

SOCIOLINGUISTICS SYMPOSIUM 24

INSIDE AND BEYOND BINARIES
13-16 JULY 2022, GHENT - BELGIUM
WWW.SS24GHENT.BE



We wish to acknowledge the concerns that have been expressed about the registration fees. When interpreting the fees that are being set, the following factors need to be considered.

1. The online registration covers full participation in all conference sessions. The conference format is fully hybrid, complementing in vivo sessions with simultaneous online participation. The cost structure for hybrid conferences is different from that of online formats and results in fees which are different from the prices that we may have become used to for exclusively online events. In the case of SS24, even when a large percentage of the delegates participates online, the fixed costs for organizing the on-site event continue to apply and they concern arrangements which equally benefit the online participants. In addition, there is the cost for streaming capacity (up to 20 parallel sessions), extra technical support in the rooms, more central IT-management, etc.
2. While the choice to involve an external Professional Conference Organizer (PCO) does represent a considerable cost, this cost is no higher than recruiting a full-time staff member for a year. Unlike in the latter case, moreover, hiring a PCO includes access to indispensable digital tools for processing abstracts and administering the registration of delegates, as well as professional experience in using these tools. Lacking an organizational structure with a membership, the tradition and scale of Sociolinguistics Symposia requires support of a professional kind, especially given the complexities of the current pandemic-affected context. To offset such costs in the future and secure a financial ceiling for fees, we recommend that the general assembly during its meeting in July reflects on the possibility of a membership structure as a framework for the organization of future Symposia.
3. The policy at Ghent University has recently changed, as we now face separate costs for the use of university rooms and lecture theatres inside the faculty buildings. We need these to accommodate the high number of parallel sessions.

In order to address the concerns raised, we have done some further calculations. Our original budget and price setting was based on a break-even situation, allowing a modest “safety margin” profit. Our chances to break even depend most of all on the number of participants who register and the current covid-19-affected context remains in many ways unpredictable in terms of expected numbers of participants from various parts of the world. In response to the concerns that have been expressed, we are prepared to take a calculated financial risk so as to contribute to closing the gap between delegates from low and lower middle income countries, on the one hand, and higher income countries, on the other hand.

1. All tariffs for delegates from institutions based in low and lower middle income countries have now been reduced by one third across the different participation formats.
2. We will use the OECD-list, as applied by Ghent University’s research office, to define low and lower middle income countries.

Should any profit remain at the end, this will be transferred to the next local team of conference organizers, as is customary in the tradition of Sociolinguistics Symposia.