



Minutes

Steering Committee SPP/ICA, Meeting d.d. 25 April 2008;
Austrian Parliament (Vienna), committee room no. IV.

Participants: Günther Schefbeck (President), Marietta Minotos (Vice-President),
Claus Brüggmann, Włodzimierz Kucner, Mateo Maciá, Béla Pálmányi,
Michael Schneider, Reinhard Schreiner

Absentees: Reinder van der Heide (Secretary), France Bélisle

Minutes: Günther Schefbeck

0. Welcome

The President (Günther Schefbeck/GS) opens the Steering Committee meeting and welcomes the attending SC members.

Before entering on the agenda, he reports on the sudden and unexpected death of the former SC/SPP member and Clerk of the Records of the House of Lords, Mr. David Johnson. The obituary prepared by Stephen Ellison will be published on the SPP website, and a letter of condolence will be sent to Mr. Johnson's widow and sons.

Subsequently, GS gives a brief report on the Sections' Chairs' meeting as well as the EB/ICA meeting in Malmö that he has attended.

As regards a specific concern of our section, he has requested the SPP Regulations submitted to the secretariat before to be put on the agenda of the EB meeting for approval. However, he had to learn from the future Secretary General that the secretariat has not yet assessed the Regulations, i.e. checked them for their compliance with the ICA Constitution. That is why the future Secretary General publicly promised in the EB meeting to assess the SPP Regulations as soon as possible and then communicate them to the EB members, to make possible their approval through correspondence. Further, GS in his report focuses on the budgetary and organisational issues discussed in Malmö, as well as the information provided on the XVIth International Congress on Archives, and the current development of the ICA website presented there.

After the financial crisis of ICA was overcome in 2006, from 2007 on the ICA budget assigned to the ICA branches and sections funds for administrative and programme purposes, as in principle foreseen in the ICA Constitution. For 2007 and 2008 each, for the sections an amount of 25.000 € was set aside for administrative purposes, and an equal amount for programme activities. Thus, the sections at least achieved a minimum financial capacity. Having this in mind, it was even more surprising to see that the draft budget figures for 2009 just earmarked an amount of 5.000 € for the sections' administration and left the positions as to funds set aside for the sections' programme activities open. After lengthy discussions, no concrete figures for an amended draft budget to be submitted to the AGM in Kuala Lumpur were adopted, but it was envisaged to realistically take into account the administrative needs of the ICA's substructures within the budget figures. As to funding of programme activities, several models will be discussed, including the present model of assigning the respective funds to the sections, with the Sections' Chairs being responsible for deciding in their own right what projects were to be funded (in accordance with a list of criteria that currently is under preparation);

another possible model for the future would be to centralize decision-making on project-funding with the Programme Commission but extend membership of this Commission to the Sections' Chairs. The attempt by the ICA Secretary General, in preparing the draft budget, to cut down the financial capacity of the sections again, may be seen as an expression of the somewhat tidal attitudes taken towards the organisational substructures within the leading bodies of ICA, between aiming at a more centralized or a more decentralized organisational structure. In a realistic assessment of the sections' capacity of pushing programme activities within ICA, due to the structural circumstance that the sections, from their very composition, are focusing on topical issues, the ICA Constitution 2004 has strengthened the organisational position of the sections within ICA, e.g. by extending EB membership to the Sections' Chairs; meanwhile, the Sections' Chairs' meetings in association with the EB meetings are about to become an organisational structure of its own, thus allowing the sections to coordinate their positions to be taken in the EB. Since indeed within the framework of the EB, as well, the sections proved to be most active, some concern about their increasing role may have arisen. An attempt to transfer the executive functions of the EB to MCOM, thus making the EB to sort of a Board of Control, however, was rejected when in Québec in November 2007 the ICA Constitution was amended. Nonetheless, in the course of the Malmö meeting a (non-)paper appeared that was aiming at achieving just the same goal by introducing something called "terms of reference". After heavy disapproval, this (non-)paper, on suggestion by the future Secretary General, was dropped very soon. The same happened to a document proposing to entrust Mr. George Mackenzie, chair of the ICA Constitutional Committee, with the task of assessing the eligibility of candidates for functions in ICA bodies and substructures.

After two years of discussion, the concept of developing a strategic plan for ICA has been re-dimensioned to the idea of issuing a "strategic direction" that would not contain concrete objectives binding the ICA officials but more or less be a mission statement accompanied by some reference to aims, activities, and general evaluation guidelines. Whereas this "strategic direction" shall be written within a ten years' horizon but currently be updated, it is still envisaged to introduce a concrete two-year business plan that is to have a binding character.

Within everyday business, a tool of utmost importance to any organisation today is its website. The ICA website undergoing a "relaunch" process for more than one year now, the future perspectives for it were made a subject of discussion in Malmö, as well. The Secretary General presented to the Sections' Chairs a prototype of how the upload function to be made available to the ICA substructures would work. Indeed, this function should make it possible for the responsible officers, e.g. the "webmasters" of the substructures, to upload files within three categories, "News", "Events", and "Documents"; a filtering function then will produce subsets of contents associated with a particular substructure. These functionalities shall be available by July 2008, and the responsible officers will be made acquainted to them within the framework of a workshop in the course of the Congress in Kuala Lumpur. Other functionalities originally envisaged, in particular interactive functionalities, will not yet be available; the schedule for making them available will be determined after the Congress only. For our section, this would in practice mean that we will have to maintain our own website, in addition to having particular kinds of documents hosted on the ICA website, for some time.

The overall programme for the XVIth International Congress on Archives has not yet been fixed. This will be done in May, as announced by the Secretary General. That is why the date and location for the workshop on website-archiving to be organised by our section is not yet known, as well. In the course of the Malmö meeting, some surprising discussion was to be conducted on the question whether at the Congress a session on "Archives and Human Rights" was to be held, and whether an event on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to be held in Mexico in December 2008 should be sponsored by ICA. For the Congress, currently the number of registrations is yet comparably small; the Senior Vice-President of ICA, Mr. Sidek Jamil, as the representative of the host, announced his readiness to send invitation letters to all member down to category C, and to others on request, in order to make it easier for some members to get permission to attend the Congress.

1. Contributions of SPP to the XVIth International Congress on Archives

GS: The main event within the working programme of the ICA in general as well as the SPP in particular in the year 2008 will be the XVIth International Congress on Archives from 21 to 27 July 2008. Our section, as agreed in Corfu, has proposed a workshop on the subject of "Archiving websites – a new challenge to archives" to be organized within the framework of the Congress, in order to share one of the most important issues dealt with by the section in the past years with the archival

community at large. The World Wide Web, in the past decade, has become the most important platform for making information available; this platform, however, today is lacking sustainability, so that information influencing, e.g., political decisions or any kind of public opinion-making often would no longer be retrievable after short periods of time. Keeping track of contemporary decision-making and opinion-making processes would therefore be nearly impossible for future historians, if websites were not archivally recorded. Archiving websites has to take into account all changes in content and structure they are undergoing, the variety of file types embedded, and the inter-connectedness of websites.

Basing upon the results of a working group of German parliamentary and party archives, which within the framework of a project carried out in the years 2004-2006 succeeded in finding a common approach for the recording or "mirroring" of websites, the SPP/ICA has dealt with the issue in its conference held in Bonn in 2006. Sharing the results of this conference with archivists from other ICA bodies and giving them practical advice on how to develop strategies for archiving websites will be the subject of the workshop to take place in Kuala Lumpur. Even though the whole workflow of website-archiving will be addressed, the workshop will focus on the specific problems of data transfer (mirroring) and on the different ways of indexing (index, description, metadata).

This proposal has been accepted by the Congress Programme Committee and found much interest with other ICA substructures, in particular with SAE and SIO. SIO, indeed, has started a standardisation effort in the mentioned field and asked for a representative of this project to be included in the list of contributors of the workshop; this request finds the unanimous approval by the Committee. In the light of the reactions experienced, our workshop is likely to be the starting point for future activities and co-operation in the field of developing a standard solution for archiving websites. In order to provide the participants of the workshop with something to carry with them, it is discussed under what circumstances the envisaged publication of the proceedings of our Bonn conference would be available in time for being presented at the workshop. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation having a well-equipped infrastructure for producing publications, according to the experiences presented by Michael Schneider (MS) it would be sufficient to have the manuscript ready by mid-June. Mr. Rudolf Schmitz therefore will approach the contributors having not yet submitted their papers to do so by end of May. Those parts of the proceedings that will not be submitted in writing by the contributors will be transcribed from the audio records within a joint effort by the co-editors. In addition to the print publication, the proceedings will also be published electronically on the SPP website.

2. Preparations for the next meeting of the SPP Plenary Assembly

Besides preparing a substantial contribution to the programme of the Kuala Lumpur Congress, SPP will also have to prepare the annual meeting of its Plenary Assembly that is to take place in association with the International Congress on Archives and will in particular serve the two purposes of striking the balance of the term 2004-2008, and of electing the Steering Committee of the section for the term 2008-2012.

GS, together with the Secretary, has prepared a brief quadrennial report on the section's activities in the past term, which he will send to the ICA secretariat for being published. The quadrennial report will also be put on the SPP website, as a working document, and presented to the SPP members attending the meeting of the Plenary Assembly on 21 July 2008. The quadrennial report is attached to these minutes.

In order to thoroughly prepare the election of the new Steering Committee, in compliance with the decision made by the SC in Corfu, GS in February 2008 has sent out to the SPP members a form enumerating the positions to be filled in and describing them in accordance with the provisions of the SPP Regulations and with the practical experience of how much time it would take to perform the tasks associated with these functions. By sending out this form, the SPP members were invited to declare their readiness to stand for election to one of the positions in question. Until expiration of the deadline set, however, the return flow was quite disappointing. That is why the SC has to try to develop a balanced solution for the composition of the future Steering Committee, and some members to be invited to join the Committee but not present at the meeting have to be contacted to seek their consent to standing for membership of the Committee. This process has anyway to be finished in due time, so that the list of candidates drawn up by the SC can be distributed eight weeks before the meeting of the Plenary Assembly along with the meeting's provisional agenda.

The discussion in the SC results in the following proposal: Since the composition of the SPP Steering Committee has to be balanced with regard to both the structural and the regional distribution of SPP

membership, it has to include representatives of the main structural groups of members of the section, namely parliamentary, political party, and politicians' archives, as well as representatives of the main regions, which may be defined as Southern Europe, Central Europe, Northern and Western Europe, Central-Eastern and Eastern Europe, and the extra-European countries, the latter of course forming the least cohesive regional group of members.

Since the SC has lost two of its members from Southern Europe in the course of the past term, effort is to be taken to re-increase membership from this region. Firstly, Mr. Alfredo Caldeira will be approached, which is also to be seen in connection with the intention of holding our 2009 conference in Lisbon; it always has proved useful to have the representative of the host of a conference in the Committee, thus making communication in the preparatory phase easier. Another option would be to approach the successor of our former member, Mr. Vincenzo Arista, as the head of the archives of the Camera dei Deputati, or the head of the archives of the Senato della Repubblica, Ms. Emilia Campochiaro. Our distinguished SC member from Spain, Mateo Maciá, has not yet decided whether he will stand for another term on the Committee; if his decision, in connection with his new professional function, was in the negative, we would follow his recommendation on who to invite instead of him, probably his successor in his former function as archivist of the Congreso de los Diputados.

SC membership from Central Europe will undergo only one change: Instead of Michael Schneider, who will retire in the near future, Mr. Harry Scholz, who has already contributed to our conferences in Bonn and Corfu, will enter the Committee.

SC membership from Northern and Western Europe has diminished already a few years ago. That is why we will encourage the candidature of a new representative from this region, firstly inviting Ms. Hanne Rasmussen, who is one of the most experienced and active members of our section.

SC membership from Central-Eastern and Eastern Europe will suffer a loss with the retirement of Béla Pálmány. Therefore, and because we are intending to increase SPP membership in this promising region in general, we will invite one of the more experienced members from the region to join the Committee. Our first choice for this invitation is Ms. Vida Kisuniene, who has shown much interest in our programme activities in the past years.

Currently, we have one SC member from outside Europe, namely France Bélisle representing North America. We have lost our SC member from Latin America but are aware that for the time being it generally seems to be difficult to more intensively involve members from Latin America in our activities. Africa, on the other hand, seems to be a promising region to extend our activities to, in connection with our 2010 conference in Dakar. That is why our friend from Senegal, Mr. Khayrou Cissé, will stand for Committee membership. With regard to Asia, the situation is quite similar as with regard to Latin America: Though we have some members there, involvement in the programme activities is capable of development; we will try to use the Kuala Lumpur Congress to intensify contacts with Asian SPP members or even win some new members from the region.

Thus, the future regional composition of the Steering Committee will, of course, further represent the yet quite Eurocentric regional composition of SPP, but nonetheless signalize the interest of more actively involving our extra-European members in our programme activities.

As to its structural composition, the Steering Committee will further be marked by a significant majority of the representatives of the parliamentary archives, followed by the representatives of political party archives, with the representatives of politicians' archives in the last place. This anyway seems to be quite a balanced composition, with regard to the SPP membership structure.

As regards the positions to be filled within the Steering Committee, the position of SPP President for the past eight years has been occupied by representatives of parliamentary archives, so that it might be an important signal and an expression of our intention to keep the balance between the different structural groups within SPP if for the term to come a representative of the political party and politicians' archives would stand for this position. Moreover, it seems to be quite a logical development if the current Vice-President, who has shown her outstanding energy in preparing the Corfu conference in 2007, would succeed in the office of President. That is why our Vice-President, Marietta Minotos, will stand for SPP President for the term to come.

The positions of the two Vice-Presidents, in accordance with the new SPP Regulations as adopted by the Plenary Assembly in Corfu, will no longer be just deputies of the President but have functions of their own, by having to coordinate the activities of the Standing Working Groups of parliamentary archives, and political party and politicians' archives, resp., integrating their activities in the overall programme of SPP. That is why it seems to be advisable to entrust experienced SC members with the positions of Vice-Presidents. Thus, the current President, Günther Schefbeck, declares himself ready

to stand for the position of Vice-President for parliamentary archives, and the former Vice-President, Reinhard Schreiner, declares his readiness to stand for the position of Vice-President for political party and politicians' archives.

The current Secretary, Reinder van der Heide, though unable to attend the meeting due to illness, has already before the meeting declared himself willing to stand for a second term in the position of Secretary.

As to the new position of Treasurer created by the amended SPP Regulations, Mr. Harry Scholz, when contacted over the phone, expresses his readiness to be the candidate.

The other new position created by the amended Regulations, that of the Auditor, for reasons of incompatibility will organisationally be located outside the Committee. Mr. Wouter Steenhout will be invited to stand for this position.

Since his readiness, as well as that of several other potential candidates to be invited, has not yet been confirmed, drawing up the complete and definitive list of candidates will yet take some weeks. The deadline anyway will be 26 May 2008, i.e. eight weeks prior to the meeting of the Plenary Assembly.

The candidates are urgently invited to attend the Kuala Lumpur meeting in order to give the SPP members present the opportunity to discuss with them their options and preferences for the upcoming term. However, in all probability there will be some candidates unable to go there, so that they will have to be given another kind of opportunity to present their reasons for standing for SC membership, their visions for SPP, and their options and preferences for the professional programme to be performed, either in writing or in the form of an audiovisual message. Their messages will be posted on the SPP website, and brought to the attention of the SPP members present at the meeting of the Plenary Assembly.

Voting in the meeting of the Plenary Assembly will be in person only, in accordance with section 6 paras. 1 and 2 of the SPP Regulations, and the practice so far. Other possible voting procedures currently seem to be too unsure, as was already stated in the 2004 electoral meeting of the Plenary Assembly.

However, GS uses the opportunity to inform the SC about his initiative to introduce a secure e-voting software for elections within ICA, which so far though has not been taken up by the ICA secretariat and governing bodies but might be a solution for the future.

3. Proposals for future programme activities

Though the working programme for the term 2008-2012, of course, will have to be discussed and adopted in Kuala Lumpur only, GS gives a preliminary report on the talks he has already had in and since Corfu, thereby focusing on the plans for organising conferences as the main events within the professional programme of the section.

These events would, on the one hand, be the appropriate fora for bringing some continuity into the professional programme, by proceeding from substantial achievements already made, going further into issues already dealt with, and resuming subjects lost touch with for some time, and, on the other hand, for extending the section's activities to new fields, both topically and geographically.

Geographically, therefore, it is intended to hold the three conferences – in the years in between the International Congresses – in three different regions, in two cases re-intensifying contacts, namely with the regions of Southern Europe and Central-Eastern Europe, in one case establishing new contacts by for the first time organising an SPP conference outside Europe, namely in Africa.

Topically, two of the conferences are suggested to deal with the more fundamental issues that parliamentary, political party, and politicians' archives are facing within their democratic political environments, whereas the third one will deepen treating the new technological challenges our institutions are confronted with.

Following a concept developed by Mr. Alfredo Caldeira and conveyed to us by our current Vice-President, Marietta Minotos (MMi), we are considering to hold our 2009 conference in Lisbon at the Mario Soares Foundation on the subject of "Archives and Democracy". This generally formulated subject would remind us of the very foundations on which parliamentary, political party, and politicians' archives have come together in our section, namely democratic decision-making processes as documented in and supported by our institutions. One particular focus of the conference could be on the role our institutions have to play even in promoting democracy and making democracy better understood.

Whereas the 2009 conference has not yet been fixed, there is, thanks to the preparatory efforts by Mr. Khayrou Cissé, already a concrete invitation by the host of our 2010 conference, i.e. the National Assembly of Senegal in Dakar. The subject of the conference would be "Modernization and sustainability. Law-making support in the 21st century". The conference should connect the current efforts to modernize the law-making process in the African Parliaments with the archival needs for sustainability. Thus, we would have to include in the conference programme projects like Akoma Ntoso and Bungeni, which are supported by UNDESA; in these projects we can already observe some very useful approaches with regard to long-term accessibility of parliamentary business, such as developing open XML standards for legislative and legal documents, or establishing naming conventions for these documents, or defining standard sets of metadata. A conference like ours could therefore be an appropriate forum for bringing the legal experts and IT experts working in the field of supporting the parliamentary process together with archivists and documentalists having the task to sustainably ensure the accessibility of the parliamentary proceedings and outcomes. The conference in Dakar, which is likely to take place in the time period of October/November 2010, would therefore be sort of a follow-up of our 2005 conference "From Archives to Information Management" held in Vitoria-Gasteiz, deepening and concretizing the subject.

For the year 2011, it is envisaged to hold a conference in Central-Eastern Europe, thereby re-establishing contacts that for the first time very successfully have been established in the mid-1990s but then somewhat lost sight of. Reinhard Schreiner (RS) promises to make available again the network of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the region in question, to reach an audience as broad as possible. A possible host could be a national Parliament in the region, such as the Lithuanian one, which then by Ms. Vida Kisuniene might be represented in the SC. It would stand to reason to choose, for this conference, a subject reflecting the problems to be tackled in "Democracies in Transition", such as the issue of the positioning of political parties' archives after the role of political parties having thus fundamentally changed with the development from "one-party-regimes" into competing party systems. The conference would therefore also concretize some of the issues to be dealt with in the course of a general conference on "Archives and Democracy". Furthermore, the conference would offer an opportunity to evaluate the developments occurred since the mid-1990s conferences mentioned above.

The basic concept as presented finds the unanimous consent of the present SC and will be further dealt with in Kuala Lumpur by the SC to be elected.

4. Directory of Parliamentary/party/politicians' archives

Following the procedure envisaged in the last SC meeting in Corfu, GS has addressed the questionnaire, which is to collect data for the directory that we are aiming at, to European national Parliaments through the network of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD). Other systematic steps have not yet been taken, but the SC members again agree on using their personal and institutional networks to send the questionnaire to as many archives as possible and try to trigger a snowball effect by asking their work partners to forward the questionnaire to similar institution known by them. This way a collection of information on parliamentary archives as well as political party and politicians archives should be obtainable that would at least form the basis for a directory of the intended kind. Béla Pálmány (BP) again reports on his unsuccessful efforts to make use of the IPU website to reach national Parliaments on a global level; he has re-checked the resources available, but the situation has not improved. According to the experiences made so far, it might take the whole next term to obtain a sufficient data collection within a global range, in particular since there will not be enough funds available to entrust the research to someone on an employment basis. However, on a proposal by Claus Brüggmann (CB) it is envisaged to establish an Ad-hoc Working Group to deal with the issue in the next term.

The question how to present the collected information is yet to be dealt with, as well. The basic requirement for a flexible form of presentation would be to enter the information available in a simple sort of database, such as an Access database from which different presentation media could be fed. The basic form for presentation will be an online directory to be published on the SPP website which then would be currently updated. According to the statement by CB as our webmaster, however, it would not be possible to prepare a preliminary presentation on our website before the Kuala Lumpur Congress. Another form of presentation discussed is a CD-ROM or DVD that could be produced at reasonable cost; producing a data carrier or even a print publication, however, would only be advisable after the systematic collection of data has been completed.

5. SPP website

CB as our webmaster reports on his efforts to obtain the domain www.spp-ica.org from the owner, which seems to be sort of a fake enterprise. So far, this enterprise has not replied to his respective request made in February. It might therefore be useful to directly turn to ICANN or to an authorized domain management agency to make them aware of the issue and ask them for help or intervention. Further, CB again asks for documents to be submitted to him for publication on the website. He already has received the PPT presentations of our Corfu conference and will put them on the website as soon as possible.

GS refers to the concept of offering the SPP members interactive functionalities enabling them to exchange experiences on professional issues of common interest, in a more continuous way than this would be possible within the framework of events like conferences. There are, of course, different technical options; since the weblog option still seems to be one of the most reasonable ones, he will provide the webmaster with some information on weblog hosts currently recommendable.

On a proposal by CB, it is envisaged for the upcoming term to issue an electronic SPP newsletter that is, on a regular basis, to replace the letters to the members sent by the President in the past at irregular intervals. Besides current information by the President, this newsletter could also contain contributions by the members; it could, e.g., be a forum for new members to present themselves to the community.

6. Financial issues

GS, standing in for the Secretary in his function as provisional Treasurer, gives a brief report on the financial situation. There are some financial reserves that would enable us to make some minor investments, e.g. into an improved website and new interactive facilities. However, he again refers to the somewhat unclear future of the sectional budgets and the circumstance that it might be required to fight for ensuring the sectional budgets for 2009 in Kuala Lumpur.

7. Other issues

The SC discusses a proposal made by Mr. Jacques Schouller to once again rework the French version of the SPP Regulations. Since the Regulations are just under assessment and waiting for approval by the EB, submitting a new version now could lead to some irritation and slow down the process of approval. Thus, the SC unanimously decides not to take up the issue for the time being but deal with it again in case another amendment of the Regulations would be required in the future.

8. Closing

The President thanks the attending members for their contributions, and in particular those members that would not have the opportunity to go to Kuala Lumpur for their good co-operation in the past four years that created such a pleasant working atmosphere in the SC, and finally closes the meeting.

The meeting is followed by a guided tour of the Austrian Parliamentary Archives.