# Introduction:

# Mapping public service interpreting and translation (PSIT): the EU work package on PSIT and languages of lesser diffusion (LLD) in the European Master's in Translation Network

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Multilingualism is one of the fundamental pillars of the European Union (EU) (Treaty of Rome 1958), recognized and enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (European Union 2000) as the right of any person who is an EU national to use any of the 24 official languages to communicate with EU institutions. It guarantees that those institutions respond in the same language. Moreover, this right guarantees the cultural and linguistic diversity of the EU and makes them an essential part of its cultural heritage. In fact, EU language policy is based on three main objectives: 1. Communicating with citizens in their own language; 2. Protecting Europe's rich linguistic diversity; and 3. Promoting language learning in Europe.

To achieve these objectives, several instruments and strategies have been put in place in EU member countries: encouraging and promoting language learning, having a strong body of professional translators and interpreters to facilitate communication between their multilingual institutions and the member states, and developing their own language technologies to promote communication across language barriers.

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In addition to official languages, the EU also recognizes the importance of regional or minority languages (RMLs) through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages approved in 1992 (Council of Europe 1992) and adopted in 1998. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1998) explicitly states that "regional or minority languages" refer to the languages traditionally used in a given territory of a State by the nationals of that State and do "not include [...] the languages of migrants", or languages of lesser diffusion (LLD).

These are very different realities, with different policies, as befits increasingly globalized and diverse societies that also lead to heterogeneous and different perspectives when it comes to designing and implementing language policy planning. However, as Monzó and Mellinguer (2022) point out, the planning and implementation of language policies can be an instrument of social justice, but also of social injustice.

Migration, which involves diverse languages and cultures, is a phenomenon that has (and will have) a great impact on EU countries and Western societies. This leads us to think about a new dimension of multilingualism since, as migration continues and increases worldwide, linguistic diversity grows in parallel. Addressing the wide variety of languages and cultures used in our cities also requires rethinking current language policies and placing more emphasis on social justice and human rights (Valero-Garcés, 2023, p. 49).

Interest in language is not new in international law either, as evidenced by the large corpus of declarations, conventions, or agreements in defence of linguistic rights, albeit with varying degrees of binding status in the legal corpus and a gap between theory and practice. This occurs in the context of the development of several international legal instruments to protect several rights: to language, to non-discrimination, to freedom of expression, to culture or a fair trial, among other rights (Valero-Garcés and Rodríguez Ortega, 2023, XVI). The purpose of all these legal provisions is to protect, in fact, languages and speakers.

However, as Mowbray (2022, p. 39) notes:

> [...], linguistic rights expressed in international law do not necessarily guarantee linguistic justice – broadly understood as justice between speakers of different languages – and may even exacerbate some of the difficulties faced by speakers of minority languages

Proof of this is the fact that dominant linguistic communities can decide what is offered to non-dominant linguistic communities and many policies are based on monolingual principles that bypass the complex linguistic realities in which they operate. Therefore, resources are unequally distributed among linguistic groups, distributing different degrees of dignity, esteem, and access possibilities (Piller, Zhang, & Li 2020). Ultimately, as Monzó-Nebot (2023, p. 41) points out, we can conclude that linguistic minorities often face multifaceted, systemic, and institutionalized forms of disadvantage.

Addressing the great variety of languages and cultures used in our cities with the influx of migration and the LLD they bring requires rethinking current language policies and placing more emphasis on social justice and human rights. Siguan (2001), at the beginning of this century, referring to RMLs, lamented the "absolute silence" of the EU on language policy, recalling that no state is monolingual and adding that the EU should state its language policy beyond the official languages. Moreover, there are many languages without a state and languages that belong to one state but have communities in another. Ultimately, language teaching should not only provide tools for communication but also fraternity and recognition of the other (2001).

Member States may legislate on linguistic matters to support their MRLs, considering the EU law, especially the principle of non-discrimination of EU citizens (Arzoz, 2014, p. 47). Hence, there are differences between the Member States themselves. Often, national laws only recognize these rights for members of minorities who are citizens of the country and know the official language. These rights are considered exceptions to the rule of using the national language throughout the country.

The situation is quite different in the case of LLD. There is a great diversity of LLD between countries and regions, and LLD is the main demand within PSIT. Human and logistical resources are very different, and speakers of these languages do not always know the contact language(s) of the country, as is often the case for speakers of co-official languages or RMLs. So, different Member States that receive migrants or asylum seekers search for solutions, which are, often, local or regional and, oftentimes, insufficient despite their best efforts. Thus, several solutions to respond to language and cultural barriers are available, as well as training proposals, volunteer programs, and projects.

## 1. Creation of the 'Mapping Public Service Interpreting and Translation in the EU' working group

Considering the previous context, the creation of a specialized PSIT network was a necessary and innovative response from the international community of interpreters, translators and researchers to society, working side by side. Thus, in spring 2020, the 'Mapping Public Service Interpreting and Translation in the EU' (EU WG PSIT) working group was created within the European Master's in Translation network (DGT-EMT network[1]), an initiative of the EU-Directorate-General for Translation (European Commission, 2024). The group was created at the suggestion of its coordinator, Professor Carmen Valero-Garcés, an EMT board member, co-director of the Master's Degree in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting and Translation (MA CITISP), and coordinator of the research group FITISPos (Research and Training in Public Service Interpreting and Translation) (FITISPos s. f.) at the University of Alcalá (Madrid, Spain).

The general objective of the EU WG PSIT was to raise attention to the many migration languages (or LLD) that are spoken in the EU. The specific objective was twofold:

1. To contribute to the efficient management of migration and asylum seekers and refugees by focusing on language and communication in LLD in cross-border training activities.

2. To support the creation of a specialized PSIT network within the EMT network mainly focused on LLD within the EU EMT network.

This broad objective was divided into the following specific objectives:

· To conduct a thorough analysis of the current situation of PSIT (and LLD) in the countries/areas where members of the working group are located.

· To identify language needs.

· To identify translation and interpreting (T&I) needs in PSIT.

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[1] The DGT EMT network is a partnership project between the DGT of the European Commission and several universities from a wide range of European countries.

· To identify good practices.

· To catalogue and classify results.

· To develop a framework for training and accreditation.

The project was designed as an open project that could be adapted depending on the outcomes achieved throughout the process. The team was made up of members from different backgrounds, areas of expertise, and different organizations and institutions, as follows:

1. EMT universities that wish to participate.

2. Large international, national, or local NGOs, such as Red Cross, Médecins du monde, Translators without Borders, etc.; translators and interpreters or language service providers that deal with migration issues.

3. EU institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders that can secure the widest possible cooperation between the EMT universities and the EU such as EU Justice, EU Migration and Home Affairs or the Directorate- General for Interpretation (DGI-SCIC).

The group met online periodically to discuss topics of interest suggested by members of the team or invited experts. The underlying purpose was to give voice to participants from different countries, organizations, or institutions. The results of these online meetings and reflections were presented at the annual meetings of the EMT network.

The working group's research corroborated what the extensive bibliography on PSIT had already been produced (e.g. Valero-Garcés, 2022; Valero-Garcés, 2023; Gaviloi & Wadensjo, 2023; Floros et al., 2024). It underlined a great variety of languages used in each country and different countries, as well as differences in the provision of linguistic services amongst different areas (healthcare, education, and legal and administrative settings) and countries. There is also a lack of information on LLD and training for LLD, as well as serious consequences and risks associated with the lack of communication between users and service providers.

In practice, in many countries, there is no legal entitlement to the provision of PSIT, and PSIT tends to be seen as a charitable or voluntary activity provided by bilingual people rather than as a professional service. This leads to little recognition and a lack of legal regulation regarding the formal qualifications of translators and interpreters in these settings.

As a result, there is a great diversity of training institutions and programs, as well as official organizations that grant some form of certification. However, in general, the absence of standardized requirements means that anyone can work as a PSIT, without an objective assessment of their skills. This lack of standardization has contributed to an even less regulated and more confusing PSIT market.

There is a growing awareness of the need to seek more structural solutions and, therefore, more solid policies. Some examples are several projects financed with European funds such as TraiLLD (Balogh, Salaets, & Van Schoor, 2016) and EU-WebPSI (2023), DIALOGOS (2022-2024), INTEGRA (2017-2019), or TRAMIG (2018-2020), among others, which help to raise awareness of this issue and the need to train PSIT professionals.

## 2. Overview of the issue

The 2025 issue of *FITISPos-International Journal* offers, in the articles section, a report of the project 'Mapping PSIT in the EU', covering different EU countries through 13 articles. This information is completed by the rest of the sections, which include current information through reviews of recent publications and an obituary, news from the researcher's corner, and working papers. A summary of the topics discussed in each section follows.

### 2.1 Articles

The feature article explores the shared characteristics in addressing the needs of multilingual communication in both practice and education across different countries. It examines the several mechanisms that countries may have in the PSIT field and the challenges stakeholders face in this process. Additionally, the article analyzes the state of PSIT in Slovakia, discusses the crisis-response measures implemented during the initial phase of increased demand for PSIT services, and outlines the broader context for PSIT training and its future development.

In Colom & Solum's study, we learn that Norway, with its pioneering Interpreting Act (2021) and well-established training and monitoring mechanisms, serves as a leading example in PSIT. Their article examines interpreter training at Oslo Metropolitan University, focusing on the teaching of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. Drawing on teaching experience, student feedback, and the experiential-dialogic approach, the study explores key challenges in interpreter training: adapting conference interpreting techniques to PSI needs, managing diverse student backgrounds, and addressing the complexities of training interpreters in LLD, in which students often compete in the same market.

Moreover, Bani-Shoraka focus on the reorganization of PSI training at Stockholm University in an attempt to meet PSI needs in relation to LLD. The reorganization is based on the principle of sustainability, which leads to a curriculum that is focused on meeting real needs, guaranteeing a structure for continued PSI-related education, and finding connections between education and stakeholders in society.

Furthermore, Biernacka reflects on the ethical challenges in court interpreting in Poland. The author highlights specific challenges associated with remote interpreting, which are rarely addressed in interpreting codes of ethics, and analyzes the court guidelines for interpreters. Biernacka concludes that remote interpreting ethical principles match those of onsite interpreting, but participants still need to be reminded of the challenges posed by remote interpreting.

Antonini & Ceccoli's study provides an overview of PSI in Italy, paying special attention to non-professional interpreting practices and, more specifically, to Child Language Brokering in education. Through an analysis based on narrative vignette interviews as a method, new trends in the use of CLB in public service settings were revealed.

Delizée & Michaux describe the design of a curriculum for PSI continued education in LLD in French-speaking Belgium. Based on the analysis of the challenges posed by training in LLD, such as the difficulties in accessing the target audience or guaranteeing potential interpreters' access to higher education, a training program was designed in collaboration with PSI providers. The authors provide details on aspects such as the contents, the certification system, and the learning methods, and pinpoint potential future developments.

González Figueroa & Poellabauer focus on the provision of PSI in LLD, and the fact that professional interpreters and translators are rarely available. Despite the difficulties that the contextual everchanging nature of LLD poses to the description of the national contexts, the authors describe the interpreter provision and training structures and an overview of the Austrian reality based on a brief literature review. The authors also highlight other relevant aspects such as the linguistic needs in Austria and the training options available for interpreters of LLD.

Hodáková & Kuklová's article is framed in the study of PSI training initiatives and describes the specific forms of cooperation between three EMT universities from Slovakia, Austria, and the Czech Republic, with the contribution of the EU WG PSIT WG. The authors describe the joint activities in which students engage and evaluate their effectiveness, while they advocate for deeper international cooperation by suggesting further cooperation possibilities.

Horváth & Gabányi explore the provision of PSIT services in Hungarian NGOs, with a focus on the profile of interpreters that work with them. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with six NGOs to inquire about the qualifications, language skills, and responsibilities of their interpreters. Additionally, they explored the textual dimension of the NGOs to obtain information regarding the availability of key documents in foreign languages and to determine who is in charge of producing such multilingual versions. The article not only describes the reality of the provision of PSIT services in the country but also sheds light on areas of improvement of language services.

Molchan & Čeňková analyze the reality of the PSI market in the Czech Republic, with a focus on the qualification requirements for working interpreters. Through a combination of descriptive and empirical methods, the authors describe the profile of interpreters, which are classified into four groups: professional interpreters, non-professional interpreters, intercultural workers and *ad hoc* interpreters. They explore the training offered and certification systems in the Czech Republic, the new challenges stemming from the 2022 migration crisis, and how NGOs and academia shape the profile of the PSI professional.

Similarly, Pokorn & Mikolič Južnič contextualize PSIT in Slovenia, focusing on language needs and the profile of interpreters. Moreover, recent actions that move PSIT towards professionalization are highlighted, including the drafting of a code of ethics and the design of the national vocational qualification for PSI.

In turn, Valero-Garcés describes the reality of communication with migrant population in LLD in Spain. The author uses critical analysis to examine the current situation taking into account the characteristics of the migrant population in the country, the quality of the communication between service providers and migrants, and the role of technology.

In the last article of this section, Vik, Viljanmaa & Segler-Heikkilä describe the reality of PSI in Finland, focusing on the legislation regarding the recognition of languages, the linguistic profile of the country, and PSI training programs. The discussion also focuses on the forms in which the legal right to PSI is implemented in practice. Additionally, a set of interviews with professional interpreters and representatives of associations were conducted to obtain insights into the current trends in PSI in Finland.

## 2.2 Interview with Carmen de las Heras from the Spanish Commission for Refugee Assistance (CEAR)

Carmen de las Heras, an expert in Arabic and Islamic Studies, with extensive experience in T&I, particularly in asylum contexts, has led, since 2007, the Translation and Interpretation Service at CEAR, ensuring linguistic access for refugees and asylum seekers. In the interview, she discusses the lack of a unified EU language policy for migrant languages, the challenges of multilingualism, and the risks of using non-professional interpreters. She emphasizes the need for clear policies, professional training, and fair compensation to guarantee quality language services. De las Heras also highlights the growing presence of LLD in Spain, with CEAR assisting over 43,000 people from 123 nationalities in 2023 alone. She advocates for greater awareness of linguistic diversity, particularly regarding North African and non-European languages, and stresses the importance of ensuring refugees can communicate in their native language, especially in sensitive areas such as mental health care.

## 2.3 Book reviews and obituary

This issue also contains a selection of seven book reviews that provide insights on the intricacies of the relationship between migration and education, intercultural communication, T&I in conflicting areas and sensitive contexts, addressing current concerns, such as the professionalization of translators and interpreters and the ethics of non-professional practice in T&I. On the other hand, it includes an obituary dedicated to Professor Gerd Wotjak. A summary of each follows.

Alarcón-García reviews *Handbook for Interpreters in Asylum Procedures*, geared towards professional interpreters working in international protection. The handbook provides a holistic approach combining theoretical modules on the international protection system with practical modules focused on interpreting competences, techniques, and principles. The book reviews all the techniques used in interpreting, and applying them to asylum procedures. For example, sight translation is approached as a technique used for the verbal translation of the written interview, so that the asylum seeker can verify that what has been written is what he/she said. This makes the book an introductory, yet specialization-oriented resource.

Fernández de Casadevante Mayordomo reviews *Migration and Language Education in Southern Europe: Practices and Challenges*. The book examines educational responses to migration, focusing on linguistic diversity, pedagogical strategies, and policy initiatives. Originating from the 16th International Conference on Applied Linguistics (2017), the volume explores translanguaging, language maintenance, inclusive teaching methodologies, and the adaptation of the CEFR. It also highlights educators' challenges, intercultural mediation, and the need for institutional support, offering valuable insights for researchers, educators, and policymakers in migration and language education.

Flores-Sáenz reviews *La traducción médico-sanitaria: profesión y formación*, which highlights the need for intercultural medical communication professionals. The book provides a detailed analysis of medical translation based on a combination of theoretical principles and practical applications. In general terms, the book points out specific needs, such as the training and the competences required, and describes the contexts in which medical translators act. The book can be a highly valuable resource for T&I students, since it not only describes the characteristics, problems, and resources for translators of healthcare settings but also pinpoints key aspects of medical translation training, providing ideas for essential activities for beginners.

Fuentes-Pérez reviews *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis*, which approaches T&I practices in crises situations, considering regulations and norms, professionalization, communities, and linguistic strategies or solutions. The book aims to insist on the importance of T&I in several settings or situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic but also conflicts such as those in Afghanistan and Syria, or the natural disasters taking place worldwide, such as those in Hong Kong.

Octavio Sevillano reviews the book *Traducción e Interpretación como mediación (inter) cultural: Visiones y perspectivas de futuro*, which explores the role of culture in T&I across fields such as literature, audiovisual media, and public services. Divided into four sections, the book examines cultural competence in different settings, highlighting key challenges like non-verbal communication, retranslation, and intercultural mediation. Through case studies and theoretical reflections, it underlines the need for cultural awareness and adaptation in T&I, providing valuable insights for researchers and professionals.

Villoslada Sánchez reviews *Unstated' Mediation: On the Ethical Aspects of Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation*. The book compiles research from the VI International Conference on NPTI (2024), addressing the ethical, professional, and social implications of informal linguistic mediation. Through nine chapters, the volume examines child interpreters, migrant training for public service interpreting, language accessibility, news translation ethics, machine translation use by non-professionals, audio description, and the role of women in LLD mediation. The book calls for further academic and industry engagement to redefine the boundaries of professionalism, recognize the impact of NPTI in multilingual societies, and establish structured support and ethical guidelines for non-professional linguistic mediators.

Finally, this section includes an obituary dedicated to Professor Gerd Wotjak (1942–2024), written by Tabares Plasencia & Sinner. Wotjak was a leading German Romanist and translation scholar, deeply connected to the University of Leipzig and the Leipzig School of Translation Studies. His work in semantics, phraseology, and contrastive linguistics shaped research in translation and intercultural communication. A key figure in academic collaboration, he helped establish major conferences like the International Congress on Hispanic Linguistics (CILH) and maintained strong ties with Latin America, particularly through his tenure at the University of Havana. As editor of the Studien zur romanischen Sprachwisschaft und interkulturellen Kommunikation series, he influenced generations of scholars. Honored by institutions worldwide, including the Royal Spanish Academy, Wotjak's intellectual and human legacy continues to impact linguistics, translation studies, and cultural mediation.

## 2.4 Research corner and working papers

The research corner updates the reader on the research advances in the field of PSIT and reflects on one of the most thriving research trends, i.e., the conjunction of technological tools and the human factor in T&I practice.

The last section, working papers, includes two articles that focus on PSIT. Merino Cabello analyzes the functioning of interpreting services across diverse public institutions in the Madrid region using field analysis and mixed approaches to identify the specific needs of service users and the applicability of field analysis. This study highlights the critical shortage of interpreting services for migrants, despite their high demand and impact on access to healthcare, legal assistance, and fundamental rights. It underscores the role of social and foreign aid organizations, such as Red Cross, in making linguistic barriers visible. Overall, the study shows that the need for improved interpreting services is consistent across regions, regardless of their economic resources. Additionally, it emphasizes the value of professional

interpreters in ensuring equal access to communication and advocates for expanding research to other regions of Spain to better address linguistic and cultural barriers and reinforce the connection between language support, equality, and social integration.

On the other hand, González González's study examines child language brokering, a form of non-professional T&I through which bilingual children assist their families in adapting to a new linguistic environment. While research on this phenomenon spans various migrant populations, most studies focus on Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S. This study narrows its focus to college students from this background. Using a literature review, the research identifies key hypotheses from existing studies, which are tested through an original qualitative analysis to assess their validity. The findings confirm that bilingual children act as brokers even when their parents speak English, perceive brokering as a chore rather than interpreting, feel they mature earlier, and navigate dual cultural identities. Their role is seen as essential in resolving family matters. However, the study disproves the idea that brokering occurs mainly in non-specialized contexts or that children experience mostly negative feelings while interpreting. Given its sample limitations, the study calls for further research, expanding to other universities in Southern California to strengthen these findings.

Overall, this issue of the journal updates knowledge about the reality of PSIT in different European countries, bringing current challenges, actions and needs regarding training and service provision into the debate, and sheds light on the connections between intercultural communication, translation, interpreting, and technologies in professional practice.

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