

EASR President's report 2009

Nine years ago, Giulia Gasparro upon her election as the president of the EASR in 2000 at the inaugural meeting in Krakow, proposed to organize a small conference in Messina the same year. Being in Messina today turns out to be a sort of coming back to one of the foundational moment and places of the EASR. Of course, this time it is a full conference with more than 200 participants. The number of participants shows in itself, how important our meetings have grown over this short period of nine years. We would like to thank Giulia Gasparro and her team for the exceptional organization and the hosting of the conference. We have enjoyed a wonderful hospitality.

The great number of participants shows also that our organization has become an important opportunity for exchange: scholars meet to discuss methods and inquiries and share their research. This year we are particularly happy to have for the first time so many Italian participants. We appreciate also that the number of scholars from eastern Europe continues to grow.

This year's conference is on the history of religion in Europe, a title which in my opinion is a good sign. Preoccupation with the contemporary world has become already very important during the last meetings. Hence, I appreciate that the theme of *history* has found a privileged place here in Messina, in Sicily, a place of historical importance and multicultural encounters. I hope that we shall continue to give an equal place to history and contemporary issues. Both perspectives actually need each other for a balanced study of religions.

Since the meeting in Brno a year ago, the Association has been very busy as will be evident from the reports by the various officers. My task here is to remind you that without their hard and devoted labour, our Association would not run as well as it does.

I would like to thank especially the general secretary, Kim Knott, for her excellent work and her laborious commitment. I would also like to thank the treasurer, Marco Pasi for taking good care of the financial basis of the Association, which is stable and sound and allows to pursue the activities and goals of the Association. Many thanks to the other officers: Mar Marcos (Membership Officer), Katja Triplett (Internet Officer), Eugen Ciurtin (Publication Officer), as well as to the other members of the committee who have contributed by sharing with us their opinions, work time and scholarship.

The committee members have been in contact with each other throughout the year and the various tasks and the decisions taken are the outcome of a joint effort.

During the month of April I was commissioned to undertake the site visit for this year's conference in Messina and what I saw and heard convinced me that the organization was in good hands indeed.

Regarding the many points discussed during this year, let me point out the wish to improve our website, which will be realized in the coming months. We are also working at improving our election system to guarantee a democratic system and a pragmatically smooth procedure.

Next year, our conference will coincide with the quinquennial conference of the IAHR in Toronto and in 2011 the EASR will meet in Hungary.

We hope you'll be able to join in Toronto, which certainly promises to be an important event for all scholars in the Study of religions, contemporary and historical, European no less than Asian, American, African...or simply global.

Maya Burger