# Mad about graphs

## CEATL examines Europe's literary translators' working conditions

### Claudia Steinitz & Miquel Cabal–Guarro

"I'm mad about graphs and statistics" Miquel states, to which Claudia adds "I put my whole life into Excel files". And a good thing too, because these are well-needed qualifications for entering the CEATL working group on working conditions. Of the six working groups CEATL currently has, it was the first to be created, in 2005, with the aim of collecting facts on the general and financial situation of literary translators all over Europe. In 2008 it published a first ground-breaking report on the catastrophic income situation of literary translators in 23 European countries and regions. In 2012, the group carried out a survey on the visibility of literary translators as authors of their translations. It included questions about naming the translators in the translated books as well as in reviews on radio and TV or in newspapers.

The most recent survey on income in all CEATL member countries took place in May and June 2020. For the first time, one survey was formulated for all translators in Europe – association members or not, full-time or part-time translators, experienced colleagues and newcomers – in 25 languages. In order to get the broadest response possible, CEATL representatives in all member associations had to convince their members and other translators in their countries using good arguments. It's always difficult to get people to talk about money...

### Working conditions after Covid-19

Out of 3700 responses, there were almost 2000 complete answers. Currently, the Working Conditions WG is sorting, coding and translating collected data in order to begin to evaluate the results. The answers on general questions, e.g. about age and experience, show that all categories mentioned above are represented in the dataset. Here are some graphs summarising the general questions:
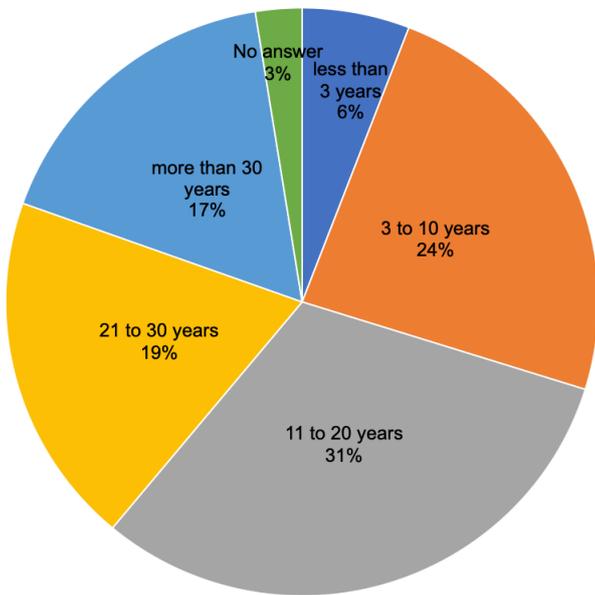
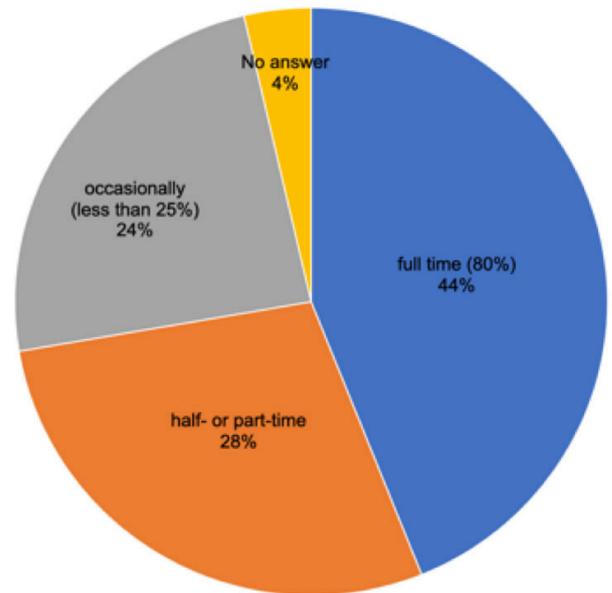**Figure 1: Years of working experience**

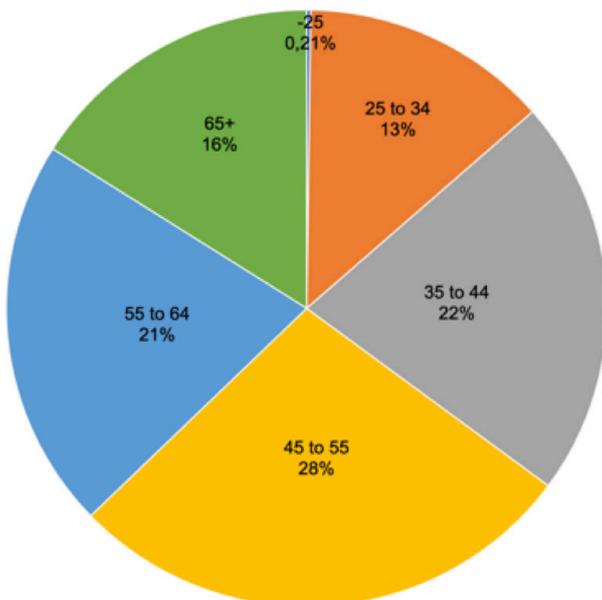**Figure 2: Full or part-time work as literary translator**
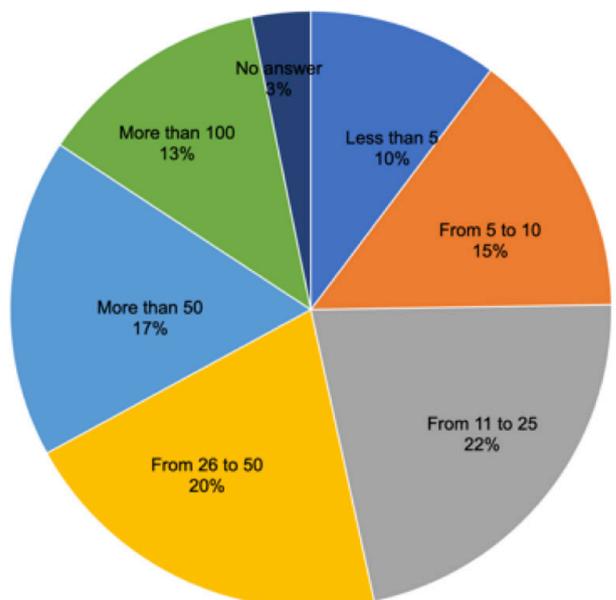
**Figure 3: Age of respondents**

**Figure 4: Number of translations published**

As it was (and still is) quite a special year, last-minute questions about the initial consequences of the COVID-19 crisis in Europe were included. Questions asked were: if the crisis affected translators in their work, if they had a lower workload, if deadlines of existing contracts were re-negotiated, and also if they were able to concentrate and work under the stressful circumstances as well as they did before.

## "*Last-minute questions about the initial consequences of the COVID-19 crisis were included*"

The answers show that in May and June about 30-40 per cent of the respondents experienced delayed payments, postponed contracts or contracts put on hold, re-negotiated deadlines, and loss of expected income from literature-related public events.

The responses about translation fees, royalties, subsidies and prices, which form the greater part of the data, will be evaluated and summarised by the end of 2020, when it is hoped the final report will be published.

### How the data will help translators

The results of the surveys on working conditions are used for different purposes: Firstly, CEATL needs this data for lobbying the EU institutions for better working conditions, more grants and subsidies for literary translators and publishers, as well as for more authors' rights, public lending rights and cultural recognition and visibility. Secondly, we want to make data available to national funding organisations which promote their national literature and therefore fund translations into other languages by translators in other countries. This data could be very useful to the "European network for translation" (ENLIT). Finally, every member association of CEATL can use the data for their own policies and lobbying and for comparing their situation with other countries.

Nowadays, speed becomes ever more important. That's why we are thinking about new ways of collecting data via shorter and quicker surveys and reporting the results on CEATL's website, our national translators' associations' websites as well as on Facebook, Twitter and in this e-zine.

**Miquel Cabal-Guarro** *is a literary translator from Russian to Catalan. He has a PhD in Linguistics and currently teaches Translation, Linguistics and Russian Literature at Barcelona University (UB), Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) and the Open University of Catalonia (UOC). He is a board member of the Catalan Writers' Association (AELC) and is their delegate in CEATL. He is one of the two vicepresidents of CEATL.*

**Miquel Cabal-Guarro**
**Photo: Elvira Jiménez**



**Claudia Steinitz** *has been translating literature from French to German for 30 years. She was one of the founders of Weltlesebühne e.V., an association which brings translators onto the world stage and promotes their public recognition. She was awarded the Jane-Scatcherd-Prize for translation in 2020. Claudia lives in Berlin and is the CEATL delegate of the German association VdÜ.*

**Claudia Steinitz**
**Photo: Guido Notermans**