



**ICORN**

international cities  
of refuge network

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# General Assembly of ICORN, the International Cities of Refuge Network

Ljubljana 21-24 May 2014

Content:

- I. Minutes of the 2014 General Assembly
- II. List of Member Cities and delegates
- III. List of attachments

I.

## Wednesday 21 May

Welcome reception and buffet dinner at Ljubljana City Museum.

Addresses from Blaž Peršin (Director of the City Museum), Zoran Janković (Mayor of Ljubljana), Peter Ripken (Frankfurt/Chair of the ICORN Board), and Girma Fantaye (Ethiopia/Ljubljana).

## Thursday 22 May

Screening of film about the city of Ljubljana.

Greetings of welcome to the 2014 ICORN General Assembly by the assembly host, Ljubljana City of Refuge: Uroš Korenčan (Director of the Puppet Theatre, main venue), Marjan Strojan (President of Slovene PEN), and Tjaša Ficko (Deputy Mayor of Ljubljana).

Peter Ripken (Chair of the ICORN Board) extended his gratitude and formally announced the opening of the assembly.

Larry Siems (PEN International) was elected Chair of the Assembly.

Marianne Hovdan (Administration Coordinator, ICORN) and Cathrine Helland (Communication Coordinator, ICORN) were elected as minute-takers.

A brief introduction of all participants, including staff, delegates, observers, writers and guests.

### Greetings from ICORN Guest Writers

- Nasrin Madani (Iran/Växjö): Speech on freedom of expression in Iran where writers need permission to publish from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Rights. Nasrin shared her experience of visiting Auschwitz during the last ICORN meeting, and talked about how history is censored in Iran by the lack of information on the holocaust in Iranian history books. She thanked politicians in Sweden who, coming together in the ICORN project, know the meaning of real democracy.
- Fadi Abou Hassan (Syria/Drøbak): Speech on how he publishes his cartoons.
- Dessale Berekhet (Eritrea/Bø): Speech about fearing the people of his own country rather than the government - due to lack of education.

*Confirmation that the meeting has been properly convened.*

*Changed order of agenda: Strategic session moved to after coffee break.*

**CALL AND AGENDA ACCEPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY.**

### **Agenda Item III: PEN International Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) Report**

Presented by Cathy McCann (Researcher, Asia/Middle East PEN International Writers in Prison Committee)

Full report and presentation can be found as attachment to these minutes

- Cathy McCann delivered a report on the conditions of freedom of expression, presenting key cases that she has been working on lately in China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East
- In 2013 over 900 cases of persecution of writers were observed by PEN. The number has been stable over the last years. PEN particularly mentions the areas/countries of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and the Horn of Africa, but also in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine we see a series of new laws severely restricting freedom of expression.
- ICORN and PEN's work is important in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. Cathy expressed hope to see more applications from these areas as the needs for protection are high.
- Talked about the collaboration between ICORN and PEN on Iraq, mentioning especially how she worked to help former guest writer in Skien, Basim Mardan.
- Sida has sponsored capacity building for PEN-centres, supporting the establishment of regional networks of PEN- centres. After the ICORN Network Meeting in Krakow and the PEN Conference in Reykjavik in 2013, a PEN Centre has been established in Myanmar, supporting emerging writers.

Elisabeth Dyvik (Programme Director, ICORN) expressed that it is not possible to exaggerate the importance of the good relationship and cooperation with PEN International:

- WiPC's assessment of the ICORN applications is very important: ICORN buys research capacity and expert advice from PEN to avoid duplication of this work. Some of the applications come from people already familiar to PEN. If not, PEN uses its network to verify the applications, which involves a lot of work.
- Elisabeth reports on a huge increase in applications to ICORN in 2013. Early 2014, ICORN signed a new contract with PEN International adjusting to the growth in applications.
- ICORN uses the PEN International assessments in the presentation of writers to member cities.

Comments from the assembly:

- Katrin Dittmer (Hannover): Can we dedicate one minute's silence to all of those whose lives have been lost in their fight for freedom of expression?
- Otba Fathalla (Iraq/Stavanger): Sometimes I criticise the organization, not because I am against the organisation, but because I am hoping for improvements.

*The assembly dedicates one minute's silence to all of those whose lives have been lost in their fight for freedom of expression.*

### ***PEN WiPC REPORT ACCEPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY***

Fadi Abou Hassan presents 6 of his cartoons on Cartoon Movements webpage

<http://www.cartoonmovement.com/p/2628>

Writers leave for workshop at the Town Hall.

## Agenda Item I: ICORN Report 2012-2013

Presented by Helge Lunde (Executive Director, ICORN)

Full report can be found as attachment to these minutes

- **Placement status:** 29 writers took up residency in ICORN member cities in 2012-2013, and many writers have already arrived in 2014. Several Syrian writers will be placed in 2014. Iran is the second largest application country.
- **Applications:** There has been a dramatic increase in applications during 2013. There are two main reasons for the growing number of applicants to ICORN: 1: War in Syria. 2: ICORN is generally becoming more well-known.
- **Geographical expansion:** ICORN needs to expand to be able to offer more writers at risk a safe haven. Currently working with cities within Europe, with South America, Australia, North America and South Africa.
- **Expansion of scope:** ICORN was created in 2006 by some of the cities in the original network, which started 20 years ago. Since then, ICORN has widened its outreach to include journalists, cartoonists, singer/song writers, publishers, translators, as well as poets, fiction and non-fiction writers, filmmakers and playwrights. Two different trends contribute to this: genres are melting together, and ICORN guest writers do often work within several genres (ex. journalist, blogger and poet). Major initiatives have emerged, particularly in Scandinavia, to host also artists and musicians who experience persecution. ICORN was authorized by the last GA to look into this and has been doing so.
- **Cooperation with the EU:** ICORN explores cooperation with the EU Commission on EU shelter city programmes. The EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) is working on a global cooperation network for initiatives for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) at risk. It is a great overlap with ICORN. This will be talked about in more detail later.
- **Administration Centre/governance:** The core activity of the ICORN Administration Centre is to qualify applications from writers, recruit and sustain member cities, to secure a good match between the city and author, and follow up on cities and writers. Strengthening the governance of ICORN is a priority. It is a democratic organisation where the members decide how the organisation should develop. The ICORN Board, consisting of representatives from the member cities, functions as representative for the members in between the bi-annual general assemblies.
- **Finance/funding:** The major financial undertakings are by the member cities themselves. Thus the work done in each city is the most valuable funding for the organisation/network and the reason ICORN is able to place writers. There is however also a need for more funding for coordination and administration.

The greatest challenge when it comes to funding is to find funders that are willing to grant long term core costs. Most funders are asking for project applications and long reports. ICORN has to accept and accommodate this, but this is time consuming for the Administration (mentions stable key funders as Stavanger Municipality and Sølvsberget, Stavanger Cultural Centre, Fritt Ord, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Sida's 3 years project/core cost funding). The membership fees are important as they make out 11 % of the income and can be used for core costs. ICORN has applied for network support, through EU's new cultural funding programme, Creative Europe. Expecting feedback in August 2014.
- **Promotion and communications:** There are a lot of new Swedish member cities; Sweden is showing a good trend of recruiting cities. By the end of this year Sweden will probably be "in the lead", surpassing Norway's current number of 12 member cities.

ICORN, member cities and guest writers organised and participated in a wide range of events. The promotion project between member cities, *Shahrazad – stories for life*, ended in 2012. ICORN is working with the cities to find new projects to boost the promotion of writers. The new Creative Europe funding programme offers funding for Cooperation Projects. It is a great

opportunity for the cities to work together to make better use of the resources of the guest writers, to expose and promote the guest writers in the cities and beyond.

- **Partnerships and cooperation:** The ICORN member cities are of extremely high value to the network, every member city means a lot to the work and the development of the organization. The nature of ICORN is not a closed circuit. The only way to continue the work is to sustain, identify and make new partnerships and to ascertain cooperation initiatives that can further boost the work of the network. Helge underlined the importance of cooperating with PEN International and the PEN centres.

Comments from the assembly:

- Paul Henrik Kielland, Tromsø: I wish to hear more about the work ICORN/the cities are doing with placement procedures.

Helge Lunde: It is an extreme emotional challenge working with real people, we wish to be quicker, but the process from application to placement often takes long. It is frustrating. In real emergencies we can work quicker and cooperate with embassies and other organisations. More applications mean a longer waiting list. But, without being cynical, we need some candidates for the cities to choose from. But at this moment the need for more cities is most urgent.

- Per Bergström, Malmö: The post placement syndrome, do we have any statistics on how many return, who can stay and what happens to them?

Helge Lunde: Increasingly the writers are able to criticize their home countries more effectively than when they were living there. This is vital. But it also means that it becomes more difficult for them to go back home. ICORN is increasing its efforts to help this situation. It is important to inform and prepare the guest writers and cities for the time after the placement immediately after arriving to the city. Applicants are constantly reminded that it is their own responsibility. There is a delicate balance between being in charge of their lives, while the city and ICORN work to help within the system and with partners who can offer alternative solutions. It is not possible to have only one post placement strategy. We need to create as many as possible, adapted to the background and needs of each writer. The Norwegian model is unique and gives the writers permanent residency since they are accepted in as quota refugees. Sweden has also an interesting model, where the guest writers can stay for two more years or permanently if they can demonstrate that they can obtain work that pays minimum the amount of social security.

- Nikolai Frank, Odense: In preparation for the work on the ICORN strategic plan, is there anything we can learn about the visibility and expansion in Sweden?

Helge Lunde: One of the reasons for the positive movement in Sweden is the cooperation between many organisations like the Swedish Art Council, Swedish PEN and the way the Swedish member cities work with the immigration office, state and municipalities, also in regard to post placement solutions. Hopefully, we can learn from the experiences in Sweden and spread this to other countries. And perhaps use it to revitalize cities of refuge in Denmark.

- Øivind Pedersen, Lillehammer: I would like a complete list of all the member cities to be included in the ICORN report.

*THE ICORN REPORT 2012-2013 ACCEPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY*

**Agenda Item II: ICORN Financial Results 2012-2013**

Presented by Helge Lunde and Marianne Hovdan

Marianne Hovdan presented the financial results for 2012-2013: Some changes have been made in the Administration Centre in 2013. Cathrine Helland was hired as Communication Coordinator part time and took over some of Marianne's tasks. Marianne Hovdan was hired as full time Administration Coordinator and has since done more of the financial work as of 2013.

- **ICORN Reserve Fund:** If everything should fail, ICORN wishes to have a three month back-up that will cover the expenses of the administration centre in this period. This is on a separate account (not included in the 2013 results).
- **ICORN Emergency Fund:** Money from the Emergency fund is used for writers who have been accepted to cities but are in urgent need before placement. The funding is provided by a Norwegian bank. Some of the money goes to overtime payments for urgent cases and for translators if the applicants do not speak English. ICORN needs to apply for a new period of funding for the emergency fund.
- **2012** Came out with a positive result, NOK 300.000. Suggested transferred to reserve fund.
- **2013** the surplus taken out was NOK 100 000. Suggested transferred to the reserve fund.
- ICORN cannot have a too big surplus because of the funders.

Comments/questions:

- Paul Henrik Kielland, Tromsø: About the reporting, the financial result is not so important for an NGO like ICORN. The purpose and the perspectives on the objectives of the organisation are. ICORN should perhaps make an activity based financial report instead. You still need the overall results, but transform some of it to show more of this.

Marianne Hovdan: In 2013 we started marking the different activities with project numbers to get a better overview of what we spend money on, and correspond with our focus areas. So we are trying, so far on a small scale, but it is challenging because of the structure/nature of ICORNs financial reporting.

***TRANSFER OF THE SURPLUS OF 2012 AND 2013 TO RESERVE FUND APPROVED BY THE ASSEMBLY  
FINANCIAL RESULTS 2012-2013 ACCEPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY***

#### **Agenda Item IV: ICORN Budget 2014-2015**

Presented by Helge Lunde

#### **2014**

- The financial situation and the budget continue along the same lines as in previous years.
- ICORN needs a sound balance between independent and governmental funding. ICORN accepts a lot of the governmental funding because it is given as core cost, i.e. with very few restrictions to how we can spend it. But we still do need a more stable funder for core costs.
- In January – April 2014 ICORN stepped up the organisation staff to four positions (from 3, 5-4) to allocate more funding for ICORN in the future.
- ICORN is applying to the EU / Creative Europe, and hope the network support application will be successful. It would have a major impact on the general budget for the two coming years.
- ICORN will continue to work with SIDA, who will hopefully continue to support core activities for capacity building. The major SIDA grant is running out in 2015. ICORN is

invited to a meeting in September 2014 to discuss continued partnership. SIDA tends to concentrate on a few initiatives and give them more instead of less for more organisations.

### ***THE BUDGET FOR 2014 IS APPROVED BY THE ASSEMBLY***

#### **2015**

- There is a small increase in the budget for 2015. The 2015 budget will be consolidated with the actual status of funding of core cost and projects. If funding is not secured in the autumn 2014 we need to cut budgets.

### ***THE BUDGET FOR 2015 IS APPROVED BY THE ASSEMBLY***

#### **The Assembly participants took part in the Market of Ideas**

##### **Report back from Market of Ideas workshop sessions:**

#### **A: Exit strategies: New beginnings**

Summary presented in plenum by Elisabeth Dyvik

Moderated by Elisabeth Dyvik and Fredrik Elg (Malmö)

Fredrik Elg's presentation can be found as attachment to these minutes

- There were some good discussions during the workshop about the writers who cannot go back or cannot sustain themselves where they are staying. The guest writers need to be able to make money in a dignified manner.
- Presentation by Fredrik Elg was followed by an example from a guest writer in Sweden, Parvin Ardalan (Iran/Malmö), who managed to get residency in Sweden after building a business plan, showing that she could sustain herself.
- Discussed planning, building networks, getting in contact with people etc. Each writer needs an individual plan, because each case is different.
- Emadi Mohsen (Iran/Mexico City) took up the nomadic life, learned Spanish and computer skills so he can now get a teaching position.
- Some choose to ask for protection as refugees, although this has its challenges. With refugee status there may be a longer term perspective, and there could be less pressure on the two ICORN years.
- Age matters, there is a difference between being old and close to retirement and young and just starting a hopefully long career.

#### Comments/Questions

- Otba Fathalla (Iraq/Stavanger): Some issues are very difficult to get published (gender, sex) so ICORN should adopt these kinds of work.
- Julia (Honduras/Jönköping's Län): Can ICORN find someone to translate the guest writers' work?

#### **B: Express freedom**

Summary presented in plenum by Danuta Glondys (Krakow)

Moderated by Danuta Glondys

- Opening address by Megan McDowell
- Reflections on what has happened in publishing during the last 25 years, the digital shift.
- Inclusion of small languages leads to translations to English and then to other small languages.
- More and more publishing happens online: E-book publishers.
- Many focus on the experience and cooperate with only one publisher in each country. Book clubs, where people can discuss literature in closed groups.

- Easterine Kire (Nagaland/Tromsø) talked about ICORN giving her invisible and visible gifts. The gift of objectivity, but this deprived her of her audience. She found it in the social media. She wrote 25 books that have been read by audiences everywhere. She also encourages writers to cooperate with artists from other areas, like musicians.
- Ali Amar (Morocco/Brussels) reminded us that only 14% of the people in the world live in societies that enjoy freedom of speech. He established a magazine, *Le Journal*, which was closed by the Moroccan government.
- Mežgebu Habtewold (Ethiopia/Stockholm) will start broadcasting his radio in June 2014. It will particularly influence people in his home country and hopefully inspire people to make a change. He assesses that radio seems to be the safest and simplest way to spread news in authoritarian countries.

### **C: Arts of hospitality**

Summary presented in plenum by Adrian Blum

Moderated by Mary-Ann DeVlieg (freeDimensional)

Mary-Ann DeVlieg's presentation can be found as attachment to these minutes

- Mary Ann had a dialogue with Naeimeh Doostdar (Iran/Malmö), staging a typical conversation/interview that should take place when a guest writer arrives in a city of refuge, to unveil wishes, challenges and possibilities.
- Mary Ann asked about Naimeh's travels prior to coming to Malmö. Through interviewing Naeimeh, Mary Ann showed what is important to consider before/after inviting a guest writer and when helping upon arrival: Are there any kids, is there need for medical help, personality, how much danger have they been through, how large is the audience of the artist, could being placed closer to home be better than coming to Europe, do they have visas or could they get visas, is the artist used to work in teams or alone, will the writer be able to work in the city, why is the writer endangered etc.
- There are political issues, dilemmas of deciding to apply for asylum or not, going from being known to being a stranger, new language, new culture, expectations to work/write, even though creativity was much easier at home. Important to establish a clear plan of action with the host, clarify expectations, city and writer should consider a written contract/agreement.
- In this case, the city worked hard to make the writer a member of the literature community, connected her to newspapers and festivals, got her a prize etc. But that never took away her worries. She wished for stricter schedules rather than freedom and choices. It is important to also support the family members.
- Any need for psychological help often takes time to realize.
- In Norway the guest writers have obligatory classes in Norwegian.
- The writer might change his/her mind and could decide to leave the city of refuge overnight.
- In Stavanger, six of nine invited writers are still living there. It is important to create a supporting environment.
- People should respect the background of the writers; they are here because of their professions and are not objects to be shown off.

### **D: Creative ICORN**

Summary presented in plenum by Mateja Lazar and Cathrine Helland

Moderated by Mateja Lazar and Cathrine Helland

The presentation can be found as attachment to these minutes

Information can also be found on the European commission website

([http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm) ).

- Presentation of the possibilities Creative Europe can create for the member cities and guest writers.

- Mateja Lazar encourages all ICORN cities and writers to seek the assistance and support for project support by Creative Europe.
- Raffaella Salierno (Barcelona) presented an already well developed cooperation project for EU funding for the cities: Bits of Freedom. Barcelona city of refuge and Catalan PEN will be the leading partners and will apply for Cooperation Project support in October this year. They already have some city partners but still welcome more to join.
- Dagmar Käse (Tallinn) presented a mobility programme for artists, looking for partners for an international residency programme.
- It is possible for cities from outside Europe to join the projects, but they cannot make out the compulsory three or six main partners, but must join as additional partners.
- Cathrine encourages contacting her for being put in contact with others who also wish to join projects.

### **Evening event**

The assembly coincided with the 2014 edition of the Overflight Theatre Festival. All participants were invited to the opening of the festival the same night, with a specially commissioned performance called *Hell is Empty*. The play was based on texts and contributions by among others the four ICORN guest writers Girma Fantaye, Jahangir Akash (Bangladesh/Tromsø), Naeimeh Doostdar and Mansur Rajih (Yemen/Stavanger). The play is directed by choreographer Marko Mlačnik. It was a resilient performance on the concept of freedom and the perspectives given by the represented writers. It was followed by a dinner in the garden of the theatre.

### Friday 23 May

While the delegation continued with the formal agenda of the General Assembly at the Puppet Theatre, guest writers were invited to attend a workshop hosted by the Mladinsko Theatre, where they met with other writers attending the festival. They also saw the play *Damned be the traitor of his homeland*, an Overflight festival performance directed by Olivier Frlić.

Introduction and welcome by Peter Ripken.

### **Agenda Item V: ICORN Strategic Plan 2014-2018**

Presented by Peter Ripken

The Strategic Plan can be found as attachment to these minutes

Peter Ripken introduced the ICORN Strategic Plan 2014-2018 to the General Assembly stating its importance and influence on the future development of ICORN. He stated that it is an ambitious document that maps out certain features that have been under debate these last years, namely the expansion of scope to include other artistic genres, and the geographic expansion, particularly outside Europe. The plan proposes a trial period of four years on the expansion of scope.

### **Geographic expansion**

- The outlined geographical expansion may look ambitious, but without growth, ICORN will not be able to cope with the tasks ahead.
- ICORN has a solid base in Scandinavia and in European countries. To be able to help more writers ICORN needs also to expand and recruit cities outside of Europe. There is already Mexico City and previously Miami was a member city. The work with recruiting cities both in- and outside of Europe is ongoing. Present at the assembly are several representatives who are working on making their cities ICORN cities of refuge.

- Presentations by the representatives of incoming member cities:

John Rich (the Guild Literary Complex/Chicago): Has been aware of ICORN for about a year and wishes to do the same work in Chicago and hope to learn from the members' experiences. Municipality and cultural organisations are involved and wish to be part of the network.

Kate Klein (University of Ithaca/Ithaca New York): Ithaca is not currently ICORN member, but would very much like to be one. They started the work with persecuted writers already 13 years ago. The universities are partners and offer opportunities for the writers. They have hosted 5 writers. Guest writers that come to Ithaca for residency need to be able to speak and teach in English.

Vida Cross (Milwaukee): Hope to become member of ICORN and wishes to build a community inclusion model within the existing community. Hope to host a writer already within the next year.

Henry Reese (City of Asylum/Pittsburg): Runs a community based model of city of asylum. It becomes a new home for the writer and a better home for the community. Would like to continue to build this relationship with ICORN. Welcomed member cities and writers to come and visit/stay.

Zita Tinoco (Bogotá): Lawyer and human rights defender. Here to implement the Bogotá project. A part of the city of Bogotá, the cultural centre of the city, is very much interested in the project. But needs the support from other entities and is in contact with the international society. Is also trying to get the support from the University of Bogotá where her daughter is teaching language. Thanked for this opportunity and hopefully this project will be implemented in Bogotá where there is a great need for it.

Michael Smith (South Africa): Trying to get South African cities on-board. ICORN is a project of the heart, not the head. The imperative of getting in is that the world hosted his people during apartheid. This is their chance of giving back. Interested in journalism safety and happy to see the discussion on expansion of scope. The leading lights need to be protected as they are targeted. Cape Town and the much smaller Stellenbosch and Johannesburg are dynamic and creative. Partnering with South African PEN and universities of Stellenbosch and Johannesburg as well as freedom of expression organisations. Community support is the key to sustain the project. Hoping that at least with Cape Town will have something positive to report within the end of the year.

Isabel Ferrari (House of Rousseau/Geneva): ICORN is an evolving project for hosting writers in the House of Rousseau, a building in the old town that belongs to the state. Hope to have a wider project, a literature house of French speaking Switzerland. But also debates on social political questions. It would be natural to have writers in exile hosted there as Rousseau himself was an exiled writer. Needs life and dynamics. Has been lobbying to convince the state to join IOCRN; hopefully in 2015 Geneva may join. Should try to accommodate for more cities in Switzerland to join.

Sylvi Debs (CABRA/Brazil): Will make a non-governmental organization, with the purpose to expand the ICORN project and negotiate with institutions. First meeting was in January, Elisabeth Dyvik was there, and PEN. Decided to make the NGO, CABRA. Will work with the universities and literary hosts, not the government. Made a tour through Ouro Preto, Curitiba, Rio with guest writer Mohsen, who spoke about his experiences. The press was very interested and one of the universities agreed to open a position for a guest writer. Hope to get more guest writers to come and talk about their experiences. Brazil is now celebrating 50 years of non-dictatorship; people are ready to talk about freedom of expression. Invites ICORN cities to send their guest writers to Brazil.

## Financial issues

### **EIDHR: Support to HRDs**

By Sophie Kammerer (EIDHR)

Sophie Kammerer's presentation can be found as attachment to these minutes

- Sophie Kammerer from the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR) presented EIDHR's work with support to Human Rights Defenders. EIDHR is interesting for ICORN because they give support to HRDs at risk. Until now, EIDHR have mostly been helping HRD's outside the EU.
- In the new EIDHR regulations we include urgent protection needs and also longer term support and access to shelter. There will be opportunities for cooperation with ICORN.
- The new regulations make the EU more flexible and less bureaucratic.
- EIDHR is currently developing a database for organisations working for human rights defenders in need of financial support and shelter. It includes access to long term shelter solutions. Facilitates NGOs to work together and implement series of activities for urgent support.
- In 2014, EIDHR will launch the call for a human right defenders support mechanism, with a financial frame of EUR 15 million to strengthen the coordination between HRD initiatives and actors supporting them. There could be special focus on certain groups or areas, and in South America they have areas of focus within which they can apply. Encouraged all to contact the national EU points/local calls for proposals to investigate if project can be supported. For instance, EIDHR can finance projects in Eritrea, but can't have calls for proposals in Eritrea because it would be too risky for the people involved.
- 2007-2013 EIDHR supported 100 projects.
- In the future EIDHR wants to focus on specific themes.
- EIDHR has emergency funds for human rights defenders at risk, and particularly for those who need urgent protection, and can give up to EUR 10 000 for one case. It is easy to apply and applications are processed immediately.

## Expansion of scope

### **Introduction by Elisabeth Dyvik**

Since last General Assembly, in Stockholm in 2012, the Administration Centre has been looking into other NGOs working with the persecution of artists and freedom of expression. Article 19 is one of these. Welcome to Oliver Spencer-Shrestha for a presentation of Article19's work.

### **ARTICLE 19 on Persecution of Artists and Freedom of Expression**

By Oliver Spencer-Shrestha, Article 19

Oliver Spencer-Shrestha's presentation can be found as attachment to these minutes

- Oliver Spencer-Shrestha from Article 19 gave examples of persecution of artists and artistic freedom of expression and the organisations work on defending the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information wherever it is threatened.
- Article19 was established 25 years ago to work on freedom of expression. Is now a second generation HRD-organization (Amnesty being first).
- The organisation has adopted the name after the UN article 19 in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.
- To Article 19, violation on freedom of expression is the important issue, not that the people they work with are of a specific profession or not. When they talk about arts, they include writers.
- It is almost always the state that interferes in the artistic expression. Outcome of the interfering is in almost half the cases arrest, detention, investigation.

- Difficult to face the violations women face, they are different and often very physical.

## **Communication**

### **ICORN digital platforms**

By Cathrine Helland

- ICORN needs to strengthen communication with all the organisation's many different stakeholders, both internally in the organization and externally. We are currently working to develop new digital platforms and will launch a new website for ICORN during the next few months.
- ICORN is working with many partners and funders; we need to show a transparent and trustworthy organisation through the actual work that ICORN, the member cities, guest writers and partners are doing. And demonstrate that ICORN is ready to meet the challenges of a growing organization.
- ICORN is developing a resource bank on the website targeting all stakeholders, which will help cities, writers and partners in their work as and with writers at risk.
- There will be more information for potential and existing guest writers on the website, also for writers that cannot apply to ICORN but need other alternatives.
- There will be more information for potential and existing member cities about how to run a city of refuge, how to facilitate for the guest writers and much more.
- The cities have the main responsibility for promoting their guest writers and are doing a great job locally, nationally and internationally. ICORN helps facilitate promotion in the network. The new web site will function as a common platform for the network's work and promotion of the guest writers, and should help reach a larger public and media.
- ICORN has recently taken a step into the world of social media, by starting a Twitter account. Encourage all to use it ( @ICORN\_ORG ).
- ICORN will launch a newsletter.
- The website will make it easier - for the public, the media, internally in the organisation - to find writers for specific events, expert comments and the like.
- Cities will be better promoted as cities of refuge with information about the city, which writers are hosted, events, media coverage etc. It will also be easier for cities to find other cities to cooperate with.
- ICORN depends on good information from the cities to be able to improve communication both internally and externally in the organisation; about changes in the organisation, about events, media coverage and the like. ICORN sends out membership questionnaires and forms for guest writers and member cities, which will make it easier for ICORN not only to make good matches between cities and writers, but also to promote both cities and writers.
- Will in the future develop an internal database/forum for the cities of refuge and perhaps for the writers (need first to investigate potential needs and uses as well as secure funding).

## **Capacity building and partnerships**

### **Nuts and bolts of ICORN**

By Elisabeth Dyvik

Elisabeth Dyvik's presentation can be found as attachment to these minutes

- Expressed deep gratitude on behalf of ICORN for the great work that the cities are doing. They know, without doubt, most about the work they do related to ICORN; their daily work with the writers.
- Overview of statistics of applications from writers and of how ICORN works with partners and political institutions.

- ICORN is very aware that there is an acute need for more capacity building for and in the cities. This is an important commitment included in the new strategic plan for the next four years. ICORN has already started an extensive work with building the capacity of the network and is dependent on all the knowledge and experiences that the cities have to be able to work more extensively and professionally with lobbying of governments and foreign ministries to find solutions for visa, residence and travel permits for writers.
- ICORN is also working to develop knowledge of and partnerships with organisations that can help the writers, to find the best ways to assist writers before and after the placements.
- It is important to note that it is not a goal to grow the organisation unnecessarily by taking on tasks already done by others. Rather, it is many times better to cooperate with partners to find the best solutions available for the writers in their actual situations, which might not necessarily in all cases be an ICORN placement.
- Promotion: The ICORN Board is currently working on re-establishing an expert council of writers that can function as door openers for the network and particularly for the writers.
- Expanding the scope of ICORN: Cities have been talking about including other arts genres than writers. This could be helpful when matching the offers of the cities better with the professional background of the writers.
- ICORN expansion: ICORN is short of resources at the Administration Centre. To recruit new cities and to be in a position with resources to advice writers and cities on what to do, the administration needs to expand.
- If we are going to keep ICORN we need to consolidate, expand and learn.

Comments/questions:

Peter Ripken (ICORN/Frankfurt) opened to comments and questions and stated his hope that the ICORN strategic plan 2014-2018 will be implemented.

Jan Lothe Eriksen (SafeMuse): Congratulations on the new strategic plan. SafeMuse is an initiative in the Nordic Countries and will comment on the expansion of scope: It is good if ICORN decides to go for this. In the last sentence on the point of expanding scope in the strategic plan, in addition to providing equivalent application assessment, there is a need for relevant placement procedures. It is necessary to know what kind of musicians they are and how they match the city. Musicians do not sit in chambers and play by themselves, they need colleagues. We wish you the best and are looking forwards to cooperating with ICORN.

Anna Livion Ingvarsson (Gävle): For us it would be possible to become a member if we can receive a visual artist. We have many possibilities to support such an artist, we've been following the work of ICORN for years and are very impressed and hope this expansion is accepted.

Fredrik Elg (Malmö): There has been a movement in Scandinavia for a while. There will be cities waiting in line to join if ICORN opens up for other artists. Malmö are already adding artists and musicians. Would welcome the initiative on expanding the scope, it is better to do both with ICORN instead of cooperating with two organisations on this.

Foujan Rouzbeh (Stockholm): I think it's wrong to discuss this without the writers being present. How can the writers be more included in the process and decisions that ICORN makes?

Helge Lunde: Comment to last comment: It is extremely important to make sure that the writers are being heard. ICORN had an advisory board that included current and previous writers. In 2010 ICORN became an independent organization and ICORN is now represented by a Board made up of five representatives from five ICORN cities. There are also representatives from the guest writers, PEN and Stavanger Cultural centre, with the right to speak, not to vote. Having a stable representation of writers at the Board is complex. ICORN is long term but also temporary, for the new writers to be represented in the Board he/she will not know the organization, and towards the end of the period of the board term he or she would no longer be in a city of refuge. It has proved very difficult to include them in the Board at the same level as the member cities are.

Nikolaj Frank (Odense): I want to comment on the paragraph about funding: It mentions all the standard ways to get funding for the organisation. Are there any other ways of getting core funding? Could other cities become members without receiving a guest writer? Idea for increasing funding for core costs for ICORN: Cities around the World may find it interesting to become member cities and not necessarily host a guest writer. Therefore it might be an idea to search/recruit member cities that will help grow the organisation's funding with membership fees. Non hosting cities will not be as resource demanding as hosting cities. They will be sort of 'sleeping members'.

Helge Lunde: Comments on last comment: In the new website we will add a donation button and alternatives for supporting the network.

Chris Gribble (Norwich/ICORN Board Member): The Board is looking at the issue of core funding. The greater the number of cities the greater is the pressure on the administration staff. We need to look at other ways of doing fund raising. It is important that funding provided does not require more time than it brings back money.

Jörgen Lindvall (Jönköping's län): With an expansion there needs to be more staff. No need for change in the text of the strategic plan. Perhaps all coordinators in the cities could work for the administration – a few weeks for the admin staff?

Jasmina Rihar (Ljubljana/ICORN Board Member): On communication: There is a need for more updated information on the writers on the ICORN website. Maybe it is a good idea to call the writers and coordinators at least once a year for updates.

## ***ICORN STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2014 ACCEPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY***

### **Election of Board Members and Election Committee**

By Raffaella Salierno (Barcelona/Member of the Election Committee)

- The Election Committee wished to discuss the Board's proposal to extend the Board from 5 to 6 board members. If one or two members are not able to participate in a meeting, it is difficult for the Board to have a proper discussion on the agenda issues. The ICORN Charter states that the Board can consist of up to 5-7 members, so there is no need for amendments.

### ***EXTENSION FROM 5 TO 6 MEMBERS OF THE BOARD ACCEPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY***

- There are two positions to the ICORN Board up for election in addition to a new member. Raffaella presented them:

**Vice Chair:** Current Vice Chair Dagny Gevelt (Kristiansand) wishes to withdraw. After four years of excellent work she has decided to step down.

The Election Committee proposed a new candidate as Vice Chair: Leikny Haga Indergaard (Bergen). Having followed ICORN from the very beginning, Leikny knows ICORN well. She

was the Director of Stavanger Cultural Centre and Library when Stavanger welcomed Araz Elses as its guest writer/musician. She is currently Library Director of Bergen Public Library. The library manages the ICORN programme in Bergen and has hosted 4 guest writers so far. Leikny is also Chair of the International Library Commission and a member of Norwegian PEN.

Leikny thanked for the nomination and accepted the nomination to the Board.

**Board Member:** Board Member Chris Gribble (Norwich) was up for election and wished to continue. Chris is the Chief Executive of the Writers' Centre Norwich, and has done a great job at the ICORN Board for the last four years.

The Election Committee suggested Chris run for a new period. Chris accepted the invitation to continue on the Board.

**New Board Member:** The Board proposed Danuta Glondys (Krakow) for the new position as Board Member. Danuta was instrumental in Krakow joining ICORN in 2011. Acting as the coordinator for the ICORN writers, she has been the Director of the Villa Decius Association since 2001, is lecturer at the University of Krakow and has several years of experience as Director of the Cultural Department of the Municipality of Krakow.

Danuta thanked for the nomination and accepted the nomination to the Board.

*No comments or opposition to the proposals. The Assembly agreed not to have a written election.*  
**ALL THREE BOARD MEMBERS VOTED ON TO THE BOARD BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Comments/questions:

Peter Ripken: I wish to give a warm thanks to Dagny Gevelt. I hope she will be with us for a long time. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with her. She shares the vision of ICORN and has two special talents that I will remember: One, a meticulous eye for details and figures. Two, she was always cheerful and smiling.

Elisabeth Dyvik: On behalf of the ICORN staff we can only agree with Peter, we need people who can keep an eye on the budget details.

Dagny Gevelt (Kristiansand): Thank you for the kind words. Kristiansand was the second city in Norway to join the network in 1998. I was Director of Cultural Affairs in Kristiansand. Now I will retire in July and thought it was correct to leave my place to someone closer to the action. I do not want to be remembered for the details, but the development. The vision is important, though the devil is often found in the details, especially when you work with politicians! That is how the devil works.

**Elisabeth Dyvik presented the new election committee 2014-2016 on behalf of the ICORN Board:**

Philippe Ollé Laprune (Mexico City) wishes to step down.

Raffaella Salierno wishes to continue.

Paul Henrik Kielland wishes to continue

Dagny Gevelt has been asked to join the election committee and she has agreed.

*No comments or counter proposals.*

**THE NEW ELECTION COMMITTEE VOTED IN BY THE ASSEMBLY**

## **Report back from writers workshops**

By Noufel Bouzeboudja (Fanø/Algeria)

- On behalf of the writers he thanks the city of Ljubljana for being such good hosts, particularly the local helpers and Jasmina.
- In the writers' workshop they spoke about issues concerning publishing and translation. About the interconnection between the writers, and more collaboration between the writers, both nationally and internationally. Interdisciplinary, cartoonists and writers together. The writers wish to sign contracts with publishers in the country of refuge, like some have done with the publisher Smokkadoll in Sweden.
- The writers' work is more important than the fact that we are ICORN guest writers. Planning to organise a workshop in Copenhagen four days to get self-published on e-books etc.
- They wish to create a digital archive to make the ICORN writers more visible. Mille Rhode (Danish PEN) will help create or launch a website for the ICORN writers, planning to organize a workshop in order to teach ICORN writers how to get published online.
- Many writers are frustrated that the Shahrazad project has ended. It was good for promoting the writer's work. They more than welcome a new alternative.
- They have been speaking also about exit strategies and the possibility of work integration in the ICORN programme. Writers were suggested to go to the following workshop held by Elisabeth and Fredrik Elg on exit strategies.
- Today many writers went to the theatre, had a very nice picnic. Talked to European and Slovenian writers and went to the theatre for a performance.
- Catalan PEN offers Basem's novel to the Arabic speaking or Catalan speaking people.

Comments/questions:

Per Bergström (Malmö): I encourage writers and city coordinators to look at a worldwide website for poems/poets, [www.lyrikline.org](http://www.lyrikline.org), created by the poetry festival in Berlin. They launch a number of poets for the 15. November (PEN's Day of the Imprisoned Writer) in original language and translations. The webpage is read by thousands of people every day and China and Iran are constantly trying to hack the webpage. In two weeks a new meeting is coming up and there is a suggestion to launch ICORN poets on the day of the persecuted writers.

Helge Lunde: To Noufel: What is the google group for the guest writers about and how are you connecting?

Noufel Bouzeboudja: The google group was initiated by Parvin Ardalan (Iran/Malmö) who was the guest writers' representative at the time. We try to exchange and get in touch regularly. Whenever there is any news we try to update it. Hopefully the new ICORN website will help us with a forum for the writers in the future.

Cathrine Helland: A forum for the writers on the website is something that we are considering, but it needs resources and time to be realised.

Michael Smith (South Africa): I was lucky to join the guest writers' workshop at the Town Hall and the Creative ICORN workshop. The writers talked a lot about the wish to be translated and published and a call for co-production. Creative Europe has a translation programme that provides a good possibility for the writers. There is an open door to include third countries as well. Their voices can be heard across a variety of countries.

Raffaella Salierno (Barcelona): Is the google group open only for current ICORN guest writers or also old, and are new invited? Are there any language problems?

Noufel Bouzeboudja: The group is open to former and current writers. Language is mainly English. Some writers do not wish to be a part of the group. New writers need to send their email to join the group. Of course new writers have to be informed about this.

Philo Ikonya (Kenya/Oslo): I am trying to manage independence in Europe. The writers saw the play *Damned be the Traitor* at the theatre today. It is humanity laid bare, it is shocking it makes you tremble, and moves your own stereotypes. It was a wonderful experience, if you have the opportunity to see it do not miss it. I wish to thank the lady that stood up and asked to thank her for the initiative to remember those who are not helped. Some of the African writers wish to do a PAN-African response to the play we saw because we see ourselves in it. I managed to sell three of my books to other writers. Say yes to the elephant and no to ivory.

Peter Ripken: To the writers: People often ask about how the writers can be heard by the Board. Having a person who is a current writer as an observer to the Board is just one way.

Noufel Bouzeboudja: 31. July my stay is over and I do not know where I am going after that. I was not elected, but was active and engaged, enjoying the ICORN spirit. We need someone else to substitute me as a representative for the writers to the Board. I think we will discuss this with the other writers. We discussed this in Krakow, but no one came with a suggestion. Hopefully in the future we'll find someone.

Helge Lunde:

- Final word: Thanks to Larry and to the guest writers. Glad, humble and thankful for all that have been with us at the General Assembly here in Ljubljana, delegates, observers, guest writers. This year we have a record number of guest writers participating, 37, which is great. The notion "ICORN spirit" has been mentioned several times. It is not an easy thing to define, but I like the sound of it and hope it is something we can develop further. The post war architecture of the theatre yesterday is not inspirational – but it was made magic by the great assembly of people from the play and the public. The outer environment is not that important, it is the internal, the ICORN spirit. Be aware and keep updated until the next meeting!
- On new item, Sweden: There is no end to it in Sweden. The Region of Västra Götaland announced on SVT in an interview with guest writer/rapper Khaled Harara that they wish to double the number of cities of refuge of Sweden. Congratulations to the actors in Sweden, this means a lot for us in ICORN.
- On General Assembly and Network meetings in the future: The physical meetings are extremely important, to meet in person. Who will host the next network meeting in 2015? Who will host the next General Assembly in 2016 or the network meeting in 2017? Please consider having ICORN visit your city and apply to become a host for these important events! We will send out, probably just after summer, a call for hosting the meetings.

Ronald Bos (Dutch PEN/Amsterdam): I am a member of Dutch PEN and contact person of both Amsterdam Vluchtstadt and ICORN. Right now it is shameful to be Dutch because of the refugee policy. Hopefully this will change after elections in the Netherlands yesterday when populist vote went down.

Amsterdam has been Vluchtstadt since Salman Rushdie founded it in 1997. It is subsidised by a literary foundation. Masresha Mammo, journalist and writer from Ethiopia, is our current guest writer. The guest writers who come to Amsterdam stay in the Anne Frank flat, the last place her family lived before going underground.

The City of Amsterdam and the Mayor wishes to welcome the ICORN and WiPC to the 2015 Network Meeting 20-23 May 2015 in a Flemish cultural venue. Supported by the City of Amsterdam, the Foundation of Literature and the Flemish centre for culture in Amsterdam. Will have a decision in July.

Peter Ripken:

- This meeting has to a large degree been an exchange of ideas, a place where we can meet and discuss, and gain new insights. Networking is important, as is gaining new knowledge of and from colleagues, partners and related organisations, like Article19 and the EU. The General Assembly is a market for ideas. We need this way of working together, to get inspiration, to get ideas, encounter different people and writers; people with different individual agendas and difficulties.
- We are expanding the scope of our traditional work. We have a long list of people who are waiting to be placed. We will look at freedom of expression issues in all art forms. After controversial debate we have decided to give it a try. This will be continuously evaluated. In 2018 we will have, before the GA, a serious evaluation of the trial period of the expansion of scope. Part of the strategy of ICORN is to find allies and partners. This is what we promise and what our members have decided.
- I am convinced that others have different aspects from the assembly to stress, this was my view.
- Thanking: Special artist of hospitality, Jasmina Rihar. Not only a Board Member but also a great organizer. It cannot be done without a team, and she has had a good team. Wish to thank the local helpers, leading us around the centre. Also the silent technicians. All went smoothly. Thanks to speakers Uroš Korenčan (Director of the Puppet Theatre, main venue), Marjan Strojjan (President of Slovene PEN), and Tjaša Ficko (Deputy Mayor of Ljubljana) and the Mladinsko Theatre. Thanks to the ICORN staff and Larry Siems.

Jan Lothe Eriksen (SafeMuse): Wishes good luck in the musical area. Performs a short piece of traditional Norwegian music from the South Western parts, about the sheep hunted by the fox.

Per Bergström (Malmö): Thanks all of you, especially to the ICORN guest writers for making me a bigger person. I will read a poem called *Herrings* by Slovenian poet Srečko Kosovel.

Galina Jalal (translator to Suhail Sami Nader, Iraq/Copenhagen): I have a fear about Sami Nader finishing his residency at the end of October, I am afraid of not seeing you again. His future is unknown. Iraq is still not safe. I can't bear the thought of what would happen if Sami Nader and his wife would have to leave Copenhagen and go live in another part of the world where people are killing each other. It has been so enriching for me as a translator to attend this GA and the Network Meeting in Krakow, to get to know your history, work and what you are fighting for, and all of you for the driving force. Thank you Jasmina and the girls. We, on behalf of Sami and his wife, we thank you. Thank you to Slovenia and Ljubljana and the powerful work at the theatre. I hope we'll meet again and the best of luck.

Khaled Harara (Palestine/Gothenburg): The chance I got from ICORN was because of all the good people in Gothenburg, thank you is not enough. I do not forget my roots, but I learn here that there is a family in everyone. The two years are a key to the rest of my life.

Larry Siems Assembly (Assembly Chair/Writer): I wish to thank you for the opportunity to join the assembly and express my thanks.

#### **Lecture by Ragip Zarakolu (Turkey/Sigtuna)**

The General Assembly wrapped up with a talk by Ragip Zarakolu, prominent Turkish writer and publisher and at present ICORN guest writer in Sigtuna. His speech titled: *My Struggle: A life as fighter for freedom of expression in Turkey* is the story of a man, in and out of the courts and prisons of Turkey more than 40 times, spending his whole life fighting for Turkish writers and minorities' right to write and publish.

### **Evening event**

After a closing dinner at the Slon Hotel, there followed the literary event Ljubljana River Poetry. The audience was brought along the Ljubljana River with poetry readings by ICORN guest writers, Slovene and international poets performing from a boat along the shore at the Makalona and the New Square.

The evening concluded with well attended performances by the Overflight festival, *To the Bridge*, powerful rap by ICORNs first guest rapper, Khaled Harara, hosted in Gothenburg City of Refuge, and an open microphone where guest writers and other cultural personalities gave the crowd a taste of their creativity.

## II

### List of Member Cities and delegates

<b>CITY</b>	<b>Delegate at GA</b>
Amsterdam	Ronald Bos
Barcelona	Raffaella Salierno
Bergen	Leikny Haga Indegaard
Brussels	Sigrid Bousset
Bø	Tore Håndstad
Chiusi	Susanna Guidotti
Copenhagen	Galina Jalal
Drøbak	Egil Lothe
Fanø	not attending
Frankfurt	Peter Ripken
Girona	Carlota Sas Ortiz
Gothenburg	Margareta Rossing
Hannover	Katrin Dittmer
Haugesund	not attending
Jönköping	Jörgen Lindvall
Krakow	Danuta Glondys
Kristiansand	Anne Kristin Undlien
Lillehammer	Øivind Pettersen
Ljubljana	Jasmina Rihar
Malmö	Per Bergström
Mexico City	Phillipe Olle Laprune
Molde	Jan Olav Szontheimer
Norwich	Chris Gribble
Odense	Nikolai Frank
Oslo	Sylvie Linge Hermansson
Paris	Sophie Boule
Reykjavik	not attending
Sigtuna	Monica Dahlgren
Skellefteå	not attending
Skien	Liv Greve
Skåne	not attending
Stavanger	Hilde Karlsen
Stockholm	Foujan Rouzbeh
Tromsø	Paul Henrik Kielland
Trondheim	Adria Scharmen
Tuscany	Susanne Gouidotti
Uppsala	Annika Strömberg
Växjö	Wirginia Bogatic
Århus	not attending

### III

#### **List of attachments (available from the ICORN Administration Centre)**

1. Agenda
2. PEN International Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) Report
3. Presentation given by Cathy McCann (Researcher, Asia/Middle East PEN International Writers in Prison Committee)
4. ICORN Report 2012-2013
5. Fredrik Elg's presentation for the workshop: Exit strategies: New beginnings
6. Mary-Ann DeVlieg's presentation for the workshop: Arts of hospitality
7. Presentation for the workshop: Creative ICORN
8. ICORN Strategic Plan 2014-2018
9. Presentation by Sophie Kammerer (EIDHR)
10. Presentation by Oliver Spencer-Shrestha, Article 19: Persecution of Artists and Freedom of Expression
11. Elisabeth Dyvik's presentation "Nuts and Bolts of ICORN"