



## **Minutes of the General Assembly of the EASR**

**held at the University of Groningen on 14 May 2014, between 17:15 and 18:35**

1. The President, Einar Thomassen, welcomes all persons present. The General Secretary, Marco Pasi, reminds the Assembly about current regulations concerning the right of attendance and the right of vote. He then mentions the associations that are not in order with the payment of dues and whose members may participate in the present GA but are not allowed to vote.
2. The agenda is adopted.
3. The Pres. presents his report (attached here as appendix 1).
4. The Gen. Sec. presents his report (attached here as appendix 2).
5. The Treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, presents her report (attached here as appendix 3).
6. The Pres. informs the Assembly about a new association that has joined the EASR. This is the Belgian Association for the Study of Religions (Babel), which will replace the old Société Belgo-Luxembourgeoise d'Histoire des Religions (SBLHR). The SBLHR had ceased to function some years earlier and its lapsed membership had been declared by the Executive Committee (EC) in 2012, and confirmed in 2014. The Assembly welcomes Babel as a new member with a unanimous applause.
7. The Pres. informs the Assembly that, apart from confirming the lapsed membership of the SBLHR, the EC has also decided, on the basis of current regulations, to declare the membership of the Associação Portuguesa para o Estudo das Religiões (APER) lapsed. APER is therefore no longer a current member of the EASR.
8. The Gen. Sec. presents the new guidelines for Individual membership, which have been approved by the EC. The guidelines have been produced by an ad hoc committee that was appointed last year in Liverpool. The committee consisted of Marco Pasi, Jenny Berglund (current EASR Membership secretary) and David Václavík (former EASR Gen. Sec.). The guidelines are attached here as appendix 4.
9. The next point in the agenda concerns the EASR presence and visibility at the 2015 IAHR congress in Erfurt. The Gen. Sec. explains that, since the next IAHR congress will be in Europe, the EASR should do its best to cooperate with the IAHR and to mark symbolically its presence, also as an opportunity to let the global members of the IAHR know about the existence and the work of the EASR. This will be the first IAHR congress in Europe since the EASR was founded and it may take many years before the IAHR returns to Europe with one of its quinquennial congresses. In the past few months there has been a discussion between Marco Pasi, Tim Jensen and Jörg Rüpke (co-chair of the IAHR congress organizing committee) about the best way to implement the idea. This has led to a proposal which is considered as very satisfactory by all parties involved. The proposal consists of the following: 1) the EASR will activate its usual program of

bursaries for the Erfurt congress, which is usually meant for EASR conferences only; 2) the EASR will sponsor one of the keynote lectures, preferably from a non-European speaker; 3) the EASR's sponsorship and contribution will be mentioned in the appropriate places in the official communication material of the congress. The Gen. Sec. further points out that the EC has approved the proposal during its latest meeting (11 May 2014).

10. The budget for the next financial year (2014-2015) is then presented by the Treas. The budget includes, apart from the usual structural expenses (costs for the hosting and maintenance of the website), the expenses related to the EASR presence in Erfurt (the bursary program and the sponsorship of the keynote lecture), and the upgrade of the website, which has been suggested by Sebastian Schüler, Internet officer, during the recent EC meeting. She proposes therefore to allocate €2800 for seven bursaries of €400 each; €1500 for the keynote lecture; and €1100 for the website upgrade (based on the received offer). This, plus the usual maintenance costs of the website (€500), makes a total of €5900 (see appendix 5). The proposal is voted and approved by the GA, with one abstention and one vote against.
11. Elisabeth Begemann, IAHR Congress coordinator in Erfurt, gives some information about the preparations of the congress and about how to submit proposals. She also shows the features of the website that has been created for the congress, and through which proposals can be submitted. She reminds the Assembly about the most important deadlines in the submission process.
12. The Gen. Sec. points out that we have no commitment from any national association about the location for EASR conferences after 2015. There have been discussions with the Lithuanian and the Belgian Association about the 2016 conference, but this has led to no firm decision. Representatives of the Finnish Association then announce that they would be happy to host the EASR 2016 conference in Helsinki. The Assembly accepts the offer with an enthusiastic applause. The Gen. Sec. points out that, if the Finnish Assoc. hosts the conference in 2016, then the Belgian Association is likely to host the 2017 conference, also because it would be possible to combine it with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Ghent. This would allow a similar propitious configuration as we had this year in Groningen.
13. The Pres. then asks if there is any constructive feedback about the present conference in Groningen. David Zbiral (Czech Assoc.) observes that this has undoubtedly been one of the best, most successful EASR conferences ever, but he also wants to share the impression, based on information he has received from other members, that the reasons for rejecting paper or panel proposals could have been in some cases more clear. Critical feedback from the organizers about rejected proposals would have been appreciated. He also wonders if in the future EASR officers should not be more involved in the organization of conferences. Sebastian Schüler (Internet officer, German Assoc.) suggests that in the future the GA should be scheduled not at the very end of the conference, but rather in the middle, so that more people can be expected to attend. The Pres. suggests that in the future it might be a good idea to offer PhD students the possibility to organize workshops by and for themselves. Michael Stausberg (German Assoc.) says that the high turnout at this conference in Groningen might be explained with the date, which is different from the usual practice of the EASR (May instead of late August or early September). He wonders therefore if it would not be a good idea to reconsider the standard scheduling of EASR conferences also in the future. The Gen. Sec. responds to this last remark by observing that the early Autumn date is a well-established tradition in the EASR, but that alternative dates might be a point for

discussion in the future. He further points out that the decision for a date often has to do with the practical constraints and needs of the local organizers and can be subject to negotiation only to a certain extent.

14. The Gen. Sec. illustrates then four proposals that have been presented at the latest EC meeting and that are aimed at improving transparency and services offered to members. These are: a) The rationalization and accessibility of the EASR electronic archives; b) The collection and visibility of EASR byelaws; c) A membership census of the EASR member associations; d) A list of European scholarly journals for the study of religions, particularly of those produced by the EASR affiliated associations. The proposals will be implemented in the current year.
15. The floor is then given to two members who had previously asked the Pres. to make announcements at the end of the GA. The first one is Peter Antes (EASR Hon. Member, German Assoc.), who mentions an opening for a Junior Professorship in religious studies at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau and invites all interested, potentially eligible persons to apply. The second is James Cox (British Assoc.), who announces that a volume of proceedings of the EASR conference in Budapest (2011) is about to be published and will certainly be presented in Erfurt.
16. There being no further business, the Pres. declares the GA closed.

## APPENDIX 1

### President's report

At last year's annual conference, held in Liverpool 3-6 September, the General Assembly of the EASR elected a new Executive Committee for 2014-2016. The new Executive Committee has been effective from January 1. I wish to thank the preceding EC for their devoted work in running the association, and in particular Maya Burger, who served as president for two full terms until the end of 2013. The six years under her leadership have been a period of remarkable growth for our association and have seen an increasing professionalization in the running of its affairs. Transition to the new EC has been smooth because we could build on a good basis.

The names of the members of the new EC will be found on the website. They are a very well experienced team with solid qualifications for the tasks which each of them has been appointed to perform. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be allowed to work with such a team. A special mention should be granted to our new General Secretary, Marco Pasi, whose diligent work is indispensable for the functioning of the association on a daily basis. He has also been in regular contact with the organizers of this year's conference, ensuring the necessary exchange of information between the organizing committee in Groningen and the leadership of the association.

Organizing the EASR conferences has become an increasingly demanding task both logistically and professionally. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to our Groningen colleagues for having undertaken this task with this year's conference. They have put together a programme that adequately reflects the current diversity of religious studies in Europe and which will give inspiration for the future.

Our attention is also directed towards 2015, when there will be no separate EASR conference because the quinquennial IAHR congress will take place in that year. We are in regular contact with the Erfurt organizers and the leadership of the IAHR to define the appropriate role and visibility of the EASR at the 2015 IAHR congress.

I consider it an important purpose of the EASR and its conferences to stimulate collaborative research on religion across Europe. The opportunities provided by the EU research funding system, now under the umbrella of the Horizon 2020 programme, should be exploited to a larger extent by scholars within our discipline. With this in mind I attended the meeting of the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities (EASSH) in Berlin, on May 9, 2014. The meeting brought together representatives of some 70 academic organizations with the common aim of strengthening the position of the SSH in EU research policy, and specifically with regard to the Societal Challenges pillar within Horizon 2020. In my view, the EASR will be able to profit from continued association with the EASSH.

Einar Thomassen  
President of the EASR

## APPENDIX 2

### General Secretary's report

I would like to begin by addressing a word of heartfelt thanks to the officers who have preceded us in the Committee, and who have come to the end of their term in December last year. In particular, I would like to thank my direct predecessor in the office of General Secretary, David Václavík, who has ensured a smooth transition during this period. It is particularly important to mention that he has sent me the electronic archives of the EASR, which had been entrusted to him by his predecessor Kim Knott, and which are now in my possession. The archives include all relevant documents produced or received by the EASR since its creation. I will mention later the current plans concerning the preservation and accessibility of these archives.

The new Committee has been operative since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January of this year. This means that the last few months have been a transitional period, where the new officers have started to familiarize themselves with their tasks. This has been perhaps a bit more complicated than it has been in the past, because of the much earlier date of our annual conference this year with respect to what we are used to. Everything went much quicker this year, and all procedures, such as the bursary program, the deadline for the payment of the annual dues, and the calls for the meetings had to be consequently anticipated. Apart from the occasional, and I would also say inevitable, bumps in the road, it seems to me however that all has gone fairly well. Also, after the Groningen conference, we will have more time than usual, until Erfurt next year, to fix all outstanding problems and issues.

I think it is important to make site visits to the locations of upcoming conferences, even when we can trust the local organizers to do a good job. This is why I have paid a visit to Groningen in January. I was received by the chair of the organizing committee, Kocku von Stuckrad, who showed me the rooms and the locations, presented the program, and discussed with me all other practical details. This has been very useful, and has allowed me in particular to see and choose the rooms that would be used for the EC meeting and for the GA. Next year, since there will be no EASR conference, there will be no need for a site visit, but that will be of course an exception to what should be our standard practice.

The situation of membership presents a relatively quiet picture, with a few exceptions, that will be the object of a discussion later during the GA. Most associations are quite regular in the payment of their dues, and the financial situation of our association, as the Treasurer will confirm, looks quite reassuring. The most important news concern the application of a new association from Belgium, Babel, which is now replacing to all intents and purposes the old Association Belgo-Luxembourgeois d'Histoire des Religions, which has been considered defunct for some time now both by us and the IAHR. It is important to keep in mind that Babel has also applied for membership with the IAHR and that the International Committee of the latter has already recommended Babel for affiliation to its General Meeting of Members, which will be held in Erfurt next year. On that occasion Babel's membership in the IAHR will be definitely formalized. Babel finds itself, therefore, in the same situation as the Irish and Lithuanian associations, whose application for EASR membership we have accepted precisely on the basis of their status as IAHR provisional members, whose membership will be formalized in Erfurt. We can therefore proceed in the case of Babel exactly in the same way.

Another important issue that I have dealt with during my first months as Secretary is our presence and visibility at the IAHR conference in Erfurt next year. My intention was to ensure that the EASR would have at least a symbolic presence at this Congress, which (it should be remembered) will be the first one that the IAHR holds in Europe since the foundation of the EASR. With that purpose, I

have taken contact and engaged in a discussion with the IAHR General Secretary Tim Jensen and with the chair of the congress organizing committee, Jörg Rüpke, who have both been extremely cooperative and encouraging. The result of this discussion has been a basic agreement which will be submitted for discussion during the present GA.

During the last EC meeting in Liverpool it was decided to create a working group that should focus on the situation with individual membership and make some proposals for improving it. The group consisted of David Václavík, Jenny Berglund, and myself. After carefully examining the status quo, it has produced a series of guidelines that will be presented during the present GA.

At this moment, we still do not know for sure where we will hold our conference in 2016. This is of course relatively disquieting, and we hope to have more clarity about our future plans soon. I have had some talks with a few associations (Lithuania, the new Belgian association), but there has been no firm commitment from any, yet, which is why I have included a very tentative call for bids in my last call for the EC meeting. I hope that suggestions and ideas about this important point can be submitted during the present GA.

Finally, during these first few months as a Secretary I have been thinking about a series of measures and plans to improve the functioning of our Association. They include the following items, which will be discussed individually during the course of the meeting: rationalization and accessibility of the EASR electronic archives; collection and visibility of EASR byelaws; a census of the membership of EASR affiliated associations; a list of European scholarly journals for the study of religions, particularly of those produced by the EASR affiliated associations.

Amsterdam, May 9, 2014

Marco Pasi  
General Secretary of the EASR

## APPENDIX 3

### Treasurer's report

#### 1. *Preliminary remarks*

As a result of the shifts in officers/committee members for 2014-2016, as well as the relatively early date set for the General Assembly at Groningen (May instead of the usual August/September), this report is more brief than usual.

#### 2. *Membership dues*

This year the deadline for the national associations to pay their dues was initially set on 31 March 2014. After a reminder, some associations paid straight away or reacted with questions or requests. As the payment of dues is an essential pre-requisite for a national association to have the right to vote at the Executive Meeting and at the General Assembly, we expect that some last minute payments in cash in Groningen will settle a few more of the 2014 accounts. The EASR's flexible policy in this respect causes this report to have a provisional character. Also, since the way dues are computed (based on the number of members counted in the full year previous to this year) is proposed as an item to be discussed the present GA, we leave the rather opaque nature of rising and falling membership numbers open for debate.

#### 3. *Bursary funds*

This year, we sent out the instructions for applying for the 2014 conference earlier than usual. The deadline was 11 January. Applicants were notified of the outcome by 11 February. For 2014 a total amount of €2800 had been made available, divided into seven bursaries of up to a maximum of €400 each. Both the bursary guidelines and the application forms had been posted on the EASR website as well. We received 17 applications, of which 10 were not eligible, 3 were partially meeting our criteria, and 5 were fully meeting the criteria. In the end we notified 7 applicants that their applications had been successful. The bursaries will be reimbursed as usual after the conference, upon demonstration of both actual participation in the conference and actual costs.

#### 4. *Conclusion*

Based on the present state of the EASR bank balance and the calculated expenses covering the 2014 conference, the financial situation right now looks secure. An additional document includes some recommendations for next year's budget of €900, to be voted during the General Assembly. We draw attention to the fact that this year's budget, provided it meets with the acclamation of the GA, will draw on our reserves as a result of two exceptional expenses.

## APPENDIX 4

### Proposal for new guidelines concerning the EASR individual membership

*Submitted for discussion and approval to the EASR Executive Committee in Groningen 2014 by the ad hoc committee appointed at the EC meeting in Liverpool 2013 and composed of the following members: Marco Pasi (current EASR General Secretary), Jenny Berglund (EASR Membership Officer), David Václavík (former EASR General Secretary)*

*N.B. This document is divided into two parts. The first one presents a discussion of the status quo and of the reasons for proposing specific guidelines; the second one contains the actual guidelines to be approved by the EC. Only the second part will be the object of a vote during the EC meeting in Groningen.*

#### First part: Background, rationale and other comments

The committee was appointed in Liverpool to assess the current situation about individual members and make suggestions to improve it.

First of all, it is important to recall the existing regulations concerning individual membership in the EASR. The main relevant article in the constitution is art. 4, which defines EASR membership:

##### Article 4. Membership

- i) Membership of the EASR shall be open to all students, researchers and others who share its objective, and who are normally or occasionally resident in or have close academic ties with a European country. Membership may take the form of individual membership [...].
- ii) Applications for individual membership shall be addressed to the appropriate officer of the EASR and the committee shall have the right to approve or reject such applications.
- iii) The membership of any individual may be terminated by decision of the General Assembly for good and sufficient reason and after an opportunity for representations to the contrary has been extended.
- iv) Individual members shall pay an annual subscription, the amount of which shall be determined from time to time by the committee. The rights and privileges of membership depend on payment of the membership subscription in advance for the membership period in question. Lapsed membership may be restored with reference to a subsequent membership period without further application.

Furthermore, art. 6.i stipulates that individual members have a right to be represented in the Executive Committee:

##### Article 6. Committee and officers

- i) The business of the EASR shall be conducted by a Committee consisting of [...] (c) two elected representatives of the individual members of the EASR from countries where no national affiliated association exists [...].



By implication, the term of office for the elected representatives of the individual members is the same as for the other members of the Executive Committee, as indicated in art. 7.i:

#### Article 7. Elections

i) The members of the Committee shall be elected for a period of three calendar years running from January 1st. A member may be re-elected, except that no member shall serve in the same office for more than two terms, and no member shall be elected for a total of more than five terms with or without intervening periods. The same terms apply to delegated members.

It is important to keep in mind that the rationale for the existence of individual membership is based on the idea that the EASR should do its best to involve scholars from European countries where an EASR affiliate national association does not exist, and also scholars from extra-European countries who have a specific interest in European-related subjects. It can be noted that the IAHR, whose constitution was used as a model for the EASR constitution, has a similar provision (see art. 3B), which was clearly written with the same spirit and purpose. But the formulation of the EASR constitution leaves some problems open, e.g. what to do when the person who applies for individual membership comes from a European country where a national association for the study of religion *does* indeed exist but is not, for whatever reason, an affiliate of the EASR (there are at present at least two such cases, namely the Slovakian and the Ukrainian associations, which are not members of the EASR while being members of the IAHR).

On the basis of this and other considerations, the committee came to the conclusion that there is a need for some guidelines that would help dealing with specific practical problems related to individual membership. The committee tried therefore to determine what are the perceived problems with the current situation.

The problems that were identified were the following:

- 1) Excessively complicated procedure in the admission policy
- 2) Problems related to the management of the members' list and excessive growth of individual membership
- 3) Insufficient guidelines concerning lapsed membership for individual members
- 4) Insufficient guidelines concerning the election of representatives of individual members
- 5) Availability of individual membership for scholars living in European countries where national associations exist that are not affiliated to the EASR
- 6) Problems related to payment options

#### ***1) Excessively complicated procedure in the admission policy***

In relation to this problem, it should be noted that it is a relatively recent one. For some reason, the approval of new individual members has taken place in the last two years (Stockholm 2012 and Liverpool 2013) not only during the Executive Committee (EC), but also during the General Assembly (GA). Judging from the minutes of previous GAs however (up to Budapest 2011), this was never done before. And in fact, the constitution (art. 4, ii) makes it clear that it is the EC, and the EC alone, that approves or rejects such applications. Once we return to our usual practice as defined in the constitution, a large part of the problem will be solved. On the other hand, the constitution

clearly indicates the Membership Secretary as the EC officer who examines the applications of new candidates for individual membership and, after assessing their eligibility, presents them at the EC meeting for discussion and approval. There doesn't seem to be anything problematic with this procedure, which appears to be the most logical and practical one. *In this case, therefore, the suggestion is simply to return to our usual practice, as prescribed in the constitution, of having new applications approved or rejected only by the EC during EC meetings.* It should also be remembered that a new bylaw concerning the admission policy of individual members was approved at the EC meeting in Stockholm 2012. The bylaw reads as follows: "For an application for individual membership it is necessary to present two written recommendations of persons who are individual members of the European Association for the Study of Religions or members of a national association which is a member of the EASR." The intent of the bylaw is clearly to have sufficient guarantees about the scholarly reputation of potential new members. We see no reason to modify this bylaw, and we suggest therefore to maintain it as it is.

## **2) Problems related to the management of the members' list and excessive growth of individual membership**

Both Jenny Berglund and Marco Pasi, in their respective positions as Membership Secretary and former Treasurer, have noticed in the last few years a steady growth in the number of applications for individual membership and, consequently in the number of actual members. This has begun to pose some problems in terms of management of the members' list and of the payment of dues. *We suggest to address this problem by taking the following two steps: formulating clearer guidelines about the individual membership management and setting a limit of members per country.*

Concerning the first point, the Membership Secretary should be responsible for keeping an updated list of current individual members. This list should be updated at least once a year and posted in the EASR website in a dedicated page. The Membership Secretary should also communicate the list (including email addresses of members) once a year to the Treasurer, so that s/he can send the appropriate reminders for the payment of dues to the current members. On the other hand, once a year the Treasurer should let the Membership Secretary know about members who have not paid their dues for the previous year. The Membership Secretary should then determine, on the basis of this information and after an appropriate amount of time, when the membership of an individual member becomes lapsed (about this, see also point 3 below). Lapsed members would then be excluded from further lists of current members.

Concerning the second point, in order to avoid an excessive growth of individual membership, we suggest to set a limit of 12 individual members per country. It should be noted that this provision has a clear rationale, which goes beyond the mere intention of limiting the growth of individual membership: it can be assumed that, if more than 12 members are present in a country where no national association exists, there is a sufficient "critical mass" of persons to create such an association. The creation of a new association in that country would eventually make individual membership for that country redundant. At this moment (April 2014) no country exceeds the suggested limit. Russia, the country with the largest number of individual members, has presently 11 members.

## **3) Insufficient guidelines concerning lapsed membership for individual members**

The EASR constitution (art. 6.iv) clearly says that individual members cannot enjoy their rights (consisting mainly in voting rights at the annual GA) if they are not paid-up. But it doesn't specify after how many years of non-payment of dues an individual membership becomes lapsed. *We propose that individual membership should be declared automatically lapsed after 2 years of non-payment of dues.* When membership is declared lapsed by the Membership Secretary (in consultation with the Treasurer), the name of the member is struck from the current members' list, which is also available online on the EASR website. The name remains however preserved in the historical record of individual members, which is kept by the Membership Secretary. In accordance with the EASR constitution (art. 6.iv), whenever a lapsed member wants to renew his/her membership, s/he will be allowed to do so by paying the dues for the current year. No payment of back years, or procedure of approval from the EC, will be necessary for the renewal. However, s/he will be allowed to renew his/her membership only if it does not exceed the limits of individual members per country as set in point 2 above.

#### ***4) Insufficient guidelines concerning the election of representatives of individual members***

As mentioned at the beginning, the EASR constitution stipulates that the individual members should be represented in the EC by two "elected representatives" (art. 6.i). No indication is given, however, about how the election procedure should work. This explains why there seems to have been some inconsistency in the past in the way the representatives were chosen. Judging from the minutes of past EC meetings, no real election of representatives seems to have taken place up to Toronto 2010. Until then, it appears that the representatives of individual members at EC meetings were just chosen among the individual members who happened to attend the conference and who were considered by general consensus to be representative of the whole group. It was with the EC nomination and election procedure that took place in 2010 for the triennium 2011-2013 that for the first time individual members were asked to propose a candidate (see the minutes of the EC meeting in Toronto 2010). Ivar Maksutov was proposed and, being unopposed, was automatically elected, in accordance with art. 7.ii of the EASR constitution. The constitution says that there can be two representatives, but Maksutov was the only candidate and therefore was elected as a single representative. His position in office was renewed for a second term (2014-2016) in 2013 (see the minutes of the EC meeting in Liverpool 2013). While asking individual members to propose candidates for the two positions of representative seems the most logical thing to do, and we suggest therefore to adopt it as a standard procedure in the future, it is not clear what should happen if more than two candidates are proposed by the individual members. It is clear that in that case an election should take place. It seems evident to us that, *if such a situation should occur, the candidates (unlike the other officers of the EC) should be voted by the individual members alone via electronic ballot. In that case, the two elected representatives would just be the two with the largest number of votes.* This would not be in contrast with any of the provisions of the constitution concerning the election of officers.

#### ***5) Availability of individual membership for scholars living in European countries where national associations exist that are not affiliated to the EASR***

There are at this moment European national associations that, while being members of the IAHR, have not applied for membership to the EASR. We are referring in particular to the Slovak and the Ukrainian associations. While we heartily hope that these two associations will eventually join the EASR, we cannot say if and when this will happen. Furthermore, more such cases could materialize

in the future. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there is at least a third European country with a national association that is listed as a member of the IAHR, but is not a member of the EASR. This is the Russian Association for the History of World Religions. It is not clear to us whether this association is really active, as we could find no website or sign of concrete activity on the internet, but it is important to keep in mind that the majority of the present EASR individual members are actually from Russia. This means that, in this case, the EASR has simply accepted the fact that these persons wanted to be autonomously involved in the activities of the EASR, which clearly they could not do by simply joining the Russian association. Experience tells that local situations may be particularly complex and difficult to interpret from the outside. For this reason, *we suggest to maintain what has been our traditional policy so far, i.e. to continue accepting applications for individual membership from any European country where there is no EASR affiliate association.* The fact that a national association for the study of religion exists in such a country, and whether or not it is a member of the IAHR, will not be a discriminating factor in approving or rejecting the application. On the other hand, when a national association applies for EASR membership and is accepted as a new member, or a former member association renews its lapsed membership, individual members from the same country will be asked to join that association, and their membership will be declared lapsed. It will be the duty of the EC to ensure that the new member association offers all guaranties of democracy and fairness which will make it not only possible, but also desirable for former EASR individual members to join the national association existing in their country.

### **6) Problems related to payment options**

Payment of annual dues (currently €15) can be a difficult thing for individual members who live in countries where banks charge heavy fees on international transfers. This is in fact the case with the vast majority of current individual members, whether they are from countries from the ex-Soviet bloc or from outside of Europe, such as the US or Canada. Until now, the only practical solution was to have payments in cash at conferences, which would of course work only if the members are attending at all. Another solution that has been suggested in the past is having the representative of the individual members (currently Ivar Maksutov) collecting the dues from members living in the same area or with whom he regularly meets. He would then hand the money cash to the treasurer during each conference. But this of course does not work for all the other members, and ultimately also depends on whether Ivar Maksutov is able to attend any given conference. Ultimately, it seems to us that a possible, if perhaps still partial, solution for this problem would lie in further expanding the methods of payment of the fees. Marco Pasi, in his former capacity as Treasurer, has experimented with PayPal, and has realized that it should not be too complicated to use this payment tool for individual members. He has used his personal PayPal account, but in the future, a special account directly connected to the EASR bank account could be created, and this would hopefully make things easier for many individual members who wish to regularly pay their annual dues. *We suggest therefore to offer PayPal as a possible method of payment for individual members.* Maybe this will not solve the problem entirely, but should at least reduce it considerably. Until the possibility to create a dedicated EASR PayPal account is explored, however, we propose to leave this option open only to individual members, and to ask association members to continue using SEPA bank transfers to pay their annual dues (or, in special cases, to pay cash at conferences), as it has been the case so far.

## **Second part: Text of the proposal**

### **Guidelines concerning the EASR individual membership**

#### ***1) Procedure in the admission policy***

According to the EASR constitution (art. 4, ii) the Executive Committee (EC) approves or rejects applications for new individual members. The constitution also indicates the Membership Secretary as the EC officer who examines the applications of new candidates and, after assessing their eligibility, presents them at the EC meeting for discussion and approval.

For an application for individual membership it is necessary to present two written recommendations of persons who are individual members of the European Association for the Study of Religions or members of a national association which is a member of the EASR.

#### ***2) Management of the members' list and limit of members per country of residence***

The Membership Secretary is responsible for keeping an updated list of current individual members. This list should be updated at least once a year and posted in the EASR website in a dedicated page. The Membership Secretary should also communicate the list (including email addresses of members) once a year to the Treasurer, so that s/he can send the appropriate reminders for the payment of dues to the current members. On the other hand, once a year the Treasurer should let the Membership Secretary know about members who have not paid their dues for the previous year. The Membership Secretary should then determine, on the basis of this information, when the membership of an individual member becomes lapsed (concerning lapsed membership, see point 3). Lapsed members would then be excluded from the current list of individual members.

There can be only a maximum of 12 individual members per country of residence.

#### ***3) Lapsed membership for individual members***

Individual membership should be declared automatically lapsed after 2 years of non-payment of dues. When membership is declared lapsed by the Membership Secretary, the name of the member is struck from the current members' list, which is also available online on the EASR website. The name remains however preserved in the historical record of individual members, which is kept by the Membership Secretary. In accordance with the EASR constitution (art. 6.iv), whenever a lapsed member wants to renew his/her membership, s/he will be allowed to do so by paying the dues for the current year. No payment of back years or procedure of approval from the EC will be necessary for the renewal. However, the lapsed member will be allowed to renew his/her membership only if it does not exceed the limits of individual members per country as set in point 2 above.

#### ***4) Election of representatives of individual members***

The EASR constitution stipulates that the individual members should be represented in the EC by two "elected representatives" (art. 6.i). During the triennial nomination and election procedure for

the new EC officers, the nominating committee, in collaboration with the Membership Secretary should ask individual members to nominate candidates for the two positions of representative. If more than two candidates are nominated, and an unopposed election is therefore impossible, an election via electronic ballot should take place. The nominated candidates (unlike the other officers of the EC) should be voted only by fully paid-up individual members. The two candidates with the largest number of votes would be elected.

***5) Availability of individual membership for scholars living in European countries where national associations exist that are not affiliated to the EASR***

The EASR accepts applications for individual membership from any European country where there is no EASR affiliate association. The fact that a (national) association for the study of religion exists in such a country, and whether or not it is a member of the IAHR, will not be a discriminating factor in approving or rejecting the application. On the other hand, when a national association applies for EASR membership and is accepted as a new member, or a former member association renews its lapsed membership, individual members from the same country will be asked to join that association, and their membership will be declared lapsed. It will be the duty of the EC to ensure that the new member association offers all guaranties of democracy and fairness which will make it not only possible, but also desirable for the former EASR individual members to join the national association existing in their country.

***6) Payment of dues***

The annual dues for the individual membership are currently fixed at €15. The EASR is aware that the payment of dues can be difficult for individual members living in countries where banks charge heavy fees on international transfers. This is why the EASR has always had a relatively flexible policy, trying to facilitate payments with different means and accepting payments in cash during conferences. Whenever possible, the representatives of individual members are also encouraged to collect the dues from members living in their same region and hand it to the Treasurer. As a further means to facilitate payment, the EASR will also explore the possibility to implement new systems, such as PayPal. However, until a dedicated EASR PayPal account is created, this option will remain open only to individual members. Association members will be asked to continue using SEPA bank transfers to pay their annual dues (or, in special cases, to pay cash at conferences).

## APPENDIX 5

### Treasurer's proposal for next year's budget (May 2014-August 2015)

Considering the present financial situation and taking into account funds earmarked for the 2014 conference expenses, we propose for next year's budget (2014-2015) to be earmarked:

- (1) A bursary program of **€2800** (consisting of 7 bursaries, €400 each)
- (2) Website-related costs of €500 (maintenance) and €1100 (upgrading), total **€1600**
- (3) A special contribution for the IAHR congress in Erfurt of **€1500** (one keynote speaker)

This budget proposal covers a total amount of **€9900** and has been discussed and approved in the Executive Committee Meeting held on 11 May 2014.