Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues dans l'Enseignement Supérieur

European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education

Europäischer Verband der Hochschulsprachenzentren

Secrétariat Général
Secretary General
Generalsekretariat

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Minutes of the CercleS General Meeting on 11 September 2026 in Rome/via Zoom

16:45-18:15 CET

Meeting format

The meeting is held as a hybrid meeting, allowing both attendees in Rome and via Zoom.

Voting

Anyone is allowed to attend the meeting – online and in person – but only one person per institution is allowed to vote, as per the CercleS Statutes 2020.

A Zoom link was sent with the agenda that was sent to all members with an invitation to the GM. It was not required to register ahead of time in order to attend the meeting or in order to vote.
Voting for delegates both in-person and online is via Google forms. A QR code and URL are shared with delegates in person and online, and did not require having a Google account or registering with Google.

The votes are calculated on Google forms and checked by Zaan Bester. If hands need to be counted in Rome, these are counted by Zaan Bester.

Members of the Executive Committee: Julia Zabala (President), Mia Panisse (Secretary General), Tom Grainger (Treasurer), Libor Štěpánek (Vice-President), Alessandra Fazio (Deputy Secretary General), Ruth Tobias (Deputy Treasurer), and Zaan Bester (assistant)

Attendees

The following persons were eligible to vote (with their associations and institutions)
Online: 3
In person: 53
Total number of delegates attending and entitled to vote: 56

Associate Members

Panagiota Popoti	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Online
Saulė Petronienė	Kaunas University of Technology, Foreign Language Centre	In person
Iryna Rohovska	Ukrainian Catholic University, Center for Modern Foreign Languages	Online
Liga Belicka	University of Latvia School of Languages	In person
Natalina Hoti	University Our Lady of Good Counsel	In person

Full Members

ACLES	Daniela Cerutti	Centre d'idiomes de la Universitat de València	In person
	Begoña Checa Barbosa	University of Zaragoza	In person
	Juana Sanmartín Vélez	Universidad de Murcia	In person
	Laura Riera Grau	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) - Servei de Llengües	In person
	Adriana Peña Bueno	Universitat de Barcelona	In person
	Jackie Robbins	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	In person
	Alicia Aranda	CEU Cardenal Herrera University	In person
	David Carrascosa	University of Castilla La Mancha	In person

Presidency
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AICLU	Ana Beaven	University of Bologna	In person
	Michela Giordano	Cagliari University	In person
	Laura Santini	University of Genoa	In person
	Silvia Gilardoni	Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore	In person
	Thomas Christiansen	Università del Salento	In person
	Enrica Rossi	Università di Urbino	In person
	Annalisa Zanola	University of Brescia (Italy) - Cla	In person
	Eleonora Federici	University of Ferrara	In person
	Jessica Ann Thonn	University of Florence CLA	In person
	Elisa Corino	University of Turin	In person
	Cesare Zanca	Università di Siena	In person

AKS	Aleksandra Sudhershan	Berliner Hochschule für Technik	In person
	Ruth Tobias	Freie Universität Berlin	In person
	Johann Fischer	Georg-August-Universität Göttingen / ZESS	In person
	Alessandra dAquino Hilt	Hochschule Darmstadt	In person
	Alexander Grimm	Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg	In person
	Peter Tischer	Saarland University, Language Center	In person
	Henry Finch	TU Darmstadt	In person
	Irmgard Wanner	Universität Leipzig	Online
	M. Cristina Fronterotta	University of Konstanz, Sprachlehrinstitut	In person
	Astrid Reich	ZFA, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany	In person

AULC	Catherine Xiang	London School of Economics	In person
	Eugenia Bogomolova	Newcastle University	In person
	Marion Sadoux	Oxford Language Centre	In person

CASALC CZ	Klára Čebišová	Charles University, Faculty of Medicíne, Dept of Languages	In person
	Blanka Pojslova	Masaryk University Language Centre	In person

CASALC SK	Marek Ľupták	Technical University in Zvolen, Institute of Foreign Languages	In person

CLUB	Natassia Schutz	UNamur	In person
	Beatriz Calvo Martin	Université Libre de Bruxelles	In person

FINELC	Emmi Huttunen	Uniarts Helsinki	In person
	Satu Tuomainen	University of Eastern Finland	In person
	Ville Jakkula	University of Lapland LC	In person

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NUT	Niels Rambags	University of Groningen - Language Centre	In person

Ranacles	Marc Schirès	Université de Lorraine/UFR Lansad	In person
	Brendan Keenan	Université Lumière Lyon 2 ENTPE	In person
	Mehran Mokhtarpour	University of Strasbourg, Pole Lansad	In person
	Tom Grainger	Faculty of Sciences Aix-Marseille	In person

SERMO	Anna Krukiewicz-Gacek	AGH University Of Kraków	In person
	Małgorzata Bączyńska	Poznan University of Technology Center of Languages and Communication	In person
	Jolanta Wielgus	Gdańsk University of Technology	In person
	Kinga Studzinska-Pasieka	Medical University of Lodz	In person

SSH-CHES-CSUS	Sara Cotelli Kureth	Université de Neuchâtel	In person
	Barbara Berzel	University of Basel	In person

Voting rights (CercleS Statutes 2020)

5.6 Voting rights
Institutional members (Language Centre members of full members that have paid their subscription) and associate members have one (1) vote per member present, it being specified that full members as such, represented during the vote by institutional members, do not have their own voting rights. Honorary members and benefactor members do not have voting rights.

Proxy voting is not permitted.

A member of the Association does not have the right to vote, when the purpose of the resolution of the Ordinary or Extraordinary General Meeting is to conclude a legal act with her/him, or to initiate or terminate legal proceedings between her/him and the Association.

5.7 Resolutions
Resolutions of the Ordinary and Extraordinary General Meeting shall be passed by a simple majority of the votes cast by those members present and entitled to vote.
The majority shall be calculated based on the votes cast, excluding abstentions, blank or invalid votes, which thus shall not be added to negative votes for the calculation of the majority.
Voting shall be by show of hands, or by roll call, or by secret ballot, as decided by the President of the Association presiding over the meeting.

1. Welcome

Before we start the formal part of the meeting, we would like to announce two pieces of good news:

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A. Poster prizes (GM slide 2)

The results of the voting for most multilingual/plurilingual posters:

- First place: Poster n. 19 – Towards a Network of Language Centres: Institutionalising Staff Mobility for Strategic Cooperation, Authors: Daniela Cerutti, Alexander Grimm
- Second place: Poster n. 8 – Multilingualism and Plurilingualism in Language Education: Unlocking Their Potential in Teaching Italian as a Second Language, Author: Clelia Richters-Teodoro
- Third: Poster n. 17 – Internationalisation at Home as a Catalyst for Medical English Skills Development in a Multilingual Classroom, Authors: Timea Németh, Anna Dávidovics

We congratulate these authors, and Zaan Bester will contact them regarding the prizes.

B. Announcement by Alessandra Fazio (GM slide 3)

Alessandra Fazio announces that AICLU would like to appoint Carmen Argondizzo as Honorary President of AICLU.

Format of meeting and technical details *(GM slides 5-7)*
The president welcomed the participants of the GM in Rome and online. The voting procedure for online and in-person participants were explained.

Approval of agenda *(GM slides 8-10)*
No points are added to the agenda.
Voting: 54 approved | 0 did not approve | 0 abstained | [total: 54 votes]
The agenda is approved.

2. Approval of minutes from the Extraordinary General Meeting held via Zoom on 31 October 2025 *(GM slides 11-12)*
Voting: 34 approved | 0 did not approve | 14 abstained | [total: 48 votes]
The minutes are approved.

3. Reports: presentation and approvals

a. President's report presented by Julia Zabala (GM slides 13-36)

The President reported on progress at the halfway point of the Executive Committee's mandate, structured around the four strategic priorities identified at the beginning of the term: networking, professionalism, strengthening CercleS' reach in Europe and beyond, and advocacy for the role of language centres.

A major achievement has been the **CercleS Survey of Language Centres**, which provides an updated evidence base on the size, activities and challenges of the sector. The survey received responses from 164 centres in 27 countries, representing more than 465,000 students and over 35 languages. The findings underline the breadth of language-centre activities and the increasing role of centres in areas extending beyond language teaching, while also identifying pressures including funding constraints, staffing issues, changing demand and the impact of AI. Professional development and networking were identified by members as the areas in which they most need support from CercleS.

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The report highlighted the development of CercleS as a stronger network and professional community. Institutional members are now more visible through the CercleS website, communication channels have been expanded, and Focus Groups, National Associations and members have contributed actively to webinars, meetups and other professional activities. Focus Groups have also begun producing white papers intended to provide evidence-informed positions and practical arguments for members and to support CercleS' wider advocacy work. Two new Focus Groups, on **Plurilingualism** and **Accessibility, Diversity and Pedagogical Transformation (ADAPT)**, have been established.

The President also reported on the development of the **CercleS Manifesto**, which provides a collective position on the importance of language learning, multilingualism, interculturality and human agency in a rapidly changing technological environment. Work has also progressed on strengthening CercleS' European and international positioning, including engagement with European organisations and consultations, new international contacts and participation in relevant professional networks.

CercleS has obtained the institutional credentials needed to participate more actively in European projects and has already supported two Erasmus+ applications. The report also highlighted the **NULTE alignment project**, which compared four university language certification systems and provided evidence of strong alignment with the CEFR. Further work will focus on validation, publication and extending the alignment work to other CEFR levels.

The **CercleS Mobility Scheme** has been established to facilitate staff and learner mobility, exchange of expertise and institutional cooperation among member centres. The scheme provides organisational and administrative support rather than funding mobility directly.

The President noted the strong participation in the **2026 Rome Conference**, with more than 400 participants and contributions from across the CercleS community. The conference was presented as an important opportunity not only for academic exchange but also for reviewing progress and discussing the future direction of the Association.

Looking ahead to the second half of the mandate, the emphasis will be on **consolidating and making use of the structures and resources developed so far**: turning the survey findings into advocacy tools, the Focus Group white papers into policy resources, the Manifesto into a stronger public voice, training initiatives into a coherent framework, the new European project capacity into practical support for members, and European and international contacts into more systematic engagement and influence.

Approval of the President's report *(GM slides 37-38)*

Voting: 52 approved | 0 did not approve | 0 abstained | [total: 52 votes]

The President's report is approved.

b. Vice-President's report presented by Libor Štěpánek (GM slides 39-47)

The Vice-President reported on three main strands of activity during the first half of the mandate: strengthening **Language Learning in Higher Education (LLHE)**, developing professional development opportunities, and establishing a new **CercleS Quality and Excellence Framework**.

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The journal *Language Learning in Higher Education* has strengthened its editorial and reviewer structure, with additional reviewers and editorial board members being recruited through the National Associations. Three issues have been published during the period, with contributions from authors across Europe and beyond. Cooperation with De Gruyter is expected to continue, with discussions underway concerning subscription arrangements and the journal's future publication budget. The journal will continue to be linked to CercleS's strategic priorities and Focus Group work.

In response to the survey finding that **professional development is members' greatest need**, work has begun towards a CercleS Training Framework. This is intended to go beyond individual courses by combining central CercleS programmes, relevant training offered by National Associations, and shared quality criteria for training and trainers. A call for training proposals is now open, covering short workshops through to longer programmes, with CercleS potentially subsidising part of the cost.

The Vice-President also presented the **CercleS Quality and Excellence Framework**, currently under development. The framework is intended to provide a common, flexible and voluntary set of quality markers for language centres, without creating an unnecessarily burdensome inspection system. It distinguishes between Quality, representing essential standards, and Excellence, recognising outstanding or innovative practice. The framework covers three domains — organisation and management, teachers, and learners — and provides a progressive pathway from self-assessment through improvement and certification to formal audit.
The proposed certification process includes peer and external oversight, while fees have been designed to keep certification free or nominal-cost for CercleS members and to establish a clear fee structure for non-members.

For the second half of the mandate, work will focus on completing and validating the Quality and Excellence Framework, developing it as a practical tool for institutional dialogue and improvement, seeking wider European recognition, and connecting it with CercleS's training activities and work on assessment and certification.

Approval of the Vice-President's report *(GM slides 48-49)*
Voting: 53 approved | 0 did not approve | 0 abstained | [total: 53 votes]
The Vice-President's report is approved.

c. Secretary General's report presented by Mia Panisse (GM slides 50-61)
The Secretary General reported on developments in membership, professional activities, Focus Groups, communication and professional development during the first half of the mandate.

CercleS membership has continued to grow. Institutional membership increased from **387 to 402** during the period Dec 2024-June 2026, while Associate Membership increased from **24 to 28**, with Associate Members now representing 21 countries across four continents. Participation in webinars, Focus Groups and training activities has also increased. Fee waivers have been maintained for three Ukrainian institutions.

A substantial programme of **webinars, workshops and talks** has been delivered, covering topics including language policy, the CEFR, AI, sustainability, assessment, LSP, CLIL/EMI and intercultural issues

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in language testing. Several events attracted around 150 participants, demonstrating strong engagement across the network.

The Secretariat continues to coordinate and support **11 active Focus Groups**, which provide opportunities for collaboration and exchange of expertise and produce webinars, workshops, white papers and conference contributions. Regular communication with Focus Group coordinators, financial support and assistance with dissemination and conference planning have helped strengthen their visibility and activity. Leadership and Teachers' Meetups have likewise provided informal spaces for peer support and professional exchange.

The report highlighted the continuing collaboration with **Ranacles through the annual Teacher Training Week**. The 2025 event in Marseille focused on AI in language teaching, while the 2026 event in Namur focused on LSP integration and collaboration between language instructors and disciplinary experts. Communication with members has been maintained through the website, members' area, e-bulletins, monthly newsletters, direct communication, LinkedIn and General Meetings. The website has undergone a number of improvements, including greater visibility for institutional members, expanded information about CercleS activities and new professional development pages.

The Secretariat has also continued to disseminate information through the e-bulletin, with four issues published during the period, covering conferences, training activities, new members, Focus Groups and international cooperation.

With regard to professional development programmes, **Boost Your Language Teaching Skills** was delivered in 2025, while the January 2026 edition was not offered because of insufficient enrolment. A new call for participants has been opened for October 2026–June 2027. The Leadership Training Programme was not offered during 2025–2026 but remains a strategic priority, with future editions dependent on member interest.

In conclusion, the report highlighted continued membership growth, strong professional development activity, increased internationalisation, transparent communication and strengthened collaboration across the network. The focus for the next period will remain on supporting language centres, innovation and cooperation, and responding to emerging challenges in higher education language learning.

Approval of the Secretary General's report *(GM slides 62-63)*

Voting: 52 approved | 0 did not approve | 1 abstained | [total: 53 votes]

The Secretary General's *report is approved.*

d. Treasurer's report and approval of accounts presented by Tom Grainger (GM slides 65-67)

Auditors' reports (by Adriana Peña Bueno and Alexander Grimm)

The CercleS Budget 2024 Final Statement is shown, as well as the Budget execution (2025), and the 2026 Budget that was approved by the CC at their meeting on 12 December 2025. The association is in good financial standing.

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The auditors have approved the accounts for the period of 1 Oct 2024 to 1 Sep 2026. The auditors and the Treasurer have decided to change the time of year when the accounts will be sent to the auditors for checking, namely in February to check the accounts of the previous (calendar) year.

Teacher Training Week (GM slides 68-71)
CercleS has held two successful Teacher Training Weeks organised in collaboration with Ranacles, held in Marseille in 2025 and Namur in 2026, addressing AI in language teaching and collaboration between language and disciplinary specialists.

Summer Teacher Training Week 2027 (presented by Marc Schirès from Université de Lorraine, Nancy, France)
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, a CercleS Associate Member in Greece, offered to host the 2027 Summer CercleS Teacher Training Week. The proposed dates are 24–27 May 2027, with the theme: "Innovative Approaches to AI and Foreign Languages in Higher Education: Training, Teaching and Assessment".

Approval of the Treasurer's report and auditor's reports *(GM slides 72-74)*
Voting: 47 approved | 1 did not approve | 2 abstained | [total: 50 votes]
The Treasurer's *report is approved.*

4. Proposed Amendments to the Statutes *(GM slides 75-77)*
a. Rationale for the amendments
The proposed amendments are intended to update the Statutes and provide for the arrangements outlined in the proposals.

Proposed Article 5.8
"The General Meeting may also adopt its decisions per rollam (i.e. outside a formal meeting) in written form, electronically. The resolution to be voted on must include at least the proposed wording of the resolution, supporting documents necessary for its assessment or information on where such documents are published, as well as the deadline by which members of CercleS shall express their opinion. This deadline must not be shorter than 14 calendar days.

For written voting to be valid, the member's statement must be sent by email and must contain the full wording of the proposed resolution and a clear expression of in favour, against or abstention. In a per rollam vote, a resolution is adopted if a simple majority of the members participating in the vote is in favour.

The Executive Committee shall inform members of the Association of the voting results and, if the resolution has been adopted, shall also communicate the full text of the adopted resolution."

There is discussion by members, and questions are raised by Cesare Zanca, Johann Fischer, and Peter Tischer regarding the requirement of voting by email (perhaps outdated?), what is considered a secure way of voting, and whether this type of voting allows input from members on a resolution ahead of the vote.

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b. Voting

Approval of the amendments to the Statutes *(GM slides 78-79)*

Voting: 32 approved | 12 did not approve | 3 abstained | [total: 47 votes]

The Amendments are approved. But they will be reformulated to address concerns about outdated modalities (voting by email) and circulated to members for comment, and voting through the new per rollam option.

5. Exclusion of associate member to be approved by the General Meeting *(GM slides 80-81)*

The CercleS Statutes 2020 state:

Art. 4.2.1 Exclusion

The exclusion of a full member, institutional, associate, honorary or benefactor member can only be pronounced by the Ordinary or Extraordinary General Meeting. An exclusion must be motivated by a sufficiently serious reason preventing the retention of the full member, institutional, associate, honorary or benefactor member within the Association. This is particularly the case when a full member or associate member fails to pay its annual subscription for two consecutive years. A full, institutional, associate, honorary or benefactor member whose exclusion is being considered must be heard by the Ordinary or Extraordinary General Meeting and be given the opportunity to state its position as to the reasons for its proposed exclusion.

The Associate Member AMUM6P (our internal code) did not pay membership fees in 2025 or 2026. They were contacted several times, without a response or payment.
2025 we sent emails on 10/4, 3/6, 1/7, 3/11 – no response or payment
2026 we sent emails on 17/4, 15/6, 07/09 with warning of exclusion – no response or payment

Regarding questions by members present in the meeting: Zaan Bester confirms that the lack of response from the AM is not due to emails not reaching the recipients. Also, exclusion does not mean that the member is banned from joining CercleS again.

Approval of the exclusion of the associate member *(GM slides 82-83)*

Voting: 41 approved | 1 did not approve | 2 abstained | [total: 44 votes]

The resolution is approved.

6. AOB

a. Appointment of auditors for approval of accounts 2026-2028 (GM slide 84)

Adriana Peña Bueno from ACLES and Alexander Grimm from AKS have agreed to continue as auditors.

The venue of the XX CercleS Conference in 2028 will be announced in October.
The date and time of the next GM will be communicated to members.

Minutes: Zaan Bester | Secretary General: Mia Panisse | President: Julia Zabala

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