

European colloquia have become a platform for information exchange and cooperation between TC organisations and other institutions

On 14 March, the 5th European Colloquium for user-friendly product information took place in Brussels.

Delegates of the national TC organisations, the European Commission, the industry and the localisation sector met for a “First round-up on the organisational, technical and economic impacts” to discuss what the enlarged EU means for Technical Documentation. How can the new challenges of multilingualism be dealt with ? European legislation and relevant standards and directives were some of the topics.

The colloquium presentations are available on <http://www.tceurope.org/news/news.htm> Furthermore, a publication will be created that will be available for download in PDF format on the same site.

The annual colloquium has become a regular fixture on the calendar of events for technical communicators in Europe. The number of registrations has increased to 42 and is proof of the growing interest in cross-border topics in the field of technical communication.

What are the legal regulations for multilingualism in Europe with regard to product information ? Jens Karsten of FEDSA, the Federation of European Direct Selling Associations, started the programme with an overview of the EU regulations regarding consumer goods. Ian Fraser of the Directorate General Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission reported about the current state of the machinery directive, which is being revised. Another new guidance document was presented by Alfredo Spagna, President of EUATC, the European Union of Associations of Translation Companies: the new European standard on translation services.

Carol Caprioli and Jacques Degreves of the Directorate General Enterprise and Industry showed where regulations of the member states and the EU can be found on the EU web site.

Besides the 20 official languages there are a large number of unofficial, minority languages in the member states. These are, however, not condemned to disappear, but can assert themselves successfully, like the Catalan language for instance. Termcat, the Catalan institute for terminology provides terminology services in technical and other fields. Operating manuals in Catalan can be an important factor for competitiveness in this highly industrialised and economically strong region.

Terminology is one important aspect for multilingual technical documentation. Tools and technologies are another one. Technological developments, and changing processes and organisational structures of the working environment, characterise the constantly evolving localisation market. Rudy Tirry, Country Manager of Bowne Global Solutions Belgium, gave an overview on the developments of the past years and an outlook on future trends.

The Directorate General Translation of the European Commission is the largest translation agency in the world. How do they handle multilingualism ? Josep Bonet, who has been responsible for terminology management and workflow in DG Translation for many years, explained how this “agency” works, how processes are organised and which tools are used.

Apart from knowledge and information exchange, the colloquia provide a platform where representatives of the main stakeholders can meet to discuss the political, strategic, economic and technical aspects of technical communication in Europe. The colloquia are TCeurope’s most important contribution to promote Europe-wide quality standards in technical communication, and to make the profession known.

The next colloquium will take place on 20 March 2006. For more information contact: u.wirtz@tekomp.de