

Minutes of the
SIETAR Europa Board Meeting
held at Saarbücken, Germany on November 29-30, 2008

Participants:

SIETAR France: Jonathan Levy (JL),
SIETAR United Kingdom: Rob Johnson (RJ)
SIETAR Spain: Rob Gardiana (RG)
SIETAR Netherlands: Henning Zorn (HZ), Marianne Eldik van Thieme (MET),
SIETAR Germany: Alex Scheitza (AS), Sabine Wagner (SW)
SIETAR Italy: initiative Goffredo Diana (GD)
SIETAR Austria: Patrick Schmidt (PS)
Mirka Lachka (ML) and Ildiko Polyak (IP) – representatives of direct members of the SE Board
Christine Longé (CL): office manager

Saturday, November 29, 2008

AS kicked off the meeting by describing the interesting historical and cultural aspects of Saarbrücken. Then, as a sort of check in period, all participants expressed their feelings about where they were after the Granada Congress.

Reports of national SIETARS:

U.K. Regrouping energy after some difficult times. Mathew Hill, recently elected President, is developing new ideas. Planned is a business and cultural event at the end of February, 2009, “Intercultural Communication in the Spanish-speaking world” in London in June 2009 and hopes to hold an event in York, September 2009.

Spain: Granada Congress took much energy. It had a presentation of the U.S. election. Will have a Christmas dinner party. Postponed Board meeting because of the influx of new members after Granada Congress.

Austria: Had a good presentation of United Arab Emirates last September. Will hold another presentation on December 3 in Vienna on intercultural differences in comics and cartoons and in February, there will be a U.S. forum on intercultural aspects of Barack Obama. SIETAR Austria took part on a small intercultural congress at the Donau University in Krems last September.

Netherlands: It has at present 142 members, but they don't all take part in the workshops offered. NL will do a survey to find out what young and new members expect from SIETAR NL. More than 45 members attended Granada congress and were very positive about the whole organization. Some members expressed unhappiness about the way money was collected for Christine Musaidizi from the Congo at the Granada Gala dinner – they felt it was like taking a colonial attitude. Members are looking forward to the new website.

Hungary: There will be a meeting on 11 December, 2008 in Budapest for the discussion on the MA communication project, known as the Hofstede project. The project's curriculum will be presented to associate partners.

France: Concentrating on organizing the 30-year anniversary event in Paris for next year. It wishes to cut down on activities in order to enhance quality. Have about 80 paying members. On going debate within the Board about the utility of SIETAR Europa.

Germany: It has at present 680 members. Their membership is divided into three "columns" of interest: research, business, social, with business being the strongest. It has now regional meetings in seven cities. Had a Board meeting in October and were very sad to learn Martina Krüger-Müller announced she would withdraw from the Board at the end of next year's general assembly and elections for new Board in November 09. . The Board wants to create a sub-committee, looking into on how to enhance the organization and its structure. Will organize new Forum for February 2010. Launched a new format for their magazine, 2nd issue of 'Mondial' was published in October. Very close to starting up new website. It feels the need of more structure in both SIETAR Deutschland and SIETAR Europa. At the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich on 22 January, 2009, Geert Hofstede will speak. It is rumoured that he will present a sixth dimension to his cultural patterns.

Italy: It was able to revise its statue draft, thanks to the comments and advice from Alex. In December the new Board will meet. As far as the budget is concerned, it's not sure of what it will be, as the amount that will be refunded by SIETAR Europa is not known. Guidelines and activity plans have not yet been defined in a strategic way. It will be an open association, but new members will only have full voting rights after one year of being within the organization.

Nascent Sietars:

Two issues that touch both national SIETARs and SIETAR Europa.

1. Are the national groups part or affiliated of SIETAR Europa?
2. Can a national SIETAR leave SIETAR Europa?

'Part of' would imply that the SIETAR Europa is the mother organization and the national group would have financial obligation to the parent association. 'Affiliated' would imply a more equal relationship and non-financial obligations

The Board unanimously agreed by vote that SIETAR national organizations are affiliated to SIETAR Europa.

GD suggested SIETAR Europa register its name as a legal entity. The name is then an added-value and acknowledgement, which provide national SIETARs with a protected name. Registration also safeguards it against the misuse of their name by "rogue" organizations.

AS believes that the registration of the name SIETAR should be first discussed at the national level, in order to get the OK to register the SIETAR name worldwide.

RG suggested a dual strategy.

1. Prepare the registering of SIETAR in order to protect it

2. Inform the national organizations that SIETAR Europa sees the need to protect the SIETAR name and would move forward to safeguard it. RJ will be in charge of the registration action. The Board approved unanimously this decision.

The Board thanked Alex, who was leaving the Board, for his excellent and “meticulous” work he has given to SIETAR Europa.

SIETAR Europa Guidelines:

The Board examined the two new paragraphs of the SIETAR Europa Guidelines and changed the term ‘non-refundable load’ to ‘grant’. Likewise changed ‘sliding scale’ to ‘applicable scale’. The Board voted unanimously to accept the new paragraphs in the guidelines.

Finances of SIETAR Europa:

The Board decided to form a task force to look into how SIETAR Europa will be financed into the future. IP and RG will head the task force.

New national SIETARS

The Board voted unanimously to accept the Charter of Poland.

The Board voted unanimously to accept the Charter of Bulgaria.

The Board voted unanimously to accept the Charter of Italy.

Global Council

JL began by declaring that he felt it was weak. It couldn’t be informal and yet at the same time, have a series of real tasks. What was its scope and mandate? And do we really need a Global Council?

The Board felt that there is a need for a sort of Global Council. But did it have an action plan? Should it have a strong consulting role or a decisive role? The Global Council should have a mandate to decide their role and should look into issues such as:

1. Helping organize global congresses
2. Helping establish new SIETARs worldwide.
3. Ensuring that all voices of SIETAR organizations are heard.
4. Defining common values to be a SIETAR members. What do we stand for?
5. Making sure that the SIETAR charter is respected.

This touched on the issue of relativism and universalism. Each controversial issue should be examined and the Council needs to put it into a relative perspective.

Decision: IP has been appointed by SIETAR Europa to the Global Council and has the mandate “to get the ball rolling”. The President of SIETAR Europa will be her substitute.

Role of SIETAR Europa

JL began the discussion by asking how much time did SIETAR Europa spend developing projects, i.e. creating added-value and at the same time to make sure that the national SIETARs are all included. It needed to inspire to help others move forward, by experimentation and innovation. The Presidency should have a mission. But six months isn’t enough time to realize one’s ideas.

Both RJ and IP expressed the President should have the role of being more procedural, a chair person providing a certain consistency. In this context, AS talked about his past leadership experiences and emphasized the importance of “feeling the pulse” of each European SIETAR and of integrating all SIETARS. He felt the President should be calling members of the national SIETARS at least once a month to get a feel of where they were.

Sunday, November 30

JL talked about the roles of an architect – to think about ideas — and an engineer – to carry out the ideas — making it clear that you need both to create a structure. He transferred this metaphor to SIETAR Europa. He felt the Board was well run by “engineers” and has become well-functioning. But the architect was not really being heard, its role seemed to be very weak.

He then asked the rhetorical question if SIETAR would exist in the future and whether SIETAR Europa were adding value to the national organizations? AS agreed with JL and put on the flip chart the dilemma, finding the happy medium between satisfying members and innovating. IP fully supported this view in general, but felt that SIETAR Europa didn’t really have members or resources to accomplish these two goals. She didn’t think the Board could take on more significant work. And direct members should be brought into the working of SIETAR Europa so that they feel being part of a family.

SW pointed out that we haven’t had much time to do the innovative as we spend so much time on the engineering at Board meetings. She pointed out that it is the national SIETARS that should formulate what they want. Maybe SIETAR Europa should increase its visibility to the general public. HD suggested that we leverage the strengths of the various national SIETARS. RG asked what does SIETAR actually offer to non-members. The answer was basically the Congresses. SW added to this the regional meetings, listening to evening presentations, giving the feeling of belonging to a family by meeting others face-to-face.

What do National SIETARs and the direct members expect from SIETAR Europa? RJ asked HZ to transmit the results to the Board of the survey they will ask young and new members about what they like and don’t like about SIETAR. SW shared the results SIETAR Deutschland did in terms of a telephone survey. They found that the members wanted more regional meetings and to have it done in German. RG suggested that the national SIETARS share their reports, i.e. questionnaires, so that it could be used by others. ML talked about the network of theatre work and maybe we could learn from other external groups.

Decision:

For the next Board meeting, National SIETARs will bring in the results of their surveys and IP and ML will report on a survey among the direct members.

Granada:

JL asked the Board to give support to CL for her work at the Congress. The Board mandated JL to look into work done by Christina Bush and Candela at Granada.

CL will report in about two weeks on the receipts and costs of Granada.

The website of Granada needs update in terms of results, report of the evaluation etc. We have to keep it up to date and interesting for reference purposes of our members (AS as congress closure task).

Next SIETAR Eu Congress

The Board has unanimously decided that the task force will come up with clear proposals concerning the date and location of the next Congress for at the next Board meeting. A steering committee will be appointed at this time.

SIETAR France Congress:

JL said it would probably take place sometime in October 2009 on the UNESCO grounds in Paris as a three-and-half day event. A concept paper will be handed to the administrators of UNESCO next week and if accepted, it won't cost anything for SIETAR France to use the facilities. Themes would be (still at early stages) human rights and diversity. Languages will be in French and English. The French minister of Human Rights, Rama Yade, would be asked to be keynote speaker. A talk on the history of SIETAR would also be proposed. MET has been invited to compose a film programme.

The Board supported unanimously his concept and each national SIETAR representative would go back to their respective group and ask if they would be interested in participating and would provide names of potential workshop leaders. SIETAR France should take responsibility of accounting and accountability.

The Young SIETAR Congress will take place on 12-15 November, 2009 in Cario.

Presidency:

AS proposed that the Board continue the 6-month rotation of the Presidency. There would be two Vice-Presidents (Past and Future Presidents) to aide the current President. RG has volunteered to be VP as of now and be the future President and IP will be the other VP.

Publication:

IP told about 9 papers that were submitted from the Sofia Congress and plans to print them for the Granada Congress. One author protested, stating that he was told it would be printed on-line, so publication was postponed. IP talked to Juliana Roth about an on-line journal from SIETAR Europa. Three possible formats: 1. purely academic, 2. academic + practical 3. academic + book reviews. Plamen Makariev of Bulgaria and Juliana Roth would be co-editors, with SIETAR Bulgaria being the organizer of the publication. This would give the organization a boost in terms of prestige. The Board agreed that the 9 articles could be put on-line by mid-January 2009. SIETAR would not be responsible for the content of these articles.

ML told about Kariana Gabrielyan, who gather also 9 articles from different people. PS will take a look at the articles as well as write to the authors and have the articles put on the SIETAR website.

New website management:

HZ showed the new SIETAR Deutschland website and discussed MemberClicks. As it was complicated and had many problems with language punctuation, HZ found a simpler and cheaper replacement — CIVICMS. Stephan Winkler could maintain it,

provided that all the websites were on the same server called 'Hosting Europe'. To host and maintain the whole system, i.e. all national SIETAR sites, it would only cost Euro 200 a year. To set up and make the transition from MemberClicks to CIVICMS, Stephan would charge anywhere from Euro 2000 to 2500, but no more, plus Euro 200 to bring all sites to one server. HZ assumes that there would be no accent mark problems. HZ strongly recommends that all national SIETARs move their sites to the same server 'Hosting Europe' and inform him.

The Board unanimously approved to change from 'MemberClicks' to 'CIVICMS'. The Board unanimously approved on contracting Stephan Winkler as webmaster for the SEu website.

MET thanked again AS for all of the wonderful work he did and gave him a small gift of DVD films.

The next SIETAR Europa Board meeting will be held in Vienna on the 27-29th March.

The meeting was adjourned at 17:00

Summary of decisions:

1. The Board unanimously agreed by vote that SIETAR national organizations are affiliated to SIETAR Europa.

2. The Board approved unanimously these two decisions.

1. Prepare the registering of SIETAR in order to protect it

2. Inform the national organizations that SIETAR Europa sees the need to protect the SIETAR name and would move forward to safeguard it. RJ will be in charge of the registration action.

3. The Board voted unanimously to accept the new paragraphs in the SIETAR Europa guidelines and to change the term 'non-refundable load' to 'grant'. Likewise changed 'sliding scale' to 'applicable scale'.

4. The Board voted unanimously to accept the Charter of Poland.

The Board voted unanimously to accept the Charter of Bulgaria.

The Board voted unanimously to accept the Charter of Italy.

5. IP has been appointed by SIETAR Europa to the Global Council and has the mandate "to get the ball rolling". The President of SIETAR Europa will be her substitute.

6. For the next Board meeting, National SIETARs will bring in the results of their surveys and IP and ML will report on a survey among the direct members.

7. The Board mandated JL to look into work done by Christina Bush and Candela at Granada.

8. The Board has unanimously decided that the task force will come up with clear proposals concerning the date and location of the next Congress for at the next Board meeting. A steering committee will be appointed at this time.

9. The Board supported unanimously his concept and each national SIETAR representative would go back to their respective group and ask if they would be interested in participating and would provide names of potential workshop leaders. SIETAR France should take responsibility of accounting and accountability.

10. The Board agreed that the 9 articles, edited by Juliana Roth and Plamen Makariev could be put on-line by mid-January 2009. SIETAR would not be responsible for the content of these articles.

11. The Board unanimously approved to change from 'MemberClicks' to 'CIVICMS' and on contracting Stephan Winkler as webmaster for the SEu website.

Respectfully submitted by Patrick Schmidt