

# Languages Service Sectoral Assembly (LSSA)

## Minutes of the ninth meeting of the Bureau<sup>1</sup>

Held via videoconference on Friday, 11 February 2022, from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m.

**Attendees:** Anthony Alioto (ES), Anna Aleksandrova (RTS), Esma Belfalah (ATS), Jianjun Chen (CTS), Pauline Escalante (EDPU), Pablo González Silva (STS), Laura Johnson (President).

### Main topics discussed:

- Meeting of LSSA President with LS Chief, section chiefs and Staff Council Executive Secretary
- Section meetings with the LS Chief/DCM Director
- gData 2.0 productivity report
- Crediting of reprise
- Underpayment of post-adjustment
- ETES vision

### Decisions taken:

1. *Meeting of LSSA President with LS Chief, section chiefs and Staff Council Executive Secretary:* The President briefed the Bureau on this meeting, at which the LS Chief had presented responses to some staff suggestions taken from the global survey on the impact of the productivity standard (document circulated to LS staff on 26 January).
2. *Section meetings with the LS Chief/DCM Director:* Bureau members reported on the discussion of the various concerns highlighted at the recent meetings of their sections with the LS Chief/DCM Director, including the unfairness of original word count being used as the metric for productivity for all language pairs, irrespective of linguistic distance, the specific limitations of eLUNa for translation into Arabic and the difficulties faced by Chinese staff in using their home leave entitlements.
3. *gData 2.0 productivity report:* Staff in all the translation sections have expressed dissatisfaction with the new interface, the way it was rolled out and their inability to check the figures compared to the previous system after the deadline. The President will write to the Chief of LS to pass on the staff comments and request clarification on whether errors will be addressed.
4. *Crediting of reprise:* It was noted that no communication had been forthcoming on what would happen with crediting for reprise after the end of the current performance cycle. The President will endeavour to seek clarification from the USG of DGACM through action at the Staff Council level.
5. *Underpayment of post-adjustment:* One Bureau member reported on an individual payroll issue that resulted in a long-term underpayment of post-adjustment. He asked the President to bring the issue to the attention of the Staff Council at its next meeting.
6. *ETES Vision:* The President received a brief response from the LS Chief in response to staff concerns about the ETES vision (see annex).

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the opinions reflected herein represent staff suggestions and views collected by their representatives and are aimed at promoting communication between management and staff. In order to avoid misunderstandings, any comments or requests for corrections to the minutes should be submitted to the President of the LSSA only, for inclusion in the minutes of the following meeting.

Annex

### **Summary of staff concerns about the “vision” for ETES in New York**

Many staff expressed doubts that this vision could truly be applied only in one service in New York, certainly without that having an effect on other services and duty stations.

They considered that, given these obvious potential impacts, it was disappointing that the vision could get as far as being approved by the Division Director and presented to the Service’s staff without colleagues from other duty stations being consulted. They asked whether HR had been consulted, given that a new job profile was being introduced.

One main concern is what it means for the common system if a single service can make such significant changes. One of these changes is to create a new job profile and several staff members asked what that would mean for mobility between duty stations. Would Geneva staff be considered qualified to apply for “linguist” positions at UNHQ? Someone else asked about the effect on promotions.

Several staff members questioned the choice of the term “linguist”, for example pointing out that it could easily apply to an interpreter or a text processor. One staff member said that she had worked for an organization in which the languages service posts were similarly renamed before the organization moved to a model of having very few in-house staff and contracting out most of the work.

Staff from the Editing and English Translation Sections stated that they could see no benefit to merging the sections, pointing out differences between Geneva and New York, including the fact that there is more translation from languages other than English, more précis-writing work and more editing work in languages other than English.

Staff asked about the potential effects on MTS/DPU staff and wondered what was meant by the “review of TPUs planned for 2022”.

One staff member noted that the document contained a long list of non-UN languages that the Service worked with but no mention of Chinese, an official UN language.

More than one staff member expressed concern about “innovativeness” being used as a metric to measure performance, for example because it might result in ideas being put forward to “innovate for innovation’s sake” or because they feared innovation being used as a euphemism for cost-cutting and that staff could be penalized for objecting to changes that would cut costs but have other detrimental effects.

One staff member asked how the new posts would be classified.

More than one staff member noted the use of the word “seamlessly” in relation to task switching, stating that “seamless” task switching does not exist.

Some staff objected to the Service being described as different because of being “multi-functional”, which might imply that other translation services are monofunctional, which is not the case. They found these implications contrary to the spirit of the common system and the principle of multilingualism. They worried that the trend might be towards increased use of English as a relay language and relaxing of the language requirements for the future LCE (number of languages required).

In addition, New York staff representatives informed me that since the establishment of the English Translation and Editing Service, it has become common to assign editing jobs in a language that is not the native or main working language of the editor. They (the NY staff reps) are considering calling for the re-establishment of a separate Editing Service.

### **Response from the LS Chief**

Received and acknowledged. I have shared with both Nicole and Kira. It is my understanding that Kira will raise your questions and concerns with the ASG

The only information I have received so far is the quote I shared with you orally from M.s Elizalde: “Please note that in the ETES vision, nothing has changed in the CELPs. The proposed English linguist profile is just a merger of the translator/precis-writer and editor profiles requested to reflect the reality of the situation in New York where many members of ETES routinely perform two if not three of these functions and have done for several years (specialization in one function or a particular language combinations is still required and encouraged – so not all staff perform multiple functions). The development of an “English Linguist” profile would in no way change the competitive exam, beyond adding another functional title to the list in the announcement.”