

ICORN REPORT 2012-2013

ICORN is an organisation of member cities and regions, offering safe havens for persecuted writers. Our aim is to be able to host as many persecuted writers as possible in ICORN member cities, forming a sustainable and dynamic global network for freedom of expression. For each writer arriving safely in a city of refuge, a former censored, harassed and threatened voice is granted a free space to think, write and express whatever is on the person's mind.

2012 and 2013 have been thriving and eventful years for the ICORN network. During the two years, ICORN and the member cities welcomed 29 new writers into the network, 7 new cities signed in, new fruitful partnerships and networks were formed, and the guest writers participated in a number of international cultural and political events promoting their case and works.

Each year, ICORN's close partner PEN International WiPC monitors between 700-900 cases of persecuted writers across the globe. While approximately 40 persecuted writers and human rights defenders applied for ICORN placement annually in 2011 and 2012, applications nearly doubled by the end of 2013.

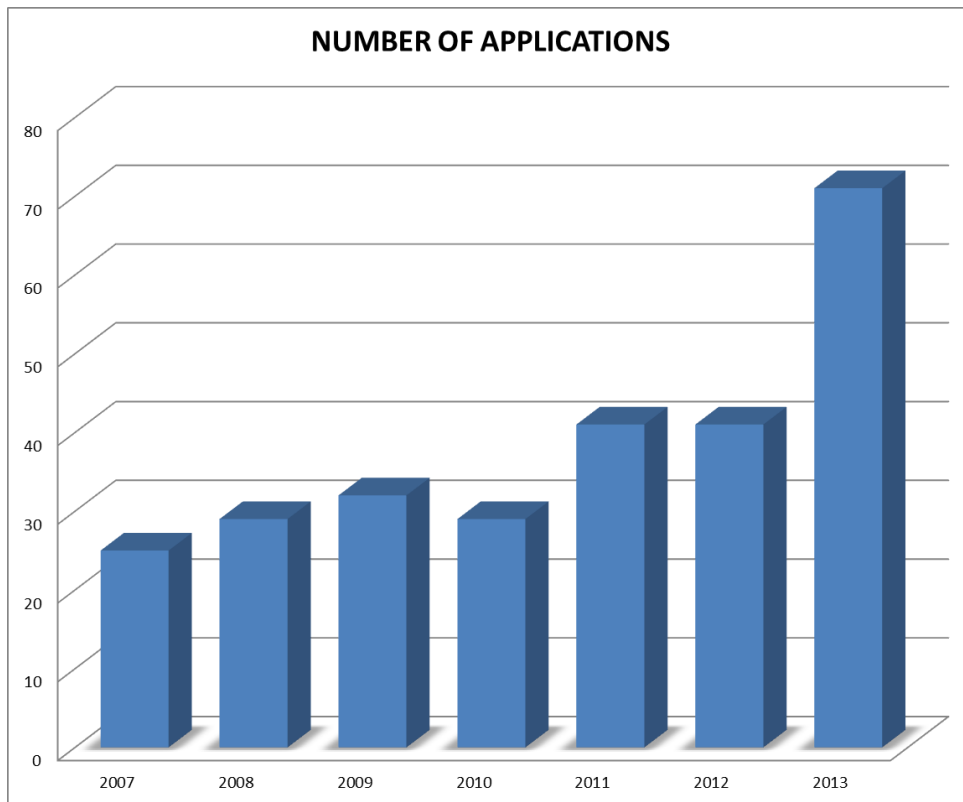
It is a fact that ICORN will achieve little or nothing without the relentless work performed in and by all our member cities, our partners and funders, and of course, our guest writers. Their contribution to protecting and promoting persecuted writers and freedom of expression is priceless. It is a challenge though that the evident need for shelter for a rapidly growing number of applicants cannot be met by the more slow expansion of cities joining the network. Fortunately, ICORN has become more visible and new cities are showing interest in and joining the network. These are crucial movements and emphasise the organisation's need for expansion, consolidation and professionalization.

Applications and Placements

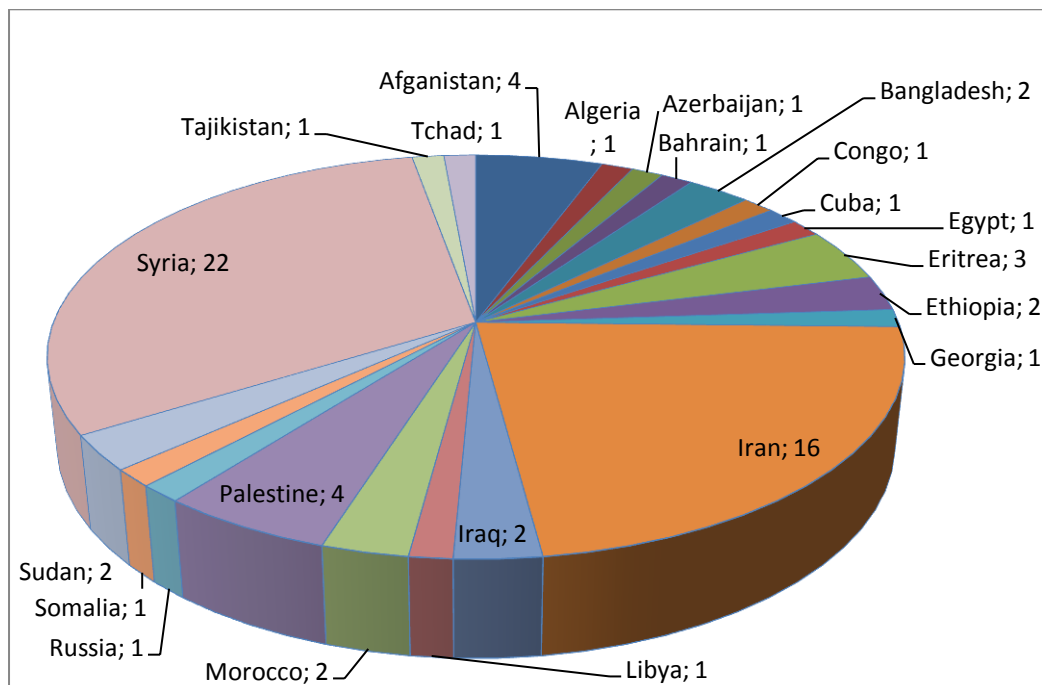
In 2012 ICORN received and handled 41 writer applications, and placed 16 new writers from Iran, Syria, Zimbabwe, Palestine, Cuba, Egypt, Russia, Eritrea, Iraq, Ethiopia in ICORN member cities.

The ICORN administration received and handled 71 writer applications by the end 2013. ICORN brought 13 persecuted writers, from Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Turkey and Vietnam, into safe havens in ICORN member cities.

The inhumane war in Syria explains parts of this dramatic increase in applications. However, when PEN WiPC monitors between 700-900 cases of persecuted writers around the globe each year, it is clear that free expression is massively countered by dictatorships, terror groups and surveillance regimes continuously. Since its beginning in 2006 ICORN has hosted over 100 persecuted writers in the member cities.



Number of applications from persecuted writers 2007-2013



Applicants' nationalities 2013

Geographical Expansion

To be able to meet the need of a constantly growing amount of applications from writers and human rights defenders in need of shelter, ICORN has been working actively for the last two years to lay the foundations for increasing the number of member cities.

In 2012, four new cities joined the network: Sigtuna (Sweden), Bø (Norway), Reykjavik (Iceland) and Växjö (Sweden).

In 2013, three new cities joined the network; the Catalan city of Girona and the Swedish cities; Skellefteå, Jönköping and the region of Jönköping. With the positive synergetic effect that we see in Sweden, agreements for new cities to join in 2014 are already formed.

With only a few exceptions, ICORN placements until now have happened in European cities. Many signs indicate this will change when we are looking a few years into the future. In October 2012 ICORN held a workshop in New York City with current and future cooperation partners on how to establish new ICORN shelters in Canada, USA and the Americas. Initiatives for establishing ICORN cities in South Africa are maturing, and distinguished writers Anna Funder, John Coetzee and Thomas Keneally are among those pushing for the Australian cities Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide to join the network.

In 2013, ICORN has been working closely together with new and old partners and ambassadors around the globe to establish dedicated ICORN member cities worldwide. Many European cities are scheduled to join the network already in 2014 and we see a positive movement in the Americas, Australia and South Africa. ICORN, our partners and committed ambassadors are already working with the following cities: Edmonton (Canada), Pittsburgh, Chicago, New York and Milwaukee (USA), Curitiba, Ouro Preto and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Puebla and Oaxaca (Mexico), Montevideo and Buenos Aires (Argentina), Medellin and Bogota (Colombia), Adelaide, Sidney and Melbourne (Australia), Nantes, Marseilles and Strasbourg (France), Zürich, Bern and Geneva (Switzerland), Hague (Belgium), Heidelberg (Germany), and Prague (Czech Republic).

Expanding the scope

ICORN worked initially primarily with literary artists at risk, poets, novelists, short story writers etc. The scope was gradually widened when genres like non-fiction writers, editors, bloggers, journalists, publishers and translators were included. Towards the present, more artistic genres have been added to the ICORN portfolio, like playwrights, film-makers, cartoonists and singer-songwriters/rappers.

As new cities are joining ICORN, sister networks and initiatives are increasingly inspired to look for options to create safe havens for persecuted artists and actors for change so far not being embraced by the ICORN system. In February 2012, the European Commission launched a comprehensive global mapping study of temporary shelter initiatives for human rights defenders and throughout Scandinavia and beyond, music and arts organisations are

working to develop inventive and sustainable shelter solutions for a wider range of artists in distress.

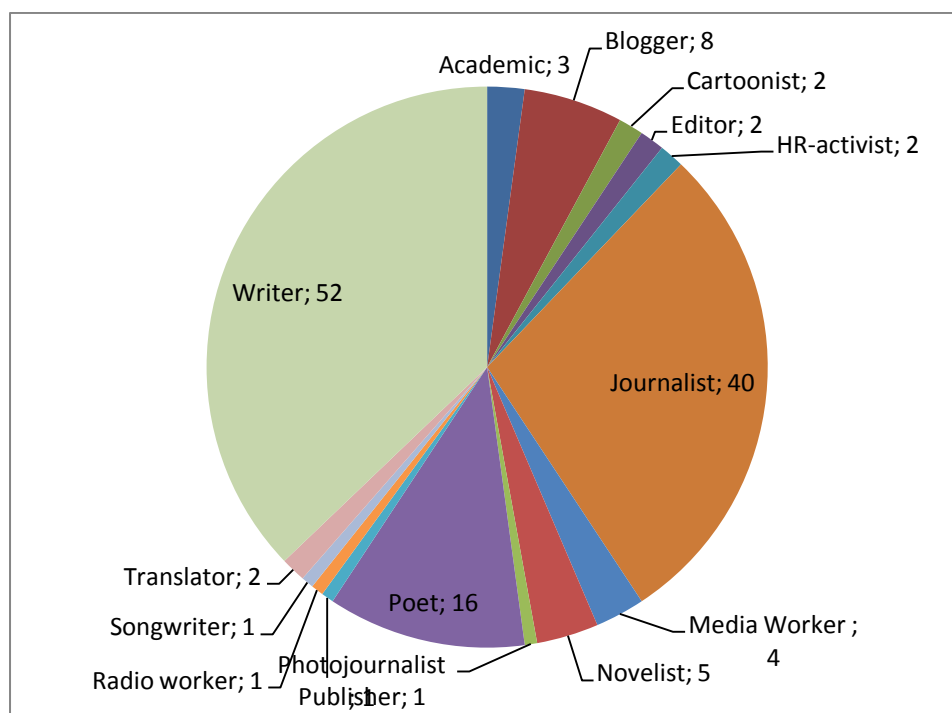
In accordance with the ICORN strategic plan 2012-2014, ICORN has been exploring the issue of broadening the scope during the last two years. Member cities and cities wanting to join ICORN are expressing interest in hosting a broader spectre of culture workers and new shelter organisations are starting to emerge to fill the gap and host musicians and visual artists.

In November 2013, ICORN participated in and helped organize a [Nordic Expert Meeting](#) in Malmö City of Refuge with art councils of the Nordic countries and other cultural organisations working in the field of promoting free speech for culture workers and with shelter programmes for dissident artists. Some Swedish member cities have already decided to host artists AND writers, and wish to do so through the ICORN programme.

Exploring the possibilities and practical issues relating to expanding the scope, ICORN participated in a meeting in Stockholm in April 2013, and met with Norwegian PEN and the Norwegian Art Council in October 2013 about cities of refuge for artists. ICORN has since 2012 been active in the EU ARJ Group (Arts Rights and Justice) that in October 2013 organized an [ARJ conference](#) in the European Parliament with a presentation by special rapporteur on “The Right to Freedom of Artistic Expression & Creation”.

On a regular basis ICORN has consulted with the new Norwegian based organisation Safemuse that is establishing a shelter programme for musicians, and have held meetings with Norwegian UD and UDI as well as PEN on the issue (February, June and October 2013).

ICORN has been in dialogue with organisations that will be relevant for qualifying other artistic genres with the same quality that we receive from our partner PEN WiPC.



Main occupation of writers applying to ICORN 2011-2013

Finance/funding

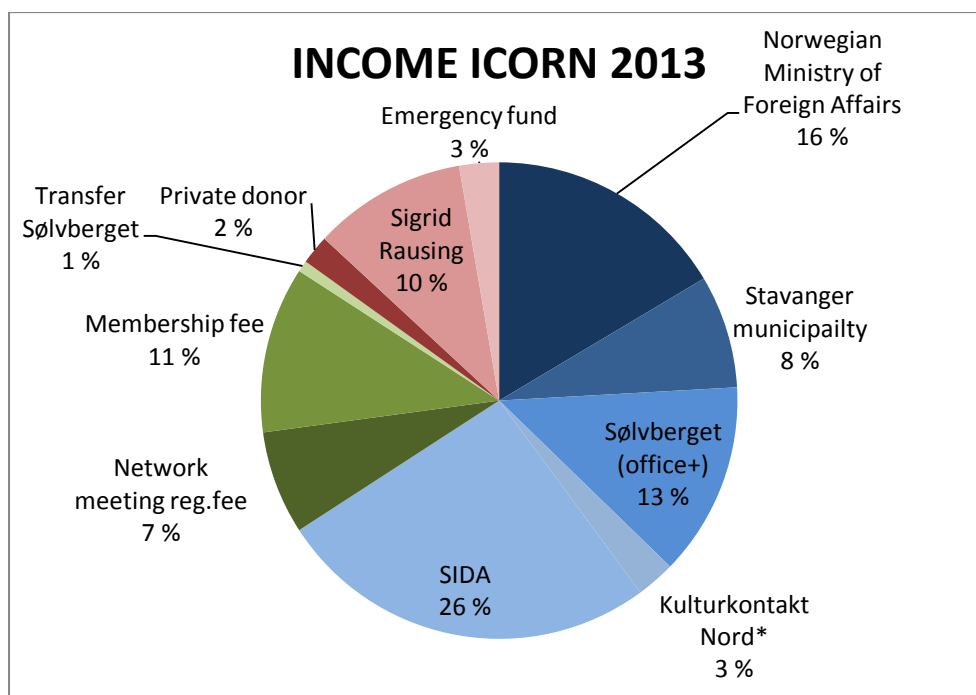
The major positive development on the funding front in 2012 was the significant contribution from Sida, the Swedish Development Agency. Under the title: “Safe, but not Silent - making ICORN a strong and sustainable global tool for freedom of expression and actors for change”, Sida decided to grant the sum of SEK 3 300 000 over a three years period.

Our major funders from the very start (the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs, the Municipality of Stavanger and Sølvsberget, Stavanger Cultural Center) stays on board, and the Nordic Council committed themselves to long term project support to strengthening and consolidating the ICORN organisation.

Still not severely hit by the financial crisis at its Norwegian head quarter, several of ICORN’s member cities have been striving, especially those in the southern parts of Europe. Some new cities expected to join ICORN in 2011 and 2012 have been delaying the process due to financial constraints. The ambitions to recruit member cities also in Africa, Asia and the Americas are still not put on hold, but ICORN has had to continue to adjust plans for extension, awaiting regional, national and international economies to recover.

One of the greatest challenges that ICORN is facing is securing long-term core cost for running the organisation. The tendency is that more and more funders are prioritising providing project based (restricted) funding.

Throughout 2012 and 2013 ICORN has been exploring new possibilities for stabile long-term funding for core costs. Towards the end of 2013 the EU launched a new cultural funding programme, Creative Europe (2014-2020). ICORN started preparations for applying for Network Support, for developing and strengthening the capacity of the organisation. The result will be announced at the latest August 2014.



Consolidation, capacity building and network learning

Throughout 2012 and 2013 ICORN has continued to develop a democratic and efficient governance structure. The development from being a loosely organised network to becoming a proper international organisation was successfully accomplished in 2010, and the process has been brought further and consolidated in 2011, 2012 and throughout 2013.

We are still facing challenges with regard to keeping the information channels to all the writers and all the member cities alive and going. We do realise that the annual meetings between the many different actors and stakeholders in the network; guest writers, city coordinators, cultural institutions, human rights organisations, partner organisations, funders, politicians and the like, are essential to consolidate and strengthen the network and to boost the network's capacity to protect, promote and participate in human rights and the freedom of speech.

General Assembly and Network Meeting: In 2012 ICORN successfully convened its second proper [ICORN General Assembly](#) in Stockholm in May, with more than 100 participants, among them 25 ICORN guest writers. And in May 2013 a second magnificent Network Meeting in the city of Cracow; the "[Writing Freedom](#)" ICORN Network Meeting, jointly organised with Cracow City of Refuge and PEN International Writers in Prison Committee.

Board meetings: ICORN held three board meetings in 2012; Stockholm (February and May 2012) and Krakow (November 2012). Three ICORN board meetings in 2013; London (February 2013), Krakow (May 2013), and Ljubljana (October 2013).

Strengthening the organisation: As the quantity of applications from persecuted writers is continuously growing, and ICORN is working with a large number of cities that are and wish to become a part of the network, ICORN has used 2012 and 2013 to strengthen the organisation. To meet the challenges of continued and welcomed growth, with support and funds from among others Sida, ICORN strengthened its headquarters in Stavanger with a new Administration Coordinator and a Communication Coordinator for the next three years.

Strengthening communication platforms, professionalising procedures and building the cooperation structure and the capacity of the network are essential tasks that have been initiated in 2013 and will continue to develop. Foundations for building the capacity and knowhow of the organisation have been thoroughly discussed and will make part of the strategy for the next four years to come. The preliminary work for establishing a database for knowledge sharing in the network is started.

The ICORN Board as of 2012

Chair of Board: Peter Ripken, Frankfurt City of Refuge

Vice Chair of Board: Dagny Anker Gevelt, Kristiansand City of Refuge

Board member Chris Gribble, Norwich City of Refuge

Board member Jasmina Rihar, Ljubljana City of Refuge

Board member Annika, Mexico City City of Refuge

The ICORN Administration Center as of 2013

Helge Lunde, Executive Director (100 %)

Elisabeth Dyvik, Programme Director (100 %)

Marianne Hovdan, Administration Coordinator (100 % from January 213)

Cathrine Helland, Communication Coordinator (50 % from March 2013)

Writers network representatives: The Fanø guest writer Noufel Bouzeboudja (Algeria) has taken upon over from Parvin Ardalán (Iran) the task to represent the guest writers to the ICORN Board, providing for an active participation of the writers in the work and activities of ICORN.

Sustaining the current member cities: As important as recruiting new cities of refuge for more persecuted writers to be hosted, is sustaining the current member cities and partners that are doing a fantastic job for the writers and the network.

In 2012 ICORN promoted itself at major book fairs and festivals in Europe and beyond, including a major manifestation with promotional stand and 30 events at the [Gothenburg Book Fair](#) in September.

During the year of 2013, ICORN participated in a number of international cultural and political events in the member cities during the year of 2013. Among them are; the Göteborg Bookfair, the Frankfurt Bookfair (ICORN stand and events with ICORN guest writers), Kapittel Literary Festival (Stavanger), Norwegian festival of Literature (Lillehammer), Slovene Days of Poetry and Wine Festival, Uppsala festival for freedom of expression, Jönköping (signing membership agreement), Stockholm meetings on the cities of refuge system in Sweden, Girona (signing membership agreement), Reykjavik for PEN Congress and meetings with Reykjavik city of refuge, meetings in Sigtuna and Växjö, meetings with the Norwegian cities of refuge and Norwegian PEN, participated in the Rafto Award at the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, co-organised and participated in evaluation of the Shahrazad – stories for life evaluation meeting in Barcelona, Brussels and Passa Porta (participated in the welcome ceremony of the new guest writer).

Promotion and communication

Communication and digital platforms: Many have had the possibility of getting a glimpse of ICORN's work by watching Marion Stalens' [short information film](#) from 2012. The film also reveals our day to day work within the ICORN Administration Centre. One of ICORN's major roles in the years to come is to make the organisation more visible and transparent to increase the outreach to our many stakeholders.

A vital step in the process, in 2013, ICORN began the work on developing new digital communication platforms. Work on a new website was started in 2013 and will be launched in 2014. The website will create new opportunities not only for promoting ICORN, but also the member cities and guest writers.

The preliminary work for establishing a digital database for knowledge sharing in the network is started. We have been exploring the possible role of ICORN on social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, and are in the process of laying strategies for communicating to a larger public without compromising security.

Member city cooperation: No doubt, rest and respite are essential components in an ICORN shelter experience. Nevertheless, most ICORN guest writers are looking for new and numerous ways of letting their voices be heard as soon as they are well established in their host city. ICORN member cities are responsible for the promotion of their guest writers. However, ICORN also facilitates communication and promotion within the network and attempts to encourage the network to take advantage of each other, engaging writers and cities in events across the network.

When the ICORN had just been formed in 2006, ICORN facilitated a partnership between member cities to apply for the EU cultural funding programme. The EU multi annual cooperation project *Shahrazad-Stories for life* (2007-2012) was the successful outcome, a 5 years promotion project between six main city partners (Stavanger, Barcelona, Norwich, Stockholm, Frankfurt and Brussels). It provided finance for promoting the writers, increasing their mobility, organizing events and reaching new audiences. *Shahrazad-Stories for life* was brought to conclusion by the exit of 2012.

The project has united many of the cities and writers and we see positive synergy effects when many continue to do projects together.

In 2013 the EU launched a new cultural funding programme relevant to the member cities under Creative Europe. ICORN has since been working actively on promoting the programme within the network to get the member cities to join forces to apply for funding and create new projects together (mails and meetings in Barcelona and in Copenhagen).

Global movement/immigration

Visa and migration: It is still posing big challenges to get persecuted writers out from their present danger zones and into their future ICORN safe havens. The ICORN Administration Centre has continued to mobilise an increasing energy and working force towards managing the problems arising in each individual case. It often takes frustratingly long time from a writer is invited to become a city's guest writer, until he/she finally successfully arrives. The Arab revolutions continued to bring challenges with regard to "Fortress Europe" in 2012, and the *Shahrazad – stories for life's* [European Hospitality Tribunal](#) in Stockholm in May 2012 has never seemed more timely and to the point.

ICORN has in 2013 been working extensively, together with the member cities, to map procedures and rules for visa and migration to identify and overcome unnecessary obstacles.

The post placement syndrome is still a major challenge to our organisation. We are approaching stronger and multiple strategies to answering the crucial "what after" question also through 2012 and 2013. Only rarely, a writer can return to his/her home country after a

two year standard ICORN placement. In 2013 we have invested more resources in continuous communication between the writer, the host and the ICORN office from day 1 of the stay, with regard to look actively for alternatives for post placement life and career. ICORN has established close collaboration with other organisations working with similar situations and are developing cooperation and working strategically to find solutions more locally.

Partnerships and Cooperation

ICORN is a dynamic, flexible and participatory organisation, connecting its member cities and guest writers in a global network of solidarity, creativity and mutual interaction. As a network of this kind, ICORN is truly dependent on cooperation with a wide range of networks and institutions, on local, regional, national and international levels.

To the core of its identity, ICORN is both a literature/culture *and* a human rights/freedom of expression organisation. On the cultural side we interact with local networks in the member cities, national arts councils, and internationally with PEN International, Res Artis and other residency programmes. With regard to human rights, we depend heavily on cooperation with Article 19, Reporters Without Borders, Amnesty International and so on. We interact also very closely with networks, like us, active in both sectors, like FreeDimensional, Scholars at Risk, Frontline defenders, Freemuse, Arts, Rights & Justice, On the Move, Tactical tech and more.

ICORN has in 2012 and 2013 continued to develop the relationships with both existing and new partners and supporters to continuously increase the capacity to help persecuted writers around the world. We have continued our involvement with the European Parliament's and the European Commission's human rights units, and particularly EU's persistent initiative to set up a global system of shelter for human rights defenders. Their [global mapping process](#) was finished in 2012 with ICORN as a central reference. ICORN has been keeping close contact with the Commission on this issue throughout 2013, exploring the potentials for our organisation to being a part of a global platform for shelter initiatives, which the EU plans to implement in the period between 2014 and 2020.

PEN International has continued to be a vital partner for ICORN throughout 2012 and 2013. The assessment agreement between ICORN and PEN International has played a vital role for the development of our organisation, and the negotiations toward a new and improved agreement from as of 2014 was an important mutual achievement arrived at in late 2013. Furthermore, ICORN has kept contact with an increasing amount of national PEN centers, and taken part in the PEN Congresses in Korea in 2012 and in Reykjavik in 2013.