SUMMARY RECORD OF THE WORKSHOP ON USER REQUIREMENTS

Ms Lawson, in the chair, opened the discussion by referring to the different types of user; the end-user, the requester, and, in some cases, the translator himself.

Various speakers informed the meeting of their order of priorities. Mr Sereda (EDS Canada) put cost and competitiveness first, followed by the time factor and specific subject-field terminology, the latter being very time-consuming. He discussed the merits of the various kinds of typesetting. Up-front investments at EDS were not taken into account but overheads were calculated on a per-word rate. Ms Kinet (Mendez) ranked quality first and productivity next, putting cost in third place.

Mr Pigott reminded those present that Mr José Mendez had given a general breakdown of costs in his environment as follows: 35% for translation; 15% for specific revision for clients; 20% each for typesetting and studio work; 10% - printing and distribution.

Mr Lavorel asked Ms Kinet if clients requested different levels of quality. She replied that most expected a high-quality translation, while some were content with a rapid post-edit.

In reply to a question by Ms Braun, Ms Kinet stated that Systran was not used for every translation, but more particularly for texts to be published in the journal "Europe Sociale". The Systran approach was not used for texts dealing with advertising.

Ms Preston (CEC data bases) expressed satisfaction with work done for the General Secretariat. Some texts, written in a sort of idiomatic journalese, were perhaps not ideally suited to translation by Systran but overall reactions were favourable. Mr Foucart, in turn, expressed his satisfaction with rapid post-editing done on texts for the General Secretariat. The experiment had started one and a half years previously and he had seen a rapid improvement in the quality of Systran output.

Mr d'Erman stated that DG XVII had had a positive experience with Systran and there was widespread satisfaction with the work done by post-editors. However, end-users were generally considered to be less demanding than post-editors.

Mr Pigott spoke of the increased benefits from external users in terms of feedback. Much had been received from KfK and helped greatly the development of the French-English system.

In reply to Mr Foucart's question as to whether requesters' needs were reviewed regularly, Mr Pigott stated that this was one of the aims of the present workshop. It was very difficult to obtain an objective idea of the needs of in-house translators. There had been an unsuccessful attempt to circulate a questionnaire on users' basic requirements. There was, for example, an increasing need in the General Secretariat for translations from French and English into German.

The two basic applications, full post-edit and rapid post-edit still applied
and needs were standardized according to each user. Some departments had been
requesting more direct access to the system but, with the exception of the
end-users themselves, there was little enthusiasm for this idea.

Mr Lavorel explained that no basic distinction had hitherto been made between
documents destined for the circulation of information and documents which
would be used as a basis for legislation. Lack of information to translators
on the use to which their documents would subsequently be put, a point
reiterated subsequently by Mr Foucart, was the main objection they had to
allowing end-users direct access to the Systran system.

Mr d'Erman spoke of the need for less used languages such as Danish and Greek.
They required a rapid translation, mainly for information purposes. It was
generally accepted that Systran was particularly useful for the translating
short Commission documents which were required very rapidly and which took too
long to process in the translation service. Systran could provide them in a
couple of hours rather than the usual couple of days.

In reply to a question by Ms Lepelletier on the priority for the development
of new language pairs, Mr Rolling explained that it was on the basis of a
study of the volume of translation done in various language pairs at the
Commission in recent years; for example, 60% of texts translated were written
in French.

Mr Pigott explained that the French-German system would soon be in operation
and that development of French-Dutch and English-Dutch was currently under
way. Priority would be given to the development of English-Spanish, leaving
English-Portuguese for a later date.

Other external end-users gave brief but detailed accounts of their various
experiences and basic needs. CTA expressed satisfaction with translations done
in the French-English and English-French language pairs in the agricultural
domain. Mr Cox outlined NATO's need to shift a backlog of documents which
would be run through Systran. Both raw and rapid post-edited translations
would be used. Over ten years, NATO's demand for English-French translation
had gone up by 91.22%. He wondered about the validity of conclusions which
could be drawn after six months' use of the system.

Mr Habermann stated that he was supplying raw machine translated texts to
scientists and technicians. He made a distinction between what users want and
what they actually need and maintained he could provide them with what they
needed using machine translation.

There was general agreement on the need for machine translation output to be
in machine readable form.

Most end-users expressed a desire for rapid translation of texts. Mr Pigott
warned of the danger of confusing software speed and turn-around time. Speed
could be defined as the time within which the customer needed to receive his
translation. Mr Byrne-Sutton (IAEA) explained that the turn-around time at the
UN was very short: sometimes texts had to be translated overnight. In reply to
a question by Mr Pigott, he stated that a raw or rapid post-edited machine
translation would be preferable to none at all.

Most speakers agreed that the short turn-around time was one of the chief advantages of Systran.

Mr Pigott outlined the work being done by the Commission on Systran, including the number of language pairs it had. Mr Denis Gachot gave a brief description of the set-up of the Gachot group of companies and the systems they were developing and providing to clients.

Summing up, Ms Lawson laid emphasis on the individuality of clients. It was difficult to advise one on the basis of the needs of another. However, there seemed to be general needs common to all.