



Optimising professional translator training in a multilingual Europe

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

The OPTIMALE project aims to enhance the visibility and relevance of professional translator education and training in Europe. This is defined as providing Master's degree level programmes that equip graduates with a thorough knowledge of the translation industry, professions and processes, and with a range of competences that are relevant to professional requirements in this area.

Objectives

The network aims to achieve the following:

- Continue, expand and update the mapping of translator training in Europe.
- Monitor market and societal needs and professional requirements and standards relevant to translator education and training.
- Reinforce the economic and societal relevance of ongoing or future translator training programmes by identifying, describing and disseminating best practice in a number of key training areas.
- Enhance the quality of translator trainer training by identifying key training resources, setting up a resource platform and organizing workshops on the implementation of best educational and training practice.
- Provide support for translation faculties and departments by organising training of trainers sessions on professionally relevant teaching and learning practices.

Target groups

OPTIMALE has several core target groups:

- Academic staff, who need to follow emerging trends relevant to future translator training, to exchange good practice in this area, and to share innovative and useful resources.
- Students engaged in advanced degrees in translation, who will benefit from more relevant programmes, courses and teaching methods.
- Language service providers, who will recruit young graduates better equipped to face new market needs and meet professional standards.
- International organisations, and public service bodies at the national or local level, who will find candidates with more relevant competence profiles.

Partnerships

OPTIMALE works with the whole spectrum of stakeholders involved in the education and training of translators and translation-related professions:

- Universities with professionally-oriented Master's degree programmes in the area of translation, whether they be domain focused (technical, legal, medical, etc.) or process-focused (covering all the translation professions, from translator to terminologist and project manager). They make up the bulk of the

project partnership, representing 64 of the 65 EEA members of the consortium.

- Language industry professionals, focusing on translation service providers, whether they be companies or freelance operators, but with particular emphasis on the former, represented by the EUATC (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies).
- Future students, who will be the medium-term beneficiaries of the project through the provision of more professionally-relevant degree programmes, and current students from member universities, who have participated in most of the project meetings to date in an observer capacity or as active participants in the implementation of project activities (data entry, conference, meetings).
- International organisations: the OPTIMALE network has worked closely with the DGT's European Master's in Translation team, to coordinate the two networks' goals and activities, and has consulted with other IO language services via the IAMLADP University Contact Group.

Methodology and results

OPTIMALE's first remit is to enhance the visibility of professional translator training throughout Europe. This has been done by implementing an interactive map of degree programmes. The map takes the shape of an online application accessible from the main Optimale website (www.translator-training.eu/map), with a display feature enabling users to locate existing institutions, and a data base including programme fact sheets for each programme, provided by the institutions, which can be displayed in English and in two other languages. The map is designed for use by future students, academics, employers and university authorities and can be regularly amended by programme directors to provide up-to-date information on their programmes and courses.

The second remit is to enhance the relevance of degree programmes in translation to societal and market needs. The first year of the project has been devoted to identifying these needs by:

- determining current and emerging competence requirements within the European translation industry, i.e. identifying the competences that employers seek when looking to employ new staff, via an online survey aimed at employers throughout the industry;
- providing input for further analysis and discussion during eight "regional" workshops bringing together academics involved in Master's degree translator training programmes and industry players from across Europe.

The outcomes of the survey (over 680 respondents) and of the workshop discussions (attended by 87 translation industry professionals from 26 different countries) provide a pan-European snapshot of specific competence requirements for graduates seeking employment in the industry and for programme directors seeking to improve the employability of their graduates in the translation professions. An analysis of the

overall survey results and workshop discussions can be found on www.translator-training.eu.

The third remit of the project is to enhance the quality of academic provision in the field of professional translator education and training by identifying and sharing good practice in a number of specific areas, i.e. integrating professionally-oriented practices in the curriculum, tools and technologies, domain specialisation and quality assurance. This process is ongoing and has begun with the establishment of status quo reports on current practices in each of the specific areas identified. A number of case studies describing interesting and innovative approaches to teaching and learning in these areas are in the process of being selected and completed, which will lead to the definition of detailed reference frameworks for learning objectives to be achieved and methodologies to be recommended in these areas. Transferable learning resource materials will then be identified, produced and made available to the network members and, whenever possible, to the wider translation community, via a resource platform.

Finally, the outcomes of the first stages of the project will be used to implement training sessions for academic staff from the network institutions. These sessions will focus on how to achieve the learning outcomes defined in specific areas of translator training by applying the methods and resources identified and disseminated via the resource platform.

Project outcomes have been widely disseminated within and outside the network, electronically via the project website (www.translator-training.eu), which has attracted growing interest from the professional and academic translation community, via mailing lists, data sharing platforms and a Twitter account, and face to face via participation in a number of professional and academic events (including national conferences organised by translation company and freelance translator organisations, several academic conferences and lectures involving students from Master's degrees in translation).

Plans and prospects for the future

The project is currently entering the second half of its programme and is on track to achieve the projected results as outlined in the application. The benefits of the project in terms of enhanced programme relevance and visibility are expected to be sustained by the updating of the interactive map, continuing cooperation with the professional associations and organisations associated with the project, the dissemination and updating of the employer survey results and the lasting impact of the reference frameworks, resource materials and training of trainers sessions implemented during the project's lifetime.

Project website: www.translator-training.eu

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1. Project Objectives

The OPTIMALE project aims to enhance the visibility and relevance of professional translator education and training in Europe. Professional translator training is defined as including university programmes that aim to provide graduates not only with generic academic competences and advanced foreign and native language and intercultural competence, but also with a thorough knowledge of the translation industry, professions and processes, and with a range of competences that are relevant to professional requirements in this area. The OPTIMALE project has set out to do this by:

1. Identifying professionally-oriented advanced (Master's degree) programmes in translator education and training and enhancing their public visibility via an interactive online map. The standardized description of each programme in three languages, including its objectives and content, admission criteria and conditions, is designed to facilitate access to information on higher education translation programmes for students, public authorities, employers and the media, who often have difficulty in apprehending the extent and diversity of higher education provision in this area.
2. Monitoring the current state of the market and the current competence requirements of language industry employers in the context of a rapidly changing technological and economic environment via an extensive online survey and a series of consultation workshops. The survey of professional competences required by translation companies aims to provide a pan-European overview of the current situation which can be of use both to translation graduates and higher education programme directors and to the translation industry itself. The eight consultation workshops organised throughout Europe were designed to allow discussion and exchange on the survey results and their relevance to the training of translators, between academics in charge of translator training programmes and representatives of translation companies and professional bodies.
3. Identifying and describing good practise in a number of key areas of translator training (professional practices, translation technologies, specialisation and quality assurance) in order to provide examples of teaching and learning methodologies and resource materials which can be adopted by translator training programmes throughout the consortium and beyond.
4. Providing support for translation faculties and departments by disseminating specific reference frameworks and resource materials for key areas of translator training via a resource platform and organising training of trainer sessions on professionally relevant teaching and learning practices. These resources and sessions are designed for members of academic teams wanting to make their curricula even more relevant to professional needs in an increasingly global market.

2. Project Approach

Increasing visibility

The aim of the Optimale interactive map is to provide an easily accessible and comprehensible source of information on higher education translator training programmes in Europe, filling a gap which is detrimental to student and professional mobility and to the visibility and credibility of academic programmes in this area. University websites are all too often difficult to navigate for outside visitors, and rarely provide information in more than a couple of languages, at best, while departmental or faculty websites and pages present the information on programme contents, admission criteria or work placement requirements in many different ways, using different terminology, and with varying degrees of detail.

The map takes the shape of an online application accessible from the main Optimale website, with a display feature using Googlemaps to locate existing institutions, and a data base including programme fact sheets for each programme provided by each institution, which can be displayed in several languages by clicking on the relevant icon.

Methodology

The Optimale project first set out to define a standard “fact sheet” designed to elicit information on translator education and training programmes (see a PDF version of the questionnaire below...). This covered the location and identification of the programme, a description in terms of duration, credits, languages of delivery and working languages, a list of course modules, information on translation technology tools used and taught and on mandatory internships or other forms of professional involvement, on graduate employment and job profiles, on admission criteria and conditions, and provided for additional information on doctoral programmes, links with industry, etc.

In order to make the information available in as many languages as possible, the fact sheets must be completed in three languages: the language of the institution offering the programme, English, and a third language, which can be either: French, German, Spanish or Italian.

The fact sheets were initially completed in PDF format and then entered in the application’s data base. Now that the map has become accessible online, information can be entered directly and modified by programme directors via an access code, and new programmes can be added after validation by the project management and steering committee.

The first targets of the fact gathering exercise were the 69 academic partners of the project themselves. This initial circle has now been extended to include as many existing programmes as possible outside the network. This part of the process is still ongoing and will continue until the end of the project and hopefully, beyond, the aim being to provide a comprehensive map of the situation in Europe.

Enhancing professional relevance

For many years, employers in the translation industry have complained that graduates entering employment in the industry were not sufficiently prepared to meet the professional, economic and technological challenges that translation companies are confronted with in an increasingly competitive global market. Although it is generally recognised that a university education in general is not simply about preparing students for the marketplace and that holders of Bachelor's or Master's degrees in translation may find employment in many other fields, depending on the local or national context, the Optimale project is very much about enhancing the relevance of the professional skills and competences taught and learned in advanced translation degree programmes.

From the onset, the project has worked hand in hand with representatives of the profession. The EUATC (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies), is a full member of the project partnership, and has greatly assisted in promoting the project objectives among its member organisations. Its current and former general secretaries have personally taken part in a number of project activities and meetings. Representatives of national employer organisations have actively supported the project's initiatives and taken part in national meetings and in the first year conference. The project coordinator has been invited to a number of events organised by the EUATC and its member organisations to explain the project and to present the results of the employer survey (see below). Members and representatives of national freelance translator organisations have also been actively involved, whether as members of the advisory board, or as participants in consultation meetings and the first year conference. Cooperation with the EU's institutional language services has also been a key feature of the project: a permanent dialogue with the European Commission's Directorate General for Translation (DGT) has been in place since the project's inception. A former leading member of the Commission's SCIC (Service commun d'interprétation de conférence) sits on the project's advisory board and takes an active part in project activities.

Using the well-established "Tuning" methodology¹, the Optimale project began by conducting research into current trends in the translation market (or markets) and competence requirements in the translation professions. This was done, whenever possible, by initially exploiting existing survey data published by national and/or international organisations, and then by a year-long consultation with employers and professional practitioners in the industry.

Methodology

Employer consultation

The extensive employer consultation had three main aims:

¹ Tuning involves examining academic programmes in a particular discipline and identifying what knowledge and skills students should have once they complete their degree.

- To determine current and emerging competence requirements within the European translation industry, i.e. identify the competences that employers seek when looking to employ new staff.
- To provide input for further analysis and discussion during eight "regional" workshops bringing together academics involved in Master's degree translator training programmes and industry players from across Europe.
- To provide a pan-European snapshot of specific competence requirements for graduates seeking employment in the industry and for programme directors seeking to improve the employability of their graduates in the translation professions.

Following the initial assessment of existing surveys and resources, it was decided that the Optimale survey would more specifically target commercial translation service providers ("TSPs"). Institutional translation service competence requirements have been extensively studied by A. Lafeber as part of an ongoing doctoral research project undertaken at Tarragona University under the supervision of Professor Anthony Pym, while freelance translator competences are the subject of regular international and national surveys conducted by professional associations. TSP employer surveys, on the other hand, whether at the national or international level, tend naturally to concentrate on market trends rather than on competence requirements. The survey did not, however, exclude respondents from translation departments within large organisations, institutional language services or freelance translators.

The online survey

The survey took the form of a short questionnaire to be completed on paper (in the initial stages of the survey) and online (from May 2011 onwards). The questionnaire was designed to be completed within five to ten minutes at the most, and therefore sought to elicit information that would be both meaningful and useful, both for the profession and for academics and students, while setting a limited number of questions.

The first basic premise of the consultation was that TSP employers are interested not only in translation competence *per se*, but in the whole range of competences required within a language service providing company. Hence the sections devoted to project management, translation technology or client relation competences.

The second premise was that the survey should not seek to elicit the obvious. It was therefore assumed that for translation positions, high-level language competence requirements, both in the native language and in the foreign working languages, were to be taken as a basic employer requirement which did need to be reasserted within the scope of this survey. Similarly, translation competences *per se* (i.e. source text and discourse analysis, cognitive skills, target message formulation, reader and user focus, etc.) were not deemed to enter the remit of this survey, as it was assumed that any employer seeking to employ a translator or his/her services, would require the said translator to possess the basic skills of his/her profession.

According to the same rationale, generic professional competences such as the ability to comply with specifications or deadlines, or to work under stress, were excluded from the questions.

One question what the questionnaire should probably have included was whether employers were currently finding the competences they required among applicants for job positions. With hindsight, this would admittedly have provided useful information, as some of the comments submitted by respondents seem to indicate.

The response rate and key results are discussed below in section 3.

Regional workshops

The remit of the workshops was to identify important trends and issues relating to current translation markets and practises, to discuss the findings of the Optimale employer survey relevant to the countries concerned, and to determine what existing or new professional competence profiles might be relevant in determining the learning outcomes for current and future academic degree programmes.

Eight regional workshops were organised respectively in Brasov (Romania), Vilnius (Lithuania), Paris (France), Alcala de Henares (Spain), Ghent (Belgium), Guildford (UK), Trieste (Italy) and Vienna (Austria). They brought together practising professionals from the translation industry and academics and other stakeholders involved in the running of Master's degree-level translation programmes. Each workshop covered between 2 and 6 countries represented in the project (see list).

The workshop participants themselves illustrated the diversity of the language industry, with participants representing many facets of the industry, from independent freelance operators to major LSPs employing over 100 permanent staff, from very small TSP's whose bread and butter is mainly low volume, local "legal" translation contracts for individual clients, in single language or limited language combinations, to large multinational, multilingual operators specialising in high volume localisation work, from literary translation to highly specialised technical translation for high-tech industries....

Workshop organisation varied according to the local contexts, but was based on the following structure:

1. Presentation of market trends in the participating countries
2. Presentation of the survey results available at the time of the workshop (four of which took place only two months after the launch of the survey and four between five and six months after the launch).
3. Comments on the survey results by professional participants, in the light of their own experience in their sector of the industry.
4. Discussion of current translator training in the countries represented and of future competence profiles.

A brief outline of the workshop outcomes will be found below in section 3.

WP5 - Sharing good practise

Building on the key competence requirements identified during the consultation, the second year of the project focuses on identifying and sharing good practise in four key areas of translator training:

- The teaching and learning of professional practices within the curriculum, via specific modules, project based learning, the participation of practising professionals, work placements, etc.
- Translation technologies in the curriculum: place and importance; range of technologies; theoretical knowledge vs. practical usage, etc.
- Domain specialisation in translator training: how early should students be expected to specialise, in what fields, how should specialisation be taught, etc.?
- Quality assurance: international and national QA standards applied to translation process and products; quality control at project level; proofreading and reviewing principles and methods.

Each of these areas covers a range of particularly crucial professional competences but are often the most difficult to implement within the scope of a translation degree curriculum. Four working groups were formed at the Brussels conference on the basis of these thematic areas and project partners were invited to register for one of the groups according to where they felt they could contribute and/or gain most. Each group has between 15 and 20 members.

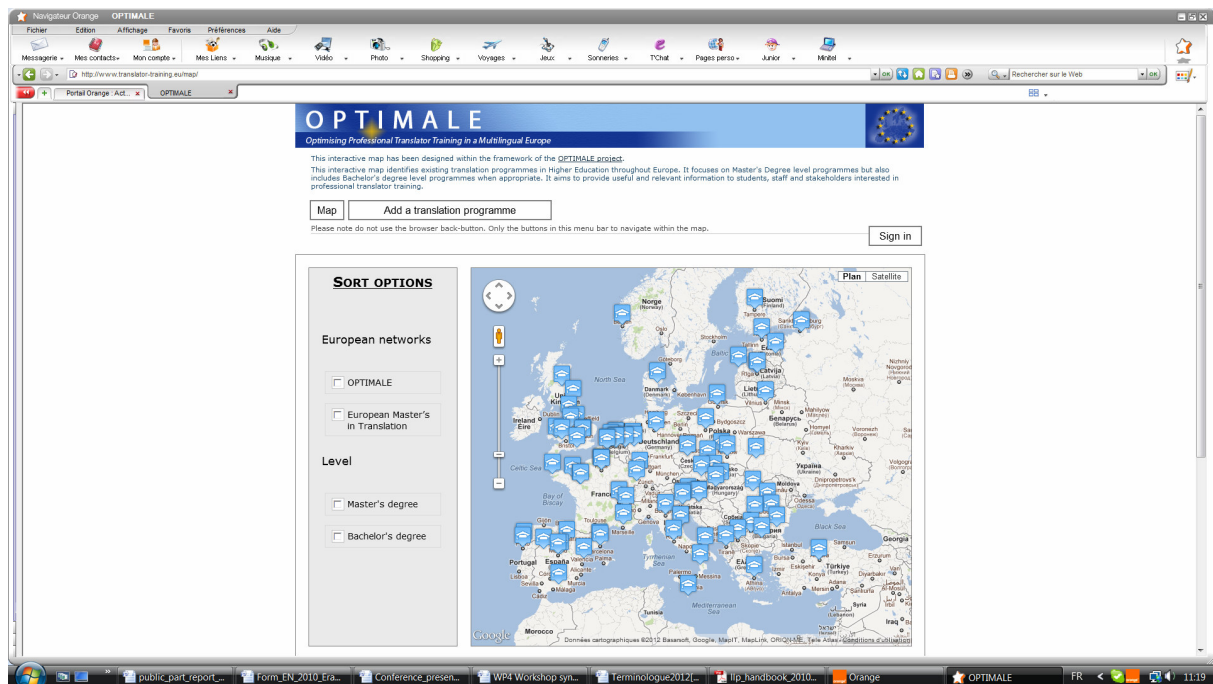
By identifying and sharing good practise in terms of well-proven or innovative teaching and learning methodologies and environments, the project is expected to benefit all of its members via the internal dissemination of case studies, recommendations relative to innovative teaching and learning practices and resource materials. It will also benefit the wider academic community involved in the field of translation by the dissemination of selected case studies and reference frameworks for the implementation of professionally-oriented translator education and training.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

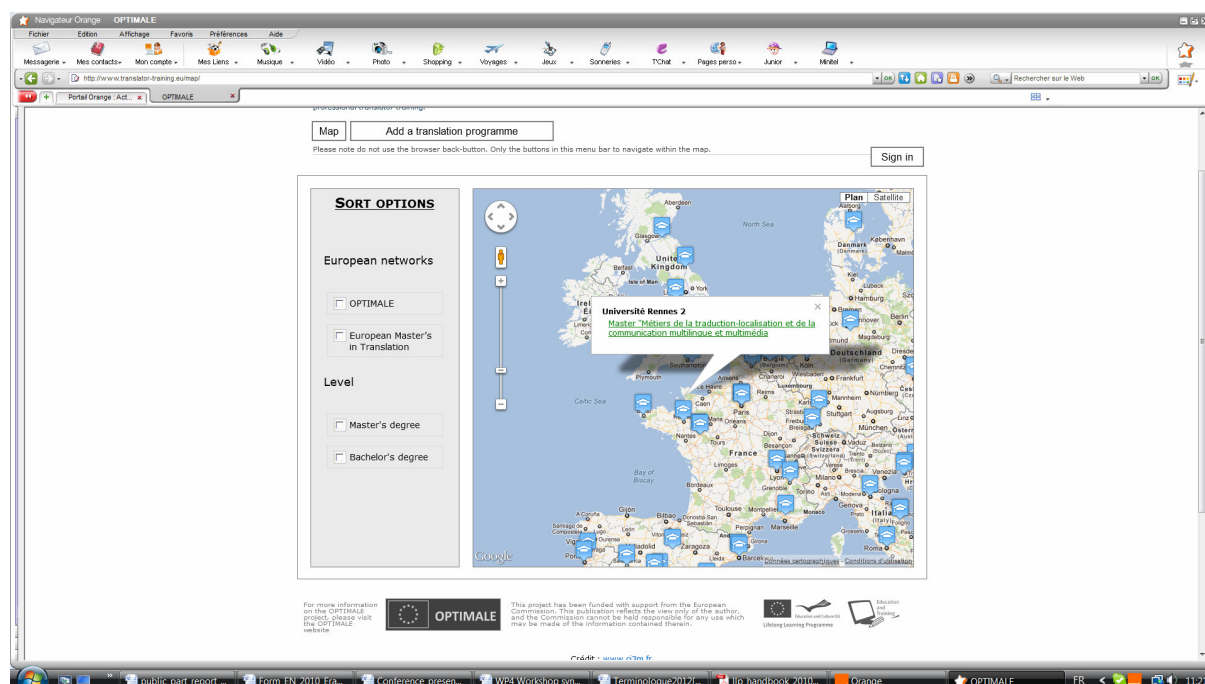
Interactive map

The interactive map of university level translator education and training programmes is one of the most significant outcomes of the first eighteen months of the Optimale project. It marks a breakthrough in the dissemination of multilingual information on translator training in Europe. The map is intended as a gateway to and not as a substitute for the more detailed information on university and departmental websites, but the standardised display format and terminology are designed to favour transparency for students, academics, employers and other stakeholders in the world of professional translation.

The map of university level translator training programmes went online in April 2012. It is accessible from the main project website (www.translator-training.eu/map) and displays existing university level programmes using the “Googlemaps” application, as illustrated below:

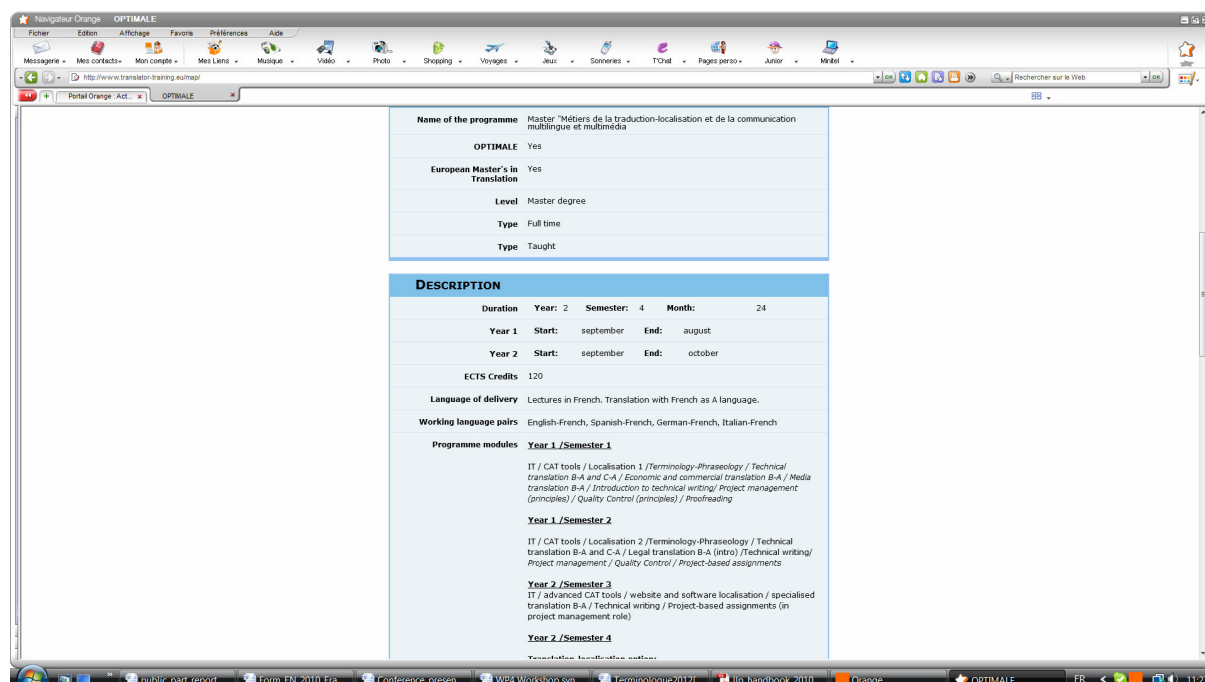


By clicking on a particular location and university, users can display the programme or programmes offered by that university:



Sort options enable users to selectively display institutions according to their membership of the Optimale network, the European Master's in Translation network (EMT) or both, as the case may be, and programmes by level (Bachelor's or Master's, although the vast majority of programme belong to the latter category).

A further click on a programme name opens a standard format fact sheet describing the main features of the programme, including contents:



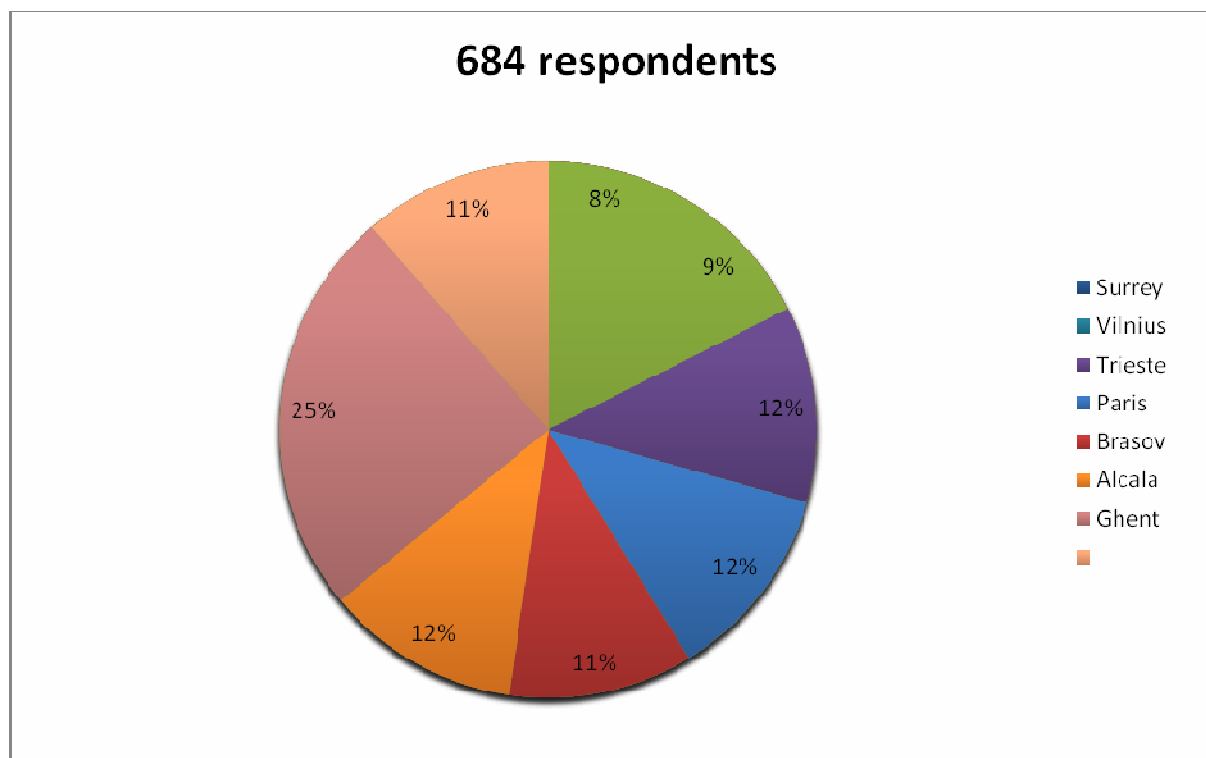
The fact sheet is available in the home language of the institution, in English and in one other language in most cases. 91 institutions and 118 translation programmes

(including 22 at institutions outside the Optimale network) are currently represented on the map. The latter figure is expected to increase as knowledge of the Optimale map spreads among academics and students. New programmes can be added online after validation by the project steering committee and existing information can be modified at will by programme directors with private access.

The employer consultation

The second major achievement of the first eighteen months of the project been the employer consultation conducted in partnership with the EUATC (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies).

The **online survey** (see presentation above) received over 680 responses from across Europe, with a well-balanced geographical spread between North and South, East and West, as illustrated below



Note: Responses have been grouped according to the “regional” working groups used to organise the consultation workshops. The country groupings were as follows:

Surrey = UK + Ireland + Norway + Iceland

Vilnius = Lithuania + Estonia + Latvia + Poland + Finland

Trieste = Italy + Slovenia + Malta

Paris = France

Brasov = Romania + Bulgaria + Greece + Turkey

Alcala = Spain + Portugal

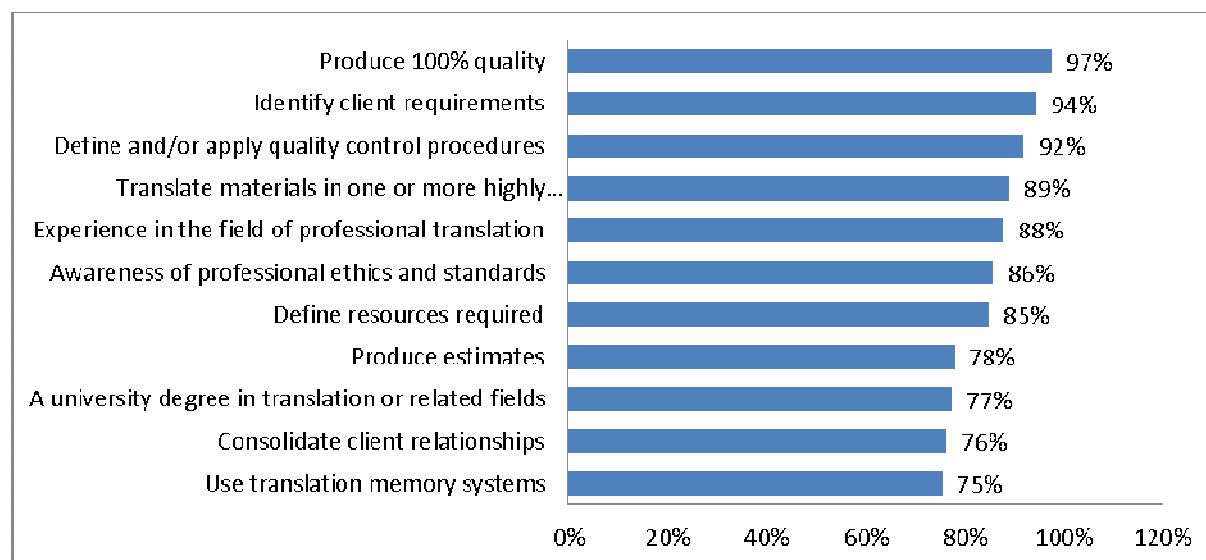
Ghent = Belgium + The Netherlands + Germany + Denmark

Vienna = Austria + Czech Republic + Slovakia + Hungary

The overrepresentation of the “Ghent” group is due to the large number of translation service providers in Belgium.

Over three quarters of the respondents were commercial translation service providers, with around 15% representing translation services or departments within other business organisations. Public sector translation services supplied fewer than 10% of the responses, as they were not specifically targeted by this survey. The respondents generally reflected the diversity of the translation industry in terms of size and turnover, with over half the respondents employing fewer than 5 salaried staff while another 15% declared a payroll of over 30 (including a number of large operators employing several hundred translators, revisers and project managers). Similarly, half the respondents declared a turnover of less than €200,000 while 14% generated revenues of over €2m. It must of course be remembered that although it concerns a global industry, the survey covers countries with very different costs of living, wage levels, and standard translation tariffs.

Of those who completed details on their activity, size and language combinations, between 530 and 580 answered the series of questions on competences sought by employers when recruiting new staff. A full presentation of the results can be found on the project website (www.translator-training.eu). The following table summarizes the ten competences most consistently classed as “essential” or “important” (figures show the percentage of respondents to each question having identified the following qualities or abilities as “essential” or “important”):



An analysis of the above shows that these qualities and competences can be grouped under several headings. They show that employers are first and foremost interested in quality:

- Quality of the translators they employ, who are expected to have:
 - o A good knowledge of one or more specialised fields
 - o Experience of professional translation
 - o An awareness of the professional ethics and standards

- A university degree in translation or related areas (and not simply a modern language degree)
- Quality of the work produced
 - By producing high quality translations
 - By defining and applying quality management and control procedures
 - By identifying and making efficient use of resources
 - By making efficient use of the most suitable IT translation tools
- Quality of the customer relationship
 - By correctly identifying client needs
 - By establishing estimates

A detailed breakdown of results can be found on the project website: http://www.translator-training.eu/optimale/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36&Itemid=3

The importance of these qualities and competences was confirmed by the professional representatives who took part in the **joint regional workshops** organised in eight different locations. They also stressed a number of qualities that were not specifically included in the survey, i.e.

- Perfect mastery of the native language (the lack of which is deplored by many European employers)
- The ability to combine speed and productivity with quality
- The ability to work in teams (and to be aware of the role of the translator in the overall translation process)
- Flexibility, i.e. the ability to demonstrate a range of competences within the company (translator, project manager, proof-reader, reviser, CAT tools manager, etc.)
- Proactiveness in identifying client needs or in adapting to new technologies
- Awareness of the primary importance of deadlines
- A good knowledge of professional practices

Quality translations still primarily depend on the quality of the translators: this point was highlighted by both academic and professional participants. Whether this should be achieved by academic translator training programmes, by experience and in-house training within TSPs, by continuing professional development or by a combination of all three, was a moot point discussed in a number of workshops. In the Guildford workshop and in Paris in particular, a clear distinction appeared between those who defended the capacity of advanced degree programmes based on recognised competence frameworks to produce professionally relevant graduates, and those who put the emphasis on professional experience and domain specialisation rather than on academic training for the translation professions.

Domain specialisation *per se* was an issue discussed by a number of workshops (Brasov, Trieste, Vilnius), particularly in the fields of finance and economics or in the area of legal and judicial translation.

Many professionals spoke of the extent to which the achievement of high quality is now heavily dependent on both the quality of the source materials supplied by the client, the reliability of the terminology resources and reference materials available to the translator, the professional qualities of the translators involved in the translation or localisation process, and of the revisers and quality controllers who ensure that the final product is up to standard. Discussions therefore naturally often led to the diversity and importance of all the players in the translation process, which cannot be restricted to the actual translation phase. Many professional participants stressed the need for universities and translation students to recognize that project management, resource management, proofreading and reviewing and quality management skills were now essential competences in the translation “chain” which should therefore be taught and learned at some point in all translation programmes. Companies were now seeking either graduates with specific skills in project management or quality management or “all-rounders” capable of “multi-tasking” within a small TSP company.

The consultation workshops made it possible to highlight “regional” features and specific competences which did not so clearly appear in the overall survey results. This was particularly the case regarding translation *into* the translator’s “B” or “C” languages, which is common practice in countries where the market for translation into the national language is smaller than that for translation into other languages. This was true in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in the “legal” translation market, where the translation of official documents into foreign languages is a dominant activity (cf. the Brasov and Vilnius workshops). But it was also mentioned in relation to Portugal, Denmark or the Netherlands, where translation into English or other languages by non-native speakers is commonly required.

Variations in demand for IT and technological skills, on the other hand, were more often related to the nature and size of the companies than to geographical location (with the exception of the localisation industry in Ireland).

Key competence requirements were again discussed at the **first project Conference** held in Brussels on December 1 2011. Ten of the professional partners who had taken part in the regional workshops were invited to react to the overall consultation findings. *A video recording of the proceedings can be accessed at : <http://scic.ec.europa.eu/str/index.php?sessionno=28acfe2da49d2b9a7f177458256f2540>*

WP5 Sharing good practice

Only one of the workshop meetings (Aston – Professional practices in the curriculum) had taken place by the end of the reporting period (March 31 2011). The three other workshops have all taken place at the time of writing. To date, each working group has produced a status quo report on the range of approaches and methodologies being implemented among the group’s membership. During the workshops, group members discussed the reports and the issues raised, presented examples of

specific teaching and learning methodologies relevant to each thematic area, and established criteria for the selection of case studies to be expanded and used as a basis for the development of reference frameworks for the definition of learning outcomes in each particular area of translator training. In the second stage of the work package, detailed reference frameworks and resources materials will be produced, for use in the training of trainers workshops due to take place in the final year of the project. Some of these will then be made available to the wider academic community involved in translator education and training.

Dissemination

Project information and outcomes have been disseminated via day to day communication, and via the project website and project events. Sub-workpackage leaders under WP 5 (good practice) have implemented communication and data sharing within their working group via Googledocs, Dropbox and other online data sharing platforms.

1. Regular electronic communication on ongoing project developments has taken place between the project management and project members.
2. The project website was set up in January 2011 (www.translator-training.eu) and provides an overview of the project, its objectives and its main outcomes to date. A members-only section allows project members to access and to share information relating to ongoing activities. 7742 connections to the website have been registered since June 2011.

Access to the online employer survey was via the project website and registered over 770 connections.

The interactive programme map can also be accessed via the website (www.translator-training.eu/map). 711 connections have been registered since April 3rd 2012.

3. A Twitter account has been set up but has only attracted a handful of subscribers to date.
4. Since the onset of the project, several project events have been open to participants from outside the project membership. This was of course the case in the eight “regional” employer consultation workshops, where some thirty translation company managers and representatives of national professional organisations were invited to take part, alongside students and staff from the organising university. This was also true in the first project conference, designed to highlight the project’s first year outcomes. The conference took place in the Commission’s Charlemagne building and was attended by the project membership, by members of the EMT network not involved in the Optimale project, by ten industry representatives (both companies and freelance translators) from ten different countries and by DGT staff.

4. Partnerships

From the onset, the OPTIMALE project has worked in close partnership with a number of professional and academic networks at the European and national level:

1. Professional organisations:

The EUATC is the umbrella organization bringing together national translation company associations from across Europe. It is a fully-fledged member of the OPTIMALE consortium and is represented in all the network's activities.

Several of the national translation service provider associations have invited representatives of OPTIMALE to their annual events and have actively cooperated in promoting the employer survey and other activities.

National freelance translator organizations have also been represented at the OPTIMALE conference and a prominent member of the French freelance translators' association sits on the advisory board.

2. DGT - EMT

The OPTIMALE consortium was launched under the aegis of the DGT's European Master's in Translation network, and includes 24 of the EMT's member institutions. Close cooperation with the DGT has enabled the organisation of the two main conferences and several steering committee meetings back to back with EMT events, so as to leverage funding and cross-fertilize input from both networks. The EMT's working group themes have been tailored to avoid duplication with OPTIMALE's thematic groups and outputs.

3. Several of OPTIMALE's French member universities are leading members of the French Association of Professionally-oriented Master's Degrees in Translation Studies (AFFUMT <http://affumt.fr/>) and have reported on the project's initiatives in the area of employer competence requirements and good practice dissemination. The close links that OPTIMALE's French members maintain with translation companies and professional bodies within the translation industry were instrumental in increasing employer participation in the online survey and consultation workshop.
4. Links with academic research into professional translation-related issues have been established through cooperation with the European Society for Translation Studies, the DGT's research initiative, the study of translator status in Europe conducted by Professor Anthony Pym, and individual contributions to academic conferences by participating members of the consortium on issues related to or deriving from work conducted within the project.
5. The coordinator of the OPTIMALE project also sits on the Board of the European Language Council (www.celelc.org) and has reported regularly on project progress, so that output can also feed into ongoing ELC initiatives such as the special interest groups on public service translation and interpreting, university language policy, the multilingual classroom and renovating bachelor's degree programmes.

5. Plans for the Future

The benefits of the project in terms of enhanced programme relevance and visibility are expected to be sustained by the updating of the interactive map, continuing cooperation with the professional associations and organisations associated with the project, the dissemination and updating of the employer survey results and the lasting impact of the reference frameworks, resource materials and training of trainers sessions implemented during the project's lifetime.

The sustainability of the interactive map has been discussed and plans have been made for it to be hosted after the end of the project, either at Rennes 2 University, or in conjunction with the DGT, according to circumstances at the time.

An overall analysis of the results of the employer survey has been conducted and made available on the project website. A more detailed analysis by geographical location and by company size will now be carried out. A research publication based on these results and integrating the discussions and outcomes of the consultation workshops has been envisaged. A update of the employer survey during year 3 of the project has also been under consideration, in order to take into account changing market circumstances and technological advances, particularly in the field of machine translation.

The reference frameworks and resource materials will first be made available via a resource platform accessible via the project website. These will be tested during the training of trainer sessions and if found adequate, will be disseminated towards the wider academic community (providing intellectual property rights are granted by the authors). The research impact of this work will be enhanced by organising a research symposium on the themes addressed throughout the project, back to back with the final project conference (June 2013), so as to leverage funding and increase the visibility of the final project outcomes. A call for papers for the final symposium and conference will be published by late May this year.

Further network projects deriving from and carrying forward the work conducted under OPTIMALE will be discussed during the next six months and will hopefully lead to further submissions in the call for proposals 2013.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The OPTIMALE project is central to the pursuit of the EU's multilingualism agenda, as the training of professionally competent high-level translators is key to maintaining communication and mobility for individuals and the free circulation of goods and services throughout the Union without imposing the use of a lingua franca. Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceeding is yet another example of how EU policy will significantly increase the need for qualified translators in the next few years.

Prior projects and the status quo reports drafted under WP5 of the project have shown that wide discrepancies still exist in the objectives and methodologies implemented at Master's Degree level in the teaching and learning of professional translation. Without attempting to apply a single model, it is therefore essential to ensure optimal convergence in the learning objectives and methodologies applied. This is what OPTIMALE aims to achieve.