

Program and Budget Committee

Twenty-First Session
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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WIPO LANGUAGE POLICY

prepared by the Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. The Assemblies of Member States of WIPO considered the Policy on Languages at WIPO in their 2010 and 2011 Sessions. After consideration of the issues involved, the Assemblies approved the recommendation of the Program and Budget Committee in respect of document WO/PBC/18/15, recorded in document A/49/16, as follows:

“28. Based on the analysis contained in this document, the Secretariat submits for the consideration of Member States the following proposals:

(a) The language coverage for documentation for meetings of the WIPO Main Bodies, Committees and Working Groups, as well as for core and new publications, shall be extended to the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) in a phased manner that commenced in 2011 (as detailed in Section II above) and subject to approval of the resource requirements proposed in the draft 2012/2013 Program and Budget. The cost of language coverage for documentation for Working Groups will be assessed in the light of experience gained in 2012/2013 and in the context of the 2014/2015 Program and Budget.

(b) The translation requirements for the WIPO web site shall be examined in more depth in parallel with the restructuring of the said web site.”

2. While considering the policy, Member States had recognized that more concise working documents would facilitate deliberations, and therefore approved the proposal of the Secretariat to further reduce the average length of the working documents. Member States approved the policy on the understanding that such a reduction would not be a statutory requirement but an indication of principle, and that it would not apply to documents submitted to the Secretariat by Member States. In respect of exceptionally voluminous documents and support papers (studies, surveys) commissioned by certain Committees, Member States further noted that these would be made available only in the original languages with a summary to be prepared by the Secretariat in all six languages, with the proviso that if a Member State or group of Member States were to express specific interest in one of such documents, the Secretariat would translate its full text in the required language.

IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

3. Following the initial extension of six-language coverage to documentation for the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) and the Standing Committee on the Law of Trademarks (SCT) in 2011, the Secretariat extended the same coverage to the remaining WIPO Committees from January 2012. The six-language coverage was also extended to all WIPO Main Bodies at the same time, except for the PCT Union Assembly and the Coordination Committee for which the coverage was extended in 2013.

4. It was expected that with this extended coverage the workload of language services would increase by 18 per cent, in terms of number of pages translated. To deal with this enhanced work, the Secretariat had adopted a twofold approach in a cost-effective and quality conscious manner. First it recognized that a core team of expert revisers and translators would be available, as staff members, for each language service of the Organization to manage the translation work, ensure quality control, establish work priorities, deliver translation of critical documents and respond to the urgent and immediate needs of ongoing meetings. Second, it aimed to increase the percentage of outsourced translation work to achieve greater cost effectiveness, while ensuring strict criteria to maintain work quality.

5. Under the business model adopted, the Secretariat proposed to increase the volume of outsourced translation work from 30 per cent in 2008/2009 to around 45 per cent in 2012/2013, for which the network of external translators would be expanded. In order to maintain appropriate quality standards, the concept of 'quality at source' was applied by ensuring the recruitment of competent translators. Furthermore, to enhance translation quality, information technology related tools were introduced, and the staff trained on the use of the new systems.

6. In an attempt to identify agencies in all regions, with the potential for delivering translation services to the required WIPO standards, an international Call for Expression of Interest for the provision of translation services was published last year, and out of some 72 companies worldwide which expressed their interest, two were retained and have entered into contract with WIPO, as of January 2013. In the light of the lessons learned from the process, another international Call for Expression has been issued with a view to engaging more companies.

7. The restructuring and redesign of the WIPO website is ongoing, with an expected launch date late in the third quarter of 2013. A major part of the restructuring involves the elimination of out-of-date or unnecessary pages, as well as the creation of new text and new pages; this will likely result in an overall reduction in the number of pages on the site. Once completed, an assessment will be made as to the resource needs for the translation of the content of the new site as well as the resource needs for implementation and ongoing maintenance and updating of the language versions. This will include prioritization of areas for translations. Based on these evaluations, a workplan will be developed.

8. Along with the adoption of the policy, internal rules and practices were reviewed and aligned within the spirit of the policy approved by Member States. With regard to the size of documents, Program Managers were requested to ensure that the length of a working document does not exceed 3,300 words (10 standard UN pages). They were also requested to ensure that whenever voluminous support documents, such as studies and surveys, are commissioned, either in-house or through an external source, provisions are made for preparing executive summaries. For such documents, it is only the executive summary that will be translated into the other languages. Program Managers also have to ensure that in the case of updated documents, the information contained in an earlier document is cross-referenced and not repeated in the new document.

9. Despite the institution of measures to rationalize and control the workload of the Language Services, the adoption of the Policy generated a 53 per cent increase in the number of translation requests in 2012, as compared to 2011. The length of documents for which translation was requested also increased. As against a total number of 11.93 million words (36,161 standard UN pages) translated in 2011, the number of words translated in 2012 rose to 18.24 million (55,281 standard UN pages). With no increase in the number of staff translators in Language Services¹, 56 per cent of the work was outsourced, thereby exceeding the levels projected for the biennium. The table below provides a comparison between the workload handled by Language Services in 2012, as compared to 2011.

Translation by Language Services
(Meeting Documentation and Others)

Year	In-House		Outsourced		TOTAL	
	words	pages	words	pages	words	pages
2011	6,587,052	19,961	5,346,224	16,201	11,933,276	36,161
2012	8,024,597	24,317	10,218,414	30,965	18,243,011	55,282
Increase	1,437,545	4,356	4,872,190	14,764	6,309,735	19,120

Even though the number of words translated in-house increased by 22 per cent, the higher workload necessitated a 91 per cent increase in out-sourced translation work.

10. Due to the increased workload in 2012, the actual expenditure on outsourcing the translation of meeting documentation and other requests increased to 2.70 million Swiss francs, as compared to 1.41 million Swiss francs in 2011.

11. While the Secretariat has been taking all possible measures to contain the work load, it finds it difficult to extend such measures to reports of Committees and Main Bodies, which carry verbatim accounts of the proceedings. Some of these reports are more than 400 pages in length. In 2012, the Secretariat incurred an expenditure of 1.18 million Swiss francs on outsourcing the translation of the verbatim reports of Committee meetings. It would be possible to institute significant economies and further extend the six-language coverage, if these verbatim reports were replaced by summary records of meetings, limited to 30 pages, as against the average length of 194 pages in 2012. The Secretariat is also examining other options in this regard.

¹ The number of translators was discussed in paragraph 19 of document WO/PBC/18/15.

FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY

12. During the consideration of the Language Policy in 2011, it was decided that the extension of the six-language coverage to documentation for Working Groups would be assessed in the light of experience gained in 2012/2013 and in the context of the 2014/2015 Program and Budget. The extension of such coverage is expected to cost an *additional* amount of 1.56 million Swiss francs, based on the unit cost of translation in 2012. The allocation for Program 27 in the Program and Budget 2014/2015 is proposed to be increased by 7 per cent, essentially due to increase in staff costs. As language services would be required to deal with the rising workload, within the existing framework, it would be difficult to assume further obligations at this stage unless savings of a corresponding amount were available in translation of other documentation. Therefore, it is proposed that the six-language coverage to Working Groups be deferred for the present and considered again in the context of the 2016/2017 Program and Budget.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

13. The present document was prepared by the Secretariat to report on the implementation and impact of the Language Policy adopted by the Member States, which has seen a 53 per cent increase in the number of translation requests within a space of one year. The Secretariat has instituted measures to rationalize and control the workload, and will continue its endeavor to apply them more rigorously. As a further extension of the six-language coverage to documentation of Working Groups would increase the workload significantly, it is proposed that such extension be deferred at this stage and the issue be considered again in the context of the 2016/2017 Program and Budget.

14. *The Program and Budget Committee is invited to:*

(i) take note of the information contained in this document; and

(ii) recommend to the Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO the adoption of the proposals contained in paragraph 13 above.

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