

The Principle of Subsidiarity in the FIT Context

(Memo approved by the FIT Council in Ottawa on 18 March 2017)

Introduction

Art. 38 of the FIT Bylaws states: "Matters that can be handled better at regional than at global level shall be dealt with by the relevant Regional Centre (principle of subsidiarity), unless there is an overriding global interest. In cases of doubt, the Council shall decide on the assignment of responsibility." This memo defines how that principle is to be interpreted and applied in practical relations between the Council and the Regional Centres (RCs).

FIT structure

FIT has set up RCs to meet the needs of associations of translators, interpreters and terminologists in specific regions (Art. 36 of the FIT Bylaws). The RCs discharge their mission on behalf of the FIT member organisations in their territory in accordance with the goals and principles set by the FIT Congress and implemented by the Council in order to ensure coordination and the global identity of the Federation. In so doing, they are accountable to both the Council and their constituent organisations.

The RCs can also be delegated by the Council to represent the Federation at meetings and other events taking place in the region where appropriate in order to facilitate organisation and save the Federation's travel costs.

Distribution of competences

It is not deemed expedient to draw up a long list of Council and RC competences because such a list will always turn out to be incomplete due to new or unforeseen developments.

RCs are obviously closer to the individual associations in their region and to specific regional institutions, such as EU institutions in Europe. Therefore they can handle certain matters better.

However, apart from clearly global matters, there are cases where added value can be provided if an action is carried out at a global rather than a regional level or where tasks can be handled more effectively globally than regionally.

Similarly, global actions can benefit from regional input, expertise and backing.

Needless to say, there are some instances where a certain amount of overlapping occurs. Three examples are:

- the representation of the Council and/or an RC at international events of purely regional institutions or at events of international institutions in the relevant region;
- the drafting of position papers on current issues in the world of translation, interpreting and terminology;
- the establishment and maintenance of contacts with institutions of not purely regional significance.

Consultation and coordination

Timely mutual consultation and information are essential in all matters relevant to RCs. The Council and RCs are not working for themselves, but rather for FIT, on the course set by the Council – the governing body between Congresses (Art. 28 of the FIT Bylaws). They must work together and with the same aims in mind, promoting the FIT brand. In order for these aims to progress concurrently, collinearly and in the same direction, continual communication and collaboration are essential. RCs and the Council cannot work independently. Collaboration is achieved and strengthened through the liaison officers on Council. Prior formal notification has also been guaranteed since September 2016 by the calendar for FIT office-bearers available on the FIT website. FIT office-holders at all levels will register their visits in the calendar well in advance whenever they act in their capacity as FIT representatives.

In the instances where roles overlap (for example in terms of attendance at events, or when issuing public statements or position papers, or when negotiating and entering into MoUs), the action to be taken has to be decided on a case-by-case basis in common agreement. Coordination and information sharing are essential to ensure a uniform stance vis-à-vis the outside world.

Dispute settlement

A spirit of goodwill generally prevails in relations between the Council and the RCs. As already stated, Art. 38 of the FIT Bylaws gives the FIT Council as the Federation's governing body between Congresses the final say in cases of doubt about the distribution of responsibilities. However, if any such case of doubt leads to serious friction between the Council and an RC, FIT Honorary Advisers may be called in to act as ombudsmen and mediate in the dispute. One Honorary Adviser has to be nominated by the Council and one by the RC concerned. These two Honorary Advisers then appoint a third person as chairperson. Together they hand down a binding decision within one month.

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Of interest in this context is the 2016 European Parliament fact sheet on "The Principle of Subsidiarity" available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_1.2.2.pdf