



Minutes of the General Assembly of the EASR

held at the University of Helsinki on 29 June, between 18:15 and 19:30

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 General Secretary informs the GA that a new point has been added to the agenda after point 6. This will be: "Changes to the articles of the EASR Constitution concerning the election of EC officers", now included as point 7. With this modification, the agenda is adopted by the GA.
3. The President presents his report (see appendix 1).
4. The General Secretary presents his report (see appendix 2).
5. The General Secretary reads the report of the Treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, in her absence (see appendix 3).
6. Election of EC officers for the new term (2017-2019). The current term will expire at the end of 2016. The General Secretary explains how the election for the next term has been prepared, based on our constitution and byelaws. In the course of the past year, the Nominating Committee, which was appointed by the EC in Erfurt, brought forward a list of nominees for each vacant position (see appendix 4). Subsequently, a call for additional nominations was sent by the General Secretary to all national delegates. No additional nominations were received. Nominated candidates can therefore be elected as unopposed at the present meeting. The GA approves the nominated candidates by acclamation. The candidates are thereby elected and will enter into office at the end of the present term.
7. The General Secretary explains that a proposal to make some changes in the articles of the EASR Constitution concerning the election of EC officers is being prepared and will be submitted to the GA next year. The proposal has already been discussed by the EC this year and is endorsed by it. It will be circulated among EASR members with sufficient advance before the next GA meeting in Leuven.
8. A complement to the guidelines for the Nominating Committee has been approved by the EC. The General Secretary reads the text and gives an explanation. He observes that he has used the byelaws of the IAHR as a model. Kim Knott (BASR) asks about the role of the chair of the Committee. The General Secretary responds that a specific section in the byelaws describes the chair's duties. Knott, being a former General Secretary of the EASR, agrees that all important issues are covered in guidelines.

9. The General Secretary presents a proposal concerning new guidelines for the Nominating Committee. The proposal has been previously discussed and approved by the Executive Committee. It is now also approved by the General Assembly. The new text of the guidelines will be posted on the EASR website together with the other byelaws.
10. Guidelines for an Audit Committee have been prepared by the General Secretary. They have been discussed and approved by the EC. The General Secretary explains the rationale for the Audit Committee and reads out the guidelines. They will be posted on the EASR website together with the other byelaws.
11. An application for membership has been submitted by the Ukrainian Association of Researchers of Religion (UARR), which is already a member of the IAHR. The delegate Ljudmyla Fylypovych presents briefly the association, which has ca. 200 members. The application has been discussed by the EC and is endorsed by it. It is now approved by the GA by acclamation. The UARR is therefore a new member of the EASR.
12. The proposal for the next financial year's budget (2016-2017) is approved (see appendix 5).
13. Jos Verheyden, chair of the organising committee of Leuven 2017, provides information about the preparations for the next EASR conference. For the years after 2017, the EC has received a number of bids and has made the following decisions: the 2018 conference will be organised by the Swiss Association and will be held in Bern (2018); the 2019 conference will be organised by the Estonian Association and will be held in Tartu. There will be no separate EASR conference in 2020 because of the IAHR world congress in that year.
14. There being no further business, the President declares the GA meeting closed.

APPENDIX 1

ANNEX 1

President's report

Dear delegates and colleagues

Last year I had the pleasure of reporting to you that the affairs of our association were running smoothly. This year, my task is no less pleasurable. Since we last met, the several administrative functions of the EASR have been performed with great dedication and competence by our various designated officers, a fact you will soon be able to ascertain yourselves from their reports. Thank you all for your hard and selfless work in the service of our association! Special thanks are due this year as well to our General Secretary Marco Pasi, who holds all the threads of our organisation and manages it on a daily basis. It is he who has called and organised this meeting, having done the massive work of preparing the many documents that are needed for each of the items on the agenda, and sending them out in perfect agreement with the stipulations of our Constitution. In particular, I wish to direct your attention this year to the important initiatives he has taken to improve the procedures for electing the Executive Committee, and to clarify the guidelines of the Nominating Committee. Following up the mandate issuing from last year's discussions, these matters can be finalised at today's meeting.

I also wish to mention specifically the essential service to our association that is provided by our Treasurer Tineke Nugteren, who is in charge of the finances of the EASR, including correspondence with our fee-paying members and our bursary programme. Due to illness, Tineke is unable to be with us today, and since our Vice-Treasurer is also unable to attend, General Secretary Marco Pasi has undertaken to present the Treasurer's report. I wish to thank Tineke for her conscientious and hard work in managing the association's finances, and express our concern and wishes for her full and speedy recovery. I also thank Marco for offering to take over the presentation of the Treasurer's report on very short notice.

It is also to be noted that three of our EC officers will not stand for re-election for a new term. Deputy General Secretary Katja Triplett, Membership Secretary Jenny Berglund, and Publications Officer Mihaela Timuş have all been highly visible in the work of the EC and have made remarkable contributions to it. Thank you all for your dedication and enthusiasm. It has been a true pleasure to work with you, and you will be missed.

The most important purpose of the EASR is undoubtedly to ensure the organisation of our annual conference. The conferences serve to develop the study of religion as a scientific enterprise in our continent, to exchange ideas across national borders, to refine our ideas in response to criticism, to establish networks and formulate new projects. The association cannot do this without the active support of its member associations and their individual members. It is gratifying to see that this active support holds up and is even increasing. This year, we are all grateful to our Finnish colleagues for having been willing to do this work for us. Thank you, Tuula Sakaranaho, and all your collaborators, for all your hard work in organising what appears to be the largest EASR conference ever!

It is no less gratifying to see that offers to organise the conference in the coming years have already been made from different parts of Europe. This is a testimony not only to the steadily growing support for the EASR throughout the continent, but also, and more importantly, to the importance of the study of religion itself as a key factor in the understanding of today's cultural processes, identity negotiations, and human hopes and fears.

The conviction that the study of religion can, and should, make a substantial contribution to contemporary developments in society and culture, is a main reason why we, as an association, also try to monitor the European research funding system, currently known as Horizon 2020. Last year we voted to become a member of the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities (EASSH), which is devoted to the promotion of the humanities and the social sciences in the context of the research programmes of the European Union. We now pay an annual membership fee of 100 euros to EASSH, and I attended the first General Assembly of EASSH on 28 October 2015, in Brussels (<http://www.eassh.eu/>). I also attended the Net4Society conference in Brussels on the two following days, at which the 2016–2017 Work Programme for Societal Challenge 6 was presented. As a matter of fact, this Work Programme, and the calls resulting from it, contain a number of openings for research on religion, and I presented an overview of these in a posting on EASR's Facebook 22 December 2015. It is important in my opinion that scholars in the study of religions are alert to these funding opportunities and do not leave it to other disciplines to respond to the quite significant requests for research on religion made in some of the "Challenges" in Horizon 2020. In this respect, the EASR conferences should serve as a networking arena for the formation of research partnerships that will enable our discipline to become more visible in the European research system. As president, I intend both to follow up our involvement with EASSH and to look for other opportunities for interacting with European research policies on behalf of the EASR and our discipline.

Einar Thomassen
President of the EASR

APPENDIX 2

General Secretary's report

Dear EASR members,

This has been a relatively busy year for the EASR. One of the most important activities has been the preparations for the election of the EASR officers for the next triennial term, which will begin at the end of the present year. But other important things have been done or have happened, such as the application of new members, and the preparation and approval of new guidelines.

1. Timing of calls

The calls for the meetings of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly to be held in Helsinki were sent by email to EASR officers, national delegates, and contact members on 3 March 2016. This is well within the timeframe stipulated by our Constitution (90 days for the GA in case of electronic notification; and 30 days for the EC meeting). Final calls for both meetings, including their respective agendas, have then been sent separately on 13 June 2016. The call and the agenda for the meeting of the General Assembly has also been circulated widely through the EASR e-lists

2. Elections for the next term (2017-2019)

The next term of office will start on 1st January 2017 and will end on 31 December 2019. Therefore, preparations for the election of new officers had to be started last year. We appointed in Erfurt a Nominating Committee (NC), consisting of Kim Knott (chair), Peter Antes, Veikko Anttonen, James Cox, and Mar Marcos. I would like to thank them here for their work. The NC has submitted a list of nominees, all of whom have agreed to stand as candidates and have submitted a statement of intent. Both the list of nominees and their respective statements of intent have been sent to EC members and delegates on 20 April 2016.

This is the list submitted by the NC:

For the position of President: Einar Thomassen (Norwegian Association, second term)
 For one position of Vice-President: Marion Bowman (British Association, second term)
 For one position of Vice-President: Giovanni Casadio (Italian Association, second term)
 For the position of General Secretary: Marco Pasi (Dutch Association/Italian Association, second term)
 For the position of Deputy General Secretary: Ábrahám Kovacs (Hungarian Association)
 For the position of Treasurer: Tineke Nugteren (Dutch Association, second term)
 For the position of Deputy Treasurer: Franz Winter (Austrian Association, second term)
 For the position of Membership Secretary: Silvia Alfayé (Spanish Association)
 For the position of Publications Officer: Teemu Taira (Finnish Association)
 For the position of Internet Officer: Sebastian Schüller (German Association, second term)

After receiving the list of nominees, the General Secretary opened the nomination process to all delegates of EASR member associations. No alternative nominations were received, which means that, on the basis of our Constitution (7.ii), the candidates nominated by the NC will be elected as unopposed during the present meeting of the General Assembly.

3. Proposals for changes in the Constitution and new guidelines

Last year, one of the most important points for discussion during the meeting of the EC was the proposal made by the General Secretary, in agreement with the President, to modify the EASR Constitution with respect to the procedure for the election of EC officers. At present, our Constitution stipulates that the election is to take place by way of postal ballot, with the entire EASR membership as the electorate. This procedure cannot but create numerous practical problems, which were discussed at length last year. On the basis of that discussion, it was decided that the General Secretary would prepare a proposal for the revision of the Constitution. The proposal has been submitted this year to the EC, which has decided to endorse it. The proposal will now have to be submitted to the General Assembly, which, according to our Constitution (8.i), will be asked to approve it by a two-thirds majority. However, the General Assembly will be asked to approve this proposal only next year in Leuven, because, according to our Constitution (8.i), proposals for amendments to the Constitution must be notified to EASR members well in advance of the meeting of the GA.

Last year new guidelines for the Nominating Committee were proposed and approved by the EC. It was however pointed out that these guidelines did not cover some important aspects, such as the criteria for selecting and appointing the members of this committee. It was therefore decided that a complement to the guidelines would be prepared by the General Secretary. This has been done and the proposed complement has been presented and approved at the meeting of the EC this year. You will hear more about this later in the course of this meeting. Finally, it was also suggested that an Audit Committee be created in order to review the financial statements produced by the Treasurer. Therefore, a proposal for the establishment of an Audit Committee has also been presented and approved at the meeting of the EC this year. The first committee has then been appointed by the EC, and is composed of William Arfman (Dutch Association); Knut Jacobsen (Norwegian Association); and Monique Weis (Belgian Association). Details about these guidelines will also be given later during this meeting.

4. Applications for membership

In the course of this year we have been very happy to receive a new application for membership from a national association. This comes from the Ukrainian Association of Researchers of Religion (UARR), which was established in 1993. I received an official letter from its president, Prof. Anatolii Kolodnyi on 14 September 2016 requesting the affiliation to the EASR. The UARR has been a member of the IAHR since 2001, and is, also for this reason, fully eligible to become a member of the EASR. The EC has unanimously approved this application during its meeting yesterday and the GA will be asked to approve it as well and give a warm welcome to the UARR as a new member of the EASR.

We also received an application for individual membership from Ksenia Medvedeva, from Russia. The application has been evaluated and approved by the Membership Secretary Jenny Berglund.

5. Working Group Committee

Last year the EC also decided to appoint a Working Group Committee that would “produce a document outlining the rationale and the guidelines for the adoption of working groups within the EASR” (see minutes of the 2015 EC meeting, #14). Sebastian Schöler, Wanda Alberts, and James Kapalo kindly volunteered to sit on this committee. The document has been presented to the EC and part of it has been adopted as a guideline for working groups.

6. *Site visits and future conferences*

Throughout the year, I have had frequent contact with the organizing committee of the Helsinki conference, and particularly with the chair of the committee, Tuula Sakaranaho. In October 2015 I came here to Helsinki for the usual site visit and met with the members of the organising committee. I had a very warm welcome from them and was struck by the enthusiasm and professionalism with which they were preparing the conference. As it has been the case since 2008, we will stick to the regulation 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.

Next year the EASR conference will be organized in Leuven by the Belgian Association Babel. The prospective dates for the conference are from 18 to 21 September, and the theme will be “Communicating Religion”. Both our President and myself have been in frequent contact during the past months with the Belgian representative Jos Verheyden about preparations. We also liaised with the President of the German Association, Christoph Bochinger, since the Leuven conference will be very close to the annual conference of the DVRW. We have discussed ways to avoid an overlap between the two conferences, as we want to make it possible for all members to attend both events if they so wish.

As to the years after 2017, the EC has evaluated proposals submitted after a call for bids we have circulated at the end of May. Eventually, it has been decided to accept the bid of the Swiss Association for 2018 and the bid of the Estonian Association for 2019.

7. *Finances and absence of the Treasurer*

An important point that needs to be mentioned in this report concerns the unfortunate circumstances which have obliged our Treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, to be absent from the EC meeting and GA this year. Tineke had prepared her travel to Helsinki and was planning to participate in the meetings but sadly a week ago news came that she was obliged to cancel her trip due to serious illness. This was unexpected, and it is made even more unfortunate by the fact that our Vice-Treasurer, Franz Winter, also couldn’t make it to Helsinki. In any case Tineke has provided me with all necessary information and documents related to the current financial situation and has sent me her report, so I will take care of presenting them here today. At this moment, I can of course only wish Tineke a speedy recovery, and I am sure she will be back with us next year in Leuven.

8. *Outgoing officers at the end of this term*

As I said earlier in this report, the EC is now at the end of its triennial term and a new term will begin in January 2017. Some officers will have to leave the EC and some new ones will join the team. I would like to thank here Jenny Berglund, Katja Triplett, and Mihaela Timuş for all the energy and enthusiasm they have put into working with us. Their input and contribution have been remarkable, and they will be missed. At the same time, I wish all the best to those new EC officers who are going to take up their functions at the end of this year.

Helsinki, 29 June 2016

Dr. 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 and GA meetings in Erfurt, August 2015. During that meeting we agreed about the proposed budget for the following year. This budget appears in the balance sheet under 'earmarked funds'. 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 extended deadline for the national associations to pay their dues was set at the 15th 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 also pointed this matter out in his calls to the EASR meetings in Helsinki. 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 almost all regular 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. We are relieved to say that contact has been re-established and dues have been paid to a certain degree. Since the computation of national dues to be paid to the EASR is based on the member list, the Treasurer normally gratefully accepts the payments without checking the actual number of members. However, when it would become 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. We received a good number of applications, mostly from early-career candidates and independent scholars. The President, the General Secretary and the Treasurer came to a consensus and awarded seven candidates. When one recipient notified us that he had received news that his other (simultaneous) grant application had been successful we could – last-minute – give the bursary to the candidate next in line who gratefully accepted it. We had settled on a budget of €3500, divided into seven grants of up to a maximum of 500 Euro each. The bursaries will be reimbursed as usual after the conference, upon demonstration of both actual participation in the conference and original material evidence of actual costs.

4. Conclusion

Based on the present state of the EASR bank balance and (1) the earmarked expenses covering the reimbursements after the Erfurt conference, and (2) the earmarked expenses pertaining to the Helsinki conference, the financial situation looks secure. We propose a new budget (3) leading to next year's conference in Leuven consisting for the main part of a bursary fund and some additional expenses on maintenance of the website, dues to be paid to the EASSH, and travel expenses to be made by the General Secretary for a site visit to Leuven.

In a separate document, we propose items for next year's budget to an amount of €4.600. This is divided into €600 for website maintenance, €300 for travel expenses, €100 for the dues to be paid to the EASSH, and €3.600 for nine bursaries to a maximum of €400 each. This budget is to be voted during the General Assembly.

Dr. Albertina Nugteren

Treasurer of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR)

Appendix 4

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EASR for the period 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2019

Background

The current term of office in the Executive Committee of the EASR will come to an end on 31 December 2016. The next term will run from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019. A Nominating Committee (NC), consisting of Kim Knott (chair), Peter Antes, Veikko Anttonen, James Cox, and Mar Marcos, was established by the EASR Executive Committee in Erfurt on 23 August 2015. According to the current guidelines, the purpose of the NC is to assist in the election process by providing a list of nominees who are deemed to be the most suitable candidates to serve as officers in the next term. The NC has brought forward the following list of nominees, all of whom have agreed to stand as candidates and have submitted a statement of intent:

For the position of President: Einar Thomassen (Norwegian Association, second term)
 For one position of Vice-President: Marion Bowman (British Association, second term)
 For one position of Vice-President: Giovanni Casadio (Italian Association, second term)
 For the position of General Secretary: Marco Pasi (Dutch Association/Italian Association, second term)
 For the position of Deputy General Secretary: Ábrahám Kovacs (Hungarian Association)
 For the position of Treasurer: Tineke Nugteren (Dutch Association, second term)
 For the position of Deputy Treasurer: Franz Winter (Austrian Association, second term)
 For the position of Membership Secretary: Silvia Alfayé (Spanish Association)
 For the position of Publications Officer: Teemu Taira (Finnish Association)
 For the position of Internet Officer: Sebastian Schüler (German Association, second term)

Additional nominations

The General Secretary issued a general call for additional nominations on 20 April 2016. The call was sent to all delegates and/or contact persons of EASR corporate members. No additional nominations were received by the General Secretary before the deadline, which was set on 31 May 2016.

Election

Since no additional nominations were received, the nominated candidates will be elected as unopposed during the next General Assembly, to be held in Helsinki on 29 June 2016 (see art. 7.ii of the EASR Constitution: "The elections shall be conducted by postal ballot. In cases where a candidate is unopposed there should be no postal ballot.").

Amsterdam, 9 June 2016
 The General Secretary of the EASR
 Marco Pasi (m.pasi@uva.nl)

Appendix 5

Prospective budget for the next financial year (2016-2017)

- A program of 9 conference bursaries of €400 each	€ 3.600
- Website maintenance	€ 600
- Travel costs officers	€ 300
- EASSH membership fee	€ 100
Amounting to a total of	€ 4.600