

November 18, 2021

**An Open Letter to Call for Fair Working Conditions for Translators in the Entertainment Industry from the American Translators Association**

This letter is a call to action in light of recent discussions in the [press](#) and [social media](#) about working conditions for translators in the entertainment industry. Translators who specialize in services that make the global distribution of films, TV shows, and other entertainment content possible are highly trained professionals who provide content in hundreds of languages for millions of viewers all over the world. Without these translators, international on-screen entertainment wouldn't be as available as it is today. However, according to [statistics](#) published by Pablo Romero-Fresco, Honorary Professor of Translation and Filmmaking at Roehampton University, 50% of most film revenue comes from translated and accessible versions, but these account for less than 0.1% of a typical film's budget. In the global age of entertainment, translators should be recognized as a critical part of the production team.

On behalf of the American Translators Association (ATA), the largest association of professional interpreters and translators in the world, I urge film and television production studios and the language service providers they contract with to refocus on a quality subtitling process, which starts with hiring *professional subtitlers* at *professional rates* rather than unskilled multilingual labor at pay that can work out to well below minimum wage. Fair pay and working conditions are crucial elements of corporate social responsibility practices. Along with talent development and retention, they should be an integral part of sustainability efforts by companies operating in the entertainment industry.

Despite recent [articles](#) claiming there is a shortage of professional translators and subtitlers, this is simply not the case. ATA's own thriving Audiovisual Division, which brings together highly trained professionals who are ready and able to work, is evidence to the contrary. Translation associations worldwide also boast skilled audiovisual translators. There is no shortage, but instead a disconnect between the value of this skilled work and the pay offered, leading to a perceived lack of qualified professionals available for these jobs and subpar subtitles in the world's most popular titles in film and TV. Current practices within the entertainment industry devalue subtitlers' work, discourage truly qualified professionals from accepting these jobs, and impede international viewers' enjoyment of these titles.

The veritable explosion of international entertainment options is a positive development and producing high-quality subtitles is in the best interest of studios, streaming platforms, and viewers. The professionals who work painstakingly to craft the multilingual versions of our favorite movies and shows should be able to share in the revenue generated thanks to their work. ATA urges entertainment industry stakeholders to offer fair and equitable pay and working conditions for the language professionals whose work allows viewers around the world to enjoy content in their own languages.

Sincerely,



Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo, President  
American Translators Association