



Katarzyna SZTRANC-SLAWICZEK
a Staff Committee member
An interview given to the Staff Committee

Can we ask you to introduce yourself to our readers?

I am Polish, my legal training is French and Luxembourgish, and I have worked at the Court since 2003. I joined the Institution in the first wave (if that term can still be used in a context other than that of the pandemic) of Polish recruitment, with the enlargement of the European Union in 2004.

Besides doing my paid job, I have a second job: as a mother of three daughters. They are 14, 11 and 7 years old respectively, and all three attend the European School Luxembourg I. In order to support them in their schooling, I have been actively involved in the life of the school community for many years.

My free time is devoted mainly to reading as well as hiking.

What path has your career taken and when did you join the Court?

I joined the Court in 2003, first as a trainee in the chambers of the Dutch judge at the General Court, Professor Arjen W. H. Meij, as part of my Masters in EU litigation (*DESS en Contentieux communautaire*).

A few months after the end of the traineeship, I was offered an auxiliary staff contract in Translation, in order to help prepare competitions for lawyers-linguists from the new Member States. It was a unique period - dynamic, effervescent, full of optimism and hope...

At the same time, I passed a competition for administrators in the field of law, which enabled me, in August 2004, to join the Court Registry, where I spent several years in charge of procedural management for cases in French, German, Polish, Czech and Slovak. I still have wonderful memories of that time, thanks to my colleagues and, above all, thanks to the then Deputy Registrar, the unforgettable Mr. Henrik von Holstein. He was indeed an extraordinary character, both in terms of his competence and his personality, full of intelligence and an exquisite sense of humour. He taught me a lot, and above all passed on to me his work ethic. He set a good example, always being present at his position and always available to answer any questions. He would come to the office first in the morning and leave last in the evening, and the

harshest criticism one could hear him make of a person was "He/she doesn't put a lot of him/herself into it". It was rare, however, that this was said of someone from the Registry, as he knew how to motivate his subordinates and, in his own words, "run the shop". Alas, due to poor health, he had to leave the service prematurely...

Unfortunately, after his departure, it became exceedingly difficult at the Registry to reconcile my professional life with family life. My daughters were very young at the time, so I finally left to join Translation, once again.

However, soon after, there was a transfer opportunity to the Communications Directorate, where a new Access to Documents Unit was to be created. I was obviously unable to refuse the proposal to participate in a project as exciting as the implementation of the transparency policy at the Court. I spent 5 years in that unit, until, at the end of 2019, it was transferred to the Library Directorate, as part of an internal reorganisation.

Since then, I have been part of Mr. Andrew Paton's unit. Thanks to his managerial skills and human qualities, I encountered the same atmosphere - positive, committed, constructive and caring - that prevailed at the Court Registry at the very beginning of my career.

You ran in staff elections for the first time in December 2019. What motivated you to run and how do you see your role on the Committee?

My candidacy for the 2019 elections was not really that long pondered upon. In fact, I was persuaded to try my luck by Mr. Jimmy Stryhn Meyer, who is one of the pillars of EPSU-CJ, and who perhaps identified some potential in me. The decision was made almost at the last moment, quite spontaneously and with little hope of success.

If I am able to contribute meaningfully to the work of the Staff Committee, it will be thanks to my legal training, which includes a certain knowledge of the Staff Regulations, my long experience in the life of the Institution, and my desire to make myself useful to the community and to work to improve the well-being of all. Even if, globally speaking, we work in a privileged environment, there is no denying that in some regards progress is still required. As Mr. von Holstein liked to say, "We don't live in a perfect world". However, in campaigning for appropriate initiatives, I believe that we can try, as far as possible, to get closer to them.

Finally, my last attribute, one I believe important to underline, is my union membership. This is essential in view of a forthcoming period of renegotiating the Staff Regulations, which is expected to be a tempestuous time for the European civil service.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the colleagues who voted for me in the last election. I hope you won't be disappointed.