



Tønsberg, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

## **General Council Meeting with Annual Report**

Good morning to all of you.

Welcome to this Meeting of the General Council of the EPEA.

Together with me are the actual members of the Steering Committee you already got to know. Ruth, the treasurer, Ana the Regional Representative of the Western Region and Paal Breivik, Regional Representative of the Northern Region.

For all those who are not so familiar with the constitution of the EPEA I will give a short explanation about who the General Council is and which role he has.

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The EPEA covers 5 *regions*. In every region should exist national branches of the EPEA. And every branch appoints two so called *liaison persons* (delegates). And these liaison persons elect the *Regional Representative* of their region.

So, if you look at the map you see which countries belong to which region and every dot with a green ring indicates a country with a national branch.

And a very important remark: the member states of the EPEA are the same as in the Council of Europe - and not only the ones of the European Union.

And as you can see, there are only 7 branches all over Europe, and therefore 14 liaison persons in total.

These 14 persons form the General Council.

*Slide 3 of the PPP*

You see the part of EPEA's constitution concerning the General Council. The original idea that the delegates from each country decide on what the EPEA should do is basically very democratic. But in reality, it is not very democratic if there are no national branches in every associated country. As for now, 14 votes out of over 500 members would decide on the strategy of EPEA ...

(plus the 3 votes of the elected officers - but at this very moment none of the officers was elected by the members).

But there is a dilemma: if EPEA would rely only on member's vote the countries with many members could overrule the other countries with few members easily. That's why a "filter" like the liaison persons makes sense.

But the Steering Committee will analyse this situation and may present a proposal how members of all countries could be better integrated and treated let's say equally.

So, a first step to interact better within the EPEA will be presented by Ana.

*Slide 4 of the PPP*

A short questionnaire

We're looking forward to presenting you the results of the survey in the next [newsletter](#).

*Slide 5 of the PPP*

## **Annual report**

I will give a very general overview of the past years. This is because the Steering Committee has not published any annual report since 2019.

After the last meeting of the SC in Timisoara in Romania in November 2019, preparations were made for the election of a Deputy Chair and a new Secretary. The Deputy Chair should serve as Annet Bakker's second in office for one year until the end of June 2021 at the latest, and then take over the office of Chair for a period of three years. But then the pandemic came upon us and overturned the planning.

In the first few months, we were able to organise three webinars for frontline practitioners. Up to almost 40 people participated in these valuable events. It was even felt online how the teachers needed each other's support in this situation. And some valuable suggestions were given on how the students could still be taught somehow despite lock down.

The elections for the deputy chair could be hold in January 2021. Cormac Behan was elected to the office by a clear margin. At the same time, a new

treasurer, Claire O'Connell, was elected, as the previous treasurer did not wish to extend his term of office. A new secretary could not be found at this time.

In fact, Cormac took over as chair after only a few weeks. Thanks to his good network, he was able to convince Jim King to act as interim secretary.

In retrospect, the handovers of office did not take place in the way foreseen in the constitution and as is desirable. The flow of communication was considerably disrupted by the pandemic, and new procedures had to be learned first.

For the EPEA members, the most visible signs of life were probably the website maintained by Per Thrane and the newsletter published every three months from spring 2021 by Ana Ferrando and Thomas Wüthrich as a matter of necessity until today.

Incidentally, the Steering Committee was blocked for about one and a half years because we had no access to our bank accounts in Norway or to our PayPal account. This also meant that we had no overview of which members had paid the membership fee. The Steering Committee was literally hanging in the air.

The members of the SC reached their limits. For the EPEA, they carry out unpaid voluntary work in their free time. And this in addition to their professional work, which was particularly demanding during the pandemic.

The next critical moment came unexpectedly. In early June 2022, Cormac resigned as chair, followed a few days later by the ad interim secretary.

The rest of the SC reconstituted itself. Thomas Wüthrich was appointed interim chair and it was decided to hold the new elections before the 2023 conference whenever possible.

Parallel to the difficult situation, new perspectives also opened. Ruth Mc Farlane, project officer at the time, was able to start preparations for the dissemination event of two projects in which the EPEA was involved - BLEEP and Art of Freedom - at the end of September in the Netherlands. The SC then agreed that this would also be the opportunity to meet physically for the first time after almost three years.

In addition, Paal Breivik, Regional Representative of the Northern Region, had joined the SC in spring. He gradually managed to find out what legal steps had to be taken for the SC to regain access to the bank accounts.

And a real motivational boost was that FOKO offered to host the EPEA conference in 2023.

Unfortunately, Claire then had to resign as treasurer for personal reasons. Ruth stepped into the breach and took over this position. So, in the end we were able to register Paal, Ruth and Thomas with the Norwegian Registry of Commerce as authorised representatives of EPEA and regain access to our accounts at the bank. That is why Ruth is now able to present you the figures from the accounts of 2022. ([See document](#))

And finally, in the last few months we were mainly focused on preparing for the conference. This required a great effort from the whole SC. But we really wanted to hold this conference because we are aware of its importance for all practitioners and researchers.

## **Elections**

*Slide 6 of the PPP*

This weekend Ruth will send an email to all members who have paid the membership fee so that they can vote electronically for the nominated candidates.

The following persons submitted their candidature for election.

Thomas as Chair, Ruth as Treasurer and Sara Loja from Portugal as Secretary. Ruth and I had a zoom meeting with her, and we are both convinced that she will be able to perform as a secretary in an excellent way.

Although there is only one candidate for each office it is important that you vote. This gives the SC the needed legitimacy to do the next steps.

You will find the application form of each candidate and a three-minute video of each of them on the website.

After this election the SC will proceed to organise the election of a Regional Representative of the Southern Region. We are in the privileged position that we more than one application.

And if Thomas will be elected as Chair, we have to find another person to take over the office of the Regional Representative of the Central Region.

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In the next future we want to tackle the following issues:

- Which activities EPEA can provide for its member and a broader public.
- After the conference is before the conference. We might call for the next conference earlier so that funding by Erasmus+ is better accessible.
- Analysis of the existing website and possible redesign with a new webmaster. Key word for this: a more interactive website.
- accessible database of members for the members for interconnection between them. There is or was such a database but as far we are informed it was not maintained in the last years.

So, these are some ideas the SC for the near future.

### AWARD - Lifetime membership

There is one final point. It's the only topic the present liaison persons can vote for today.

The Steering Committee asks the liaison persons to grant lifetime membership to our webmaster  
PER THRANE from Denmark.

For more than 20 years he was in charge of the website of the EPEA. For us, he is one representative of the "first generation" of enthusiastic advocates for education in prison. And in Denmark in his professional life, he still is doing a great job in this field.

That's why we from the SC think he really earns this kind of appreciation for all the work he has done over the years. And Per has signaled to us that, with a heavy heart, he would like to give up the post as soon as possible.



Even though he is still passionate about education in prison, his workload no longer allows him to look after the website professionally.

Who of the liaison persons votes in favour of a lifetime membership for Per Thrane?

It is a unanimous decision. Thankyou!

*Slide 8 of the PPP*

Questions?

Thank you for attending the meeting of the general meeting.

*4 Liaison persons, the 4 members of the Steering Committee, and 10 members attended the meeting.*

*Thomas Wüthrich, interim chair*

Recorded video stream on youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlHWoRBy0Fk>