



Minutes of the General Assembly of the EASR

held at the University of Erfurt on 25 August 2015, between 18:00 and 19:00

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 President presents his report (attached here as appendix 1).
4. The General Secretary presents his report (attached here as appendix 2).
5. The Treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, presents her report (attached here as appendix 3) and proposal for the next financial year's budget (2015-2016; attached here as appendix 4).
6. The President recommends the conferment of the Honorary Membership to James L. Cox. The General Assembly approves the conferment by acclamation. The President then reads the laudatory statement for Prof. Cox, prepared by the Hungarian Association, which originally proposed Prof. Cox as a candidate for this distinction.
7. The General Secretary presents a proposal concerning new guidelines for the Nominating Committee (attached here as appendix 5). The proposal has been previously discussed and approved by the Executive Committee. It is now also approved by the General Assembly.
8. Tuula Sakaranaho (Finnish Association), presents the 2016 EASR conference, which will be held in Helsinki and will be organized by the Finnish Association. The dates are 28 June – 1 July. Preparations are already in full swing and the call for papers will be opened soon after the Erfurt IAHR congress. Subsequently, Jos Verheyden (Belgian Association) presents the plans for the 2017 EASR conference, which will take place in Leuven and will be organized by the Belgian Association. The dates (to be confirmed) are 17 to 20 September 2017.
9. The President asks participant members if they have comments, ideas, or information to share. Ábrahám Kovacs (Hungarian Association) mentions the publication of the proceedings of the 2011 EASR conference in Budapest, collected in two separate volumes.
10. There being no further business, the President declares the GA closed.

APPENDIX 1

President's report

Dear delegates and colleagues,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2015 General Assembly of the EASR. I am very happy to be able to report that the affairs of the EASR are running smoothly. The credit for this above all goes to our General Secretary Marco Pasi, who has undertaken his task with great commitment and vigour. I direct your attention in particular to the important work he has done in collecting the byelaws of our association and making them easily accessible, together with the constitution of the EASR, on our webpage, and in creating a digital archive documenting in detail the history of the association, its conferences, meetings and decisions made. Marco has also had an excellent collaboration with the IAHR and its secretary Tim Jensen, in negotiating the place of the EASR at the present congress, and he has handled our bursary programme in an exemplary manner. Finally, he has undertaken to revise and improve our procedures for the nomination of officers of the EASR as well as for the nomination of honorary members. More details concerning all these matters will be given in the General Secretary's own report. Let me add that the communication between the General Secretary and the President has been continuous and excellent on each of these matters. I wish to thank Marco for his devoted and unselfish work in the service of our association.

I also wish to thank our Membership Secretary Jenny Berglund for carrying out the membership census of the national associations in accordance with the proposal made at last year's meeting, and our Treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, for expertly handling the finances of the EASR, about which we will hear more in their respective reports.

It is a pleasure to report that the Finnish association has undertaken to organise next year's EASR conference, which will take place in Helsinki 28 June to 1 July, and I wish to thank Professor Tuula Sakaranaho and her colleagues for their willingness to host the conference. There is also good hope that the 2017 conference will be taken care of by our colleagues in the newly founded Belgian association.

I also extend my thanks to the IAHR, the Executive Committee of the IAHR, and in particular its General Secretary Tim Jensen, for their good collaboration in the preparation for this congress and also for allowing the quinquennial congress to return to Europe after an interval of a quarter of a century. Many thanks are due as well to our colleagues in the German association for their herculean labours in realising this congress, which gives the members of the EASR the opportunity to come together in a year that the EASR does not offer its own annual conference.

At last year's meeting I reported on the involvement of the EASR with the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities (EASSH), which is an umbrella organisation for a number of European academic associations like our own, devoted to the promotion of the humanities and the social sciences in the context of the research programmes of the European Union. On January 16 this year I attended, as the representative of the EASR, another assembly of the Alliance held in Paris. The meeting took place in the shadow of the tragic events that had taken place only a few days before at the offices of Charlie Hebdo magazine in that city, and the importance of religion as an area of research came up repeatedly during the discussions. Those of you who are familiar with the proposed 2016-2017 Work Programme of Societal Challenge 6 in Horizon 2020 will also have noted the significant place which is now given to religion in the research policy of the EU with regard to

societal challenges. I therefore think there is every reason to continue our involvement with EASSH, which is the only organisation of its kind in Europe. The Paris meeting took the form of a Constitutive Assembly at which the organisation was formally founded, a constitution was adopted and a decision was made to establish the EASSH as a legal charitable entity under French law.

This decision has now been implemented, and as the representative of the EASR I have now received a formal invitation to our association to become a member of the EASSH. This will involve paying an annual membership fee, which for the academic year 2015/16 is set at €100.

Einar Thomassen
President of the EASR

APPENDIX 2

General Secretary's report

Dear EASR members,

I think it fit to begin this report with a big thank you to the IAHR and the organizers of this congress for letting us hold our General Assembly here today. In particular, I would like to thank Prof. Tim Jensen, Prof. Jörg Rupke, Prof. Christoph Bochinger, and Dr. Elizabeth Begemann, with whom I have been in contact in the past months while preparing both this meeting and the meeting of the Executive Committee. They have offered full support and they have facilitated things in every possible way. This a sign of the traditional and continuing friendship that exists between the IAHR and our Association.

Timing of the call

The call for the General Assembly to be held here in Erfurt was sent by email to EASR officers, national delegates, and contact members on 17 March 2015. This is well within the timeframe stipulated by our Constitution (90 days for the GA in case of electronic notification).

EASR and IAHR collaboration in Erfurt: bursaries and sponsorship of keynote lecture

The first point I would like to mention concerns the cooperation we have had with the IAHR during the past year. As you know, last year it was proposed to enhance the visibility of the EASR during the Erfurt congress through a number of initiatives. This made sense more than ever because the IAHR congress, after so many years, was once again taking place in Europe. Two main proposals were made: one was to implement our bursary program for this congress even if it is not an EASR congress, the other was to sponsor one of the keynote lectures. Both proposals were accepted by the IAHR General Secretary Prof. Tim Jensen, and by the local organizers of the congress. In the first case, we had of course to work at close contact with the IAHR, which also had its own program of bursaries, in order to avoid awarding bursaries from both programs to the same candidate. So we adjusted our timeline to theirs, and in the end we compared our respective results in order to avoid overlaps. No issues were detected, and we were able to prepare the usual list of recipients. Further information about the number of applications and of awards will be given in the Treasurer's report. Concerning the second point, after looking carefully at the list of keynote speakers, and in consultation with the IAHR organizing team, we decided that our best choice would be Prof. Kim Knott. As you surely know, Prof. Knott has been General Secretary of the EASR for two terms, between 2005 and 2010, and we have a grateful memory of her dedication during her service. Both for her past activity as EASR officer and for the quality of her scholarly achievements it was thought that she was the best candidate for our sponsorship. Her lecture is therefore presented as a "EASR sponsored lecture" in the program of the congress. Thanks to these two initiatives, the EASR is also included among the official sponsors of the IAHR congress in the dedicated website.

Digital archive

In my report for last year I said that the former General Secretary, Prof. David Václavík, had sent me the digital archive of the EASR. During the meeting last year a proposal was made to store this archive in a secure place. The ideal location would of course be the EASR website itself. This transfer has been made during the year, after the scheduled upgrade of the website had been made. This will ensure that the archive remains stored in this digital location and can be retrieved at any moment by authorized persons. It will not be in the exclusive physical possession of a single person, with all the risks that this may entail in terms of security. The preservation of this archive is of course particularly important for the present memory and the future history of our Association, and this is why I think it was our priority to take care of it as soon as possible. However, it should also be remembered that what we have here is only a collection of digital documents. While it is true that this increasingly covers the totality of documents that may be produced in the life of an association such as ours, there may still be paper documents especially from the early days of the EASR that are not preserved in this archive. In the future it may be a good idea to make a call to all persons who may be concerned to give us scanned copies of relevant paper documents they might possess. We could then include them in the digital archive. At this moment the archive is safely stored on the virtual space of the website but is not openly or freely accessible. I think that there is no need to change this for the moment. But for those who are interested in studying the history of the EASR, it will always be possible to make a request to me or to Sebastian Schüler to have access to the archive.

Byelaws

Another action point that was mentioned last year was the collection and visibility of the EASR byelaws. As you know, until now the EASR website only made the EASR constitution available to visitors in a dedicated space. But ever since its foundation, a number of supplementary regulations – usually referred to as “byelaws” – had been adopted by the Association. They had however never been collected together, and lay scattered among the minutes of EC meetings and General Assemblies. This has created a situation of uncertainty in the past, even concerning important aspects in the functioning of the Association, such as the amount to be paid by affiliated national associations as dues. In the course of the year I have therefore proceeded to browse all past minutes of the EASR and have collected all such supplementary regulations. They have been collected together and are now available in a single page on the EASR website [<http://easr.org/index.php?id=1462>]. This was announced through the EASR lists.

In this respect, it should also be mentioned that during the latest meeting of the Executive Committee (23 August 2015), new guidelines were approved for the Honorary Membership Committee and for the Nominating Committee. I will say something more about the latter later during this meeting, as there is a separate point in the agenda for this.

The text of these new guidelines will be posted in the EASR website together with the others in the dedicated page for the byelaws.

Census

Last year it was also proposed to carry out a membership census of all national associations affiliated to the EASR. This has been done by our Membership Secretary Jenny Berglund. The underlying rationale for this action was twofold. On the one hand it was thought that we should have a clearer picture of how the actual membership of associations compares to the dues that are being paid. As you know, the EASR has always had a flexible policy in this respect, trying to find negotiated solutions where particular associations were having financial difficulties or were based in countries with weaker economies. Nevertheless, this has always been done on an ad hoc basis, and we were missing a clearer overall picture of the situation. The data that we have collected will help us better address specific situations in the future. The other aim of this action was to start collecting statistic data that will surely be useful in the future, once this is done consistently and regularly over a number of years. This will allow us to see how the size of European organizations for the study of religion is evolving over time, namely whether it is growing, shrinking, or fluctuating between the two. It is in fact our intention to continue collecting these data in the coming years. The results of the census have been posted on our website.

Preparations for elections for the next term (2017-2019)

In the last few months we also had to start the process leading to the elections of EASR officers for the next term, which will run from January 2017 to December 2019. The process had to be started before the present EC meeting, because it is essential now to appoint the Nominating Committee that will produce the usual list of nominated candidates, as has been the use in our Association in the past years. This list will have to be finalized and circulated before the next EC meeting in 2016, so that, in case a vote is necessary, there is time enough to organize it before the end of the present term (December 2016), and have the new officers appointed before the beginning of the new one (January 2017). During its latest meeting, the Executive Committee appointed a Nominating Committee composed of Profs. Peter Antes, James Cox, Mar Marcos, Kim Knott, and Veikko Anttonen. All of them are experienced colleagues who have served the EASR or the IAHR in the past.

Future conferences

Prospects for future conferences look bright. The 2016 EASR conference, as I am sure you know, has already been announced through the EASR lists. It will take place in Helsinki between 28 June and 1 July. The chair of the organizing committee is Prof. Tuula Sakaranaho, and she is here with us today to give us more information about preparations. Einar Thomassen and I have been regularly in contact with Prof. Sakaranaho over the past months about this and everything looks in place so that we can have another excellent conference next year as it is in our tradition. I will also pay a visit to Helsinki later this year to see the venues and discuss with the local team any organizational issue. I am sure some of you will note that once again, as has been the case last year in Groningen, the dates are different from what we had been accustomed in the past (late June as opposed to September). But we have of course to realize that when a national association takes the burden of organizing such a conference there are always local issues that have to be dealt with, and which make certain periods of the year very difficult. I am sure however that late June will be a convenient period for most of the EASR members anyway. I would also like to point out that we will continue with the regulation first adopted in 2008 of asking a small levy on the registration fee of the conference (€2 per regular participant, €1 per student participant) in order to generate some extra funding to cover the travel expenses for the site visit.

As to 2017, we already have a bid from the Belgian Association for organizing the conference in Leuven. Since BABEL has joined only last year, this will be a wonderful opportunity for our Belgian colleagues to showcase their new association to the rest of the EASR members. Prof. Jos Verheyden, who will presumably chair the organizing committee is also here with us today, and will give us an update about the plans for this conference as well.

We still don't have any bid for the years after 2017, and so we hope to hear from delegates of national associations whether any of them would like to propose locations for 2018 and 2019. We can already assume that there will be no EASR conference in 2020, as it will surely coincide with the next IAHR world congress.

Smaller points

A few smaller points still need to be mentioned. The first one is that the guidelines for the individual membership, which were approved last year in Groningen, have been implemented in the course of the past months. They have of course be made available on our website, together with an updated list of individual members. This list will now be updated every year on the basis of the guidelines, so that there is enough clarity about who is a continuing member, and he whose membership has lapsed for not paying the dues.

I am also happy to report that as of March 2015 the EASR has finally entered the wonderful world of social media. There is now in fact an EASR dedicated Facebook page. Our membership secretary has taken the initiative here, and I would like to thank her for this. She has also been taking of most of the managing until now. The page has proved to be an immediate success, growing very fast and reaching the current number of 607 registered users. It is very useful for members who want to post information about relevant events (conferences, workshops, lectures), publications, study programs, and job openings in fields related to the study of religion. The page has of course been linked to our website, and has been announced via the EASR lists. Delegates are encouraged to use the page if they are Facebook users, and to invite the members of their associations to do the same.

We have received no new applications for membership from national associations, and therefore the situation with our membership remains stable. There are however a couple of cases where the lack of communication and of payment of dues has been a cause for concern for a number of years. If the situation does not improve we may have to make tough decisions again in the near future.

Ideas for the future

Finally, a couple of issues that I think will have to be put on the table in the future. The first one is particularly important, and concerns the procedure for the election of the EASR officers. Our constitution says that, when a vote is needed to appoint an officer (ie, when there is more than one candidate is nominated for a particular position), all members of the association should have the power to vote (6.i), and the vote should be "conducted by postal ballot" (7.ii). This effectively means that the officer should be elected by all the members of each fully paid member association together with all fully paid individual members. This poses a number of practical problems, which are made even more serious by the fact that "postal ballot" may be interpreted as a traditional vote made on a slip of paper that is sent via normal mail. Whether it is possible at all to mobilize all national associations so as to have all their members vote in such a way is doubtful to say the least, and the

few previous experiences we have had with such a vote seem to confirm this. Furthermore, one could wonder if it really makes sense to involve in such a vote members who have never participated in EASR conferences or activities, and who may not be so interested in the EASR in the first place. One wonders therefore if it would not make more sense to transfer the power to elect EASR officers from the global membership of the EASR to the General Assembly. It is reasonable enough to assume that the General Assembly is composed of those EASR members who are dedicated enough to attend not only an EASR conference, but also to attend the General Assembly itself. In this sense it could be considered as the most appropriate locus for the power to elect officers.

The second point that I wish will be discussed in the future is the idea of creating a special category of affiliated associations and organizations, along the same lines as the IAHR. This could be done with scholarly associations that are based in Europe and have a particular regional (eg ISORECEA) or thematic (eg ESSWE) focus.

Thank you very much for your attention

Erfurt, 25 August 2015

Marco Pasi
General Secretary of the EASR

APPENDIX 3

Treasurer's report

1. Preliminary remarks

This report starts with the financial status as found in the previous report, presented during the EC meeting in Groningen, May 2014. During that meeting we agreed about the proposed budget for the following year. It should be clear that as far as the bursaries are concerned, reimbursement will take place only after the conference is over. Copies of the balance sheet, drawn up by the treasurer in collaboration with the general secretary, are with the President, the General Secretary, the Treasurer and the Deputy Treasurer.

2. Membership dues

This year the deadline for the national associations to pay their dues was set on the 31st of May. After a reminder in March, some associations paid straight away or reacted with questions or requests for official EASR letters to their Universities or Academic Councils. In addition, as the payment of dues is an essential prerequisite for a national association to have the right to vote at the Executive Committee Meeting and at the General Assembly, the General Secretary pointed this matter out in his calls to the present meeting and to the upcoming General Assembly. The EASR's flexible policy in this respect allows some last minute's cash payments on the spot, both by representatives of national associations and by individual members. We are happy to say that most associations have paid their dues so far. Considerable efforts have gone into prodding associations that have been in arrears for several years (Poland and Turkey) into action. Until now this has not resulted into any reaction of a financial nature, but the General Secretary may report on the re-established contact with the Polish association. Since the computation of national dues to be paid to the EASR is based on the member list of such an association the Treasurer normally gratefully accepts the payments without checking the actual number of members. However, when it becomes apparent that the amount paid as dues is far below the actual membership, action may be taken.

3. Bursary funds

We sent out the instructions for applying for bursary funds in two ways: through mails from the General Secretary and by giving all the information as a fixed feature on the EASR website. This resulted in a flood of applications in December, from which finally seven were awarded. The deadline was 15 December, and the applicants were notified on or before March 1st. Although the IAHR quinquennial congress in Erfurt is not an EASR annual conference, it had been decided at the EASR meetings in Groningen in 2014 to sponsor bursary applicants for the Erfurt congress as well as a keynote speaker. We had set an amount of €2800, to be divided into seven grants of up to a maximum of 400 Euro each. We received sixteen applications before or on the deadline and two more well after the deadline. The President, the General Secretary and the Treasurer came to a consensus and awarded seven candidates. When one applicant fell out because his proposal had not been accepted, we could award one of the candidates placed on a reserve list. The bursaries will be

reimbursed as usual after the conference, upon demonstration of both actual participation in the conference and material evidence of actual costs.

4. Conclusion

Based on the present state of the EASR bank balance and the earmarked expenses covering the Erfurt conference, and now, for the new budget (regarding the General Secretary's travel expenses to Helsinki (where the 2016 EASR conference is due to take place), a bursary fund and the usual expenses on maintenance of the website, the financial situation looks secure. An additional document includes the recommendations for next year's budget, including anticipated expenses up to €4.600. This is divided into €600 for website maintenance, €400 for travel expenses, € 100 for EASSH membership, and €3.500 for seven bursaries to a maximum of €500 each. This budget is to be voted during the present General Assembly.

Appendix 4

Prospective budget for the financial year 2015-2016

Considering the present financial situation, we propose to earmark for the next year's budget (2015-2016):

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| - A bursary program of 7 grants of €500 max. each, for a total amount of | € 3.500 |
| - Website maintenance | € 600 |
| - Travel costs for the EASR officers | € 400 |
| - EASSH annual fee | € 100 |

Amounting to a total of	€ 4.600
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Appendix 5

Guidelines for the EASR Nominating Committee and for election procedures

Introduction

The present guidelines were first drafted in 2009 by the then General Secretary, Prof. Kim Knott. They are in fact mentioned in the minutes of the EC meeting that was held in Messina in that year. Although the minutes state that the document was discussed during the meeting, the text was not included in the minutes and it is not clear whether it was formally approved by the EC. Its status therefore has remained undefined until now. The document is now submitted to the EC convened in Erfurt (2015), so that it can be discussed again, possibly amended, and formally approved. It will be then made public in the EASR website in the dedicated page for byelaws and guidelines. The document is divided into two parts. The first one includes the specific guidelines for the Nominating Committee, the second one includes a timetable for the whole election procedure. The original text has been slightly edited by me. It has been voted and approved during the EC meeting in Erfurt (23 August 2015).

Marco Pasi, EASR General Secretary

Amsterdam, 24 September 2015

Guidelines for the Nominating Committee

The EASR Executive Committee, in accordance with its constitution and byelaws, will appoint a Nominating Committee to assist in the election process by bringing forward the names of nominees for election to office.

Role

The role of the EASR Nominating Committee is to contribute to the smooth and effective running of EASR elections by identifying candidates for nomination to EASR executive positions.

The Nominating Committee shall bring forward the name of a nominee for each executive position for which a vacancy may arise, shall complete a nomination form, and shall obtain from the candidate a statement of intention.

The task of the EASR Nominating Committee is to nominate candidates, not to appoint them.

This procedure will contribute to the EASR's democratic electoral process. It does not override or take precedence over the legitimate nomination of candidates by other means (by national associations or those with individual membership of EASR).

Tasks

The Nominating Committee's tasks are as follows:

- (a) to identify a Chair who shall oversee the process according to the timetable (see below);
- (b) to bring forward a name for each executive position that may become vacant and in each case complete a nomination form (to identify the proposer and seconder, and to register the agreement of the candidate for nomination), this process to be completed five months before the date of the next General Assembly;
- (c) and to obtain from each candidate a brief statement (on the form provided) of credentials, experience and intentions in respect of the position of which they are nominated, and to submit these statements to the EASR General Secretary five months before the date of the next General Assembly.

EASR Election Timetable and Guidelines

- Nominating Committee to be established at EASR Executive Committee Meeting in the year preceding the election (e.g. 2015 for election in 2016 for appointments starting January 2017).
- *Immediately after establishment*: Nominating Committee to appoint its own Chair and to notify the General Secretary.
- *12 to 6 months before the General Assembly being held in the election year*: Chair to lead Nominating Committee in discussion of names of potential nominees, and to begin the process of nomination.
- *6 months before General Assembly*: Membership Secretary and Internet Officer jointly to search and verify appropriate online resources in case an electronic ballot is needed.
- *5 months before General Assembly*: Nominating Committee to complete nomination form for each candidate (proposer/seconder/agreement of candidate), and to obtain statements of intent. All forms (nominations and statement of intent) to be sent to General Secretary.
- *3 months before General Assembly*: General Secretary to open nomination process to national associations and EASR individual members, and, at the same time, to circulate existing slate of candidates drawn up by Nominating Committee.
- *30 days before General Assembly*: National associations and EASR individual members to have completed nomination forms and obtained statements of intent from any additional candidates.
- *Executive Committee Meeting*: EC to consider list of nominations and to discuss options for electronic ballot in case it is needed.
- *General Assembly*: GA to confirm election of unopposed candidates. General Secretary to announce election process if any post is contested by two or more candidates.
- *Within 30 days from after the General Assembly*: details of election process to be circulated via e-lists and national associations.
- *Before the end of the solar year*: Vote open to all members of fully paid-up national associations and paid-up individual members. Nominating Committee to act as supervisor during the counting of votes. Results of election to be announced and circulated by General Secretary.
- *1 January of following year*: New executive officers take up posts.