

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

### Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Bureau<sup>1</sup>

*Held in room E.4116 on Thursday, 1 September 2016, at 3 p.m.*

**Attended by:** Luis SARABIA UTRILLA (President), Ahmed GHAILAN (ATS), Naima ABDELLAOUI (ATS), Gamal MAHMOUD (ATPU), Melanie GUEDENET (ETS), Ashley BUNTING SEEBER (ETPU, note-taker), Mathias ARMINJON (FTS), Olivier MEYER (FTS), Yuri BOICHUK (RTS), Nina STEPANOVA (RTPU), Enrique SÁNCHEZ-REAL (STS), Ruth MAQUERA (STPU), Juan SANCHEZ PEREZ (ES), and Jiaxiang WANG (Reference Unit).

#### **Agenda**

- I. Adoption of the agenda
- II. Activities of the President since the previous meeting
- III. Issues identified by representatives
- IV. Other matters

*The meeting began at 3.05 p.m.*

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

1. *The agenda was adopted without modifications.*

#### **II. Activities of the President since the previous meeting**

2. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla reported that he had attended meetings regarding timekeeping and productivity in the TPUs: there were two preparatory meetings with the LSSA representatives and one meeting between the representatives and Ms. Aboh Dauvergne. The main issues discussed were the close monitoring of timekeeping and productivity and the resulting stress on staff. During the preparatory meetings, it was also discovered that monitoring practices varied across the units, and that streamlining some of the practices could result in both less stress for staff and more accurate gathering of statistics. The meetings with Ms. Aboh Dauvergne had resulted in fruitful discussions, and the group was set to meet again in one month's time.

#### **III. Issues identified by representatives**

*Decision to discontinue the use of eRef*

3. Mr. Wang said that staff in his unit did not agree with the recent decision to discontinue the use of eRef, as it was such a fundamental tool for the work that they perform. The unit was in the process of contacting the Sectoral Assembly and the Staff Council, preparing a memo, as well as discussing this decision and its consequences with the Director of the Division for reconsideration. It was unclear to staff why eRef was being discontinued in favour of eLUNa, as a recent survey revealed that eRef was widely used by translators and revisers. Furthermore, in previous discussions, he and his colleagues had made clear that, if eRef were to be discontinued, there must be a tool to replace it, as it was essential to completing documents according to their deadline. Mr. Ghailan suggested asking for the results of the survey in order to better understand how the decision was made, as it was

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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.

appropriate that, after a survey of staff members, staff should be informed of the results. Mr. Sánchez Real said that there was concern in his section about moving to eLUNa and discontinuing tools such as eRef and Trados. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla said that he would locate and then forward the results of the survey to the Bureau, and he suggested setting up a meeting with Ms. Aboh Dauvergne to discuss the issues.

4. Mr. Wang also said there was concern in his unit that the refrigerator in the staff lounge on the fifth floor was not being cleaned according to the agreed-upon rotation. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla said that he would send a gentle reminder to LS staff members to do so.

#### *Requests for part-time work*

5. Mr. Arminjon said that colleagues in his section expressed the wish that the Sectoral Assembly explore ways to promote part-time work. It would be interesting to consider if and how part-time work could be in the Organisation's best interest. As far as he knew, at least one recent request had been refused in FTS, with revising capacity needs cited as the reason. Others said it was unclear from recent discussions whether the authority for approving part-time work lay solely with the chief of unit or section or also with HRMS. **Mr. Sarabia Utrilla suggested organizing a meeting with Ms. Keating, interested staff members and the appropriate chiefs** in order to clarify the policy and procedure for applying for part-time work. **He also said that he would consult with the DCM Staff Management Relations Group for guidance** on the type of circumstances under which a request could be rejected and for clarification on the budgetary consequences of staff working part-time.

#### *Staff well-being in relation to time spent working on-screen*

6. Mr. Boichuk said that some colleagues in his section had discussed a recommendation from Medical Services that staff take a 10-minute break for every hour spent working on a computer, as well as the corresponding effects on productivity, as translators and revisers were being strongly encouraged to do their work on-screen and not rely on dictation. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla said that this question was raised within the Staff Management Relations Group, who was looking into the issue in consultation with HRMS and its Legal Unit. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla had also raised the question with Medical Services and was still awaiting a reply.

7. A discussion ensued as to how such breaks would be accounted for, considering the increased attention to productivity and the meeting of compliance rates. While on the one hand, working on-screen was theoretically supposed to increase productivity, on the other hand, it also necessitated more breaks than working on paper. The discussion concluded with a consensus among the representatives present that, as a matter of practicality, having to account for such breaks in gDoc would unnecessarily complicate the system.

#### *Standard operating procedures for programming in translation sections*

8. Ms. Abdellaoui asked if there were guidelines on programming, specifically how documents were assigned to which staff members, taking into account the technical nature of the terminology used and the overall difficulty of the document. Colleagues reported that similar questions had been discussed in the English and Russian sections. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla said that a standard operating procedure on programming should become available shortly. There was consensus among the representatives that the assignment of documents should be balanced and fair, taking into account the translator's or reviser's ability, the area of expertise and need for further training. Moreover, if there was a recurring pattern of unfair distribution of work, it should be addressed through the chief of section or the staff representative.

#### *Evaluation of translation quality*

9. There was a new pilot project in some sections to evaluate the quality of translations, both for training purposes and in response to the shift to senior revisers acting as First Reporting Officers (FROs). There were mixed results: for some, it was working well, as it renewed the focus on quality as opposed to solely quantity and productivity. It also ensured that colleagues received both positive and negative feedback rather than solely negative feedback when an issue arose. For others, however, there were concerns that the marking system was not applied consistently and varied according to the reviser; that some younger colleagues were de-motivated after receiving harsh marks; and that the approach felt too much “like being in school”, especially when considering how many years of education, training and professional experience many translators and revisers had behind them. Still others asked what the system accomplished that looking over a track-changes copy of the revised document would not also reveal. Mr. Meyer asked if any training was mandatory for revisers. Mr. Boichuk said that there would be training for FROs on 25 October. It was pointed out that SDLS also offers courses on feedback and on performance management that could be useful.

#### **IV. Other matters**

##### *Steering Group decisions*

10. Mr. Sarabia Utrilla reported that there were over 25 recommendations that had been approved by the Steering Group<sup>2</sup>, most of them pertaining to translation; a few to contractual work; one to the TPUs regarding bitexts, and one regarding cross assignments. While these recommendations were already approved and had become decisions, there was still value in the long-term in formulating a staff response to them. Upon the request of some representatives, he proposed that a small group be convened to look over the approved recommendations, followed by formal consultations with our colleagues. It was agreed that representatives would email their respective units and sections to ask for volunteers to go over the recommendations and forward the names of the volunteers to Mr. Sarabia Utrilla in two weeks’ time.

*The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.*

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<sup>2</sup> By September 16th 2016, a total of 49 recommendations had been approved and, therefore, become decisions.