

## CLEAR ENGLISH

### Tips for freelance EU translators

Here are some tips to help avoid copying phrasing and structure that would be cumbersome in English when translating documents from Member States. They should be especially useful to non-native speakers of English, but may serve as handy reminders for native speakers too!

#### 1. Use simple words.



*in view / light of the fact that* fees are high

*because / as* fees are high

*pursuant to / in accordance with / within the framework of* this Law<sup>1</sup>

*under / according to* this Law

*for the purpose of* protecting consumers

*to* protect consumers

the Directive *concerning / regarding / relating to* financial services

the Directive *on* financial services / the Financial Services Directive

important *from the point of view of* producers

important *for* producers

*despite the fact that* resources are limited

*although* resources are limited

*prior to / subsequent to* the Council Decision

*before / after* the Council Decision

*at the time when* the application is submitted

*when* the application is submitted

*until such time as* a decision is taken

*until* a decision is taken

*on the occasion of its accession to* the EU

*when it joined* the EU / *on joining* the EU / *upon accession to* the EU

Action is needed *at the present time*.

Action is needed *now*.

Help is needed *in the near future*.

Help is needed *soon*.

updated *on a daily basis*

updated *daily*

the Commission *is aware of the fact* that

the Commission *knows* that

*have a positive effect on* production

*help / boost* production

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<sup>1</sup> 'Pursuant to' and 'in accordance with' are used in legal English, but there are distinctions between them which translators do not need to consider. 'Under' is broad, so generally safe. 'According to' is used to cite a provision.

*have a negative effect on* consumers

*in the case of* category 3 undertakings

*in the event of* an emergency

*in the same context,* it is necessary

*equal or superior to* EUR 10 000

*It is inadvisable to be in control of a moving vehicle when suffering from fatigue.*

*hurt / harm / be detrimental to* consumers

*for* category 3 undertakings

*in* an emergency

it is *also* necessary

EUR 10 000 *or more*

*Do not drive if you are tired.*

This means avoiding archaic legalese.

The matter was put to the Style Guide Committee (*hereinafter 'the Committee'*). The Committee ...

Contract between the County of Needham (*hereinafter referred to as* 'the County') and Acme Imports (*hereinafter referred to as* 'Acme')

*the aforementioned* professions

The matter was put to the Style Guide Committee. The Committee ...

Contract between the County of Needham ('the County') and Acme Imports ('Acme')

*these / the above* professions

## 2. Leave out superfluous words.



Article 1 *of the present Regulation / hereof*

*the matter / question / subject of* state aid

under *the provisions / terms of* the Directive

the Commission *'s services*

*a period of* five years

*the / an amount of* EUR 10 000

increase funding *levels*

*under the conditions encountered* in practice



Article 1 (*of this Regulation* – only where necessary to avoid confusion)

state aid

under the Directive

the Commission

five years

EUR 10 000

increase funding

in practice

*actually* implemented the reform package including, *but not limited to, the following:*  
a *person* designated *as responsible* team leader

High prices harm consumers' *interests*.

*The practice of* crop rotation is regular.

For the operation of any lifting equipment it is *absolutely* required for the *operator* to be *equipped* with the *corresponding* licence.

This includes unnecessary initial phrases:

*It must be noted that* high prices harm consumers.

*The Commission notes that* the deal pursued a single aim.

*In this respect, I should like to recall* the consistent rulings of the Court, according to which ...

implemented the reform package including:

a designated team leader

High prices harm consumers.

Crops are regularly rotated.

A licence is required for the operation of any lifting equipment.

High prices harm consumers.

The deal pursued a single aim.

The Court has consistently ruled that ...

### 3. In general, cut out extra verbiage.



dockworkers *who have obtained authorisation to practise the profession of dockworker*

ensure *the suitability of the equipment used for the performance of work and its safety for use*

The cartel's *purpose was to maintain* prices *at their prevailing, elevated level*.

*It is not necessary that* the Commission *provide evidence of implementation of the agreement between* the participants to fix prices, *but only that it prove the existence of such an agreement*.

*Further to the letter by which the Commission asked us to provide clarification of* this matter, *we would like to provide the following opinion*.



*authorised* dockworkers

ensure *that* equipment *is suitable* and *safe*

The cartel *aimed to keep* prices *high*.

The Commission *must show* that the participants *agreed* to fix prices, *not that they actually did so*.

*Please find enclosed our response to your request for more information on* this matter.

*Part of the responsibility of the responsible team leader is also the confirmation that the totality of the workers who compose the team are wearing a work uniform which ensures their safety at work.*

The notice *seeks to increase understanding of* the Commission's investigation process *and thereby enhance the efficiency of investigations and ensure a high degree of transparency and predictability in the process.*

*The compositions of the teams for the performance of every type of construction work may not deviate from those provided for in the legislation on the branch of construction workers.*

'Cargo work' means loading *any good or item for transport or movement* from *the point of storage* onto *any* means of transport or *unloading from the point of storage onto the means of transport and from the means of transport to the point of storage.*

The team leader *must ensure* that *each* worker *on* the team is wearing a safety uniform.

The notice *explains* the Commission's investigation process *to ensure that it is efficient, transparent and predictable.*

Construction teams *must be composed as* provided for in *relevant* legislation.

'Cargo work' means moving *cargo* from *a place where it is stored* onto *a* means of transport or *vice versa.*

#### 4. Keep the subject close to the beginning of the sentence.



Under the terms of the agreement and subject to the call for proposals, *the Commission* shall fund the project.

Should a party not respond in time or should no agreement be reached within the maximum time period, *the Contracting Party* will consider the procedure to have failed.

As the provision which gave rise to the Commission's objections ceased to apply before the deadline for response, *the Commission's objections* are obsolete.

After the deadline for approval of the reports, and without prejudice to suspension by the Commission of this deadline, *the Commission* must pay interest on the late payment.



*The Commission* shall fund the project under the terms of the agreement and subject to the call for proposals.

*The Contracting Party* will consider the procedure to have failed if a party does not respond in time or if no agreement is reached within the maximum time period.

The provision which gave rise to the Commission's objections ceased to apply before the deadline for response. *Those objections* are therefore obsolete.

If payment is late, *the Commission* must pay interest. Interest accrues from the deadline for approving the reports. This clause does not affect the Commission's right to suspend the deadline.

## 5. Avoid splitting up subjects, modals, verbs and direct objects.



*The Guidelines*, which form rules of practice from which the Commission may not depart without giving reasons, *describe* the criteria for setting the amount of a fine.

The Commission *shall*, if the proposal is approved, *fund* the project.

The judicial council *may*, with a specially justified order, *extend* the period for conducting an investigation.

The audit team *reported* to the Commission *its findings*.

An applicant *may*, within 14 days, *contest* in writing *the Board's decision*.



*The Guidelines form* rules of practice describing the criteria for setting the amount of a fine. The Commission must give reasons if it departs from these rules.

If the proposal is approved, the Commission *shall fund* the project.

The judicial council *may order* an extension of the period for conducting an investigation. Such an extension must be justified on serious grounds.

The audit team *reported its findings* to the Commission.

An applicant *may contest the Board's decision* in writing within 14 days.

## 6. Prefer a verb to an abstract noun.



*carry out an evaluation of* performance

*conduct an investigation into* fraud

*give consideration to* consumers' concerns

*submit an application* for funding

*upon the expiration of* the time period

*within 30 days following notification to* farmers

*made a/the recommendation* that

by *the introduction of* a speed limit

the cost of *the provision of* a service

*contains a discussion of* results



*evaluate* performance

*investigate* fraud

*consider* consumers' concerns

*apply* for funding

*when* the time period *expires*

*within 30 days after* farmers *are notified*

*recommended* that

by *introducing* a speed limit

the cost of *providing* a service

*discusses* results

*effect payment of* EUR 10 000

*pay* EUR 10 000

*bring about an improvement in* quality

*improve* quality

*come to an agreement to the effect* that

*agree* that

Law 485/2010 *on the amendment of* Law 22/2006

Law 485/2010 *amending* Law 22/2006

*The funding of* projects *is effected* centrally.

Projects *are funded* centrally.

after *the setting up of* the Institute

after the Institute *was set up*

*introduce a ban on* smoking

*ban* smoking

*cause harm to* consumers

*harm* consumers

*effect an increase in* funding

*increase* funding

*perform an audit of* operations

*audit* operations

*provide a response* to the complaint

*respond* to the complaint

*Changes to* the Law did not *come about*.

The Law was not *changed*.

## 7. Use the passive voice sparingly. Inanimate subjects with animate verbs are fine.



An extension may *be requested by* any party.

This project *was rejected at* Commission *level*.

*A meeting was held* in Paris *between* A and B.

*In* Article 20 *it is stated* ...

Institutional reform *is advocated in* the report.



Any party may *request* an extension.

The Commission *rejected* the project.

A and B *met* in Paris.

Article 20 *states* ...

The report *advocates* institutional reform.

The passive is appropriate in these sentences:

The team's findings *are detailed on* page 8.

These provisions may *be amended by* a decision of the Minister for Finance.

## 8. Avoid starting with ‘concerning’ or a similar phrase.



*Concerning* / *When it comes to* state aid, the speaker outlined his proposals.

*As far as* these goals *are concerned*, the report states that progress is being made.

*When it comes to* fighting disease, lives may depend on *it*.



The speaker outlined his proposals *on* state aid.

The report states that progress is being made *towards achieving* these goals.

Lives may depend on fighting disease.

## 9. Consider replacing negatives with positives.



It is *not uncommon* for requests to be rejected.

It is *not excluded* / *not impossible* that we will fail.

The penalty shall be *not less than* EUR 10 000.

*Failure to observe* the rules is subject to a penalty.

The realisation of road work by workers who are *not certified is prohibited*.



It is *common* for requests to be rejected.

It is *(entirely) possible* that we will fail. / We *may (well)* fail.

The penalty shall be *at least* EUR 10 000.

*Breach of* the rules is subject to a penalty.

Road work *may* be performed *only* by *certified* road workers.

## 10. Consider short forms and pronouns to avoid repeating full names...



*The Startup Financing Scheme* grants loans to new businesses. In this way, *the Startup Financing Scheme* stimulates competition.

*The Special Investigations Department of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare* has investigated the allegations.



*The Scheme* grants loans to new businesses. In this way, *it* stimulates competition.

*We* have investigated the allegations.

### ... and instead of foreign or ad hoc abbreviations.

the National Institute for Quality and Organisational Development of Health Care and Medicines (GYEMSZI) ... **the GYEMSZI** ...

the National Institute for Quality and Organisational Development of Health Care and Medicines ... **the Institute / it** ...

the Financial Control Methodology and Internal Audit Department (FCMIAD) of the Ministry of Finance (MF) of the Slovak Republic (SR) ... **the FCMIAD MF SR** ...

the Financial Control Methodology and Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic ... **the Department / it** ...

### 11. Express conditions, including hidden ones, with 'if'.



*in the event of* fire

*in the event / case of* a successful application

*when / where* a beneficiary fails to comply

*provided that* the application is received in time

*in the event of* a sale or transfer of the holding

A manufacturer *who* does not have a place of business in a Member State shall designate an authorised representative.

A proposal *which* does not comply with applicable legislation may be excluded.



*if* there is a fire

*if* your application is accepted

*if* a beneficiary fails to comply

*if* the application is received in time

*if* the holding is sold or transferred

A manufacturer shall designate an authorised representative *if* it does not have a place of business in a Member State.

A proposal may be excluded *if* it does not comply with applicable legislation.

### 12. Express entitlement with 'may'.



Each owner *shall be entitled to* grant a licence to a third party to exploit the jointly owned results.

A beneficiary *is allowed to* use a simplified method for calculating eligible costs.

The negotiating body *shall have the right to* meet without the central management.



Each owner *may* grant a licence to a third party to exploit the jointly owned results.

A beneficiary *may* use a simplified method for calculating eligible costs.

The negotiating body *may* meet without the central management.



### 13. Express exceptions with ‘unless’ or ‘however’ (or ‘subject to’).



*except where* expressly authorised in this Annex

*without prejudice to / by derogation from*  
Article 2<sup>2</sup>

*Without prejudice to the aforementioned provisions,* a licence is not required for ...



*unless* expressly authorised in this Annex

*Subject to / unless otherwise provided for in*  
Article 2

*(However,)* A licence is not required for ...

### 14. If a sentence is too long, pull information out into separate sentences.



Under the current system, if an operator does not comply with the Regulation, the Ministry may, *taking account of the principle of proportionality,* withdraw the operator’s licence *unless the manufacturer takes measures to ensure its compliance with the Regulation within a reasonable time.*



Under the current system, the Ministry may withdraw an operator’s licence if the manufacturer does not comply with the Regulation. *The Ministry must act proportionally. It need not act if the manufacturer takes measures to ensure its compliance with the Regulation within a reasonable time.*

### But don’t change sentence boundaries in legislation.

As a work-around, split with appropriate references and semicolons.

All documents relating to the case must be sent, once the last evidence has been taken, to the prosecutor, *who,* within a period of one month, shall submit them to the court, *which,* within a period of one month, shall reach a final decision either to reject the case or to issue a court order, *even for* related offences, regardless of how serious they are, *when it* considers that there is no indication of one of the crimes in Article 1.

All documents relating to the case must be sent to the prosecutor once the last evidence has been taken; *the prosecutor* has one month to submit the documents to the court; *the court* then has one month to reach a final decision either to reject the case or to issue a court order; *this also applies to* related offences, regardless of how serious they are; *this provision does not apply if the court* considers that the case involves one of the crimes in Article 1.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Without prejudice to ...’ and ‘by derogation from ...’ do exist in legal English, but are used much less than their apparent equivalents in other languages (though their usage has become established in EU law). Avoid if uncertain.

**15. If appropriate, refer to members of a class in the singular to avoid confusion.**



*Workers* will receive laptop *computers*.

*Plumbers* with professional *licences* may:



*Each worker* will receive *a* laptop *computer*. (only one)

*A plumber* with *a* professional *licence* may:  
(Each plumber needs only one licence.)

**16. Do not use gender pronouns to refer to entities.**



The contractor shall notify applicants of *his* decision in writing.

Any deliberate inaccuracies found in a producer's declarations will disqualify *him or her* from the procedure.



The contractor shall notify applicants of *its* decision in writing.

Any deliberate inaccuracies found in a producer's declarations will disqualify *the / that producer* from the procedure.

**17. Finally, avoid 'false friends' from other languages.**



*adequate* mechanisms

an *attestation* of conformity

ordinary *citizens*

projects *coherent* with sectoral priorities

The Commission *communicated* its decision *to* the national authorities.

respect for national *competences*

This Regulation *completes* Regulation ...

*Consumption* is stable.

to *control* imports



*suitable / appropriate* mechanisms

a *certificate* of conformity

ordinary *people / consumers / users*

projects *consistent* with sectoral priorities

The Commission *notified* the national authorities *of* its decision.

respect for national *powers / jurisdiction*

This Regulation *supplements* Regulation ...

*Consumer spending* is stable.

to *check / verify / inspect / monitor* imports

to carry out a *control*  
to *deepen* relations  
The *dossier* is closed.  
Many *economic operators* have been hurt.  
to *elaborate / formulate / establish* a plan  
all *elements* of the process  
to *exercise* a profession  
to *exercise the profession of* lawyer  
to *foresee* a ban  
to *foresee* action  
*in the framework of* the plan  
*heterogeneous* conditions  
*illegal* state aid  
an *important* amount  
*informatics* experts  
an *information note*  
to *intervene* at a meeting  
EU *intervention*  
to *introduce a demand* for aid  
to provide *justification*  
agricultural *material*  
a *negative evolution* in trade  
the report *of* the Court  
the economic *perspective*  
to *realise* a project

to carry out a(n) *audit / check / inspection*  
to *expand / improve* relations  
The *issue / matter* is closed.  
Many *businesses / traders* have been hurt.  
to *draft / draw up / develop / produce* a plan  
all *aspects / items / stages* of the process  
to *practise* a profession  
to *work as a* lawyer  
to *provide for / impose* a ban  
to *envisage / plan / contemplate* action  
*as part of / under* the plan  
*uneven / disparate* conditions  
*unlawful* state aid  
a *large / significant* amount  
*IT / ICT / computer* experts  
a *memo / letter*  
to *speak / take the floor* at a meeting  
EU *activity / projects / action / involvement*  
to *submit a request* for aid  
to provide *evidence / an explanation*  
agricultural *supplies / equipment*  
a *downturn / decrease / drop* in trade  
the report *by* the Court / the Court( 's) report  
the economic *prospects / outlook*  
to *implement, carry out, complete* a project

to invite <i>reflection</i>	to invite <i>discussion / debate / thought</i>
to <i>reinforce</i> transparency	to <i>enhance / improve / increase / heighten</i> transparency
to <i>represent an actor for</i> change	to <i>help bring about</i> change
to <i>respect / adhere to</i> conditions	to <i>comply with / fulfill / meet</i> conditions
<i>sickness</i> insurance	<i>health</i> insurance
Regulation 23/2000 ... <i>this</i> Regulation ...	Regulation 23/2000 ... <i>the</i> Regulation ...
a <i>training</i>	a <i>course / workshop / presentation / talk</i>
to <i>transmit</i> a report	to <i>send</i> a report

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