

A brief history

At the end of 2008, the Publications Office of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as 'PO') proposed that the Directorate-General for Translation (hereinafter referred to as 'DGT') of the Court of Justice of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as 'CJEU') should contribute to the creation of a comparative multilingual legal vocabulary (hereinafter referred to as 'VJM') for the various domestic legal systems of the Member States of the European Union, within the framework of the interinstitutional project *e-Justice*.

Available in 23 languages, VJM would allow lawyers and EU citizens to have access to a multilingual documentary tool for indexing and searching the documentary tools of national legal databases.

In order to respond based on concrete factors; DGT conducted a feasibility study and began working on VJM in March 2009. In this context, DGT proposed to produce an atypical controlled vocabulary, which would meet two requirements: finding information (the documentary need) and understanding it (the terminological need). Currently, VJM covers the domains of immigration law and family law. Criminal law is in progress.

The lawyer-linguists working on the project conducted extensive comparative legal research (concerning national, EU and international law), which required a detailed analysis of the different legal concepts specific to each legal system, as well as of the different designations of a concept within each system in legislation, case law and academic legal writing.

This comparative legal analysis has produced a coherent and hierarchically structured set of terminological entries containing terms accompanied by reliable references, contexts, various notes (historical notes, comparison of laws, evolution of concepts, caution on the use of terms, etc.), definitions, comparative law summary notes contexts, semantic relations, etc. In addition to the terminological entries, a common concept tree is available for each domain.

In June 2010, DGT submitted the report on the feasibility study to the PO. This report and a summary of the conclusions were presented in November 2010 to the e-Justice group of the Council.

This project has numerous benefits, especially with regard to the translation of Member States' urgent requests for preliminary rulings. As a matter of fact, the work done allows lawyer-linguists to save time as well as to provide high-quality translations thanks to greater harmonization of legal terminology in translations. Therefore, the importance of pursuing the project and expand it —if conditions allow to other legal domains which are frequently subject of proceedings before the courts of the European Union is now firmly established throughout Directorate-General for Multilingualism (DGT before 2018).

At present, VJM contains about 647 terminological entries: 243 in the domain of immigration law, 404 in family law. Both collections have been imported into the [IATE public database](#).

This vocabulary can be useful to anyone (citizens, legal professionals, students, linguists, terminologists, translators) as a source of information or terminological support (translation support or simply an aid for comprehension).