

# AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATORS EUROPE

Thanks to the work of specialised professional audiovisual translators, people all over Europe are able to enjoy films, series, documentaries, news, informational videos and social media content produced in languages other than their own. **AudioVisual Translators Europe**, the European federation of national associations and organisations, unites these media translators working in dubbing, subtitling and voice-over translation. We represent several thousand audiovisual translators working for cinema, TV, streaming services and the corporate sector.

## AVTE

- **coordinates** efforts to promote our profession and create the good working conditions that ensure high-quality translations.
- **encourages** networking and the exchange of information between member associations and various EU institutions and lawmakers.
- is the **key communication partner** for the relevant bodies on audiovisual translation issues, informing legislators on the importance of good practices.
- works to make the profession more **visible** on a European level.

Audiovisual translation is an essential linguistic link connecting European citizens. It facilitates the transfer of culture between nations, making cultural and media products accessible to all. This is an essential requirement if we wish to maintain the linguistic diversity of the European community. Audiovisual translation also generates huge and indispensable revenue for the entertainment, information and cultural sectors.



## RATES

### NO MINIMUM WAGE

Today, subtitling and dubbing translators are mostly paid per minute of audiovisual content. Their work, therefore, is the only kind of translation where there is no correlation between the remuneration and the quantity of text translated. Here **neither regulations nor common standards apply**. Depending on the country or the final client, rates vary enormously, with some translators earning a reasonable living, while many struggle to make the minimum wage.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The fees for audiovisual translation are at the same level as 20 years ago, and even lower in some places. Would a salaried worker accept such a situation?

### NO SAFETY NET

Audiovisual translators are **freelancers**, but due to the structure of the sector, they are often tied to one or two big intermediaries. They thus become de facto employees, but without any of the usual benefits of employment. In most countries, they have **no access to unemployment schemes**, paid leave or pensions. In some countries, they do not even have health benefits.

### STATUS OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATORS IN EUROPE:

predominantly freelancers and self-employed some are in-house translators

### NO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

In most European countries, this freelancer status **forbids** them from establishing **collective bargaining agreements** and minimum tariffs. As a result, audiovisual translators' rates have fallen dramatically in the last 10 to 15 years, making their status increasingly precarious.

### NO RECOGNITION

Translators are at the very **end of the production process**. Although audiovisual translation is crucial to the distribution of audiovisual works on the international market, it is often an afterthought, even for major production companies. A good quality localisation costs only a **fraction of the distribution budget**, but even so funds are either insufficient or middlemen take substantial cuts, leaving the translators severely **underpaid**.

only 15% of the surveyed national organisations in 2019 have the power to negotiate collective bargaining agreements

Median cost of a film in Europe: € 2 million Median cost of subtitling a movie in 24 European languages: € 19,000 = 0.95%  
Or the cost of subtitling in 24 languages is typically less than 1% of the production cost

## AUTHORS WITHOUT RIGHTS

The **Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works** recognizes translators of works of art, including **audiovisual works**, as **authors**, granting them certain rights. However, the stipulations of the Convention are not applied consistently throughout Europe and the rights granted to translators are rarely respected. This has a direct economic impact on translators/authors who lose a portion of the revenue that is due to them.

### DID YOU KNOW

that some clients don't allow the translators to keep a copy of their own work?

## MACHINE TRANSLATION

### EDUCATION

in 60 % of member countries there is some kind of specialized or partly-specialized university degree course

The use of neural-based machines is supposedly making human translators redundant. That is far from true.

### THE TRANSLATORS ARE DEMOTED TO «POST-EDITORS»

Subtitlers are reassigned to **post-editing work** and left to repair substandard machine translations because machines cannot understand context, culture or any kind of creative content. They translate words between two points, ignoring the previous sentence, the image and the sound. And they do not know how to condense dialogue, something that is crucial in subtitling to allow viewers to read in comfort.

### THE HUMAN FACTOR

Neural machine translations are based on the mass of data they absorb, **fed to them by existing human translations**. Yet this crucial contribution is completely ignored and **never remunerated**.

### THE OWNERSHIP OF THE DATA

Since the translated material consists of intellectual works, the translations must be protected by copyright laws. Yet the question of the ownership of this data has not been addressed.

### THE MIRAGE OF CUTTING COST

The main argument for the implementation of artificial intelligence assisted tools is that subtitling will be cheaper and quicker that way. But that is only the case if one accepts sub-standard subtitling. Creating an acceptable translation takes a post-editor as much time and as much creative input as they would have invested when working from scratch. Yet post-editors are paid only a fraction of what they would have received for subtitling. To produce a good quality translation, human translators are **as necessary as ever**.

Translators are the builders of bridges between different nations and cultures. And in today's united Europe, defined by its cultural and linguistic diversity, we need builders of robust linguistic bridges so that European diversity becomes a strength and not a weakness.

**TRANSLATORS STRENGTHEN DIVERSITY**

The slashing of translation rates has one inevitable consequence: the erosion of quality. As audiovisual content becomes more and more prevalent in our lives, the whole sector of audiovisual translation, whose viability depends on experienced language professionals, is being pushed to the verge of collapse and the drop in quality will lead to a general impoverishment of languages and linguistic diversity.

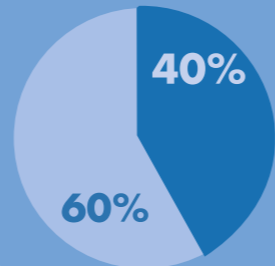
**TRANSLATORS FACILITATE THE CIRCULATION OF WORKS**

Without a translation, a movie won't be understood outside its linguistic frontiers. And without a good translation, it won't be understood the way its creators intended. Thanks to subtitling and dubbing authors, Spanish viewers watch the latest BBC Dickens adaptation, Czech audiences appreciate an award-winning French arthouse movie and a hit Scandi-noir series thrills fans in Italy. Compared to other production costs, the price of translation (dubbing or subtitling) is low, yet compared to the potential financial success on an international level, its cost is almost insignificant.

**TRANSLATORS PROMOTE ACCESSIBILITY AND LEARNING**

Modern European society prides itself on respecting values such as tolerance, social equality and education for a better and more sustainable future. As audiovisual translators, we see ourselves as key partners in the promotion of those values because we make audiovisual content accessible and understandable to all audiences, including those with disabilities, across Europe and throughout the world. Audiovisual translation also facilitates language learning and education in general. And since subtitling is also a tool for teaching new generations, its quality is paramount.

**PREDOMINANT FORM OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION IN EUROPE:**



Dubbing countries: 40%  
Subtitling countries: 60%

**OBJECTIVES**

**THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Audiovisual translators, just like other creative freelancers across Europe, need a framework for collective bargaining with global players. The way the system currently works, freelancers are mostly deprived of collective bargaining rights due to the questionable application of non-competition clauses.

**RESPECT FOR AUTHORS' RIGHTS**

All European audiovisual translators must be granted effective protection and respect for their intellectual property rights (Implementation of article 18 of the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market). There must be appropriate and proportionate remuneration of authors in all European countries. In particular, streaming services must be obliged to contribute their fair share and to negotiate with collective management organizations.

**EXPERT CONSULTING IN MACHINE TRANSLATION DEVELOPMENT**

Audiovisual translators are expert linguists who have proved their capacity to embrace new technologies. Their expertise must play a major role in machine translation development at the institutional level. Audiovisual translators are improving machine translations through their work, for which they should receive a fair remuneration. Instead of automated translation, the European Union should promote language learning, for instance through quality subtitling. This is a way to strengthen European cultural bonds and business relations.

**AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION AS AN INHERENT PART OF PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION BUDGETS**

Audiovisual translation must be perceived as an integral part of audiovisual content production. Cooperation with audiovisual translators should be part and parcel of a professional international distribution strategy.

**AVTE'S FAMILY**

From left to right:

*Mirka Brezovska, Tina Shortland, Estelle Renard, Kristin Gerdes, Victoria Da Silva, Henrik W. Johnsen, Amalie Foss, Marielle Steinpatz, Linus Kollberg, Ian Burley, Barbara Mueller, Manuela Marianetti, Jean-François Cornu, Polona Mertelj, Mireille Onon, Mane Galovic, Silke Nagel, Petra Matic, Ian Burley, our host Marie-Claude Gaullier, Iris Permuy*

