

# Liliana Szczuka-Dorna (2016–2019)

I became President of CercleS in 2016. The elections took place in Calabria during 14th CercleS' Conference organised by Prof. Carmen Argondizzo and her team. Previously, I had been on CercleS' Executive Committee working as Treasurer during Prof. Gillian Mansfield's presidency. This past experience, as well as my eight-year presidency of SERMO (a Polish association), helped me greatly in my subsequent activities as CercleS President.

The new CercleS Executive Committee began work on many fresh initiatives through which we wanted to improve both cooperation within CercleS, i.e. cooperation among national associations, and cooperation with past and new stakeholders. The new Executive Committee consisted of:

Prof. Carmen Argondizzo as Vice President, Dr Heidi Rontuu as Secretary General, Dr Marta Clotta as Treasurer, and the Deputies: Dr Catherine Chabert, and Dr Andrea Koblizkova.

## **New Executive Activity**

We decided to meet online once a month in order to prepare a variety of documents which needed changes and corrections. One of the most important issues was updating CercleS' registration documents, including CercleS' bank account and main address. These issues were very complicated but, as you know, thanks to Dr Catherine Chabert and Dr Annick Rivens, CercleS started its activities in perfect order and according to French law. The Executive Committee introduced some changes to web com-

munication, modifying CercleS' web pages to give access to members and / or non-members. Responsibility for web administration was given to Kasia Jesse, who together with Helen Nuttall (Assistant to the General Secretary), kept all members up to date with CercleS' news. Discussions took place between the EC members regarding their specific responsibilities within CercleS, since the Statutes did not at that time give any information about this. The EC divided responsibilities according to the posts within CercleS. The roles and responsibilities were presented during the meeting of the EC and Coordinating Committee (CC) in Helsinki in 2017.

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The Executive Committee could not operate alone, therefore regular meetings with the Coordinating Committee as well as with CercleS' members during conferences became the starting point for new initiatives. The e-bulletin was introduced and, thus far, CercleS' members have been updated on the most important news 4 times a year. The CercleS' conference at Poznan University of Technology in 2018 was the first one with a different timetable. One day ahead of the conference, Focus Group coordinators as well as the invited speakers ran workshops for CercleS' members and non-members. Additionally, during that day, the Coordinating Committee had a conference meeting. It became evident on reading feedback from participants after the conference that they appreciated the pre-conference day because it allowed them to develop their knowledge and expertise on the different topics covered by the Focus Groups in the workshops.

The activities of the Focus Group coordinators was a topic of consideration for the Executive and Coordinating Committees. During my presidency, some new Focus Groups were formed. Moreover, the possibility to apply for grants/scholarships remained for young researchers/teachers.

The years 2016-2019 were extremely active for the Executive and Coordinating Committees as CercleS' Mission and Strategy documents needed updating. One of the last issues we were involved in was starting the discussion about updating the CercleS

Statutes, producing a new version with important changes, which became a key point of discussion.

### **CercleS' Journal: Language Learning in Higher Education**

The Executive Committee met with Dr Breffni O'Rourke, a new Editor-in-Chief from the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences at Trinity College Dublin. We met in Dublin and created a detailed action plan including meetings at the De Gruyter publishing house in Berlin to discuss and negotiate online access to the journal as well as smaller fees for CercleS' readers. It should be underlined that it was both the De Gruyter team, with Rebecca Walter as team leader, as well as Dr Breffni O'Rourke's personality and charisma, that allowed us to introduce new volumes on the market. Prof. Carmen Argondizzo worked closely with Breffni on the *Call for papers* and other issues concerning the journal. The new version of the journal included two types of publications: articles and activity reports associated with the Focus Groups.

### **CercleS, stakeholders and agreements**

In 2018, as CercleS' President, I visited Brussels together with Dr Cristina Perez, ACLES President. We had a very productive meeting with Mr Rodrigo Ballester, Member of Cabinet in the European Commission. The next topic of CercleS' interest was co-operation with different language organisations including ECML in Graz. Over the years, CercleS has been represented in Graz by Dr Helena Salgalikova and myself. One of the highlights of CercleS' activities during this time was the

signing of the NULTE Memorandum of Cooperation during the CercleS' Conference in Poznan in 2018. This cooperation marked the beginning of a new period with testing and exam quality as the focal point. New agreements were signed with ECML in Graz, the European Language Council and the De Gruyter publishing house. CercleS' members were invited by Dr Brian North to take part in a formal consultation on a new extended version of the CEFR illustrative descriptors. Some responses from National Presidents were received regarding their or their Association's participation. A report was prepared on behalf of CercleS with the reflective feedback of the teams involved.

The presidency 2016-2019 was a challenging time for the Executive Committee and for me personally. On the Executive Committee I cooperated with my friends on different levels, not only representing CercleS, but also bringing our characters and enthusiasm into our meetings. Working together with National Presidents, Focus Group Coordinators, stakeholders and many people interested in languages, culture and plurilingualism was a journey I will never forget. The positive feedback, and the professional advice and support helped the Executive Committee and myself to enter a new phase in CercleS' development.

So, thank you for the challenging times I experienced with all of you!

*PUT Prof. Liliana Szczuka-Dorna,  
Ph.D.*