



**International Federation of Translators**

# **Guide for establishing a new translators association**

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## Introduction

Establishing a new association is never an easy task. It usually grows out of enthusiasm and dedication on the part of a small group of people, but they can quickly lose spirit and become overwhelmed by the many different aspects they need to attend to. It would therefore be useful to have a committee work on this task, rather than a single person, to spread the workload.

Among FIT's objectives are to link and bring together existing associations of translators, interpreters and terminologists and to encourage and facilitate the formation of associations in countries where they do not yet exist. In a spirit of collegiality and helping to build on what has gone before, rather than reinventing the wheel, FIT has produced this guide as an aid to those wishing to establish new associations. It is not a definitive document, but gives an overview of the major considerations for establishing new associations and principles of good governance.

Please note that FIT is an inclusive family, and while we use the generic term "translator" and its derivatives in the guide it is intended to be interpreted in the widest possible sense to include translators, interpreters, terminologists, lexicographers, text editors, etc. – all those involved in the language profession.

Note also that we have used the term "accreditation", referring to the assessment and declaration of an individual as competent in their particular discipline or field of work. However, different terms are used around the world, and readers may be more familiar with the term "credentialing" or in some cases "certification".

Where we were able to identify some websites of relevance to the topic, we have added them at the end of the chapters. We hope they will help you with further research and decisions.

The persons who prepared this document are FIT Council members and representatives of FIT member associations, who were appointed as a task force by the Council for this project. We, however, acknowledge the contribution of all in the profession who have gone before us and worked to build strong and successful translators associations around the world, thereby providing the examples and background for the content here.

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## Some abbreviations used in this document

AIIC	International Association of Conference Interpreters <a href="http://aiic.net/">http://aiic.net/</a>
AVT	Audio-visual translation (subtitling, etc.)
CAT	Computer-aided translation
CPD	Continuing professional development
FIT	International Federation of Translators <a href="http://www.fit-ift.org/">http://www.fit-ift.org/</a>
ITD	International Translation Day (30 September)
MT	Machine translation
WASLI	World Association of Sign Language Interpreters <a href="http://wasli.org/">http://wasli.org/</a>

## Chapter 1

### Setting the focus of your association:

#### Aspects to consider when defining mission and target group(s)

When you set out to build a professional association of translators, it is helpful to start with a clear definition of mission, target group(s) and objectives of the association. Especially when they come from different professional backgrounds, the players involved in association building efforts may well have different ideas of and place divergent expectations in the association to be built, and it is certainly a good idea to discuss and agree on a clear mission and on the target group(s) addressed.

##### 1. Draft a concise mission statement

Drafting and discussing a concise mission statement can help clarify your target group and objectives. Your mission statement should provide a clear and concise definition of the goals/agenda of your association. It provides a basis for all players involved in association building to work together in the same direction and also serves as a guideline for external communication with the target groups addressed.

As a starting point, it may be helpful to consider the FIT mission statement, which can be found on the FIT website (<http://www.fit-ift.org/?p=269>), and adapt it to the situation in your specific country and to the target group(s) or disciplines you wish to address: *“The goal of the Federation is to promote professionalism in the disciplines it represents. It seeks constantly to improve conditions for the profession in all countries and to uphold translators’ rights and freedom of expression.”*

Starting from such a fairly “high-level” statement, you can then add a catalogue of more specific objectives that your association hopes to achieve in your country. However, before you can draft such a specific agenda for your work, you will first need to clearly identify the target groups you want your association to serve.

**Hint to keep in mind:** Your mission statement and your agenda of objectives should be ambitious but realistic. While an unrealistic mission statement and wildly optimistic goals driven by wishful thinking may initially sound very attractive, they serve no purpose and at the end of the day will frustrate the association’s volunteers (as they will be unable to meet the standards) and the loyalty of its members (as they will be disappointed by the failure of the association to achieve its objectives).

##### 2. Define the target group(s)

Obviously, the target group of your association plays a very important role in defining the mission and objectives. Identifying your specific target group is by no means an easy exercise, as the translation professions are extremely varied and professionals differ in many respects. Think, for example, of just these few differences:

- Practitioners differ by discipline (translators, terminologists, interpreters) and specialization (translators: literary, technical, legal, medical, etc.; interpreters: conference, community, legal, medical, etc.). In recent years, we have also seen a number of new varieties of professional practice emerging, such as post-editing of machine-translated texts, and remote interpreting.
- Practitioners also differ by their employment status. For instance, there are staff translators employed by large corporations or institutions and in companies providing language services; self-employed/freelance translators; and owners of translation companies or language service providers who are themselves employers of translators.
- Last but not least, practitioners also differ in terms of their training and background, e.g. university-trained or otherwise formally trained professionals and self-made professionals, such as bilingual or expat engineers or lawyers.

Depending on what they are doing and how they are working, the practitioners will face different issues and will accordingly expect their association to cover their specific field and the concerns they may have. As a new association starting “from scratch” will normally have very limited resources, you should not feel compelled to cover the entire range of aspects of the profession. It might be better to start with a clear focus on certain disciplines and target groups, even though such a “narrower” focus means leaving certain other disciplines and particular interest groups out of consideration for the time

being. Of course, it may make perfect sense to add more disciplines and target groups at a later stage, as the association makes progress.

To define the target group(s) to be addressed, you will have to analyse the specific local situation in your country. The following are some questions that might help you to start with your analysis:

**Hint to keep in mind:** In your analysis it might be helpful to consider both the current situation and the medium to long-term outlook. A relatively new specialization that is still small today may well gain tremendous ground over the next few years.

- How relevant are the different group(s) for the local translation industry?
- What is the size of the different group(s)?
- To which of the group(s) do you have access?
- What are the key issues and challenges faced by the different group(s)?
- What are the association's prospects of success in tackling these issues?

While it is quite possible to have more than one association serving the same audience and competition with other associations may be healthy in certain instances, you should be careful not to have too many organizations focusing on the same target group. If there is already an association serving the group you have identified, then perhaps it is not necessary to start a new organization. One wants to broaden the range of options for practitioners, not dilute them – too many organizations targeting the same practitioners simply means each has to manage with fewer resources. If there is not a good reason for starting a new association, perhaps you should reconsider before you go too far.

### **3. Combine mission statement and target group(s) to draft your association's agenda or objectives**

Now that you know the general mission and the target group(s) of your association, you can draft an agenda of more specific tasks and objectives for your association's work. The objectives should be in line with the target group identified and the specific local conditions, and also in accordance with the objectives of FIT.

Such an agenda or set of objectives may include aspects like the following:

- Enhance the visibility and status of translators and increase appreciation for and trust in translators' work (by ...)
- Promote the professionalization of the association's members through ongoing training (and ...) (see the information on continuing professional development in section 9 of chapter 5)
- Help the association's members to position themselves in the market (by ...)
- Strive to improve the remuneration of translators
- Contribute to the development of official standards for the professional practice of translators
- Work towards legislation to create a regulatory framework for the profession(s) served
- Link and work with other associations, universities and institutions for the benefit of the profession(s) served

#### **Websites to visit relating to association missions**

For some theoretical input on the drafting of mission statements:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission\\_statement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission_statement)

International Federation of Translators (FIT) <http://www.fit-ift.org/?p=269>

American Translators Association (ATA) [https://www.atanet.org/aboutus/about\\_ata.php](https://www.atanet.org/aboutus/about_ata.php)

Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ) <http://www.bdue.de/en/bdue/bdue/bdue-mission-statement/>

## Chapter 2

### Setting admission criteria for membership

An association of translators, like any other professional organization, brings together practitioners of a specific profession. Therefore, before building your association, you should know who your target group is, taking into account the purpose and objectives of your association. Depending on this, you should then set admission criteria for membership.

The intention in setting admission criteria is to raise standards and to ensure the best possible quality of work in the field of translation. There are a number of factors, such as local circumstances and the lack of training opportunities in languages of lesser diffusion, that make it impossible to set standard requirements to be applied by all associations. The paragraphs below set out general guidelines for establishing admission criteria. In the end, it is up to associations to make their own decisions, taking the local environment into account.

In the next section, we will touch on the most important aspects of admission criteria for membership.

#### 1. Decide if admission criteria are necessary

Generally, professional associations do limit membership to professionals, for the following reasons:

- **Distinguishing:** There are a wide variety of types of non-governmental, non-profit organizations. To distinguish your organization as a professional association, you should limit membership to professionals.
- **Recognition and reputation:** Remember that just as the association represents its members, the members also represent the association. A poorly-performing interpreter may damage the reputation of your organization. Therefore, those who use the name of association should be eligible to do so.
- **Objectives:** Once again, if your association has translation-related objectives, then you should be bringing together translation-related persons.

#### 2. Decide what criteria to use

Most associations either have eligibility criteria that must be met for membership or require their candidate members to sit for an exam, or they may do both. The following are some widely used eligibility criteria:

- Proof of experience
- A relevant degree or other qualifications
- References from clients or peers

If your association believes that these criteria are not sufficient to verify applicants' eligibility for membership, entrance exams may be used. Have a look at section 8 in chapter 5 for further information on accreditation and the value of these exams.

#### 3. Define your categories of membership

You may set different admission criteria for different categories of membership. Most translators associations have their own categories of membership. The following are examples of membership categories found in different associations:

- Full/Accredited/Ordinary/Regular member
- Student member/candidate member
- Associate/Affiliate member
- Observer member
- Honorary member
- Corporate member

**Hint to keep in mind:** If you are building a more specialized association, such as an association of literary or legal translators, you may not need to set any membership categories.

Having different categories implies having different rights for different members. Considering the local legal aspects, and the benefits of being a member of your association, you may decide to limit specific

privileges, rights or benefits to those in specific categories. For example, only full members might have the right to vote, or only full and associate members might benefit from discounts for paid workshops or other training events.

A new association might find it more convenient to have a relatively simple membership structure, with fewer categories. You can always introduce more specific categories as your association expands and develops.

#### **4. Think about local constraints**

Do not forget to consult a lawyer with regard to possible legal requirements in your country. For instance, in some post-soviet countries legislation does not allow non-governmental organizations to limit membership based on certain criteria.

#### **Websites to visit on admission criteria**

New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters. <http://www.nzsti.org/about/>

South African Translators' Institute

[http://translators.org.za/sati cms/index.php?frontend\\_action=display\\_text\\_content&content\\_id=1695](http://translators.org.za/sati cms/index.php?frontend_action=display_text_content&content_id=1695)

Literary Translators' Association of Canada <http://www.attlc-ltac.org/membership-application>

## Chapter 3

### Deciding on a constitution or governing structures

It is important for an association to have a solid structure and documentation governing its operation. This avoids internal conflict over how things should be done and constant changes in focus.

However, remember that a constitution can be amended and what you start with does not have to remain the same forever.

The way that your association operates will depend on the legal requirements in your country. You will need to familiarise yourself with this as soon as you want a formal structure. Depending on the complexity of the environment you are operating in, you may have to get expert legal advice about what you need to do.

#### 1. Decide on a structure for your association

The first thing to decide is what sort of body your association is going to be. There are several factors to consider here:

- First, you need to decide whether your association will be a non-profit organization or have a for-profit structure. It is rare for a professional association to be for profit, but you need to find out what the conventions are in your country. There will be various rules and regulations related to the different structures and so it is important to know your responsibilities when you make this decision.
- You must find out whether organizations like yours have to be registered with any authority in your country, e.g. with a government department or ministry, with a municipality or with a registrar of companies or associations.
- You should also check whether there are any further legal or other formalities involved in setting up an association in your country.

#### 2. Prepare the guiding documents for your association

The guiding documents set out how your association will operate. They can have different names and take different forms, and you will need to investigate what is the common practice in your country. In some countries or associations, there will be a single document, and it may be called by a number of different names: a constitution, a charter, statutes, bylaws, articles of incorporation, etc. In other cases, there may be a set of several interrelated documents, e.g.

- bylaws (containing only the basics required by law), complemented by
- rules of procedure for the executive body
- rules of procedure for other bodies
- electoral regulations
- financial regulations
- code of conduct
- definitions of requirements for membership, etc.

FIT itself, for example, has both bylaws and rules of procedure (see [http://www.fit-ift.org/?page\\_id=454](http://www.fit-ift.org/?page_id=454) and [http://www.fit-ift.org/?page\\_id=312](http://www.fit-ift.org/?page_id=312)). The advantage of this system is that the bylaws as such can be kept short and concise, while complementary documents can be more specific and instructive, and a set of complementary documents may be easier to amend or update. In Germany, for instance, it is not easy to amend the bylaws as such, because each amendment will be scrutinized by the registry court.

Below is a list of elements that you should consider for inclusion in your guiding documents. Not all of them may be relevant to all associations, but thinking about them will help clarify the structure you want for your organization.

It may also be useful to look at the guiding documents of similar organizations in your country to check if there are any elements specific to local circumstances you should include or any other relevant aspects that are not mentioned here. The links at the end of this chapter are a good starting point.

**Hint to keep in mind:** Have a look at the guiding documents of similar organizations or other professional associations for ideas about what to include and what wording to use.

These are elements that you should think about including in your guiding documents:

#### *The basics: First things first*

- What are you going to call the document (will you have a constitution, bylaws, articles of association, etc., or a set of documents as outlined above)?
- Do you specify your association's name and describe any association logos and a coat of arms?
- Do you need to define any terms used in the document(s)?
- Will there be different language versions of the document(s) (this is particularly relevant if you are in a multilingual country)? If so, you need to mention them and also indicate which version will be the decisive one if there is a dispute about the content or translation.
- Who will make the final decisions on interpretation if there are queries about the intention of the document(s) (i.e. if the meaning is not clear enough)?
- Are there any exceptions that need to be noted?
- Have you indicated the legal status of the association (e.g. body corporate, for profit or not for gain, company)? You may want to include an indication that the organization will continue to exist, notwithstanding changes in the composition of its membership or office-bearers, and that members and office-bearers do not have the right to appropriate the Institute's property or assets for personal use or gain.

#### *What you do and who is involved*

- Do you list the objectives/goals/purpose of the association?
- Do you clearly indicate the powers of the association, i.e. what it is able to do (e.g. the power to raise funds for its activities, to open a bank account in the its name or to take disciplinary steps against members who do not comply with its regulations)?
- Do you have a section dealing with membership matters? Here you would list the different membership categories (individual, student, honorary, youth, junior, corporate, fellow, qualified, associate, affiliate, accredited, certified, senior, advanced, etc.), indicate who sets the requirements for the different categories and what these requirements are, mention the procedure for approving applications for membership, list the rights and privileges of members and outline any general requirements for membership.
- Do you indicate where the authority of the association lies? Is it with the members, with the board/council/committee or with some other person/structure? Who makes the final decisions and who executes them, and what is the position in between meetings of the highest authority (e.g. authority may reside with the members, but governance is vested in the executive structure and there may be a secretariat or office that executes the decisions)?
- Do you indicate how committees and/or working groups will be formed and list any regulations related to how they will operate?
- Do you specify whether and how regional or interest groupings among members may be formed?

#### *What your executive structure will look like*

- Do you specify what sort of executive structure the association will have (a council, a board, an executive committee, etc.)? Once you have decided this, you need to give details of its composition, the length of members' terms of office, who is eligible to serve on the executive, how they will be elected, what happens in the case of vacancies, and the circumstances under which executive members can be removed. You may also wish to include a clause indemnifying the executive members against prosecution for actions taken on behalf of the association.
- Do you list the functions of the executive structure, both in general and also the duties of specific portfolios on the executive?
- Do you specify rules relating to nominations and elections for the executive structure?
- Do you give information about meetings of the executive structure? This section would include details like how often they meet, what is required for a quorum, how voting at meetings takes

place, whether any honoraria or other remuneration is paid to members, details relating to minutes, and how and when minutes will be approved.

- Do you mention if there is an office or a secretariat structure to support the executive and the association? If there is one, details should be provided here.

#### *Other operational aspects to think about*

- Do you give details related to meetings of the association, such as annual meetings, extraordinary meetings, regulations relating to notice periods, agendas, proceedings and voting, reports to be tabled, minutes, etc.?
- Do you outline voting procedures?
- Do you clarify financial matters, such as the association's financial year, where its funding comes from, use of funds, who handles the funds, accounting practices, financial liability, and setting of dues/subscriptions?
- Will the association produce any publications? If so, you may need details here.
- Who is responsible for association property?
- How will the document(s) be amended?
- How will the association be dissolved?

It is important to check that any requirements set by the authorities in your country relating to the type of structure you have for your association are covered by your guiding documents.

### **3. The size of working teams is critical**

When you are thinking about the management of your association, it is important to make sure that people can work together easily. You should try to keep your structures simple and manageable. For example, practical experience has shown that it is not ideal to have large, unwieldy structures, whether these are the executive structures or committees dealing with only certain aspects of association life. Trying to make decisions when you have a board of 20 people is not easy; large committees are simply far more difficult to manage, and this puts an extra load on all concerned. It is far better to keep decision-making teams to between five and eight people. These groups can then be complemented with advisors or specialists (sometimes they are called "consultants") with an advisory role, who can be brought in to provide input where the board or committee does not have the relevant knowledge or skill within its ranks.

### **4. Approval is essential**

It is important to have the codes, rules and procedures approved by the members of the association before implementation in order to ensure legitimacy.

#### **Websites to visit with examples of constitutions you can consult**

The American Translators Association [http://www.atanet.org/docs/p\\_bylaws.pdf](http://www.atanet.org/docs/p_bylaws.pdf)

Contact the Institute of Translation and Interpreting in the UK at [info@iti.org.uk](mailto:info@iti.org.uk) for a copy of their constitution

The International Federation of Translators (FIT) (in English) [http://www.fit-ift.org/?page\\_id=454](http://www.fit-ift.org/?page_id=454) and [http://www.fit-ift.org/?page\\_id=312](http://www.fit-ift.org/?page_id=312)

The International Federation of Translators (FIT) (in French) [http://www.fit-ift.org/?page\\_id=312&lang=fr](http://www.fit-ift.org/?page_id=312&lang=fr) and [http://www.fit-ift.org/?page\\_id=454&lang=fr](http://www.fit-ift.org/?page_id=454&lang=fr)

The Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ) (in German) <http://www.bdue.de/der-bdue/statuten/satzung/>

La Société française des traducteurs (in French) <http://www.sft.fr/statuts.html#.VmV172xBv6U> and <http://www.sft.fr/reglement-interieur.html#.VmV2CWxBv6U>

The Fachverband der Berufsübersetzer und Berufsdolmetscher e.V (ATICOM) in Germany (in German) <http://aticom.de/der-verband/satzung/>

UNIVERSITAS Austria (in German) <http://www.universitas.org/de/information/publikationen/statuten/>

You can also consult the website of the International Federation of Translators (<http://www.fit-ift.org/>) for a list of member associations and then contact associations directly for advice.

## Chapter 4

# Bringing people together to work for a common cause: Human resources in association building

Association building is all about bringing people together to work for a common cause. To successfully grow your professional association, you will constantly need to recruit new volunteers and manage people who are willing to contribute their skills and labour. Below are some ideas you may want to think about in relation to finding and working with volunteers.

### 1. Recruiting volunteers

When looking for volunteers to be actively involved in your association's work, you should place a particular emphasis on recruiting people with the necessary "soft skills" (i.e. people skills) and the right attitude. Everyone involved in an association must be working for the good of the association and the profession as a whole, not aiming to advance their own careers. Open-minded team players are needed, rather than individuals with an inflated sense of their own importance who are unable to accept any views other than their own.

It has also proven useful to bring together "old hands" with new entrants into the profession.

#### Hint to keep in mind:

Experience has shown that teaching staff from universities and other training institutions and also staff translators can play a particularly beneficial role in association building, as many of them are more experienced in team building and public relations work than freelancers, and they also have direct access to large pools of potential (future) association members.

### 2. Rewards of being a volunteer

Volunteers do not normally get paid for their work. To motivate people to contribute their time and effort, it is helpful to create awareness of the following rewarding aspects of volunteer work:

Volunteers can ...

- draw inspiration from association work
- work with other interesting people and make new contacts
- develop their skills, both soft skills and hard skills, e.g. management and communication skills that would be difficult for them to develop in their work as a translator or interpreter

However, you should keep in mind that volunteers must take care to keep their own business separate from the association's business. Experience has shown that things can get really difficult if people start drawing (or are perceived to be drawing) personal profit from their volunteer activity, e.g. by exploiting the association's work and its contacts for drumming up translation jobs and new clients for themselves.

### 3. Enabling and training volunteers for their functions

Association work is challenging, and officer-bearers will often need skills and know-how they do not yet have. You should therefore consider offering seminars or coaching for volunteers to develop their skills and help them cope with the expectations placed on them. An induction manual or programme for newly-elected office-bearers could be considered. Clear "job descriptions" for their roles have also proven useful to avoid volunteer burn-out.

### 4. Paid work can be an important complement to volunteer work

Work performed by volunteers has always been the backbone of professional associations around the world. Nevertheless, as the organization grows, a paid secretariat/office may be necessary at some stage to cope with the administrative workload.

Moreover, it has also proven useful to contract, from time to time or on a regular basis, services from external professionals, especially in the legal and public relations fields.

However, you should keep in mind that policy decisions should always be made by the members themselves in general meetings or by volunteers who are elected into their positions by the members, and not by paid staff or non-elected technocrats. Having policy decisions made by members of the association or by elected office-bearers can help to ensure that these decisions are based on professional expertise and solely oriented towards the best interests of the practitioners in the profession, while decisions made by "bureaucrats" may sometimes also be guided by a tendency to expand and justify their own existence, something that is inherent in any bureaucracy.

## Chapter 5

### Benefits associations offer their members

Before anyone joins an association, they will want to know what the benefits of membership are. You should therefore clearly spell out the advantages of membership of your association and communicate this information to prospective members on your website. You could also include these benefits in information sheets or brochures that you can disseminate at events and in public places. Remember, a website is often the first meeting place between a prospective member and the association, so make sure the benefits are available there!

**Hint to keep in mind:** List the benefits of membership in a prominent spot where the information is clearly visible to the person who visits your website with a view to joining your association.

In the sections below, some of the benefits associations typically offer their members are listed and described. There may be even more benefits to membership than the ones below. You may not be in a position to offer a long list of benefits at the outset, but your association can work towards extending more and more benefits to members as you grow and develop.

#### **1. Members are included in the association's online directory**

Associations often make available, on their website, a database of their members and typically indicate, amongst other things, the following:

- The member's contact details, such as telephone numbers and email address
- The language combinations the member works in
- The services the member renders (translation, interpreting, text editing, proofreading, etc.)
- The member's certification or accreditation status, if applicable
- The member's formal and/or professional qualifications

Inclusion in this directory is usually voluntary. You may decide to charge members an additional fee if they opt to be included in the online directory. One benefit of being included in the directory for members is marketing of their services. Clients can readily identify the right language practitioner in the right language combination for the particular service they need. This directory therefore brings clients and language practitioners together.

#### **2. Members gain access to members-only website content**

A distinct advantage of membership is that associations often have an ear-marked area on their website, to which only members have access. Here job postings, newsletters, policies, invitations to events, minutes of the association's annual general meeting, and other internal, and sometimes also external, publications are available to members. This may include access to resources such as online dictionaries or terminology lists. Non-members do not have right of entry to this area of this website.

#### **3. Members receive information on job offers and adverts**

Employers and recruitment agencies often send details of job vacancies and special projects to associations, which in turn circulate the information to their members. In addition, advertisements and special offers for products (such as CAT tools, books, etc.) and invitations to events (such as conferences, workshops or training sessions) are also often circulated amongst the association's members. This information may also be made available, for a period of time, on the members-only area of the association's website so that members are able to access it for reference at a later stage.

Being a member of an association will provide access to such information. A member may just land that perfect position, or attend an interesting event, simply because they were privy to the information. Non-members more often than not miss out on lucrative opportunities and exciting events!

#### **4. Members get to network**

Translators largely work alone and they can easily feel isolated or cut off from the world around them. Being a member of an association means the translator becomes part of a community of like-minded people. The networks that are created through membership are often very supportive, as members

can exchange ideas and talk about common problems. Between them, they are often able to come up with solutions to these problems.

Translators who are members of associations get to meet new people, learn new things, stay abreast of new industry trends, attend events and training workshops, and rub shoulders with potential clients and employers. It often happens that members of such networks collaborate on projects and even share clients. The opportunities that are created through these networks are endless!

### **5. Members get discounts**

Members of associations often get various discounts, negotiated on their behalf by the association.

Discounts may be given on registration fees for workshops, training sessions and conferences, purely on the basis of membership of a particular association, or by virtue of the association being affiliated with a larger umbrella body.

Discounts external to the association are also often possible for journal subscriptions, computer software (including CAT tools) and insurance packages, amongst other things.

### **6. Members get to vote**

As a member of an association, you can vote on issues that may affect your "life" as a translator. This means you have a voice and you can participate in the decision-making processes of the association.

### **7. Members are allowed to use the association's logo**

Members of translator associations are, in most cases, allowed to use the association's logo on their business cards, in their CVs and as part of their email signatures. In this way, clients' perceptions of the quality and credibility of their work is enhanced and, as a result, clients may hold them and their work in high regard on the basis of their membership of a reputable association.

### **8. Members get to become accredited through the association**

Some associations have accreditation systems in place. To become accredited, a translator must be a paid-up member of the association. To retain their accredited status, a translator must also remain a member of the association and may have to comply with certain other requirements, like CPD or re-testing at specified intervals. There are many advantages to being accredited, the most important being that a professional association attests to, or endorses, the ability of a translator to render work of a high standard. Clients often need this kind of reassurance and they may decide to select an accredited translator over a non-accredited translator. Sometimes only accredited members of an association have voting rights.

Accreditation may also be linked to an association's membership criteria (see section 2 of chapter 2). Where membership is very open and not based on high-standard formal qualifications, accreditation becomes especially relevant, as it offers a guarantee of competence. It may not be as necessary in other cases where strict criteria related to qualifications are in place.

In countries where the language industry is not regulated, translators associations can play a big part in maintaining high standards through accreditation. Accreditation can at times be either a recommendation or a prerequisite for positions in an institution or a company. Being an accredited member of a translators association will therefore stand an applicant in good stead. You should point this out to prospective members!

Be aware, though, that setting up an accreditation system requires a great deal of time and dedication, and there can be challenges in accommodating all the languages your members may wish to be tested for. Do some careful research before you start a scheme and make sure you have the resources to maintain it once you get going. At the end of this chapter we list some associations and organizations that currently offer accreditation, which you could consult if you are considering introducing accreditation.

### **9. Members get opportunities for CPD**

Translators associations often offer events, courses and workshops that count towards CPD (continuing professional development) units/points. In countries where the profession is statutorily

regulated, CPD may be a legal requirement and if translators do not comply with the CPD system that is in place, their registration with the relevant statutory body or membership of a voluntary association may be withdrawn. In other instances the CPD system may be instituted by the association as an obligation for its members or even as a voluntary exercise for members. No matter how it is required, CPD is aimed at maintaining high levels of professionalism and is a benefit to anyone. It should be a basic element of the mission of any translators association to foster a culture of CPD, as this is the basis of maintaining and raising standards in the profession, and it is strongly recommended that associations try to implement such a scheme.

### **10. Members' interests are protected**

Translators' associations look after members' interests by interacting with the relevant authorities, monitoring developments and trends locally and around the world, building local and international contacts, etc. A single person may not be able to achieve a great deal in these areas, but an association representing a large number of affected persons can have considerable influence. Members benefit from having their interests protected and from being kept informed.

#### **Websites to visit on member benefits**

American Translators Association (ATA) <http://www.atanet.org/resources/>

Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDU) <http://www.bdue.de/en/bdue/>

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) <http://www.iti.org.uk/become-a-member/benefits>

Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)  
[http://ausit.org/AUSIT/Join\\_AUSIT/Membership\\_Benefits/AUSIT/Join\\_AUSIT/Membership\\_Benefits.aspx](http://ausit.org/AUSIT/Join_AUSIT/Membership_Benefits/AUSIT/Join_AUSIT/Membership_Benefits.aspx)

#### **A selection of associations that run CPD and/or accreditation systems**

American Translators Association (ATA) <http://www.atanet.org/certification/index.php> and  
<http://www.atanet.org/events/pd.php>

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) <http://www.iti.org.uk/professional-development-events/cpd;>  
<http://www.iti.org.uk/professional-development-events/qualified-translator-exam>

Translators Association of China [http://www.tac-online.org.cn/en/node\\_515764.htm](http://www.tac-online.org.cn/en/node_515764.htm)

Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)  
<http://www.ausit.org/AUSIT/Practitioners/AUSIT/Home/Practitioners.aspx?hkey=e9c49bb1-4878-4900-a487-a9a464d63328>

South African Translators' Institute  
[http://translators.org.za/sati cms/index.php?frontend\\_action=display\\_text\\_content&content\\_id=1728](http://translators.org.za/sati cms/index.php?frontend_action=display_text_content&content_id=1728)

Swiss Association of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters (ASTTI)  
[http://new.astti.ch/web/Formation\\_25\\_2.php](http://new.astti.ch/web/Formation_25_2.php)

National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) <http://www.naati.com.au/>

## Chapter 6

### **Keeping the association strong: Managing your financial resources**

For an association to be successful, it needs to have a solid financial basis. This may take time to develop, but it is important from the outset to have a clear idea of where your finances will come from and how they will be managed. You should never allow your association to be put into a situation where you could be accused of using association funds for other purposes.

#### **1. Sources of funding**

There are three basic sources of funding for an association:

- Membership fees
- Internally generated earnings
- External financing

#### **2. Members' contribution to funding**

In most cases, the major portion of a translators association's funds comes from membership fees. Of course, your local situation could be slightly different, but in general this is the case and it ensures a certain independence within the association in managing its own funds.

Local conditions may also influence who your members are and thus the level of your income. If there is a mandatory legal requirement for all or certain categories of translators to belong to your association, you will have a guaranteed level of income. If membership is voluntary, you will have to attract members to your association, possibly in competition with other associations. You will therefore need to offer value for their membership (see chapter 5 on benefits for members) and be aware that you could lose members if you do not meet their expectations, which will also have an effect on your bottom line.

You will have to consider your members' situation when you set the membership fees – if they are too high you will lose members, and if they are too low you will not have the funds to achieve your objectives. Members should also be involved in setting the level of fees; they should not be imposed by the executive. Generally the executive will make a proposal, based on a budget for the activities the association would like to implement, and members vote on this or make alternative proposals. This can be done at your annual general meeting or by other means such as electronic voting.

#### **3. Generating further income**

Income can also be generated through association activities and this can supplement the income from membership payments. This income may be used to keep membership fees low or to expand the association's activities.

The ways associations can generate extra income will vary depending on local conditions and on the creativity of the members! Here are a few ideas:

- In some countries, translations have to be certified or legalized by a translators' association and they charge a fee for this.
- Associations can offer training courses and make a profit on the fees charged for these.
- Other types of events organised by an association can generate a profit, such as conferences and networking events.
- Associations can sell miscellaneous goods, such as books, magazines, branded clothing or other products, and so on.

It would be important to make sure that you cover the costs of any event you organize, because if you consistently make a loss you will soon have to dissolve the association.

#### **4. External financing**

This refers to resources that do not come specifically from activities that are characteristic of a translators association, but that have a direct effect on the income flow. Examples could include:

- Government grants
- Grants from public or private institutions
- Grants from individuals
- Public or private donations
- Revenue from broadcasting and advertising activities
- Sponsorships for specific projects or activities

In the case of external financing, it is important to ascertain what conditions are attached to the funding and to make sure that accepting it does not endanger the association's independence. Such funding may be made available to support a specific project or activity, rather than being regular income. If you are able to obtain sponsorships, this can help keep your membership fees or the cost of events low.

#### **5. How funds are used**

Generally, an association's resources should be used to the benefit of the members. The first thing would thus be to cover the costs incurred in meeting the objectives of the association, such as:

- Operating expenses, which will vary depending on the association's set-up, but could include maintaining an office, staff expenses, consumables, communication costs, etc.
- Membership of relevant national and international associations
- Investments
- Publications
- Advertising and promotional work

Once the basic expenses have been taken care of and the association is on a sound footing, further available funds can be used to provide more direct or tangible benefits for members, such as scholarships or special training activities.

#### **6. Being accountable and transparent**

It is vital that an association's financial affairs are handled carefully and according to sound financial principles. An association should draw up a budget each year, and this will be the guide as to what activities can be undertaken during the year and if enough funding is available for them.

The association should have its own bank account and all transactions should be undertaken by the duly authorised persons on the executive. You should also decide early in the life of your association what financial claims can be made by office-bearers and members. These should ideally be limited to refunds for direct expenses and reasonable payment for services rendered to the association, and should be subject to a process of authorization.

Depending on local requirements, you may have to have the accounts formally audited each year, but even if this is not a legal requirement it is advisable to have them checked by an expert. This gives members the confidence that the funds are being properly managed.

#### **7. A last word on finances**

Considering that the main goal of our associations is to further our profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession and the public interest, all translators associations should have a sound distribution plan for all their resources, not just the financial resources.

## Chapter 7

### What codes of ethics are about

Translators associations usually have codes of ethics (sometimes referred to codes of (professional) conduct or practice) and they expect their members to adhere to these codes. An association may include a statement on the application form, to be signed by the applicant, indicating that they will abide by the principles contained in the code. Alternatively, it is possible to make the applicant sign a copy of the code itself when they join the association. The purpose of these codes is to ensure that members behave professionally towards both colleagues and clients.

You should put the code of ethics on your website, so that your members can become familiar with its content, and so that your members' clients can also take note of the conduct they can expect of service providers.

You should think carefully about what you, as an association, want to include in your code of ethics or conduct. The following aspects are commonly included in codes of ethics for individual members.

**Hint to keep in mind:** You may wish to consider initially drawing up a *generic* code of practice, but as your association grows and develops, you may experience the need to have different, more *specific*, codes for the different categories of members (such as individual members, corporate members and/or agencies), and for the different branches of language practice (such as translators, editors and interpreters), as the contexts within which language practitioners work may require different behaviours. An alternative is to have a short generic code that applies to all members complemented by a set of rules relating to specific branches of practice and/or membership categories.

#### 1. The role of the translator

Codes of ethics often start off by describing the role of the translator. The translator may be described as an important role-player who facilitates and promotes communication and understanding between parties who do not share the same language. You can decide on the most appropriate wording to describe the role of the translator in your specific context, country and part of the world. This could be covered in a preface to the code.

Some translators work in conflict zones and war-torn areas. Their lives may be in danger. If you have such members in your association, you may wish to include information on conduct in such cases in your code. FIT in partnership with certain other international organizations has drafted a [Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of Their Services](#). This document outlines the basic rights, responsibilities and practices recommended by the organizations. It applies to translators and interpreters serving as field linguists for the armed forces, journalists, NGOs and other organizations in conflict zones and other high-risk settings. The code is available in a range of languages on the FIT website (<http://www.fit-ift.org/?p=368>). It may not be possible for an association to enforce these guidelines, but it could be useful to include a local version as an addendum to your code.

#### 2. Professional conduct

Codes of ethics usually require members of an association to act professionally. This means members should:

- not do anything that will damage the reputation of the profession or the association
- not "steal" work from others in the profession
- not undertake work that is illegal in the country concerned
- insist on having their names included in the final published translation, where possible

#### 3. Confidentiality

Codes of ethics often deal with the important issue of confidentiality and the importance of members of an association keeping the information that they translate, edit or interpret confidential. Clients often expect translators, editors or interpreters to sign confidentiality agreements as well, binding them to treat the information they are working with as confidential.

#### 4. Competence

Codes also refer to the competence levels of those who are bound by the code. So, members of an association should:

- at all times attempt to achieve the highest quality of work
- not accept work that they are not able to do properly (referring here to knowledge of the source and target languages, knowledge of the subject matter or discipline and the ability to meet deadlines)

#### 5. Impartiality

Translators should remain impartial and not "take sides" when translating information. This means they should translate the information without bias and they should not distort information when translating to suit their preferred viewpoint. The notion of impartiality underscores the importance of accuracy in translation, the topic of the next point.

#### 6. Accuracy

A very important aspect that associations typically refer to in their code of ethics relates to accuracy. Unless the brief requires differently, translators must render a faithful translation of the source text and should not change anything substantial without either the author's or the client's prior permission or approval.

#### 7. Professional development

Codes of ethics encourage the members of an association always to strive to improve and develop their skills and knowledge. This includes staying informed about developments in the profession and keeping up to date with the tools translators use in executing their work. A code of conduct may also refer to the translator's responsibility to help foster the development of others in the profession, such as by acting as a mentor for young, upcoming and inexperienced translators. This means translators should be collegial. Collegiality further implies that a translator should refer a client to another translator with the required knowledge and skills, if he or she is not available or unable to accept the work. In cases where subcontracting is allowed, the code of ethics applies equally to the person to whom the work is subcontracted.

#### 8. Responsibility

An association's code may also refer to the need for a translator to accept responsibility for the quality of their work. This relates to section 4 above, dealing with the issue of competence, and the importance of adhering to deadlines. If a translator negotiates for and accepts a deadline, they should take care to meet that deadline at all costs.

#### 9. Reasonable pricing

This point is closely related to the issue of professional conduct discussed in section 2 above. A code of conduct should point out to members that they should not overcharge for work, but they should also not undercharge in an effort to take work away from others.

#### 10. Disagreements and disputes

Codes of ethics may describe the rules of procedure in cases where a disagreement or dispute arises between a client and a translator, or between two or more translators. A code may also describe, in the form of guidelines, the ways in which disagreements and disputes can be avoided in the first place. Some codes also include a clause indicating that disputes may be mediated by the association.

**Hint to keep in mind:** The American Translators Association (ATA) has a supplementary document to their code of ethics that serves as a living document. It includes examples and explanations that clarify what is meant in the code. You may wish to do the same for your association. Visit [http://www.atanet.org/governance/code\\_of\\_ethics\\_commentary.pdf](http://www.atanet.org/governance/code_of_ethics_commentary.pdf).

#### 11. A last word on codes of ethics

Please remember: Paper is patient! If your association has a code of conduct, you must be prepared to enforce it. To be able to enforce your code means that you may have to include information on the procedures if a member does not comply with it. This could be part of your code or a separate document setting out the disciplinary mechanisms for enforcing the code. It must clearly indicate who can report deviations from the code, how they should be reported and what procedures will be followed by the association once such a complaint has been received. It is also important to indicate the types of sanctions that may be applied for different instances or categories of non-compliance, such as a

warning, followed by more serious action against the member and even culminating in withdrawal of their membership. FIT is working on a database of complaints and decisions, which will offer a generic guide to the types of offences committed in our profession and the sanctions meted out; over time, this could offer a common basis for disciplinary procedures.

#### **Websites to visit on codes of ethics**

American Translators Association (ATA) [https://www.atanet.org/certification/online\\_ethics\\_code.php](https://www.atanet.org/certification/online_ethics_code.php) and [http://www.atanet.org/governance/code\\_of\\_ethics\\_commentary.pdf](http://www.atanet.org/governance/code_of_ethics_commentary.pdf).

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) <http://www.iti.org.uk/become-a-member/code-of-professional-conduct>

Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association (ITIA) [http://translatorsassociation.ie/component/option,com\\_docman/task,cat\\_view/gid,21/Itemid,61/](http://translatorsassociation.ie/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,21/Itemid,61/)

South African Translators' Institute (SATI) [http://www.translators.org.za/sati/cms/index.php?frontend\\_action=display\\_text\\_content&content\\_id=1684](http://www.translators.org.za/sati/cms/index.php?frontend_action=display_text_content&content_id=1684)

Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) [http://ausit.org/AUSIT/About/Ethics\\_Conduct/Code\\_of\\_Ethics/AUSIT/About/Code\\_of\\_Ethics.aspx](http://ausit.org/AUSIT/About/Ethics_Conduct/Code_of_Ethics/AUSIT/About/Code_of_Ethics.aspx)

FIT *Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of Their Services* <http://www.fit-ift.org/?p=368>

## Chapter 8

### Building relationships

In order to promote your association's role and the interests of your members, it is beneficial to build up relations with other associations and bodies.

This can be on a formal basis, e.g. through memorandums of understanding or formal agreements, but it can also simply be on an informal basis to build good relations and promote cooperation. Whichever route you decide to take initially, don't let it slip off your agenda – it is too late to start building relationships when you have a specific need for such a relationship. Rather make friends before you need them ...

Initially it is probably a good idea to start informally, e.g. invite each other to your events, hold informal round table (or bilateral) meetings to share information about activities/plans, etc. You can also draw inspiration from other associations' work, procedures and set-ups. As your association grows, it will become apparent when more formal relations are required.

Very often translators do a variety of types of work and so your relations with other associations could be relevant and beneficial to them.

#### 1. Build relationship with a range of bodies

You do not have to limit your relationship to only one or two bodies. Here are some ideas of whom it might be useful to have a relationship with:

- Other translators associations in your country – these could be general associations or associations for specialised fields, e.g. literary translators, AVT translators, Bible translators, sign language interpreters
- Sister associations, e.g. associations for editors, indexers and bibliographers, terminologists, lexicographers
- Organizations in related fields, e.g. linguistics, languages and language teaching, journalism and writing, publishing
- Cultural organizations like the Alliance française, Goethe Institute or Dante Alighieri as well as similar local associations, which often offer translation services themselves and offer contact with potential members
- Government structures, e.g. the government department and unit under which translation falls in your country (at national and provincial/local level); statutory bodies that are relevant to translation; language offices in structures such as the police, legislatures, military, post office, medical and emergency services, etc.
- Translation agencies/language service providers, if they are not included in your association
- In-house translation offices, if their employees are not members of your association
- Training institutions that offer training in the field, both universities and other providers
- International associations like FIT, WASLI and AIIC, depending on the focus of your association
- Sister organizations in neighbouring countries, where it is useful to have closer contact

#### 2. Aspects that you might consider in the different relations

The relations will not be the same with all your partners and you should be selective in what you pursue in each case. Here are examples of types of cooperation you can establish:

- Disseminating information – this might be about activities and developments in your association or more generally to raise awareness of the profession (e.g. celebration of ITD, petitions for protection of linguists in conflict areas – see FIT's Resolution on this subject at [http://www.fit-ift.org/?page\\_id=3175](http://www.fit-ift.org/?page_id=3175)); it is often helpful to request other associations to spread the information further
- Reduced fees for attending your events for members of sister organizations and vice versa (one can have a hierarchy of charges – sister organizations should not necessarily pay the same as your own members, as this dilutes the benefit of membership; you could have one charge for your

members, a charge of 20-30% more for sister organizations and a charge of 50-100% more for non-members)

- Organizing joint events with sister associations, training institutions, statutory bodies, government departments
- Discussions and cooperation of matters of common interest
- Joint approaches to authorities
- Consultation and (giving or receiving of) advice on projects, legislation, CPD, etc. (e.g. being recognised as the experts and having government consult you when relevant legislation is considered, or approaching government to suggest regulations your association feels are necessary)

### **3. Contacts with the media can be useful**

Establish a media list for disseminating information. This need not only be for formal media, such as newspapers, television and radio; you could have one list like that for information that needs to be publically disseminated, but you can also have a second list that includes contacts in the other organizations you have established relations with to disseminate information that is of more interest/relevance to insiders, e.g. developments in your association or the profession, events, and so on. It can also be useful to ask your contacts to post information on their website or in their social media.

### **4. Make sure your relationships are maintained**

Office-bearers change in volunteer associations and you should take care to ensure that relationships continue to exist even when people move on. Contacts are often initially built up because of personal relationships and people that your office-bearers happen to know. Maintaining these contacts should not depend on the personalities involved; you must have a central database and a means of making contact as an association rather than only on the basis of one office-bearer's personal relationship. You should also make sure you know who is the appropriate contact person in the other organization; it may not always be the initial personal contact.

## **A final word**

Building an association will demand a great deal of enthusiasm, dedication and hard work. We hope this manual will help make that process a little easier and wish you all the best with your efforts. Remember that there are many FIT member associations around the world that you can turn to for advice and assistance.

Remember too that it is important to have the codes, rules and procedures approved by the members of the association before implementation in order to ensure legitimacy.

It would be useful for a new association to evaluate their entire structure after about five years in order to ensure that the structures put in place are still appropriate and working efficiently. This should cover both the formal documentation and the practical operation of the association.

Any feedback or ideas to improve this manual will be gratefully received. Please send your comments to the FIT Secretariat at [secretariat@fit-ift.org](mailto:secretariat@fit-ift.org).