



FIT - EUROPE

REGIONAL CENTRE EUROPE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRANSLATORS

info@fit-europe.org

REPORT BY THE OBSERVERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING OF THE FIT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE GENEVA, 26 AND 27 JANUARY 2008

Executive Committee (EC) Members: Peter Krawutschke (ATA – USA), Bente Christensen (NO – Norway), Youyi Huang (TAC – China), Miriam Lee (ITIA – Ireland), Sheryl Hinkkanen (SKTL – Finland), Anne Verbeke (SFÖ – Sweden)

Observers:

- Honorary advisers: René Haeseryn, Florence Herbulot (26th only)
- FIT Council members: Helen Slatyer (AUSIT – Australia), Andrew Evans (ITI – UK)
- Regional centres: FIT Europe, represented by João Esteves-Ferreira (26th)
- Member Associations: SFT – France (Sabine Colombe); CBTIP – Belgium (Patrick Rondou); ASTTI – Switzerland (Silvia Cerrella Bauer – 26th); ESIT – France (Clare Donovan – 26th, morning)

Three officials of member associations were known to be present in Geneva during the weekend but chose not to attend the meeting.

Proceedings were interrupted on two occasions to hear presentations: first by the Arab Thought Foundation, announcing a conference, and secondly by the University of Geneva demonstrating its project for distance training of interpreters.

1. **Attendance (PK)**
 - 1.1 Present
 - 1.2 Regrets
 - 1.3 Honorary Advisors and Council members present
 - 1.4 Presidential guests
2. **Approval of the agenda (PK)**
3. **Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of 26-28 October 2007 (PK)**
4. **Follow-up of action items of the Executive Committee meeting of 26-28 October 2007 (PK, SH)**

The meeting opened with housekeeping: introduction of those present, adoption of agenda, amendment (but not approval) of minutes of the last meeting, matters brought forward, and results of email votes.

5. **President's Report (PK)**
 - 5.1 Strategic Plan 2008-2011
 - 5.1.1 Review of questionnaire responses from FIT member associations
 - 5.1.2 Review of internal assessment
 - 5.1.3 Creation of the second questionnaire to send to FIT member associations
 - 5.2 Editorial review of the FIT bylaws

The President announced that an internal evaluation of FIT by Council members was under way: some responses had been received within time and others would no doubt follow. He declined to accede to FIT-Europe's request to disclose the content of those already received.

The session continued with an analysis of the responses sent by member associations to the questionnaire on their vision of FIT. The Secretary General reported that 14 responses had been received before the closing date and another six afterwards (out of 72 members associations).

Those present, including the observers, then examined and summarised the 14 responses received within time. The conclusions:

a) What FIT does well:

1. It exists and can act as a representative body for translators' associations at world level.
2. It organises congresses permitting contacts between translators
3. It supports and promotes literary translators
4. It distributes prizes and publishes a number of journals

b) What needs rethinking or improving

1. FIT should regionalise its working and organise more events at that level
2. It should do more to coordinate its members' initiatives, ensuring horizontal communication among them and federating their efforts and actions
3. It should modernise its structures in depth, and use technology to control its costs
4. It should launch or foster specific projects
5. It should do more to disseminate information about the professions it purports to represent

c) What FIT does badly:

It is out of touch with the reality of professional translation and has no clear vision of the needs and wishes of its member associations.

Those present observed that most responses made the same points (see below), underlining the need for FIT to listen to the message being sent by associations and draw the proper conclusions.

To conclude this item, the President asked the FIT Europe representative to report candidly on what FIT does badly and what it should do to raise its game.

FIT Europe's representative stated that he would mention only the most frequently-reported areas of discontent among European associations:

a) What FIT does badly:

1. Structure is antiquated and ill suited to reality
2. Decision-making, resources and information are all too centralised
3. Lack of clear and meaningful projects
4. FIT's vision of the professions it purports to represent are too vague and expressed in terms which are too broad
5. Weak or non-existent communications. Fails to react to change in the translating professions.

b) What FIT should do:

1. Its leadership, and notably the EC, should delegate more and concentrate on their core responsibilities, i.e. managing the Federation.
2. Council and EC should encourage and support initiatives by committees and regional centres, instead of concentrating their efforts solely on administrative tasks
3. FIT should redirect its financial resources towards transparent projects, instead of spending most of its money on administration.

Next, the EC presented a draft of formal amendments to the bylaws. The first proposed amendment related to a substantive issue and following comment by several observers the EC resolved to propose to the Council that the question be submitted to Congress in the form of amendments to the bylaws.

6. Administration (SH)

- 6.1 ID Cards
 - 6.1.1 Implementation of the renewal (report from D McK)
 - 6.1.2 Recommendation by the Solidarity Committee to allocate sponsored cards by the Norwegian Association (AV)

The meeting continued with a report on FIT identity cards. The Secretary General announced that 550 cards had been sold, covering the initial costs, and the project was thus a great success. In answer to a question from FIT Europe during a break in proceedings, the President stated that FIT believed it represented between 60 000 and 400 000 translators worldwide.

7. FIT Memberships (SH)

- 7.1 Inquiries (SH)
- 7.2 Applications (ML)
 - 7.2.1 Association des traducteurs et interprètes professionnels du Congo (ATIPCO)
 - 7.2.2 Egyptian Translators Association
- 7.3 Change of status request: Asociación Cubana de Traductores e Interpretes (ACTI)
- 7.4 Solidarity Fund (AV)
 - 7.4.1 Request for solidarity funds

FIT has received inquiries about admission from associations in Mexico, Georgia and Ukraine, and applications from an association in Congo and another in Egypt. An application for readmission from a Cuban association has also been processed.

10. Committees and Regional Centres (SH)

- 10.1 Report on FIT Committees
- 10.2 Report on Regional Centres
 - 10.2.1 RCE
 - 10.2.2 CRAL
 - 10.2.3 RCNA
 - 10.2.4 VARC

Reports followed on the activities of a number of committees and regional centres:

- Community Based Interpreting Committee, Copyright Committee, Literary Translation Committee, Translation Technology Committee
- The meeting heard brief reports on the successful activities of the Regional Centre Latin America, the absence of activities in Regional Centre for North America and the need to amend the structure of the Virtual Asian Regional Centre.

FIT Europe did not present a report to the EC but would report to the next meeting of the Council. Its representative did, however, answer questions and requests for additional information from the EC.

The first day's business ended with the designation of the presidents and members of the juries for the FIT prizes, many of them from the European region.

The meeting resumed at 09h00 on Sunday. Business was hampered by a lack of power for the secretariat PC and beamer, and such documents as were available had to be presented on paper.

Observers attending:

- Honorary adviser: René Haeseryn
- FIT Council members: Helen Slatyer (AUSIT – Australia), Andrew Evans (ITI – UK)
- Member Associations: SFT – France (Sabine Colombe); CBTIP – Belgium (Patrick Rondou);

9. Public Relations (PK)

- 9.1 Press Release - International Translation Day (SH)
- 9.2 International non-payment of professional fees (PK)
- 9.3 Relations with IFJ: Meeting in February (PK)
- 9.4 UNESCO NGO's event and General Assembly (ML)
- 9.5 FIT Corporate Identity: a proposal for proceeding (AV)
- 9.6 Report on the ESIT 50th anniversary in Paris (PK)

The President stated that ATA had sent a communication on the non-payment of international fees, expressing misgivings about the publication of documents. The FIT card was again mentioned in the context of the FIT's contacts with the International Federation of Journalists. The Bureau's aim appears to be to have the word "Press" printed on the outside of the FIT card. It was observed from the floor that some translators might not want this, feeling it to be an imposture.

Reports were heard on the UNESCO NGO day, attended by a member of the EC, and on ESIT's 50th anniversary, attended by the President at the expense of his own Association.

There was nothing to report on the agenda item concerning FIT's corporate identity. It is planned to register the FIT logo but the EC believes that the mark "FIT" has sufficient demonstrable anteriority to make its registration unnecessary.

Work was interrupted a third time for a demonstration of Skype (see www.skype.com), since this had been touted as a potential route to teleconferencing in place of face-to-face meetings.

8. Finances (AV)

- 8.1. Budget 2008
- 8.2. Increase of membership fees

The budget for 2008 was presented to the EC but for lack of electricity could not be screened and was not circulated to observers. The Treasurer stated that she currently has no plans to recommend an increase in membership fees for approval by Congress.

12. FIT Website Management (AV, SH)

- 12.1 Review of the Website
- 12.1 Proposal for new functionalities

The 2008 budget includes an extraordinary provision of \$5000, carried forward from 2006, for the website. This sum will be spent on implementing new functionalities including a download area for members. It is hoped that this will contribute to a reduction in postage costs.

- 8.3 Advertising policy
 - 8.3.1 Draft document on the rules of advertising in FIT
- 8.4 Follow up of visibility funds granted in 2007
 - 8.4.1 FITLIT and events in Frankfurt
 - 8.4.2 RCE and the seed money for the seminar in Barcelona
 - 8.4.3 Any other visibility projects

The Agenda item on Finance included a sub-item on advertising policy. The EC continues to see this as a solution to FIT's chronic lack of funds. The draft policy document announced in the agenda was not, however, available. Reference was made to emulating the publicity on ATA's (or possibly "ITI's") site but neither in fact carries advertising of any kind.

Finance also included reports on FIT-financed events: the Co-Chair of FIT-Lit reported on the Frankfurt book fair and in response to questioning from the Chair the European observers present gave details (attendance, results) on the success of FIT Europe conference on copyright and translation tools.

- 13. **XVIII FIT World Congress, China, 2008 (HY, SH)**
 - 13.1 Progress Report
 - 13.2 Preparation for the Statutory Congress

Huang Youyi gave an update on the Shanghai congress. Some 1400 papers had been received and classified as "accepted for presentation", "accepted for publication", "accepted for posting" or rejected. He noted that the Statutory Congress and the Open Congress are in different and distant parts of the city. The conference languages will be English, French and Chinese.

- 11. **FIT Publications**
 - 11.1 *Babel* (RH)
 - 11.2 *Translatio Supplement*
 - 11.3 *Translatio* (SH, AV)
 - 11.3.1 Format

René Haeseryn reported on Babel and Translatio. He requested supplementary funds to cover the shortfall on publication costs, due to the declining euro value of the \$500 he receives "like any other committee". Nothing was offered and the EC insisted that the finances of these publications be centralised in Montreal rather than handled by Dr Haeseryn himself. Nothing was reported about Translatio format.

- 14. **Date and place of the next meetings (SH)**
 - 14.1 Next Executive Committee and Council meetings

The next meetings of EC and Council were set for 25 and 26/7 April 2008 near Washington, DC.

- 15. **Any other business (PK)**

Under other business the EC was asked about the promotion of FIT's Administrative Secretary to "Executive Director/Directrice Générale". This was stated to be a unilateral decision by the President on the grounds of the prestige needed by FIT for its dealings with other institutions in North America.

- 16. **Adjournment (PK)**

The session ended at 14h00.