

## **Minutes of the AILC-ICLA Executive Council meeting**

**23 September 2022**

**3.30-5.00pm Paris time**

**Online (Zoom)**

(Extension of the initial hybrid meeting of the new EC 2022-2025,  
Tbilisi, 29 July 2022)

Members present : Lucia Boldrini (President), Noriko Hiraishi, Anne Tomiche, Haun Saussy, Marcio Seligman-Silva, Massimo Fusillo, Zhang Longxi, Yuriko Yamanaka, Veronique Porra, Irma Ratiani, Chandra Mohan, Zhang Hui, Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, Oana Fotache, Toshiko Ellis, Stefan Buchenberger, Youngmin Kim, Alexandra Lopes, Matthew Reynolds, Ipshita Chanda, Anne Duprat, Helga Mitterbauer, Rita Terezinha Schmidt, Ato Quayson, Sandra Bermann, Jeronimo Pizarro, Sayantan Dasgupta, Clotilde Thouret, Kitty Millet, Marko Juvan, Marina Grishakova, Tegan Zimmerman, Adelaide Russo, Emmanuelle dos Santos, Raul Calzoni, Fatiha Taib, Lobna Ismail.

The President thanked all present and welcomed them to the extension of the initial hybrid meeting of the new EC 2022-25, which was held in Tbilisi on July 29, 2022. the first.

The President noted that the minutes of that meeting had been circulated only in the last 24 hours, and apologised for the delay, while thanking the secretaries for their work.

She also thanked Anne Duprat, French Secretary, who set up our meeting but cannot attend all of the meeting, as she is running a conference today. Ipshita Chanda will take minutes this time.

The President thanked the colleagues who have accepted to chair a committee or take care of a particular aspect of our work. Names were in the email preparatory for today's meeting sent by Anne Duprat on 19.9.22 (with some more news to follow), namely:

- Committee concerning the Balakian Prize: E.V. Ramakrishnan (for a second term);
- Committee on Affiliated and Allied Organizations (proposed new name for "NA Plus"): Haun Saussy and Toshiko Ellis, as co-chairs;
- Nominating Committee: Stefan Helgesson;
- Research Development Committee: Matthew Reynolds (for a second term);
- Participation Grants Committee (previously Travel Grants Committee): Oana Fotache Dubalaru;

- ECARE will be chaired by Emanuelle Santos, who was elected as its chair by the committee itself.

1. Brief introductions

The President invited all the members present to introduce themselves.

2. Priorities and plans for 2022-25:

The president offered a brief reminder of initial discussion at meeting of 29 July (see minutes and notes circulated in advance), with some updates:

- i. Earlier, all communications matters (email of the association, website, newsletter, membership list, mailing list) ended up concentrated in one person, and that is not sustainable nor advisable. So we need to divide those roles.

The President thanked Alexandra Lopes for taking on overall coordination of membership list matters.

- ii. The President apprised the committee that discussions with colleagues had resulted in the suggestion that rather than a single individual for website and one for the newsletter, it seemed a better solution to have small teams taking care of the website and the newsletter, with members coming from different parts of the world, to give us better connection to our various constituencies, gathering information from all areas and amplifying its resonance globally. They will have to work collaboratively within and across the teams, and a coordinator could be put in place to ensure coherence.

The President informed that she had been working on these teams and many colleagues have already confirmed their willingness to participate. She thanked them, and asked the committee to bear with her until this process is complete, and all the teams can be announced together.

- iii. The President pointed out that the website needed substantial rethinking which might lead to a new design altogether; she stressed the need to define the requirements and functionalities we need in order to arrive at the potential expenditure, which, she felt, might be substantial, depending upon our requirements.

The team in charge of the website would have to research this area, while continuing the work of updating the current website.

- iv. The President noted another possible expense that would support our work: the purchase of a software package (such as Microsoft Office).

This would greatly facilitate our communication between us and with our members – individual and national associations – as well as give us a secure space to keep our documents, archives, collaborative documents, offer secure

space for our national associations to communicate their membership lists and update them etc.

Security and consistency of data and avoiding constant moves is a significant priority.

A first look at possible cost using the Microsoft Office Suite appeared to be between 800 and 3500 dollars per year, depending on the number of people covered and the sophistication of the package to be purchased.

- iv. The third possible expense would be for employing an administrator to deal with all the day-to-day business and as many as possible of the tasks above (responding to email, routine updates to the website, entering the new members into the membership list, maintaining it, helping drafting the newsletter and sending it).

To ensure consistency and continuity, including across different terms when officers change, this should be someone who is able to do this work on a reasonably long-term basis – so more than a student helper or intern (though we can also have helpers and interns to help us)

Ideally this would also have to be someone who already has certain skills and experience (maintaining websites, managing mailing lists, simple databases, etc.). The cost could be quite high. Different jurisdictions may have different costs and legal requirements, but we'd still need to be sure that we do everything that is right and legal.

The President then shared with the members a summary outlining the three areas of expense detailed above (Part A) and the amounts available (Part B):

A.

- Website redevelopment (probably substantial but one-off)
- Software package to support and stabilize our communications structures (recurrent but not huge cost)
- A person to support us with all the work (recurrent cost, and potentially very expensive – depends on how much we ask the administrator to do)

B. Financial circumstances and discussion of order of priorities for expenditure

From the reports of the treasurers in June 2022 180,000 dollars in our bank accounts, all together but with different health for each of the three areas (Asia Pacific, Europe, Africa Middle East and Americas).

An overall (somewhat pessimistic estimate, to be on the safe side) of our regular annual costs to include the journal *Recherche Litteraire / Literary research*; the funds for research committees; the minimum expenses for website, mailing list server etc., appears to be, all together, c. 23,000 dollars per year.

One-off expense every 3 years are: a) US\$ 10,000 for the congress; b) a substantial amount was spent in preparation for the online elections in 2022; since this expense was largely for technical support to set up the online election platform and use it for the first time, this expense will be

reduced in the future; if we assume again (pessimistically) another 10-12,000 dollars, the overall sum every three years is about US\$ 21,000 – that is, an average of US\$ 7,000 per year.

Thus we can estimate our annual expenses at US\$ 30,000.

Our income, based on the number of members, is estimated as between 35,000 and 40,000 dollars per year. It can fluctuate and this is based on all members staying remaining members (in non-Congress-years the membership can drop).

The amount available for spending per year in addition to the regular expenses above would therefore be about 5000 dollars. This can fluctuate, with the membership; but the more and the better we can serve and support the community, the more stable the income should be.

Returning to the priorities for investment: the website redevelopment (one-off) can be paid for from the reserves; the purchase of software package may be paid for from existing funds and regular income, but in the current financial condition, there may not be enough money to pay for high level of professional experienced administrative help.

The President having laid out the issue in detail, a discussion followed.

- Adelaide Russo asked how much the election support from Digimentors cost. The President gave an approximate figure of 11,000 to 12,000 dollars, reiterating that this should go down in future.
- Anne Tomiche brought up the question of whether this was the right time to discuss if the membership fee should be raised, given the expenditure required.
- Adelaide Russo suggested that if we opted for 3 as priority, i.e, a professional part time helper, they may be able to deal with elections and membership list and may reduce other costs
- Matthew Reynolds felt that there could be no justification for keeping idle the large reserve of 180,000 dollars, and suggested that there should be a conservative policy on the amount of reserves (for example maintain only a 2-years reserve), and employ professional to help with website using the money we already have. This would be using the reserves for benefit of members. He emphasized that all measures advocated were crucial, and should be actively implemented.
- Adelaide Russo agreed and suggested that the kind of account held by the association should be different, wherein the accumulated reserves could be invested to increase the available funds for providing services and benefits to members. The President agreed and suggested that the treasurers, and officers analyse the accounts and decide on a reasonable reserve and its distribution across treasuries, decide on the minimum reserve for each

treasury and explore the income that can be generated at the lowest possible risk.

- Noting that it would be difficult to increase the membership fees with a reserve of the amount that we have, the President recommended that we make the association more visible and provide a wider range of services to members and then discuss the possibility of increasing the membership fees within the committee before making a decision.
- Yuriko Yamamata, as Treasurer for the Asia-Pacific, asked whether the introduction of software and the new process design would change the structure of the information flow. For example, she was the hub for the membership information of the Asia-Pacific which she then shared with the consolidated membership list of the ICLA. A direct access to a Sharepoint site would enable associations to send their information directly to the membership secretary instead of through the Treasurer.

The President replied that different treasuries, having a varying number of associations with their varied membership renewal schedules to deal with, may require different facilities, and that the information flow would not necessarily change for the Asia-Pacific treasury, unless it was agreed that it would be more efficient.

She then asked the members for their final decision on each of the proposals. Adelaide Russo stressed that we should consider ways to implement all three. There were no objections to the salient points and solutions that emerged from the discussion and the consensus was to work to implement all three proposals.

### 3. Visibility and expansion of research activities

Recalling the discussion about visibility of research in the last meeting, the President emphasized that we should not convey to our members the sense that the association is here to manage relationship rather than produce and support advanced research. In this regard, she had consulted with Matthew Reynolds (chair of Research Development Committee) and invited discussion on three areas

- i. First, whether the name “research committee” suggests a bureaucratic structure rather than, for example, “research groups”. The President invited a discussion regarding renaming them.  
Then ensued the discussion about renaming the research committees to reflect research rather than administration of research. Points that emerged in the discussion:
  - Some of the committees were time-bound while some were standing committees, i.e. permanent – how would the word “group” reflect this difference? (Zhang Longxi)
  - Chairs of research committees / groups inviting new members to join would need to explain the work of the committee / group as a

collective, and to current members how the change of name reflects that (Kitty Millet)

- To the suggestion that we may change the name in the promotional material available on the website, Helga Mitterbauer opined that the nomenclature used in the by-laws and that used in the promotional material on the website should tally – hence a change in the nomenclature would mean a change in the by-laws as well.

Summing up the discussion, the President said that though the meeting agreed that change was necessary, the direction of change could not be ascertained; some of those who have agreed to chair or participate in the research committees not being present, an immediate vote on the matter should be deferred; the Chair of the Research Development Committee could be informed of each committee's decision regarding the change of nomenclature, and a course of action emerging out of that could be put to vote by the EC via email.

- ii. Tracing the journey of successful time-limited research committees which have either completed their work (e.g., Dream Cultures) or become standing ones (e.g., Comics and Graphic Narratives) the President emphasized the need to encourage new committees, or groups, to keep the research alive and fresh and innovative. Increasing the visibility of research done by the committees would serve as an incentive for this.
- iii. Regarding, the visibility of the research the President made some suggestions emerging out of her discussion with Matthew Reynolds, Chair of the Research Development Committee, which would make the work of the presently functioning committees more visible, and encourage the founding of new research committees:
  - a. All committees should have a short video presenting their work, to be published on the committees' pages on the website
  - b. An annual lecture of the ICLA, both topic and lecturer emerging from the members and the work of the research committees. The lecture would be given online, or streamed, with the video then staying on our website.
  - c. An annual seminar or workshop, or possibly two per year, also promoting the work of the committees, also to be streamed online and published on the website.

#### 4. Development of a pedagogical focus

The President shared her thoughts on the developing of a pedagogical focus for the discipline, noting that the experience of working online has opened up the possibility of doing this on a global scale, more concretely and cheaply. This could cover both theoretical reflection on and practical application of comparative literature pedagogy. Examples can be:

- Sharing of resources and expertise among teachers: Providing, through our collective and world-wide expertise, a space on the website for rethinking and

discussing pedagogical models, approaches, syllabi and curricula, decolonising and diversifying the way we teach our subject; this can take various forms, such as a dedicated blog where people reflect on these issues, sample syllabi and accounts of experience of teaching differently and so on – via website and newsletter. It's the comparative nature of our association that is crucial, for example, decolonizing the curriculum in France or Germany will mean something very different from decolonizing in Ghana or in Egypt or in India or in China.

- Providing pedagogical and research training workshops for doctoral students in comparative literature, or early career teachers, either general, such as about methods of comparative study, or focused on particular areas, such as from gender studies or translation or studying comics and popular literature, etc.

The President informed that she had spoken in this regard to William Spurlin who was keen to collaborate with the ICLA on pedagogical and educational issues.

During the ensuing discussion, Adelaide Russo recalled that ACLA had subgroups for programme coordinators; Lobna Ismail said that this was a way of involving national associations who would have the facility of sharing their pedagogical and research insights and developments on the website–

Emanuelle dos Santos pointed out that pedagogy and research models must involve students and early career researchers. The President agreed that we should eschew a top-down approach ECARE could offer very good insights, especially about involving ECRs as producers of pedagogy and said that we could also consider a committee (group) for this, after a broad based discussion.

## 5. Future meeting(s) of the EC (2023, 2024)

The President invited suggestions and offers of hosting the EC meetings in the next two years, and said that we must decide whether we want to meet in person (which would entail a hybrid format so that those who could not attend in person could do so online) or whether the meeting should be entirely online.

Since Princeton university under the leadership of Sandra Bermann had expressed a desire to repeat the ECARE publication workshop held in 2021, the President hoped that one of the next EC meetings could be held in tandem with that.

## 6. Any other business

Finally, the President informed the committee that the certificate of the results of the 2022 election had been obtained by the election officer; though the convention is not to announce the number of votes received by each candidate, she stated that Anne Tomiche had polled the highest number of votes as Vice President, and hence, if the President were unable to continue in her position, the duties would be taken over by her.