

Secretary General's Report

Council meeting March 29-30, 2015 in Baku (Azerbaijan)

The first report of the Secretary General is not only to report about achievements (very few in such a short time) but an occasion to present aims and how things can be done more efficiently and smoothly in the future.

Tasks of the SC

When I became FIT Secretary General, my immediate reaction was to look up the tasks in the Rules of Procedure: "Organising the Council & EC meetings and preparing documents in due time. Responsible for all minutes, receiving and dispatching all correspondences."

I understand that it is my duty (together with the ED) to be the information and communication resource for all Council members because it is the Council who has the final responsibility for FIT's work. Art. 39 of the Rules of Procedure say clearly: "The management and administration of FIT shall be vested in the Council. The latter may exercise all powers and perform all such acts as may be lawfully done..."

Limited EC meetings

Contrary to the last mandate with monthly EC meetings followed by ready-to-vote decisions for the Council, there have been only two EC meetings since the Congress because the aim is to give full power and work load back to the Council. Simply because the more people are involved, the more work they can do.

According to the by-laws, the EC is "answerable to it (the Council), always ensuring that the Council receives all information and support it needs to exercise its function as supreme FIT governing body between Congress meetings."

In particular, the EC has "to carry out the instructions specifically given to it by the Council or Congress, and to carry on the routine business ..." The EC has "to refer to the Council or Congress all matters for which specific instructions have not been received or for which there is no precedent", except for emergency decisions. Only the hiring of staff is in the hands of the EC.

For this reason, except for the EC meeting in November 2014 to redefine Jeannette's tasks, there was no item to be discussed by the EC. All routine tasks are in the hands of the secretary general, the executive director and the treasurer and all non routine items (i.e. needing discussion) have been put straight onto the Council agenda without discussing them first in the EC as in past mandates.

The requirement in the by-laws: "Under normal circumstances, the Executive Committee shall meet at least three times a year." is obsolete, since today we have a permanent secretariat and communication via the e-group of the Council and the newly created EC-group.

Admission procedure

Since the last Congress, FIT has received 4 applications; one of them is a change from observer to regular status.

The admission procedure is defined in Article 60 of the RoP: “Before being submitted to Council pursuant to Article 11 of the By-laws, applications for membership shall be submitted to the Executive Committee by the Secretary General, together with the relevant documentation that shall necessarily include the total number of members in the association. The Executive Committee acting alone or with the assistance of persons appointed for that purpose shall examine the acceptability of applications and submit them to the Council together with its recommendations for a decision.”

The last Council suggested that a standing committee should be set up to review new applications for membership. But the work of the admission committee (of which I was member in the last mandate) is purely administrative as it only consists in verifying that the applicant’s bylaws are compliant with the purposes of FIT and the membership criteria in the FIT by-laws (Art 1 to 9), and in particular in rejecting any commercial entity or primarily commercially oriented association (the limits are not always clear cut).

My experience on this committee (as with other ones) was that one person actually does the job and the others agree without checking. We don’t need a committee for that. That’s why I submitted the 4 applications mentioned above to the EC (with all necessary documents) and then sent the EC recommendation to the Council, ensuring that each Council member can access the same documents as the EC because the by-laws require that all information needed for Council’s decisions must be accessible.

FIT Communication

Better communication was the principal request of our member associations from the survey in 2007 and has become an essential part of the FIT action plan.

At the end of the last mandate, the FIT communication channels were: the FIT website, the FIT Newsletter, Translatio, the FIT Flash and FIT info, the scientific journal, Babel, and the Bibliography of translation related publications.

Separate reports have been submitted for Babel (Frans de Laet) and the website (Eva Malkki), so that I will just give you some thoughts about the following:

Members’ e-group

The e-group has been well adopted by the members. FIT can now contact all regular and associate members through this group; this means that FIT info and FIT Flash are unnecessary today, so Jeanette’s workload is significantly reduced since there is no longer any need to do the time-consuming layout as in the past.

The e-group has been used to inform members about FIT matters such as announcing new issues of Translatio, asking for comments on the Crowdsourcing paper etc. and it replaces the previous documents in a very smart and easy way. The e-group communication channel is even more efficient as all members can answer, forward or discuss all matters immediately.

The group was set up just before the congress and since then, Eva and Jeannette had have a lot of work to do to add the right addresses and to create a follow-up system ensuring that the group is not an open one, as it was to start with, but limited to one address per regular and associate member.

But Google groups are much less efficient than Yahoo groups. Google groups are only instant message exchanges; polls cannot be held, files cannot be deposited and there is no message archive search function and no statistics. I was not aware of this before. Should we change it into a Yahoo Group now? Now, after 3 months of experience, I would be pleased to propose that the Council discuss it and take a decision.

Translatio

The edition mode of Translatio has been changed: instead of having one single editor in charge of the whole edition as in the past, today the entire Council defines the content (in a special e-meeting) and a volunteer staff – currently 5 people - is doing the editing and the layout. This mode makes it possible to publish Translatio quarterly.

Babel

Frans de Laet who is responsible for Babel today, suggests in his report that a standing committee be set up for Babel. The work load to edit such a publication is too important for one person on a volunteer basis.

Translatio Bibliography

René Haeseryn has been editing the bibliographic review on translation related publications for a very long time. But for health reasons, he has postponed some issues of this publication and at the moment, there is little visibility about the next editions.

PR strategies and member recruitment

Real PR work is costly and time consuming. On the one hand, PR is necessary to enhance FIT's visibility, on the other hand, our personal and financial resources are limited. Are there any PR actions we can afford? Which ones? Marion prepared a long list of translator associations which are not FIT members who we could contact, at least to find out what they would expect from FIT.

Most of these points will be discussed in Baku under different parts of the agenda. I consider your views of great importance, and I would be grateful for them.