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POINTS OF INTEREST**Join the conference**

Register to the CercleS International Conference [here](#).

Call for papers

The International Conference calls for papers on the subject *Language Centres at a Crossroads: Open Directions for New Generations of Learners*. [Read more here](#).

Submit proposal to abstractsCercleS@cjv.muni.cz by 30 January 2020.

E-bulletin



Dear colleagues,

I hope that you enjoy reading the third edition of this e-bulletin:

Get to know better the associations CASALC and SSH-CHES and add upcoming CercleS events to your agenda such as the XVI CercleS International Conference held at The Masaryk University Language Centre, in Brno, Czech Republic, on 10–12 September 2020 – and the first edition of the Cercles Management Training Programme *Aspire to Inspire* starting in October 2020.

Please have a look at my welcome message as new President, which includes news about the new Executive and its meeting in Zurich.

I regret that Heidi Rontu has decided to resign from her post as Secretary General as of 1 December. I would like to thank Heidi for her commitment in more than three years of intensive work for CercleS – and wish her lots of success and satisfaction in her new professional challenge as project director and manager at Aalto University.

I am happy that Anne Château has agreed to step in and work as Secretary General. We are currently looking for a solution to support the Secretary General by appointing an assistant and/or hire an external company for administrative work.

I am looking forward to meeting you soon in person and wish you lots of energy for the last few weeks of this year and a relaxing and inspiring holiday season.

Schöhni Wiehnachte! Wesołych Świąt! Joyeuses fêtes! Buon Natale! Bellas festas!

Sabina Schaffner
President

COMING UP

10–12 SEPTEMBER 2020 XVI CercleS International Conference

Language Centres at a Crossroads: Open Directions for New Generations of Learners Held in in Brno, Czech Republic and organized by CASALC. [Read more here](#)

OCTOBER 2020 – FEBRUARY 2021 *Aspire to Inspire*

Management and Leadership Skills for HE Language Centre Managers Workshops held in Křtiny Conference Centre, Czech Republic. [Read more here](#)

Update from General Secretariat and Treasurer

This year, members of the former Executive Committee have been on 'borrowed time'. In September 2018, when the Coordinating Committee met in Poznan, representatives of National Associations agreed that the then Executive Committee would continue one year till the next Coordinating Committee's meeting in autumn 2019, and endeavour to accomplish the official registration status of our association and the opening of a new bank account.

By March, the matter of the registration of CercleS was resolved with confirmation from the Tribunal d'Instance in Strasbourg that the required updating of their register had been recorded in their Registre des Associations.

Once the registration process was completed, we started working on opening a new current bank account in France in the name of CercleS. After contacting several banks that work with associations, we have finally succeeded in opening the new bank account in Caisse d'Epargne in Strasbourg. Here we want to express special thanks to former Deputy Secretary General Catherine Chabert for the extensive work she has done in this process.

Aside from this, we have managed as best as we could without a replacement for Helen Nuttall, the former assistant to the Executive Committee, who resigned on 01/01/2019 to focus on her new career. Administrative support is an issue that the new Executive Committee will be looking at.

The new Executive Committee was elected in the meeting of Coordinating Committee and confirmed in the General Assembly in September 2019 in Valencia. The members of the new Executive Committee are as follows: Sabina Schaffner President, Carmen Argondizzo Vice President, Heidi Rontu Secretary General, Anne Chateau Deputy Secretary General, Marta Estella Treasurer and Andrea Koblizkova Deputy Treasurer. Heidi Rontu has, however, had to resign from the post of Secretary General as of 1st December 2019, because of been invited to new work tasks at Aalto University that require full-time engagement. Deputy Secretary General Anne Chateau will be taking over the post and the tasks of Secretary General.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

In 2019, the former Executive Committee met seven times:

08/01/2019
07/02/2019
14/03/2019
12/04/2019
17–18/6/2019
11/9/2019

The newly elected Executive Committee met once:

11–12/11/2019



President
Sabina Schaffner
SSH-CHES



Secretary General
Heidi Rontu (–1 Dec.)
FINELC



Treasurer
Marta Estella Clota
ACLES



Vice-President
Carmen Argondizzo
AICLU



Dep. Secretary General
Anne Chateau
RANACLES



Dep. Treasurer
Andrea Koblizkova
CASALC

Greetings from CASALC!

All photos are from the CASALC general meeting in Brno, 24th January 2019.

Inspired by the existence of fellow organizations in Europe, the Czech and Slovak Association of Language Centres (CASALC) was founded in 2000 with the mission to represent language teachers working in various contexts within institutions of higher education in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The association was established, in particular, thanks to the joint effort of the heads of the language centres at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, Prague, Masaryk University, Brno and Comenius University in Bratislava. Following the well-established tradition of historically close relations, two independent associations, CASALC (CZ) registered in the Czech Republic and CASALC (SK) registered in Slovakia, decided to bear one common name, creating, in this way, a strong bond that would symbolise the character of their cordial cooperation.

Today, in 2019, CASALC associates 45 members, 31 in the Czech Republic and 14 in Slovakia, 17 of whom are also members of the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS). All CASALC activities are organized and coordinated concurrently and independently in the Czech Republic and Slovakia by two executive committees, which meet three to four times per year. Peter Gergel (Comenius University in Bratislava) was elected the chair of CASALC (SK) in spring 2019, taking over from Mária Igazová (University of Cyril and Methodius, Trnava); Libor Štěpánek (Masaryk University, Brno) was elected the chair of CASALC (CZ) in January



2019, taking over from Andrea Koblížková (University of Pardubice), who became the first ever CASALC member of the CercleS executive committee.

From the outset, language centres associated in CASALC focused, among other areas, on professional development, and it was 2010's that brought the key momentum in this respect. The centres participating in projects funded by the European Social Fund within the framework of the Education for Competitiveness Operational Programme (ECOP) increased their activities within CASALC and shared their latest educational approaches and tools within the network. CASALC even became a consortium partner in the UNICOM, COMPACT and IMPACT projects.

The networking activity associated with the implementation of those projects enhanced the collaboration and mutual support of CASALC centres: informal events designed

to share best practices such as the annual Language Centre Week at Masaryk University, Brno, were quickly followed by similar events organized by other universities across the country. CASALC also operates an electronic portfolio - a platform through which the language centres and individual members may communicate with their colleagues.

Another important chapter in the history of CASALC was written in June 2011, when the first issue of CASALC Review was published. The CASALC Review is a journal designed as a forum for disseminating research results as well as sharing best practices in fields ranging from LSP methodology to testing and assessment and from autonomous learning to the use of ICT in language teaching. The editors prepare two to three issues annually; some issues are monothematic, while others might publish contributions presented at local conferences.



CASALC has begun to play a crucial role in advocating a national language policy and supporting the existence of language centres. The former chair, Andrea Koblížková, conducted a nation-wide survey in 2017 to map the situation in tertiary education institutions in the Czech Republic. The aim was to negotiate with the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB) a requirement of an explicitly defined language proficiency level in degree programmes at Czech universities. Even though CASALC failed in this particular battle (NAB leaving individual universities to decide), the role of CASALC has strengthened and several universities have changed their language policy based on CASALC recommendations.

Looking forward to celebrating its 20th anniversary next year, CASALC is a lively professional organiza-

tion, committed to the promotion of plurilingualism, enhancement of professional development, facilitation of networking among language centres and support of language policy initiatives. The increasing professional and cooperative spirit within CASALC has resulted in the decision to offer to be the host of the biennial Cercles Conference entitled Language Centres at a Crossroads: Open Directions for New Generations of Learners, taking place at Masaryk University, Brno, in September 2020. To quote from the Call for papers:

“The concept of crossroads reflects the dynamic times we live in. Conventional strategies for addressing university language education have been changing, influenced by a great number of factors. New policies, strategies and designs, innovative initiatives and complex ex-



periments are being shaped by the manifold social, political and scientific interactions at multiple levels, both at universities and in the world at large. Traditional authorities and processes in academia have begun to be challenged by a number of new actors and approaches. And in the middle of it all, language centres are exploring new directions.” And so is CASALC today – a professional, collaborative organisation set to explore new directions in language teaching and learning.

Greetings from Switzerland!

In internationalised multilingual Switzerland, teaching and learning in various languages necessitates collaboration while also facilitating collective development. SSH-CHES (Verband der Sprachenzentren an Schweizer Hochschulen – Association des Centres de Langues des Hautes écoles suisses), the Swiss Association for Language Centres in Higher Education plays a central role in this.

Why was the Swiss association for language learning in higher education founded?

The SSH-CHES grew out of two developments, some of them also evident in other parts of the world during the latter decades of the 20th century. The first was welcome changes in language teaching and learning. These included the shift towards task-based language learning, growing focus on learners, lifelong learning beyond school, greater comparison across linguistic and national borders and the promotion of plurilingualism, and capitalising on previous language learning when teaching additional languages. Many of these developments – to which Switzerland contributed – were promoted by increasingly influential transnational bodies, such as the Council of Europe and the European Language Council, whose efforts extended throughout Europe. The second, unwelcome, development pertained to the economics of higher education and language instruction in an age of austerity. Savings, an emphasis on economic considerations, and threatening privatisation placed language learning and teaching under considerable strain.

Taken together, these trends made it logical for language centres and instructors to collaborate across language boundaries, to participate in thorny discussions on language policy in higher education, and to formalise and institutionalise mutual support.

What was the national context?

It is only since the late 1990s that lecturers of additional languages outside the academic philologies have been actively pursuing exchanges across language boundaries within Switzerland. Historically, structures within and across languages were poor. Lecturers had primarily liaised within the confines of their own target language group, and it was only lecturers of German as a foreign language in higher education who organised themselves into a formal association. This lack of collaboration across languages in higher education may be connected to the regional nature of multilingualism in Swiss society on the whole. While Switzerland boasts four national languages on the federal level – German (with a strong use of localised dialects), French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance – on the regional level each of these languages tends to concentrate in its own separate geographic space. This regional monolingualism is reflected in higher education institutions in that learning and teaching is mostly conducted in only the one national language which is regionally dominant. In the wake of internationalisation, English has increasingly become an additional language of instruction, often crowding out the use and knowledge of the national languages.

Given the challenges and opportunities that this specific multilingual constellation poses to higher education, the association strove to either initiate or contribute to often contested language policies. For example, in a position paper to the federal association of universities (formerly the Conference of Rectors of Swiss Universities, now swissuniversities), it proposed that students who do not graduate from a Swiss school require a high B2 in the languages of instruction (French or German) for admission to Bachelor and Master studies. In addition, in the event that institutions should discontinue internal exams to test students' levels themselves, the paper listed authoritative certificates that could attest the proposed level.

Intensified collaboration became increasingly possible and also necessary as more Swiss institutions of higher education established Language Centres in the late nineteen-nineties and the early twenties. The institutionalisation of mutual support had its early beginnings when members of language centres founded a special interest group within the national association of applied linguistics. The Interest Group for Foreign Language Instruction in Higher Education Institutions in Switzerland (IG-FHS/GI-ELHE, Interessengruppe Fremdsprachenunterricht an Hochschulen in der Schweiz / Groupe d'intérêt enseignement des langues dans les Hautes Ecoles en Suisse) was founded in 1996. Within two decades, this predecessor association evolved into a fully self-governing body in its own rights.

How does the SSH-CHES work?

Refounded under its new name and constitution, the SSH-CHES still benefits from membership of the Swiss Association for Applied Linguistics (VALS-ASLA Vereinigung für angewandte Linguistik in der Schweiz/ Association Suisse de Linguistic Appliqué), but now as an independent collective member. Presently, the SSH-CHES has three individual and 13 institutional members. The latter include federal and cantonal universities as well as universities of applied sciences from the French and German speaking parts of the country. Complementing the official Swiss languages and English as a lingua franca dominate, other languages represented by members range from Arabic to Latin, Brazilian Portuguese to Japanese.

Multilingual and trans-regional collaboration within Switzerland has gone hand-in-hand with building transnational networks. Twenty years ago, the national association joined CerlceS. And in September 2014 it hosted the 13th CercleS conference on “Language Centres in Higher Education – Exploring and Shaping Plurilingual Profiles”, thereby contributing to the promotion of multilingualism in higher education. During an intensive three-day programme the association welcomed an estimated 275 participants, who delivered around 80 presentations in six sections, with three keynote and a round table. Contributions were delivered in English, German, French and Italian. The current CercleS presidency of Sabina Schaffner, Director of the Language Centre of the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, adds an additional dimension to the involvement of the national associa-

tion in the international umbrella organisation.

What are the main objectives and activities of the SSH-CHES?

The main objectives are, to:

- Gain recognition for the importance of language instruction for academic, professional and everyday purposes in higher education. This includes the allocation of European credits for courses in additional languages and the professionalisation of language learning and teaching.
- Enhance the quality of language teaching and learning in higher education. This includes lecturer development through workshops and conferences as well as networking and sharing of information amongst managers.
- Contribute to discussions on language policies. This ranges from suggestions on language entry requirements to the promotion of multilingualism.
- Share resources and join forces. This includes the organisation of international and national events as well as collaboration on research and sharing experiences and findings.

These aims are reflected in the activities of three focus groups – management, research, and training. The focus group on management is reserved for the directors of language centres. This creates a confidential environment where they can consult on difficult aspects of staff management and leadership, such as recruitment, appraisals or conflict management.

The further education group is responsible for lecturer development. Starting five years ago, it has been organising an annual national train-

ing day for lecturers. This day combines expert keynotes with workshops by lecturers for lecturers. In addition, the SSH-CHES supports member organisations who open their internal further education to lecturers of other centres. Through these national and local events, lecturers are updated and update each other on current trends in language learning and teaching. In addition, they form their own networks, which spawn self-organised meetings among lecturers from different centres. Recent and upcoming topics include blended learning, flipped classrooms, writing for language acquisition, and the individual language learner.

The research group develops and disseminates an evidence base for teaching. For a recent study on lecturers’ attitudes and beliefs regarding students’ writing, it surveyed two sets of lecturers: those who teach students to write and those who use writing as a means to teach an additional language. Findings were presented at various levels: in a workshop on writing for lecturers from member institutions, at the 15th CercleS conference in Poznan, and at the Wulkow Meeting of Directors of Language Centres in Higher Education in Europe. In addition, through publications in the CercleS journal *Language Learning in Higher Education*, individual members of the association participate in exchanges with researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the broader higher education community.

Stephan Meyer and

Stefanie Neuner-Anfindsen

Co-presidents of the SSH-CHES

November 2019

ssh-ches.ch

Contact & Information

CONTACT INFORMATION

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STATS

Established in
1991, Strasbourg, France

Number of members

**Within National
Associations:** 375

Associate Members:20

Meetings

Executive committee
Monthly online

Coordinating committee
Annually

General Meeting
Biennially

Conferences

Arranged
Biennially

Next Conference
*XVI CercleS International
Conference*
September 2020
Brno, Czech Republic

The European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS) has been promoting interaction and cooperation between different institutions involved in language teaching in Europe since 1991, bringing together Language Centres, Departments, Institutes, Faculties or Schools in Higher Education whose main responsibility is the teaching of languages.

