

## Translitteræ EUR Strategic Orientation Committee (COS) September 2022 Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

International members: Souleymane Diagne (remote), Nélia Dias, Dan Garber, Romain Graziani, Jean Khalfa, Matthias Middell, Simonetta Montemagni, Joël Noret, David Simo

For the Translitteræ EUR: Gabriel D'Avigneau, Michel Espagne, Isabelle Kalinowski, Sonia Litaïem, Annabelle Milleville, Valérie Theis (meeting opening only)

For ANR [French National Research Agency]: Florian Cordonnier (remote), Yanni Gunnell

The Translitteræ EUR Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) has 13 international members (see webpage: <https://www.translitterae.psl.eu/presentation/gouvernance/cos/>).

During the second meeting of the Translitteræ SAB, the international attendees were welcomed by Ms. Valérie Theis, Deputy Director of Lettres at ENS since March 2022. She points out that the COVID period was not a slow period for the EUR. It was quite the opposite, in fact, with a resurgence in activity and many new developments. She exhorted a strengthening of ties between research and teaching, through the multiplication of innovative programmes in association with the new programmes at ENS, which benefit in part from EUR support: Programme Suds, Humanités médicales et environnementales [Medical and Environmental Humanities], and the Interdisciplinary Centre for European Studies.

Next, they listened to a presentation by Gabriel D'Avigneau on the publishing support policy and how it is implemented from an operational point of view [<https://www.translitterae.psl.eu/pratique/soutien-a-ledition/>].

Afterwards, Caroline Mounier-Vehier shared her post-doc experience at the EUR in 2021-2022 [<https://www.translitterae.psl.eu/caroline-mounier-vehier/>]. In particular, she spoke about the two one-day workshops organised by four Translitteræ post-doctorate students over this period, the *Cour d'amour* evening held in June at the ENS theatre and the external partnerships such as the one she formed with *Cité de la Voix* in Vézelay.

Then, Claire Riffard from ITEM, Institute of texts and modern manuscripts, briefly discussed the dynamics of her team's work on French-language manuscripts [<https://www.translitterae.psl.eu/seminaire-manuscrits-francophones/>]. She touched particularly upon genetic scholarship at the University of Dakar and the new projects revolving around Léopold Sédar Senghor's archives opened up in Normandy.

Finally, Serigne Seye, from Cheik Anta Diop University of Dakar, visiting professor at the EUR, presented his work and highlighted the benefits that he has already drawn from his time at Translitteræ [<https://www.translitterae.psl.eu/seye-serigne/>]. He undertook cross-referencing research in genetic scholarship and intermediality, and developed a project on *littératureurs* [BookTubers] and urban music in Senegal.

Isabelle Kalinowski then gave an overview of EUR activities over the last 30 months, since the SAB last convened in January 2020.

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

**Joël Noret**, professor at the Free University of Brussels, would like to see more clarity in the budget presented — the document currently in use is from the initial projected budget for the EUR (2018) but

the expense items have changed. For example, the number of doctoral/postdoctoral students is different from document to document: the increase in this figure, the reason for which was the result of a clear choice made by the EUR, as Isabelle Kalinowski explained in her presentation, should be pushed to the fore. On the topic of young researcher contracts (doctoral and postdoctoral), whose number is still quite limited with respect to the numbers for a country like Belgium, co-funding models have to be developed with outside partners, like Institut français, which offers postdoctoral [contracts] to coordinate activities, but this is just an example. In the same way, data should be provided on the percentages of successful calls for proposals for these contracts, the number of candidates, etc.

**David Simo**, professor at University of Yaoundé I, underscored what he considers Translitteræ's strengths: support for publications and for young researchers, and in particular, post docs. He mentioned the 2020 *Humanités Numériques* [Digital humanities] partnership project, which was put on hold during COVID but now could be put back on the programme/rescheduled.

**Matthias Middell**, professor at Leipzig University, brought up the Franco-German Doctoral College being set up between Leipzig and ENS, financed by the Franco-German university, which testify to collaborations between institutions (not just individuals) that can be a source of joint funding. He suggested that Translitteræ's added value be put forward and promoted through a handbook published in English.

Finally, he suggested that an example be worked up to describe outgoing EUR's postdoctoral profile in order to increase employability through the Translitteræ "label." (e.g., "A postdoctoral scholar selected from a very competitive international pool, who had ample time to consolidate their work and research dynamic...").

**Jean Khalfa**, professor at the University of Cambridge, wishes to put emphasis on the question of the future employability, on the international stage, of young researchers from the EUR. It would be interesting to survey Translitteræ doctoral and postdoctoral students on their job search outside of France, and in this way spur them on to applying abroad.

Translitteræ's specificities, and particularly the link between historical research and professional work on texts and archives, and its multilingual dimension, could work in candidates' favour if this was featured on job applications. At the international level, these are uncommon skills.

The number of contracts available is minute, requiring co-funding to be set up, through patronage, for example, as well as longer-term contracts. He underscored that since registration fees at PSL are slight, funding Translitteræ students costs far less than funding graduates in American or English universities; this is one of the programme's strengths from the point of view of the search for patrons. Large international foundations and private donors would therefore have at least double the impact for the same investment. This argument should be provided to the department in charge of patronage, which can cast favourable light on the fact that even recruiting is done at the global level. In short, as has already been mentioned, an attractive international identity must be created for Translitteræ.

Finally, he emphasised to a great extent on the significant advances to be made in terms of digital humanities.

**Nélia Dias**, professor at the University of Lisbon, observed that anthropology is making a place for itself within the EUR and is pleased about this. While this development is significant in research, it is less so in terms of programmes. With this in mind, as an example, she suggested creating a Translitteræ dissertation prize for social sciences in addition to the PSL dissertation prize.

*The various questions make the team realise that it must provide the EUR and PSL master's mapping in the future.*

**Simonetta Montemagni**, research director at the Italian National Research Council, commended the group on the project — whose scientific utility is evident — which was able to remain active during the COVID period. Nevertheless, she regretted that Digital Humanities developments are not showcased more: opportunities for international partnerships could be seized. She asked whether the research in this field, within Translitteræ, is also bidirectional in nature? The answer is yes: researchers also call upon specialists in Digital Humanities and update their paradigms to meet the needs of special projects.

She asked how interdisciplinarity is assessed, and how results are evaluated. This question underscores the issues that are present everywhere: multidisciplinary is extolled, but this does not open the door to better employability, which is generally field-related.

**Dan Garber**, professor at Princeton University, came back to the idea of a Translitteræ manual, (or handbook, as proposed by Matthias Middell), stating that this type of summary publication is very common in the English-speaking world. It could take the form of a “Companion to Interdisciplinarity in Humanities” for the EUR, published by Translitteræ.

He expressed some disappointment with the fact that English philosophy is lacking representation. *This comment calls to the EUR team’s attention that the list of projects submitted and selected was not included in the packet sent to SAB members.*

He described the overall difficulties getting responses from subject matter departments and proposed that foreign visiting professor invitations be reserved for candidates from at least two fields.

**Romain Graziani**, professor at ENS in Lyon, came back to the question of interdisciplinarity by stating that in terms of hiring prospects, it oftentimes does not weigh very heavily in the balance. It can lead to dissertations that cannot be monetised. How can the creation of an intellectual identity square with professionalisation?

He confirmed that the creation of economic partnerships with non-university institutions would be timely, for postdoctoral rather than doctoral contracts, currently more useful with regard to the plethora of dissertations already funded in general, in comparison to the number of positions to be filled.

On this matter, he mentioned the moral responsibility that exists prior to each financing arrangement.

**Jean Khalifa** added that Translitteræ could play an active role with companies by creating programmes especially for them (for example, for a specific geographic and cultural area), which would be a source of revenue or patronage, and would perhaps have an impact on hiring.

**Joël Noret** added that it is also a possibility to turn to the non-profit world.