Faced with the globalising online economy and ever-increasing amount of information in all imaginable languages, it is important that citizens can access and use information and services across national and language barriers, through the internet and mobile devices. Information and communication technologies (ICT) need to promote content creation in multiple languages, while providing the means to bridge the language barriers. This overall goal is supported by i2010 - the policy framework for the information society - one of the objectives of which is to create a Single European Information Space by ensuring seamless access to ICT-based services and improving the conditions for the development of rich and multilingual content.

In line with this policy framework, the various European technology programmes (7th Framework programme for Research and Development, eContentPlus, Competitiveness and Innovation Programme) foresee financial support for promoting technology that helps removing obstacles resulting from language barriers. The characteristics and priorities of these support programmes will be described in more detail in the presentation.

Today the online universe is becoming more multilingual and the share of web pages in English is decreasing. While Web users have genuine access to global content and services, they are increasingly confronted with language barriers.

Overcoming the language barriers enables cross-lingual access to web resources, but also encourages language diversity and locality in content production. This is particularly important for user generated content with the emergence of Web 2.0.

There is a need for a wider deployment of machine translation systems of sufficient quality and coverage in the Web environment. This requires language technology tools and other technical language infrastructure and language resources to make the multilingual Web content and services accessible across languages. Although Europe stands in the frontline of Web multilingualism, only one third of the 23 official EU languages are covered by satisfactory language technology and resources.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence, machine learning, human-computer interaction and cognitive systems enable further progress in addressing remaining shortcomings of machine translation and other forms of natural language processing making it more adaptive, capable of self-learning and more user-friendly. More focused solutions for specific problems are needed to process languages with rich morphology or challenging word order, as these issues currently present an obstacle for further progress for data-driven machine translation and other forms of language processing based on the same paradigm.