



## **Minutes of the General Assembly of the EASR**

**held at the University of Bern on 19 June 2018, from 15:30 to 17:00**

1. The Vice-President Marion Bowman presides the meeting as the President, Einar Thomassen, is not able to attend. She 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 data about the attendance of the GA).
2. Vice-President Marion Bowman proposed to approve the agenda. William Arfman (NGG) asks to add an item about the report of the Audit Committee. The General Secretary seconds the proposal and the item is added to the agenda. After this modification, the agenda is approved.
3. Vice-President Marion Bowman reads the President's report (see appendix 2).
4. The General Secretary presents his report (see appendix 3).
5. The Treasurer presents her report (see appendix 4).
6. The representative of the Audit Committee, William Arfman (NGG), presents his report (see appendix 5). The report is approved by the GA.
7. The General Secretary introduces the next point, concerning affiliated organisations. He informs the GA that the EC has considered, and preliminarily approved, two formal applications submitted for the new category of "affiliated organisations": the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), and the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE). He gives some basic information about these two scholarly organisations and asks the GA to approve their application. The GA approves their affiliation by overwhelming majority.
8. The Internet Officer presents his report (see appendix 6).
9. A representative of the Religious Studies Project (RSP), Chris Cotter, is invited to present the project to the GA. He thanks the EASR for the invitation and for the financial support it has promised to give to the project. This support should make it possible to send an RSP representative, usually a young scholar, to every EASR conference. The project is growing (though at this moment mainly in Northern Europe). He adds that the RSP team is considering the possibility of recording podcasts in other languages than English, as it has been the case until now.
10. The Treasurer proposes the budget for the next financial year (2018-2019; see appendix 7). It is approved by the GA.
11. The next point concerns future EASR conferences. The delegate from Estonia, Madis Arukask, presents the Conference in Tartu in 2019 and its webpage ([www.easr2019.org](http://www.easr2019.org)), which is already up and running. He also mentions the key-

speakers who will be invited. Then the floor is given to Chiara Tommasi (SISR) who has submitted a formal bid for organising the 2021 conference in Pisa. She gives information about the city, the University of Pisa, and the Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere of which she is a member and which will host the conference. She proposes the dates of 21-25 June and also a provisional title (“Resilient religion”). The theme of the conference is connected to a large research project which would allow to make some funding available. The bid is approved by the GA. Then Jenny Butler, Secretary of the Irish Association (ISASR), presents a proposal to organise the 2022 EASR Conference in Cork, Ireland. The year will mark the hundredth anniversary of the independence of Ireland, which would make it possible to obtain funding and institutional support from the Irish Government, the University of Cork, and the Irish Tourist Board. The proposed title for the Conference is “Freedom of Religion, States of Freedom”. She gives information about the city, the University of Cork, the transport network and other logistics. No decision is made about this bid: the formal approval is left to next year’s meeting in Tartu (2019).

12. Vice-President Marion Bowman asks the GA whether there is any other business to discuss. The General Secretary says that we should think ahead about the 2020 IAHR world congress in New Zealand. In 2015, for the Erfurt congress, the EASR offered its usual program of bursaries. He notes that we should do the same for the 2020 congress. The IAHR President Tim Jensen agrees and thanks the EASR General Secretary for the proposal. The General Secretary states that the proposal will be formally presented in 2019 to the EC and GA meetings for approval.
13. There being no further business, the Vice-President declares the GA meeting closed.

**APPENDIX 1****Attendance at the 2018 General Assembly**

*Number of members attending per national association (including EC officers; members with multiple national memberships are counted for each association to which they belong)*

BABEL (Belgium): 1  
BASR (UK): 7  
CSR/CASR (Czech Republic): 1  
DASR (Denmark): 3  
DVRW (Germany): 13  
EAUS/ESSR (Estonia): 4  
GSSCR (Greece): 0  
ISASR (Ireland): 1  
LRD/LSSR (Lithuania): 1  
LRPB (Latvia): 1  
MVTY (Hungary): 0  
NGG (Netherlands): 2  
NRF (Norway): 1  
ÖGRW (Austria): 1  
PTR (Poland): 0  
RAHR (Romania): 2  
SECR (Spain): 5  
SER (France): 2  
SGR/SSSR (Switzerland): 1  
SISR (Italy): 16  
SSRF (Sweden): 3  
SUS (Finland): 3  
TAHR (Turkey): 0  
UAR/UARR (Ukraine): 4

*Individual members attending: 0*

*Honorary members attending: 0*

*Guests and observers: 1*

**Total: 73**

## APPENDIX 2

### President's report (2018)

Dear EASR members and colleagues

My report this year will be brief. It has been, in a good sense, an uneventful year for our association. Its administrative functions are running efficiently, thanks to the professionalism and dedication of our elected officers. I wish to thank them all for their efforts.

The day-to-day administration of our association has been taken excellently care of, as usual, by our General Secretary Marco Pasi. He has handled the sometimes complicated issues related to the communication between the EASR and its members, been alert to needs for adjusting our byelaws, and made sure that our administrative processes are observed according to schedule. In particular, he has made the necessary preparations for this meeting in an impeccable manner. Thank you, Marco!

I also wish to thank our treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, for conscientiously and professionally handling our finances, making sure they are in good shape. It is a special pleasure to record that Tineke has recovered from the health issues that last year gave cause for serious concern.

As you will have noticed, the EASR website has received a new and considerably improved design, thanks to the efforts of our Internet officer Sebastian Schöler, who has followed up the initiative he took at last year's meeting and was approved by the Executive Committee. Thank you, Sebastian!

The preparations for this year's conference have gone very well. By all accounts, our Swiss colleagues have done marvellous work in organising the event, which has now become a major undertaking. The proposed theme Multiple Religious Identities met with immediate approval on our part; it is in my view an excellent theme that manages to address contemporary concerns at the same time as it provides a common platform for a variety of approaches, historically, regionally, and methodologically. It is a source of satisfaction to see that attendance at our conferences continues to grow. I take this as a sign that the approach to the study of religions that we represent strikes a sound balance between maintaining a distinct methodological profile and inviting interdisciplinary pluralism. The establishment of competing organisations in the field of "religion", which was a cause for concern last year, seems not to have had any effect on the attractiveness of the EASR and the attendance at our conferences.

Our involvement with the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities continues. I was unfortunately unable to attend the General Assembly of EASSH in 2017, but I hope to do so this year. EASSH is currently directing its attention towards the design of the new Frame Programme for research, Horizon Europe (2020–2028), in the hope of achieving more recognition for the humanities and the social sciences. At the moment the success of such initiatives seems uncertain. Involvement in the research policies of the EU and the exploitation of the opportunities for research funding provided through its Frame Programmes should in any case continue to be an objective of the EASR.

Einar Thomassen  
President of the EASR

## APPENDIX 3

### General Secretary's report

Dear EASR members, dear guests,

Thank you all for your participation in this meeting. I would like to thank the organisers of this conference, particularly the chair of the organising committee Prof. Jens Schlieter, who is facilitating our meetings here in Bern in the best possible way.

This has been a quiet year, and there are less developments to report than in previous years. EASR officers have carried out their duties with the usual dedication, and collaboration has been effective and smooth. I would like to thank them for the work done in the course of this year.

#### *1. Timing of calls*

The calls for the meetings of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly to be held this year in Bern were sent via email to EASR officers, national delegates, and contact members on 16 March 2018. This is within the timeframe stipulated by our Constitution (90 days for the GA in case of electronic notification, and 30 days for the EC meeting). Final calls for the two meetings, including preliminary agendas, have then been sent via two separate emails on 18 May 2018. The minutes of the previous EC and GA meetings 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. Preparations for the next term of EC designated officers*

As you know, we have a clear timeline to follow in order to prepare the election of new officers for the next term. The current term will expire at the end of 2019 and preparations for the election have to start this year already. The EC has appointed a Nominating Committee that will propose a list of nominees for each position of designated officer. The list of nominees will be submitted to the EC at the 2019 meeting in Tartu, so that the EC can proceed to elect the officers for the new term (2020-2022). During this process, it will also be possible to nominate alternative candidates. A vote will be necessary only if there is more than one candidate for any available position. New rules apply now for the election procedure, after the changes to the constitution that have been approved by the GA last year. For the first time, in case of a vote, the new officers will be elected by the EC.

The Nominating Committee that has been appointed by the EC is composed of the following members: Wanda Alberts, Giovanni Casadio, Francisco Diez de Velasco, David Václavik, Jens Schlieter.

### *3. Applications for membership and affiliations*

We have received no new applications for membership from eligible national associations this year. On the other hand, we have received two applications from scholarly organisations (ESSWE and CESNUR) to become affiliated to the EASR. I have also been in contact with the board of a third organisation, ISORECEA, and it is to be hoped that an application from it will come in the future as well.

As you know, this is a new possibility for which we have approved the guidelines last year. The idea is to make the EASR more inclusive and attractive to communities of scholars working on religion who, for one reason or another, have not been involved in the EASR so far. It is clear however that to make this idea work, a proactive approach is necessary. Otherwise, it will be difficult to reach out to these scholarly communities and to receive applications from their organisations. In the case of CESNUR and ESSWE, the applications have come because I have personally contacted the boards of these organisations, with which I have intensely collaborated in the past. I have done the same with ISORECEA, although this has not led to an application yet. If we want these new option of affiliated organisations to work, all EASR members at all levels (officers, national delegates, members at large) should think about the networks and organisations they know that could be potential candidates for affiliation. I will send reminders about this from time to time to our members through the usual EASR channels, so that we can all contribute to the future development of our association. The two applications for affiliation have been examined and endorsed by the EC. They are now submitted to the GA for final approval.

We have also received a few applications for individual membership, only one of which was found in conformity to our regulations. This was from Igor Mikeshin from Russia. The application was presented by the Membership Secretary to the EC, which approved it. Igor Mikeshin is therefore a new individual member of the EASR.

### *4. Byelaws for affiliated organisations*

Last year we approved the byelaws for the affiliated organisations of the EASR. However, I have since come to realise that there is no provision in those guidelines for terminating the affiliation, in case the latter becomes undesirable for any reason. This is why I have thought of proposing to add a new article to the byelaws, where this problem is addressed. The article is based on similar provisions for the termination of individual membership (art. 4.iii in the EASR constitution). The new article has been discussed and approved by the EC.

### *5. Site visits and future conferences*

I have visited in January the location for the present conference in Bern. As usual, the organising committee, presided by Prof. Jens Schlieter, welcomed me very warmly and generously, facilitating my visit in all possible ways. I used the checklist that I have prepared for such visits, and I was not surprised to see that everything was proceeding very smoothly. I inquired about all practical aspects related to the preparations of the conference and gave some advice on the basis of previous experience. I left being confident that this will be another excellent conference, as in our best tradition, and what I have seen so far confirms my early impression. It is also interesting to note that the growing trend of our conferences doesn't seem to want to slow down. Each conference is

breaking new records with respect to participation. The organisers received no less than 600 paper proposals this year, which is extraordinary.

Also for the present conference, as it has become customary, 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 in Tartu, Estonia. The exact dates will be 25 to 29 June 2019. The theme of the conference should be “Religion: Continuations and Disruptions”. We will hear more about preparations during this meeting. I will be in touch with the organising committee after the Bern conference in order to plan my site visit there.

In 2020 there will be the quinquennial IAHR world congress in Dunedin, New Zealand. In spite of the distance, I hope that the congress will see a large participation of EASR members and European colleagues, as it has always been the case in the past. As our regulations dictate, there will be no EASR conference in that year.

Concerning 2021, we received last year during the GA meeting an expression of interest from the Italian Association (SISR) to organise the conference in that year in Pisa. I have been in touch in the course of the past year with Prof. Chiara Tommasi Moreschini, who is acting as coordinator for this bid. I also had the possibility to visit the University of Pisa in January, while there for a lecture and could have a tour of the locations that would be used for the conference. I also discussed with Prof. Tommasi Moreschini all practical requirements for a successful conference plan. I had a very positive impression of this location and I was happy to receive from Prof. Tommasi Moreschini a formal bid, which has been submitted to the EC, which has approved it at its latest meeting. It is therefore my pleasure to announce that we will be in Pisa in 2021. At this moment, it seems likely that the conference will take place in June.

In the course of the year I have also received an expression of interest from the Irish Association (ISASR) for the organisation of a future conference, possibly in 2022. As you know, we have never been in Ireland. A formal bid was received a few days before the EC meeting. The EC discussed but made no formal decision at this stage, postponing it to the next year. Informal expressions of interest have also been made for years after 2022, but it seems premature to mention them here.

## 6. *Finances*

Things seem to be stable enough with respect to finances our Treasurer, Tineke Nugteren, has been full operative after the health problems she has last year, and this of course wonderful news for us and for our association. We have a small deficit with respect to last year, but this is entirely due to the expenses we have incurred for the renovation of our website, which was long overdue and had been decided last year. This is of course a kind of expense that has to be made from time to time, and which we will not have to meet again for some time in the coming years. Apart from that, our expenses and our income follow the usual pattern as in previous years. More details about the financial situation and the new website will be given in the Treasurer’s and the Internet Officer’s reports respectively.

## 7. *The Religious Studies Project*

The EASR has been asked by the Religious Studies Project (RSP) to formalise the kind of support that the EASR is willing to offer to the project. As you may know or remember, this issue was discussed already some time ago. Let me quote from the minutes of the 2016 EC meeting:

*The next point is a presentation of the Religious Studies Project by David Robertson. He explains that the Project offers a podcast every week on a particular topic related to the study of religion, with a particular attention for critical edge. It has been created in 2012, is based in Britain, and has been supported until now by the BASR, the AAR and the Australian Association for the Study of Religions. Two hundred podcasts have been prepared and put online so far and its editorial team is spread all over the world. He now asks for support from the EASR. He observes that it would be good to include a non-anglophone community in the future and asks whether it would be possible to give financial support to two young scholars who would conduct interviews for the project at future EASR conferences. The General Secretary says that it should be possible to negotiate a partial waiver of registration fees for two persons with the local organising committees, even if this cannot be guaranteed, of course.*

As you can see, the EC did not make a binding commitment about the issue on that occasion. But in the course of the past year I was contacted by David Robertson, representing the RSP, who explained to me that without a full waiver of the registration fee for at least one representative of the project, it would be difficult for them to attend an EASR conference at all. The request has been submitted to the EC and discussed by it. On my proposal, the EC has committed to offer one bursary every year, out of our usual program, to a representative of the RSP in order to attend the annual conferences of the EASR.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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 Leuven, September 2017. 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 are concerned, reimbursement will take place only after this conference in Bern is over. Copies of the balance sheet, prepared 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 deadline for the national associations to pay their dues was set on the 30th of May. After a general call in January, some associations paid straight away or reacted with questions or requests for official EASR letters to their Universities or Academic Councils. This year it was necessary to send two reminders. 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 Bern. 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 this case it is however important to get in 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 have paid their dues so far.

#### 3. Bursary funds

We sent out the instructions for applying for bursary funds in three ways: through mails from the General Secretary and by giving all the information as a fixed feature on the EASR website. This year we also notified the various EASR discussion groups. We received a good number of applications, mostly from early-career candidates and independent scholars. What was striking this year, particularly, is the number of applications (in sometimes imploring prose) by scholars from outside Europe, whose presentations had been accepted but had no funds. We indicated the possibility of individual membership to them. The President, the General Secretary and the Treasurer came to a consensus and awarded nine candidates. We had allotted a budget of € 3.600, divided into nine grants of up to a maximum of 400 Euro each. 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 Leuven conference, and (2) the earmarked expenses pertaining to the Bern conference, the financial situation looks secure. We propose a new budget (3) leading to next year's conference in Tartu consisting for the main part of a bursary fund and some additional expenses on hosting of and maintenance of the website, dues to be paid to the EASSH, and travel expenses to be made by the General Secretary for a site visit to Tartu.

In a separate document we propose items for next year's budget to an amount of € 4.400. This is divided into € 300 for website hosting and maintenance, €400 for travel expenses, € 100 for the dues to be paid 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.

#### 5. Some remarks on matters of financial administration.

- In order for our mails and overall functioning to be effective it is crucial that all national member associations keep their particular page on the EASR website up to date. How else would we know whom to address with our requests for money?
- Many applicants for the bursaries from countries outside Europe but even in some cases within Europe were not aware of the possibility of individual membership, and of course too late for their application for individual membership to be effective this year. There was a PhD from Turkey who applied, coming from the same university/institute as one or even two of the (former) EASR officers there, who had never heard of the TAHR. So please spread the word.
- In order for me to keep a sense of control and clarity I would request that those who pay ahead, for whatever reason, state clearly in their money transfer for which year(s) the payment is meant. In some cases bank costs are involved. Please try to avoid to share the costs with us. Instead make sure that we are paid the full amount, particularly when your membership fee is already the minimum amount of 50 Euros.

Sincerely yours,



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

## Appendix 5

### EASR Audit Committee: Annual Report 2017-2018

Dear members of 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.” At that occasion, the following members were appointed for the term 2016-2019: Monique Weis (BE), Knut Jacobsen (NO) and William Arfman (NL). The committee appointed William Arfman as its chair.

In 2017, a period of one month before the annual EASR conference was decided upon with regards to when the committee would receive the full documentation needed for an audit. As such a deadline was proven to not actually be feasible in both years, however, a period of two week before the conference was agreed upon in both instances instead. In principle, two weeks has proven to be sufficient time for the task, but one solution for this issue that the Executive Committee could consider for the future is to transition to a solar financial year instead.

The chair of the audit committee received all the digital documentation from the treasurer and then shared these via e-mail with the other two members of the audit committee. For the bursaries, the claims by the recipients were digitalized and shared via email as well. Like last year, the rather large amount of receipts associated with these claims were not digitalized and shared, but instead checked by the chair alone. With regards to the latter, the audit committee would like to hear from the Executive Committee whether this procedure is considered sufficient.

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 the treasurer for her efforts.

On behalf of the EASR audit committee,



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

## Appendix 6

### Internet Officer's Report (2017-2018)

#### 1. New Website

##### Change of Content Management System (CMS)

As decided in the last EC meeting in Leuven 2017, the website has been renewed. Therefore, a change of the content management system has been made, from TypO3 to Wordpress. The new website went online on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2018.

The new website contains the same content as the old website. There is only a different arrangement of menus (top-menu, primary menu).

Some advantages of new the CMS:

- Wordpress is most popular cms (freeware) on the internet, which results in continuously new developments such as new designs and plugins
- Easily adjustable for changes
- In Wordpress a blogging function is included
- Good for search engines
- Updates for free (TypO3 updates usually cost a lot of money)

##### Change of Hosting Company

The Hosting includes webspace and domains. The contract with JWeiland was probably done by Michale Pye about 17 years ago and became too expensive. There are much cheaper companies on the market today. A new contract has been closed with the company All-Inkl.com. The contract was done by Sebastian Schüler. After the move of the website to the new server, the old contract will be terminated. This should not take longer than two month from now.

- Old: JWeiland.net: unlimited webspace and 4 domains (.de, .info, .eu, .org)
- New: All-Inkl.com: 50GB webspace and 3 domains (.info, .eu, .org)

##### Expenses of Hosting

###### Old Website (TypO3 and JWeiland)

- Technical Support (Felix & Uta Quast, QID Media) = 333,20 Euro
- Webspace and Domains (Weiland) = 246 Euro /p.a.
- Total = 579,20 /p.a.

###### New Website (Wordpress and All-Inkl)

- Technical Support (Felix & Uta Quast, QID Media) = 178,50 Euro /p.a.
- Webspace and Domains (All-Inkl.com) = 57,60 Euro /p.a.
- Total = 236,10 /p.a.

## **2. Development of E-Lists**

	Aug 09	Aug 10	Sep 11	Aug 12	Sep 13	May 14	Aug 15	June 16	Aug 17	June 18	Decrease / Increase from last year
<b>Candide</b>	56	66	82	95	104	110	117	118	119	126	+7
<b>Dolmen</b>	179	201	231	248	280	302	323	344	363	363	0
<b>Most</b>	74	77	87	91	96	102	99	97	95	95	0
<b>Synkron</b>	122	124	131	131	152	154	149	145	144	146	+2
<b>Tonantzin</b>	92	101	106	112	122	117	112	110	109	112	+3
<b>Yggdrasill</b>	616	685	774	850	902	926	978	1008	1041	1050	+9

## **3. Development of EASR Facebook-site:**

Number of members June 2015: 607

Number of members June 2016: 874

Number of members September 2017: 1123

Number of members June 2018: 1279

Sebastian Schüler  
Leipzig

**Appendix 7****Budget for the next financial year (2018-2019)**

- A program of 9 conference bursaries of €400 each	€ 3.600
- Website maintenance	€ 300
- Travel costs officers	€ 400
- EASSH membership fee	€ 100
<b>Amounting to a total of</b>	<b>€ 4.400</b>