



Summary of the survey sent by the ACLF to around fifteen associations of proofreaders in Europe

This conclusion is based on information provided by the three European associations that responded to the survey, located in Estonia, Slovenia, and Germany.

The Estonian association has been active since 2012 and has more than 200 members working in the fields of proofreading, translation, and editing, as well as linguists and specialists.

The Slovenian association has been active since 1996 and gathers around 100 members (proofreaders, translators, journalists, and anyone interested in proofreading).

The German association, with members in Austria, was created in 2000 and has 1,300 members working in proofreading, training, translation, and all writing professions. The membership has been steadily increasing over the past 10 years.

Due to linguistic differences, the issues at stake sometimes differ.

While the Estonian and Slovenian associations are both committed to preserving their languages and promoting their proper use, the German association is more concerned with economic and political issues.

The activities of these three organizations include: meetings (seminars, conferences, social activities, video conferences), training, transmission of job offers, legal advice, maintaining website and directory, providing access to professional insurance, links with ministries, participation in writing articles on Wikipedia, links with other associations, etc.

The associations operate in a similar way to the ACLF (5 to 9 volunteers), except in Germany, where federalism prevails (9 regional groups).

In each country, there is only one association of proofreaders, and no proofreading union.

Training and knowledge sharing (through forums and discussion groups) remain key in countries without officially recognized training programs. Experience is often the most important factor. The profession is not regulated, but the Estonian association offers a master's degree program and is consulted on language-related legislation.

In these three countries, our peers have developed strong partnerships with associations from other professions, authors' unions, ministries (Culture in Slovenia, Education and Research in Estonia), academic institutions, NGOs, fairs, etc.

Entrepreneurship seems widespread. In Estonia, people whose work is recognized as being of high quality can have six months of work ahead of them; in Slovenia, the profession is socially highly valued; in Germany, self-employed people pay only half the social security contribution (health insurance, pension).

The advantages of the profession seem to be the same: flexibility, intellectual stimulation, time management. So are the disadvantages: pressure, job insecurity, low salaries requiring additional work (in the book industry or elsewhere). The Slovenian association mentions particularly difficult relationships with authors, perhaps due to non-universal editorial standards. Salaries are often equal to or lower than the average income. In Germany, the average gross annual income for a proofreader is €21,000. In Slovenia, unfair competition is common: where the recommended rate is between €5 and €7 for 1,500 characters, rates as low as €2 are sometimes charged.

The clients are the same in every country, and the communications sector is financially more advantageous than the publishing one.

In terms of annual publication volume: in Estonia, 4,000 literary works are published (generated by six main publishing houses); production in Slovenia is considered relatively high (notably supported by a robust library system), and German-language production stands at 70,000 works, with self-publishing playing an increasingly important role. As a reminder, in France, around 100,000 works are published.

The NAF and NACE codes, which were our initial focus in this survey, are sometimes unified within a country but unfortunately disparate at the European level:

- in Estonia, NAF 74.9.0 (specialized, scientific, and technical activities, consulting);
- in Germany, NAF 58.1 (publishing of books and periodicals);
- in Slovenia, NACE 74.83 (secretarial and translation activities); 74.84 (other business activities); 92.31 (artistic and literary creation and interpretation); 93.5 (other service activities).

Work has been undergoing major changes, such as the arrival of digital technology, the shift to entrepreneurship, and the advent of AI. Estonian language authorities are considering a language reform and wish to standardize written language. Some want to “liberate” the language, while others prefer to maintain a nuanced usage, far from the influence of English.

The quality of texts is declining, and rewriting is on the rise.

According to the Estonian association, AI increases the workload rather than reducing it. For the Slovenian association, AI allows professionals to focus on nuances, therefore acting as a complement rather than a replacement. The German association is campaigning for the protection of copyright and promoting human capabilities.

This overview, ultimately reduced to three responding organizations, remains interesting. It shows that social struggles are the same, that the need to unite is growing, and that training is lacking everywhere. The road to NACE code unity seems very long, but the actions undertaken by all the associations are varied and supported by numerous partnerships that are just waiting to be expanded.