ELIS 2023 LANGUAGE INDUSTRY SURVEY

EUROPEAN LANGUAGE INDUSTRY SURVEY 2023

Trends, expectations and concerns of the European language industry

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POWERED BY **ELIA | EMT | EUATC | FIT EUROPE | GALA | LIND | WOMEN IN LOCALIZATION**

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PREAMBLE

ELIS, the European Language Industry Survey, was initiated in 2013 by EUATC, the European Union of Associations of Translation Companies. Today, it is co-organized with ELIA, FIT Europe, GALA, the EMT university network, the European Commission's LIND group, and Women in Localization.

The survey covers market trends, expectations and concerns, challenges and obstacles, as well as changes in business practices. It is open to language service companies (LSCs), independent language professionals, training institutes, language service buyers, as well as private and public translation departments.

ELIS, in effect, consists of 4 separate surveys, built around a common core but tuned to the needs and interests of their respective industry segment.

The 2023 edition received 1,164 responses

> 636 from independent language professionals
> 175 from representatives of training institutions and students
> 63 from language departments and language service buyers:
> 264 from LSCs

ELIS 2023 was made available in up to 16 languages (depending on the segment), including Ukrainian in an effort to better assess the impact of the war in that country. 16% of the individual professionals and 13% of the LSCs completed the survey in one of the translated versions.

With COVID in the past but the Ukraine war still raging, this 2023 edition tries to establish how these successive crises, combined with global inflation and recent new developments in language technology and artificial intelligence have altered the industry, both for real and in the mind of its stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2022 can be described as a 'return to reality' following the post-COVID rebound in 2021.

High-strung expectations were not met and expectations for 2023 are now toned down taking into account 2022 actuals.

ELIS 2023 results show considerable performance variations between individual countries and size segments, with smaller LSCs and independent language professionals reporting significantly poorer results.

The survey confirms the common intuition that a weak company culture leads to a lack of success, but fails to positively link a strong culture to better performance.

The data also suggests that language companies (LSCs) and independent professionals are drifting further apart in terms of market sentiment. The investment mood of LSCs is back up to pre-COVID levels, while in the open text parts of the survey, independent professionals (both translators and interpreters) express an increasingly negative sentiment which, although not supported by most actual survey data, should be acknowledged by the industry.

This negative sentiment is predominantly linked to a perceived lack of fair remuneration, but also to work-life balance issues. These perceptions are confirmed by a lower score for work-life balance, while all other industry segments report a better work-life balance than last year.

Traditional human translation is the activity that suffers most, while post-editing and other MT-related services, but also audio-visual localization and creative translation are identified as the most promising growth areas. Overall, the survey shows a more even distribution across services and domains than last year.

Machine translation continues to be the dominant trend in all segments of the industry, often linked with concerns regarding price pressure, lower quality levels and a reduction of human intervention. Artificial intelligence, primarily considered an opportunity a year ago, is now mainly perceived as a negative trend, possibly based on ChatGPT coverage in press and forums.

Technology implementation and actual use continue to increase across all segments, including machine translation which is now estimated to be used in more than 30% of professional translation business.

SEGMENT AND COUNTRY DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS

Table 1 below shows between square brackets the minimum number of responses from LSCs and individual professionals that has been defined as a reliability threshold for each country.

Countries that exceed the threshold are highlighted in green. Countries that are highlighted in yellow or grey delivered less than 100% or less than 50% of the response threshold. Data from these countries should be analysed with caution.

	Companies	Individuals	Training institutes	Buyers & lang depts
TOTAL	290	636	175	63

Europe				
Central & Eastern Europe				
Albania	[5]	1 [10]		
Belarus	1 [5]	[10]		
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1 [5]	1 [10]		
Bulgaria	5 [5]	6 [10]	7	
Croatia	3 [5]	4 [10]		
Czech Republic	6 [5]	14 [10]	4	1
Hungary	15 [5]	23 [10]	2	1
Kazakhstan	[5]	[10]	2	
Moldova	[5]	1 [10]	1	1
Montenegro	1 [5]	[10]		
Poland	7 [5]	12 [10]	27	1
Romania	4 [5]	18 [10]	4	
Russia	3 [10]	1 [20]	1	
Serbia	1 [5]	[10]		
Slovakia	3 [5]	31 [10]	10	
Slovenia	9 [5]	21 [10]	2	4
Turkey	4 [5]	2 [10]		
Ukraine	5 [5]	7 [10]	2	
	68	142	62	8

Figure 1 - ELIS 2023 responses per country

	Companies	Individuals	Training institutes	Buyers & lang depts
Northern Europe & Baltics				
Denmark	2 [5]	8 [10]		1
Estonia	4 [5]	2 [10]		
Finland	8 [5]	20 [10]	5	8
Iceland	1 [5]	[10]		
Latvia	1 [5]	6 [10]	5	1
Lithuania	7 [5]	6 [10]	4	
Norway	[5]	2 [10]		1
Sweden	4 [5]	3 [10]		
	27	47	14	11

Western & Southern Europe				
Austria	8 [10]	15 [20]	18	
Belgium	10 [10]	24 [20]	10	1
Cyprus	[5]	1 [10]		
France	14 [10]	68 [20]	7	1
Germany	19 [10]	46 [20]	2	10
Greece	14 [5]	25 [10]	3	2
Ireland	1 [5]	19 [10]	2	3
Italy	30 [10]	78 [20]	27	3
Luxembourg	[5]	2 [10]		2
Malta	1 [5]	4 [10]	2	
Netherlands	11 [10]	6 [20]	1	6
Portugal	12 [10]	20 [20]	9	3
Spain	22 [10]	73 [20]	6	4
Switzerland	3 [5]	3 [10]	2	2
United Kingdom	28 [10]	47 [20]	7	2
	173	431	96	39

	Companies	Individuals	Training institutes	Buyers & lang depts
Americas				
Argentina	4 [5]	2 [10]		
Brazil	1 [10]	[20]		
Canada	1 [10]	1 [20]		
Ecuador	[5]	1 [10]		
Mexico	[5]	1 [10]		
USA	8 [10]	6 [20]	1	4
	14	11	1	4

Africa, Asia & Oceania				
Australia	[5]	[10]		1
China	[10]	[20]	1	
Hong Kong	[5]	1 [10]		
India	8 [10]	3 [20]		
Sudan	[5]	[10]	1	
	8	4	2	1

Non-determined		1		

INDUSTRY STRUCTURE AND DEMOGRAPHY

As market research has shown repeatedly, the language industry is highly fragmented, with a strong majority of independent professionals and small LSCs and a small but growing top layer of larger companies. The latter represent approximately 25% of the market volume.

Entity size

The ELIS 2023 survey results represent primarily the view of independent professionals (55%) and smaller companies, with only 7% of the participating companies reporting more than 10 million euro revenue.
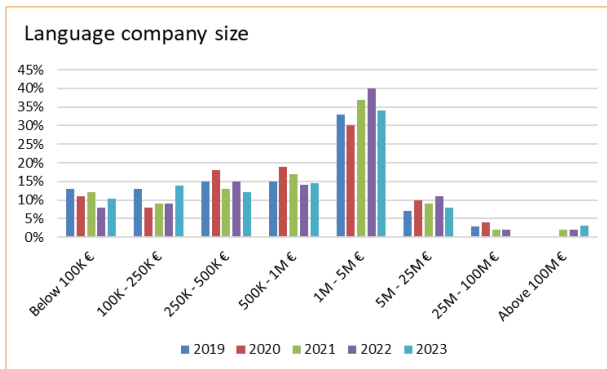

Figure 2 - Language company size

Among the language companies, the size segment between 1 and 5 million euro remains the dominant one. It is also a prime acquisition target for larger companies that are looking for further expansion, which can partly explain the strong drop in numbers between this size segment and the next.

Reported language department sizes vary widely. No correlation with organization type or company size could be found.

Company types

57% of the LSC participants represent single-site companies. Not surprisingly, these correspond to the smaller size segments, with more than 70% below 1 million euro revenue.

4% indicate that they are backed by venture or private equity. Contrary to expectations, 30% of these companies have a size below 1 million euro.
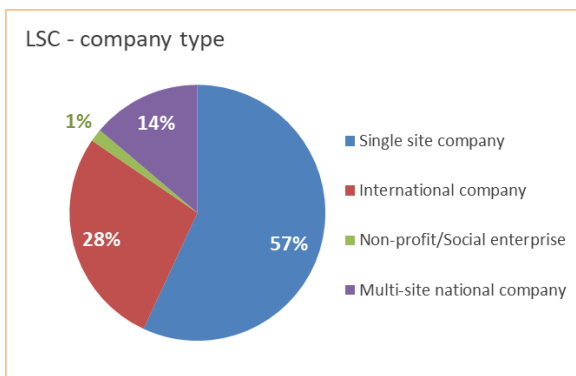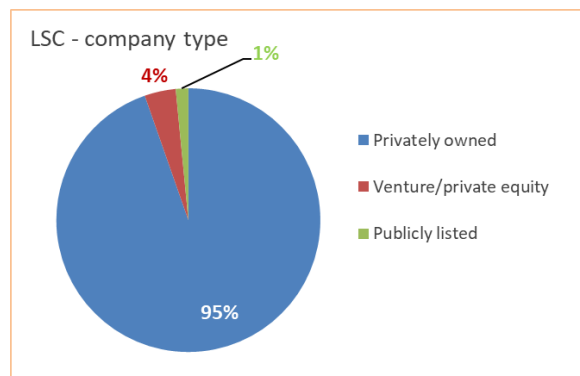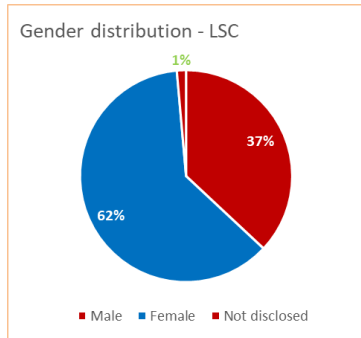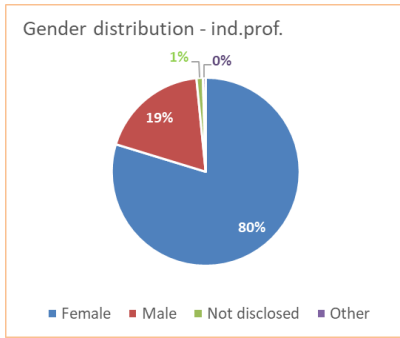
36% of the participating LSCs are woman-owned.

Figure 3 – Language company type

Gender distribution

Figure 4 – Gender distribution

ELIS data confirms that the language industry is a women-dominated industry, with as many as 80% female independent professionals. Within LSCs, the gender distribution is slightly more balanced, with 62% female representation.

Contrary to independent professionals, LSCs show a strongly role-dependent gender distribution.

Among company owners and general managers, there is close to gender parity, while participating project and resource managers -but also sales people and other management profiles-are primarily women. The numbers in the boxes show the number of responses.
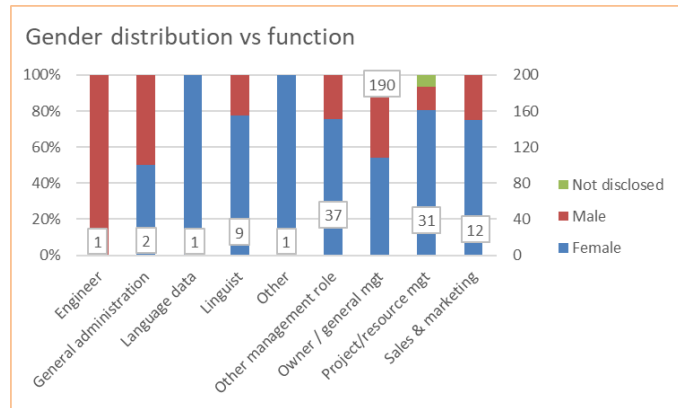
Figure 5 – Gender distribution vs function

Seniority
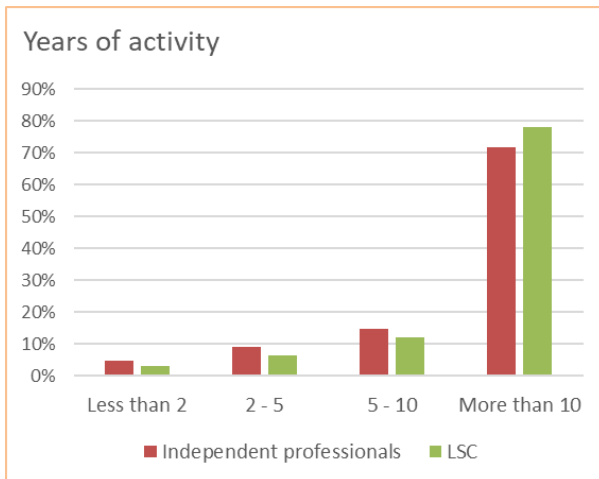
Figure 6 – Years of activity

Independent professionals and LSCs show similar levels of seniority, with a higher than 70% majority with more than 10 years of language industry experience.

Young professionals are still only marginally represented in the ELIS results. This group is regrettably more difficult to reach with surveys such as ELIS, due to their lower affiliation degree and lower level of industry awareness (see below).

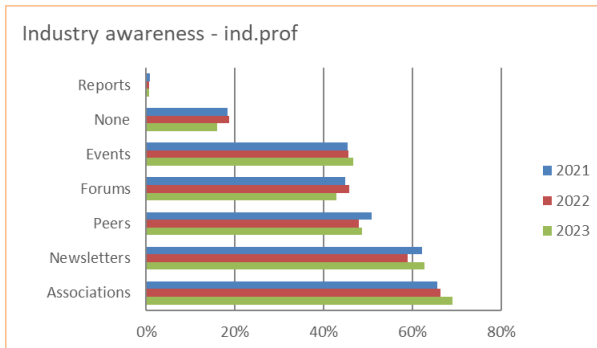# INDUSTRY INFORMATION, AFFILIATION AND CERTIFICATION

Industry information

Figure 7 – Sources of industry information – independent professionals

Independent professionals continue to use the same channels to get access to industry information. The variations are not significant.

Academia rely slightly less on industry associations or newsletters, giving priority to communication with peers and other industry actors. 30% of the students are still not actively looking for industry information.

Compared to 2022, independent professionals report an improvement in availability for all types of information, although for some types such as market and competition, this availability is still not considered sufficient.
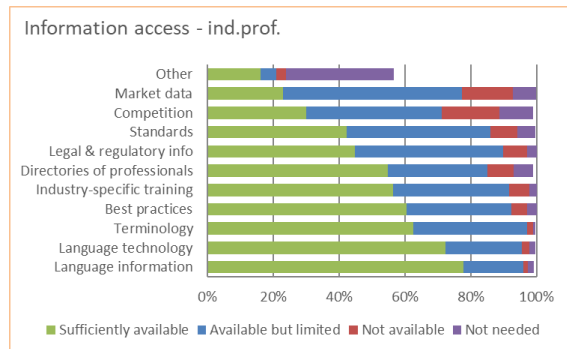
Figure 8 –Information availability – independent professionals

Not surprisingly, academia considers language research information sufficiently available. For the other categories, they agree to a large extent with the independent professionals, but seem to find it slightly easier to get information about standards and regulations.
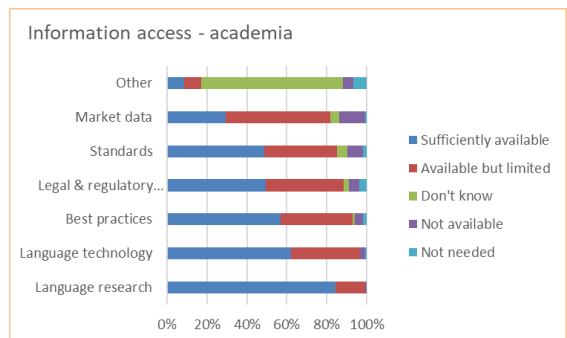

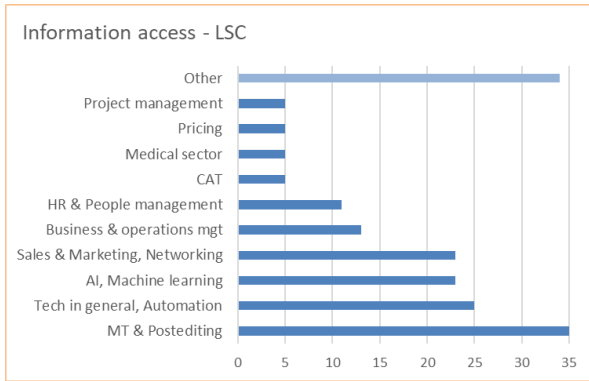*Figure 9 – Information access – training institutes*

Figure 10 – Information access – language companies

Affiliation

According to the results, 40% of the participating language department are not affiliated to any language industry association.
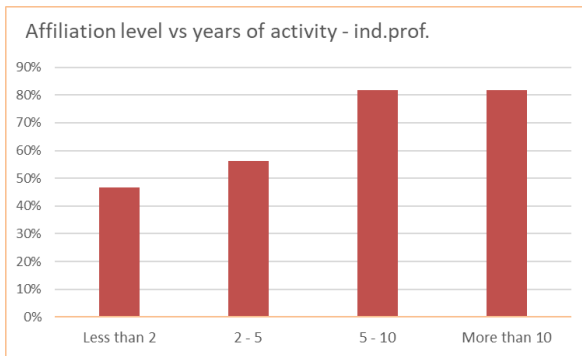

Figure 11 – Affiliation levels – independent professionals

Among the participating independent professionals, it is only 22%, which is logical given that ELIS is co-organized by FIT Europe, the umbrella federation grouping European associations of language professionals.

A comparison between the various seniority groups shows that affiliation grows with seniority. There is still room for associations to attract young professionals.

The 12% gender difference that was visible in 2022 data has shrunk to 5% (79% of female and 73% of male professionals are members of a language association).

Language companies report a lower overall affiliation level than in 2022.

Closer analysis indicates that LSCs seem to become more selective in their affiliations. Compared to 2022, twice as many companies report just one affiliation.

The strong increase of Women in Localization may be linked to stronger communication activity by this association, which is one of the co-organizers.
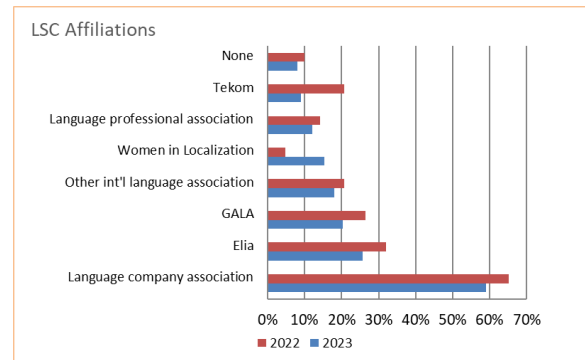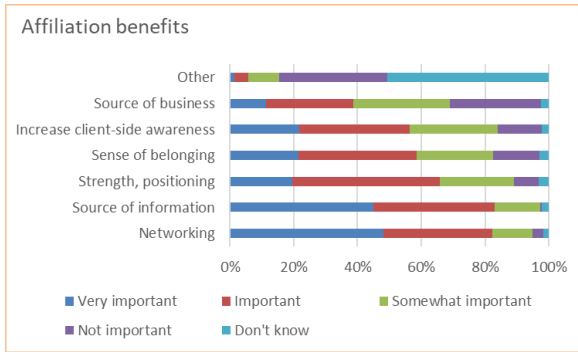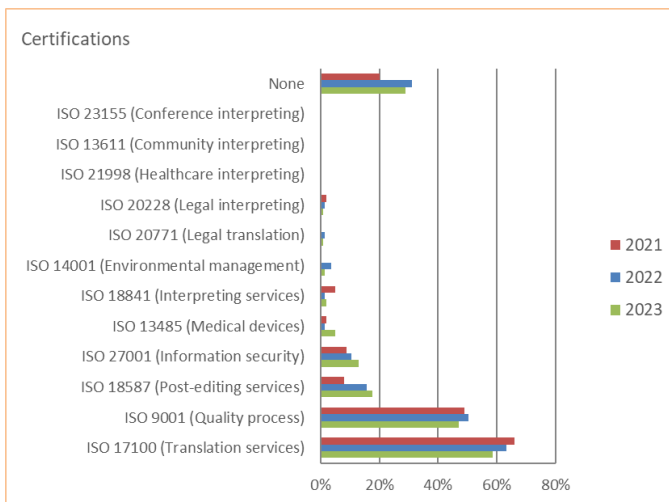

Figure 12 – Affiliations – language companies

Figure 13 – Affiliation benefits

The participating language companies consider networking and information gathering as main benefits of affiliation.

Certification

Figure 14 – Certification – language companies

ELIS 2023 results confirm the 2022 assumption that ISO 9001 and 17100 certifications were approaching their potential maximum among language companies.

Certification for post-editing services continues to grow but has not reached the 20% mark yet.

Other growing certification schemes include information security and medical devices, but the increase remains extremely modest.

BACK TO REALITY

2022 performance data and 2023 expectations paint a more complex picture than the almost euphoric one presented in ELIS 2022.

Differences between industry segments, but also between formal expectations and sentiments expressed in open questions reveal an increased level of discomfort and insecurity.

IMPORTANT: *in the industry evolution charts below, percentages are not the percentage of increase or decrease expected, but the percentage of respondents that expect an increase minus the percentage of respondents that expect a decrease.*

Market performance

In ELIS 2022 all industry segments expressed the expectation (or hope) that 2022 would continue the strong post-COVID growth of 2021, which, according to market research company Nimdzi, reached a stunning 10%.

Up to 70% of language company and language department respondents expected further growth in 2022 and even independent professionals reviewed their market expectations upward to the highest level since 2016, despite much more modest expectations for their own professional activity.

LSC and independent professional participants now state that 2022 did not meet their high expectations. 'Only' 44% net of LSCs and 27% of independent professionals estimated real market growth in 2022, which is more than 20% less than the expected level.

Both segments have toned down their market expectations for 2023 in line with their view of 2022 reality. On the other hand language departments and academia representatives maintain their high levels of expectations for market growth in 2023.

Only 21% net of participating language companies report activity growth in 2022, which is a huge difference compared to the 70% net that expected to grow their business.

These results are in line with the findings recently published by market research company Nimdzi, taking into account that the still respectable 7% growth estimated by Nimdzi (which brings the global language industry to a new record volume of some 61 billion euro) includes a much higher growth rate (+13%) in the top quarter of the market, roughly companies above 10 million euro, while ELIS results typically reflect the other 75% of the industry.
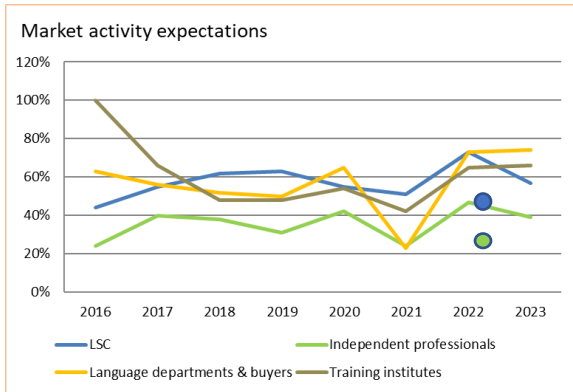
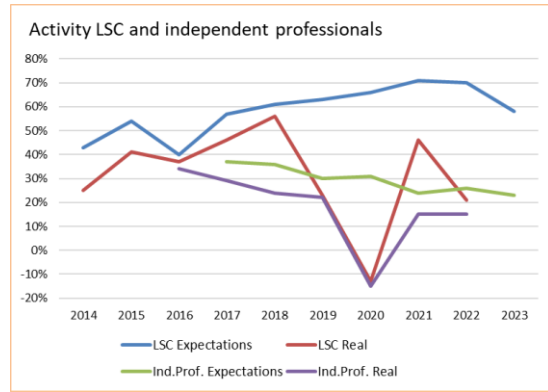Figure 15 – Market activity expectations

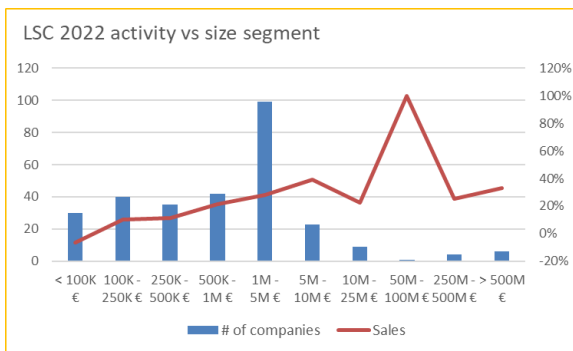Figure 16 – Activity language companies and independent professionals

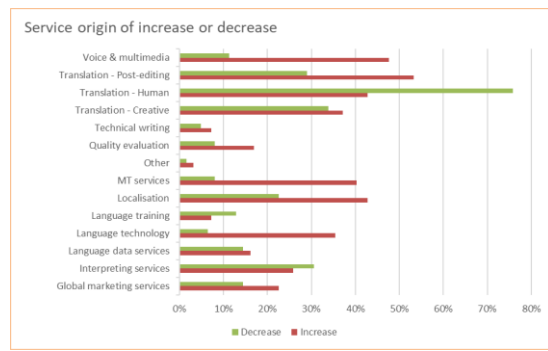Figure 17 – Activity vs size segment

Figure 18 – Service origin of activity increase or decrease

The smallest size segments benefit less clearly from the global market growth.

Above 1 million euro revenue, at least 25% net of language companies report activity growth. The peak in the 50-100 million euro segment is not relevant since it is based on only 1 answer.

Human translation was clearly the area that suffered most in 2022, while voice-related activities, post-editing, MT services, and language technology are identified as the main growth-supporting activities.

Interestingly, results show a significant correlation between a weaker company culture profile and weaker sales performance in 2022. See more details in the section on company culture.

Country-specific differences

2022 performance varies strongly from one country to another, even within the same European region.

Note: check the reliability of country-specific data in the table showing the number of answers per country.

	Market activity	Active LSCs	Turnover	Profitability	Investments	Staff size	Sales rates	Buy rates	Recruitment effort
Argentina	75%	75%	25%	0%	75%	50%	-25%	50%	75%
Austria	50%	-13%	38%	25%	13%	-25%	0%	13%	25%
Belarus	-100%	100%	0%	0%	-100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Belgium	10%	-30%	-20%	-30%	30%	-20%	40%	60%	20%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Brazil	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	0%	-100%	-100%	0%
Bulgaria	40%	20%	0%	-20%	60%	40%	80%	100%	80%
Canada	0%	0%	-100%	-100%	-100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Croatia	33%	67%	-33%	-33%	-67%	0%	33%	33%	67%
Czechia	17%	50%	-17%	-50%	33%	-17%	0%	17%	50%
Denmark	50%	50%	-50%	-50%	-50%	-50%	50%	100%	50%
Estonia	25%	-25%	25%	25%	50%	25%	0%	25%	50%
Finland	-13%	-13%	-25%	-25%	13%	13%	25%	25%	25%
France	43%	-36%	36%	-14%	21%	21%	-7%	0%	57%
Germany	42%	-5%	-32%	-21%	0%	5%	5%	21%	47%
Greece	57%	29%	50%	36%	36%	50%	21%	57%	79%
Hungary	60%	20%	13%	-7%	0%	33%	53%	87%	67%
Iceland	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%
India	88%	50%	88%	88%	63%	63%	50%	63%	75%
Ireland	100%	0%	0%	-100%	100%	0%	-100%	0%	100%
Italy	23%	-3%	10%	-7%	37%	0%	-30%	37%	53%
Latvia	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%
Lithuania	57%	14%	14%	43%	57%	0%	29%	71%	29%
Malta	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Montenegro	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%
Netherlands	45%	-18%	9%	27%	73%	27%	64%	64%	64%
Poland	71%	57%	43%	14%	71%	57%	71%	57%	14%
Portugal	8%	17%	42%	33%	8%	17%	-17%	17%	75%
Romania	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	50%	75%
Russia	67%	-100%	-33%	-33%	-33%	-33%	-67%	0%	100%
Serbia	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%
Slovak Republic	33%	0%	-100%	-67%	-67%	-33%	33%	33%	33%
Slovenia	56%	22%	67%	11%	56%	78%	56%	56%	78%
Spain	45%	5%	32%	-9%	45%	18%	-14%	18%	55%
Sweden	100%	25%	25%	-25%	75%	-25%	25%	25%	50%
Switzerland	100%	67%	-33%	-33%	33%	0%	67%	67%	33%
Turkey	50%	50%	25%	-50%	-50%	-25%	-25%	100%	-50%
UK	71%	25%	43%	29%	29%	25%	18%	39%	54%
Ukraine	60%	-20%	0%	0%	-20%	-20%	20%	20%	60%
USA	75%	25%	88%	63%	-13%	13%	25%	25%	63%

Figure 19 – Market evolution per country

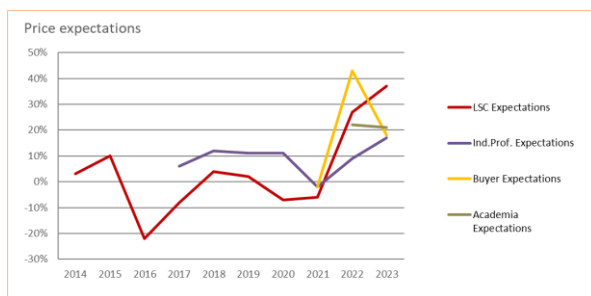# Pricing and profitability

Price increases

Figure 20 – Price expectations

In 2021, approximately 25% of language companies and 40% of language departments/buyers expected that prices would increase in 2022.

Today, only 15% of companies and departments report actual increases.

This led buyers to review their expectations: only 18% net expect price increases in 2023 bringing them into line with independent professionals and academia.
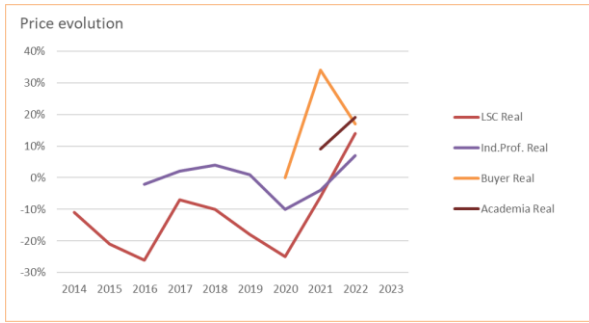
Figure 21 – Price evolution

37% of language companies continue to expect price increases in 2023.

Note that language departments and academia were only asked for price increase estimates in 2021 and 2022 respectively.
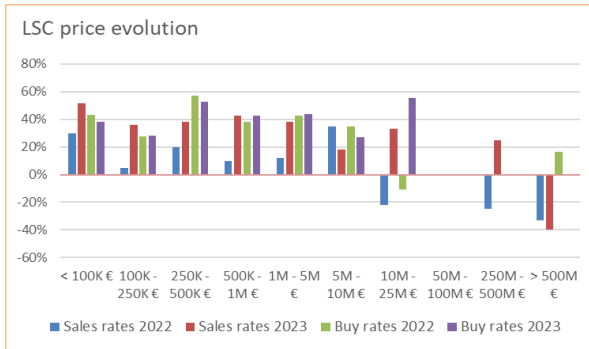

Figure 22 – Price evolution vs size segment – language companies

Among LSCs, we note strong differences in price evolution and expectation between the different size segments.

While the smaller companies report and expect both sales and buy rate increases, this is not the case in the largest segments. On the contrary, the so-called 'super agencies' report and expect price decreases rather than increases.

These findings seem to tie in with data about competition.
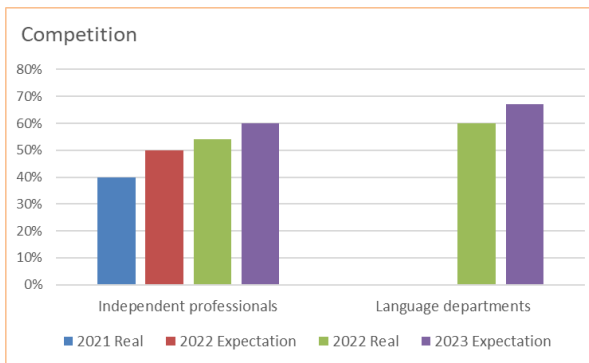
Figure 23 – Competition evolution

Independent professionals and language departments report a solid increase in competition among language service providers in 2022 and expect it to increase further in 2023. The 10% jump from 2021 Real to 2022 Real that the freelance participants report is particularly worrying.
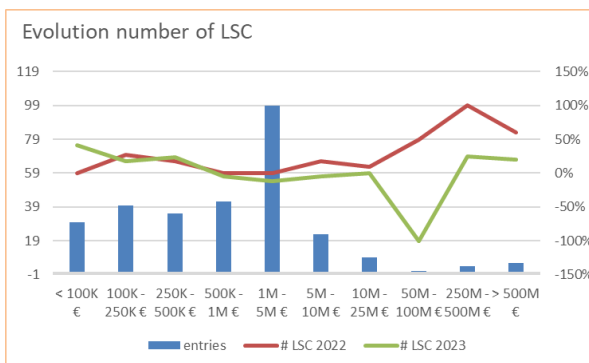
Figure 24 – Evolution number of language companies

This expected increase in competition does not seem to be based on a higher number of competitors.

On average, language companies do not expect a major increase in the number of LSCs in 2023, but, just as for pricing, there are strong differences between size segments.

The largest companies especially expect the arrival of new competitors.

Change in rate systems coming?

- Yes, most probably
- Possibly, but only marginally
- No
- Don't know

17%
31%
45%
8%
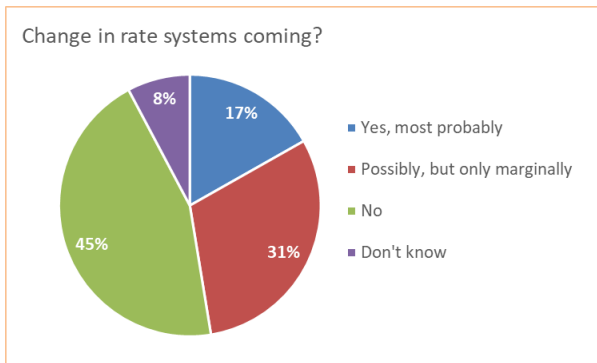
Figure 25 – Change in rate systems

Language industry publications and events often mention that the currently prevalent volume unit-based rate system needs to be replaced by a fairer system to take into account the application of machine translation and other language technologies.

A clear majority of language companies are not expecting any major change in rate systems.

If there would be any change, respondents estimate that a time or effort-based system will be the most likely candidate.

Average pricing

The table below shows the (median) rates that language companies reported as average for their main language pairs in combination with English. Note that interpreting is often not priced on an hourly basis, but only per half day or full day.

	Standard translation € cents per word	Standard translation € per hour	Interpreting on site € per hour	Interpreting online € per hour
Argentina	0.10	24.50	200.00	120.00
Austria	0.20	69.00	100.00	120.00
Belarus			50.00	50.00
Belgium	0.15	59.38	125.00	118.33
Bosnia-Herzegovin	0.03	25.00	35.00	25.00
Brazil	0.05			
Bulgaria	0.07	22.00	58.33	53.33
Canada	0.21	48.00		
Croatia	0.07	21.67	62.50	60.00
Czechia	0.08	24.40	71.67	70.00
Denmark	0.14	25.00		
Estonia	0.06	22.50	81.67	95.00
Finland	0.18	50.00	100.00	70.00
France	0.12	45.00	118.75	128.00
Germany	0.18	62.54	113.33	120.00
Greece	0.09	26.00	150.00	143.33
Hungary	0.09	21.67	49.00	50.83
Iceland	0.25	50.00		
India	0.07	13.38	100.00	75.00
Ireland	0.20	50.00		
Italy	0.13	40.17	123.57	105.63
Latvia	0.04	15.00	30.00	25.00
Lithuania	0.08	30.40	75.00	75.00
Malta				
Montenegro	0.08			
Netherlands	0.15	58.88	226.00	309.00
Poland	1.29	35.00	287.50	162.50
Portugal	0.09	30.00	141.67	94.00
Romania	0.08	23.75	45.00	42.50
Russia	0.05	131.00	145.00	92.50
Serbia	0.07	18.00	80.00	80.00
Slovak Republic	0.08	23.00	90.00	45.00
Slovenia	0.10	25.00	120.00	107.50
Spain	0.10	38.75	209.00	195.00
Sweden	0.19		232.50	222.50
Switzerland	0.40	120.00	120.00	120.00
Turkey	0.07	22.50	100.00	100.00
Ukraine	0.06	22.50	50.00	50.00
UK	0.13	43.56	63.00	41.67
USA	0.21	56.67	120.00	120.00
Global average	0.15	40.58	118.03	108.15
# answers	214	160	87	82

Figure 26 – Average pricing per country

Profitability

Only 5% net of LSCs report an increase in profitability in 2022. This is even lower than in 2020, the year COVID first affected global trade. This does not discourage 50% of them from expecting an increase in 2023. Whether this is based on actual business considerations or not is unclear.

More than 60% of language companies report translation gross margins above 30%.

The extremely low interpreting margins of 2021 have improved, but 18% still report margins below 10% (or even below 0%), and a worrying 30% do not know their margin for this activity.

10% report a net profit below 5%.

Approx. half of the respondents include project management in the gross margin calculation.
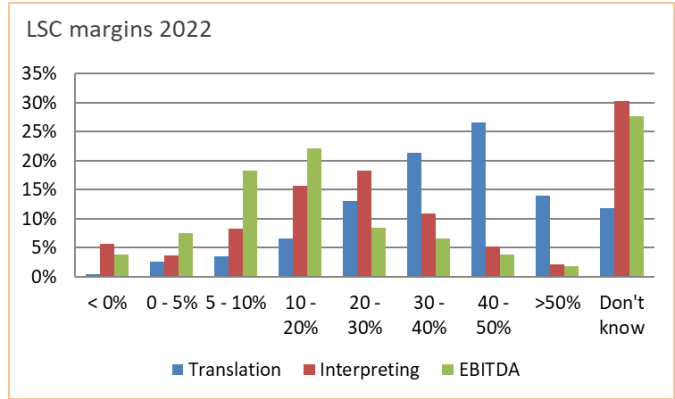
Figure 27 – Language company gross margin 2021
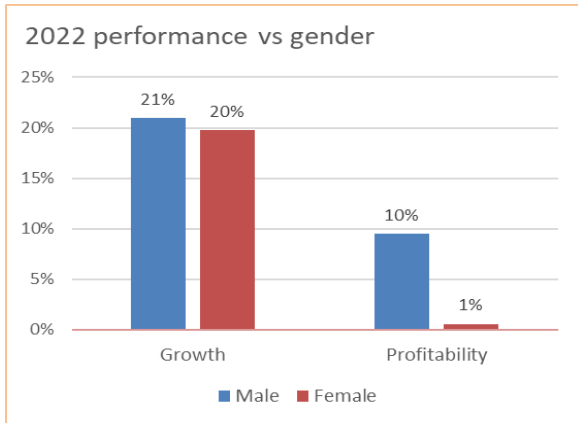
Figure 28 – 2022 performance vs gender – language companies

ELIS 2023 confirms the absence of a meaningful gender difference in 2022 revenue growth figures.

The difference in profitability growth that was detected in 2022 is also confirmed, with less than 1% of woman-led companies reporting such a growth.

Company size and company culture focus, two potential explanations, do not show a significant gender bias. The reasons for the difference are therefore unclear.
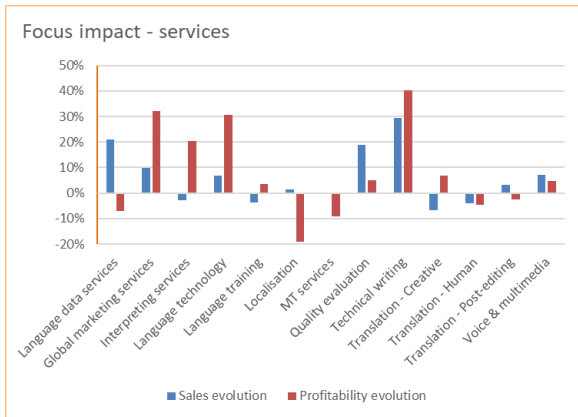
Figure 29 – Service focus impact on performance
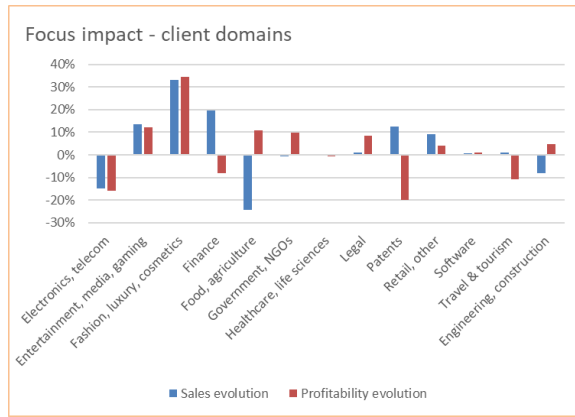
Figure 30 – Domain focus impact on performance

One generally expects that focusing on specific services or client domains will improve revenue and profitability due to experience and higher recognition. While 2022 performance data confirm this assumption for a number of areas, they also tell us that it is not a guarantee for success.

The above charts show the difference in performance between companies focusing and not focusing on service domains (focus = more than 25% of business). Note that for certain services or domains, the number of focused companies is extremely limited (for example None for aerospace).

INDUSTRY SENTIMENT

Language company investment mood

Sentiment = (Investment score - disinvestment score) / Number of companies. 0 = neutral. Empty = no answers
Sentiment > 0,5 = Green. Sentiment < 0 = Red. Other = Yellow. Number of total responses below threshold = Grey.

	Owner answers	Investment	Disinvestment	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Austria	6	9	0	0,67	1,30	0,70	0,30	0,89	1,50
Belgium	7	3	0	0,62	0,57	0,80	0,70	0,92	0,43
Bulgaria	3	3	0	-0,25	1,00	1,00	0,30		1,00
Croatia	2	0	0	0,53	1,07	0,20		0,38	0,00
Czech Republic	2	2	0	1,40	1,20	0,50	1,00	1,33	1,00
Estonia	1	2	0	0,67	0,80	0,80	1,10	1,00	2,00
Finland	4	2	0	1,00	0,57	2,00	1,50	1,25	0,50
France	11	10	1	1,1	0,53	0,7	0,00	0,00	0,82
Germany	12	11	2	0,80	0,89	1,60	0,40	0,88	0,75
Greece	7	10	0	0,70	1,20	0,70	1,00	0,50	1,43
Hungary	13	10	2	1,00	0,88	0,70	0,00	0,67	0,62
Italy	20	21	0	0,91	0,76	1,30	1,00	0,47	1,05
Lithuania	7	2	0		0,71	0,80	1,20	1,20	0,29
Netherlands	9	10	2	1,27	1,42	1,00	0,90	0,75	0,89
Poland	3	4	0	1,00	0,80	0,40	0,00	0,70	1,00
Portugal	8	11	0	0,92	1,18	1,00	0,70	0,44	1,38
Romania	4	6	0	0,71	0,43	1,00	1,20	1,00	1,50
Russia	2	1	2	2,00	0,86	2,00	0,60	1,00	-0,50
Slovak Republic	3	3	0	0,60	0,67	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
Slovenia	5	10	2	1,36	1,44	0,90	0,20	1,17	1,60
Spain	13	8	1	0,76	0,56	0,70	0,10	0,47	0,54
Sweden	4	7	0	1,00	0,67	1,7	0,00	2,00	1,75
Switzerland	1	2	0	2,00	2,00	0,00		2,00	2,00
Turkey	4	2	0	1,22	0,00	2,00			0,50
Ukraine	3	4	0	2,00	2,00		2,00		1,33
United Kingdom	20	15	4	0,53	1,10	0,80	0,80	0,74	0,60
USA	4	4	0		0,67	1,50	0,67	1,50	1,33
				0,98	0,94	0,99	0,69	0,84	0,97

Figure 31 – Investment mood language companies

Despite the more mixed market performance in 2022, the investment mood scores continue to increase. The average score is now back to pre-COVID levels.

This mood table only takes into account the investment sentiment among LSCs. The investment score reflects the companies' intentions to create or acquire other companies, while the disinvestment score shows intentions to sell the company or leave the industry.
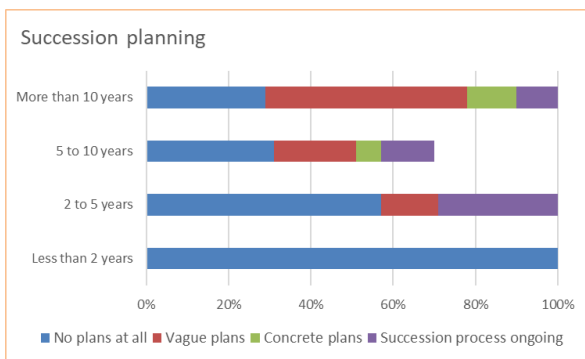
Figure 32 – Succession planning language companies
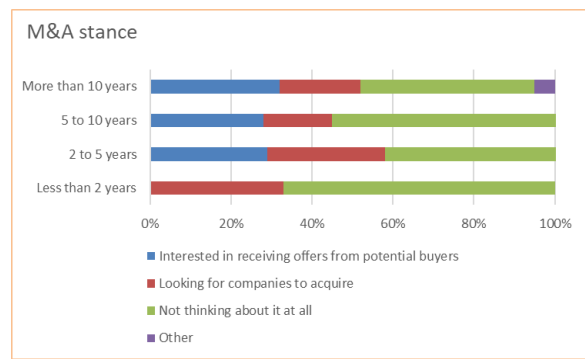
Figure 33 – M&A stance vs years of activity

Not surprisingly, succession planning is mainly visible among the longer established LSCs. Active succession planning is going on mainly in the one to five million euro segment.

Even at an early stage in their development, LSCs are looking at acquisition or exit opportunities. There does not seem to be much difference between individual countries. Only a handful of countries show a majority of participants that are not thinking about it.

As expected, results show that M&A activity is strongly size-dependent. With growing size, companies show more interest in both active and passive acquisition.

When results climb above 10 million euro, however, participating LSCs mainly show an interest in active acquisition.
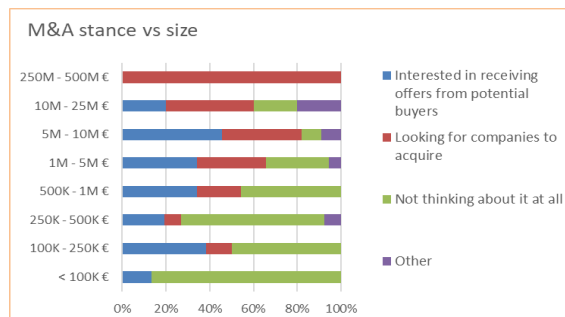
Figure 34 – M&A stance vs company size

Independent professional mood

The above positive LSC investment mood is in stark contrast with the predominantly negative sentiment expressed by independent language professionals.

57% of the participants, both translators and interpreters, identified reasons that are preventing them from achieving a rewarding career as a freelance language professional.

Terms such as "illegal", "disloyal" or even "corruption" in the open text answers reflect a high level of frustration and insecurity about their professional future.
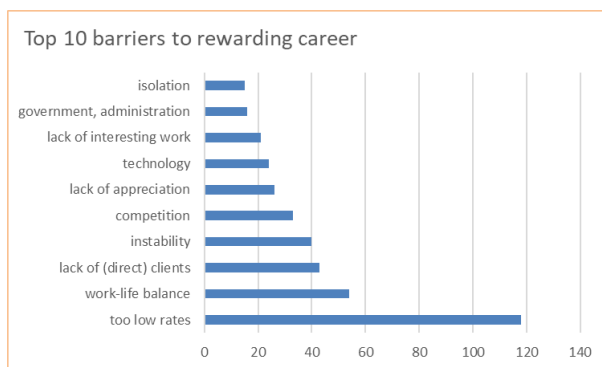
Figure 35 - Barriers to a rewarding career as independent professional

This negative sentiment is mainly based on difficulties negotiating fair rates with LSCs and direct clients, which could be connected with the negative pricing expectations expressed by the largest language companies.

The respondents feel that pressure on rates is forcing them to accept more but less interesting work, which, in turn, makes it difficult to achieve a better work-life balance (especially for single parents) or spend enough time on lifelong learning or client relationships.

The impact of the increased use of machine translation, rising cost of living and competition from all sides (LSCs, newcomers or established professionals) create additional levels of discomfort. Quite a few respondents name a generalized lack of visibility and appreciation as the underlying cause of the situation.

More information about this sentiment can be found in the section about challenges and about working in the industry below.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Machine translation dominates the trend list, both on the positive and negative side, closely followed by and often in direct correlation with price pressure.

Artificial Intelligence has partly lost its aura as a new opportunity and is now mainly seen as a challenge, which can be linked to the way that ChatGPT and similar AI applications are covered in forums and in the mainstream press.

Beyond those three industry-wide trends, the 2023 results show a wide variety of tendencies and concerns that are either identified by part of the industry or that plainly contradict each other. These are discussed in the segment-specific information below.

Language service companies

LSC main positive trends
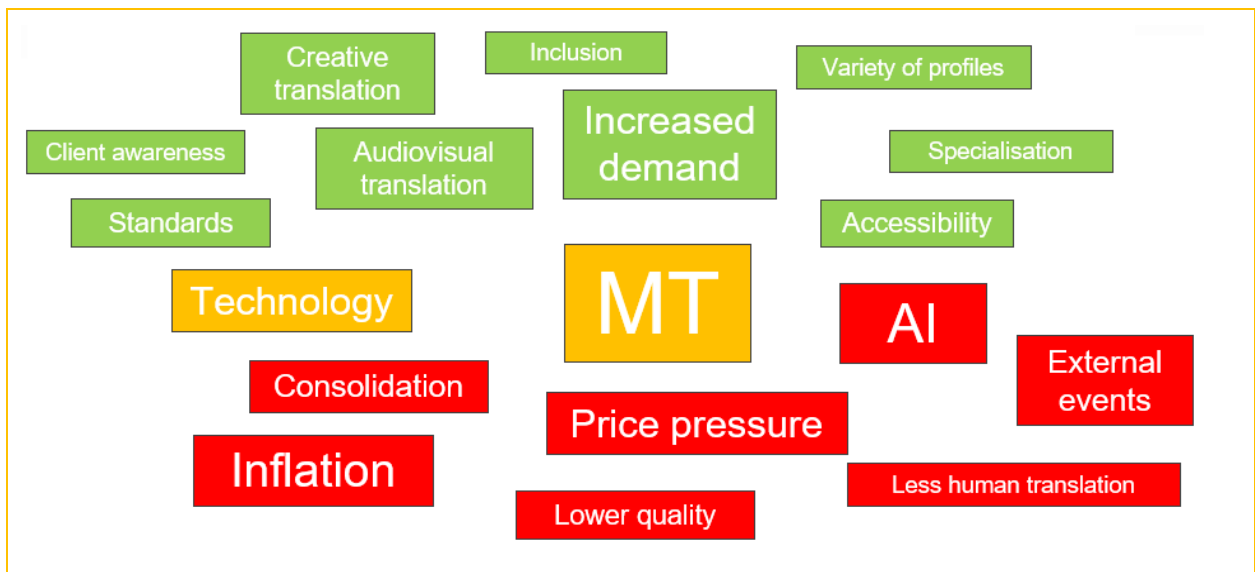
LSC main negative trends
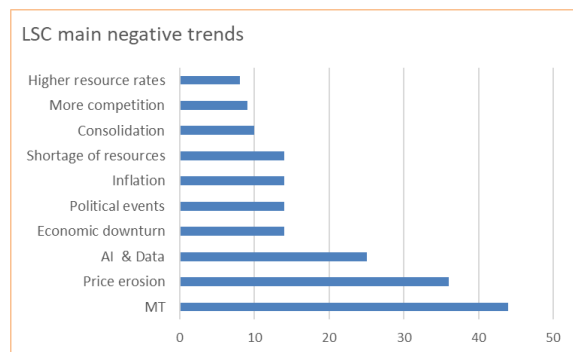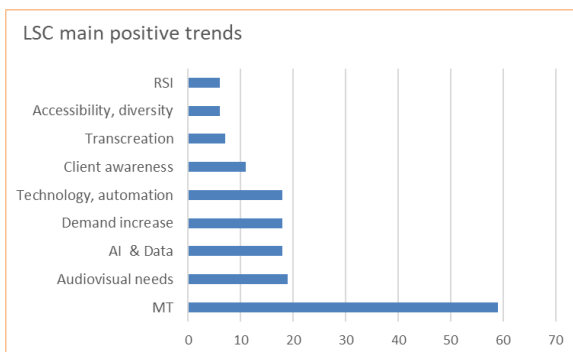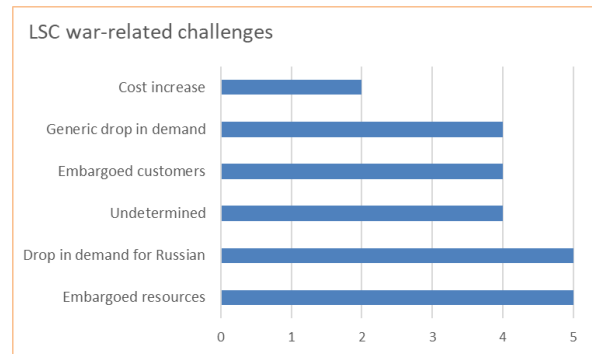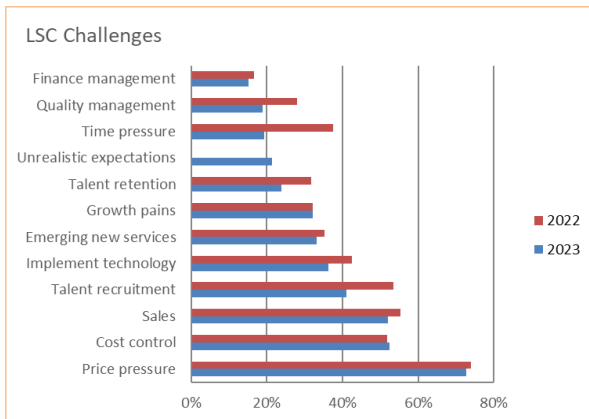
Some language companies still believe that the demand for language services will continue to grow, but at the same time there is a concrete concern about economic downturn. Audio-visual localization is seen as a positive trend and to a much lesser extent so is creative translation. Quite a few LSC participants see a positive evolution in client awareness. Accessibility, the main theme of last year's Translating Europe Forum, is only mentioned sporadically.

Inflation and economic downturn are among the main negative trends identified by LSC respondents, together with political events and shortage of resources. The 'Challenge' score of the latter, however, indicates that resource availability has improved compared to 2022.

Only a small number of LSCs report challenges that are directly related to the war in Ukraine.

Independent professionals
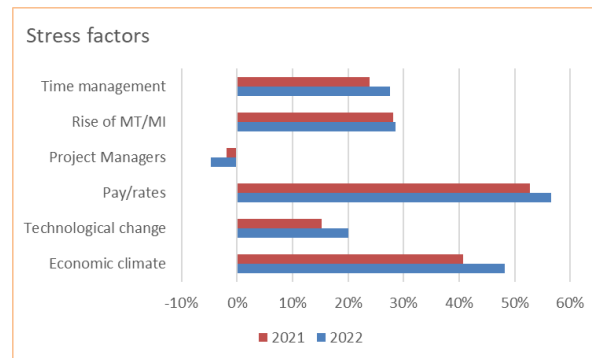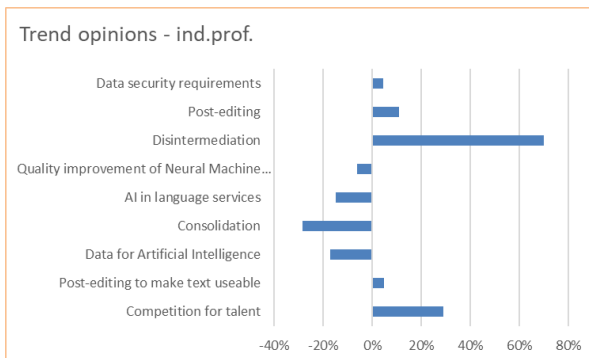
Figure 36 - Trend opinions - independent professionals

Figure 37 - Stress factors independent professionals

Not surprisingly, independent professionals consider disintermediation and competition for talent as opportunities, while consolidation in the LSC segment is seen as a threat.

AI is considered exclusively as a threat.

While opinions about machine translation and post-editing are quite balanced, the rise of machine translation (and machine interpreting) is considered as a considerable stress factor.

Although free text comments express a much stronger frustration with the impact of MT than last year, this is not visible in the stress factor data (contrary to the frustration with rate levels, which is also reflected in those stress factor data).

Language departments
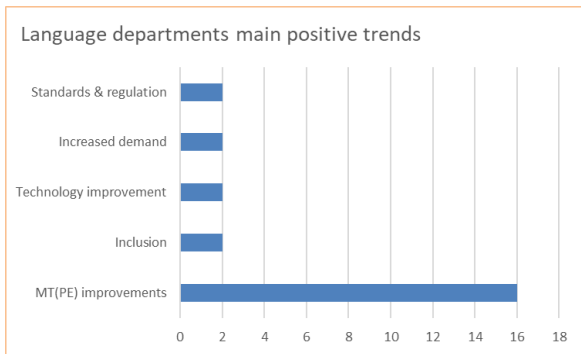
Figure 38 - Positive trends - language departments
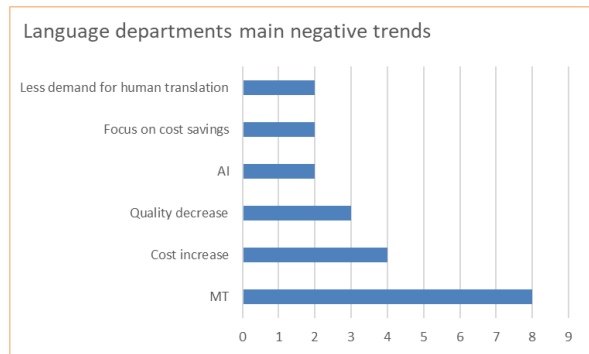
Figure 39 - Negative trends - language departments
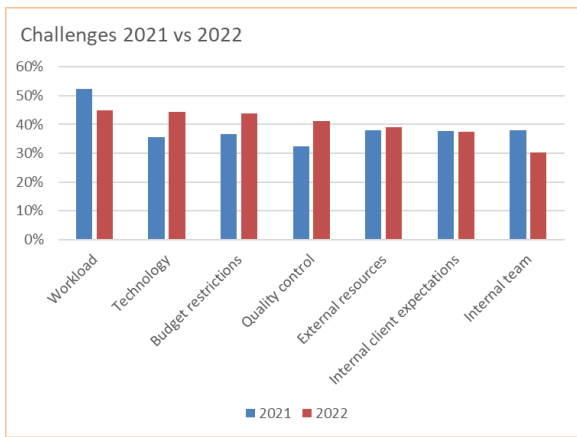
Figure 40 - Challenges - language departments
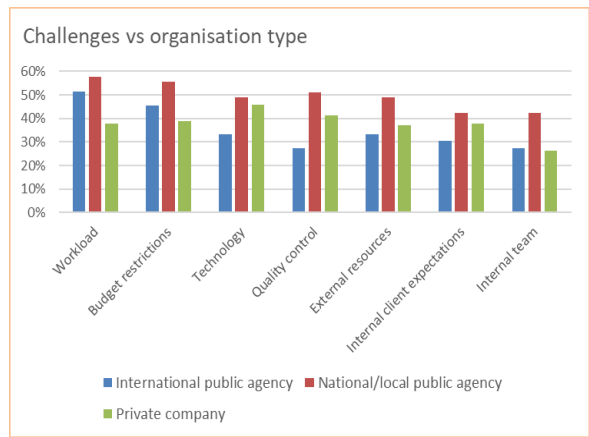
Figure 41 - Challenges vs organization type

Participating language departments see machine translation predominantly as a positive development, although they are not blind to potential negative side effects such as quality erosion and a decline in demand for human translation.

Other positive trends that are mentioned by individual participants include voice, sustainability and fair price awareness, but also automation, an extended role for linguists and even AI, which are contradicted by opposing negative trends.

Budget restrictions and quality control are perceived as even stronger challenges than last year, while coping with the department's workload and managing the internal team seems to have been better under control.

The different types of organization indicate varying challenge levels for individual items, but national public agencies consistently report the highest level.
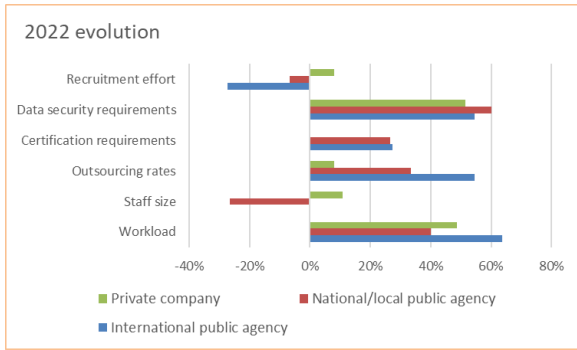
Figure 42 - 2022 evolution - language departments
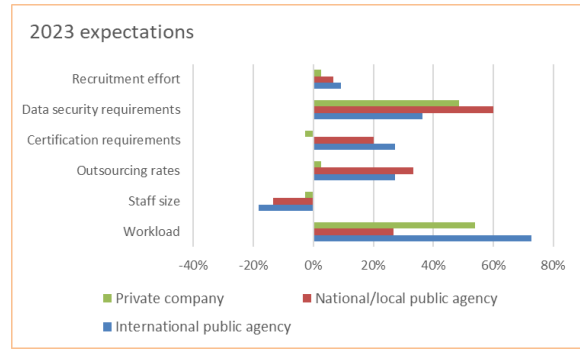
Figure 43 - 2023 expectations - language departments

2022 evolution and 2023 expectations regarding the language department workings add a new dimension to the challenges they are facing. Data security requirements are high on the agenda (much higher than certification requirements) and the reported concerns about increased workload combined with shrinking staff is increasing.

Training institutes
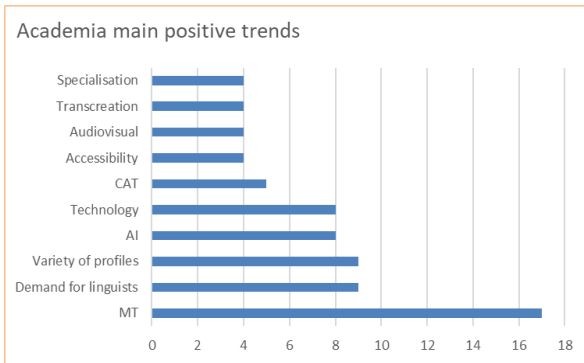
Figure 44 - Positive trends - training institutes
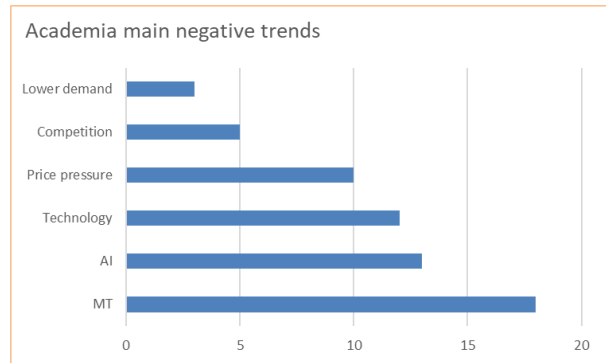
Figure 45 - Negative trends - training institutes
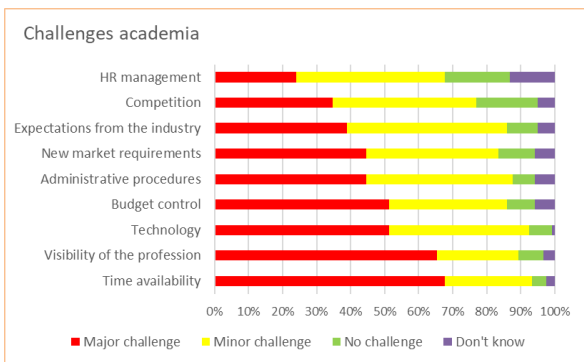
Figure 46 - Challenges - academic staff
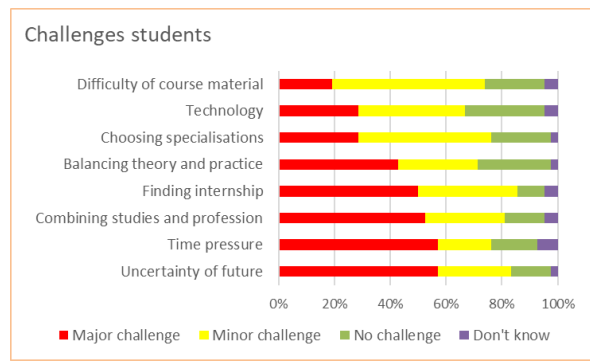
Figure 47 - Challenges - students

Other negative trends reported by training institutes include inflation and budget restrictions, but some respondents also contradict positive trends by predicting less specialization or less varied roles for linguists. Students especially are less optimistic regarding the future role(s) of linguists.

Training institutes rank the various challenges in exactly the same way as in 2022, but report a slight increase level across the board. The same applies to student participants, who are, however, somewhat less uncertain about their professional future than last year.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

Areas of business

Geographic origin
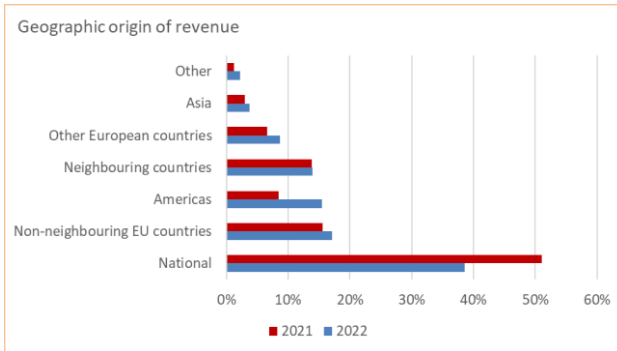
Figure 48 - Geographic origin of revenue - language companies

According to the 2023 LSC results, business originating from the Americas has doubled in 2022. This may be partially linked to the higher number of participants from the largest LSC size segments.

Domestic business dropped by more than 10%.

These figures hide strong differences between countries: national business varies between 20% and 80%.

Services
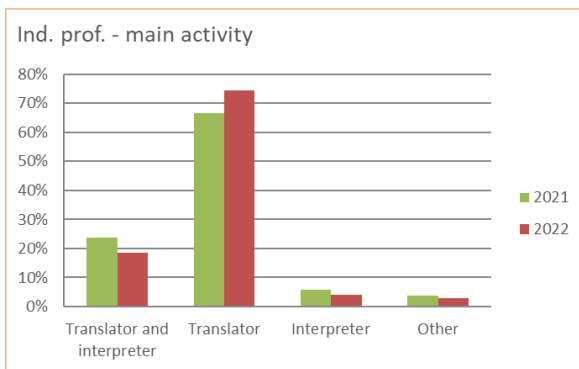
Figure 49 - Main activity - independent professionals

Independent professionals report a slight shift in main activity which, compared to 2021, seems to hint at a move away from interpreting to translation work.
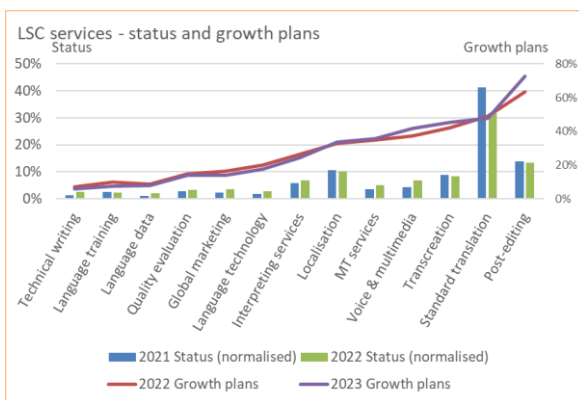
Figure 50 – LSC services status and growth plans

Among language companies, standard human translation was still by far the dominant type of service in 2022, although it lost ground by a clear 10% compared to 2021. It is still number 2 in terms of growth potential.

Surprisingly, that 10% is not transferred directly to post-editing (which is identified as the activity with the highest growth potential again), but is spread over a number of other services with substantial growth.

Voice and MT services are virtually doubling in size, with voice services approaching the same level as interpreting. Voice is also considerably strengthening its position as a growth driver.

In the Services chart above the status figures are normalized to a total of 100%, while the growth figures show the non-normalized respondents' intentions (totalling more than 100%).
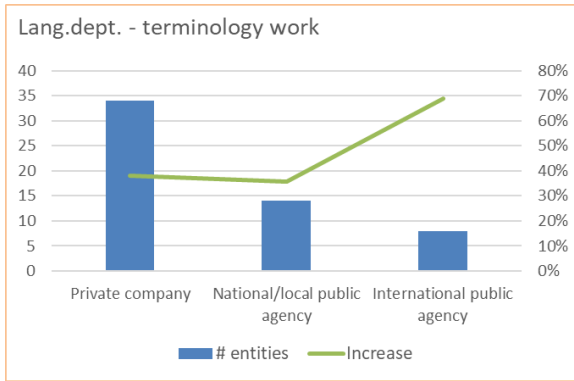
Figure 51 - Terminology work – language departments
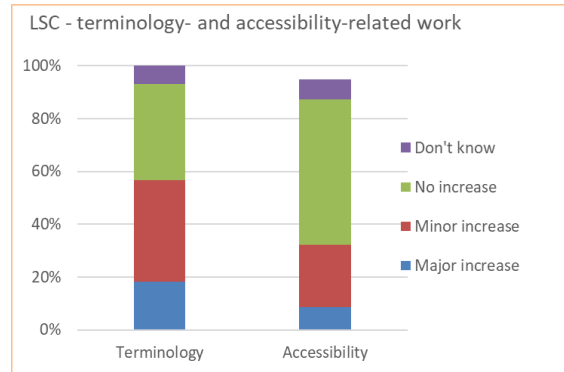
Figure 52 - Terminology and accessibility work - language companies

Almost 70% of language departments in international public agencies report an increase in terminology work related to the use of language technology. This tendency is considerably weaker in national agencies, private enterprises or LSCs which report only a minor to moderate increase.

32% of LSCs also report an increase in demand for accessibility-related services, including activities such as audio description or sign language.
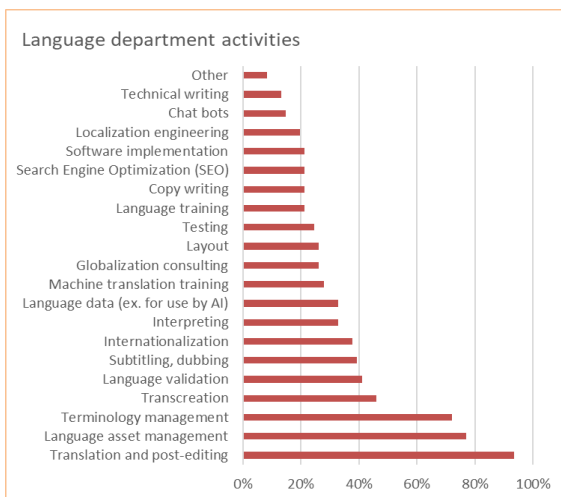
Figure 53 - Activities - language departments

Language departments cover a wide variety of language activities, but only standard translation and post-editing, language asset management (translation memories) and terminology management are handled by more than 50% of the participating units.

Marketing-related language activities such as SEO or copy writing seem to be handled elsewhere in the organization.
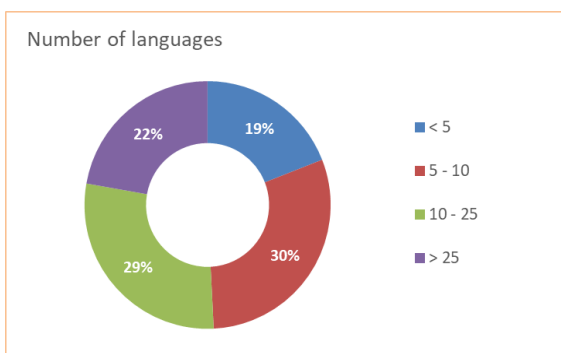
Figure 54 - Number of languages covered - language departments

A clear correlation between the number of languages and size of company could not be established. The number of languages handled does not even seem to be linked to the size of the language department, with the exception of the largest units.

On average, national public agencies report dealing with fewer languages than international agencies or private enterprises, which is hardly surprising.

Client domains
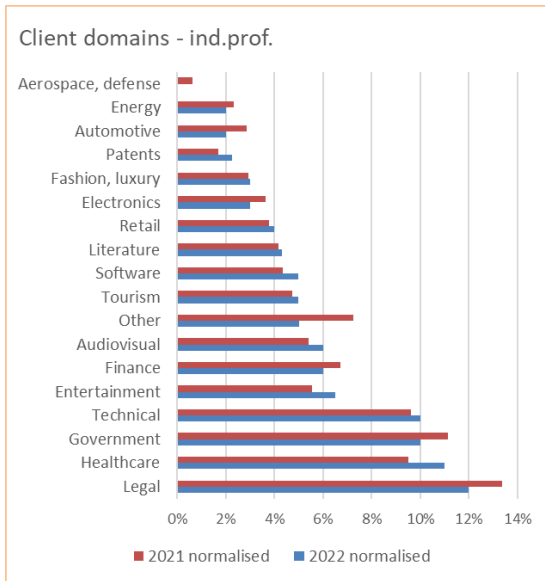
Figure 55 - Domain ranking - language professionals
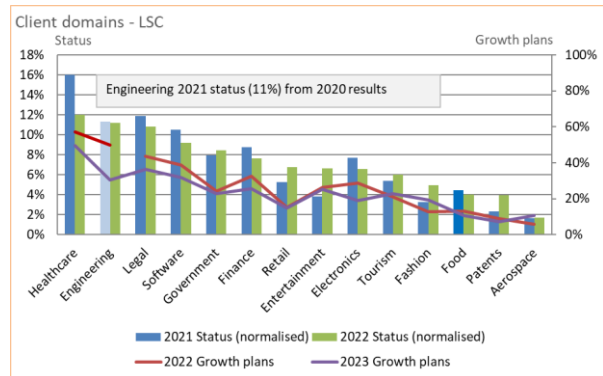
Figure 56 - Domain ranking – language companies

For most individual sectors LSCs express more modest growth plans for 2023. Exceptions are tourism, fashion and aerospace/defence,

Both for independent professionals and LSCs, this year's data shows a more homogeneous domain distribution. Healthcare remains the number1 domain for LSCs but is now more on a par with engineering and legal.

Among independent professionals, healthcare takes second place after legal.

Contrary to a commonly held view, focusing on specific services or client domains is not a guarantee for success, as the graphs below illustrate. The impact on sales growth and profitability evolution depends strongly on the type of service and domain.
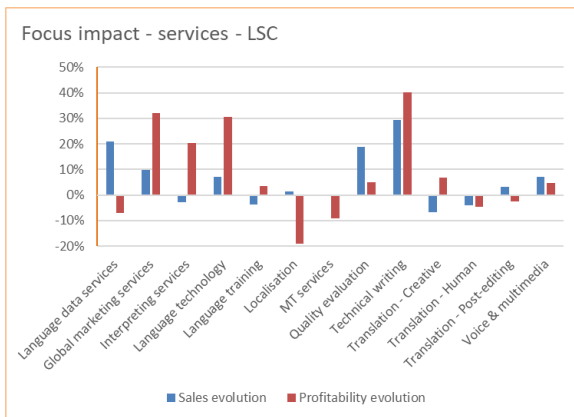
Figure 57 - Service focus impact - language companies
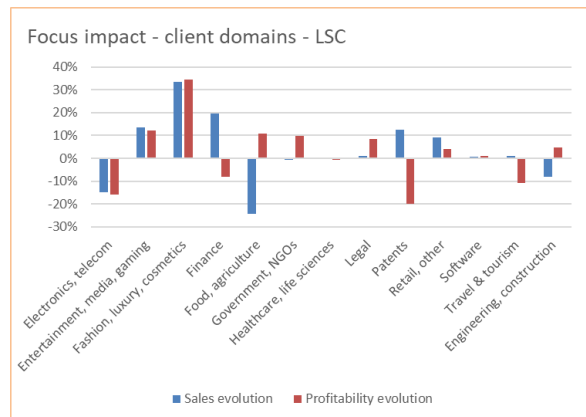
Figure 58 - Domain focus impact - language companies

Note that the subject area *Engineering* was missing from the ELIS 2022 language company list. In the above chart for language companies, it has been included in the position corresponding to its 2021 percentage.

Direct clients vs subcontracting
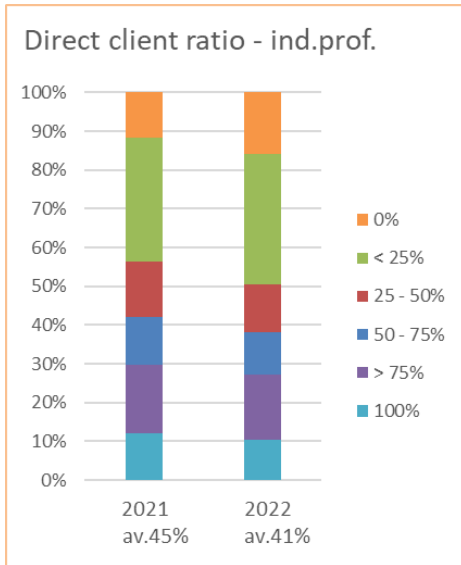
Figure 59 - Direct client ratio - independent professionals

Independent language professionals report an average direct client ratio of 41% in 2022, which is substantially lower than the 45% reported in 2021.

The change is notable across the entire range of direct client ratios, with a net result that 16% of the participants do not work for direct clients, compared to 12% last year.

17% net of respondents expect the direct client ratio to increase in 2023, but 47% do not expect any change.

The drop in direct client ratio is also visible, though less dramatic, among LSCs (74% compared to 77% in 2022 results).

Except for those companies that are already exclusively working as subcontractors (0% direct client ratio), all LSCs expect their subcontracting work to increase, including those that are currently exclusively working for direct clients.
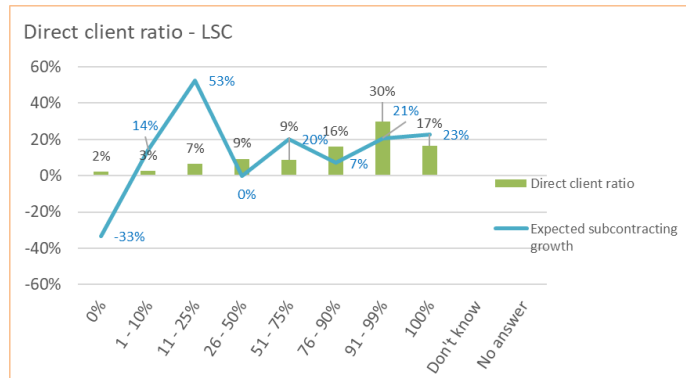
Figure 60 - Direct client ratio - language companies

Operational changes

Independent language professionals

Figure 61 - Professional practices - language professionals
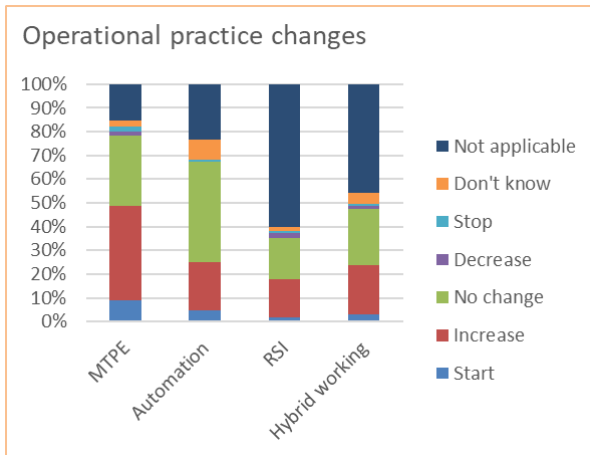
2023 results do not show any meaningful differences compared to ELIS 2022.

The increase in post-editing work continues to be identified as the biggest change in the professional practice of independent language professionals, with 9% starting and 40% increasing the activity.

RSI is used by all but a few independent interpreters (40% of the respondents). Approximately half intend to further increase the service, while 3% expect to stop or decrease it.

Language service companies

Figure 62 - Language companies major changes

Language companies report considerably less structural changes in 2022 than in 2021.

This is not surprising after the strong wave of change reported by companies last year, in particular in technology, process and service offering.

Outsourcing practices

Language departments
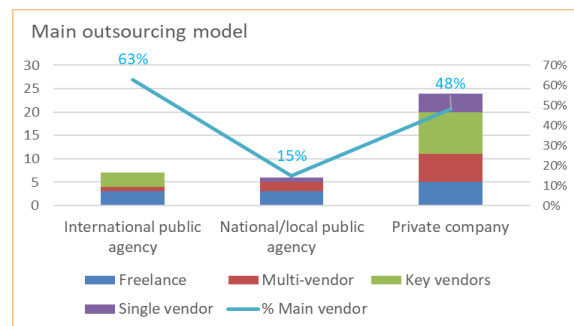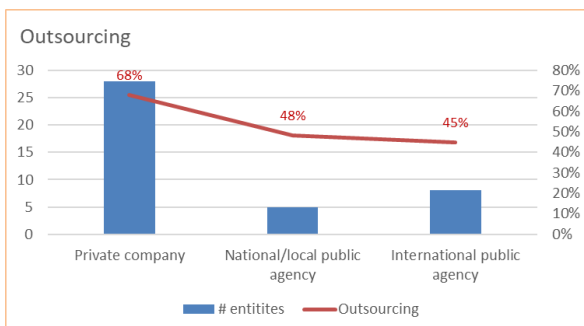
Figure 63 - Outsourcing levels - language departments

Figure 64 - Outsourcing model - language departments

The level of outsourcing reported by language departments has increased considerably compared to last year (68% vs 63% for private enterprises and 48% respectively 45% vs 35% for the public agencies).

The individual organization types also show quite different preferences in their outsourcing model: international public agencies seem to prefer a freelance model, while private enterprises tend to work with key vendors.

Some caution is required, however, given the low number of public agency answers in this year's data.
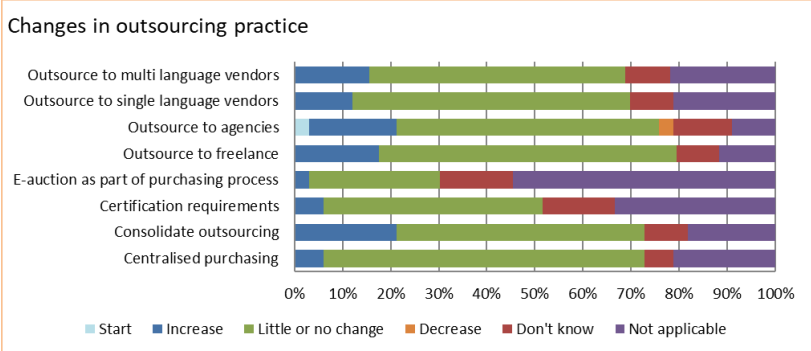
Figure 65 - Changes in outsourcing practice - language departments

Based on the answers from language departments, most of them will apply little or no changes to their outsourcing practices.

This year's responses, however, show a few tendencies that indicate a shift towards a more agency-oriented outsourcing model:

Whereas ELIS 2022 data still showed the intention to grow freelance outsourcing more than agency outsourcing, this preference has disappeared.

Moreover, we see a twice as high intention to consolidate outsourcing, and 15% of the respondents indicate that they want to increase outsourcing to multi-language vendors, which was not visible in last year's data.
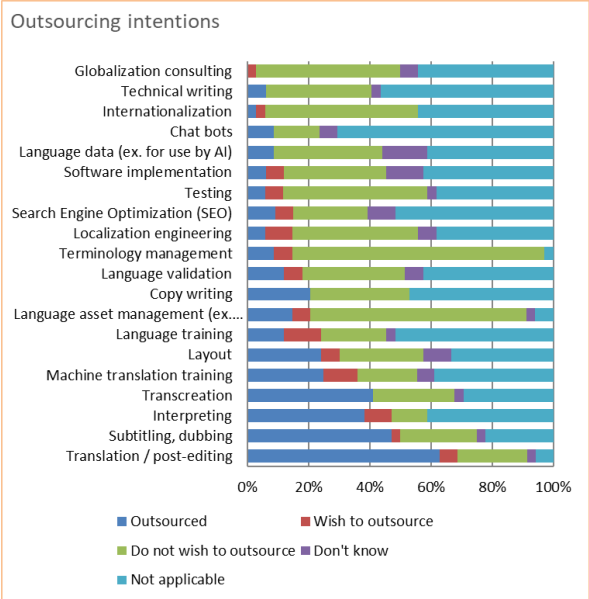
Figure 66 - Outsourcing intentions - language departments

The higher level of outsourcing is also visible in the list of individual outsources services, but the outsourcing intentions for these individual services has not changed. Language departments continue to focus their outsourcing on classic activities, where transcreation has joined translation/post-editing, interpreting and subtitling as a key outsourcing activity.

Terminology and language asset management continue to remain firmly under internal control.

Language service companies

LSCs follow the same trend of increasing outsourcing. This year's results indicate that 82% outsource more than 25% of their work, which is considerably more than last year's figure of 69%.

61% outsource more than half of their work.

Only 3% operate a 100% in-house model, compared to 7% last year.
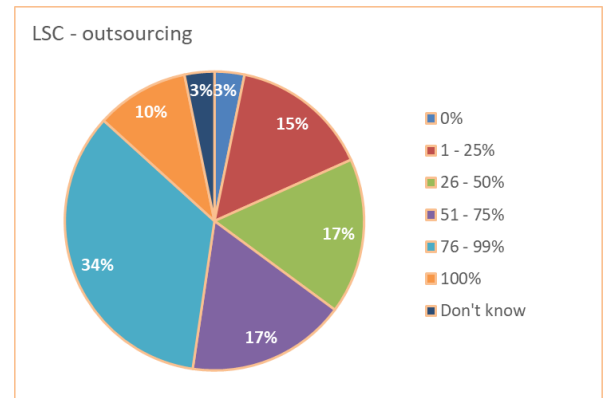
Figure 67 - Language company outsourcing practice

Freelance vs agency outsourcing has not changed significantly compared to the previous year.

75% of the participating agencies outsource their work primarily to independent professionals, with remarkably little variations between size segments.
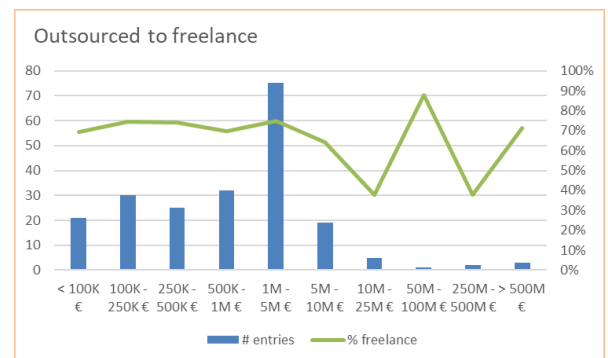
Figure 68 – Outsourcing to freelance

Framework agreements and NDAs
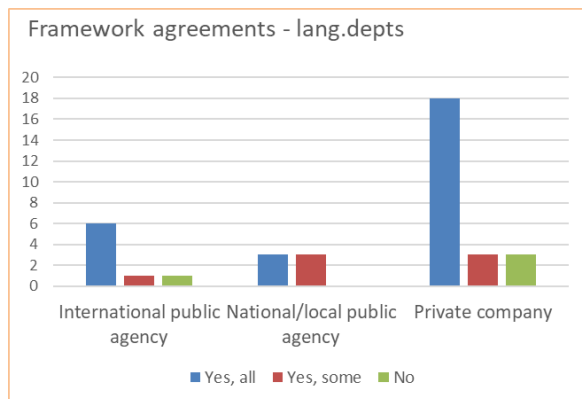
Figure 69 - Framework agreements - language departments
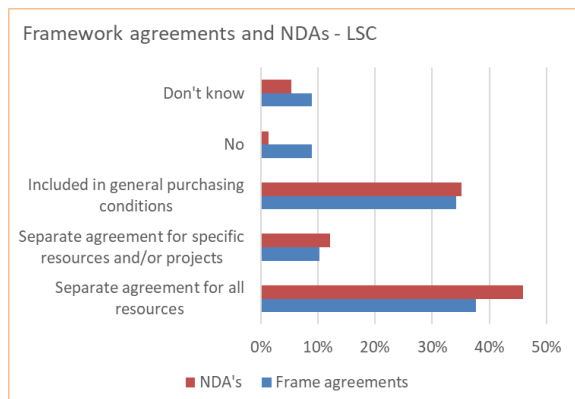
Figure 70 - Framework agreements - language companies

NDA - lang.depts

Private enterprises and international agencies are more stringent in the use of framework agreements than their colleagues in national and regional agencies or LSCs.

For non-disclosure agreements, there does not seem to be any meaningful difference between the various respondent types:

It is important to note that more than 30% of the LSCs rely on general purchasing conditions.

Figure 71 - Non-disclosure agreements - language departments

The data does not show any link between the use of framework agreements and NDAs in language departments and the type of organization (except for national agencies) or the size of the private enterprises. However, it does suggest a link with the size of the unit, which should not be surprising given the administrative impact on the department's workload.

Due to the small number of answers in each language department category, these conclusions need to be viewed with some caution.

CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

In ELIS 2023, only the survey for independent language professionals addressed the importance of individual aspects of the relationship with direct clients.

The comparison with 2022 results does not show any significant changes

Other aspects mentioned that play a role in the client relationship include: availability, experience, trust, confidentiality and specialization.
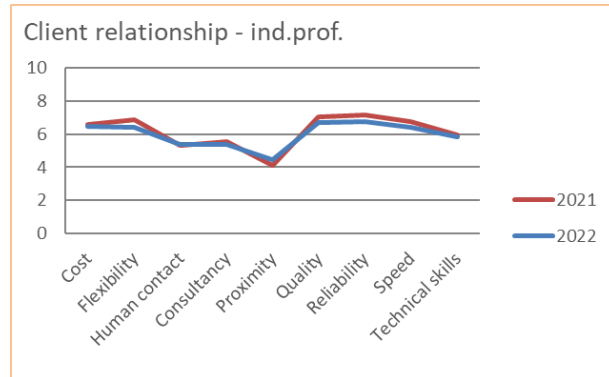
Figure 72 - Independent professionals' relationship with direct clients

Relations between independent language professionals and language companies
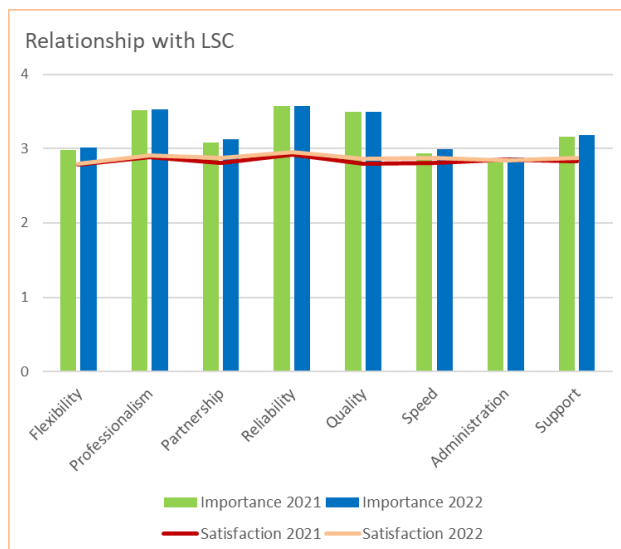
Figure 73 - Collaboration with language companies
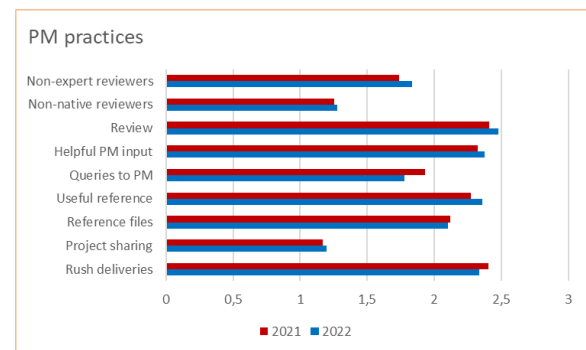
Figure 74 - Aspects of project management

Independent professionals give almost exactly the same scores for the various aspects of their relationship with language companies, both for importance and satisfaction. The detailed project management practices are scored marginally higher.

This is a somewhat surprising result given the strong negative sentiment expressed in responses to free text questions, often related to the relationship with LSCs, in particular the lack of flexibility in terms of rate negotiations.

Organizational culture
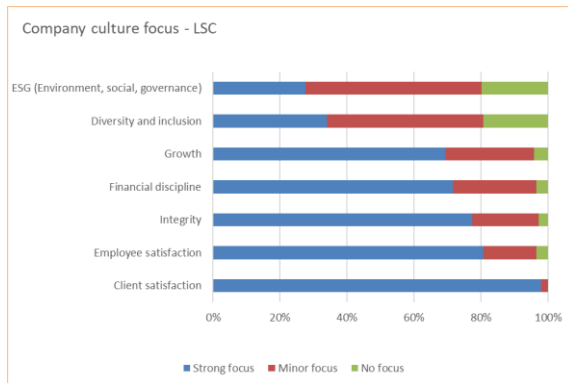
Figure 75 - Company culture focus - language companies

Client satisfaction is by far the strongest focus in all LSC segments regardless of size, but the other focus areas are strongly size-dependent.
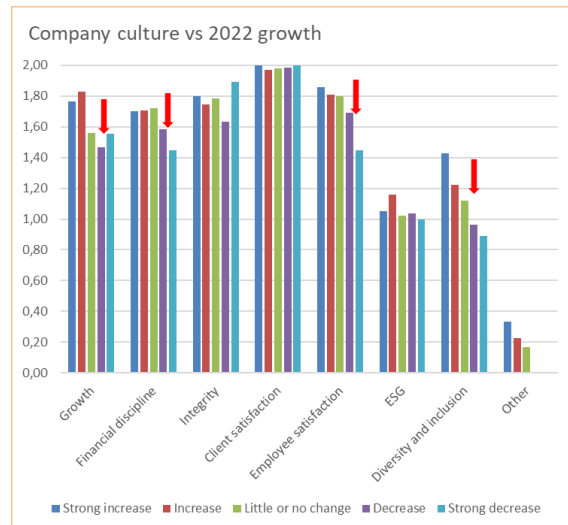
Figure 76 - Company culture focus vs 2022 growth

Among LSCs, focus on growth shows a sharp difference between companies in size segments below 5 million euro and higher. Above that threshold, growth becomes all-important. For financial discipline, the answers show a – less sharp – threshold at 10 million euro.

Employee satisfaction and integrity are strongly present among the smaller companies as well as in the highest size segments, with a dip around the 10 million euro mark.

ESG focus is still in its infancy in all size segments, while diversity and inclusion are not surprisingly mainly a matter of focus for the largest companies.

A detailed analysis of the 2022 growth data suggests that a strong focus is at least partially instrumental for company development, or rather lack of it. Companies reporting a decrease of revenue in 2022 report on average a lower focus on virtually all company culture aspects except client satisfaction and integrity. The correlation between strong focus and high growth is however not that clearly visible. (The Y-axis in the graph above represents the focus score.)
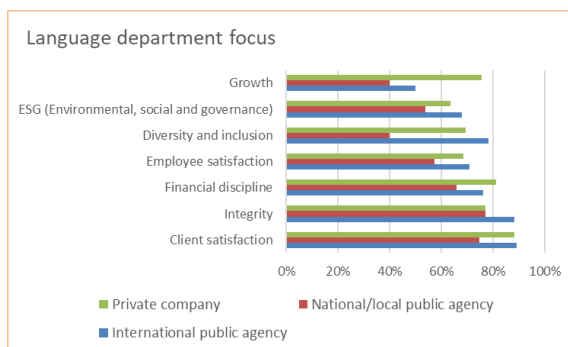
Figure 77 - Organization culture focus - language departments

Language departments agree with LSCs that client satisfaction should be their prime focus.

On the other hand, employee satisfaction is ranked substantially lower by all types of language departments.

Growth is understandably only important for units that are part of a private enterprise.

The low diversity score among national agencies is surprising.

Performance indicators
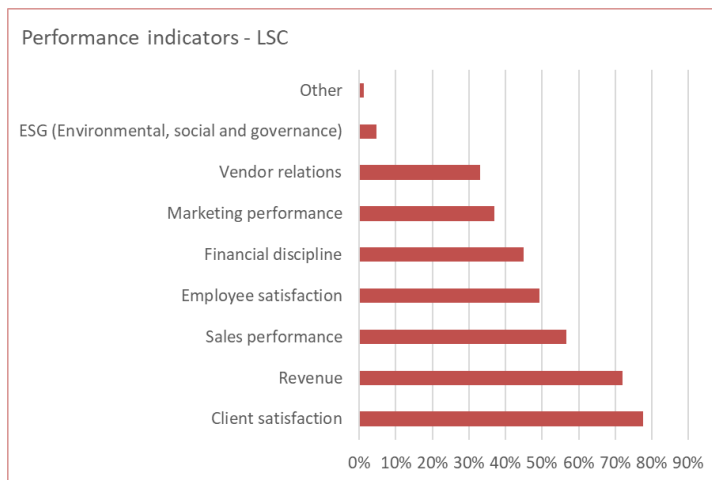
Figure 78 – Performance indicators – language companies

The high percentage for client satisfaction and revenue is expected.

Financial discipline and vendor relations are clearly size-dependent, with less than half of the respondents below one million euro considering them as a performance indicator.

The low (21%) vendor relations indicator under one million euro is somewhat concerning given that even these smaller companies outsource more than 50% of their work.

LSC data reveals that company culture focus does not always translate into performance measurement: employee satisfaction – number 2 in company culture focus – is measured by less than half of the participants.
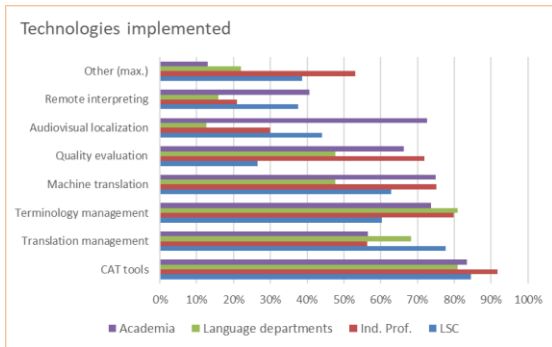
Implementation

Figure 79 - Technology implementation
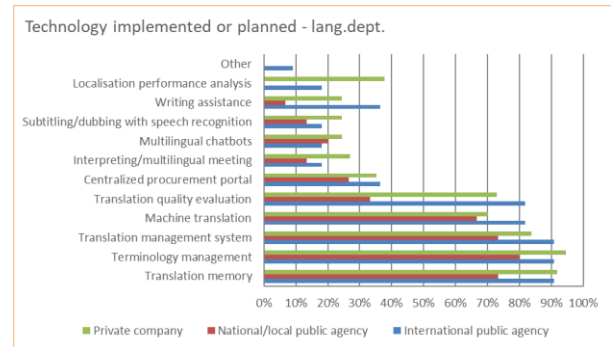
Figure 80 - Technology implementation - language departments

In terms of implementation, CAT and translation management tools (as well as RSI and audio-visual localization tools when considering their limited scope of activity) are approaching their full market potential.

Insofar as the low number of answers allows any conclusions to be drawn, national/local public agencies are consistently reporting lower technology implementation rates than the other language departments, in particular for technologies such as automated quality evaluation, writing assistance and (completely absent) localization performance analysis.

Machine translation and quality evaluation technology still have growth potential, in particular among LSCs.
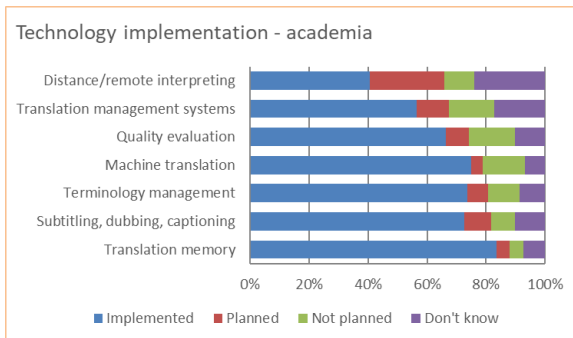
Figure 81 - Technology implementation - training institutes

Compared to last year, respondents from training institutes report a considerable increase in all types of technology implementation.

RSI is still lagging behind in terms of actual implementation but 20% of respondents indicate that this technology will be implemented in the future.

Actual use
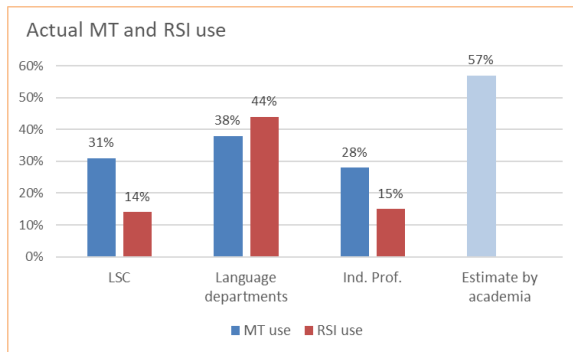
Figure 82 - MT and RSI use
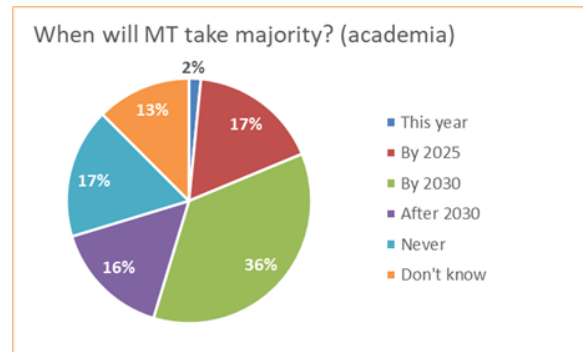
Figure 83 - When will MT take majority - training institute estimate
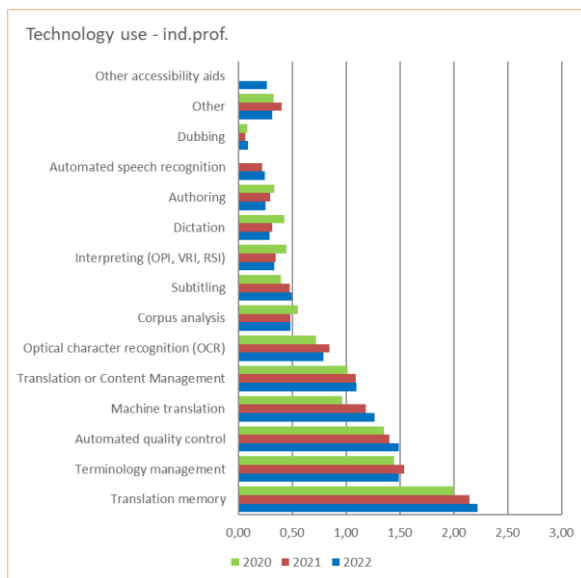
Figure 84 - Technology use - independent professionals

The data show a continuous increase in actual usage of the main language technologies, but reported machine translation use still remains well below popular estimations, including those made by academia respondents (57%).

Public agencies report less MT usage in outsourced work (compared to their total MT usage), while private companies follow an opposite path (62% of outsourced work using MT, compared to their average of 44%).

Other technologies used include system connectors, centralized portals, multilingual chatbots, OCR and corpus analysis tools, among others.

55% of academic respondents estimate that, by 2030 at the latest, machine translation will be used in most professional translation work. This seems like a reasonable prediction, though 17% still think that this will never happen. The lower usage score for RSI (remote interpreting) technology among language companies is most likely linked to the fact that most LSCs are not focused on interpreting.
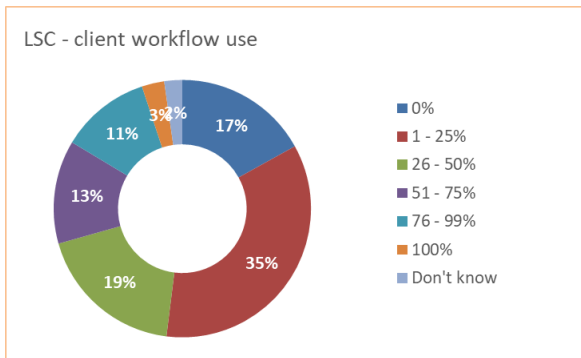
Figure 85 - Client workflow use - language companies
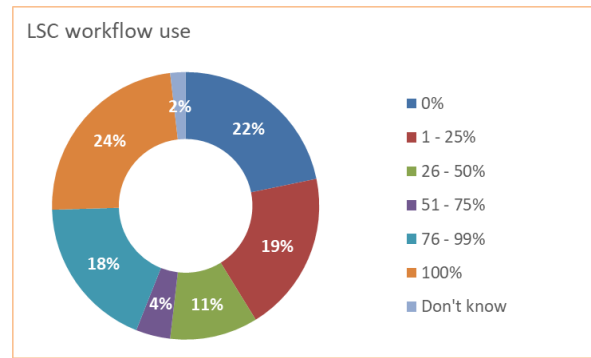
Figure 86 - Language company workflow use

In just one year, workflow usage has increased dramatically. In 2022, 81% of clients and 56% of LSCs used automated workflows for less than 25% of their outsourced work. This year, these percentages have shrunk to 52% and 39%.

LSCs indicate that 29% of their clients send most of their jobs through an automated workflow, and 48% of LSCs do the same when sending work to their vendors.

24% even report that they rely completely on this channel for outsourcing.
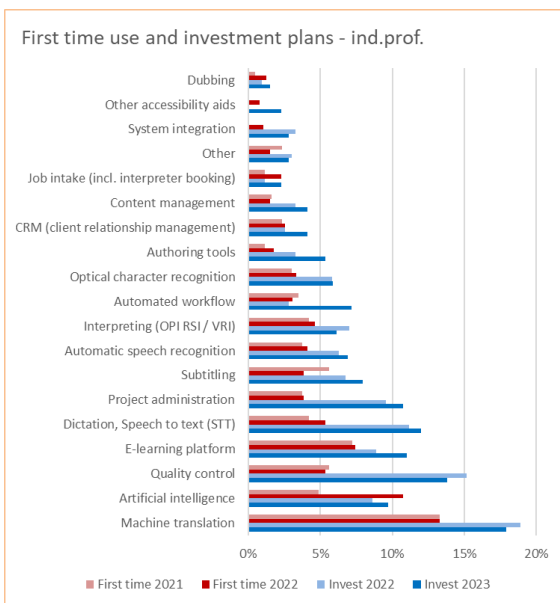
Figure 87 - First time technology use and investment plans - independent professionals

Not surprisingly, artificial intelligence stands out as the main 'new' technology for independent professionals.

However, judging only by the modestly increased investment intentions, it is not yet considered as a solid addition to their technology toolbox.

Globally the 2023 data show a slightly stronger intention to invest in technology, with machine translation again in the lead, followed by quality control technology.

Automated workflow shows a remarkable increase in investment intentions, with more than twice the 2022 score (7% compared to 3%).
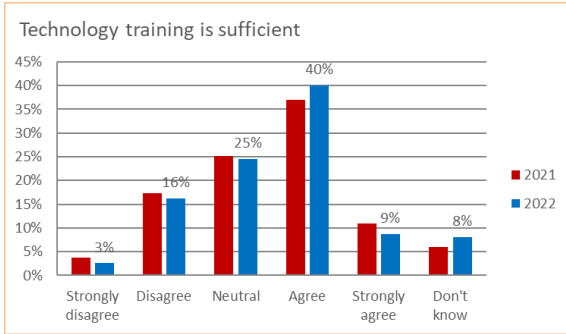
Figure 88 - Technology training satisfaction - independent professionals

Opinions regarding the usefulness of training provided by technology providers in 2022 show a very slight further increase compared to previous year, with negative opinions dropping by 2%.

Overall, independent professionals consider that the training they receive is sufficient to be successful in their work.
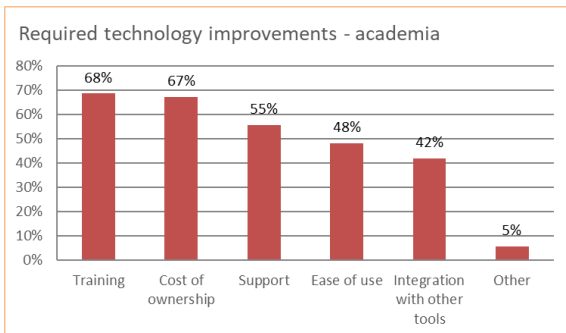
Figure 89 - Technology improvements - training institutes

Training institutes do not entirely agree with the independent professionals with regards to technology training. A clear majority of academic respondents still sees a need for improved training (as well as for support, though to a lesser extent).

Cost of ownership is another major concern, driven by ever stricter budget restrictions.

Preferred tools

Figure 90 – Preferred tools

The above lists show the tools that are mentioned more than once by LSC participants.

In each tool category, we have a clear top 2 or top 3, except for RSI technology, where the interpreting functionality integrated in communication tools such as Zoom or Teams are making it difficult for dedicated RSI tools to gain ground.

With the integration of technologies into suites that combine most if not all required functionalities, it may soon be futile to look at individual tools.

Proprietary tools not only continue to hold their position in the translation management arena, both with LSCs and language departments, but even seem to be gaining ground compared to dedicated tools.

WORKING IN THE LANGUAGE INDUSTRY

A global market of more than 60 billion euro (according to Nimdzi's estimate) is, by definition, a valuable source of employment.

Due to the very nature of the service and the prevailing freelance-based business model, the language industry is a sector that newcomers can easily enter without too many capital, or technology-related restrictions. Participating LSCs, however, do not expect a net increase in the number of language companies this year. In contrast, net 28% of the independent professionals still expect an increase in numbers.

LSC staffing
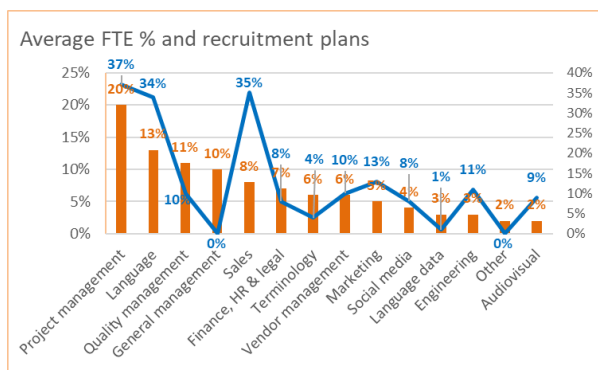
Figure 91 – LSC staffing and recruitment

Some 55% of language company staff (expressed in full time equivalents) are directly involved in production, in a project management role, as linguists, multimedia experts or engineers.

As in 2022, recruitment plans remain mainly focused on language, project management and sales profiles and do not match ambitions for areas such as audio-visual (the 9% consists of 6% for multimedia and only 3% for voice) and language data.

With 17%, management and general business functions score somewhat lower than in 2022.

Sales and marketing remain largely unchanged, with both functions (social media included in marketing) equally strong.
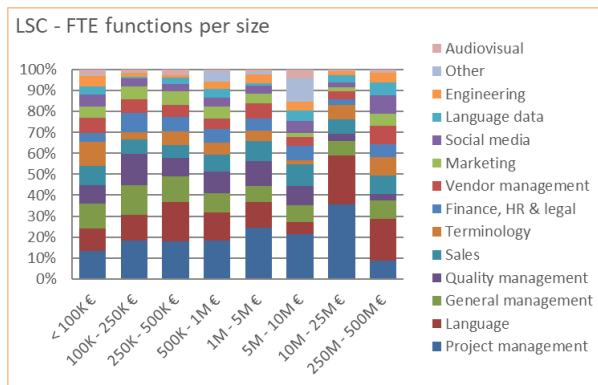
Figure 92 - Functions per size segment - LSCs
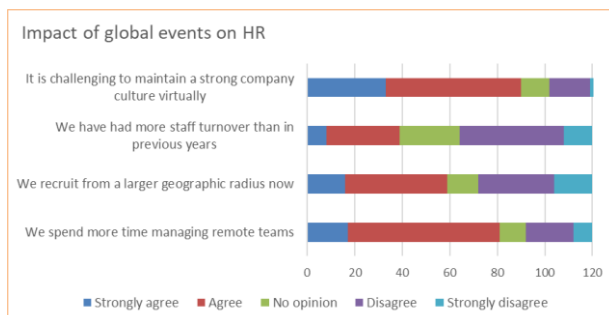
Figure 93 - Impact of global events on HR - LSCs

Managing remote teams is considered a challenge and several respondents mention difficulty with hiring negotiations, in particular around remote work, or loss of talent due to the war.
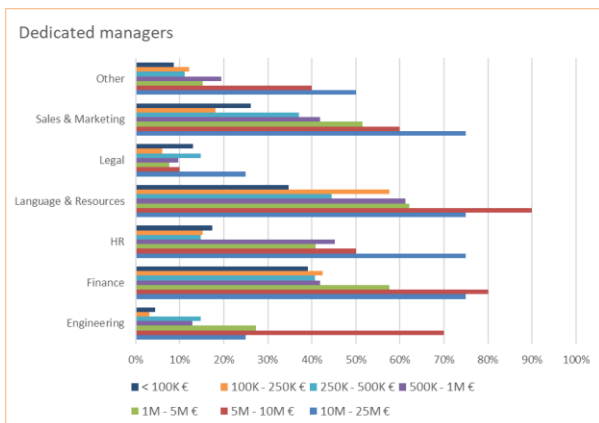
Figure 94 - Dedicated managers - LSCs

Surprisingly, the presence of dedicated managers is not linked to the size of the companies.

Language/resource managers are found in all but the smallest segment, while sales managers mainly appear above the 1 million euro revenue mark.

On average 500 thousand euro seems to be the minimum size to hire a HR manager, but 50% is reached only above the 5 million euro mark.

Finance managers are found in a sizeable percentage of all size segments, including the smallest one (which is strange), but reach 50% only above the 1 million euro mark.

Employment quality

Work from home
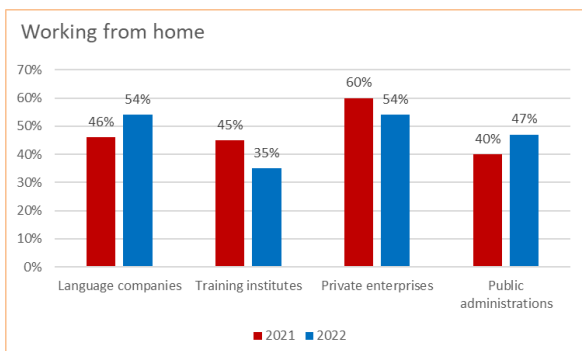
Figure 95 - Work from home

Work from home has always been a fact of life for independent language professionals. COVID introduced it to LSC and language department staff as well.

In this second post-COVID year, the hybrid model has firmly taken root, both in LSCs and language departments.

In the participating LSCs and public agencies, remote working continues to increase, while the opposite seems to happen in private enterprises and training institutes.

Work-life balance

Participants in all segments, except independent professionals, report the same or a better work-life balance than in the previous year.

Independent professionals most often cite uneven workload and tight schedules as causes for a poor work-life balance, while good time management and flexibility, plus the skill of saying 'no' are instrumental in achieving balance.
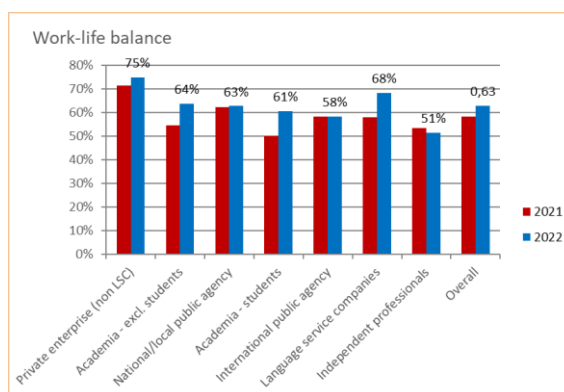
Figure 96 - Work-life balance

Salary, benefits and career opportunities
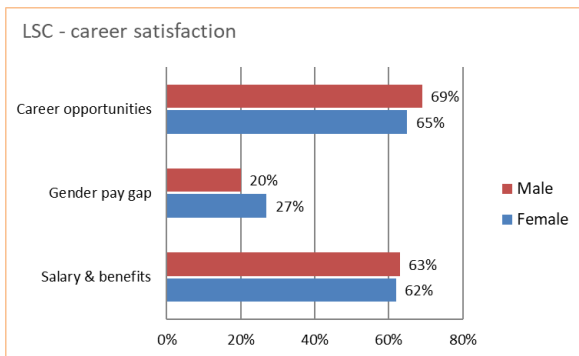
Figure 97 - Career satisfaction - LSCs
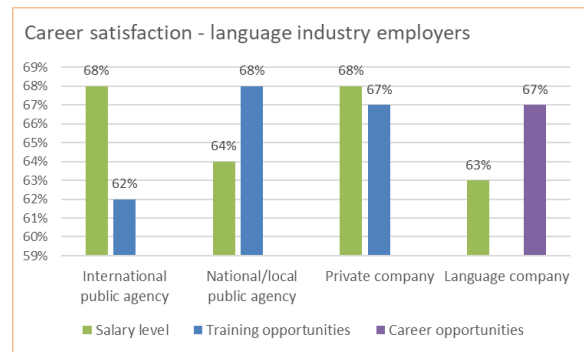
Figure 98 - Career satisfaction - language industry organizations

Previously reported salary level differences between LSCs and other language industry employers seem to have reduced considerably. On the other hand, language industry staff report a higher gender pay gap than in previous years.

International agency staff report substantially lower training opportunities than their colleagues in other language departments.

LSC staff report considerably better career opportunities than last year (average 67% compared to barely 50% in ELIS 2022). The difference between male and female staff however remains fairly strong (400BP).
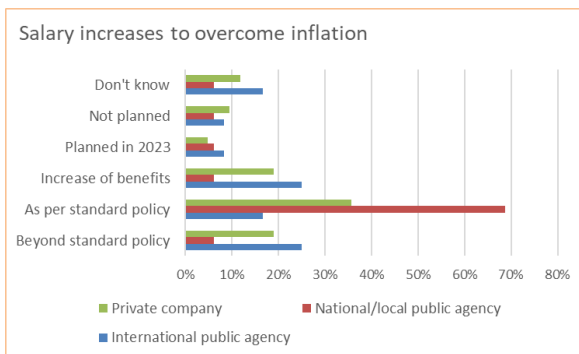
Figure 99 - Salary increases to overcome inflation impact – language departments

Only international agencies or private enterprises apply or plan special salary or benefit increases to compensate for the current high inflation.

National agencies tend to stick to their standard policies.

The situation for independent language professionals is hard to compare with that of employees or public officials. Last year's results indicated that the financial situation of independent professionals had improved in 2021 (a very strong year for the language industry with a global growth of more than 10%). This year, the opinion is slightly less optimistic, with 66% of the independent respondents reporting that they earned enough as freelancers in 2022, which is 200 BP lower than in 2021.

Although small, this drop reinforces the negative sentiment, expressed by independent professionals in several open text answers, claiming a lack of fair payment for their services.

Independent professionals report a slight drop in provision for retirement, but at the same time a considerable increase in private insurance coverage, which seems to be contradictory. Those who do not have retirement provision typically (2 out of 3) indicate that their earnings are not sufficiently stable to afford such provision.
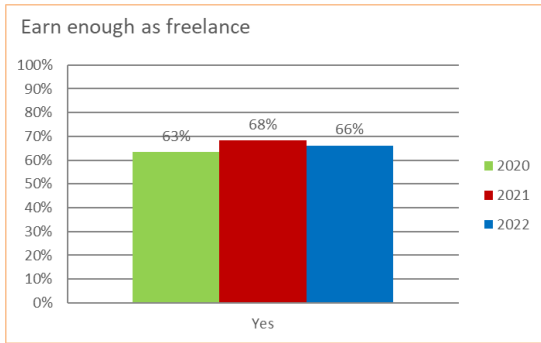
Figure 100 – Earnings – independent professionals
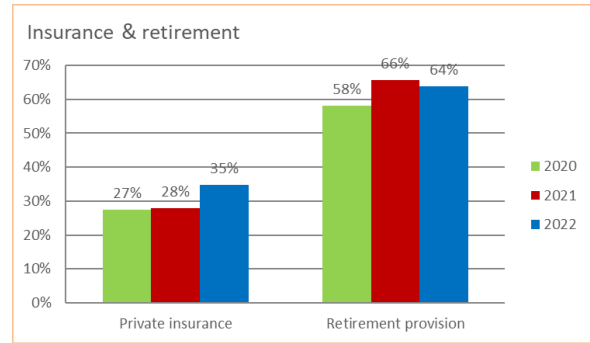
Figure 101 - Private insurance and retirement provisions – independent professionals

The gap in earnings satisfaction between female and male independent professionals that was reported last year, also appears in this year's results (65% for women and 73% for men).
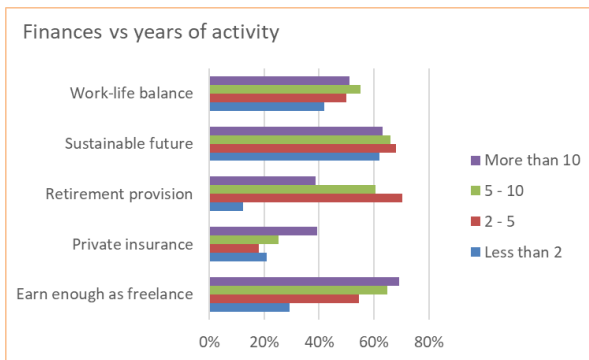
Figure 102 - Finances vs years of activity - independent professionals
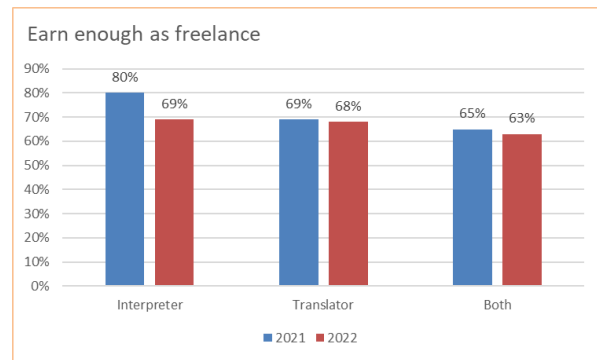
Figure 103 – Earnings vs main activity – independent professionals

According to the ELIS results, the financial profile of independent professionals depends strongly on their seniority. Not surprisingly, the youngest professionals (less than 2 years in the sector) have difficulty earning a living as a freelancer, but the next seniority band has already caught up with the most senior colleagues. More surprising, though, is the high level of confidence young professionals have in the sustainability of their freelance activity.

The considerable difference in earnings that ELIS reported in 2022 between translators and interpreters has almost completely disappeared from this year's results. Those who combine both activities however continue to show a somewhat weaker earnings profile.

Continuous professional development (CPD)

CPD (continuous professional development) plays an ever more important role in the life of independent language professionals.

77% of the independent participants rate it as 'Important' or 'Very Important', which is slightly higher than in ELIS 2022.

We see the same evolution in the frequency of CPD trainings, where we see a significant drop of respondents who did not attend any CPD event.

Sales is back up as a CPD subject, after the short-lived dip in the 'boom' year, 2021.
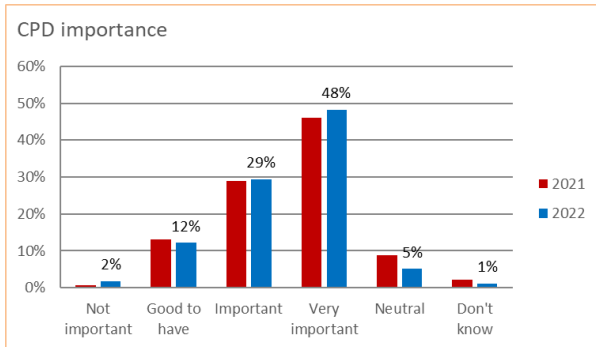
Figure 104 – Continuous Professional Development – Importance
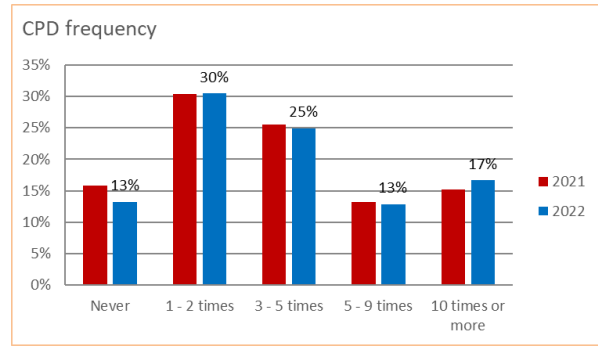
Figure 105 – Continuous Professional Development – Frequency

The small decline in sales and technology CPD that ELIS 2022 spotted has completely been undone. Soft skills are up considerably, mainly under the impulse of young professionals, who joined the industry less than 2 years ago.
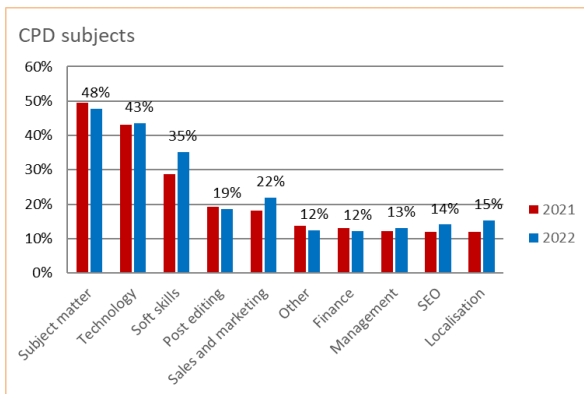
Figure 106 - Continuous Professional Development - Subjects
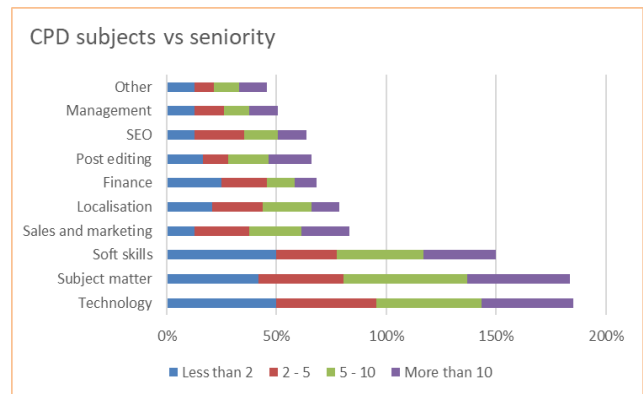
Figure 107 - CPD subjects vs years of activity
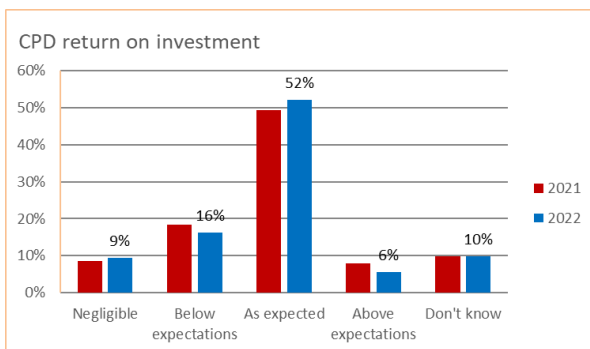
Figure 108 - CPD return on investment

Overall the satisfaction with return on CPD investment has not changed.

With 27% of respondents considering the return negligible or below expectations, there is still room for improvement in that area.

Stickiness of the language industry

According to this year's results, the 'stickiness' of the language industry, in particular among language company staff, clearly increased in 2022. The fear of a 'great resignation wave' that apparently exists in certain countries cannot be confirmed, though a career abroad has also gained attractiveness.

This change may be the result of a generalized sense of insecurity about where the economy is heading.
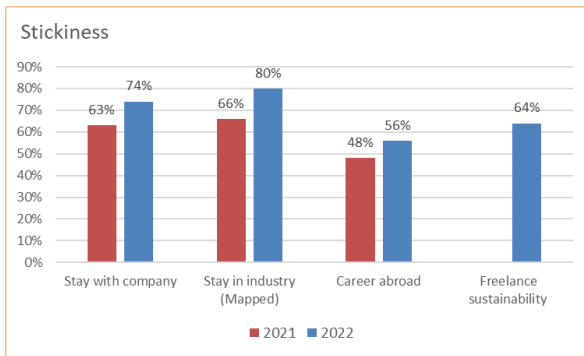
Figure 109 - Language industry 'stickiness' and mobility – LCSs and independent professionals

Since ELIS 2023 was the first edition asking the question about the sustainability of freelance activity, comparison with previous years is not possible.

A comparison with earlier surveys by fit Europe however indicates that this indicator needs to be investigated more in-depth.

ENTERING THE LANGUAGE INDUSTRY
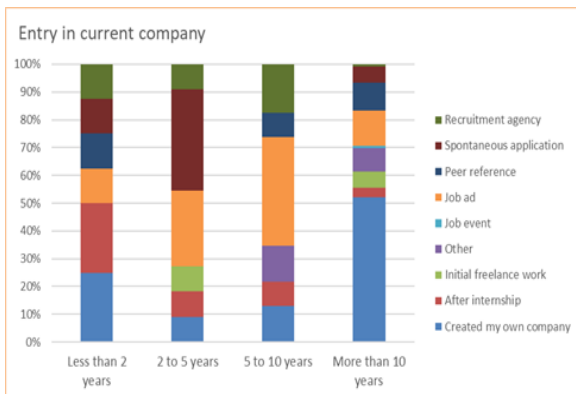
Figure 110 - Channel of entry in current company
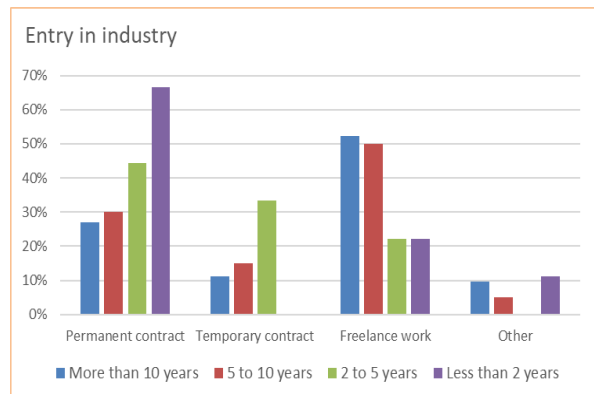
Figure 111 – Type of entry in language industry
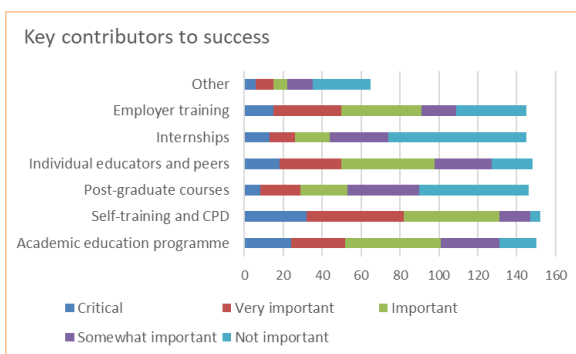
Figure 112 – Career success factors
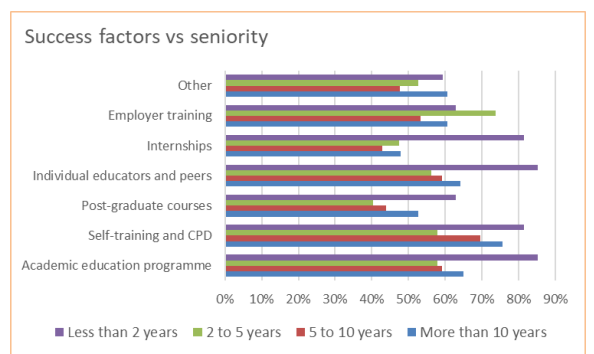
Figure 113 - Career success factors vs years of activity

This year's results indicate that creating one's own company is gaining popularity again among young professionals (if the small sample of recent entrants is anything to go by), but at the same time we see a clear tendency towards permanent contracts compared to past generations.

The youngest generation named an internship as their main entry point to their current company, and hence as an important factor for their success. Older generations do not share this opinion, possibly because internships did not play a role in their own career.

With growing seniority, the role of self-training becomes ever more important, but young professionals are already convinced of this as well.

Required skills
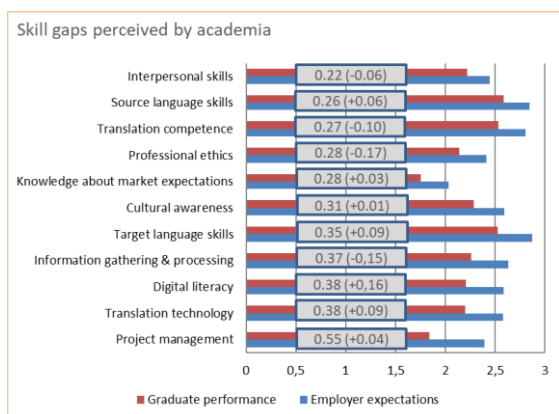
Figure 114 - Skill gaps perceived by training institutes
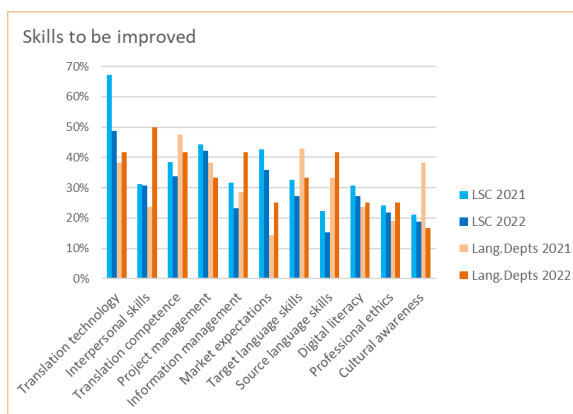
Figure 115 - Skill gaps perceived by language industry

The ELIS 2023 results show considerable differences between LSCs and language departments, but also in comparison with the previous year.

LSCs noticed encouraging improvements in translation technology, traditionally their number one concern, while participants from training institutes still see a considerable (and even widening) gap in that area.

Project management skills are another area that continues to require attention, which is also something correctly assessed by the training institutes.

Language department data show a few dramatic and surprising differences compared to ELIS 2022 results (for example: a spike on interpersonal skills and a stunning improvement on cultural awareness). These strong changes are most probably caused by the very small quantity of skills gap data from language departments (only those that hired Master graduates in 2022 got to answer the question).

The different opinions of language companies and the various types of language departments with regard to specific topics such as target language skill and translation competence (no gap identified by international public agencies) are possibly linked to specific operational requirements or to a recruitment process that filters out candidates that are weaker in those areas.

More detailed research and closer cooperation between training institutes and the different employer types remain necessary to better assess and address these gaps.

LANGUAGE INDUSTRY TRAINING LANDSCAPE

Everywhere in Europe training institutes are struggling to match language industry needs with academic requirements as well as with ever more stringent budget and regulatory restrictions.

To make things even more complicated, interest among the general public about languages as a career choice is waning, which leads to shrinking student numbers and concern about the viability of specific training programmes.

ELIS 2023 follows up on the training landscape that was already sketched out last year, in order to refine the gaps that exist between current training programmes and the expectations of the various industry stakeholders.

Note: Only a formal government-led survey can provide an exhaustive view of the language training landscape in Europe. However, since nearly all "EMT-countries" are covered in ELIS 2023 (only Estonia and Lebanon are missing), the data can be considered to provide a fairly balanced view, even if some countries are over, or under-represented.

Academic evolution
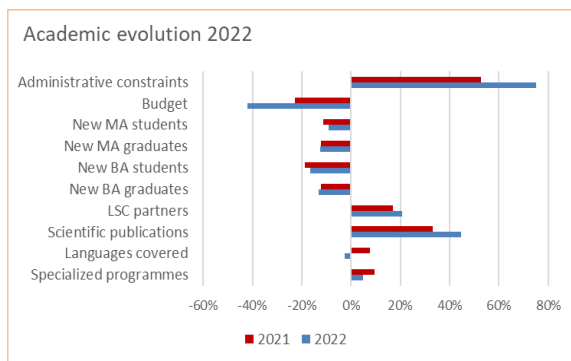
Figure 116 - Academic evolution 2022
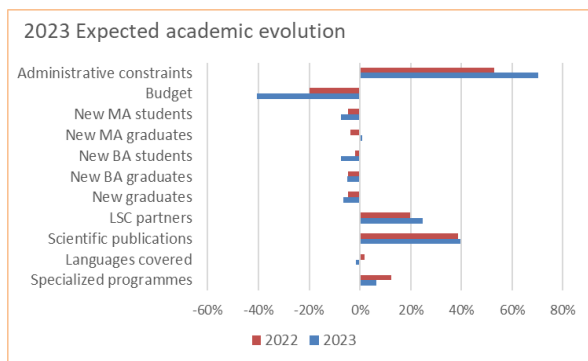
Figure 117 - Expected academic evolution 2023

Participants from the training institutes report that the already severe administrative and budget constraints only got worse in 2022. Student numbers continued to decrease, although cooperation with LSCs increased slightly.

Unfortunately, these trends are expected to continue in 2023, both in terms of restrictions and student numbers.

Existing training programmes

Programme foci and levels
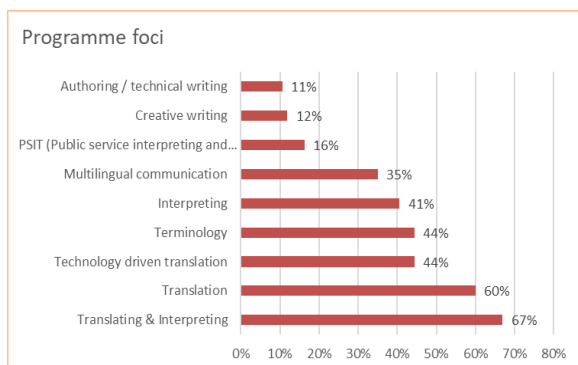
Figure 118 – Training programmes
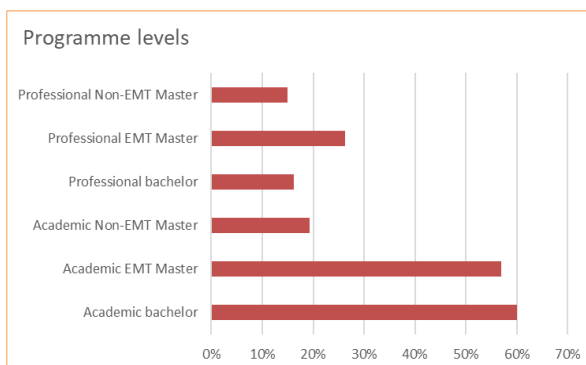
Figure 119 – Training programme levels

The exact distinction between translating and interpreting seems to be diminishing. Many programmes offer a combined "Translating & Interpreting" programme, which may be due to country-specific legal requirements or to market trends.

Note that some institutes state that they organize both the combined programme and a separate translation and/or interpreting programmes, which leads to seemingly over-estimated percentages.

This year's data show a welcomed increase in programmes focused on "Technology driven translation".

The "Multilingual Communication" focus is typically found in bachelor programmes.

The tables below show the distribution per country.

	# answers	Authoring / technical writing	Creative writing	Interpreting	Multilingual communication	PSIT (Public service interpreting and translation)	Technology driven translation	Terminology	Translating & Interpreting	Translation
Austria	15	1		8	7	5	8	6	12	8
Belgium	10	1	2	6	9	4	4	8	7	6
Bulgaria	6	1	2	3			2	2	5	3
China	1								1	
Czechia	4	1		2	2	2	2		4	2
Finland	5	1			2	2	3	2	3	2
France	6	3	2		4	1	3	4	3	3
Germany	2			1	1		1	1	1	1
Greece	3				1			1	3	
Hungary	2			1		1	1	1	2	1
Ireland	2					1	1	1	1	1
Italy	25	1	1	13	3	2	14	15	13	18
Kazakhstan	2				1				1	2
Latvia	6			4	2		3	1	3	4
Lithuania	3		1	1	1			1	1	3
Malta	2		1	2				1	2	2
Moldova	1			1	1			1	1	1
Netherlands	1				1	1		1	1	
Poland	21	2	2	4	3	2	11	7	14	9
Portugal	9	3	2	6	5		5	6	6	7
Romania	4		1		2		1	2	1	3
Russia	1		1	1					1	1
Slovak Republic	10	1	2	4	4	1	4	4	8	4
Slovenia	2			2	1			1	1	2
Spain	6		1		1		2	2	3	4
Sudan	1		1	1			1	1	1	1
Switzerland	1	1		1	1					1
UK	7	1		3	3		4	2	5	6
Ukraine	2				1				2	
USA	1			1		1	1		1	1
		17	19	65	56	23	71	71	107	96

Figure 120 – Training programmes per country

	# answers	Academic bachelor	Academic EMT Master	Academic Non-EMT Master	Professional bachelor	Professional EMT Master	Professional Non-EMT Master
Austria	15	13	10	4		1	2
Belgium	10	8	8			2	
Bulgaria	6	2	1	1	2	3	
China	1				1		
Czechia	4	3	3		1		1
Finland	5	1	4	1		1	1
France	6	2	3	1		4	1
Germany	2	2	1	2			
Greece	3	2	3	1		1	
Hungary	2		1			1	
Ireland	2		1			1	
Italy	25	15	15	6	2	6	2
Kazachstan	2	2		1			
Latvia	6				3	5	1
Lithuania	3	2	3		1	1	1
Malta	2	1	2				
Moldova	1	1			1		
Netherlands	1	1					
Poland	21	13	16	2	5	4	2
Portugal	9	7	7	1	1	4	2
Romania	4	4	2	1	1	1	
Russia	1	1	1		1		1
Slovak Republic	10	6	5	1	3	3	2
Slovenia	2	1					
Spain	6	4	3	2		3	1
Sudan	1	1		1	1		
Switzerland	1	1	1				
UK	7	3		6	1		6
Ukraine	2				1		1
USA	1	1					
		97	90	31	25	41	22

Figure 121 – Training programme levels per country
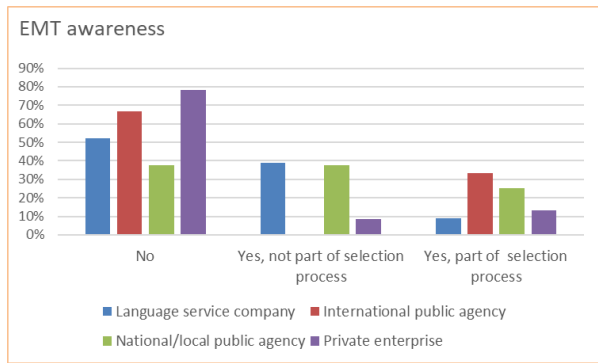
Figure 122 – EMT awareness

Due to the EMT's network role as co-organizer of ELIS, non-EMT programmes may be under-represented in this overview.

The data do not show an improvement of the EMT label's visibility among language companies and language departments. The low number of responses from public agencies, however, makes it difficult to compare with last year's results.

Specializations
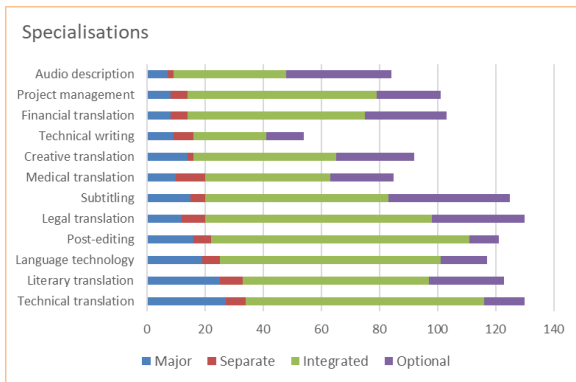
Figure 123 - Training programme specializations

In a 'Major' specialization, a significant part of the programme is focused on that particular domain, while 'Separate' means that domain-specific courses are part of the standard programme. 'Integrated' indicates that domain-specific content is used in the standard programme and 'Optional' means that students can add non-compulsory domain-specific courses to their programme. The chart is sorted by Major + Separate.

Input from the industry would be required to determine how well these aproaches meet professional requirements

Languages
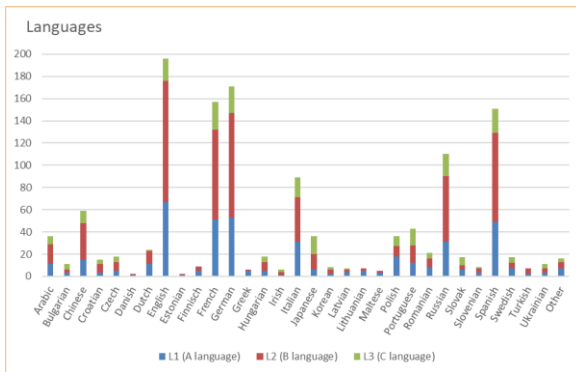
Figure 124 - Training programme languages

Language distribution cannot be considered a true reflection of the actual situation due to the imbalance in response numbers (for example only one entry mentioned Danish, and this entry came from an English respondent).

Moreover, due to the anonymized nature of the data, they cannot be matched to specific programmes.

Even so, the chart shows clearly the imbalance between languages and the precarious situation of specific ones.

Preparing for the language industry

On top of the professionalization courses that are part of the standard training programme, training institutes typically have 4 main instruments to prepare their students for the reality of the language industry: guest lectures, internships, workshops and simulation exercises.
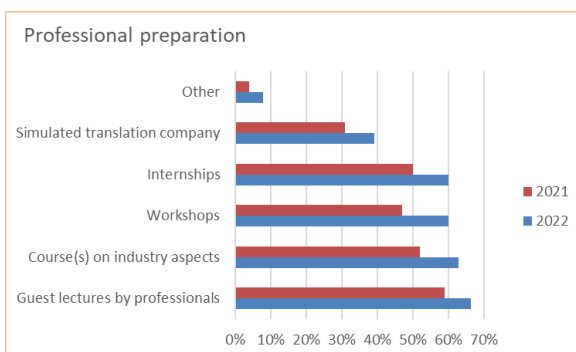
Figure 125 - Professional preparation in training programmes

All types of professional preparation actions have increased compared to previous year, in particular workshops, industry courses and internships.
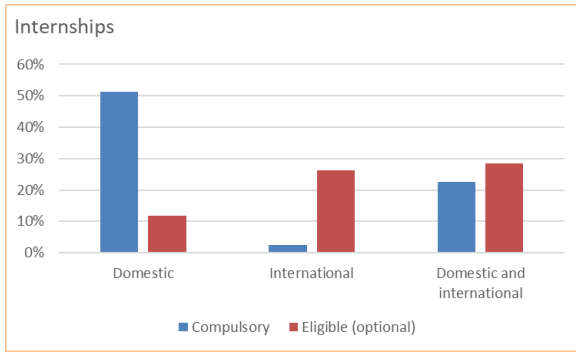
Figure 126 - Internships in training programmes
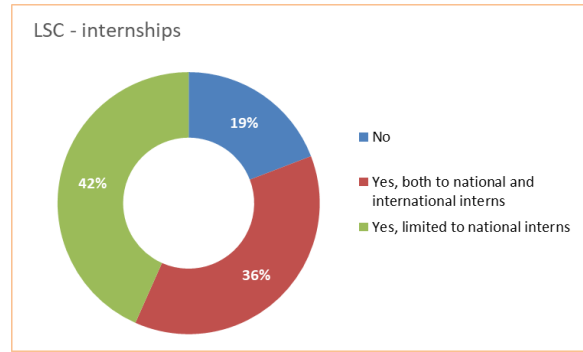
Figure 127 - Internships in language companies

The training institutes' approach to internships has not significantly changed: in programmes that only include domestic internships these are usually compulsory.

International internships are typically optional. This is most probably linked to the increased complexity of organizing international internships as well as financial considerations.

LSCs report a slightly higher (+300 BP) tendency this year to also offer international internships.
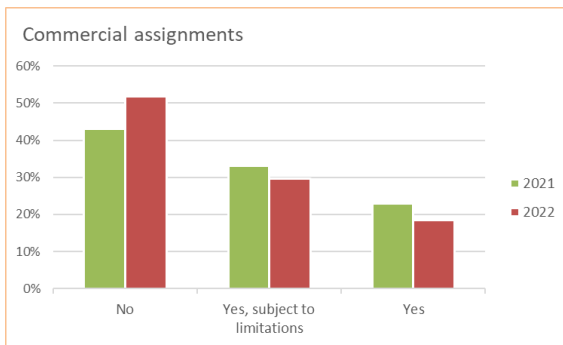
Figure 128 - Commercial assignments in simulations

Based on this year's results, the approach to commercial assignments as part of translation company simulations has become a bit more stringent. This indicates a higher awareness of potential conflicts of interest with language industry stakeholders.

More than 50% of participants report that their training institute does not accept commercial assignments as part of these simulations.

ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY COMMENTS

Mid-point averages	Many answer options represented a volume, revenue or percentage range such as "21 – 50%" or "2 – 5".
	Averages of these answers have been calculated by using mid-point values: "21 – 50%" was converted to "38%" and "2 – 5" became 3.5.
Respondents per country	For mature language service countries, ELIS uses a target threshold of 10 companies and 20 independent professionals. For smaller economies, this threshold has been set to 5 and 10 respectively.
	These thresholds are the same as in previous years. Data for countries with lower response rates should be used with caution.
Market evolution	% Increase and strong increase responses - % decrease and strong decrease responses divided by the number of responses after deduction of "don't know" answers.
Investment mood	[Investment in 2020 * 2 + Investment later - Disinvestment later - Disinvestment in 2020 * 2] / number of answers.
	The reliability of country-specific sentiment scores depends on number of responses received from the individual countries. See table with country-specific thresholds.

TABLE OF FIGURES