



## CercleS Presidency and Vice-presidency Mid-Term Report 2024–2026

### 1. Introduction: where we are halfway through the mandate

When the current Executive Committee took office in October 2024, we identified four strategic priorities for CercleS: to encourage networking among our members; to create opportunities to promote professionalism; to strengthen our network in Europe and beyond; and to promote the role of Language Centres in language education in Europe.

Reaching the halfway point of the term provides an opportunity to reflect on progress and outline future priorities; accordingly, this report serves two purposes. First, it looks back at what has already been achieved during the first part of the mandate. Secondly, and just as importantly, it looks ahead to where we are going. This mid-term report intends to illustrate our direction, coherence and ambition.

Over the past two years, we have tried to help CercleS become more active, more visible, more evidence-based and more strategically useful for its members. We have strengthened communication, activated Focus Groups, launched new initiatives, supported European project applications, developed professional development opportunities, prepared a Manifesto for language learning and created stronger foundations for advocacy, mobility, quality and cooperation.

The second half of the mandate aims to consolidate this work. Our task is to transform the structures we have created into long-term instruments of support, representation and influence. In other words, we have built a strong base; now we must use it.

### 2. Evidence for action: the CercleS survey

One of the most important developments in the first half of the mandate has been the CercleS survey of Language Centres. The goal was to update the picture of who we are, what our Centres do, what challenges we face and what kind of support is needed from CercleS. The survey has given us evidence, and evidence gives us strength. The survey gathered responses from 164 Language Centres in 24 countries. The respondent Language Centres represent more than 30 languages and approximately 410,000 students per year. If we consider the wider CercleS network of more than 400 institutional members, we can reasonably affirm that our community reaches well over one million learners annually.

This sends a powerful message: Language Centres are not peripheral service units. Together, we constitute a European multilingual infrastructure with a significant collective impact. All Language Centres will be able to access this data. The data generated will enable Language Centres across Europe to demonstrate their value to local stakeholders and decision-makers. Most importantly, it reinforces the fact that no Language Centre stands alone; each is part of a strong, interconnected network whose voice and influence cannot be ignored.

But the survey also confirmed the pressures many Language Centres experience: budget constraints, lack of teachers, institutional undervaluation, decreasing enrolments in languages other than English, uncertainty around AI, questions around assessment and certification, or the need to adapt courses to changing student motivation. Members also asked CercleS for policies, statements, best practices, networking, collaborative

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projects, professional development, support for language testing, funding opportunities, staff exchanges and stronger institutional advocacy.

In the second half of the mandate, the survey has the ambition to become more than a diagnostic tool. It should become one of the foundations for our advocacy, our training programme, our quality work, our Focus Group activity and our conversations with European and institutional partners.

### 3. Networking and communication: making the community visible

A central priority has been to strengthen CercleS as a living network. CercleS now brings together 14 Full Members, more than 400 institutional members, 28 Associate Members from 21 countries across four continents, and more than 1,300 subscribers to the website.

We have made institutional members more visible on the CercleS website so that Language Centres can identify one another, connect more easily and show their own institutions that they belong to a recognised European network. This is not just communication; it is institutional positioning. We have also improved external communication. The CercleS [LinkedIn profile](#) was launched to share activities, promote initiatives, increase visibility, and give members a public space where their work can be recognised. Webinars, meetups, the e-bulletin, the [website](#) and the [YouTube channel](#) continue to support dissemination across the network.

Focus Groups, National Associations and individual members have contributed to webinars and events on EMI, LSP, assessment, interculturality in testing, CEFR alignment, sustainability, AI and good practices. Leadership Meetups and Teachers' Meetups have also continued to provide spaces for professional exchange. These activities matter because they remind us that CercleS is not merely an organisation, it is a community of practice.

In the second half of the mandate, we plan to make this communication even more strategic. We need to use our channels not only to announce activities, but to show impact, promote our members' work, circulate vital evidence and reinforce the public image of Language Centres as essential units within higher education.

### 4. Focus Groups: from activity to strategic expertise.

A major achievement of this period has been the activation and strategic alignment of the Focus Groups. We asked all Focus Groups to prepare [white papers](#) setting out their position on key themes and challenges. These documents are not symbolic. They are becoming the intellectual and strategic foundation of CercleS. The white papers help us define what CercleS believes in, what Language Centres need and what arguments we can use when speaking to universities, policy bodies and international partners. The white papers also help Language Centres locally, because they provide shared language, evidence-informed positions and collective legitimacy. White papers have been prepared in areas including Language Assessment and Testing, English as a Medium of Instruction, Languages for Specific Purposes, Associate Members, and Leadership and Management. Their work is helping us design our mission, clarify our goals and prepare stronger policy and advocacy tools. And this is a significant shift. Focus Groups are no longer only spaces for thematic exchange. They are becoming engines of expertise for the future direction of CercleS.

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In the second half of the mandate, our task is to connect this expertise more clearly with action. The white papers have fed into our Manifesto, quality checklist, training priorities, European project proposals and institutional position statements. This will help CercleS speak with one voice while still respecting the diversity of its members.

## 5. New Focus Groups: Plurilingualism and ADAPT

During this period, CercleS formalised the Focus Group on Plurilingualism. This group had already worked collaboratively for around ten years and has now become an official CercleS Focus Group. Its creation responds to a crucial need. The survey shows that many Language Centres are experiencing pressure on languages other than English, which is connected to one of the most important aspects of our Manifesto.

CercleS has also created ADAPT — Accessibility, Diversity and Pedagogical Transformation — as a new Focus Group. ADAPT responds to an increasingly urgent need: how Language Centres can support students with disabilities, learning differences and atypical learning profiles in university language education. ADAPT is particularly important because inclusion cannot remain an abstract institutional value.

In the second half of the mandate, the Plurilingualism FG can help CercleS develop stronger arguments, examples and policy positions on plurilingual internationalisation, the protection of linguistic diversity and the role of Language Centres in sustaining Europe's multilingual identity. The ADAPT FG will help CercleS move towards more concrete guidance for Language Centres: examples of reasonable adjustments, inclusive assessment practices, accessibility-aware pedagogy and institutional recommendations.

## 6. The CercleS Manifesto: a collective voice for language learning

The CercleS Manifesto marks an important step in our advocacy work. It defends language learning as a human necessity in a world where democracy is threatened, equality is compromised, and diversity is not always celebrated. The Manifesto affirms that languages are part of the democratic infrastructure of our societies, that knowing languages promotes active citizenship and social inclusion, that weakening language education limits access to academic, professional and civic life, and that democracy depends on our ability to understand others and accept differences.

In the second half of the mandate, the Manifesto should become one of our main advocacy instruments. It should help us speak to universities, European partners and policy organisations with clarity and confidence. It should also help our members locally, giving them arguments to defend language learning, multilingualism and the strategic value of Language Centres.

## 7. European and international positioning

One of the clearest ambitions of this presidency is to position CercleS as a recognised and influential voice in European decisions on language education. We do not want CercleS to remain on the margins of policy debates; we want it to be actively shaping them. Language Centres implement, every day, the values that European institutions seek to promote: multilingualism, mobility, inclusion, employability, intercultural understanding, democratic participation and responsible digital transformation.

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As the organisations closest to learners, educators and institutions, Language Centres possess unique expertise. Their perspectives deserve not only to be heard but also to inform the policies that shape the future of language education in Europe.

For that reason, CercleS must be present where these agendas are discussed and shaped. And this ambition is already becoming concrete. CercleS was represented by Julia Zabala and Libor Štěpánek in a European Commission teacher consultation on 15 January 2026, contributing the perspective of Language Centres in higher education to discussions on working conditions and the competences needed to support students and peers

We have also strengthened our links with the ECML Professional Network Forum and intend to use this channel to share the CercleS Manifesto with partner organisations such as EALTA, EAQUALS, OLBI, AILA, EPA, ACTFL and ECSPM. This is not simply dissemination. It is strategic positioning. CercleS has the confidence to become a recognised European voice on language education, assessment, plurilingualism, AI, accessibility and higher education. Our expertise must be visible where decisions are being made.

Several concrete opportunities for international cooperation have also been explored and initiated during this period. These include cooperation with the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) in the United States, focusing on mutual promotion, exchange of expertise and participation in conferences and events; engagement with Libertas International University in Croatia, which expressed interest in closer cooperation through European projects and membership within the CercleS network; closer links with the FOREU4ALL Community of Practice framework, connecting CercleS with sixteen European University Alliances and creating opportunities for collaboration in multilingualism, language education and innovative teaching approaches; and active participation in workshops, seminars and meetings of the European Centre for Modern Languages and the Professional Network Forum of the Council of Europe in Graz, Austria. These initiatives have broadened the international reach of CercleS and strengthened its position within wider European and global networks.

In the second half of the mandate, this European positioning should become more systematic. We need to identify relevant consultations, policy spaces, European initiatives and partner organisations where CercleS can contribute. We should not wait to be invited only when decisions have already been taken. We should make ourselves visible as an organisation whose expertise is necessary before those decisions are made.

## 8. European projects and institutional capacity

A very concrete step has been the request for an EU Login, an Organisation ID (OID) and a participation code for CercleS to participate in EU programmes. This significantly changes our capacity to support members. It means that when CercleS member Language Centres apply for European projects within our field of expertise, they can state that they are supported and backed by CercleS. This gives Language Centres stronger institutional credibility and allows CercleS to become an active European support structure. We have already supported two Erasmus+ KA2 project applications. The first is LinguAI, on AI in language teaching, coordinated by the University of Salamanca. The second is a project on language learning in healthcare contexts, coordinated by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, with participation requested by the Polytechnic University of Lisbon. These projects may or may not be funded, but the institutional step is decisive. CercleS

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can now support members not only morally or informally, but through recognised European project structures.

In the second half of the mandate, we should clarify how CercleS can support project applications: when we can act as partner, when we can provide institutional endorsement, when we can disseminate results, and how projects should align with the expertise and priorities of CercleS. This will allow us to support members while protecting the credibility and strategic coherence of the organisation.

## 9. Professional development

Professional development has always been at the heart of this presidency's agenda. Our courses are open to staff from member and non-member institutions, but CercleS subsidises participation so that our members pay a reduced fee. Our ambition is broader than individual courses. Now, we would love to move towards a structured CercleS Training Framework. This framework should organise professional development across three interconnected levels. First, CercleS will continue to offer central training programmes in areas of common interest, such as language teaching, assessment, AI, EMI, LSP, plurilingualism, accessibility, leadership and quality. Second, National Associations will be invited to share relevant training opportunities through the CercleS platform, so that high-quality training developed locally or nationally can become visible to the wider European community. Third, CercleS will work with National Associations and Focus Groups to identify quality criteria for training and trainers.

In the second half of the mandate, the aim of this work is to transform professional development into one of our most visible services to members. The survey has shown that professional development is a major need. The training framework can become one of the clearest ways in which CercleS responds to that need.

## 10. Language Learning in Higher Education (LLHE)

*Language Learning in Higher Education* (LLHE), the flagship journal of CercleS, remains a key instrument for visibility, research dissemination and academic credibility within the network.

One important area of work has been the strengthening of the editorial structure. In response to the journal's continued growth, a revised editorial structure was proposed in December 2024. The new structure includes the Editors-in-Chief, Carmen Argondizzo and Anne Chateau, and the establishment and composition of an Advisory Board and an Editorial Board have been discussed. To address increasing submission numbers and reviewer workload, National Associations were invited to nominate additional reviewers and editorial board members. As a result, the reviewer pool has expanded, strengthening the journal's capacity to maintain a rigorous peer-review process. However, more reviewers are still encouraged to join the current group.

During the reporting period, LLHE has continued to develop strongly. Issue 15.1 was published, featuring 12 research papers and four activity reports, many originating from the 2024 CercleS Conference in Durham. Issue 15.2 was published in October 2025, presenting seven research articles and four activity reports from authors across Europe, Asia and the USA. Issue 16.1 was published in June 2026, presenting 15 research articles focusing on collaboration, autonomous thinking, mutual esteem and respect for sustainable development as cornerstones for educators, with contributions from authors across the globe. We intend to maintain regular cooperation with De Gruyter to ensure the journal's stability and sustainability. Work is being done to

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negotiate reduced subscription fees for member institutions and a more realistic annual publication budget from 2027 onward.

Special thanks are due to Editors-in-Chief Carmen Argondizzo and Anne Chateau, as well as to all reviewers whose dedication has ensured the continued success of LLHE.

In the second half of the mandate, LLHE should continue to be connected to the strategic priorities of CercleS, including Focus Group work, survey findings, Language Centre research, quality, assessment, AI, plurilingualism and accessibility.

## 11. CercleS Mobility Scheme

Another example of practical support for CercleS members has been the development of the CercleS Mobility Scheme, inspired by Alexander Grimm's proposal for a "CercleS to Go!" programme.

The scheme was designed to strengthen cooperation among Language Centres, encourage international mobility of staff and learners, support the exchange of pedagogical practices and institutional expertise, and increase the visibility of member institutions. It can support a range of activities, including teaching mobility, training mobility, research mobility, learner mobility and the development of institutional partnerships or Memoranda of Understanding.

Given its relatively small budget, the scheme is not intended to finance mobility itself. Rather, it focuses on facilitating and supporting mobility through limited administrative and organisational funding. This is important because sometimes what Language Centres need is not full funding but help in making cooperation possible.

In the second half of the mandate, the CercleS Mobility Scheme should become more visible and easier for members to use strategically. It represents an important step towards a more interconnected and collaborative CercleS community, and it responds directly to members' requests for staff exchanges, peer learning, networking and stronger cooperation across Language Centres.

## 12. Teacher Training Week

The annual Teacher Training Week organised with Ranacles has also remained central to our professional development work. The 2025 Ranacles–CercleS Teacher Training Week in Marseille focused on language teaching and artificial intelligence, with participants from ten countries and a very positive response. The 2026 Teacher Training Week held at UNamur in Belgium and hosted by CLUB included communications and workshops on LSP-content partnerships, interdisciplinary engagement, global teaching, project-based collaboration, sustainability, GenAI, and language, culture and emotion in LSP courses.

In the second half of the mandate, Teacher Training Week should remain a flagship activity, as it shows what CercleS can do particularly well: combine practical training, international cooperation and European professional identity.



### 13. Assessment, certification and quality

Quality in assessment has remained central to our work. The NULTE certification alignment process brought together CLES, ACERT, UNiCert and CertAcles, with judges from the different systems and external experts in standard-setting and CEFR alignment. The results showed strong agreement with the CEFR and will be made visible on the CercleS website, together with comparative information on the certification systems. This provides validity evidence, supports transparency and helps universities recognise certification systems developed within our network. Again, this is strategic positioning: CercleS operates at all levels of language education, from teaching and learning to assessment, certification and recognition.

Another initiative launched during this term is the development of the CercleS Quality and Excellence Framework for Language Centres. The framework aims to provide a common set of quality markers for Language Centres; a voluntary and flexible self-assessment tool; support for institutional reflection and improvement; and a basis for future training and certification opportunities.

The framework has been in the process of design since April 2026. It is intended to provide a scalable system that institutions may use in different ways: simply as a reference point, as guidance for targeted support and development, or, if they choose to do so, as a pathway towards more formal recognition. Importantly, the framework has the potential to increase the visibility, credibility and influence of both CercleS and its member institutions at European and international levels.

In the second half of the mandate, the development of the Framework will continue. We will seek endorsement from other European bodies, because our work should encompass the whole teaching and learning cycle, from the setting of goals to the assessment of achievement. The aim is not to impose an inspection model, but to give Language Centres a shared language of quality, a tool for institutional dialogue and a stronger basis for recognition.

### 14. Rome 2026 Conference

The XIX CercleS Conference 2026 in Rome demonstrates the vitality of our community. Around 300 abstracts were received, 274 were accepted, and the programme includes presentations, workshops and posters under the title “The Role of Language Centres in a Fast-Changing World: Responding to Emerging Needs in Society, Communication, and Learning.” Nine Focus Groups will meet in Rome, with financial support from the Executive Committee. The conference will, therefore, not only be an academic event. It will be a strategic meeting point for the community we have been building: Focus Groups, National Associations, Associate Members, teachers, researchers, managers and international partners.

The Rome Conference comes at an important moment in the mandate. It allows us to present what has been done, but also to consult members on where we should go next. It should help us consolidate the second half of the presidency around shared priorities, stronger participation and a clearer collective voice.

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## 15. Conclusion

The period 2024–2026 has been characterised by growth, innovation and increased international engagement. None of these achievements would have been possible without the commitment and collaborative efforts of the Executive Committee, the Coordinating Committee, National Associations, Focus Groups, LLHE Editors-in-Chief, De Gruyter, reviewers, and individual members across the CercleS network.

Now, we can say without hesitation that CercleS has made significant progress. It has become more evidence-based through the survey; more visible through its website, LinkedIn, webinars and LLHE; more active through its Focus Groups; more supportive through training and mobility; more influential through the Manifesto and European partnerships; and more capable through its Organisation ID and participation in European project applications

Our next task is to consolidate. We must turn the survey into advocacy, the white papers into policy tools, the Manifesto into a public voice, the training initiatives into a coherent framework, the OID into project capacity, the Focus Groups into strategic expertise, and our European contacts into real influence

Our message to members is, therefore, the message of confidence and commitment. Many Language Centres are facing pressure, but you are not alone. CercleS now has stronger evidence, stronger structures, stronger tools and a stronger European voice. If Language Centres need arguments, policy support, visibility, contacts, training, project backing or examples of good practice, CercleS is here to support you. Because together we are stronger.

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