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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	5740/20
Subject:	Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts on Multilingualism and Translation - <i>Final mandate</i>

Delegations will find attached the mandate for the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts on Multilingualism and Translation, as finalised further to the discussions at the Cultural Affairs Committee meeting on 18 February.

Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts on

Multilingualism and Translation

set up under Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022

Priority C. An ecosystem supporting artists, cultural and creative professionals and European content

- mandate -

Rationale:

1. The Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 provides for the creation of an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of Member States' experts focussing on Multilingualism and Translation, considering that “in a multilingual environment, translation is key to enabling broader access to European content”.
2. Translation and translators play a key role in the circulation of European works especially in the book sector but also other sectors, such as performing arts (over-titling), film (subtitling and dubbing), music (lyrics translation) or museums and exhibitions. Translation contributes to social inclusion and European integration by facilitating access for non-native speakers to works from other countries.
3. The role of translators is not limited to translating texts. In the book sector, for instance, translators very often act as ambassadors and promoters to publishers of books to be translated or theatre plays to be adapted. This is especially true for texts written in languages which are less widely spoken in Europe (“lesser-used languages”), and which, in the absence of an English translation, are not readily accessible to international publishers. After translation, translators can also contribute to the promotion of the translated work to a large audience.

4. The creative sectors need therefore to have access to professional translators with solid linguistic and cultural competences in literary translation. The higher education system has an important role to play in the initial training of literary translators and the diversification of languages especially for lesser-used languages. Besides linguistic competences translators should develop the ability to interact with each step of the value chain: such as – for the book sector - authors, book agencies and other book-related public bodies, publishers, literary agents or book fairs etc. as well as writers and dramaturges, theatre directors, critics, musicologists, etc. in the performing arts sector.
5. Fair remuneration and good contractual relationships with the clients (publishers) are also important aspects of the professionalisation of the sector.
6. Where relevant, translators also need to understand the technological specificities of the different supports (i.e. dubbing, subtitling, over-titling and any other digital means) to serve fully the needs of the different sectors. Recent technological changes such as automated translation and artificial intelligence are already having an impact on the translation sector. For the creative sector, it is necessary to assess to what extent those evolutions can be applicable to literary translation and how translators could use them in the future.
7. Translating for the creative sector is a niche market, especially concerning the translation from and to lesser-used languages. Strong linguistic, cultural, technological and professional competences are necessary conditions for the sustainability of the translation sector but not enough to ensure its growth. The professionalisation of the sector, the availability of translators covering a wide diversity of languages and the emergence of new translators depend primarily on the level and the diversity of the demand from the various creative sectors.

8. The publishing and book sector in particular remains of particular importance for translators considering the volume of translations and the special role translators can play in promoting books before and after translation. The translation sector can therefore play its full role and contribute to multilingualism and cultural diversity only if, in turn, the whole book value chain (authors, book fairs, literary agents, publishers, distributors, libraries and booksellers) becomes more active in the circulation of works. Public policies including financial support at EU and national level can play a key role in that regard.

Role of the OMC group

9. In order to encourage multilingualism and translation and to promote better circulation of European works, the OMC Group will discuss how EU and national support schemes and public funding may support the book and publishing sector at each step of the value chain, from the original author to readers across borders, in Europe and beyond with a special focus on translation from and to lesser-used languages. The OMC Group will discuss in particular how the translation sector should be reinforced to cover the needs of the book and publishing sector but also other cultural and creative sectors (visual and performing arts, the audiovisual sector and the music sector) as well as the general public/audience in order to contribute to the circulation of cultural works. The OMC Group will recommend concrete measures, which may be implemented under the 2021-2027 Creative Europe programme.
10. Experts will exchange on national policies and best practices in international book promotion; training and professionalisation of literary translators; and funding mechanisms to support translation, publication, distribution and promotion of European books and other works within the EU and beyond. Discussions will include lessons learnt from the book and publishing sector, as well as other cultural sectors such as visual and performing arts, audiovisual and music sectors, in order to build synergies, when possible.

11. The OMC Group should primarily be composed of experts from the book and/or translation sector. The group may decide to involve external experts, professional bodies and civil society with specific expertise in technological aspects (e.g. automated translation) or experience in translating for other sectors (performing arts or audiovisual).
12. Based on the findings resulting from the activities mentioned above, the OMC Group will prepare a report providing at least the following chapters: the role of public policies and funding schemes at national and European level in helping 1) the circulation of translated books and 2) the development of a vibrant translation sector able to cover all cultural sectors. It should include an analysis of best practices as well as recommendations addressed to the relevant public entities, and also to professionals and other concerned stakeholders. The OMC group is expected to start its work in the spring 2020 and a mid-term presentation to the Cultural Affairs Committee could be envisaged early 2021. The final report, to be examined in the second half 2021, could serve as an input for the Presidency conference in the first half of 2022.

Topic:

Multilingualism and translation

Working methods:

OMC group followed by a Presidency conference

Rationale:

In a multilingual environment, translation is key to enabling broader access to European content. To build upon Europe's linguistic diversity as an asset and to promote better circulation of European works, existing support mechanisms for translation at European and national level will be assessed. As digitalisation has a big impact on linguistic diversity and on the translation professions, their needs in this area will be addressed as well.

Target outputs:

Experts will exchange best practices on supporting translation in the book and publishing sector, as well as in other cultural and creative sectors, and recommend concrete measures under the Creative Europe Programme to promote linguistic diversity and the circulation of works.

