

Translated from French by **Victoria Britten**

# AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION, PLAINLY SPEAKING

Audiovisual translators are an essential part of the audiovisual production machinery. However, because their work is done in the final stages, little is known about it – and the conditions in which it is carried out.

To shed some light on them, the SCAM (Civil Society of Multimedia Authors, known as LaScam in English) carried out an online survey of 1,162 members of the profession, along with the ATAA (Association of Audiovisual Translators) and the SNAC (National Union of Authors and Composers). 528 people agreed to take part. The answers give a composite portrait of a population that is very predominantly female, ever more qualified, and yet faced with constantly worsening pay and working conditions.

The survey's final question was an open one: "How would you describe your working conditions?" Putting together the many answers to that question showed up several tendencies, which included dissatisfaction with the level of pay, difficult and sometimes worsening working conditions, heavy pressure on time (tighter and tighter deadlines) and a lack of job security often felt to be burdensome. Few of the translators spontaneously lamented the fact that no kind of framework (a collective agreement, for example) covers their working conditions, whilst at the same time many of them regret how difficult it is to come together for joint action.

Less directly, fear of accepting rates that are too low and guilt at doing so could also be heard. Likewise, there was perceptible anxiety about the new forms of broadcasting (VOD platforms, Netflix, etc.) and the unfavourable effect they have on rates, in particular given the major drop in – or even absence of – royalties paid by collecting societies such as LaScam and the SACEM (Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music).

To conclude the survey, portraits of three women and two men also give a snapshot of respondents' very varying situations and profiles.

Audiovisual translators, who are self-employed and almost all work from home, translate foreign fictional or documentary works. Their translation work, which may be voice-over (where the translation is voiced over the original), subtitling or dubbing, is creative for a large part; for this reason, much of it falls into the category of "authorship" (see insert p.7).

# PROFILES

As a profession it is very female, urban and qualified, with versatile and experienced translators most of whom belong to authors' societies and professional bodies.

## THE STANDARD PROFILE IS A FORTY-SOMETHING PARISIAN WOMAN

76% of people who replied to the questionnaire were female: that percentage varied little according to speciality. In dubbing, the figure is slightly lower (71%). The age range is dominated by forty-somethings (30% of respondents), ahead of those in their thirties (29%). Over half the translators surveyed (57%) are over 40. 7% of translators carry on working after 60. Dubbing is the activity with the greatest proportion of under-30s. Paris and its area, where the bulk of laboratories are, is also home to the vast majority of the profession: 25% of respondents live in Paris itself and 50% in the Paris region (including Paris). Outside the Paris region, the biggest group (26 respondents) lives in Alsace, where (French/German TV channel) Arte has its offices.

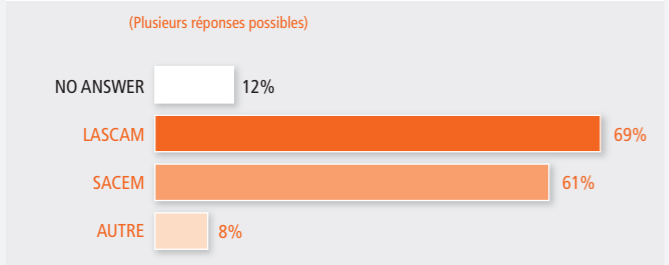
## A QUALIFIED OCCUPATION

37% hold a vocational master's degree from Lille, Nanterre or Nice university, ahead of translation or interpretation studies not focusing on audiovisual media. An equal proportion (37%), however, state they have had other training. It seems very likely that the proportion with qualifications will increase steadily, since each of those three vocational master's programmes delivers fifteen or so graduates a year.

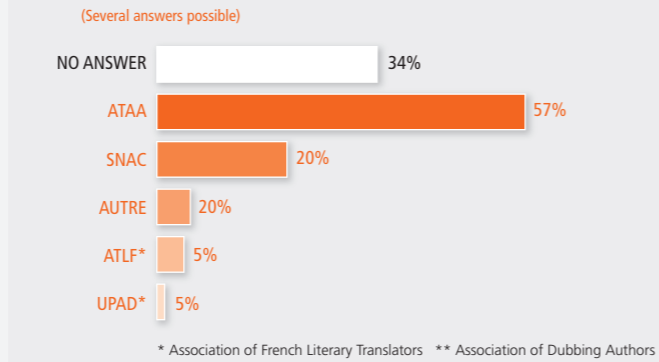
## MASSIVE MEMBERSHIP OF COLLECTING SOCIETIES AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS

69% are members of LaScam (documentaries) and 61% the SACEM (fiction). NB: More than one answer was possible. 57% are members of the French audiovisual translators' association (ATAA), and 20% belong to the national authors' and composers union (SNAC). Roughly a third of those invited did not reply, which suggests they do not belong to any professional organisation.

### VOUS ÊTES MEMBRE D'UNE SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION COLLECTIVE



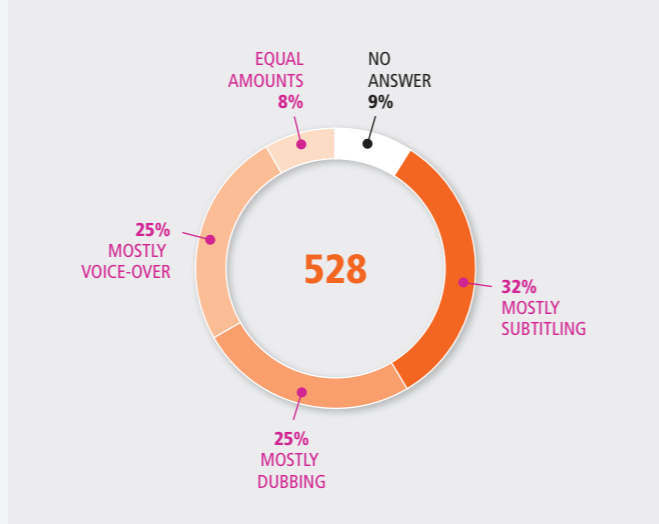
### YOU BELONG TO A COLLECTING SOCIETY



## TRANSLATORS WHO ARE PROFESSIONAL, VERSATILE AND EXPERIENCED

They translate not only for subtitles (67%), but also voice-over (66%) and dubbing (42%). Subtitling is the main activity for most respondents (32%). Dubbing has more of a tendency to be an exclusive activity: only 42% say they do it, but it is the main activity for 25% of the panel.

### WHAT PROPORTIONS?



As for experience, 54% of translators declared at least 11 years' activity and 22% have been practising for over 20 years. Comparing the age distribution and years of experience suggests a group that starts working life fairly late: while under-30s made up 15% of respondents, 21% of the total had been in activity for five years or less.

## ENGLISH IS BY FAR THE MOST FREQUENT SOURCE LANGUAGE

More than one answer was possible, and 88% of people gave English as a source language; 29% Spanish; 20% French; 16%

German; and 12% Italian. Of the 11% who replied "other language", 22% of translators gave Portuguese as a source language. Only a limited number of translators work with Chinese, Russian and Japanese. Unsurprisingly, the main target language is French (87%), ahead of English, Spanish, German and Italian ●

# WORKING CONDITIONS

A well-equipped community of professionals, most of whose activity is focused on audiovisual translation and whose working time can slide over into weekends.

## HOW DO PEOPLE GET STARTED?

Three main gateways lead in roughly equal proportions into the occupation: work placements (32%), recommendations (31%) and canvassing with CVs (28%). This is much the same whichever the activity: dubbing, subtitling or voice-over.

## BUSY WEEKENDS AND NOT MANY HOLIDAYS

Over three-quarters of translators (79%) said they work at the weekend. Just over half (52%) said they take more than three weeks' holiday a year; less than a third (27%) take three weeks; 18% say they take only two weeks and 4% make do with just one week a year. These percentages vary little in the different branches of activity ●

## PEOPLE EQUIPPED WITH PROFESSIONAL TOOLS

The vast majority of translators (84%) own the software they work on. Of the 15% who say they do not, 32% have software supplied by a lab, 19% rent it on a daily basis and 20% work on an online platform.

## A MAIN ACTIVITY, IN PARTICULAR FOR DUBBING SPECIALISTS

Audiovisual translation is the main activity for 83% of the translators polled. This proportion is highest (91%) for dubbing specialists. Of the 17% for whom audiovisual translation is less than half their workload, it can be seen that 23% work in literary translation and 24% in technical translation, while 65% have another occupation (it was possible to give several answers), often linked to the worlds of culture and media.

"You come into this with the idea of sharing your culture, but the realities of audiovisual work soon catch up with you."

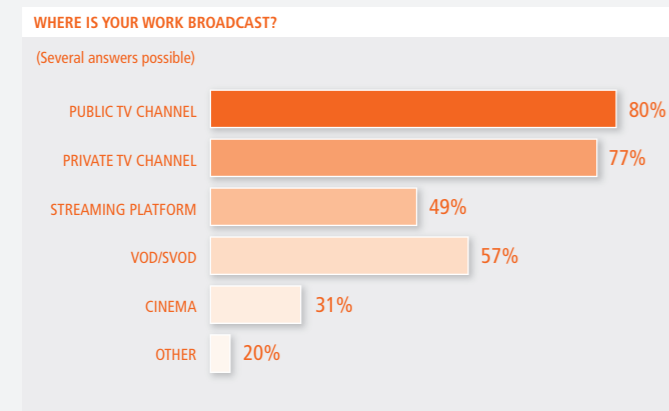
Madeleine Lombard

# WORKING PRACTICES

Translators who have regular clients and work for all broadcast media, but rarely sign contracts and don't always see their name in the final credits.

## MAIN CLIENTS: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TV CHANNELS

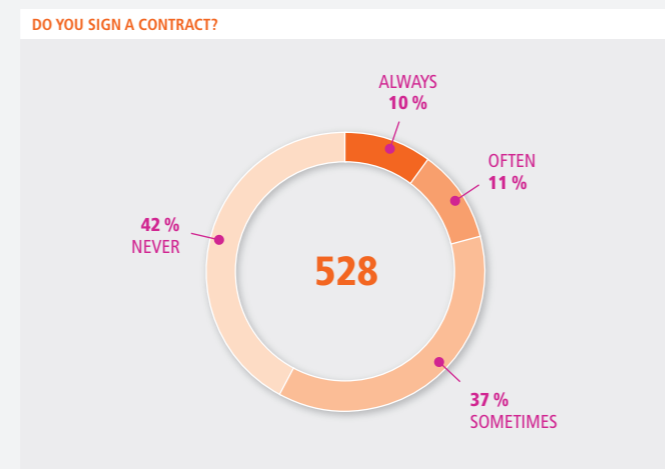
Audiovisual translators work for all types of media, but first and foremost public television channels (80%), which lead private channels (77%) by a short head. VOD comes next, with 57%, followed by streaming platforms (49%) and cinema (31%).



## LOYAL RELATIONSHIPS BUT STILL UNEVEN RECOGNITION OF THE PROFESSION, WITH ONLY 10% SAYING THEY ALWAYS SIGN A CONTRACT

A majority (68%) of respondents say they work for between two and five companies (subtitling laboratories, recording studios, direct broadcasters, production companies...), and 18% for between six and ten companies. Only 9% have just one client, and 4% more than ten.

Audiovisual translators maintain trusting, long-term relationships, which may explain why 42% say they "never" sign an authoring contract for a commission and 37% only "sometimes". Only 10% of the profession always sign a contract!



Only a third of translators (34%) say their name "always" appears in the credits; 41% say they are "often" mentioned and 20%, "sometimes" ●

"I am always appalled when I'm asked to avoid complicated words and sophisticated turns of phrase. It has been a constant feature for several years and I'm not at all sure that this levelling down is actually to broadcasters' advantage in the long run."

Hélène Inayetian

# PAYMENT

Widely disregarded union rates in all three areas: dubbing, subtitling and voice-over; an unequal balance of power between translators and their clients; and an income that is modest in spite of the royalties paid by authors' societies.

## THE MAJORITY ARE PAID AS AUTHORS\*

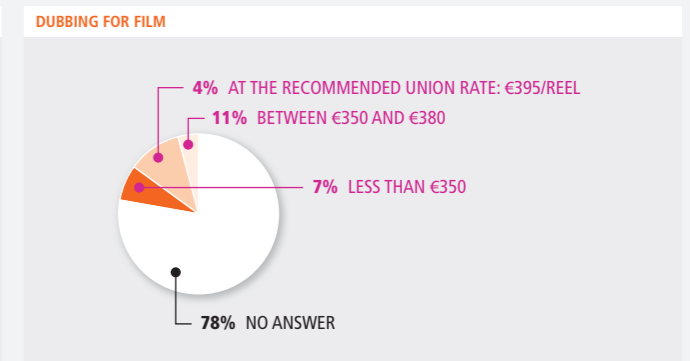
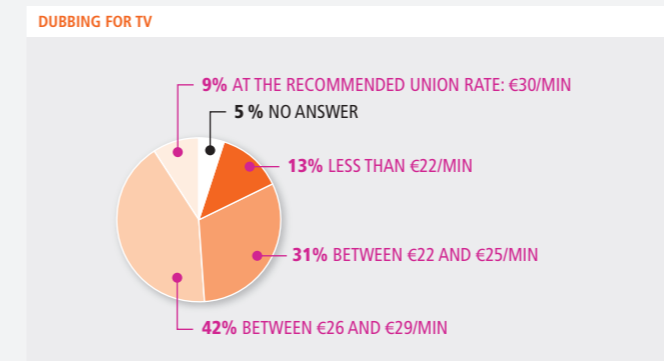
74% of translators say they have author status. Dubbing pays the greatest number as authors (90%); on the other hand, subtitling has the highest proportion of those who have a different self-employed status known as auto-entrepreneur (28%).

\*See insert p.7

## IN DUBBING – OUT OF 223 REPLIES, OR THE 42% OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAID THEY DO DUBBING

For television, the biggest group of translators (42%) are paid between €26 and €29 per minute; 31% get between €22 and €25; but barely 9% are paid the recommended union rate of €30 per minute.

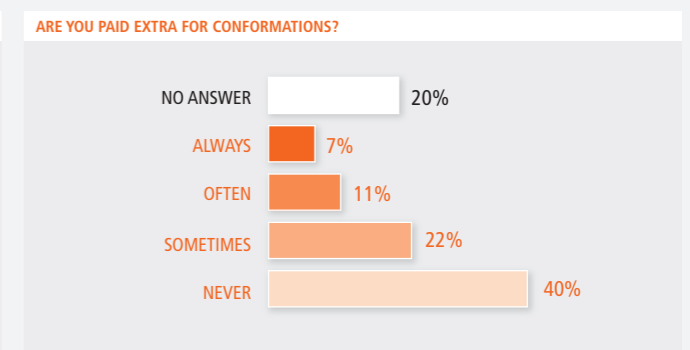
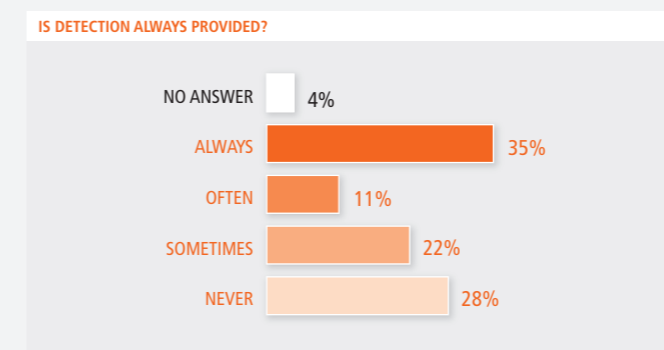
For cinema, the low reply rate (22%) skews the result, but only 4% of those respondents say they receive the union rate of €395 per 10-minute reel.



## DETECTION

It is impossible to establish clear rules as to detection practices. 35% of translators who practise dubbing say it is "always" supplied for them. However, 28% say it "never" is.

As for conformation, when the translator has to do it, this is paid for in 7% of cases.



"When I was starting out, 25 years ago, you always went to the lab for a final check of your subtitles. Today, you send your work as a download and you don't meet your clients as often."

Frédéric Dussoubs.

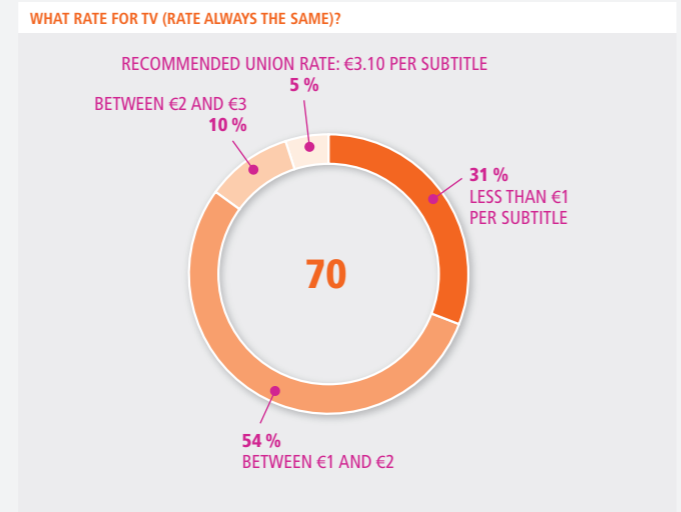
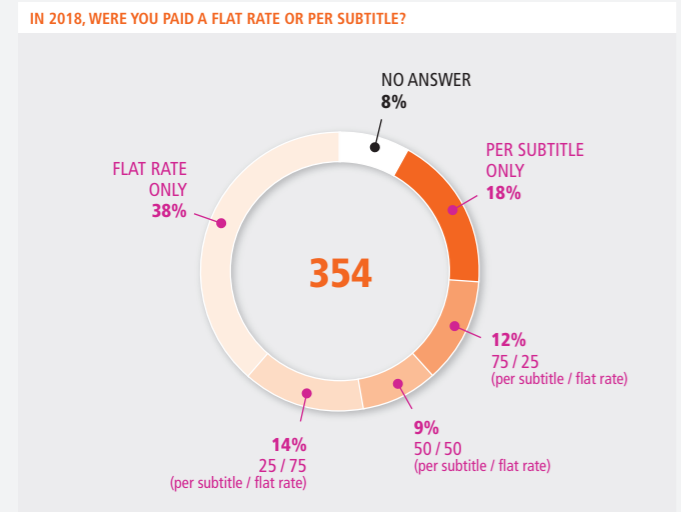
It's complicated for a beginner to get to work for a French national channel.

Antoine Leduc

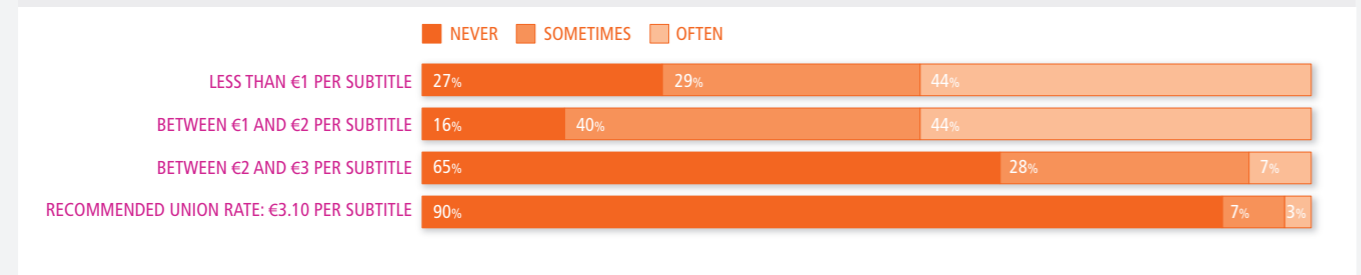
**IN SUBTITLING – OUT OF 354 REPLIES, OR THE 67% OF RESPONDENTS WHO DO SUBTITLING**

Most people (38%) are always paid a fixed rate for subtitles. By contrast, 18% say they are always paid according to the number of subtitles. Only 20% of subtitle translators are always paid the same rate. When they are paid per subtitle for television use, only 5% of translators receive the union rate of €3.10 per subtitle.

The majority (54%) are paid between €1 and €2 per subtitle, or even less than €1 (31%). On the other hand, for 43% of respondents, conformation is never paid for. It "always" is for just 4% of people; "sometimes" for 21% and "often" for 5%.



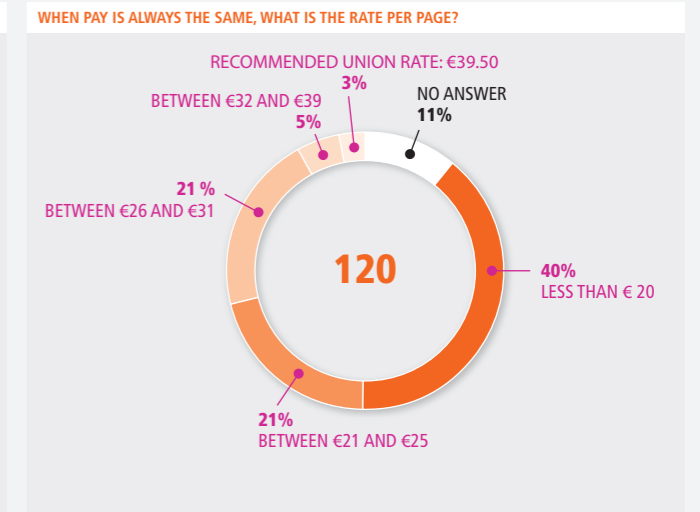
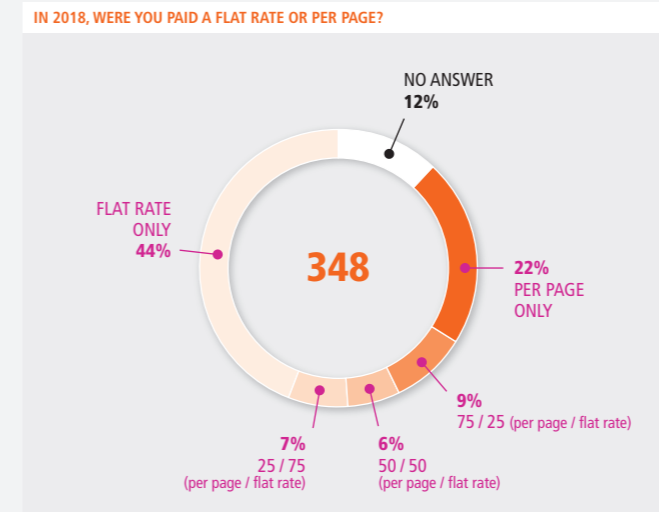
**WHEN PAID DIFFERENTLY, WHAT RATE FOR AUDIOVISUAL USE? – OUT OF 251 PEOPLE (71% OF SAMPLE)**



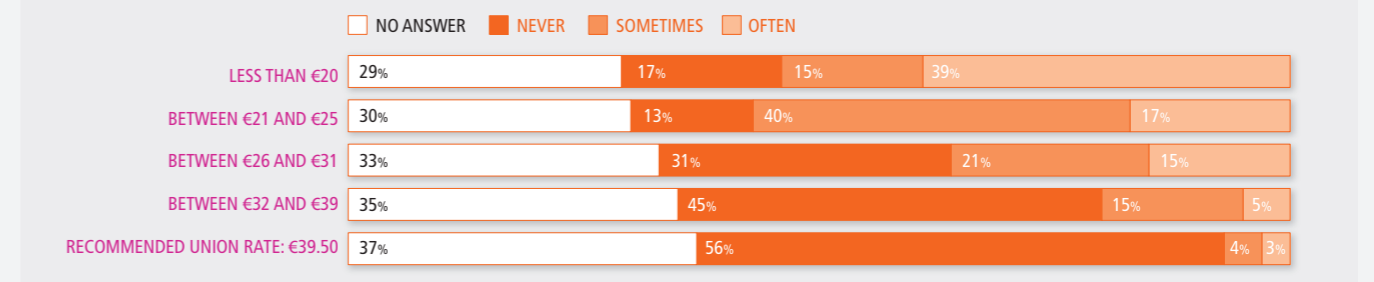
**IN VOICE-OVER – OUT OF 348 RESPONDENTS, OR THE 66% WHO SAID THEY DID VOICE-OVER**

Most people (44%) are always paid a fixed rate for voice-over. By contrast, 22% say they are always paid per page. The rate per page is always the same for only 34% of voice-over translators (a conversion rate was estimated for those who said they were only paid a fixed rate); 21% say they earn between

€21 and €25 per page, 21% between €26 and €31 and 5% between €32 and €39. Only 3% of those paid per page receive the recommended union rate of €39.50 per page. For those who say the rate varies according to the client (45% of the sample), the rate is generally below €20 per page.



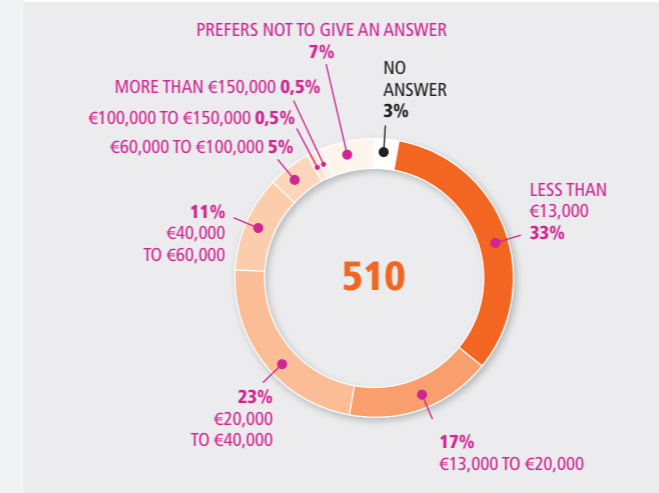
**WHEN PAID DIFFERENTLY, WHAT RATE FOR AUDIOVISUAL USE? – OUT OF 156 PEOPLE (45% OF SAMPLE)**



**MODEST INCOMES**

For most people (64% of replies), income from their authoring activities makes up over 76% of their total annual income. 39% of translators declare annual net income between €20,000 and €40,000; 17% earn between €13,000 and €20,000 and 13% less than €13,000 per year. Dubbing specialists have the highest average earnings (16% between €40,000 and €60,000 net).

**WHAT IS YOUR ANNUAL INCOME BEFORE INCOME TAX?**



**AUTHOR STATUS**

In France, audiovisual translators fall into the category of authors, which is a specific self-employed status with particular social and fiscal characteristics. Like all authors, they enjoy lifetime paternity of their works, which may not be altered without their consent. However, they make over the exploitation rights for their translations to those commissioning them, who can thus broadcast and distribute them as necessary. In return for that transfer, translators receive payment proportional to the use made of their works. This payment is made by Collective Management Organisations such as LaScam and the SACEM, which bring together authors from various sectors: music, film, theatre etc. These societies manage authors' property rights.

“In my mind translator and author are linked. For me, film translation sits between literary translation and interpreting. You have to have a broad range of styles in mind whilst taking into account space constraints for subtitles or a need to create oral language when dubbing fiction.”

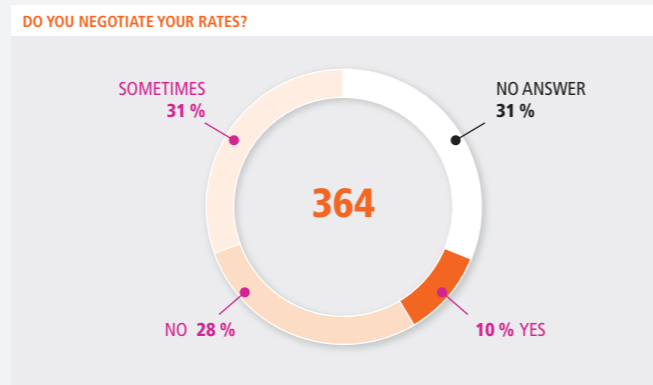
Brigitte Hansen

### AN UNEQUAL BALANCE OF POWER

Only 10% of translators in dubbing, subtitling and voice-over state that they “always” negotiate their rates; 31% “sometimes” do and 28% say they don’t negotiate!

The result is distorted by the fact that 31% of those surveyed did not answer the question, which goes to show what a delicate subject this is.

This difficulty is compounded by payment terms which may stretch on and on. Only 11% of people surveyed are “always” paid on time; 33% of them “often” and 38% “sometimes”.



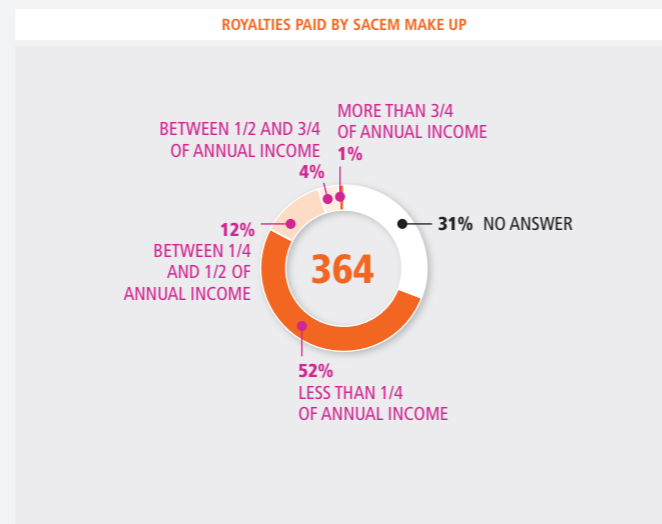
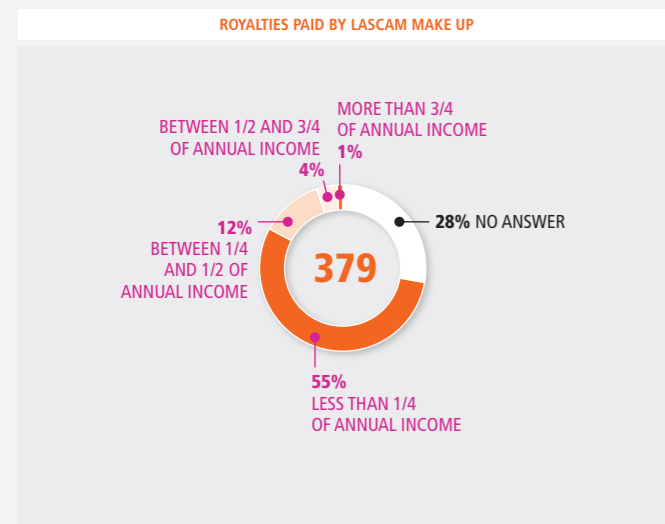
### LASCAM AND THE SACEM, A NOT INSIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION

In an uncertain financial context, the payment of royalties allocated by societies that collect and share them out - LaScam for documentary translations and the SACEM for subtitling and dubbing fiction – makes up a significant share of income.

For 12% of translators, the royalties paid by LaScam count for between 25 and 50% of annual income, and for 55% of them

they make up less than 25%. It must be noted, however, that 28% of respondents did not answer the question, which skews the result.

Likewise, for the SACEM, royalties made up less than 25% of annual income according to 52% of those surveyed. But there too, a large part (31%) of the sample did not respond ●



# FIVE VOICES TELLING A TRADE

Interviews by Charles Knappek

To conclude the survey, portraits of three women and two men also give a snapshot of respondents’ very varying situations and profiles.

## FRÉDÉRIC DUSSOUBS

Frédéric Dussoubs lives in a house on the edge of woods, *half an hour from Paris by motorbike*, he says. An ideal environment for this fifty-something man who has led many lives and who came late – in his thirties – to audiovisual translation. *I would find it hard to do without this setting, he acknowledges. Working solo suits me, I have no timetable, I organise my time however I fancy and I can work outdoors when the weather is good.*

While he is now a recognised member of the profession - he was on the 2019 television documentary translation prize jury - Frédéric Dussoubs wasn’t necessarily destined for a career in the field. At school and university, his focus was on science and economics. It wasn’t until a lengthy stay in Amsterdam in the mid-1980s, earning a living doing odd jobs, that he discovered he was good at languages. *I was never much good at English at school. However, after two years of watching English language series, I was virtually bilingual and my Dutch was pretty good too, thanks to the subtitles.*

When he came back to France, he initially earned a living doing various jobs in the film industry: assistant photographer, assistant director, production manager... He was involved in all areas of the audiovisual sector and also spent time in the festival world. To the extent that in the mid-’90s, given his known flair for language, he was asked to undertake some subtitling missions for various festivals including the international documentary festival (Fipa).

One thing led to another, and the occasional activity became his main occupation: he was subtitling for several laboratories and working on more and more projects. He

has stayed with the activity ever since, apart from translating a few screenplays, gradually moving from subtitling to voice-over, which has been his main occupation for the last 15 years.

In 25 years’ practice, Frédéric Dussoubs has observed and experienced the changes in the profession. *When I began, you were still sending your work in on a floppy disk and going to the lab for the final checking process, he remembers. It was a time for interacting and you were dealing with people who understood the work. Nowadays, you send your work as a download and get to meet your clients less often.*

He has an excellent relationship with his main client, for whom he translates on average three documentaries a month, but occasional jobs for other players in the sector reinforce his feeling that working conditions are generally degenerating. Client contacts unaware of the specific nature of the work, ever-tighter deadlines, worsening pay and lack of recognition darken an already bleak picture. Like all experienced audiovisual translators, over two-thirds of his income comes from royalties.

Thus, in line with many of his colleagues who replied to the survey, Frédéric Dussoubs harbours serious questions about the future of the profession: *Fifteen years ago, we earned a decent living from this work. Nowadays, it is more difficult. The attractive side of the work, in particular the freedom you enjoy, is offset by growing insecurity in relation to laboratories. We have always worked without a safety net, but now more than ever the job demands great self-confidence and rigour ●*

## BRIGITTE HANSEN

Brigitte Hansen isn't one for idling. She is a prolific audiovisual translator who also has various translation-related activities, mainly for institutional clients; she is also a LaScam administrator, representing audiovisual translators. *I love constantly discovering new worlds, which is one of the advantages inherent to my speciality,* says this experienced professional, who started out back in 1993.

Working within a broad palette—fiction and documentaries, dubbing, voice-over and subtitling – she explores the full scope of her job as an author. It is a title she is particularly fond of: *I always link translator to author. Working with LaScam, I realised that authors in other fields did not always understand the specific nature of what we do. For me, film translation sits between literary translation and interpreting. You have to have a broad range of styles in mind whilst taking into account space constraints for subtitles and the need to create oral language when dubbing fiction.*

Brigitte Hansen's days are full. From early morning, and often till late at night, she spends most of her time with her eyes glued to the words and pictures on her screen. She does however include in her programme salutary and regular moments of letting go, which are essential safety valves. *Sometimes inspiration will not come, and then you need to be able to leave your desk and do something else to clear your head, she explains. It is a necessary breather in order to recover efficiency, which is impossible to maintain if you force yourself to work too-long hours.* Dubbing works of fiction, which nowadays makes up 90% of her work as an author, also allows her to meet her clients regularly for the final checking process. This type

of precious interaction with an artistic director or other authors is frequent in dubbing but ever rarer for voice-over and subtitling. Brigitte Hansen, who sees the job as a form of craftwork, deplores the fact: *Doing the final checks at the laboratory was also an apprenticeship: an opportunity to polish your skills and learn from your mistakes. That aspect has virtually disappeared now.* This is why solidarity within the profession seems particularly important to her. Audiovisual translators are isolated but need not be lonely: *Over time, you forge strong links with some colleagues. That allows for discussion, mutual aid, expanding your activity by sharing projects and contacts.* Not to forget defending the interests of the profession. From the outset, Brigitte Hansen stood against abusive practices on the part of certain laboratories. *It closed doors to me that I didn't wish to open anyway,* she says ironically. *The choices you make generate the type of clients you want to work for.*

Nowadays, Brigitte Hansen works for a dozen or so clients, of which five or six are regular. Besides freedom to organise her time, she enjoys two other luxuries: juggling between various types of audiovisual translation and having built a rich and varied network between fiction, documentary and institutional works, which allows her to escape being limited to just one field whilst never losing sight of her passion for the mot juste ●

## HÉLÈNE INAYETIAN

Though she spends most of her time in the study/sitting room in her flat in Paris's 11th district, we meet 48-year-old Hélène Inayetian in her local café on boulevard Voltaire.

*I go out a lot and don't need anyone's permission to set up an appointment within so-called office hours, she says, freely admitting to her solitary nature. I think the people who do this job need a great deal of freedom. In "freelance" you have "free", and that's the most important thing for me.* But that freedom goes well with a very disciplined life. Hélène Inayetian may not be able to say how much time she spends on work, but isn't one to let it take over her life. With regular working hours and free weekends, her days are strictly timetabled and holidays are a vital part of her organisation. *Sometimes I buy a train ticket to make myself get away. It's the best way to avoid getting holed up in a tunnel of work.* Therein lies great freedom too: with assignments arriving at the last minute, she never knows what her workload will be like. She is far from anxious about that, as her clients are loyal and regular. *If I have no commissions I go out, see people, but it never lasts very long. Right now, the next three weeks are fully booked, which is already quite a lot for me, she says with amusement.*

Hélène Inayetian has been an audiovisual translator since 1999: after studying English and then going to the school for translators and interpreters (ESIT), she worked for Larousse publishers before branching off into dubbing thanks to a university friend. *At the end of the 1990s most audiovisual translators came from the Lille University. My profile as a technical translator from ESIT was fairly rare even then, but it wasn't a bar because the sector was booming. I think it would be more difficult these days.*

Though she first worked in the era when you were hired via the small ads, and has since suffered from a gradual lowering of rates – with matters made worse by increased social security contributions – over 20 years, Hélène Inayetian feels that she doesn't do badly. For the last 20 years two clients have given her the bulk of her jobs: 60-odd documentary translations per year, mostly for voice-over and mainly broadcast by a national TV channel, France 5. It's true that you have to *work more and to ever-shorter deadlines to keep the same level of income,* but this Parisian has two secret weapons: she works fast and, especially, can count on the broadcasting royalties paid to her by LaScam, which make up roughly two-thirds of her income. On top of this she has worked since 1998 with *National Geographic* magazine, for which she translates 20-odd pages every month. Her salary for this supplementary activity only makes up a small part of her income.

While her status as an experienced author does not entitle her to better pay, there are nonetheless some advantages: Hélène Inayetian systematically turns down programmes where the preparatory spotting of the subtitles has not been done. She is also one of the rare translators not to use subtitling software. Lastly, her clients give her subjects that cover her favourite themes, particularly historical ones. Inayetian appreciates this recognition, whilst expressing worry about an insidious and no longer new trend: clients' ever-lowering standards. *I am always appalled when I'm asked to avoid complicated words and sophisticated turns of phrase. It has been a feature for several years and I'm not at all sure that this levelling down is actually to broadcasters' advantage in the long run ●*

## ANTOINE LEDUC

Antoine Leduc works on his sofa, alongside his partner Melody Das Neves who is also an audiovisual translator. *Ergonomically speaking, it could be better. The question of a study will soon arise, this 28-year-old, who has been doing this work for two years, acknowledges. The couple – she is 26 – have settled in London, living and working in two rooms, and are already earning a very good living. The flipside of the coin is working all hours.*

Antoine and Melody met in their small audiovisual master's degree translation class (13 women, two men) at Nanterre University. After the usual internships, they started out together. *We were a bit afraid of doing everything together. But actually it's fine, we work together on the same subjects and that means we get things done very quickly, says Antoine Leduc who, for the moment, acknowledges that he is still at the time of life when he can work hardest without feeling the effects of an intense rhythm. We're storing up experience and income. I don't think we can keep going at this rate forever. When our plans move on, we will have to adapt.*

Indeed, after a short time with not much work, the two are now so much in demand that they frequently turn jobs down. *When you start out, it's hard to immediately have regular work at reasonable rates, Antoine adds. At first, we tended to accept everything that came along. Now, we're beginning to be more choosy. Offers arriving on Friday for Monday morning, with a client assuming we will work over the weekend, are now turned down. Their evenings and weekends are full nonetheless, and going away for a few days without a laptop in the suitcase is clearly not a possibility. The first exception to that rule came last November, when they had a full month's "real holiday" in Vietnam. It made up for all the weekends we've worked this year, says Antoine Leduc with a smile.*

Experience also very soon led the pair to change track. They went over from documentaries – voice-over or subtitling – to dubbing works of fiction films, which is better paid and better recognised. Antoine Leduc gives the example of some documentary production managers who send out one email to their whole list of author-translators: it's first come, first served. *It's common practice but doesn't show much respect, to my mind. Unless I'm short on work, I don't generally answer those messages, he declares. With dubbing, on the other hand, such practices are rarer. Whereas in 2018 he did virtually only documentaries, they have been knocked off their perch by works of fiction and now count for only about a tenth of his activity. In the buoyant sector of fiction, 70% of his work is on Netflix output in English and German, Leduc's second working language. With its vast catalogue and its selling point of requiring lower standards than most television channels, Netflix is a client that can't be ignored. It's a way into the job that is appreciated by many newcomers to the trade. It's complicated for a beginner to get to work for a French national channel, Leduc testifies. With Netflix you get straight into the work and you improve quickly. The only downside is the poor broadcasting royalties the Californian company pays.*

Sitting on their sofa, Antoine and Melody are happy with the life they're leading. They have kept in touch with their classmates and get information from a Facebook group for audiovisual translators. *I love my work, concludes Antoine Leduc. The variety of the programmes I work on, the oral and creative aspect... I hope I can carry on doing it for a long time ●*

## MADELEINE LOMBARD

Madeleine Lombard, 29 years old and a globe-trotter at heart, has been an audiovisual translator for five years, three of which have been spent abroad: the United States, China, Japan, Argentina... *An advantage of this job is that you can work anywhere, says the young woman joyfully, just a few days before leaving once more to spend a year in Argentina improving her Spanish in order to make it her second working language after English. She chose and indeed asserts her nomadic lifestyle: I'm rarely at home, even in France, and my days don't have any pattern. Obviously there are times when I'm very busy, but I try to share out my time so as not to be working non-stop and to be able to make the most of wherever I am.*

Like many audiovisual translators, Madeleine Lombard didn't know that the path she was taking would eventually lead her to this work: after studying literature for entry to France's most prestigious "grande école" and being lucky enough not to succeed, she completed a master's degree in cinema studies in 2014. And even then, it was only because it was time to start earning a living, otherwise this eternally curious free spirit would happily have carried on exploring. The only guiding principle was to get into translation. *That was always the idea, but I could have gone to study languages. When I discovered I could learn to become an audiovisual translator, I realised there was a way to bring together two of my major interests: the audiovisual scene and languages - which, paradoxically, she has never formally studied.*

At nearly 30, Madeleine Lombard is no longer really a beginner. From the outset, she managed to build trusting relationships with several clients, some of which have been with her ever since graduation. The variety of uses her translations are put to is by far the most exciting aspect of

*the work, she says. Above all, it gives her some latitude in choosing who she works with and negotiating her rates, usually paid to her as an author, and per page. This is how she tries always to be paid, just as she does her best not to go below a certain minimum rate.*

In practice, however, it is necessary to be somewhat flexible: *I don't know anyone who observes the recommended union rate, she says with irony. She counts heavily on her broadcasting royalties for a top-up. After only five years' activity, that already makes up a third of her income.*

Money questions aside, striking a balance between prestigious jobs and simple rent-payers (reality TV), for example is crucial: *You come into this line of work with the idea of sharing your culture, but the realities of audiovisual work soon catch up with you. Personally, I manage to work on jobs that interest me and keep the share of less intellectually stimulating programmes within reasonable limits. Especially since the workload is easily increased: while most programmes come with a script in the original language, it is still necessary to check it or even, when subtitling, to go over the spotting, which should theoretically be done beforehand (beginning and end of speech, shot changes...) Madeleine Lombard learnt to do that on her master's course and admits she tend[s] to do it readily, even though it is a technical task and not the role of an author. She adds, I find it difficult to dissociate the spotting from my translation work, since I am constantly adjusting the translated phrases. For me, the two go hand in hand.*

Looking back at her five years' experience, Lombard thinks she has been pretty lucky. *I combine my deep aspirations with the realities of the job and feel still I hold onto my freedom, she concludes ●*

LaScam\*

5, Avenue Vélasquez, 75008 Paris – Tel: +33 1 56 69 58 58 – [www.scam.fr](http://www.scam.fr)

April 2020 – Director of publication: Hervé Rony – Journalist: Charles Knappek – Translated from French by Victoria Britten – Graphic design: Grabuge.co