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Introduction

At the time of writing this policy plan, many things are happening around literary translation. There are concerns about translators dropping out for financial reasons, concerns about cuts in language training, and of course the various implications of the rise of Generative AI. On the other hand, we experience increasing visibility of the translator's work, important translation awards and translators who, 'despite everything' consider their profession to be the most beautiful in the world.

As in previous years, ELV is striving to support literary translators *into* and *from* Dutch as much as possible in the upcoming policy period, with the human factor being more important than ever. This not only involves the creativity and experience of translators (which no machine surpasses), but also an appropriate remuneration for their work and the joint care for a sustainable translation sector. Hence the title of this policy plan: ***A lifetime of translating.***

Mission and vision

ELV boosts the quality of literary translation into and from Dutch through education, training and the sharing of expertise. We do so by enhancing the knowledge, skills and professionalism of translators, educators and related organisations.

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

In the upcoming policy period, we wish to build on what has been achieved in recent years. Hundreds of translators have been able to further professionalise, through courses, individual coaching, the ELV Knowledge Base, study days and various other activities. The European PETRA-E Network of translation teachers and trainers has been expanded and has published a new version of its joint Literary Translation learning trajectory. In addition, there were annual editions of the ESLT Summer School (European School of Literary Translation) for translation teachers and translators who train their colleagues, and the network within and outside the language area has been further strengthened. Attention has been paid to diversity in different areas, to sustainability and to providing customisation as far as this is possible.

To draw attention to this, we have used our website, newsletters, social media as well as forms of personal information. There have also been campaigns for specific target groups, such as language and translation students, international Dutch Studies, publishers and, of course, the translators themselves.

More and more work has been carried out using data analysis, in collaboration with the institutions around us, so that it has become clear where ELV can make the greatest impact. This has led to questions such as how many translators are active in certain language combinations and for which genres, what is the age distribution, where may shortages occur, what is the financial situation, and for what topics do people require extra training? With a view to the upcoming policy period, we have carried out alumni surveys, we have held roundtable discussions with translators and other stakeholders, and at the request of ELV, the *Boekmanstichting* (Boekman Foundation) has conducted a survey into the position of literary translators in Flanders and the Netherlands.

In addition, the recommendations from the *Vertaalpleidooi verTALEN voor de toekomst* (Advocating translating for the future, 2019) and the European report *Translators on the Cover. Multilingualism & translation* (2022) still serve as important guidelines.

Objectives for 2025-2029

We have formulated the following objectives for the new policy period:

1. Providing types of education, training and professional development for literary translators (in the broadest sense, both beginner and advanced) that are not available elsewhere, but for which there is a need (for example specific languages, levels or skills such as AI literacy);
2. Facilitating the knowledge transfer between different generations of translators;
3. Preserving talented translators for the profession;
4. Facilitating the transition between language and translation study programmes and the market;
5. Helping to enhance the position of literary translators regarding visibility and appropriate remuneration;
6. Strengthening the transnational network of translation study programmes that focus on the core language of Dutch by forging and maintaining ties with both academic and non-academic educators and developing joint initiatives;
7. Introducing literary translation to students of Dutch studies worldwide and students of language, literature and culture in the Netherlands and Flanders.

Aspects to consider when achieving the objectives

Translation technology

Developments are moving fast in the field of translation technology. In technical and business translation, the use of machine translation is already the norm, and the ever-improving performance of Large Language Models is also having an increasing impact

on translation in the creative sector. In all these developments, it is important that the machines are at the service of people rather than the other way around.

This is why in the new policy period, ELV wishes to make a structural contribution to the AI literacy of literary translators, so that they gain greater insight into what is and what is not possible and they can make well-informed choices themselves when using certain tools.

Data-driven language policy

The need for the growth and training of translators differs per language combination. In some languages, the supply of translators is greater than the demand, whereas in other languages, there is an urgent need for new translation talent, in the short and in the long term. Clearly, there are also differences, for example in the market demand for specific genres, opportunities for training, and the age distribution of the group of active translators.

The situation for translating *into* or *from* Dutch is also very diverse. This is partly due to the accreditation system of the *Nederlands Letterenfonds* (Dutch Foundation for Literature) for translators *from* Dutch into other languages, and the differences in financial support for translations (*from* Dutch) and translators (*into* Dutch).

From 2020-2024, some forty dossiers were drawn up for the translation *from* Dutch, partly based on input from the ELV *Taskforce talenbeleid* (Language Policy taskforce), together with the *Taalunie* (Dutch Language Union) and the *Nederlands Letterenfonds* (Dutch Foundation for Literature). In these dossiers, the situation is mapped out as precisely as possible for each language, for example how many translators are active and in which genres and in what areas is there a risk of shortages.

From 2025, similar dossiers will be drawn up for the translation *into* Dutch, again in collaboration with our partner institutions. This will allow priorities to be identified, and ELV will determine which training tool is most effective for which language.

Impact analysis

In recent years, ELV and institutions around us have conducted several studies into various aspects of literary translation, including the working conditions of translators. In the upcoming policy period, ELV would like to establish a systematic form of monitoring with all parties involved, so that data from different moments can be properly compared and a joint policy can be developed. To this end, ELV will take the initiative to bring together the various parties and, if necessary, to also conduct further research, for example into the influence of AI on the translation profession and into ways in which AI can be complementary rather than a threat.

Based on this, we can continue to determine what our impact is and how our activities can be improved and used as effectively as possible.

Sustainable development

As in previous years, ELV is keen to contribute to ongoing career development for literary translators. This means that education, training and knowledge transfer are designed in such a way that talented, beginning translators are structurally supported until they are able to work independently on translation projects. They themselves may then ultimately be able to support a new generation of translators. In other aspects, sustainability has also become the guiding principle in ELV. Activities are designed for the long term, so that they are reproducible or remain accessible via the Knowledge Base.

Recruitment of younger translators

The collected data shows that the age distribution differs greatly per language combination. For many language combinations, translating both into and from Dutch, there is the threat of an aging population. Consequently, when selecting for training programmes for novice translators, the aspect of long-term growth will be taken into account; if necessary, priority will be given to younger translators. The aim is to maintain the number of translators required for each language combination, through sufficient growth and by limiting premature outflow.

Priority: preventing outflow

A serious concern is the outflow of translation talent. From the alumni surveys conducted by ELV in 2023, the roundtable discussions with translators in 2024, and the 2024-2025 survey by the *Boekmanstichting* (Boekman Foundation), it has become clear that the situation is currently precarious for many literary translators. This affects both translators who started not so long ago and translators with a long-standing track record. The latter's expertise cannot be missed, if only because of the knowledge transfer to their novice colleagues.

The problem is mainly financial, but it is also related to the developments around translation technology and Generative AI. Together with the institutions around us, such as the translators' unions, we will continue to work towards appropriate remuneration for translation work. In addition, it is important that translators are supported as much as possible in the business aspects of the profession and – as mentioned above – in dealing with the developments in translation technology.

For the next five years, ELV will prioritise preserving good translators for the profession. To this end, an *Action Plan for the retention of translation talent* is being drawn up and implemented, in coordination with the other institutions involved.

Tailor-made activities: small-scale and larger groups

Traditionally, small-scale ELV activities have been successful, such as courses for a certain language combination and the different types of individual guidance. However, it is also important to serve the wider group of translators who would like to continue to professionalise further.

More than previously, ELV wants to decide for each training activity whether it is intended for a small number of translators or for a much larger group. This is why during this policy period, we will be working on a more extensive range of activities for translators, for example in the form of ELV Masterclasses.

Diversity

We base our approach on diversity and inclusiveness in the broadest sense possible, including cultural diversity, a diverse demographic profile and accessibility for everyone. We also adopt a broad interpretation of *literary* translation: the focus is not exclusively on highbrow literature, and the activities are aimed at different types of texts and genres, so that what we offer is geared towards the broadest possible group of translators.

In recent years, ELV has organised a number of projects in collaboration with others to contribute to greater cultural diversity within the literary translation community. These included the translation project based on the book *Lot* by Bryan Washington, collaborations with the Read My World festival and various tailor-made mentorships. It is clear that much more effort is needed, and we are happy to contribute to this, where possible through new translation projects in collaboration with other institutions and the targeted application of individual guidance.

The Knowledge Base contains articles on for example cultural diversity, inclusive language use and gender-conscious translation. By continuing to focus on these topics in courses and individual training, ELV aims to raise awareness in this area among all translators and to offer them the opportunity for further training. We will also continue to check the website for accessibility, including for people with a visual impairment.

Consultations with study programmes

Given the budget cuts in higher education, it is important to explore where further collaboration is possible between the various education providers in the field of (literary) translation, so that they can reinforce each other. Regular consultations are necessary for this.

Flexibility

Changes in the field of translation are happening rapidly, not only in translation technology but also in the book industry in general and in the education sector. We wish to be able to adequately respond to these developments, which is why we will not only be offering our established forms of training but also more flexible training components, depending on what is most desirable at any given time.

Each year we must continue to determine where the greatest needs and requirements lie; in other words, where ELV can make the most impact, whether or not in collaboration with third parties. Whenever possible, we will connect with initiatives elsewhere, such as activities of ELV partners and other institutions around us. This may include organising sufficient translators in the languages spoken at trade fairs where Dutch literature is the

Guest of Honour, contributing to translation workshops elsewhere, collaborating on the recruitment and selection for talent development programmes, using media channels for the activities of other institutions, as well as thinking about new schemes and joining such schemes.

Cooperation

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, ELV will continue to look for opportunities for cooperation. First of all, we will look for cooperation with our five partners, namely the *Nederlandse Taalunie* (Dutch Language Union), KU Leuven, Utrecht University, *Literatuur Vlaanderen* (Flanders Literature) and the *Nederlands Letterenfonds* (Dutch Foundation for Literature), and in addition also with institutions such as the *Auteursbond* (Authors' Union), the *Vlaamse Auteursvereniging* (Flemish Authors' Association), the *Verenigde Literair Vertalers* (United Literary Translators), the *Internationale Vereniging voor Neerlandistiek* (International Association for Dutch Studies), educators within and outside the language area, and other institutions involved in translation. Moreover, we would like to cooperate with publishers, literary festivals, translation magazines and translation projects elsewhere. Furthermore, we will continue to be part of the PETRA-E network with representatives of literary translation training courses from all over Europe. ELV was one of the founders in 2017; there are now 35 members from 22 countries, and there is the PETRA-NED sub-network on translating into and from Dutch.

In the new policy period, ELV will also set itself the task of bringing together translators, publishers, trainers and/or policymakers to see where they can work together.

Activities in 2025-2029

The focus of ELV is on offering **training courses** and sharing **expertise**. For all activities, ELV concentrates as always on translators both *into* and *from* Dutch.

Education

Choosing and prioritising

As described above, the languages and topics covered are determined in consultation with the institutions around us and the analysis of available data. ELV sets priorities for certain languages or genres, and each year it examines which forms of training will most successfully meet the existing needs.

Suriname and the Caribbean are among the areas that will receive special attention. In addition to the Sranan Tongo dossier, there will be a Papiamentu dossier in the Knowledge Base; in addition, in 2025 we will be providing training, together with Wintertuin, to translators translating into and from Papiamentu.

At some trade fairs, the organising Foundation for Literature highlights Dutch literature (Guest of Honour). In these cases, there will be a focus on the languages spoken at these fairs, for example Italian in 2025 and Swedish in 2027. These languages will be given priority in courses and individual guidance.

Individual guidance programme

The individual guidance programme will be continued, in collaboration with *Literatuur Vlaanderen* (Flanders Literature) and the *Nederlands Letterenfonds* (Dutch Foundation for Literature). This programme is still a highly valued form of direct transfer of expertise from experienced translators to their more novice colleagues; with this form of guidance, translators *into* and *from* the various languages take a major step in their professionalisation. In this period of technological developments, the personal transfer of translation expertise is especially important.

Based on evaluations and the alumni survey, the development programmes will be further improved in the coming years. They have also been given a new name (professionalisation programmes), which covers the scope of the programme better and which will also put an end to any confusion with other schemes of the same name.

The professionalisation programmes are still intended for talented, novice translators who have not yet acquired an assignment. They also continue to receive one-to-one guidance from an experienced translator in their language combination, when translating part of their own chosen text. The hours earmarked for acquiring assignments and other business professionalisation will now be used in a different way. Together with the other participants, the novice translators will follow a tailor-made programme in which they work under supervision on a portfolio that significantly

increases their chances of acquiring assignments. A pilot starts in 2025, after which the programme will be determined in greater detail. The mentorships, in which translators receive individual guidance in translating a literary work with a model contract, will be continued.

For the time being, the new policy period comprises both twelve professionalisation programmes and about twelve mentorships per year, and this is comparable to previous years. Depending on the needs in the different language combinations, translators will be specifically encouraged to request a guidance programme.

Online courses in ELVi

The format for courses developed in recent years for ELV's online learning environment ELVi is now well-established. A group of translators in a specific language combination work on translations, give feedback on each other's work, and have access to several online workshops with moderators. This is supported by relevant theory, web lectures and assignments, and afterwards the participants receive individual feedback from the instructor.

An alternative option are the professionalisation courses. These cover topics such as the literary field in which translators are active, entrepreneurship, visibility, the translator as an intercultural ambassador, negotiating and giving pitches. All of these aspects are explored in more detail in an individual portfolio.

In recent years, the online courses have been highly valued by participants. They are offered for language combinations with a need for new talent or further training for active translators. The programming focuses on language combinations where the need is currently greatest or where there is a risk of a shortage in the longer term. Based on the demand from translators, an additional professionalisation course is offered once every two or three years. ELV organises at least two online courses per year.

On-site courses

If it adds value to bring together a group of translators who translate from a specific language into Dutch or who have a special training need, ELV will organise a short 'offline' course for them. The format is based on the intensive two-day course for mid-level translators from English in 2024, in which translation workshops were combined with sessions on public speaking skills and visibility.

Module for students

During the past policy period, an online module was developed for students of Dutch all over the world as well as for language students in Flanders and the Netherlands. Guidelines help teachers to use this module in their lessons or have students work with it independently. Promotion for the use of this module will continue so as to spark the interest in the profession of as many potential future translators as possible.

Expertise

Knowledge Base

The Knowledge Base now consists of 270 items: articles, summaries, web lectures and overviews of for example reference works and study programmes. Its content is regularly updated. The material is used not only by ELV in its own courses but also by educators worldwide; it is also well-suited for self-study.

At the end of 2024, Usably conducted a website user survey among translation students, novice translators, and more experienced translators. This gave us more insight into the needs and expectations of the website visitors and allowed us to draw up an improvement plan. Together with Ontwerpwerk, we started improving for example the search function of the Knowledge Base, thus making the available material more accessible.

In terms of content, the existing services will be further developed and expanded. The dossier format (an introduction and approximately five articles on one specific topic, such as a particular genre, a translation technology, or the financial position of translators) has been well-received and will be continued in the future.

Another innovation is the series launched in 2024 entitled *TalenDossiers* (Language Dossiers). This is a series of small 'translation pocket books', which feature a different language combination each time, with a focus on languages for which training opportunities are limited. They are compiled by at least two translators who are experts in translating between Dutch and the foreign language. After pocket books on Frisian, Portuguese and Sranan Tongo, in the upcoming policy period ELV plans to continue adding new languages each year.

New: ELV Masterclasses

In 2025, ELV will launch short forms of knowledge transfer called ELV Masterclasses. These could be online workshops led by experienced translators, based on a pre-translated text. There appears to be a great need among both novice and advanced translators for such translation workshops, in which experienced translators transfer their knowledge.

The flexible format also allows us to respond to other current needs or demands from translators. For example, we are thinking about sessions on working with AI, the financial aspects of the translation profession, or pitching a translation. For these sessions, we always look for the most suitable expert in the relevant field.

Study days

During study days, larger groups can be informed simultaneously about new or otherwise relevant substantive topics, or about the practical and business aspects of being a literary translator. In the upcoming policy period, one major study day will be organised annually, alternating between locations in Flanders and the Netherlands, and

accessible via a livestream. Whenever possible, this will be done in collaboration with academic staff members from KU Leuven and Utrecht University.

Collaboration and Communication

Networking

In the previous policy period, significant effort was put into further expanding the ELV's network. This included formal partnerships such as the European PETRA-E Network and the ESLT Summer School (European School of Literary Translation, 'training the teacher of literary translation'), both of which were co-initiated by ELV. There is now also a sub-network for translation programmes into or from Dutch, PETRA-NED, and several other, partly informal networks have emerged. Additionally, ELV will continue its substantive and financial contribution to the *Litteraire Vertaaldagen* (Literary Translation Days), the annual two-day event for the literary translation profession.

During the roundtable discussions in the autumn in preparation for the new policy plan, it was concluded during the session in Flanders that it is highly desirable for Flemish translators to meet more frequently to discuss relevant topics with each other. Additionally, it was decided that an equal number of activities will be organised in Flanders and in the Netherlands during the new policy period. Furthermore, following the CEATL congress in Strasbourg in 2024, ELV initiated a meeting for participants from the Netherlands and Flanders. In the coming years, ELV aims to continue bringing together discussion partners, from which new forms of collaboration can arise.

Furthermore, ELV remains keen to align its activities with institutions involved in various forms of translation, such as expertise development for professional translators and interpreters. During the roundtable discussion on the translation profession organised by the *Taalunie* (Dutch Language Union) in the autumn of 2024, the importance of working together was highlighted, especially given the present-day challenges that we all face.

Website, translator database and social media

We will continue to provide information via the website (such as news updates, events calendar and photo of the month).

The translator database on the website now contains over 550 profiles, making these translators visible to potential clients. ELV will continue to promote this option among translators who meet the criteria in terms of education and/or experience, and will also encourage translators who already have a profile to keep it up-to-date. Promotion for this database will also be continued among publishers and other potential clients.

ELV will remain active on social media (Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn) and will send out a newsletter approximately six times a year in the coming years. Finally, ELV will continue to serve as a source of information and a referral point for translators and other interested parties (via website, email, phone and social media).

Organisation

ELV is a partnership of the *Taalunie* (Dutch Language Union), KU Leuven and Utrecht University, with *Literatuur Vlaanderen* (Flanders Literature) and the *Nederlands Letterenfonds* (Dutch Foundation for Literature) as associate partners. The board determines the policy and supervises the ELV team, and consists of Gunther van Neste (secretary-general of the *Taalunie*, chair), Elke Brems (KU Leuven), Haidee Kotze (Utrecht University), Romkje de Bildt (executive director of the *Nederlands Letterenfonds*) and Paul Hermans (director of *Literatuur Vlaanderen*). The board secretary is Folkert de Vriend (*Taalunie*). The board meets twice a year.

The ELV team implements the policy and consists of office staff Gea Schelhaas (director), Sander Grasman, Bodil Ponte-Kok and Tom Ruben, and academic staff members Jack McMartin (KU Leuven) and Gys-Walt van Egdom (Utrecht University).

Colofon

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