

**Minutes of the ICOS Board Meeting**

**Zoom, 30 May 2022, 4 pm CET**

[https://cuaieed-unam.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMude-rrTspHtEZnYfzI30qlIzuIvxdfNZq](https://cuaieed-unam.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMude-rrTspHtEZnYfzI30qlIzuIvxdfNZq" \t "_blank)

**Present:** Katalin Reszegi (KR, chair), Yolanda Guillermina López Franco (YGLF, Vice-President), Peter Jordan (PJ, Vice-President), Vladislav Alpatov (VA, Secretary), Eugen Schochenmaier (ES, Assistant Secretary and Web Officer), Brittnee Leysen (BL, Postgraduate Representative), Fatemeh Akbari (FA), Lasse Hämäläinen (LH), Márcia Sipavicius Seide (MSS)

# Welcome and Apologies

KR welcomed everyone present.

AP, DS, AG excused themselves for absence.

# Minutes of the previous meeting (Zoom, 26 January 2021)

The minutes were approved for publication by the Board.

# Confirmation of the agenda

The following agenda was confirmed:

[1. Welcome and Apologies 1](#_Toc94224139)

[2. Minutes of the previous meeting (Zoom, 26 January 2021) 1](#_Toc94224140)

[3. Confirmation of the agenda 1](#_Toc94224141)

[4. Working groups’ reports 1](#_Toc94224142)

[5. Report of the Postgraduate Representative (BL) 2](#_Toc94224143)

[6. Completion of the ONOMA archive (FA) 3](#_Toc94224144)

[7. ICOS cooperation network (PJ) 3](#_Toc94224145)

[8. ICOS Newsletter (KR, VA) 3](#_Toc94224146)

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[10. Any other business 6](#_Toc94224148)

# Working groups’ reports

**Terminology Group Report (AG)**

**Work on ITOS within ICOS TG**

1. Discussions have been initiated to expand the existing list of onomastic key terms (ITOS International Terminology of Onomastic Sciences). TG members can comment and propose the development of further terms in a Google document made available to all. There are proposals to modify the concepts of previously established terms and their definitions. This is problematic insofar as a revision process would have to be carried out at the level of the three core languages of ICOS and the dozen or so others into which the list of key terms prepared in previous terms of the ICOS TG has been translated.
2. It is possible that the "simple" project under point 1 will be replaced or completed by the more elaborate ONOMTERM project, which will be presented to all TG members, as announced by Iveta Valentová (Bratislava). This is a very technically advanced project, which foresees the development of a system of onomastic terminology in many languages. TG members would participate in the work on the individual languages. Quite important here is the selection of "main editors". The whole work has a social character. The results of the work will be made available online.
3. - The ONOMTERM project, together with the database completed so far (in Slovak, Polish, English, Italian) is being transferred to the server of the Faculty of Philology of the University of Lodz, in accordance with the agreement between the JULS Institute of Linguistics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava and the authorities of the Faculty of Philology of the University of Lodz (discipline linguistics). The costs of the transfer and implementation on the server at the University of Lodz are covered from the funds of the Institute of Romance Studies of the University of Lodz and a terminology research grant of Artur Gałkowski. Once ONOMTERM has been implanted at the University of Lodz, members of the ICOS TG will be invited to participate in the work, although it is doubtful that all those who are theoretically responsible for a given language will be motivated to participate in this informal project. Plans to apply for some kind of international grant on this issue still remain. It is not easy to convince and involve foreign colleagues from different research centres in such extensive work. However, the ICOS TG chair is not giving up and will make further searches for a suitable programme and attempts to include experts from different countries and languages.

- Meanwhile, the ONOMTERM project is described in publications of a contributory type, e.g. in an article that will come out in the forthcoming issue of Rivista Italiana di Onomastica 2022/2 (by Iveta Valentová, Milan Harvalík, Artur Gałkowski).

- Translations of the current list of ICOS key terms (ITOS) in other languages are in progress. A list of this terminology in Portuguese language (with European and Brazilian terminologies) has recently been posted on the ICOS website. The ITOS list in Romanian is still awaited.

**Names as Open Data Working Group Report (Peder Gammeltoft (AP))**

The group is under formation. Email about the establishment of the ICOS Working Group on Names as Open Data was sent to the group on January 5 2022. Nothing more to report.

The report was received by the ICOS Board.

# Report of the Postgraduate Representative (BL)

BL

**Report of the Postgraduate Representative**

There is little to report on the ICOS Student Network, though there is still general interest in action being taken on the following points:

1. The establishment of a student essay prize
2. A virtual summer school or workshop option for Summer 2022
3. A live in-person summer school hosted at the University of Glasgow in Summer 2023

On point 1:

* Would the Board be willing to offer a monetary sum in addition to publication in *Onoma* to the winning essay? If so, how much seems reasonable?
* How often should the essay prize run? Perhaps each year following a congress? Or during the year of a summer school?
* Who would review the entries for the essay prize? LH suggested the Onoma Board.
* What are the parameters for ‘student’- are Undergraduates allowed to enter, and how long after PhD submission shall we allow entries?

On point 2:

* As time is getting closer, it seems that perhaps the best option on this point would be collaborating with the contributions we have for ‘Onomastics Online’ to perhaps offer some kind of workshop or Q&A session with the scholars that are a part of the ‘Onomastics Online’ series. This is just an idea though, and if it seems too much to ask, then perhaps time and energy is better spent working to prepare the in-person summer school (point 3). – This plan has been rescinded by the Board.

On point 3:

* I will hold a meeting with any interested members of the ICOS Student Network in March 2022 to discuss their desires, aims, and objectives with regards to an in-person summer school in Summer 2022. Further information on what we would request of the Board will be available after this meeting. AP, KR – there is a 1000 Euros budget for the organization in 2023.

The report was received by the ICOS Board.

# Completion of the ONOMA archive (FA)

FA

Not all issues of the ONOMA journal are available electronically. It is essential that this problem be resolved as soon as possible so that 1) access to ONOMA is made available to all around the globe via the Internet, and 2) this invaluable source of reference in the field of onomastics is properly protected for current and next generations before the printed copies disappear.

The suggestion was considered by the ICOS Board. It was decided to make further inquiries concerning the costs and legal issues / copyright (KR).

# ICOS cooperation network (PJ)

Background paper by PJ can be found in the Minutes of the November 2021 Board Meeting

PJ updated the Board about the new developments. Leila Mattfolk has agreed to be the new contact person in UNGEGN for ICOS. PJ as Chairperson of the Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymywill also provide liaison with these organizations. In relation to affiliated organizations and institutions it will be important to identify contact persons reporting to ICOS about actual and potential cooperation activities. ICOS could also consider joining project applications of affiliated organizations without financial involvement or just supporting such applications by a reference letter. FA said she is in contact with Dr Galinsky from ISO. KR thanked PJ and FA for representing ICOS at the Iranian Onomastics conference earlier this year.

# ICOS Newsletter (KR, VA)

Sent as a separate paper due to its size.

The Board approved the circulation of the Newsletter by email.

# Languages of ICOS (PJ, YGLF)

PJ

Background paper

**Why not English as ICOS’ only official language?**

From its foundation ICOS practices three official languages (English, French, German). This can be understood as an expression of internationalism, pluralism, receptiveness for cultural diversity very appropriate to cultural sciences and especially to linguistics and has certainly – especially as regards German – also its historical reasons.

**Practical problems with three official languages**

It means, however, also a burden, since all communication (website, newsletter etc.) has to be translated consuming time, sometimes also money and anyway energy that could alternatively be invested into other, perhaps more productive and innovative tasks. It means a special problem with ICOS congresses, where sessions in the three languages have to be accepted, although a session in German (and not much less so in French) attracts only a small audience prompting many German or French native speakers to present in English, if they wish to have their findings to be disseminated widely. (Would I have presented my keynote at the ICOS Congress 2021 in my mother tongue German, I would have had an audience of 20 at the maximum, while I had all the audience, when I spoke English.) Small French and German sessions generate exclusive bubbles, exclude the majority of conference participants from certain topics and thus prevent open, all-inclusive communication. International organizations with their international events are to provide for international, inter-cultural communication and leave intra-language communication to national events.

**Experiences from other global scientific organizations**

This is also the experience in other global scientific umbrella organizations like the International Cartographic Association (ICA) or the International Geographical Union (IGU). Both declare English as well as French as their official languages, but the use of French is in practice confined to symbolic bilingual words of welcome by the president with congress and conference openings and to some exceptional French sessions in their framework with (see above) a very small audience. All the commissions as well as all communication within the organization (website, newsletter etc.) function in English only.

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) as a branch of the United Nations system practices of course the six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Russian) in its plenary sessions, where simultaneous translation is provided. But all its working groups use English as the only working language, when they meet (even when the meeting is in the UN headquarters) or communicate internally, and all communication within UNGEGN except official speeches in plenary sessions occurs in English only (with the minor exception of the new French chair’s message in the UNGEGN Bulletin, which is presented in English and French).

**Language of science**

Not only for practical and financial reasons as demonstrated by these examples it would be appropriate to confine the communication of and within an international scientific organization to English, but also in the interest of science. It makes much sense to have a ‘language of science’, by which all research can be disseminated to the widest audience possible and exposed to comments and criticism. This is, how science works: new findings need to stand objections, not only out of the very own language community, but from as many perspectives as possible.

When we look back into history, we had always a language of science. Earlier this was Latin, later French, in the later 19th century and at least in some disciplines even German. Today this is clearly English due to its distinct number-one-position as a global trade language.

In my period as the editor of the Annals of the Austrian Geographical Society (2009-2017) we had a growth of the share of English articles from 10 to 80%. When it were in 2009 only non-German-speaking authors who published in English, it were in 2017 in their majority German native speakers just because they wanted to address a larger, international audience.

**ICOS practices in fact trilingualism, not plurilingualism**

It is in the case of ICOS also worth to be remarked that by its three official languages it does in fact not practice or demonstrate plurilingualism, but trilingualism. Out of the variety of choices it selects three languages for not completely transparent reasons. Why is German one of them and not Spanish, or Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, or Italian, Polish, Hungarian…? At least the choice of German looks to me extremely subjective and not justifiable in our days. I dare to say that as a German native speaker and understand it as an indication of their sensibility that non-German-speaking members of an ICOS Board of Directors have not raised this question so far. (I would also not object against Hungarian, if this was one of a few official ICOS languages.)

I would, however, also propose to discontinue French as an official language based on the experiences with ICA, IGU and UNGEGN cited above. Strange as it may sound, reduction to one global language, to English as the contemporary language of science, is more inclusive than practicing two official languages in addition. The latter elevates these two languages over all others – in fact discriminating them. As a Brazilian, Hungarian, Italian, Pole or Russian I would indeed feel uncomfortable with our current regulation. English, however, can not only be regarded as the language of sciences, but also as the real successor of Esperanto (resembling it even genetically) – just much better established and much more widespread. It is today a polycentric language, far from being owned by only one community or nation.

This does not mean that the ICOS List of Key Onomastic Terms is not to be elaborated in other languages than English – to the contrary: in this case plurilingualism has its perfect justification.

PJ added a question whether pluriligualism is really functional in an international organization? It possibly leads to self-isolation of linguistic communities at conferences. Even though it is a tradition to have the three languages, and engagement of other language speakers is important, it is no longer functional to organize separate sessions in German and French (and other non-ICOS languages) at meetings in the new language configuration in the world.

YGLF

Background paper

**For multilingualism within the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS)**

Since its origins, the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) has had the vocation of plurilingualism. Albert Dauzat organized the first two international onomastics congresses in Paris in 1938 and 1947, and it was in 1949 that the ancestor of the current ICOS was founded in Brussels: "International Committee of Onomastic Sciences / Comité International des Sciences Onomastiques,” as the ICOS website says (https://icosweb.net/about-icos/brief-history/).

Moreover, on the homepage of our association, all three official languages - French, German and English - are declared and the content was previously available in all three. It is only during the recent refurbishment of the site that the French and German versions are no longer there. Each onomastic system includes a vision of the world conveyed by the language-culture which supports it.

It would be a huge loss to reduce our research and our exchanges, which are so rich at congresses and meetings, to a single language. I have been present at all the ICOS congresses since Pisa 2005 and there has always been the presence, not only of the three official languages, but, depending on the host country, of other languages for presenting communications and even for plenaries. I remember one in Catalan in Barcelona, for example. At the Congress of Cracow, which has just taken place, the Slavic languages were admitted. The greater the diversity, the greater the wealth.

The movement for intercomprehension and multilingualism is currently the most innovative trend in education, business and international exchanges. Including through technology, as shown by the International Association for the Promotion of Intercomprehension at a Distance (<https://www.miriadi.net/l-apicad>).

To limit oneself to English alone would be to take several steps backwards. As part of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Ministry of Culture and the General Delegation for the French Language and the Languages of France are organizing the Online Forum "Innovation, Technology and Multilingualism" from February 7 to 9 2022, and consider plurilingualism as an “issue of social cohesion and citizenship in Europe” (<https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/Langue-francaise-etlangues-de-France/Actualites/Forum-Innovation-Technologies-et-Plurilinguisme>).

A good part of the members of our ICOS are European, and the European Union advocates multilingualism as one of the bases of good relations between Europeans and with the inhabitants of other countries of the globe. Our association is international, let's give their rightful place to at least 3 official languages.

We, as onomasticians, seek to widely disseminate our work in open access scholarly journals. ICOS should not play into the hands of publishers who only accept publications in English and who seek only profit. Science is also done in a plurality of languages. Plurilingualism is a principle of equity.

In any case, the question of official languages concerns the entire community of onomasticians, who are members of our association, and must therefore be submitted to the vote of the ordinary general assembly at the next congress, or even before, if the management committee considers it urgent, in the form of an extraordinary meeting.

YGLF and VA added that simultaneous translation could be provided (into English) for non-ICOS languages at ICOS Congresses, should the organizers wish to organize a session in the local language. KR mentioned the high costs of such arrangements. ES added that from his experience of regular multilinguistic working environment, he can see both PJ’s and YGLF’s concerns and cannot see a practical common ground so far. He also mentioned it had been increasingly difficult to provide quick translation for the ICOS Newsletter in the previous years. Everyone agreed English should be the working language at Board meetings.

The Board had an extensive discussion on this and decided to continue the consideration of this issue.

# Any other business

KR said she had received votes from all ICOS Board by email to approve the ICOS Budget plan until 2024 sent in by AP (a separate paper).

KR mentioned the successful experience of the new OnomasticsOnline project and updated the Board about the arrangements for the autumn set of lectures.

BL suggested there might be scope for an in-person Board meeting before the end of the term of the current Board at the next Congress in 2024. Provided there is a budget, her team could look at possibly hosting this in Glasgow to coincide with the Summer School 2023. LH, YGLF and MSS suggested a hybrid format.

KR thanked everyone for participation and adjourned the meeting at 17.45.

♣♣♣

Vladislav Alpatov

Secretary

(30 May 2022)