



HALMA Helping writers to move around Europe

Authors, translators and publishers were given the opportunity to enrich their work through experiencing the variety of cultures across the regions of Europe. Hosted by participating literary centres, they could carry out research, produce new work, and take part in readings, workshops or lectures with a strongly local flavour. Halma is the Greek word for 'jump' – and the game of the same name – and the network provided a frame in which European writers could move across Europe like players of board games or kids enjoying hopscotch.

Laura Seifert, the project leader, gives some examples of how widely the benefits have been shared:

"The writers have got a lot out of it individually, of course, because they travelled abroad and discovered places in Europe they would have never seen – and wrote things they might never have otherwise written. Anna Kim from Austria wrote: "... and it's in strange places that we notice how strange we are ourselves, not only for those around us but for ourselves as well, how little we actually knew about ourselves and how surprised we are at our own reactions".

But there were other results. They connected among themselves too, creating a **network of writers, intellectuals and translators** – which is something I hadn't expected. Other spin-offs came in terms of publishing and performance. Some of the HALMA members are also publishing houses, and GOGA in Slovenia discovered writers that it found very interesting: as a result, the novel "Este e o meu corpo" by Portuguese writer Filipa Melo appeared in Slovenia. Similarly, the plays "Strand line" and "Pump girl" by Irish playwright Abbie Spallen were staged in Finland in the framework of HALMA. And many of the sample translations of works produced within the project have been published in literary magazines.

Exchanging and hosting writers from across Europe has also intensified links between HALMA members, and increased their own international profile – particularly giving organisations on the periphery of Europe, in Romania or Finland, for example, new opportunities to boost their engagement in trans-national cultural cooperation. As Vesa Lahti, a translator from Jyväskylä, Finland, said of the HALMA members meeting, "You could actually feel the HALMA spirit. There was something warm and touching to have this feeling of doing something important and remarkable together."

Photos provided by HALMA – Larissa Boehning © Robert Kruh

The programme ran from **November 2009 to November 2010** and was supported under a special call for action 'Support to mobility of artists (EAC/09/2009)' with a grant of **108 500 euros**. The lead organiser was HALMA, the **European network of literary centres**, in Berlin and the co-organisers were **Alte Schmiede** in Austria, the **Elias Canetti Center** in Bulgaria, **LCB** in Germany, **Ventspils House** in Lithuania, **kunst.raum SyltQuelle** in Germany, **Het Beschrijf @ Passa Porta** in Belgium, **Maison des écrivains étrangers et des traducteurs** in France, **Villa Decius** in Poland, **The Literature House Schleswig Holstein**, Denmark, and **Writers' House Jyväskylä** in Finland. Website: <http://www.halma-network.eu/en.html>