SECTION 9

INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH

Some associations have become increasingly involved in research activities. These go beyond their role in disseminating research to teachers, if their training activities move beyond the practical to the more research-oriented. They increasingly include funded research projects which the associations apply for and manage themselves. Of course, for many associations, this is seen to be beyond their capacity, given the challenges of finding active members. On the other hand, however, some associations are looking to funded research projects as a way of bringing in income and of involving their members in research activity either through offering them opportunities to get actively involved or through consulting them on issues which emerge during the research process.

The first case study (Case study 9.1), which has been contributed by CASLT (The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers), offers an overview of the many ways in which this association engages in research, and this is complemented by the second case study contributed by The Romanian Association of Teacher of English (Case study 9.2).

These next sections will provide an overview of different types of research activity, with examples from other associations. It also highlights the role of collaboration which enables associations to have greater and more effective involvement in research.

1. Funded research projects

Associations are well placed to attract funding to carry out research and development projects. Through the associations, funding bodies are able to claim to be supporting the teaching profession as a whole, and are also more confident that the developments will gain approval and have an impact. Furthermore, language associations are able to draw on a wide range of expertise, as they tend to have members from all sectors of education, from primary schools to universities and, in some cases, from other language-related sectors such as publishing and translating. In addition, many associations have developed extensive contacts with other types of organisation, such as businesses, embassies and the media.

However, even associations actively involved in research continue to look for ways of enhancing this aspect of their work. According to the German Teachers' Association of Slovakia, for example:

> "SUNG ist ein Deutschlehrer- und Germanistenverband, im Unterschied zu den meisten Ländern Europas sind in seiner Mitgliedschaft Unterrichtspraxis und Forschung eng verbunden. Der konstruktive Austausch zwischen diesen verschiedenen Zielgruppen könnte jedoch verbessert werden und intensiver gestaltet werden. Auch Formen der Weiterbildung von Deutschlehrenden könnten effektiver werden**."**

(Spoločnosť učiteľov nemeckého jazyka a germanistov Slovenska (SUNG); Verband der Deutschlehrer und Germanisten der Slowakei, Slovakia)

In its case study, CASLT describes a number of funded research projects in which it is engaged. These involve the development of a resource which adapts the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Languages Portfolio for the Canadian context, the development of an assessment toolkit, the production of research digests which illuminate different aspects of school leadership and administration in relation to second language teaching and learning, the production of a teaching portfolio, the provision of teacher research grants, and the production of accessible guides to research for teachers.

Other projects described by associations include:

- The development of student standards; development of K-12 culture materials database; chapter projects; K-8 programme development; articulation projects; cultural knowledge projects; professional development projects here and in Germany; leadership training projects; teaching of diversity
  (American Association of Teachers of German, USA)
- Involvement in the evaluation of the project EWOW (English for the world of work)
  (English Language Teachers Association in Albania)
- Création et développement des formations du français optionnel/spécialisé (du tourisme, des affaires, des mines etc)
  (Association des professeurs mongols de la langue française (APMLF), Mongolia)
- Projet 'Culture d'enseignement, culture d'apprentissage' (FIPF-AUF), Fonds d'innovation pédagogique (MAEE, France) **(Association des professeurs de et en français en Bulgarie, Bulgaria)**
- Involvement with the Professional Standards Project for Language Teachers in Australia; AFMLTA also worked with the Asia Education Foundation on the National Promotions Project. **(Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations)**
- Partner with three universities in Government-funded research into the development of a World Languages Strategy, which would enable schools to offer a wider range of languages in primary and secondary schools. ALL's role was to support the research through organizing group meetings and critical reading of drafts, as well as the organization of the consultation process once the Strategy was developed.
  (Association for Language Learning, UK)
- FIPLV, together with FIPF and IDV, is leading on the LACS project based at the ECML in Graz, Austria, the results of which will support language teacher associations around the world through sharing of ideas. **(FIPLV, FIPF, IDV)**

LEND (Lingua e Nuova Didattica) in Italy, is in a strong position to involve itself in research due to the strengths of its members:

"Le travail et les expériences des groupes locaux, donnent à LEND la possibilité d'établir quelles sont les priorités pour la/les recherche/s et/ou les projets à lancer ou auxquels participer au niveau national et international. LEND est actuellement engagé

dans trois projets européens:
1. REAL: création d'un réseau européen d'associations de professeurs de toutes les langues
2. APPEAL: pour la production de matériaux pour l'apprentissage des langues (français, italien, allemand, français, espagnol, arabe) de la part de tous ceux qui travaillent dans des projets européens
3. AECLIL: évaluation des compétences à l'intérieur de modules CLIL / EMILE".

The following contribution was made by Shpresa Delija from Albania. In it, she describes two projects in which the English Language Teachers' Association of Albania was involved, partly on a voluntary basis out of commitment to ensuring that teachers' voices are included in curriculum development, and partly financed. However, reduced funding is leading ELTA to look elsewhere as a means of remaining active, such as to the European Union or ECML.

"ELTA Albania is in close relations with the British Council, though its funds have been cut considerably recently and most of the work we do is done voluntarily by the majority of ELTA members. But this kind of work will not last long [as] most of them are retiring in 5-8 years and the young teachers tend to work only if they are paid. I can give one example of this volunteer work. In 2008 I was asked by MoES (Ministry of Education and Science) to work on the ELP design for university students and there was also another group of teachers from the high schools to work on their ELP. The representative of MoES said that they were going to sponsor this group of teachers, whereas for us they asked us to do it voluntarily, otherwise the group from the university should be excluded from this project. So I chose some dedicated professors and we did it almost voluntarily, and now we have an accredited ELP (2009).

As for the EWOW (English for the world of work) project, ELTA was appointed by the BC to deal with the evaluation of this project. We organized questionnaires to 2 vocational schools (Economics and Tourism); we had interviews with the English teachers in the piloted schools. Then we attended some demo lessons done by these schools and after analyzing all the gathered data we evaluated the work done by the teachers, head teachers and the businesses. In the final report we gave our recommendations to this project as well." **(English Language Teachers' Association of Albania)**

2. Opinion polls and surveys

Associations frequently carry out surveys of their members. These can be for different purposes: as well as evaluating events (e.g. BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages, Canada; English Language Teachers Association of Albania), associations also refer to their use in order to identify member needs in order to inform the development of the association and to gather information and opinions on a particular language-related issue (e.g. CASLT, Canada). Such surveys are now most frequently done on-line, either through an email request for comments to be sent to the association, through longer research or consultation questionnaires using tools such as survey monkey, or through short weekly

opinion polls on a specific issue through the website. Although some associations report difficulties in getting members to respond, it is also recognised that such activity is important and that on-line surveys are still more successful than trying to arrange face-to-face meetings, especially when consulting on association development.

- **Input into association development**

  o "We conduct surveys often to determine the needs and opinions of our members on a variety of issues. We want to assure ourselves that we are doing whatever we can to support our members. Communication always needs to be improved and despite many "blasts", we often learn that members still do not know all that we do for them!"
  (American Association of Teachers of German, USA)

  o "We send out questionnaires quite often but have a very low response rate. We do get feedback during various activities but they are specifically related to the activity but we could try to find out more about what they want and need during the next upcoming conference. There is always a session on just this question during our conferences, but last time only two people came." **(TEA: Teachers of English in Austria, Austria)**

  o "We mainly discuss issues that need to be discussed during our monthly meetings. Also, like I stated, there are polls posted on the website, so I presume that people have no need to complain that their views are not taken into account if they do not bother to express them. I believe that things are transparent enough as they are." **(RATE: Romanian Association of Teachers of English, Romania)**

  o « Notre association utilise les techniques d'enquête pour mieux comprendre les besoins et des voeux de nos membres. Nous discutons que nous devons changer pour améliorer nos activités. » **(Association lituanienne des professeurs de français, Lithuania)**

  o "Souvent pendant les stages pédagogiques nous posons des questions aux professeurs pour essayer de mieux comprendre ce qu'ils souhaitent obtenir de l'association. Parfois ils indiquent des sujets pour les stages futurs qu'ils retiennent utiles pour leurs classes." **(Association des Professeurs de Français de Malte (APFM), Malta)**

1. **Surveys on language issues**

  o "Die einzelnen Mitgliedsländer haben sehr unterschiedliche Forschungs – und auch Lehrvoraussetzungen. Ein Perspektivenvergleich kann am besten bei Tagungen erfolgen. Wir sind derzeit zudem in der Anfangsplanung für eine

große gemeinsame Publikation über die Situation von DaF in den einzelnen Mitgliedsländern (sie soll in unserem Online Magazin erscheinen)." **(IDV)**

- "On-line discussions and surveys on government proposals in order to inform the association's official response. This has been used, for example, in 2001, when the government was planning to make languages optional beyond the age of 14, and more recently in 2011, in response to the government consultation on the new curriculum. The 2001 survey led to an annual Language Trends survey, which take snapshots of language learning activity in a range of sectors/educational phases. In 2002, it looked at levels of disapplication from language learning for learners aged 14-16, and in following years, the survey was expanded to include other areas such as adult education, community languages and vocational language learning in further education. The survey is conducted in partnership with CILT, the National Centre of Languages, and ISMLA (the Independent Schools Modern Languages Association)." **(ALL, UK)**

3. Support for teacher research

In some instances, associations are enabling their members to carry out research themselves. Although this is usually not considered to be as central to their activity as other forms of professional development, there is clearly a recognition that this contributes enormously to teacher and classroom development and has a high level of impact. Some associations are still considering strategies for developing this as part of their services to teachers.

"We encourage and financially support members to create innovative topics for professional development sessions at local, state, regional and national meetings. Chapter officers write innovative grants in order to fund their projects."
(American Association of Teachers of German, USA)
"Action research bursaries that we offer annually to teachers wishing to engage in classr oom research." **(CASLT, Canada)**

"Unserer Lehrerverein erkennt die Wichtigkeit von Forschungsmöglichkeiten für alle portugiesischen Deutschlehrer an! Aus Zeitgründen – da wir alle an Schulen tätig sind und den Verband lediglich „nebenbei" führen, haben wir uns noch nicht dazu entschlossen. Für unseren Verein steht das Angebot für deutschsprachliche spezifische Aus-und Fortbildung im Vordergrund; dabei kommt es oft zu intensiverer Forschung."
(APPA – Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Alemão, Portugal)

"Damit wir überhaupt an Forschungsmöglichkeiten auf Verbandsebene denken können, müssen wir unser Aufbaustudium "Deutsch als Fremdsprache" zustande bringen. Im Moment sind Forschungsergebnisse eher auf individueller Basis zu finden. Aber wir, als Verband, arbeiten ganz intensiv, um dies zu ändern…Wir wollen einen Forschungspreis beginnen. Bis jetzt war unser Vorgehen so, dass wir versuchen die Lehrer, die Interesse an Forschung haben, zu Kongressen und/oder Seminare zu schicken, sowie wir versuchen, ihre Beiträge in Magazinen zu veröffentlichen. Hierbei ist das Magazin für

Lateinamerikanische DaF-lehrer (DaF Brücke) das wichtigste Medium." **(AVENPA (Asociacion Venezolana de Profesores de Alemán, Venezuela)**

4. Disseminating research through publications and events

Associations generally have a major commitment to disseminating research and policy developments to their members. This can be done face-to-face at professional development workshops and conferences and other events, or by means of publications, including increasing use of technology. It is recognized that research plays a vital role in developing language learning and teaching, and strengthens the position of language teachers. The links between theory, practice and research are all too often not made, and associations can play an important role in supporting teachers and helping them to benefit from and develop them.

"Wir sind eher "Anwenderinnen" und weniger in der Forschung tätig. Greifen aber wissenschaftliche Themen in unserer Publikation auf oder laden Referenten zu grösseren Veranstaltungen ein." **(Arbeitskreis Deutsch als Fremdsprache in der Schweiz)**

"Die unterschiedlichen Forschungstendenzen werden vor allem bei Tagungen präsentiert und diskutiert. Außerdem können unsere Mitglieder die Produkte ihrer Forschungsergebnisse durch unseren Verband (Mailing-Liste) bekannt machen." **(Associazione Italiana di Germanistica – AIG, Italy)**

"We organize annual meetings of the members, where all members are invited to participate; also round table discussions to plan the activities for the next year. The members of the LKPA board organize events and other activities to fulfill the needs of the founder institutions and professionals working there. A seminar on innovation in education was held during the annual meeting in 2011. The question of creativity was discussed during the annual international conferences in Kaunas "Multilingualism and Creativity: Theory and Practice of Language Education " organised by LKPA, Vytautas Magnus University and Kaunas Technological University organised May 21-22 , 2010 in Kaunas, Lithuania. Information about the conference is placed on: http://www.lkpa.uki.vu.lt/index.php?cid=344&more=1&lang=en. The conference papers selected by the scientific committee are published in a refereed journal "Studies about Languages". The other papers are available in a non-refereed collection in the CD attached to the book. Articles placed on CD you can download on http://www.vikc.lt/lkpa/." **(Lietuvos kalbų pedagogų asociacija – LKPA, Lithuania)**

"Encourager les recherches sur les études françaises (Dans ce cadre nous avons commencé à publier le journal annuel « Les études françaises »); Organiser un colloque régional sur l'enseignement du français et les études françaises (Dans ce cadre nous devons décider le problème de financement)." **(Association des professeurs mongols de la langue française -APMLF, Mongolia)**

"(Our most important function?) Acting as a forum for teachers to disseminate good practice as well as carrying out research. There is a little contact between the researchers and University professors who work out on new methods, techniques in teaching foreign languages and teachers from primary and secondary schools who should apply those methods and raise the level of quality but also quantity. There is a weak connection between theory and practice." **(Slovenská asociácia učiteľov francúzštiny, Association slovaque des professeurs de français, Slovak Association of Teachers of French, Slovakia)**

"Auf unseren Konferenzen können Mitglieder ihre Arbeiten, Forschungen usw. vorstellen, aber auch Probleme aufzeigen und diskutieren. Dazu soll in den kommenden Wochen auch ein Forum auf unserer Webseite geöffnet und promoviert werden**." (Slowenischer Deutschlehrerverband (SDUNJ), Slovenia)**

5. **Research collaborations**

Two main barriers to involvement in research activity are identified by associations. One barrier, exemplified by the following quotation, is the lack of resources, especially human resources:

"Nous divulguons les travaux des collègues qui nous contactent et essayons d'être à l'écoute de leurs intérêts à travers le courrier électronique mais il ne nous est pas possible d'impliquer l'association dans des activités de recherche en raison du manque de disponibilité et de ressources humaines.□ **(Associação portuguesa dos professores de francês – APPF, Portugal)**

The other barrier is competition with other organizations for limited research funds, such as in the following example:

„Leider gilt hier, wenn es um den Bereich DaF/DaZ geht, nur das Goethe Institut als erste und einzige Instanz." **(Türkiye Almanca Öğretmenleri Derneği / Türkischer Deutschlehrerverein, Turkey)**

Nevertheless, the Turkish association has found a way forward with this problem to some degree, through working with other organisations and active members who work in other sectors:

„Involviert sind wir als Vorstand, wenn auch nur begrenzt, mit anderen Bereichen der Forschung dank der Universitäten und deren Lehrkräfte sowie Verlage für Deutsch-Lehrwerke." **(Türkiye Almanca Öğretmenleri Derneği / Türkischer Deutschlehrerverein, Turkey)**

The following shows how a language specific association contributes to research activity through collaboration with multilingual associations:

« Nous organisons parfois des enquêtes pour mieux connaître les besoins de nos membres et améliorer nos services. Nous ne soutenons pas d'activité de recherche particulière mais certaines de nos commissions sont impliquées dans ce domaine comme la Commission sur la compétence culturelle qui a établi un modèle dévaluation de la compétence culturelle sur quatre niveaux. Notre association collabore aux efforts des grandes associations de langues aux états-Unis comme l'American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) dont les publications et initiatives déterminent l'évolution de la recherche en didactique des langues étrangères dans notre pays. » **(American Association of Teachers of French, USA)**

Further examples of working in partnership with a range of organisations are to be found in Case study 9.1 (CASLT). Clearly, collaboration with others is a way of addressing the shortage of human resources to carry out the research and the problem of competition for limited funds. Clearly defined roles, such as in the World Languages Project described above, in which ALL is an active partner, is a way of ensuring that the research benefits from the partners' strengths and that it is not beyond the capacity of the association.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Dr. Wendy Carr

The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) promotes the advancement of second language learning and teaching throughout Canada by creating opportunities for professional development, by encouraging research, and by facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas among second language educators.

One of CASLT's five strategic areas of focus is to conduct/produce and disseminate research projects, reports, articles, weblinks, podcasts and other resources related to second language teaching and learning. CASLT's mission is to inform members and stakeholders about priority topics related to current issues and trends in second language education and to support policy makers in decisions related to development and delivery of language programmes and services, including teacher professional development. Some of CASLT's research projects have been groundbreaking, from the *National Core French Study* (1990) to *Teaching FSL in Canada: Teachers' Perspectives* (2006) to recent and ongoing research related to the integration of the Common European Framework of Reference and Portfolio.

Most research projects are funded through grants (involving detailed applications in a competitive process) from various governmental agencies, such as the Department of Canadian Heritage (www.pch.gc.ca), Ministries of Education (http://www.cmec.ca) the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca), and others. Some projects, especially those involving professional learning opportunities and conferences, are conducted in conjunction with some of our institutional partners, such as:

• Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics, Montreal, Québec
• *Canadian Modern Language Review*, University of Toronto Press Journals Division
• Canadian Teachers' Federation, Ottawa, Ontario
• Institute for Innovation in Second Language Education, Edmonton, Alberta
• Centre for Educational Research on Languages and Literacies, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
• Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, University of Ottawa, Ontario
• Second Language Research Institute of Canada, University of New Brunswick

CASLT is very proud of not only its various projects and products but also its outreach to second language educators across the country. This is accomplished through the dissemination of reports, articles, podcasts, webcasts, e-bulletins (many of which are found on our website, www.caslt.org) and a quarterly publication called *Réflexions*. We also hold national conferences, such as our bi-annual Languages Without Borders Conference, local professional development events called CASLT Chez Vous, and an annual networking event that brings together provincial and territorial stakeholders to focus on current language

education issues and review our strategic directions. Each is held in varying locations across the country.

Some of CASLT's Recent and Ongoing Research Projects

A Common Framework of Reference and a Portfolio for Languages in Canada Information Kit (2nd ed.)

This information kit, incorporating the work of the Council of Europe and numerous professional development sessions across Canada (with David Little and others), synthesizes the CEFR and ELP literature for teachers and administrators. This resource has been very timely for decision-makers and educators as a means of showing how the CEFR and ELP can be integrated into programme planning and classroom instruction and assessment.

Assessment Toolkit (2nd ed.)

This two-year funded project was intended to update existing Assessment Toolkit documents (for both French and English as second language contexts) to reflect new assessment practices, such as assessment for learning, learner autonomy, goal-setting and also link to the Common European Framework of Reference (including tools to use in a language portfolio). In Year 1, project leader/researcher, Dr. Laura Hermans, oversaw educator-design teams as they developed a template for assessment tasks with samples at the A1 level. Teacher feedback was sought and, in Year 2, teams are now proceeding to higher CEFR levels with a growing group of pilot teachers. Teacher validation and feedback will be incorporated into the next stages of development, and the toolkits will be available to school boards in the months ahead.

Administrators Leadership Support Folio Series

Each folio highlights a key topic and incorporates the latest research to guide administrators in supporting their second language teachers and programmes (along with suggested readings to extend professional learning). The first phase, led by Dr. Cynthia Lewis, involved developing folios to guide administrators in the following areas:

- supporting professional growth,
- organizing effective second language programmes,
- maximizing student learning,
- recruiting and retraining teachers,
- assessing for learning, use of the framework and portfolio,
- promoting success for all learners (differentiation, inclusion).

The second phase involves the marketing the folios to school board and school-based administrators as well as providing professional development sessions for their implementation.

Pre-service and Inservice Teacher Portfolio

Le portfolio canadien des langues pour enseignant(e)s, a project led by Dr. Miles Turnbull (University of Prince Edward Island), is structured like the European Language Portfolio (with passport, biography, self-assessment charts and dossier) and designed to support

preserve and inservice teachers in reflecting on and recording their linguistic and intercultural competencies. These competencies are framed in specific contexts that relate to teachers' daily language use in the classroom and in their professional lives as language educators. This tool will be marketed to faculties of education, school boards and schools.

Teacher Research Grants

CASLT provides grants for Canadian teacher research around questions of importance to language educators. Classroom teachers may submit a classroom-based research proposal and seek funding in order to collaborate with colleagues, conduct classroom observations, or other activities that will enable them to address a question of practice. An example of two projects presently underway are how the use of journals can enhance oral production and what strategies can be borrowed from an intensive delivery model to enhance a core French programme. Findings are shared in CASLT's quarterly publication, *Réflexions*.

Canadian Modern Language Review Teacher Research Guides

A two-year pilot is underway to increase access to relevant second language educational research published in the scholarly journal, *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La revue canadienne des langues vivantes*. Dr. Callie Mady (Nipissing University, Ontario) has produced teacher professional support guides related to several articles. In each guide, she summarizes the key points and highlights practical applications for classroom use based on the findings of each study. The guides will be marketed to school boards and universities and include a one-year subscription to the *CMLR*. Virtual discussion workshops are planned once the guides have been published.

Conclusion

These are but a few items on CASLT's research agenda. We strive to stay ahead of the curve by anticipating where trends are moving are moving in languages education, what our members need to know and how we can infuse an informed pedagogical perspective into the various agendas of policy makers and decision makers. Through our conferences, publications and projects, as well as strong partnerships with others who care about language education, CASLT strives to maintain a strong and current knowledge base and ensure that its members are well informed.

Dr. Wendy Carr (University of British Columbia) is a Director at Large on CASLT's Board of Directors : http://educ.ubc.ca/faculty/wcarr

ROMANIAN ENGLISH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Cristina Rusu, EFL Teacher, "Emil Racovita" National College,
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The key-word in today's fast-paced world is information. If you have it, the world is your oyster. On the other hand, because of an unfortunate information gap, highly capable people fail to achieve otherwise easily achievable goals, or fail to take advantage of opportunities that could help them advance or improve professionally. In my view, a professional association should set a primary goal for itself, that of providing its members with top-quality, up to date information. Our association tries to do just that and it mostly succeeds.

Our main ways of getting information across to our members are face-to-face meetings, conferences and the internet. During our meetings, which are always highly publicized in advance, we tackle a variety of issues and also attempt to find out the needs of our members. Through polls and questionnaires, as well as open discussions, the teachers who take part in these meetings can ask for assistance, vote on proposed changes or simply acknowledge events or express views on different issues.

The website of the associations also contributes to the aforementioned process of information. It is easy to use and well-documented and it has improved our work considerably.

Periodically, we invite representatives of local or regional organizations and publishing houses to hold workshops and information sessions. For example, during the last association meeting, we had the regional manager of the British Council join us, and she informed us that the Council was about to place book orders for the upcoming year and that they were interested in the needs of the EFL community members in terms of publications, activities that the Council should organize, as well as courses that were needed, asking us to visit the BC website and send e-mails until a certain deadline, in which we should state precisely what our needs were. We found that particularly useful, as it provided us with a real, straightforward chance to ask for what we really needed in terms of materials or training possibilities. As well as this, we had Longman representatives present us the new materials and interactive websites of Pearson Longman; this is all information without which we could definitely not do our job properly.

On a more general note, the Romanian association is organized as a pyramid, RATE (which stands for Romanian Association of Teachers of English) being the central organism which is regularly in contact with the regional associations (CETA –Transylvanian/ North-West regional body , BETA –representing the capital city and the surroundings/ South- Central , TETA- the Association from the Western part of the country and MATE- the Moldavian Association, North- Eastern part of Romania). While the members of these different –yet so similar- association groups meet at least once a year at the National RATE conference to share experience and research, the presidents of the four regional bodies meet on a regular basis and discuss the global issues that appear, ways of making the Association more

efficient, as well as means to address the needs of the members; they are also in contact with the regional and national authorities, which ensures added transparency and efficiency in our field.