



Young Translators Competition

A window on careers in languages

"Emma exemplifies the skills and qualities that more and more businesses are looking for in our future workforce by offering excellent communication skills, both in her own and other languages." Mr Edward Coffey, Head of Modern Languages at Morrison's Academy, Perthshire, neatly sums up the abilities which led **Emma Robertson** to emerge as the UK winner for 2010 in the European Commission's annual "Juvenes Translatores" contest for 17-year-old linguists from across the European Union. "I hope that her success will help to dispel the myth that we Scots are not good language learners," he adds.

Though disarmingly modest, Emma is clearly a talented young woman. With five Highers including maths and music under her belt, she is well on the way to Advanced Highers in French, history and English literature, and is looking forward to reading English literature with two modern languages at St Andrew's. Picked as a "Juvenes Translatores" winner for her flair as a prose stylist, she is also an accomplished public speaker, with a national debating prize to her name. Given her mother Kay's longstanding interest in languages and experience in teaching French at primary level, it is not surprising to hear that Emma started to speak French before starting secondary school and has constantly sought out opportunities to practise on visits abroad.

It was a natural choice for Emma to translate from French into English, but under "Juvenes Translatores" rules contestants – whose geographic spread in 2010 extended from Kemijärvi in Finnish Lapland to Hania on the Greek island of Crete – can choose any language pair from among the EU's 23 official languages. While English is a clear front-runner among source languages, French, German and Spanish were also well represented in the 2010 competition, and language combinations totalled 141. The organisers encourage budding linguists to translate into their mother tongue, as this produces the best results and reflects professional practice. And it may even kindle the ambition to seek a career in the EU civil service.

European Commission translators have a wide range of academic backgrounds, though their common denominator is an in-depth knowledge of at least two EU languages apart from their mother tongue. Anne Cahling, a fellow Scot working in the English-language department, has combined scientific and linguistic interests since her schooldays.

After a degree in biochemistry at the University of Glasgow, Anne took a postgraduate diploma in Russian before editing scientific journals for the Royal Society of Chemistry in London. A move to rural Sweden heralded the start of a multi-faceted career as a "purveyor of the English language" which encompassed teaching, interpreting and translating. As a scientist she was much in demand to translate medical, scientific and environmental texts, and she added yet another string to her bow by qualifying as a legal translator and interpreter. Anne currently translates mainly from Swedish, Danish and French, and is now building on her knowledge of Russian to learn Bulgarian. What does she like most about working for the European Commission? Challenging work, face-to-face contact with friendly and well-informed colleagues, and the opportunity for lifelong learning are three big pluses.

While a linguistic career in Brussels is not for everyone, there are plenty of job opportunities in the wider world of translation for people with good languages and knowledge of specialist subject areas. But how many 17-year-olds, even those studying a language, are aware of this? Here's where the "Juvenes Translatores" competition has a useful role to play. It demonstrates one way of using language knowledge in the "real" world and provides hands-on experience. Taking part in a Europe-wide competition, with the chance of winning a trip to Brussels and meeting young people from all over Europe, can be a motivating challenge for reasonably able students. It also provides language teachers – who accompanied the winners in 2010 – with opportunities to network with one another which can lead to fruitful exchanges between schools.

If your school would like to take part, you can sign up as of **01 September**.

A random selection procedure is then applied. The competition itself is scheduled for **24 November**.

There will be one winner in each of the 27 European Union countries, but the runners-up will receive feedback too. For further information about the competition, take a look at the European Commission's website and Facebook (see below). Why not give your young linguists a little extra challenge, which might well open up some new avenues?

Fiona Graham, staff translator at the European Commission

JUVENES TRANSLADORES on the internet: 2010 source texts: http://ec.europa.eu/translatores/texts/texts_en.htm
Web: <http://ec.europa.eu/translatores> Facebook: www.facebook.com/juvenestranslatores Twitter: [@translatores](https://twitter.com/translatores)