



BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE

## 2024 NATO BILC CONFERENCE

### Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting

Vienna, 15 May 2024

#### NATO COUNTRIES

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

#### ATTENDANCE

*Absent*  
Sr. Capt. K. Heylen  
Ms. S. Ganeva  
Ms. S. Normandin  
Ms. M. Prosic  
Mr. J. Vosáhlo  
Mr. K. Kldevang  
Ms. K. Sirkel  
Ms. S. Patronen  
Ms. E. Cleret  
Mr. C. Loreck  
*Absent*  
Ms. C. Szücs  
Brig.Gen. P. Romano  
Ms. G. Lauva  
Ms. J. Kuzaitė  
*Absent*  
Drs. G. Seinhorst  
*Absent*  
Ms. B. Grande  
LTC J. Dudek  
CDR C. Rolo  
LTC A. Toderică  
*Absent*  
Ms. B. Petek  
Col. F. Valencia Feijjo  
Ms. M. Martin  
Capt. A. Kınık  
LTC E. Carter  
Dr. R. Savukinas



**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

**PARTNERS/OBSERVERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Australia	<i>Absent</i>
Austria	LTC T. Fronek
Azerbaijan	LTC H. Klalilov
Bosnia-Herzegovina	<i>Absent</i>
Georgia	Ms. T. Shavlakadze
Iraq	Staff Maj Gen Muayad Nooruldeen
Jordan	LTC H. Khrissat
Serbia	Maj. G. Milicevic
Ukraine	Col. N. Vasyukova

**NATO BODIES:**

NATO ACO	<i>Absent</i>
NATO Mission Iraq (NMI)	Mr. J. Nowers
PLTCE	Dr. E. Nickels

**BILC SECRETARIAT**

Chair	Ms. I. Prpic Djuric
Senior Advisor	Dr. R. Clifford
Associate Secretary	Ms. P. Garza
Associate Secretary	Ms. J. Dubeau
Associate Secretary	Ms. J. Vasilj-Begovic

**Item 1: Opening remarks**

- i. Introductions and Recognition of the Heads of Delegations and Observers

Chair welcomed delegates and extended a special welcome to Sweden and Finland as new NATO members. She then conducted a roll call of NATO member delegates. Chair presented the Secretariat members and thanked them for their assistance and contributions.

- ii. Approval of Agenda

Chair asked delegates to approve the agenda, and it was unanimously approved.



**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

**Item 2: Information & Acknowledgements**

- i. Report on the BILC Advisory Activities in the Period May 2023 – May 2024:

Chair introduced the topic of BILC advisory activities conducted under the auspices of Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP).

- ***Azerbaijan and Georgia Reports on Current Activities and Plans for 2024 – Ms. Irena Prpic Djuric***

Chair began her report by stating that BILC had offered support to the testers of **Azerbaijan** in the development of listening and reading test items, as well as to other staff in the development of ESP courses. NATO BILC Professional Development Seminar was held in Baku in October 2023, and it was followed by a workshop on test development at the end of October 2023.

**Georgia**. The support provided to Georgia consisted of professional development offered to English teachers and test developers through various activities and workshops. In April 2024, a workshop on item moderation, statistical analysis, and norming of the writing and speaking skills was held. Planned activities include the following: a) developing Level 3 items, b) course development and alignment of goals and learning outcomes with STANAG 6001, as well as c) classroom assessment. The dates of these activities is to be determined. It is worth mentioning that Georgia is benefitting from the presence of a Slovenian SME, posted to this country.

In 2023, support was also provided to the instructors of the Higher Institute for English (HIE) in **Mauritania** through a STANAG 6001 familiarization workshop that followed a scoping visit. There are no activities planned for 2024.

- ***Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kazakhstan Reports on Current Activities and Plans for 2024 – Ms. Peggy Garza.***

Ms. Garza reported on the support offered to these three nations. She mentioned that the support to **BIH** was offered through several events that took place in 2023 and 2024, such as a pre-service training & follow-up coaching provided for newly hired instructors; continuous professional development for instructors of English; as well activities linked to military terminology, translation and interpretation. In addition, leadership discussions took place, and an instructor exchange with Hungary.

**Kazakhstan**. The support to this nation consisted of a visit to Astana where a familiarization workshop on STANAG 6001 was given. BILC representatives (three nations) also met with the MoD, as well as with the US and UK attaches.

**Ukraine**. The continuous support to Ukraine has consisted of multiple activities, including the following: a) continuous professional development of English



**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

instructors; b) STANAG 6001 familiarization for language instructors and programme managers; c) support for STANAG 6001 testers on test development and statistical analysis; military terminology, and translation and interpretation. Virtual sessions on various topics of interest (in cooperation with the Foreign Languages Education and Research Centre of the National Defense University) were organized and lessons learned from NATO nations discussed, as well as language program management. Representatives from Ukraine participated in many out-of-country events, such as the workshop on applied consecutive interpreting techniques (PLTCE 2023 and 2024); English language classes for Ukrainian military personnel (in Slovenia and Bulgaria), etc. No events have been foreseen to take place in Ukraine. Ms. Garza added that another course that will be offered is an online writing strategies course for staff officers. Ms. Garza mentioned the strong support she receives whenever she asks for experts to conduct sessions of interest to Ukraine.

- **Armenia, Colombia, and Iraq reports on current activities and plans for 2024 – Ms. Branka Petek**

Ms. Petek stated that BILC support to Armenia consisted of the following activities: Several virtual meetings and discussions about different aspects of language training and testing IAW STANAG 6001 took place in 2023. In March of 2023, a BILC expert team visited the Military University in order to continue discussions and exchange experiences. A group of potential testers visited the Czech testing team in Brno, and several Armenian teachers participated in BILC courses and seminars. Ms. Petek highlighted the discussion on the development of a policy paper called Roadmap of Language Training and Testing. The political situation in the country makes planning challenging.

Colombia - Ms. Petek stated that a successful faculty workshop was given in April 2024. She also mentioned the fact that the National Police was part of the military services, and that they have unique needs. For 2024, the focus continues to be on the professional development of English instructors. For now, the planned establishing of a testing capacity has been suspended.

Iraq. Support activities provided to Iraq in 2023 included professional development of the English instructors and an initial training of STANAG 6001 testers. In addition, a pair of Iraqi teachers came to Slovenia under a successful exchange programme. For 2024, the focus of assistance will be professional development of English language teachers and testers. It is worth mentioning that in addition to BILC-sponsored visits to Baghdad, there are also permanent BILC-associated personnel on the ground assisting DLI.

- **Jordan report on current activities and plans for 2024 – Dr Edelmira Nickels**





**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

**Jordan** - Dr. Nickels informed the delegates that the focus of BILC support to Jordan was in the area of testing-building capacity, which would contribute to Jordan's ability to participate in NATO activities. A scoping visit was conducted in 2023 during which testing and training policies were discussed, and a way-ahead regarding the building of a testing capacity was mapped out. Latvia and Estonia have been involved in this support effort. In 2024, Jordanian representatives attended the Advanced Language Proficiency Skills Course and will also attend the Language Testing Seminar. Consultations on how to move this project forward will also take place in 2024.

ii. Other

- BILC website – Ms. Irena Prpic Djuric

Chair thanked the presenters on assistance visits and introduced the topic of the BILC website, highlighting the challenges of maintaining and upgrading a website. Croatia has explored other possibilities in order to transfer this task to NATO, specifically to DEEPe Academy. DEEP has stated that they could migrate everything to their server and take over the domain name at no charge to BILC. This transfer should take approximately 3-4 months. More information to follow.

- BILC POC List – Ms. Irena Prpic Djuric

Chair mentioned that she occasionally receives complaints from nations about not receiving communications from BILC. For that reason, it is extremely important to have BILC PoC lists up to date. There are three such lists, one for the general BILC PoCs, who are heads of delegations, one for the national testing centre contacts, and the last list is intended for the PoCs for military terminology. Chair said that she would send these lists the following week to the nations with a request to have them updated. Ms. Petek added that the military terminology list is a new one and intended for a new target audience. Military terminology conferences are a recent addition to the list of BILC events and their aim is to standardize terminology and its management. It is important to forward invitations to the specific event to the right people within an organization.

**Item 3: Action Items from Last Conference**

- i. Shared Item Bank Project – Ms. Merit Kompus.

Ms. Kompus began her briefing by providing the background of this project, which began in 2020 with a seven-nation team (currently six), the aim of which was to create a bank of listening and reading items encompassing levels 1-3. Reading items have been trialled out on over one thousand people and statistical analyses have been conducted, as well as final items selected. These items are now ready for use. Six sample items can be viewed on the BILC website. The working group (WG) produced guidelines on the use of the items, as well as a written report on



**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

how they were developed. In addition, a non-disclosure document will be sent to interested nations. BILC Secretary, Ms. S. Horvat is one of the custodians of these items. Chair will inform BILC testing centre PoCs on the availability of the reading items. Listening items are currently being developed. They will be pre-tested and the working group will request assistance from nations.

ii. JTAC Working Group – Ms. Peggy Garza.

Ms. P. Garza provided the background of this project and stated that JTACs have a SLP requirement of 3332. BILC was asked by JTAC stakeholders to conduct a language needs analysis of the actual JTAC target language use and to consider a more focused test for JTACs. The WG, composed of Denmark, Norway, Slovenia, and the US, analyzed JTAC linguistic tasks for a year by observing their exercises in Denmark and Slovenia, their simulation training, and certification training in Norway, etc. The WG also sent a survey on critical JTAC linguistic and target language use factors and received 246 responses from JTACs, JTAC evaluators, and JTAC programme managers. Among the critical JTAC tasks were communicating under pressure, demonstrating interactional competence in a dynamic multinational environment, comprehending multimodal communications from digital and human sources, and responding in a timely fashion with clear pronunciation. Based on its analysis, the WG recommended a JTAC-specific language test, as well as development of a JTAC-specific language course. The WG is currently developing integrated skills performance test tasks. The Study Group (SG) on JTAC specific course content will inform the BILC plenary on its recommendations. A full report is available from Ms. Garza. LTC Fronek offered Austrian expertise with this project as Austria is certified to test IAW International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Air Service Agreements (ASA). LTC. E. Carter from the UK commented that JTACs need exceptional listening and speaking skills and that any new test will need customer buy-in.

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

Ms. J. Dubeau, co-leader of this group along with Mr. J. Collin from France explained to the plenary the reason behind the forming of a Focus Group at the BILC SC 2023. She highlighted first the fact that every STANAG was periodically reviewed and revised (3-5 years typically), and that the STANAG 6001 had not undergone a content review for over 15 years. As custodian of this standard, it is the duty of BILC to review it periodically. The Focus Group was formed for the purpose of assessing the extent of the review and proposing the way-ahead. Because Mr. J. Collin had noticed problems with the translation of the STANAG into French, he and Ms. Dubeau proposed that the review be performed in parallel on both language versions to ensure alignment of both documents. Another reason why a review is required is that the language use and its contexts have changed,



**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

and new text genres, e.g. have come into existence (social media, etc.). Furthermore, the concept of the native speaker as the final point of reference has been criticized in recent literature and replaced in some other well-known scales, such as the ILR. As BILC constituents had remarked in the past on some difficulties with using the STANAG descriptors, the Focus Group developed a survey asking nations to make suggestions on the potential improvements. The feedback from the survey showed that all surveyed nations were in favour of making improvements to the scale, and that they were also overwhelmingly in favour of removing the native speaker concept from level 5 and replacing it with a reference to an exceptionally high proficiency regardless of how it was acquired. Ms. Dubeau added that nations, which had not had a chance to respond to the survey may still complete it and send to her. Ms. Dubeau also stated that the review of the STANAG 6001 will include necessary adjustments, such as incorporating the multinational nature of language use, adding general defense and NATO examples and contexts, resequencing some statements within each level to make it more user-friendly. There is, however, NO intention to change the levels and their interpretation; therefore, all the foreseen changes should have minimal impact on training and testing. Ms. Dubeau requested that the SC members approve that the status of the Focus Group be changed to one of a Working Group. Chair asked the SC if they agreed with this proposal and the Belgian delegate raised his hand saying that he moved that the Focus Group be granted a Working Group status. His motion was seconded by Denmark. There were no objections, and the proposal was unanimously approved. Ms. Dubeau added that more details would be provided at the end of the week, in plenary.

**Item 4: New Business**

- i. Update on BILC courses – Ms. Peggy Garza.

Ms. Garza showed an updated calendar of BILC sponsored and NATO approved courses. They are: the Language Testing Seminar, Advanced Language Testing Seminar; Language Standards & Assessment Seminar, and the English Teaching Faculty Development Workshop. A new course for testers, titled, “Language Test Analysis Workshop” will be offered from 23-26 July. An online writing course for staff officers, called “NATO Writing Strategies Course” is also available. Facilitators for these courses come from many nations and Ms. Garza took the opportunity to extend her gratitude for these invaluable national contributions.

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

Chair stated that Croatia would finish its presidency over BILC in 2025. She asked if there was any country that wanted to express interest in taking over the BILC Chair. Finland expressed interest and the delegate said she would discuss this with the decision-makers at her university. Chair stated that if any other country was interested, to contact her.



**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

**Item 5: Future Events**

Chair informed the delegates of the future events and their locations. A host for the 2026 conference was needed and Hungary expressed interest to host this event in Budapest. Chair mentioned that she would need a letter of intent in the fall. The Hungarian delegate promised a letter next month. Ms. Dubeau added that to help host nations organize events, BILC prepared a checklist that outlines a number of logistical aspects for host nations to consider when organizing an event, as well as templates for Joining Instructions and other documents. The Professional Development Seminar is scheduled for October 2024 in Prague.

Hosts are also needed for the BILC Professional Development Seminar in 2025 and 2026. Chair mentioned that she would appreciate receiving letters of intent in 3-months time.

**Conferences**

2025 conference: Croatia (confirmed by a formal letter)

2026: TBD

**Seminars**

2024 seminar: the Czech Republic (confirmed by a formal letter)

2025 seminar: TBD

2026 seminar: TBD

**STANAG 6001 Testing Workshops**

2024 workshop: Norway (confirmed by a formal letter)

2025 workshop: the Netherlands (confirmed by a formal letter)

2026 workshop: TBD

**Military Terminology Conference**

2026 conference: Poland (TBC)

2028 conference: TBD

**Item 6: Acknowledgments**

Chair took a moment to remember the passing of a great BILC contributor from Lithuania, Ms. Ausra Narbutiene. Ms. Narbutiene helped host various BILC events, facilitated various BILC seminars and testing workshops, and, above all, was an exceptional colleague and friend, who will always be remembered with much fondness and appreciation.

Chair also acknowledged the upcoming retirement of Col. Valencia from Spain and thanked him for his contributions to BILC by presenting him a small gift of appreciation.





**BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE COORDINATION  
BUREAU DE COORDINATION LINGUISTIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

She then mentioned certificates of appreciation are given to experts who participate in the virtual sessions for Ukraine. Ms. Kuzaitė from Lithuania received a certificate for her participation and Ms. Ganeva accepted a certificate on behalf of another Bulgarian expert.

Chair asked if there were any comments. She adjourned the meeting.

Minutes prepared by J. Vasilj-Begovic, BILC Associate Secretary, June 2024

Reviewed by: P. Garza, BILC Associate Secretary, June 2024, and S. Horvat, BILC Secretary, June 2024

Approved by: I. Prpic Djuric, BILC Chair