



## **Minutes**

SPP/ICA Plenary Assembly Meeting, d.d. Thursday, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006;  
Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Bonn, Germany)

### **Attending SC Members:**

President: Günther Schefbeck;

Vice-president: Marietta Minotos;

Secretary: Reinder van der Heide;

Members: France Bélisle, Claus Brüggmann, Mateo Maciá, Włodzimierz Kucner, Béla Pálmány, Michael Schneider, Reinhard Schreiner.

**6 other SPP members present (with right to vote); guests (without right to vote).**

The meeting of the Plenary Assembly took place in the afternoon, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16.00 – 17.10 p.m.

### **0) Opening**

Günther Schefbeck (GS) opens the meeting of the Plenary Assembly and cordially welcomes the members of the SPP present.

He asks the members to be so kind as to fill in the list of attendees and explains a few things about the agenda, especially agenda item 6 which will give everyone present the opportunity to share his or her concerns.

With particular regard to agenda item 4 (SPP draft regulations), he reminds the attendees of the procedural provision that in case of voting only one vote per category C member (institution) will be counted.

### **1) Report by the President**

GS first takes some time to look back at our conference at Vitoria-Gasteiz. It was a very worthwhile conference, no doubt about that, and he repeats his thanks to the organisation in Spain, especially Mr. Jesus Sobrón, for the fine job they did. Unfortunately, the meeting of the Plenary Assembly held at Vitoria-Gasteiz took place in a much less harmonious atmosphere than the conference itself. Organisational questions were intensively discussed in a tense atmosphere. The proposed new regulations for the SPP failed to pass, several speakers wanted to have their oral proposals to somehow subdivide the section treated first. The subdivision into two (or three) groups was proposed orally at the meeting; however, since, of course, only written proposals regarding organisational modifications that have been submitted in time and put on the agenda can be decided upon, the president couldn't have these changes voted on then and there. This was not understood and accepted by everyone present. Regrettably, the discussions and other interactions of this meeting of the Plenary Assembly in Vitoria have so far not properly resulted in (draft) minutes because the secretary

leaned heavily on the promised transcripts of the audio recording of that gathering. It is understood that the audio files are available, so perhaps a copy of them (on CD-Rom) could be sent to him, in order to enable him to use the proper material for drafting his report? GS recapitulates yet again the very good reasons for 'staying together', but, as he points out, alternatively the concept of 'working groups' within the section is proposed in the renewed draft regulations (see item 4).

During the SC meeting in Vienna it has been decided to invite all members to formulate and share their opinions about the strategy for the future of the SPP.

A first attempt to gather these opinions - and GS walks ahead of the agenda here (see item 3) - was the questionnaire sent to the members, which is available on the SPP website, as well.

Because so far only 4 completed questionnaires have been returned to the SC, a realistic evaluation of the answers is not yet possible. GS asks the members present to fill in the questionnaire here in Bonn and hand them in to Michael Schneider or Reinder van der Heide. If a proper number of forms will be returned, next time we can base a more valid evaluation on the answers, for instance regarding our future structure as well as future activities.

GS concludes his report by thanking Michael Schneider for his hospitality here at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and his outstanding efforts to organize the conference in Bonn.

## **2) Report by the Secretary**

Reinder van der Heide (RvdH) says that he doesn't want to repeat too much of what the president already said in his report. He wants to mention that the Section of Archives and Archivists of Parliaments and Political Parties has displayed diverse activities during the last year (July 2005 – July 2006).

The most important event – not only in his eyes –, was the conference in Vitoria-Gasteiz, along with the annual meeting of the Plenary Assembly of the SPP. The Steering Committee in co-operation with the Spanish members of the section, in particular Mr. Jesus Sóbron and his staff, organised this conference at Vitoria-Gasteiz (Bask Country, Spain) in the beginning of October 2005. Theme and title of the conference – as everyone knows –: "From Archives to Information Management". The question to be addressed there was how to embed 'archives' in their capacity of 'information' into the broader context of the management of all sorts of information. Of course, "access", especially 'permanent' access, played an important role during this conference, which turned out to be very interesting and fruitful, and the same goes for the very worthwhile social and cultural program.

The results of the conference will be published, sometime (hopefully next year?), in the form of a digital and/or print document. Just as with regard to the minutes of the last meeting of the Plenary Assembly, this would depend on the precondition of having the transcripts of the proceedings available.

During the Vitoria conference, plans were developed to hold this Bonn conference in 2006. This conference, scheduled for November 2006, deals with problems and hopefully solutions and/or strategies in the sphere of "Website Archiving" / "Time Independent Access". The conference, organised by Michael Schneider and our other German friends under auspices of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, so far promises to be very worthwhile and fruitful, too. Another activity of the section has been the setting-up of a new SPP website with better technical and communicational functionalities like a weblog (alas not available yet) for the benefit of the members of the SPP.

The SPP website gives and/or will give attention to two main functions, an information function and a communication function.

The address of the SPP website is: <http://wad426ar.homepage.t-online.de/spp/index.html>.

The SPP webmaster is our esteemed member Claus Brüggmann (CB).

### 3) Questionnaire evaluation

GS observes that this issue has been dealt with in a way as sufficient as possible, for the time being, during his reporting under agenda item 1. If no one objects, we can go ahead with agenda item 4. The assembly agrees.

### 4) SPP draft regulations

GS reminds us that the original draft regulations were dealt with and rejected at the meeting of the Plenary Assembly at Vitoria-Gasteiz. A formal reason to reject them at that time was the lacking of a French version. Ms. France Bélisle (FB) in the meantime remedied this formal impediment to accepting the draft by translating the text into French (for which she is dearly thanked). Beyond that, the draft regulations have been amended by inserting provisions for establishing ‘working groups’ of parliamentary, party, and politicians’ archivists. GS expresses his hopes that these additional organisational structures would provide more flexibility for members with different professional backgrounds to work and co-operate within the section.

After this introduction GS asks the assembly to start the discussion on the new draft regulations. CB reads the paragraph regarding the setting up of ‘working groups’ aloud. He asks the assembly whether they agree with these additions. This turns out to be the case. Since there are no more requests for leave to speak, GS proposes now to vote on the new draft regulations. The text as it is now, is accepted by 15 attending members, no one is against, there is one abstention.

Renate Höpfinger (RH) expresses her scepticism regarding the potential of this new structure to satisfy those members of our section who prefer a more radical division, but on the other hand, she adds, it surely cannot harm either. GS stresses the flexibility this new organisational structure would provide for members preferring to work within the section with colleagues employed in a similar environment as themselves.

### 5) Working program 2006 / 2007

Marietta Minotos (MMi) plans to organise a SPP conference in the year 2007 at Corfu. Theme for the conference: ‘Parliamentary, party, and politicians’ archives and their neighbouring institutions’. With ‘neighbouring institutions’ we refer to other bodies dealing with information management, such as ‘libraries’, ‘documentation centres’, etc.

The 2007 SPP conference is to be organised by the Karamanlis Foundation in co-operation with the Ionian University which has its seat at Corfu. This university is the only Greek university harbouring an Archival Sciences department. The involvement of the university offers the possibility to invite students to participate in the conference and co-operate with us during the conference. In an earlier stage MMi offered to organise the conference in both Athens and Corfu, but it seems not practical to have a conference at two locations. It would be simply too expensive for a lot of SPP members, and for the students.

GS states that archives, libraries, documentary collections, etc. have a function or even a mission in common: meeting a universal need ‘to know’, the information needs of people: historians, researchers, journalists, and last but not least, citizens.

He sees 4 items to be addressed by this conference, in particular:

1. political, cultural, and educational responsibilities of archives, libraries, and documentation centres;
2. training requirements for archivists, librarians, and documentalists;

3. organisational issues (how to give form to co-operation between archives on the one hand, and libraries and documentation centres on the other?);
4. the legal environment (e.g., copyright and other intellectual ownership issues).

The keynote speakers to be invited will be chosen with regard to these four issues. The invitation for the conference, to be held at the end of October or the beginning of November 2007, will be sent to the members as early as possible, but at least 8 weeks in advance.

GS mentions plans to hold a later conference, to be organised in Lisbon, Portugal, in co-operation with the Mário Soares Foundation, on the subject of 'Archives and Democracy' or, to put it in a more programmatic way: 'Open Archives, Open Societies'.

These plans will become more specific after the next Steering Committee meeting, which will take place in Vienna in spring.

### **Publications**

The reason that so far there are no results in the field of publications has, among other things, to do with the lacking of transcriptions of the presentations and debates of the Vitoria-Gasteiz conference. Though the proceedings are available as audio files, so far it proved to be impossible to have them transcribed. Another problem is, of course, the difficulty of translating the available English texts into French. This doubles the problem. One way of dealing with this last problem could be to just produce abstracts.

The Bonn conference faces the same difficulties. Of course, one can always fall back on the electronic audio records and thus limit oneself to publishing and distributing the audio files of the proceedings; in this case, however, there will just be a limited audience.

There might be the possibility of publishing certain results in 'Comma'. In this case only short summaries are allowed.

## **6) Other issues / activities**

Within the new ICA funding framework, expenditure will be oriented at projects. What is a project? According to GS the ICA President, Mr. Lorenz Mikoletzky, has generally defined a project as anything that has an 'output', a 'result'. A publication, e.g., could be a 'result'. GS, therefore, invites the SPP members to think about possible projects, which would enable us to obtain funds for SPP activities.

A proposal the secretary (RvdH) brings forward has to do with the technological possibilities offered by 'voice recognition / interpretation', a technology resulting in an automatic transcription of audio(-visual) records. In the Netherlands many experiments in this field are taking shape. He promises to ask around at the two universities in the Netherlands (Delft and Twente) which are the most active in this regard.

GS adds that he has information about similar efforts in Estonia and Austria. If such a project could be made viable, it would be sensible to look for some partner or partners (other ICA bodies dealing with audiovisual records, private enterprises).

In case of preparing a project proposal, we also have to bear in mind the time schedule for submitting it. The preliminary questions are to be resolved, the project proposal is to be drafted and approved, and then submitted to the ICA Programme Commission.

Nassa Traoré Diallo (NT) has a proposal as well:

She is interested in exchanging ideas as to how we can involve the personnel of our respective institutions more actively in the endeavours of our section and of the ICA. She makes the point that it would be advisable to make sure the full benefit of our meetings and its important results will be shared with as many of our employees as possible. NT proposes to reflect on the idea of 'jumelage': 'twinning' institutions, similar to the way municipalities all over the world are doing and have been doing for some time now. By way of such constructions it

will, e.g., be easier to organise reciprocal visits, to organise internationally oriented trainings for employees, to exchange experiences, ideas and practices on an employee level, etc.

GS confirms that such ‘twinning’ or ‘institutional partnerships’ could be a fruitful concept for developing a more active and fruitful bilateral, perhaps even multilateral co-operation and interaction between members and member institutions of our section. He mentions the fact that yesterday, at the SC meeting, this subject was discussed positively as well. He agrees it is a serious idea, which is worth close attention. It would be useful to establish structures for personnel exchange. He sees the analogy with city and school partnerships. A regular structure could make it easier to obtain funding for mutual visits, etc.

RvdH also whole-heartedly stands behind this idea and proposal of NT. He will, together with NT, try to draft a more detailed proposal in this direction. NT and he will exchange drafts by e-mail.

Observation: a supplementary approach would be the establishment of a network for virtual exchange – without any doubt a cheaper alternative to personnel exchange, involving travelling in the real world..

The SC will try to offer a weblog facility to be used not only by SPP members, but accessible for co-workers of members in their respective institutions.

RvdH notes that in Austria a weblog facility having to do with archives and record keeping already exists: the URL is: <http://www.langzeitarchivierung.at>. Of course, regrettably but logically it is mostly in German . RvdH mentions a similar forum in his country, which has been established years ago: the DIVA-discussielijst via URL: <http://www.divakoepel.nl>. This one is in the exotic Dutch language, of course, even more regrettably and self-evidently so.

GS asks if there are any issues left for this plenary to address? Since this does not seem to be the case, he thanks all members present for their attendance and their contributions, and closes the meeting.

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