

GENERAL ASSEMBLY Meeting Minutes, *Liverpool, UK*

Tuesday September 5 2013, 1400hrs
Liverpool Hope University

EASR Officers: IAHR Officers:

National Associations Representatives:

Adoption of final agenda

1. Adoption of final agenda
2. Reports by the President and the General Secretary
3. Treasurers report
5. Approvals of individual memberships
6. Honorary membership
7. Any other business

The agenda was adopted.

President's report

This year has been particularly important as we had to renew the Executive Committee and organize the vote. I recall briefly, that votes are held every three years to fill in the positions in the Executive committee.

The Nominating Committee was composed of the president (Maya Burger), Christoph Bochinger (German Association), Eugen Ciurtin (Rumanian Association), Marco Pasi (Dutch Association) Charles Guitard (French Association). Several positions that had to be renewed, some positions were to be continued and confirmed by the Committee. The positions to be filled were President, Vice president, General secretary, Deputy Secretary, treasurer, Internet officer and publication officer.

The Committee tried to take into account as many parameters possible to present a new Executive Committee capable to handle the challenges of our society. Criteria have been of course different according to the position to be filled. All of these positions are of utter importance and I hope that you may all find the result conclusive. I have sent through the general secretary the report of the Nominating Committee, which you may read seperately. The Committee had many and lively discussions and we did not always agree. However, the final list we present today is such that each member of the Committee stands behind it and can defend it.

I have also presided the Honorary Membership Nominating Committee, composed by Katja Triplett (Germany) and Panayotis Pachis (Greece), beside myself. We have decided to honour this year Professor Ursula King. We have chosen Ursula King for her pioneering work in the field of gender studies in the Study of religions. She has much invested to promote the gender question in our field. Today this seems almost obvious, but when she started her work it was a field yet to be constructed. We are happy she has accepted our proposition. There is a special report highlighting the important contributions of Prof. Ursula King.

This year we decided to drop our annual site visit to the forthcoming host of the Conference, as the advancement of the organization was already quite clear during our stay in Sweden in 2012. In such cases, we may propose to suspend these visits and invest the money for scholarships.

I thank all the members of the Executive committee for their great work. We take leave this year from the president, the vice-presidents, the general secretary, the deputy general secretary, the treasurer, the deputy treasurer, the publication officer. For each of them there is much to be said for their dedicated work and for the time they have given to the association. A special thanks goes to the General Secretary, David Vaclavic, who showed us that we can do our work in a democratic spirit. He accomplished his work diligently and in a friendly manner. He was always ready and open to include the opinions of others. We thank him warmly for the three years he has dedicated to EASR and for his contribution to the good functioning of EASR.

We welcome the new members of the Executive Committee hoping that they have time and energy to keep up the smooth and sound working of our organization. Let us remember that the most important aim is to promote excellent scholarship.

I am myself departing from my duty as president and I thank you very much for having me entrusted with the position for six years, a period during which I learnt really a lot.

General Secretary's report

The number of EASR-affiliated national associations is twenty-four, with sixteen individual members, three honorary members and one IAHR member (jointly held post). Representatives of the Slovak Association, who declare to be a member of EASR, contacted General secretary. But unfortunately they haven't sent any official request. On the other side there is a group of national associations, which are passive and haven't paid their membership fee for years. These are the Polish Association, the Portuguese Association and the Turkish Association. More information will be presented in the treasurer's report.

Regular business

- a) The call for this year's General Assembly was made by email more than 90 days in advance as required by the constitution. It was posted on the e-lists of EASR.
- b) Member associations and individual members were reminded of the need to pay subscriptions (or make an arrangement with the Treasurer) by 31 May. More information will be given in the treasurer's report
- c) EASR bursary information and application form were circulated and posted on the website earlier in the year (with closing date of mid-June).
- e) Next EASR **conference will be held** in May **11 - 15 in 2014 Groningen (Netherlands)**, hosted by the Dutch Association for the History of Religions.

Finally. The most important event in last year was nomination process and election of new executive committee for the triennium 2014-2016

Nominations and election

The nominations and election process for the triennium 2014-16 was initiated during our last EC in Stockholm. The Nominating Committee, agreed at the 2012 General Assembly, was established and it consists of

Maya Burger as a head of Nominating committee (President of the EASR/Switzerland)
Marco Pasi (Treasurer of the EASR/ Italy-Netherlands)
Eugen Ciurtin (Publication Officer/ Romania)
Christoph Bochsinger (Germany)
Charles Guittard (France)

With advice from EASR officers and delegates, the committee drew up a list of nominated candidates for vacant positions. Nomination forms and statements of intent were completed. The nominations process was then opened up to the wider membership of EASR (at the end of May, with the call for the General Assembly), with officers and delegates of national associations invited to nominate officers (and individual members invited to nominate to the post of representative of the individual members). No further nominations were received by the closing date.

Therefore, at the EASR Executive Committee meeting on 3 September 2013 and then at the EASR General Assembly on 5 September 2013, and in conformity with the EASR Constitution, article 7.2, the following people were 'elected unopposed' for the three year period from 1 January 2014 to end December 2016.

President: Einar Thomassen, University of Bergen, Norway

Vice-president: Marion Bowman, Religious Studies, The Open University, England

Vice-president: Giovanni Casadio, Università degli Studi di Salerno, Italy

General Secretary: Marco Pasi, University of Amsterdam (UvA), The Netherlands

Deputy General Secretary: Katja Triplett, University of Göttingen, Germany

Treasurer: Albertina (Tineke) Nugteren, Associate professor/senior Lecturer Faculty of Humanities, Tilburg University, the Netherlands

Deputy Treasurer: Franz Winter, Institut für Religionswissenschaft, University of Vienna, Austria

Internet Officer: Sebastian Schüler, Assistant Professor Study of Religions, University of Greifswald (until September 2013), University of Leipzig (beginning October 2013)

Publication Officer: Mihaela Adriana TIMUŞ, Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy, Romania

Secretary general has obtained a statement of intent from each candidate.

Positions to be continued

Membership Secretary: Jenny Berglund (Sweden)

Co-opted Member: Wanda Alberts (Germany)

Representative for the individual members of the EASR: Ivar Maksutov (Russia)

It is gratifying to think of the business of EASR moving ahead in such capable and experienced hands, with new members joining the committee and others remaining for a second term, and with an excellent spread of officers from East, West, South and North of the continent.

Current members of the committee were thanked for their work over the last triennium, particularly those who will leave office at the end of 2013.

Finally, I would also like to add a more personal note. I would like to heartily thank the colleagues with whom I have worked at close contact in these three years: first of all President Maya Burger, treasurer Marco Pasi. Their dedication and commitment made my work a much easier task than it would have been otherwise. And I would also like to thank all the other officers and the delegates of the national associations and of the individual members.

Treasurer's report and finance matters

Treasurer's report

1. General remarks

This has been a quiet year for the Association from a financial point of view. There have been no unexpected expenses or problems with our regular sources of income. Generally the estimate of expenditures we made last year, and for which appropriate amounts had been earmarked, has been confirmed, and in fact we spent on the whole even less than we anticipated, especially because there were no expenses for the travel costs of officers and we spent a bit less than last year on the maintenance of our website (€ 567 against an earmarked amount of €800). On the other hand, we received € 609 from the levy on the registration fee for the Stockholm conference. This means that, once again, we conclude our financial year with a positive balance. We now have a credit total of € 13.629, with a credit balance of € 1.570 with respect to last year. This is of course good news, and I believe that our present situation will allow us to significantly increase the number of bursaries for next year.

2. Dues

I am pleased to see that this year most associations have paid their dues on time, and a few after the deadline but still with a reasonable delay. In very rare cases, some associations prefer to pay cash at the conference, due to complications with sending money through a regular bank transfer. We continue to accept this practice, remaining faithful to the usual flexible policy that has always been ours in the past.

At this moment we have only three problematic cases.

The first one is the Polish Association. As you know, I have been trying very hard to establish a communication channel with this Association, and there have been indeed both sporadic contacts and occasional payments. The problem is that a single payment for the current year cannot solve the outstanding debt for all the years in which no dues were paid. I am sure however that the biggest problem is not the debt, for which again I would be more than happy to negotiate a convenient solution, but rather the apparent impossibility to communicate on a regularly basis with the Polish Association. In spite of all this, I do not lose optimism, and I am sure that a solution will be found with them sooner or later.

The other two cases, on the other hand, are a different story. The first one is the Portuguese Association. Here I fear that we have a case that is similar to the Belgo-Luxembourgeois Association (SBLHR), whose membership, as you will remember, was declared lapsed last year. From what I have heard the Portuguese Association has ceased any activity and should be understood as extinct to all intents and purposes. This has been confirmed to me several times by the only person who ever acted as their international delegate at our meetings, Dr. Steffen Dix. It is also relevant to note that the IAHR has already declared the membership of

the Portuguese Association lapsed. So the time has come to consider whether we should also declare the membership of the Portuguese Association lapsed, still with the hope that in the future other colleagues will revive it and join the EASR again.

The third problematic case is the Turkish Association. They have last paid their dues in 2010, and I haven't since heard from them, despite the constant reminders and several attempts to contact them. It would be interesting here again to liaise with Tim Jensen and see whether he is experiencing similar problems from the IAHR perspective and, if so, how he is dealing with them. Perhaps he could also facilitate contact with them. Alternatively, I guess that also in this case we should sooner or later take some initiative, unpleasant how this may be.

I would like now to make a more general remark about the dues. As EASR treasurer I usually collect the dues from the various national associations without asking the numbers of their actual membership, on the basis of which the fee should be calculated. Obviously, I can only trust that the calculations of the respective officers be honest and fair. I wonder however, if it would not be a good idea, even apart from the financial aspect, to have a more precise notion of the actual size of membership for each national association affiliated to the EASR. I think that such a census would give us interesting information about the geographical distribution and development of our discipline across the continent. This idea has come to me recently when I realized that the memberships of some associations from Northern Europe, namely the Swedish and the Finnish one, seem to have shrunk significantly in the last few years. This became visible to me by the fact that their dues were decreasing dramatically from one year to the other, to the point where these associations — admittedly from well-off countries with a deep-rooted tradition in the study of religion — would in some cases pay less than associations from smaller countries or from countries that are supposed to be in a difficult financial situation. Knowing more about how memberships of national associations are changing in different parts of Europe may help us realizing problems that we might not even see otherwise, and considering ways to further support and promote our discipline where it is needed. This might be a proposal for next year, and, from a more practical point of view, might also be a useful tool in the future for the person who will soon take my position as treasurer.

3. Bursary Fund

This year, we had six available bursaries and we have received eight applications, so we had to decline two of them. The bursaries will be paid as usual after the conference, upon demonstration of actual participation in the congress (through the usual documents: receipt of registration fee, flight or train ticket, student house or hotel bill).

As usual, I would like to remind officers and delegates of the national associations that it is also their responsibility to spread information about the bursary scheme among their members and encourage their eligible members to apply.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the financial situation of the EASR remains healthy and secure, and we can be optimistic about the future development of our association. As I did last year, I will make my specific recommendations for next year's budget in a separate document (attached).

Finally, I would also like to add a more personal note. As you know, this is the end of my second term, and therefore also my last year, as treasurer of the EASR. I would like therefore to end this report by heartily thanking the colleagues with whom I have worked at close contact in these six years: first of all President Maya Burger, then General Secretaries Kim Knott and David Václavik, who alternated in office during my two terms, and Wim Hofstee who has been vice-treasurer during the same terms. Their dedication and commitment made my work a much easier task than it would have been otherwise. And I would also like to thank all the other officers and the delegates of the national associations and of the individual members. I can hardly remember any situation where issues and problems were not dealt

with a spirit of collaboration and understanding, and this makes me think that our Association is a healthy one not only from a financial point of view, but also in a more impalpable, but no less important, way, which has to do with the values of collegiality and professional commitment. This is a good reason, among others, to be optimistic about its future development.

Considering the present cash inflow, I would suggest that our budget for next year's bursary scheme amount to € 2800, divided into seven bursaries of € 400 each (which will be a significant increase compared to last year). € 700 would be earmarked for website-related costs and € 300 for EASR officers travel costs.

An amount of € 3800 will be earmarked for the EASR budget of 2013-2014, which will be divided as follows: € 2800 for seven bursaries of € 400 each, € 300 for travel costs of EASR officers, and € 700 for website costs.

This proposal **was accepted** by the GA

Proposal for the Individual Membership

Individual Membership Secretary informed about received application. She obtained two applications from Canada (*Marsha Aileen Hewitt*) and USA (*Sean Elliot Currie*). GA then discussed need for new policy on individual membership. GA was informed about the establishing of a new working group for the preparation of new rules for individual membership, which consists of *David Václavík, Jenny Berglund* and *Marco Pasi*.

GA accepted new individual members - Marsha Aileen Hewitt and Sean Elliot Currie

Proposal for the Honorary Membership

The group for Honorary Membership is composed of Katja Triplett and Panayotis Pachis, respectively from the German and Greek Associations, and Maya Burger (author of the present report). Honorary membership of our Association is attributed to a person for his/her outstanding work in the field of the Study of religions and /or for his/her longstanding contribution to our Association. This year we propose **Prof. Ursula King**.

The GA **accepted** the proposal of the working group and of the EC.

Any other business

No any other business was discussed.