

## EU told to planificate end of nonsense

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News

When you were at work yesterday, did you engage with agents and other actors to planificate ahead of an impending comitology?

If you did, you're probably an employee of the [European Union \(javascript:void\(0\);\)](#) . Because the odds are that only a worker of that institution would understand what that sentence means.

Jeremy Gardner, a senior translator at the [European Court of Auditors \(javascript:void\(0\);\)](#) , has compiled a 33-page document filled with 89 real examples of nonsense words used by the EU. They vary from accidental misuse of English terms to repeated use of words that have been entirely made up and that anyone outside of the EU would struggle to understand.

"Over the years, the European institutions have developed a vocabulary that differs from that of any recognised form of English," Mr Gardner writes. "Internally, we all know what 'informatics' are (is?), what happens if we 'transpose' a directive or 'go on mission' and that, when our 'agents' are on a contract, they are not actually going to kill anyone," he goes on.

One word he highlights, modality, is not a real English word. But that does not stop EU staff from using it – it appeared more than 2,000 times on an official EU legal-text website, EUR - Lex. And people even "swear it is correct", Mr Gardner says, and "say they have to use it because the [European] Commission does so".

Another phrase that has provoked his wrath is "sickness insurance".

It should be, he points out, "health insurance", adding: "Presumably one would take out 'sickness insurance' if one wanted to stay in bad health."

"Comitology", a word that does not exist in the English lexicon, but which the EU uses to mean "committee procedure", had, he found, been used 1,253 times. "Not only does the word not exist outside the EU institutions," he writes, "but it is formed from a misspelt stem. It is therefore highly unlikely that an outsider would be able to deduce its meaning, even in context."

The aim of his dossier is to help EU employees to communicate better with members of the public who may not speak EU , he says, and he gives examples of other words that might be used instead. Why use "hierarchical superior" when "manager" would do? The misuse of "Anglo-Saxon" to mean "English speaking" is something that particularly irks Mr Gardner.

"In English, the term 'Anglo-Saxon' is generally used to describe 'a member of any of the West Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) that settled in Britain from the fifth century AD ," he explains. "Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon language ceased to exist in the 12th century."

Mr Gardner told The Wall Street Journal that he was not an Eats, Shoots & Leaves-style pedant but that he was just trying to make EU texts more readable.

"I am concerned with trying to help people keep to a model of English that is comprehensible for our potential readership," he said, in plain language that anyone could understand.

### LANGUAGE BARRIER

#### EU SPEAK

#### AGENT

EU meaning: anyone employed by the EU - i.e member of staff.

Real meaning: spy or representative of another person.

#### HOMOGENISE

EU meaning: standardise

English meaning: to mix (milk)

#### PERSPECTIVE

EU meaning: Future expectation

English meaning: Seen from a particular point of view

#### VISA

EU meaning: approval (to anything)

English meaning: specific travel document. Or a credit card.

#### COMITOLOGY

EU meaning: committee procedure

Real meaning: there isn't one. And, as Mr Gardener points out, it is mis-spelt anyway: committee has two m's and two ts.

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