

MULTILINGUALISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: UNITY (AND CHALLENGE) IN DIVERSITY

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Abstract

While being part of the European Union's commitment to preserve its linguistic and cultural diversity, the multilingualism of this supranational organization also poses some challenges due to the unprecedented number of the official languages recognized.

After a quick historical overview on the evolution from 4 to 24 languages today, and a short comparison with other international organizations' approach regarding the languages, we will present the current relevant legal provisions, after the Treaty of Lisbon, regulating the linguistic regime of the EU, followed by an overview of the way the EU institutions (for example, the Council, the European Parliament, the Commission, the European Court of Justice) use language in their activities.

The purpose of this paper is to identify the right, pragmatic balance between, on one side, the need to give equal legal status to all the Member States' official languages, as a manifestation of a general principle of equality between the EU citizens, and, on the other side, the 'costs' of this linguistic pluralism, in terms of accuracy and uniformity of interpretation of legal texts and case law, efficiency, time frame, transparency, financial costs, inevitable complications and difficulties.

We will also see how language could be seen and used as a bridge to unity within the EU, through communication between individuals, between the EU institutions and EU citizens, within the EU institutions, rather than a barrier, while at the same time aiming to also preserve an important element, namely the practical efficiency of the functioning of the European process in its entire complexity.

Keywords: language, diversity, multilingualism, EU institutions, EU law, equality principle.

1. Introduction

Motto: "The harmonious co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of the EU's aspiration to be united in diversity, one of the cornerstones of the European project".¹

The multilingualism which is present in and chosen by the European Union is a horizontal aspect of its functioning, having tremendous consequences on a variety of activities, domains, interactions and approaches within this international organization. The commitment to the language diversity is one of the main values of the European Union, and it has influences on many directions: from legislation's adoption to institutional activity, from interaction with the EU citizens to their participation in EU's life, from the need for uniform legal interpretation across the Union to the freedom of movement of products and persons.

These are all reasons for which studying the impact of the multilingualism on EU's complex functioning is not only really important, but also very interesting. We cannot ignore the importance and the consequences of the multilingualism on the efficiency of this integration organization, with its very ambitious goals, and at the same time trying hard to blend the idealistic values with the practicalities of the daily duties and the urge for efficiency in terms of legislation response and ever evolving and challenging economy.

So, our objective is, on one hand, to identify the status quo of the EU legislation on this matter and, more importantly, the reality and practice of using multiple languages in EU institutions and in relation with the citizens, and, on the other hand, the realistic balance between this idealistic value of multilingualism and the costs, the difficulties, the practical approaches and the compromises that can be observed through the Union's activity and legislation.

The paper will start by presenting the history and general aspects of EU's linguistic diversity, and continue by analyzing its regulation on the matter: the treaties, the secondary legislation and some of the most important case law. A very important hint about the reality of putting into practice the multilinguistic approach is by studying how the institutions use different languages in their activities.

After analyzing all the above-mentioned aspects, we will conclude as to the concrete compromise the EU is making towards this very costly and most of the time delaying process of applying the multilinguistic principle, and also market oriented approach the EU uses as means to deal with this linguistic diversity within its borders.

As the references prove, this theme is of much interest for many researchers, and their perspectives on the matter are rather diverse, from technical to ideological. There are many studies, books, articles, working papers, study guides aiming at catching the theory, but also the reality of how a multilinguistic

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¹ European Commission's website: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism/linguistic-diversity_en, accessed 01.03.2018.

international organization succeeds to put together in a functional manner such complex aspects and consequences of a complicated, bold and beautiful, yet challenging choice - language diversity.

Languages define personal identities, but are also part of a shared inheritance. They can serve as a bridge to other people and open access to other countries and cultures, promoting mutual understanding. A successful multilingualism policy can strengthen the life chances of citizens: it may increase their employability, facilitate access to services and rights, and contribute to solidarity through enhanced intercultural dialogue and social cohesion².

According to EU official website, 'every year on the European Day of Languages, 26 September, the EU joins forces with the Council of Europe, the European Centre for Modern Languages, language institutions and citizens around Europe to promote linguistic diversity and language learning through events and happenings'³.

Increasingly, it has become important to the EU to promote and protect those many diverse cultures and encourage its citizens to expand their linguistic knowledge. Travelling across state borders would become easier; businesses would flourish; people would develop a better understanding of the many diverse cultures that surround them in the EU. Multilingualism has the potential to enhance integration within the EU through this heightened appreciation.⁴

2. Short history of multilingualism in the European Union

The motto of this integration international organization, the European Union, is: "united in diversity". Diversity is celebrated, it is where EU's strength is coming from, according to its officials, and it is also its challenge. This motto was adopted in 2000 'to express the common goal of the European project, which is to "achieve unity of purpose through peace and prosperity in Europe, while acknowledging and fostering the wealth of its different cultures, traditions, and languages"; (...) Languages occupy a central element in Europe's diversity'⁵.

As Richard L. Creech says in his book, "In no way is the EU more diverse than in terms of language"⁶ - 28 member states, 500 million citizens, 3 alphabets, and 24

official languages. According to Richard L. Creech, the Union's approach to language must be seen from two perspectives: "the EU's territorial growth, with the concomitant rise in the level of its linguistic and cultural diversity (the so-called '*widening*' of the EU), and its evolution from something that was little more than an engine of economic integration into an organization that embodies a serious commitment to human rights principles (the so-called '*deepening*')"⁷.

In their search to find ways to prevent a new World War to happen, and to 'overcome the destructive potential of their differences, linguistic or otherwise'⁸, the Europeans created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), in 1951, and, in 1957, the Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC), with the clear intent to make the member states so deeply interlinked and interdependent economically, to a such extent that war would no longer be an option for them, as Schuman Declaration proclaims.

The initial founding member states were six, namely: France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands. Consequently, the first 4 official languages (meaning 'equally authentic') of the organizations were: French, German, Italian and Dutch.

With the first enlargement, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark joined in 1973, so English and Danish became too official languages. According to Richard L. Creech, adding English, which was also the language of the USA, the 'superpower', 'was to have profound consequences'⁹. Irish, on the other hand, had a semi-official status, becoming only a Treaty language, but not a secondary legislation language.

In 1981, Greece became part of the Communities, bringing along Greek as an official language (with a difficult alphabet, because it was different from the Roman script).

Then, Portuguese and Spanish were added in 1986; after that, Finnish (the first non-Indo-European language in EU) and Swedish joined the list (for Austria, German was already there) in 1995. In 2004, nine new languages were brought in EU, along with 10 new member states from Eastern Europe and Mediterranean Islands¹⁰. For Cyprus, Greek was already provided from the time Greece joined the EC. Romanian and Bulgarian were also introduced in 2007, and Croatian in 2013.

We can see the great linguistic diversity, and, as author Richard L. Creech states, 'the EU has not defined

² http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism/linguistic-diversity_en

³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism/linguistic-diversity_en

⁴ Shannon Hall, *Protection and Promotion of Multilingualism in the EU*, May 15 2013, available at <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/05/15/protection-and-promotion-of-multilingualism-in-the-eu/>, accessed 26.01.2018, p.1.

⁵ Vicent Climent - Ferrando, Linguistic neoliberalism in the European Union. Politics and policies of the EU's approach to multilingualism, *Journal of Language and Law*, no. 66, 2016, p. 3.

⁶ Richard L. Creech, *Law and Language in the European Union. The Paradox of a Babel 'United in Diversity'*, Europa Law Publishing, Groningen, 2005, p. 3.

⁷ Richard L. Creech, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁸ Richard L. Creech, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁹ Richard L. Creech, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁰ Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Slovak, Slovenian.

any geographical limit on enlargement - beyond the vague requirement that members must be 'European States' - and the room for linguistic expansion is therefore also open-ended¹¹. There is indeed a large number, but, as author Theo van Els, says, 'it is exceeded considerably by the number of languages which have no place in the institutions of the EU'¹², meaning the (around 60-80)¹³ minority or regional languages within the member states (spoken by approx. 40 million people, according to EU's official website).

3. Quick comparison with other international organizations' approach of the matter

The multilingualism of the EU is unprecedented comparing to other major international organizations, such as United Nations, NATO or the Council of Europe. As Athanassiou Phoebus puts it, 'the concept of multilingualism stands out as one of the most prominent symbols of European historical, political, and cultural diversity and has gradually assumed, in addition to its inherently symbolic dimension, the mandatory nature of a legal imperative and the significance of a political necessity'¹⁴.

An analysis regarding the use of language in international courts is made by Olga Lachacz & Rafal Manko, in their study¹⁵. Thus, after the Latin of the Roman Empire dominated the diplomatic relations, it was replaced by French during the 18th century, followed in the 19th century by English, being recognized as second language of the League of Nations and of the Permanent Court of International Justice. The principle of equality and the right to a fair trial were very important in adopting the multilingualism principle in international organizations and their courts.

For example, the International Court of Justice and International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea operate in two working languages (English and French). On the other hand, according to the above-mentioned authors, 'in international criminal courts broader linguistic solutions have been adopted', offering the defendants the choice to receive the documents in their native language, that could be other than the official language of the respective court (International Military Tribunal, International Criminal Court). Finally, according to the authors, the European Court of Human Rights has the rule that the applicants

have the right to communicate in their own language, respecting at the same time the rule providing that English and French are the official languages of the Court.

As we notice, the European Union and its institutions, including the European Court of Justice, are not at all unique in the choice of the linguistic diversity.

However, according to Athanassiou Phoebus¹⁶, 'a key feature that differentiates the EU from an ordinary international organization and justifies its consistent adherence to multilingualism is its distinct legal nature, and in particular, the direct effect of primary and secondary Community legislation. (...) Absent a fully multilingual legal regime, neither the principle of direct effect nor the doctrine of the supremacy of Community law could effectively operate'. So, we agree with the author Athanassiou Phoebus when he says that 'multilingualism is a necessary corollary to the principle of direct effect and, ultimately, to the doctrine of supremacy (...)'

We shall therefore analyze further how the EU regulates multilingualism and then how it deals with its challenges.

4. How the language diversity is regulated within the European Union

The legal base for the multilingualism is represented by the following texts (primary law): art. 2, art. 3(3), 55 TEU; 20, 24, 342, 165 (1) of TFUE; art. 22 and 21 of the Charter of fundamental rights of the EU; Declaration no.16 annexed to the Treaties (which is not obligatory text, but has political value).

There is also secondary law, namely: Regulation no. 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community¹⁷, as amended with each new accession to the EU.

Articles 2 and 3 TEU set the general context for the multilingualism to exist in the EU. We will render their content below.

Article 2 TEU says that 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, *equality*, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which *pluralism*, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.'

¹¹ Richard L. Creech, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹² Theo van Els, *Multilingualism in the European Union*, International Journal of Applied Linguistic, vol. 15, no.3, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005, p. 269.

¹³ Vicent Climent - Ferrando, *op. cit.*, p.3.

¹⁴ Cf. Wagner, Ema, Bech, Svend and Martinez M. Jesus, 2002, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome Publishing, pp.1 to 7, cited by Phoebus Athanassiou, *Working paper: The application of multilingualism in the EU context*, ECB Legal Working Paper series, no.2, 2006, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/154656> (www.econstor.eu), accessed 26.01.2018, p.1.

¹⁵ Olga Lachacz, Rafal Manko, *Multilingualism at the Court of Justice of the European Union: theoretical and practical aspects*, Studies in logic, grammar and rhetoric 34 (47), Versita, 2013, p. 76-78.

¹⁶ Athanassiou Phoebus, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:01958R0001-20130701&from=EN>

Furthermore, article 3 TEU para. 3 provides that 'The Union shall establish an *internal market*. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.'

Article 55 TEU talks about the official languages of the EU, as follows:

1. This Treaty, drawn up in a single original in the Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish languages, the texts in each of these languages being equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the Italian Republic, which will transmit a certified copy to each of the governments of the other signatory States.
2. This Treaty may also be translated into any other languages as determined by Member States among those which, in accordance with their constitutional order, enjoy official status in all or part of their territory. A certified copy of such translations shall be provided by the Member States concerned to be deposited in the archives of the Council.'

Important relevant provisions we can also find in the Charter, namely article 21 - Non-discrimination:

1. Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, *language*, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.
2. Within the scope of application of the Treaty establishing the European Community and of the Treaty on European Union, and without prejudice to the special provisions of those Treaties, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited.', and article 22 - Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity: 'The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.'

Regarding the use of languages by the European citizens, article 20 TFEU provides: '(d) the right to petition the European Parliament, to apply to the European Ombudsman, and to address the institutions and advisory bodies of the Union in any of the Treaty languages and to obtain a reply in the same language.'; article 24 TFEU: 'Every citizen of the Union may write to any of the institutions or bodies referred to in this Article or in Article 13 of the Treaty on European Union in one of the languages mentioned in Article 55(1) of the Treaty on European Union and have an answer in the same language.'

An important provision regarding the linguistic diversity is to be found in article 165 TFEU, which

states that: '1. The Union shall contribute to the development of *quality education* by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their *cultural and linguistic diversity* (...). 2. Union action shall be aimed at:

developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the *languages* of the Member States (...).'

Article 342 TFEU provides that 'The *rules governing the languages of the institutions* of the Union shall, without prejudice to the provisions contained in the Statute of the Court of Justice of the European Union, be determined by the Council, acting unanimously by means of regulations.' This provision is the basis for the Council Regulation on languages, updated after the last EU enlargement in 2013, saying that:

Article 1

The official languages and the working languages of the institutions of the Union shall be Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish.

Article 2

Documents which a Member State or a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State sends to institutions of the Community may be drafted in any one of the official languages selected by the sender. The reply shall be drafted in the same language.

Article 3

Documents which an institution of the Community sends to a Member State or to a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State shall be drafted in the language of such State.

Article 4

Regulations and other documents of general application shall be drafted in the official languages.

Article 5

The Official Journal of the European Union shall be published in the official languages.

Article 6

The institutions of the Community may stipulate in their rules of procedure which of the languages are to be used in specific cases.

Article 7

The languages to be used in the proceedings of the Court of Justice shall be laid down in its rules of procedure.

Article 8

If a Member State has more than one official language, the language to be used shall, at the request of such State, be governed by the general rules of its law.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.'

The last of the relevant acts on the use of languages in the EU we are going to mention is Declaration no. 16 on Article 55(2) of the Treaty on European Union, a political act, annexed to the Treaties. The Declaration says:

'The Conference considers that the possibility of producing translations of the Treaties in the languages mentioned in Article 55(2) contributes to fulfilling the objective of respecting the Union's *rich cultural and linguistic diversity* as set forth in the fourth subparagraph of Article 3(3). In this context, the Conference confirms the attachment of the Union to the *cultural diversity* of Europe and the special attention it will continue to pay to these and other *languages*. (...)'

If we are to synthesize the above-mentioned provisions, we could say that, basically¹⁸, 'the EU's multilingualism policy has two facets:

- striving to protect Europe's rich linguistic diversity, and
- promoting language learning.'

There are currently 24 official languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish and Swedish.

As EU citizens, we have the right to use any of these languages in correspondence with the EU institutions, which have to reply in the same language. EU regulations and other legislative texts are published in all official languages except Irish (only regulations adopted by both the EU Council and the European Parliament are currently translated into Irish).

One of the EU's multilingualism goals is for every European to speak 2 languages in addition to their mother tongue. The best way to achieve this would be to introduce children to 2 foreign languages from an early age. Evidence suggests this may speed up language learning - and boost mother tongue skills too.'

The EU supports language learning, according to Commission's website, because¹⁹:

- better language skills enable more people to study and/or work abroad, and improve their job prospects;
- speaking other languages helps people from different cultures understand one another - essential in a multilingual, multicultural Europe;
- to trade effectively across Europe, businesses need multilingual staff;
- the language industry – translation and interpretation, language teaching, language technologies, etc. – is among the fastest growing areas of the economy.

Also, as the Commission says, EU citizens should be able to get information about what the EU is doing, have access to EU law in a language they can understand, be able to participate in the law-making

process of the EU, because Europeans have a right to know what is being done in their name. They must also be able to play an active part without having to learn other languages. Using as many national languages as possible makes the EU and its institutions more open and effective.

If we were to comment on the Regulation of languages in the EU, we could cite author Athanassiou Phoebus²⁰ with whom we agree, and who mentions the acknowledgement by the Regulation of *national* languages only, thereby excluding from its scope of application *regional* languages, and also not clearly distinguishing between *official* languages, and the *working* ones. At the same time, the author notices the fact that only the *written* form of the use of the languages are considered (*translation*), and there is no mention about their utilization in *verbal* communication, in *interpreting*.

5. The EU institutional practice regarding the multilingualism (official vs. working language; equal vs. ranked)

First, we have to mention that the above-mentioned Regulation allows the institutions a certain degree of freedom in selecting their language regime (working languages), provided that it is explained in their internal rules regulation.

The non-discrimination rule on the basis of language (enshrined in the Charter, art. 21) was considered in the *Kik v. OHIM* case (T-120/99, C-361/01 P) by the ECJ as not being a general principle to which no limitation is allowed; consequently, there is no absolute principle of equality of languages, so the institutions are free to establish which official languages they use as they see fit, in specific cases. Nevertheless, the limitations must be objective, appropriate and proportionate, limited and justified, with no unjustified differences of treatment, and not undermining the essence of linguistic diversity (for these concepts, the Opinion of Advocated General Maduro, in case C-160/03, *Spain v. Eurojust*, is relevant).

Therefore, for practical reasons, the institutions choose not to adapt the full multilingualism, but to use instead some working languages. We also notice there is also ranking as regards which official languages are used as working one within the institutions, which may in fact contradict the principle of equality. The preoccupation arises as to find the right balance between linguistic diversity and efficiency.

We are going to present below the choice of some institutions for the use of languages in their activities and in relation with the EU citizens.

¹⁸ https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/multilingualism_en, accessed 28 February 2018.

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/service-standards-and-principles/use-languages_en, accessed 28 February 2018.

²⁰ Athanassiou Phoebus, *op. cit.*, p.10.

5.1. Multilingualism in the European Parliament²¹

In the European Parliament, all official languages are equally important: all parliamentary documents are published in all the official languages of the European Union (EU) and all Members of the European Parliament (MEP) have the right to speak in the official language of their choice. It also ensures everyone is able to follow and access the Parliament's work.

The European Parliament differs from the other EU institutions in its obligation to ensure the highest possible degree of multilingualism. Every European citizen has the right to stand for election to the European Parliament. It would be unreasonable to require MEPs to have a perfect command of one of the more frequently used languages, such as French or English. The right of each Member to read and write parliamentary documents, follow debates and speak in his or her own language is expressly recognized in Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

All EU citizens must be able to read legislation affecting them in the language of their own country. As a co-legislator, the European Parliament also has a duty to ensure that the linguistic quality of all laws it adopts is flawless in all official languages.

Europeans are entitled to follow the Parliament's work, ask questions and receive replies in their own language, under European legislation²².

The 24 official languages make a total of 552 possible combinations, since each language can be translated into 23 others. In order to meet this challenge, the European Parliament has set up highly efficient interpreting, translation and legal text verification services. Very strict rules have been put in place to ensure that these services function smoothly and that the costs remain reasonable.

The legislation adopted by the European Parliament affects over 500 million people in 28 countries and 24 official languages: it must be identical and as clear as possible in all the languages. Verifying the linguistic and legislative quality of the texts is the job of Parliament's lawyer-linguists.

As a conclusion, we can surely notice the strong commitment of the Parliament for multilingualism, as a *sine qua non* condition for legitimacy and democracy, as the European Parliament is the only EU institution with democratic legitimacy, being elected directly by the European citizens.

5.2. Multilingualism in the Council

First we must say that in the Council the members represent the interests of the member states (and not the general interest of the EU, as the Commission must do). After the Treaty of Lisbon, the Council is part of the

decision making, together with the Parliament adopting the EU legislation on equal footing.

In this context, it is normal that the full multilingualism principle is adopted by this institution. So the draft legislation must be translated in all the official languages of the EU.

5.3. Multilingualism in the Commission

Studying the way the activities of the Commission are carried, it is obvious that this institution uses, *de facto*, only three working languages: English, French, and sometimes German, too. The reason for this situation is the imperatives for speed and efficiency²³.

5.4. Multilingualism in European Court of Justice (ECJ)

In order to provide an equal and real access to justice, the ECJ respects the principle of linguistic equality, in order to ensure the effective protection of the rights of citizens under the EU law. Therefore, the *language of the case* may be any of the 24 official languages, fact usually decided by the applicant.

At the same time, internally, the ECJ deliberates in French, and also the draft judgment is in French, and then translated into the other official languages. The choice for French has also historical reasons, but also provides for the crucial aspect of legal certainty when deliberating and drafting the judgment, given the paramount importance of uniformity of interpretation and then application of EU law by all its addresses within this integration and supranational organization.

6. The delicate balance between different factors of multilingualism

Studying the EU treaties, the legislation, the case law and also the institutional practical approach regarding multilingualism, we cannot help noticing the different factors that must be taken into consideration while acknowledging the EU's commitment towards the linguistic diversity as a political value: the equality principle applied to EU official languages vs. ranking of the working languages, the market/economic oriented approach to multilingualism, and the various types of costs of a multilingual European Union.

Translation and interpretation within this organization are a 'mammoth task', each institution having its own translation department, besides a unique organism for all the institutions - the Joint Interpreting and Conference Center²⁴.

According to European Commission, multilingualism costs each European citizen only two euros per year, comparing this price with that of a cup

²¹ Source for this subtitle: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00013/Multilingualism>, accessed on 27.02.2018.

²² Rules of Procedure of the EP: Rule 158 relating to multilingualism; The EP Code of Conduct on Multilingualism.

²³ Athanassiou Phoebus, *op. cit.*, p.20.

²⁴ Richard L. Creech, *op. cit.*, p.26.

of coffee. At the same time, in order to cut the costs, a lot of materials remained un-translated or only summarized. Also, the institutions use only a limited number of working languages to make the process more speedy and efficient, trading off the equality principle to the need of productivity.

Although the financial costs do not seem high, there is another type of 'costs' that are pretty important in regard to translation of written texts: the institutional inefficiencies, the delays, the translation errors, the lost productivity, the differences between the translated texts which are hard to avoid, time pressure, inconsistencies, the risks for uniform interpretation of EU legislation across the member states. At the same time, in order to have really accurate translations, according to author Richard L. Creech, 'a good legal translator must therefore also be an expert in comparative law'. Actually, in order to find out the real intent and aim of the legislator it is necessary to read the text in at least 2-3 other official languages; even the ECJ recommends to the national judges to do this compared reading before considering addressing a preliminary question to the Court, in order to get more clarification on the text²⁵.

As regards the interpreting, the situation is even more complicated, as, besides meeting lasting a long time and becoming tiring, a lot of the information and the sometimes crucial non-verbal message are lost, including the jokes, for example, which are at times skipped, or heard later by the persons who listen to the interpreter and not the speaker. So the listener is not only disconnected by the speaker, but also cannot fully grasp the message in its complexity, verbal and non-verbal.

According to Richard L. Creech, 'the EU's programs do not acknowledge the economic and political integration is in fact inherently antagonistic to linguistic diversity'.²⁶ Actually, the working languages are 2 + 1, and it is easy to notice that out of these three, English has become a true lingua franca²⁷. As Bruno de Witte says²⁸, 'from the point of view of market integration, linguistic diversity is not so much a cultural asset, as an obstacle to efficient communication.' Richard L. Creech concludes, consequently, that 'the

EU's approach to language use has up to now been largely an economic affair²⁹.

As Vicent Climent - Ferrando³⁰ puts it, 'while the idea of promotion, protection and respect of linguistic diversity remains in the current EU *political rhetoric* on languages, the *actual policies* adopt a market-oriented approach, which considers languages as mere commodities for economic growth, mobility and jobs'. Indeed, as the above-mentioned author proves in his paper, we can also see 'the functional importance of language skills to increase competitiveness, reinvigorate the economy and to boost people's employability and mobility through (majority) language learning³¹.

It results a kind of utilitarian and market-oriented approach to multilingualism in the European Union, which puts in a different perspective the idealistic political principles of linguistic diversity and equality of the EU's official languages, which represents the 'sentimental' dimension, associated, as Vicent Climent - Ferrando says, with 'notions of *culture, identity, respect, intercultural dialogue and EU values*, but does not translate into concrete policy initiatives³².

7. Conclusions

The European Union has always seen its great diversity of cultures and languages as an asset. Firmly rooted in the European treaties, multilingualism is the reflection of this cultural and linguistic diversity. It also makes the European institutions more accessible and transparent for all citizens of the Union, which is essential for the success of the EU's democratic system³³.

The European Union's aspiration to be united in diversity underpins the whole European project. The harmonious co-existence of many languages in Europe embodies this. Languages can build bridges between people, giving us access to other countries and cultures, and enabling us to understand each other better. Foreign language skills play an increasingly important role in making young people more employable and equipping them for working abroad. They are also a factor in competitiveness; poor language skills cause many companies to lose contracts and hamper workers

²⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2016:439:FULL>

²⁶ Richard L. Creech, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²⁷ Lingua franca = any language that is used by different speakers to communicate when they do not share a common language/whose native languages are different - www.oxforddictionaries.com. In the past we had Latin and Greek, and now English. Other linguas francas are: Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, in different continents and regions of the world.

"I speak Spanish with God, Italian with women, French to men, and German to my horse" (Emperor Charles V), cited by Ineta Dabasinskiene, Laura Cubajevaitė, *Multilingualism in Europe - Study Guide. A resource Book for Students*, Kaunas, Vytautas Magnus University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Lithuanian Languages, 2013, pg. 12.

²⁸ Bruno de Witte, *Surviving in Babel? Language rights and European integration*, in 'The protection of minorities and human rights', Y. Dinstejn & M. Tabory eds., 1992, p. 277, 295, cited by Richard L. Creech., *op. cit.*, p.103.

²⁹ Richard L. Creech., *op. cit.*, p.157.

³⁰ Vicent Climent - Ferrando, *op. cit.*, p.1.

³¹ Vicent Climent - Ferrando, *op. cit.*, p.6.

³² Vicent Climent - Ferrando, *op. cit.*, p.10.

³³ Source for this subtitle: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00013/Multilingualism>, accessed on 27.02.2018.

who might want to seek employment in countries other than their own³⁴.

The objective set up in Lisbon 2000 was for the EU to become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, with good growth, employment and social cohesion. Of course, language, meaning effective communication, plays an important role with regard to internal market, professional mobility, skills improvement etc. Languages, therefore, is a fundamental asset in free movement of goods, labour, capitals, services, facilitating, at the same time, opportunities and fostering competitiveness.

The EU's remarkable linguistic pluralism and its respect for linguistic diversity are intimately related to its unique nature as a sui generis, treaty - based organization bringing together [28] European countries with distinct, yet closely linked cultural and historical traditions'. As the author affirms, examining the language regime reveals that multilingualism is not an absolute imperative, but rather a value that may need to be balanced against other equally important considerations, like speed, efficiency, which are objective and operational needs³⁵.

Indeed, the multilingualism, the linguistic diversity, the equality of all official languages, all these are important, idealistic values, with which the EU resonates deeply as concepts. At the same time, we cannot ignore or forget that this is an economic integration organization, with ambitious goals, an internal market to manage, in a nutshell, a very complex

and demanding project that needs to be successful for everyone involved. That is why concepts as efficiency, speediness, practicality must also be considered and addressed. There is also the issue of the EU legislation, with its special characteristics: direct effect and applicability, primacy, which makes it even more complicated in terms of uniform interpretation and application of EU law by the member state, uniformity being an essential component of integration.

The success on all levels of this unique integration organization will eventually depend on the way it manages to balance all these factors, most of them even contradictory, in a way that is smart and ingenious, similar in approach with Jean Monnet's courageous and ingenious idea in 1950.

The languages, as expression of national identity and cultural diversity, can therefore be used as a link or bridge between people, rather than an obstacle to the market integration. Let's not forget that the EU was, is and should be first of all about its peoples, and not mere economics, and let's not forget the words of this *primus inter pares* among Europe's founding fathers, this man of great beginnings, Jean Monnet, who said: 'Nous ne coalisons pas des États, nous unissons des hommes.' So, we consider that it is in our mission today, as inheritance, to try to continuously re-connect with this initial spirit, which ignited the European Communities and keep it alive, even in the multilingualism approach, through all difficulties, ambitious economic objectives and competitiveness at all levels.

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³⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism_en

³⁵ Athanassiou Phoebus, *op. cit.*, p.23.