



EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

SECRETARIAT GENERAL
TRANSLATION DIRECTORATE

A

**BRIEF LIST OF MISUSED
ENGLISH TERMS IN EU
PUBLICATIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the European institutions have developed a vocabulary that differs from that of any recognised form of English. It includes words that do not exist or are relatively unknown to native English speakers outside the EU institutions and often even to standard spellcheckers/grammar checkers (*'planification', 'to precise' or 'telematics'* for example) and words that are used with a meaning, often derived from other languages, that is not usually found in English dictionaries (*'coherent'* being a case in point). Some words are used with more or less the correct meaning, but in contexts where they would not be used by native speakers (*'homogenise'*, for example). Finally, there is a group of words, many relating to modern technology, where users (including many native speakers) 'prefer' a local term (often an English word or acronym) to the one normally used in English-speaking countries, which they may not actually know, even passively (*'GPS' or 'navigator'* for *'satnav'*, *'SMS'* for *'text'*, *'to send an SMS to'* for *'to text'*, *'GSM'* or even *'Handy'* for *'mobile'* or *'cell phone'*, *internet 'key', 'pen' or 'stick'* for *'dongle'*, *'recharge'* for *'top-up/top up'* etc). The words in this last list have not been included because they belong mostly to the spoken language.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ENGLISH?

English is the most widely-spoken language in the world¹ and is currently an official language in 88 sovereign states and territories; it therefore follows that it has many different versions and standards (British, Irish, American, Australian, Canadian, Indian, Jamaican, Singapore etc.). However, our publications need to be comprehensible for their target audience, which is largely British and Irish, and should [therefore follow a standard that reflects usage in the United Kingdom and Ireland](#). This is not a value judgment on the other varieties of English, merely recognition of the need to communicate in the language that our readers understand best. Arguments that "agent" or "externalise", for example, are used with different meanings in the United States, Singapore or Australia miss the point, as does the view that we should accept the EU usage of, say, 'prescription' because it can be found with the same meaning in a handful of countries and states that have a civil law tradition, like Scotland, or historical links with France, like Quebec, the State of Louisiana and Vanuatu.

¹ According to estimates, between 1.5 and 2 billion people speak English in one form or another. Although Chinese and Spanish claim to have more native speakers, English is geographically more widely spread and, if we include those who speak it as a second or foreign language, spoken by far more people (see: http://www.davidcrystal.com/DC_articles/English3.pdf).

WHO CARES?

A common reaction to this situation is that it does not matter as, internally, we all know what 'informatics' are (is?), what happens if we 'transpose' a Directive or 'go on mission' and that, when our 'agents' are on a contract, they are not actually going to kill anyone². Indeed, internally, it may often be easier to communicate with these terms than with the correct ones (it is reasonable to suppose that fewer EU officials know 'outsource' than 'externalise', for example). However, the European institutions also need to communicate with the outside world and our documents need to be translated – both tasks that are not facilitated by the use of terminology that is unknown to native speakers and either does not appear in dictionaries or is shown in them with a different meaning. Finally, it is worth remembering that, whereas EU staff should be able to understand 'real' English, we cannot expect the general public to be *au fait* with the EU variety.

'BUT THE COMMISSION USES THE SAME TERMINOLOGY!'

A further objection that is often put forward is that we must use the same terminology as other institutions (the Commission in particular). That is to say, if the Commission uses the verb 'transpose', for example, we must all use the same term, even if we know it to be incorrect. This is a dangerous path to take, especially as the Commission itself recognises the need to improve the quality of its English and is often hampered in this by constraints that smaller institutions may not face. Furthermore, many of our most important documents are designed to be read by the general public and not just the Commission or the other institutions and should be drafted accordingly. Fortunately, there are a number of simple ways of getting round any mismatches that we may find between the terminology in the background legislation, or in Commission documents, and the terminology that we know to be correct. If, for example, we find ourselves having to quote a passage that contains an incorrect or in-house term, we must explain it if we want to be sure that our readers will understand. In the example of 'transpose', we might add a note saying something like 'term used at the Commission/in EU legislation to indicate ...' (in this case, the enactment of a Directive in national law)³.

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contract>, meaning 4.

³ An example of good practice in this field comes from a Court draft report on 'Axis 3', which copes with the need to use the in-house term 'axis' by introducing it at the outset as follows: 'EU rural development policy for 2007 to 2013 is focused on three themes (known as "thematic axes")'.

HOW WAS THIS LIST PREPARED?

The original list was drawn from 'statements of preliminary findings' and draft reports from the Court of Auditors. Other words were supplied by English-speaking colleagues. The terms were then checked against dictionaries, native speakers in the UK, and the British National Corpus⁴, which is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken English from a wide range of sources, intended to represent a broad cross-section of current British English. Where possible, examples are quoted from official publications so as to give them more weight.

HOW SHOULD THIS LIST BE USED?

The problem with these words is that when people use them with the wrong meaning or in the wrong context, they are usually unaware that they are doing so. When we write 'the penalties "foreseen" in the Regulation', for example, it just sounds right, so most authors will not think twice about putting it down on paper. You might therefore find it useful to keep the summary list below to hand as a reminder for the next time one of these words comes up. This list may also help new staff to understand the terminology in existing texts and legislation. Please note that the opening list of words is hyperlinked to the main text.

IS THE LIST COMPLETE?

No. It is a living document and is subject to constant change. Also, English is, of course, a living language, and it too changes all the time. In some cases, EU expressions may even filter back into normal UK and Irish usage (although American English does have a much stronger influence). I feel that 'working group', as opposed to 'working party' may be one of these; another is almost certainly the unusual use of the term 'enterprise' instead of 'business' in the acronym 'SME'. On the other hand, the increasing though as yet not widely recognised use of 'actor' just to mean 'someone who does something' may be the result of the combined effect of both EU and US usage.

⁴ <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/using/index.xml?ID=simple><http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/using/index.xml?ID=simple>

A	Actor	Contractual (agent)	
	Actual	Contradictory procedure	
	Adequate	Control (to control, a control)	
	Agenda		
	Agent	D	
	Aids		Deepen
	Aim (with the aim to)		Define/definition
	Allow (to), permit (to), enable (to)		Delay
	Anglo-Saxon		Detached/detachment
	Articulate/articulation		Dispose (of)
Assist at	Do		
Attestation	Dossier		
Attribute to			
Axis			
B	Badge (badge, to badge)	E	
	Bovine, ovine, caprine and porcine animals		Elaborate
	Budget line		Enable (to) (see allow (to))
C	Cabinet		Ensure (to)
	Caprine (see bovine)		Establish
	Case (in case/in case of)		Eventual/eventually
	Coherent/coherence		Evolution
	College		Exercise
	Comitology		Externalise (externalisation)
	Competence(s)		
	Complete (to complete)	F	
	Concern (concerning/for what concerns)		Fiche
	Conditionality		Foresee
Conference	Formulate		
	Frame (in the frame of)		
	H		
			Heavy
			Hierarchical superior
			Homogenize (homogeneous/ homogeneously)

- I**
- Important
 - Incite
 - Inform (to)
 - Informatics/telematics
 - Inside
 - Intervention
 - Introduce
- J**
- Jury
 - Justify/justification
- M**
- Mission
 - Modality
 - Modify/modification
 - Modulation
- N**
- Name
 - Normally
 - Note
- O**
- Of
 - Operator/economic operator
 - Opportunity
 - Ovine (see bovine)
- P**
- Permit (to) (see allow (to))
 - Perspective
 - Planification
 - Porcine (see bovine)
 - Precise (to)
- Prescription
- Project
- Punctual
- R**
- Reasonability
 - Reflection/reflection group/reflection forum
 - Reinforce
 - Request
 - Respect (to respect/respect)
 - Retain
- S**
- Semester/trimester
 - Service
 - Shall
 - Sickness insurance
 - So-called
- T**
- Telematics (see informatics)
 - Third country
 - Training (a)
 - Transmit
 - Transpose (transposition)
 - Trimester (see semester)
- V**
- Valorise
 - Visa

ACTOR

Explanation

The Collins English dictionary defines an actor as 'a person who acts in a play, film, broadcast, etc.' or 'a person who puts on a false manner in order to deceive others (often in the phrase **bad actor**)'. However, in EU usage, 'actors' are often simply 'the people and/or organisations involved in doing something'. As this meaning is also found in US English, it also occurs in some sectors of international relations (as in the phrase 'state actors', for example). However, 'actor' is not normally used in this way, either in the United Kingdom or in Ireland and is best avoided. Research in the UK shows that, in this meaning, it is either not understood by the general public or, where understood, is perceived as 'a poor translation'. In the second example below, respondents understood the 'actors' in question to be internationally known film stars.

Example

*'Municipalities represent a major **actor** of the required change, thus their initiatives like the Covenant of Mayors should be further strengthened⁵.'* *[The European Parliament] ... acknowledges and welcomes the success of state-building efforts by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, which have been supported by the EU and endorsed by various international **actors**⁶.'*

Alternatives

It is very often preferable to rework the sentence, thus avoiding the problem altogether ('town councils play an important role in the process of change'). Often, as in the case of 'operators' below, you can resolve the problem by trying to identify exactly who you are talking about ('international aid organisations', for example) and using the appropriate term. In some circumstances, you may be able to use '**player**', which can actually mean 'actor' in both senses ('town councils are major players in the process of change'), but this should be done with extreme care.

ACTUAL

Explanation

'Actual' is sometimes used to refer to something that is happening now. However, in English it means 'real' or 'existing'.

Example

*'This appropriation is intended to cover basic salaries of the staff, as listed in the attached table, based on the **actual** regulations and on the probable adjustments⁷.'*

Alternatives

current, present.

⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0639:EN:NOT>

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011IP0429:EN:NOT>

⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002B0486:EN:NOT>

ADEQUATE

Explanation

'Adequate' is frequently used with the meaning of 'appropriate'. However, its actual (*sic*) meaning is closer to 'satisfactory' or even 'barely satisfactory'. An 'adequate solution' to a problem may not be the best one, but it will do. An 'appropriate solution' is one that is fitting.

Example

*'The collection of the data during the reporting process should be **adequate** and proportionate to the objectives pursued⁸.'*

Alternatives

appropriate, suitable, fitting.

AGENDA

Explanation

An agenda is 'a list or programme of things to be done or considered'. It is not a book in which you write down your appointments.

Alternative

diary.

AGENT

Explanation

In British and Irish English, an 'agent' is normally either someone who works for a government intelligence agency (CIA, MOSSAD, MI5, G2) or a person who runs or represents a service agency (travel agent, estate agent). He/she can also be someone who represents the interests of an artist (actor, musician etc.) or, increasingly, someone (not necessarily a direct employee) who represents a company in its dealings with the public (ticket agent, baggage agent, call-centre agent). Its use to mean 'someone who is employed by the EU in any capacity' is incorrect and, incidentally, is not even sanctioned by the Staff Regulations or the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants.

⁸

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010R1033:EN:NOT>

Example

'The issue of vacancies mainly concerns **contract agents**; it is not the high turnover as such but rather a matter of finding staff with the appropriate expertise⁹.'

Alternatives

staff, employee, official ('the problem of vacancies mainly concerns contract staff').

AIDS**Explanation**

The word 'aid' is usually uncountable¹⁰ in the meaning given here (=assistance, which is also uncountable) and should only be used in the singular. With an '-s', it is commonly used to refer to a disease (AIDS) or to devices that help you do something (e.g. 'hearing aids' or 'teaching aids'). Significantly, of the 3,232¹¹ examples of the word 'aids' included in the British National Corpus, nearly all those used to mean 'assistance' come from EU sources.

Example

'State **aids** — Decisions to propose appropriate measures pursuant to Article 108(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union where the Member State concerned has accepted those measures¹².'

Alternatives

aid, subsidies.

⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:C2010/303/02:EN:NOT>

¹⁰ English nouns are said to be either 'countable' or 'uncountable'. Countable nouns are words like 'biscuit', which can be counted, whereas 'uncountable', or 'mass' nouns are words like 'sugar' or 'milk', which do not normally have a plural. This distinction has grammatical consequences (compare 'some milk' with 'some biscuits'). Nouns that are uncountable in one language may be countable in another, like, for example, 'information', which, is uncountable in English but countable in French. Furthermore, nouns can be countable in one meaning and uncountable in another (which is the case here).

¹¹ Except in direct quotes, I have preferred to follow UK/Irish numbering conventions throughout as they are more widely understood than those currently provided in the EU's interinstitutional style guide, which can be found here: <http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-360500.htm>

¹² [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011XC0312\(01\):EN:NOT](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011XC0312(01):EN:NOT)

AIM (WITH THE AIM TO)

Explanation

There are 634 instances of 'with the aim to' (do something) in EUR-Lex. This expression actually takes of + the gerund.

Example

*'List of specific recommendations from the Commission **with the aim to** reduce the administrative burden of REACH by SMEs while maintaining their ability to fulfil (sic) all REACH obligations¹³.'*

Alternatives

with the aim of (doing something), with a view to (doing something).

ALLOW (TO), PERMIT (TO), ENABLE (TO)

Explanation

When used to mean 'make it possible to', 'allow to' cannot be used without a grammatical object, so we cannot say: 'At present, the statistics available do not **allow to** take account of all these situations': 'allow' needs to be followed by a noun or pronoun such as 'us' (the statistics do not allow us to take account of all these situations). EUR-Lex contains around 600 cases where this construction is used wrongly. The same applies to 'permit to' and 'enable to'.

Example

*'When the interoperability constituent is integrated into a Control-Command and Signalling On-board or Track-side Subsystem, if the missing functions, interfaces, or performances do not **allow to** assess whether the subsystem fully complies with the requirements of this TSI, only an Intermediate Statement of Verification may be issued¹⁴.'*

Alternatives

'make it possible to', 'allow us to', 'enable us to', 'allow (an assessment) of'

¹³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52013DC0049:EN:NOT>

¹⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012D0088:EN:NOT>

ANGLO-SAXON

Explanation

In English, the term 'Anglo-Saxon' is generally used to describe 'a member of any of the West Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) that settled in Britain from the 5th century AD'. Also, particularly in America, it is used to denominate white people, usually of the Protestant faith ('WASPS'), thus excluding large swathes of the population of that country. It follows that there is no such thing as an Anglo-Saxon country, or, as in the example below, an Anglo-Saxon agency or Anglo-Saxon capitalism. Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon language ceased to exist in the 12th century (I am ill-informed about Brussels, but the last known speaker in Luxembourg was St Willibrord, 658-739¹⁵). This term is particularly inapplicable (and, I gather, irritating for those concerned) when used to describe the Irish, Scots and Welsh, who partly base their national identities on *not* being Anglo-Saxons, and verges on the ridiculous when used to include West Indians.

Example

*'The **Anglo-Saxon** group of agencies reflect (sic) the previous dominance of **Anglo-Saxon** capitalism which was not disrupted by two world wars and the specific operational issues relating to Asian economies¹⁶.'*

Alternatives

'English-speaking' when referring to the countries or the people, 'British' and 'American' ('Australian' or whatever) when referring to agencies, capitalism etc. The term may, however, be used if you are talking about something like the (presumed) 'Anglo-Saxon conspiracy' and you will often find it used ironically in this way in the British press (usually in inverted commas). However, it has negative connotations and should be avoided.

ARTICULATE/ARTICULATION

Explanation

In English, 'articulate' normally means 'to put something into words' (e.g. 'he tried to articulate his fears'). Used intransitively, it means 'to speak' or 'to enunciate' (e.g. 'he had drunk so much that he had difficulty articulating'). Consequently, 'articulation' is 'the act or process of speaking or expressing in words'; it is also a synonym for a joint (principally in anatomy, botany and mechanics) and, by extension, the 'state of being jointed together'¹⁷. In EU texts, on the other hand, 'articulate' is commonly used, in a manner found in some Romance languages¹⁸, to mean 'coordinate', 'link together', 'connect', 'organise' or 'structure', and so 'articulation' is used to mean 'coordination', 'relationship', 'connection' etc. However, it is often difficult to understand exactly what meaning is intended, resulting in markedly different translations into other languages.

¹⁵ <http://www.willibrord.lu/>

¹⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010AE1615:EN:NOT>

¹⁷ 'Articulation' is also used as a technical term in music, sociology and social anthropology and certain schools of Marxist analysis (Gramsci, Althusser), but our readers would not necessarily be familiar with this.

¹⁸ <http://www.wordreference.com/es/en/translation.asp?spen=articular>

Examples

'The European Parliament ... urges Turkey to **articulate** (= discuss? coordinate?) with the Iraqi Government, and other neighbours, measures to counter the negative impact of the hydroelectric dam project announced by the Turkish Government¹⁹.' 'The strategy is **articulated** (= structured?) around four main 'pillars' that mutually reinforce each other²⁰.' 'While all groups aimed at generating policy recommendations, the main challenge remains to channel them into policy making at EU and national level, and **articulate** (= coordinate?) the work of the groups with that of Council Presidencies and the Commission²¹.' 'This includes an appropriate **articulation** (= coordination, link?) with the Cohesion policy funds²². The European Parliament ... calls on the Commission to develop a Product Policy that ensures greater consistency between environmental product policies by better coordinating the **articulation** (= design, coordination, interaction?), revision and implementation of the different policy instruments²³.'

Alternatives

Unless you actually mean to 'put something into words' or 'the act of putting something into words' or are referring to a joint, avoid these words and use 'coordinate', 'link together', 'connect', 'organise', 'structure' etc. for 'articulate' or the corresponding nouns for 'articulation'.

ASSIST AT**Explanation**

'Assist at' is archaic in the meaning of 'attend'.

Example

'The representative of the Commission as well as other officials and interested agents of the Commission **assist at** the meetings of the Committee and the working groups²⁴.'

Alternatives

attend, be present at.

¹⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011IP0090:EN:NOT>

²⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012DC0196:EN:NOT>

²¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0390:EN:NOT>

²² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0811:EN:NOT>

²³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010IP0485:EN:NOT>

²⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31974D0234:EN:NOT>

ATTESTATION

Explanation

Attestation is not a common word in English and its most frequent meaning is: *'the act of attending the execution of a document and bearing witness to its authenticity'*. It is not normally a synonym for 'certificate' as in the quote below.

Example

*'It is therefore necessary to decide whether, for a given product or family of products, the existence of a factory production control system under the responsibility of the manufacturer is a necessary and sufficient condition for an **attestation** of conformity²⁵'*

Alternative
certificate.

ATTRIBUTE TO

Explanation

If you attribute something to someone, you are saying that he is thought to have made it/produced it. For example, 'this painting was attributed to Constable' means that he was thought to have painted it, not that someone gave it to him. You can also attribute something to a cause ('The EIB attributes this relative underperformance ... to the financial crisis'). You cannot, however, attribute aid, compensation, contracts or licences.

Example

*'The contracting authority was obliged to **attribute** a service contract exceeding the value of 236 000 euro using the proper tendering procedures²⁶'*

Alternatives

allocate, grant, give, award, assign.

AXIS

Explanation

The use of the word 'axis' that is often found in EU documents (e.g. 'priority axes') appears to derive from the French (presumably from the meaning 'general direction' cited in the 'Petit Robert'). This use does not exist in English, where the word is used primarily in geometry, anatomy and politics ('the Axis powers'). This term is particularly unfortunate in the plural because the reader may mistake it for the plural of 'axe'.

²⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32011D0019:EN:NOT>

²⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009TA1110%2801%29:EN:NOT>

Examples

'Article 77 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (hereinafter the "General Regulation") provides that the interim payments and the final balance shall be calculated by applying the co-financing rate for each **priority axis** laid down by the Commission decision adopting the operational programme concerned²⁷. 'The Commission, by its Decision C(2008) 8573 dated 15 December 2008, reduced the ERDF assistance granted to the Operational Programme "**Access and Road axes**" for the period 1994-1999 in Greece by an amount of EUR 30.104.470,47. The relevant amount was effectively decommitted on 22 December 2008²⁸:'

Alternatives

depending on the context: priority axis = priority; road axis = road (sometimes trunk road); strategic axis = strategic priority etc.

²⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0482:EN:NOT>

²⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009SC1495:EN:NOT>

BADGE (BADGE, TO BADGE)

Explanation

The noun 'badge' is widely used in the EU institutions to indicate either a service pass or a tag used by employees ('agents') to clock in and out. Neither is usually called a badge in English, as the word generally refers to something that is worn (usually pinned, stuck or sewn to the bearer's outer clothing). By extension, the English term 'to clock in/out', has been replaced here by the neologism 'to badge'. On a brighter note, the little signs saying 'badger' at the Court entrances afford some harmless amusement for English-speaking staff (see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Badger>).

Example

*'One of the key features of the project is to rationalise and reduce the large number of types of **badge** that currently exist²⁹. 'New topping up system for your children's **badge** at the European School.'*

Alternatives

'service pass' or simply 'pass' for the piece of plastic you use to get into a building, 'tag' for the clocking-in device, and 'clock in/out' for the verb. In the school example above, the object is actually a 'lunch card'.

BOVINE, OVINE, CAPRINE AND PORCINE ANIMALS

Explanation

Bovine animals are 'any of various chiefly domesticated mammals of the genus *Bos*, including cows, steers, bulls, and oxen, often raised for meat and dairy products'. They are normally called 'cattle' in English. However, whereas the word 'bovine' may be recognised by English speakers (often with the meaning 'sluggish, dull and stolid'), the terms 'ovine', 'caprine' and porcine would only be known to specialists.

Example

*'Commission Decision of 26 July 2004 amending Annexes I and II to Council Decision 79/542/EEC as regards model certificates relating to the importation of **bovine animals** for slaughter and **bovine, ovine** and **caprine** fresh meat.'*

Alternatives

cattle, sheep, goats and pigs respectively³⁰.

²⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009D0970:EN:NOT>

³⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004D0620:EN:NOT>

BUDGET LINE

Explanation

'Budget line' is used so often that it has begun to sound right. However, it does not exist in English in the sense in which it is used in the EU institutions. Furthermore, even within EU terminology, there is no consensus as to what 'budget line' actually refers to (some say 'budget heading' and some 'budget item'), which is already a sign that it should be handled with care. The dictionary definition of 'budget line' is 'the alternative combinations of two different goods that can be purchased with a given income and given prices of the two goods', which is quite a different matter.

Example

*'Three budget titles in this policy group are almost exclusively managed by three corresponding Directorates General (DGs) of the Commission. These are DG and Culture (DG EAC) for **budget line** 15, DG Communication (DG COMM) for **budget line** 16 and DG Justice, Freedom and Security (DG JLS) for **budget line** 18³¹.'*

Alternatives

budget heading/item/title etc.

³¹

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1109%2801%29:EN:NOT>

CABINET

Explanation

'Cabinet' (usually pronounced 'cabinay' by English speakers and 'cabinet' by others) is the term used at the Commission (and informally at the Court of Auditors) to refer to the private office of a Commissioner (or Member). Other than denoting a piece of furniture, the term is most commonly used in Britain to refer to 'the senior ministers of the British Government'. The 'British cabinet' is therefore 'the principal executive group of British government' and not the private office of the British member of the Commission or Court or the staff thereof.

Example

'the British *cabinet*.'

Alternatives

'private office', sometimes, just 'office'.

CASE (IN CASE/IN CASE OF)

Explanation

In English, 'in case of' is most commonly used in sentences that follow the pattern: '*in case of fire, break glass*' i.e. 'in the event of an (adverse) occurrence³², act as follows'. In EU texts, on the other hand, it is often erroneously used to replace the preposition 'for' (e.g. 'farmers are subject to possible reductions in case of non-compliance' (= for non-compliance). 'In case' (without 'of') is often used instead of 'if', 'when' or 'where' ('the fund can be mobilised in case the damage caused by a national disaster exceeds the threshold'). This use is not only incorrect English, but it may also be misunderstood (in the case in point, the sentence does not mean 'we can mobilise the fund if and when the damage exceeds the threshold', as intended by the author, but 'we can mobilise the fund in order to prevent the damage exceeding the threshold', which is a different thing entirely).

Examples

'Farmers are ... subject to possible reduction of the grubbing-up premium *in case of* non-compliance with certain requirements³³.' '*In case of* pigs and poultry, at least 20 % of the feed shall come from the farm unit itself³⁴.' '*The likelihood of continuation of dumping in case the measures would be (sic) allowed to lapse is examined in the following*³⁵.' '*The fund can be mobilised in case the damages (sic) caused by a national disaster exceed the threshold of three billion euro*³⁶.'

³² In case of 'emergency, mugging, disputes, difficulty, trouble, accident, breakdown, enemy interference, trouble when handling prisoners, falls, germs, air raids, an attack, a hard winter, fraud or dishonesty, war, breakdown, hostilities, a fall, avalanches, a retaliatory, resurgence of smallpox, attack, broken legs and so forth, loose shoelaces (perhaps the cause of the broken legs), offending the Scots (!), rebellion in Hungary (!!)' etc (results from a BNC search)

³³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012SA0007:EN:NOT>

³⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012R0505:EN:NOT>

³⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012PC0264:EN:NOT>

³⁶ ECA preliminary report.

Alternatives

for, if, when, where. You can also say 'in the case of' (pigs, for example) or 'in cases of' or 'in the event of' (e.g. non-compliance).

COHERENT/COHERENCE**Explanation**

Coherent means 'logical; consistent and orderly' or 'capable of logical and orderly thought'. In the former meaning it is generally an internal characteristic of an argument or a publication, for example, and in the latter meaning, it is an internal characteristic of a person (e.g. 'he is totally incoherent, he must have been drinking'). In the EU, on the other hand, it is frequently used with the meaning of 'in agreement with' or 'accordant with' (something else).

Example

*'The proposed Framework Programme is **coherent** with the objectives of the SET-Plan and EU 2020 Strategy. For more details please refer to the ex ante evaluation and explanatory memorandum³⁷.'*

Alternatives

consistent/consistency.

COLLEGE**Explanation**

In the English-speaking world, 'college' normally refers to one type of educational establishment or another (university college, Eton College, etc.). It can also be a body of electors ('electoral college'). In the EU, it is used to mean the actual Court or Commission, as opposed to the institution and its staff. The only context where it is traditionally used in a similar meaning is the ecclesiastical Latinism: 'the college of cardinals' (from Collegium Cardinalium). The term 'college of Commissioners' has become enshrined in EU usage, but we should use the word sparingly when referring to other bodies. Especially when it is used in isolation ('the college' *tout court*), readers outside the institutions are unlikely to know what it refers to. In the example below, we can replace the word 'college' with 'Court' with no loss of meaning.

Example

*'The commitment will be confirmed again in the new building policy, to be adopted by the **College** before the 2007 summer break³⁸.'*

³⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0072:EN:NOT>

³⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007SA0002:EN:NOT>

Alternatives

'the Court'/'the Commission'. If it is necessary to specify beyond doubt that it was the actual Court, we can say 'the Court itself' or 'the Court's members' ('the Members of the Commission') or even just 'the Members' (or the 'Commissioners').

COMITOLOGY**Explanation**

There are 1,253 instances of the word 'comitology' in EUR-Lex. However, not only does the word not exist outside the EU institutions, but it is formed from a misspelt stem (committee has two 'm's and two 't's) and a suffix that means something quite different (-ology/-logy means 'the science of' or 'the study of'. It is therefore highly unlikely that an outsider would be able to deduce its meaning, even in context.

Example

*'The Commission must draft new rules setting out the powers and workings of the bodies replacing the Committees in the framework of the now-abolished **comitology** procedure, to ensure that the new system operates properly³⁹.'*

Alternative

The official term is 'committee procedure'.

COMPETENCE(S)**Explanation**

'Competence' in its meaning of 'the legal authority of a court or other body to deal with a particular matter' is uncountable in English and therefore does not usually take a plural. We normally speak of the 'powers' of bodies or institutions rather than their 'competences'.

Example

*'This Directive fully respects the **competences** of Member States, particularly on employment, labour and social matters⁴⁰.'*

Alternatives

Powers, jurisdiction.

³⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011AE0537:EN:NOT>

⁴⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009L0050:EN:NOT>

COMPLETE (TO COMPLETE)

Explanation

To 'complete' means to finish, end or terminate. It therefore implies that whatever is being completed was somehow incomplete. In EU texts, however, this word is often used to mean that something extra has been added to supplement something that, in itself, was actually complete beforehand.

Example

*'The French Republic, in July 2000, proposed a Regulation, to **complete** Regulation (EC) No 1347/2000, aimed at facilitating, through the abolition of exequatur, the exercise of cross-border rights of access in the case of children of divorced or separated couples, aged up to 16 years⁴¹.'*

Alternatives

supplement, add to.

CONCERN (CONCERNING, FOR WHAT CONCERNS)

Explanation

We often find paragraphs in reports that begin with '**concerning** XYZ, the Court found that ...', or instead of 'with regard to'. This sounds very odd in English. The rather endearing Gallicism 'for what concerns' is also remarkably common, even in published documents (30 hits in EUR-Lex, many of which are recent).

Examples

*'**Concerning** the achievement[s] of the six EFA goals, the PEDP report reports that sound progress is being made ...⁴²'* *'**For what concerns** resettlement, Member States will receive financial incentives (lump sums) every two years ...⁴³.'*

Alternatives

with regard to, in respect of, in terms of. However, there is no need to start an English sentence with a direct reference to the subject matter, as you would in certain other languages, and a different word-order might be better (*'The PEDP report states that sound progress is being made towards the achievement of the six EFA goals.'*). Furthermore, where this introductory phrase merely repeats the paragraph heading, it should be eliminated altogether.

⁴¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52002AE0029:EN:NOT>

⁴² Draft report on development aid.

⁴³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0751:EN:NOT>

CONDITIONALITY

Explanation

'Conditionality' is a clumsy word that should be used parsimoniously (see 'Reasonability'). Moreover, it is not an erudite synonym of 'condition' but a derivative of 'conditional' and means simply 'the state of being conditional'⁴⁴. Finally, it is an uncountable noun⁴⁵ that cannot be used in the plural, despite the 156 plural hits in EUR-Lex. It should perhaps be noted that this word is also used, equally incomprehensibly, by the IMF⁴⁶.

Example

*[The European Parliament] ... calls for it to be made possible for the actors involved in the management of operational programmes to influence **conditionalities***⁴⁷.

Alternatives

Often just 'conditions' or 'the conditions imposed/set'.

CONFERENCE

Explanation

In-house terminology uses 'conference' to refer to a simple talk or lecture, where one speaker comes to impart his knowledge on a given subject. In English, a conference is 'a high-level meeting for consultation or exchange of information or discussion with a number of speakers, often lasting several days', like the Kyoto conference, or in the legal context, a one-to-one meeting between a barrister and his client. In the example below, an outside reader would have understood that the medical service had invited a number of experts (doctors, researchers, university lecturers and politicians) to discuss the problem of infectious diseases and that one of them, Dr Arendt, would be taking questions. In fact, there was just Dr Arendt and he was giving a talk.

Example

*'In this context, and in response to the concerns expressed by a number of colleagues, the Medical Service is organizing a **conference** on Tuesday 12 October... A specialist doctor, M. Vic Arendt, will answer any of your questions*⁴⁸.'

Alternatives

talk, lecture, presentation.

⁴⁴ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Conditionality>

⁴⁵ See footnote 10.

⁴⁶ <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/conditio.htm>

⁴⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011IP0316:EN:NOT>

⁴⁸ Email from 'your administration' on 7/10/2010.

CONTRACTUAL (AGENT)

Explanation

'Contractual' means 'laid down in a contract' (e.g. 'contractual terms'), it does not mean 'under contract'. Although the term is widely used in this latter way in the institutions, it does not appear at all in the current *Staff Regulations* or in the *Conditions of Employment of other Servants*.

Example

*'The breakdown of staff employed at 31/12/2009 by the executive agencies was as follows: Temporary agents (officials seconded by the Commission and agents recruited by the agency) | **Contractual agents** | Seconded national experts | Total |*⁴⁹.

Alternative

contract (staff).

CONTRADICTORY PROCEDURE

Explanation

'Contradictory procedure' does not exist in English as a fixed expression, although, of course, a procedure can be contradictory⁵⁰. The dictionary definitions of contradictory are: 'involving, of the nature of, or being a contradiction' or 'given to contradicting', and it is unlikely that an uninitiated reader would understand what our 'contradictory procedure' is, even in context.

Example

*'All audits result in detailed findings being sent to the auditee to confirm the accuracy of the Court's observations, followed by a "**contradictory procedure**" on the final text of the audit report⁵¹.' 'The rights of the operators should be guaranteed through a **contradictory procedure** with its Flag State, the criteria for the listing should be clear, objective and transparent, and the de-listing process when the criteria are not met any longer should also be foreseen⁵².'*

⁴⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0281:EN:NOT>

⁵⁰ Try googling 'youtube argument clinic' for an example of a contradictory procedure.

⁵¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012SA0019:EN:NOT>

⁵² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007SC1336:EN:NOT>

Alternatives

There are some grounds for retaining 'contradictory procedure' as the technical term for the Court's *inter partes* discussion procedure with the Commission, as it has become the technical term for this event (although we used to call it, rather more informatively, the 'bilateral discussion procedure'). However, we must always bear in mind that people beyond our immediate circle will not understand it (the inverted commas in the first example above do not help), and it should certainly not be used outside this context (e.g. 'the paying agency held a contradictory with the farmer'). 'Inter partes hearing' or, in some cases 'adversarial (or) adversary procedure (proceedings/process)' are the equivalent English legal terms, but may sound too technical. In many cases it would be better to rework the sentence, e.g. 'the paying agency called the farmer in to discuss the matter'.

CONTROL (TO CONTROL, A CONTROL)**Explanation**

To control does not usually mean 'to audit' 'check' or 'verify'⁵³ and 'a control' is not normally 'a check' or 'an inspection'. Its most common meaning is 'to exercise authoritative or dominating influence over; direct'. Thus, if we say that 'the Commission controlled project X in the Member States', we do not mean that the Commission audited it, but that the Commission ran it. In combination with a few other terms contained in this list, this misuse can end up sounding quite sinister (e.g. 'the Commission's contract agents were on a mission in the United Kingdom to control spending'). Used as a noun, we do not 'carry out' or 'perform' controls. Controls are more likely to be systems that are in place (passport controls, for example). Hence, we can say that the Court checked to see if the key controls were working, but not that it carried out controls. When talking about systems, the best term will often be 'safeguard'. For example, 'a number of safeguards are built into the system to ensure that funds are spent correctly'.

Examples

*'Administrative checks must be undertaken on all applications for support and payment claims, and cover all elements that are possible and appropriate to **control** by administrative means⁵⁴.'*
*'Apart from the annual review of the reference amount, customs authorities are not obliged to carry out **controls** after authorisation⁵⁵.'*

Alternatives

audit, check, verify/verification, inspect/inspection, safeguard.

⁵³ This meaning is not mentioned at all in the Oxford online dictionary and is described by Merriam Webster as "archaic" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/control>)

⁵⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1109%2801%29:EN:NOT>

⁵⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006SA0011:EN:NOT>

DEEPEN

Explanation

'Deepen' is used in EU texts with an extraordinary variety of meanings, perhaps under the influence of languages where there is only one word for 'deep' and 'profound' – 'The EESC wishes to **deepen** Euro-American relations.' (expand? bring us closer? improve?) 'Further work is therefore needed to **deepen** understanding of these developments.' (increase?) 'In order to **deepen** the European Union.' (make it more pervasive?) 'We do not think it would be worthwhile to further **deepen** this issue here' (go into in greater detail?) 'It is in the Union's interests to further **deepen** its relations with the developing countries concerned.' (improve? take them further?) etc.

Alternative

Unless you are talking about making something physically deeper ('a well', for example), you would be advised to avoid this word and reformulate your sentence.

DEFINE/DEFINITION

Explanation

In English, 'define' means 'to state the precise meaning of' (for example 'we have already defined the meaning of control'). It does not mean 'establish', 'set out', 'lay down' or 'illustrate'.

Examples

*'The main tasks and activities of the IMI Joint Undertaking shall be: (a) to ensure the establishment and sustainable management of the Joint Technology Initiative on "Innovative Medicines"; (b) to **define** and carry out the annual implementation plan referred to in Article 18 via calls for project⁵⁶. 'A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the **definition** and implementation of all Union policies and activities⁵⁷.'*

Alternatives

establish, lay down, set out, draft, establishment, drafting, design.

DELAY

Explanation

'Delay' is often used to mean 'deadline' or 'time limit'. In English 'delay' always refers to something being late or taking longer than is necessary. You cannot, therefore comply with (or 'respect') a delay.

⁵⁶ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1216\(03\):EN:NOT](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1216(03):EN:NOT)

⁵⁷ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1214\(06\):EN:NOT](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1214(06):EN:NOT)

Example

'In order to respect the **delay** for transmission, the Commission can make small changes to the notification provided that they are agreed with the notifying member prior to transmission⁵⁸.'

Alternatives

time limit, deadline, time allowed.

DETACHED/DETACHMENT**Explanation**

'Detached' means 'separated', 'disconnected' or standing apart from others (as in 'detached house') or, in the case of a person, 'marked by an absence of (emotional) involvement'. A 'detached official' would therefore be one who worked in an objective manner (no doubt a laudable quality, but not what is usually meant).

Example

'The table below shows staffing levels in ACP Delegations before and after devolution. External staff comprise Local Agents, Contract Agents, **Detached** National Experts and Young Experts⁵⁹.'

Alternative

seconded/secondment.

DISPOSE (OF)**Explanation**

the most common meaning of 'dispose of' is 'to get rid of' or 'to throw away'; it **never** means 'to have', 'to possess' or 'to have in one's possession'. Thus, the sentence '*The managing authority disposes of the data regarding participants*' does not mean that it has them available; on the contrary, it means that it throws them away or deletes them. Similarly, the sentence below does not mean: 'the Commission might not have independent sources of information', it means that the Commission is not permitted to discard the sources that it has.

Example

'The Commission may not be able to assess the reliability of the data provided by Member States and may not dispose of independent information sources (see paragraph 39)⁶⁰.'

Alternatives

have, possess, xyz is/are not available to [the Commission].

⁵⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32011R0016:EN:NOT>

⁵⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006SC0977:EN:NOT>

⁶⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012AA0007:EN:NOT>

DO**Explanation**

'To do' is a rather weak word: 'to perform' and 'to carry out' are often better. Using them also avoids the rather common confusion between 'to do' and 'to make'. A peculiar use of 'do' is also found in '**Done at Luxembourg/Brussels**'; this is probably a legal requirement, but it would be better as just "Brussels" (or "Luxembourg").

Example

*'A third source of revision is the statistical adjustments **done** at national level and at European level to take account of the seasonality and the calendar effects affecting time series⁶¹.'*

Alternatives

perform, carry out, undertake.

DOSSIER**Explanation**

A 'dossier' is a file, often a copious one containing detailed records on a particular person or subject. However, it is not a particularly common word and not one that readers will necessarily fully understand or even know how to pronounce⁶². Also it is mostly used in certain specific contexts (intelligence agencies, for example – compare 'agent' above⁶³). In EU texts, in addition to being overused in this meaning at the expense of 'file', it is also employed metaphorically, where there is no actual file, to mean 'subject', 'issue' or 'question'.

Example

*'The Commission recognises how difficult it is to speed up its financing decisions, because of the huge mass(sic) of **dossiers**, the complexity of the management rules ... and the complexity of the internal and external consultation process'. 'Turkey has maintained close official contacts with the Iraqi authorities, and the Prime Minister visited Iraq, including the Kurdish Regional Government. Turkey engaged with Iran on the nuclear **dossier**⁶⁴'. 'The adoption of implementing measures in the field of taxation following the Comitology procedure is still the main obstacle to getting the proposal adopted. Probably only an amendment to the Treaty could give new momentum to this **dossier**⁶⁵.'*

Alternatives

if you mean file, use 'file' wherever possible, otherwise question, issue, matter, subject or even procedure.

⁶¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008DC0340:EN:NOT>

⁶² See comments under <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dossier>

⁶³ The example given in the Cambridge dictionary is illuminating: 'the secret service probably has a dossier on all of us'.

⁶⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011SC1201:EN:NOT>

⁶⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52003DC0614:EN:NOT>

ELABORATE

Explanation

To elaborate means 'to work out carefully or minutely' or 'to develop to perfection'. It does not mean to write something up. It is possible, though rather unusual, to elaborate a strategy, but not a document.

Example

*'Additional background information on less commonly used species, and habitats is available in the background information document **elaborated** by the Group of Experts⁶⁶.'*

Alternatives

draft, draw up, prepare.

ENSURE (TO)

Explanation

'To ensure' means 'to make sure or certain'. However, it is often used in the EU to mean 'to provide'. 'Ensure' should never be followed by 'to' and an indirect object.

Example

*'Establish national plans for rare diseases in order to **ensure** to patients with rare diseases universal access to high quality care, including diagnostics, treatments and orphan drugs throughout their national territory on the basis of equity and solidarity throughout the EU⁶⁷.'*

Alternatives

provide (with), guarantee.

ESTABLISH

Explanation

'Establish' is often used in the EU to mean to 'draw up' or 'draft'. In English, it actually means to 'set up', 'found' or 'secure'. You can establish a company or criteria, but not a report.

Example

*'During the reporting phase the Agency shall **establish** a final inspection report containing details of the conduct of the inspection⁶⁸.'*

⁶⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32007H0526:EN:NOT>

⁶⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008PC0726R%2802%29:EN:NOT>

⁶⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006R0736:EN:NOT>

Alternatives

draw up, draft, produce, prepare.

EVENTUAL/EVENTUALLY

Explanation

Eventual means 'occurring at some unspecified time in the future', eventually means 'in the end'. However, in EU texts, these words are often used with a meaning akin to 'possible' and 'possibly'. Thus, the sentence 'eventually, the beneficiary provided documentary evidence', which the author intended to mean something like 'if any documentary evidence were necessary/available, the beneficiary provided it', actually means that it took the beneficiary a long time to do so. In the example below, 'eventual' is used to mean 'possible', whereas it actually means 'in the long term'.

Examples

*'They both opposed an **eventual** imposition of anti-dumping measures as they considered that it could lead to a cessation of imports of the product concerned from the PRC⁶⁹. 'The results thus obtained will be taken into consideration by the Commission with regard to an **eventual** new request for derogation⁷⁰.'*

Alternatives

possible, any. It may sometimes be better to rework the sentence (e.g. eventual claims should be sent to the paying office = if you wish to make a claim, please write to the paying office).

EVOLUTION

Explanation

The word 'evolution' is both heavily overused and misused in our texts. Above all, it does not sit very well with the adjective 'negative' and a 'negative evolution' is something of an oxymoron. There are a number of more common words that should be preferred.

Example

*'The increase in transport costs leads to a negative **evolution** of exports and consumption (households have to face increased costs of transport)⁷¹.'*

Alternatives

development, trend, change, downturn/upturn, etc.

⁶⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010R0812:EN:NOT>

⁷⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010R0812:EN:NOT>

⁷¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008SC2208:EN:NOT>

EXERCISE

Explanation

'Exercise' is often used in EU documents to indicate a procedure or process of some sort or a period in which something is done.

Example

*'The promotion **exercise** is different in each institution. At the Commission and Parliament, the system involves the accumulation of points: officials are promoted when they reach the threshold for promotion⁷².'*

Alternative procedure.

EXTERNALISE (EXTERNALISATION)

Explanation

Although 'externalisation' has become something of a buzzword in the UK public administration, it is a recent acquisition and has not yet reached the dictionaries⁷³ or even Wikipedia⁷⁴, so readers may be unclear as to exactly what it means. It is therefore preferable to use a more established term if we wish to express the idea that a given service has been contracted out to a private company.

Example

*'Furthermore, the White Paper required that the decision to **externalise** should be taken on a consistent basis across the European Commission, so that similar instruments are used in similar cases⁷⁵.'*

Alternatives

outsource/outsourcing, contract out, send out.

⁷² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0042:EN:NOT>

⁷³ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/externalize>

⁷⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Externalization>

⁷⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009SA0013:EN:NOT>

FICHE

Explanation

Fiche is a useful word, but it is French. Its only use in English is to indicate the (somewhat outdated) microfiche.

Example

*'Where other information contained in the product information **fiche** is also provided, it shall be in the form and order specified in Annex III⁷⁶.'*

Alternatives

sheet, document, record, entry.

FORESEE

Explanation

The safest policy with this word is to avoid it. If you do wish to use it, bear in mind that it is one of the most frequently misused (and, by many accounts, annoying) words in this list and should be used with considerable caution. Its basic meaning in English is 'to see something in advance' and therefore to 'predict' or 'expect'. It is often used to describe the activities of soothsayers and fortune tellers ('she foresaw that you would meet a tall dark stranger') and, perhaps for this reason, it may sometimes not be clear whether the prediction in question is based on fact or not. In EU texts, it is incorrectly used in many ways that correspond more or less to the uses of the French word *prévoir* or the German *vorsehen* (both literally fore-see). We are told that 'X is foreseen in the Regulation' (= set out in/provided), that 'on-the-spot checks are foreseen' (=intended/planned) and that 'our procedures foresee (= include/provide for) documentary checks'. Even when used with the right meaning, 'foresee' is often syntactically awkward as it does not, for example, normally govern the infinitive: thus 'Croatia is foreseen to join the Union in 2013' is odd, whereas 'Croatia is expected to join the Union in 2013' is not.

In the example below, the author intended to say that the fleet adjustment schemes provided for the scrapping of 367 vessels. What he actually says is that they predict it.

Example

*'In total, Member States adopted 13 Fleet Adjustment Schemes (FAS), which **foresee** the scrapping of 367 vessels accounting for 32 448 GT and 50 934 kW⁷⁷.'*

Alternatives

According to the exact meaning intended: envisage, plan, lay down in, set out in, provide (for), contemplate, expect, predict.

⁷⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010R1062:EN:NOT>

⁷⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0037:EN:NOT>

FORMULATE

Explanation

Formulate is heavily over-used in our documents; it means 'to put into or express in systematic terms', 'to express in (or to express as if in) a formula' or 'to devise'. In our work, it is often overused with a meaning akin to 'draw up' or 'prepare'.

Example

*'This is estimated at €646,832 on a yearly basis, covering 4.0 FTEs to manage the documents and the website (including dealing with confidentiality issues and one 'communication manager) to **formulate** urgent safety communications)⁷⁸'.*

Alternatives

draft, draw up, produce, prepare.

FRAME (IN THE FRAME OF)

Explanation

Like 'foresee', 'in the frame of', meaning 'in connection with', 'in the context of' or 'within the scope of' corresponds literally to an expression found in a number of other languages (Italian 'nel quadro di', German 'im Rahmen von', French 'dans le cadre de' etc). Unfortunately, this expression does not exist in English.

Examples

*'In case (sic) the analysis is performed **in the frame of** a contamination incident, confirmation by duplicate analysis might be omitted in case the samples selected for analysis are through traceability linked to the contamination incident⁷⁹.' 'Food products would be chosen by Member State authorities **in the frame of** national food distribution programmes⁸⁰'.*

Alternatives

'in connection with', 'in the context of'. 'In the framework of' is also possible but may sound somewhat bureaucratic. In the second example above, 'under' would also be a good alternative.

⁷⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008PC0664:EN:NOT>

⁷⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012R0278:EN:NOT>

⁸⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0634:EN:NOT>

HEAVY

Explanation

'Heavy' has a number of meanings, mostly to do with weight and thickness (heavy load, heavy fog). It cannot, however, be used to render the idea that a procedure or administration is excessively complicated, slow or difficult. As well as using 'heavy' itself, EUR-Lex documents try to render this concept in a number of ways (cumbersome, burdensome, and even ponderous), but they rarely sound quite right.

Example

'The usual reason appears to be over-heavy administration'⁸¹.

Alternatives

complicated, excessively or unnecessarily complex/slow, etc., often 'unwieldy' (organisation, argument), or 'laborious' (process, procedure). Sometimes, we say that there is 'too much red tape'.

HIERARCHICAL SUPERIOR

Explanation

In English, this term is used almost exclusively in the ecclesiastical context, and even the word 'hierarchical' may be seen as a difficult word by many readers.

Example

'Error in the application of the case-law regarding the unlawful exercise of activities by the applicant's hierarchical superior'⁸².

Alternatives

manager, line manager, boss, immediate superior, head of unit, director etc.

HOMOGENISE/HOMOGENEOUS/HOMOGENEOUSLY

Explanation

Homogenise is a rather unusual word in English (only two hits in the British National Corpus) and is most commonly used with reference to milk. 'Homogeneous' and 'homogeneously' are much more common, but they are more often found in the sciences and social sciences, and are over-used in our texts.

⁸¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:92001E1812:EN:NOT>

⁸² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:62008H0340C%2801%29:EN:NOT>

Example

*'This new approach commits Member States to work together towards shared goals without seeking to **homogenize** their inherited policy regimes and institutional arrangements⁸³.'*

Alternatives

standardise/standardised, uniform/make uniform.

IMPORTANT

Explanation

'Important' is often wrongly used to mean 'big' ('the most important power station in France'); it actually means: 'strongly affecting the course of events or the nature of things' or 'having or suggesting a consciousness of high position or authority'.

Example

*'The annual accounts give detailed information on the financial corrections confirmed, implemented and to be implemented and explain the reasons for which an **important** amount is still to be implemented⁸⁴.'*

Alternatives

large, significant.

INCITE

Explanation

To incite means to 'encourage or stir up (violent or unlawful behaviour)' or to 'urge or persuade (someone) to act in a violent or unlawful way'. You cannot therefore, except in some Alice-in-wonderland parallel universe, incite someone to buy a car, use organic farming techniques or comply with a regulation.

Example

*'Although the slow charging stations have lower unit costs, the relative short ranges of EVs imply that the charging infrastructure needs to initially develop with a sufficient density to **incite** consumers using [= to use] such vehicles, and thus ensure utilisation rates that lead to a reasonable payback period⁸⁵.' 'Such activities shall not **incite** consumers to buy a product due to its particular origin⁸⁶.'*

Alternative

encourage.

⁸⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1109%2801%29:EN:NOT>

⁸⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52013SC0005:EN:NOT>

⁸⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32008R1145:EN:NOT>

INFORM (TO)

Explanation

Like 'to allow', 'to inform' requires a direct object (inform the public/us/them etc.) and cannot be used without one except in passive sentences ('we were informed of something', for example).

Example

'A number of Member States **informed** that they release regular evidence-based reports on young people's situation (*sic*), including their living conditions⁸⁷'.

Alternatives

in some cases you can add the relevant object ('a number of Member States informed the Commission ...'), otherwise, announced, declared, stated etc.

INFORMATICS/TELEMATICS

Explanation

Although these terms exist in English, they are not widely understood.

Example

'Professional experience in **informatics** related to data base management and accountancy applications⁸⁸'.

Alternatives

IT/ICT, or sometimes computer/computerised.

INSIDE

Explanation

'Inside' is often used in EU documents instead of 'within' or 'in' or even 'at' or 'by'.

Example

'The Commission's impact assessment system aims at ensuring evidence-based policy making **inside** the Commission through an integrated and balanced assessment of problems and alternative courses of action⁸⁹'.

⁸⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012SC0256:EN:NOT>

⁸⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:C2010/292A/02:EN:NOT>

⁸⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008SC0120:EN:NOT>

Alternatives

within, or the appropriate preposition: at/by/in.

INTERVENTION**Explanation**

In international relations, the normal meaning of 'intervention' is '*interference by a state in another's affairs*'⁹⁰ and this can have strong negative connotations⁹¹. Indeed, it is often found in combination with the word 'military', and this is how many respondents understood the first example below. In any case, it implies a limitation of the sovereignty of the country or territory in question⁹², which may not be well received by the public. In EU parlance, on the other hand, it is just the term normally used to designate EU-funded operations in the member countries and elsewhere, and is part of a hierarchy of activities that also involves 'measures' and 'actions' in which, more often than not, 'interventions' are implemented via specific 'measures' and 'actions' are a subset of 'measures' (sometimes known as 'sub-measures'). However, confusingly 'measures' and 'actions', are sometimes just synonyms (as in the common pleonastic phrase 'measures and actions'⁹³). A further problem is that, in normal English usage, both 'intervention' and 'action' are often uncountable, leading to unwanted grammatical problems. Curiously, 'intervention' is also used to mean a 'speech' or 'comment', usually in a conference or meeting. This is also wrong.

Example

*'The North of Kosovo: **interventions** have been very limited and there has been almost no progress in establishing the rule of law*⁹⁴. *[The committee of the Regions] ... considers it necessary that development and investment partnership contracts should become a means of making national and EU **interventions** truly complementary. [The committee of the Regions] ... reiterates that such contracts must be drawn up and developed with the full involvement of regional and local authorities*⁹⁵. *The following spoke: Holger Kraemer on the **intervention** by Rebecca Harms*⁹⁶.

Alternatives

'Activities', 'projects', 'EU-funded activities/projects'; where it refers to someone's contribution to a conference 'speech', 'contribution', 'comments', 'question', 'explanation' etc.

⁹⁰ <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/intervention>

⁹¹ 'The EU has overreached itself with directives and interventions and interferences' – David Cameron quoted in the Daily Telegraph, 8 April 2013

⁹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overseas_interventions_of_the_United_States, or 'the Australian August 26 2012 "Labor frontbencher Minister Bill Shorten has conceded that "residual resentment over the federal government intervention" might have played a role in Labor losing government in the Northern Territory'

⁹³ E.g. '[the European Parliament] considers that the public authorities and the EU have a moral and political obligation to adopt measures and actions to tackle this social problem', (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011IP0408:EN:NOT>)

⁹⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012SA0018:EN:NOT>

⁹⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011AR0167:EN:NOT>

⁹⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:C2013/029E/02:EN:NOT>

INTRODUCE

Explanation

Introduce normally means to 'present someone' or 'bring something in', whereas it is often used in our work to mean to 'submit' (as in submit an application or a report).

Examples

*'...importer should nonetheless (if he so wishes) **introduce** an application for a refund of anti-dumping duties within the six-month time limit⁹⁷.' 'In order to obtain accreditation ..., a candidate environmental verifier shall **introduce** a request with the Accreditation or Licensing Body from which it seeks accreditation or a licence⁹⁸.' 'Each State has to **introduce** a demand to be granted funding⁹⁹.'*

Alternatives

submit, put/send (an application/request/demand) in. In the first example above, it would be even better to substitute the whole phrase with 'apply'.

⁹⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52002XC0529%2805%29:EN:NOT>

⁹⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009R1221:EN:NOT>

⁹⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:92001E0730:EN:NOT>

JURY

Explanation

A 'jury' is 'a group of, usually twelve, people sworn to deliver a true verdict according to the evidence upon a case presented in a court of law'. The term is also sometimes used in talent shows. In English, it is never used in the context of recruitment.

Example

'The audit of recruitment procedures showed that the selection of applicants invited for an interview — about 80 % of applicants are rejected at this stage — was made by only one member of the jury¹⁰⁰'.

Alternatives

selection board, selection panel.

JUSTIFY/JUSTIFICATION

Explanation

In English, to justify means 'to demonstrate or prove to be just, right, or valid' or 'to show to be reasonable', and 'justification' is 'the act of justifying' or 'something that justifies'. In EU texts, we often find it used to mean 'to explain' or 'provide evidence for'. By extension, especially in working papers, we also find 'justification(s)' used to mean 'supporting document(s)'. In the example below, the author uses 'justification' to mean 'evidence', whereas, from the actual wording, we would understand something like: 'the French government was unable to provide an explanation (or even an excuse)'.

Example

*'Whereas the French Government was unable to provide any **justification**, and the Commission could find none, showing that the aid in question fulfilled the conditions required for grant of one of the exceptions set out in Article 92 (3) of the EEC Treaty¹⁰¹'.*

Alternatives

substantiate, provide evidence for, explain, evidence, supporting document, proof, explanation.

¹⁰⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1214%2815%29:EN:NOT>

¹⁰¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31981D0601:EN:NOT>

MISSION

Explanation

Mission' has a number of meanings, none of which corresponds to the way it is most commonly used in EU texts. Generally speaking, missions in English are performed by secret agents, astronauts or diplomats. Otherwise they can be the places where priests, nuns, diplomats etc. work abroad (often in developing countries). It never means a business or official trip and we would not say 'on mission' in any case. Unfortunately, however, it is a very useful word: we 'do our mission planning', 'go on mission', fill in a 'mission order', spend our 'mission allowance', declare our 'mission expenses' and do all of this via the 'mission(s) office'. While it would be difficult to do without the word internally, we should bear in mind that it is likely to be misconstrued by outsiders.

Example

*'With regard to the management of travel orders, the **missions** office ... has systematically coordinated the reservation of plane tickets and hotel rooms and has been able to obtain very reasonable group rates¹⁰².'*

Alternative

Often, at the Court of Auditors, 'audit/visit' ('I wasn't here last week because I was in Rome for an audit' (=on mission)), sometimes 'official trip', 'official business' or just 'business' or 'work' ('I was in Rome on business/for work'). NATO, the UN and the Canadian Government often talk of 'duty travel'.

MODALITY

Explanation

'Modality' is one of those words which people (a) swear is correct and (b) say they have to use because the Commission does so (the example below is a case in point). The trouble is that it is not English – at least not in the meaning applied in our texts. EUR-Lex contains over two thousand cases in which it is used to mean 'procedure', but this does not make it mean 'procedure'. In English, it is a rare and quite specialised word (only 50 or so hits in the British National Corpus), whose main meanings relate to grammar, philosophy, medicine and physiology.

Example

*'Evaluating such a unique scheme is a particular challenge for all actors involved. Evaluation **modalities** have gone through significant changes over recent years¹⁰³.'*

Alternatives

procedure, method, mode.

¹⁰² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31980Y1231%2806%29:EN:NOT>

¹⁰³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007SA0009:EN:NOT>

MODIFY/MODIFICATION

Explanation

When referring to changes to legislation, 'amend/amendment' are better words than 'modify/modification'. In other contexts, the word 'change' is a more common alternative.

Example

*'The Commission ... undertook to make proposals to **modify** the regulation before issuing the next annual report, which is to be drawn up in mid-2009¹⁰⁴.'*

Alternatives

amend, change.

MODULATION

Explanation

In English, 'modulation' is only normally used in the fields of music and grammar and with regard to wave frequencies. It is, in any case, a difficult word and one that many native speakers may not know. In EU documents, on the other hand, it is (strangely) used to mean a 'reduction' and, in the jargon of the common agricultural policy, refers specifically to a 'system of progressive reduction of direct payments allowing a transfer of funds from Pillar 1 ... to Pillar 2'¹⁰⁵. This is not something that the average reader can be expected to know (or even the above-average one for that matter).

Example

*'The voluntary **modulation** should take the form of reducing direct payments within the meaning of Article 2(d) of Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003¹⁰⁶. Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 established a system of compulsory, progressive reduction of direct payments ("**modulation**")¹⁰⁷.*

Alternatives

adjustment or reduction/increase as applicable. With reference to the common agricultural policy, if you use 'modulation', it must be explained.

¹⁰⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009AE0627:EN:NOT>

¹⁰⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/glossary/index_en.htm

¹⁰⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32007R0378:EN:NOT>

¹⁰⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012R0671:EN:NOT>

NAME

Explanation

In EU texts, particularly in administrative forms, the word 'name' is often used to refer exclusively to a person's surname, so we are asked to supply someone's 'name and first name' (usually in that order, sometimes with the word 'name' knowingly written in capital letters). More unusually, but very confusingly, it is sometimes used to refer to the person's first name to the exclusion of his/her surname (so we have 'name and surname'). In English, a person's 'name' is his/her whole name, so my 'name' is Jeremy Stephen Gardner, where Jeremy is my 'first name', 'forename', 'given name' or 'Christian name', Stephen is my 'middle name' and Gardner is my 'last name', 'surname' or 'family name'. The universal convention in the English-speaking world is that the 'first name' should come first and the 'last name' last (hence their names) and that it is possible to tell which is which by the order in which they are placed; the common EU practice of putting the last name first and indicating that it is actually the surname by placing it in capital letters is not widespread in English and may not be understood.

Examples

'CardHolderName is the **name and first name(s)** of the holder of the Control Card¹⁰⁸.' 'Title, Name and surname, Position in the applicant organisation¹⁰⁹.'

Alternative

As languages and cultures differ on this point, documents and forms in English should unambiguously specify which name is which, e.g. by using the neutral terms 'given name' and 'family name'. In running text (as opposed to forms or tables), the normal order should be retained.

NORMALLY

Explanation

Normally means 'as a rule', 'usually', 'ordinarily' or 'in a normal manner' (e.g. 'act normally!'). In EU usage, it often expresses something that should happen.

Example

'**Normally**, she will come at 8 o'clock' (= *She should be here at 8 o'clock*); 'Are you free this weekend?' 'Yes, **Normally**.' (= 'I should be.').

Alternatives

supposed to, should, expected to.

¹⁰⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002R1360:EN:NOT>

¹⁰⁹ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012D0215\(01\):EN:NOT](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012D0215(01):EN:NOT)

NOTE**Explanation**

In our administration, the word 'note' (dictionary definition = 'a brief letter, usually of an informal nature') seems to have invaded the semantic field of both 'memo' ('a written communication, as in a business office') and 'letter' (many of our 'notes' are anything but brief, and none of them are informal).

Example

*'An information **note** from Vice-President Kallas and the President, addressed to the College under the title, "Review of security policy, implementation and control within the Commission", which covered physical security as well as security of information, was adopted in 2008¹¹⁰.'*

Alternatives

memo, letter.

OF

Explanation

Many of our authors seem unsure of the rules governing English prepositions, possessive constructions and noun-noun compounds. They therefore tend to use 'of' as an all-purpose preposition in the place of 'from', 'by', 'in', 'on', 'at' etc., giving us 'previous reports of the Court' instead of 'previous reports by the Court', 'communication of the Commission', instead of 'communication (letter?) from the Commission', 'EC reports of the projects' instead of 'Commission reports on the projects' etc. Moreover, phrases with 'of' are often used instead of possessive '-s' constructions or noun-noun compounds (the reports of the Court/the Court's reports, communications of the Commission/Commission communications). This type of error can lead to ambiguity even where it is not grammatically wrong; for example, in the phrase 'the system of control of the Commission', is the Commission being controlled (audited?) or is it doing the controlling?

OPERATOR/ECONOMIC OPERATOR

Explanation

EUR-Lex has 1,057 hits for 'economic operator'. The term is not used in English in this way, but I take it that these are simply companies or businesses. Similarly, on its own, the term 'operator' is used to cover a wide range of activities – in customs, it can mean 'importer' or 'exporter' or possibly 'shipping company', depending on the customs scheme being examined: in agriculture, it can refer to farmers or people who market their produce etc.

Example

*'An alert mechanism that allows competent authorities to warn other Member States of a serious risk caused by an **economic operator** to the proper and secure functioning of the Single Market¹¹¹.'*

Alternatives

It would be clearer to call things by their own name – business if you mean business, farmer if you mean farmer, importer if you mean importer etc. As in the case of 'actor', the problem can often be solved by thinking carefully about who or what the 'operators' on question actually are.

OPPORTUNITY

Explanation

'Opportunity' does not mean 'the character of that which is opportune' (I am translating verbatim from a French dictionary). The English dictionary definition of opportunity is 'a favourable or advantageous circumstance or occasion or time' (as in 'I take the opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas.').

¹¹¹

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0075:EN:NOT>

Example

*'The Court questioned the **opportunity** of introducing these measures in such an uncertain economic climate¹¹².'*

Alternatives

advisability, whether it was advisable to, whether it would be opportune to.

¹¹²

Taken from a draft special report.

PERSPECTIVE

Explanation

The word 'perspective' is often used correctly to mean 'point of view' (e.g. 'from a research perspective'). However, it is also used incorrectly to mean 'expectation for the future' (as in 'financial perspectives').

Example

*'The Foundation enjoys a more stable **perspective** in 2010. It has already put in place tighter monitoring and control of budget transfers to limit the number of transfers and prepares measures to further enhance budget planning and forecasting for the 2011 financial year¹¹³.'*

Alternatives

outlook, prospects (usually in the plural).

PLANIFICATION

Explanation

'Planification' does not exist in English, but it comes up quite regularly. The example below comes from a published Court report.

Example

*'Simplified procedures and better **planification** should make it possible to even out the caseload under FP6, improving internal control and speeding up processes¹¹⁴.'*

Alternative

planning.

PRECISE (TO)

Explanation

There is no verb 'to precise' in English. 'Precise' is an adjective.

¹¹³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1214%2826%29:EN:NOT>

¹¹⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52004TA1130%2801%29:EN:NOT>

Example

'This proposal for a new basic regulation is justified because there is a need **to precise** the objectives of the CFP¹¹⁵.' 'The Committee urges the Commission ... **to precise** which period before confinement is meant¹¹⁶.'

Alternative
specify.

PRESCRIPTION**Explanation**

Although the legal term 'prescription', meaning 'the limitation of time beyond which an action, debt, or crime is no longer valid or enforceable' is commonly used in Scottish law, the State of Louisiana and possibly Quebec, it is little known with this meaning in the rest of the English-speaking world. It is a convenient term, but unfortunately not one that most English speakers would understand.

Examples

'During the period of the stay, the party who has seised (sic) the court in the Member State shall not lose the benefit of interruption of **prescription** or limitation periods provided for under the law of that Member State¹¹⁷.' 'Thus, inter alia, a uniform method for calculating the **prescription** is used, the starting point being the date on which the continuing infringement ceased, and the penalty to be imposed on each participant is only in respect of the whole of its unlawful conduct¹¹⁸.'

Alternatives

Generally speaking, 'limitation'. A 'statute of limitations' is said to apply: we can say, for example that there is a 'three-year statute of limitations', 'three-year limitation of action', 'three-year time-bar' or 'three-year limitation period'; if it is too late to pursue an action, we can say that 'the statute of limitations has run out'; if a debt can no longer be collected, we can talk of a 'time-barred' claim or offence. The terms 'stale claim' and 'stale offence' may also be used, but are less well-known.

¹¹⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0425:EN:NOT>

¹¹⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009AE0882:EN:NOT>

¹¹⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010PC0748:EN:NOT>

¹¹⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:61992C0049:EN:NOT>

PROJECT

Explanation

We sometimes find 'project (of)' used with the meaning of 'draft'. It is more common in working documents than in published reports, but some cases filter through into the Official Journal.

Example

*'A number of technical and editorial amendments were also introduced to define the scope of some provisions, to make the wording of the Directive more explicit and more consistent with the wording of the **project** of Regulation on placing on the market'¹¹⁹.*

Alternative
draft.

PUNCTUAL

Explanation

Punctual means 'acting or arriving exactly at the time appointed'. In the example below, the word 'punctual' implies that the experts' meetings were held on time. A good thing, no doubt, but not what is meant here, which is probably 'occasional'.

Example

*'The management of the above mentioned feed sectors is subject to close co-operation with the Member States through regular (generally monthly) meetings of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health, section on Animal Nutrition, and **punctual** expert groups meetings where appropriate'¹²⁰.*

Alternatives

one-off, occasional, individual, ad hoc, periodic, regular.

¹¹⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008AG0021:EN:NOT>

¹²⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010SC1143:EN:NOT>

REASONABILITY

Explanation

'Reasonability' may occur in some dictionaries, but like a number of other words in -ability and -ableness (**unavailability** is another common example much loved by IT), it is very marginal and stylistically awkward. Words of this sort should be avoided.

Example

*'Even if, as FNK maintains, it should be left to the crane-hire companies to interpret the concept "reasonable", which incidentally is nowhere apparent, it is still established that the **reasonability** of rates was discussed between the crane-hire companies and FNK¹²¹.'*

Alternatives

Rework your sentence to use the word 'reasonable', 'available' etc. instead.

REFLECTION/REFLECTION GROUP/REFLECTION FORUM

Explanation

In English, reflection is an internal process that takes place within the individual (e.g. 'I have reflected long and hard on this problem.') and does not necessarily involve any discussion. As for the curiously named '**reflection group**', the dictionary definition is 'a discrete group which is generated by a set of reflections of a finite-dimensional Euclidean space' (!?!).

Example

*'The Commission's **Reflection Forum** on Multilingualism and Interpreter Training[16] produced a report with recommendations on the quality of interpretation and translation¹²².'*

Alternatives

discussion, think tank, forum.

REINFORCE

Explanation

The verb 'reinforce' is most commonly used in the engineering or military contexts, but it is often misused in EU texts to mean 'improve' or 'increase'. Authors who recognise it as a Gallicism are often tempted to replace it with 'strengthen' (e.g. 'When strengthening the administrative capacity of a country, twinning is recognised as an important instrument.'), but there are often better words.

¹²¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995D0551:EN:NOT>

¹²² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010PC0082:EN:NOT>

Example

'Furthermore the Commission initiative on health security planned for 2011 will seek to **reinforce** the coordination of the EU risk management and will strengthen the existing structures and mechanisms in the public health area¹²³.'

Alternatives

improve, bolster, consolidate, increase, or, if negative, worsen, exacerbate etc.

REQUEST**Explanation**

Many authors assume that 'to request' is merely a more formal way of saying 'to ask' and that the two verbs can be used interchangeably. However, this is not the case as they function quite differently from a syntactic point of view. You **ask** someone **to do something** or you **ask** somebody **for something**, whereas you **request something from someone**. You do not, on the other hand, **request somebody to do something**. There are no problems with using 'request' as a noun.

Example

'In its resolution on the discharge of the EU general budget for 2004, the European Parliament **requested** the Commission **to** clarify the Court's right of access to projects managed by UN agencies¹²⁴.'

Alternatives

Replacing 'request' with 'ask' is by far the best option. Constructions using 'request' sound stilted and are difficult to get right: 'requested [clarification of ...]'; 'requested [that the Commission clarify ...]' (N.B. This construction requires the subjunctive ('clarify') rather than the indicative ('clarifies').)

RESPECT (TO RESPECT/RESPECT)**Explanation**

The most common meaning of the verb 'to respect' is 'to show deferential regard for'. It can also mean 'to avoid violation of' (rules, for example), but with this meaning it is over-used in EU texts and often in a grammatically awkward manner. The example below should read: 'ensure respect for property rights'.

¹²³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0673:EN:NOT>

¹²⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006TA1031%2801%29:EN:NOT>

Example

*'The existence and implementation of a coherent, effective and transparent set of laws which ensure the **respect** of property rights and the operation of a functioning bankruptcy regime'¹²⁵.*

Alternatives

comply with, compliance with, adhere to, meet (a deadline).

RETAIN**Explanation**

Retain means 'keep', unless you are talking about lawyers, in which case it means 'hire'. In EU texts, it is often used to mean 'adopt' or 'choose'.

Example

*'As this hypothesis was not **retained** by the social partners, the conclusion will differ'¹²⁶.*

Alternatives

select, choose, adopt, accept.

¹²⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52005PC0623:EN:NOT>

¹²⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009PC0410:EN:NOT>

SEMESTER/TRIMESTER

Explanation

In English, 'semester' refers to a term in an academic institution where the academic year is divided into two terms. This is rare in the UK and Ireland, where the academic year is usually divided into three terms. 'Semester' is rarely used for periods of six months in other contexts. 'Trimester', on the other hand, is used in medicine to refer to any of the three periods of approximately three months into which pregnancy is divided. Again, it is rarely used to refer to three-month periods in other contexts.

Example

*... will submit a proposal for a European Parliament and Council Regulation to create a general legal basis for IMI during the first **semester** of 2011¹²⁷. 'Training courses for the employees of the territorial subdivisions for population documentation were given during 2011 and in the first **trimester** of 2012¹²⁸.'*

Alternatives

Semester = half (e.g. 'during the first half of 2011')/six months/six-month period. Trimester = quarter (e.g. 'during the first quarter')/ three months/three-month period.

SERVICE

Explanation

At the Commission (but not usually at the Court), the term 'service' is widely used with a meaning akin to 'department', which causes confusion for the casual reader of the Commission intranet, where the word is used indifferently to mean both 'department' and 'service'. 'Service' is not the generic term for 'department' in English, although it is indeed used in the names of a few government departments, especially when they offer a service (e.g. the 'Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service', or the 'passport service'). The first example below shows that it is also misused in EU texts to mean 'the staff of'. In the second example, it is superfluous ('In agreement with the Commission'), though some might argue that it serves to emphasise a distinction between the institution itself (or its members) and its staff. However, there is usually no need to make this distinction explicit in English as the precise meaning is usually clear from the context.

Examples

*'For the financial year 2007, the **services** of the Commission's Accounting Officer carried out a follow-up of the previous year's findings¹²⁹.' 'In agreement with the **services** of the Commission, the group may set up subgroups to examine specific questions on the basis of the terms of reference defined by the group. Such subgroups shall be disbanded as soon as their mandate is fulfilled¹³⁰.'*

¹²⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0075:EN:NOT>

¹²⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012DC0348:EN:NOT>

¹²⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008TA1110%2801%29:EN:NOT>

¹³⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010D1016%2801%29:EN:NOT>

Alternatives

'The services of the Commission/Court etc.' can usually be reduced to 'the Commission/Court etc.'. If you really need to avoid ambiguity (was it the staff or the Commission itself?), you can say 'the Commission's staff' or 'the Commission's XYZ department'.

SHALL**Explanation**

In the third person (he/she/it/they), 'shall' should only be used if you are writing legislation or contracts or are quoting directly from them (in inverted commas). It should never be used when paraphrasing legislation or quoting it indirectly.

Examples

'The seven members of the board are selected from among experts possessing outstanding competence in the field of statistics. They perform their duties in their personal capacity and **shall** act independently¹³¹.' *Competent authority: The central authority of a Member State competent for the organisation of official controls (sic) in the field of organic production, or any other authority to which that competence has been conferred. It **shall** also include, where appropriate, the corresponding authority of a third country (sic)*¹³².'

Alternatives

must, should, is/are, is to/are to, can, may (as appropriate).

SICKNESS INSURANCE**Explanation**

As the correct term is health insurance, presumably one would take out 'sickness insurance' if one wanted to stay in bad health. I am afraid we are stuck with the paradoxical 'joint sickness insurance scheme', but the term should be avoided in other contexts.

Example

'A national authority may refuse authorisation to receive treatment in another Member State only if treatment which is the same or equally effective for the patient can be obtained without undue delay from an establishment with which the insured person's **sickness insurance** fund has an agreement¹³³.'

Alternative

health insurance.

¹³¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012SA0012:EN:NOT>

¹³² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012SA0009:EN:NOT>

¹³³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:62009C0173:EN:NOT>

SO-CALLED

Explanation

This is a risky term to use; although some dictionaries allow the meaning ‘commonly known as’, others, like the Collins dictionary, emphasise that its use casts doubt on the veracity of the term it introduces = ‘called (in the speaker’s opinion, wrongly) by that name’. In the example below, it implies that the author wishes to cast doubt on the fact that the system is really transitional. Furthermore, to cite the American Heritage Dictionary, ‘quotation marks are not used to set off descriptions that follow expressions such as so-called and self-styled, which themselves relieve the writer of responsibility for the attribution’. This use of ‘so-called’ followed by quotation marks is very common in EU texts (second example) and should be avoided.

Examples

*‘The EESC notes that the **so-called** transitional system for the application of the minimum standard rate of VAT, set at 15 %, which was adopted back in 1992 and is due to expire on 31 December 2010, needs to be extended¹³⁴.’* *‘With dimensions of approximately 8,5 × 30 × 23 cm, designed for monitoring the respiratory and anaesthetic gases of a patient under medical treatment (**so-called** ‘Gas Analyser Module’)¹³⁵.’*

Alternatives

Often, as in the two examples above, ‘so-called’ is superfluous and the other term can stand on its own. In other cases we can say ‘known as’ or ‘this is called’. Occasionally we may use inverted commas, though here too there is a risk that they will be misinterpreted.

¹³⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010AE1368:EN:NOT>

¹³⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32011R0112:EN:NOT>

THIRD COUNTRY

Explanation

The USA is one country, Canada is another, and Ireland is a third. The USA could sign an agreement with Canada to exclude a third country (e.g. Ireland) from their territorial waters (for fishing, for example). In EU texts, the term is widely used to mean 'countries outside the European Union', and sometimes 'countries outside whatever grouping of countries we are talking about'. This is incorrect and largely incomprehensible to outsiders. It is also objectively unclear. This is evident if we look at the (invented) example: 'he has a Schengen visa but he is not allowed to work in third countries'. Do we mean here: 'non-Schengen countries' or 'non-EU countries'? The unaccustomed reader might even mistake it for 'third-world countries'.

Example

*'Regulation (EC) No 1580/2007 lays down, pursuant to the outcome of the Uruguay Round multilateral trade negotiations, the criteria whereby the Commission fixes the standard values for imports from **third countries**'¹³⁶.*

Alternatives

non-member state(s), non-Schengen state(s), countries outside the EU/EEA etc.

TRAINING (A)

Explanation

This is one of a series of gerunds used creatively but incorrectly as countable nouns (a training, a screening, a prefinancing, a planning), which is not generally possible in English. Training in English is a process (the process of being trained) and it cannot be used as a synonym for a '(training) course'. It is also often used redundantly in combination with 'course' (second example below), as if the word 'course' on its own were somehow not good enough.

Examples

*'Workers posted by a TC¹³⁷ company (its principal place of business is outside the EU/EEA):- contract services suppliers;-ICT (including for the purpose of a **training**)¹³⁸.'The development of a vocational training programme for internal auditors in the Commission was completed, including a **training course** on fraud prevention, developed by OLAF¹³⁹.'*

Alternatives

course (language course/I am on a course/I am doing a course), workshop (attending a workshop), presentation, talk etc.

¹³⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010R1156:EN:NOT>

¹³⁷ TC = Third Country = in this case, country outside the EU and/or EEA.

¹³⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010SC0884:EN:NOT>

¹³⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0447:EN:NOT>

TRANSMIT

Explanation

'Transmit' normally refers to radio or television, or possibly the Morse code. When sending something by letter, email or fax, we normally say 'send'. If we are sending something on that has been sent to us, we say 'forward' or 'send on' rather than 'retransmit'.

Examples

*'The Court would thus be required to **transmit** its draft report on the same day that the Commission is required to **transmit** its synthesis report on the operation of the internal control system¹⁴⁰.' 'Where appropriate, each Member State shall **retransmit** to the NEAFC Secretary reports and messages received from its vessels in accordance with Articles 9 and 11 of Regulation (EU) No 1236/2010, subject to the following amendments¹⁴¹.'*

Alternatives

send, forward.

TRANSCOPE/TRANSPPOSITION

Explanation

In English 'to transpose' means 'to put in a different order' and it is normally used in mathematics and music. It is not a legal term and does not (even in places that have civil law systems, like Scotland, Louisiana and Quebec) have the meaning attributed to it in EU jargon (= to enact the provisions of a Directive in national legislation). It is a useful word internally, but will not be understood in the outside world, even by lawyers, except possibly those who speak good French or are used to EU terminology.

Example

*'The Commission shall, on the basis of the information provided by the Member States, publish on its website the details of the provisions approved by each Member State which **transpose** Chapter 3 of Title XI of Directive 2006/112/EC¹⁴².'*

Alternatives

implement, transfer/convert (into national law), enact (in national law).

¹⁴⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010AA0006:EN:NOT>

¹⁴¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012R0433:EN:NOT>

¹⁴² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010R0904:EN:NOT>

VALORISE

Explanation

'To valorise' means 'to fix and maintain an artificial price for (a commodity) by governmental action'. In EU texts, however, it is often used to mean 'to assign a value to' or to 'make the most of'.

Examples

'How could the results of the work of the Agency be best valorised for both the public and the private sectors thus enhancing the visibility of the Agency'¹⁴³' 'Whereas Article 4 (a) of Commission Regulation (EEC) No 1164/89 (3), as last amended by Regulation (EEC) No 2095/93 (4), lays down, inter alia, that the aid is to be granted only in respect of areas harvested, on condition that normal cultivation work has been carried out; whereas, if the aid scheme is to operate properly, a definition should be given of what is meant by harvest, on the one hand, and on the other only those cultivation practices which seek to valorize almost the whole of the product cultivated should be accepted'¹⁴⁴'

Alternatives

increase the value of, give a value to, enhance, make the most of, accentuate, upgrade, put to good use.

VISA

Explanation

Visa is misused to render not only 'approval' (example 1), but also the act of giving approval (example 2). In English, a visa is generally 'an official authorisation appended to a passport, permitting entry into and travel within a particular country or region'. It is also the name of a credit card. Some dictionaries also give a meaning akin to the one used here (approve/approval). However, it is not generally understood or used in this way, to the extent that none of the 407 occurrences of 'visa' in the British National Corpus corresponds to this meaning. In any case, you certainly cannot 'perform', 'do' or 'carry out' a visa as in the first example below.

¹⁴³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010SC1126:EN:NOT>

¹⁴⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31994R1469:EN:NOT>

Examples

*'Delegated Authorising Officers are responsible for financial management in their services, including functions that had previously been fulfilled at central level, such as, for instance, the centralised ex-ante **visa** performed by the Financial Controller, which was abolished in the context of Reform¹⁴⁵.' 'An important part of the system is the role played by the Control and Finance Section which has to **visa** all transactions before they can be authorised¹⁴⁶.' 'In addition, the Commission services indicated that the ex-ante **visa** of the Delegation would be suspended unless the ratification of the amendment to the MoU was ensured by the date of May JMC meeting and a credible plan to fully address the audit findings was prepared¹⁴⁷.'*

Alternatives

approval, endorsement, to approve, to endorse.

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¹⁴⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52004DC0093:EN:NOT>

¹⁴⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000Y1201%2801%29:EN:NOT>

¹⁴⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007SC1462:EN:NOT>