

Expertisecentrum Literair Vertalen

Policy Plan 2020–2024

The Centre of Expertise for Literary Translation (ELV) is a partnership between the Taalunie, KU Leuven and Utrecht University, in cooperation with Flanders Literature and the Dutch Foundation for Literature. This document sets out the outlines of the policy to be pursued for the 2020–2024 policy period.

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Mission and vision

The ELV furthers the quality of literary translation into and from Dutch through education, training and the sharing of expertise. We do this by strengthening the knowledge, skills and professionalism of translators, educators and related organisations.

The ELV

- contributes to the professional development of literary translators into and from Dutch and helps them enhance their position;
- helps ensure that there are sufficient expert literary translators for as many language combinations as possible into and from Dutch, both now and in the future;
- facilitates a transnational network of literary and other translation study programmes and professional development initiatives that focus specifically on the core language of Dutch.

Looking back

The main focus of the 2016–2020 policy period was making the available knowledge and expertise accessible. A key objective was the development of the Knowledge Bank ('Kennisbank') on the website. This will be expanded further for use in the courses offered by the ELV and other educators and by translators for professional development purposes.

Another milestone was the publication by Leuven University Press of a book on literary translation entitled *Alles verandert altijd. Perspectieven op literair vertalen* (*Everything changes all the time: perspectives on literary translation*), which was edited by Lieven D'hulst and Kris Van de Poel and developed at the initiative of the ELV. Since this publication was also published in open access, it can be consulted by anyone free of charge.

In addition, the website was completely upgraded, new materials were published, the newsletter was given a new look and the Translators Directory ('Vertalersbestand') was expanded. Each year, summer courses and online courses are organised for translators of nine different languages into and from Dutch and the individual support programme has seen significant growth, partly due to the fact that development grants are now also available to translators who are new to the profession (previously, this was by invitation only).

Together with partners from a number of different countries, the ELV set up the European PETRA-E Network, a partnership of institutions that are involved in the education and training of literary translators, based on the jointly developed Framework for Literary Translation (PETRA-E Framework). Based on this network, the ELV, together with institutions from Italy and the UK, set up the European School of Literary Translation (ESLT), with an annual Summer School in Rome for translators and new and experienced lecturers who educate literary translators. We also cooperated with projects such as CELA and The Chronicles (Crossing Border) in the field of talent development.

In the spring of 2019, the ELV presented a new Vertaalpleidooi (call to action in support of translation) entitled *verTALEN voor de toekomst* (*Translating for the future*). This was presented to Luc Delrue (secretary-general at the Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Government of Flanders) and Barbera Wolfensberger (director-general of Culture and Media at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science). This publication is one of the pillars of the ELV's policy for the coming years.

In line with the recommendations and actions set out in the call to action, the partners and associate partners that make up the ELV are keen to work with other partners on the required further strengthening of a transnational network of translation study programmes and professional development initiatives and on enhancing the position and income of translators.

In addition, it is important to recruit new translation talent for those language combinations where there is likely to be a shortage of translators in the long term. For translations from Dutch into a foreign language, we will work with lecturers in Dutch studies abroad to encourage students worldwide to consider a career in translation.

DE VERTAALTOEKOMST



verTALEN voor de toekomst (2019)

The new call to action stresses the importance of a resilient and flourishing translation culture. The infographic sets out the barriers to this culture, as described in the call to action, and the actions that the ELV recommends to rectify the situation. The call to action is an appeal to responsible parties at the ministries, to translators themselves and to publishers, educators and policymakers to take action.

The English translation of this publication is available on our website www.literairvertalen.org.

Objectives for 2020–2024

The following objectives have been formulated for the new policy period:

1. To provide types of education, training and professional development for literary translators (in the broadest sense of the word) that are not available elsewhere, but for which there is a need nonetheless (specific languages, levels or skills).
2. To facilitate the transition between language/translation study programmes and the market.
3. To help enhance the position of literary translators through education, training, professional development, improved visibility and appropriate remuneration.
4. To strengthen the transnational network of translation study programmes that focus on the core language of Dutch by forging or maintaining ties with both academic and non-academic educators and developing joint initiatives.
5. To introduce students of Dutch studies worldwide and students of language, literature and culture in the Netherlands and Flanders to literary translation.

Aspects to consider when implementing the objectives

Online

Even more than in previous years, the ELV is keen to focus on online delivery. By investing in online learning methods, the reach of ELV's activities can be significantly increased. This may include integrated online learning, blended courses and self-study options, for example through the Knowledge Bank.

In our own online learning environment ELVi, which was developed in the previous policy period, groups of translators into or from a specific language can receive training specific to their needs. This is particularly useful for language combinations for which there are fewer translators. The online courses also help translators expand their network, particularly where translators *into* and *from* the same language participate in a joint course (this is known as reciprocal learning). Each year, the ELV will organise more courses than the year before. It will also consider how groups can be combined.

The many students of Dutch abroad will be introduced to literary translation through an online module.

Sustainable development

In many respects, sustainability is at the heart of everything the ELV does. Activities are designed with a view to the longer term, so they can be replicated or accessed through the Knowledge Bank.

As in previous years, the ELV is keen to provide ongoing career development for literary translators. This means that education, training and knowledge transfer are designed in such a way that talented new translators are supported on an ongoing basis, until such time as they are able to work independently on translation projects. Ultimately, they themselves will be able to support a new generation of translators in turn, where possible.

In order to compensate for the large number of translators working in specific language combinations who are reaching the end of their translation careers, specific priority will be given to attracting *younger* translators to the profession for these languages.

Diversity

The translator community would benefit from a greater diversity in cultural backgrounds than is currently the case. Over the years, it has become clear that this is not a natural development and

that a policy is required to facilitate it. The ELV is keen to work proactively on this with its partners and relevant individuals and institutions, for example by organising specific types of training.

The Knowledge Bank will include articles on cultural diversity, including use of language, gender-neutral translation, etc. By addressing this issue during courses and individual training, the ELV will endeavour to raise awareness of it amongst all translators.

Literary translation in the broadest sense

The ELV is keen to break away from the ‘them and us’ mentality and to work towards a higher degree of inclusiveness in multiple areas. For example, in the Netherlands and Flanders a distinction has traditionally been made between ‘literary translators’ and ‘book translators’. Does this distinction still reflect the reality? Many translators work in both categories. Often, the translation of books which do not fall into the strictly literary category paves the way for more literary work, if the translator in question so desires.

Aside from the formal differences in terms of standard contracts and project work grants, there are many similarities between the two categories. Translators of ‘semi-literary’ books would also benefit significantly from professional support. The objective is therefore to involve this group more in the ELV over the coming period. One of the ways this can be done is by including relevant items in the Knowledge Bank and by expanding the criteria for inclusion in the Translators Directory on the ELV’s website (see page 12).

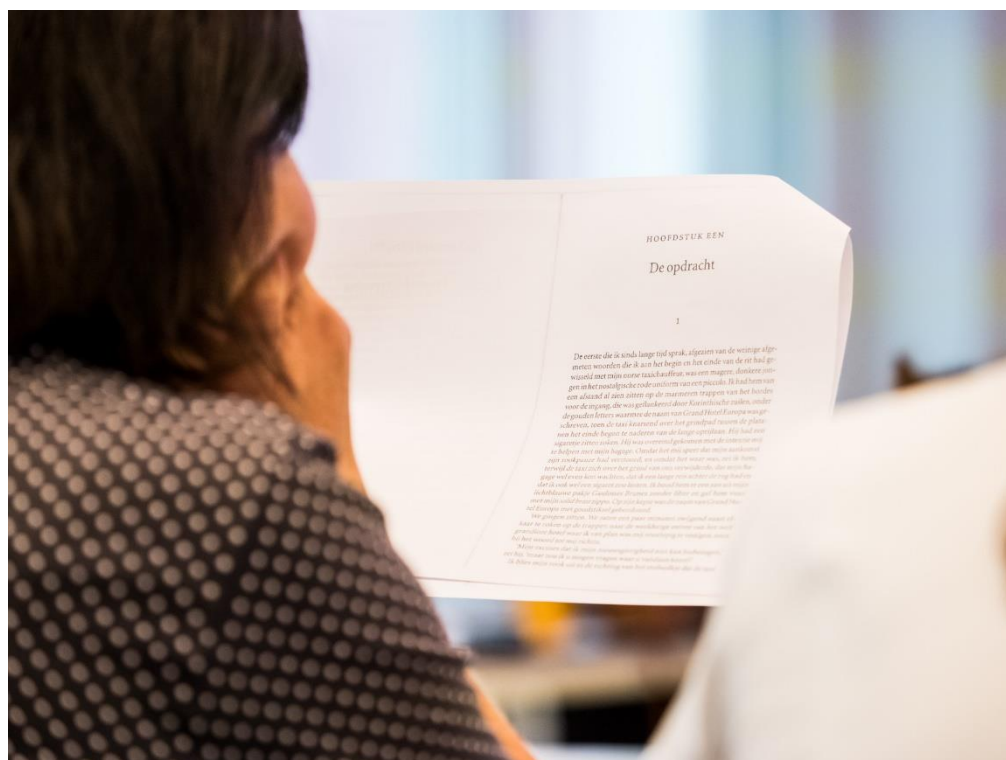
Language policy

The need to expand the number of and train translators varies significantly according to the language combination. Factors include shortages of active translators in the short or long term, training opportunities elsewhere, the age distribution of active translators, market demand, etc. The situations for translation *into* and *from* Dutch also vary significantly. In this policy period, we will work on the basis of a languages plan, in which we will identify the situation for each language and determine where the priorities lie.

Cooperation

If the aforementioned objectives are to be achieved, the ELV must actively continue to invest in the network and constantly look for opportunities for cooperation. When it comes to improving the position of translators, for example, a number of different aspects play a role: education, training and professional development, greater commercial awareness, visibility and, of course, better pay. Clearly, it is also important to have an idea of what other institutions do, so we can join forces with them where necessary rather than duplicating our efforts. For instance, we liaise with the Vertalersvakschool in Amsterdam and Antwerp with regard to courses. Expertise in the field of payment and the position of translators on the labour market primarily lies with organisations such as the Flemish Writers’ Association and the Dutch Authors’ Guild. For expertise in online learning and other fields, we can call upon KU Leuven and Utrecht University.

Over the new policy period, the ELV will make it its business to bring translators, publishers, educators and/or policymakers together, where necessary, to establish where we can work together to implement the actions set out in *verTALEN voor de toekomst*. This may, in turn, form the point of departure for various forms of cooperation.



Activities in 2020–2024

The focus of the ELV is on the provision of **education and training** and the sharing of **expertise**. As always, the ELV will target all activities at translators both *into* and *from* Dutch.

Education and training

Languages plan

In 2020, we will consult with our partners and associate partners, publishers, translators and other parties to draw up a plan specifying the languages that will be given priority during this policy period and how this will be achieved, e.g. by designating them as preferred languages for development grants, making them the focus of a summer course or online course, etc.

Individual support programme

The individual support programme will be continued, in cooperation with Flanders Literature and the Dutch Foundation for Literature. This remains an ideal way of enabling experienced translators to transfer their expertise directly to less experienced colleagues. The programme consists of **development grants** for talented new translators who have not yet signed a contract with a literary publisher, and **mentorships** for translators who have a standard or other contract with a publisher. These types of support are a great source of professional development for translators *into* and *from* many different languages.

In the case of the development grants, we will decide and make clear in advance for which languages in particular we will urge candidates to make an application. Over the last policy period, the number of people taking advantage of the individual support programme increased significantly. This is partly due to the fact that the development grants were opened up to translators who are new to the profession, which led to virtually a doubling in the number of such grants. Applications in this area now far exceed the number of available grants.

For the time being, we will work on the basis of twelve development grants a year over the new policy period, divided between two application rounds, and around fifteen mentorships annually. Where possible, the support programme will be improved further, among other things by providing more comprehensive instructions at the start of each programme. Due to a lack of interest, the coaching option will no longer be offered in this policy period. Research indicates that experienced translators prefer to organise help with difficult issues themselves rather than embarking on a coaching process.

Online courses in ELVi

Over the past few years, a format has been developed for courses in ELVi, the ELV's online learning environment: a group of translators in a specific language combination work on translations, give feedback on each other's work and take part in a number of video conferencing sessions with a moderator. This is framed by relevant theory, web lectures and assignments and course participants subsequently receive individual feedback from the tutor. Over the coming policy period, we will work on formats for other target groups, such as translators *into* or *from* different languages with a common learning objective.

In recent years, participants have rated the online courses as extremely useful. They can be used for language combinations for which more translators are needed or as continuing professional development tools for active translators. One of the main advantages of these courses is that they enable groups of geographically dispersed translators to cooperate intensively and build a network over a period of several months. When planning courses, we choose language combinations for which the need is currently the greatest or for which there is likely to be a shortage in the longer term.

When organising the courses, we also endeavour to future-proof this type of learning (by producing handbooks for tutors and participants, using supporting material from the Knowledge Bank and from *Alles verandert altijd*, etc.). We want to create a format that can be replicated and used for multiple language groups.

A minimum of four online courses will be offered annually. This is double the number in the previous policy period. Where possible, ‘reciprocal courses’ will be offered, whereby translators *into* and *from* a specific language work together.

We will decide which languages will be offered on an annual basis, based on our own information for each language and on information available from other sources (e.g. KVB Boekwerk, the Translations Database of the Dutch Foundation for Literature, overviews of accredited translators from Dutch into other languages supplied by the literature foundations, any needs identified by these foundations, the wishes of publishers, etc.). In 2020, the ELV will develop a long-term ‘language policy’ in conjunction with its associate and other partners. Among other things, this will specify which language combinations will be given priority and what will be offered for which languages.

Ideally, translation study programmes will keep pace with new insights in the field of translation theory and practice and developments in the field of literature and culture (to the extent that they impact on or relate to translation practice).

International Dutch Studies module

Dutch studies courses outside of Dutch-speaking areas are of crucial importance for increasing the number of translators from Dutch. As indicated in the call to action, however, not all departments are able to offer translation study programmes at the required level. In order to reach potential future translators *from* Dutch, an online module will be developed in consultation with lecturers in Dutch studies outside of Dutch-speaking areas to introduce students to literary translation. This will enable them to see whether this might be a career for them. At the same time, their attention will be drawn to the courses offered by the ELV on completion of their studies.

Guest lectures on literary translation

A programme of guest lectures on literary translation is being developed for languages students in the Netherlands and Flanders. This involves providing financial support for guest lectures by experienced translators or translation lecturers, with a particular focus on languages where there is or is likely to be a shortage of translators. This is a way of getting potential future translators *into* Dutch interested in literary translation. The guest lectures replace the location-based translation workshops and the translation workshops in the Netherlands and Belgium.

Summer courses

Where there is an explicit added value in bringing a group of translators in a specific language combination or with a specific training need (e.g. the translation of non-fiction) together for a week on location, the ELV will organise a summer course for them. The aim is to organise three summer courses over this policy period. In the years when there is no course, we will have the opportunity to focus on other activities, such as the further development of online learning, additional seminars or the meeting to discuss the call to action (see page 13).

Expertise

Knowledge Bank

The upgrade of the Knowledge Bank’s interface and search function was completed at the end of 2019. The Bank now contains some 250 items. In 2020, the information contained in the Bank (in the form of articles, summaries, web lectures, knowledge clips and references to secondary literature) will – where necessary and useful – be augmented further, partly with texts by external

authors and editors. Where applicable, we will link to or build on chapters in the publication on literary translation *Alles verandert altijd*.

In addition, some of the knowledge will be clustered and made available by theme. This will enable ELV course participants and mentees, students of the Bachelor's and Master's in Translation, the Vertalersvakschool and other courses and translators who wish to develop themselves further professionally to make more effective use of the information. Clearly, the ELV courses will also make use of the material in the existing areas of the Knowledge Bank, such as the page containing an overview of translation study programmes worldwide, and they will also be updated where necessary.

The initial delivery is due to be ready by the end of 2020, by which time core content to cover all key topics should be available in principle. The first phase will be evaluated in 2021. Based on user data and meetings with representatives of the various target groups, we will establish what information is potentially still missing, so it can be added in future years. In addition, the Knowledge Bank will continue to gather and provide information and knowledge on current developments in the field on an ongoing basis.

Seminars

Seminars allow us to inform larger groups simultaneously about new or other relevant content-related topics and about the practical side of literary translation, such as pitching potential translation projects to publishers. The aim is to offer at least two seminars or lectures a year for both new and/or more experienced translators. Where possible, sessions will be recorded or transcribed, so anyone who is unable to attend can view or review the sessions at a later date through the Knowledge Bank.



Cooperation and communication

Website, Translators Directory and social media

The provision of information via the website (news, photo of the month, events, etc.) will continue. Given the growing number of international contacts, relevant areas of the website will be made available in English over the next few years.

Access to the Translators Directory will be expanded, i.e. it will not be limited to translators who have attended a course of the ELV or who have graduated from the Master's in Literary Translation offered by KU Leuven and Utrecht University or the Vertalersvakschool. Essentially, anyone who works as a literary translator (in the broadest sense of the word) can create a profile. More specifically, this means that, as of 2020, translators who meet one or more of the following criteria can also be included in the Translators Directory:

- They have completed a literary or other translation study programme with a literary translation focus at an official educational institution other than the ones mentioned above.
- As a translator into Dutch, they have translated at least two books in the past five years for various professional publishers under a standard contract drawn up by the LUG/Dutch Authors' Guild.
- As a translator from Dutch, they have translated at least two books in the past five years for various professional publishers in accordance with a contract.

We expect this database to grow significantly, which will make it much more useful for potential clients. In addition, more translators will engage with the ELV as a result, and the directory will also provide a clearer picture of the translators working in the various languages and their various specialisms.

The ELV will remain active on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and will continue to publish a newsletter six times a year. Finally, the ELV will continue to be a source of information and referring body for translators and other stakeholders (through the website or by email, phone and social media).

Networks

Over the last policy period, much time was spent setting up and expanding the ELV's European network. This includes the European PETRA-E Network (co-founded by the ELV; until 2019, the coordinator was a member of the board), de ESLT Summer School in Rome (European School of Literary Translation, 'training the teacher of literary translation', devised and set up by the ELV and others in 2017, now a more regular activity) and input into the European talent development programme CELA (Connecting Emerging Literary Artists). These forms of cooperation are currently being consolidated. The contribution to the organisation of the Literary Translation Days (Literaire Vertaaldagen) and the financial support will continue. As a result, hundreds of translators are reached each year and brought into contact with each other.

Over the coming period, the focus will be expanded to include the lecturer network of the Taalunie and the International Association for Dutch Studies. Clearly, students of Dutch studies outside Dutch-speaking areas are potentially future translators of Dutch into other languages. In addition, many lecturers work as translators. While there are occasional contacts with lecturers, they are not yet systematically targeted.

In addition, expanding and maintaining the network of literary translation study programmes both within Dutch-speaking areas and beyond is high on the agenda, partly in cooperation with the Taalunie, which will also be active in this field. We will actively seek cooperation with other universities and academic partners, in consultation with colleagues involved in the Master's in Literary Translation at KU Leuven and Utrecht University.

Where we cannot implement recommendations from the call to action ourselves, we will link up with other institutions and initiatives. For example, when it comes to encouraging prospective students to choose a languages degree, organisations that are active in this field must be

given information on literary translation, so the translation profession becomes more visible when prospective students are provided with information.

Follow-up on the call to action

Following the second call to action *verTALEN voor de toekomst*, the ELV and the Taalunie will organise a meeting with translators, professional organisations, publishers, educators and policymakers. The aim is to bring together anyone involved in translation into and from Dutch for the purpose of sharing relevant initiatives and discussing how the recommendations in the call to action can be put into practice. Based on these findings, smaller-scale sessions will be organised in the years to come and, where possible, new partnerships will be established or joint actions implemented.

Relationship between objectives and activities

The table below shows how the planned activities correspond to the objectives formulated at the start of this policy plan (page 6).

		Objectives				
		1. To provide types of education and training that are not available elsewhere	2. To facilitate the transition between study programmes and the market	3. To enhance the position of translators	4. To strengthen the transnational network of study programmes	5. To introduce students to translating
Activities	Individual support	++	++	++		
	Online courses	++	++			
	Summer courses	++	++			
	International Dutch Studies module	+			+	++
	Guest lectures on literary translation				+	++
	Knowledge Bank	++	++	++		+
	Seminars	++	++	++		
	Website, Translators Directory, social media		++	+	+	
	Networks	+	+	+	++	+
	Meeting in response to the call to action	+	+	+	++	+

Benchmarking

A plan is being developed to determine how the results of the ELV's activities can be measured, evaluated and – where necessary – improved.

Organisation

The ELV is a partnership between the Taalunie (Union for the Dutch Language), KU Leuven and Utrecht University, with Flanders Literature and the Dutch Foundation for Literature as associate partners.

The board decides on policy and manages the ELV team. It consists of Kris Van de Poel (secretary-general of the Taalunie, chair), Liesbet Heyvaert (KU Leuven), Haidee Kotze (Utrecht University), Tiziano Perez (managing director, Dutch Foundation for Literature) and Paul Hermans (director, Flanders Literature). The secretary to the board is Martijn Nicolaas (Taalunie). The board meets twice a year.

The ELV team implements the policy and consists of office staff members Gea Schelhaas (coordinator), Sander Grasman, Anne Lopes Michielsen and Anne Sluijs, and academic staff members Onno Kusters (Utrecht University), Lieven D'hulst and Chris Van de Poel (both KU Leuven).

Images

Page 5: image from *verTALen voor de toekomst*, design by COPPER DESIGN creatief en secuur
Pages 8 and 11: photos by Elbert Besar, taken during the ELV Summer Course 2019 and the book presentation of *Alles verandert altijd*

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www.literairvertalen.org

Het ELV is een partnerschap van de Taalunie, de KU Leuven en de Universiteit Utrecht, in samenwerking met het Nederlands Letterenfonds en Literatuur Vlaanderen. Het ELV stelt zich ten doel een impuls te geven aan de kwaliteit van het literair vertalen in en uit het Nederlands door middel van opleiding en deskundigheidsbevordering.

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