



BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE

MINUTES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

17 May 2023

Online meeting hosted by Croatia

NATO COUNTRIES

Albania
Belgium
Bulgaria
Canada
Croatia
Czechia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Montenegro
North Macedonia
Norway
Netherlands
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Turkey
United Kingdom
United States

ATTENDANCE

Absent
Sr. Capt. K. Heylen
Ms. S. Atanasova
Ms. J. Dubeau
Ms. M. Prosic
Ms. Ž. Nikam
Mr. K. Kildevang
Ms. K. Sirkel
Ms. S. Patronen
Ms. E. Cleret
Mr. C. Loreck
Absent
Mr. M.K. Mark
Col. M. Perrotta
Ms. G. Lauva
Ms. J. Kuzaitė
Ms. S. Knezevic
Absent
Absent
Drs. G. Seinhorst
LTC J. Dudek
Ms. C. Rolo
Col. C. Ispas
Absent
Ms. B. Petek
Col. F. Valencia
LTC O. Bostanci
LTC M. Sharp
Absent

PARTNERS/OBSERVERS IN ATTENDANCE

Australia *Absent*
Austria LTC K. Testor
Azerbaijan *Absent*
Bosnia-Herzegovina LTC K. Kulasevic
Georgia Ms. T. Shalamberidze



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Kazakhstan
Sweden
Ukraine

Col. R. Isseyev
Ms. M. Martin
Col. D. Demydko

NATO BODIES:

NATO HQ (IMS)
SHAPE
NATO DEEP Academy
NMI
PLTCE

Mr. E. Arnold
Absent
Ms. J. Kowalczyk
Absent
Dr. E. Nickels

BILC SECRETARIAT

Chair
Secretary
Secretary
Associate Secretary
Associate Secretary
Associate Secretary
Senior Advisor

Ms. I. Prpic Djuric
Ms. S. Horvat
Ms. B. Soldo
Ms. P. Garza
Ms. J. Dubeau
Ms. J. Vasilj-Begovic
Dr. R. Clifford



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Item 1: Opening Remarks

i. Introductions and recognition of the new heads of delegations and observers

Chair opened the meeting expressing regret that due to the extraordinary circumstances in Turkey, the Conference host country, the event and the Steering Committee meetings could not take place in person. Chair introduced herself and invited the heads of delegations to do the same.

ii. Approval of agenda

Chair called for approval of the agenda by the heads of NATO member delegations. The agenda was unanimously approved.

Item 2: Information & Acknowledgements

i. BILC update – Ms. Irena Prpic Djuric

Chair gave a presentation on BILC origin and organizational structure, explaining its connection to NATO and Allied Command Transformation (ACT). She highlighted the advisory role of BILC, its vision and mission and the fact that it is the custodian of STANAG 6001. Among its roles and activities, BILC assists host nations with the organizing of three annual events, the May Annual Conference, the STANAG 6001 Testing Workshop, and the Professional Development Seminar. Furthermore, BILC offers a variety of seminars, courses, and workshops, with the main goal of standardizing testing and training in support of interoperability. BILC also provides various types of assistance to requesting nations by helping them, for example, establish or improve their training and testing systems, etc. This assistance often takes place under the umbrella of the Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP).

Besides, Chair provided a report on BILC activities. She mentioned receiving two requests for assistance. One came from the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR in French), an organization that sought information about the PoCs of BILC testing centres, with the aim of approaching them about the possibility of having CIOR students tested by them. Chair advised this organization that even though she was not able to disclose the full list of PoCs, once CIOR identified the nation they would like to approach, Chair would inquire with the national BILC PoC if that nation was able to provide testing services to CIOR.

The other request came from Israel's Desk of International Training (Military Diplomacy School) inquiring about the possibility of sending testers to BILC courses and seminars. There has been no further development on this inquiry.



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ii. Report on the BILC advisory activities in the period May 2022 – May 2023:

- Azerbaijan, Georgia and Mauritania reports on current activities and plans for 2023 – Ms. Irena Prpic Djuric

Chair began her report by stating that under the auspices of DEEP, BILC offered assistance to Azerbaijan, by supporting their testers and teachers in the test development field, as well as in designing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. In October-November 2023, a testing workshop will be provided to this nation by Estonia and Latvia. One of the topics at the October Professional Development Seminar will focus on the design of ESP courses.

The assistance to Georgia consisted of professional development provided to teachers and testers, a workshop on classroom assessment, as well as one on the development of training materials for blended courses.

Regarding the assistance provided to Mauritania, an online meeting was held in 2022, followed by a scoping visit in April 2023. In the second half of 2023, a STANAG 6001 familiarization workshop has been planned for instructors, as well as another visit. A report on recommendations will be provided to Mauritania based on the scoping visit findings.

- Bosnia-Herzegovina and Ukraine reports on current activities and plans for 2023 – Ms. Peggy Garza

Chair invited Ms. Garza to report on the BiH and Ukraine projects. Ms. Garza began her report by extending her gratitude to the countries which assisted with these DEEP-sponsored projects for BiH. In 2022, professional development was offered to the BiH instructors of advanced English, as well as a workshop on military terminology, followed by leadership discussions, and a visit to the Slovenian Armed Forces Translation Department. In February 2023, Croatia offered preservice training for new instructors and in June, Austria will support the piloting of the Military Terminology Course. Continuation of cooperation with the Slovenian AF Translation Department and leadership discussions are also part of the assistance plan. A new component is norming and continuous professional development of STANAG 6001 testers.

The assistance to Ukraine has been ongoing for several years, with seven BILC-member nations offering support. Faculty Development Workshops were planned to take place at 10 institutes; however, first due to COVID and then the Russian invasion, the program had to be discontinued. The first out-of-country workshop dealing with maximizing learning and developing the speaking skills was held from 28 March – 6 April, 2023 in Bulgaria for 12 instructors. The second one will be in



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Slovenia in October. In August, two Ukrainians will take part in PLTCE's consecutive interpreting techniques course.

Virtual cooperation with the Ukrainian National Defence University has also been taking place for a long while, covering topics such as STANAG 6001 familiarization for instructors and programme managers, statistical analysis consultation and language programme management. Session formats include a panel of experts and roundtable discussions on lessons learned.

- Armenia, Colombia, and Iraq reports on current activities and plans for 2023 – Ms. Branka Petek

Chair invited Ms. Petek to report on Armenia, Colombia, and Iraq activities. Ms. Petek began her report by stating that in 2022, Armenia established its language training and testing capacities, as well as a professional development framework for teachers and testers. BILC's assistance to this nation began with virtual meetings. Armenia is currently considering the way-ahead, and once it has informed BILC of its decisions, more events will be planned in 2023.

Colombia is a new DEEP country. The initial scoping visit took place in May 2022, and it included discussions about BILC's assistance in the field of training and testing in 2023. This assistance would cover professional development of the English instructors, as well as the standing up of the STANAG 6001 testing capacity.

Iraq has been a very active DEEP-sponsored partner nation. Assistance efforts to Iraq included visits to its Defense Language Institute (DLI) in 2022, two exchanges of teachers with Slovenia, two-week long workshops for teachers and testers. A faculty development workshop was planned for 2023, but it has been postponed until 2024 as the proposed dates were not convenient. Another teacher exchange will take place in November this year, as well as a visit of the Iraqi Dean of DLI to Slovenia.

iii. Other

- BILC website – Ms. Irena Prpic Djuric

Chair informed delegates that the BILC website could not be hosted on the Croatian server. In spite of that, the website has been updated. This situation is expected to change soon, and new information will be provided.

- BILC POC list – Ms. Irena Prpic Djuric

Chair stated that she would send to the nations two lists, asking them to update both the list of the national BILC PoCs, as well as the list of the PoCs for the national testing centres. She highlighted the importance of having accurate and updated information about the respective PoCs.



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Item 3: Action Items from Last Conference

i. Shared Item Bank Project – Ms. Merit Kompus

Chair invited Ms. Kompus to report on this ongoing project. Ms. Kompus briefed delegates on the project's origin and its aim to create a bank of listening and reading items covering levels 1-3 that will be available to all nations. Seven nations are members of this Working Group (WG), and their representatives have revised and moderated 47 reading items. The WG held 14 online sessions, piloted the items on teachers in Canada, Latvia, and Romania, and assembled two test versions. In the pretesting session that took place from October until December 2022, 500 volunteers took each test version. Different programmes were used to conduct statistical analyses of the items. The group retained a number of items at each level to be used as anchor ones. The group is currently working on the listening item development and has already moderated 45 Level 1 and 2 items via two online sessions. Large-scale pretesting has been planned for 2024. Ms. Kompus mentioned that other nations will be invited to join the project in the future.

ii. JTAC working group – Ms. Peggy Garza

Chair invited Ms. Garza and Mr. Kildevang to report on this project. Ms. Garza began her report by stating that Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) have a language requirement of SLP 3332. BILC was contacted by the US Joint Fires Integration Division and asked to conduct a needs analysis of JTACs' linguistic tasks. Because JTAC tasks are considered quite unique, BILC was also asked to consider a test with a more focused approach that would reflect JTACs' target language use (TLU). Mr. Kildevang mentioned that even prior to the formation of the WG, BILC members had been looking into the misalignment of the JTAC language tasks and the way their language is assessed on a general proficiency test. A chapter in the book *Language in Uniform*, posited that the speaking skill requirement, as part of the JTAC SLP, was not aligned with the TLU of this skill in real life, i.e., in the field of JTAC operations. There was a collaborative (Norway and USA) attempt to modify the Oral Proficiency Test format (OPI Plus) and add to it a military component in the form of JTAC context/content; however, the test-takers' output was similar. In addition, the Danish presentation at the 2019 BILC Professional Development Seminar also raised concerns about language testing for JTACs. At the 2022 BILC Conference, Steering Committee members were surveyed on testing and training JTACs. The survey results revealed that about 83% of the 26 nations tested JTACs but only 25% of those countries offered either general proficiency or specialist language courses for JTACs.

Throughout the study the WG consulted JTAC SMEs in Denmark, Norway, and Slovenia. WG members observed JTAC exercises, training, and certification courses and conferred with the BILC representative from Germany on their experiences with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) language testing. The WG concluded that STANAG 6001 Level 2 was the working level in most situations; however the JTAC TLU domain is complicated by unique factors not encountered in other



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communication environments. These include communicating under pressure, comprehending, and responding to communications from multiple digital and human sources, and responding promptly, often using brevities and specialized terminology. A survey completed by 246 JTACs, evaluators and program managers confirmed the JTAC language tasks and the linguistic and non-linguistic factors typical of the JTAC TLU domain.

A report was submitted to the BILC Chair and to the US Joint Fires Integration Division. The WG will continue to coordinate with JTAC SMEs on a new test construct that emphasizes integrated skills performance-based testing and will develop and trial test tasks that are more suitable for the specific needs of this military specialty.

iii. French group – Ms. Julie Dubeau

Chair invited Ms. Dubeau to report on the French group meetings. Ms. Dubeau began her report by stating that a few BILC standardizing initiatives had begun before Covid interrupted that work, such as the review the International Military Staff (IMS) one-page STANAG Overview to verify satisfactory translation to French; the review of specific STANAG-related terminology and the drafting of a lexical aid; and the translation of the Table of Text Modes (and skill levels combined) into French. At the recent BILC Professional Development Seminar in Utah, last October, one of the French delegates from the War College pointed out some inadequacies in the translation of the English STANAG 6001 into French, stating that the translation did not reflect some socio-cultural norms of the French language and society. As the STANAG 6001 standard is intended to serve as a reliable basis for language proficiency assessment regardless of the language being assessed, it must not be anchored solely in the socio-linguistic reality of the language in which it is written; it should avoid ambiguity and leave no room for the various interpretations of those who use it. Therefore, as a first step towards improving the French STANAG, a delegate from France (Mr. Jerome Collin) and Canada (Ms. Dubeau) met in November of last year to review some of the phrasing of the edition 5v2 in French. In doing this work, they felt that the potential reorganizing of a bilingual English / French standard from the conception stage may resolve this issue. At that time, it also became evident that the STANAG 6001 wording in both French and English contained some ambiguities that may benefit from some review. These discussions were to continue at the 2023 May BILC Conference in Istanbul, but unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled.

iv. Future activities in the field of Military Terminology – Ms. Branka Petek

Ms. Petek mentioned that during the Steering Committee meetings at the 2022 BILC Conference in Italy, a unanimous decision was taken to add a bi-annual Military Terminology Conference to the roster of BILC events. This event will be sponsored by ACT, meaning that partner nation participation will be subsidized. The next



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conference will take place in late March 2024. Military terminology is used in training and in numerous documents, and it is important that it be standardized with the help of linguists and translators. It is, therefore, important to establish close cooperation between military and language SMEs. Slovenia organized one conference last year by bringing military experts and linguists together. This conference has as its goal to initiate terminology management discussions, interoperability, and security, as well as capability aspects, and challenges in terminology development. During the 2024 conference, the way-ahead will be chartered. BILC is currently looking for a host for the 2024 conference and plans to create a list of PoCs for military terminology.

Item 4: New Business

i. Update on BILC courses – Ms. Peggy Garza

Ms. Garza stated that all BILC courses were unfolding well thanks to the voluntary national contributions consisting of facilitators. She highlighted the fact that PLTCE is a NATO accredited institution and that all its courses have NATO approved status. They abide by NATO quality standards, so courses are constantly being improved based on the feedback received from facilitators and participants. One noticeable trend is education in the digital age, and that trend is reflected in the online component of the courses over the past couple of years. This year, feedback will be collected from participants and facilitators to establish if the balance between the in-person and virtual content needs to be modified.

ii. Piloting of Faculty Development Workshop Lite (Slovenia, February 2024)

Ms. Garza turned the floor to Ms. Petek, who briefed delegates about a new methodology workshop focused on the development of the speaking and writing skills and familiarization with STANAG 6001. It is intended for inexperienced teachers or military language instructors with lower English proficiency, and it will be piloted in Slovenia in 2024. Ms. Petek invited nations to send participants to take part in this piloting so that feedback could be collected.

iii. Focus group on STANAG 6001 – Ms. Julie Dubeau

Ms. Dubeau stated that the NATO Standardization Office periodically asks STANAG custodians either to undertake a review of their STANAGs, or to justify why a review is not needed. STANAG 6001 Edition 5 from 2014 reflected formatting changes, as did v2 in 2016. Since 2010, when edition 4 of STANAG was produced, BILC has not endeavored to update it. Having looked at the STANAG through a bilingual lens, Mr. Colin and Ms. Dubeau felt that the potential reorganizing of a bilingual English / French standard from the conception stage may resolve the issue of a review and have multiple benefits for the entire BILC community. As it also became evident that the STANAG wording in both French and English contained some ambiguities, discussion on some of the phrasing contained in the STANAG should also be initiated. For example, some concepts may need to be refined, or some contexts of language use may need to be added. To begin these discussions, BILC has formed



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a Focus Group. The group has been stood up with the goal of making recommendations to the BILC secretariat and to the Steering Committee. This small focus group, made of members of the Secretariat and other long-standing delegates, with in-depth knowledge of the scale, will begin the informed discussions during the testing workshop in Riga.

iv. Discussion on the new BILC chair (May 2025 – May 2028)

Chair encouraged delegates to consider taking over the chair of the Secretariat and to discuss this possibility with their superiors. Intent to take over the role of Chair may be declared at the Steering Committee meetings at the 2024 Conference.

Item 5: Future Events

i. Events in 2023

Chair mentioned the STANAG 6001 Testing Workshop is scheduled for September this year in Riga, Latvia, as well as the Professional Development Seminar, which will be held in October in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Chair asked Ms. Farte from Latvia to provide information on the Testing Workshop. Ms. Farte stated that the workshop dates were 5-7 September, and the umbrella theme was: ***Furthering the Validity Argument by Keeping Pace with Technological Development***. Because the venue is limited in size, only one delegate per nation will be accepted.

ii. Future hosts

Chair asked LTC Testor to say a few words about the 2024 Conference in Austria. This conference will take place from 13-17 May 2024. More details on the hotel, theme etc. would be provided at the Professional Development Seminar in Baku.

Chair invited delegates to consider hosting future events.

Conferences

2024 conference: Austria (confirmed by a formal letter)

2025 conference: Croatia (TBC)

A host is needed for the 2026 Conference.



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Seminars

2023 seminar: Azerbaijan (confirmed by a formal letter)

Chair mentioned that Joining Instructions are being prepared.

2024 seminar: TBD

Chair informed delegates that Czechia had expressed interest in hosting the 2024 seminar and may for now be considered as a tentative host.

2025 seminar: USA (DLIELC, TBC)

STANAG 6001 Testing Workshops

2023 workshop: Latvia (confirmed by a formal letter)

2024 workshop: Norway (confirmed by a formal letter)

2025 workshop: TBD

Chair stated that the 2023 and 2024 hosts for the Testing Workshop have been confirmed, but the 2025 slot was still open.

Military Terminology Conference

Chair reiterated that this conference was a new event (bi-annual) and that a host was needed for 2024. Austria had offered to host the 2026 event. Chair encouraged nations to consider hosting BILC events.

2024 conference: TBD

2026 conference: Austria (TBC)

Item 6: Acknowledgments

- Contributions
- Secretariat

Chair thanked all delegates for their contributions and the Secretaries for their work. She expressed special gratitude to Ms. B. Petek for her help and support during the handover of her duties as Chair to Ms. Prpic Djuric. She also thanked the retired colonel P. Petkov, and the retiring Associate Secretary, Keith Wert for their contributions to BILC, and adjourned the meeting.

Prepared by: J. Vasilj-Begovic, Associate BILC Secretary, Canada, May 2023

Reviewed by: P. Garza, Associate BILC Secretary, USA, May 2023; Suzana Horvat and Borjana Soldo, BILC Secretaries, Croatia, June 2023

Approved by: I. Prpic Djuric, BILC Chair