

CENL Executive Committee Meeting (33)

23 January 2023, 09:35-15:30 CET
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

Attendees

Frank Scholze, CENL Chair
Janne Andresoo, CENL Vice-Chair
Karin Grönvall, EC Treasurer
Laurence Engel, EC Member
Sara Lammens, EC Member
Hans Petschar, EC Member
Ivanka Stričević, EC Member
Susanne Oehlschläger, CENL Secretary

In attendance

Ophélie Ramonatxo, BNF
Hélène Bergès, BNF (from 10:40-11:30 CET)
Stefanie Schust, CENL Secretariat, minutes

Frank Scholze opened the meeting at 9:35 CET and welcomed all to the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

1. Approval of agenda

Paper 01

The agenda was approved with no further additions.

2. Minutes from last EC meeting, 28 September 2022

Paper 02

Minutes were approved with no further additions.

3. Matters and actions arising from minutes

Susanne Oehlschläger informed that all eight action items from the last meeting had been fulfilled.

The survey on European national libraries' support for Ukrainian libraries and cultural heritage was released on 18 January 2023.

Frank Scholze and Karin Grönvall had their appointment at the ING Germany in Frankfurt to sign a document and to clarify their identity. This was necessary because the bank only accepted the personal appearance of two EC members to be able to change the address of the CENL secretariat. Michael Duchardt who is responsible for finances at the CENL Secretariat has written to the bank again, but no cash balance paper has arrived yet. The issue will be discussed further in the Secretariat.

Regarding Action 5, a video meeting was held with the Treasurer on 5 December 2023, the results can be seen in the CENL Finance Update (Paper 04).

Action 6 included a video meeting with Ivanka Stričević, the results of which are included in Paper 08.

The Secretary further reported that after the EC meeting in September, the strategy for 2023-2025 was updated, as can be seen in Paper 06.

For the AGM 2023 in Paris, Guillaume Lafortune and Harri Sahavirta have been asked to give keynotes, and both have confirmed. Lyubov Andriivna Dubrovina agreed to send a pre-recorded video message again, giving an update of the current situation in Ukraine. For the status of the preparations for the AGM, see item 5.

4. Change of statutes

Paper 03

At its meeting in September 2022, the EC noted that it is likely to become the new normal that not all members will be able to attend an EC meeting. As the Statutes require all members to be present for valid decisions to be taken, a solution needs to be found.

The secretariat was asked to propose amendments to the statutes for discussion at the January 2023 meeting. The secretariat also had a look at whether further amendments were necessary.

The most important proposals for changes refer to Article 9, paragraphs 2, 6 and 7: A quorum is constituted when the majority (instead of all) of the EC members are present (paragraph 2) in person or by telephone or videoconference, or by proxy (paragraph 6). If a meeting is not possible, the decision-making process should be shortened from 2 months to 1 month (paragraph 7). Another change in Article 8, paragraph 1 refers to the number of members of the Executive Committee, for which previously no upper limit was given.

The EC members agreed that the Executive Committee should consist of no more than seven persons in order to achieve a balanced representation in relation to the number of 46 members (= 15% of members represented in the EC).

Karin Grönvall suggested that with the simple majority approach a very small group of EC members could make decisions.

So after a short discussion the EC members agreed that a 2/3 majority would make more sense in terms of attendance and quorum.

A short discussion followed on the proposed shorter period of one month for feedback in the decision-making process when a meeting is not possible: Laurence Engel wanted to mention in the statutes that this option is only to be used in urgent cases. The EC members pointed out that this process would only happen if the EC was unable to meet and an urgent decision needed to be taken. This situation was considered as very unlikely to happen after the other changes (2/3 majority and the possibility to attend the meeting by telephone or video or by proxy) were made. It was also clarified that proxy does not mean that any other person can be sent instead of the EC member but only another EC member.

Susanne Oehlschläger suggested that some of the inconsistencies in the English text (e.g. presented/represented) might be a translation issue as the original text of the statutes is in Dutch. Sara Lammens offered to have a closer look at the Dutch version, and the Chair asked the Secretary to prepare a new draft of the statutes with the changes discussed.

- **ACTION 1:**

The Secretary to prepare a new draft of the amendments to the statutes by the next EC meeting in April.

5. CENL Finance Update

Papers 04, 04a and 04b

The Chair reported on the discussions after the last EC meeting on the use of reserves (Paper 04a). The background to this is the recurring discussion about how the large assets of CENL could be sensibly reduced for the benefit of the members.

As the income from membership fees and the fixed expenses are almost equal, the reserves are needed for all other activities. Frank Scholze explained that the reserves are therefore the only possible way to act and to create, which he sees as one of the tasks of the EC to make this possible for the members. As fixed costs cannot be reduced, he proposed to proceed as before with a moderate overspending over time.

Susanne Oehlschläger added that the Secretariat had reviewed the accumulation of assets: for example, people had not travelled during the pandemic, so Grants and Bursaries and the money from the Network Groups had not been used as much as before. But now that circumstances have improved, members are travelling more, which creates costs, just like the expenses through the CENL website. All these measures have contributed to decline in assets, which means that there is no way to operate without money from the reserves.

A discussion arose about how to explain this to the Board of Directors. Hans Petschar reported on a debate among the members who felt that the reserves were very large and therefore considered that there was more than enough money to spend. He also pointed out that the Network Groups and Grants and Bursaries might become more expensive in the future and was in favour of setting a ceiling for spending from the reserves. Frank Scholze explained that it is difficult to determine a sum above which the reserves should no longer be used as the expenses are not always the same. He suggested to present the EC proposal at the Paris AGM and see what the members think about it as it is their decision. But in 10 years' time at the latest, it would be clear whether Network Groups and Grants and Bursaries would still be possible.

Susanne Oehlschläger added that the Secretariat recalculates membership fees from time to time. The last adjustment of the membership fees was decided at the AGM in 2021 and is in force since 2022. For those who have to pay more, only since 2023. If the budget were to be prepared without recourse to the reserves, the membership fees would have to be increased. The Board of Directors would have to be informed that this was for their benefit. Should the situation change over the years, the matter would have to be reviewed.

Regarding financial support for members travelling to Paris, EC members agreed to the Secretariat's preferred option 1 (€1,000 for members paying fees of €750-1,000) as set out in Paper 04b. Susanne Oehlschläger reported on the proposal to release Ukraine from the 2023 membership fees. Although the Ukrainian member did not ask for it yet, it was preferred not to charge them this year.

6. CENL Annual General Meeting 2023

Paper 05

Preparations for the AGM in Paris are in progress, a first draft programme has been prepared.

Frank Scholze opened up the possibility of including a video message from Claudia Roth, the German State Minister for Culture and Media, in the programme. To highlight the German-French cooperation, the Chair emphasised that a video message from the French minister of culture

would also be a good way to include two political statements. Laurence Engel welcomed the idea and agreed to ask the French Minister for a video message. The EC members agreed to put both statements at the beginning of the meeting on Monday when the welcome takes place. Frank Scholze pointed out that the German minister should only speak when her French counterpart also speaks. Regarding the programme, Sara Lammens felt that there was not enough time for members to speak. It was suggested to shorten the lunch break and to fill the free time with content from the members instead. Susanne Oehlschläger recalled that after the Brussels meeting, the EC wanted to have more time for informal talks, and that the experience from Ankara had shown that members very much welcomed these breaks. Basically, it will be necessary to wait for the results of the Call for Contributions, as the Secretariat had not yet received many responses to the call and it was therefore not yet possible to estimate the participation of members.

The EC members decided to move the lunch break to 13:00 CET and preferred to shorten the speaking time of the keynote speakers rather than the Q&As. Ivanka Stričević and Sara Lammens added that it would be good to have time after the presentations for members to reflect in smaller groups on what had been said. Regarding the time allocation, it was preferred to have the passive parts before and the active parts after lunch. Laurence Engel suggested for the next AGM that it might in general make more sense to agree on fewer keynote speakers in order to have more time for members' content.

A discussion ensued on whether it would also be possible for non-directors to participate in the AGM. Both Frank Scholze and Hans Petschar saw this as a change in format. In their view, it is a conference for the Directors, which was very strictly adhered to at the AGM in Ankara. As the host of the event, the exception is that staff members who are involved - in whatever capacity - in the organisation of the AGM can participate. The Chair refused to open the meeting to everyone.

Hélène Bergès gave an overview of the cultural programme on 18 June, which can be found in Paper 05. She mentioned that they are planning for 60 people, but for organisational reasons she asked for confirmation of the number of attendees, if possible, one week before the AGM at the latest. From Monday to Tuesday the AGM will be held in the François Mitterrand building in Tower 2. Three rooms have already been booked where breakout sessions can be offered to members. For all members who still have some time after the AGM, a visit to an exhibition is also planned.

Sara Lammens and Frank Scholze pointed out that it was important to inform members that they should buy tickets for the Metro in advance (in the TGV or at the airport) to avoid longer waiting times or to at least calculate some time.

Following this, Ophélie Ramonatxo gave a short tour of tower 2 of the BnF and presented the EC members the Belvédère meeting room where the AGM will be held in June.

- **ACTION 2:**
Laurence Engel will ask the French Minister to record a video message for the AGM.
- **ACTION 3:**
CENL Secretariat: Inform CENL members who will be attending the AGM in Paris that they should buy Metro tickets in advance to avoid longer waiting times.

7. Strategy 2023-2025

Paper 06

The Secretary prepared a new draft of the 2023-2025 Strategy to be presented as a final draft before the AGM in Paris.

Ivanka Stričević saw some issues of language in the draft. She felt that the wording is too much about libraries in general, but not about management aspects and how directors can be helped to achieve their goals through CENL. She asked how this is different from IFLA's strategy. Both have the same approach, but they are two different associations.

Hans Petschar suggested adding a sentence in the CENL mission that it is a Conference of national librarians instead of talking about national libraries.

Frank Scholze addressed Ivanka Stričević's comment to delete the word "world-leading memory institutions" and use the phrase "leading memory institutions" instead. The Chair asked Hans Petschar to send his proposed wording for the strategy to the Secretariat so that they can prepare a new draft by the next EC meeting.

- **ACTION 4:**
Hans Petschar/CENL Secretariat: Submit a new draft strategy with discussed changes by the next EC meeting in April.

8. Network Groups Update and Applications

Paper 07

The Secretariat received a total of seven applications for the Network Groups. Three of them were re-applications and four were new applications. In order to facilitate the evaluation of the applications, the Secretariat prepared a list of criteria to ensure a relatively objective evaluation of the applications as a basis for the EC discussion of the EC. According to the Secretariat, ideally no more than three Network Groups should be selected.

There was a brief but intense discussion about the influence of the individual criteria on the decision to set up the network groups. Some felt that the existing groups had an advantage over colleagues applying for the first time. In the end, it was agreed that the results of the assessments based on the criteria of the Secretariat and the resulting scores should only give a first indication. And they also supported the inclusion of new groups.

Each application was then discussed in detail.

Reading History and Reading Habits

The EC thanked for the application and agreed that reading history and reading habits are important subjects for national libraries. However, they felt that the proposal was too focused and sounded more like a research project than a Network Group. In addition, the names of persons for the group do not represent a large geographical area. Hans Petschar suggested that the group could contact the re-established Books and Audiences Network Group (BANG) and consider joining that group.

Open Science

The EC members acknowledged the importance of addressing the issue of open science in national libraries. However, they agreed unanimously that the topic seemed to be well covered by other stakeholders. The EC felt that it is more of an issue for academic libraries and should be discussed with other stakeholders like LIBER, SPARC Europe, OpenAire, etc. who are probably more active in this field. The EC suggested that the applicants consider eventually forming a CENL Dialogue Forum with active relevant stakeholders in open science.

Copyright

The Executive Committee stressed the fact that copyright issues continue to be a most important topic for national libraries, and thanked the former network group for their work. However, the EC agreed unanimously that in this term they want to support the establishment of a new

network group. After a break of three years, the applicants will be free to apply again for the next term in 2025.

Climate Change

The EC discussed the importance of addressing the issue of climate change in national libraries. However, the EC agreed unanimously that the topic is a very broad one and at the same time a topic that is dealt with in various ways in the CENL member countries. Furthermore, the application was not complete as there were no rules allocated.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Although the proposal was also submitted incomplete, the EC members saw a more urgent need for discussion among CENL members on this issue. This could address not only the different ways of dealing with values that present an LGBTQ+ unfriendly environment, but also how diversity can be dealt with in terms of language. The applicant shall be asked to complete the process and elect chair, secretary and treasurer as soon as possible.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Due to the importance of that topic for national libraries and the good work done by the group in the past three years and the evaluation by the EC members agreed to accept the application of this group for another term.

Books and Audiences (BANG)

As this group was one of the most active ones and in light of the assessment of the applications, the EC agreed to continue that group.

The following are thus accepted as new network groups: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Books and Audiences (BANG) and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

The Secretariat may notify applicants for these groups that their applications have been accepted.

If as announced, the AI (or another Network Group) wishes to discontinue after one year, the Secretariat is keeping open the possibility of establishing another Network Group in the near future.

- **ACTION 5:**

- CENL Secretariat: Notification of all applicants of the EC's decision regarding the Network Groups.

9. Bursaries and Grants Update

Paper 08

On 5 December 2022 the Chair, the Secretary and Sabine Schrimpf who is responsible for Funds and Grants at the secretariat met online with Ivanka Stričević to discuss the idea of a new fund for Endangered Cultural Heritage. The discussion led to the conclusion that no new Fund for Endangered Cultural Heritage should be established. Instead of this, the Secretariat proposed a more proactive perspective with an Emergency Planning Fund (EPF). The new fund should be open to all members: Those who do not yet have an emergency plan for their library would be supported, the others could have their emergency plan evaluated. Frank Scholze explained that the condition is that every member should be able to apply for it once, so it would be a temporary fund running out of time naturally. Currently, €10,000 are available in the 2023 budget for funds, a new fund needed an extra budget. Therefore, the Board of Directors would have to decide on it at the AGM in Paris, so applications could only be submitted after June. Regarding the number of EPFs, the Secretariat proposed to start with 5 funds and to endow them with €1,500.

The EC members pointed out that setting up a new programme would be a lot of work and there was little time available for it. They also wondered whether there would be interest among the members for such a fund and whether it would not be better to invest more money in one project. Hans Petschar suggested that during the AGM in Paris, the members should be asked in the discussion groups whether they see urgent need in this area. Sara Lammens supported this idea. Ivanka Stričević suggested that before the AGM there should be a survey of the status in each member library. Even without feedback, time could be set aside at the AGM for discussion with members.

- **ACTION 6:**

- CENL Secretariat: Prepare a survey of all CENL members before the AGM on the status of their libraries with emergency plans and their need for support from CENL.

10. Dialogue Forum

Currently there are two Dialogue Forums within CENL.

The CENL FEP Dialogue Forum has met once, and the Chair Ute Schwens from the German National Library will be asked to submit a report for the AGM in Paris, even though informal groups are not obliged to do so.

Frank Scholze reported that the Dialogue Forum National Libraries as Data had their second meeting in December 2022. Another meeting is planned for March to bring together a smaller group where more experts will share ideas on how to build the group step by step before opening it up to all CENL members. Another group meeting is planned for June during the DARIAH conference in Budapest.

Sara Lammens asked if the National Libraries as Data Dialogue Forum should be mentioned in the newsletter. Frank Scholze replied that it was too early for that, but as soon as there was something to report, it could be included in the CENL newsletter, probably in March or April.

Karin Grönvall said that the name "National Libraries as Data" seemed too general to her, as it was not clear who the group represented. Ivanka Stričević agreed and suggested renaming the group "CENL Dialogue Forum National Libraries as Data" to be more consistent.

All EC members agreed that the Dialogue Forum should not be left to the experts alone but that it was necessary to wait until the next EC meeting in April to observe the group's developments.

11. Any other business

The next EC meeting will take place on 17 April from 14:00-17:00 CET via video conference.

Rotterdam was suggested as the venue for the next face-to-face meeting as it could be combined with the 88th IFLA General Conference and Assembly in August. However, as not all EC members can confirm their presence, it was agreed that the EC meeting will be held in Stockholm on 18 September 2023 instead.

Frank Scholze wondered if all EC members would be willing to exchange their mobile phone numbers for emergencies. All agreed and were asked to send their numbers to Susanne Oehlschläger who will set up a WhatsApp group.

Janne Andresoo asked about the contact with colleagues from the Italian national libraries. Frank Scholze reported that it was pretty difficult to get in touch with them, and that there was not too much hope that they would come to the Paris AGM. However, he promised to check again with Dr Luca Bellingeri from the Central National Library of Florence in particular.

The Chair thanked everyone for a productive meeting and concluded the first EC meeting of the year.

Summary of actions:

- **ACTION 1:**
 The Secretary to prepare a new draft of the amendments to the statutes by the next EC meeting in April.
- **ACTION 2:**
 Laurence Engel will ask the French Minister to record a video message for the AGM.
- **ACTION 3:**
 CENL Secretariat: Inform CENL members who will be attending the AGM in Paris that they should buy Metro tickets in advance to avoid longer waiting times.
- **ACTION 4:**
 CENL Secretariat: Submit a new draft strategy with discussed changes by the next EC meeting in April.
- **ACTION 5:**
 CENL Secretariat: Notification of all applicants of the EC's decision regarding the Network Groups.
- **ACTION 6:**
 CENL Secretariat: Prepare a survey of all CENL members before the AGM on the status of their libraries with emergency plans and their need for support from CENL.

DRAFT