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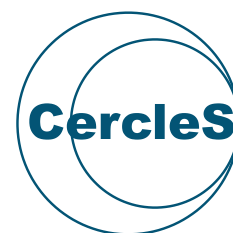
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E-bulletin



Dear colleagues

After long months under the ongoing influence of the pandemic, we have become skilled in adapting to the changing reality and to adjusting our teaching and management practices accordingly.

The data of the *CercleS survey on the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Language Teaching in Higher Education*, carried out between 30 March and 5 May, has offered the opportunity to present and discuss important outcomes at various occasions. You will find more information about the past events and upcoming activities in the following pages.

To further compensate for the loss of face-to-face professional exchange and personal encounters, the Executive Committee of CercleS has continued in the second half of 2021 to offer various webinars, workshops and meetings for peer exchange and peer support. You will find more information about upcoming events on [page 16](#).

Moreover, you can find out more about the second edition of the *Aspire to Inspire CercleS* training programme.

This e-bulletin pays special attention to the CercleS Focus Groups. Please gain some insights about the Focus Groups dedicated to Autonomy, Associate Members, Language Policy, Translation, Management & Leadership, Language Testing and Assessment, and Teacher Training, Teacher Education and Staff Exchange.

In addition, you will find Liliana Dorna-Szczuka's contributions to complete the ones offered by former CercleS presidents in the last e-bulletin.

With regard to the CercleS 30th Anniversary, the Executive Committee has selected an anniversary slogan from various applications. You can read more about it on [page 10](#).

And last but not least: please don't forget the call sent out by the CercleS Conference organisers in Porto; you will be reminded about it on the following pages.

We wish you a happy end of the teaching and/or examination period, a wonderful Christmas time and a promising start to 2022, and are looking forward to more digital and, hopefully, also face-to-face encounters next year.

Keep well and stay safe!

Yours,

Sabina Schaffner

We decided to dedicate this edition of the e-bulletin to the CercleS Focus Groups - communities that have formed based on the shared interests of members. There are currently 11 Focus Groups, of which 8 are profiled in this e-bulletin. For a list of all the FGs, a summary of their activities and the details of their coordinators, visit the [FG page](#) on our website. Members who have registered for the website can access more information and documents about FGs in the [member area](#).

FG Teacher Training, Teacher Development and Staff Exchange

The **Teacher Training, Teacher Development and Staff Exchange** Focus Group is intended to become a group of professionals whose objective is to enhance European cooperation in language-teacher development using the current expertise of all CercleS members within the field, providing fuller opportunities for language teachers' growth both in the light of their own needs and those of their students.

To the best of our knowledge, there are currently no databases that provide an overview of teacher-training and development programmes at universities, or of those activities and resources available at the European level. Language centres may therefore sometimes waste considerable energy and resources (both human and financial) when identifying needs and structuring development programmes on their own. This could lead to duplication, at the very least, across European countries, or even within a single country.

Currently the Focus group's initiative is orientated towards three areas. The first, and the most important one is to collect the data on the membership base to understand who we are, what we

teach and what institutional activities we are involved in. There is a questionnaire available to be completed by, ideally, all teachers of the CercleS full members as well as associate members. The outcome would give the answer to the core question.

Another area requires to collect the data on currently available development programmes delivered by the member institutions to all interested teachers or just in-house. Such in-house programmes, if provided on regular basis, can be easily transformed to the open-access ones. Comparing the programs with the teachers' duties will show the white areas where the interested institutions could concentrate on the introduction of new programmes. The institutions planning teacher mobility programmes and exchanges would benefit from the overview of the courses taught as well as training programmes available.

Last, but not least, the data collected would help the members or individual teachers to find the partners for their planned projects because they would provide the clear picture of the expertise residing in the individual member institutions.

The collected data will be accessible on the CercleS website for every interested CercleS member institution as well as individuals. The Focus Group plans to update the information cyclically and enhance the creation of development courses if the need occurs.

As the past experience shows, the effort of the Focus Group does not bring the expected outcomes without the close cooperation of all member institutions. So far, the response rate of the questionnaires disseminated was so low that the data could not be processed. Therefore, we invite all presidents of the member associations and all heads of the member institutions to pay attention to the initiative which, at the end of the day, will serve all of us.

Moreover, we would welcome the representatives of the associations to join our small group to personalise the bridge between the Focus Group and the individual associations.

If you need more information, want to comment on the initiative or offer the hand, please, contact us at the address below.

FG coordinator:

Helena Šajgalíková
(helena.sajgalikova@euba.sk)

FG Translation

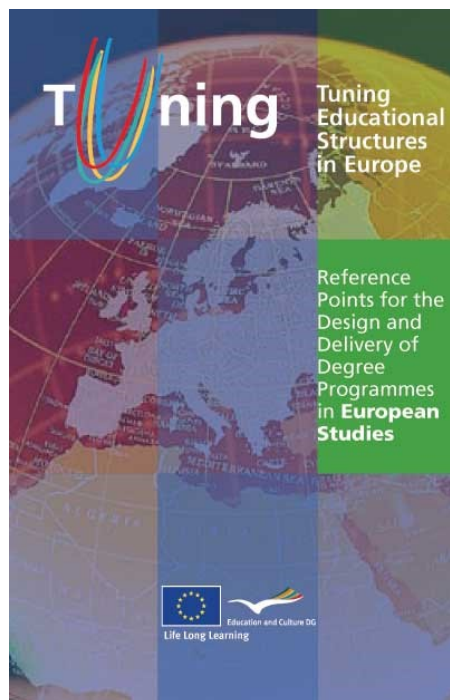
This focus group attends to and reflect the needs and concerns of CercleS members who work in the ambit of translation-service provision within university language services and those in other higher-education institutions. The fundamental purpose of this group is to cater to the specific interests and needs of these organisations. This includes identifying and developing a range of professional issues such as best professional practices, inter-institution terminology projects, the impact of ICT on our sector and—broadly—the mutual exchange of impressions and insights. The group is also open to and suitably positioned for an advisory role on the creation of academic terminology, its production at multilingual level and its informed and accorded alignment with on-going changes in higher education. The focus group is also concerned with issues of training and research in translation, how these issues can be managed and applied by university translation services and how they can be usefully approached as a point of connection between language centres and academic departments.

The Translation Focus Group (TFG) is now just over ten years old: we were formally established at a CercleS meeting in Nebrija University (Madrid) in November 2011. Currently, we have members in Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Since 2011, as our mission statement indicates, our group has been involved in activities that aim to connect with the daily working practices of its members

and that incorporate and underline the ambits of expertise that the group offers.

For several years, the principal concern of the TFG was related to the nomenclature-centred initiatives of the Tuning Project (Tuning Educational Structures in Europe: unideusto.org/tuningeu).



Close discussion with one of the two principal Tuning coordinators at Groningen University in the Netherlands was carried out through our TFG Netherlands representative, the late Dr Julia Harvey, with a view to establishing our group as the principal translation body for Tuning's requirements, but additionally—and more especially—to act as a think-tank and generator of academic nomenclature through consultation with Tuning and the TFG's national representatives. As our reps and members are all located in HE contexts, we believed that this would ensure not only an effective localisation of terminolo-

gy at a linguistic level but also a far greater level of conceptual precision in the production of its items.

Following this line of discussion, from 2014–2019, the group's approach to establishing broad-based activity was through the preparation and presentation of a terminology and style-guide project within the framework of the Erasmus+ initiatives, which would have provided us with the framework to work more concertedly with Tuning. During that lengthy phase, we were able to carry out valuable, innovative work with group members from Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal. The project proposals finally submitted were of a very high standard and were recognised as such by the Erasmus reviewers; ultimately, however, they did not succeed in being awarded the necessary funding to take them forward.

Following a careful review of this phase, the group then agreed to initiate a new collaborative project, but—adjusting this to the reality of our own circumstances—opted for a less institutionally ambitious path not dependent on first setting up an Erasmus framework.

To ensure that the work done by the TFG is of practical value to its members, we have set out (from 2020) on a new project that can be initiated and monitored in a more dynamic way, and, crucially, that provides all members with a tool to actively help them in their everyday work.

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We are therefore currently working on a multilingual Higher Education terminology database, modelled on significant member-produced resources already in use within the group. This database covers a variety of important areas that are common to HE contexts (administration, academic degrees, grades, governance, re-

search, teaching categories, study related items) and will facilitate a broad overview of comparative terminology across the CercleS spectrum. In turn, this will enable a more efficient and more accurate use of terminology across languages.

It is our hope that the final tool will be hosted by CercleS through its updated website.

Currently, translators in several languages are at work on this project within the group (these languages are Catalan, Czech, English, Finnish, Spanish and Swedish), and we hope to be able to add more to this in the near future.

FG coordinator:

David Owen
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FG Autonomy

Since CercleS was established in 1991, language centres have offered their learners various ways of improving their language skills. They are often innovative places where new pedagogical approaches and devices for language learning are proposed. Among the different learning possibilities offered to students in language centres, some aim at facilitating the development of learner autonomy. Some language centres indeed offer tools such as self-access centres, and language advising facilities that enable learners to take more control of their learning to support their autonomisation.

The purpose of this Focus Group (created in Nancy in 2015) is to investigate the relationships between learner autonomy and language centres. In order to do so, we think that it is first necessary to clarify the concept of autonomy, which on the one hand has been differently interpreted both in research and in practice, and which on the other hand has been evolving since its first introduction at the end of the 1970s. We plan to write up a synthesis (or a collective work - article or book) on

this topic as a collective contribution to the field of learner autonomy in language learning.

One of the first initiatives of this Focus Group in 2017 was to undertake a survey among language centres / members of CercleS in order to obtain a panorama of autonomous learning schemes and existing practices in as many different contexts as possible. The results of the questionnaire were first presented at the CercleS Conference in Poznan (2018) and then together with qualitative interviews of selected directors of language centres in 2020, in a second phase. At the CercleS Conference in Brno, 2020, the results were discussed and avenues for further reflection and development were illustrated (see also Chateau & Tassinari, 2021). The questionnaire was designed by one of the authors of the cited article, and supported by some colleagues from Ranacles (*Rassemblement National des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur*, the French national association for language centers and a member of CercleS).

The results of this initiative show

several main points to be taken into account. Fostering autonomy needs a learner-centred, flexible approach, which includes not only individual but also social learning opportunities in various learning environments and is supported in the form of tutoring or advising to enhance informed choices, decision-making, and reflection. Teachers need to be prepared to intervene as learning facilitators and support learners in pedagogical, methodological, technical, and personal issues. And, to be able to do this, they need opportunities for professional and personal development, for networking, sharing experiences and resources, reflecting on their work, and further developing in a community of practice. The Focus Group understands itself as one of the tools for this process and welcomes anyone interested in these issues or wishing to design learner-autonomy oriented programs.

FG coordinators:

Giovanna Tassinari
(giovanna.tassinari@fu-berlin.de)
and Justine Paris
(justine.paris@univ-paris-diderot.fr)

FG Associate Members

How it started

The formation of the Associate Members (AM) Focus Group (FG) was based on an attempt to bring together members from different Language Centres at tertiary level in different countries, who did not belong to national associations. The initiative was taken by Ms Olga Filipchuck, who was also our first FG coordinator, with the aim of sharing needs and practices and on focusing on expertise and challenges faced in AMs' Language Centres in different countries. This attempt was further enhanced at the CercleS conference in Poznan (6-8 September 2018) where the AMs tried to give some more concrete substance in the FG. However, the FG then went through some time of inactivity. So, here we are again with a "booster" shot - to use the current Covid terminology - trying to reshape our FG. In other words: the need for communication and

sharing is more necessary than ever and we are calling for contributions of ideas and activities.

Issues or topics that are focused on

Issues or topics that are focused on depend on the language teaching environment of each University Language Centre or individual language teachers. These could include the status of University Language Centres, policies, practices, challenges faced, as well as whatever other issue that arises based on their needs. Moreover,

Future plans or ideas

Our concrete plans include:

- arranging an online meeting with all the members of the FG to get to know each other and schedule regular meetings;

composing a list of the particular needs of each member of the FG and looking into ways CercleS could provide support;

making "pairs" or "smaller groups" within the FG (e.g. within the same country or with subject-specific universities) with the aim of carrying out small scale research projects. This could facilitate communication and activity within the FG; and

inviting cooperation with other FGs on common areas.

FG coordinators:

Androulla Athanasiou
(androulla.athanasiou@cut.ac.cy)
and *Eleni Kakrida*
(ekakrida@aua.gr)

FG Languages for Specific Purposes

The idea of a Focus Group on Languages for Specific Purposes emerged from a similar Special Interest Group we coordinate for AULC (Association for University Language Communities in the UK and Ireland).

We thought it would be particularly interesting to get a broader perspective from our European partners on what we saw as a growing field in foreign language teaching. Indeed, we had noticed a number of individual initiatives that had led

to the organisation of several Languages for Specific Purposes-related events across Europe. This Focus Group aims to integrate and sustain those efforts in order to establish and develop a dynamic network of LSP practitioners, representing the broadest possible range of languages and disciplines.

This network has allowed to broaden the scope of the annual LSPHE conference at which a slot is reserved to the Focus Group. In 2021, we had an online edition

hosted by the University of Bolzano in Italy and we're currently planning an in-person event for September 2022 at the University of York. We look forward to welcoming many of CERCLES members to this event, either as delegates or speakers.

FG coordinators:

David Tual
(dhpt2@cam.ac.uk)
and *Benoît Guilbaud*
(B.Guilbaud@sussex.ac.uk)

FG Management & Leadership

The CercleS Focus Group on Management & Leadership is a loose affiliation of Directors of language centres who share common interests and ideas, and is designed to develop ideas for shared projects, collaborations and wider shared strategic initiatives that can then be applied in individual language centres across the CercleS confederation.

The Focus Group was established in 2014 around the time of the CercleS conference in Fribourg, by 7 language centre Directors. The original convenor was Heidi Rontu, then Director of the language centre at Aalto University in Finland. The FG initially worked on a project to review concerns around the well-being of language centre Directors. This resulted in a survey and report published in 2015, and a paper published in the LLHE journal in 2016. Mark Critchley took over as Convenor of the group in 2016, and a strategy was developed at the CercleS conference in Calabria to use the network as a loose affiliation to support language centre Directors, in particular through a coaching and mentoring network and a mailing list to share ideas, questions and strategies of common interest.

Since 2016 the Focus Group has not been especially active in terms of projects, other than the

key initiative developed by a small group of colleagues to create the *Aspire to Inspire* training programme for managers and Directors working in language centres. The majority of the original founding members of the Focus Group have now moved on. Currently, the Focus Group includes around 20 members covering most of the CercleS national associations, although membership to date has largely been related to interests in specific initiatives. It is intended to revitalise the group as an active forum for discussion and collaboration as we emerge from the global pandemic. We want the Focus Group to grow in terms of numbers of participants, and that new collaborative projects will be developed that individual members can participate in at their discretion. Not every member of the Group will participate in every project, although it is intended that the results or outcomes of projects will be shared across CercleS. As we move into 2022, there are several key areas of interest for the Focus Group:

1. Activities or projects resulting from the CercleS survey on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Language Teaching in Higher Education;

2. Opportunities regarding the implementation of distributed leadership in language centres, and its implications for scholarship and professional development;

3. Opportunities for international collaboration between CercleS members through virtual exchange;

4. Opportunities for collaboration in the further development of inter-cultural communication/competence courses in CercleS member institutions (including training, scholarship and learning outcomes);

5. Development of a range of resources to complement the *Aspire to Inspire* training programme, and to support leaders and managers in language centres, especially those new to the role.

Beyond that the Focus Group principally exists as a forum to exchange ideas, information and strategy between language centre Directors and managers, and is open to anyone in a leadership role. Anyone wishing to join this Focus Group can contact the current coordinator (details below).

FG coordinator:

Mark Critchley
(mark.critchley@durham.ac.uk)

CercleS on the web & social media

Website 
cercles.org

Instagram 
[@cerclesgeneralsecretariat](https://www.instagram.com/cerclesgeneralsecretariat) CercleS organisation

YouTube 

Twitter 
[@_CercleS](https://twitter.com/_CercleS)

FG Language Testing and Assessment

Background to our Focus Group

The creation of the CercleS focus groups goes back to an initiative launched in 2009. On November 20th and 21st, 2009, CercleS members from different national associations met in Toulouse to discuss the needs of our members and the different focus groups that might be beneficial for our association, and to discuss responsibilities and future activities. The CercleS Focus Group “Language Testing and Assessment” has been active ever since and has had a certain impact on our network. In general, the Focus Group met at irregular intervals, in average approximately once every two years, being less active at certain times, and more active at others. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a stronger need for exchange of information, and the network have proven being particularly helpful.

Issues

Over the past 12 years the focus group has discussed aspects concerning the specificities of university language testing, minimum standards, European-wide standardised testing, task-based assessment, professional development needs, guidelines for teachers and examiners, codes of practice, quality assurance, mutual recognition, and more recently the impact of the content of the CEFR Companion Volume on testing and assessment. Finally, in the context of the COVID crisis, aspects like online testing, aca-

demic integrity and malpractice have become particularly important.

Outcomes

The CercleS Focus Group “Language Testing and Assessment” started with focus group meetings providing an exchange of information on practices, but soon developed a variety of different strands of activities, which can be summarised under the following headings:

• *Focus Group meetings:*

Since its launch in 2009 the CercleS Focus Group “Language Testing and Assessment” has created a (loose) network of practitioners and researchers. The meetings have initiated animated and fruitful discussions and have impacted our approach to testing and assessment, taking up ideas from colleagues in other countries.

• *Göttingen workshop on language teaching, learning and assessment:*

This initiative was launched in October 2009 and initially addressed only assessment, focussing at different language skills and different approaches to assessment. However, the group soon realised that assessment needs to go in line with teaching and has then moved to discussing both aspects, teaching and assessment, in a more coherent holistic approach. Workshops took place approximately every second year in October, i.e. the second one taking place in October 2011 and the following ones in 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019 and [2021](#).

• *NULTE network:*

The idea of creating a network of national university language certification systems was already discussed at the first focus group meeting in 2009 and then in more detail at the meeting in 2010 in Messina. In October 2015 the different certification systems within CercleS met in Göttingen for the first time to discuss the possibilities of cooperation and mutual recognition. This meeting had been initiated during the conference “New Challenges for Language Centres: towards mutual recognition of qualifications”, a European seminar to mark the 10th anniversary of the Language Centre at the Universitat Politècnica de València in Spain. While at the first meeting we realised a series of differences between our different approaches, the second meeting focused on the similarities; from there we moved to drafting a descriptive grid comparing our different systems. This table has then been used to describe the NULTE minimum standards for language testing and assessment. These minimum standards have been summarised in the NULTE Memorandum of Cooperation, which was finalised at a meeting in March 2018 and then signed during the CercleS conference in Poznań on September 7th, 2018, the date that marks the birth of our network – the “[Network of University Language Testers in Europe](#)” under the umbrella of CercleS.

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The NULTE members now meet at least twice a year. They have started close cooperation, exchanged hands-on experience and different views on assessment and launched joint projects; they aim at increasing language literacy in our national associations and at improving quality assurance in language testing and assessment.

• **Council of Europe project on the implementation of the CEFR Companion Volume:**

During the Council of Europe's launching conference of the [CEFR Companion Volume](#) in 2018 we initiated a project to discuss the implementation of the ideas of the CEFR Companion Volume at university language centres. This led to a series of more than 30 presentations, workshops, seminars and discussion rounds between May 2018 and November 2019, which addressed aspects like the four modes of communication and the four language skills, the CEFR's underlying action-oriented approach or the role of mediation in testing and assessment.

• **ECML Project "CEFR Companion Volume Implementation Toolbox":**

The Council of Europe project has also led to a three year project with the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, entitled "[CEFR Companion Volume Implementation Toolbox](#)" (or short: "VITbox project"), which started in 2020 and will be completed in 2022. This project aims at applying the ideas presented in the Companion Volume to the context of teaching, learning and assessing languages at university and in vocational training and at developing resources that teacher educators can use in initial teacher training and in professional development programmes; furthermore, teachers may use these resources for self-study purposes.

• **Network:**

The main outcome of this focus group, however, is the fact that members have exchanged knowledge and experiences about assessment practices across our different national associations, individual universities and national certification systems. This has led to a better un-

derstanding of needs, practices and challenges in different contexts, but also to joint workshops, seminars, projects and research activities. This European-wide collaboration has led to increased assessment literacy at our language centres, where the focus is often on teaching and learning, and less on testing and assessment.

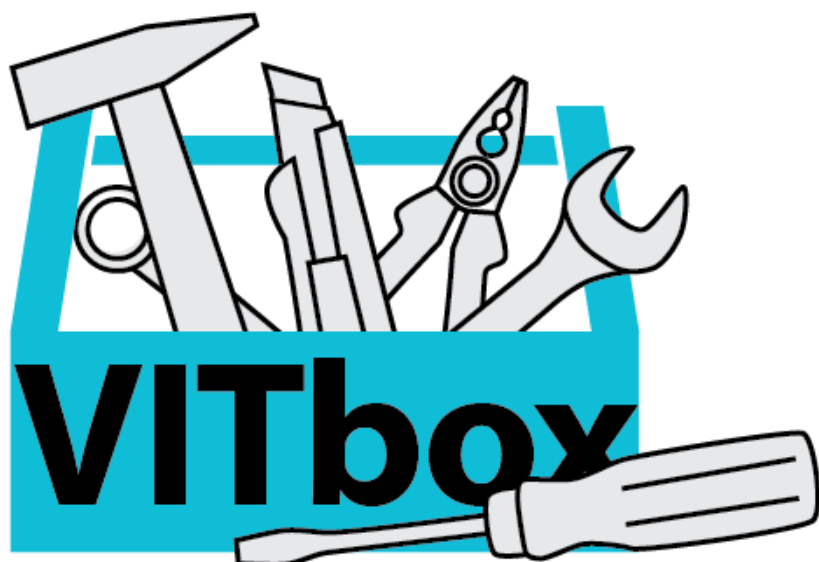
Challenges

Although our focus group has achieved many objectives and has had a strong impact on associations, institutions and individuals we still face major challenges:

- Different contexts require different approaches. This variety is enriching, but can sometimes also create obstacles. The exchange of information about different ways of approaching the same question needs to be continued and will help to build bridges and overcome these obstacles. We need to work towards increased harmonisation, while leaving every individual their personal room for manoeuvre, and make the best out of the differences we have identified.

- As far as the work of the focus group itself is concerned, the major challenge is continuity: at each focus group meeting different people were present, some attended more regularly than others, some came only once and did not come back; people took responsibilities but the expected continuity and outcomes did not always materialise.

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• The COVID 19 pandemic has been another major challenge for all of us, but the exchange of information and experience at institutional, regional, national and European level has helped us to manage the challenges of online (or on-site) testing in times of online teaching. This unprecedented situation has shown us more than ever how important and fruitful our network has become.

Opportunities

The review of the activities of the CercleS Focus Group on Language

Testing and Assessment has shown how much everybody can benefit from the activities. It helps to increase assessment literacy at various levels, to define minimum standards and other criteria of quality assurance in language testing and assessment at university and to understand the role of assessment in the context of teaching and when defining our learning objectives, i.e. when it comes to constructive alignment. The new CEFR Companion Volume has made us reflect on the objectives of assessment and on new approaches to testing and assessment, where the test-taker takes the role of a social agent during an exam situ-

ation that is integrated into an action-oriented and task-based scenario.

There are plenty of issues to discuss, to address and to develop further. With your active involvement and your personal contribution to our focus group we will increase assessment literacy and improve our examinations. Your participation can have an impact of assessment practices and together we can create new and better ways of testing.

FG Coordinator:

*Johann Fischer
(Johann.Fischer@zess.uni-goettingen.de)*

FG Language Policy

The aim of this focus group is to cover a wide variety of themes and to leave room for various activities and initiatives. The group may discuss and analyse the following questions:

What language policies have universities in Europe adopted so far? What form should or could a suitable university language policy take?

Is there a need for language centres to have a language policy? Do the individual National Associations have their own clearly defined language policy?

These were the main issues the group discussed in the past and produced a couple of documents about (see CercleS website: Focus

Group Language Policy).

But another important aspect to discuss is the CercleS Language Policy for all levels of activities. In all past CercleS conferences and meetings, this was always a point of discussion and dissent, and it surely remains a difficult field: to understand each other and to communicate within a big community of persons with so many different language horizons – without coming back to English only, by providing the option to present in different languages, but also without a situation such as a metaphorical Babel.

- What language policy should CercleS adopt?
- How can we contribute to creating plurilingualism within

CercleS and at CercleS events in order to reach our members that are not confident in English? How can we convey information across the different languages?

How can languages become a bridge rather than a barrier within CercleS?

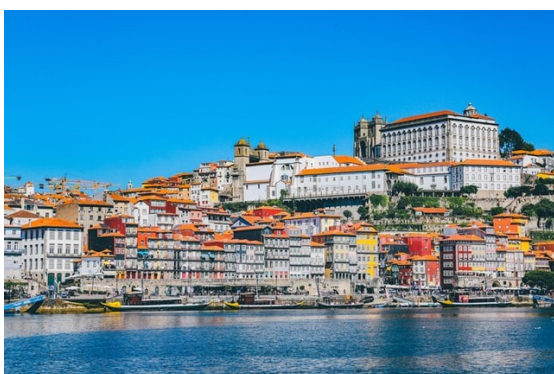
For a couple of years already, the former coordinator has been looking for new members and also for a future successor to coordinate the group with new ideas and answers for new needs. Looking forward to accompany this process (personally until April 2022)!

FG Coordinator:

*Regina Mügge
(regina.muegge@sprachenzentrum.uni-halle.de)*

SLOGAN COMPETITION

As part of our 30th anniversary celebrations, we invited submissions for an anniversary slogan, which can be used in emails and on PowerPoint slides throughout 2022. A number of very creative slogans were received, but the slogan that was selected is: **CercleS: 30 Years Putting Languages Centre Stage**, submitted by *Radboud in'to Languages* (NUT). One of their staff members will have their 2022 CercleS conference fees and conference dinner paid for by CercleS. Early next year, we will distribute a version that can be used by members.



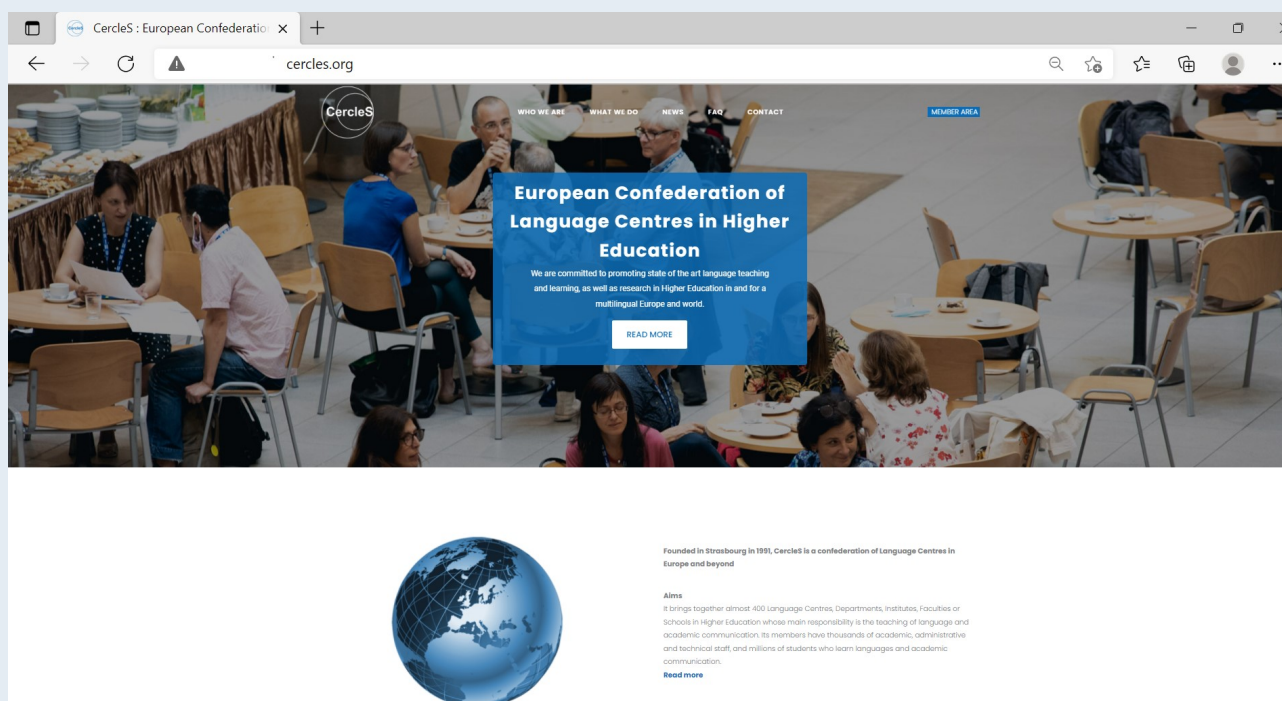
CALL FOR PAPERS: 2022 CERCLES CONFERENCE

We are very excited about the **XVII CercleS International Conference** that will take place in **Porto, Portugal 15-17 September 2022**, and invite you to submit papers on a range of very interesting topics. You can visit the conference website [here](#), and for details of the call for papers, please see the following [link](#). Deadline for submissions: 11 February 2022.

PLEASE REGISTER FOR THE NEW WEBSITE (cercles.org)

Please remember to register on the website, so that you can access the members' area, which contains information accessible only to members, a forum where you can post job advertisements and other discussion topics, and access to our journal, *Language Learning in Higher Education*.

Managers of Language Centres should use this [institutional registration link](#) to register their institution. *After institutional registration is completed*, please share this [individual staff profile link](#) with your staff so that they can create their own profiles. If they register, they will not need to use your login details to access the members' area of the website, but can do so on their own. (Please note the links are different—only the Language Centre manager should use the institutional link to register.)



Past presidents of CercleS share their memories and insights: 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 Ballesster, 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.

Update from the General Secretariat

Dear CercleS members,

Many things have happened in the recent months, but our association has kept on being active, even though the Covid crisis has now unfortunately affected us in our daily activities for more than a year and a half.

A Coordinating Committee meeting took place in a hybrid way in Nancy last September. It was the opportunity for the 8 members present to enjoy working together after all these months of distance only meetings.

Many webinars and workshops have been organized since last June and the recordings can be found on our YouTube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTizzIHoo6QeG-xWmfguOOQg)

[channel/UCTizzIHoo6QeG-xWmfguOOQg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTizzIHoo6QeG-xWmfguOOQg)). Moreover, the results of the CercleS survey “Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Language Teaching in Higher Education”, which ran from 30 March to 6 May 2021, can now be accessed from the research page of our website (<https://cercles.org/research/>).

Our new website, on which some members of the Executive Committee worked for almost 6 months, has now successfully been launched and is available in 3 languages (English, French and German) for all our members. For the moment, only 436 (as at 16 Dec) individual members have subscribed, but we really hope it will attract many more of you.

In 2021, CercleS has 365 institutional members (Language Centres) from 13 National Associations and 23 associate members. Since the new site allows **each staff member of these language centres** to register and create an account, the number of members using the site could increase rapidly. We really hope it will help attract more members’ attention notably to the Focus groups, some of which have outlined their activities in this issue.

The General Secretariat wishes you a very peaceful and relaxing end of the year and holiday season.

Anne Chateau and Mia Panisse



At the CC meeting in Nancy, France, about a third of the participants attended in person, and the rest attended online. From the left, in a clockwise direction: Anne Chateau (General Secretary), Sabina Schaffner (President), Cristina Pérez Guillot (ACLES), Marta Estella Clota, (Treasurer) Manuel Moreira da Silva (ReCLes) and Katja Hunfeld (NUT).

Update from the General Secretariat

Chers membres de CercleS,

Il s'est passé beaucoup de choses ces derniers mois, mais notre association a continué à être active, même si la crise Covid nous a malheureusement affectés dans nos activités quotidiennes depuis maintenant plus d'un an et demi.

Une réunion du Conseil de coordination a eu lieu de manière hybride à Nancy en septembre dernier. Ce fut l'occasion pour les 8 membres présents de prendre plaisir à travailler ensemble après tous ces mois de réunions à distance.

De nombreux webinaires et ateliers ont été organisés depuis juin dernier et les enregistrements sont disponibles sur notre chaîne 'YouTube' (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTizzIHoo6QeG-xWmfguOOg>).

[UCTizzIHoo6QeG-xWmfguOOg](https://cercles.org/research/)).

Par ailleurs, les résultats de l'enquête CercleS "Impact de la pandémie COVID-19 sur l'enseignement des langues dans l'enseignement supérieur", qui s'est déroulée du 30 mars au 6 mai 2021, sont désormais accessibles depuis la page recherche de notre site (<https://cercles.org/research/>).

En effet, notre nouveau site web, sur lequel certains membres du comité exécutif ont travaillé pendant près de 6 mois, a été lancé avec succès et est maintenant disponible en 3 langues (anglais, français et allemand) pour tous nos membres. Pour l'instant (au 16/12/21), seuls 436 membres se sont inscrits, mais nous espérons vraiment qu'il attirera beaucoup plus d'entre vous.

En 2021, CercleS compte en effet 365 membres institutionnels (centres de langues) issus de 13 associations nationales et 23 membres associés. Comme le nouveau site permet à chaque membre du personnel de ces centres de langues de s'inscrire et de créer un compte, le nombre de membres utilisant le site pourrait augmenter rapidement. Nous espérons vraiment qu'il devrait contribuer à attirer l'attention de plus de membres notamment sur les groupes de réflexion, dont vous pourrez lire la description dans ce numéro.

Le Secrétariat général vous souhaite une excellente fin d'année et de très bonnes fêtes.

Anne Chateau et Mia Panisse



The members of the Coordinating Committee and Executive Committee who participated in the hybrid CC meeting on 10-11 September in Nancy, France. From the top, left to right: Sabina Schaffner (President), Mark Critchley (AULC), Katja Hunfeld (NUT), Libor Štěpánek (CASALC CZ), Simone Klinge (VUS), Annick Rivens (RANACLES), Peter Gergel (CASALC SK), Manuel Moreira da Silva (ReCLES), Carmen Argondizzo (Vice-president), Mia Panisse (Deputy Secretary General), Nina Pilke (FINELC), Maïke Engelhardt (AKS), Stephan Meyer (SSH-CHES), Kinga Studzińska-Pasieka (SERMO), Zaan Bester (assistant to the General Secretariat), Alessandra Fazio (AICLU), Anne Chateau (General Secretary).

Update from the President

Second edition of CercleS Management and Leadership training: October 2022 – February 2023

The second edition will be organised in a blended format, combining synchronous online training meetings and asynchronous individual and cooperative study units with a face-to-face two-day seminar on 2-3 December 2022 in Berlin.

Elisabeth Paliot (HEIG-VD Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland) and Robert Koch (RWTH Aachen University, Germany) will be responsible for the Management Module, whereas Libor Štěpánek (Masaryk University, Czech Republic) and Sabina Schaffner (University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland) will be in charge of the Leadership Module.

From February 2022, further information will be available on the CercleS website and a call for applications will be sent out by the General Secretariat.

If you want to find out more about the training in the meantime, please have a look at the testimonials of two of the graduates of the first edition: Sara Cotelli's [Testimonial](#) and Andreas Vogel's [Testimonial](#).



Aspire
to inspire!

Cooperation with the ECML

As a CercleS delegate, Sabina Schaffner has been involved in the working group preparing a survey and two Think Tanks on "The future of language education in the light of Covid-19: Lessons learned and ways forward".

The [results and the webinar](#) are accessible on the ECML website. On 27-28 May, Sabina Schaffner took part in Think tank 1, followed by Think tank 2 on 20-21 September. At the [Colloquium on 14 December 2021](#), the outcomes of the initiative were presented, which include online think tanks, case studies by teachers, and a draft guide for language educators on how to cope with the kind of challenges caused by the pandemic. From the CercleS community, both Libor Štěpánek – one of our ECML delegates – and Sabina Schaffner, participated.

CercleS survey on the «Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Language Teaching in Higher Education»

The [CercleS survey "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Language Teaching in Higher Education"](#), which ran from 30 March to 5 May 2021, served to identify the conditions and forms of delivery of language teaching and learning in Higher Education during the COVID-19 pandemic, to define quality criteria of the different formats of language teaching and learning, and to inform future planning of CercleS training and development events. The working group under the leadership of Sabina Schaffner

with delegates from CercleS member institutions, Dr. Nebojša Radić from University of Cambridge (AULC), Isabella Stefanutti, University of Bath (AULC), Katarína Zamborova, Ekonomická Univerzita v Bratislave (CASALC), and Ruth Tobias, Freie Universität Berlin (AKS), who had designed the survey and developed the questionnaires for teaching and management staff and analysed the results from both questionnaires – addressing teaching and management staff – shared the outcomes with the CercleS community at a webinar at the end of June. 2021 A [recording of the webinar](#) is available on our YouTube channel. The results were also presented at international conferences in October and November 2021.

Workshops on the pedagogical implications for future language teaching in Higher Education (15 October 2021) and on a future Policy Statement based on the survey outcomes (19 November) were also held. The Policy Paper draft will be discussed and edited by an editorial team. It will be presented on 25 May at the CercleS Coordinating Committee meeting. The final version of the paper will be presented and discussed at the CercleS Conference, held from 15-17 September 2022 in Porto.

The results will also be consulted when planning further CercleS training activities, international cooperation and exchange projects.

Sabina Schaffner

Update from the Vice-President

NEWS from *Language Learning in Higher Education*

Dear CercleS Friends,

After the update we gave you in the June 2021 e-bulletin (refer to it if you missed the news about the Issues 10.2, a Special one on *Enhancing the Role of European University Language Centres: past achievements and future perspectives*, and the 11.1 based on the outcomes of the XVI CercleS Conference), we are ready to give you more information about the *LLHE Journal*.

Issue 11.2 has just been published (November 2021). The Issue, which is partly based on the outcomes of the XVI CercleS Conference, includes a variety of topics such as the *Outcomes of the CercleS Survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on foreign language teaching in higher education*; *Personality traits in language learning*; *Language assessment literacy*; *Translingual and transcultural competence*; *Hints on the Action-oriented*

approach; *Online diaries in the language classroom*; *Reading comprehension across learning styles*; *A meaningful use of Google in second language learning*; *Autonomy in learners with special needs*; *The application of eye movement desensitization on adults with foreign language anxiety*; *An investigation of teaching assistants' participation in meetings in a US academic context*; *The academic and professional profile of language teachers in the UK*; *A model for empowering actors and stakeholders in language curriculum development*. The papers offer interesting research insights that we want to share with all of you.

Currently, we are working on the 12.1 Issue which will be published in May 2022. Once again, the Issue will host papers which have been sent to us from academic contexts based all over the world. Moreover, a new Call for Papers for a Special Issue 12.2 (2022) was published in November 2021. You can find information in this e-

bulletin, and on CercleS and De Gruyter's websites. This Special Issue will be edited by two Guest Editors, Odette Gabaudan and Pilar Molina (Technical University of Dublin) and will focus on Language Education for Sustainable Development. If you want to submit a paper or an activity report related to this relevant and, nowadays, so meaningful topic, don't miss out the Call (submission date 31 January 2022).

We are also happy to announce that CercleS will organize two Webinars dedicated to *LLHE* in March and November 2022 with the aim of presenting and discussing the most relevant research studies covered in the 11.1 and 11.2 Issues (March 2022) and 12.1 and 12.2 Issues (November 2022).

We hope that the scientific papers published in the *LLHE Journal* can inspire you to carry out further research in the field of language learning and teaching.

Carmen Argondizzo

Events coming up in early 2022

Please make a note of the following online events taking place in January, February and March. For more online and face-to-face events offered by CercleS and National Associations, visit our website's [events calendar](#).

◆ 18 January 17:00-18:00 CET:

Leadership meeting, aimed specifically at Language Centre managers - Topic: "Contribution of CercleS language centres to the ambitions of CercleS internationalisation projects" (Chaired by Mark Critchley)

◆ 19 January 16:00-18:00 CET:

Johann Fischer talks about the VITbox project (details at www.ecml.at/companionvolumetoolbox)

◆ 22 February 17:00-18:30 CET:

Leadership meeting, aimed specifically at Language Centre managers - Topic: Peer coaching

◆ 25 March 16:00-18:00 CET:

Webinar on *LLHE* issues 11.1 & 11.2 - meet the authors of articles for a Q&A session about their papers

Update from the Treasurer

We would like to report on CercleS' finances. Please see the following brief comments about the budget.

Expenses

The development and redesign of the new website is the main item (€15,960) on the budget. It is followed by the subscription to the journal *Language Learning in Higher Education*. The invoice from De

Gruyter has not yet been received, which is the reason why it was not paid by 10th December. The travel expenses are lower than expected due to the pandemic and the consequent restrictions on mobility.

Income

The main item, as usual, is the membership fees. The majority of institutional members have already paid

their membership for 2021, and it is reasonable to expect that the pending payments will be received by the end of the year. As for the associate members, some of them have not paid their membership fee, and unfortunately have not replied to the reminder emails sent to them.

Marta Estella Clota and
Tom Grainger

Update CercleS Budget 2021 (Dec 10), accounting basis

Income				Expenditure			
	Budget	July	December		Budget	July	Statement Decem
Balance January 2021	101.625,92			FIXED COSTS			
Membership fees	39.500,00	31.691,11	32.991,11	Personnel costs	4.000,00	1.810,00	3.540,00
Institutional members (372)	37.200,00	30.091,11	31.391,11	Assistant to General Secret	3.500,00	1.345,00	2.895,00
Associate members (23)	2.300,00	1.600,00	1.600,00	Webpage assistant	500,00	465,00	645,00
Journal LLHE	2.150,00	2.227,04	2.227,04	Journal LLHE	15.325,00	750,00	750,00
Editorial and admin work	1.500,00	1.500,00	1.500,00	Subscription 2021 (35€/member)	13.825,00		
Royalty statement	650,00	727,04	727,04	Editorial work + copy editing	1.500	750,00	750,00
Aspire to Inspire fees (2020)		980,00	980,00	Bank fees and payment charges	100,00	109,23	129,21
					100,00	109,23	129,21
				Web and email	500,00	119,70	119,70
				Web hosting + e-mail	500,00	119,70	119,70
				Total fixed costs	19.925,00	2.788,93	4.538,91
				VARIABLE COSTS			
				Travel expenses (transport, accom., m	5.000,00		
				CC meeting	4.000,00		1.290,92
				Contribution to conferences	1000	5.000,00	3.024,00
				Contribution to Focus Groups	1000	3.000,00	
				Development / redesigning CercleS we	15.060,00	4.518,00	15.960,00
				Aspire to Inspire (2020 edition)		6.860,00	6.860,00
				Extraordinary/Unexpected expenses	1.000,00		
				Total variable costs	33.060,00	14.402,00	27.134,92
Total income	41.650,00	34.898,15	36.198,15	Total expenses	52.985,00	17.190,93	31.673,83
Total income + surplus							
Balance							

Record of Meetings

Executive Committee meetings held between June and December 2021:

- ♦ 19 August 2021
- ♦ 9 September 2021
- ♦ 8 October 2021
- ♦ 9 November 2021
- ♦ 14 December 2021

Joyeux Noël
Buon Natale
Merry Christmas
Schööni Wiehnacht
Bon Nadal
Geseënde Kersfees
God Jul 2021



Happy 2022!

Join us in creating promising **new perspectives**, inspiring **ideas**, dynamic **peer learning** and **innovative events!**

Anne, Sabina, Mia, Carmen, Marta, Tom and Zaan

Contact & Information

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SOCIAL MEDIA

Website: cercles.org

Instagram: [@cerclesgeneralsecretariat](https://www.instagram.com/cerclesgeneralsecretariat)

Twitter: [_CercleS](https://twitter.com/_CercleS)

YouTube: [CercleS organisation](https://www.youtube.com/CercleSorganisation)

STATISTICS & INFORMATION

Established

Strasbourg, France in 1991

Number of members

Within National

Associations: 365

Associate Members: 23

Meetings

Executive Committee

Monthly online

Coordinating Committee

Last meeting: 10-11.09.2021

Next meeting: 20 May 2022,
10:00-13:00 (online)

General Meeting

Biennially

Last general meeting: 04.09.2020

Conferences

Arranged

Biennially

Next Conference

*XVII CercleS International
Conference*

Date: 15-17 September 2022

Venue: Porto, Portugal (Instituto
Superior de Contabilidade e
Administracao do Porto)

The European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS) has been promoting interaction, cooperation and research between different institutions involved in language teaching since 1991.

