

European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR)

Report of the General Secretary

Presented at the General Assembly, 9 September 2008

Masaryk University, Brno

Membership status and issues

EASR Member Associations 9 September, 2008 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) (Annika Hvithamar)
- 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 Tarsaság (Hungarian Association for the Academic Study of Religions) (Mihály Hoppál)
- NGG, Nederlands Genootschap van Godsdiensthistorici (Dutch Association for the History of Religions) (Gerard Wiegers)
- 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 Aydın)

Individual members

Gustavo Benavides

Olga Breskaya

Gilani Fawzia

Ivar Maksutov

Ivan Miroshnikov

Janis Priede

Michiaki Okuyama

Anita Stasulane

Galina Rousseva-Sokolova

Hrvoje Cargonja
IAHR representative

Rosalind Hackett/Tim Jensen

Before the General Assembly the number of EASR-affiliated national associations was twenty one, with ten individual members, and one IAHR member (jointly held post).

In 2008 there were no requests for membership from national associations. In April, on behalf of EASR, the General Secretary attended the inaugural conference of the Portuguese Association for the Study of Religion (APER), which joined EASR last year. Conversations had taken place with Latvian scholars about the formation of a national association.

It was confirmed that individual members who had not paid their subscriptions and had not been in contact with the Treasurer or the Membership Secretary following their requests had had their membership terminated. This had been done in consultation with IAHR representatives. Two requests for individual membership had been processed during the year and those new members were welcomed to the association. Seven applications had been received at the conference from Russian scholars and these were pending and would be reported on at next year's Assembly.

Last year the issue of honorary membership of EASR had been raised (for which provision is made in the constitution) and a working group had been set up in 2008 to draw up principles and a process for nomination. These were presented to the EASR Executive Committee on 8 Sept 2008, with the names of two nominees for this year (see General Assembly minutes).

Outstanding matters concerning the election process 2007

Following the election unopposed of the majority of EASR officers in September 2007, an election was undertaken in the autumn for the two posts of Vice-President. There were three candidates. Ballot papers were sent out by email to all members of national associations and individual members belonging to EASR for whom we had been provided with an email address by the due date. Instructions were given in the email about printing out the ballot paper, voting and returning the completed paper to the General Secretary by 14 December 2007 in an envelope marked 'EASR Ballot' with the voter's email address written clearly on the back. Two tellers were appointed. Four votes were invalid (no email address on the back of the envelope). The results were as follows:

Veikko Anttonen	36
Bretislav Horyna	15
Hubert Seiwert	41

Professors Anttonen and Seiwert were duly elected and appointed to serve as Vice-Presidents for the three-year period 2008-2010 inclusive.

Following a discussion at the Executive Committee meeting, it was agreed that, at the time of the next election, statements will be requested from nominated candidates, that membership e-lists would be requested from national associations even earlier than last time, and that the role and duties of the nominating committee and its chair would be made more clear and widely understood (via EASR e-lists). It was agreed to propose to the General Assembly that, in addition to the nominating committee, only national associations (via their representatives or officers) or fully paid-up individual members could make nominations (which would need to be seconded and have the agreement of the nominee). The General Secretary was asked to form a small working group to prepare draft guidelines on the EASR election process to be considered at next year's meeting. Once adopted, these guidelines would be posted on the website and used to inform and bring clarity to the election process in future. It was also hoped that an effective and reasonably priced electronic voting system would be in place by the time of the next election.

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). Details of this year's subscriptions can be found in the Treasurer's Report. It was noted that two national associations were in default of payment for this and earlier years and had not been in touch with the Treasurer. The voting rights of their 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 in mid-June had been circulated (for future years these will be placed in a prominent position on the updated-website). The bursary budget for 2008 had been set at €3,000.00 for the purpose of helping scholars and postgraduate research students to participate with papers in the this year's conference. Seven EASR bursaries were awarded.

A discussion was held about the reimbursement of costs of EASR officers travelling to work on behalf of the Association. Two proposals were made and it was agreed that they should be put before the General Assembly (see GA minutes).

Discussion lists and website

The Internet Officer had provided a full report to the Executive Committee, noting that the website had been updated and developed, with new domain names acquired (easr.eu and easr.org). The domain www.easr.eu was now the official web address of the Association and members were requested to use this in publicity, though the old

address would continue to work. Sub-pages had been switched around and space found for the Internet Journal of Religion hosted by the Study of Religions Department at Marburg University (the integration of which had been agreed on earlier occasion). Various suggestions were made by the Internet Officer about forthcoming improvements and additions, including offering publicity space for publishers (for which they would be charged) and space for the proposed Internet Encyclopedia of Religion.

The e-lists continued to be active (Candide, Dolmen, Most, Synchron, Tonantzin, Idrasyl), though difficulties had arisen as a result of the lists being clogged up with spam. Manual filters had been put in place but the situation cannot be remedied entirely. The Internet Officer suggested that EASR switch from e-lists to web-based discussion forums.

The Internet Officer brought a proposal and brief to the Executive Committee meeting for the redevelopment of the entire EASR website, in part to enable the development of discussion forums, but also to accommodate other new features and to give the website a more up-to-date appearance. She provided a quotation and was asked obtain an additional one. The committee proposed an upper limit for a budget over two years (see GA Minutes) for the work.

The Internet Officer was thanked for her efforts.

Publications

The Publications Officer had not sent a report, but the representative of the French Association, Société Ernest-Renan, had reported on the progress of the edited volume from the 2002 congress, *Le Monotheisme: Diversité, Exclisivisme ou Dialogue?*, which will be published later this year.

We did not have time at the Executive Committee meeting to discuss **EASR and European research and publishing initiatives** but agreed that this should be placed higher up the agenda at next year's meeting to ensure it is considered more fully. It was noted, however, that publication and the dissemination of the discipline were central issues in the redevelopment of the website.

Working groups and EASR

Last year, Wanda Alberts and Tim Jensen were asked to explore the possibility of establishing an EASR Working Group on Religion in Public Education and, if appropriate, bring a proposal to the Executive Committee meeting in 2008. They presented a report at the meeting on 8 September presenting the aims, means and plans for the Working Group. Their proposal was accepted and they were asked to report back to the Executive Committee in 2010 at which time the group would be reviewed.

An informal request had been received to form a Working Group on religion and the media. The Executive Committee asked that a formal proposal be presented and the

proposer invited to address next year's meeting.

Future conferences

It was noted that the proposal had been accepted by the General Assembly in 2007 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'. The dates for this would be 14-17 September.

We were reminded that no EASR conference would be held in 2010, but that the General Assembly (and executive committee meeting) would take place during the IAHR Congress, in accordance with the EASR constitution.

A proposal had been received from the Hungarian Association for the Academic Study of Religion to host the conference in 2011.

We agreed to invite views about the timing of future conferences from delegates at the General Assembly (see GA Minutes).

Conclusions

The conference organising committee, with representatives from the Czech Association and staff from the Department of Religious Studies at Masaryk University, were warmly thanked for their hard work in planning and running the conference so successfully.

Kim Knott

EASR General Secretary

9 September 2008 (revised 20 December 2008)