**Transcriptions interviews**

*Interview Jonas*

*Kim*: First of all, thank you very much for participating. I really appreciate it since I recognize that your time is also valuable. Do you maybe have some questions beforehand? Before we begin?

*Jonas*: No, not really.

*Kim*: Just as a disclaimer, of course since I have my questions here, I will be looking down sometimes but I'm still listening. Yeah, just to begin, could you maybe explain how you got into the European Parliament, because I saw in your questionnaire that you first worked at another unit?

*Jonas*: Well not really at another unit. Just for your information, I'm 61 years old. I have a degree in interpretation. So actually, I'm a conference interpreter. I studied Dutch, which was compulsory, English and modern Greek and then I worked for 10 or 11 years as a freelance translator and interpreter. And in 1999, I joined, I passed a competition and in January ‘99, 25 years ago exactly, I joined the Dutch translation unit of the European Parliament. For one year I was accorded to the Budget Committee as an administrator. This had nothing to do with translation. I came back and I stayed here, and I will stay here until my retirement.

*Kim*: That's nice.

*Jonas*: And apart from, yes that's actually so I am one of the senior translators in the Dutch translation unit.

*Kim*: So, you still like it, I suppose, because otherwise ...

*Jonas*: I still like it. I've always liked it, I still like it very much, but for you as a young person I must admit that the translation profession, the translation market has evolved enormously. I date from pre-history times. So, in my time, when I was a student, when I started working, there were no computers, there was no internet, there was nothing. Everything was on paper, encyclopedia, dictionaries, newspapers, magazines, etc. That's it. So, my first translations really were with pencil then it had to be tagged, that gave the first word docs. And then the first computers, the first word processing systems, CAT-tools, etcetera, etcetera. And now we are in the era of machine translation, artificial intelligence, so it has evolved enormously. And very often I think, well, we've seen everything, but I'm afraid we haven't seen everything yet.

*Kim*: No, probably not.

*Jonas*: But the future will tell us.

*Kim*: Yeah, that's very true. And in those years, all those experiences, did your view on machine translation change? Because you also mentioned that you've worked on machine translation for a couple of years already.

*Jonas*: Yeah, yeah it definitely has changed, because as I told, well, I have always been interested in technology, in technological tools, in tools and such that can help us in doing our work. And so, I started with translators work bench, with Studio. I've been a trainer for those tools for many years. And I've always been interested also in the evolution of machine translation. As you know, at the very, very beginning everybody was laughing like, well, it's ridiculous. But over the years, it has evolved enormously, quality has improved enormously and now we even reached the point that one starts considering, starts asking, as a translation, do I still have a future?. Will machine translation or will AI and/or a combination of both take over my job? But I think it’s not only valid for the translation form, you could also ask the same question for journalist, for instance, or for other types of professions. But my view has always been that it's a very useful tool, but it's one of the many tools we have at our disposal. It's not perfect. I don't know whether one day it will ever be perfect for legislation or for specific document types. But in my view, it's a very useful tool. But of course, you have to look at it and I also consider it as a, from time to time, as a useful source of information, because sometimes machine translation pops up with suggestions, with solutions, that I would not have thought of myself. But then of course, I start realizing, okay, we worked with, so our systems, the eTranslation that we and the European Commission uses has been trained with certain data. The more data you have, and actually, the data we have is everything that has been translated by humans. Not only at the Parliament, but also the Commission admins use it etcetera. So, sometimes you get a very good translation, that I say, wow, I wouldn't have thought about it myself. But then I realize, okay, this has been invented by one of our many colleagues, in one of the institutions.

*Kim*: Oh yeah, I think that's a nice way to look at it.

*Jonas*: And apart from that, sometimes there are, you have to be very, very attentive. Because, well, we are not allowed to use DeepL for security reasons, but of course DeepL for Dutch is very good. And the risk is that when you have a lot of work, a lot of time pressure, your attention is decreasing, because you have to speed up, you have to continue, you have to go on and certainly in the beginning, DeepL, it read, you read something as if it were written by a human. But when you start analysing it, it says just the opposite than that what is meant in the source text etcetera. So, you have to be, I think you have to be more attentive than when you translate yourself everything from scratch. But of course, humans translating from scratch can make mistakes as well. So, you have to be very concentrated. And I, when we translate legislation, and there is a reference to a regulation or a directive, it's never translated correctly. I don't understand why, because we work with texts from the European institutions. So, I don't understand why they have not succeeded in coupling, let say, the database of EUR-Lex, that contains all the titles of directives, regulations, etc. That's, so there you can be sure, that you have to check it you have to correct it etc. And what I also mostly do when I translate a document in Studio, I add a specific QA checker that you probably know, that you might also use already, which is very useful for identifying more technical mistakes like dates or references or double spaces or that kind of things. And I also always add a term base, the IATE term base, that is available. Because let's say, the combination of having machine translation on the one hand, and then other integrated tools in Studio like the QA checker and the IATE term base, also saves a lot of time, because we have a term, a validated term that is recognized in IATE, you have it immediately. You can check where the machine translation has taken the right terminology, has used the right terminology or not, so that's the way I work.

*Kim*: Alright, alright. And you also mentioned that you use a couple of tools within the Parliament, with which of those do you apply machine translation?

*Jonas*: Well, let's say the two main translation tools we have are Studio, SDL Studio and CAT4trad, an in house-designed tool. I use it for all my texts, I use machine translation for all my texts, for all my documents.

*Kim*: Alright.

*Jonas*: And for some types of documents the results are better for others they're not. But for me, I'm so used to it, because even when you have a text, you have information coming from different translation memories, for the different sources, sometimes you have a match, maybe 65% or 85%, sometimes you don't have a match. So actually, I only use machine translation, it pops up when there are no matches of at least 65% in the translation memories, but if there is nothing, I use machine translation that is offered automatically.

*Kim*: Alright, alright. And you mentioned that the outcomes can vary on the type of texts that you translate. Would you say that there are certain types of texts where you would, where you would recommend using machine translation more than other types of texts?

*Jonas*: Well, let's say for more typical texts for Parliament or for legislation, I would recommend it. For more creative texts, especially our eTranslation is not that good. But even then, even then, it might always come up with some suggestions. Let's say, you can use it as a basis, but it will take you more time to have a good translation than for technical translations or other documents. But I've noticed over the years that quality has improved enormously, yeah.

*Kim*: So, in general, you would say that you are content with the machine translation?

*Jonas*: I'm satisfied.

*Kim*: Satisfied, that's the word I was looking for.

*Jonas*: I'm satisfied, yeah definitely, definitely. But I don't rely, let's say, only on machine translation. For me. It's a very important tool, that is integrated in our own translation tools, that I use in combination with other integrated tools, like the term base, like the translation memories, etc.

*Kim*: Alright.

*Jonas*: So, I don't use it as a stand-alone solution.

*Kim*: No, exactly.

*Jonas*: I don't use it as a stand-alone solution, but when I have something that has to be translated from scratch, so this means that nothing comes from the memories or has been translated completely or partly by someone else, that is contained in one of the memories, I rely on machine translation. And sometimes you don't have to change anything. And sometimes you have to delete it and start from scratch, yeah.

*Kim*: Alright. According to you, what are the main difficulties when translating with machine translation?

*Jonas*: The main difficulties, well I wouldn't call it difficulties, but as I told already, you have to be very, very attentive, because the risk is when it sounds like good or normal Dutch, and that's mainly, I would say, the pro-, not the problem, but when you use DeepL, very often it sounds as if it were written by a native speaker. So, when you don't have a lot of time and you read, okay it sounds good and then with control enter you confirm, etcetera, etcetera. So, you have to be very, very attentive, and you always have to check, let's say, references to directives and regulations, etc.

*Kim*: And then on the other side, what do you think are the main advantages of machine translation?

*Jonas*: The time you gain. Well, not only the time. So, you gain a lot of time. Even, let's say, if you have to post-edit something or to change something, you don't have to type or to translate the sentence yourself completely. So, when you're quite keyboard literate, when you know some shortcuts etcetera, you can very easily change the position of words or characters or delete a word or part of a sentence in one go. So, when you know some shortcuts, you can gain a lot of time. And very often also a very useful source of inspiration I would say.

*Kim*: Alright, alright. Oh yeah, that was another question that I was curious about. Does it also matter from which language you translate from, how good the machine translation output is?

*Jonas*: Yes, because English has the best results, because it's the biggest database. And, let's say, I do Polish, I do Greek, I don't know whether you know that, but when I have to translate something from Greek into Dutch, and you get machine translation, it is first translated from Greek into English, and then from English into Dutch. So, it's like in the interpretation booth where they don't cover all languages directly, they use a so-called relay language. So anyway, when you have to translate something, or you have to process something more than one time or two times or three times, then there's always something lost. So definitely, English-Dutch, for me has the best results, because it's based on the biggest set of data that we have at our disposal and for all, for many other or so-called exotic languages, or less used languages, it's always first a translation into English and then from English into Dutch.

*Kim*: I didn't know that that was the way it works.

*Jonas*: Yeah, that's the way eTranslation works.

*Kim*: Okay. And if there was anything that you could change about the machine translation used here, what would you like it to have?

*Jonas*: Well, as I mentioned already, I don't understand why references to directives and regulations are not taking over literally from, let's say, from CELEX or from EUR-Lex, from the official journal, or whatever, and that it has to be reinvented or retranslated. And what I also notice very often is that, I know how machine translation works, but sometimes you have to repetitive words, repetitive sentences in a big document and well at the beginning it is translated this way, a few pages further down it's translated, the same thing is, or more or less the same thing, is translated using other words. So, it would be nice if machine translation could be more context based.

*Kim*: Yeah, that makes sense, yeah.

*Jonas*: I know, I know it always looks at a few sentences or a few words before that and a few words after that. But it would be nice and maybe with artificial intelligence it would be possible in the future, in the near future, I don't know, that machine translation not only looks at the sentence level or part of the sentence level, but also at a bigger level, at a higher level, let's say at the document level. And when, I think that can be done with AI, when it sees that it's the same term, a specific term comes back five times that it's, if possible, that's also maybe one of the improvements, that it's coupled to IATE databases. That that specifical term is given based on the IATE terminology and that in those five cases you are sure that you get five times the same exact translation. But on the other hand I would say, when you don't use machine translation, and in our context and projects we work in you have your translation memories with input from everywhere, from in house from outside of the Parliament, the Commission, the Council, the committees etcetera and even then you are not 100% sure that all the input you get used the same terminology, so that's one of the main tasks of the human translator, of the human revisor, post-editor, call it the way you want it, to see to it that when you opt for, let's say, term A or term B, I don't care, but at least see to it that within the same document, within the same context, you always opt for either A or B.

*Kim*: Alright, yeah, I can imagine that that would help a lot.

*Jonas*: But that's not only for machine translation, that's also for human translations. You get so many inputs from so many different sources, and it's not always streamlined. That's human of course, it's not always wrong. It also has to do with personal style or preferences or whatever. It's not necessarily wrong, but sometimes it's useful to have more streamlined terminology within one document.

*Kim*: Yeah. And then I have some questions about clear language guidelines. Because in your survey you said that you basically apply them always.

*Jonas*: I try to apply them, yes.

*Kim*: Could you explain a little bit about how you apply them and what the clear language guidelines are for you?

*Jonas*: Well, for me, clear language, first of all, or for me a good translation, is, let's say, a text that reads and sounds as if it were written by a native speaker in a clear, understandable way. So not too many... It's not always easy with the kind of texts we have to translate. But there, for instance when you have a very long, Latin style, half page sentence. Well, I will cut it in pieces, to make it clearer, more understandable and that of course, machine translation doesn't do it. When you have a half page sentence, well you will get a half page sentence translated as well. Then of course you start changing it, and well that's one aspect of clear language to me. Another one is also, although I'm one of the oldest colleagues, I try to use vocabulary that is modern. So, I won’t use, I hate archaic words or archaic style or whatever. Although I also try to use, let's say, the *je*-form instead of the *u*-form in Dutch. So not really the polite official, but it depends on the kind of text of course, so that kind of things. I always try to imagine, but that's very general, clear language specifically for Dutch, language that is comprehensible for both Dutch people and Flemish people.

*Kim*: Yeah.

*Jonas*: Sometimes my Dutch colleagues, I'm Flemish, my Dutch colleagues use words or expressions that even I don't know. So, if they use that, let's say, the average Flemish or Dutch reader will not understand it either.

*Kim*: Yeah.

*Jonas*: So that's also an aspect of clear language specific to Dutch. Then, of course, let's say, something that is comprehensible, let's say, for the average intelligence quotient of readers.

*Kim*: Yeah.

*Jonas*: Of course, sometimes when you have technical legislation, of course, we have to use that vocabulary, but if it is more a press release or something for the bigger, the wider public, then you can be more free and you can apply more, let's say, the clear language rules than in a really technical or legal texts.

*Kim*: Yeah, I can imagine. And since you mentioned differences between Flemish and Dutch, do you also experience some difficulties, I guess, with machine translation when it comes to those types of things?

*Jonas*: Yes, yes. For instance, let's say, I won't be the first one to mention that example. SME's, small and medium enterprises, we say *KMO's*, *kleine en middelgrote bedrijven*, in Holland it is *het MKB*. And as I told already, when you have a text about SME's, depending on the source, or the part of the dataset where the machine translation gets its information you sometimes might get *KMO* and sometimes MKB and whether you choose *KMO* or *MKB*, I don't care, although in Flanders most of the people don't know *MKB*, they don't know what it is. We know, but they don't. But at least within one, within the same text, see to it that you opt either the one or the other.

*Kim*: Yeah, alright.

*Jonas*: But sometimes, it depends of course on the text, *bijvoorbeeld ‘het College van burgemeester en schepenen*’, we say *‘schepenen’*, you say *'wethouders’*. Okay, in Belgium, constitutional law it's called *'schepenen’* in Holland it's called *'wethouder’*. What do you do with it, I don't know.

*Kim*: Yeah, but I think that’s also a general...

*Jonas*: This, in say, it says has nothing to do with machine translation.

*Kim*: Yeah.

*Jonas*: Also, for the human translations you have the same problem.

*Kim*: Yeah, I can imagine. And then I think my last question for now, do you experience more difficulties when, I guess, applying clear language guidelines when using machine translation?

*Jonas*: A bit more, yes. Because very often, it depends on the kind of text you have, but very often machine translation is still quite literate. It follows, let's say, more or less the structure of the original. And sometimes you have to change it.

*Kim*: Like in the longer sentence you were talking about earlier.

*Jonas*: Yeah, yeah. But especially long sentences. Then you make two or three sentences of it. But it's getting better and better. Because at the very, very beginning, well, very often the verb was missing, or parts were missing etcetera. Or let's say the subject was in singular and the verb was in plural, or the other way around. But the last few years, we don't have very often that kind of errors anymore.

*Kim*: That's good. Alright, and do you have any other things you would like to add or questions?

*Jonas*: No, not really.

*Kim*: Then I would like to thank you very much again for the interview.

*Jonas*: You're welcome. I wish you good luck.

*Kim*: Thank you.

*Interview Esmee*

*Kim*: Okay. Well first of all, thank you very much for participating. I really appreciate it.

*Esmee*: You're very welcome

*Kim*: Because I understand that your time is valuable, so I really appreciate that you wanted to participate in my study. Do you maybe have any questions beforehand, before we start the interview?

*Esmee*: No, not at all. I hardly remember what I filled out in the questionnaire, but we'll see, so it will be a bit of a surprise attack, I suppose.

*Kim*: So first of all, I would like to... O yeah sorry, another disclaimer: I might be looking at the interview questions.

*Esmee*: No worries.

*Kim*: So, I will listen, but sometimes I just have to look at the paper. So, the first question I would like to ask is, how you got to work here at the European Parliament?

*Esmee*: A long time ago, 12,5 years ago I started to work here. Actually, I participated in a competition in 2006 already, I think. But it was a very long procedure, so it ended in 2008. By the time I did my last interview in Brussels, I was already pregnant with my daughter, so I already put a flag to my name: don't call me, don't write me, I'm not available for the next period. Then, yeah, I got flagged by the Parliament some time later, and by the Commission at the same time almost. But the Parliament was earlier, so I went to the interview. Yeah, it was already 2011, but by then, I had a second child who was very small. So I said if we can postpone the start date a little, then I would be very, very happy. So yeah, this took ages, the whole procedure. So in the end I started working in October 2011. So, yeah, and then the whole family came along with me.

*Kim*: That sounds very interesting, how it all, like, came along.

*Esmee*: Yeah, and quite adventurous, because to the interview we had to travel with my three month old son, by that time. So, my husband came along and my son came along, not to the interview, but they were also in Luxembourg. The rest is history.

*Kim*: That sounds very nice. And could you describe how the European Parliament uses technology within their translation units?

*Esmee*: Yes, of course, we work in the Trados Studio environment, so already, that's a given. Unless, yeah, for some projects it's only in Word, if you don't want to use Translation Memories. So yep, Studio is the basic tool and on top of that we have term bases, and we have both our database where we can look up terms or strings of terms and we have machine translation, so, and ah yeah, we have an in-house developed tool, specifically, well mainly for amendments, but also for other kinds of documents, like yeah also amendments, but a different kind, budget amendments, some minutes of meetings or agendas and that is called Cat4Trad. I think, yeah, that is more or less it. So, Euramis, IATE, all online databases we use. So I would say, yeah and dictionaries, of course. So almost everything takes place online, electronically, and by making use of technology.

*Kim*: Alright, and you mentioned in the questionnaire as well, that you worked with machine translation for, I think it was between five and ten years.

*Esmee*: Yes, I think so. So, not straight from the beginning, then it was not even active yet. When I came, a few years after, it was developed by the Commission, MT@EC. In the beginning I was very reluctant, I must say. Because I was afraid of losing creativity, I think I also wrote that in the questionnaire. But then also, as the workload got heavier and heavier, I was like, let's try it out. And machine translation, it is getting better, because it's being fed with our translations. So in the beginning I was not very convinced that this is the way forward, but now actually it saves so much time and especially if it's about drier texts, then it's more usable than for let's say, for citizen's texts, or websites, where you would really like to use creativity, your own idioms and expressions.

*Kim*: Alright, so it changed quite a lot.

*Esmee*: Yes, yes I was quite sceptical, but, now, okay, it's not perfect, that's why we're here, but it's much better right now. It evolved, absolutely.

*Kim*: That's good, good to hear. And would you say that now, what do you generally think of the machine translation output?

*Esmee*: Very good, but you have to be very aware. So I would not recommend it for absolute beginners, people who have never translated, because sometimes the solutions sound okay. But when you start checking, quite often elements are missing or a different logic is applied. So if your knowledge of English is good enough, then you spot, okay this is not the same reasoning. It sounds good, but this is not what's in the original. So, I think there are a lot of traps to be aware of. So, it's not just light post-editing what we should do. It's really a thorough check of the left column in Studio and the right column, where the translation is.

*Kim*: So, some of the problems are with the fluency, that the fluency of the machine translation looks good, but it might not be an equivalent of the English or other language.

*Esmee*: Yeah exactly, so it sounds like a good Dutch text in this case, grammatically correct, but yeah, especially content wise, it's not always spot on, is my experience.

*Kim*: Alright. And you talked a little bit about certain texts, that it would be more useful. Are there certain aspects of a text that will make it more suitable to use machine translation?

*Esmee*: Especially texts, as I said, a bit drier texts, maybe where it sounds a bit, yeah, like a paradox actually, where more precision is required or where it's more important to stay closer to the source text, because it's legislation for instance, there actually the machine translation is better. When there is no room for ambivalence, double meanings. If there's a pun, for instance, in the source text, it might not get it. So yeah, the further you move away from official legislation or whatever official text, the more difficult it finds it to deal with it, I think.

*Kim*: Alright. Yeah. Yeah. Could you also explain a little bit about your general translation process? With using MT or without using the machine translation?

*Esmee*: I always have it switched on. But sometimes, for instance now with the elections or, yeah you get really strange results. So sometimes I just empty the whole segment, and I start from scratch, because... Yeah, what I also feel is that you might not come up with certain solutions, if you already have something pre-edited basically, and you see something on your screen and then it's difficult to step away from it. Although, when you start with a clean sheet, you might have this perfect idea of translating it. So, it is always switched on, but sometimes I just disregard it or I delete it and then start from scratch with my own translation. Also, depending on how much, how much time I have. I mean, I really like to think over solutions or like I'm looking for this expression, it takes more time. Or I come back to it, so yeah if there's really a high pressure, probably, yeah, the creativity will be less.

*Kim*: So, would you say that it takes less time when you're using machine translation, generally?

*Esmee*: Yeah. Even though, yeah, not everything is acceptable. But still, it saves a lot of time, because you already have something to start from. So, you can move faster through the text, but yeah, the end result might not be as good as it might have been, had you done everything by yourself from scratch. But yeah, that's the downside, especially on the time pressure, you don't have much choice.

*Kim*: Yeah, I can imagine.

*Esmee*: Hopefully, the end product is still good enough. Let’s say 90%. But, I'm kind of a perfectionist, so yeah, sometimes you get your own text back, or later in the process, and then you're like, okay. It's okay, but it could have been even better.

*Kim*: I can imagine that, that it's a bit of a...

*Esmee*: compromise.

*Kim*: Yeah.

*Esmee*: Definitely.

*Kim*: And I was also wondering, would you still use machine translation if, for example, at a private company, sometimes you get less, like, you get rewarded less money if you use machine translation, or if you post-edit. Would you still use machine translation if you were to be rewarded less?

*Esmee*: Ah, but as a freelancer or as an inhouse translator or what do you mean?

*Kim*: I think, if you were to work… because here it's all the same, right?

*Esmee*: Or do you mean matches, or what do you mean, or in pay?

*Kim*: In pay.

*Esmee*: Aha. Like if, okay, but I think that's up to the company, no? If they decide, they do a check, and then they say, it's like 50% is already known or comes from the memory, so yeah you get deducted for machine translation, so I think it's not up to the translator maybe. And back in the day, when I was a freelance translator, this was not really an issue yet. Especially with my language combination, mainly Hungarian–Dutch, and I said, I don't use Studio or machine translation or whatever, which maybe didn't even exist then. So, then it was not, not, not an option. Nowadays I think, yeah, it's either take it or leave it, probably so. Either you agree, like this is a bit too little pay, but they decide. You can try to negotiate of course, but yeah, I think it's one of the facts of life, it is there, and you have to use it. I guess that's the reality, but I haven't been a freelancer in a long time, as I said I have been here for 12,5 years. So, who knows what the practice looks like nowadays.

*Kim*: And you talked a little bit about your language combination. Is it Hungarian–Dutch, and do you have other language combinations?

*Esmee*: Well, most people translate from English most of the time, so, but, yeah. I did the competition with English and Hungarian. I also translated already from the beginning from German. And then I added French, after having done a language course. And by now I also translate from Croatian. They have twelve levels of Croatian here, so officially I should be at C2 level, which is not true, especially for speaking but I can translate. The reading is always the easiest part for a translator. As long as you don't have to communicate in that language.

*Kim*: I can imagine. And does it make a difference from which language you are translating for the machine translation outcome?

*Esmee*: When the machine translation is concerned? Well, I guess English-Dutch is the best, but, yeah, I use it also for Hungarian and Croatian. For Hungarian, it might be, I don't even know if it's less good, but most of the time with Hungarian it's amendments anyway. So small pieces of text. So, yeah, I use my common sense and my knowledge of Hungarian. With Croatian, it's a bit tricky because I don't really have such a thorough knowledge of Croatian as of English and Hungarian, which I really feel something is not right. With Croatian, I cannot really rely on the machine translation. So, there I also use language versions, which is also a feature in our Studio environment. To see what the French, German and other translators, how they translated the sentence. Often, completely not corresponding. So, then there's always a native speaker I can ask, so I do also use human tools if I'm not sure and then I would ask a Croatian person. So, for English and Hungarian not really necessary. But in case of the lesser languages that I don't even get very often, then it's also a good idea. Because the machine translation, it yields something that seems okay, but it's about the finesses, that I might not have in that source language.

*Kim*: Then it's nice that there are Croatian people to ask.

*Esmee*: Yeah, multicultural environment. That's a big advantage.

*Kim*: Yeah. Then I also have some questions about clear language guidelines. In the questionnaire you told me that you use clear language guidelines on all texts I believe?

*Esmee*: Yeah, well not concretely the guidelines. I know that they exist, but more as a principle. Like, I try to write as clearly as possible and especially for texts for a broader audience. Sometimes, even, you know, reading out loud, or thinking how would I say this to a friend or a neighbour, just to see if it's colloquial enough. So, I test those texts on myself, and also with, we do sometimes podcasts and the news in brief, is if I already stumble over a sentence for me that means that the sentence is not good. If I cannot pronounce it, there's something wrong with it. Maybe reading is easier in silence. But still, for me that bar is pretty high. So, if there is a problem with either a too long sentence or words that are similar and too close to each other, too long words, then I change the sentence or I swap the order, so it comes out more fluently. So yeah, that for me is a tip for those, yeah, texts in citizen's language and clear language that it should be fluid to read, no obstacles. So yeah, but also even when it's not really possible, or if you don't really have the freedom to change too much in a structure, especially with amendments. You have to adapt to the underlying texts then still, yeah, I try to translate as clearly, as transparently as possible. Unless the source text is so unclear, then I don't want to interpret, because it might be on purpose, it might be opaque for a reason. So then it's not up to me to say okay, but I decide, probably this and that is meant. So, you don't always have that leeway and you have to be careful, because we are here in a political environment and people themselves do not have such a clear understanding and then who are you as a translator to decide on how it should be. So, I always try to not make it, to not make it less clear. But if the source text, if there are already some problems, it's not always possible to play judge and to say, it should be this of course, unless it's an obvious and it’s a spelling mistake, but if it's just open for multiple interpretations, then it's, it's not evident. If you are going to choose one of the options and then you try to stay vague a bit.

*Kim*: Yeah, and would you say that the use of machine translation affects the application of clear language guidelines, even though as you said you don't really see them as guidelines, but more in a broader sense?

*Esmee*: Yeah. Well, yes, it makes it, it makes texts a bit more flat, I think. So, nowadays, I noticed that machine translations don't always follow the source text structure anymore, like very one to one. So, I see some, already some more natural developments. But yeah, especially with expressions or colloquial themes in speeches, you'll see that it's really not up to speed yet. Lately, I had an example. And it was about describing the picture for visually impaired people. And it said president bla bla bla or a director with arms crossed, and then the translation in Dutch read: *met gekruiste wapens*. Arms, arms. So, then you notice, okay, not quite.

*Kim*: Not quite the same, no.

*Esmee*: So, especially in these short phrases, it often doesn't have a clue. It needs a context. So yeah, and when it's more like everyday speech, it will not give you nice expressions. Sometimes there's a proverb or slogan, I think it's really not, not suitable. Yes.

*Kim*: Alright, so it also really depends on the type of text as well.

*Esmee*: Yeah, yeah. So, I think it doesn't know, of course, about clear language guidelines. It just tried to give a loyal representation of the original, but doesn't know anything about the target audience. So, for my taste, it's always a bit boring, a bit dry. Not really a translation of flesh and blood.

*Kim*: Alright. I think that were all the questions that I had.

*Esmee*: Okay, I saw a very long list, but.

*Kim*: Yeah, do you maybe have something you would like to add?

*Esmee:* I would be curious what your exact topic of your research is, and what you want to discover.

*Kim:* Well the topic is machine translation use at the European Parliament and I'm looking at clear language guidelines, as well.Like yeah, if it changes. If it's harder to use a machine translation when you;re thinking of the clear language guidelines.

*Esmee*: Okay, and you would like to find out whether it's widely used and what people think.

*Kim*: Yeah, yeah. What they think of it and if they like to use it. How they use it, yeah. Yeah, so maybe it could be used to apply to, to improve machine translation in the future.

*Esmee*: Okay, and what do you yourself think, so far?

*Kim*: Well I think, I mean I think that.. Well, you're the first interviewee.

*Esmee*: What about machine translation, I mean you do translate already, so?

*Kim*: I do also think it really depends on the type of texts and like you said, the image descriptions, usually are just nonsense. So yeah, I think it really depends on the type of text and that clear language guidelines could be a bit hard to follow. You really have to keep them in mind while editing the text, the machine translation.

*Esmee*: You can maybe even better compare, now that you that you, well you will be, later now you're here, at directorate D and then you'll come to us, and then you will see the difference probably.

*Kim*: Yeah, I'm really curious.

*Esmee*: You might now still be quite negative or not always convinced about machine translation, and then you come to us and you'll see that sometimes it is really good. So far, I don't think that you really have to be afraid. Of course, that's also something that I'd like to hear, I think. But yeah, especially when you don't only want to read robotic texts, I think this creativity, that's still the most important factor that a machine cannot do to the same extent. Of course, it's being fed with our translations, so it will find some expressions, but maybe not always at the right moment. Okay.

*Kim*: Then I will stop the recording.

*Interview Thomas*

*Kim*: Well, first of all, thank you very much for participating. I know that your time is very valuable. So, it's really, it means a lot that you are willing to participate.

*Thomas*: You’re very welcome.

*Kim*: Do you maybe have any questions beforehand, before we start?

*Thomas*: No, not at all. I think you've provided me with enough info beforehand, so I’m fine.

*Kim*: Alright, alright. And yeah, just a disclaimer of course since I have the questions before me, I will look down sometimes, but I will still be listening, of course. Yeah, just to begin. I was wondering how did you get into the European Parliament?

*Tomas*: How I got into the European Parliament? Well, I took part in an EPSO competition. I think that was 2017. I simply saw there was competition organized by several institutions, the European Parliament being one of them. So, I took part at that time, this was through the EPSO website where they advertise where they publish basically all the competitions of that kind. So yeah, I took part in that competition, and then I made it to the reserve list. And after some time, I had the opportunity to come in for a job interview for this particular position. So, I've been here since July 2020.

*Kim*: Alright, that’s very interesting. Could you also describe a little bit how the European Parliament uses technology to translate?

*Thomas*: Well, I think we rely very heavily on technology, as you know we use CAT-tools on a daily basis. So, we use Trados Studio 2019 I think is the current software version. We make use of term bases, a lot of terminology and machine translation, as well of course also. I would say on a daily basis, but that would not really refer to me personally. I think in Directorate B, so the Directorate for Translation, they use it more commonly as I think more of their, the documents that they translate are more standardized, which makes it easier I find for, for machine translation to generate coherent translations. And I think that really helps them to do their work more quickly. Whereas in Directorate D, the Directorate for Citizen’s language, we have more, let's say, creative input, sometimes in our translations, which so far, machine translation doesn't really help that much. Sometimes it does help to inspire and to get started. But not, definitely not always. What else I can say about technology is that I know that whenever we consider using new technologies, that there are specific units for this to really research the technology that is available on the market, or if there's something very specific, some kind of functionality that we really feel we need, we can also have new technology or new programs developed specifically for us. So, this is a quite lengthy process. It takes a lot of time. But as far as I know, the policy is first to look at what is on the market and, you know, how much does it cost, how well does it meet our needs. And if there's something already on the market, the first reflex is of course to buy what’s already on the market. Yeah, sometimes it does happen that things are developed specifically for us, based on an extensive study that has been done within the house.

*Kim*: That’s the same case for the machine translation, right, the engine?

*Thomas*: Yes, I believe so. Yeah.

*Kim:* And within your own workflow, how do you incorporate machine translation?

*Thomas*: Machine translation, well normally when we start on the translation project, we can rely on our proofreader who prepares a project themselves in Studio and will also either link machine translation to the project or not. Now, at the moment we don't have a proofreader, so for specific texts I use our own proprietary tool, which is eTranslation and you basically import the source document into it, and it emails you a translation which you can then link to your Studio project. And then it's quite user friendly when you're working in Studio, you start a new segment, and you can immediately access the machine translation. Personally, I only use eTranslation for slightly longer texts, where I know that it's unlikely that I will be changing a lot in terms of the order of information, for example, when that is something that needs to be done, I try to avoid using Studio altogether, such as the daily Newsflashes. They're quite short, the news items are short and when you then have to switch around information, I mean the order of information is not really practical to work with Studio, so no machine translation in that sense. But for longer scripts for podcasts, for example, I would, I would do it, or longer translations, then I would definitely use eTranslation. Just to get started. It makes things easier to, to have a first suggestion to work with and sometimes it's, sometimes it's rubbish and I don't use it at all. But oftentimes, it really helps to create an idea. But it's always important especially in our work, when we want to have a very natural sounding Dutch translation that is not too formal and doesn't seem like a too literal translation from English, it's important to really not stick too closely to the machine translation as well, to also use your own imagination and to try to come up with something from scratch. But machine translation can very often really help to get started and to get the ball rolling more quickly.

*Kim:* Alright, yeah, I can imagine. And in your questionnaire, you also mentioned that you use other types of tools, like Plint, and are there, apart from Studio, other tools where you apply machine translation?

*Thomas:* No, not really. The machine translation is really limited to Studio alone. I have wondered, since Plint, you know, is usually, is used for subtitling, but I did feel like I should mention it because there has been talk of using automated subtitling as well. So, basically combining machine translation with subtitling software. But personally, I have no idea how far this kind of technology has come. I mean, I think we're all familiar with automatically generated subtitles on YouTube, for example, which often, especially to subtitlers seem awful. Although I have spoken to end users, I mean, people who simply watch YouTube and are not really into the subtitling business themselves, and they greatly appreciate it. But, so far, I don't think there are any concrete plans to incorporate that in our workflows to start using that in Plint. But I mean, never say never, this technology evolves very quickly, and it might well be that we start using it within a few years. We've been getting more and more subtitling jobs in the past few years, so the bigger workload probably means we'll look into more technology that can make life easier for us.

*Kim:* I can imagine. So, what do you usually think about the quality of the machine translation? Because you talked about a little bit, but can you explain a bit more?

*Thomas:* Well, it varies, it really depends on the source next, which is probably an answer you've gotten before as well. And this usually holds up. I mean, if you have a source text that is very formalized, very, very heavily reliant on terminology that always has to be translated in the same way or to specific phrases that come back again, and again, this really makes life a lot easier. It really speeds things up. And possibly you would have to have an even keener eye on your post editing because you really have to pay attention to the small mistakes, which machine translation can still have even in that kind of texts. But usually, I think in procedural texts that have a very specific structure and have these typical phrases that always come back, there machine translation is brilliant, because it really speeds up work. In other types of texts, where you deviate more from this, you know this standardized form, and especially the texts that we quite often work with, where we get some creative, creative input.

*[the recording stopped here, but we immediately realized and started a new recording]*

*Thomas:* Okay, so, short recap. I was just saying that for the very standardized texts, with same formulations that come back again, and again, it's really great. It really speeds things up. But the texts that we use where you need some more creative input, or where you have the license to maybe omit a few things or add some extra information, because you feel like your target audience, like it would help your target audience, then machine translation has a more limited use. It can still help you to get the ball rolling, to get, you know, the first inspiration to start translating, but you really have to be more critical when you're post-editing then. You have a bigger input yourself, at that point. So, it can still has its uses, but it's more limited.

*Kim:* Yeah, I can imagine. And since the machine translation output is not always perfect, especially in the more creative text in directorate D, how much would you say that you actually use the machine translation proposal, if you apply machine translation?

*Thomas:* Well, I mean to use it 100% without any changes that would be rather rare. I would say maybe 5% of the time, so that's very limited. But there's a good chance that like one in four of the suggestions will have at least some use to me. So, that I would definitely you know, just use it as a basis and make some, maybe even small changes, add some, some punctuation or change a word around because we find it's more accessible to a wide audience. So yeah, to actually apply the offered suggestion. Sometimes I really need to make big changes. But maybe, the essence of the suggestion is still there and that can... it does save me some time to type, I don't know 10 words, I will use it but I think it's only like one in four that I make some small changes and I'm happy with the machine translation’s suggestion. And it does happen, from time to time, that I could just apply the suggestion. These will usually be the shorter segments and the segments that are a bit more like the ones you might get at directorate B, where things are more standardized.

*Kim:* Right. And do you have a preferred type of text, where you would apply machine translation?

*Thomas:* Yes. As I said, I only find it very useful if the text is slightly longer. But that's relative as well. I would use it for example, for press releases that we translate as well, which are, which are quite difficult texts to translate. So quite often, I would have to change a lot to the suggestions from the machine translation as well, but at least they help me out. They help me to get a first glimpse of the meaning of the text. Sometimes I would even, because it's such an intricate text, sometimes I would have difficulty understanding even the source segments, to find meaning behind it. And sometimes machine translation actually makes it more clear to me. I would go like ‘Ah, okay, yeah I hadn't even considered that this might be what was meant in the source text’. So that could really, that would be one type of text where I would definitely use it. Or, for example, let's say the model answers that we sometimes translate for, for AskEP, so answers to letters from citizens, because they also quite often refer to legislation that has been adopted in the past years or specific resolutions or specific guidelines or research that has been done. So, that's also where machine translation really comes in handy sometimes.

*Kim:* And from which languages do generally translate into Dutch?

*Thomas:* Well, I think it's fair to say that 95% of the texts that we translate are translated from English into Dutch. We do get some translations from French. Sometimes we can, we can basically choose. As you have probably noticed already, some of the ‘my house of European history’ stories, they will for example, have the original French and then you would have the English translation that has already been done in house and then we can basically choose, and the same applies to German for example. When it's a more exotic language, so to say, if it's the Slovenian for example, if that's the source language, then we will only see the English translation. But yeah, mostly it's English, 95% and the remaining 5% would be either French or German and once in a blue moon we have Spanish.

*Kim:* And even though the fast majority is from English, do you recognize some differences between the machine translation output between those languages?

*Thomas:* That's a good question. I find it hard to say because it's so rare that we translate from any other language than English. But since nothing really comes to mind, I would say that the quality is very... is more or less the same. I don't think there are any really big differences. So no, I wouldn't say there's a very noticeable difference. Probably there is. I assume that there will be if I would get more texts in French, I would probably see the differences. But I can't really say there is, although come to think of it. I do remember one example where I was translating from French, and I did have some suggestions that were a bit off the mark. And that's, I remember thinking that in French you have many more homonyms or, you know, words that you write in the same way but actually, or words that have more double meanings. And then you would have some weird translations there. So, I think that happens a little bit more when you have automatic translation from French than you do from English, but it's just one occasion that I remember.

*Kim:* Alright, interesting. And do you maybe have some things that you would like machine translation to have, that it doesn't have at the moment.

*Thomas:* Another good question. Well, it would be interesting if you would have more options to customize basically the type of text, if you could really indicate that this is a legislative text, so I want to keep the kind of jargon or I want to keep the register of this source text really in my target text. And I want to say this is really a legal text and I want to keep it that way. I want you to interpret every word you find in a legal way. Because sometimes you will like a jargon term that if you translate it literally, probably machine translation would use the most often used translation of that specific word, whereas in a jargonistic meaning, it will have something, it would mean something completely different. And the same would go for if you want a really creative translation, if you say, okay, this might be more, this could be a little bit more literary, like more, almost poetic text and you can translate more freely. That would be good. I know in eTranslation that you do have, that you can distinguish, but in my experience so far, it's not really... it's not really there yet.

*Kim:* Alright,I can imagine that it could be useful.

*Thomas:* Yeah, I think so, yeah.

*Kim:* In your questionnaire I also read that you used to work at a private company, and that also applied machine translation. And you mentioned that there were some differences in the way it was used, could you explain that?

*Thomas:* At least my experience, yeah. So, when I was working in the private sector I was with a company for about six years, and I seem to remember that the first two to three years we didn't really use machine translation at all. We still had like this, there was this cliche, and I often thought that this was kind of funny, because I'm not the kind of translator that shies away from technology or machine translation. I don't think it's going to take over our jobs and we're all going to be unemployed soon. I think we just have to learn how to use it. But a lot of clients often said that if they were unhappy with the translation they received, they would use this as an insult, and they would say that it looks like it was translated by Google Translate. Whereas I was thinking Google Translate at the moment is the most advanced machine translation available to man. So, it has actually progressed by leaps and bounds compared to 10 years ago, at that time 10 years ago, so by now 15 years ago. So, I noticed that at one point, we were getting a lot of you know, repetitive tasks, or repeat translations, things that will be updated every month or every year. And then in the private sector machine translation was really, really considered to be a tool that can save time and increase your output. And it was just basically the way to save money, which makes sense. I mean, if we were already relying very heavily on CAT-tools and translation memories and that could really help. You know, if you use a translation memory it also really increases your output, increases speed. The translation, machine translation increased that even further, in some texts and also it was only used when the client agreed to, for us to use it. We would say okay, we will apply machine translation which means that we can work faster, and we can give you a discount. We can tell you, okay, it's going to be cheaper if you allow us to use machine translation. In the knowledge that there will be post-editing done. There was always a human translator who'd have another look at it. Whereas here in the public sector, machine translation is not, obviously not used to save money or to make money. It's something that can be applied more broadly. You can always use it if you want to. You can apply it every time you translate, as long as you feel that it saves you time. And as long as you feel that the output, the quality of the output is okay to actually use it. So, there's quite a big difference to me. We used it a lot less frequently in the public sector, because it still had a bad reputation with the public. People would see and say, ooh, you know, machine translation, a computer can't compete with, you know, with a human yet. So why would you use it and then, you know, it's going to take quality down. But some clients, you know, they assumed if it gets us the translation more quickly and if there's still someone looking at it so we can rest assured it's correct and please do. And let's all save time and money. So, that's what I meant by my comment there.

*Kim:* Yeah. Yeah, that's interesting, because I hadn't really thought about that much that it would be quite different, the way in which you, machine translation is used. Then I have one last question about machine translation in general, actually. Do you like using machine translation?

*Thomas:* I do, yeah. In general, I do.Of course, sometimes it's just, it can be cumbersome. And when I think back to my time in the private sector, sometimes especially in the beginning, it was still difficult to find out which texts are really suited to use machine translation on. And then sometimes you would basically lose time, even though you would charge your client less because you told them, you know, we're going to be saving time by using machine translation. And then sometimes basically, we didn't make any profit on the translation, or on the contrary, we actually lost money because we thought this was going to be a good text to use machine translation on, and then the output was so bad or there were so many of these homonyms for example. I think we, I seem to remember, we found out quite quickly that for website translations, for example, it is terrible. Because web designers will give you a whole Excel list of terms, I think you recently translated one. And you can very often, you notice that there's just like terms, one word or two, three words, and it will be it will be translated in completely the wrong way. Where, you know, in an IT-setting, if you have the word 'gateway’, you can translate it inti Dutch, obviously, but in IT-terminology, a Dutch speaking IT-guy will not want a translation of the word 'gateway'. They will want the English word, because there they really know, you know, what it's about. So, sometimes, it was very cumbersome, and it basically cost us more time. Nowadays, though, in general, I really do like using it. But again, it all comes down to knowing what kind of source text is suitable for machine translation. Sometimes it's just better not to use it. By now, most of us have some experience in that and we kind of know and the good thing is you can always add it in Studio. You can always add machine translation and if, you know if you start translating, you can see, I mean I've done 10 segments now and every suggestion from machine translation was rubbish, you can basically just remove it and you can take it out of the project and just start translating on your own. But usually now whenever there's machine translation suggestions available, I'd say most of the time, at least 70 to 80% of the time, I'm very happy that I have it available and that I can use it.

*Kim:* Alright, that's good. Then I have some questions about the clear language guidelines. In the questionnaire, you also mentioned that you basically apply the guidelines, always. Could you explain a little bit about what the guidelines are for you and how you apply them?

*Thomas:* Well, these guidelines, they basically come down to knowing your audience, I mean, knowing who you're translating for, and really tailoring your translation to them. To make sure that whatever you write down is transparent, that it's not full of jargon, that whenever there's jargon that you cannot avoid, you at least try to explain it. To make clear through the context, what it is you're actually talking about or to use a commonly used term and then add or use the jargon and add a more commonly used term, so that's clear, this is what you basically mean. And also bearing in mind that long, complex sentences and grammar structures are to be avoided. These are some very common, very common guidelines. I think it's also common sense to apply them. And basically, what we've been taught is to, you know, if you're trying to... if you're making a translation about a topic that not everyone will be familiar with, try to imagine that you're trying to explain this to a friend at the pub. You're just talking about something that you read, and that you found interesting, and you notice that your friend who you're talking to, is not really that familiar with the topic, how would explain it to them? And that's basically the kind of conversation that you have to keep in mind when translating. So, this is what we apply in everyday life. Just to make sure that the people reading our texts get the information that they need, that they can, they can find it and they can apply it, that they can do something with it.

*Kim:* Alright, and is there also a way that machine translation affects these guidelines?

*Thomas:* Machine translation specifically? I don't, I don't think so because it's, you always have to bear this in mind whether you're using machine translation or not. And that also goes for using translation memories, because we haven't always been as mindful of clear language as we are now. So, it's quite often actually you still get these suggestions from translation memories, so the translations that we have made in the past or also our colleagues have made in the past on the same topic, and we basically notice that nowadays, this doesn't sound clear at all. The translation might be correct, or the quality in itself might be good, but it doesn't really serve the purpose of really informing a wide audience. So, then we still have to rewrite this, and we have to revisit this specific segment. And the same goes for machine translation. So, you might get a suggestion that is perfectly correct, but still we, you know, we change things around and hopefully, if we apply these guidelines often enough and long enough, then machine translation will basically pick it up as well and will start doing the same things as we do or applying the same guidelines. But, of course in a perfect world, the source texts are already written in clear language, and so then the machine translation will also be in clear language. But that's, I'm afraid we're not there yet.

*Kim:* Then I only have one more question, and that is if you have any more questions or things you would like to add?

*Thomas:* No, I don't think so. The one I really wanted to add myself was the comment that I had made in the questionnaire basically, on how machine translation is used? No, I think machine translation is a very, very interesting development. I know that there are many misconceptions about it. Or I at least think that they are a lot of misconceptions about it. And now of course, with you know, artificial intelligence being all the rage and being a huge hype. I also expect this to develop even further, and it will improve machine translation, I'm quite sure of it. And maybe, you know, as we were mentioning clear language before, artificial intelligence can really help to apply clear language principles in machine translation. That would be brilliant. If it can do that and it will be up to us as translators to really follow up on these developments and to try to stay abreast of it all. And really learn how to use it and to get the maximum result out of it. So no, I'm very, very curious to see how it's going to develop even further. But I hope I've given you enough for your thesis.

*Kim:* I think so, yeah.

*Thomas:* It's a very interesting topic.

*Kim:* Well, thank you again for participating.

*Thomas:* You're very welcome.

*Interview Astrid*

*Kim*: Okay. Well, first of all, I would like to thank you very much for participating because I know that your time is valuable. And it just is. Yeah. I really appreciate that you are willing to participate.

*Astrid*: You’re welcome.

*Kim*: Do you maybe have any questions beforehand?

*Astrid*: Oh, no. I've read the information sheet. So, it should be clear.

*Kim*: Alright, alright, that’s nice. Oh, yeah. I also wanted to say that I will sometimes look down, but I am still listening, of course.

*Astrid*: No problem.

*Kim*: I would like to start by asking you how you got into the Parliament, how you started working here?

*Astrid*: Well, when I moved to Luxembourg that was because my husband started working as a translator for the Commission, and since I didn't have any work when we moved here, it was the perfect time to join the competition for Dutch translators. So that's how it all got started. Before, I was active in education, I did different jobs in education, in Flanders.

*Kim*: Alright, that sounds interesting. And could you maybe also describe, because you worked at the European Parliament for a couple of years...

*Astrid*: nine years, yeah.

*Kim*: That’s very nice, how does the European Parliament apply technology in their translation process?

*Astrid*: Technology in general, or more specific machine translation?

*Kim*: In general

*Astrid:*Well, when I first started, a lot of processes were still on paper, and that has been gradually changing over the years. So, in these nine years there's almost no paper left. Almost everything is digitally, right now. So that's a big change. And also, the CAT-tools we are using are continually developing and getting new features and new databases and new possibilities to look up information, to compare information, to check information. So, yeah, there are continually new features that we can use. Also, lots of testing groups where you can participate in testing new developments that I also sometimes participate in. So, yeah.

*Kim*: Alright, and you mentioned in the questionnaire that you also work with machine translation for a couple of years. Was it immediately when you started working here?

*Astrid*: No, only from the moment when it was integrated in our CAT-tool, in Trados Studio, and then I started using it more regularly. Before, I didn’t really see the need. Also, because in those periods the work pressure was quite manageable. Last year, I’ve intensively used machine translation. And that’s completely due to the high workload of the past year. And already, since the last couple of weeks, I notice that I use it less. So, it really is for me a tool that is most useful to save time, to save typing.

*Kim*: Alright, so it really takes less time to post-edit than to translate from scratch?

*Astrid*: Yeah.

*Kim*: Alright, and what do you usually think of the output of the machine translation?

*Astrid*: I’m usually surprised by the quality. So, the eTranslation that is developed by the Commission is quite good, what we get. Not in every text, but when I'm translating, for instance, in certain weeks we do resolutions with a very short deadline on Wednesday evenings, and machine translation is a dream for these types of texts, because it has been fed with lots of similar documents. It is always about human rights, so also the topic is already known to the machine, I think. So that's really welcome, you can really race through the segments at a moment like that. In some other texts, for instance, the European Parliament has a, how do you call it, a collection of contemporary art objects. Sometimes they publish brochures with the description of art, and then it’s completely rubbish what you get from the machine translation. You can’t do anything with it. No, nothing is useful.

*Kim*: Alright, so what would you say are some specific aspects of a text that will make it more suitable for machine translation use?

*Astrid:* Predictable formulations, like the resolutions I'm talking about, the structure is really predictable, the kinds of verbs that are used it's really EU-jargon. So, the machine can guess really easily what we want as an output. And yeah, for art descriptions it’s, you know how artists can talk about their object of art, it has a philosophical layer and then another layer and so the machine is lost at that moment. When different interpretations are possible, then you have to be very careful.

*Kim*: Alright, alright. And could you maybe explain a little bit about your own translation process when using machine translation or in general?

*Astrid*: So, in Studio it's possible to add in your settings that it appears immediately in the segments you’re translating. I have not checked that option, because I don’t like when it’s already present in my, in the field where I want to put my translation. So, when I use it, I copy it from the matches that are offered in Studio. So, that’s already a small threshold or a moment for thinking, do I want to use it or am I just going to start typing myself, so I like that aspect. Already a moment to think is it really necessary to use it. And then when I do use it, then I go through it really thoroughly. So, word by word and check with the original that every word is represented and very careful about verb tenses and plural/singular, if everything is, yeah, the concordance between two grammatical structures is correct, because that’s usually a problem. And the consistency of terminology, because the machine sometimes changes words, refer to an earlier segment, suddenly it chooses a new possible synonym. So that's also something that I’m really careful about.

*Kim*: Alright, I can imagine that those are some of the things that are good to look at. And does it also change for which language combination you translate?

*Astrid*: Yes. Although I also translate from French, Italian and Polish. For French I don’t really use it. For Italian, it’s really good. So, I really appreciate it for Italian. And for Polish, it depends. I usually use it as a first basis, but in the end, there are quite a few changes afterwards. So, I’m not 100% content, not compared to the English-Dutch language pair, that is really satisfactory for me. But, so, English and Italian work really good and for French and Polish I do it less, I don’t know why for French, but...

*Kim*: Alright. And what, what are the main difficulties about machine translation, you talked about it a little bit already…

*Astrid*: Like, the things that can go wrong?

*Kim*: Yeah.

*Astrid*: Well yeah, the grammar you have to be really careful, and the consistency, those are the main aspects. And also very literal translation, sometimes. Also word order, that doesn't really sound natural for Dutch, it would be better to change it afterwards. I always read my texts monolingually, in the end. So, without the original and then I check if one sentence connects in a good way to the next sentence and everything. So, that is something that I do with all the texts I translate. So, not specifically only with machine translation.

*Kim*: Alright. Oh, yes, that’s another question. What do you generally think of the final result after post editing, the machine tradition outcome?

*Astrid:* After post-editing? So, what do I think about my own work?

*Kim*: I guess, yes. Or other, I don’t know if you have to review some texts as well?

*Astrid*: Yeah, I think if people are aware of all the possible things that can go wrong, it's usually a good result after post-editing, so there's no problem there.

*Kim*: That's nice. And do you also feel like machine translation holds you back in any way? Because I think in your questionnaire, you said that it can also kind of start your creativity.

*Astrid*: Yeah, sometimes it triggers creativity, because you see nice solutions in what the machine offers. But also, the other way around, sometimes it is also better to start from a blank page and not have any input. But the last thing that I'm describing, it requires time, so when there's no time then the inspiration is usually offered by what the machine presents. And then you, that triggers extra thinking and then other solutions, or you think that synonym could also be useful. So, I think it's both ways. I think that even in the busy times, there has never been a text where I used it from A to Z, it is always a mix. In some, in the first segment I start from the machine translation, but the next one, I start from scratch. It's, it's always, organically I decide which one to choose.

*Kim*: Ah, okay. That's an interesting, yeah interesting way to do it. And, about clear language guidelines, I think you said in the questionnaire that you use them basically all the time. Can you explain a bit about how you apply them, and what these guidelines are for you?

*Astrid*: For me it means that the message should be clear without any confusion about what the text wants to confer. So, even in complicated legislation, I try to eliminate elements in a sentence that makes things more confusing or more complex than it should be. So, eliminating redundant things, so words and then I try to use words that are familiar for most people, sentences that are not too long. I very often decide to split sentences, for instance, things like that.

*Kim*: And is it sometimes also a bit hard to know whether some words are generally known? Because you've been working here for a while, and you start to be more familiar with some terms.

*Astrid*: Well, my background comes in handy, I told you that I worked in education, and specifically I worked with adults with very low education levels, so primary school and a maximum of two years of secondary school, so really low skilled adults. So, that made me very aware of what adults, functioning in society sometimes miss to really participate fully. Because that was exactly what I was doing, trying to fill in the gaps for them to fully participate in society. So, I think that is always in my mind. I have several specific persons therefore in my head, so if I would explain it to this or to that person, how would they understand it. So, that helps a lot.

*Kim*: I can imagine that it helps. And in what way do you think that machine translation affects the way in which you apply clear language guidelines? Maybe it's a bit different because you don't always use machine translation?

*Astrid*: I don’t think machine translation has any specific link with me using clear language guidelines. I don't think machine translation is per se, more difficult or more complex than it should be, because sometimes what it offers is also very clear and structured and easy to understand. So, I don't think there's a clear link between the two.

*Kim*: Alright, I think those were actually all the questions I had. Do you have anything you would like to add?

*Astrid*: No, I can't think of anything now, no.

*Kim*: Alright, well thank you very much.

*Astrid*: You're welcome.

*Interview Olivia*

*Kim:* Well, first of all, thank you very much for participating. I know that your time is valuable. So, it means a lot that you are willing to participate in my thesis. Do you maybe have any questions beforehand, before we begin?

*Olivia:* No, I don't have any.

*Kim:* Alright*.* Yeah, just as a disclaimer, of course, since I have my questions in front of me, I will be looking down, but I will be listening as well. And then the first question I would like to ask you is how did you get into the Parliament?

*Olivia:* Yes, well, actually, I got into the whole EU institutions thin when I was still studying at the university. I did, like, a practice project for my studies, and we got a list, and in the list, there was this terminology project from the European Commission at the Dutch translation unit. And I applied for that position. I got accepted. And then from a colleague there, I heard that oh, they're organizing trainees, traineeships I mean, for the institutions. So then I applied for the blue book traineeship at the Commission here in Luxembourg. And then yeah, one thing led to another I competed, I did the CAST exam, I succeeded and then I got onto a list. I think it took, yeah after the traineeship I went back to Belgium, it took me three months. I did an interim position there, and then the head of unit from Directorate B calls me, he said, we have a position free for you, if you want it, but it's in Luxembourg. So yeah, that's how I got here. Yeah.

*Kim:* Interesting. Could you maybe describe a little bit how the European Parliament uses technology within the translation process?

*Olivia:* I think we use a lot of technology, and we also really depend on it, because we have a very high workload and there are a lot of documents and translations that come in. So, we have a lot of tools. Yeah, one to prepare the translations and to translate and then to process the translations as well. For example, we have Studio Twist, in which we can upload then the translation memories, etc. And then yeah, for translation we usually use SDL Trados Studio, with which we also use machine translation, the machine translation of the Parliament itself, which is integrated into the tool. Yeah, we also have these dictionary tools like IATE. We also use that a lot. Euramis as well, where we have this, the previous translations of other translators that you can see and then compare with other, with the translations that we're doing right now. That's actually the main tool that I use as a translator. But probably there are a lot more when we're talking about assistants and so on.

*Kim:* And what about your personal, like, workflow? Could you explain a little bit about that?

*Olivia:* Well, I work as a matrix, so my workflow really depends on the directorate that I'm in. For Directorate B, everything goes through Tflow. So, our head of unit just assigns you a translation, you can see it in Tflow, in your list. Yeah, then you just start the translation. Actually, it's pretty easy in Directorate B. You don't have to do a lot of things. You don't have to save all the documents etc. You don't have to upload translation memories yourself. In Directorate D it's a completely other way. You have to do a lot more. Yeah, we get our task usually through mail and also through Tflow. Not so much to through Tflow. But usually, we also just create a project ourselves, add the translation memory and then we start translating. Then it also goes to revision also for the same in Directorate B and then you process, post-process the translation.

*Kim:* Alright. And within this workflow, would you say that you use the MT-proposal a lot?

*Olivia:* Yeah, I do. We have this option in Studio Twist that you can click on machine translation. And then for every project that you create, or that is created, the machine translation will automatically be involved in your translation. So, with every segment that you click on, there will be a text generated by machine translation. And yeah, I have to say, I always use it and especially Directorate B, machine translation is really a great support. Because there are so many texts and all these legislative texts, with, they all have the same structure. Especially the resolutions, human rights resolutions, for example, you always have these, the same structures, like ‘the Parliament notices that’, ‘the Parliament underlines that', ‘considers that’, yeah and it goes on.

*Kim:* I can imagine.

*Olivia:* So, yeah, it's really a great support. Also, the thing with legislative texts is they... you can translate them more literally, because you don't need that much room for interpretation. So, it's better to be on the safe side and just do a literal translation than translate freely and have, yeah, the readers, give the readers a wrong interpretation. So, that's why machine transition is really important in Directorate B, I think. Also, you have these very long sentences. It's really, it goes on. You think it stops, but it keeps going. So yeah, also machine translation really helps there, because for me as a human it's sometimes difficult to understand, wait, what part of the sentence belongs to what. And with the machine translation it's much more easy to understand and it saves you a lot of time as well. And in Directorate D, yeah, I always have the machine translation, but it's more to just get me inspired, to boost my inspiration. Because the texts in Directorate D, they are also much shorter, they are for citizens, regular citizens, and they need to be in clear language with the short sentences, not too difficult, and sometimes they're also more creative with wordplay, irony. Also, sometimes sensitive subjects, sensitive language. And with machine translation, often, we keep a list of this, because we have a good laugh with what the machine translation generates. It's too stiff, it's too formal. There's no human feeling, human touch to it, no flow. It's better to, as a translator in Directorate D, to see how can I structure this sentence better? Like, it's more easy to read.

*Kim:* I can imagine. There was a question where I was like, now I can ask this question as a follow-up, but now I'm like, what was it again? You mentioned a little bit about the different aspects of texts that would make it easier or less easy to use machine translation, but are there specific types of texts that you would generally tend to use machine translation or ones where you would rather stay away from it?

*Olivia:* Yes, like I said, human rights resolutions, it's. The machine translation, sometimes I really don't have to change the sentence at all. It's so good and it saves a lot of time. So, for these types of texts, also for amendments, I would rather use machine translation. Sometimes it also takes into account other translations from other translators that are in the translation memory. But for creative texts, I would definitely avoid it. It can help you as an inspiration, but I wouldn't depend on it.

*Kim:* Alright, alright. And yeah, a more general question. What do you usually think about the quality of the machine translation here?

*Olivia:* I have to say, sometimes I'm not very satisfied. For example, we also have these in Directorate B, these petitions. They are called *'verzoekschriften’* in Dutch. And these are basically questions from citizens, on which the European Commission answers or provides an answer. and the European Parliament has to translate them. And for that I usually also use machine translation. But the problem with these petitions is that they are citing legislation and, yeah, because of that, you have these very long sentences and the text becomes, what was supposed to be a text read by citizens becomes a very stiff and formal text. And sometimes it's almost impossible to make it better.

*Kim:* Oh, yeah, I can imagine. So, yeah, what would you say are then the greatest disadvantages of machine translation?

*Olivia:* The disadvantages? I would say that for creative texts it becomes too literal. Also, what I also noticed is when we have not so common abbreviations the machine translation doesn't connect, doesn't make the connection with the abbreviation and the context of the text. So, then it starts to make its own abbreviation which really doesn't have any in common with the text. We also have a list of that, yeah, we had a very funny one. But I don't know if I can tell you..., I will tell you later. That's maybe not appropriate to tell it right now.

*Kim:* Now I'm very intrigued.But yeah, I can imagine that yeah, those types of things can be kind of tricky. And then on the other hand, what do you think are the most..., the advantages?

*Olivia:* Sometimes it's just easy to put the text in the machine translation and then have already a basic, a basis that you don't have to start from scratch and sometimes that can really, save, yeah help you to save time. Especially when, in very busy times, like we had last month. So yeah, I would say that that is a very big advantage of machine translation. Yeah, for me, like I said before, it really sparks your inspiration, really boosts your inspiration sometimes. It gives you an idea that you didn't think of before and then pushes you towards another direction or another perspective. And yeah, then you can create a nice text, a nice translation.

*Kim:* That's good. That's good. And is there maybe a thing that you would like to change about machine translation, or add to its function?

*Olivia:* The machine translation from the Parliament, or in general?

*Kim:* Yeah, the machine translation here.

*Olivia:* Yeah, for example, what I like about DeepL, the machine translation, is that it gives you more options. When you click on a word, it can give you more options. And sometimes I really need that, because, yeah, you can see it in the whole sentence. And then you don't have to look it up in synonym dictionaries or etc. And yeah. I really like DeepL as well. But don't say it to anyone here.

*Kim:* Yeah, I can imagine that that would be useful actually.

*Olivia:* Sometimes I'll also use it for Directorate D texts, DeepL, just to give me inspiration, like to see what other words are available?

*Kim:* Oh, yeah. Alright, alright. And do you translate from multiple languages? I guess more in Directorate B?

*Olivia:* Not so much. Most of the texts are from English to Dutch. I only got one, one or two Spanish text. And that's it, so not so much actually.

*Kim:* Okay. I mean, even though you don't have a lot of, like, information maybe to go off, but did you see a difference between the machine translation when you've translated from Spanish compared to translate it from English.

*Olivia:* I can't really answer that one, because it was still during my, yeah so, my very first months. And as a good student as I was, I didn't use machine translation back then, because I really wanted to see what I could do myself. So, yeah, I can't answer that, I'm sorry.

*Kim:* No, fair enough. That's, I mean, that's good that you tried it without machine translation as well. Yeah, then I have just, like, a general question. Would you say that you like using machine translation? I think you in your questionnaire or you also ticked some different boxes?

*Olivia:* Yeah, I know my opinion on machine translation, it's maybe a bit controversial, still. But yeah, I mean, in these modern days, you really have to keep up with the workload and therefore you really have to use machine translation and embrace it as well. Sorry, what was the question again?

*Kim:* If you generally like using machine translation?

*Olivia:* Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, just because it saves time a lot. And it gives you a certain idea and keeps you going.

*Kim:* So, really an idea to work on*.* Alright. And would you say that it can hold you back in some ways?

*Olivia:* Sometimes yeah, when the machine translation is not so good. Then sometimes I really think oh, I shouldn't have read that, because now I think about it a lot and now it restricts me in this thinking, and I have to think outside the box, which is more difficult when you have already read a sentence. So, in that way, I would say it can really be a restriction on your creative thinking.

*Kim:* So, it can kind of be, like, both, it can encourage you to think...

*Olivia:* Yeah, it can go both ways, it can encourage you to think more outside the box, but then if it's not a good machine translation, then for me at least, I feel like I'm a bit stuck inside this perspective. Like, then I'm thinking, okay, but how can I formulate it differently? And sometimes it takes a lot, a lot of time to come up with another solution.

*Kim:* Yeah, I can imagine. Then I have some questions about clear language guidelines. I think in the survey, you said that you applied them sometimes?

*Olivia:* Yeah, the reason for that is because I work very differently in Directorate D and Directorate B. In Directorate D, I always apply these clear language guidelines, always. But that's also because the texts in Directorate D are very small. They're not so big, they're not so long. So yeah, also because if you want to apply these guidelines, it takes a lot of time. You have to think about it, you have to reread it to see if everything goes smoothly. So, that takes a lot of time. And in Directorate, B, usually you don't have the time. And like I said in these petitions that you have from the citizens. It's like a text combined with, clear language combined with legislative citations, which makes it so difficult because you have all these long sentences, and it just takes too much time to really apply all these clear guidelines, language guidelines. I try to but yeah, usually it's also always the same. I try splitting up segments or sentences so it's not too long. So, it's more easy to read. I also try to add more small, more accessible small words. For example, I have to think of an example right now. Oh, yeah. ‘As a consequence of’, which is more formal, you can just change it into ‘because of that’, which is more accessible to citizens. Another example, maybe, you also have ‘regulation concerning’ or ‘regulation on’ and then the subject. You can just change that into ‘regulation about’ or 'regulation of’, which is already, it really changes the mood already. So, yeah.

*Kim:* Alright, and is it really, do you really have, like, guidelines, specific guidelines that someone told you about or is more, like, just thinking about it being clear?

*Olivia:* No, we have guidelines. I think they are available in Directorate D on the website. We also have guidelines on sensitive language. So, people with disabilities, etc, how we have to approach them. So yeah, all these guidelines really focus on how to include people and how to make everything as much accessible as possible.

*Kim:* Alright, and do you usually keep those guidelines, like you really look at them or are they more in your head?

*Olivia:* They're more back in my head. In the beginning I really noted them down, everything, the feedback that I got from our colleagues as well. Yeah, but right now I just, it's a habit, it's become a habit. So, I have them in the back of my head. Sometimes with sensitive language I usually check, because it's a very sensitive subject as well, a delicate subject. So, it's better to check.

*Kim:* And I think some of those terms are also bit more recent, like they change maybe.

*Olivia:* Over time, you mean?

*Kim:* Yeah, yeah. Those, like, those inclusivity types of terminology.

*Olivia:* Yeah. In Dutch, for example, you had these, in the past you couldn't say, black people, you had to say coloured, or something similar. And now you have to use black and white. So that's something that changes over time. So, these guidelines still have to be adapted and updated every time.

*Kim:* And then in relation to machine translation, do you feel like using machine translation affects the way you apply the clear language guidelines or the inclusivity guidelines?

*Oliva:* I would say in a way it does. Yeah, especially also in Trados Studio because the text is really segmented, really split up in different segments and per segment you have machine translation. And yeah, sometimes it's, you can't really see the overall context anymore, of the text. So, then I would say that machine translation really affects it. I think, for example, with the news in brief, we don't translate it in Studio, we translate it in Word, because it's also for people to hear so it needs to be more clear. And then sometimes I totally change the structure of the text. I put sentences more in the beginning of the paragraph or at the end or I add sentences to make it more clear. So, yeah, these segments, and then the machine translation combined, really puts you inside a box that you can't really escape. Yeah, in that way I would say that it affects the translation.

*Kim:* Alright. That's interesting to know. Yeah, what do you think is the most important when applying the clear language guidelines?

*Olivia:* The most important thing? Okay, that's not an easy question. I have to think about it.

*Kim:* That's okay, take your time.

*Olivia:* When I am applying these guidelines?

*Kim:* Yeah, like in general maybe like, what is the goal? I guess.

*Olivia:* Of applying these clear language guidelines? Yeah, I think the goal to apply these clear language guidelines is to really include citizens, especially for the institutions. It's all about legislation about the citizens and for the citizens. So, it's also important that they are included in process, that they can know what is going on, that they can understand what's going on, and that's why it's really so important to adapt your style to the comprehension of the citizens, I think. I hope that answers the question.

*Kim:* Yeah. Yeah, it does. Yeah, then I only have one more question and that is basically if you want to add something that you missed during the interview, or do you have any questions?

*Olivia:* Not that comes to my mind right now.

*Kim:* Alright, then that that was all. Thank you very much again.

*Interview Robin*

*Kim:* Well, thank you first of all very much for participating in my thesis interview. Because I know that your time is valuable and it really, Yeah, I really appreciate it.

*Robin:* You're welcome*,* no worries.

*Kim*: Just a disclaimer, of course since I have the questions in front of me, I will be looking down during the interview. But of course, I will also be listening. Do you maybe have some questions before we start?

*Robin:* Not immediately, I think I asked right beforehand, so no I think I'm ready to go.

*Kim:* Alright, then I would first like to know how you got into working at the European Parliament?

*Robin:* Okay, so I have a bachelor's degree in applied linguistics. I studied Dutch, German and Spanish, and after that, I started a master's in International Relations and Diplomacy Studies. But during my master's I always thought that maybe translation was not something for me, that it would be too, yeah literally boring as most people would think. But to really make sure of that, I applied for a Bluebook traineeship at the European Commission, and I was accepted. That was back in 2017, where then I did my 5-month traineeship in translation in the Director General for Translation at the European Commission in Luxembourg already. And then after that I stayed in Luxembourg, I finished my master's because it was during my master's that I did my internship. And then I finished my master's and in October 2018 I went back to Luxembourg to work as a translator in the private sector, because I really enjoyed my traineeship, and I started considering translation and localization, transcreation etcetera, as an actual possibility for my career. So, then I worked for two years in the private sector, as a translator into Dutch. And then, well I ended up on the list, on the reserve list for the European Parliament and I was hired four years ago, in 2020. And I've been enjoying my work here since.

*Kim:* That's good to hear. And could you maybe describe a little bit which kind of technology the European Parliament uses in their translation process?

*Robin:* Well as you might have already heard, there are two, like big directorates in our Directorate General, right. So, in Directorate B, the colleagues they told you about that, they use, like, more tools still. Like CAT4trad, maybe they have mentioned. But apart from that, of course in D as well we use the usual Studio, like SDL Trados Studio, to translate. We use Euramis, which is kind of a repository of all translations within the main European institutions. We use IATE very frequently, which is the EU terminology database. And then MT, even Directorate D, we regularly actually use MT as well, machine translation, which is often based on the European Commission's eTranslation tool. So, what we do is we have our source file, we upload it into, on the website of eTranslation, and then we get the TMX file back which we then can upload into our translation memory and then it automatically creates our machine translation, which we then afterwards adapt according to our needs. What else, these are the main tools, I think for translation. Every once in a while, we use term bases as well. Although in our particular, day-to-day tasks it's less relevant. But maybe, like, in very long documents in Directorate B for example, it can be useful to always remember what type of term you need to use. Yeah, that's what just comes to mind right now.

*Kim:* Alright. And how do you personally, like what is your personal workflow, when it comes to using machine translation or yeah just translating in general?

*Robin:* So, in our directorate we create our projects ourselves, which is different from Directorate B, where it's created centrally and where translators basically just can start translating after the project has been also prepared by the assistants in Directorate B. In our case, we prepare the projects, I mean we create the projects even, we prepare them and by preparing them, I mean that we, when creating the projects we insert the necessary translation memories to begin with. So, we have a Directorate D specific translation memory for three or four different languages, like from English into Dutch, French into Dutch and German into Dutch, which we then attach to our project. For now, it's still a very big translation memory, let's say. Since this Directorate was created only four years ago, so we still have to maybe create separate smaller translation memories, specific for our directorate. But for now, we have these bigger TM's. So, we add those. We have fullcat as well. So, when we create a project, we have this shared fullcat translation memory, which means that in real time, you can see how other colleagues translate a certain segment that might be related to yours or even if it were the same segment. And then once the project is created, we prepare it, meaning that we localize all the links usually. We lock the links, because then they do not enter our translation memory. At least, that is what I do, because I don't like it when then automatically the translation memory gives you a link that might not be the correct one and then you have to check very thoroughly to make sure it's good. And then after that, we can start translating, unless I decided to add eTranslation through TMX, which I add to another translation memory, which is then not... So, then we have the Directorate D specific translation memory, we have fullcat usually, if we create our project through Studio Twist, and then, if need be, I add an eTranslation file of my source document into a third translation memory. And then those are the TM's. Then we translate and localize the links, we lock them, and we can start translating.

*Kim:* Alright, interesting. And how much would you say that, if you apply machine translation, that you use the proposal?

*Robin:* Could you repeat that one more time?

*Kim:* How much would you say that you use the machine translation proposal?

*Robin:* Okay. The thing is, in most cases, in most segments, it's usable in a way. But still, in most segments I would still adapt certain things. Even if it's not necessarily wrong, it's not always the best way in the particular text to translate it or, it's often structure nowadays, because terminology wise, it really, the machine translation really knows, the EU jargon as well. So, on that front it's quite advanced. But when it comes to style and reader friendliness, for example, it could sometimes be adapted. So, in many cases I would say, 80 or 90% of cases, we would still adapt a tiny bit. Even if it's only a few words or it's the structure of the sentence, but yeah, our human eye is still very much needed

*Kim:* And do you often also just scrap the whole proposal?

*Robin:* Well, I have seen a big improvement on that front, to be honest. When I was working in the private sector, in those 2 years that I was talking about, I really saw big mistakes, you know, where I really thought like, okay, I cannot trust this tool, because there are too big mistakes in there. Like, when Turkey is literally translated as *'kalkoen’*, it's where it doesn't give you confidence in the tool. So, there, yeah, it happened that I just scratched the whole machine translation proposal, and I entered my own translation. But in this case, it’s a very specific type of translation also, EU translations, and the eTranslation tool and other, I mean, the machine translation that is used within the institutions is quite advanced, I think especially when it comes to EU terminology and jargon and structure even, for Directorate B then mostly. So, in D, we adapt the style. But if it's for more formal ways of writing, it's, it works quite well, so honestly, I do not delete the whole proposal anymore, I just adapt. Because I trust it way more than I used to.

*Kim:* That's also something that I was going to ask you about, if your view of machine translation has changed throughout the years that you have applied it?

*Robin*: Yes, really. Before I started at the Parliament, I was more sceptical about it. Not necessarily because of this fear that machines will take our jobs or anything, but just because it really didn't feel right, like I didn't feel confident about it. Not because I couldn't use it, even though on that front I have learned, of course. Because post-editing is not the same as translating obviously, but it was really mostly about the confidence that I had in the tool, so that has really improved. So, the one that we use here, I'm quite happy about. I don't know how it's evolving, I mean I know to a certain extent how it's evolving outside of the European institutions, but you know, I cannot say anything about that.

*Kim:* Fair enough. Does it also matter from which language you translate from? I know that most texts are probably from English to Dutch, but maybe if you translate from a different language?

*Robin:* That's a good question. Because indeed everything I've been saying now, it has indeed been mostly related to the English into Dutch machine translation. I don't know, maybe French can sometimes be a bit trickier. So, then the machine translation also tries to understand the source text and it doesn't always manage to. Which actually, I wanted to say as well, even in English it still depends on how well written the source text is. Because, you know, sometimes it is not that well written, but luckily I know enough of what usually the author wants to say, that I can adapt it easily and I know what they want to say, even if the machine doesn't get it. But yeah, French could be a tiny bit trickier, even though in practice I think it's still okay. What I do think is into other languages I don't know if it's part of your thesis, but not, the tool is not as effective for every language as it is for Dutch, for example, so there is some progress to be made on that front. Because, you know, English and Dutch are quite related in sentence structure and all of that. But, you know, when you have languages that do not have articles or languages that have, I don't know, very many cases, it's not always very natural, I think when it's the machine translating.

*Kim:* Alright*,* and what would you say are the main advantages and disadvantages of machine translation?

*Robin:* I think, I found it interesting in the questionnaire that I had to fill in, right before this interview, that there was an option that machine translation makes me less creative and machine translation increases my creativity or something. And I found it very interesting, because in a way, I would combine those two for myself, it's very strange, but I mean productivity of course, it increases with machine translation, because you know, it's relatively fluent, many solutions from the machine are really usable. So, I really feel way more productive when I use it. In a way, what I meant to say is that it enhances my creativity in the sense that I do not have to think already of many, you know, a lot of terminology a lot of... it gives me ideas. If you know, as a translator what is right and what is wrong you know that okay, this is right and now I can focus maybe on a more or less stylistic point of view or on stylistic matters and not so much on spelling and grammar, so you have more time to think of these, think about these creativity matters. But on another hand, of course, you are still bound to the segment-by-segment type of structure which, for us in Directorate D, is for example not ideal when we translate news, the news in brief. They're like, three small items of, let's say 5 sentences, more or less, each. So, 15 in total, and we would..., you know ideally we would be able to reshuffle the sentences and even, you know, change affirmative sentences into questions and we would need much more freedom and then in that regard, the machine translation would not be of that much help because we would feel bound to the structure and to what the machine is still telling us to do, you know. Yeah, so basically the more, the more freedom I have in a text, the less likely actually I am to use machine translation, because machine translation is very good for formal texts, for objective things, but less at this point for really creative solutions. So, it helps my creativity, but it doesn't provide, in itself, a lot of creativity.

*Kim:* Alright. That's an interesting way to look at it. And I actually wanted to ask about the types of texts as well, if there is a certain type of text where you would earlier opt for machine translation?

*Robin:* Yes, well I can only speak for Directorate D, of course. I think in B for many texts it would be very useful. In D we have letters that are usually, you know letters to questions from citizens and in those letters, our colleagues, so the authors, use a lot of quotes and references to existing legislation and even if our goal is to make it clear, we would still benefit from machine translation, because the machine kind of knows the *acquis communautaire,* aswe call it. So, it can find basically the actual translation and, yeah, in that case it really helps again for the productivity, and to be faster and more efficient. Because also, we can alter, in our cases, not if we quote it, if we quote the regulation, for example, literally, of course we have to use exactly what is in the regulation. But in Directorate D, sometimes we take away the quotes if it's too complex for a citizen to understand, because the legislation is quite complex, then we can remove the quote and we make more digestible. So, for that, machine translation is quite useful. Yeah, for CI's as well. I don't know if I have to explain what CI's are. They're like little texts about, like one-pagers, we had even to three-pagers as well, but most of them are one-pagers, that are meant for the 'What Europe does for me’ website and on that website, citizens from all over the EU can find information about all sorts of topics about what the EU does for them in their country, their region, for their profession. And so, they're very short texts, and I think machine translation is helpful there, because some of these segmenting and sentences I would rephrase in questions, for example, but the segmentation, the structure of the texts are usually fine. In that case, they help my creativity. So, in the case of CI's, I feel like it helps my creativity. But then when it comes to scripts for podcasts and, well obviously with subtitling we don't have machine translation necessary for subtitling, but for scripts for podcasts I tend not to use it although I do have used it already. So, there maybe I would say it depends on the text, on the time that I have. If it needs to be delivered quickly, I mean, obviously as said, machine translation does help your productivity. I don't know if the result will be as great as I might have wanted, but it would definitely be fit-for-purpose. If I can and if I have the time I think I'd rather not use machine translation for podcasts and very citizen-oriented texts, where I have a lot of freedom almost to write, almost like, I wouldn't say copywriting, but you have a lot of freedom then as a translator where you take basically the source and you really make it your own and you write something based on the content. And you use the content, of course, but you write something that is natural in your language, and you can restructure everything and make it really flow nicely and that takes a lot of time. So, if I can I do it like that and if I don't have the time, even for those texts machine translation could help.

*Kim:* Alright. And then, in general, would you say that you like using machine translation?

*Robin:* Yeah. I think that fits within what I was saying. Yeah, yeah. As I said, like, my opinion of it has really evolved over time. So, now I'm quite happy about it, at least within the context I'm working. So, yeah. I would say there are not many disadvantages at this point, from where I'm sitting.

*Kim:* That's good.And even though you generally like using the machine translation, is there maybe something that you would like it to have, or to change something about it?

*Robin:* About machine translation?

*Kim:* Or even specific, just machine translation here, maybe?

*Robin:* I'm usually somebody who acknowledges that it’s always a work in progress. And, I see for example, that now with, I think it's called neural machine translation, like, it really starts to understand also, stylistic things, actually. Like, it knows what sounds better or how a sentence that is structured a certain way in English should be structured in Dutch. It really starts to grasp these things and that's really what will make machine translation great, when it doesn't only translate almost literally, but really makes it flow in Dutch. And in some cases, I really see it's already happening. So, if I would see anything better, it is that it improved in that direction, you know, that it goes in that direction. And then of course, I'm not afraid for our jobs, because at least where I'm working now, we... there are so many things that linguists can do, and we're not limited, I think, to post-editing machine translation. Like, there are many things we can be creative writing, we can subtitle. You know, when we create podcasts, we still have that creativity freedom. So yeah, but if it's just about MT and how it's improving, yeah, what I would want to see to make the work even better or easier and faster is to have stylistically appropriate machine translation.

*Kim:* Alright. And then I have some more questions about clear language guidelines. I think in the questionnaire you said that you always apply them?

*Robin:* Yes, well we, yes. I mean it's, we have many, many, many clear language guidelines and there is a lot to think about, but these clear language guidelines, or clear language in general is something that we always keep in mind, you know. Especially where we are, we write most of the time for the citizens. So, we are like, okay, how will this affect the citizen, like, will the citizen, 1: understand it, 2: will the citizen want to know more about it? Also, you know, does the citizen feel like it answers their question? Do they, yeah, the goal is as well to make them interested and not alienated from what the EU does in general, because that's what we hear all the time, right? That it's not, you know, that it's too far away and it's too complex and they use words that no one understands. So, the goal here is to use these guidelines for the purpose of bringing the EU closer to the citizens and Parliament in particular. Yes, and we have guidelines for different products as well, of course. So, in this case I was mostly talking about written texts, so if a guideline is one of those. But we have also specific clear language guidelines for podcasts and subtitles because every medium is different. In a podcast, when you read the script of a podcast, it might not be the most grammatically cool way of phrasing things, but it's what works best when you speak, when you record it. And when you listen to it, that it sounds natural and spoken. And yeah, and then in subtitles of course, you have to condense, whilst at the same time keeping the source content. And there too, it's more, there it's spoken language in written form. So, you have the written texts, you have the oral podcast and then you have subtitles that are a representation of spoken language into written form. So, we have very different products, formats and they all require different sets of guidelines. We try to keep that in mind, whilst translating. So, it's not like we have the guidelines next to us every time we work on something. But yeah, I'm sure it's the same for all of my colleagues, at least in Directorate D that it's something we try to keep in mind on everything we do.

*Kim:* Alright, so it's more just a broader sense of, yeah, just making things clear, basically than thinking, oh, I have this guideline that I apply?

*Robin:* I mean I have to say, of course I started four years ago and in the meantime, most of the points in the guidelines are just stuck in my head and I can apply them, but yes in the beginning okay, I read them more often and maybe I did have them next to me a few times just to make sure that I checked, you know, for example, for audio products, is it fluent, is it clear, is there not too much jargon in it, like would the listener understand it? You know, you might want to address the listener directly with ‘you’ instead of having these vague general sentences. So, yeah, I remember them, and I apply the rules, so I don't know if you want to hear more about the rules in particular.

*Kim:* Yeah, you can, if you want to.

*Robin:* Addressing is key, especially in Directorate D, that your reader or listener feels that you are involved, and you are involving them. Maybe variation between long and short sentences and not always very boring the same sentence length with variety in your texts, usually. But stick to the right terminology though, if possible. Unless it's too complex, then maybe you explain it. In audio products for example, we try to avoid abbreviations because 1: not everyone understands them and 2: if they are spoken, they don't always ring the same bell as when you read them on a piece of paper. So, that's what we're trying to avoid. What else can I say. For audio, I remember one of the guidelines was like, speak as if you were speaking to a friend, you know. Try to explain what the Parliament is doing when it's about the news in brief, as if you were speaking to a friend. So, there are these little things that might sound obvious, but when you do it in practice and you have your source text, we are usually, people are usually, have a hard time getting away from what it written in the source text. So, in that case it's important to always remind yourself that you can take some more freedom to really make it good, with the purpose of addressing your reader, or listener or viewer. Yeah, there is a definition, I don't know if someone else told you about it, like recently there has been the ISO standard on clear language and maybe someone has mentioned already? It was, like, published last year in June, so it's been a year that there has been an ISO, so that's the International Standardization Organization, right, so there is now a plain language standard for the first time. And the definition is that clear communication means that the reader finds what you want them to find or what it needs to find and that understands what it finds. So, it's not only about words, and even of the structure of the sentences, as it's about the design of your text, in this case. It’s about formatting: the structure, design, words, sentences, all of these things combined that make something clear and not only words which, in our case, is something you obviously focus on as linguists, but there is more to it.

*Kim:* Yeah, alright. Then I've got one more question about clear language guidelines. Does the use of machine translation change the way you can apply those guidelines?

*Robin:* I don't think it excludes it. I think they can be combined. As I was saying, like with my idea for future MT improvements, is that it would be more stylistically appropriate. So, as I said as well, MT will not be useful for every type of text, anyway. So, if it's not useful, if I don't think it's useful, because I would need to restructure the whole text or the design is more important or colours are more important, or whatever. I might not use it, so in that case, how it relates to clear language guidelines is not that relevant. But in cases where I do use machine translation, I think it can be combined, because it will be... I mean MT is already relatively good, even for the clear language guidelines, actually, and then you just adapt them even more to make it more in line with the guidelines. So, I don't think they are excluded, they can be combined if it's good for the purpose of your translation.

*Kim:* Okay, okay. And then I only have one more question and that is if you have any questions, or something else that you would like to add about the topic?

*Robin:* No, I'm very looking forward to the results. I think all of my colleagues are. But apart from that it was nice. It was a nice interview, thank you.

*Kim:* Thank you very much, again. And then it is finished.