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Let's do it together: Instances of cooperation in terminology work: Roles, tools, needs and difficulties

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Abstract. High quality multilingual terminology work is essentially a cooperative activity, as different roles (e.g. terminologists, domain experts, IT experts) interact to achieve the intended results. Furthermore, in the last decade the world of terminology has seen various efforts in fostering data sharing, exchange and mergers as well as the publication of previously in-house terminological data collections. The times when terminology was kept for internal purposes only and every organisation strived to meet internal demands by starting separate – albeit often similar – terminology projects are coming to an end: the era of cooperation in terminology has begun. However, several issues hampering cooperation and communication in terminology remain to be faced. Smooth collaboration between different professionals, challenges in work coordination, limited support from dedicated tools and a complex legal framework are some of the relevant aspects addressed in the paper.

Keywords. Cooperation in terminology, communication practices in terminology work, terminology workflow, roles in the terminology workflow, legal framework of databases, needs in terminology work.

1. Background

In the last decade the world of terminology has seen various efforts in fostering data sharing, data exchange and data mergers as well as the successful publication of previously in-house terminological data collections. For example, the Canadian termbank TERMIUM Plus^{®1} and the Swiss Termbank TERMDAT² are now open to the public. In 2004 the new European Union terminology database IATE³, the result of a merger of formerly separate institutional databases like EURODICAUTOM (Commission), EUTERPE (Parliament) and TIS (Council), was launched for internal use and later made available to external users in 2007⁴. Also data exchanges are being discussed and implemented more and more often (cf. e.g. the EuroTermBank project⁵). It would therefore seem that the times when terminology was kept for internal purposes only and every organisation strived to meet internal demands by starting separate – albeit often similar – terminology projects are slowly coming to an end. The era of cooperation in terminology has begun.

Notwithstanding these recent developments, several issues hampering cooperation and communication in terminology remain to be faced. Smooth collaboration between different professionals, challenges in work coordination, limited support from dedicated tools and a complex legal framework are some of the issues that we will address in the following sections.

2. Data collection

The information presented in this paper results from the analysis of 17 semi-structured interviews conducted between autumn 2011 and spring 2012 with terminology managers and terminologists working in terminology centres or units located mainly in Europe, but also beyond. It is further confirmed by the outcomes of an explorative online survey launched on the same topics in winter 2010/2011. The public centres/units involved in the research belong to different institutional levels, from the local/regional, to the national and supranational or international level. Also private

terminology centres participated to both the online survey and interviews. All types of approaches to terminology work have been covered. Most centres/units work with two or more languages, but some also follow monolingual projects (monolingual vs. multilingual terminology work). Both the prescriptive and the descriptive approach are represented. Often the two approaches coexist, but one or the other prevails according to the specific issue or project (prescriptive vs. descriptive terminology work). The majority of terminology centres/units supports translation work, only few have terminology standardisation as their main aim; several centres/units actually state that their terminology work can be considered multipurpose (translation-oriented terminology work vs. standardisation-oriented vs. multipurpose terminology work). The limited number of staff and time available do not allow many terminology centres/units to perform systematic domain-related work. Some work on a text-related basis, but most have to meet specific terminological needs ad-hoc in a very short time (ad-hoc vs. systematic vs. text-based terminology work). Finally, great efforts are put into anticipating future terminological needs rather than collecting terminology a posteriori (proactive vs. a posteriori terminology work) (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 24-26).

The online survey was based on more than 50 multiple-choice answers, the interviews on a predefined protocol concerning various aspects of terminology work, such as general aspects, methodology, terminology management, terminology management systems, terminology planning, etc. The survey was disseminated via relevant terminology networks (e.g. TermNet⁶, Infoterm⁷, etc.). With only one exception held via conference call, all interviews were conducted face-to-face. The interviewees were free to answer the questions and provide information in their own words. The audio was recorded with the interviewees' consent. The respective transcriptions have been numbered in sequence and anonymised (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 10-12).

3. Cooperation in terminology

Based on the results of the survey and interviews, in the following sections we will discuss various aspects of cooperation and collaboration in terminology, both within a single organisation (see 3.1.) and between different organisations (see 3.2.). We will illustrate the cooperating roles and also address the main difficulties and needs expressed, which concern, for example, the tools supporting collaboration and the legal framework of cooperation projects.

3.1. Intra-institutional cooperation

High quality multilingual terminology work is essentially a cooperative activity. Different roles interact within a set workflow to ensure a smooth progress of work, full adherence to the needs voiced, the topicality and relevance of information released as well as correctness of both language and content. Fig. 1 illustrates the roles involved in terminology work. The most prominent role are the terminologists doing the core work, who may be coordinated by terminology managers. Terminologists consult domain experts during their activity and are often supported by IT specialists. Their paramount goal is to meet the needs of their target users, who voice their demands and give feedback on the results. The rules and the degree of cooperation between the various roles we have just listed can be determined by different factors, e.g. the purpose, scope and target users of terminology, the specific domain under analysis and the number of languages considered. For example, in prescriptive terminology work domain experts may assume a more prominent role, e.g. as members of standardisation committees. In very small terminology teams, the role of the terminology manager might not exist, as one of the terminologists will take over coordination tasks, next to his or her daily tasks in terminology elaboration. Finally, the technical support can be outsourced to external service providers, especially when commercial tools are used for terminology management.

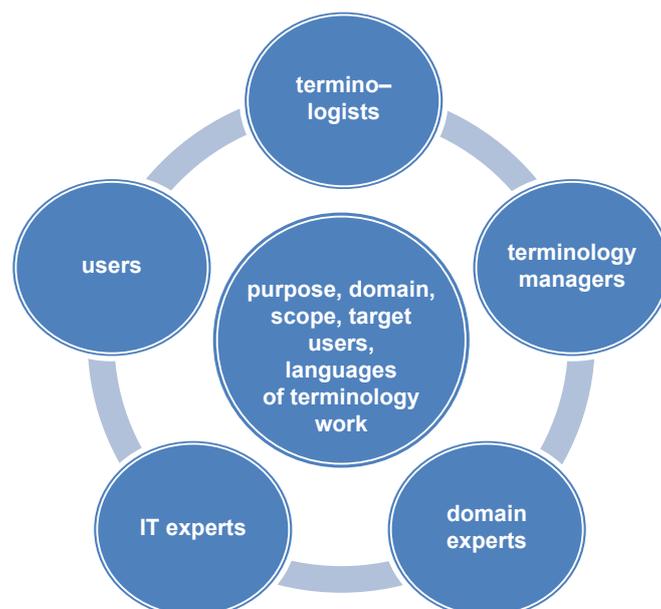


Figure 1: Roles cooperating in terminology work

The needs expressed in the interviews concerning the cooperation between roles in the terminology workflow and the solutions envisaged to meet them – albeit often in form of a compromise considering the availability of staff and resources – mainly concern:

- the limited availability of trained terminologists for all languages (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 23).

Qualified training in terminology is not available in all countries and for all languages of the world. Therefore, for lesser used languages or for languages spoken in countries with a very limited tradition in terminology work there is a clear lack of professional staff. This is one of the reasons why the native speaker principle demanding that terminologists mostly work in their mother language is rarely applied very strictly. The staff's training in terminology may also influence cooperation, as professionals belonging to different schools of terminology do face some challenges while cooperating in a large team.

The approach followed by some terminology centres/units that mainly support work in various translation units is to offer terminology trainings to the translators and/or to organise translator secondments to the terminology unit. These “rotating terminologists” temporarily enlarge the staff available for terminology work and become familiar with the theory and practice of terminology elaboration. Offering traineeships, especially to students of terminology, translation and languages, is another common way of acquiring temporary staff, but is also an opportunity of training and getting to know possible new staff members (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 24).

- the difficulty in coordinating terminology teams and keeping track of discussions and information exchange.

In the era of globalisation and cooperation in terminology, some terminology centres/units must cope with new languages, with teleworking staff, with challenges in coordinating various terminology units within a large organisation or within a cooperation project. One of the biggest issues is keeping track of discussions and common decisions. To meet this need some centres/units possess dedicated terminology forums; others conduct their internal projects, for example their terminology consolidation projects, in physical meetings or by circulating text documents and spreadsheets (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 32).

- the difficulty in involving domain experts and especially in having them formally involved in the workflow (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 28).

Domain experts play a key role in ensuring that the terminology produced fully adheres to the linguistic usage of the respective community of experts in a given language. They also help directing the search for terminology, explain difficult concepts, revise and correct the content produced by the language experts. Not being familiar with the principles of terminology work, they need the terminologists' guidance to fulfil their tasks. Domain experts are not always available for all languages and subject fields treated or they simply do not have the time to provide input, since terminology is not part of their core work. For this reason, many terminologists express the need for a more formal involvement of domain experts in the workflow.

In order to find expert advice when needed, most terminologists have their private networks, both within their own institutions and beyond. Consequently, domain experts are very often involved with an informal procedure, i.e. via e-mail or telephone, based on goodwill and personal acquaintance. In-house domain experts might be more readily available than external contacts, but for some domains there simply might not exist any internal expert. To counter the constant need for (timely) expert advice by native speaker domain experts, some terminology centres/units have tried to build a network of external specialists. A notable example is the network of Italian experts *Rete di Eccellenza dell'Italiano istituzionale* (REI)⁸. Its creation was triggered by the Italian Department of the DG Translation of the European Commission. The REI serves, among other purposes, also as a vast network of expert consultants for the Italian speaking translators and terminologists of the EU.

Once the expert is available, however, the problem of communicating the specific tasks that they are required to perform remains. Especially when domain experts are asked to revise terminology entries, it is good practice of some terminology centres/units to provide them with detailed checklists of what exactly they are supposed to examine and, if necessary, correct. This helps ensuring a constant level of quality and coherent revision across all languages and subdomains that are checked by different domain experts.

- the lack of IT assistance or difficulties in communicating specific needs to IT staff (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 32).

Dedicated tools or in-house programs designed to support terminology work can provide precious help, for example, by speeding up some activities, like term extraction, or by ensuring the retrieval, storage and dissemination of data. Still, many terminologists lament the lack of good tools, both commercial and own products, either because the tools need too much training in their opinion or because the tools seem to respond only marginally to their specific needs. The limited flexibility of certain software products is criticised, too. Finally, those who have in-house IT staff admit to having communication problems: they are not always able to express their needs in a way that would be understandable to a non-terminologist, as much as the IT staff have trouble in explaining technical issues and procedures to the terminologists.

Most large terminology centres/units established several decades ago have developed in-house tools for the management and publication of their terminology, especially because commercial tools were not readily available or not yet fully mature at the time. The in-house solution allows for maximum flexibility and independence, the lack of which is a much-lamented fault of commercial tools, next to the initial efforts needed to set, adapt or train any off-the-shelf tool (e.g. term extractors). However, the solution of building in-house tools for terminology calls for a regular cooperation with IT specialists (computer linguists, programmers, database managers, etc.) (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 32), with the ensuing difficulties of communication with non-terminologists. A surprising number of terminologists rely on common software to produce, share and update their terminology (e.g. spreadsheets, text files, etc.). This is obviously a sign that they feel the tools they possess do not meet their requirements. It is also true that terminologists mostly have limited or no competence in computer science and related technical issues and that they would need dedicated training in order to understand the full potential of the tools and how they can be employed to obtain satisfactory results.

- the limited input/feedback from users.

Terminology work is useful only if it meets the demands of the final users. However, if the target users – be they translators within the same organisation, who the terminologists intend to support with their work, or the general public – fail in providing input on their specific needs and feedback on the outputs of terminology, the terminologists are left without clear indication on the quality of their work and on the future expectations of their target groups.

To avoid this detachment from users' needs the terminology centres/units that mainly serve as a support for translation often organise regular meetings with the translation units in order to collect their needs according to the languages, domains and types of texts they are dealing with. Some centres/units also try to anticipate future needs by meeting the writers of the original texts (e.g. the legal drafters) or by collecting information on which issues will be discussed and will need translation (e.g. new measures, upcoming campaigns, legislation that is being revised, etc.). In this way they strive to tune their terminology work to the real upcoming needs as much as possible (cf. Chiochetti & Ralli 2012: 25, 30).

Information exchange with the end users also travels via other channels, such as terminology portals, feedback forms in terminological databases, terminology helpdesk services, etc. The secondment of rotating terminologists from translation units (where available), the “mandatory quota” of terminology work assigned to translators in some translation units or simply the writing rights given to translators in the terminological database are further strategies designed to keep the terminologists in constant contact with the users of terminological products. Some of these strategies seem to have triggered better results than others: while translator secondment seems to be evaluated quite positively, forcing a mandatory quota of terminology work upon the translators has not proven to be really effective.

3.2. Inter-institutional cooperation

In addition to the aspects considered in sec. 3.1., which apply also in case of inter-institutional cooperation, when separate organisations intend to join forces cooperation can become particularly daunting. In view of common terminology work or data exchange it will be useful to find a coordinator of the terminology projects and set up a team of experts from all participating organisations, with a clear definition of the roles, responsibilities and type of contribution. As in any other project, reasonable deadlines and clear work assignments for all participants help monitoring the work in progress and meeting the intended goal. Regular exchanges in physical meetings or with the help of communication tools (e.g. conference calls, forums) are a good occasion for discussion and information transfer (cf. Chiochetti et al. 2013: 66 ff.).

Data exchanges and mergers require a lot of preparation work, which can be kept in reasonable limits if the source data has a high granularity, that is, if data categories are clear-cut and very detailed, so that no manual check and revision of “multipurpose fields” (e.g. “jumble” note fields) will be necessary before data export. Data that can be exported in TBX, the standard TermBase eXchange format, will definitely pose minor problems. In case of data mergers, the probability of ending up with many doublettes can be quite high. Manual or (semi-)automatic data cleaning and consolidation should be foreseen to minimise the annoying presence of doublettes.

Especially – but not exclusively – for data exchange, it might be necessary to sign a cooperation agreement taking into consideration copyright issues and data ownership (see 4.). In 1996 TermNet published a Guide to terminology agreements (Galinski & Goebel) that may serve as a reference and starting point in order to draft any specific agreement, which will further need to take into consideration the national legislation of all parties.

4. Legal protection of databases

The legal protection of databases is a complex issue, as:

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- copyright protection for databases exists in various forms according to the national legislation or case-law (cf. Dir. 97/9/EC);
- different levels of protection operate both on the data itself and on the structure (Chiochetti et al. 2013: 64).

The need for legal protection of databases has its roots in the regulation of intellectual property⁹ at international level (De Robbio 1999: 2). In this regard, the *Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement)*, administered by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and adopted in Marrakech on 15 April 1994, is a fundamental milestone, as it aims, among other objectives, at protecting computer programs (as literary works) and databases (as intellectual creations):

- (1) Computer programs, whether in source or object code, shall be protected as literary works under the Berne Convention (1971).
- (2) Compilations of data or other material, whether in machine readable or other form, which by reason of the selection or arrangement of their contents constitute intellectual creations shall be protected as such. Such protection, which shall not extend to the data or material itself, shall be without prejudice to any copyright subsisting in the data or material itself. (TRIPS Art. 10)

The *World Intellectual Property Organization Copyright Treaty, (WIPO Copyright Treaty or WCT)*, adopted in Geneva on 20 December 1996, further states that:

Computer programs are protected as literary works within the meaning of Article 2 of the Berne Convention. Such protection applies to computer programs, whatever may be the mode or form of their expression. (Art. 4)

Compilations of data or other material, in any form, which by reason of the selection or arrangement of their contents constitute intellectual creations, are protected as such. This protection does not extend to the data or the material itself and is without prejudice to any copyright subsisting in the data or material contained in the compilation. (Art. 5)

At European level, the legal protection of databases is treated in a specific EU directive on copyright law, Directive 96/9/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 1996. This legislative act aims at harmonising the national regimes applicable to the legal protection of databases and introduces a new type of right, the *sui generis* right. The Directive protects databases, defined as “a collection of independent works, data or other materials arranged in a systematic or methodical way and individually accessible by electronic or other means” (Art. 1, para. 2). Therefore, a database can be “in any form” (Art. 1, para. 1), e.g. on an electronic medium, on paper, etc. The Directive does not apply to the software used in the making or operation of the database (Art. 1, para. 3) or to its content (Art. 3, para. 2). It concerns only the form, i.e. the structure or architecture of a database (Chiochetti et al. 2013: 65).

Art. 7 of the Directive introduces the already mentioned *sui generis* right. This right is attributed to the maker of a database¹⁰ in order “to protect the investment in making a database, i.e. collecting, verifying and/or presenting its contents” (Stockholm Network 2005: 7) against extraction or re-utilisation of the whole or of a substantial part of it (Art. 7, para. 2). This means that if there has not been a qualitatively or quantitatively substantial investment, the database will not be protected (Art. 7, para. 1).

In case of databases made available for the public, the maker of a database cannot ban the lawful user “from extracting and/or re-utilizing insubstantial parts of its contents, evaluated qualitatively and/or quantitatively, for any purpose whatsoever” (Art. 8, para. 1). In any case, the lawful user may not perform acts that could damage the interests of the maker of the database or conflict with normal exploitation of the database (Art. 8, para. 2).

The *sui generis* right can be transferred, assigned or granted under contractual licence (Art. 7,

para. 3) and lasts for fifteen years with effect from the date on which the making of a private database was terminated or a database was made available for the public (Art. 10).

Summing up, the Directive pursues a double objective:

- through the *sui generis* right it protects investments as such (e.g. human and financial resources, investments of time), unlike copyright law, which protects the creativity of an author and the structure of a database, but not the investment that went into collecting the materials (cf. Stockholm Network 2005: 7);
- it provides “copyright protection for the intellectual creation involved in the selection and arrangement of materials”¹¹ (cf. Art. 3, para 1).

Tab. 1 illustrates the main features that distinguish copyright and *sui generis* right at European level:

Copyright (author's rights)	Database right (<i>sui generis</i> right)
Rights are owned by the author.	Rights are owned by the maker.
The author owns the exclusive rights to authorise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ reproduction ○ translation, adaptation distribution to the public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ communication to the public ○ any use of translations, adaptations and other arrangements of the copyrighted material. 	The maker owns the rights to restrict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ extraction ○ re-utilisation of the database.
Exceptions apply for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lawful users performing actions necessary for the access to and normal use of the contents of the databases (without authorisation) <p>The Member States may provide for further exceptions for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ teaching purposes or scientific research, as long as the source is indicated and to the extent justified by the non-commercial purpose ○ purposes of public security or an administrative or judicial procedure <p>Additional exceptions might be traditionally authorised under national law.</p>	Exceptions apply for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ extraction and/or re-utilisation of insubstantial parts of the database ○ public lending <p>The Member States may provide for further exceptions for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ teaching purposes or scientific research (extraction and/or re-utilisation also of substantial parts of the database), as long as the source is indicated and to the extent justified by the non-commercial purpose ○ purposes of public security or an administrative or judicial procedure
Rights expire 70 years after the author's death, irrespective of the moment in time when the work was made accessible to the public.	Rights expire 15 years after creation

Table 1: Copyright vs. *sui generis* right (Chiochetti et al. 2013: 65-66)

As stated also by Galinski & Gobel (1996: 20), it is very important that each institution owing or elaborating terminological data see their data as an essential contribution to the intellectual property of humankind. Therefore, it should be made available to users according to terms and conditions reflecting the nature of the data. However, it is of paramount importance that data and database owners are aware of the different levels of protection that apply to their content and database structure, in order to take them into consideration when publishing and exchanging data.

5. Communication in terminology

Irrespective of the type of collaboration – whether inter-institutional or intra-institutional – good communication in terminology is important for the following reasons (cf. Chiochetti et al. 2013: 67):

- Making the stakeholders aware of the importance and usefulness of terminological activity.
- Strengthening the network with the people involved.
- Explaining methods and processes for implementing a terminology project according to the project schedule and the objectives defined. This is particularly important in case of inter-institutional cooperation, as different institutions that intend to cooperate could have diverging approaches concerning their data and their management strategies.
- Consulting, sharing information and data exchange, e.g. through physical meetings, discussion forums, dedicated platforms, etc.
- Making any contribution or data ownership visible in order to enhance motivation and identification with the terminological product.

Some interviewees outlined the difficulties in communicating the importance of terminology work in the translation and drafting process. In fact, communication problems often occur already at internal level. First, a strategy should be envisaged to make internal staff – be they translators, drafters or domain experts – recognise that terminology work is not an additional activity, but rather an essential part of the translation/drafting process and, at the same time, an investment that aims at making their work easier and more coherent. Next to successful internal awareness-raising initiatives, terminology work should be promoted externally, i.e. to the public.

A good communication strategy, needless to say, requires notable efforts and a lot of time. The results are usually visible in the medium and/or long term. The interviews conducted have shown some interesting initiatives in communicating terminology, such as (cf. Chiochetti et al. 2013: 68):

- the internal promotion of terminology work through, for example, internal meetings
- the creation of dedicated terminology portals collecting glossaries, external links etc. in order to share resources
- the creation of a common electronic platform for regular exchange (e.g. forums, wiki-like applications, etc.) and discussion concerning terminology issues
- the external promotion of terminology work, i.e. to the general public (e.g. at university level) through terminology newsletters, terms-of-the-month initiatives, periodic dissemination of neologisms, etc.

6. Conclusions

The days when institutions worked mostly on their own and did not need to exchange data or disseminate their activities are probably gone. Nowadays, terminology is essentially a cooperative activity. Cooperation means planning together, coordinating activities, sharing resources,

information and knowledge, exchanging data and experiences. This creates and strengthens group feelings and fosters the development of new ideas and perspectives. Working in and with a team allows focusing on specific aspects of terminology work, according to individual expertise and skills. In daily terminological practice, however, notable time pressure and shortage of staff do not always allow working with well-defined, separate roles and tasks. For example, as we have seen in 3.1., a terminologist might be in charge of coordinating a group of terminologists – thus acting as a terminology manager – and, at the same time, be supposed to perform his or her daily tasks concerning terminology elaboration.

The exchange of data between different institutions is a complex issue, too. From a legal point of view, copyright issues and data ownership cannot be overlooked and must be regulated clearly and explicitly in a specific agreement. From a mere technical point of view, data structures and data categories could differ. Consequently, it might be necessary to create a common database definition. This implies investing the time and efforts of qualified staff (e.g. staff with IT skills) to process and convert data.

Cooperation in terminology goes together with the need for efficient communication, both at internal and external level. Terminology is often seen as a by-product of translation, i.e. as something additional, not as a necessary complementary activity. As mentioned in sec. 5., specific strategies can be applied, first at internal level, to make the staff aware of the importance of terminology work in the translation/drafting process, and then at external level, e.g. by going public and making the database available to everyone, by sending out news on terminology and updates via mailing lists, etc.

Finally, in this paper we have given an overview over the instances of cooperation in terminology work from a theoretical and a practical point of view with the aim of better supporting the practical aspects of collaboration. This has been illustrated by discussing some specific issues, such as the levels of collaboration, the legal protection of databases and the communication strategies. Some aspects presented in this paper are further treated in the “Guidelines for collaborative legal/administrative terminology work” (Chiochetti et al. 2013) that were produced as an output of the LISE project (see introduction).

7. Acknowledgements

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8. Notes

¹ The Government of Canada’s terminology and linguistic data bank, available online at <http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca>.

² Terminology database of the Swiss Federal Administration, available online at <http://www.termdat.bk.admin.ch>.

³ Inter Active Terminology for Europe database, available online at <http://iate.europa.eu>.

⁴ Cf. http://iate.europa.eu/iatediff/brochure/IATEbrochure_EN.pdf (accessed 14 October 2013).

⁵ The EuroTermBank project results in a centralised online terminology database for the languages of recent EU member countries, esp. Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, with links to several other terminological databases and resources. It enables exchange of terminological data with existing databases, e.g. by establishing cooperation initiatives and aligning methodologies and standards as well as by designing and implementing exchange mechanisms and procedures (cf. <http://www.eurotermbank.com>, accessed 14 October 2013).

⁶ International Network for Terminology, cf. <http://www.termnet.org>.

⁷ International Information Centre for Terminology, cf. <http://www.infoterm.info>.

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⁸ Cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/rei/index.htm> (accessed 14 October 2013).

⁹ Intellectual property “refers to creations of the mind: inventions, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names, images, and designs used in commerce” (<http://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/index.html>, accessed 22 October 2013).

¹⁰ The maker of a database is “the person who takes the initiative and the risk of investment” (Dir. 96/9/EC, Preamble, p. 35) and does not qualify for copyright.

¹¹ Cf. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/internal_market/businesses/intellectual_property/l26028_en.htm (accessed 22 October 2013).

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Stockholm Network (2005). *What is the database sui generis right?* From the Selected Works of Estelle Derclaye. Issue 9, November 2005. Available online at http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=estelle_derclaye (accessed 18 October 2013).