

IATE SURVEY FOR EXTERNAL USERS (2022)

IATE (Interactive Terminology for Europe) is the European Union's advanced terminology management system, designed to support the multilingual drafting of EU texts and help make EU legislation more transparent to citizens. EU terminologists provide relevant, reliable, easily accessible data with a distinct added value compared to other sources of lexical information (e.g. translation memories, the internet, electronic archives).

IATE has been available to the public since 2007, giving language professionals, academics, national experts, public administrations, policy advisers, private-sector companies and the general public access to validated terminology in the 24 official EU languages.

About the survey

Following the release of the new IATE in November 2018, and after a 4-year cycle of constant evolution of the tool and enrichment and consolidation of its content, the IATE Management Group decided to launch an anonymous survey to gather feedback on the existing features and gain a deeper understanding of the users' experience in order to further improve IATE. The survey ran from 1 September to 15 November 2022 and received 943 replies from external users.

Survey findings

As expected, most of the respondents were translators (80%), followed by interpreters (20%). 20% of the respondents were external language service providers for the EU institutions and EU bodies. The vast majority (83%) do not log in to IATE to benefit from extra features when using it.

General user experience

Regarding the general user experience, most users (96%) find IATE relatively user-friendly. They nevertheless point to some areas that could be improved:

- filtering by domain could be easier
- selected filters are not visible enough and not easy to disable
- predictive typing with suggestions followed by no results frustrates many users
- fuzzy searches are not retrieved
- 'no results' message is not prominent enough
- cursor should move back to search box (behaviour improved in the meantime)
- access to full entry view could be more intuitive
- there is too much scrolling in general
- features available to logged-in users are not clearly promoted

- look and feel could be better

Search feature

As for the main IATE feature, the search, users find the basic search easy to use, but more advanced options/filters/metadata are not always easy to find or clear enough.

In spite of this, 78% answer that they are satisfied with the options for targeting their search, and 45% report that they use the expanded search. The most used options (i.e. always or often used) in the expanded search are the filter by domain (29%) / the search in other fields (19%) / the matching options (18%) / the filter by reliability (18%).

The language selection for the search is considered easy to use (90%), and 44% of respondents select more than one target language (some of them systematically, others when no results are found for their main target language). Multiple source languages remain rare (10%), since this feature is only available to logged-in users and most of the respondents are not familiar with this possibility. The fact that the language selectors collapse after launching a search is not seen as practical by a few users, along with the small font of language codes.

Search results

Regarding search results, 10% of the respondents are always satisfied, while 70% are often satisfied and 17% sometimes satisfied. Lack of results (silence) and too many irrelevant results (noise) are the main issues pointed out by respondents.

The main proposals mentioned by users to improve the usefulness of results are the following:

- seeing terms in context and with their definition (within IATE or with a link to other EU resources like EUR-Lex)
- easier ways to filter/unfilter results, particularly by domain
- clearer domain classification
- more equal language coverage
- better coverage of some fields
- further consistency with EU legislation
- cleaning the outdated terminology

The **display of the results** is considered user-friendly and easy to understand by 58% of the respondents, and more or less clear by 39%. The sorting of results is not always clear, and some users complain that they cannot copy-paste terms easily or that the font is too small. While some users would like to see the definition and the term in context by default, others would rather have a more compact view to avoid scrolling or getting multiple pages of results.

Of the **metadata** displayed in the results page, the anchor language is the least transparent (not understood by 21%), followed by the icons for expanding fields (not clear for 11%). Definition/context/reliability are considered the most useful, while the accuracy of the reliability value is questioned by several users.

Other features

The use of other features besides launching searches and retrieving results is rather limited. Not being familiar with them, not having easy access to documentation to learn more about them, or lack of time to explore more beyond the basic needs are mentioned as the main reasons.

- **Bookmarks:** the possibility of saving favourite entries in a personal list remains an unknown feature for most of the respondents (97%), probably because it is relatively recent and requires logging in.
- **Last queries:** the function of relaunching recent searches is rarely used (11%) and not considered useful.
- **Search by collection:** the recent feature 'Search by collection' still remains widely unused by 90% of the respondents, mainly because they do not know how to use it.
- **Full entry view:** most users seem to remain in the results page, already containing the main information around the term. The full entry includes too many details.
- **IATE Documentation:** 72% of the respondents never consult the IATE handbook (unaware of it or lack of time).
- **Feedback form:** 92% of the respondents never send feedback on entries (unaware of it or lack of time).
- **IATE download:** 92% of the respondents never use the IATE download to export terms and limited metadata for further reuse (unaware of it or lack of compatibility with the CAT tools used).

Conclusions and proposed actions

IATE is a resource that is **highly valued by external users**, and many of the respondents have expressed appreciation and encouragement in their comments. Even though most of the respondents are regular IATE users, they seem to prefer using the more basic features and default settings, although a login could offer them the possibility to customise useful parameters.

IATE is perceived by the majority as a **complex tool** and the survey has been a means for many of the respondents to learn more about IATE and its use. Several users expressed their interest in exploring features presented in the questionnaire they were not familiar with.

The replies received confirm the main conclusions that the IATE Management Group had already drawn from continuous user feedback, and further validate decisions that had been taken in order to further improve the tool and its data. The general IATE survey analysis and the detailed answers and comments will be extremely useful first-hand data for the various working groups working on IATE documentation, the user interface, data clean-up and development priorities.

Proposed actions

The main proposed actions, some of which are already part of the IATE Work Programme 2023, are as follows:

- **Documentation and training**
 - Implement an online help: on-screen access to short pieces of information, including clearer details on EU Login and the benefits of logging in

- Prepare additional tutorials for basic features (search, results and their sorting, metadata) and for complementary features (filters, bookmarks, last queries, search by collection, feedback mechanism and IATE download)
 - **Data quality**
 - Reinforce clean-up
 - Revise the use of the reliability values
 - Continue enriching the language coverage of newer official EU languages
 - More timely lifecycle management of terminological data in IATE
 - **User experience**
 - Use the opportunity of the user interface revamp in 2023 to improve user experience, namely domain filtering, simple versus advanced view, more transparent access to full entry view, clearer display of metadata, easier display of terms in context, and clearer access to user preferences and their management. Include volunteer external users in the process.
 - Promote the feedback mechanism.
 - Improve retrievability with phonetical analysers and fuzzy match strategies. Analyse further retrievability of results via semantic matches.
 - Facilitate results analysis through faceted search (quickly narrow and organise results by applying filters based on a faceted classification of the items).
 - Follow-up TBX3 compatibility with CAT tools. Reconsider offering also TBX2.
 - Improve the discoverability of IATE in the main search engines.

The IATE Management Group would like to thank all respondents for their time and valuable input, and will duly inform IATE users on the upcoming changes to further improve the tool, taking into account the users' needs identified in the survey.