Why Europe needs a
Multilingual Digital Single Market

Europe’s 24 official languages present a tremendous opportunity for European business

Removing language barriers within Europe would open access to 73% (with >€25 trillion in annual revenue!) of the world’s digitally accessible market to European enterprise.

Europe today is not a single market: it is a separated into 20+ small language markets.

Current eCommerce growth within Europe is about half that of the US, due partially to a lack of language coverage from European SMEs.

Less than 5% of European SMEs currently sell cross-language.

No single language accounts for more than 20% of the potential Multilingual Digital Single Market.

Most account for less than 3% of the DSM.

Without a solution, the European Digital Single Market will remain fragmented.
THREE PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACHIEVING THE MULTILINGUAL DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

Multilingual access to all digital goods and services across Europe

Customers are six times more likely to buy from sites in their native language.

English is not the answer

52% of EU customers do not purchase from English-language sites.

Adding even a few languages to an SME’s website beyond English can have a major impact on revenue. Large organizations today often localize products and websites into fifty or more languages to increase market share.

Most EU languages address less than 3% of the market, fundamentally limiting SMEs operating in countries where those languages are spoken.

Language can be expensive for SMEs

Online businesses face around €5,000 in up-front costs for each new language they translate their websites into, plus similar ongoing costs for maintenance. These figures do not include support and marketing costs.

Lack of language technology support (automatic translation, tools to assist human translators, and multilingual support in content-creation tools) restricts customer access to content and excludes millions of individuals from the online audience of European businesses.

Even when sites are translated, the vast majority of SMEs cannot respond to support requests or customer feedback in other languages. Such responsiveness is needed to achieve customer satisfaction and build brand loyalty.

Geo-blocking and language-blocking are barriers to access

Geo-blocking:
- keeps customers from accessing content due to nationality, location, or residence
- can be worked around by tech-savvy customers
- prevents some cross-border commerce

Language-blocking:
- keeps customers from accessing content in languages they do not speak
- customers never even know what they cannot find
- is unavoidable: no-one speaks all languages; however, current online translation is insufficient
- prevents customers from even trying to conduct cross-border commerce
- disproportionately impacts speakers of less common languages

Both geo-blocking and language-blocking are daily problems for tens of millions of EU citizens.
2 Boosting commerce through multilingual technologies

The native languages of approximately 140 million EU citizens are in the Language Technology Danger Zone, where language technology is inadequate to support the DSM.

* Figures based on the META-NET study “Europe’s Languages in the Digital Age” (2011/2012). Technology support has improved for some languages since this study was completed.

Only three European languages (Spanish, English, and French) meet at least the “moderate” level of language technology support.

Translation opens 20 times its cost in revenue opportunity. However, translation remains too expensive for many European SMEs, blocking this opportunity and limiting economic growth in Europe. Lowering these costs is a strategic opportunity for high-quality automatic translation.

3 Connecting citizens to European digital public services

290 million EU citizens excluded

Over half of EU citizens are language blocked from interacting with the European Commission’s web resources for citizen participation.

Without Language Technology, the European Commission has no way to respond effectively to citizen participation.

Current language technology is inadequate for over half of the EU official languages to help the European Commission solve its citizen engagement problem.

Most local governmental services are monolingual only. This poses a problem for tourists, expatriates, and linguistic minorities. Language technology can provide the next generation of technology solutions for public services.

Multilingual eParticipation can help build the European Identity

In the medium-to-long term, multilingual language technologies are needed to enable all European citizens to communicate with one another in their respective native languages with sophisticated machine translation working behind the scenes. Only when EU citizens can interact in their own languages will they truly develop a sense of European identity and community.

This fact sheet was launched by the European Language Technology Research, Development and Innovation community, drafted by META and LT-Innovate. It will be supplemented by the more in-depth Strategic Agenda for the Multilingual Digital Single Market, to be released at the Riga Summit on the Multilingual Digital Single Market (27–29 April 2015): http://rigasummit2015.eu.

META, the Multilingual Europe Technology Alliance, has more than 750 members (http://www.meta-net.eu).

LT-Innovate, the European Association of the Language Technology Industry, has 180 corporate members throughout Europe (http://lt-innovate.eu).
Technology Solutions

Investment in the following solutions will help achieve the Multilingual Digital Single Market

Unified Customer Experience
- Provides a contextualised experience to users (for eCommerce)
- Brings together content, product, customer care, customer relationship, discussion fora, help-desks, etc.
- Unified digital (eco)system across languages

Multimodal User Experience for Connected Devices
- Multilingual speech, text, and gesture interfaces
- For connected devices such as robots, cars, household appliances, and consumer products (Internet of Things)

Voice of the Customer
- Comprehensive methods for multilingual market research
- Connects business to customer opinion and experience across borders and languages

Content Curation and Production
- Smart multilingual authoring support
- Multilingual and multimodal report generation, cross-lingual linking, enrichment, and semantification

Digital Translation Centre
- Automatic translation services
- Free (for the citizen) or for a fee (specialised HQ services)
- To and from businesses, governments, customers, citizens

The forthcoming Strategic Agenda for the Multilingual Digital Single Market will provide additional details on these and other solutions for the needs of the Multilingual Digital Single Market.

Download this fact sheet from [http://cracker-project.eu](http://cracker-project.eu).
For more information contact Dr. Georg Rehm (DFKI) at georg.rehm@dfki.de.