



Minutes of the General Assembly of the EASR

held at the University of Leuven on 19 September 2017, from 17:00 to 18:30

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 (see appendix 1 for statistics of attendance).
2. Point 10 in the agenda (discussion about the EuARE) is moved at the end of the meeting. With this modification, the agenda is adopted by the GA.
3. The President presents his report (see appendix 2).
4. The General Secretary presents his report (see appendix 3).
5. The Vice-Treasurer, Franz Winter, reads the report of the Treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, in her absence (see appendix 4).
6. The representative of the Audit Committee, William Arfman (NGG), presents his report (see appendix 5). The report is approved unanimously by the GA.
7. The General Secretary introduces the next point, which concerns some proposed changes to the articles of the EASR Constitution concerning the election of EC officers. These changes are meant to improve the functioning of the electoral system of the EASR. The regulations in the EASR constitution in its present form make procedures extraordinarily complicated, by demanding that the EC officers be elected by all members through the use of a postal ballot. It is now proposed to have officers elected by the EC. These changes were proposed by the General Secretary last year at the EC meeting in Helsinki and were approved by the EC. They are now submitted to the GA for discussion and vote. In order to be approved, a two-third majority of the GA will have to vote in favour of them. The President opens the floor for a discussion. Jörg Rüpke (DVRW) asks if it is appropriate that officers would be elected by the EC, because it sounds as if the EC would be electing itself. The General Secretary responds that the EC is not only composed of officers, but also of national delegates, who are much more numerous than officers and represent their respective national associations. This ensures that elections would be conducted as democratically as possible. Kim Knott (BASR, past General Secretary) comments that the proposal is fine. The procedure should be considered also on the backdrop of the nomination guidelines, which also ensure democratic functioning. She hopes for a lively nomination process. The Nomination Committee should propose names and then suggestions should be made by member associations. It would be good to have multiple candidates for each position. The new procedure is not as narrow as it may look without knowing the context, there would be in fact greater democratic participation in the process in this way. The General

Secretary agrees and observes that proposing alternative candidates is part of the democratic process. Tim Jensen (IAHR) supports the proposal fully. It is a question of democratisation, this new procedure is similar to what exists now in the IAHR. Giovanni Casadio (SISR) is strongly in favour of the proposal: the changes are necessary. Helmut Zander (DVRW) says that it is not clear who the members of the EC are. The General Secretary responds that this is clearly indicated in article 6 of the EASR constitution. Rüpke says that he is absolutely in favour of the proposal, but he asks whether the designated officers are also members of the EC. The General Secretary responds that new officers would be elected by the whole EC, including the old officers. Some may consider it a problem that, in case an officer is nominated to continue in his/her position, he/she might vote for him-/herself. Jensen notes that this situation can also happen in the IAHR and it has never been a problem. In any case it would just be one vote in the context of an electoral body that is large enough. William Arfman (NGG) remarks that this does not only concern officers, a national delegate could also vote for him-/herself. Jos Verheyden (Babel) says that, as with any law, there is the spirit and there is the letter: candidates can also choose not to vote for themselves if they think it appropriate. After this discussion, the President asks the GA to vote about the proposal. The proposal is approved unanimously. See appendix 6 for the text of the modified articles.

8. The next point concerns a proposal for the introduction of a new category of “affiliated organisations”, for which the General Secretary has drafted a text of guidelines. The creation of this new category responds, among other things, to the widely felt need to expand the outreach of the EASR and become ever more inclusive with respect to fields of research encompassed by a broad understanding of the area of religious studies. In preparing the present proposal, the General Secretary has taken into account the provisions about a similar category of affiliated organisations in the IAHR. The draft of the guidelines has already been discussed and approved by the EC during the meeting yesterday (18 September 2017). It is now submitted to the GA for discussion and final approval. The General Secretary adds that, with respect to earlier drafts, the annual fee for affiliated organisations has been reduced to € 60 (€ 40 when the organisation is already an IAHR affiliate). Also an article about bursaries has been added, and he suggests that there should be two separate votes: one about the guidelines without the last article about bursaries, and one about the article about bursaries. The President notes that a proactive approach will be necessary for the idea to work, ie, it will be important that members who know organisations that may become affiliates encourage them to do so. The floor is then opened for the discussion. Kim Knott (BASR) suggests that applications for affiliation should be sent to the Membership Secretary (rather than the GS). The General Secretary agrees. Joseph Verheyden (Babel) asks what is meant by the “etc.” in the first line of the first article. The General Secretary refers to the Centre for the Study of New Religions (CESNUR) as an example: the idea is to be able to involve networks, centres, institutes, so not to be too specific about names. Each application will be scanned in any case, to see if it is compatible with the general idea of affiliation to the EASR. Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR, guest) suggests that we might have pre-conferences for affiliated organisations, similarly to what happens at the meetings of the American Academy of Religion. The General Secretary expresses a negative opinion about this idea, because the organising committees of EASR conferences, largely composed of voluntary staff, already have a lot of work for the conference itself, and it would be difficult to put this extra burden on them. Tim Jensen (IAHR) makes a point about the procedure for approving these new byelaws. He thinks that they could have

been passed just by the EC, without submitting them to the GA as well. The General Secretary responds that the constitution is vague about this kind of procedure, so we don't have a clear indication to follow; but the point is taken for the future, the suggestion makes sense. Jörg Rüpke (DVRW) is against giving bursaries to affiliated organisations, bursaries should be given only to members. Suzanne Owen (BASR) agrees with Rüpke. William Arfman (NGG) is in favour of offering the bursaries as they may be important for junior scholars. The General Secretary observes that the fees of the paying affiliates would contribute to the EASR budget, so it would make sense to offer a limited number of bursaries to them as well. The discussion is then closed and the President asks the GA to vote on the first seven articles of the byelaws. 50 votes are in favour, 2 votes are against, and there are 6 abstentions. The proposal is approved. The President then asks the GA to vote about article 8 (about bursaries). 38 votes are in favour, 10 votes are against, and there are 10 abstentions. The proposal is approved. The final text of the new byelaws is in appendix 7.

9. The proposal for the budget of the next financial year (2017-2018) is then introduced by the Vice Treasurer, Franz Winter. The President points out that the budget has been modified during the EC meeting, with the addition of an item for the renovation of the website. The Internet Officer, Sebastian Schüler observes that maintenance for the new website will be cheaper, so we will save some money in the end. The budget is unanimously approved (see appendix 8).
10. Charles Guittard, on behalf of the Honorary Membership Committee, proposes to award the distinction of honorary membership of the EASR to Maya Burger. The proposal is approved by acclamation.
11. The organisers of the next two EASR conferences (Jens Schlieter for Bern 2018; and Ülo Valk for Tartu 2019) present the situation with preparations. The topic for the Tartu conference will be "Continuities and Disruptions". Tim Jensen (IAHR) speaks about the 2020 IAHR world congress, which will take place in New Zealand in the last week of August. For 2021, the President invites particularly Southern European countries to offer to organise that conference. Giovanni Casadio (SISR) says that the Italian Association would be happy to host the 2021 conference and that the best location it could offer is the University of Pisa. SISR member Chiara Tommasi, also present at the meeting and affiliated to the University of Pisa confirms the availability to organise the conference. The president encourages the Italian Association to submit a formal proposal for next year (2018).
12. The next and final point is a discussion on the recently created European Academy of Religion. The President introduces the matter, explaining what has happened in the past year, especially with respect to the interaction between the EASR and this newly founded organisation. Statements were issued by the EASR leadership that were widely circulated, a response was received from Prof. Melloni, and discussions took place on the EASR e-lists. The floor is open for the discussion. Lidia Guzy (ISASR) thinks that the statements of the EASR could have been formulated in even stronger terms. Helmut Zander (DVRW) has attended the Bologna conference and he has noted that it was mostly focused on political issues; the number of attendees was probably less than the 900 that were announced. He also observes that to draw sharp boundaries is a sign of weakness, not of strength. Jos Verheyden asks if there will be a response to Prof. Melloni's latest letter. The President responds that he has prepared a statement together with Tim Jensen and Marco Pasi, to which Prof. Melloni responded. It doesn't seem necessary to continue this dialogue because there is a clear intention to proceed with the EuARe project independently from it. Tim Jensen (IAHR) endorses the

leadership of the EASR about the way it has dealt with the matter. The IAHR is in full support of the EASR, even though it is a regional matter that has to be handled primarily by the EASR itself. It is smart to try to learn a lesson from this story. He also points out that, with respect to Prof. Melloni's comparison of the EuARE with the American Academy of Religion (AAR), the AAR has been a loyal member of the IAHR since 2010, so the comparison is not relevant or appropriate. The AAR supported the EASR's response to Prof. Melloni. Steven Sutcliffe (BASR) says that our challenge is to be proactive and to communicate about us to a wider public. Wanda Alberts (DVRW) stresses the importance of drawing sharp boundaries, in a context where a distinction between scientific and other approaches in matters relating to religion is not always clear. With this, the discussion is closed by the President.

13. There being no further business, the President declares the GA meeting closed.

APPENDIX 1**2017 General Assembly: statistics of attendance**

Number of members attending per national association (including EC officers)

BABEL (Belgium): 4
BASR (UK): 5
CSR (Czech Republic): 1
DASR (Denmark): 2
DVRW (Germany): 11
EAUS/ESSR (Estonia): 1
GSSCR (Greece): 0
ISASR (Ireland): 3
LRD/LSSR (Lithuania): 0
LRPB (Latvia): 0
MVTY (Hungary): 1
NGG (Netherlands): 3
NRF (Norway): 1
ÖGRW (Austria): 1
PTR (Poland): 1
RAHR (Romania): 0
SECR (Spain): 5
SER (France): 2
SGR/SSSR (Switzerland): 2
SISR (Italy): 8
SSRF (Sweden): 2
SUS (Finland): 3
TAHR (Turkey): 0
UAR/UARR (Ukraine): 4

Individual members attending: 1

Honorary members attending: 0

Guests and observers: 2

Total: 60

APPENDIX 2

President's report

Dear EASR members and colleagues

This is the first meeting of the General Assembly of the EASR to be held during the present term of elected officers. Once again I have the pleasure of reporting that the administrative machinery of our association is running well. Our officers are discharging their duties conscientiously and the association is accomplishing its objectives. Thank you all officers for your hard work!

The hub of the machinery is the General Secretary, who ensures that everything functions smoothly. Marco Pasi continues to do hard and excellent work for the association, as you will have seen in the preparations for this meeting and as will be further shown today by his own report. As before, Marco has been alert to possible improvements in the way the EASR functions, and this year has proposed new byelaws for the category of 'affiliated organisations'. This is an initiative I fully endorse, since it has the potential of broadening our contacts and interaction with groups whose academic interests converge with ours without being national associations for the study of religions. The collaboration between President and General Secretary has been excellent, as always.

I also wish to mention in particular Tineke Nugteren, who in spite of difficult circumstances has continued to serve as our Treasurer, managing our finances, corresponding with our fee-paying members, handling our bursary programme and preparing the Treasurer's report for this meeting, assisted by our Vice Treasurer Franz Winter and the General Secretary. Thank you Tineke, and all three of you, for your contributions.

The preparations for this year's conference have gone smoothly. The General Secretary and I have worked together with our BABEL colleagues on the theme and date of the conference, and the General Secretary made a site visit. I also had occasion myself to inspect the locality in June this year. Jos Verheyden and his collaborators have done a marvellous and highly professional job getting funding and organising the conference, which has all the signs of being the largest conference of the EASR ever, with well over 500 participants. The annual conference is certainly the most important thing the EASR exists for, and we must all be grateful that our member associations are willing to undertake all the hard work involved. It is also gratifying to see that the next two years' conferences are firmly in place, the responsibility for them having been taken by the Swiss and the Estonian associations respectively.

Our collaboration with the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities continues, and I attended the General Assembly of the EASSH in Brussels on November 2 last year. The EASSH exists to promote the social sciences and the humanities in the research frame programmes of the European Commission. I think it will be no distortion to say that the GA of the EASSH gave expression to considerable discontent with the attention given to the SSH area in the Commission's research policies. This discontent is supported by monitoring studies that document that the allegedly desired "full integration" of the social sciences and the humanities in Horizon 2020 is not reflected in the actual allocation of research funding. Moreover, the various Work Programmes do not in fact give much scope or offer much inspiration for research in the humanities and most of the social

sciences. The EASSH is to some extent in dialogue with policy making bodies in the EU research system, but seems, on the whole, not to have had much success so far.

A matter that gave cause for much concern during the last year, finally, was the launching of the European Academy of Religion. Substantial documentation of our position and actions in this matter have already been communicated to the national associations, so I may here restrict myself to summarise. In June 2016 Alberto Melloni, of the *Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII* in Bologna started circulating letters to various recipients in Europe inviting them to take part in the creation of a European Academy of Religion for the purpose of promoting the study of religion as an important area of research for Europe. The Academy would model itself after the American Academy of Religion and was to be launched at an event in Bologna on December 5, 2016, in the presence of the EU Commissioner for Research Carlos Moedas and other important political figures. I received the letter of invitation on July 13. I responded by expressing surprise at this initiative, since a European organisation for the study of religion already exists in the EASR, and the creation of a new organisation was therefore redundant. Moreover, the EASR represents Europe in the IAHR in the same way as the AAR represents the United States. In response, Melloni argued that the EASR only represents one part of religious studies, and that the EuARE aimed to be more inclusive. I argued in return that the EASR, according to its statutes, is highly inclusive, excluding only confessionally based approaches to the subject matter of religion. There was agreement on this position in the EASR leadership, and the IAHR also gave its support, through its President Tim Jensen. I may add at this point that collaboration with the IAHR President has been very close and valuable throughout in our work on this matter. Extensive support was also given by our national member associations, who were informed of this correspondence. As a matter of fact, not one of our member associations expressed disagreement with the line we had taken on this issue.

I nevertheless decided to attend the Bologna meeting, at which a session of open discussion had been scheduled, and I requested to speak during that session in order to make known the existence of the EASR and its contributions to the study of religion in Europe. The meeting was also attended by our General Secretary, the President of the IAHR, and several active members of our association. In the event, the session of open discussion was deleted from the programme and none of us were allowed to speak. Instead, the speaking time was given to Commissioner Moedas and a range of other high-ranking political and organisational figures, none of whom were professional academics in the field of religious studies.

Some time before the Bologna meeting I wrote to Commissioner Moedas to explain the position of the EASR on this initiative, and also to express our willingness to contribute in a European context to research on important issues relating to religion. I received a courteous reply from his office expressing agreement with the view that religion was an important area of research, and that the Commissioner did not wish to interfere in how researchers in this area chose to organise themselves.

Since these events took place, the EuARE has held its first conference. Before the conference, the EASR and the IAHR issued a joint statement which reiterated their position on the EuARE, and explained that they were not in support of that organisation. The statement led to a response by Professor Melloni. Both the statement and the response are included in the documents that have been sent to the members before the present meeting, and form part of the background materials available for the discussion that will take place as item 12 on today's agenda.

The first, actually called 'zero', conference of the EuARE was held in Bologna on 18–21 June this year. It is said to have been attended by 980 registered participants, though by very few who are also members of one of our national associations. It would seem that the EuARE is now well established.

It also seems reasonable to conclude at this point that the EuARE attracts a different constituency from the EASR. This in turn leads to two further conclusions. First, the EuARE is not a threat to the EASR in the sense that we risk losing members to it. Secondly, however, it also has become clear that much interesting research on religion is being done across Europe that is not represented in the EASR. This includes research that is made from within such disciplines as history, the social sciences, law, philosophy and digital humanities. That is an important lesson, which indicates that the EASR might work harder to attract collaboration with scholars working on religion in other disciplines than the study of religion as such. We have the ambition of being broadly inclusive in principle, but we still have some way to go before we fulfil that ambition in practice.

Einar Thomassen
President of the EASR

APPENDIX 3

General Secretary's report

Dear EASR members, dear guests,

Thank you all for being here today. I would like to thank the organising committee of this conference, particularly its chair Prof. Jos Verheyden, who has assisted us in all possible ways and has facilitated our meetings.

As you know, this is the first year into our new term after last year's elections. New officers have taken function and have been active throughout the year. Our collaboration has been smooth and effective, as I am sure it will continue to be until the end of the term. I would like to thank here all the EC officers who have done excellent work during the past months, and more particularly the new officers, who had to familiarise themselves with their duties. Some officers had serious health issues that prevented them from being fully operative, but I was impressed by the dedication and commitment they showed to the EASR even in difficult circumstances. I would also like to mention the continuing excellent collaboration with our President, with whom I had the pleasure to work at close contact especially in relation to the situation with the European Academy of Religion, about which more below.

As I have done in the past, I will give particular space in this report only to matters for which there is no entry in the agenda, and for which there will be a separate discussion in the course of the meeting. An exception will only be made for the point about the recent creation of the European Academy of Religion. All in all, we have less items to discuss this year than last year, but they are no less important.

1. Timing of calls

The call for the meeting of the General Assembly to be held here in Leuven was sent by email to EASR officers, national delegates, and contact members on 5 May 2017. 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). Another call for the meeting of the General Assembly, with further details about time and place was sent on 15 June 2017. Final calls for both meetings, including their preliminary agendas, have then been sent on 6 and 7 September 2017, respectively. As usual, the minutes of the previous EC meeting and a number of annexes to the EC agenda have also been attached, so that EC officers and delegates could read in advance the documents that will be discussed during the meeting.

2. Changes in the Constitution

Last year the EC approved a proposal to modify the EASR Constitution in relation to the procedure for the election of EC officers. At this meeting of the General Assembly this proposal will be

presented and voted. If all goes well, we will then have a new electoral system, which will make things easier and more transparent at the next round of elections (2019). In order to pass, the proposal will have to be approved by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. The proposal was notified to EASR members via the national delegates with sufficient advance, in accordance with our regulations for such cases (see the constitution, 8.i).

3. *Applications for membership*

We have received no new applications for membership from eligible national associations this year.

4. *Byelaws for affiliated organisations*

You will remember that last year we approved some regulations about the creation of working groups within the EASR. The proposal had been presented by the Working Group Committee that had been created for that purpose. At the same time the Committee also proposed some ideas about the affiliation of existing research networks. Since this was also an idea that the General Secretary intended to work on for some time and the agenda was already quite busy last year, it was decided that the General Secretary would prepare a draft for a more complete proposal about affiliated organisations and networks, to be presented and discussed this year. This has been done and the proposal has been circulated as an annex to the agenda before the meeting.

I will just say here that I see an important rationale behind this idea. The intent of the proposal is to enhance the outreach of the EASR towards existing scholarly organisations, associations, and networks that focus on specific areas of study within religion or which cover particular regional areas within Europe. These organisations, not being national associations for the study of religions, would not be eligible for full EASR membership. However, it is certainly in the interest of the EASR, as the main scholarly organization for the study of religions in Europe, to be as inclusive as possible towards all those colleagues who carry out scholarly research on religion, whether involved in a national association for the study of religions or not. It is also to be noted that the IAHR, which is always a useful model for us, has also created some time ago a category of *affiliates* (international associations for the study of religion in particular areas) distinguished from that of *members* (national/regional associations). It is important to know that the proposal presented this year by me takes into account the discussions I had in the past about this issue with the current President of the IAHR, Tim Jensen. It is also for this reason that I found it important to include a reduced fee for those affiliated organisations that are also affiliated to the IAHR.

Finally, if the proposal is accepted, it will be good in the future to avoid confusion and use the term “affiliation” only for affiliated organisations, and not as a synonym of “membership”, as has been often the case in the past.

5. *The European Academy of Religion*

The agenda this year includes also an entry about the recently created “European Academy of Religion”. Rumours about plans for the creation of this organisation has already reached me last year before the meeting in Helsinki, but I had decided not to report on them as I thought it was still quite premature and the agenda was already particularly charged. After Helsinki things accelerated and

intentions to create such an organisation were finally publicly announced by the person who first had this idea and had decided to realise it, ie the Italian colleague and historian of Christianity Prof. Alberto Melloni. It is impossible to include in this report everything that happened since that public announcement was made, so I will stick here to the essential. The EASR leadership took immediately a critical stance about this project, and this mainly for two reasons: the first one had to do with the fact that Prof. Melloni presented his initiative for the creation of a new comprehensive and major organisation for the study of religion in Europe, explicitly taking inspiration from the American Academy of Religion, without any acknowledgment of the role already played by the EASR. Secondly, there was a concern about the fact that Prof. Melloni's initiative clearly intended to bring together under the same umbrella both religious studies scholars and theologians, assuming that this would be a desirable situation for all. As could be expected, however, this idea was far from being perceived as desirable by religious studies scholars, whose professional interests are ideally represented in Europe by the EASR.

A launch meeting of this new European Academy of Religion was planned in Bologna in December 2016, and it was decided that both our President and myself would attend the meeting in order to observe the workings and represent the interests of the EASR, possibly also making a public statement about the EASR's position in relation to this new organisation. Other colleagues who have always had a close relation to the EASR, such as the IAHR President Tim Jensen, Armin Geertz, Giovanni Casadio, and Christoph Bochinger attended the meeting with similar purposes. There was however no possibility to make any public statement during the meeting, but we were at least able to form an opinion about the way in which the project was being realised.

After the Bologna meeting there was an intense discussion between the EASR leaders, the IAHR President, and some representatives of national associations about how to deal with what was clearly a new challenge for the EASR. Messages were sent to Prof. Melloni to express our concern, statements were issued, to which Prof. Melloni responded. In the meanwhile, the first full conference of the European Academy of Religion was organised very quickly in March 2017, again in Bologna. It attracted a large number of participants (judging from the published program one can get make a rough estimate of 400/450). This time, no official representative of the EASR attended the event. There is an intention to hold a similar conference every year from now on. From this we can conclude that the European Academy of Religion is now an established reality and that the EASR will have to deal with this reality in the future.

I would like to make here a few concise points about this matter. The first one is that, after an initial worry about the possibility of damaging competition between two large organisations, each claiming to be the most authoritative organisation for the scholarly study of religion in Europe, we can probably afford now to be a bit less concerned. The programs of the two large events of the European Academy of Religion show that the participants to these events do not overlap significantly with the community of scholars attending more or less regularly the annual conferences of the EASR. There is a clear predominance of theologians and of scholars working from perspectives that are not immediately compatible with that of religious studies as it is commonly understood. This impression is confirmed by the figures of this year's conference in Leuven: the number of participants, far from decreasing, is in fact very probably even larger than the one we had last year in Helsinki. This means that the new situation is not causing negative effects to us, at least as far as the participation in our conferences is concerned.

A second point to be mentioned is the exceptional support that our membership showed to us whenever statements critical to the form and the content of Prof. Melloni's initiative were released. This did not really surprise us, but went probably beyond our expectations. All delegates who sent feedback about these public statements expressed agreement and support, and we heard only a few

critical voices from members, which led in some cases to discussions on the EASR lists. It was comforting for our President and for myself to realise that the stance we decided to take was largely shared by our community, especially as it is represented by its national delegates.

The third point is that, while there are some reasons to be critical towards this newly created European Academy of Religion, we can also take this episode as an opportunity to learn a few lessons. Like any other large organisation, the EASR is not perfect, nor cannot be. We do our best to make it fulfil its mission, but we can always find new ways to improve and do things better. It has occurred to me that some of the points made by Prof. Melloni in his communications, both public and private, deserved consideration and reflection. There is for instance something to be said about the fact that the EASR may have been unable, until now, to attract significant numbers of European scholars who are working on subjects related to religion from perspectives that are quite compatible with that of the EASR. This realisation has made the creation of a new category of affiliated organisations even more urgent. It is to be hoped that this new option will help to make our Association more attractive and inclusive.

Finally, the fourth point concerns our future relations with the European Academy of Religion. As things stand now, it is difficult to imagine how they could take a more positive turn in the immediate future. But, at the same time, we have to accept the fact that this organisation now exists, is apparently quite successful in what it tries to do, and has access to sources of funding that largely exceed ours. On the other hand, it is clear that, whereas theoretical and practical differences between these two organisations are not likely to disappear any time soon (which is in fact good news, because it means that there cannot be real competition between us), still it is fair to recognise the contiguity of our endeavours and interests, with religion as a common interest and denominator. So the moment may come in the future when dialogue in some form between the leaders of the two organisations becomes not only possible, but even desirable for both, at least for practical and strategic purposes.

6. *Site visits and future conferences*

In March I have visited the location of the our conference in Leuven. I was received very cordially by the organising committee, chaired by Prof. Jos Verheyden, and was led for a tour of the venues. Everything seemed to be perfectly in order, and I am confident that this conference will be very much in line with our best tradition, while also breaking a new record of attendance with its 500 registered participants.

I should also report that I have now prepared a checklist that will help me in the future to organise my site visits and the meetings with organising committees. The checklist will be handed down to my successor at the end of my term in the hope that it will be helpful also to him or her.

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 we will be, as you know, in Bern from 17 to 21 June. The theme is “Multiple Religious Identities”. The announcement and the call for papers have already been sent out and I am sure that it will be another successful conference. I have been in regular contact in the past months with the chair of the local organising committee, Prof. Jens Schlieter and I will do my site visit there sometimes in the early months of 2018.

Tartu, Estonia, will follow in 2019 and then, in 2020, we will already be in the year of a quinquennial IAHR conference, whose location has also been announced recently: it will be in Dunedin, New Zealand. There will be therefore no EASR conference in that year.

7. Finances

Last year I reported that our Treasurer had to cancel at the last minute her participation in the meeting of the General Assembly because of serious illness. The situation was such that she had to take a leave from her function in our association. Luckily our Deputy Treasurer was willing to step in and replace her while she was recovering. The situation was not easy for a number of technical reasons, particularly the access to the online management of our bank account, but in the end we were able to keep things going, and things went quite smoothly. Recently we got the happy news that our Treasurer is now in a much better condition and, although some uncertainties remain and she was not able to be here for this meeting, she should be able to resume her duties in the near future. This is of course wonderful news. I would like to thank here both Tineke and Franz for the enormous dedication they have showed during this difficult period.

This was also the first year in which our financial documents and reports were submitted to an audit. The Audit Committee has been established last year and has been at work to inspect the state of our finances. They will present a report at this GA meeting, so you will hear more about their findings from them. In any case, since I was directly involved in the transactions, I would like to say that it was a pleasure to collaborate with the committee. I am sure that this new feature is a positive development for our association.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Leuven, 19 September 2017

Dr. Marco Pasi
General Secretary of the EASR

APPENDIX 4

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 Helsinki, June 2016. 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 for Leuven are concerned, reimbursement will take place only after the conference in Leuven 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, the Deputy Treasurer, and the Audit Committee.

2. Membership dues

This year the extended deadline for the national associations to pay their dues was set at 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 also pointed this matter out in his calls to the EASR meetings in Leuven. 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. In such a case it is important, however, to get into contact with the Treasurer or the Deputy Treasurer before the conference, so that they are informed about the necessity of such a special arrangement. We are happy to say that almost all regular associations and three of the six individual members have paid their dues so far.

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 Deputy Treasurer came to a consensus and awarded ten candidates. Through their colleagues we were notified that two of them had to withdraw and are not present at the conference. We had originally allotted a budget of €3.600, to be divided into nine grants of up to a maximum of 400 Euro each. As we were not notified in time – in fact only on the first day of the conference – we could not select another of the applicants, and this year our actual expenses on bursaries will be below the budget. 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 Helsinki conference (i.e., €2846,26) and (2) the earmarked expenses pertaining to the Leuven conference (i.e., €3.600) the financial situation looks secure. We propose a new budget (3) leading to next year's conference in Bern consisting for the main part of the bursary fund; the usual hosting and maintenance of the website, along with a transfer of the website as

proposed yesterday during the meeting of the Executive Committee; dues to be paid to the EASSH, and travel expenses to be made by the General Secretary for a site visit to Bern.

In a separate document we propose items for next year's budget to an amount of €6.050. This is divided into €550 for website hosting and maintenance; €1500 for an all-over transfer of the website; €300 for travel expenses; €100 for the dues to be paid as membership fee 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.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Albertina Nugteren
Treasurer of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR)

18-09-2017

Appendix 5

EASR Audit Committee: Annual Report 2016-2017

Dear members of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly of the EASR,

At the 2016 EC meeting in Helsinki it was decided to appoint an audit committee “to review the financial statements and other official financial information provided annually by the Treasurer to the meetings of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly.” The following members were appointed for the term 2016-2019: Monique Weis (BE), Knut Jacobsen (NO) and William Arfman (NL). In March 2017, the committee appointed William Arfman as its chair.

In correspondence with the general secretary and the deputy treasurer, a period of one month before the annual EASR conference was decided upon with regards to when the committee will receive the full documentation needed for an audit. Given the special circumstances (see the treasurer’s report for more details), this term did not prove viable for the current situation. Instead, the chair of the audit committee paid a visit to the general secretary (to receive the various bank statements and related documentation) as well as to the treasurer (to receive the documentation regarding the bursaries), two weeks before the conference. Where needed these documents were digitalized and then shared via e-mail with the other two members of the audit committee. Given the amount of paperwork involved, the receipts associated with the bursaries were not digitalized, but instead checked by the chair alone.

The audit committee checked the documentation on the following points:

- Calculations of the financial update to be shared with the EC and GA
- Conformity of the account balances mentioned on the financial update to those found in the actual bank information regarding both the savings and checking account
- Conformity of the listed items mentioned on the financial update to those found in the actual bank information regarding both the savings and checking account (and vice versa)
- Conformity of the listed expenses on the financial update regarding the website, travel expenses and the bursaries to the relevant receipts (see the note above regarding the bursary receipts).

Based on the above, the EASR audit committee concludes that no issues have been found.

In closing, the members of the audit committee would like to thank both the treasurer and the general secretary for their efforts under these special circumstances.

On behalf of the EASR audit committee,

Dr. William Arfman (Chair of the EASR Audit Committee)

Appendix 6

Modified text of articles 6 and 7 of the EASR constitution, as approved by the General Assembly of the EASR in Leuven, on 19 September 2017.

Article 6. Committee and officers

i) The business of the EASR shall be conducted by a Committee consisting of (a) designated officers who shall be elected by the Committee, (b) one member each delegated by the European affiliate associations of the EASR in accordance with their own electoral provisions (c) two elected representatives of the individual members of the EASR from countries where no national affiliated association exists and (d) one member delegated by the Executive Committee of the IAHR.

Article 7. Elections

i) The designated officers 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.

ii) The designated officers shall be elected by the Committee. In cases where a candidate is unopposed there should be no vote. More specific rules for the conduct of the elections may be laid down by the General Assembly, provided always that they are consistent with these statutes.

Appendix 7

Byelaws for affiliated organisations of the EASR

- 1) Scholarly organisations (associations, societies, networks, etc.) based in Europe that are not national associations for the study of religions, but which have a thematic or regional focus related to the scientific study of religions, can apply for affiliation to the EASR. If the application is accepted, they become “affiliated organisations” of the EASR.
- 2) Affiliated organisations have the possibility to propose sessions under their names at the annual EASR conferences. They also have the possibility to hold a business meeting during those conferences, depending on the availability of rooms.
- 3) Affiliated organisations may send a non-voting delegate to the EC meetings of the EASR. All members of affiliated organisations have the possibility to attend the meetings of the General Assembly of the EASR without the right to vote.
- 4) Applications for affiliation are submitted to the Membership Secretary, who then presents them at the next EC meeting. If endorsed by the EC, they are then submitted to the General Assembly for final approval.
- 5) Affiliated organisations pay an annual fee. The fee is €60 per year. In case the organisation is also an affiliated organisation of the IAHR, the fee is reduced to €40.
- 6) A list of affiliated organisations, including dedicated pages with relevant details and links to respective websites when applicable, will be made available on the EASR website.
- 7) Affiliation to the EASR will be declared lapsed by the Executive Committee if any dues remain unpaid after six consecutive notifications within a period of 18 months. Where any dues remain unpaid for three years, the organisation’s name will be struck from the list.
- 8) Affiliated organisations may have access to a limited number of bursaries for the participation in EASR conferences. The number of bursaries available to affiliated organisations will be decided every year for the following year.

Appendix 8**Budget for the next financial year (2017-2018)**

- A program of 9 conference bursaries of €400 each	€ 3.600
- Transfer of the website to new system	€ 1.500
- Website maintenance	€ 550
- Travel costs officers	€ 300
- EASSH membership fee	€ 100
Amounting to a total of	€ 6.050