Asetrad | Asociación Española de Traductores, Correctores e Intérpretes

# Asetrad's position on the use of Large Language Models in translation, interpreting and editing

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This document sets out the position held by Asetrad, a Spanish association of language professionals, as of the above date, on the development, marketing, monetization and use of Large Language Models (LLMs) as applied to translation, interpreting and editing. LLMs are generative AI models based on neural networks trained on vast corpora of written and spoken texts to produce, translate, edit, generate and even predict text. Sometimes these LLMs are used to translate or correct texts or interpret the spoken word rather than contracting language professionals who have the expertise required for the task. Furthermore, in some of the cases where experts are sought to rework this output, the conditions offered are professionally unacceptable.

Asetrad advocates the ethical development and use of technology and, in particular, the development and use of ethical LLMs. Ethical LLMs are those which do not infringe the Spanish Intellectual Property Act [1], guarantee data confidentiality, promote linguistic diversity, have minimal environmental impact and, in their production, do not entail abusive practices such as exploiting labour under unacceptable conditions to generate content for these models.

Asetrad's position is based on Article 2 of its statutes [2], which establishes the following among the association's purposes:

- *To promote the recognition of the translation, editing and interpreting professions and to defend the interests of their practitioners.*
- *To uphold the professional rights of members before the national and local public authorities.*

Asetrad's intent is to protect its members, as well as consumers and users, from any potentially adverse consequences of applying LLMs to translation, interpreting and editing.

Asetrad warns that delegating language services to automated tools without professional expertise entails tangible risks:

- **Risk to health and physical safety:** in medical or technical translation, LLMs' errors, hallucinations and omissions can result in harm to human health and damage to property.

- **Legal and financial risk**: in the legal and institutional sphere, the use of automated systems without professional expertise leads both individuals and public and private bodies to make binding decisions based on output not governed by a code of professional conduct [3] and for which the provider assumes no liability, leaving users without legal recourse.

- **Confidentiality risk**: processing documents using tools connected to external databases and systems can breach privacy and non-disclosure requirements when effective safeguards to protect personal and confidential data are lacking.

- **Cultural impoverishment risk**: in education, journalism, art, communication and other similar areas, algorithms' inability to capture cultural subtleties and nuances has a detrimental effect on both user experience and the wider public realm, while at the same time homogenizing and distorting language.

- **Risk to personal and organizational reputation and public image**: automatically converting content into another language without the expert input of a qualified language professional can lead to errors, factual inaccuracies and statements that reproduce offensive social biases.

Asetrad maintains that, in translation, interpreting and editing, an LLM is a support tool which should be used only where appropriate, and that only a language professional has the necessary expertise to judge if and when to use one. The association's position on the use of LLMs establishes three essential criteria necessary to ensure legal certainty and trustworthy quality in language service provision in Spain:

1. **Professional accountability**: an LLM lacks legal status or capacity to assume liability for its output. Only a qualified language professional subject to a code of conduct [3] and a duty of non-disclosure can be legally answerable for their work.

2. **Protection of intellectual property and the value of the work produced**: unethical LLMs use translations and texts that are, in many cases, subject to intellectual property rights [1] which are not duly acknowledged or compensated. When contracting organizations require language professionals to use computer-aided translation or interpreting tools, corpora of data are also produced, in addition to the translation, interpreting or editing work. These corpora are harvested by technology platforms to train LLMs without the professionals' express consent and without payment for the added value created.

3. **Rebuttal of false equivalences and prevention of robo-encroachment:** Asetrad holds that, whether the output is used raw or post-edited, machine interpreting or translation can never reach the standards of quality and trustworthiness of work performed entirely by a qualified language professional. We also alert both individuals and public and private bodies to the spread of robo-encroachment: the marketing and sale of automated services that simulate professional practice without the input of a qualified expert. In accordance with the EU regulation on artificial intelligence [4], LLM providers must mark all machine-generated content. Asetrad thus insists that all synthetic content be clearly identified as such.

Asetrad issues an urgent call to action to the following groups:

- **Public authorities:** we demand that employment rights, intellectual property rights and those deriving from the recognition of the full value of all work performed be enforced with all the means established for that purpose, and that clauses stipulating the compulsory hiring of qualified language professionals be included in all public language services tenders.

- **Legislators:** we call for reform of the legal framework to the degree necessary to protect the aforementioned rights, ensure decent terms and conditions in public tenders, protect the public from the risks involved in the use of LLMs, ensure synthetic content is clearly identifiable, and promote the richness and diversity of language and culture.

- **Other professional groups:** we stress the need to join forces to protect our common interests before the Spanish and European authorities.

- **Society in general:** we hold that the general public must be made fully aware of the severity and type of risks involved in using machine translation and interpreting without appropriate expertise.

Bibliographical references:


1. The Spanish Intellectual Property Act, Article 1: *"The intellectual property rights to a literary, artistic or academic work belong to the author by virtue of having created it."* Article 11: *"Without prejudice to the copyright of the original work, the following are also subject to intellectual property rights: 1. Translations and adaptations. 2. Revisions, updates and notes. 3. Compendiums, summaries and extracts. 4. Musical arrangements. 5. Any transformation of a literary, artistic or academic work."* https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1996-8930&p=20220330&tn=0
2. Asetrad's Statutes: https://asetrad.org/estatutos
3. Asetrad's Code of Conduct: https://asetrad.org/codigodeontologico
4. Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj/eng and its transposition to Spanish law: https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=DOUE-L-2024-81079


Glossary:

- **Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) system:** a software program designed to help translators work more efficiently and produce better quality texts.
- **Large Language Model (LLM):** a type of language model based on generative artificial intelligence and trained on vast corpora of texts. It uses deep-learning algorithms to generate, summarize, translate and edit texts without human supervision.
- **Machine interpreting:** a process by which software converts speech from one language into another. It is more complex than machine translation because it involves transcribing spoken text to written text, automatically translating that text and converting the new written text into spoken text.
- **Machine translation:** process by which software produces a target language text based on a source language text. The output is expected to approximate the original text. Many machine translation tools are now partially based on LLM technology.

Robo-encroachment: encroachment on the practice of a profession by automated digital services. In this context, it refers to inexpert translation, editing and interpreting by an LLM.