



Survey for European proofreaders

Could you describe your organisation? What are its main purposes?

The ACLF is an independent, apolitical association. Its four main missions are to bring together professional proofreaders, promote the profession, and represent and train proofreaders.

The ACLF believes that proofreaders should keep an essential position in the written production chain and in rapidly changing economic sectors. In the digital age, it is important to raise awareness and recognition of their role, to clarify and promote the tasks they perform, so that all professions within the writing industry can benefit from a genuine cohesion.

When was it created? How many members does it gather? Is it growing steadily? If not, what are the obstacles in recruiting new members?

The ACLF was founded in 2018. Nearly 300 people have joined the association since its creation, and it currently has about 200 active members, who are trained and practising professionals. Their number is slowly growing, even though the number of proofreaders at the beginning of their career has decreased (due to the ACLF's membership process).

Who are your members? Are they proofreaders only? If not, which other professions are represented?

All members are practising proofreaders (the ACLF also accepts retired proofreaders).

According to a survey conducted in 2020 by the ACLF, only 40% of respondents work exclusively as proofreaders. Other activities are mostly concentrated within the publishing chain: authors, editors, translators, graphic designers, editorial coordinators or assistants, etc.

What are your main actions?

The primary role of the ACLF is to bring proofreaders together and enable them to benefit from the network they have joined.

The ACLF organises regular meetings to exchange experiences and expertise; provides useful resources; offers an online discussion forum to stimulate exchanges between members; offers support through training courses, webinars, videos, and the podcast 'Les Incorrigibles'. The ACLF also created a directory of professionals.

The ACLF participates in festivals and salons; communicates about its actions through social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram); develops partnerships with other professional organisations: proofreaders' union, the Association des traducteurs littéraires de France (ATLF), Fontaine O Livres, the Association romande des correcteurs et correctrices d'imprimerie (the Swiss organisation for proofreaders), etc.

The ACLF first sought to gain a thorough understanding of proofreaders, whether they are members or not. To this end, it conducted surveys aimed at providing an accurate picture of the profession and those who practise it.

One of the main purposes of the ACLF website is to provide relevant and up-to-date information about the profession and to inform proofreaders and trainee proofreaders about tools and reference documents they need for their work.

How is the organisation structured?

The administrative board can accommodate up to nine volunteers. Currently only seven volunteers meet virtually to complete the missions of the ACLF. Every year, a president and a treasurer are elected.

Is it the only organisation of that kind in your country? Does a union for this profession exist in your country?

There are no other associations of proofreaders, but there is a union, a distinct Facebook group and a distinct online chat system.

What are your communication tools?

The ACLF often communicates through the first page of its website and through social media. Members can chat through the forum. The ACLF also uses emails to communicate directly with its members.

Do your members physically or virtually meet up?

Every month, up to 8 members have the opportunity to virtually meet to discuss any topic relating to the profession.

The ACLF celebrated its fifth birthday by a physical meet up. About 30 people joined over a weekend. Two years later, in September 2025, about 50 members met in Paris for a day. The ACLF is planning on perpetuating this physical meeting to create a sense of cohesion.

Does your organisation provide training for its members?

The ACLF previously organised in-person training (mostly lasting 1 day) about specific topics (bibliography, relationships with the clients...). Too few people benefited from it and it was decided to stop those kinds of training.

The ACLF keeps organising online webinars on different topics, mostly focused on editorial issues.

Has your organisation developed some partnerships? If so, with what kind of structures (governmental, non-profit, entrepreneurial)?

In the last five years, the ACLF has been organising a conference cycle (conversations between proofreaders and authors, translators or graphic designers) with the help of an association specialised in the book chain in Paris.

The ACLF also benefited from grants from the Directorate of Cultural Affairs.

Do you have any kind of official recognition?

None.

How does one become a proofreader/copy editor in your country? Is there any specific training?

According to the survey conducted in 2020 by the ACLF, proofreaders are highly educated: half hold a bachelor's degree or more. 80% of them have previously worked in other fields, and the average age of entry into the profession is 35, regardless of training and career paths. 6 out of 10 proofreaders have undergone specific training for this profession. Training is provided by a small number of public or private schools.

What are the usual working conditions of a proofreader? What is/are the legal status(es) of proofreaders?

According to the survey conducted in 2020 by the ACLF, 80% of proofreaders are self-employed and 20% are salaried employees. Most of them work from home.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the job?

The difficulty in finding assignments and the low rates imposed in the publishing industry (even though it is forbidden) are among the problems. The loneliness that comes with these working conditions can sometimes be difficult for some proofreaders.

For most, the comfort lies in working from home, personal organisation, and, of course, the literary and intellectual pleasure of the job.

What are the rates or the salary generally observed?

There is a wide disparity of rates, and the explanatory variables for this dispersion are difficult to identify. The level of qualification, seniority in the profession, the medium, and the type of client seem to play a role.

The ACLF is not in a position to provide its members with rates. Indeed, legal professionals informed the association that: 'As a professional association, the dissemination of rates for services to your members would [...] be likely to constitute a restriction of competition [...]'

The ACLF published then a video to help calculate the rates, without providing any price list.

Who are the clients or employers? Do they belong to your own country exclusively?

Clients or employers can be publishers, communications agency, individuals, private companies, public institutions... Some members work for clients in French-speaking countries, such as Switzerland, but also internationally (for NGO, for instance).

Are there a lot of books published in your language each year? Is self-publishing a common type of edition in your country?

The book industry is still growing in France. In 2022, 537 million books were produced. Self-publishing has expanded a lot in the last decade.

As independent workers, which NACE codes are assigned to proofreaders?

Most independent proofreaders appear to be registered under the code 8219Z (photocopying, document preparation, and other specialised office support activities), but some are also listed under code 7490B (specialised, scientific, and technical activities, which includes all consulting activities) and others to code 5811Z (book publishing). It is therefore impossible to know the exact number of registered independent proofreaders.

Has the job of proofreading changed over the last years/decades? How and why?

The work is changing and is now mainly screen-based. The speed of production, and therefore of proofreading, has increased, and working conditions have deteriorated.

The creation of the 'auto-entrepreneur' status in France in 2008 has also changed the situation for proofreaders. This self-employed status has gradually replaced salaried employment, furthering the insecurity of the job.

Is the development of artificial intelligence a concern for proofreaders?

Advances in artificial intelligence initially caused concern among proofreaders. Other professions have been more severely affected, such as translators. As long as the subtleties of language and its poetry remain a mystery to AI, proofreaders appear to be safe.

Would you like to add any information?

Professional proofreaders sometimes feel unfair competition from people who start proofreading even though they do not have the necessary skills. These are people who are good at spelling or former French teachers, but who do not master the subtleties of real proofreading work.