

E U R O T R A : T O O M U C H R , N O T E N O U G H D . R X : M O R E E C U s

The Pannenberg Report on Eurotra is in. In a skillfully political document, the study criticizes the project for indulging exclusively in research and straying from its mandate to develop a new machine translator for the European Community (see LT #1) – but goes on to recommend that even more money and effort be expended to turn the project around.

Official reaction in Eurotra and its paymasters the European Commission is that the recommendations are positive and support the project, and the changes called for were foreseen and welcome. Unofficially, project leaders are less happy: the report confirms that the project will fail to produce a prototype for a production machine translator by 1990, for commercialization by 1993, having become instead a huge university research program. And the panel's recommendations are equally unpalatable: that the project should cease

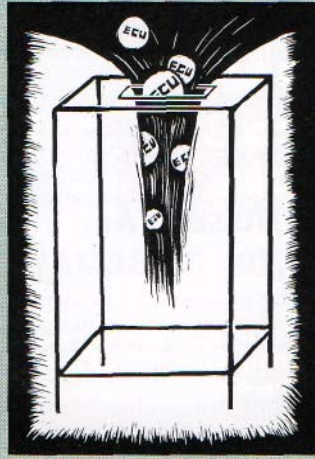


Illustration: Ryu Tajiri

research and finally start development. Eurotrans can take some solace in the report recommending increased spending. But a chunk of this spending is now expected to go outside the current project organization. Language pairs for which no dictionaries or glossaries are currently available – for example Greek to Danish – will be contracted from private sources. And an outside consultant is to be brought in to study the program, with an eye to enlisting commercial sponsors.

All admit that the original schedule is now completely invalid. Latest guesses about when a prototype might be ready have shifted to the mid-nineties, and even the turn of the century.

Ultimate irony: the translation of the Pannenberg report was done by the European Commission's Systran machine translator, the system Eurotra was originally designed to replace, and which is now likely to reign as the EC's workhorse for many years to come.