



**CercleS Coordinating Committee Meeting 12 December 2025, 10:00-13:00 (CET)**

**Via Zoom**

**Minutes of the meeting**

| National Association | Country               | Present                                |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|
| ACLES                | Spain                 | Juana Sanmartín Vélez                  |
| AICLU                | Italy                 | Carmen Argondizzo                      |
| AKS                  | Germany               | Maike Engelhardt                       |
| AULC                 | UK                    | Ana de Medeiros & Oranna Speicher      |
| CASALC CZ            | Czechia               | Blanka Pojslová                        |
| CASALC SK            | Slovakia              | Peter Gergel                           |
| CLUB                 | Belgium               | Dominique François                     |
| FINELC               | Finland               | Emmi Huttunen                          |
| NUT                  | Netherlands & Belgium | Esther Scheeren                        |
| RANACLES             | France                | Proxy: Peggy Candas                    |
| ReCLES               | Portugal              | Manuel Fernando Moreira da Silva       |
| SERMO                | Poland                | Lucyna Skwarko                         |
| SSH-CHES-CSUS        | Switzerland           | Sara Cotelli Kureth & Elisabeth Paliot |
| VUS                  | Austria               | Norbert Conti                          |
| <b>Total votes</b>   | <b>9 (out of 14)</b>  |                                        |

| Executive Committee | Votes                 | Present                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | <b>3</b>              | Julia Zabala Delgado (President)<br>Mia Panisse (Secretary General)<br>Tom Grainger (Treasurer)<br>Alessandra Fazio (Deputy Secretary General)<br>Ruth Tobias (Deputy Treasurer)<br>Zaan Bester (Assistant to the General Secretariat)<br><br><i>Excused: Libor Štěpánek (Vice-President)</i> |
| <b>Total votes</b>  | <b>12 (out of 17)</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

**1. Welcome and approval of agenda (slides 2-3)**

Julia Zabala Delgado welcomes everyone at the meeting. She gives an overview of the agenda and asks if anyone wants to add anything to the agenda under AOB. No points are added.

**2. Approval of CC minutes of the meeting of 16 May 2025, via Zoom → email attachment (slide 4)**

Votes in favour: 10 | Votes against: 0 | Abstentions: 1

(NAs present/represented to vote: ACLES, AKS, CASALC CZ, CASALC SK, CLUB, FINELC, RANACLES, SSH-CHES-CSUS, VUS)

The minutes are approved.

**Presidency**

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### 3. Welcome to CLUB representative (slide 5)

Julia welcomes Dominique François and asks him to introduce their alliance. He shares something about their network – which has about 200 staff members – and each institution. They look forward to joining CercleS and its network.

### 4. Short reports of the EC activities – questions and feedback by CC members

May 2025-December 2025:

#### a. Presidency:

- *Marseille summer school (Tom Grainger will have the floor) (slide 7)*

There was a detailed article with feedback about the Teacher Training Week in the June e-bulletin. There were participants from 10 countries, and the topic was generative AI and issues around it, such as ethical considerations. The response to the week was positive and will be held again in 2026, to be hosted by a CLUB member (UNamur) 18-22 May 2026. There will be a call for contributions in the e-bulletin, and the registration information is also available.

- *ACLES Conference - round table on national associations and challenges (slide 8)*

From discussions at the round table, it emerged that language teachers do not always know about CercleS and the support/network that it offers. We therefore invite other NAs who are organising conferences to host a similar format of discussion (like a round table).

- *CLES anniversary (slide 8)*

Julia Zabala Delgado also attended the CLES anniversary. The discussions were very positive, and Annick Rivens will make a video of the discussion available that we can put on the CercleS website.

- *Alignment process of NULTE certifications (slide 9)*

The alignment project was introduced at the CC meeting in May. There was a fear that the tests would not align with each other because they are very different tests, but it was found that there was indeed very good agreement between the tests and the CEFR. The idea was also to create guidelines for language test developers within our context. We want to make this visible on the CercleS website, so that when universities are asked to accept these certificates, it is evident they are valid and aligned with the CEFR.

→ Maike Engelhardt asks if there will be a CercleS language certificate logo so that universities can recognise the logo easily instead of trying to understand a language certification in a foreign language. Julia Zabala Delgado mentions that at the moment, the NULTE and CercleS logos are used. The certification information is on the website under WHAT WE DO → Assessment ([link](#)). There will be a link to the different parts of the alignment to the CEFR of the different certification systems, with a clear description of each system in a comparative table to facilitate transparency and clarity.

→ Maike Engelhardt mentions that UniCERT is not only an examination organisation, but also a quality mark. When she sees that a certificate is from UniCERT, she can work out based on the number of hours whether the certificate is comparable. Julia Zabala Delgado mentions that this is not done at the moment, but this will be described on the CercleS website.

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• *Results of the survey to LCs (slide 10)*

Julia mentions that this process is still ongoing. There are currently about 170 responses, and we invite NAs to share the QR code (on the slide) with their institutions so that we can get a better idea of what LCs are doing, and especially the challenges they are facing and what they need from CercleS, and how CercleS can provide support. At the moment, the following challenges have been noted, and there have also been direct requests to CercleS, most of them have already been addressed in the last year or are in process now:

*Challenges noted:*

- Institutional recognition: budget cuts, lack of teachers
- Plurilingualism: fewer students in languages, particularly other than English
- Assessment: quality of internationally recognised exams
- AI and technology (to enhance learning – also to avoid cheating)
- Adapting courses to increase student motivation

*Requests to CercleS*

- Policies/statements/best practices defending LCs
- Networking possibilities (collaborative projects, resource sharing)
- Professional development (AI, testing, teacher training)
- Creation of a Cyprus and Greece national association (Full member of CercleS)
- Language testing models
- Funding for events (networking/research)
- Exchanges with other centres (staff mobility)

• *Situation of LCs in Europe and beyond: CercleS Manifesto (slide 11)*

The situation of many language centres and services is dire (budget costs, undervalued, AI as the substitute for learning languages). Our manifesto – which we would like to keep to one page, and three at a maximum) – will be focused on the strength of our network (more than 400 centres in Europe and beyond) and on defending:

- languages as generators of soft skills for employability
- AI as a tool that is based on language models and needs representability to prevent bias
- languages as a safeguard of democracy

The idea is that this manifesto would be signed by all possible language centres, and we need the help and encouragement of our members to achieve this. The ECML suggested that we may share this with the ECML PNF network (EALTA, EAQUALS, OLBI, AILA, EPA, ACTFL, ECSPM), which would mean that more countries and associations would also support it.

• *Overview of the final white papers drafted (slide 12)*

All focus groups were approached and asked to write a white paper stating their position on the themes and challenges related to their group. All the white papers have the same structure: Introduction to the topic and relevance, Themes, Target audience, Challenges in European language centres and universities, Proposed solutions and actions, Intended impact, and References and further reading.

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These focus groups have already contributed white papers, and the newly formed FG Plurilingualism and FG ADAPT have also been asked to create a paper each:

- Language assessment and testing
- English as a medium of instruction
- Language for specific purposes
- Associate members
- Leadership and management (to be submitted very soon)

• *Website changes (slide 13)*

We have made changes to the website to make it easy to find the white papers. Instead of placing it under WHAT WE DO → Focus Groups, we have added a new main menu: [WHAT WE BELIEVE](#) in the three website languages (also in [German](#) and [French](#)).

• *New edition of CercleS courses (slide 14)*

The new edition of two CercleS training courses will be offered again in 2026: [The Leadership Training Programme](#) and [Boost Your Language Teaching Skills](#). There are a few small changes to the new edition, based on experiences from the first offering this year. The training is open to all staff, to CercleS members and also non-members, but the cost is subsidised by CercleS so that CercleS members pay a reduced fee.

**b. Vice-Presidency**

• LLHE updates (issue 15.2) (slide 16-17)

- We firstly issue a heartfelt thanks to our editors-in-chief, Carmen Argondizzo and Anne Chateau, for their very hard and dedicated work.
- The new issue of Language Learning in Higher Education (15.2), published in October 2025, presents texts arising mostly from the XVIII CercleS Conference, held at Durham University in September 2024, under the theme “Multilingualism and the Anglosphere”, by authors from Europe, Asia and the USA.
- A new contract will be signed with de Gruyter (just an administrative step that is taken regularly every year, and this time, also due to personal changes in EC and Editorial Board). Due to CercleS having more than 400 members, we pay a reduced fee of €30 per member.
- We continue to require additional editors willing to contribute to the peer-review process. Please encourage members within your national associations to participate. The greater the number of reviewers, the smaller the workload for each individual.  
→ Emmi Huttunen asks about the requirements to be part of the editorial board. Carmen Argondizzo mentions that a person should be an expert in one of the aspects of academic writing.

• CercleS to Go: encouraging exchanges (slide 18)

The proposal is based on the idea of Alexander Grimm (University of Halle, AKS) that a “CercleS to Go!” programme could support and facilitate exchanges among CercleS members. The EC has created a draft of a CercleS Mobility Scheme (CMS), the aim of which is to strengthen international cooperation of Language Centres (LC). Although there is the existing Erasmus+ scheme, not all Language Centres have access to these funds.

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The goals are to enrich Language Centre performance through exposure of their staff members and learners to diverse academic cultures, pedagogical practices and curricular approaches; strengthen and expand institutional partnerships within the CercleS network; and support individuals and individual CercleS institutional and associate members in developing their international experience and professional/institutional visibility.

The CMS would support several formats of professional activities, such as Memorandum of Understanding signing; Teaching, Training and Research Mobility support; Teaching Mobility; Training Mobility; Research Mobility; and Learners' Mobility.

**The CMS is not intended to cover or co-fund the mobility activities.** Its purpose is to support and facilitate such mobilities; therefore, it may only cover administrative and organisational expenses related to activities financed by other bodies, namely Higher Education Institutions or individuals participating in such mobilities. Administrative and organisational expenses must not exceed €200 per mobility/HEI. The annual funding allocated by CercleS would amount to a total of €2 000 per year.

### Approval of the CercleS to Go (CercleS mobility scheme) (slide 19)

Votes in favour: 12 | Votes against: 0 | Abstentions: 0

(NAs present/represented to vote: ACLES, AICLU, AKS, CASALC CZ, CASALC SK, CLUB, FINELC, RANACLES, SSH-CHES-CSUS, VUS)

The proposal is approved

#### • Checklists for quality marks (slide 20)

The objective is to use our white papers to identify the current challenges and the proposals for facing these challenges. Based on the bibliographies provided, we would create a checklist of qualities and characteristics language centres could strive to comply with to facilitate teaching, managing and/or assessment quality. This would be the start of a quality mark, a much longer process, which also started with the white papers.

#### • Participation in European Projects (slide 21)

In 2026, the Executive Committee (EC) plans to support initiatives that will enable CercleS to join and participate in EU-funded projects. Such participation, however, generally requires co-funding of the participating parties in various forms. While the co-funding never exceeds the funding provided by the EU (it typically ranges from 10-25%), it does mean that a specific allocation from CercleS is necessary at the beginning of the projects. For this reason, the EC would like to ask the CC to vote on the following proposal:

**CercleS may join projects that require CercleS co-funding, provided that the overall project funding results in a net financial gain.**

### Approval of participation in European projects (slide 21)

Votes in favour: 12 | Votes against: 0 | Abstentions: 0

(NAs present/represented to vote: ACLES, AICLU, AKS, CASALC CZ, CASALC SK, CLUB, FINELC, RANACLES, SSH-CHES-CSUS, VUS)

The proposal is approved

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### c. General Secretariat:

- Membership management ([slide 23](#))

- Full members: 14
- Institutional members: 396
- Associate members: 27
- Subscribers to the website: 1 309 (11.12.2025)

We also invite NA presidents to encourage their members to subscribe to the website, as this is the main way that we communicate with members. There is information on the [NEWS](#) page, but we do not publish things like Zoom links on the NEWS page. Members can also only access the LLHE for free via the website.

- CercleS meetups and webinars ([slides 24-25](#))

CercleS has held several meetups this year, and continue to provide a community and network for staff. We ask NA presidents to encourage their members to also join these sessions.

There have also been several webinars this semester:

- Aligning language education with the CEFR: A handbook (11 Nov)  
*Presented by Neus Figueras*
- LSP Focus Group webinar: Increasing the inclusion of different transversal skills in LSP courses (20 Nov)  
*Presented by Marju Taukar and Tiina Meos*
- Webinar on aligning examinations to the CEFR: NULTE examinations alignment process (10 Dec)  
*Presented by Johann Fischer, Laurent Rouveyrol, Barbara Sawicka, Juana Sanmartín Vélez and Julia Zabala*

- Focus groups ([slides 26-28](#))

Two new Focus groups have been created during the period May-December: The FG Plurilingualism group has worked as a collaborative unit for about 10 years, but requested to formally form a CercleS focus group. The Focus Group aims to expand this network, share best practices, and strengthen synergies around plurilingualism in higher education.

We also received a request for a new focus group on students with special needs: ADAPT (Accessibility, Diversity, and Pedagogical Transformation). → *email attachment*

The FG has the following aims:

- to promote inclusive and accessible language education for all university students, including those with disabilities, learning differences, or atypical learning profiles.
- to raise awareness among language educators and institutional stakeholders about the challenges and opportunities of teaching students with specific needs in higher education. This includes advocating for best practices in applying the CEFR principles to diverse learners.
- to develop, share, and disseminate good practices, pedagogical models, and standardised assessment support frameworks that enhance accessibility and equal participation.
- to foster collaboration among CercleS member institutions and other international networks working in inclusive education and language pedagogy.

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#### d. Treasury:

- Update on payments received from Full Members and Associate Members ([slide 30](#))

All Full Members have paid their membership fees for 2025. The three Ukrainian Associate Members were exempt from paying fees in 2025. One Associate Member (Mohammed IV Polytechnic University, Morocco) has not paid, despite several reminders and being informed of the possibility of exclusion.

- Budget 2025: Update on expenses to date ([slide 32](#))

The budget for the year is given, with columns showing what was budgeted and what actually spent. The biggest difference between budget and execution was for the Boost Your Language Teaching Skills training course.

- Budget 2026 (discussion and vote) ([slide 32](#))

Tom Grainger shows the proposed budget for 2026. The budget shows a proposed net loss for 2026. However, the treasury feels that CercleS can afford this considering the funds available, and the expenses take into account the fact that it is a conference year, and that CercleS is providing significant financial support to CercleS projects and members.

#### Approval of the 2026 budget ([slide 35](#))

Votes in favour: 10 | Votes against: 0 | Abstentions: 0

(NAs present/represented to vote: ACLES, AICLU, AKS, CASALC CZ, CASALC SK, CLUB, FINELC, RANACLES, SSH-CHES-CSUS, VUS)

The proposed budget is approved

#### 5. Initiatives, projects and plans for 2026

- a. Actions to be taken as a result of challenges expressed in the survey ([slide 38](#))

##### Challenges

- Institutional recognition: budget cuts, lack of teachers
- Actions for financial sustainability
- Plurilingualism: fewer students in languages, particularly other than English
- Assessment: quality of internationally recognised exams
- AI and technology (can/will it substitute language learning)
- Student motivation

- b. CercleS hopes to formulate arguments in favour of language centres and services in HEI in the CercleS Manifesto. Everyone breaks into rooms to brainstorm about the content for the CercleS Manifesto.

- c. Updates on Rome 2026 (Alessandra Fazio will have the floor) (20 min) ([slide 39](#))([additional PPT](#))

#### STATE OF THE ART ([slide 2 of additional PPT](#))

Formal Agreement will soon be signed by both CercleS and AICLU by the end of December 2025. The conference organisers can report as follows:

1. A Call for Papers has been prepared and is available in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish under the conference title: "The Role of Language Centres in a Fast-Changing World: Responding to

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Emerging Needs in Society, Communication, and Learning.” This includes twelve main themes and sub-themes under which abstracts have been invited. The Call for Papers was issued on 5 December 2023 with a closing date of 27 February 2026. Authors will be notified of acceptance by 31 March 2026.

2. Submission process: Abstracts will be submitted via an internal submission form and email. An internal working group at Foro Italico LC has been established to manage correspondence with authors (receipt and notification process).
3. The Call for Papers was announced on 19 November 2025 on LINGUIST List <https://linguistlist.org/issues/36/3525/> and the website was launched on 21 November 2025 and is available in 5 languages.
4. Budget and Timeline: The conference will be supported by AICLU and the hosting university. A detailed timeline has been prepared to ensure smooth organisational operations.

#### **STATE OF THE ART** *(slide 3 of additional PPT)*

5. Conference website is available from:  
Cercles homepage <https://www.cercles.org/> and/or University of Foro Italico [www.uniroma4.it](http://www.uniroma4.it)  
Homepage slider: <https://www.uniroma4.it/?lang=en>  
News and events: CfP is available in 5 languages <https://www.uniroma4.it/index.php/eventi/>
6. Keynote speakers:
  - Carmen Argondizzo (Honorary professor of English Language and Translation, University of Calabria), "CercleS Conferences as Milestones in the Development of a European Community of Practice: A Diachronic Analysis of Evolving Themes and Reflections on Current Societal Expectations".
  - Francesca Romana Lenzi (Full professor of Sociology, University of Foro Italico) "Complessità del cambiamento contemporaneo e il ruolo socioculturale del linguaggio"
  - Mike Mayor (Senior Director, Global Scale of English at Pearson) "Learning to Learn: Staying Relevant in the Age of AI" (offered by Pearson)

#### **WHAT'S NEXT?** *(slide 4 of additional PPT)*

1. A Scientific Committee has to be created as per the agreement to review abstracts. The CC is asked to propose experts that could be included in the Scientific Committee. A rating matrix will be finalised accordingly.
2. Launch of International Erasmus+ week 7-12 September 2026 at University of Rome Foro Italico (Teaching and/or training open to participants, including teachers, lecturers, instructors and both academic and non-academic staff (from universities that are eligible for Erasmus+ funding through their home institutions).
3. Keynote suggestions. Any other Keynote the CC would like to suggest.
4. Programme Publication: Publication of general programme by the end of January and updates by February, and March
5. Registration opening: 1 April 2026
6. Further Updates will be about: abstracts and notification to authors, participants, conference schedule and general programme, finalisation of sponsors and exhibitors, preparation of the conference materials and venue (catering, social dinner etc.).  
These will be implemented step by step according to the established timeline.

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### **HOTEL BOOKING INFORMATION** *(slide 5 of additional PPT)*

The Conference Organising Team will select 2 or 3 hotels (3-or 4-star) offering special rates for conference participants. The list of selected hotels, along with booking terms and conditions, will be published on the conference website.

Room rates are expected to range between €130 and €180 per night (bed and breakfast), and bookings will be managed through the Conference Agency.

Zaan Bester notes that CercleS will be offering subsidies for transport/accommodation to the 2026 Conference.

### **CONFERENCE REGISTRATION** *(slide 6 of additional PPT)*

Conference registration will be available online through the website.

Early bird registration

- Registration opens mid-January 2026
- Registration closes end of June 2026

Regular registration: from 1 July 2026 to 31 July 2026

### **6. Where do we want to go?** *(slide 40)*

**We want to:**

- continue facilitating the growth of Cercles
- facilitate networking and mobility amongst our members - including COIL practices
- encourage networking with other international associations
- increase our voice in Europe
- promote transparency:
  - strengthen the quality of our assessment
  - set up a quality system based on our specific needs

We need to disseminate what we do in our own centres. We need to make sure that all members benefit from their membership to CercleS.

### **7. Proposals, reports, motions from members** *(slide 41)*

The FG Leadership and Management will be meeting in Berlin in February 2026. Ruth Tobias says she is ready to sign any paperwork for staff members who would like to use Erasmus+ funds to be able to attend this meeting.

### **8. AOB**

- Next CC meeting in May 2026: via Zoom *(slide 41)*

*Reminder:* CC meeting at 14:00 on Wednesday, 9 September 2026 in Rome (in-person)

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