

Minutes of EASST General Meeting, Trento Sept 2010

The meeting opened with coffee and pastries in the sunshine!

Present: Fred Steward (President – in the chair), Harro van Lente (Secretary), Erika Mansnerus (Treasurer), Sonia Liff (EASST Office), Marc Audetat, Estrid Sørensen, Ann Rudinow Sætnan, Claire Waterton (all EASST Council Members)

R. McNally, Athena Piterou, Franc Mali, Karen Kastenhofer, Ingmar Lippert, Alain Kaufmann, Arie Rip, Radhika Gorur, Sonja Weber, Lucy Suchman, Lana Thompson, Axel Kittenberger, Michael Ornetzeder, Renata Brandimarte, Claudia Muhl, Vivien Lloveria, Yukie Nagai, Michael Soegaard Joergensen, Erich Griessler, Illeka Aruninen, Isabella Wagner, Norman Schraepel, Sigrid Schmitz, Raoni Rajão, Maureen McNeil, Christine Hine, Jenny Palm, Inge Røpke, Sarah Ward, Ulrik Jorgensen, Ralf Brand, Johanne Mose Entwistle, Jeannette Pols, Yutaka Yoshinaka, Susan M Hodgson, Jane Calvert, Dana Abi-Ghanem, Galit Wellner, Karin Wenz, Inga Ulnicane, Les Levidow, Victoria van der Land, Marina Topouzi, Nicholas J Rowland, Joachim Boltz, Andreas Klaura, Gerald Beck, Lara Houston, Poul B Olsen, Paolo Landri, Enrico Maria Piras, Attila Bruni, Claudio Coletta, Michael Krause, Sofia Alexia Papazafeiropoulou, Francesca Musiani, Ether Turnhout.

1. Introduction to President, Secretary, Treasurer, Administrator and purpose of the meeting

2. Minutes from the Previous Meeting (Rotterdam 2008)

Fred Steward highlighted some items on the previous minutes particularly those relating to the conference arrangements. Concluded that the Trento team had addressed these splendidly!

Minutes accepted

3. Report on Council Activities 2009 & 2010

Fred Steward reported on the Council's activities over the past 2 years including:

- Financial support to 3 workshops in 2009 which brought together a diversity of participants. Reports in EASST Review.
- Working with STS Italia to plan for our 2010 conference in Trento in September.
- EASST has given financial support to the PhD pre-conference workshop.
- Financial support for participation at the conference of some of those from under-represented countries
- Joint meeting between Council and representatives from 11 national STS organisations and centres across Western Europe. Report in EASST Review. Hope to build on this to grow membership and cooperation
- Production of EASST Review
- Ongoing discussions about make-up of EASST members and conference attendees
- Informing our discussions about membership costs, benefits, and forms of communication

Ann Rudinow Sætnan (Review Editor) spoke about the changes to production / distribution process. The last edition went out by email. Had people received it? Yes. This approach has a range of advantages and the Council wants to continue with it. It saves money but also allow the Review to be better including color, more pages, more timely, future innovations – perhaps video. She reported that she generally had little feedback on the copy (although the memoria had generated some positive response). She had tried to initiate a linked online discussion forum but the main response had been the attempt of 200 online bots to sign up. This proved very time consuming to manage and in the absence of genuine discussion had been discontinued.

Fred urged members to consider contributing to the Review for example by sharing their experiences about threats and opportunities in their institutions / countries and to report on conferences or workshops attended.

4. Membership Report

Sonia Liff reported on membership of EASST

- 912 members at mid-August 2010, 513 in 2009.
- The majority of members in 2010 are new (c. 70%). Renewal rate from 2009 – 56%.
- Around 30% of current members are students
- The vast majority of members are based in Europe. Of these most come from Western Europe but with significant membership from North and South Europe. East European membership is disappointingly low.

Questions

- Is it still possible to pay for multi-year membership? Yes but has to be done by direct transfer. Looking at whether it is possible to make this available online.
- Do we have any sense of the potential membership? SL we can get some idea via the membership of national associations. Many of these are considerably larger than the EASST membership for that country. FS we know that 4,500 separate individuals have participated in EASST conferences over the years.

5. Financial Report

Erika Mansnerus reported on EASST's finances.

- The main sources of income are membership fees and conference surpluses
- EASST Council members are volunteers, communicate primarily by email.
- Main spending: Workshop funding; Travel grants; Website; EASST Review; Administration
- Healthy budget: operating on the basis of available assets

Showed 2 year budget for 2009 & 2010. Aimed at £60K, spending in line with this with some savings on Review.

Erika has reached the end of her term on the Council and EASST will need a new treasurer from existing or new Council members. She will support the transfer of responsibilities.

No questions.

6. Amendments to Constitution

Fred Steward introduced this item and detailed suggestions. The changes are not ones of principle but are intended to formally record in the constitution decisions that have been made by the Council and General Meetings over the years in the way we currently work. Main issues are that all members have the same rights (regardless of whether or not they reside in Europe) and the use of online (rather than postal ballots).

Detailed proposals were presented and accepted unanimously. An amended constitution will be available on the EASST website.

7. Feedback on EASST010

Fred Steward thanked Attila Bruni and STS Italia colleagues for organizing a successful and enjoyable conference.

He asked everyone to let EASST have any feedback on the conferences and lessons that can be learned for future conferences. These can be sent by email.

8. Hosting EASST 2014 Conference

EASST will shortly putting out a call for a group to organize the 2014 (EASST only) Conference.

9. Council Vacancies

- EASST Council meets once or twice a year to discuss EASST business and communicates on-line between meetings. They are responsible for the overall management and direction of EASST
- 2 council members have reached the end of their 4 year term
- Student member has reached end of 2 year term and wishes to retire
- Looking for nominations ...
- Will arrange an on-line ballot by members within 3 months in line with the Constitution

Question about whether the 2 year term for Student Council rep should be in the Constitution. FS felt that it was better to leave this open to reflect the circumstances of the particular representative.

10. Arrangements for the 2012 Jt Conference with 4S

The conference will be hosted by Copenhagen Business School in October 2012. There will be SHOT conference at the same location 11-13th October and the 4S/EASST conference is likely to be around 15-17th October

There was concern from the floor about conference dates. Is it possible to have some discussion about this before it gets finalized? Very difficult for people to participate if it occurs at the beginning of academic years.

Discussion revealed a number of issues:

- Considerable difference in academic terms across Europe. Current timing very difficult for Northern European participants
- August is not acceptable for most Southern European participants.

- Christine Hine (past president) reported that the option to specify the timing is rarely possible. EASST is very grateful when an institution agrees to host a conference and has to follow their preferences / availability over timing.

Agreed it would be useful to at least gather better information about appropriate timing for the conferences from different national groups so that this can at least be considered where there is some flexibility.

11. Analysis of EASST Conference Participation and Implications for EASST Strategy

Fred Steward introduced an analysis of participation in EASST and joint EASST / 4S Conferences which he had undertaken with Athena Piterou. This is work in progress and will continue to be discussed in Council and with members as a guide to the future direction of EASST. Points identified included:

- The number of individuals continues to increase showing a sustained growing interest in the field. Implications: this is a great opportunity but we need to make it a priority to consolidate to stabilise EASST for the long term.
- The number of Institutions represented at conferences is more uneven. Implications: EASST needs to make sure that it caters for 'isolates' as well as those from the established centres.
- EASST participation remains distinctively European which represents all parts of Europe although with strong representation from the West. Implications: In order to express the breadth of the new Europe more effectively, EASST needs to pursue serious initiatives in the East & South.
- Only a small proportion of conference participants go to more than 1 conference. Some conferences in diverse locations have been successful in attracting different participants but this is not sustained. Implications: relying on conference registration as the main membership route for EASST does not support a long term strategy of European diversification. It is also likely to result in weaker long term identification with EASST by any participant. EASST must move toward a robust annual membership system and offer a clearer range of services in addition to a biennial conference. Location of a conference outside Western Europe facilitates but does not guarantee the participation of a wider range of countries. EASST needs to ensure that hosting in such locations builds such diversity effectively.
- There is a growing number of 'big centres' with significant numbers of conference participants. Implications: EASST's implicit role as a network of centres as well as of individual participants needs to receive more explicit attention. The promotion of a new institutional membership scheme is proposed as the best way to achieve this.
- In terms of the subject area of the institutions from which participants' come, *Science & Technology Studies* and *Sociology* have remained leading academic fields of the participant centres/departments; *Humanities* and *Philosophy* remain important but their rankings have declined; *Business & Management* and *Innovation Studies* became more prominent in the decade 1994-2000 and then flattened in the subsequent decade 2002-8; *Health* and *Environment* both show a

continued & significant rise in the rankings to the positions of 2 & 4 in the recent decade (2002-2008). Implications: The institutional landscape of EASST's field has changed over the past 3 decades. While the primary orientation has remained sociological and STS in nature, there are two shifts of importance: 1. The emergence of business/management & innovation studies 2. The new focus on social challenges in key areas of health & environment. EASST should ensure that its identity adapts to reflect this – otherwise there is a risk that these participants look elsewhere for representation. Should we indicate the breadth of the field more effectively?

Discussion following from this presentation:

- Concern from member (Vienna) that the Institutional Membership suggestion would strengthen the strong and weaken the weak. Fred clarified that this is not intended to replace individual membership.
- Arie Rip raised note of caution about institutional membership. Many institutions, even large ones will be reluctant to put money into this. Emphasize the open character.
- Maureen McNeil Lancaster: Said that 'STS mixtures' initiative in Lancaster had used web-based and video conferencing forms of communication to promote interaction across an international community. Easy to use. Fred responds that we do want to develop more space for collaboration (in the website).
- Alain Kauffman: proposal for working groups, as a way to offer members more benefit. These could be along the lines of the tracks at Trento conference but continue to operate between conferences. Currently level between membership and council is missing. This would offer a platform for links between members.
- Estrid Sørensen: the findings show where the funds are, should we reflect/ support that development? When we serve the periphery of the business/management it might be OK. Fred reports that the analysis is developing to include what people are working on (rather than the subject designation of the institution they come from).
- Les Levidow: there has been an institutional rebranding, units calling themselves business, innovation etc. Maybe not entirely new. The tracks and workshops is a good way, not more is needed.
- Ulrik Jørgensen: taxation is very high, which would not be the case in Denmark, Netherlands.

Maureen McNeil thanked the Council for its work over the past 2 years.