Glossaries and translations

This section provides a brief overview of existing glossaries and multilingual "thesaurus" at European level.

A "glossary" is an alphabetical list of terms in a particular domain of knowledge accompanied by the definitions of those terms. In case of a bilingual glossary, the terms in one language are defined in a second language or glossed by synonyms or near-synonyms in another language. A glossary may be understood as containing explanations of concepts relevant to a certain field of study or action. In the law field, the term "glossary" may refer to two different tools: on the one hand it is used for a list of expressions with translations provided for each country; on the other hand, it is also used for a list of definitions for terminology.

Glossaries

IATE

IATE (InterActive Terminology for Europe) is a **multilingual term database** used for translations within the European institutions.

It consists of a **search engine** for expressions and phrases used in all areas of European Union activity. It requires rather professional knowledge of the target language in order to be used properly. It is a very useful tool for professional translators while not being wholly suitable for the general public, judicial authorities or legal professionals. Therefore, the translations of expressions and phrases are entered by the translators themselves to create new references or supplement existing ones. Suggestions for translations are provided for several, but not in all, official languages of the European Union.

Access to this database is free of charge.

Dictionary of synonyms

EU Vocabularies

The EU Vocabularies website provides access to vocabularies managed by the EU institutions and bodies. This includes controlled vocabularies, schemas, ontologies, data models, etc. As part of the EU open data initiative, the EU Vocabularies site offers free public access to all of its content.

This thesaurus exists in 23 official languages of the European Union.

COMPARATIVE MULTILINGUAL LEGAL VOCABULARY (VJM)

VJM is a collection of multilingual terminological data entries found in multiple domestic legal systems (24 languages and 30 legal systems) resulting from comprehensive research work on comparative law done by the lawyer-linguists of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The VJM's terminological data entries have very detailed information such as definitions (adapted to each legal system), notes on comparative law, legal references (legislation, case law and academic legal writing from national, EU and international legal systems), the different designations of a concept (in the same language and sometimes different depending on the legal system), a clear indication of the origin of a term (functional equivalent or formulation — circumlocution), warning notes (legal false friends, risk of confusion, obsolete terms), concept trees allowing to see the semantic relationships between concepts at a glance, etc.

At present, VJM contains about 1 400 terminological entries: 250 in the domain of immigration law (rights of aliens), 450 in family law, 420 in criminal law (about half of the entries in criminal law are under review) and about 280 entries in other domains. All the data records are available through the terminological database IATE.

This vocabulary can be used by anyone (citizens, legal professionals, students, linguists, terminologists, translators) wishing to understand a concept. It can also be useful for translation and drafting purposes.

More information about the project:

Project history PDF (434 Kb) en

A leaflet Comparative multilingual legal vocabulary PDF (2520 Kb) en

List of multilingual terminological data records:

Concept trees:

Family Law: Filiation | Matrimonial law | Family situation

For more information, contact the team in charge of the project at the Court of Justice of the European Union.

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