

# Guidelines for organizing an SLE Annual Meeting

## **1. General**

The Societas Linguistica Europaea has a yearly conference, the **SLE Annual Meeting**. It is characterized as follows:

- It is the regular meeting of SLE members; non-members may participate, too.
- It has a different general theme each time.
- It lasts three or four days.
- It is scheduled for the summer time, and should not conflict with other relevant international conferences.
- It migrates among European countries.

The aims of the following **guidelines** are the following:

- to guarantee a certain tradition and recognizability to SLE Annual Meetings,
- to help organizers in their routine and their decisions and thus contribute to a smooth running of the event,
- to avoid dispute between the local organizers and officers of the SLE.

Many of the following statements characterize the default (or typical) case. Deviations may be necessary and justified.

## **2. Participants**

Participants of an SLE Annual Meeting are

1. full members of the SLE
2. student members of the SLE
3. non-members of the SLE
4. accompanying persons.

Participants belonging to any of the first three categories may or may not make an (oral or poster) presentation. Participants of the fourth category make no presentation, but are entitled to some of the relevant benefits.

## **3. Organization**

The Executive Committee (EC) of the SLE decides on venues for the coming Annual Meetings on the basis of available offers. The criteria applied in the selection are essentially those listed in § 5. In addition, diachronic geographical spread over Europe is sought.

### **The Local Organizing Committee**

The EC gives the mandate of organizing an SLE Annual Meeting to an SLE member, the local organizer (LO) in charge. This person, in turn, forms a **Local Organizing Committee** (LOC). This consists at least of the following members:

1. the LO,
2. a member of the EC,
3. a secretary,

4. a treasurer.

The LO is typically a professor of the host university.

LOC member #2 is delegated by the EC by mutual agreement with the LO. He has a mandate by the EC. In cases of dispute in the LOC, he consults with the SLE President and/or Secretary.

Unless tasks are split otherwise, LOC member #3 is in charge of publicity, including importantly the conference website.

There should be at least one meeting of the LOC that LOC member #2 physically attends. This should include in-detail inspection of the venue. The SLE bears the necessary travel and accommodation expenses of its EC member.

## The Programme Committee

It is the task of the Programme Committee (PC) to plan the content of the Annual Meeting. It is composed as follows:

- three members delegated by the LO,
- the members of the Scientific Committee of the SLE.

The members of the PC should cover the field of linguistics as widely as possible. The chair of the SLE Scientific Committee chairs the PC.

The tasks of the PC include the following:

- It stipulates the general theme of the conference.
- It selects plenary speakers.
- It selects section chairs.
- It may invite workshop organizers.
- Incoming submissions of papers (titles and abstracts) and workshop proposals are anonymized and submitted to the PC. The PC applies strict quality standards. It passes its decision within a month and at least four months before conference starts.
- The PC structures the scientific programme of the Annual Meeting, seeing to it that, to the extent possible,
  - thematically akin papers are bundled in a session,
  - talks presented in the same language succeed each other.

## 4. Programme

### Content

The **general theme** of the SLE Annual Meeting is chosen in order to lend prominence to an area of linguistics

- that currently enjoys wide-spread interest in the field and possibly even outside it,
- that has not been represented in the general themes of recent SLE Annual Meetings.

The general theme fulfills the following functions:

- It bundles conference activities in a liberal way, i.e. without constraining participants in any way.

- It provides the topical area for plenary speeches.
- It supports publicity for the conference by lending it a thematic identity.

The sections and workshops cover different fields of linguistics. Typically, a **section** is devoted to a large canonical component of the discipline, like 'Syntax', 'Pragmatics', 'Language change' etc., while a **workshop** is typically devoted to a more specific research topic, e.g. 'Relative clauses', 'Argumentation', 'Methods of reconstruction'.

**Conference languages** are English and a few others, typically any of the following

- French
- German
- Spanish
- the language of the host country.

The LOC should be aware that if the language of the host country is not an international language, having many presentations delivered in this language will deter rather than attract an international audience.

The publicized program is to be updated when necessary, especially during the conference. This necessity, however, is greatly reduced by adherence to the principle (see § 9) that only persons who have paid the conference fee can appear on the program.

## Structure of the schedule

An SLE Annual Meeting typically lasts three and a half days. Because of APEX flights, it should be adjacent to a weekend. That means it either starts on Monday and ends on Thursday; or it starts on Wednesday and ends on Saturday.

The typical conference day consists of a morning and an afternoon block of four hours (of academic activity) each. Each half-day block is divided into two by a coffee break. There are no academic activities after supper.

There are four types of sessions:

- plenary sessions,
- sections,
- workshops,
- posters.

## Plenary sessions

The session type 'plenary session' is reserved for the following kinds of events:

- the opening ceremony,
- presentations of plenary speakers,
- the "business meeting" (i.e. the general assembly) of the SLE,
- the closing ceremony.

It is well-trying practice to start each half-day block with a plenary speech.

## Opening ceremony

There are typically welcome addresses by

- a representative of the host institution,
- the SLE president,
- and the LO.

Together, they last half an hour.

## Plenary speakers

There may be up to six plenary speakers:

1. The first plenary speaker is the departing president.
2. The other plenary speakers should be specialists in the area including the general theme of the meeting.

One of the plenary speakers should be from the host country. A fair distribution in terms of thematic areas, generations, genders, countries should be observed.

No person should be a plenary speaker of an SLE Annual Meeting more than once in 10 years.

A plenary speech lasts 45 min, plus 15 min for discussion.

## Sections and workshops

Sections and workshops take place in parallel sessions. A section or workshop may extend over the entire conference time, or one may succeed another in a slot. Each presentation lasts 20 min, plus 10 min for discussion.

**Sections** are moderated by chairs. A chair serves for a half-day or a session.

**Workshops** are organized by specialists in the field in question. They may be applied for and then refereed by the PC, or they may be invited by the PC. Similarly, workshop participants may submit an abstract to be approved by the workshop organizer or may be invited by the workshop organizer.

## 5. Infrastructure

### Venue of the Annual Meeting

Essential requirements include:

1. There must be a number of classrooms of the appropriate size plus one hall for the whole Annual Meeting.
2. The rooms must have standard technical facilities.
3. There must be a room where the conference office is installed. This may be a space in a hall (foyer); however, it does need a telephone line and a computer.
4. There must be a space in which drinks and snacks can be served and consumed.
5. Refrigerators for conserving these things should be within reach.
6. Besides bathrooms, there should be a kitchen to prepare snacks and to wash dishes, if necessary.
7. Something like a students' restaurant, a mensa, a canteen should be within reach and be available at least for lunch.
8. Facilities for printing and copying must be available.

9. A couple of computers with internet access should be available to participants.

The sum of these requirements is commonly best met by a university. And the organizer's university is, in fact, expected to provide such an infrastructure.

## **Personnel**

There is much that the LOC can do themselves, if necessary. Additional personnel is needed for the following tasks:

1. accountancy,
2. welcome and registration upon arrival,
3. service in the conference office during the conference, including maintenance of conference whiteboard,
4. xeroxing during the conference,
5. technical service (beamer, overhead projector, computers ...),
6. catering of snacks and drinks.

As for item 1, this will be supervised by LOC member #4. Depending on whether or not the host university (i.e. its administration) takes on the accountancy (see below), a member of the local administration may do the actual work, or LOC member #4 has to do it himself. It will not be done by SLE. The accountant should be available for this task at least for half a year preceding and two months following the event.

The other tasks are commonly taken on by local students.

## **Accommodation for participants**

Conference participants are lodged in hotels or in student residences (dormitories, colleges and the like).

It is advisable to select large establishments so that all participants can be lodged in a few places. Ideally, they should be situated on the route from downtown to the conference site.

Suitable hotels are selected well in advance. Most participants prefer 3- or 4-stars hotels. If there are no sufficient residences, some 2-stars hotels should be included for students. In any case, these establishments should offer breakfast.

The organizing university has an agreement with some local hotels concerning special room rates. These should be the lower, the more participants are lodged in the same hotel.

For accommodation, a travel agency should be hired only if they do not make any charges and accommodation for the individual does not get more expensive that way. Neither is it necessary or advisable for the LOC to handle hotel booking for participants. It is sufficient to announce the list of hotels on the congress website (see below) and to ask participants to make their own arrangements.

## **6. Financing**

### **Principles of planning**

The goal of financial planning is to balance at zero. If there is a surplus in the end, it means that participation fees were unnecessarily high. If there is a deficit, the LOC has a problem.

1. If there is a surplus at the end, half of it goes to the Treasurer of the SLE.

2. If there is a deficit at the end, the LOC takes charge of it. The SLE cannot be held accountable for balancing out a deficit.

As for item 1, the SLE gets this benefit in compensation for providing the patronage, the publicity, scientific counselling and help in organizational matters. However, this payment to SLE does not materialize if there is no surplus.

As for item 2, the LO is advised to

- ensure that any deficit at the end is taken care of (for instance by his university),
- schedule all commitments in such a way that no payments or financial commitments are made before the necessary revenue is secured.

The LOC must set up a bank account through which all transactions are conducted. This may or may not be an account of the host university administration.

Participants' payments, whether made by bank transfer or by credit card, must be free of charge to the recipient.

## Expenses

The following expenses arise

1. publicity,
2. allowances and payments to plenary speakers (see below),
3. photocopies,
4. conference material like badges, folders, information sheets,
5. snacks and drinks in the pauses,
6. reception in the eve,
7. catering service and other services (local students may provide it gratuitously).

**Plenary speakers** may receive the following benefits:

1. The participation fee is waived.
2. Travel expenses are reimbursed.
3. Free accommodation is provided.
4. There may be an honorarium.
5. It is good practice to invite them for dinner.

There is no compensation for section chairpersons and workshop organizers.

Excursions and other kinds of sightseeing may be offered to participants in the aftermath (see below). The fees should not be included in the registration fee.

## Revenue

Participants (except members of the LOC and plenary speakers) pay a **participation fee** that covers all of the benefits mentioned above. For details, see § 9. Past SLE Annual Meetings counted between 150 and 200 paying participants.

**Financial support** should be sought from various sources. Possibilities include:

- Science foundations and research councils.
- Local and regional sponsors; their support can take the form not only of money, but also of natural produce.

- Some funds may be obtained from the host university and/or faculty. They are, at any rate, expected to waive any charges for infrastructure and administrative support.

## 7. Scheduling

In the following table, the number of months and days preceding the event mark the deadline at which the agenda is finished.

months	agenda
24	agreement with SLE, university and student residences, if any
24	fix date (second half of July or September)
21	set up the LOC and the SC
21	select suitable local hotels
18	stipulate general theme
15	find plenary speakers
15	apply for funds
12	first public announcement of Annual Meeting; inform relevant electronic (mailing) lists
12	send out call for papers
12	during the "business meeting" of the preceding Annual Meeting, the incoming LO presents the next Annual Meeting
9	second public announcement; publish deadlines; put registration form and abstract submission form on the internet
7	deadline for submission of abstracts
6	cheap registration
6	set up sections and working groups
6	select presentations, notify submitters

5	publish abstracts on the internet
3	last public announcement
3	select chairpersons for sessions, get their consent
1	publish the time and room table
1	cancellation of registration free of charge; increased registration fee

days	agenda
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2	set up conference office
1	post conference posters, signs for conference office, plenary hall, seminar rooms etc. (A3 size!)
1	cater snacks and drinks
0	participants' booking of social activities (conference dinner, sightseeing ...)
0	update information on presentations on an hourly basis

Financial commitments should be made depending on binding registrations of paying participants.

## 8. Public announcements

All public announcements are made on the internet; a subset is made by other media, too. The SLE Annual Meeting has its own **conference website** (referred to on the SLE website), which is administrated by LOC member #3. The website is in the conference languages.

During the year leading up to the event, the following kinds of information are provided cumulatively (among many others):

- time and place of the SLE Annual Meeting,
- the LOC and the SC: list of members, complete address of LOC member #3,
- exact address of conference site,
- local maps and detail plans,
- list of hotels, with links to hotels' websites,
- route description for conference town by diverse means of transport,

- route description for conference site and residences, by car / public transport / on foot,
- reduced tickets for public transport,
- registration regulations,
- abstracts accepted,
- conference program.

The conference website includes an online submission and registration system. These are provided by the SLE.

The conference website also includes publicity for the SLE and for membership.

Apart from the website, the SLE Annual meeting is announced as follows:

- on the electronic (mailing) lists of the discipline: LinguistList, ...
- by e-mail circular to SLE members,
- by posters sent out to Linguistics Departments in Europe.

Messages by these latter media may do little more than refer – by an HTML link – to the relevant section on the conference website.

The **Call for Papers** is sent out to a large list of (European) linguists, including all SLE members.

- It contains all the relevant information, including the identity of the LOC, the SC and the plenary speakers, deadlines for submissions and registration regulations.
- It invites contributions to the sections and workshops.

The Annual Meeting is also made known to the publisher of the SLE journals and to other publishing companies, so that they get a chance to present linguistic publications in the conference foyer.

## 9. Registration

The participation fee is staggered in various dimensions:

It differs by the **status** of participants (cf. § 2) – percentages are approximate:

status	amount
full SLE member	X
student SLE member	X - 20%
(student) non-SLE member	X (- 20%) + one annual (student) SLE membership fee
accompanying person	X - 50%

X = 90 Euro is a useful guide. Somebody claiming to be a student must be unemployed. Whether or not a participant makes a presentation makes no difference for the rate to be paid.

The appearance of a presentation on the program presupposes that the person has paid the conference fee.

Any doubts about who pays which rate must be dispelled before conference start.

Secondly, the registration fee is staggered in two **temporal steps**:

- cheap registration up to a certain deadline,
- raised registration fee up to the event itself.

In addition, the following regulations hold:

- Cancellation after the above one-month-deadline implies forfeit of the difference between cheap and increased registration fee.
- The conference folder handed over to participants contains a diploma stating
  - participation in the SLE Annual Meeting,
  - oral or poster presentation, if any,
  - payment of registration fee, if any.

The **conference brochure** contains the following information:

- table of contents
- map of conference site
- synoptic program table with schedule and rooms
- workshop proposals
- abstracts ordered by last name of speaker
- alphabetical list of participants (name, home university, e-address, program slot)
- suggestions on what to do in the evening: at least a (commented) list of restaurants, maybe some cultural events.

## ***10. Social and touristic activities***

An SLE Annual Meeting typically offers the following amenities to participants:

1. welcome drinks and snacks in the eve (“warming up”),
2. a reception at the townhall,
3. a guided tour through the town,
4. conference dinner on the evening preceding the closing session,
5. excursions into the environs.

The first of these items are usually included in the conference fee, while the others are typically booked and payed for individually. For the latter, it is convenient (but not obligatory) to charge a travel agency.

In the selection of the place for the conference dinner, the LOC should be aware that a fancy noble place, apart from being unaffordable for many participants, tends to make for a stiff, formal atmosphere, which is not what congressists look for in the final evening.

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Suggestions for improvement welcome: [Christian Lehmann](#)

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