- Revision of translations
- Coordination of language versions
- Electronic exchange of translators' notes
- Support functions: IT, terminology, documentation, etc.
- Improvement of original texts: editing service for English and French originals, clear writing campaigns

Commission and the Web

Tackling new challenges

- Communication and interaction with citizens is a political necessity

- 23 languages + a multitude of policy areas $\Rightarrow$ more than 1600 on-line sites on EUROPA, and millions of web pages

- Huge increase in multilingual websites over the last years

- Maximum number of languages is provided, balanced with resource constraints

The price

- All the translation and interpreting services of all the EU institutions cost each EU citizen around 2 euros per year

- The cost of multilingualism adds up to less than 1% of the whole EU budget

Thank you for your attention

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