

NOTES FROM AROUND EUROPE

Hope springs eternal

Update from Romanian association ARTLIT

Lavinia Braniște

The idea of ARTLIT (Asociația Română a Traducătorilor Literari – Romanian Association of Literary Translators) started in 2013 when Andy Jelčić, then Vice-president of CEATL, and Peter Bergsma, President of RECIT, came to Bucharest for an event organised by the Goethe Institute about perspectives in the profession of literary translators in South-Eastern Europe. It was supposed to be the first of a series of such events but as far as I remember it was the only one.

After carefully listening to our stories and questions, Mr. Jelčić strongly encouraged some of us to start an association and gave a lot of useful tips.

There was also (and still is) a literary translators branch in the Writers' Union but we were unaware of any of their activities and understood that admission wasn't very straightforward.

So we thought it was better to start afresh with a new association and thus ARTLIT was legally created in the summer of 2014. This took place 25 years after the events of 1989, 25

years during which the translation market was a jungle with no regulation whatsoever of the relationship between translators and publishing houses.

We became members of CEATL in 2016. The other delegates were very supportive and encouraging and somebody told me not to expect it to be easy, there would be results in about ten years. I thought that was fair enough.

We had energy and enthusiasm for about four years, and then the new fiscal code came into force at the beginning of 2018. It is complicated to explain how much damage it has caused to independent workers, especially to those working on copyright, but this is a brief summary: up to 2018, taxes were paid by the publisher, and translators negotiated a net fee. Starting this year, taxes have to be paid by the translator and we negotiate a gross fee. So last year's rate of 3 euro net per page became 3 euro gross per page this year. And taxes were doubled. We now pay 45% tax to the state. Romania has the highest tax rate on work in Eastern Europe. Some publishers agreed to raise the fees to around 4 euro per



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Photo: Adi Bulboacă

page, but this is still not enough to cover the taxes and definitely not enough for a translator to make a living from literary translation. For that we would need at least 8 euro per page (a page in Romania is considered to have 2000 characters with or without spaces, it depends on the publisher). All the negotiations were on an individual basis, because we are too small and frail for collective negotiations.

Since these fiscal measures were brought in this year by our very competent socialist government we have had a very difficult time. Our members' morale has dropped and we even lost some members, which puts us in an even more delicate situation financially, because members' annual fees are our sole source of funding.

So it goes with ups and downs and now we are in a 'down' moment. However, we have a new board and I hope they will have more energy and ideas for accessing funding and negotiation strategies than the initial team of founding members had (myself included). We were very good at visibility (but then again, that is the easiest part, isn't it?)

but at least people started to be more aware of our profession. And some publishers, while continuing to offer 3 euros per page, started to put the translator's name on the cover. Too bad that doesn't make the cover edible...

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asociația română a traducătorilor literari