Netherlands hosted the 21th meeting on May 10th and 12th, in Leiden.

The meeting was attended by the following participants:
Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Great Britain, Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland and Tenerife.

This meeting was held during the International Toy Libraries Association 14th Conference.

**MEETING WITH ITLA BOARD**

ITLA’s Board joined the meeting to get to know ETL members better and hear from us what we expect from ITLA. We discussed the following points:

- We have all the same ideas and same goals.
- The cooperation between the two groups is essential and can be achieved by having a good website and a strong communication throughout the year.
- Learning from each other is a very important point. ITLA should share articles from all over the world with information, how Toy Libraries are running in the different countries and give access to them to everybody.
- To have an European link on the Board could help to achieve a close cooperation and so Portugal will have that duty for the next ITLA’s Board mandate.

*ETL & ITLA Board*
ITLA’S 14TH CONFERENCE: PLAY! OPEN YOUR WORLD!

ITLA’s conference gathered professionals working on toy libraries from all around the globe. It was clear, through the key note presentations, workshops and plenary presentations that the impact of play and toy libraries is recognized in every community despite cultural differences, different country incomes and different experiences throughout the years.

ETL members had a strong presence, namely through the development of workshops, the exhibition of videos or communications in plenary sessions, e.g.:

- France: Workshop “French toy libraries involved in youth and community and education”
- Switzerland: Video “Toy libraries in Switzerland”

Renate Fuchs was present on the opening ceremony and presented ETL on a plenary session.

ETL PRESENTATION AT THE CONFERENCE

ETL work was presented in Saturday’s plenary session. It was an opportunity to give some information about the European network of Toy Libraries to colleagues from all over the world, giving an overview of ETL’s work during the last 20 years and also looking towards the future.

Along the presentation, videos with testimonies from ETL members were played and issues like “Why a group of European Toy Libraries?”, “How it is to host a ETL Meeting?” and “How does ETL work?” were addressed.

We can state that, accordingly to the interviews of ETL members, ETL was successful in these 20 years in empowering countries, reinforcing national TL, creating an European identity, inspiring and helping each other all along the way. Not forgetting some funny moments and long lasting friendships!

Renate Fuchs finished the presentation stating that “I am very positive about the work done by ETL and I am sure that it will continue because we are on the right track and because play is so important for all of us and toy libraries are a very important service for our society and have to be promoted everywhere. And we can show that a good European cooperation is possible.”

Play and toy libraries are in our current society key points to help children, adults and elderly feel more happy and develop in healthier and happier ways.
REFLECTIONS ABOUT ETL PURPOSES...

Considering that ETL’s purposes have turned 20th years, Renate Fuchs suggested to have a reflection about their value nowadays and their accuracy considering the work ETL has been developing.

After a discussion in small groups, the purposes were reviewed and agreed to be as follows:

- To spread the idea of Toy Libraries (TL) as a means for bringing play and play material to people.
- To reinforce TL social, cultural and educational role e.g. through research on special topics and European facts & figures.
- To serve as a network and cooperate with national TL organizations, providing opportunities for international exchange of ideas and materials.
- To organize common presentations at local, national and international events such as the International Conferences organized by the International Toy Library Association.
- To develop and spread communication materials online.

ETL purposes were reviewed and updated

... AND A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

For the next years, ETL will initiate some work on the following areas:

- update the group’s material (e.g. flyer)
- renew ETL’s website and add relevant information (e.g. national events)
- discuss on issues that are affecting TL’s work nowadays, such as new ways of working so to survive, the media and online games and the lack of volunteers.

NEXT MEETING

The next ETL meeting will take place in Scotland on April 20-21st. It will be the first time ETL will have a meeting in this country and we thank our Scottish colleagues for giving us the chance to get to know their work!
SOCIAL PROGRAMME

The group had the chance, as usual, to get to know local toy libraries and the work carried out.

In the morning, we visited two toy libraries in Leiden: ‘Klapstuk’ (located in a multifunctional building, next to a playground, it is a good example of most toy libraries in The Netherland) and ‘Pinokkio’ (located in a part of the city were lots of different cultures are present, in a big building “het Gebouw” with lots of opportunities to meet other people like a library).

In the afternoon, we were in De Speelbergh, the largest toy library of The Netherlands in Noordwijk, a small village near the Dutch coast. This toy library has lots of adjusted toys for children with special needs and material to ‘snoezel’. We had the opportunity to experience this room for the senses ourselves.

We thank all the people who helped to organize this meeting and the social programme for such a wonderful time spent in The Netherlands.

ETL HISTORY AND MEMBERS

The Group of European Toy Libraries (ETL) was founded in 1996 during the 7th International Conference on Toy Libraries in Zurich (Switzerland).

ETL is committed to the beliefs that play, playthings and playful interaction are essential to optimal education, physical, psychological, social and cultural development. It has as current members the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tenerife and Turkey.

ETL works in cooperation with the International Toy Libraries Association (ITLA).

NEW MEMBER: TENERIFE

ETL welcomes Dora Marrero a new member from Tenerife that has joined the group for the first time. We were very happy to get to know the work carried out in the country and we expect to see members from Tenerife in the next few years!