

**Minutes of the CercleS Coordinating Committee Meeting
13 October 2023, 10:00-13:00 (CET)
Via Zoom and in-person in Zurich**

ACLES	Spain	Juana Sanmartin
AICLU	Italy	(Carmen Argondizzo) Proxy: Alessandra Fazio
AKS	Germany	Maike Engelhardt
AULC	UK	Mark Critchley
CASALC CZ	Czech	Blanka Pojslová
CASALC SK	Slovak	Peter Gergel
FINELC	Finland	Emmi Huttunen
NUT	Netherlands	Katja Hunfeld
RANACLES	France	(Tom Grainger) Proxy: Peggy Candas
ReCLES	Portugal	<i>Absent: Manuel Moreira da Silva</i>
SERMO	Poland	<i>Absent: Lucyna Skwarko</i>
SSH-CHES-CSUS	Switzerland	Stefanie Neuner; Elisabeth Paliot
VUS	Austria	<i>Excused: Katrin Mayr</i>
Total Votes	10	

Executive Committee	Votes	Present
	3	Sabina Schaffner (President) Anne Chateau (Secretary General) Marta Estella Clota (Treasurer) Carmen Argondizzo (Vice-President) Mia Panisse (Deputy Secretary General) Zaan Bester (Assistant to the General Secretariat)

1. Welcome and approval of agenda

Sabina Schaffner welcomes everyone on behalf of the EC, especially those joining for the first time (Blanka Pojslová). Apart from the 3 members of the Executive Committee, 10 out of the 13 National Associations are present and represented. According to article 8.3 of the CercleS Statutes, except for the election of the Executive Committee (see Standing Orders), the Coordinating Committee decides by a simple majority of the votes cast by the members present and represented excluding abstentions, blank or invalid votes, which shall thus not be added to negative votes for the calculation of the majority. A simple majority for this meeting is 7 votes. Stefanie Neuner who will step down from her position as co-president of the Swiss association expresses her thanks to the colleagues of the Coordinating Committee for the cooperation and exchange.

Approval of agenda

Everybody agrees with the agenda as presented by Sabina and no points were added. (*Slides 3-4 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx*)

Approval of CC minutes of meeting of 12 May 2023, via Zoom → email attachment

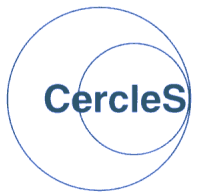
The minutes of the Coordinating Committee meeting of 12 May 2023 are approved. (13 votes in favour, 0 against, 0 abstain, 3 not present to vote)

Presidency

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2. Short reports of the EC activities – questions and feedback by CC members (Aug – Oct 2023):

a. President:

Working groups: research (Slide 8 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- Survey on research culture in language centres - Mark Critchley will report on this under agenda point 3 (see Slide 40 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

Follow-up Round Table discussion of Porto Conference (Slide 9 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- We are continuing to follow up specific points arising from the Round Table discussion, including an increased focus on **teachers** (through the Teachers' Meetups, which are ongoing), and **fostering bottom-up activities** and projects by offering CercleS prizes. Through scholarships for conferences and NA events, CercleS also hopes to **foster younger colleagues**.

Cooperation with partner institutions (ECML) (Slide 12 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

ECML programme of activities 2024-2027 "Language education at the heart of democracy"

- A proposal for a 3-year project under the title "**Boost your language teaching skills as facilitator, coach and evaluator**" was submitted on 31 August 2023. We will receive information about acceptance at the beginning of November.
- **Project outline:** The main objective of the project is to equip teachers in higher education with the tools necessary to navigate the challenges of the 21st century classroom. This will empower them to recognise, assess, and reflect on their interdisciplinary or transversal skills, thereby further developing their teaching practices in the language classroom.
- **Project team:** Project coordinator: Sabina Schaffner; Website correspondent: Barbara Sawicka; Second language documentalist: Julia Zabala Delgado; Communication officer: Marta Demchyshyn; Associate partners: Tetiana Kibalnikova - Translator of project materials into Ukrainian; Anne Chateau - expert counseling in the field of autonomous learning & the final editing of project materials translated into French.

Cooperation with Ukrainian Language Centres (Slide 13 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- **Inviting** these colleagues to join the Teachers' and Leadership **meetups** and CercleS **webinars**, and to participate in **ECML project**.
- **Promoting** among our contacts at Ukrainian universities the option of **associate membership** (as precursor to perhaps forming a national association), and the waiving of 2023 membership fees. We now have 2 associate members from the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU): The Center for Modern Languages; The School of Ukrainian Language and Culture.
- **Supporting training opportunities:** the Seminar in Language Test Design and Validation offered by the university of Jaén in Spain from 3 to 14 July. Three Ukrainian colleagues received grants from the University of Jaén, plus a scholarship from CercleS to cover their traveling costs.
- Promoting (calling for teachers for) the **Summer School** (19 Jun - 1 Jul) organised by the **Center for Modern Languages, Ukrainian Catholic University** in Lviv, and two CercleS members participated as teachers.

b. General Secretariat:

Webinars – attendance problems (Slide 15 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

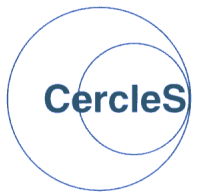
- 8 June: Seminar: Who uses machine translation and how? Lessons learned in academia. Presenters: Sara Cotelli Kureth (Université de Neuchâtel); Nicolas Molle (Université de Lorraine) ; Guillaume Nassau (Université de Lorraine) → 25 people attended
- 12 June: Workshop: Machine translation and AI in the language classroom

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- 14 September: The European Language Portfolio: origins, history, failure, success and possible future.
Presenter: David Little → very low attendance (5 people)

→ *Should we read anything (about topics, frequency, etc.) into the low attendance of some webinars?*

Elisabeth Paliot notes that the dates of the webinars are not always very convenient as it is in the exam period or during the entrance exams. There are probably no ideal dates as different universities have different schedules. The topics are also a determining factor, as machine translation is more relevant, but the Language Portfolio not necessarily. The low attendance should not be seen as a lack of interest.

We encourage members to go to YouTube to watch the videos of the webinars.

Meetups (Slide 16 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- Leadership meetups (run by Leadership & Management Focus Group):
met on 20 June, 25 September, 10 October
- Teachers' meetups
met on 21 June and 19 September (Only English, German and Italian groups this time)
There are fewer languages represented, but there are still 15-20 attendees, so we will keep the meetups in their current format.

Training (Slides 17-22 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

Presented by Tom Grainger

- In the past, RANACLES has offered several training sessions on various topics, and based on the success of these sessions, we are proposing a CercleS-wide training session 11-14 June 2024 in Nancy, France. The programme will focus on AI and the sessions will include keynotes and workshops on various topics related to AI in teaching and the classroom. The capacity is 30 attendees, and the estimated cost will be about 400 euro per head. The Executive Committee will ask for a subsidy of 5 000 euro towards this training that will be included in the proposed budget 2024.

Membership management (Slide 23 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

Numbers:

- 375 members (from National Associations)
- 24 Associate Members (3 new AMs applied recently – 2 from Ukraine and 1 from the USA)
- 819 users of the website (including the 6 members of the EC) – this number has also grown quite notably over the last couple of weeks due to the registration of the staff of the new AM in the USA

Newsletters – unsubscribes, low interaction rate (Slide 24 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- We send out a newsletter once (at most twice) per month with news of events and relevant information. But for our last newsletter, only a third of recipients opened the newsletter, and only 9% of people clicked it, while 5 unsubscribed

→ *Should we send fewer newsletters?*

Mark Critchley feels the low engagement is likely due to people being busy. He says we should continue as it is an important source of information. Maïke Engelhardt also feels it is good to keep people informed this way.

c. Vice President:

LLHE publications (Slides 25-26 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

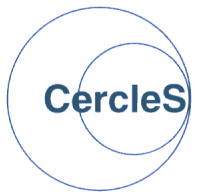
- A summary is given of the articles published in the journal issues from 2020 to 2023. Issue 13.2 (October 2023) contains 12 Articles (4 Porto proceedings), and 3 Activity Reports. There is an increasingly wider geographical distribution of authors, which is very positive. The 4th LLHE webinar, where we interview some of the authors whose articles were published in Issue 13.1 will take place on 26 October.

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Cooperation with De Gruyter (Slide 27 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- The LLHE will get an impact factor from this year. It is not very high (0.5), which is due to it being new.
- Carmen Argondizzo notes that more reviewers are required for LLHE. NA presidents are invited to send names of possible reviewers to her. A call will also be published soon for guest editors of an upcoming issue.

d. Treasurer's report: January – June 2023, Budget 2024: → email attachment

Budget 2023 accounting basis (Slide 29 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- The biggest source of income is from membership fees, and there is also increased income from royalty fees from the journal. The fixed expenses include personnel costs (the assistant to the General Secretariat), and the subscription fee for De Gruyter from 2022 (because DG sent the invoice only in 2023). The variable expenses were lower because there were no expenses for the CC meeting and no Focus Group expenses.

Budget 2023 accrual basis (Slide 30 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- The only difference between this accrual basis budget and the accounting basis budget in the previous slide is the De Gruyter invoice for the 2022 subscription, which is not reflected in this budget.

Proposal 2024 budget: Special items (Slide 31 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- We really want to support the activities of CercleS members, and therefore we want to contribute money towards these actions. This will include contributions towards participation in CercleS conferences, CercleS projects, ECML projects, National Association professionalisation, and Focus Groups.
- The amount of 5 000 euro for the CercleS teacher training in June 2024 is an additional item – it was not included in the documents sent to the CC in preparation for the meeting.

Two proposals for 2024 budget – (Slides 32-33 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

- We present two versions of the proposed budget for 2024: one without the 5 000 euro for the Training week, and one with the 5 000 euro.
- The fixed costs in both versions are the same. The income will again be the membership fees and the journal.

- Maike Engelhardt asks about the way that the stipends will be promoted to members. Another suggestion is to give the money directly to the conference organisers, and thus reduce the amount that each attendee will pay. In this way, the costs for all members attending the conference will be reduced.
- Mark Critchley says he is working on the assumption of about 250 attendees. He hopes that sponsorship will also reduce the costs. So far, the expected cost is about the same or a little less than for the Porto conference (less than 200 euro).
- Maike Engelhardt notes that if the cost is 100 euro, managers will be more likely to send their teachers.
- Peggy Candas feels that keeping the fee low is good for everyone, but it should be kept in mind that 100 euro is not 'the same' for everyone, and asks if it would be possible to offer more support to universities in such countries.

Vote on the budget: (Slide 33 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx) including

- To add the 20 000 euro for subsidy for conference registration fees in UK in September 2024.
- To accept the 5 000 euro for the Teacher Training in Nancy in June 2024.

13 votes in favour, 0 against, 0 abstain, 3 not present to vote

3. Proposals, reports, motions from members

a. Glimpse on XVIII CercleS Conference 2024 (Slides 36-37 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

Presented by Mark Critchley

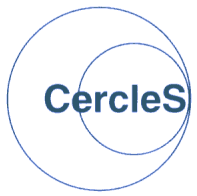
- Working title: Multilingualism in the Anglosphere
- Dates: 12-14 September 2024
- Conference website available and being updated early October 2023
- Multilingual conference: AR, CH, DE, EN, ES, FR with interpreting

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- 3 of 4 keynote speakers identified (UK government; Inter-cultural competence; English language; Application of technology and Artificial Intelligence)
- Call for Papers to be issued by 31 October 2023: oral presentations and workshops
- 8 parallel sessions; Poster session for students and early-career academics
- Sessions for EC & CC meetings and Focus Groups on 11-12 September

- Outline of programme, including proposals for keynote speakers and Call for Papers to be circulated around 20 October to CercleS EC for approval
- Delegate rates to be proposed around 31 October 2023 for approval; supported places scheme to be in place
- Conference venue: Teaching and Learning Centre, Durham University
- Welcome Reception: Durham Castle
- Conference Dinner: Ramside Hall Hotel
- Social excursion: Beamish open-air museum

Mark Critchley says that the conference organisers may not use the whole amount allocated by CercleS in the budget 2024 if they can get sufficient sponsorships.

b. CercleS Training (Slide 40 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

Presented by Mark Critchley

- This has not moved forward as he had hoped. The working group being reconvened was delayed from May 2023. One of the struggles has been to identify what topics should be included – a survey that was sent out got very few responses.
- The training programme launch September 2023 is deferred.
- Three topics will be identified for half-day online training courses commencing January 2024 .

c. Survey on research in Language Centres (Mark Critchley) (Slide 41 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

Presented by Mark Critchley

- Survey intended to provide an overview of the research activities carried out in LCs with the goal to inform CercleS member institutions about how a research- enhanced teaching & learning culture can contribute positively to the LCs' mission and how it can be supported and sustained within a language centre environment.
- Working group: Sabina Schaffner, Irmgard Wanner, Mark Critchley
- Draft survey nearing completion
- Draft survey testing completed via small group of colleagues June to Sep 2023
- Survey being launched in October 2023
- Report by end 2023

d. Exchange among National Associations in 3 breakout rooms on opportunities and measures
(Slides 44-46 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)

Group 1

Feedback given by Mark Critchley:

Opportunities

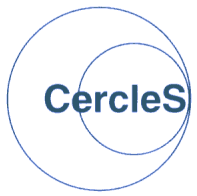
- We should try to engage more people actively in CercleS beyond the current core group, especially teachers. Despite the low engagement in events, we should persist and continue to offer opportunities. If we do not offer the opportunity, then it will be more difficult to attract more people.

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- We should encourage people to make use of the Focus Group structures, which are existing structures. The different Focus Groups could set some priorities for themselves, and then find out how CercleS can get involved. The fact that FGs are not using the budget – we need to push for them to use it.
- Teacher meetups are a good initiative. At the national level, they (National Associations) should encourage more people to get involved. Perhaps we should host an in-person Teacher meetup at the Conference next year. And we could particularly support teachers to come to the conference with the budget.
- We should consider various prizes in various domains, such as for leadership, or teaching. There would be more than one prize and get more people involved.
- International collaboration should be pushed a bit more and people should be encouraged to get involved.

Group 2

Feedback given by Elisabeth Paliot:

- There are already a lot of things being done by members – no further suggestions.
- There was uncertainty about what the “CercleS prize” refers to (is it a cash prize or just recognition?). We should remember that universities in a better financial position would be able to present better projects, which may perhaps be unfair. We should consider what the criteria will be and how the projects will be judged.
- Regarding identifying a contact person between CercleS and each institution: we should make sure that the contact person is not overloaded. Such a person cannot take on a mother-figure role to staff. (Our) expectations of such a person will have to be managed carefully. We should appoint perhaps more than one contact person.
- Adapt communication to needs and reduce unnecessary information in order to keep communication effective.

Group 3

Feedback given by Maïke Engelhardt:

Threats

- Even in the various National Associations, it is difficult to foster new projects, so motivating people is difficult in general – not just in CercleS.
- The workload of staff that are involved in the CercleS network is already very high, and people are involved in other European alliances (ECML, etc.). These European alliances are a ‘threat’ of sorts as they are not going to go away. These people might be able to act as multipliers.
- Focus groups should work on a schedule so that members can plan their contributions.

Summary of main points raised by Sabina Schaffner:

- We will try to mobilise the Focus Groups again and ask them for schedules.
- We shall continue offering our activities and keep promoting them, and involve more people in the promotion.
- We need to design the CercleS prize(s): target group, focus, promotion and assessment
- It is a good idea to have an in-person Teachers’ meetup at the conference in Durham in 2024.
- We will keep the CC members posted on further developments and welcome any suggestions regarding the topics discussed in the meantime.

4. Outlook on election process of the Executive Committee in September 2024 *(Slide 47 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx)*

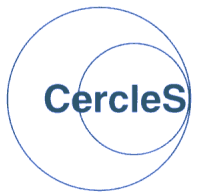
- Contact with potential Election Officers: September 2023
- Decision about appointment of Election Officer: November 2023

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- Briefing of Election Officer: November 2023
- Sending out Call by Election Officer / General Secretariat: end of January 2024
- Reminder of Call to be sent to National Associations: March 2024
- Deadline for nominations: 3 May 2024
- Information about nominees to be sent out to national presidents: end of May 2024
- Letter by Election Officer to be sent to nominees about preparation at the CC meeting in September // online talk for National Presidents / Associations in early July: to be sent by the end of May 2024

From the current Executive Committee, two members will likely be available for election again in 2024: Mia Panisse and Tom Grainger. We ask NAs to submit nominations for the various positions.

5. **Outlook on activities October – December 2023** (*Slide 49 CercleS CC meeting 20231012.pptx*)

a. *Talks / Webinars / Trainings*

Upcoming webinars

- 26 Oct: LLHE webinar – interview with the authors
- 15 Nov: CercleS policy paper webinar and workshop (Ruth Tobias)

Leadership meetups:

- 9 Nov: Focus on activities of the Focus Group Leadership and Management
- 12 Dec: Administration in Language Centres

Teachers' meetups:

- 17 Oct, 16 Nov, 13 Dec
- Sessions organised around breakout rooms where teachers of a specific (target) language talk about the specific issues concerning its teaching.
- Breakout rooms: English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Swedish, Chinese, and any other language if needed.
- The groups have been asked to send ideas for future topics to be discussed.

b. *Research*

→ see 3d

c. *Suggestions for other topics / presenters?*

We invite the NAs to suggest topics or speakers for upcoming webinars.

6. **AOB**

- Next CC meeting: Friday 17 May 2024, 09:00-12:00 CET

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