News from EAHIL

Report from the MeSH Special Interest Group Meeting
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The Special Interest Group (SIG) on MeSH translation met on June 11 and gathered a section of the 14th EAHIL Conference participants from Belgium, the Dutch Caribbean, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and of course Italy. The idea of meeting for SIGs during the Conference and not on the day/days before, when CE courses are usually held, was very successful and we gathered over twenty people interested in MeSH translation. After a brief welcome introduction, participants were encouraged to introduce themselves and to raise issues or questions. Sigrun Espelien Aasen talked of her experience, as a research librarian, at the Norwegian Electronic Health Library of the Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services, Oslo. They have translated most of MeSH and are planning to make them freely available for all in September 2014. They have also translated «Health topics» used in MedlinePlus to be used in combination with MeSH in Norwegian health portals. She underlined the importance ofhigh quality in MeSH translation, but also the need for money to support this effort. This terminology is so technical and specific that translation should be done by professional experts/translators in the field. The cost for translation is high, money does not come easily and that is the main challenge. She stressed the value and importance of NLM's Open Access policy, support and expertise. Now they are working to make MeSH available as linked data. Mesh is recommended to be used in ISO 13199 Health Informatics-Clinical Knowledge Resourses-Metadata 23s 2012.

Within the Belgian group, Koen Vanneste and Carl Gossens, IVS-Iscientia and Geens Siegfried, Ceban Digital Library took part in the discussion: they agreed on the financial aspect and presented the Belgian experience with an extra problem, they have two official languages, French and Dutch, and had to contact the University of Ghent for MeSH translation, which was quite an effort. In Italy we translated MeSH at no added cost, since researchers at the Istituto Superiore di Sanità helped us as experts in various field, but this could be considered an exception.

Samuel Johnson also took part in the discussion and talked of his past experience at the NLM MeSH Section, which added extra value to the debate. Besides the official group of countries already involved, other countries would be interested in MeSH translation, such as Romania for instance, and we all should make an effort to make this possible. So, we envisaged the possibility of a project, maybe financed by the EU Commission, for the development of MeSH translation in more languages. A good launching platform for this idea could be the participation of EAHIL in the European Civil Social Platform for Multilingualism. This issue was discussed at the EAHIL Council meeting and proposed by Suzanne Bakker. In brief, the Platform's objective is to support the European Commission on issues of Languages in the EU. The represented European associations are active in the field of multilingualism as a cultural issue, e.g. in translations, in promotion of native/lesser used languages, minority groups, languages in education, English as the lingua Franca, teaching languages etc. EAHIL joined the Platform having the MeSH-SIG activities in mind.

Maurella Della Seta and Suzanne Bakker, as EAHIL representatives, plan to present to the platform in Spring 2015 something about the usage of the MeSH thesaurus for indexing and information retrieval and to give some background insight into the computer technology of the hierarchical organisation of the thesaurus (tree structure). Regarding the work and interests of EAHIL they will talk about the translations of MeSH in European languages and the use in medical and health-related bibliographic databases, with the emphasis on the facilitation of retrieval of relevant documents and information across languages. The MeSH-SIG supported this great initiative of Maurella and Suzanne.