**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.