

SGROUP NEWSLETTER

Foreword

The final pages of the calendar remind us that another year is coming to a close. This edition invites us to pause and celebrate the progress we have made together in 2025. Every step forward has been shaped by the dedication and collaboration of our community, and each member has played an important role in strengthening the SGroup network.

In this edition, you will find:

- Christmas Greeting
- Honouring 2025 Award Winners
- News from the Executive Committee
- Open Calls
- New Establishments: New Trends in English Studies Research and Working Group
- Example of Good Practise: DITE Project
- A Calendar of Activities in 2026
 - ICon Programme
 - Think Tank Academy Spring Conference 2026
- End-of-Year Activities 2025
 - Online Cafe in November
 - PHD CUP 2025 Final
 - Think Tank Academy Autumn Conference 2025
 - Annual Meetings 2025

Looking ahead, our next edition will be released in March 2026 and will feature a new section, "Information from Partner Universities" where members can share invitations to the international events open to other network members. We encourage you to contribute by filling in the form [[here](#)] by the 1st of February 2026.

Thank you for your continued engagement and for the family spirit that defines SGroup network.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a joyful holiday. May the New Year bring exciting opportunities, continued success, and ongoing collaboration – we look forward to sharing 2026 with you.

Communication Working Group

Contact us

Stay connected with us



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We invite you and your colleagues to follow SGroup on Social Media for the latest updates, news and opportunities

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Dear Members of the SGroup Network,

As we approach the end of 2025, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to each one of you.

Despite ongoing violent conflicts, and accumulated crises, as well as increased pressure on higher education, this has been a year marked by excellent outcomes and significant achievements across our network. Together, our closely knit network of trust lived through painful personal losses, supporting each other as colleagues and friends. Professionally, we strengthened our collaborations, advanced our strategic initiatives, and continued to demonstrate the value of our collective commitment to internationalisation, innovation, and academic excellence. In particular, through your dedication, creativity, and unwavering spirit of cooperation, we have transformed challenges into opportunities and ambitions into achievements and developed even further the vibrant spirit of collaboration that defines the "SGroup family".

I am deeply grateful for your engagement, vision, and trust. As we look ahead to 2026, we do so with confidence and optimism. There is a renewed sense of hope, possibilities, and enthusiasm for what lies ahead. I am certain that, together, we will continue to grow, evolve, and deliver meaningful impact for our students, staff, and academic communities. And, with the solid foundations we have built together, we step into the new year with confidence—ready to broaden our horizons, deepen our collaboration, and open new pathways for excellence and impact.

May this festive season bring you peace, joy, inspiring moments, and above all, celebration with your loved ones. I wish you a wonderful Christmas, and may the New Year bring happiness and health, filling our hearts with gladness as we continue our journey forward, together.

With warmest wishes,

Arnim Heinemann

President

SGroup – Universities in Europe



Source: University of Szeged

HONOURING 2025 AWARD WINNERS



Source: Canva

IMPACT AWARD

We are proud to share that this year's Impact Award was presented to Gemma Castro from the University of Cantabria, one of SGroup's founding institutions. As the first Secretary of the network, Gemma helped establish many of the structures and practices that continue to guide SGroup today. Her long-standing involvement, enthusiasm, and continuous support have significantly shaped the network's development. This award recognises her remarkable contribution and the positive influence she has had on colleagues and initiatives across SGroup.



Source: University of Szeged

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

We are delighted to announce that the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Professor Cecilia Christersson from Malmö University. As former Vice President of SGroup, Cecilia has made amazing contributions to the network, especially through her active involvement in the Think Tank Academy. Her commitment to strengthening international collaboration, advancing discussions on social mission, and enriching debates on doctoral education has left a lasting impact on our community. We are deeply grateful for her dedication and the important legacy she leaves within SGroup.



Source: Canva



Source: Google Images

NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

THANK YOU

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Mar Fernández Sáinz (University of Valladolid) and Cecilia Christersson (Malmö University) for their outstanding contribution, vision, and commitment during their time on the Committee. Their work has left a lasting impact to SGroup and its members. ❤️

LEADERSHIP

We are proud to continue our journey under the inspiring leadership of Arnim Heinemann (University of Bayreuth) as President and delighted to welcome Kathleen O'Connor (University of Lille) as the Vice President of the Committee.

WELCOME & REAPPOINTMENTS

A new chapter begins as we welcome Stephen Wallis (University of Westminster) and Rafael De Paz Urueña (Universidad de León) to the SGroup Executive Committee! Their experience, insight, and dedication will help advance SGroup's mission to connect universities, foster innovation, and strengthen international collaboration across our network. We congratulate Joanna Misiukajtis (University of Szczecin) on her second term re-election.



Source: B.Paranhos

OPEN CALLS

JOIN OUR THINK TANKS

Are you passionate about shaping the ideas that drive our network forward? Our Think Tanks are the perfect place to dive deep into discussions, research, and strategy development across a variety of focus areas. By joining, you'll collaborate with fellow members to generate innovative solutions, provide valuable insights, and help guide the future direction of the Think Tanks. Whether you're an expert in your field or simply eager to contribute your perspective, your voice matters. Get involved and make an impact through our Think Tanks!

JOIN THE NEW MEMBERSHIP TEAM

Looking for a hands-on way to grow our community? The Membership Team is at the heart of recruiting and welcoming new members into our organization. By joining this team, you'll help introduce others to the opportunities and benefits of being part of our network, fostering connections and engagement along the way. If you enjoy building relationships, supporting others, and helping our community thrive, this is the perfect group for you. Come help us expand our reach and strengthen our member network!

HOW TO APPLY?

Ready to join a working group? Applying is easy! Simply fill out our application form to indicate which group you'd like to join and share a bit about yourself. [**Apply Here**](#). Applications close on the 1st of February 2026.



Source: University of Szeged



Source: University of Szeged

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW WORKING GROUP – NEW TRENDS IN ENGLISH STUDIES (NTES)

The initiative to explore New Trends in English Studies was proposed by the University of Catania, through its Language Centre (CLA), in collaboration with the Language Centre of the University of Enna (CLIK). This initiative is dedicated to promoting and disseminating the English language, fostering awareness of English-speaking cultures, and enhancing the teaching of English across undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes. The creation of NTES supports SGroup's mission's core areas of cooperation in academic collaboration and knowledge transfer, and is embedded within the SGroup Think Tank Academy actions for 2026, with the aim of connecting and empowering language centres across our member institutions.

The NTES Research and Working Group aims to:

- Explore the evolving role of universities as centres of knowledge, research, and innovation in English Studies;
- Offer training activities for PhD candidates, researchers, and administrative staff to strengthen their competences in language learning, research, teaching, and support services;
- Monitor current trends in language teaching and assess the strategic role of language centres within partner universities.

To ensure effective implementation and oversight, a Scientific and Management Committee of the NTES Research Group has been established, comprising:

- Prof. dr. Kathleen O'Connor, Vice-Rector for Europe and International Relations at Université de Lille and Vice President of the SGroup – Universities in Europe;
- Dr. Paola Clara Leotta, Associate Professor of English Language, Translation and Linguistics, and Internationalisation Delegate, Department of Educational Sciences, University of Catania;
- Dr. Vincenza Tutino, Director of the CLA, University of Catania;
- Dr. Annalisa Bonomo, Associate Professor of English Language, Translation and Linguistics, and President of the CLIK, University of Enna "Kore."




Source: University of Szeged


2026 CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

January SGroup Café TTSMU Engagements session Launch of the ICON Programme	February Launch of PhD CUP 2026 Deadline ICON applications Request for LO's- ICON application validation	March BIP on Inclusion – Rouen PhD CUP & ICON selection PhD CUP & ICON – communication of results
April Second call ICON Programme Virtual component BIP Staff Week (online) Think Tank Academy-Kaunas Deadline – 2 nd ICON call	May PhD CUP training SGroup Café Virtual component BIP Doctoral Education-Lille PhD CUP Video Submission	June Evaluation PhD CUP SGroup Staff Week – Ostrava TTSMU Engagements session BIP on Doctoral Education – Lille
July Confirmation of PHD Cup Top 10	August Office closed (3-14)	September Final Preparations- Annual Meetings
October Annual Meetings at Silesian University-Gliwice,Poland (13-15) PhD CUP final Think Tank Academy Autumn Conference	November SGroup Café	December Office closed (24-31)

JOIN US IN KAUNAS, LITHUANIA, FOR THE TTA SPRING CONFERENCE 2026

Topic: Disruptions and Innovation in Global Higher Education

 Save the Date
20–21 April 2026

 What to Expect

A gathering of all Think Tank (TT) communities to explore how global higher education is evolving amid disruption and innovation.

Participating TTs:


TT Africa • TT Americas • TT Asia Pacific • TT PhD • TT Social Mission of Universities

Programme Highlights:

- Keynotes on global HE shifts and innovation
- Parallel sessions led by each Think Tank
- Panels and discussions across all Think Tanks
- Campus and city tours

 About Kaunas University of Technology

KTU is a leading Baltic research university known for innovation, engineering, and international collaboration. Read [more information](#) about the university.

 Please read the [Visitors' Guide](#), which provides information on transportation, accommodation, and other essential logistics for reaching Kaunas



Source: Google Images



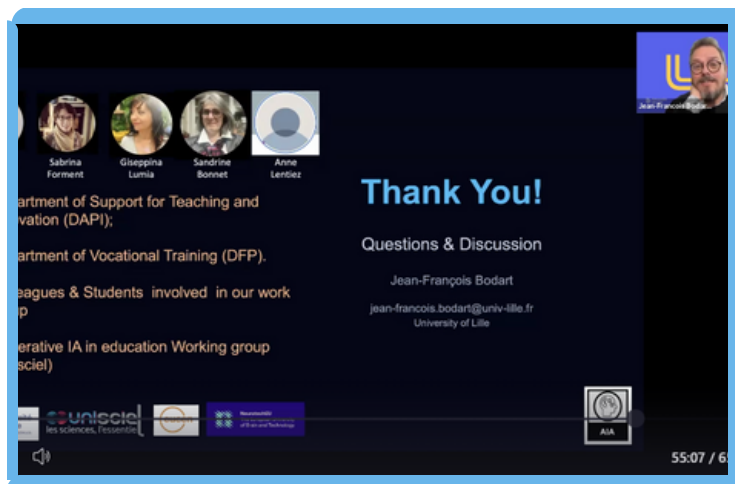
Source: Google Images

2025 EVENTS

SGROUP CAFÉ IN NOVEMBER

Topic: “AI & University Pedagogy – Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining”

Our latest SGroup Café gathered 25 participants for an inspiring session led by Professor Jean-François Bodart from the University of Lille. Professor Bodart shared Lille’s innovative strategy for integrating generative AI into teaching and learning, highlighting their ethical AI charter, new approaches to evaluation, and initiatives to support both teacher training and student engagement. It was an energising and insightful discussion with excellent participation from across the network.



Source: B.Paranhos

THINK TANK ACADEMY AUTUMN CONFERENCE IN SZEGED

During the TT Autumn Conference, Philipp Dengel from the TT Asia-Pacific presented the results of an extensive survey exploring current institutional engagement across all regional Think Tanks. The findings highlighted that universities are actively involved in a wide range of existing partnerships, with particularly strong links in the Asia-Pacific, the Americas, and Africa. Many institutions also indicated clear ambitions to grow or diversify their collaborations, signalling a continued interest in strengthening global outreach.

The survey further revealed that members value the Think Tanks as platforms for strategic guidance, practical support, and knowledge exchange, and many expressed a desire for even closer coordination and clearer thematic priorities. These insights underscored the importance of aligning activities with the evolving needs of the network.

Overall, the results offer a valuable snapshot of current trends and expectations, providing coordinators with concrete input to refine their goals and shape the strategic focus for 2026. This collective feedback will help ensure that each Think Tank continues to develop in ways that maximise engagement, relevance, and impact across the SGroup network.



Source: University of Szeged



Source: University of Szeged

2025 EVENTS

PHD CUP COMPETITION

This year's PhD Cup was one of our most inspiring editions yet, showcasing the incredible talent and communication skills of doctoral candidates across our network. The journey began in May, when 26 selected participants took part in a dedicated training session designed to strengthen their ability to communicate complex research in a clear, engaging, and accessible way. Following this training, all participants submitted their video pitches, from which a top 10 was identified—and ultimately, the top 5 finalists were chosen for the grand final.

These five exceptional finalists were invited to join us in person at the Annual Meetings in Szeged, where they delivered their one-minute pitches live on stage before a distinguished jury and an enthusiastic audience. The energy in the room was outstanding, and each finalist delivered a creative, sharp, and compelling pitch that highlighted the breadth and impact of research across our member institutions. During the gala dinner, we were delighted to announce the winner of the 2024 PhD Cup: Emma Cieslak-Jones (University of Lille). Our outstanding finalists—Eiya Ayed (University of Lille), Aurora Gasparello (University of Liège), Fabian Puga (University of Lille), and Felix Lizalde (University of Valladolid)—also delivered remarkable performances and contributed greatly to the success of this year's competition.

The finalists shared how transformative the experience was:

🧑‍🎓 “Reaching the final really strengthened my scientific communication skills and gave new visibility to my research... the atmosphere was spectacular.” – Félix Lizalde Arroyo

🧑‍🎓 “The PhD Cup taught me that even the most technical topics can be shared clearly and enjoyably... presenting as a finalist was invaluable for my future career.” – Aurora Gasparello



Source: University of Szeged



Source: University of Szeged



Source: University of Szeged



Source: University of Szeged

ANNUAL MEETINGS 2025

A huge thank you to everyone who attended our annual meetings in Szeged! It was an incredible week filled with engaging discussions, collaboration, and shared insights. We especially want to thank the University of Szeged for their incredible organization and hospitality – they truly made the week unforgettable.

Main Outcomes from the Szeged Annual Meetings:

- Finalized key strategic initiatives for the upcoming year.
- Approved updates to our governance and working group structures.
- Shared best practices and innovative projects across member universities.
- Strengthened collaboration between Think Tanks

For those who want to revisit the presentations and important documents, you can find everything in the Files section of our website:

[Access Meeting Documents](#)

If you want to relive the week, check out the highlights in our video:

[Watch the Annual Meeting Video](#)

Save the Date – 2026 Annual Meetings

Next year's meetings will be hosted by the Silesian University of Technology from October 13th to 15th. Mark your calendars and get ready to join us in Gliwice, Poland for another inspiring week of collaboration!



Contact us

Stay connected with us



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