



88th PEN International Congress 2022 – Uppsala, Sweden

PEN Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee (TLRC) Meeting

1. Attendees of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee Meeting

Name	PEN Center (or other)
Catrina Wessels	PEN Afrikaans
Polina Sadovskaya	PEN America
Armen Ohanyan	PEN Armenia
Lila Cona	Aspiring PEN Aromanian
Dušan Gojkov	Aspiring PEN Aromanian
Helmuth A. Niederle	PEN Austria
Mosud Mannan	PEN Bangladesh
Laura Mintegi	Basque PEN
Yauhen Sapach	PEN Belarus
Yorn Young	PEN Cambodia
Carles Torner	Catalan PEN
JM Vidal-Illanes	Catalan PEN
Enrique Perez Lopez	PEN Chiapas Pluricultural
Olga Walló	Czech PEN
Jørgen Christian Wind Nielsen	PEN Denmark
Dessale Berekhet Abraham	PEN Eritrea
Leena Manninen	PEN Finland
David Ferré	PEN France

Cornelia Zetzsche	PEN Germany
Claudia Guderian	PEN Germany
Karla Martina Olascoaga	PEN Guatemala
Ilaria Maria Sala	PEN Hong Kong
Satoshi Gunji	PEN Japan
Berivan Dosky	Kurdish PEN
Serkan Yildirim	Kurdish PEN
Wezi Msukwa-Panje	PEN Malawi
Olga Drobot	PEN Moscow
Sophie Zijlstra	PEN Netherlands
Arne Svingen	PEN Norway
Jean-Frédéric Brun	PEN Occitan
Maria Karina Bolasco	PEN Philippines
Ricky Monahan Brown	Scottish PEN
Aljaž Koprivnikar	PEN Slovenia
Alix Parodi	PEN Suisse Romande
Terry Carlbom	Swedish PEN
Elisabeth /Isabelle ...	Swedish PEN
Daniel Gustaffson	Swedish PEN
Amelie Marmelind	Swedish PEN
Dmitri Plax	Swedish PEN
Laura S. Kauer	Safe Havens Freedom Talk
Ayi Renaud Dossavi-Alipoeh	PEN Togo
Hiep Pham	PEN Vietnamese Abroad
Lan Cung	PEN Vietnamese Abroad
Phú Kim Nguyen	PEN Vietnamese Abroad
Luca Paci	PEN Wales Cymru
Alicia Quinones	PEN International
Urtzi	PEN International

2. Minutes of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee Meeting

The Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee (TLRC) gathered a few minutes after 11 AM.

The Empty Chair remembered Dom Phillips and Innocent Bahati and were read by Enrique Perez Lopez (PEN Chiapas Pluricultural) and Wezi Msukwa-Panje (PEN Malawi).

After 3 years without in-person meetings, and following the requests at the last online meetings, we used most of the time (originally planned to be used only before the lunch break), for the centers' updates and the subsequent discussions. Before that, the Chair had an introductory word and presented the work of the Committee minutes of the last meeting in June, which were approved by the delegates.

Catalan PEN presented their activities in relation to the centenary of their center.

PEN Chiapas Pluricultural expressed their joy at being part of the meeting as they are one of the newest PEN centers, and one focused on the indigenous peoples and languages of Chiapas, Mexico.

PEN Cambodia presented the situation of indigenous languages in their country and the difficulties they face under the pressure of the official Khmer state language.

PEN Belarus denounced the situation in Belarus, where the state works against the national language and the writers, journalists and activists working in it. Many of them have been arrested in recent months and years, and even the PEN center has been officially closed. Still, PEN Belarus continues its activities, with 10 literary awards to promote the Belarusian language.

PEN Occitan expressed the importance of their center being at the congress, and their willingness to increase their activities in 2023.

Swedish PEN spoke on their work regarding international questions, their main focus being Belarus and Ukraine, and another focus being the situation of Uyghurs in China. An anthology of Ukrainian literature has been published in Swedish, and other activities to promote these issues are also being carried out. One of the problems is the lack of translators from Belarusian and Ukrainian. Within the country, they expressed their concern for some worrying tendencies to limit linguistic rights, and the attitude the new government may adopt.

Before the recess for lunch, the Video-Poem project of the International Mother Language Day was presented, with the poem of the Kaqchikel poet Miguel Ángel Oxlaj. After lunch, centers continued presenting their activities and projects, while other poems were also screened.

PEN Germany, PEN France and PEN Netherlands presented their work in places like Belarus and Afghanistan. PEN Netherlands is celebrating their centenary in 2023 with many activities and debates. Czech PEN presented their project Kadena Magika, a chain of poetry among different poets. Basque PEN

talked about the congress organized together with PEN Quebec, where writers and translators met, including indigenous authors from Quebec.

At 3 PM, the Resolution on Kurdish Linguistic and Cultural Rights was presented by the Europe regional coordinator of PEN International, Aurélia Dondo, and by members of Kurdish PEN: Berivan Dosky and Serkan Yildirim. After a short discussion, and some questions on the resolution and the situation of Kurdish PEN and Kurdish authors in Turkey, the Committee adopted it to formally present it to the Main Assembly.

PEN Togo expressed how the situation in their country has improved in relation to writers showing an interest in and writing in Ewe and other languages – something that was unthinkable until not so long ago, when the language was forbidden, with kids being humiliated and frowned upon when speaking their mother language. Recently more and more structured projects, contests, writing debates have been carried out, however there is more work to be done.

Finnish PEN presented their work with Sámi writers (including one Sámi language writer in their Board), and their work regarding other languages spoken in the country, including the book of 22 writers in their original languages and their Finnish translations.

PEN Malawi echoed some of the ideas expressed by PEN Togo, regarding the feeling of shame for not being able to speak English, especially in rural areas. PEN Malawi has translated the book “The Invisible Child” into Chichewa language, and hold different types of exercises, workshops, and conversations in schools about gender, children rights, etc. They are also doing digital books.

PEN Eritrea in Exile spoke on the terrible situation in Tigray. However, PEN Tigray said that very promising translators are coming and translating important books into Tigrinya. Unfortunately, they must do their work in exile.

PEN Afrikaans presented their work in South Africa, where they are witnessing a shift towards English. They are also working on the perception of their language and getting rid of the stigma of being the language of apartheid, even if the majority of its speakers are not white. Their work is seeing encouraging signs though.

PEN Guatemala was born in 2005 and Karla Martina Olascoaga (PEN Guatemala) is its first female president. This is a new generation and they are working on projects related to women, together with other Latin American centres. They have also updated their technological approach during the pandemic. In Guatemala there are 22 languages, but the bilingual education is not working, however they are working to meet indigenous writers.

PEN Norway introduced their centenary plans, with the list of activities that are being organized in autumn.

PEN Suisse Romand presented their activities and introduced a joint proposal together with Italian and Rhetto-Romansh speaking Swiss PEN (whose delegate could not attend the Congress), about nationalisms and the defense of languages. Visa problems also made the participation of other centers impossible, such as PEN Quechua and PEN Ghana, both centers which are also carrying out very interesting projects.

PEN Philippines expressed the situation in their country, where there is a trend to suspend the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in favor of bilingual education (Filipino & English only). Language and MTB-MLE proponents and advocates are currently trying to block the suspension as the program is already fully implemented by the Department of Education.

PEN Slovenia remarked on the work that their center does and expressed their support in boosting the Video-Poem project's visibility. PEN Wales Cymru presented on their dedication to their work, and how even a center with small financial support can achieve many things, including how they have used their own Welsh language to support Kurdish authors.

Danish PEN emphasized that Denmark is a very digitalized country, and that Danish is the official language, with migrants having no linguistic rights besides speaking Danish. In the Faroe Islands, the majority of the population speaks Faroese – as well as Danish – and in Greenland the situation is changing. Danish PEN expressed anticipation regarding the meeting organized by Finnish PEN later in the week with other Nordic centers.

Once the rest of the delegates spoke, the last report of the Committee was presented. ***DENIAL, SUPPRESSION, REVITALISATION; The importance of linguistic rights, yesterday and today, for freedom of expression.*** The report has been written in Spanish and English, and PEN France expressed their interest in translating it into French as well.

There was not much remaining time, and the scheduled presentation of the Aspiring PEN Aromanian had to be postponed due to the travel details of their delegates, who arrived later that day. However, the next day, September 28th, they participated in a panel on indigenous languages, together with the delegates of PEN Chiapas and PEN Malawi.

Other meetings

During the remaining days of the Congress, other side-meetings were organized to plan future activities and focus on strengthening the Committee itself, as well as its working group (whose name should be rebranded as Board, Directorate, Council or something similar). There were informal meetings with other Committees (WfPC, WWC), regional coordinators (Nduko o'Matigere; Africa regional coordinator for PEN International), veteran members of PEN and the TLRC (Carles Torner PEN Catalan), and amongst members willing to be more engaged in this Council: PEN Denmark, PEN Togo, PEN Malawi in person, and PEN Uganda, PEN Zambia, PEN Philippines and Italian and Rhaeto-Romansh speaking Swiss PEN

online, together with centers working mainly in Spanish like PEN Chiapas, PEN Guatemala, PEN Argentina or PEN Quechua with whom we are always in contact as well.

Proposals for meetings in 2023, 2024 and beyond

There was a question regarding 2023 meeting of PEN TLRC. Since the response was that most probably it would be held online, some expressed their disappointment about this possibility. **Alix Parodi** said she could arrange the meeting again in the city of **Biel / Bienne** (she already organized the meeting in 2018), but that the Committee should approve it as soon as possible.

Another proposal came through **Tomica Bajsic** (PEN Croatia), so that the TLR Committee could have the meeting in Spring 2023 in **Zagreb** together with WiPC – same day(s), or a day of extension to the WiPC meeting, before the WfPC in Bled.

Finnish PEN also brought a proposal, in this case to organize the meeting in 2024. their idea is to take the meeting to **Inari**, in Sápmi, where three Sámi languages are spoken. While this is a very good idea, **Swedish PEN** has expressed their view that other centers/countries with Sámi populations, such as Norway and Sweden, should also be involved in this. I understand that the meeting of Nordic centers helped in this sense.

Katlin Kaldmaa came with the idea of having the joint TLRC/WWC meeting that was cancelled in 2020 – not in Myanmar, but in **Bangkok** (Thailand), at the university where she teaches. 2023 seems to be too early, but around February 2024 it might be a good option.

Last but not least: we discussed the possibility of having some encounter in **Africa**. They could be around one of the international book fairs, such as those in **Lomé** (Togo) or **Lagos** (Nigeria), but perhaps the most doable approach would be to start thinking in **Nairobi**. The regional coordinator **Nduko o'Matigere** is convinced it could be a very successful meeting: it is a stable country, where a democratic transfer of powers has recently happened, where the regional coordinator is based, with a PEN Center and an active group (**Ituika**), very close to PEN ideas, working in the importance of strengthening African languages, under the shadow of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o.

Minutes taken by: *Urtzi Urrutikoetxea*