

## Sectoral Assembly of the Languages Service (March 2016–February 2017)

### Minutes of the 1st meeting of the Bureau<sup>1</sup>

*Held in room E.4116 on Thursday, 7 April 2016, at 3.30 p.m.*

**Attended by:** Luis SARABIA UTRILLA (President), Ahmed GHAILAN (ATS), Judy FADEL-OSTIJIC (ATS), Jamila CHEDAD (ATPU), Leslie FILLION-WILKINSON (ETS, note-taker), Melanie GUEDENET (ETS), Mathias ARMINJON (FTS), Olivier MEYER (FTS), Yuri BOICHUK (RTS), Nina STEPANOVA (RTPU), Enrique SÁNCHEZ-REAL (STS), Ruth MAQUERA (STPU), Juan SANCHEZ PEREZ (ES), Elena ISSAEVA (Reference Unit) and Miguel MORENO (Terminology Unit).

#### **Agenda**

- I. Adoption of the agenda
- II. Organization of work for the mandate
- III. Identification of main issues for the mandate
- IV. Other matters

*The meeting began at 3.30 p.m.*

#### **I. Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted without modifications.*

#### **II. Organization of work during the mandate**

*Election of the Vice-President of the Sectoral Assembly*

2. Ahmed Ghailan was elected Vice-President by acclamation.

*Minutes of the meetings*

3. The minutes would continue to be drafted in English, with note-takers rotating according to their availability. Minutes could be drafted in French in the absence of all of the usual note-takers.

*Strategic Heritage Plan delegation*

4. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla said that the SHP delegation set up under the previous mandate would be disbanded because it was felt that relevant discussions should be held with the Bureau as a whole. However, he reserved the right to convene an extraordinary general assembly of the Sectoral Assembly should an issue that required a decision arise.

#### **III. Identification of main issues for the mandate**

*Productivity*

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the opinions reflected herein represent staff suggestions and views collected by their representatives and are aimed at promoting communication between management and staff. In order to avoid misunderstandings, any comments or requests for corrections to the minutes should be submitted to the President of the LSSA only, for inclusion in the minutes of the following meeting.

5. Mr. Meyer, reporting that staff at Headquarters had received an email stating that five pages per day was now the minimum expected output, said that the LSSA should be prepared to take action if any increase in productivity targets was being considered. It was generally felt that the current target, which had been decided decades earlier, did not take into account the numerous changes that had taken place since and which added a considerable burden on translators, or the difficulty of some documents and languages; therefore, any increase of the target was ludicrous and would be setting people up to fail. Furthermore, it would be fairer if the five-page target applied at the section level rather than to individuals, which would not prevent the indicator from being used—as originally intended—as a benchmark for calculating budgetary and personnel needs.

6. It was widely felt that expecting self-revised translators to produce more than junior translators when they were in fact doing the work of two people essentially amounted to punishing them for having achieved a status that was beneficial for the Organization in terms of efficiency. Given the emphasis on productivity and compliance rates, the Organization would do well not to penalize self-revision. For example, self-revised translators could be given extra credit for every page of translation completed.

7. Mr. Sánchez-Real raised the concern that newcomers were not given the time to train and get acquainted with the work and that there was too much pressure on them to meet productivity targets. Accordingly, he suggested that a certain amount of special assignment (SPA) should automatically be applied to all newcomers for a fixed period of time. In addition, capping SPA at 10 per cent was not realistic, especially for staff who specialized in more technical fields that required considerable research.

#### *Today (dashboard)*

8. Several members raised concerns about Today, in particular that its ultimate purpose was unclear, that it offered little more than what gDoc already did, that it fostered unhealthy competition among staff, that there were discrepancies between Today and gDoc, and that the rating tool did not go far enough and might actually be counterproductive in its current form. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla pointed out that the tool was not compulsory and that additional posts had been allocated to LS thanks to figures produced by the software underpinning the dashboard.

#### *Text processing units*

9. Mr. Boichuk said that the ratio of typists to translators was too low for the volume of work.

#### *Part-time work*

10. Mr. Arminjon said that the LSSA should explore ways of facilitating part-time work as the current budgetary practices rendered such arrangements next to impossible.

#### *Compensatory time*

11. Mr. Ghailan said that the LSSA should keep abreast of the problems staff were experiencing with taking compensatory time off for the overtime they had worked. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla noted that the issue arose primarily from the fact that that type of leave could not yet be entered into Umoja.

### **IV. Other matters**

12. Ms. Issaeva, reporting on the findings of the survey on referencing needs, said that a surprisingly large number of translators did not know that they could contact the Referencing Unit

directly to make on-demand requests even if the document had not been run through eRef. It was an important service of which she encouraged translators to avail themselves.

13. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla said that there was now a link to the LSSA on the website of the Coordinating Council (<http://staffcoordinatingcouncil.org/index.php/contact>) and that, in addition to the rules of procedure, staff would be able to access the minutes of Bureau meetings.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*