



Translitteræ EUR Strategic Orientation Committee (COS) January 2020 Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

International members: Nélia Dias, Mamadou Diouf, Romain Graziani, Jean Khalfa, Matthias Middell, Simonetta Montemagni, Joël Noret, David Simo

For Translitteræ EUR: Emmanuel Basset, Paolo d'Iorio, Isabelle Kalinowski, Annabelle Milleville, Frédéric Worms

The Translitteræ EUR Strategic Advisory Board has 13 international members (list attached and available on <https://www.translitterae.psl.eu/presentation/gouvernance/cos/>).

During this first meeting of the Translitteræ EUR Strategic Advisory Board (SAB), the international attendees first sought clarification on the interface between Translitteræ and its administrative supervisors, Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) and Paris Sciences & Lettres (PSL). Emmanuel Basset reminded everyone that one of PSL's ambitions is to offer a "more comprehensible benchmark abroad."

Going around the table, each attendee had the opportunity to make remarks and suggestions.

Mamadou Diouf, professor at Columbia University (New York), has noticed that the creation of "graduate schools" in France, with the plan to recruit future doctoral candidates during their masters coincides with an opposite trend observed currently in the United States. Rather than pushing students to take up a doctorate, a tuition-based "master's only" track that brings money into the university. Consideration was given to the fact that a graduate education costs around \$60,000 per year, an amount deemed excessive. That being said, this amount entails an obligation of residency and allows students to fully devote themselves to their studies.

Matthias Middell, professor at Leipzig University, remarked that Translitteræ's communication is based exclusively on promoting institutions rather than "charismatic" individuals. He was referring to the exceptional way it has brought them together. He suggested that more emphasis be put on the programme's leading figures, to "play up the name and renown of scholars" as is done, for example, at the University of Cambridge. He also wondered about the process of internationalising institutions, and about the possibility of developing exchanges between Translitteræ and other international graduate schools, for example, around a specific topic.

Jean Khalfa, professor at the University of Cambridge, wished to focus on the issue of students' future careers, which should have a certain logic. He also underscored the importance of the international criterion – at Trinity College, less than 20% of students completed their studies at Cambridge. The geographical distribution of where students are from can also provide significant information. Finally, developing a policy on "alumni" patronage may constitute a major asset.

Nélia Dias, professor at the University of Lisbon, recommended presenting concrete figures on the Translitteræ website, and added that it will be important for board members to receive a Translitteræ activity report beforehand, which includes the breakdown of student enrolment by master's programme. She noted that the strong persisting opposition between "humanities" and "social sciences" at French institutions is outdated. At the international scale, Translitteræ's total budget does not appear very high.

Jean Khalfa inquired about whether Translitteræ could manage European funds. Annabelle Milleville replied that this possibility is not within the jurisdiction of the EUR but that of the *Pôle Ressources*

Lettres, which she runs, and whose mission is to manage funds from all sources, according to researcher needs. In general, funding sources could be diversified. **Matthias Middell** reminded everyone that an agreement exists between ANR-DFG [French National Research Agency-German Research Foundation] and ENS, for example.

Mamadou Diouf seconded the suggestion from Nélia Dias to give access to quantitative information. He supports a selection principle that would allow funds to be used in the most efficient way. He advocates for strengthening the development of language learning and, in general, increasing the EUR's resources.

David Simo, professor at the University of Yaoundé I, reminded everyone of the difficulties organising higher education systems in countries where “everything has to be created from scratch” and models are imitated at the expense of some confusion. He is convinced that the “marginal position of African scholars can redefine central positions”, by proposing “another perspective on things.” Inasmuch as concerns projects with Africa, encouraged by Translitteræ, David Simo recommends truly bilateral exchanges, with a flow of students coming in from France. Circulation of scholars remains a priority.

Matthias Middell and **David Simo** requested that the website structure be made “easier to digest and read” by students.

Romain Graziani, professor at ENS in Lyon, supported Jean Khalfa's proposal to foster strong ties with alumni. Returns can be counted on in terms of prestige and donations; the “moral obligation culture” among alumni is very pronounced. He supports the idea that professions and the prospects for employment outside of research should be encouraged.

Jean Khalfa added that 90% of alumni donors are former undergraduate students.

Joël Noret, professor at the Free University of Brussels, regrets that a document had not been sent before the meeting. The pace of current reforms is triggering quite the concern. The question of patronage cannot be posed without giving thought to the source of funds received and the processes of legitimisation entailed.

Simonetta Montemagni, research director at the Italian National Research Council, underscored that the transversal nature of “digital humanities” can play a federating role in a programme like Translitteræ, and help disciplines ask new questions by promoting interdisciplinarity. She insisted on the issue of open access and the link to international infrastructures (archives and databases). International grants can be obtained to maintain the data.

With respect to the discussion, **Matthias Middell** suggested that, as each country is developing its own idea of what a “Graduate School” is, Translitteræ could take advantage of the SAB to initiate a comparative discussion on what a graduate school is in the United States, in England, in Yaoundé, and so on. An explanation could also be provided on the Translitteræ website.