

CENL Executive Committee Meeting (38)

14 October 2024, 09:20-15:00 CEST

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek / National Library of Austria, Vienna

Attendees

Frank Scholze, CENL Chair

Gilles Pécout, Vice Chair (online, from 09:20-12:00 CEST)

Karin Grönvall, EC Treasurer (online, from 10:20-12:00 CEST)

Tomáš Foltýn, EC Member

Sara Lammens, EC Member

Ivanka Stričević, EC Member

Susanne Oehlschläger, CENL Secretary

In attendance

Hélène Bergès, BnF (online, from 14:15-15:00 CEST)

Stefanie Schust, CENL Secretariat, minutes

Frank Scholze welcomed all EC members, especially the two new EC members Gilles Pécout and Tomáš Foltýn, and started the hybrid meeting at 09:20 CEST.

1. Approval of the agenda

Paper 01

The agenda was approved by all, with no additional points.

2. Minutes of the last EC meeting, 28 March 2024

Paper 02

The minutes were approved without further additions.

3. Matters and actions arising from EC minutes

No matters and actions arose.

4. Reports by Chair und EC members

Frank Scholze took this opportunity to ask EC members what had been important for them after the AGM in Warsaw and which events they had attended. He reported that a total of 13 changes of Directors had taken place within CENL so far in 2024 and that he had held online meetings with most of the new CENL members to welcome them and establish connections. The Chair had a particularly positive impression of the new members from Greece and Spain, who expressed a strong commitment to promote international exchange and support CENL. Even though not all new members were able to travel to the AGM in Warsaw, he emphasised his dedication to keep in touch with all of them. The next online meetings are planned with Wilma van Weezenbeek (National Library of the Netherlands) and Jovica Nikchevski (National and University Library 'St Clement of Ohrid', North Macedonia).

He also spoke about the LIBER 2024 Annual Conference in Limassol, Cyprus, from 2-6 July 2024, which he found to be a very good meeting with open discussions with the LIBER Board. There was a clear interest in Open Science, and it was discussed how national libraries could help to support this. However, it was noted that the situation varies across countries. Furthermore, artificial intelligence is still a controversial topic. A memorandum of understanding is currently under development. German copyright law would still allow some room for manoeuvre, has been included in the discussions. Frank Scholze went on to say that there was mutual agreement on the LIBER Board that it would be very helpful to have more conversations about this subject. While National libraries have some insights on these issues a more detailed and continuous exchange would be beneficial. The Chair suggested that this could perhaps be established as a new format within CENL. He emphasised the importance of having Sara Lammens as well on the EC of CENL and the Executive Board of LIBER. It could be considered whether there could be meetings between LIBER and CENL or the EC. It could also be worth considering inviting a representative of LIBER to the AGM. Although the relationship between LIBER and CENL is very positive, it should be noted that LIBER has a much stronger focus on Open Science than some national libraries.

Tomáš Foltýn reported on a European Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group on public libraries, which strengthens cooperation between EU countries. Representatives from EU countries are working on guidelines for the European Commission. Guidelines are to be published at the end of next year. Only a few library experts are involved here; the majority are people from local ministries and governments. The group explores the future of public libraries and, in particular, how to strengthen the multiple roles of libraries as gateways to and transmitters of cultural works, skills and European values. He emphasised the importance of this working group and promised to report on the developments, in particular the summary of the local strategies of the national libraries. Ivanka Stričević expressed her concern that the group will serve the EU Commission, as this could be of great impact. It could become a problem as the group would be led by non-librarians. She reported that the Croatian Ministry had asked her to send the best librarians from her institution to the group, as this would result in an important document. That is why it is so important that the perspective of the national libraries is brought into the group. Frank Scholze added that there is indeed a group of experts advising the OMC group and mentioned Frédéric Döhl from the German National Library. Tomáš Foltýn underlined that the resulting guidelines will have an impact on libraries; the process would be democratic. The IFLA headquarters will also be involved. A meeting will take place at the beginning of November. If anything important for CENL comes out of this meeting, he will report it immediately. It was suggested that the draft of the guidelines that is expected to be ready in Summer 2025 should be sent to CENL.

Another issue was the Conference of National Libraries (CDNL) in Brisbane, Australia, in October. Under the topic 'Cyber-security threats and what they require from us as leaders – before, after and during a cyber-security incident', the cyber-attacks on the National Library of the Czech Republic and the British Library were also discussed. Tomáš Foltýn was glad about the exchange of different solutions. Overall, he described the conference as very productive and he was pleased that Tomasz Makowski, Director General of the National Library of Poland, was elected as the new Vice- Chair of CDNL. Frank Scholze agreed that this would provide a good link between CENL and CDNL.

5. Minutes from AGM 2024 in Warsaw (Draft) and review of AGM 2024

Paper 03

The EC members thanked Katharina Schöneborn and Stefanie Schust for taking the minutes at the AGM in Warsaw, which was a very huge task.

Ivanka Stričević had an addition to item 8 of the minutes, which concerns the situation in North Macedonia: For better understanding, she suggested to add that Maja Micevska is no longer a member of the EC. Frank Scholze took the opportunity to explain the process in more detail to the other EC members: As it turned out after the election, Maja Micevska had applied for the EC without the permission of her own Director General. This led to Rahmetula Kuqi's statement that she was no longer authorised to represent the National and University Library "St Clement of Ohrid" within CENL. Due to the change of Director General, Maja Micevska has been allowed to rejoin the Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Network Group (EEDI). The Chair explained that the lesson to be learnt from this experience was that in the next application phase for the EC, care should be taken to ensure that the application either comes from a member or that there is a written statement from the member that a staff member is allowed to apply.

All EC members were in favour of the clarification in the minutes. The minutes for the AGM 2024 will be officially approved by the Board of Directors at the next AGM in 2025.

Action Point 1:

The CENL Secretariat will add to the minutes of the AGM 2024 the point that Maja Micevska will no longer be part of the Executive Committee.

6. Matters and actions arising from AGM 2024 minutes

Under this item, the EC members discussed their impressions of the AGM in Warsaw and what they thought could be improved. Ivanka Stričević found the program very meaningful and good. She particularly complimented the good combination of panels and group work. Sara Lammens agreed and felt that the programme was even stronger than last year. However, in her opinion, the transport from the accommodation to the venue was difficult. She felt that it should have been better organised.

The Chair agreed that it was a good balance of meaningful topics that would affect all national libraries. It is important for CENL to focus on Directors of National Libraries. The EC members appreciated the many interactive parts that made it possible to look at the topics from different point of views. All AGMs are special in their own way, but in direct comparison with other conferences in which librarians participate, the AGM in Warsaw was perceived as the best conference in 2024.

Frank Scholze added that the crucial point for him was that the CENL AGMs should not be too large in terms of the number of attendants. Care must be taken to ensure that it remains familiar and that colleagues can still be involved. There should, however, always be a limit to the number of people who attend. Poland had done this very well at this year's AGM, but it would also depend very much on the host, who would bear the costs. In addition, it is not justified that colleagues have to travel to the AGM for a 10-minute presentation. Frank Scholze summarised that it should be communicated that it is always possible for speakers to join in via video conference and that they do not have to come on site. Directors should as a general rule not be

accompanied by more than one person. Only the CENL Secretariat is likely to differ, as this is where all the work is done.

Another topic concerned the revision of the statutes, which has now been finalised. This highly formalised process has taught a lot about the Dutch Notary's and law, as it is now clear that changes must always be voted on the basis of the original language. Susanne Oehlschläger added that most EC members are now also registered. Ivanka Stričević mentioned that the notary's office had sent her a confirmation letter in which Yugoslavia was still listed as the country instead of Croatia. Although all other information was accurate, this correction has still not been made, which the EC members regretted.

7. Financial Update

Paper 04

It was reported that Michael Duchardt from the CENL Secretariat will be retiring at the beginning of 2025. Sabina Henn from the German National Library will take over. She will be the new contact person for CENL financial matters at the CENL Secretariat.

The treasurer explained that moderate overspending was continuing as planned and approved by the Board of Directors. 5,000 euros had been reserved for a possible emergency planning fund. Frank Scholze considered making another offer to RSM if a more favourable offer could not be obtained from another company. The CENL Secretariat was instructed to look for other auditing firms that might perform audits at a lower cost.

Sara Lammens expressed her disappointment to see that so many bursaries and grants would remain unused and asked for this to be checked again. Frank Scholze replied that the Secretariat would try to maintain communication about the grants and funding programmes in order to highlight their benefits for members. At the same time, reference could always be made to the good examples that would be presented both at the AGM and in the CENL newsletter. A distinction should be made between the Skills and Knowledge Exchange Bursary Scheme (SKE), where two libraries exchange information on a specific topic. The Erland Kolding Nielsen Grant (EKN), on the other hand, is more complex with more than two partners. This important difference between the two funding programmes should be constantly emphasised. Susanne Oehlschläger added that 1000 euros as financial support for more than two libraries could be difficult. There would always be a call for applications from the CENL Secretariat, including a reminder. Nevertheless, there would not be many responses. Applications for SKE could be submitted all year round, only for the EKN grant there is a deadline, which is communicated from the beginning of the year. Tomáš Foltýn added that there were other funding options with a better budget and fewer restrictions like Erasmus+. Perhaps libraries could do more with it. Susanne Oehlschläger replied that SKE was more aimed at staff. However, she felt that library staff were not aware of this option. Many of them were also unaware of the members' area on the CENL website. It would be the responsibility of the members to make it clearer to their staff that they could apply for this. Gilles Pécout welcomed this joint exchange, in which it should be ensured that colleagues in other institutions could be welcomed. Finally, it was pointed out that Paper 04 would not be the final document for the AGM 2025.

Action Point 2:

The CENL Secretariat will contact other auditing companies in order to possibly achieve a lower price for carrying out the audits than with RSM.

8. AGM 2025 at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh

Paper 05

Frank Scholze wanted to divide this item into three different points: The cultural programme, the accommodation and the decision on the main topic of the AGM 2025 in the National Library of Scotland (NLS) in Edinburgh.

With regard to the cultural programme, he spoke from Paper 05 about the various stops on Sunday, 15 June 2025, including a visit to Edinburgh Castle, a lunch at Riddles Court and a tour of the Royal Mile. Guided tours would also be offered.

As far as accommodation is concerned, all hotels in Edinburgh are quite expensive. For a decent hotel room within the city, one would have to expect to pay around 240 euros per night. In October, Motel One will announce their rates for 2025, there is a small chance to pre-book a block of rooms. It should therefore be discussed whether hotels outside the city should be recommended instead. The Chair pointed out that this could, however, delay some colleagues and that he would generally prefer a hotel near the venues. He suggested recommending a number of hotels and allowing colleagues to decide for themselves where to stay. In addition, it would be necessary to wait and see whether Motel One's prices would be acceptable after all. To this end, the CENL Secretariat was asked to contact colleagues from the NLS once again in order to sound out the possibilities and to encourage them to enter into more negotiations with the hotels to see whether price reductions could be negotiated.

Next, an overall topic for the AGM 2025 was discussed. Aminah Shah, Director General of the NLS, had submitted two proposals to the Secretariat:

- National Libraries in the age of division
- Responsible stewardship for the next century

Tomáš Foltýn brought further points into the discussion in addition to the topics listed in Paper 05: Change of library systems. He reported on the difficulties with the changeover from Aleph to Alma and said he would be in favour of talking about the different experiences. He also mentioned disaster management, as many libraries are currently affected by this topic in the form of cyber attacks and floods.

The EC members discussed whether they should choose a more general or more specific topic for the AGM 2025. Above all, it was decided that it was time to take a closer look at AI and data as a topic, while the topic of library management systems is better dealt with in informal groups in order to be able to exchange ideas there. This could either be organised during the AGM or a new Network Group could be formed as soon as the current term of office is over. Risk management, on the other hand, was seen as a topic that is ongoing anyway and should therefore not be used as the main topic for the AGM. Ivanka Stričević, for example, argued that AI could be linked to the library collections, both from a challenging and a positive perspective. It was decided not to link AI with a democratic topic and instead to focus more on the effects of AI on national libraries. Possible questions in this regard could be: What effect does AI have on work and how can it be

useful? What can this mean for every institution? How will AI affect formal cataloguing in the next 10 years? Where to find new skilled workers familiar with AI? How can current staff remain open to these new developments? What can AI do for library users? The focus should be therefore less on the technical aspects and more on institutional and organisational aspects.

The EC members agreed to continue the conversation at the next EC meeting and to think about possible keynote speakers and send proposals to the CENL Secretariat. Furthermore, a suitable catchphrase for the topic of the AGM 2025 needs to be found.

Note: Following the EC meeting, the working title ‘The transformative power of AI for and through National Libraries’ was announced and published on the CENL website.

Action Point 3:

The CENL Secretariat will contact the colleagues from the National Library of Scotland to find better price solutions for accommodation during the AGM 2025.

Action Point 4:

The EC members are thinking about possible keynote speakers for the AGM 2025 and send their proposals to the CENL Secretariat.

9. Bursaries and Grants Update

Paper 06

As already mentioned in the financial report, not all available funds were spent. The CENL Secretary further reported that the CENL Secretariat had promoted the opportunity for all CENL members to apply for the SKE in the August 2024 newsletter. As a result, two new applications were received from Romania. The CENL Secretariat is of the opinion that one of the applications did not fulfil the scope of the grant and asked the EC for a decision. It was decided by the EC members that the application would not be approved. As a matter of principle, efforts should be made to encourage more CENL members to submit an application.

Further action was needed on the question of whether another fund should be introduced in addition to the SKE and the EKN grant. A third funding line would be possible from a financial point of view: A budget of 5,000 euros has been set aside for this purpose from the budget for 2025. In the previous EC meetings, the idea of an Emergency Planning Fund was considered, whereupon it was decided to first organise a survey among CENL members to determine the need for such a fund. Based on the survey results, one could conclude that all those who responded already have a risk plan. The EC members therefore agreed that it was not necessary to set up another fund. Instead, additional resources should be made available for SKE by encouraging CENL members to use this fund for the exchange of best practices in the area of risk management.

10. Network Groups Update

Paper 07, 07a

Now that Hans Petschar is no longer a member of the EC, a new sponsor must be found for the Artificial Intelligence in Libraries Network Group (AING). Frank Scholze explained that the sponsor does not have a controlling function, but should be seen as a spokesperson for the group within the EC and maintain contact. Tomáš Foltýn volunteered to take on the role and is approved as

new sponsor of the AING. The CENL Secretariat will exchange the relevant contact details. Sara Lammens remains the sponsor of the Books and Audiences Network Group (BANG), as does Karin Grönvall for the EEDI Network Group. All three Network Groups were described as very active, as can also be read in the reports.

A change is planned within a Network Group: EEDI asked the EC to agree that Rosemarie van der Veen-Oei from the National Library of the Netherlands may take over the Chair of their group instead of Elizabeth M. Kirwan. The EC members approved to this so that the change can take place from 1 November 2024.

The CENL Secretariat received another request from EEDI: In a meeting of the Network Group the possibility of an application to ERASMUS+ was discussed. EEDI would like to apply in spring next year; if the ERASMUS+ application is successful, this would become active from the end of 2025. The EC members should decide whether a Network Group should be allowed to apply as a CENL unit without the approval of the EC. Susanne Oehlschläger stated that it should be considered what consequences this could have if the application is successful but the Network Group's term of office ends. In the discussion, the EC members agreed that the responsibility lies with the institutions and that only the participating national libraries could apply for the programme, but not the Network Group itself. However, CENL would support all national libraries applying for ERASMUS+. As the term of office of all Network Groups ends on 31 December 2025, the EC members declined to make any premature statements about the future of any of the Network Groups at this stage. It would not be possible to guarantee that EEDI would be re-elected in the next application phase, as each application process opens up the possibility of new topics and therefore new Network Groups.

Action Point 5:

The CENL Secretariat will Inform the AING about Tomáš Foltýn as their new sponsor and exchange relevant contact details.

Action Point 6:

The CENL Secretariat will inform the EEDI Network Group about the decisions of the EC.

11. Dialogue Forums Update

Unfortunately, the CENL Secretariat did not receive any reports on the CENL Dialogue Forums. Susanne Oehlschläger reported that the FEP CENL Dialogue Forum had held a meeting, but that the minutes were still awaited. No activities have been reported from the Dialogue Forum National Libraries as Data since the AGM in Warsaw. It has also become known that Sally Chambers now works at the British Library. Frank Scholze suggested contacting Sally Chambers. He also pointed out that a replacement is needed for Peter Leinen of the German National Library, who will be retiring in the first half of 2025.

Action Point 7:

The CENL Secretariat will contact Sally Chambers from the CENL Dialogue Forum National Libraries as Data.

12. Plans for 2025

Susanne Oehlschläger reported that CENL members had been asked to fill out Fact sheets for their national libraries. There are still surveys from national libraries on the CENL website that are out of date. The aim is to provide up-to-date information about each national library that is easier to update. This basic information is important, especially for the Secretariat, in order to be able to calculate the membership fees for CENL members. As was made clear at the handover of the secretariat by the British Library, it is important to recalculate the membership fees every three to four years. So far, the response has been poor. The deadline is 1 November 2024. Frank Scholze emphasised that this information was important regardless of the CENL budget and that a reminder should be sent to CENL members if necessary.

Susanne Oehlschläger went on to say that other ideas for 2025 were that new members could be introduced through a video message on the CENL website. This could be placed on the official part of the website and also apply to all directors. Ivanka Stričević commented on what the EC could do for the new members. This could mean, for example, helping with the transition by meeting them online. The Chair reported that he was already trying to hold a video conference with each new director to welcome them. He also spoke of a possible new format for the AGM 2025, which would be a kind of speed dating. Tomáš Foltýn picked up on the CENL secretary's suggestion that the introduction of the new members could be made more interactive by asking them to prepare a minute in which they introduce themselves or another director asks them questions about their national library. Frank Scholze added that they had already had good experiences with contributions from the national libraries in the 'Looking back and ahead' format on the website. The same could be transferred to the new directors and they could be asked to make a short statement about what they want to achieve, for example. While Tomáš Foltýn was in favour of submitting videos rather than texts in the long term, Sara Lammens expressed concern that this would be a lot of work and that she was not sure if members would watch these videos. With a total of 13 new Directors, this would mean 13 videos. But it could also make the website more attractive, according to Susanne Oehlschläger. Frank Scholze summarised that these two factors should not be mixed up: On the one hand, there is the onboarding of the new members, on the other hand, a way has to be found one would like to find ways to increase the attractiveness of the website. It was questioned how important it is that there is a lot of traffic on the website, as all the information you need is there. The CENL Secretary replied that her main aim was to address the library staff more strongly.

Another point in the planning is the organisation of the EC meetings for 2025, two of which will take place virtually in the spring of 2025 and one physical meeting, which is expected to take place in autumn at the National Library of Luxembourg. Claude Conter will be asked if he can make premises available for this purpose. It would also have to be decided who will host the AGM 2027. There will be an application process for this in due course. In addition, the call for applications for the Network Groups should take place in autumn 2025, as the term of the current groups ends in December 2025.

Action Point 8:

The CENL Secretariat will coordinate the dates of the EC meetings in 2025 with the EC members. For the organisation of the physical meeting, Claude Conter is asked whether the National Library of Luxembourg can make premises available for this purpose.

13. Any other business

The 11th Annual General Meeting of South-East European National Library Directors (SEENL) was discussed, which takes place from 16-18 October in Ankara, hosted by the National Library of Türkiye. Although none of the EC members will be attending, it was discussed that there is an overlap between CENL members and others. North Macedonia in particular was described as very active, as can be seen from the report of the EEDI Network Group.

The Chair closed the meeting at 15:00 CEST and thanked everyone.

During the lunch break, the EC members present were given a guided tour of the National Library of Austria by former EC member Hans Petschar. Among other things, they were able to visit the State Hall of the National Library (Prunksaal).

Summary of action points:

Action Point 1:

The CENL Secretariat will add to the minutes of the AGM 2024 the point that Maja Micevska will no longer be part of the Executive Committee.

Action Point 2:

The CENL Secretariat will contact other auditing companies in order to possibly achieve a lower price for carrying out the audits than with RSM.

Action Point 3:

The CENL Secretariat will contact the colleagues from the National Library of Scotland to find better price solutions for accommodation during the AGM 2025.

Action Point 4:

The EC members are thinking about possible keynote speakers for the AGM 2025 and send their proposals to the CENL Secretariat.

Action Point 5:

The CENL Secretariat will inform the AING about Tomáš Foltýn as their new sponsor and exchange relevant contact details.

Action Point 6:

The CENL Secretariat will inform the EEDI Network Group about the decisions of the EC.

Action Point 7

The CENL Secretariat will contact Sally Chambers from the CENL Dialogue Forum National Libraries as Data.

Action Point 8:

The CENL Secretariat will coordinate the dates of the EC meetings in 2025 with the EC members. For the organisation of the physical meeting, Claude Conter is asked whether the National Library of Luxembourg can make premises available for this purpose.