

Cambridge conference 2001

EASR General Assembly , Cambridge 2001, September 11th , 4.-6.p.m.

Report 2000-2001 by the General Secretary

Following the preparatory work of a working committee headed by the (then) president of the IAHR, Prof. Michael Pye, The European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) was established in Cracow, May 2nd , 2000 at an inaugural meeting that took place in accordance with the enabling measure included in the draft statutes of the EASR. The meeting was presided over by Michael Pye as president of the IAHR.

Immediately following the meeting (cf. detailed minutes at <http://www.easr.de>) and the election of the designated officers of the committee (the names of which can be found at the above mentioned website), the president, Giulia Gasparro, chaired a meeting of the present members of the committee.

It was decided

- that EASR should immediately apply for affiliation to IAHR
- that the Gen.Secr. should immediately address those officers who were elected in their absence,
- that the committee was pleased to accept the offer from BASR to have the first EASR conference in connection with the annual meeting of BASR in Cambridge, GB, September 2001,
- that the committee should meet next time in connection with a conference in March/April 2002 in Messina, Italy,
- that Michael Pye - as representative and president of IAHR – and Giulia Gasparro as president of EASR should write to the national associations as well as some individuals as soon as the minutes from the inaugural meeting, the confirmed, revised statutes and the registration in The Hague were in place, in order to tell them about the establishment of EASR and invite them to join,
- that work on the construction of an official homepage and mailing lists/discussions lists would be started by the internet officer (Michael Pye) in June and go on-line as soon as possible.

All of these tasks were completed as planned, and at the meetings of the International Committee and the General Assembly of IAHR, in Durban, August 2000, the EASR was formally and fully affiliated to the IAHR as a regional association.

When the committee held its third meeting in connection with the conference kindly arranged by the president and partly sponsored by the University of Messina in Messina March 30th , 2001, 12 national associations had joined as corporate members, and recently one more national association, The Czech Society for the Study of Religion, has joined.

Accordingly, at this moment, 13 European associations, covering Eastern, Southern, Western and Northern parts of Europe and a range of languages, have joined EASR as corporate members. The member associations are:

- BASR, British Association for the Study of Religions
- Ceska Spolecnost Pro Studium Nabozenstvi (The Czech Society for the Study of Religion)
- DAHR, Dansk Selskab for Religionshistorie (Danish Association for the History of Religions)
- DVRG, Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionsgeschichte (German Association for the History of Religions) (subject to ratification)
- NGG, Nederlands Genootschap van Godsdiensthistorici (Dutch Association for the History of Religions)
- NRF, Norsk Religionshistorisk Forening (Norwegian Association for the History of Religions)
- Polskie Towarzystwo Religioznawcze (Polish Association for the Science of Religions)
- SECR, Sociedad Española de Ciencias de las Religiones (Spanish Association for the Science of Religions)
- SGR/SSSR, Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Religionswissenschaft/Société Suisse pour la Science des Religions (Swiss Association for the Science of Religions)
- Società italiana di storia delle religioni (Italian Association for the History of Religions)
- Société Ernest-Renan. Société Française d'Histoire des Religions (French Association for the history of Religions)
- SSRF, Svenska Samfundet för Religionshistorisk Forskning (Swedish Association for Research in Comparative Religion)
- Suomen Uskontotieteellinen Seura (Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion)

2 persons, P. Pachis and G. Lease, have registered as individual members. Those individuals who registered as members in Cracow are as far as we know all members of a national association that has joined later.

In Messina, the committee of course was very pleased that so many associations had already joined, and the committee likewise was pleased to see that the website and the 6 discussion lists were running.

Most of the designated officers plus the delegated member from DVRG, the German Association, Hans G. Kippenberg, as well as one of the individual members, P. Pachis from Greece, were present at the meeting.

With regard to voting rights, in committee, at the general assembly, and during the elections (of the designated officers) following the general assembly, the status of the German Association (which still needs to have the decision of its executive committee to join EASR confirmed at a general assembly in late September this year) was briefly discussed. It was decided to consider DVRG a full member with all the rights as such at the meeting in Messina and at the general assembly, and the committee expressed its sincere hope that the membership would be confirmed, so that DVRG and its

members can participate in the elections. This is, it may be added, still the hope of the committee.

It was also decided that P. Pachis was welcome to attend the meeting though he could not be considered a representative of the individual members.

Concerning the legal registration in The Hague, the treasurer, Wim Hofstee, who had handled the process, ascertained that the EASR was now a legal person with rights (and dues) accordingly. He also noted that the Dutch translation of the constitution (needed for the registration) according to lawyers consulted differed from the original English version only in a few small details, with no importance from a legal or practical point of view.

Concerning the finances, the treasurer informed the committee about the costs related to the process of registration, and about the fact that the IAHR had been kind enough to help EASR with a loan (800 US\$). With no income so far, the debt accordingly was 988.72 Euro. The treasurer urged the committee to call upon the associations to help finance EASR, and it was agreed that the treasurer should investigate other means of funding.

Concerning internet communication, Michael Pye, the internet officer, informed the committee about the EASR homepage (<http://www.easr.de>) and the 6 discussion lists covering most of the various geographic and linguistic areas of Europe and EASR.

Concerning further development of membership, the Gen. Secr. Tim Jensen informed about recent promising contacts to the Romanian association (also in the process of seeking affiliation to IAHR) and the vice-president H. Grzymala-Moscinska informed about contacts to the Ukrainian Association . It should be added that these contacts have been continued, and that the Romanian Association has asked a Romanian scholar located in GB to contact EASR in Cambridge.

At the meeting Marion I. Bowman on behalf of BASR informed the committee about the conference in Cambridge 10-13 September and asked the members to help inform everybody.

The committee decided:

- that the president should write another letter of invitation as soon as possible (in time for associations to join before and participate in the general assembly in Cambridge) to those associations that had not yet joined (Austrian, Hungarian, Belgium/Luxembourg, Czech; the Baltic nations et al), and Prof. Peter Antes, the delegate of IAHR to the committee, promised that he or Armin W. Geertz would be happy to write and recommend membership,
- that the membership fee should be 2 Euro per head (per member) per association per year and 15 Euro for individual member per year. It was also decided that the fee for 2001 from the registered members should be paid no later than 3 weeks before the general assembly (that is no later than August 21st). However, year 2001, as well as 2002, should be considered a period of transition with the possibility for associations to apply for a reduced fee as

- well as a respite with payment. At the same time those associations which had the means should be called upon to pay an extra amount of money to help EASR get rid of the accumulated debt to the IAHR. As for the year 2002 and following years subscription and payment is due by the end of January,
- the date and time for the General Assembly, the means by which it should be called and that it should be called no later than June 12th 2001. At the general assembly the consequence of Article 10, iv should be formally recognized by the GA,
 - that P. Pachis, K. Knott and Tim Jensen should work out a plan and a form for nomination of candidates to the posts as designated officers.
 - that the committee during the process of nominations should be aware of the importance of the future committee reflecting the geographic and linguistic areas of the EASR.

Finally it was stressed that it is up to the national associations, especially their delegated member to the committee or contact person to distribute relevant material, including the call for the General Assembly, material concerning elections et al.

Since the meeting in Messina, the call for the general assembly, the call for nominations and the call upon the member associations to pay their fee or apply for a reduced fee and/or respite with the payment has all been effectuated.

Most but not all of the member associations have appointed a delegate to the present committee, and the membership secretary as well as the treasurer by now have some ideas about the number of members in the various associations.

Concluding remarks

In spite of the discussions, even heated discussions, in the period prior to the establishment and the preliminary work of the working party headed by Michael Pye, today there seems to be no doubt that so far EASR is worthwhile. Of course some of the national associations have had and maybe still have their doubts about the use of yet another association, and quite a few most probably have been worried about the relationship between EASR and IAHR. From the very beginning, however, EASR has been developed with the goodwill and recommendation of the IAHR, and neither the committee of EASR nor IAHR considers EASR a competitor to IAHR. On the contrary, the EASR hopefully functions in such a way that it will be a support and supplement to the IAHR, and the committee is constantly keeping contact with the president and the general secretary of IAHR. Likewise, some national associations initially feared that the establishment of an European association might be interpreted as another Western-European effort to dominate the international scene. On this view, just as the IAHR was in a process of further de-colonializing, the Europeans were gathering to regain power and control. Globalization once again maybe meant nothing but Westernization, and Europe once again would mean the old Western-European countries.

Hopefully these fears have already been removed. To the committee the picture is not one of a European association trying to gain the upper hand. It is, however, an association that tries to help the many national associations of Europe gain or regain

inner and outer strength by means of a closer cooperation that respects the national traditions and seeks to secure that the study of religion in Europe will be as manifold and variegated as possible. We see it as one of our main purposes to help scholars working and writing within various cultural traditions and in various languages. Globalization, it is true, too often is equivalent to Westernization and Americanization, and Europe often has been taken to mean Western Europe and Northern Europe, also in matters relating to language. It is one of the hopes of the committee that the EASR may see to it, that those studies on religion that are produced in countries where the tongue spoken is not English will not be forgotten. Even if the conference language most probably quite often will be English, the aim of the EASR is to promote the academic study of religions throughout all that can be called Europe and in the rest of the world as well. The aim is collaboration and not uniformity, inspiration and not dominance.

Tim Jensen, General Secretary, August 2001.