

## **European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR)**

### **Report of the General Secretary**

Presented at the General Assembly, 27 September 2007

University of Bremen

### **Membership status and issues**

EASR Member Associations 27 September, 2007 with names of appointed delegates/representatives to the EASR Executive Committee:

- APER, Portuguese Association for the Study of Religion (Associação Portuguesa para o Estudo das Religiões (Steffen Dix)\*)
- BASR, British Association for the Study of Religions (Graham Harvey)
- Ceska Spolecnost Pro Studium Nabozenstvi (The Czech Society for the Study of Religion) (Bretislav Horyna)
- DAHR, Dansk Selskab for Religionshistorie (Danish Association for the History of Religions) (Marianne Q. Fibiger)
- DVRG, Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionsgeschichte (German Association for the History of Religions) (Hubert Seiwert)
- ESSR, Eesti Akadeemilise Usundiloo Seltsi (Estonian Society for the Study of Religion) (Ülo Valk)
- GSSCR Greek Society for the Study of Culture and Religion (Panayotis Pachis)
- Magyar Vallástudományi Társaság (Hungarian Association for the Academic Study of Religions) (Mihály Hoppál)
- NGG, Nederlands Genootschap van Godsdiensthistorici (Dutch Association for the History of Religions) (Wim Hofstee)
- NRF, Norsk Religionshistorisk Forening (Norwegian Association for the History of Religions) (Knut A. Jacobsen)
- Polskie Towarzystwo Religioznawcze (Polish Association for the Science of Religions) (Halina Grzymala-Moscinska)
- ÖGRW, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Religionswissenschaft (Austrian Association for The Science of Religion) (Johann Figl)
- RAHR, Asociația română de istorie a religiilor (Romanian Association for the History of Religions) (Eugen Ciurtin)
- SECR, Sociedad Española de Ciencias de las Religiones (Spanish Association for the Science of Religions) (Santiago Montero)
- SGR/SSSR, Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Religionswissenschaft/Société Suisse pour la Science des Religions (Swiss Association for the Science of Religions) (Maya Burger)
- Società italiana di storia delle religioni (Italian Association for the History of Religions) (Fabio Scialpi)
- Société Ernest-Renan. Société Française d'Histoire des Religions (French Association for the History of Religions) (Charles Guittard)
- Société Belgo-Luxembourgeoise d'histoire des religions (Association for the History of Religions of Belgium-Luxembourg) (André Motte)
- SSRF, Svenska Samfundet för Religionshistorisk Forskning (Swedish Association

- for Research in Comparative Religion) (Susanne Olsson; Olof Sundqvist)
- Suomen Uskontotieteellinen Seura (Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion) (Veikko Anttonen)
- TAHR, Türkiye Dinler Tarihi Derneği (Turkish Association for the History of Religions) (Mehmet Aydin)
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Individual members

Gustavo Benavides Gilani Fawzia Svetlana Gorbunova Alexandre Krasnikow Ekaterina Elibakain Michiaki Okuyama Marianna Shakhnovich Ivan Miroshnikov Marina Vorobjova Olga Konstantinova Elena Borta Galina Sokolova

IAHR representative:

Rosalind Hackett/Tim Jensen

Before our meetings in September 2007 the number of EASR-affiliated national associations was twenty, with twelve individual members, and an IAHR member.

During the year one request for membership had been received from a national association (the Portuguese Association for the Study of Religion (Associação Portuguesa para o Estudo das Religiões, APER), and the Executive Committee fully endorsed the request (which was later accepted by the General Assembly on 27 September).\*

There had been no change in individual membership. It was affirmed that individual members who had not paid their subscriptions and had not been in contact with the Treasurer to make an arrangement will have their membership terminated. It was agreed that this should be done in consultation with IAHR representatives.

A discussion had been held at the Executive Committee meeting about the establishment of honorary membership of EASR (for which provision is made in the constitution) and on what basis this might be awarded (e.g. in recognition of administrative service and contribution to the discipline). The General Secretary was asked to establish a working group for the discussion of honorary membership and possible nomination of members early in 2008 (once new EASR officers are in place).

In advance of the electronic ballot, the Membership Secretary had been in communication with national associations in order to obtain email addresses of their members. Despite several reminders, lists had been sent by only nine national associations.

**NB** All the national associations are kindly reminded to tell the General Secretary if their EASR representative for 2008 has changed.

### **Payment of subscriptions and other financial matters**

During the year associations had been reminded of the requirement to pay

subscriptions or request a reduced level of fee by 31 May (and that voting rights at the General Assembly were contingent on payment). Eleven member associations had paid for this year; one was in default of payment for this and earlier years and had not been in touch with the Treasurer. The voting rights of its members were suspended. The committee once again reiterated the possibility of applying for and paying a reduced fee. It was aware that this option is important to less affluent associations and, consequently, to the well-being and progress of EASR. Member associations were strongly urged to seek agreement for a reduced fee and to pay in due time, i.e. no later than May 31 each year.

Details of the EASR bursary scheme with a closing date for applications of the end of June had been circulated (in due course these would be placed in a prominent position on the website). The bursary fund was to be kept at €3,000.00 for the purpose of helping scholars and postgraduate research students to participate with papers in the next year's conference. Five EASR bursaries were awarded, with a further eight awarded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

### **Discussion lists and website**

The Internet Officer had reported to the Executive Committee, noting that changes to the web presence of EASR were still envisaged but, for various reasons, slow in being realised (see minutes of meeting of 2006). Although the website is now based on a content management system, making it easier to update and change, the planned second phase of development had not yet begun.

The e-lists continued to be active, with some busier than others. Current numbers of users were as follows:

Candide 56  
Dolmen 132  
Most 84  
Synchron 113  
Tonantzin 88  
Yggdrasil 459

Representatives of national associations were asked to remind their members of the lists which act as sites for discussion as well as the exchange of information. A website had been identified for the running of an electronic election (for Vice-Presidents), and the Internet Officer was in the process of testing it and setting up the ballot. E-lists of members from about half the national associations had been received. In total some 760 valid voters would be balloted (less than half the total number of actual members of national associations). It was noted that, in future, national associations should be asked to send membership lists in an agreed format (name, email address).

Up to €2000 has been reserved in 2007 for supporting these initiatives.

### **Publications**

The Publications Officer had reported on publications arising from previous conferences. The volume from the Turku conference had been published at the end of

last year (T. Ahlbäck and B. Dahla, *Exercising Power: The Role of Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Donner Institute, 2006). Seven volumes of proceedings were planned from the Bucharest conference. The newsletters and journals associated with member associations were mentioned, including the new journal of the Spanish association, *Bandue*, and the relocation of DISKUS on the website of the British association. The importance of the various EASR e-lists for communicating about publications on the study of religion in Europe was endorsed.

### **IAHR matters**

The President and General Secretary of IAHR had reported on the recent meetings of the IAHR Executive Committee. Items included the issue of membership and affiliation, subscriptions and finance, the successful conference in Sweden earlier in 2007, the forthcoming special IAHR conference in Turkey on secularization and secularism, development discussions with Portuguese, Russian and Bulgarian scholars of religion, the renegotiation of terms with regard to *Numen*, the 2010 IAHR Congress in Toronto and other future IAHR special conferences in Europe.

EASR executive and representatives had been asked to check EASR and national association information provided on the IAHR website, and to contact the IAHR Internet Officer if changes were needed.

A short report was given on the formation of the IAHR Women Scholars Network.

### **EASR and European research initiatives**

A new *Journal of Religion in Europe*, is to be launched in 2008 and published by Brill.

The possibilities afforded by the Bologna process for establishing collaborative teaching, particularly at Masters level, had been noted at the Executive Committee meeting. An MA in the Study of Religion was in the process of being set up by several central European universities.

The European Science Foundation (ESF) provides funding opportunities for research and conference activity for humanities scholars. These may be worth investigating by national associations as well as EASR itself.

This year's conference in Bremen hosted five sessions on religion and education. The possibility of setting up an EASR working group on the study of religion and RE (to gather information and map models of RE in Europe, and to look at the training of RE teachers in different countries) had been discussed at the Executive Committee meeting. A proposal was brought to the General Assembly that Wanda Alberts and Tim Jensen look into the formation of an EASR working group and report back to next year's executive committee meeting in Brno. In association with this they were asked to keep a record of the process of establishing such a group so that the experience can be shared and retained for the future. The importance of any future working group coordinating its activities and meetings with those of EASR was noted

(for example, by holding working group meetings and sessions on the day preceding the annual conference).

Members were reminded of the importance of circulating information on European research initiatives on the e-lists.

### **Nomination and election to office 2008-2010**

Following the establishing of a Nominations Committee last year, the nominating process was established and a list of nominees for EASR positions was developed. Those nominated by the Committee had been proposed and seconded and had given their agreement for their names to go forward:

President: Maya Burger  
Vice-Presidents (2): Hubert Seiwert, Veikko Anttonen  
General Secretary: Kim Knott  
Deputy Gen Secretary: James Cox  
Treasurer: Marco Pasi  
Deputy Treasurer: Wim Hofstee  
Membership Secretary: Mar Marcos  
Publications Officer: Eugen Ciurtin  
Internet Officer: Katja Triplett.

Following an open invitation to national associations and individual members to bring forward names for election to office, the German association nominated Wanda Alberts for Membership Secretary and the Czech association nominated Bretislav Horyna for Vice-President. Wanda Alberts withdrew from the election for Membership Secretary, but was co-opted (see EASR and European Research Initiatives above). As a result of the nominations process, in line with constitutional requirements, the following nominees were elected unopposed: Maya Burger (President), Kim Knott (Gen Sec), James Cox (Deputy Gen Sec), Marco Pasi (Treasurer), Wim Hofstee (Deputy Treasurer), Mar Marcos (Membership Secretary), Eugen Ciurtin (Publications Officer) and Katja Triplett (Internet Officer). An election would be held for the positions of the two Vice-Presidents.

Thanks were expressed to those who had served on the EASR nominations committee (Helena Helve, Giovanni Casadio, Gustavo Benavides, Graham Harvey).

### **Future conferences**

It was proposed that the Czech Association for the Study of Religion should host the 2008 EASR conference in Brno with the following theme: 'Time of Decline, Time of Hope: Scientific, Cultural and Political Commitment of the Study of Religion.' (This will also be an IAHR special conference.) Dates 7-11 September.

A proposal had been received from Giulia Gasparro on behalf of the Italian Association for the History of Religions to host the 2009 EASR conference in Messina, with the theme of 'Religion in the History of European Culture'. It was agreed to take forward this proposal to the General Assembly.

It was agreed that, in those years in which an IAHR Quinquennial Congress is held,

no EASR conference be held, but that the General Assembly (and executive committee meeting) could take place during the IAHR Congress, as stated in the EASR constitution. We agreed to propose this practice for 2010 (but agreed that it be decided on a case-by-case basis in future years).

## **Conclusions**

The conference organising committee, with representatives from the DVRW, and in particular the energetic young organisers Gritt Klinkhammer and Wanda Alberts, were warmly thanked for their hard work in planning and running the conference so successfully, for obtaining sponsorship from the German Research Foundation, and for introducing the issues of sustainability and childcare to our conference planning.

Kim Knott

EASR General Secretary  
5 October 2007 (revised 14 January 2008)