

Dr. Ildikó Farkas

Profile written by Flóra Szabó

Dr. Ildikó Farkas is a translator, interpreter, former translator and terminologist of the Council of the European Union and professor at the University of Szeged since 1983. She graduated as a French-Russian secondary school teacher from JATE (University of Szeged). She started to deal with translation when she was a student, translating some articles in philosophy. This might have given the first push to her becoming a translator and an interpreter.

She used to work intensively as an interpreter for nearly two decades for Hungarian-French joint ventures during the 1990s and the 2000s. Among others, she was regularly hired by the local electricity company Démász for interpreting tasks at the company's business meetings and the annual general assemblies. During these years, she gained experience in French-Hungarian and Hungarian-French consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. Additionally, she translated important internal and external company documents, such as the detailed records of the above mentioned meetings, annual reports, legal, financial, technical papers etc. From that time on, she has been working on texts that cover a lot of different fields, such as Hungarian and European law, economics, finance and accounting, commerce and marketing, energy, printing industry, architecture and urbanism, human resources and cooking. Her B language is French and her C language is English.

In 2005 she became a translator and terminologist at the Council of the European Union. After two and a half years spent in Brussels she resigned for various reasons. In the EU, she had to translate legislation practically in every field of life, thus, for example, fisheries, trademarks and designs, geographical indications, viticulture, agriculture, transport, energy, etc. For the last few years she has been working as an external legal translator for the EU, essentially from Hungarian into French, as well as a literary translator: she has already translated a couple of books for several publishers.

During the interview she told me about her experiences as an EU translator, her work as a literary translator and as a professor, and her opinion about CAT tools.

About the European Union and her experiences as an EU translator:

"I worked in Brussels for two and a half years as a translator, revisor and terminologist in the Hungarian Unit of the Translation Department at the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union. I took the EPSO exam in 2004. After I got hired, I was offered a translator position at the Council though I initially wished to work at the Court in Luxembourg, but this latter institution only hires lawyers for translator positions. That is why I accepted the job at the Council. Since in such institutions there's team work, translators are never lonely because they have to integrate into a community and adapt to the others. After the 9-month probation period I was appointed as an official. But I wasn't quite sure I wanted to do this in all my life, so to everybody's great surprise I resigned. In an institution like this there are very rigorous conditions: not only the working time is set but you are also expected to work in a team, and you can't choose which text you wish to translate or what kind of method you intend to use for the translation because (when I worked there) you had to use Trados. Thus this kind of job obviously includes many constraints and less freedom, e.g. translators had (and still have) to comply with very short deadlines. Overtime was regular. It was a very useful experience: as a matter of fact, I hadn't imagined before that the job of a

translator could be as stressful and monotonous as that. I can say I resigned and came back home because I was looking for intellectual freedom, too."

About literary translation:

"For the last three years or so I have also been doing literary translation. I have already translated seven or eight books. Literary translation has very different criteria and constraints, and is a very exciting, challenging task. For example, I translated books written for teenagers from French into Hungarian and also a work by Ildefonso Cerdà, a 19th-century Spanish architect according to the theoretical visions of whom the town plan of Barcelona was designed. This last one was perhaps the most challenging translating task in my career. A Hungarian architect discovered this book and the publisher asked me to translate it but since I'm not an architect, I had to do a lot of research in this topic."

About CAT tools:

"I don't use Trados. I have made a big empirical research that I summed up in a long article published in Fordítástudomány. The results of this research were confirmed by many colleague translators. Of course, Trados presents a lot of advantages in the case of repetitive texts and big text corpora but the segmentation really ruins thinking text, and I didn't like it. I know that nowadays translators have to work with some CAT tool, but I have asked my clients to send me only texts that don't need using translation memories."

About teaching:

"Honestly, I quitted my job at the Council because I missed teaching, too. I have always loved teaching, the direct relationship with students, giving them what I know, and I'm always happy when students' eyes light up because they understand e.g. what 'grammatical aspect' means. Besides, you can always learn from students, you are always among young people, thus, you feel like you are getting younger among them."