

Session 4: Summary of the discussion

Peter Barber of Able Translations Ltd had two questions regarding the AVIMA project. Firstly, whether the corpus of approved terminology in nine languages would be generally available as a marketable product, and secondly, whether they had any other application in mind for AVIMA. Dimitri Theologitis replied that the terminology was available free of charge and would be printed in the EC official journals. As far as future developments were concerned, he would welcome the prospect of the standard nomenclature being taken over by private firms, hopefully culminating in their submitting pre-processed tenders!

On the subject of the effects of working with computers, Christopher Burdon of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities in Brussels asked Gunnela Westlander whether there was any Scandinavian legislation on the health aspects of laser printers and photocopiers. She replied that there was no legislation at all really. Legislation did exist on VDU use in Scandinavia but in Sweden itself there were no restrictions, apart from the fact that companies had to buy spectacles for employees if they complained of sight problems. Christopher Burdon then commented that he had heard from Danish colleagues that legislation did exist in Denmark on the health effects of using laser printers and photocopiers, particularly with regard to ozone emissions. Gunnela Westlander again stated that nothing was being done in Scandinavia to her knowledge.

Pamela Mayorcas, who chaired the session, wished to know if any research had been done into the problem of constant noise levels. She was personally very relieved to switch off her office machines at the end of the day. Gunnela Westlander agreed that this was an interesting issue,

particularly the noises one could not necessarily hear but were damaging nonetheless. There were guidelines for protection in Sweden but research had only been carried out into mental insufficiencies when working in an environment with very low noise levels. Unfortunately, there was no other research to date.

Finally, Ian Jones of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, remarked that the title of Dr. Westlander's paper was very vague, bearing in mind that there were different types of computers, work stations etc. He asked whether any research had been carried out into the different types of screen, the different colours and resolutions used. Gunnela Westlander replied that it was difficult to set up a control trial. The researchers were mainly medical researchers who were not interested in differences in machinery but in exposures to electromagnetic fields etc. The situation was complicated by the fact that researchers were not allowed to reveal what sort of equipment a particular company used for reasons of confidentiality. For example, even if they were aware that a local government body was using bad equipment they were not allowed to disclose the information. In her opinion, more sociologists were needed to carry out research. She stated that her paper was vague because she just wanted to give a hint on measuring time spent in front of VDUs. Different research teams had different, often crude methods. She reflected how sad it was that there were so few studies into the health effects of working with computers. It was as if the powers that be wanted to brush the problem under the carpet.

RAPPORTEUR

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