

CENL Executive Committee Meeting (39)

27 February 2025, 13:00-15:15 CET
Videoconference via Zoom

Attendees

Frank Scholze, CENL Chair
Karin Grönvall, EC Treasurer
Sara Lammens, EC Member
Tomáš Foltýn, EC Member
Ivanka Stričević, EC Member
Susanne Oehlschläger, CENL Secretary

In attendance

Annika Wenzel, CENL Secretariat, minutes

Absent

Gilles Pécout, CENL Vice Chair

1. Approval of the agenda

Paper 01

The agenda was approved by all.

2. Minutes of the last EC meeting, 14 October 2024

Paper 02

The minutes were approved by all.

3. Matters and actions arising from EC minutes

Susanne Oehlschläger presented the updates on the action points from the last EC meeting.

Action Point 1 concerned the Secretariat adding to the minutes of the AGM 2024, that Maja Micevska left the EC. This has been done.

In fulfilment of Action Point 2, the Secretariat contacted other auditing companies in order to possibly achieve a lower price for carrying out the audits. Until now no other company has been found, perhaps because they usually tend to bigger clients than CENL. The Secretariat will contact smaller companies, but stick to RSM for the 2024 audit.

Action Point 3 regarded the Secretariat contacting the colleagues of the Scottish National Library to find better price options for accommodations in Edinburgh. Unfortunately, the prices remain very high. The EC recognised this to be a problem for members with a lower budget. *See point 5 CENL finance update.*

Action Point 4 concerned possible keynote speakers proposed by EC members for the AGM 2025. The Secretariat has now agreed with the Scottish colleagues on two keynote speakers: Melissa

Terras (Professor of Digital Cultural Heritage at the University of Edinburgh) and Paul Gooding (University of Glasgow), as well as Richard Ovenden (Head of the Bodleian Library) as a third, not keynote, speaker on Tuesday.

As stated in Action Point 5, the Secretariat wanted to inform the AI in Libraries Network Group “AING”, now “AI”, about Tomáš Foltýn as their new sponsor and exchange relevant contact details. This was done and Tomáš Foltýn mailed Svein Arne Brygfeldt from the National Library of Norway (AI Treasurer), but did not yet receive an answer. He will try to reach out to the AI chair Jean-Philippe Moreux, as proposed by Susanne Oehlschläger.

Action Point 6 was fulfilled by informing the Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Network Group “EEDI” that the change of their chair to Rosemarie van der Veen-Oei from the National Library of the Netherlands was approved by the EC.

Action Point 7 was for the Secretariat to contact Sally Chambers from the CENL Dialogue Forum National Libraries as Data, as she did not react to former attempts for contact. Sally Chambers has answered the Secretariat and sent a recent report. The forum is active and meeting regularly.

Action Point 8 regarded the coordination of the next dates for the EC meetings in 2025. Those dates have been set, **19 May via Zoom and 29 September, as a physical meeting, at the National Library of Luxembourg**. The EC members have been informed.

4. Reports by Chair and EC members

There have been several changes in membership over the past few months. The Chair has been in contact with new CENL members and reported having had fruitful conversations with them. The new members, who come from different backgrounds, all expressed a strong interest in engaging with CENL. They also confirmed their intention to come to Edinburgh in June and indicated that they would share information about CENL with their staff.

Tomáš Foltýn told the EC that he met Rebecca Lawrence, the new chief executive of the British Library, the day before. He agreed with what Frank Scholze said, she seemed very motivated and could bring new visions to the British Library. He thought she would be a good addition to CENL. He asked about the Slovak National Library, which has a new acting director, but is difficult to get in touch with. Both he and Frank Scholze would keep trying to stay in contact.

Sara Lammens reported that LIBER recently formed a Taskforce on AI. They want to work together with CENL and its network group and have created a vision document, which Frank Scholze will distribute after it's been finalised.

Sara proposed that someone from the taskforce could be in the CENL network group and vice versa. Also, they could invite a member from the taskforce to the AGM in Edinburgh. The taskforce has already appointed a chair, Erik Opsahl, from the University of Trondheim, to whom the Secretariat could send the AGM call for contributions. Susanne Oehlschläger added that there is a placeholder in the AGM agenda for a LIBER input.

Action Point 1:

Sara Lammens will contact the LIBER board concerning a cooperation with CENL and will keep the EC members updated.

Karin Grönvall reported about the EEDI network group, for which she is a sponsor. Some of the member libraries applied for an ERASMUS grant to further advance their work. They cannot apply

as a network group, only as individual libraries. Ivanka Stričević found their work to be very well structured and organised. Regarding their ERASMUS application for additional funding, she noted that not all members took part in the process. She also supported them by reviewing and correcting their application.

Tomáš Foltýn updated the EC on the European Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group. They have created the first text of their guidelines, which they want to present to the European Commission. Next steps are a planned meeting in Latvia next month and a meeting after that, which Tomáš Foltýn will attend. He will report to the EC on its results. Frank Scholze added, that Frédéric Döhl from the German National Library is also in contact with the group.

Ivanka Stričević spoke about the success of the 2024 EKN Project between the National Library of Bulgaria and the National and University Library of Croatia. The participants decided on a face to face meeting and were happy to be able to connect and work together. Frank Scholze supported her description of the value of the EKN grant projects.

Sara Lammens represented CENL at the farewell ceremony of Roly Keating, former chief executive of the British Library. She reported that it was a beautiful ceremony and that he was really touched by her speech about his contributions to CENL.

Susanne Oehlschläger reported on the registration difficulties on the CENL website. The website designers are working on fixing them. The website will also soon be updated and have its layout refreshed, ideally before the AGM in June. The member sites will be updated as well, with up-to-date information. Frank Scholze approved of that and said that some of the new CENL members have mentioned outdated information on their CENL member sites to him.

5. CENL finance update

Papers 03 and 03a

The Secretary reported that after Michael Duchardt retired, Sabina Henn took responsibility for managing CENL's finances. The finance report (paper 03) was the first prepared by her. She continued that CENL's finances are business as usual and that the annual accounts included nothing special. Now the secretariat is waiting for the audit to start. Karin Grönvall added that CENL spent less than they could have in 2024. In regard to the planned moderate overspending she proposed doing something special. For example, to expand the AGM travel bursaries to more members, given how expensive Scotland will be.

Susanne Oehlschläger explained that this was done once in 2021 before the German National Library had the Secretariat. They had extended then the pool of eligible members, by not only offering the bursary to members who pay the lowest membership fee, but also to those who are on the lowest two tiers. During the last years, all 13 eligible members applied for the bursary, therefore the 13,000€ funding was used up completely.

The Chair proposed to send the information about the travel bursary to the now eligible members and if not all of them apply, the Secretariat could contact the second lowest tier. To do this, they had to set a deadline for the first 13 members, which would be difficult, as it was largely overlooked last year. A proposal by the Secretary to reduce the granted amount to 750€ to serve more members was rejected. Frank Scholze wanted to stick to the amount of 1,000€ per member, given the prices in Edinburgh and proposed a "come first, serve first" rule

Ivanka Stričević wanted the Secretariat to confirm whether the membership fees are related to a library's budget and whether that information is up to date. The Secretariat asked for each library's budget, when they send out factsheets last fall. Despite numerous inquiries, they have not yet received all filled out factsheets.

The fees were last calculated in 2021 and will be again next year, according to Sara Lammens they were checked every three years in the past. Karin Grönvall proposed to put the responsibility of sending the Secretariat up-to-date numbers to the individual libraries.

Action Point 2:

The Secretariat will recalculate the CENL membership fees for 2026.

The Chair returned to the beginning of the discussion and asked the other EC members, if they would agree to hold on to 1000€ per bursary. Also, if the 13,000€ are not used up by lowest tier, they will extend the call for applications to the second lowest tier. All EC member agreed.

Action Point 3:

The Secretariat will open the travel bursary eligibility to the second lowest tier of membership fees, if not all 13,000€ are spend.

Next up was the support for Ukraine. Since the war started, the membership fee of Lyubov Dubrovina from Vernadskij National Library of Kiev has been suspended. All EC members agreed to propose this to the Board of Directors to do so again this year. This decision has to be confirmed by all members at the AGM in Edinburgh.

Action Point 4:

The membership fee 2025 for the National Library of Ukraine will be suspended subject to approval of members at the AGM.

The Secretary informed the EC about the amendment of the CENL statutes. All EC members are now registered with the chamber of commerce. The law firm did not send an invoice for the services performed, in view of their relationship with CENL, which she found quite generous.

Concerning the Books and Audiences Network Group "BANG", they didn't spend their allocated money last year and asked the Secretariat whether they could transfer it to 2025. Frank Scholze was in favour of keeping the granted money yearly. Only if the network group would plan something like a big event, a transfer might be up for consideration. BANG plans to do a meeting in May, but they did not tell the Secretariat of this in advance (last year). All EC members agreed to stick to the yearly budget for network groups.

Action Point 5:

The Secretariat will inform BANG that they cannot transfer their yearly budget unless they submit a substantiated application for a larger spending to the EC well in advance.

6. Bursaries and Grants Update

Paper 04 with App_A-D

The call for applications for the Erland Kolding Nielsen (EKN) Grant was open from 8 January 2025 to 7 February 2025. This early deadline was set in order to give the applicants more time to plan and stage their proposed projects.

Four applications were received. The Secretariat evaluated the applications and recommended three applications for approval and considered one application to be out of scope, as its content was not suitable for the EKN. In line with the 2025 budget, three applications could be approved. Frank Scholze asked the EC whether they would agree to award the grants to Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. All EC members voted unanimously in favour of this.

Action Point 6:

The Secretariat will inform the approved EKN applicants.

One SKE grant from last year, which was awarded to Bosnia and Herzegovina is still open, after the retirement of their former director, to whom it was initially awarded. The library wants someone else to take up the bursary. The EC is aware of the difficult (financial) situation of the library. Frank Scholze said he would talk to the new director in March and may get new information about their general situation as well as an update about the bursary money.

Susanne Oehlschläger reported that two applications for SKE funds have been received by the Secretariat, from Latvia and Serbia. They have been approved. Ivanka Stričević worries that the budget of 1000€ is too low. With regard to the low number of applications by now, she suggested to raise the bursary budget and offer fewer than 10 grants.

Sara Lammens agreed as prices have risen greatly during the last years. The EC discussed to raise the granted amount from 1,000€ to 1,500€. The Secretariat wants to wait and see how many bursaries applications it will receive until summer. As this year's budget is already fixed and two SKE bursaries have already been awarded with 1,000 euros, Frank Scholze proposed to include the raised amount in the 2026 CENL budget. All EC members agreed to raise the SKE grant to 1,500€ starting 1 January 2026.

Action Point 7:

The Secretariat will take into account the increased amount for the SKE grants when preparing the 2026 budget.

7. Network Groups Update

Paper 05

Susanne Oehlschläger reported the network groups to be very active. Their three-year term will end in December this year and given the recent activities and plans, she is unsure, whether they have been aware of this.

The Secretariat will send out a call for applications for new network groups in the fall. The EC might have to discuss if there can be more than 3 network groups. Frank Scholze clarified that the current groups can apply again and could continue their work. He wants to wait with a discussion until after the call. Ivanka Stričević added that the EEDI network group had just started to yield results and it would be a pity to disband them.

Recently a question from the BANG network group was posed to the Secretary. They are about to meet in Latvia and asked for an EC member to give the opening speech. Sara Lammens, as the groups sponsor, would be the first choice and she confirmed that she would contact them.

8. Dialogue Forums Update

Paper 06

All information is in the Paper 06.

Frank Scholze added that this year's French-German meeting on copyrighted works in libraries which is a subgroup of the FEP-CENL Dialogue Forum will focus on digital music. The German National Library only just started to collect digital music. They started with a small German label and want now to address the big labels such as Sony and Universal to drive the topic forward.

9. CENL Annual General Meeting 2025

Paper 07

The Secretariat has so far received 52 registrations from 28 members for the AGM and expects more to come. Key note speakers are booked. *See point 4, action point 4.*

The cultural program on Sunday is set, so is the registration and lunch at the National Library of Scotland (NLS). The tour of the library will be on Sunday as well, which differs from previous years. The dinner on Sunday will start at 7pm, because Edinburgh Castle is open to the public beforehand.

The business meeting on Monday will be rather short, which is possible, as there are no special topics to be discussed. Melissa Terrace who will give the first key note has to leave at 11 am, therefore she needs to be early on the programme. The customary introduction of the members will follow later by a kind of speed dating with special questions.

Regarding the call for contributions for short presentations by CENL members about AI in their libraries, the Secretariat has so far received two responses from Belgium and one from Luxembourg. The National Library of Norway offered to provide a general overview about their work with AI. Susanne Oehlschläger proposed Svein Arne Brygfjeld from the National Library of Norway who is the AI network group secretary and treasurer to report. Frank Scholze agreed that the National Library of Norway is conducting very advanced work with AI and it should be interesting to hear about. The Secretariat will wait for more applications. Ivanka Stričević proposed the AI network group to be more engaged in the AGM, as AI is their topic. Frank Scholze wants all CENL members to have a voice, not just those with members in the AI group. Ideally the AI network group could give an overview of AI progresses in national libraries.

Karin Grönvall agreed with this proposition and also reminded the EC that it is important to have enough time to discuss and think about the input.

In view of the limited time, the reports could not be presented in full.

The secretary also proposed the possibility of excluding the updates on the British Library cyber-attack and the situation in Ukraine. The EC members opposed the latter, as it is still politically relevant and deserves to be presented. Tomáš Foltýn reported that there's not much new information about the cyber-attack. The Chair asked the EC about these two programme points. All members agreed to take the time for Ukraine and remove the cyber-attack update from the programme.

Action Point 8:

The Secretariat will update the AGM agenda in the light of the discussion.

10. Any other business

Tomáš Foltýn will not be in Edinburgh until Monday mid-day and will therefore miss the business meeting in the morning. Susanne Oehlschläger reminded him to fill out the proxy form in this case. Tomáš Foltýn will give it to his colleague to take with her.

Susanne Oehlschläger proposed to meet up on Saturday evening before the AGM. Frank Scholze already has an appointment and won't be able to join.

Frank Scholze thanked the EC members for the good work and taking their time for the meeting.

He closed the meeting at 15:15 CET.

DRAFT