



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

**held at the University of Tartu on 28 June 2019, from 16:30 to 18:00**

The President, Einar Thomassen, presiding. The General Secretary, Marco Pasi, taking the minutes with the help of Silvia Alfayé (Membership Secretary).

1. The President welcomes all persons present and officially opens the meeting. 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.
2. The President proposes to approve the agenda. The agenda is approved without modifications.
3. The President presents his report (see appendix 1).
4. The General Secretary presents his report (see appendix 2).
5. The Treasurer presents her report (see appendix 3).
6. The representative of the Audit Committee, William Arfman (NGG), presents his report (see appendix 4). The President thanks the Committee for the work done and the report is approved by the GA.
7. The next point in the agenda is the announcement of the results of the election of EASR officers for the next term (2020-2022). As the General Secretary mentioned in his report, the election took place during the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 25 June 2019. For only one position there were two candidates and there had to be a vote. This was for the position of Deputy General Secretary, for which Chiara Tommasi was elected. All the candidates were automatically elected as unopposed since they were the only candidates for their respective positions. This is then the result of the election, including all the officers for the next term:
  - President: Kim Knott (British Association, first term)
  - Vice-President: Joseph Verheyden (Belgian Association, first term)
  - Vice-President: Ábrahám Kovács (Hungarian Association, first term)
  - General Secretary: Jenny Berglund (Swedish Association, first term)
  - Deputy General Secretary: Chiara Tommasi (Italian Association, first term)
  - Treasurer: William Arfman (Dutch Association, first term)
  - Deputy Treasurer: David Zbírál (Czech Association, first term)
  - Membership Secretary: Silvia Alfayé (Spanish Association, second term)

- Publications Officer: Jenny Butler (Irish Association, first term)
- Internet Officer: Carmen Becker (German Association, first term)

The President congratulates the elected officers, who will enter into office at the beginning of 2020. The GA welcomes the result with an applause.

The General Secretary adds that another important piece of information should be reported. Since the Audit Committee will also come to the end of its term at the end of 2019, a new Committee had to be appointed by the EC. This has been done, and the members of the new Audit Committee are: Rasa Pranskevičiūtė (Lithuanian Association), Bulcsú Hoppál (Hungarian Association), and Paweł Kusiak (Polish Association).

8. The President presents the application of REMID as an affiliated organisation of the EASR, which has already been approved by the EC. The General Secretary gives some information about this scholarly organisation and the President asks the GA whether the application can be approved. The GA approves the affiliation unanimously.
9. The Treasurer proposes the budget for the next financial year (2019-2020; see appendix 5). It is approved by the GA.
10. The next point concerns future EASR conferences. The General Secretary presents the 2020 IAHR congress in Otago and leaflets are distributed among the audience. All EASR members are invited to attend the IAHR congress. Then the President gives the floor to Chiara Tommasi, who presents the 2021 EASR conference in Pisa. The dates will probably be from 28<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> July. She also reminds the GA that the theme of the conference will be “Resilient Religion.” Promotional bookmarks and pens are distributed among the GA attendees. The floor is then given to Irish delegate Alexandra Grieser in relation to the bid for the 2022 conference. She gives some information about the Irish Association (ISASR) and then passes the floor on to Jenny Butler, who illustrates the plans for the conference with Powerpoint slides. Finally, the President informs the GA that a bid from the Ukrainian Association has also been accepted for organising the 2023 conference in Kyiv.
11. The next point in the agenda concerns the proposal of creating a code of conduct and an unpleasant situation that has been reported during the conference. The President says that most associations have such codes of conduct and that, since a proposal was made for it, the EC will work on it and report to the GA in the future. The President also mentions an incident that has happened during the conference, which has been reported to the General Secretary. He asks whether the person who reported the incident is in the audience and wants to say something about it. This person, a PhD candidate in Islamic Studies is indeed there and asks to take the floor. She then reads a statement. She explains that in one session she found that several papers were based on stereotypes about Muslims that could be characterised as xenophobic and Islamophobic. When she criticized some of the claims made particularly in one of those papers, she found that the ensuing discussion was not up to the scholarly standard that could be expected at an EASR conference. She found the experience unpleasant and worrying. This is why she decided to share her experience and express the wish that such situations don’t happen again in the future. The President observes that the fact that religion is increasingly a sensitive, if not even controversial, subject, shows the need to address issues that are especially important to us, as scholars working on the study of religions. This will have to be discussed further at the next conference in 2021. But at this moment it is only an

information item on the agenda, on which it is not necessary to have a discussion at this point.

12. The President then moves on to the next point, which concerns the creation of a working group on publications. He thanks Jenny Butler (new Publication Officer) for taking care of this plan. She will start working on it in 2020, when she will be formally in office. The idea is to explore the possibility of having working relations with scholarly publishers that can bring support or benefits for the EASR. Paweł Kusiak (Polish Association) and Mariana Ferrara (Italian Association) express an interest in participating in the group.
13. There were no further points on the agenda. The President asks the GA if there is any further comment or point to be raised. Kim Knott (British Association), new EASR president elect, raises her hand and the floor is given to her. She says that the next EC will work on the code of conduct, which she finds important. She thanks the PhD student for reporting her unpleasant experience. As the newly elected president, she also wants to thank the current EC. She mentions the current president, the vice-president Marion Bowman, the current treasurer, and everyone who has been part of the EC. She would also like to especially thank Marco Pasi for his work on behalf of the next committee that will take office in 2020. President Thomassen appreciates the words of the newly elected president, also on behalf of the Executive Committee.
14. There being no further business to discuss, the President declares the GA meeting closed.

## APPENDIX 1

### President's report (2019)

Dear delegates and committee members

Welcome to this year's General Assembly of the EASR! Once again I can report that the association is running well, thanks to the dedication of all its officers. In particular I wish to thank our General Secretary Marco Pasi for having executed his office in a most reliable and professional manner. He has been ensuring that our member associations fulfil their commitments, that the preparations for this year's conference go as planned, and that the EASR's own organisation functions as it should. As president I have been kept regularly informed and I have been consulted on all important matters. The collaboration has been excellent throughout.

I also wish to express a special thanks to Tineke Nugteren, our Treasurer, who has carried out the arduous work of keeping our finances in order, and who has also been in charge of the bursary fund, where difficult decisions sometimes have to be made.

You will be able to appreciate for yourselves the services rendered by the General Secretary, the Treasurer, and all our other officers when they present their own reports later in this meeting.

This year I also wish to thank the members of the Nominating Committee for their work in providing us with a list of candidates to be elected as officers of the EASR for the next term. It is a work that has not been without complications, but I am confident that the outcome serves the interests of the association in the best possible way.

As your president I have represented the EASR in the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities since its official foundation in 2015, and in 2018 I attended the General Assembly of EASSH, which was held 25-26 November in Vienna. As you know, EASSH is an umbrella organisation for academic associations like ours across the humanities and the social sciences, and works to strengthen the role of those disciplines within the research programmes of the European Union. During the last couple of years EASSH has become more firmly organised, and now has a permanent Director.

It is my opinion that as an academic association at the European level, the EASR needs to be attentive to the research policies of the EU and should endeavour to make its voice heard through whatever channels are available. As president, I have considered it an important part of my office to stay informed about EU research policies and their possible implications for the academic study of religions. I should therefore like to use this opportunity to share with you some observations regarding this issue.

When the European Commission launched its 8th Frame Programme, Horizon 2020, six years ago, it stated that the humanities and the social sciences would be "fully integrated" within the important section of the programme called Societal Challenges. In addition, Societal Challenge 6, "Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies," was meant as a special invitation to the humanities and the social sciences. As the programme is now coming towards its end, it must be

concluded that those visions have not been fulfilled. Four monitoring reports specially devoted to this issue have shown that the participation of SSH researchers in awarded Societal Challenges projects has been far weaker than envisaged, that among those who have participated, economics, business, and political science are predominant, and that the humanities as such are very poorly represented. Moreover, input from SSH has been declining over time, from one Work Programme to the next, and the funding of Societal Challenge 6 in particular has been decreasing in comparison to the other Challenges.

This situation suggests, in general, that the societal challenges model is incongruous with the nature of knowledge production in the humanities and the social sciences, and, in particular, that research in the study of religions is not well served by this model.

At the moment, the European Commission is preparing its next Frame Programme, Horizon Europe, for 2020 to 2028. There, “challenges” will be replaced by “missions”: research previously defined as “challenge driven” should now be “mission oriented.” The new terminology suggests an even more instrumentalist approach to research than in the current FP, and does not inspire high hopes for an increased participation of the humanities and the social sciences.

The good news, however, is that the SSH share has been increasing in the ERC, with a record 23% of the total sum awarded in 2017. Moreover, the biggest growth has been in the panels (SH 3, SH 5, SH 6) that are most relevant to researchers in our field. This, after all, is rather encouraging, and indicates that, if the EASR wants to have a research policy, an emphasis on curiosity driven, basic research will be more rewarding than attempts to accommodate politically defined “challenges” or “missions.”

Finally: This is my final year as president, and my last meeting with you. It has been a true pleasure to work with you all. I wish to thank all the officers for your commitment to the association and your excellent collaboration during the last six years. I also wish to thank the delegates of the national member associations for your active participation in the work of the EASR. We are, I am happy to say, a bottom-up organisation which depends on the input and the commitment of the national associations, who serve as lines of communication with the individual members, who encourage them to attend our European conferences, and who are ready, in due course, to host a conference themselves. During these six years I have had the pleasure of seeing our annual conferences grow in size and variety of content year by year. The credit for this does not belong to the leadership of the association, but is due to you, who make the association the well-functioning organism it is and its conferences the inspiring annual events they have become.

Thank you!

Einar Thomassen  
President of the EASR

## APPENDIX 2

### General Secretary's report

Dear EASR officers, dear delegates, dear guests,

Thank you all for your participation in this meeting. I would like to thank the organisers of the Tartu conference, and particularly Indrek Peedu, for facilitating our meetings here in the best possible way. As you know, this is the final year of the present term of office, which means that most of the current officers will conclude their involvement in the EC at the end of this year. For me personally, this is the end of a long journey, and I will have a few more words to say about this at the end of this report. For now, I would like to thank the officers who have worked hard in the course of the past year to keep the machine of our association running smoothly.

#### *1. Timing of calls*

The calls for the meetings of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly to be held this year in Tartu were sent via email to EASR officers, national delegates, and contact members on 25 March 2019. 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). The final call and agenda for the EC meeting have been sent on 17 June 2019. The final call and agenda for the meeting of the GA have been sent on 21 June 2019. The minutes of the previous EC and GA meetings (Bern 2019) 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. Elections for the next term of office (2020-2022)*

As I said earlier, this is the final year of the current term of office. Last year we had already started to prepare the election of the new officers by appointing the Nominating Committee (NC). The task of the NC was to prepare a list of suitable candidates for each available position. The NC was composed of the following colleagues: Wanda Alberts (DVRW), Giovanni Casadio (SISR), Jens Schlieter (SGR/SSSR), David Václavík (CSR), and Francisco Diez de Velasco (SECR). The committee elected Wanda Alberts as chair. The committee could agree on most names of potential candidates, but no complete agreement could be reached about the whole list. This created at a certain point a difficult situation, and the President Einar Thomassen and myself did our best to help the committee to find a solution. Luckily, thanks to the sense of responsibility of all the persons involved, it was possible to reach a compromise even within the formal deadline for the submission of the list of candidates. This explains why, in one case, two candidates were proposed by the NC for a single position. This made it necessary to elect one of the two candidates through a vote during the meeting of the Executive Committee that was held a few days ago.

The list of candidates that was submitted to the EC for approval and election was excellent. The persons who will take up the job when the present officers come to the end of their term, are all hard-working, dedicated colleagues, who in some cases have served our association in other capacities before. It gives me much pleasure to think that our association will be in good hands in the years to come.

After the NC finished its work and submitted its list of nominates candidates, I opened the nomination process to all national associations, as dictated by our constitution and byelaws. Therefore, on 25 March 2019 I circulated a call for nominations. During the following two months (ie, until 24 May 2019), national associations had the possibility to nominate alternative candidates, who would then join the list of nominees prepared by the NC. During this period I received only one valid

nomination from the Irish Association, which nominated Jenny Butler for the position of Publications Officer. At the moment of closing the nomination process I heard that Teemu Taira, who is our current Publications Officer and had been nominated by the NC for a second term in the same position, decided to retire his candidacy. At that moment, Jenny Butler remained the only nominated candidate for that position, and that is why she was elected as unopposed, together with all other unopposed candidates. After this change, the nomination process was closed and the list of candidates was finalised. It is on the basis of that list that our new officers were elected by the EC.

While most of the candidates have been elected unopposed, as our constitution stipulates, a vote was necessary to elect our new Deputy General Secretary, since we two candidates from the same national association (SISR) for that position. The list of elected officers will be given later during this meeting.

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

We have received no new applications for membership from eligible national associations this year. We have however received one application from a scholarly organisation (REMID) to become affiliated to the EASR. The application has been received by the Membership Secretary Silvia Alfayé and the application was presented during the EC meeting a few days ago. It was unanimously approved by the EC, so we can welcome REMID as a new affiliate today.

Since REMID's application has been accepted, we now have three affiliated organisations (the other ones being ESSWE and CESNUR, whose applications were accepted last year). That is good, but I am sure we could and should have more affiliations. This will probably require a more proactive approach from the future General Secretary and Membership Secretary, but also from the whole EC and especially from national delegates. While I am sure that there is a great potential for collaboration between the EASR and other thematic or regional scholarly organisations, it is also clear that this potential will not become available unless we reach out to those organisations and explain to them why it might be a good idea to be associated with us. This will make our association grow and develop further in the future, as was the intention with the creation of this new category of affiliation.

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

I visited Tartu in December last year for the usual site visit and meeting with the conference organising team. I was warmly welcomed by the Estonian Association for the Study of Religions and particularly by Indrek Peedu, who is the coordinator of the organising team and with whom I exchanged a long stream of emails about the conference in the past few months. I was also asked to deliver a lecture during my stay in Tartu, which made it possible for the Estonian Association to cover the costs of my hotel. I mention this because I think it is a good formula that can be used also in the future. It makes it possible for the EASR to save some funds that can be used for other good purposes (particularly bursaries). So I would encourage the future General Secretary to explore this possibility whenever the conference site visit has to be planned.

The site visit itself went very well. Although the Tartu conference is going to break all records of attendance of past EASR conferences (something to which we are getting accustomed), the organising team seemed to have everything perfectly under control. All in all, it was a real pleasure to see the team working with such enthusiasm for our community, in spite of the usual administrative complications and logistic challenges. That is why I am convinced that the 2019 conference will fit nicely in the best tradition of scholarly gathering that we have established year after year. A tradition that speaks for itself, since we are attracting every year a larger number of colleagues.

Since I mentioned that the Tartu conference is going to set a new record of attendance, it may be useful to offer some statistics here. No less than 836 proposals were submitted for evaluation for the conference. This includes both paper and panel proposals. However, it is important to keep in mind that some authors submitted more than one proposal, as it is often the case. When we take this into account and consider only individual authors, we still have a very impressive number: 791 authors

from no less than 61 different countries! This shows that the attractiveness of EASR conferences is now going well beyond the borders of our continent. If we break down the proposals by country of provenance of the authors, then we see that the top three countries are: 1) Germany, with 64 proposals; 2) Russia, with 62; and 3) Italy, with 61. Now, of course one thing is the proposals that are submitted, and another the persons who actually go to the conference. Here we also have very interesting figures, because it turns out that the organisers expect now no less than 660 participants (600 of which will be presenting a paper). This is around 160 participants more than Bern, which already broke previous records. Apart from our obvious satisfaction for this growing trend (which in my view should also be tempered by concern about the practical problems that such quick growth may create in the future), I think these statistics are interesting in themselves, and we should encourage future conference organisers to collect them and to share them with us.

As it has been the case in the past, a small levy on the registration fee of the Tartu conference (€2 per regular participant, €1 per student participant) will be applied. This regulation allows us to generate some extra funding to cover the travel expenses for the site visit.

As you know, there won't be an EASR conference next year, and this is because there will be the quinquennial IAHR world congress in Otago, New Zealand. Distance and costs may make it difficult for many of us to go, but I am sure we are all considering at least the possibility of going. As I said in my report last year, the EASR has it in its DNA to support the IAHR and its congresses, and we will do our best to help EASR members to go to Otago. For this reason our Treasurer will propose this year not only to offer our bursary program next year as well, but even to upgrade it, since we would like to give a bit more money than usual (€500 instead of €400). I am sure that our members and the IAHR leadership will appreciate this gesture.

Also in relation to the IAHR congress in Otago, we should keep in mind that our meetings next year will in principle be held there. We have to hope therefore that there will be enough EASR officers, delegates, and members to hold our EC and GA meetings in such a distant place.

Concerning the 2021 conference, we have accepted last year the Pisa bid presented by Chiara Tommasi on behalf of the Italian Association. I have been in touch with Chiara and I know that she has been already quite active in laying a good ground in view of the conference. A website has already been put in place and will be presented during this meeting by Chiara herself.

During the recent meeting of the EC an Irish bid for the 2022 conference in Cork was discussed. We had received no other bids for that year and the EC found the proposal excellent, so the bid was unanimously approved. Finally, during the EC meeting a bid was also presented by the Ukrainian Association for organising the 2023 conference in Kiev. This bid was also unanimously approved by the EC. So we already know where we will be not only in 2021, but also in the following two years.

##### 5. *Other activities*

At the beginning of June I was invited to deliver a couple of lectures in Kiev. This gave me the opportunity of meeting many members of the Ukrainian Association. I first visited the Department of Religious Studies of the Taras Shevchenko University, and then the Department for the Study of Religion of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. In both cases I was received with warm, generous hospitality and I was asked to deliver a short speech in my vest of General Secretary. I have seen the enthusiasm with which our Ukrainian colleagues look at their involvement in the EASR, and my visit gave me several opportunities for fruitful discussions with them. This has given me the idea that perhaps in the future it should be a regular feature of our association to send a small delegation (perhaps the President and the General Secretary) to visit one of our association members every year. We would then understand better local situations and strengthen the ties between the EASR and its various members.



## 6. *Finances*

There are no particular issues to mention with respect to finances. The situation is stable and there are no reasons for concern. You will hear more details about it from the Treasurer's report. I would like however to add one point. We should perhaps consider in the future a raise in our fees. As you probably know, we still have the same fees that were decided when the EASR was created twenty years ago, so a raise would not be illogical after so many years, while we could also differentiate between countries with stronger economies and countries with weaker ones.

## 7. *Recommendations for the future*

Since I am now coming to the end of my final term as General Secretary, I would like to make a few recommendations for the future:

- Creation of a working group for publishing opportunities under the coordination of the Publications officer.
- The text of the constitution should be harmonised with the new regulations for affiliated organisations (the term "affiliate" in the constitution can be a bit ambiguous now).
- Future development of the EASR mailing lists, with a discussion of how they could be made more active and inclusive.
- The creation of an EASR paper and digital archive at the library of the University of Marburg (which hosts an IAHR archive already).

## 8. *Farewell*

This is my last year as officer of the EASR, and I think a few words are in order by way of a farewell. I have served in the EC of the EASR for twelve years, six as Treasurer and six as General Secretary. It has been a long adventure, full of enthusiasm and of interesting experiences. All in all, the positive moments have far outnumbered the occasional bumps on the road. Our association has many positive sides, but I think that the best of them is its spirit of collegiality and good will. This makes all the work done for it so much easier and lighter. I am sure that the future leadership of the association will continue to preserve and cultivate this spirit, so that our association can grow and flourish in the years to come.

I would also like to thank to all the colleagues with whom I have worked during these twelve years: President Einar Thomassen, former President Maya Burger, former General Secretary Kim Knott, Treasurer Tineke Nugteren, Membership Secretary Silvia Alfayé, and former Membership Secretary Jenny Berglund. It is also important for me to remember Wim Hofstee, who preceded me in the role of Treasurer and introduced me to the intricacies of the EASR administration. Finally a big thank you goes to Vice-President Giovanni Casadio, who first had the crazy idea of proposing me for the position of Treasurer back in 2007. He had to insist quite a bit before he could convince me that I was fit for the job. I wouldn't have had these extraordinary 12 years of experience in the association if it had not been for that crazy idea, which maybe – as I can say now – was not so crazy after all.

Thank you very much for your attention, and see you around at future EASR conferences.

Marco Pasi  
General Secretary of the EASR

## APPENDIX 3

### Treasurer's report (2018-2019)

Tartu, General Assembly, June 28, 2019  
Report dated 14-06-2019

#### *1. Preliminary remarks*

This report starts with the financial status as found in the previous report, based on the financial situation on 4 June 2018 and as presented during the EC and GA meetings in Bern. 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, our present balance is based on the previous round of bursaries. Reimbursement of the current bursaries will take place only after this conference in Tartu is over. Copies of the balance sheet, prepared by the Treasurer, were checked by the President, the General Secretary, 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 31st 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 one reminder in April and a last-minute reminder to those associations who had failed to respond either by payment or by requesting permission to pay cash right before the meetings in Tartu. 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. The EASR's flexible policy in this respect allows some last minute's cash payments on the spot, both by representatives of national associations (such as the Romanian association) and by individual members. In such cases it is crucial to get in contact with the Treasurer and/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.

On the closing of our current financial year, on the 6th of June 2019, the Polish association has paid arrears for 2017, 2018 and 2019; the Greek and Turkish associations also promised to pay their dues for 2019. It appears that these associations may react to Membership Officer Silvia Alfayé's requests to send their current membership numbers, but largely ignore the Treasurer's invitations to pay their dues, possibly due to financial hardship. After having been personally addressed both associations stated their commitment to pay as soon as possible, if only the minimum amount and not based on the number of members. Another reason may be that some associations may have their own website in order, but fail to communicate important changes (in officers and/or e-mail addresses). We have brought this to your attention repeatedly: please notify our web manager Sebastian Schüller of any personnel changes, in order to keep your own webpage on the EASR website up to date.

#### *3. Bursary funds*

We sent out the instructions for applying for bursary funds in three ways: through early 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. Our timing is always a precarious matter. It may look ideal to synchronize our announcements and deadlines with the organizers of that year's

conference, but in practical reality we cannot always avoid the situation that a bursary recipient has to pay a full registration fee (instead of the early bird rate); or, conversely, that panel organizers had accepted participants who later have to withdraw once they were notified that they would not receive a bursary.

This year we sent out invitations to apply for bursaries quite early, with a deadline for applications on the first of January. In order to give candidates an extra opportunity to collect the required letters of recommendation, we postponed the deadline for completing their applications for another ten days. We received a good number of applications, mostly from early-career candidates and scholars from countries with weaker currencies. What has become a regular feature by now, is the number of applications (in sometimes imploring prose) by scholars from outside Europe, whose presentations had been accepted but had no funds, and obviously hadn't read the EASR bursary guidelines properly. We indicated the possibility of individual membership to them. Mostly this comes to nothing, as such membership would have to be voted on first. But European candidates who are not a member of the EASR-related national association for the academic study of religion can relatively easily become a member of their national association in time to qualify as a serious candidate for the EASR bursary program. As usual, 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. Since there were so many eligible candidates this year we had to make tough choices. One of the additional criteria we used this year was an even spread of recipients over the various national affiliates. This might be a topic for further discussion in our meeting today, as we aspire transparency in our selection criteria, and we may even be in need of a slight addition to the text of the bursary program. In addition, as an exceptional one-off case, we granted the amount of 100 Euro to cover half the registration fee of a last-minute candidate from Ukraine.

These grants will be reimbursed as usual after the conference, upon demonstration of both actual participation in the conference and original material evidence of actual expenses.

#### *4. Conclusion*

Based on the present state of (1) the EASR bank balance, (2) the earmarked expenses covering the reimbursements after the Tartu conference, and (3) the earmarked expenses accepted during the Bern conference, the financial situation looks secure. As you can see at a glance, we have considerably cut down on our regular expenses on the website. In the preceding financial year the construction of the new website had bitten a considerable chunk off our budget, but now that we have both a functional new website and a considerable decrease in costs of website hosting and maintenance, website-related costs have normalized. We propose a new budget (written on a separate sheet as well) leading to next year's conference in New Zealand. As this will be an IAHR conference there will be no site inspection costs. Although strictly speaking the EASR is not involved in the organization, we propose that we offer a regular bursary program, particularly to encourage those young scholars and colleagues from countries with weaker currencies who would otherwise have no way to cover the substantial expenses involved in registration, accommodation and especially travel.

Our budget proposal thus consists for the main part of a bursary fund and some of the regular relatively small expenses on the website, and the membership fee to be paid to the EASSH.

We propose items for next year's budget to an amount of € 4.900. This is divided into € 300 for the website (which leaves room for unforeseen additional costs apart from mere hosting), € 100 for the fee to be paid to the EASSH, and € 4.500 for nine bursaries to a maximum of € 500 each. This budget is to be voted during the General Assembly.

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

Although there is only half a year left in this constellation of officers, we may make some suggestions to the future management of the EASR's financial administration.

- In order for our mails and overall functioning to be effective as well as efficient 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 as well as our generous bursary program?
- Many applicants for the bursaries from countries outside Europe but even in some cases within Europe are not aware of the possibility of individual membership, and of course too late for their application for individual membership to be relevant for this year's bursary candidates. So please spread the word, through the discussion groups as well as through other communication channels, such as in your own department.
- In order for a treasurer to keep a sense of control and clarity we would request that those who pay ahead, for whatever reason, state clearly in their money transfer for which year(s) the payment is meant. The same is valid for those who pay arrears. 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 due is the minimum amount of 50 Euros.
- As mentioned above, we may need to scrutinize the guidelines for bursary applications. In those situations when there are so many eligible applicants that we need a further fine-tuning of our selection criteria, such as a balanced spread of recipients over the various national affiliates, for the sake of transparency we need to have an additional phrase in the existing text. This is a suggestion for the new officers.

Sincerely yours,



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

## Appendix 4

### EASR Audit Committee: Annual Report 2018-2019

Dear members of the Executive Committee and 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 the following years, however, a period of two week before the conference was agreed upon instead. In principle, two weeks has proven to be sufficient time for the task.

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. This process has been approved by the EC in 2018.

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 EASSH, 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 5****Budget for the next financial year (2019-2020)**

- A program of 9 conference bursaries of €500 each	€ 4.500
- Website maintenance	€ 300
- EASSH membership fee	€ 100

**Amounting to a total of € 4.900**