A Study on Multilingual Lawmaking in the EU

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Multilingualism and multilingual lawmaking

The European Commission’s policy for Multilingualism has three aims:

- to encourage language learning and promoting linguistic diversity in society;
- to promote a healthy multilingual economy, and
- to give citizens access to European Union legislation, procedures and information in their own languages.
Aims of the study

- To give a comprehensive overview of EU lawmaking which involves 23 official languages.
- To identify the current mechanisms that aim to ensure linguistic consistency between all language versions.
- To identify ways to further strengthen the multilingual drafting process and enhance the linguistic quality of European legislation.
The multilingual lawmaking process: detailed description of the workflow

- An alternating system of drafting, translating and legal revision
- Efforts for improving the quality of the original text before it is sent for translation
- The use of a single interinstitutional terminology database and common drafting guides
- The importance of the informal personal contacts between actors involved in the process
The impact of EU law on languages

- The language of EU law has both positive and negative effects on languages

- EU law triggers standardisation of technical terminology and raises sensitivity towards linguistic issues

- Interference: legal, syntactic and stylistic effects of the drafting language
The study also contains a chapter on the Case Law of the European Court of Justice

- on definition of EU concepts not comprehensively defined or not defined at all at legislative level
- on diverging language versions of EU acts
- on the legal consequences of inadequate drafting
Brief analysis of other multilingual legal systems

- Practices in Belgium, Malta, Canada and Switzerland are analysed

- **Positive features** of these systems are
  - Efforts made for avoiding unnecessary linguistic interaction between drafting languages
  - Entrusting a central body with advisory and control functions within the drafting system
  - Separating policy questions and drafting
Where can I download the study?

- Directorate-General for Translation: