

Teaching literary translation:

How it is and how it could be

Teodora Tzankova

CEATL's Training and Education working group was formed in 2009 as a tool for attracting attention to the state of affairs of the training and education of literary translators across Europe. The group consists of seven members, the majority of whom joined recently: Dalma Galambos (Hungary), Teresa Pradera (Basque Country), Silvana Roglic (second Croatian delegate), Brigitte Saramago (Portugal), Vesna Stamenković (Serbia), Françoise Wuilmart (honorary member, Belgium) and myself as coordinator of the group since 2018. Lara Hölbling Matković (Croatia) is our connection to the Board. We organise our work via emails and Skype and meet, if possible, twice a year.

At the time of its constitution, all members of the working group taught literary translation at university level alongside their avocation as literary translators. Although some changes have taken place over the course of the last ten years, it is, I think, this combination of activities which lies at the heart of our shared ideas. We all believe in the importance of teaching literary translation, especially in times like ours

when the quality of literary translation is often neglected for the sake of speed, demanded by the market. We are also convinced of the fruitfulness of relations between academia and non-academia, as well as of the interdependence of theory and practice. A literary translator may or may not have a passion for theory but, either way, they should be aware of the reasons behind their particular choices and of the consequences of these choices.

Due to the heterogeneous panorama of training and education in literary translation in Europe between 2009 and 2016, the working group devoted its efforts to two projects: 1) a Report on Training and Education in Literary Translation in the European countries represented in CEATL (coordinated by Katarina Bednarova from the Slovak Republic and Françoise Wuilmart from Belgium). The report covers academic and non-academic practices and analyses the advantages and disadvantages of the current situation (i.e. c. 2014). The report concludes with a list of general recommendations; 2) the PETRA-E, a joint European project (where the working group was



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represented by Françoise Wuilmart and myself), which resulted in a general [Framework of Reference for the Education and Training of Literary Translators](#), comprising a competence-based model and a learning line.

“There is a gap between an excellent idea and a manageable project”

Today, the PETRA-E Network (of which CEATL is a member) aims at promoting and implementing the Framework. Between 2017 and 2019 the working group, coordinated by Kateřina Klabanova ([Czech Republic](#)), explored the possibility for a new, more practically oriented project, entitled ‘Small is Great’, that focused on training for translators

from small languages. The main goal was to develop an effective model (based on the PETRA-E Framework) for enhancing the promotional competences of literary translators, strengthen their mobility, stimulate networking, and boost circulation of small-language literatures. Unfortunately, the project turned out to be too large for us to manage and was not meant to be. The story of the Small is Great project can be told as a failure but also, I hope, as a lesson learnt: there is a gap between an excellent idea and a manageable project, and vast amounts of enthusiasm, energy and well-disposed colleagues all over Europe are not always enough to bridge it.

Now the working group is in the process of looking for new inspirations and enterprises to undertake, possibly with a focus on mobility. We look to the future with optimism and a maintained focus on furthering the education and training of literary translators in Europe.