

The EUDA's approach to multilingualism





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Introduction: Why we need multilingualism

The European Union's motto 'united in diversity' signifies the essential contribution different languages and cultures bring to the European project. Firmly rooted in the EU treaties, multilingualism and translation ensure that the work of the European institutions and bodies is accessible to all citizens of the Union and beyond. This is essential for the success of the EU's democratic process.

As an EU agency, communicating with our customers in their native languages is vital for the EUDA. Our approach to multilingualism stems from many years of experience, while evolving naturally as new techniques to enhance the translation process have emerged and customer needs and expectations have changed. Providing content in national languages helps to ensure that we provide our customers with the resources and information they need in a language they understand. It is essential that, as we apply our digital-first approach to communication, efforts are made to translate and culturally adapt our outputs and services, providing these in formats that are accessible to the broadest audiences.

This multilingual approach supports the implementation of the [EUDA's Communication Strategy](#), published in 2025 following Management Board approval. The Strategy supports the delivery of our mandate, purpose, values, vision and goals by:

- contributing to the EU's preparedness on drugs to save lives by acting today and anticipating tomorrow;
- positioning the EUDA as the go-to agency for drug-related issues;
- building and maintaining the EUDA's reputation by enhancing its visibility and customer engagement;
- ensuring that high-quality and trustworthy information on the drug situation is easily available, and;
- optimising the communication channel portfolio for effective outreach.

Our approach to multilingualism as part of our portfolio of products and services reflects the core principles set in the Strategy.

Guiding principles

Customers first!

For clarity, we refer to our audiences as customers. This includes all stakeholders, partners and members of our customer groups. We place multilingualism at the heart of our work, applying the following principles (when considering the needs of our customers):

- We create content on scientific themes that uses **clear language** that speaks directly to our customers. We aim to draft all content with translation in mind.
- We explore and apply **innovations** in the translation field to provide culturally adapted content.
- We embrace **digital transformation** and the opportunities it presents for timely, targeted and effective translations.
- We prioritise **accessibility** through language.



- We define various **levels of translation quality** adapted to purpose, according to customer needs and available funds.

The world of communication, and of translation and multilingual techniques, is in constant change. The technologies available today are sophisticated and diverse. Our innovation roadmap for translation (including AI, innovations in machine translation, and quality automation) aligns with the agency's strategic ambitions as part of its digital transformation. Similarly, we must remain responsive to customer expectations as they evolve.

Customer groups

At the EUDA we serve and interact with many customers. We have organised them into seven groups, according to the interests they share (selected examples are given in brackets):

- **Policymakers** (in EU institutions and EU Member States; third countries where we have signed working arrangements; partners in international cooperation projects)
- **Field actors** (professionals and practitioners working in the drugs field, including in healthcare and law enforcement, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations)
- **Academics** (scientific community, researchers, higher education professionals, students)
- **Partners and co-creators** (Reitox national focal points, EU agencies in the Justice and Home Affairs portfolio and other EU agencies with common interests, UN organisations and agencies and non-governmental international organisations and associations working in the drugs field)
- **People** (individuals and communities, with a focus on young people, families, people who use drugs or have used drugs)
- **EUDA staff and community** (EUDA colleagues, members of our community and people interested in joining our agency)
- **Communicators** (media, journalists, press agencies, influencers).

When designing products and services we analyse what triggers each customer group to seek information and guidance from the EUDA. At the same time, we assess their needs in terms of translated content and the quality level for each translated output or service. This will be decided upon through internal mechanisms, based on the needs analysis, in cooperation with colleagues in the Communication unit and project teams.

Focus on: EUDA national focal points

Our network of national focal points, based in each Member State, Norway and Türkiye, and at the European Commission, is a key partner in our communication ecosystem. The focal points are an important stakeholder group for our products and services and play a critical role in helping us reach our customers on the ground in all Member States, and beyond. They are our ambassadors, language and culture experts, co-creators, content localisers, multipliers, amplifiers and listeners. At the same time, the national focal points have their own national agendas, which we support by providing translations, when needed. We rely on our focal point colleagues as language and terminology guardians.



The translation process

Languages

Although our main language for communication within the agency is English, as an EU agency serving EU citizens, we communicate in the 24 EU official languages – 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 – plus Norwegian and Turkish. Through our international work, we also translate into and out of Arabic, Georgian, Russian, and other non-EU languages.

Translation partners and services

The EUDA is a member of the Management Board of the Translation Centre of the European Bodies (CdT) and plays an active role in shaping EU translation policy and initiatives. Our long-standing cooperation means we can stay at the forefront of developments in this area. As the Translation Centre has expanded its services in response to new trends and technologies, we have also been able to broaden the range of translations we offer to our customers.

Translation: this involves converting the meaning of a text from the source language into the target language, ensuring it follows the target language's grammar and meets the translation project's requirements. Before translation, documents are processed to identify repeated content, allowing reuse from translation memories, including agreed terminology, and use of machine translation. The pre-translated texts are post-edited by linguists to ensure they match the quality of traditional translation methods.

Automatic translation: a fully automated service using the Translation Centre's translation memories and custom machine translation engines, with no translator review or document preparation. Requests are processed instantly, with processing time depending on the size of the document or text. This service is useful for quickly accessing and understanding content published in a language the reader does not know.

Light post-editing: this improves machine translation output for non-publication use, focusing on conveying essential meaning. Linguists make manual corrections to ensure the text is clear, with no key omissions or added errors. This service is particularly suitable whenever the highest level of quality of the final text is not required.

Along with regular translation we also work on the **cultural adaptation** of our outputs, particularly those intended for customers who work in the field. This includes not only translating but also adapting content to new national or regional realities with experts from the countries or regions concerned. We estimate that this approach may develop in the coming years as machine translation becomes more widespread and the need for more tailored content increases.

We also work in partnership with other EU agencies (to share best practice) and EU and international bodies active in the field of translation and multilingualism to benefit from the broader range of initiatives and tools being developed in this field.

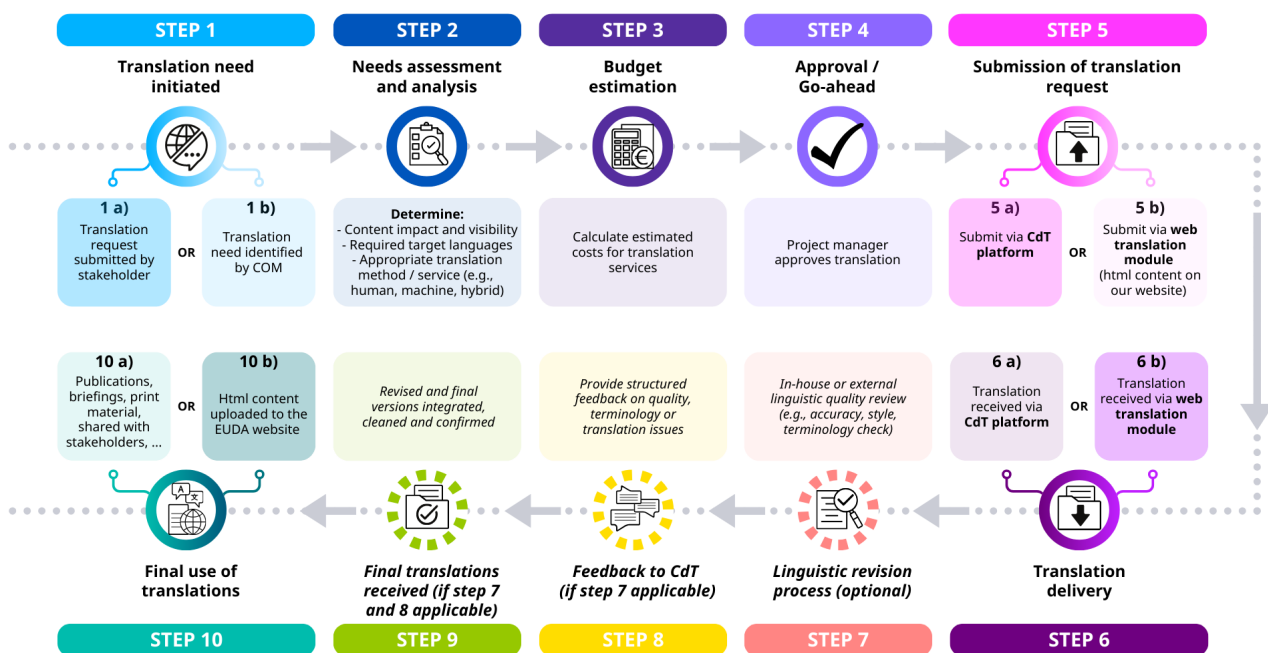


Resource planning and prioritisation

Translation requests are handled by the Communication unit (COM), which is the contact point between the agency and the Translation Centre. We work with the constraint of matching the funds we have available for translation with identified customer needs. Requests from staff or external partners (e.g. national focal points) stating the source and target languages and deadline (if applicable) are evaluated by COM to estimate the cost of each job, along with the indicative delivery deadline. Requests from colleagues are always assessed to ensure cost-effectiveness and relevance. Special attention is paid to assessing urgent or high-impact content requests, as these come at a higher cost. COM also independently assesses translation needs according to customer needs and content we already have available.

Visualising the translation process

The following graphic illustrates the process we follow when we receive a translation request. Step 2 involves determining the translation quality required for any content. Quality control features in Steps 7 to 9 apply depending on the translation sought (more about this in the next section).



Quality assurance

As the graphic shows, providing feedback to the Translation Centre on its translations is central to the translation process and contributes to improving translation quality. Our quality assurance involves various processes and actors.



Review process by focal points and staff

Linguistic checks are performed by our focal points or in-house colleagues (in track changes, with comments on terminology and quality). These changes also feed translation memories, which are vital for machine translations.

Feedback mechanisms

The Translation Centre uses feedback forms to gather information on translation quality. Feedback is provided by sending corrected version requests allowing clients to express their satisfaction and comment on any errors of adaptations needed to translated texts, in addition to uploaded corrected files. This feedback also feeds into translation memories.

Terminology

Started in 2008, our ‘preferred usage’ glossary project has resulted in the creation of standard, approved drug-related terms and definitions in all EUDA working languages. This has been implemented in cooperation with the national focal points and the Translation Centre. Over 200 terms and definitions on concepts central to our work have been translated and then validated by the focal points. These are now included in the [IATE EU terminology database](#). There is a widget on our website that provides direct access to our terminology in IATE. Standardising terminology is key to saving time and money when undertaking traditional translations and adds to the quality of machine translations. Through the activities carried out within international cooperation projects managed by the agency we now also have the glossary terms and definitions available in Arabic, Georgian and Russian.

Texts fit for translation: supporting our colleagues

A translation can only be as good as the source language text and it is important to create quality at the source. As part of our customer-first approach to communication, our Communication Strategy includes a guiding principle that we practice ‘the highest level of science communication, using clear language that speaks directly to our audiences’. One initiative to support clear writing in English is an online webinar we prepared in collaboration with the Translation Centre. This, along with the Translation Centre’s guides on writing for regular and machine translation, supports staff when drafting content that may need translation. Our colleagues are also encouraged to take part in courses on writing plain English. These are available on the EU Learn training platform.

Measuring success

The added value of translated content, which depends on both internal (resource-based) and external (contextual) factors, must be measured.

As part of our agency-wide assessment processes, the percentage of engagements with new non-English content, compared with engagements on English content, can help us assess the reach of our translated materials. We can also examine downloads and page visits of outputs we have already translated (such as the *European Drug Report*) as well reports with content that focus on specific country situations, to evaluate the added value of providing these translations. We can also use interactive elements on our website to gather immediate feedback from our customers, as well as sporadic surveys.



As defined in our Communication Strategy, any work to analyse the success of this part of our communication activities should be based on both qualitative and quantitative information. As presented under 'Customer groups' above, at the end of each year we will also review the translated content produced per customer group to assess if we are meeting our targets.

Encouraging and supporting translation

To ensure consistency, efficiency and terminology accuracy across all EUDA communications, as well as to provide the necessary resources to entities interested in translating the EUDA content, a multilingual toolkit will be created on the EUDA website.

It will contain the following elements gathered in one place making it easier to locate and use:

- **Multilingual approach** — setting the framework and basis for multilingual work.
- **Translation guidelines** — procedures and rules for third parties wanting to translate EUDA content.
- **Glossary/terminology database** — official terms, definitions, with source validation.
- **Logos and visual identity in multiple languages** — correct naming of the agency in each official language, file formats (SVG, PNG, etc.), usage rules.
- **Disclaimers and legal templates** — copyright, translation disclaimers, name change notices, adaptation acknowledgements.