

AILC/ICLA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

7 MARCH 2025 (online)

2.30 pm CET

The President, Lucia Boldrini welcomed the members and apologised for the postponement of the meeting due to insufficient information and updates on ongoing items. She welcomed newly elected Chairs of Research Committees: Simone Rebori and Youngmin Kim, co-Chairs of the research committee on Digital Comparative Literature; Eugenia Kelbert and Marianna Deganutti, Chairs of the research committee on Language Contact in Literature: Europe; Florian Mussnug, Chair of CHLEL; Fatiha Taib and Lobna Ismail, elected members of the EC and now attending also as co-Chairs of the Arabic Comparative Literature Standing Research Committee; and Anne Duprat, ICLA Secretary and now also newly elected Chair of the Standing Research Committee on Literary Theory.

A change of order in the items for discussion was proposed, requested by the chair of the Structures Cttee (as template for Research Development Committee by-laws involves Structures Cttee decisions), so matters related to Elections and items related to the possible amendment of bylaws, would be taken one after the other.

1. Elections of Officers and Executive Committee 2025-2028

- a. Nominations Committee's list of nominations for approval
- b. Electronic elections platform
- c. Timeline of election process

Lucia outlined the election process:

- The Nominating Committee identifies candidates
- The EC discusses and approves the list
- The list is published and communicated to members. As per Statutes, ICLA members can then make additional nominations supported by 7 other members in good standing of the ICLA by a specified deadline.

The Election committee oversees the correctness and timeliness of the election process.

The Election Committee comprises the Chair of the Structures Committee, Liedeke Plate; Marko Juvan (EC member not standing for re-election) and Lucia Boldrini (ex officio and for the same reason no conflict of interest) + Anca Mihalache, the administrator, whose role is to prepare the electoral register from the membership list.

1a: Nominations List

Lucia Boldrini reported on behalf of Stefan Helgesson, Chair of Nominating Committee (NC), who could not be present. There were two documents circulated: a synoptic list of candidates and a PDF file with all the biographies.

The NC sought to compile a list that includes a wide range of geo-cultural linguistic and scientific expertise and is balanced in terms of identity characteristics and also of seniority.

Lucia announced the list of candidates. She read out the list of candidates for office bearers along with the terms that they have already served on the EC and invited comments / thoughts / questions on these positions.

Then she proceeded to introduce the list of 30 candidates for Executive Cttee, reminding the members that the Statutes stipulate that 16 will be elected directly by the membership and 2 will be added from the non-elected list, with consideration given to the diversity of the Council. The incoming President and the NC will identify those two additional names.

All candidates will be reminded that they need to be members in good standing, hence anyone who is not will be asked to regularise their position.

The membership appreciated Rita Schmidt's successful effort to find candidates from Latin America, who have been included in the list of candidates for EC.

Anne Duprat proposed that the nominations list be approved and Adelaide Russo seconded.

The list of nominations was unanimously passed.

1b: Electronic election platform

Liedeke Plate, Chair of the Election Committee, thanked Lucia for the work done on identifying, contacting and obtaining quotations and information from various possible suppliers, and discussed the information provided regarding voting platforms.

Four companies providing E-voting platforms had been longlisted, the election committee proposed a shortlist of two: Election Buddy (which provided service in 2022) and Mi-Voice (which provides more services and hence is more expensive).

Lucia reminded EC members that an IT consultancy company had been used in the previous elections, as intermediary between the EC and Election Buddy; this was very expensive. As we have had the experience of e-elections in 2022, we may now directly engage an e-voting company without intermediary, with the full support package (which will incur some additional charges). Election Buddy would charge for late updates and voter support out of office hours; they would certify the result slightly later though the results would be sent to us immediately the vote closes. The Mi-Voice quotation is more flexible, including updates at the last minute and full voter support up to the end of the vote, with results and the certification available very shortly after the vote closes (within an hour or so).

Adelaide asked why did we use the intermediary Digimentors, which had a high cost, if the Election Buddy platform worked well.

Lucia recollected that Digimentors was recommended by then President Sandie Bermann, who had had excellent experience of working with them as they had set up the ICLA-ECARE Princeton conference and that 2022 was the first time ICLA held elections online, so we needed to be sure we followed correct processes. Now we have experience and we can tailor our costs accordingly.

Adelaide suggested that the EC endorse the election committee's choice.

Liedeke explained that election committee considered favourably the flexibility of Mi-Voice, though the base price is cheaper for Election Buddy. Whichever choice we make, the process will be much cheaper without the IT consultancy acting as intermediary. Lucia and Marco confirmed.

Liedeke proposed, on behalf of the Election Committee, that we go with Mi-Voice.

Lucia proposed, Anne Duprat seconded the proposal to vote upon the question:

Do you endorse the recommendation of the election committee to select Mi-Voice as a voting platform.

Endorsed by 20 yes votes; 4 did not vote.

1c: Election Timeline

Lucia introduced the election timeline by stating that this was determined by the Statutes (e.g., by when the members can submit new nominations) and by the e-platform which needed to receive material in time to set up the ballot. Hence we have to announce the date of the communications to members to confirm dates of election, where to find information on candidates, and how to vote.

Accordingly, she suggested **26 June 2025** as the cut-off date, i.e. the latest date for confirming all the details. Notifications of the process will start following the approval of the timeline via newsletters / website.

Schedule:

Election opens on July 10 2025 at 00.01 Paris time and closes at 23.59 Paris time on July 30; the Nominating Committee and the incoming President will select two candidates among the non-elected ones in addition to the 16 elected members to complete the of Executive Committee members, to be announced to the General Assembly, probably taking place on 31st July.

Lucia noted that it has been customary **not** to announce who was elected directly and who was added to make up the number of 18 Exec Cttee members, so as not to make them feel, or appear to others, 'second class' members. The EC agreed to continue with this practice and approved the timeline presented.

2. Structures Committee's review of statutes and any proposed changes presented by Liedeke Plate, Chair of the Structures Committee.

Article IV

The Committee proposed an amendment to reflect the reality of electronic voting, replacing "attendance plus absent members who had voted by electronic ballots" with "association's members in good standing by an electronic ballot."

Voting on the question "Do you endorse the proposed amendment to Article IV of the Statutes", proposed by Lucia Boldrini and seconded by Anne Duprat

Accepted by 18 yes votes, 6 did not vote

Article VII

The Committee proposed the following possibilities to amend the Article VII which states “that the chairs of standing research committees have the right to vote on all issues that come before the Council, except for their own reports on the condition that the General Assembly has ratified their position as chair.”

Liedeke summarised three options for amending Article VII, recommended by the Structures Committee:

Option A: Ratification by electronic voting by all members of the General assembly when a new chair is elected even if mid-cycle. The following words to be added to the Article: “In the case of a change of chair of a Standing Research Committee in between congresses, the new chair may only vote after their position as chair has been ratified by the Association’s members in good standing by an electronic ballot according to the procedures established by the Executive Council”.

Option B: remove the ratification requirement entirely by deleting the words “on the condition that the General Assembly has ratified their position as chair”.

Option C: to be changed to ratification by the Executive Council instead of by the General Assembly; words of the Article to be amended to: “on the condition that the **Executive Council** has ratified their position as chair”.

In the discussion, it was suggested that SRCs could align their elections with the annual meeting of the EC or the triennial meeting of the Congress and include that in their by-laws. Adelaide agreed and asked if the ratification vote could be dealt with through the website. Lucia responded that the standing committee could announce the change in Chair via the website, but anonymous voting via the website is not possible (to do so would require costly development of the website, or costly use of e-voting platforms).

Anne Tomiche argued that the General Assembly should endorse the Chairs, despite the cost (possibly concentrating votes once a year in proximity to EC meetings, when other decisions

may also be put to the membership for a vote) to support the democratic principle that all voting EC members should have been approved by the membership.

The Chair of the Research Development Committee Matthew Reynolds argued that Standing Research Committees should have the right to elect the Chair they deem most appropriate, without needing the entire ICLA membership to approve it (since only members would know who the appropriate person is), according to principles of self-determination and representative democracy; in any case, the elected EC would still have to approve the SRC Chair. Anne Tomiche pointed out that currently, chairs are ratified by the General Assembly every three years. Since the SRCs use ICLA funds, it is necessary for the members to be informed of their activities in the interests of transparency and democracy to avoid concentration of power. Lucia pointed out that this discussion is, precisely, to propose to change the Statutes in this respect, and the GA will decide whether to approve or not; the use of ICLA funds is reported in the annual reports and the EC minutes, and it is not relevant to the ratification of the Chair. Liedeke reminded us that it was only in 2016 that Chairs of Standing Research Committees got the same voting rights as elected members of the EC, and the justification given was that they would participate in the policy and planning of the association since their election would be ratified by the General Assembly.

Lucia suggested that, since we do not want to prevent SRCs from electing their own chair and the membership is not necessarily informed about the research area, the issue seems to be more about the principle of research committee chairs having voting rights in the Executive Council, rather than about ratifying specific individuals. But having to ask every three years whether the membership is happy to continue supporting the principle that standing research committee chairs have a vote (and if they say No we would have to change the Statutes again) seems unreasonable. In any case the GA should not compromise the freedom of the SRCs to conduct their own affairs and elect the most appropriate Chair.

Liedeke emphasised that these are only proposals to changes in the Statutes, and they have to be voted on in the General Assembly.

The EC voted on the options.

Option A: 1 vote

Option B: 1 vote

Option C: 17 votes

Liedeke stated that the Committee had also been asked to consider whether chairs of time-limited research committees (as opposed to standing research committees) should also have a vote in the EC. The Structures Committee opined that since time-limited research committees are by definition temporary, they should not vote on decisions that might be long-term.

There was unanimous agreement on this proposal.

Article VIII

The Structures Committee proposed to amend the text to formalise what is actually happening, i.e. that electronic voting is employed to amend statutes.

The current phrasing:

Amendments to the Statutes may be proposed by the Council to the members of the Association up to two months prior to a General Assembly. The General Assembly has the sole authority to adopt or reject such amendments by a majority of votes cast.

In anticipation of a General Assembly, members of the Association may convey suggestions regarding Association procedures or amendments to the Statutes to the President or one of the Secretaries-General

should therefore be changed to:

Amendments to the Statutes may be proposed by the Council to the members of the Association via an electronic vote, according to the procedure established by the Executive Council. The membership, which consists of members in good standing, has the sole authority to adopt or reject such amendments by a majority of votes cast.

Voting took place on the question: “Do you endorse the proposed Change to Article VIII of the Statutes”?

The proposal was endorsed by 21 yes votes.

Article X

The Structures Committee proposed deleting Article X because it actually repeats verbatim, the start of Article IV.

Voting took place on the question: “Do you endorse the proposal to delete article X of the Statutes?”

The proposal was endorsed by 17 yes votes, no abstentions, no votes against.

3. Template for research committee by-laws

Matthew Reynolds, Chair of the Research Development Committee, presented a template for research committee by-laws, based on the existing by-laws of the Research Committee on Literary Theory. The template is designed to be flexible and accommodate different ways of being a research committee. Matthew suggested that existing committees don't need to revise their by-laws, but future committees (or those that do not have by-laws) should use the template. Lucia proposed that the template should be discussed and agreed on, but did not need a formal vote.

Lucia informed the EC that she would be meeting all research committee chairs to discuss and coordinate various aspects of the work of the committees including the launch of an annual lecture, and that she had contacted RC chairs to collect information about all the committees in a coherent, consistent, clear manner for publication on the new website.

The Executive Council agreed the template and recorded that, in the interests of transparency, Research Committees that do not have by-laws, should be are required to provide the Executive Council with their bylaws for approval at the next meeting in Seoul.

Youngmin Kim proposed having a separate meeting for research committee chairs during the upcoming congress in Seoul.

4. Platform for communications, shared space and archiving

Lucia discussed the challenges of setting up a platform for secure document storage, email communication, and archiving, and the need for a Microsoft contractor's support. A Microsoft Business account would cost many thousand euros. A Microsoft nonprofit account would be free but faces potential administrative and legal issues and makes it advisable to enlist the support of a tax accountant, which would cost around €1,200 annually. The team also discussed the need for a new postal address for the Association as there is currently no-one to receive our post at our official address at the Sorbonne.

Lucia led a discussion on a decision regarding the choice of a professional to help operate a non-profit Microsoft account requiring SIRET (French requirement for companies) filing, suggesting the possible options:

A. do we register for the SIRET number and continue the application for a non-profit Microsoft account, with all the administrative consequences (filing of yearly tax returns and forms 3916, with the help of a tax accountant)?

B. do we accept the higher cost of a business account to avoid the additional administrative requirement of filing a tax return in France?

C. do we not proceed at all with a communication and archiving platform, continuing using individual email accounts, google docs, etc, with the risk of loss of data and historical information, lack of continuity, lower security of members data?

16 members voted for option A and 2 members for option C. Option A was approved.

5. Seoul Congress: interim report

Youngmin Kim, coordinator of the Seoul 2025 Congress, gave an update, stating that they have received over 1400 abstract submissions from 65 different countries. They are also working on arranging accommodations for attendees, and exploring the potential for financial assistance. Youngmin mentioned that they are still working on other aspects of the event and are hopeful for a successful outcome of the funding applications.

Youngmin discussed the registration system, which includes a \$10 membership fee for non-members and different rates for students.

Lucia clarified that the fee should only be added for those who are not already members. This would be reviewed as soon as possible after the end of the meeting.

Youngmin explained the options of staying at a hotel or commuting from Seoul, though the final decision would be made before the event. Youngmin also mentioned the construction of subcommittees and the use of the ConfTool system for organizing the event. Finally, Youngmin discussed plans for special sessions and invited speakers, discussed the ongoing preparations

for the upcoming conference, including the organization of group sessions and the assignment of these sessions to individual rooms. He also mentioned the need for further assistance from the program committee members in organizing the schedule. Youngmin confirmed that letters of acceptance had been sent out to all accepted submissions.

6. New Website

Lucia provided an update on the new website, noting that it was slower than expected but nearing completion.

7. Any other matter

The ECARE committee's report was tabled to update the EC about the activities of the committee's plans and Ipshita announced that the prizes for two submissions had been selected for the First Book Subvention prize instead of one, as they both warranted recognition, and the money was available because no award has been made in 2023.

It was reported that the Travel Grant Committee was moving forward with its deadline approaching.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm CET.