

May 29, 2024

CAS Representative Report regarding ICS-17 (the 17th International Congress of Slavists, to be held at Sorbonne-Paris University, AUGUST 25-29, 2025)

LINK to ICS-17 [MKS Paris 2023 - Sciencesconf.org](https://www.mks-paris-2023-sciencesconf.org)

CAS Participation in ICS-17

May 1, 2024 marked the deadline for the FINAL submission of approved Abstracts (Paper Proposals) from the respective national committees to the Organizing Committee of ICS-17 in Paris. Shortly before that deadline, I relayed the CAS package of NINE approved Abstracts to Paris (note that the quota allotted to CAS by the ICS was 10). Of these nine abstracts, SIX were carryovers from the first round of assessment, while THREE were approved between April 1-25, 2024, after the original deadline was extended by two years due to the postponement of ICS-17 from 2023 to 2025 in response to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. In addition to the abstracts, I relayed ONE CAS-approved Poster proposal. Finally, ONE CAS scholar will be presenting a paper at a Thematic Block (note that Thematic Block proposals do not require review by CAS or any other national committee, but are reviewed separately by the ICS-17 Organizing Committee in Paris).

Summary of the minutes of last year's ICS Zoom meetings (Sept 1, 2023 and Dec 22, 2023; for March 2023 CAS report, see preceding document)--

Format of ICS-17 (Paris, Sorbonne)

At the Sept 2023 meeting, a proposal was put forward to conduct the sessions of ICS-17 in mixed format, i.e., online via Zoom and in person in Paris. After some discussion, it was decided that the Organizing Committee in Paris would investigate the practicality of such a format and report back. In response (at the December 2023 Zoom), the officers of the Organizing Committee explained that except for the Plenary Session invited lectures, the online format would be impractical since the non-Plenary (individual) sessions occur in simultaneous streams and therefore a technological glitch in any one of them could potentially disrupt the coordination of the overall schedule. Further, the Organizing Committee cannot guarantee that every lecture room would have a proper internet connection, nor that it could provide tech support for every venue, nor, finally, that it can assume that each Chair of each session would successfully create a separate Zoom account.

Proposed ICS reforms

For a summary of the reforms proposed by the ICS Working Group and of some of the ensuing discussion at the ICS zoom session (March, 2023), please refer to my Report of March 2023. Note that no final decision regarding any of the proposed reforms will be made until the ICS Plenary Session of the national representatives at the time of ICS-17 in Paris in August 2025. If any of the proposed reforms are approved at that time, they will apply to the Congresses that follow.

In brief, the chief reforms are --

1) formation of an ICS Program Committee, which would supervise and coordinate the review of paper proposal abstracts, thereby relieving the national committees of this responsibility;

2) elimination of the system of national quotas (i.e., maximums) for the allocation of presentations at the ICS Congress, an exception being made for smaller nations (see point 9 under “Review process for abstracts” below);

On December 1, 2023, the Working Group circulated a revised version of the Proposal which provided more details on these reforms. This revised version was discussed at the December 22, 2023 zoom session. Again (as noted above), NO final decisions on any of the proposed reforms will be made till the ICS Plenary session in Paris in August 2025.

ICS Program Committee and its role in the Abstract review process

The Program Committee would be charged with coordinating the review of Abstracts.

For prospective Reviewers, the Committee will draw from two sources:

- 1) the membership of the ICS Research Commissions (40 in number);
- 2) scholars otherwise known to members of the Program Committee itself;

Structure of the Program Committee

1. Representation of THREE topic areas: a) literature, b) linguistics, c) other humanities disciplines (e.g., culture, folklore, art, music);
2. SEVEN members (minimum), with at least TWO representatives for each topic area;
3. Members selected by ICS Executive (Presidium);
4. Terms of service: from the end of the preceding ICS Congress till the end of current one;
5. To facilitate communication between the host Organizing Committee and the Program Committee, the president or secretary of the PC should also be a member of the OC, and vice versa.

Review process for Abstracts

1. Applicants are to send their Abstracts directly to the Program Committee as an attachment to an email. In the Abstract document itself, the applicant should indicate not only the current ICS congress Topic Area to which the proposal pertains, but also which of the 40 current ICS Research Commissions, in their opinion, would be thematically closest to the topic of their paper (an updated list of the ICS Research Commissions would be posted on the site of the next ICS Congress or on a new site based in the ICS itself). Where appropriate, the applicant may indicate their uncertainty regarding the choice of Commission or point out that no such Commission appears in the list provided by the ICS. In an accompanying email message, the applicant should indicate their name and national affiliation, although in the Abstract itself this information should be absent.

2. The Program Committee sorts the anonymous Abstracts into groups according to thematically appropriate Research Commissions from which Reviewers will be drawn. In cases where no such Commission can be found, the Program Committee may request that a possible external specialist be recommended by the Chairs of the Commissions whose general topic areas seem to be most relevant.
3. To facilitate the Program Committee's search for Reviewers, prior to every Congress (and more specifically prior to the initial deadline for the submission of applications for participation), each Research Commission is to provide the Program Committee with an updated list of its members and their areas of specializations. Note that the Research Commissions do *not* take part in the selection process itself, but rather serve as a database for potential Reviewers.
4. To complement the range of expertise supplied by the membership of the Research Commissions, the Program Committee may propose additional reviewers.
5. The Program Committee sends paper proposals to the Reviewers it has selected. If a reviewer is unable to conduct a review, the Program Committee will ask another specialist to do so. The Program Committee can ask a reviewer to review more than one Abstract.
6. The Program Committee will provide all reviewers with Instructions. Abstracts are to be evaluated on a 10-point scale. Where necessary, this will enable the Program Committee to establish a cut-off point to keep the number of approved abstracts below the maximum set for participants in the Congress.
7. Abstracts which have undergone the review process will NOT be forwarded to the national committees for a second round of review (such a procedure was proposed during the ICS Zoom discussion of the first draft of the reforms).
8. Abstracts may be written in English or any Slavic language.
9. To bring the ICS into alignment with contemporary norms for international academic organizations, the national quota system for participation in the general sessions of the Congress will be eliminated. However, to ensure that smaller ICS member countries or linguistic groups (such as the Sorbs) will be able to participate in the Congress, such countries will each be allocated a minimum quota of FIVE approved Paper Proposals for the general sessions. To effectuate this minimum quota, after the ICS Program Committee has received the Abstract assessments from the external Reviewers, it will verify the nationality of all the authors whose Abstracts were *accepted*, and if any country or linguistic group is represented by LESS than five accepted abstracts, the Program Committee will select the highest ranking Abstract(s) for that country from the *rejected* Abstract category to enable that country to meet the minimum quota of five. If LESS than five Abstracts are submitted by any country of linguistic group in the first round of evaluation, then ALL will be accepted.
10. Abstracts for Round Tables and Posters are to be reviewed by the Program Committee. Abstracts for Thematic Blocks are to be reviewed, as before, by the ICS plenary.
11. It is also proposed that ICS develop its own electronic database of the names of specialists, which could then be made available to Program (or Organizing) Committees in the future.

The continuing role of the national committees in the ICS

Although the national committees would no longer supervise the review of paper Abstracts and other Congress presentations, they would still have a variety of other important functions in the ICS, including the collective ICS response to international crises, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the related postponement of ICS-17, the election of the Executive Committee (Presidium), the choice of Plenary session guest lecturers at the Congress, and broader issues concerning the organization of Congresses and the structure of the ICS.

Structure of the Executive Committee (Presidium)

At least *one* of the vice-presidents of ICS should not be from the country which is hosting the Congress, while at least *one* member of the Executive Committee should be from the host country.

Creation of an ICS website

The Working Group advises the creation of a permanent ICS website, one which will provide information about the ICS' activities, including the work of the Research Commissions, preparations for the Congress (with an interactive app for matching Abstracts with Reviewers, to be used by the Program Committee, if the reforms are adopted, or the Organizing Committee, if the status quo is maintained), etc.

With best wishes,

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