

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

Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Bureau¹

Held in room E.4116 on Thursday, 13 October 2016, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Attended by: Luis SARABIA UTRILLA (President), Ahmed GHAILAN (ATS), Jamila CHEDAD (ATPU), Leslie FILLION-WILKINSON (ETS, note-taker), Pauline ESCALANTE (ETPU), Mathias ARMINJON (FTS), Olivier MEYER (FTS), Nina STEPANOVA (RTPU), Enrique SÁNCHEZ-REAL (STS), Romina MERIÑO (STPU), Philippa FLETCHER (ES), and Elena ISSAEVA (Reference Unit).

Highlights

Main topics discussed:

- Activities of the President and Vice-President since the previous meeting;
- Discontinuation of eRef and the professional future of referencing staff;
- Part-time work;
- Evaluation/feedback forms for translation assignments;
- Consultation of staff, in particular regarding the recommendations of the Steering Group;
- Overtime;
- Format of the minutes.

Action points:

- The President to request Ms. Keating and Mr. Ngoma-Mouaya to hold an information session for translators and other interested staff on the reference-on-demand tool and the real implications of the discontinuation of eRef.
- The Bureau, in consultation with MERS, to design and circulate a survey on the amount of overtime put in by staff.

Good to know:

- All staff members are permitted to request part-time work, in any configuration; however, the feasibility of such arrangements is decided at the section or unit level. If a request is denied, the chief should provide a reasoned explanation and, where applicable, prospects for accommodation at a later date. While the Bureau encourages interested staff members to apply for part-time work, it draws their attention to the financial implications of such arrangements (e.g. higher percentage of insurance premiums paid by the staff member, pensionable earnings likely to be significantly reduced, lower subsidies/grants).
- Ms. Keating will be organizing information sessions on each of the decisions of the Steering Group. The monthly sessions will be held for 30 minutes over the lunch hour; therefore, staff will not be permitted to claim SPA to attend the sessions.
 - The Bureau is disappointed as it believes that disallowing SPA will discourage staff from attending the information sessions and would like for the Chief of LS to reconsider this decision.
- A retreat will be held for the translation chiefs and, possibly, one or two senior staff members from each section to develop a five-year roadmap for the services provided by the Translation and Editorial Support Section.

¹ 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.

Addendum

Pursuant to LSSA policy regarding the right to reply to the minutes, as outlined in footnote 1, Ms. Fassotte, Chief of the French Translation Section, has submitted the following observations in response to statements recorded in paragraph 6 of the minutes of the fourth meeting (distributed electronically on 1 September 2016):

The session on burnout was organized, not in response to a current problem in FTS, but as a reaction to an email sent to the entire Section by a colleague who was separated on grounds of disability. Michelle [Keating] and I felt the most constructive and useful response was to inform everyone of what burnout is and is not, and what can be done to identify and avoid it. The session was also a good opportunity for staff to meet the staff counsellor, which could make it easier for them to seek out her help if needed in future. The three colleagues who were on long-term leave (they were granted special leave without pay for two years) and recently went on disability or resigned, gave no indication that long hours or an inordinate workload had been a problem for them.

It is reassuring to learn that the average overtime, as estimated by staff in a survey by staff representatives,² is no more than one hour a day. A training course on time management is being organized by SDLS; two staff members have asked to participate and have been allowed to do so.

Four members of FTS currently work part time, two for medical reasons and two electively. At this time, it is not possible to allow revisers to work part time (other than for medical reasons) because there are not enough qualified freelance revisers on the market to replace them (and it takes at least three to five years for a translator to acquire the skills needed to do revision work). Part-time work also creates operational difficulties because urgent documents often cannot be processed within deadlines by those who work part time. There is, therefore, an operational need to limit the number of translators working part time at any given time; if not all requests can be accommodated, a rotation will be established, whereby someone working part time will come back to work full time so another colleague can be given a chance.

² *Note by the note-taker:* This survey was run by the staff representatives of FTS and covered FTS staff only. It is different from the upcoming survey mentioned on page 1 of these minutes.