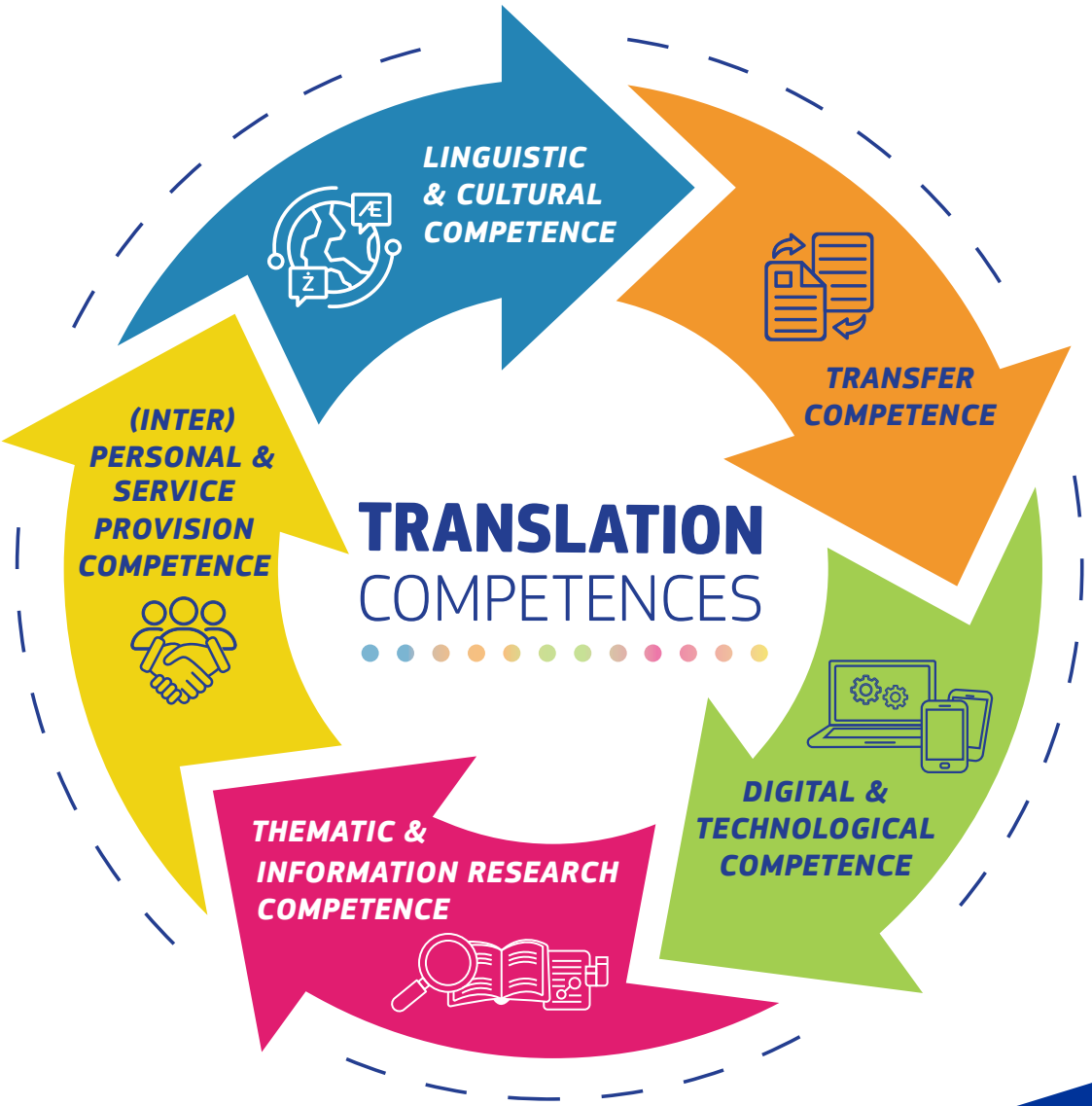
Competence Framework
2026

European Master's in Translation



European Commission

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FOREWORD

The European Master's in Translation (EMT) network published its framework for translator and translation competence in 2009, followed by a redraft in 2017 and an update in 2022. Although this framework has now become one of the leading reference standards for translator training throughout the European Union and beyond, both in academia and industry, recent advances in language technologies, particularly large language models (LLMs) and machine translation (MT) (and neural MT in particular), and their impact on both the translation profession and translator educational needs have necessitated a further update[1].

This update aims to reflect the priorities of European translator training programmes, as they prepare their students for a dynamic and very often highly technologised and digitalised workplace. Technology has an ever-increasing impact on the way translation services are provided; however, over time its limits have also become more apparent. Consequently, human intelligence, knowledge and skills are still the key factors in delivering quality translations and the growing range of related language services.

This framework reflects the need for these human skills by reiterating the importance of linguistic, ethical, cultural and transcultural knowledge and abilities that remain a key differentiator in a technologised employment market.

The translation market is multifaceted, with evolving needs that encompass an expanding range of processes tailored to content types and communicative purposes. Moreover, the continuing expansion of English as a lingua franca is creating new requirements that, in some translation environments, can only be met by reversing the traditional principle of translating into one's mother tongue. In addition to that, catering to a diverse audience necessitates a focus on accessibility in both the production and reception of multilingual, multimedia materials.

With this in mind, although this document seeks to outline a framework for translator and translation competence, we wish to stress that the terms "translator" and "translation" are used here in their broadest sense. They encompass the full range of professions and activities undertaken by multilingual experts operating across diverse communicative modes: textual, visual, auditory, and gestural. This includes professionals variously described as transcreators, multilingual technical writers, content creators and communicators, revisers, post-editors, terminologists, project managers and related specialists.

Under this broad understanding, translators continue to enable communication that is both accurate and appropriate across languages and cultures and remain multilingual and intercultural agents whose work fosters inclusive, ethical and socially responsible communication (RFCDC,

1 Developments which lead to the organisation of digital, AI-based toolkits like Digital Europe - AI-based Multilingual Services.

2018). Today, they are not only able to transfer the meaning of a source-language text (written or oral, gestural or visual) into a fit-for-purpose target-language text, but also need to post-edit MT output, evaluate the quality of automatically translated texts, prepare multilingual glossaries and terminology resources, and carry out quality assurance tasks. In addition, they are increasingly expected to use and, in some cases, develop digital tools and language technologies, build bespoke technology-enhanced translation workflows, create multilingual content, and act as linguistic consultants, for example, transcreating multilingual texts for marketing, public relations and corporate communications. Crucially, these activities require critical evaluation, professional judgement and ethical responsibility in the use of technology. Accordingly, these changes need to be taken on board in academic translator training programmes, so that future graduates become aware of both the challenges and opportunities that they represent and can adapt their skills and practices, enabling greater inclusion of a diverse global public.

In December 2025, with future translation graduate employability and with graduate reskilling and upskilling firmly in mind, and in line with the objectives of the European Commission's Union of Skills initiative (which emphasises future-oriented competences, digital and artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, and enhanced employability across the European labour market), the EMT Competence Task Force was given the task of updating the existing EMT competence framework, adjusting the key competences and skills required to best equip and empower future translation graduates.

The competence framework primarily addresses translator trainers and scholars in charge of designing curricula and training their students for the various needs of the language industry and language professionals, as well as universities wishing to join the EMT network in the next round of applications. Beyond this primary audience, it can also serve additional purposes, such as providing a template for practising translators who wish or need to engage in lifelong learning, and thereby future-proof their skills. Considering the most recent research in the field[2] and following a consultation process involving the network membership and language industry stakeholders, a draft updated framework was produced. This has now been adopted as the EMT Competence Framework, effective from 2026 onwards.

The EMT Board & Competence Task Force[3]

Christos Ellinides,
Director-General of DGT
& Chairman of the EMT Board

2 For example, the current update was informed by the results of the PACTE, DataLitMT, EFFORT, and LT-Lider projects, as well as by monographs (e.g., Nitzke and Hansen-Schirra 2021), and research reported in collected volumes (such as a chapter by Lafeber 2023 or the volume edited by Penet, Moorkens & Yamada 2026, with a chapter by Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow explicitly focusing on translation competence). It also drew on articles by Krüger (2024) and Prieto Ramos (2024), on the document titled "The new competency profile for translators", submitted by the Advisory Group for Human Resources based on the ECT mandate (2019), on ISO 17100, and on research carried out within the EMT network (e.g., Froeliger, Krause & Salmi, 2022; Loogus & Saar, 2022), to name just a few.

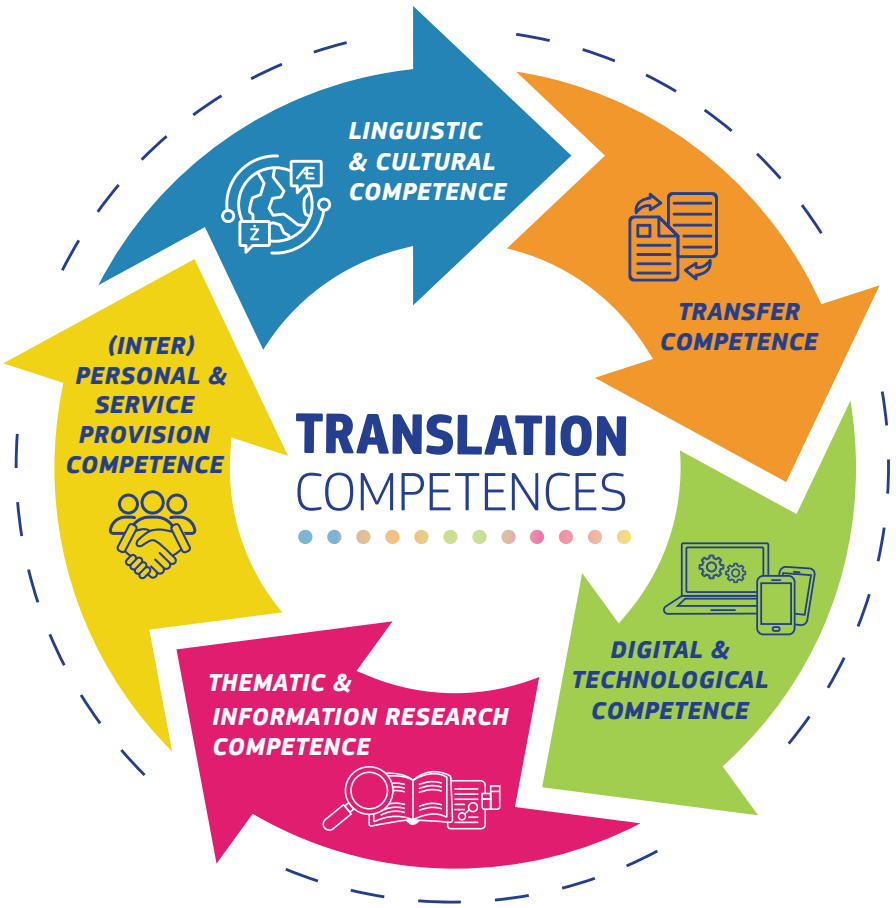
3 The EMT Competence Task Force consisted of (ordered alphabetically) Lucio Bagnulo, Adriano Ferraresi, Nicolas Froeliger, Sabien Hanoulle, Anna Kokkinidou, Alexandra Krause, Joss Moorkens, John O'Shea, Emília Perez, Pilar Sanchez Gijon, Tomáš Svoboda, Susana Valdez, Andrejs Vasiļjevs, and was led by Nike Kocijančič Pokorn and Leena Salmi.

INTRODUCTION

This framework does not claim to provide a comprehensive description or model of all the competences, skills and knowledge that translation graduates should acquire. It does not, for instance, include the theoretical knowledge or the generic research skills that are an integral and important part of many advanced translation studies programmes. It sets out a common set of learning outcomes for EMT master's degree programmes, described in terms of the competences and specific skills that their graduates are expected to possess. Individual programmes may, of course, deliver a much wider range of competences, skills and knowledge in areas that are not included in this framework.

The framework considers that translator education and training at master's degree level should equip students not only with a deep understanding of the processes involved, but also with the ability to perform and provide a translation service in line with the highest professional and ethical standards.

Translation competence is therefore a multidimensional construct that we define as consisting of the five interdependent areas of competence listed below:



Within each of these areas, a number of skills are deemed to be essential or important within the context of a master's degree in translation. Although each of them can be viewed separately, the five areas defined below should be considered as complementary and equally important in providing the translation service, which is the ultimate goal of the translation process. For clarity, some of the technical terms used in this framework are explained in a glossary at the end of this document.

The framework does not attempt to define levels for each of the areas of competence. It is assumed that master's degree programmes within the EMT network expect students to achieve the advanced level of competence required of future language industry professionals.

However, it recognises that some of the competences, skills and knowledge may have been acquired at previous stages in the higher education process (e.g., at undergraduate level) and that master's degree programmes lasting more than one academic year are likely to define different learning outcomes at different stages in the programme.



LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

(TRANSCULTURAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS)

This competence encompasses all the general or language-specific linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and transcultural knowledge and skills that constitute the basis for advanced translation competence. It is the driving force behind all the other competences described in this reference framework, and it is thus important and expected that students also perfect their competences in these areas during their studies.

This framework takes as a premise that a high level of language competence in at least two working languages (CEFR level C1 and above or an equivalent level in comparable reference systems) should be a prerequisite for quality translator education. The EMT also recognises that within the European context, the number of working languages may differ according to the national and/or professional environment, and that the same level of competence may not be achieved (or required) in all working languages.

TRANSLATION GRADUATES KNOW HOW TO...

1. Understand the meaning and identify cultural elements, values and references in the text (including presuppositions, allusions and stereotypes)
2. Draft texts for specific purposes and audiences in accordance with cultural conventions, genre conventions and rhetorical standards, including summarising, rephrasing, restructuring or shortening existing messages to meet various situational constraints and market needs, in one or more working languages
3. Understand the function of language variations (social, geographical or historical) and use the appropriate grammatical, lexical and idiomatic structures of their working languages

TRANSFER COMPETENCE



Transfer competence should be understood in the broadest sense, encompassing not only the actual meaning transfer phase between two languages (interlingually, including the use of pivot languages), between two or more semiotic codes (intersemiotically), or within the same language (intralingually), but also all the strategic and methodological competences that come into play before, during and following the transfer phase per se – from document analysis to final quality control procedures.

As such, it also covers different domain-specific, media-specific and situation-specific types of translation, including special areas such as public service translation, (multimedia) localisation, audiovisual translation and barrier-free communication (audiovisual and digital accessibility, clear language, etc.). Moreover, this competence is indivisible from the technological and associated MT and AI literacy competences in the following section.

TRANSLATION GRADUATES KNOW HOW TO...

4 Analyse a source text, identify potential textual and cognitive difficulties and assess the strategies and resources needed to render it in line with the client's specifications and communicative needs

5 Edit, pre-process and manage source texts, files and other media including for integration into translation tools

6 Produce a fit-for-purpose translation by working with different types of material on and for various media, using appropriate techniques, and implementing any given instructions, style guides or task-specific conventions

7 Mediate in specific intracultural and intercultural contexts, for example in those involving public service translation, multimedia localisation and accessibility, or in technology-enabled and multimodal environments

8 Post-edit machine-translated text, mitigate the negative effects of priming and interference in the target text, and use style guides and terminology glossaries, if any, to maintain quality standards

9 Check, revise and evaluate their own work and that of others according to standard or work-specific quality objectives

10 Analyse and justify their translation solutions and choices, using the appropriate metalanguage and applying appropriate theoretical approaches



TECHNOLOGICAL AND DIGITAL COMPETENCE

(TOOLS AND APPLICATIONS)

This competence encompasses the knowledge and skills used to assess, determine whether and when to use, advise on the use of, and implement present and future translation technologies within the translation process, including MT (also covering translation by LLM) technologies, and systems for augmenting or automating workflow tasks.

TRANSLATION GRADUATES KNOW HOW TO...

11 Understand the core principles of MT systems and their impact on the translation process, demonstrating AI literacy

12 Understand the nature of LLM training data and model adaptation (for example, data sources, training cut-off dates, data representativeness and the role of fine-tuning), and their implications for accuracy, reliability and domain-specific performance

13 Understand basic principles, risks and benefits of workflow automation and be able to integrate MT into a translation workflow in a task-appropriate and critically informed way, as well as pre-process, process and manage files and other media/sources as part of the translation workflow, where relevant / when appropriate

14 Critically select, justify and communicate the choice of translation technologies in relation to task complexity, data sensitivity, ethical considerations and client requirements

15 Use the most relevant technology applications, including the full range of office software

16 Apply tools in support of language and translation technology, such as terminology and data management tools, computer-aided translation tools, corpus tools, text analysis tools, translation and workflow management systems or generative AI technologies

17 Interact effectively with LLM-driven technologies in alignment with client specifications and the specific model used by evaluating automatically generated responses and carrying out supplementary research

18 Apply ethical principles when using MT, AI and information technology in translation, taking into account related linguistic, legal, societal and environmental issues, including data protection, bias mitigation, transparency, accessibility, responsible sourcing of language data, and effects on professional practice

19 Demonstrate digital resilience by continuously monitoring technological change, evaluating emerging tools and adapting rapidly to new technological environments

THEMATIC AND INFORMATION RESEARCH COMPETENCE



This competence covers general knowledge and the knowledge of the specific subject matter, field or domain that a translator is working with. It also includes the ability to search for and acquire specialised information from different sources, including from experts in specific domains, to better grasp the topic at hand, as well as to recognise the inaccuracies in the sources they are using.

TRANSLATION GRADUATES KNOW HOW TO...

20 Carry out research to identify information sources, including dictionaries, glossaries, corpora, experts and AI-generated content, and critically evaluate their relevance and reliability

21 Acquire, develop and use thematic and domain-specific knowledge relevant to translation needs (mastering terminology and phraseology, specialised sources, systems of concepts, methods of reasoning, presentation standards, etc.), also in order to identify and eliminate inadequate additions, omissions, biases and hallucinations or fabrications when working with MT and AI

22 Identify, describe and evaluate domain-specific content and terminology using appropriate specialised knowledge and linguistic data management frameworks for each context

23 Recognise the importance and value of different kinds of data, demonstrating data literacy

24 Extract, compile, structure, maintain, check and revise multilingual terminology resources, including domain-specific glossaries and termbases, and integrate these into translation technologies and client-specific translation workflows



(INTER)PERSONAL AND SERVICE PROVISION COMPETENCE

This competence area includes the generic, transferable and reflective skills, often referred to as "soft skills", that enhance graduate adaptability, employability and capacity for lifelong learning. It also encompasses the skills required for the provision of translation and, more broadly, language services in professional and socially situated contexts – from awareness of clients, commissioners, users and communities, negotiation and ethical decision-making, through to project management and quality assurance. In this sense, it also integrates global competences, including intercultural awareness, active citizenship, respect for diversity, social responsibility and the ability to act critically and appropriately in multilingual, multicultural and institutionally complex settings.

TRANSLATION GRADUATES KNOW HOW TO...

25 Plan and manage time (including complying with deadlines)

26 Manage workload, cognitive load and stress, and effectively adapt to the organisational and physical ergonomics of the working environment

27 Work both autonomously and in virtual, multicultural and multilingual teams, taking into account the cultural backgrounds of team members, and using appropriate communication technologies

28 Use social media responsibly for professional purposes while respecting intellectual property rights, privacy and professional ethics

29 Understand and implement the standards applicable to the provision of a language service by critically assessing and working within the ethical principles (such as confidentiality and fairness) defined in codes of ethics and guides of good practice

30 Approach existing clients and find new ones through prospecting and marketing strategies using the appropriate written and oral communication techniques

31 Interact with clients to clarify the requirements, objectives and purposes of the task and to negotiate deadlines, rates, invoicing, pricing method (e.g., per word, per hour, value-based), translation approaches, working conditions, ethical standards and other issues related to the language service specifications to ensure mutual understanding

32 Organise, budget and manage translation projects involving single or multiple translators and/or other service providers

33 Apply the quality management and quality assurance procedures required to meet pre-defined quality standards and manage client feedback and complaints

34 Improve individual and collective professional visibility by networking with other translators, language service providers and other stakeholders, including via professional associations, events and social media

35 Manage personal progression and continuously self-evaluate, update and develop competences and skills through personal strategies, collaborative learning and structured reflection on one's own professional development

36 Monitor and take account of new societal and language industry demands, new market requirements and emerging job profiles by analysing and critically reviewing language services and policies and suggest improvement strategies as an extension to their economic and social responsibility

GLOSSARY

Note: The terms 'competence', 'skill', 'knowledge' and 'learning outcomes' are used here in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework (https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf), while the terms 'data literacy' are adapted from Ridsdale et al. (2015), 'AI literacy' from Krüger (2026), 'MT literacy' from Bowker (2025), and 'priming' from Carl and Schaeffer (2017) and Krüger (2025). In defining different AI-specific terms, we also considered the EU AI Act.

AI literacy: the ability to understand in principle how AI technologies work, and the benefits and risks for using them in a task; the ability to interact with AI technologies (such as generative and agentic AI) and to oversee their use in translation workflows; awareness of the ethical and social impacts of AI technologies and the ability to assess these impacts.

Competence: the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

Data literacy: the ability to collect, process, manage, evaluate, and critically use data (by deriving meaningful insights from but also possible misleading information within data).

Digital resilience: ability to thrive in a technology-oriented profession by recovering from and adapting to psychological and technical stressors encountered in modern online translation practice environments, by responding proactively to technological challenges, and by being open to change (adapted from Kornacki & Pietrzak, 2024

Generative AI: AI systems that use machine learning models, including large language models (LLMs), to generate or transform text and other forms of content.

Knowledge: the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study.

Large language models (LLMs): machine learning models that use deep learning techniques to generate human-like text for one or more languages.

Learning outcomes: statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy.

Machine translation (MT): automatic translation of text or speech performed by computer software, including LLMs.

MT literacy: the ability to understand the basics of how MT systems process texts and how they can be used for different purposes, as well as the wider implications associated with the use of MT; evaluate how MT-friendly a particular source text is; create and modify a source text so that it can be translated more easily by an MT system; and modify the MT output to improve its accuracy and readability.

Priming: a phenomenon where exposure to a word, phrase, or grammatical structure in the source text or in the MT output impacts the production of a related item in the target or post-edited text.

Skill: the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

Working languages: the source and target languages that the translator uses in a professional capacity. Generally, the main target language is referred to as language A, the main source language as language B and other source languages as C, D, etc.

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