

A brief list of misused English terminology in EU publications

Introduction.

Over the years, the European institutions have developed a body of vocabulary that differs from that of any recognised form of English in a number of ways. More specifically, it includes a number of words that do not exist or are relatively unknown to native English speakers outside the EU context (*'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 (*'externalise'*, being a case in point). Thirdly, there are a number of words where the meaning is more or less correct but the usage is different (*'homogenise'*, for example). Finally, there is also a group of words, often relating to modern technology, where users (often even 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'* or *'Tom-Tom'*, *'SMS'* for *'text'* *'to send an SMS to'* for *'to text'*, *'GSM'* or even *'Handy'* for *'mobile'* or *'cell phone'*, *'key'*, *'pen'* or *'stick'* for *'dongle'*, *'modem'* for *'router'*, *'recharge'* for *'top-up/top up'* etc. The words in this last list have not been included because they appear to belong mostly to the spoken language.

What do we mean by English?

English is the most widely-spoken language in the world and there are many different versions and standards (British, Irish, American, Australian, Canadian, Indian, Jamaican, Singapore etc). It is, however, axiomatic that our publications should be comprehensible for their target audience, which is largely British and Irish and should therefore follow a standard that reflects usage in the Great Britain and Ireland. This is not a value judgement on the various varieties of English; it is just a statement to the effect that we should be aiming to communicate in the language that our public understands best. Arguments to the effect 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 this 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.

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 anyone¹. In fact, 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 quite 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, it must always be borne in mind that 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 reader 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 implementation of a Directive in national law).

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 Corpus², which is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken English from a wide range of sources, designed 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 usually have no awareness 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 be useful to new staff as a guide to help interpret 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 rare cases (I feel that 'working group', as opposed to 'working party' may be one of them), EU expressions may even filter back into normal UK and Irish usage, although American English does have a much stronger influence.

Actor	Do	Punctual
Actual	Elaborate	Reflection/ Reflection group
Adequate	enable (to)	Reinforce
Agenda	Ensure	
Agent	Establish	Request to
Aids	Eventual/eventually	Respect
Allow (to), permit (to), enable (to)	Evolution	Retain
Anglo-Saxon	Exercise	Semester
Assist at	Externalise	Service
Axis	Fiche	Sickness insurance
Attestation	Foresee	So-called
Attribute to	Frame	Strengthen
Badge	Formulate	Student
Budget line	Heavy	Telematics
Cabinet	Hierarchical superior	Third country
Case	Homogenise	Training
Coherent/Coherence	Important	Transmit
College	Informatics/Telematics	Transpose
Comitology	Introduce	Unavailability
Complete (to complete)	Jury	Valorise
Concern (concerning, for what concerns)	Justify	Dispose (of)
Concern (concerning, for what concerns)	Mission	
Conference	Modify	
Contractual (agent)	Modality	
Contradictory procedure	Normally	
Control	Note	
Deepen	Of	
Define	Operator	
Delay	Opportunity	
Detached/detachment	permit (to),	
Dispose (of)	Perspective	
	Precise (to)	
	Planification	
	Prescription	
	Project	

Actor

Explanation: In EU usage, 'actor' is often used to refer to 'the people and/or organisations involved in doing something'. Outside the EU, however, an actor is generally someone who performs on stage or screen.

Example: '*Municipalities represent a major **actor** of the required change, thus their initiatives like the Covenant of Mayors should be further strengthened*'³

Alternative: You can use 'player', which does actually mean 'actor' in both senses ('town councils are major players in the process of change') or, better still, you could rework the sentence ('town councils play an important role in the process of change').

Actual

Explanation: 'Actual' is sometimes used, particularly in working documents, to refer to something that happens or is happening now. However, in English, it means 'real' or 'existing'.

Example: '*The Commission's **actual** policy is to employ contract staff*'.

Alternatives: Current, present.

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' to the same problem is a solution that is fitting.

Example: '*The collection of the data during the reporting process should be **adequate** and proportionate to the objectives pursued*'⁴.

Alternative: 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) 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). 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.

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 expertise'⁵.*

Alternative: staff/employee/official ('the problem of vacancies mainly concerns contract staff').

Aids

Explanation: the word 'aids' is usually uncountable 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 3232 examples of the word 'aids' given 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 measures'⁶.*

Alternatives: aid/subsidies.

Allow (to), permit (to), enable (to)

Explanation: When used to mean 'make it possible to', '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 like this. 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 issued'⁷.*

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

Anglo-Saxon

Explanation: In English, the term 'Anglo-Saxon' is 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 (the last known speaker in

Luxembourg having been St Willibrord, 658-739). 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 economies⁸'.

Alternatives: 'English-speaking', or, less commonly, if you must, 'Anglophone', if you are talking about the countries or the people, 'British' and 'American' ('Australian' or whatever) if you are talking about the 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. However, it has negative connotations and should be avoided.

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 groups⁹'.

Alternatives: Attend/be present at.

Attestation

Explanation: Attestation is not a very 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, where 'certificate of conformity' might have been a better wording.

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 conformity¹⁰'.

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 or licences.

Example: 'The contracting authority was obliged to **attribute** a service contract exceeding the value of 236000 euro using the proper tendering procedures¹¹'.

Alternatives: Allocate/grant/give/award.

Axis

Explanation: The use of the word 'axis' that is often found in EU documents (e.g. 'priority axes') would appear 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'.

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 concerned'*¹²; *'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 2008'*¹³.

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

Badge (badge, to badge)

Explanation: The noun 'badge' is widely used in the EU institutions to indicate either a service pass or a little 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: *'New topping up system for your children's **badge** at the European School'*

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

Budget line

Explanation: 'Budget line' is a technical term that is used so often that it has begun to sound right. In fact, it does not exist in English in the sense in which it is applied in the EU institutions. Furthermore, there does not seem to be any consensus as to exactly 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** 18¹⁴.

Alternative: Budget heading/item/title/ etc.

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 denote the private offices of the commissioners (and members). Actually, other than being 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 Court or Commission or the staff thereof.

Example: 'the British **cabinet**'.

Alternative: '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 a (negative) occurrence¹⁵, act as follows'. In EU texts, on the other hand, it is often erroneously used in the place of the preposition 'for' (e.g. 'farmers are subject to possible reductions in case of non-compliance' (= for non-compliance). On the other hand, 'in case' (without 'of') is often used instead of 'if', 'when' or 'where' or 'in the event that' ('the fund can be mobilised in case the damage caused by a national disaster exceeds the threshold' = 'the fund can only be mobilised **if** the damage caused by a national disaster exceeds the threshold'). This use is not only incorrect, but may also be misunderstood (in the case in point, the sentence does not mean, as intended by the author: 'we can mobilise the fund if and when the damage exceeds the threshold', 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 requirements¹⁶*'; '***In case of** pigs and poultry, at least 20 % of the feed shall come from the farm unit itself¹⁷*'; '*the likelihood of continuation of dumping in case the measures would be (sic) allowed to lapse is examined in the following¹⁸*'; '*the fund can be mobilised **in case** the damages (sic) caused by a national disaster exceed the threshold of three billion euro¹⁹*'.

Alternatives: where possible, replace '**in case of**' with 'for'. Sometimes, you can also say 'in **the** case of' (pigs, for example) or 'in cases of' or 'in the event of' (e.g. non-compliance). Changing the syntax, you can also say, for example, 'in the event that' (e.g. 'farmers are subject to possible reductions in the event that they do not comply'). For '**in case**', use 'if', 'when' or 'where', if this is what you mean.

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).

Examples: *'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 memorandum²⁰'.*

Alternative: Consistent/consistency.

College

Explanation: In the English speaking world, 'college' normally refers to one type of educational establishment or another (university college, Eton College, I go to 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 meaning similar to the one applied in the EU is ecclesiastical: 'the college of cardinals'. 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 will not necessarily 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 break²¹'.*

Alternative: 'The Court'/ 'the Commission'. If a real need is felt 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 properly²²'.*

Alternative: The official term is 'committee procedure'.

Complete (to complete)

Explanation: To 'complete' means to finish, end or terminate. It therefore implies that whatever is being completed was somehow incomplete. In our texts, however, it 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 years²³'.*

Alternative: Supplement/add to.

Concern (concerning, for what concerns)

Explanation: We often find paragraphs in reports that begin with 'concerning XYZ, the Court found that ...', 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).

Example: *'**Concerning** the achievement[s] of the six EFA goals, the PEDP report reports that sound progress is being made ...²⁴; **For what concerns** resettlement, Member States will receive financial incentives (lump sums) every two years ...²⁵'.*

Alternatives: With regard to/in respect of/in terms of. However, unlike some other languages, English does not necessarily feel the need to start a sentence with a direct reference to the subject matter, 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'). Very often, the phrase in question is often just a repetition of the paragraph heading and can be eliminated altogether.

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. 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 questions²⁶'.*

Alternative: Talk/lecture/presentation.

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 the institutions, it is not

used 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 |'*²⁷

Alternative: Contract (staff).

Contradictory procedure

Explanation: 'Contradictory procedure' does not exist in English as a fixed expression, although, of course, a procedure can be contradictory²⁸. 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' was, even in context.

Example:

*'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 foreseen'*²⁹.

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 the 'bilateral discussion procedure'). However, we must always bear in mind that people outside our immediate circle will not understand it, 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: The default meaning of 'to control' 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 research expenditure'). 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 we are talking about systems, in some cases, the best term will often be 'safeguard'. For example, we can say that 'a number of safeguards are built into the system to ensure that funds are spent correctly'.

Example: *'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 means*³⁰; 'Apart from the annual review of the reference amount, customs authorities are not obliged to carry out **controls** after authorisation'³¹.

Alternative: Audit, check, verify/verification, inspect/inspection, safeguard.

Deepen

Explanation: The word 'deepen' is used 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: If you are not 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: This is actually one of the terms that are most often misused. 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'.

Example: '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 project'³². 'A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the **definition** and implementation of all Union policies and activities'³³.

Alternative: establish /lay down/set out/draft/establishment/drafting/design.

Delay

Explanation: 'Delay' is often used instead of 'deadline' or 'time limit'. In fact, it should actually be used when something is late. You cannot, therefore comply with ('respect') a delay.

*'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 transmission'*³⁴.

Alternatives: Time limit/deadline/period of 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 here).

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 Experts³⁵'.*

Alternatives: 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' or '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)'³⁶.*

Alternatives: have, possess, or, where absolutely necessary, xyz is/are not available to [the Commission]

Do

Explanation: 'to do' is a rather weak word and 'to perform' and 'to carry out' are often better. Among other things, this would help avoid the confusion that some people make 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".

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 series'³⁷.*

Alternatives: perform/carry out/undertake.

Elaborate

Explanation: To elaborate means: 'to work out carefully or minutely' or 'to develop to perfection'. It does not just mean to write something up. It is possible, though rather unusual, to elaborate a strategy but not usually 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 Experts'³⁸.*

Alternative: 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 'provide'. In any case 'ensure' is never followed by an indirect object with 'to'.

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 EU'³⁹.*

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 inspection'⁴⁰.*

Alternative: 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 our 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'.

Example: *'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 PRC'⁴¹; The results thus obtained will be taken into consideration by the Commission with regard to an **eventual** new request for derogation'⁴².*

Alternative: 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. On the one hand, it should only be used to describe a positive trend, so 'negative evolution' is something of an oxymoron. On the other hand, 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)'⁴³.*

Alternatives: development/trend/change/downturn/upturn etc.

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 promotion'*⁴⁴.

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 dictionaries⁴⁵ or even Wikipedia⁴⁶, so readers may be unclear as to exactly what it means. It is therefore preferable to use a more consolidated 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 cases'*⁴⁷.

Alternative: Outsource (outsourcing)/contract out/send out.

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 III'*⁴⁸.

Alternative: Sheet/document.

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 employed 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 kW'⁴⁹.*

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

Formulate:

Explanation: Formulate means 'to put into or express in systematic terms', 'to express in (or 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)'⁵⁰.*

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 (French 'dans le cadre de', Italian 'nel quadro di', German 'im Rahmen von' etc). Unfortunately, this expression does not exist at all 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 incident'⁵¹; 'Food products would be chosen by Member State authorities **in the frame of** national food distribution programmes'⁵².*

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.

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. EUR-Lex proposes a number of ways of rendering this concept (cumbersome, burdensome and even ponderous), as well as 'heavy' itself, but they rarely sound quite right.

Example: *'The usual reason appears to be over-**heavy** administration'*⁵³.

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**'*⁵⁴.

Alternative: Manager/line manager/boss/head of unit/ director etc.

Homogenise/homogeneous/homogeneously

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 more common, but they are more often found in the sciences and social sciences, and are over-used in our texts.

Example: *'This new approach commits Member States to work together towards shared goals without seeking to **homogenize** their inherited policy regimes and institutional arrangements'*⁵⁵.

Alternative: standardise/ make uniform/standardised/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 implemented'*⁵⁶.

Alternative: Large/significant.

Informatics/Telematics

Explanation: Although these terms exist in English, they are almost unknown and not widely understood.

Example: 'Professional experience in **informatics** related to data base management and accountancy applications'⁵⁷.

Alternative: 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 action'⁵⁸.

Alternatives: Within, or the appropriate preposition at/by/in.

Introduce

Explanation: Introduce normally means to 'present someone' or 'bring something in', whereas it is often used in our work to mean simply 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 limit'⁵⁹; '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 licence'⁶⁰; or even: 'Each State has to **introduce** a demand to be granted funding'⁶¹

Alternatives: Submit/put (an application) in; in cases like the first use in the example above, just 'apply' would be even better.

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 **jury**'⁶².

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'. At the Court, 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, 'justification' is actually being used to mean 'evidence', whereas, in fact, 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 Treaty'*⁶³.

Alternative: substantiate/provide evidence for/explain/evidence/supporting document/proof/explanation.

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'. On the one hand, it would be exceedingly difficult to do without the word internally, but on the other, 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 rates'*⁶⁴.

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 Canada 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 2000 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 years'⁶⁵.

Alternative: Procedure/method/mode.

Modify/modification

Explanation: If we are talking about making 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-2009'⁶⁶.

Alternatives: Amend/change.

Normally

Explanation: Normally means 'as a rule', 'usually', 'ordinarily' or 'in a normal manner' (e.g. 'act normally!'). In EU usage, we often find it to express 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').

Alternative: Supposed to/should.

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' (a lot 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 2008'⁶⁷.

Alternative: Memo, letter.

Of

Explanation: Many of our authors seem uncertain as to the rules governing English prepositions, possessive constructions and noun-noun compounds. They therefore tend to use 'of' as a sort of 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, Commission

communications/communications of the Commission). 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 1057 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 confusingly used to cover a multitude of sins according to the exact circumstances – 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 commercialise 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 Market'*⁶⁸.

Alternatives: It would be clearer to call things by their own name – company if you mean company, farmer if you mean farmer, importer if you mean importer etc.

Opportunity

Explanation: 'Opportunity' does not mean 'the character of that which is opportune' (I am translating literally 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)

Example: *'The Court questioned the **opportunity** of introducing these measures in such an uncertain economic climate'*⁶⁹.

Alternative: Advisability/whether it was advisable to/whether it would be opportune to.

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 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 year'*⁷⁰.

Alternatives: Outlook, prospect (especially 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 processes'⁷¹.

Alternative: planning.

Precise (to)

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

Example: 'This proposal for a new basic regulation is justified because there is a need **to precise** the objectives of the CFP'⁷²; 'The Committee urges the Commission ... **to precise** which period before confinement is meant'⁷³.

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.

Example: '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 State'⁷⁴; '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 conduct'⁷⁵.

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.

Project

Explanation: We sometimes find 'project (of)' used with the meaning of 'draft'. This happens more at the level of working documents than in published reports but some cases may 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'⁷⁶.

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'*⁷⁷.

Alternatives: One-off, occasional, individual, ad hoc, periodic, regular.

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 FNK'*⁷⁸.

Alternative: 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 translation'*⁷⁹.

Alternatives: Reflection=discussion/reflection group= think tank/reflection forum=forum

Reinforce

Explanation: The verb 'reinforce' is most commonly used in the engineering or military contexts, but it is often applied in the EU just to mean 'improve' or 'increase'. On some occasions, authors who detect it as a Gallicism are tempted to replace it with '**strengthen**' (e.g. 'When strengthening the administrative capacity of a country, twinning is recognised as an important instrument'), but often, all that is meant is 'increase' or 'improve'.

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 area'*⁸⁰.

Alternatives: Improve/bolster/consolidate/increase.

Request to

Explanation: 'Request to' sounds like it ought to be a more elegant way of saying 'ask'. However, it is a difficult verb to use transitively and this should therefore be avoided. 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 agencies⁸¹'.*

Alternative: Ask, or, if you want to use 'request': 'requested [clarification of ...]'; 'request that the Commission clarify', on the other hand, requires the subjunctive ('clarify' rather than 'clarifies').

Respect (to respect/respect)

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

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 regime⁸²'.*

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 differ⁸³'.*

Alternative: Select/choose/adopt/accept.

Semester

Explanation: In English, 'semester' refers to a term in an academic institution where the academic year is divided into two terms. This is not very common in the UK or Ireland, where the academic year is usually divided into three terms. It is not usually used for periods of six months 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 2011⁸⁴'.*

Alternatives: Half (e.g. 'during the first half of 2011')/six months/six-month period.

Service

Explanation: At the Commission (but not usually at the Court), the term 'service' is freely employed with a meaning akin to 'department', which causes a certain amount of confusion for the casual reader of the Commission intranet, for example. '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 used in the EU to mean 'the staff of'. In the second example, the word seems quite superfluous ('In agreement with the Commission'), though some might argue that it serves to emphasise a distinction between the institution itself and its staff. We often prefer to leave this distinction implicit in English.

Examples: *'For the financial year 2007, the **services** of the Commission's Accounting Officer carried out a follow-up of the previous year's findings⁸⁵, '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 fulfilled⁸⁶'.*

Alternatives: We would normally render 'the services of the Commission/Court etc' with just 'the Commission/Court etc'. If we really need to avoid ambiguity (was it the staff or the Commission itself?), we can say 'the Commission's staff' or 'the Commission's XYZ department'.

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 agreement⁸⁷'.*

Alternative: Health insurance.

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 extended*⁸⁸; *'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')*⁸⁹.

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 interpreted negatively.

Student:

Explanation: 'Student' is not the generic term for 'a young person in education'. Indeed, until the late 1980s, in UK usage, it referred exclusively to persons who were 'undergoing a course of study at a university or some other place of higher education'⁹⁰, and therefore largely to young adults. Since then, the American meaning of 'a person who is studying in a secondary school' has crept in, but, for many people, and in a number of expressions (student union, student bar etc.), its old meaning is the default one. In any case, it cannot be used, as in the example, to include the pupils of primary schools.

Examples: *'The proportion of **students** who, after two years of schooling, demonstrate sufficient reading fluency, and the proportion of **students** able to read with comprehension by the end of primary school'*⁹¹.

Alternatives: schoolchildren (schoolboy, schoolgirl), pupils, or if the context is clear, just 'children' ('Miss Smith has 25 children in her class').

Third country

Explanation: The USA is one country, Canada is another and Britain is a third country. The USA could sign an agreement with Canada to exclude a third country (Britain) from their territorial waters (for fishing, for example). In the EU, the term is generally used to mean 'countries outside the European Union', but it also sometimes means '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 and it does not allow him to work in third countries'. Do we mean here: 'non-Schengen countries or non-EU countries? It has also been pointed out to me that the unaccustomed reader might 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***⁹².

Alternatives: Non-member state/non Schengen state/ countries outside the EU/EEA etc.

Training (a)

Explanation: This is one of a series of gerunds used 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 'course'. Curiously (second example), it is also often used quite

redundantly in combination with 'course', as if the word 'course' on its own were somehow not good enough.

Examples: *'Workers posted by a TC¹ company (its principal place of business is outside the EU/EEA):-contract services suppliers;-ICT (including for the purpose of a **training**);⁹³ 'The development of a vocational training programme for internal auditors in the Commission was completed, including a **training course** on fraud prevention, developed by OLAF'⁹⁴.*

Alternatives: Course (language course/I am on a course/I am doing a course).

Transmit

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

Example: *'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 system'⁹⁵; '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 amendments'⁹⁶*

Alternatives: Send/forward.

Transpose/transposition

Explanation: In English '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 real world, even by lawyers, except those who speak 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/EC'⁹⁷.*

Alternatives: Implement, transfer/convert (into national law), enact (in national law).

Valorise

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

¹ TC = Third Country = in this case, country outside the EU and/or EEA

Example: '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?'⁹⁸ or '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'⁹⁹.

Alternatives: Increase the value of /give a value to/enhance/make the most of/accentuate/upgrade.

Visa

Explanation: Visa is used to render not only 'approval' (example 1), but also the act of giving approval (example 2). In English, a visa is generally 'an official authorization 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 correspond to this meaning.

Example: *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 Reform'*¹⁰⁰. *'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 authorised.'*¹⁰¹, *'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 prepared'*¹⁰².

Alternative: Approval/endorsement/approve/endorse (to).

Jeremy Gardner, 21 September 2012

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

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

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

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

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

6	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011XC0312(01):EN:NOT
7	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012D0088:EN:NOT
8	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010AE1615:EN:NOT
9	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31974D0234:EN:NOT
10	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32011D0019:EN:NOT
11	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009TA1110%2801%29:EN:NOT
12	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0482:EN:NOT
13	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009SC1495:EN:NOT
14	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1109%2801%29:EN:NOT
15	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)
16	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012SA0007:EN:NOT
17	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32012R0505:EN:NOT
18	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012PC0264:EN:NOT
19	ECA preliminary report
20	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0072:EN:NOT
21	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007SA0002:EN:NOT
22	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011AE0537:EN:NOT
23	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52002AE0029:EN:NOT
24	Draft report on development aid
25	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011PC0751:EN:NOT
26	Email from « your administration » on 7/10/2010
27	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0281:EN:NOT
28	Try googling 'youtube argument clinic' for an example of a contradictory procedure.
29	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007SC1336:EN:NOT
30	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1109%2801%29:EN:NOT
31	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006SA0011:EN:NOT
32	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1216(03):EN:NOT
33	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010TA1214(06):EN:NOT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

69 Taken from a draft special report

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

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

90 Concise Oxford Dictionary 1973 edition

91 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010SA0012:EN:NOT>

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

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