

CercleS Coordinating Committee Meeting 13 December 2024, 10:00-11:30 (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
CASALC CZ	Czechia	(Blanka Pojslová – excused) Proxy: Peter Gergel
CASALC SK	Slovakia	Peter Gergel
FINELC	Finland	Emmi Huttunen
NUT	Netherlands & Belgium	(Katja Hunfeld – excused) Proxy: Maike Engelhardt
RANACLES	France	(Tom Grainger) 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 – not present
Total votes	12 (out of 13)	

Executive Committee	Votes	Present
	3	Julia Zabala Delgado (President) Libor Štěpánek – excused (Vice-President) Mia Panisse (Secretary General) Alessandro Fazio (Deputy Secretary General) Tom Grainger (Treasurer) Ruth Tobias (Deputy Treasurer) Zaan Bester (Assistant to the General Secretariat)

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

Julia Zabala Delgado welcomes everyone at the meeting, 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 11 September 2024, in Durham → email attachment (slide 4)

Votes in favour: 14 | Votes against: 0 | Abstentions: 1

(NAs present/represented to vote: AICLU, ACLES, AKS, AULC, CASALC CZ, CASALC SK, FINELC, NUT, RANACLES, ReCLES, SERMO, SSH-CHES-CSUS | NAs not present/represented to vote: VUS)

The minutes are approved.

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

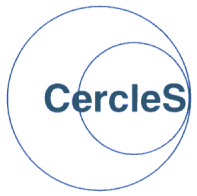
October 2024-November 2024:

Presidency

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a. Presidency:

- Julia Zabala Delgado notes the strategic priorities highlighted by the new Executive Committee, which took office on 1 October 2024. ([slide 5](#))
- LLHE board → email attachment ([slide 6](#))

Since the journal has grown significantly, a new structure is proposed. Julia Zabala Delgado explains the structure: Editors-in-Chief – Carmen Argondizzo & Anne Chateau; Advisory Board composed of 2 CercleS members (1 from the EC and 1 from the CC), and 3 CercleS or non-CercleS members; Editorial board – CercleS members (a minimum of 2 per NA), and non-CercleS members (from a peer-review system)

b. General Secretariat:

- FG Language Testing webinar ([slide 7](#))

The webinar by colleagues from Masaryk University was very successful (65 participants). A recording is available on the CercleS YouTube channel.

- Membership numbers and subscribers ([slide 8](#))

There are currently 387 institutional members from 13 National Associations, and 24 associate members. There are 1089 subscribers to the CercleS website.

- New Associate members ([slide 9](#))

Over the past number of months, 7 new associate members have joined CercleS.

c. Treasury: Budget

- Income sources ([slide 10](#))

The starting balance for January 2024 was €129,512.84.

Sources of income included:

- a. Membership fees: €42,434.53 (NAs €40,334.53 & AMs €2,100.00)
- b. LLHE editorial work and royalty statement: €2,782.30 (no change)

- Fixed costs ([slide 11](#))

The principal fixed costs were:

- a. Personnel costs: €5,959.50
- b. Subscription to LLHE: €24,540.00 (2023 and 2024)
- c. Bank fees and payment charges: €393.12
- d. Web maintenance - website & Zoom (for webinars and meet-ups): €1,368.88

Tom Grainger notes that we paid the LLHE subscription twice in 2024 because there was a delay in the 2023 payment, but this doesn't affect the budget. There was a slight increase in web maintenance fees because we had to buy Moodle plugin, but overall, the amounts are similar.

- Variable costs ([slide 12](#))

Variable costs included:

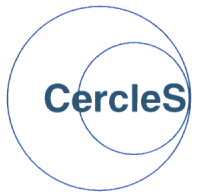
- a. CercleS Conference: €20,192.68
 - Conference subsidy: €11,467.49
 - Conference travel subsidy: €5,832.99
 - Conference gifts and prizes: €2,892.20
- b. Contribution to the Teacher Training Week: €5,000

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- c. Scholarships: €1,649.48
- d. Other travel subsidies: €1,532.49
- e. EC expenses: €12,525.17
 - o Durham: €8,034.38

The bank account (on 11 December 2024) shows €99,054.15.

Tom Grainger notes that the conference was quite expensive and proposes a discussion in June about the financing model for our conferences.

Questions and feedback by CC members ([slide 13](#))

- Maïke Engelhardt thanks the EC for the reports and says that at the CC meeting in Durham on 11 Sept 2024, it was mentioned and largely agreed that it should be called a Scientific Board instead of an Editorial Board since this would mean that the LLHE would then be considered a scientific journal.
- Regarding the finances, Maïke says that while the AKS is generally in favour of cheaper conferences, the CercleS subsidy towards the conference so that the registration fees could be lower was really appreciated. She feels that this was well spent and an investment in members.
- Carmen Argondizzo appreciates the emphasis on LLHE and is thankful for the minimum number of nominees for the Editorial (Scientific) Board as it will improve the function of the board.
- Carmen also mentions that 25 papers were received for the LLHE focused on the XVIII Conference. She and Anne Chateau are currently going through them and organising the reviewing process.

4. Initiatives, projects and plans for 2025 (with impact on the budget)

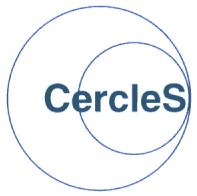
- a. Survey to gather information at our Language Centres ([slide 14](#))
 - o **A survey** will be sent to members to update the information available to CercleS so that we can cater to specific needs and provide an up-to-date picture of CercleS to European institutions. The information will be made available on the web. Information will be collected on: activities, languages taught, teacher demographics, student population, modes of course delivery, etc.
 - o **Support and networking opportunities** for centres and staff through FGs and NAs. We want to encourage the work done by FGs and encourage NAs to invite CercleS members from other NAs to their events and activities.
- b. Dissemination activities: LinkedIn profile and CercleS short-format talks ([slide 15](#))
 - o **CercleS LinkedIn profile**
We have approached someone to help us create a LinkedIn profile. We will then share this and invite members to link with us and to share CercleS' posts.
 - o **CercleS Talks**
We want to regularly post short videos on our YouTube channel: interviews with NAs, interviews about CercleS achievements, interviews with experts in different fields, etc. The aim will be to share the work that CercleS does with a wider audience.
- c. "Boost your Language Teaching Skills" training programme ([slide 15](#))

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There are currently 10 registrations for the Boost Training. AULC 5, AKS 2, AICLU 1, CASALC CZ 1, Associate member 1. The training will run from January to December 2025 and will entail 58 hours online (Moodle platform), with 2 core modules and 3 elective modules (presented by CercleS experts).

d. Working Groups for White Papers/Guidelines/Good Practices on Language Centre Activities, Assessment ([slide 16](#))

The aim is to disseminate our position on and approach to various topics.

- Possibility of **developing CercleS guidelines/good practices** organised via the **FGs** and by contacting the FG coordinators and asking for their collaboration.
- Possibility of **developing a CercleS quality mark** for our centres, with the expertise of LCs already involved in quality procedures, and the work on good practices carried out by the focus groups.

The goal would be to:

- Strengthen the position of LCs
- Improve visibility of our work
- Facilitate recognition of courses/certificates or even exchanges
- Presenting a European quality mark specifically designed with our Language Centres in mind

Questions and feedback by CC members ([slide 17](#))

- Lucyna Skwarko mentions that Sermo has a quality mark system, so they could work together with CercleS on the initiative regarding a CercleS quality mark. Maike Engelhardt sees both the positive and the negative about the initiative regarding the CercleS quality mark. We are very diverse, but we also need to show that we are an international group across Europe, unified across borders, so this could be a good initiative. Peggy Candas mentions that we are very different, so creating a mark that applied to all centres may be difficult. There is agreement that we have to look at the shared aspects but should not ignore differences. Maike asks that we also include the ECML and maybe other associations in this process –to help us find similarities among centres.

5. Outlook on scheduled activities Jan-May 2025

a. Proposal for a joint project with the ECML's Professional Network Forum ([slide 18](#))

At the PNF meeting in Graz (4-6 Dec 2024), Libor Štěpánek submitted a proposal for a CercleS project with the **Professional Network Forum (PNF)** of the **European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML)** on motivation and the use and knowledge of the CEFR Companion Volume among language teachers. It was received enthusiastically. It will be multilingual: the survey will be translated into several languages. We would ask the National Associations to review the translations and disseminate the survey in spring.

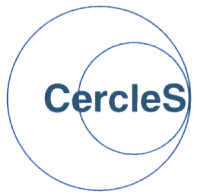
Carmen Argondizzo mentions a national project in AICLU involving 4 universities that would also be relevant for the CercleS community – they will share findings later in 2025.

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b. Talks / Webinars / Meetups: *(slide 19)*

There will be a webinar hosted by the FG CLIL/EMI on 9 April.

There was interest from non-CercleS members in our previous webinar. We therefore want to raise the question: → Should we allow non-CercleS members to attend our CercleS talks and webinar?

The EC notes:

- We want to cater to our members' needs, and there should be some benefits of having CercleS membership.
- But we would also like to give visibility to our experts outside of our community.

Proposal:

Limit attendance to CercleS members when the topic is directly related to LCs and allow attendance to non-members when the topic is wider.

- Maike Engelhardt says that opening some webinars is a good idea, and that we can then use the limited participation to certain webinars to promote membership to CercleS.
- Ana de Medeiros notes that a number of colleagues are involved in European partnerships. Many of them are working on multilingualism, so perhaps it is an idea to join the work they are involved in or ask for collaboration with these alliances so that the work is not duplicated.

c. Standard-setting process to align CercleS language certification systems to the CEFR (Valencia, 11-13 February 2025). *(slide 20)*

- Participation: CLES (France), Acert (Poland), Unicert (Germany) and CertAcles (Spain)
- Standard-setting processes are an indispensable step in the alignment of exams to the CEFR according to the manual for relating examinations to the CEFR of the Council of Europe.
- 2/3 judges from each certification system
- 3 external experts with experience in standard-setting and the Companion Volume to the CEFR
- Goal: to publish an alignment report

d. Ranacles-CercleS Teacher Training week *(slides 21-22)*

The programme of the training week is outlined, which will be hosted by Aix-Marseilles University from 11 to 14 June 2025.

Comments, questions from EC members? *(slide 23)*

- There is a question about allowing non-members to participate in the Ranacles-CercleS Teacher Training week. Tom Grainger says that having non-members join the training week for a (higher) fee is possible. But generally, all the places (30) are taken up by CercleS members and there will not be any openings.

→ The proposed 2025 budget is presented for approval. *(slide 24)*

Tom Grainger runs through the lines on the budget dedicated to new projects.

Contributions to conferences and projects: €29,600.00

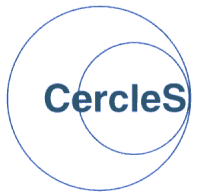
- Contributions to conferences: €0.00
- CercleS projects: €10,000.00
- LinkedIn: €2,600.00
- CercleS Talks: €5,000.00

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- Contribution to ECML Project work: €2,000.00
- Contribution to Focus Group meetings: €3,000.00
 - FG Autonomy – Paris (June 2025): 1,000.00
- Contribution to Ranacles-CercleS Teacher training Week: €5,000.00
- Professionalisation: €6,000.00
- Contribution to CercleS-wide projects: €6,000.00
 - CEFR Alignment – Valencia, February 2025): €2,850.00

Tom notes that in the budget, money is allocated for the various projects that were highlighted in this meeting. We will not necessarily spend all the money allocated for each initiative, but if we can use the money sensibly towards these initiatives, we will do so. This is why the EC wanted the approval of the CC to start these projects in the new year.

Comments, questions from EC members? ([slide 25](#))

- Peggy Candas asks about the money allocated for the CercleS conference: should we not allocate money in *each* budget every year instead of only every second year – especially since it is a large expense. Tom notes that we do not consider doing this because we have a surplus at the end of each year and we do not need to ‘save’ the money – it is available. But this does mean more pressure on the budget every two years. Tom will follow it up as a possibility.

Approval of budget ([slide 26](#))

Votes in favour: 15 | Votes against: 0

(NAs present/represented to vote: AICLU, ACLES, AKS, AULC, CASALC CZ, CASALC SK, FINELC, NUT, RANACLES, ReCLes, SERMO, SSH-CHES-CSUS | NAs not present/represented to vote: VUS)

The budget is approved.

6. AOB ([slide 27](#))

- Next CC meeting: Friday 9 or 16 May 2025 via Zoom

Most members present choose 16 May. The meeting will be held from 10:00-13:00 CET.

Julia Zabala Delgado thanks everyone for their participation and adjourns the meeting.

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