THE COUNCIL WILL HAVE THE FINAL SAY ON THE "EVRO" – "EURO" DEBATE, COMMISSIONER LEONARD ORBAN SAYS

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Multilingualism European commissioner Leonard Orban in an interview for Europe Gateway.

Mid-April, European Central Bank representatives are visiting Bulgaria to confer with officials in Sofia about the official name of the EU currency in Bulgarian language, Sega daily reported this week. The official spelling has to be "euro" as in all 23 official EU-languages. Bulgaria, however, insists on the spelling "evro", as pronounced in contemporary Bulgarian. Europe Gateway present you an interview with Multilingualism European Commissioner Leonard Orban.

All EU Member States have to prepare strategic documents aimed to be presented to the EU institutions. Usually such documents have to be voted officially by Governments or Councils of Ministers before submitting them to the respective institution in Brussels. In what language should these strategic papers be voted by the national governments - in the official language of the country (i.e. Bulgarian, Romanian, etc. and then translated into English), or directly voted into English and then translated into the official language of the respective country?

The voting procedure and the related language regime in the Member State level is the matter decided by each Member State and the Commission has no say in this. As for the documents, reports and national legislation that the Member States are required to submit to the EU institutions, these can be submitted in any of the 23 official EU languages.

Do Member States have to submit official documents to the EU institutions such as the Commission into one of its working or procedural languages (English, German, French), or do they have the right to submit them into any of the 23 official languages of the EU?

I want to underline that all "official languages" of the EU institutions are also "working languages" according to Regulation 1 of 1958.

The category of "procedural languages" applies only to documents used in the internal procedures of the Commission. To speed up certain activities, only the English, French and German language versions are required. For example, the reports and documents submitted by the Member States in the official EU languages are usually translated into these three "procedural languages", or only into one or two of them, according to the operational needs. These are for internal use in the Commission.

In case that a documents is approved in Bulgarian language and voted in Bulgarian by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, and then an English translation of it is submitted to the Commission, and if there are major differences in the two texts, which version would be considered by the Commission as the "real" one: the original as voted by the government, or

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the translation in English presented to the EC?
When the Member States notify the Commission of their national laws, they are entitled to submit these in the official EU language or languages of the Member States. Sometimes the Member States provide also a translation of their national laws, on their own initiative and for information purposes. This translation is very often in English. When a translation is needed in the Commission services - in cases it has not been provided by the Member States - the text is translated by DG Translation.
Translations of national laws, whether they are done by the Member State itself or by DG Translation, are always unofficial, and the original text is the authentic one. Therefore, the Member State which send translations along with their national laws usually mark the translations "unofficial". The Member States are responsible for translations they provide.
If differences are detected by the Commission services between the original authentic text and the translation, the matter is usually settled with the Member State concerned by correspondence. When the text is examined in the Commission, a person knowing the language of the original is always involved.
Are you aware of the current state of the discussion for the official spelling of the euro currency in Cyrillic alphabet? Before accession, Bulgarian State Administration Minister Nikolai Vassilev has said Bulgaria will demand for the currency to be spelled "evro" (as pronounced in Bulgarian) but not "euro" (as wished by the European Central Bank).
Yes, I am aware of those debates. This is to be solved by the Council. However, I want to recall that, at the European Council of December 1995 in Madrid, the Heads of State or Government decided that the name of the single currency should be ‘euro' and that this name ‘must be the same in all the official languages of the European Union, taking into account the existence of different alphabets'. It was therefore clearly Member States' intention that the single currency should bear the same name in all languages. The Constitutional Treaty provides also that the spelling of the nominative singular form should be ‘euro' in all language versions. At the same time, it allows for the necessary degree of flexibility in order to accommodate as much as possible the specific characteristics of the different languages. However, a decision will be taken by the Council.
In our two countries, should the tendering procedures and respective documentation under the Phare program and especially for the Structural Funds be held in Bulgarian and Romanian instead of English? Some of our readers who are willing to apply for tenders say that the documentation should no longer be written only in English.
As far as the PHARE programme is concerned, this was a pre-accession program. The ongoing activities are mostly related to payments. In PHARE program, the documentation is mostly in English because at that time, neither Romanian nor Bulgarian was an official language of the EU.
For the structural funds, the rule is that all official languages are equal and may be used. In reality, it seems that most of the requests from the new Member States are in English simply for reasons of efficiency.
According to the Treaty establishing the community, every citizen has the right to ask questions and to receive answers in all the 23 official languages of the Union. To what extent is this achieved so far?
The arrangement is in full use in all EU institutions. For instance, the "Europe Direct" service allows every citizen to contact the Commission on the phone, by e-mail or online to ask questions and obtain answers in the official language of their choice.

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However, if a citizen decides to contact directly an individual official, especially over the phone, it is not always obvious that this person speaks the mother tongue of the citizen.
But, as I could notice with my colleagues, the officials receiving e-mails or phone calls ask the help of their colleagues with translation, in order to have an idea on the message and to be able to provide a prompt reply.
A lot of tenders in Bulgaria and Romania were open for external translators for the European institutions. What is the degree of readiness of the IATE - interactive terminology for Europe?
All external translators, Bulgarian and Romanian ones included, who have concluded a contract with the EU institutions, have had free access to the internal version of IATE for more than a year.
Where could translators and ordinary citizens find a database of approved terminology?
Approved EU terminology can be found, for example, in Eur-Lex, the repository of all adopted EU legislation. Terminology data bases, such as Eurodicautom (the multilingual term bank of the European Commission and TIS (the database of the EU Council) will be soon replaced by IATE, which contains terminology from all EU institutions, and is now in test use.

WHO IS LEONARD ORBAN
Before becoming EU Commissioner for Multilingualism, Leonard Orban was Secretary of State - Ministry of European Integration coordinating Romania's preparation for accession to the European Union and Chief Negotiator of his country with the European Union. He also is the Coordinator of the elaboration of Romanian Post Accession Strategy for 2007-2013. Among others, Orban was also formerly responsible for the internal communication on Romania's accession to the European Union.

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