

AGA MINUTES 2003

1. Welcome

The President welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that although the AGA is open to everyone, only representatives of National Associations and Institutes are eligible to vote on regulations.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the AGA 13th September 2002

Minutes approved.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes of the AGA 13th September 2002

No matters arising.

4. Reports

4.1 President's report

Michel explained that Council had to nominate a new President Elect because the previous candidate, Jorge de Lima from the Portuguese Association, had resigned from EERA in 2003. The Council had decided to extend Michel's Presidency for a further year and Ingrid Gogolin was chosen as President Elect. Michel will hand over to Ingrid at the AGA held during ECER 2004.

The Portuguese and one of the Spanish Associations (AIDIPE) do not have a representative at Council. Several contacts with new Associations have been made and in 2004 National Associations from Austria, Belgium, Greece and Ireland may become members. In response to Francois Orivel's request if CESSE could join EERA, Michel explained that it would not be eligible for membership status because it is not a National Research Association. Ingrid suggested that as an alternative to membership, EERA try to develop a social partnership with such European agencies. This idea received a positive response. Michel suggested a session with CESSE at ECER 2004 to explore this possibility further.

Michel concluded by discussing the EC Call for Proposals in Framework 6. He explained that EERA, as a body active at European level in the field of European education, could apply to become an infrastructure for educational research in Europe. This would be a good way for EERA to be present at EC level.

4.2 Secretary General's report

Margaret began by thanking the local academic and administrative organisers, the student helpers, Kyriaki Doumas and the postgraduate mentors and the EERA Secretariat for their work in organising ECER 2003. She presented the following statistics on the Hamburg conference. 576 proposals were accepted; 798 delegates had registered by the deadline and a further 25 registrations were processed during the conference. 58 delegates registered for the Pre-Conference, of whom 37 also attended the main conference. This is a significant increase on attendance at the Lisbon Pre-Conference.

A major problem was caused by the large number of delegates (approximately 200) who did not register by the deadline. Only when the office contacted these people to confirm if they would attend, did it emerge that many of them had no intention of coming while others cancelled their papers at the last minute. This meant there were many gaps in the programme and disappointment for delegates who attended sessions only to find that the scheduled presenters had not turned up. It also involves extra administration and frustration for the

Secretariat and Convenors who spend considerable time and effort processing and reviewing papers and constructing a coherent programme. There will be consultation with the Convenors to try to minimise this problem for future ECERs.

At ECER 2002, for the first time, Chairpersons were asked to complete session evaluation forms to comment on how well the session worked. Although only 59% of sessions were reported on, it gave a picture of what happened in many sessions. The evaluations revealed that 37 presenters did not turn up – the majority of whom were scheduled at the very beginning or end of the conference. Although several chairs commented that 4 papers in one session were too many, the majority of presentations were well-paced. This exercise has been repeated at Hamburg and, so far, the 2 main problems areas have been difficulties in finding rooms caused by insufficient sign-posting and problems with audio-visual equipment either not working or not being provided in session rooms.

Margaret commented briefly on the EERA networks. One new network has been established for 2004. Its title will be “Children’s Rights in Education” and the Convenor will be Zoran Pavlovic. She stressed the importance of the annual network reports and explained that Council will place more importance on the academic work of the networks. At the Hamburg Convenor meeting, Edwin Keiner was elected for a one year term to represent the networks on Council. Margaret thanked the Convenors for their hard work and dedication over the year.

The stability in staffing and high quality of teamwork in the office was praised. Margaret also praised the office for coping with the Hamburg organisation in parallel to the creation of a new conference database. This was a considerable feat, especially given the problems, delays and frustration that the technical work had caused. After Hamburg office priorities will be processing late registrations and chasing up outstanding fees, working to finish the database, gathering membership fees, arranging publicity for ECER 2004 and setting up new EERA bank accounts which will operate in pounds and Euros.

Michel thanked Margaret for her detailed report and invited questions from the floor. Martin Lawn asked Margaret to comment on his view that 2 types of networks are problematic: those who do not produce an annual report when the regulations state that if no network report has been produced for two years the network is considered defunct; and small networks who only hold 2 or 3 sessions, but who still need a network room which would prove expensive if EERA had to pay for each room. Margaret explained that with the help of the office, she is working to build a picture of each network and how well it functions. After Hamburg for example she will be able to tell which Convenors do not attend ECER or Convenor meetings nor return evaluations on sessions. She will then need to determine if the problem lies just with the Convenor, in which case a new Convenor should be found, or if it is a wider problem concerning the entire network. She felt that communications with Convenors will improve with the election of a Convenor representative to Council.

On the subject of new networks, Edwin Keiner commented that as there are already a large number of networks, it would be better to create sub-groups within them rather than create even more new networks. Margaret agreed that as the number of networks increases, it is becoming more difficult to administer the conference and construct the programme. She proposed that the Council discuss this issue further at their next meeting.

4.3 Treasurer’s report

Jules Pieters presented figures on EERA’s income and expenditure for 2003. He explained that EERA’s financial situation is currently healthy and there should be a positive balance at the end of the year. From January, new bank accounts will be set up for each of EERA’s separate functions – Secretariat, Conference, Membership and Council. This will give a better

overview of EERA's different activities, whereas at present income and expenditure is mixed together in one account. The Council will discuss the creation of personal budgets for the Office bearers to cover travel expenses and other costs incurred during their term of office. Once the membership administration is resumed subscriptions should provide a regular source of income from 2004 onwards.

4.4 Network Convenor's report

On behalf of the Convenors, Edwin Keiner thanked the organising committee for their efforts and explained that ECER 2003 had proved a successful conference for them.

The Convenors main wish was to strengthen the discursive nature of the networks. During ECER each network is primarily engaged in its own activities and there is little time to meet colleagues from other networks. Although there would be financial implications, the Convenors felt that instead of having a large and varied event every year, EERA could perhaps have a smaller-scale conference every second year. This would enable networks to explore issues more in-depth and allow Convenors' to use their contacts to build special networks.

The Convenors also highlighted a general problem concerning the structure of the programme booklet which is ordered according to network. They felt that this format caused difficulties in cross-matching sessions across networks. They requested that the programme is printed in session order instead. The problem of presenters who did not turn up was also discussed and Convenors suggested that the Office compile a list of offenders and circulate this before the reviewing process for ECER 2004 begins. It was also noted that some of the network rooms were inappropriate for sessions as they were either too large or too small for the group or the layout was unsuitable for group discussion.

Edwin concluded by reporting that 15 out of 24 Convenors had attended the Convenor meeting. No single network reported a lower quality of papers than in previous years, indeed many felt that quality had increased. Overall, attendance at sessions was medium. All Convenors were satisfied with their sessions and thanked the presenters and organisers.

4.5 EERJ Editor's report

Martin Lawn reported that 4 new editors have joined the EERJ Editorial Board this year. There are currently 520 subscribers in 62 countries which is a surprisingly low number considering that subscription is currently free of charge. Often people are unaware that they are members of their National Associations and so already eligible to subscribe and instead take out an individual subscription themselves. The majority of subscribers are from the Spanish Association, AIDIPE (25%) and BERA (20%). Martin also stressed that there is a direct relationship between the downloading of papers and citation. There has been an intensive use of papers, with 3800 copies already downloaded. As papers have so far been of high quality, it is important for the journal that the conference is academically strong. Following a request from Dutch colleagues, Martin will pursue the case for blind reviewing of papers.

5. ECERs from 2004 onwards

ECER 2004 will be held at the University of Crete, 22-25 September. No decision has yet been taken for the 2005 venue, although Dublin has offered to host it. There is a strong possibility that ECER 2006 will be held in Geneva.

6. Conference delegate fees: threshold for low GDP reduction

Margaret explained that there are 2 bands of delegate fees – high or low GDP. Low GDP countries are those with a GDP rating of less than \$US 20,000 and delegates from these

countries are entitled to a 50% reduction in conference fees. The benefit of this system is that the levels are transparent to delegates and easy for the office to administer.

7. EERA Membership fees and individual membership

Margaret outlined a proposal to bring membership fees in line with conference delegate fees. The existing structure for membership fees is complex as there are several different bands depending on the GDP of the country. It was therefore proposed to replace this structure with the same simple high or low GDP distinction used for conference fees. Furthermore, a proposal to take into account the size of the Association or Institute was discussed. Michel explained that this would help to attract smaller Associations and Institutes to join EERA. The Austrian and French/Belgian Associations for example have expressed an interest in becoming members but as small associations, they cannot afford the existing fees. Margaret added that it would also be fairer to smaller existing members and could help to renew memberships. SERA for example have only 150 members, yet pay the same fees as BERA, which is approximately 6 times larger.

As an association of Associations, Margaret explained that EERA does not want to encourage individual membership. The only exception would be an individual from a country which does not have a National Association or Institute. In order to discourage people joining simply to benefit from the reduced conference fee for members, individual membership was therefore increased to £24 in 2003.

In order to adopt a new membership fee structure, the proposal must be approved by a vote. According to EERA's regulations, only representatives of National Associations or Institutes can vote. If the national representative was not present, it was queried whether someone else could vote on their behalf. Michel agreed that this would be possible.

A view from the floor stated that although the principal of distinguishing between size and GDP was sound, the distinction of small (<200 members) and large (>=200 members) outlined in the proposal was too abrupt. If, for example, an Association which was previously below the 200 members limit gained just a few new members, their subscription to EERA would instantly double. Margaret explained that the formula outlined in the proposal did not have to be agreed on, just the general criteria that fees should be based on the size of the Association or Institute as well as its GDP rating.

It was felt that the meeting should close because, in the absence of any National Association representatives, a vote could not be taken on this proposal. Michel said the Council would therefore vote and make a decision at tomorrow's Council meeting. Ian Grosvenor highlighted that while there were 5 representatives from one network present at the AGA, less than 5% of conference delegates had attended. Such low participation was seen as a serious issue because if the Council alone makes all the decisions it could suggest that EERA is undemocratic and that members are not consulted. Margaret concluded by agreeing that the Council needs to review and examine the functioning of the AGA as a matter of urgency.