

EUROPEAN UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the European Assembly of the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ) held electronically via Zoom on **Sunday 6 September 2020** at 17H00 BST.

Present: EUPJ Chair Sonja Guentner and the other Honorary Officers and representatives of various Constituent Members and Associate Members of EUPJ, as well as invitees as follows: Jai Anguita (Comunidad Judia Progresista Bet Shalom de Barcelona) Spain, Rabbi Charley Baginsky (Liberal Judaism) UK, Stéphane Beder (Assemblée du Judaïsme Libéral) France, Leslie Bergman (EUPJ) UK, David Bernstein (Platform of Liberal Jews Switzerland) Switzerland, Joyce Bigio (Federazione Italiana Ebraismo Progressivo) Italy, Arthur Buchman (Shir Hatzafon) Denmark, John Clark (Or Chadash, Vienna) Austria, Ros Clayton (Liberal Judaism) UK, Yael Cobano (Comunidad Judia Reformista de Madrid) Spain, Franca Coen (Federazione Italiana Ebraismo Progressivo) Italy, John Cohen (EUPJ) UK, Bill Echikson (EUPJ Brussel's Office) Belgium, Ben Fantini, (Federazione Italiana Ebraismo Progressivo) Italy, Anton Fishman (Leo Baeck College) UK, Sergio Fraile (Comunidad Judía de Valencia Bnei Sefarad) Spain, Deborah Grabiner (EUPJ Office) UK, Rabbi Alexander Grodensky (Liberal Jewish Community Luxembourg Esch/Alzette) Luxembourg, Tamás Gróf (Sim Shalom Congregation) Hungary, Marek Jezowski (Beit Polska) Poland, Marc Konczaty (Assemblée du Judaïsme Libéral) France, Miriam Kramer (EUPJ) UK, Deborah Malamud (Comunidad Judia Progresista Bet Shalom de Barcelona) Spain, Geoffrey Marx (Reform Judaism) UK, Celia Naval (Assemblée du Judaïsme Libéral) France, Sven Parsser (Nederlands Verbond voor Progressief Jodendom) Netherlands, Rabbi René Pfertzel (EUPJ Rabbinic Assembly) UK, David Pollak (EUPJ) UK, Maria Prieto (Comunidad Judia Progresista Bet Shalom de Barcelona) Spain, Michael Reik (EUPJ) UK, Rabbi Danny Rich (Liberal Judaism) UK, Deborah Rios Rey (Comunidad Judía Bet Januká de Andalucía) Spain, Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich (Liberal Judaism) UK, Gordon Smith (EUPJ) UK, Carole Sterling (WUPJ) Canada, Rabbi Jackie Tabick (European Beit Din) UK, David Tilles (Or Hadasz Progressive Jewish Community of Krakow) Poland, Rabbi Edward van Voolen (Abraham Geiger Kolleg) Germany, Jesse Weil (Sim Shalom Congregation) Hungary, Robert Weiner (EUPJ) UK, David Weis (Liberal Jewish Community Luxembourg Esch/Alzette) Luxembourg, Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz (Ec Chaim Synagogue Warsaw) Poland and Jonathan Wootliff (EUPJ) Czech Republic.

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair advised that a quorum was present and welcomed everyone to the 2020 European Assembly Meeting, saying it was the first and hopefully last Assembly meeting to be held entirely online. The Chair mentioned that the meeting was being recorded for minute purposes and that the recording would be deleted as soon as the minutes were prepared. The Chair reported apologies had been received from Ruth Cohen (Honorary Life President), as well as from Rabbi Sergio Bergman, Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Rabbi Andrew Goldstein and Peter Jossi.

The Chair then introduced EUPJ President, Gordon Smith, who made the opening prayer. The Chair also introduced John Cohen (EUPJ Vice-Chair Governance) who explained the system of voting to be implemented for resolutions using the Zoom Polling System, with the kind assistance of Adam Martin of Alyth Synagogue.

2. Approval of Minutes of the 2019 European Assembly Meeting held in Rome

The Chair advised that the minutes of the European Assembly Meeting held in Rome on 19 May 2019 were included in the EUPJ Annual Report for 2019 ("the 2019 Report") which had been made available on the EUPJ website before the meeting. In response to her request, the Chair had not received any comments or suggestions for changes

to the Minutes, which were duly accepted as a correct record of the meeting and were then signed by the Chair, the resolution to approve them having been proposed by Jesse Weil and seconded by Miriam Kramer.

3. Welcome by WUPJ Chair

The Chair introduced Carole Sterling (CS), the chair of the WUPJ, and welcomed her to her fourth EUPJ European Assembly Meeting and thanked her for all her support. CS, on behalf of herself and Rabbi Bergman, thanked the Chair for her leadership and commitment and expressed greetings to the European communities from the WUPJ leadership. CS highlighted the WUPJ activities over the year and the impact of the Covid pandemic on the activities of our communities worldwide. CS advised that the Connections 2020 conference had been postponed to May 2021, and would be mainly an online conference but would operate in different time zones to accommodate all communities. CS reminded members of the education and leadership training opportunities offered by the Saltz, Beutel and Bergman seminars, which are available online.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair referred the meeting to the Chair's Report included in the 2019 Report, which was read and noted. The Chair added the following items – (a) EUPJ was reacting to the new challenges arising from the Covid pandemic and had offered assistance to communities requiring upgrades to their communications infrastructure and technology. EUPJ would not be holding any in-person meetings during 2020 and would be using Zoom and other electronic formats for meeting and seminars. (b) The Newsfeed on the website now includes all EUPJ events as does the Facebook page and the Chair invited members and their representatives to get involved with the communications team by contacting her. (c) Once again the Chair invited members to contact her and the EUPJ team with any questions or concerns regarding EUPJ and its activities.

5. Annual Accounts for 2019

The Chair introduced the Vice-Chair Finance/Treasurer, David Pollak (DP), who referred to the Accounts, Independent Examiner's Report and his own Treasurer's Report included in the 2019 Report, which he summarised for the meeting with detailed slides. DP supplemented his report with the following – (a) The Accounts reflected a surplus of £3 114, compared with a deficit of £5 438 for the 2018 year. Income had benefitted from donations made in recognition of EUPJ Life President, Leslie Bergman, together with his brother Stanley, who were honoured at the WUPJ IHAD dinner. (b) The reduction in Admin Costs was due to the suspension of the newsletter and a reduction in website development. (c) The accounts showed a reduction in expenditure for the Brussels Office, which would in time become self-funding on the receipt of grants. (d) DP gave special thanks to Betty and Arthur Roswell for providing the funds to support so many activities in certain EUPJ countries, now expanded to include Italy and Spain. He pointed out that applications for funding for permitted projects should be submitted via him. He also advised that many of those who had paid their registration fee for the cancelled 2020 biennial conference had donated these to the Next Generation Leadership Fund, and he thanked them for their generosity.

DP opened the European Assembly Meeting to questions but none were forthcoming.

DP thanked the outside accounting firm Grant Harrod Lerman Davis LLP, and its partner Jeremy Harrod for providing the statutory examination of the 2019 Accounts

without charge and also thanked his fellow Officers and the EUPJ Administrator Deborah Grabiner for their support during the year.

The Chair thanked DP for his work and invited the meeting to approve the Accounts – the wording of the resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System and the resolution was proposed by Joyce Bigio and seconded by Tamás Gróf. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the Accounts were unanimously approved.

6. Appointment of Examiner

The Chair reminded the European Assembly Meeting that, as EUPJ is a UK registered charity, the UK Charity Commission requires its annual accounts to be examined by an independent qualified accountant who issues a report. Accounting firm Grant Harrod Lerman Davis LLP had provided a clear report, included in the 2019 Report.

The Chair invited the meeting to approve the resolution to ratify the appointment of Grant Harrod Lerman Davis LLP as Independent Examiners of the annual accounts for 2019 and to re-appoint them as Independent Examiners for EUPJ's accounts for 2020 – the wording of the resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System and the resolution was proposed by Ben Fantini and seconded by Michael Reik. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the resolution was unanimously approved.

7. Resolution to ratify the decision to admit Bnei Sefarad of Valencia to Associate Membership.

The Chair referred to the proposed resolution in the 2019 Report and reminded the meeting that, at the European Assembly in Prague in 2017, the EUPJ Constitution was amended to give the Executive Board the authority to decide all applications for membership, subject to ratification by the European Assembly.

The Chair advised the European Assembly Meeting that in early 2019 the EUPJ received an application from **Bnei Sefarad Jewish Community of Valencia, Spain (Bnei Sefarad)** for Associate Membership. The Chair advised that the EUPJ ManCom carried out a full due diligence and review in respect of Bnei Sefarad and asked its members responsible for Spain to visit and assess this community, and also received a detailed and favourable report from Rabbi Alona Lisitsa, who assists our communities in Iberia. The EUPJ was also provided with all the documentation and information which EUPJ normally requires from prospective members. The Chair then advised the European Assembly Meeting that the EUPJ ManCom unanimously endorsed this application and that the Executive Board, at its meeting on 3 December 2019, unanimously voted to admit Bnei Sefarad as an Associate member.

The Chair invited the European Assembly Meeting to ratify the decision of the Executive Board to admit Bnei Sefarad and the following resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System - "Resolved that the decision by the EUPJ Executive Board on 3 December 2019 to appoint Comunidad Judía De Valencia Bnei Sefarad – Bnei Sefarad Jewish Community Valencia, known as Bnei Sefarad, as an Associate Member of the EUPJ with effect from that date, in terms of Section 4 of the Constitution, be and is hereby ratified in terms of the proviso to Section 4.2 of the Constitution.

The resolution was proposed by John Cohen and seconded by Jesse Weil. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the resolution was unanimously approved. The Chair introduced Sergio

Fraile, the President of Bnei Sefarad, and welcomed him and his community into the worldwide Progressive Jewish family.

8. Resolution to ratify the decision to admit Ec Chaim Synagogue of Warsaw to Associate Membership.

The Chair then introduced the second membership ratification – that of Ec Chaim Synagogue of Warsaw (Ec Chaim) and explained that the matter had been complex because Ec Chaim (which was formed in 2010) was not a stand-alone entity but is part of the GWZwW (The Jewish Religious Community of Warsaw), which has a membership made up of Orthodox, Progressive and Secular Jews.

The Chair reminded members that EUPJ had two existing members in Poland – Beit Polska (a full Member) and Or Hadasz (an Associate Member) and that the relationship between Beit Polska and Ec Chaim had not been good in the past. She then advised that that discussions between EUPJ and Ec Chaim commenced in early 2019 and that as a result of these discussions, Ec Chaim adopted a set of Statutes and Regulations which will govern how it will operate going forward. These statutes were prepared in discussions with EUPJ and have been approved by EUPJ. Some of the material provisions of the statutes are as follows –

- Ec Chaim will operate in accordance with the principles of worship and religious practices of Progressive Judaism;
- Ec Chaim will not join or be affiliated with any other stream of Judaism;
- Ec Chaim is a place where the principles of equality apply to men and women, irrespective of sexual orientation, ethnicity or social background;
- An Ec Chaim rabbi must be endorsed by ERA and become a member of ERA;
- Ex Chaim will use the services of and abide by the rulings of the European Bet Din.

The Chair also advised that the EUPJ ManCom did a full due diligence and review in respect of Ec Chaim, and also received a detailed and favourable rabbinic report from Rabbis Goldstein, Tabick and Pfertzel. The EUPJ was also provided with all the documentation and information which EUPJ normally requires from prospective members. In addition, using the kind services of David Tilles, EUPJ arranged for initial discussions between representatives of Ec Chaim and Beit Polska, and these were ongoing.

The Chair advised that in July 2020 Ec Chaim formally applied to become a Member of the EUPJ, and that the EUPJ ManCom unanimously endorsed this application. This was then put to the Executive Board, at its meeting on 28 July 2020, which unanimously voted to admit Ec Chaim as an Associate member. The Board admitted Ec Chaim as an Associate Member at this stage on the basis that discussions with Beit Polska were still ongoing and wanted to encourage the parties to continue good faith discussions. It was agreed that Ec Chaim should become a full member once discussions had been completed.

The Chair invited the European Assembly Meeting to ratify the decision of the Executive Board to admit Ec Chaim and the following resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System - "That the decision by the EUPJ Executive Board on 28 July 2020 to appoint Ec Chaim Synagogue (EC), being part of the Jewish Religious Community in Warsaw (GWZwW), known as Ec Chaim, as an Associate Member of the EUPJ with effect from that date, in terms of Section 4 of the Constitution, be and is hereby ratified in terms of the proviso to Section 4.2 of the Constitution. The following decision by the EUPJ Executive Board is also ratified - that Ec Chaim meet and hold good faith discussions with Beit Polska and Beit Warszawa to reach an understanding on certain specific issues, and that once such understanding is reached to the satisfaction of the EUPJ ManCom or should an understanding not be reached by 31 December 2020 but the

EUPJ ManCom be satisfied with the way discussions have been conducted by Ec Chaim, then Ec Chaim will become a full Constituent Member of EUPJ.

The resolution was proposed by Marek Jezowski and seconded by Robert Weiner. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the resolution was unanimously approved. The Chair introduced Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz, the rabbi of Ec Chaim, and welcomed him and his community into the worldwide Progressive Jewish family.

In response to a query from Joyce Bigio regarding whether the EUPJ members in Poland would all join one national union, David Tilles advised that the current aim was for all the communities to work towards a congress of communities, which is similar to what existed in Poland before World War 2. This would result in communities which operated independently but co-operated at congress meetings.

Rabbi Alexander Grodensky queried the requirement for the rabbi of Ec Chaim to become a member of ERA and asked if this would be the case for all new member communities. John Cohen advised that it was for this specific case only because of the fact that Ec Chaim is not a separate legal entity but is an integral part of the Warsaw Gmina, which has member synagogues from different streams of Judaism. Rabbi René Pfertzel confirmed this and pointed out that there was no national union of Progressive Rabbis in Poland.

9. EUPJ Officers and Board Members

The Chair mentioned that Michael Reik was standing down from both the EUPJ ManCom and Executive Board and thanked him for his many years of dedicated service to the EUPJ in many capacities and for his commitment to the growth of Progressive Judaism.

The Chair then handed over to Leslie Bergman (LB) to deal with this item. LB advised that the terms of office of certain of the Officers of the EUPJ would end at the meeting but that they were entitled to be re-appointed for additional terms. He also advised that, in terms of the EUPJ Constitution, certain appointments to the Executive Board were ex officio as a result of holding a particular position, whilst certain members were entitled to appoint representatives to the Executive Board. He pointed out that the names and positions of the individuals concerned were contained in the Notice of Meeting and in the 2019 Report and that no other nominations had been received.

LB then invited the European Assembly Meeting to approve and/or ratify these appointments and the following resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System - "That the appointment of the following Officers, office holders and nominated representatives to the Executive Board be approved and/or ratified –

- As President, Gordon Smith;
- As Vice-President, Miriam Kramer;
- As Chair, Sonja Guentner;
- As Vice-Chairs, with the following designations – Rabbi Menno ten Brink (Education & Interfaith), John Cohen (Governance), David Pollak (Special Assignments) and Robert Weiner (Organisational Development);
- As Ex Officio representative of the European Beit Din, Rabbi Jackie Tabick;
- As representative appointees – Rabbi Edward van Voolen (Abraham Geiger Kolleg), Anton Fishman (Leo Baeck College), Marek Jezowski – Beit Polska), Joyce Bigio (FIEP Italian Federation) and Sara Losch (UpJ – Union for Progressive Jews in Germany).

The resolution was proposed by John Clark and seconded by Jesse Weil. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the resolution was unanimously approved. LB then handed back to the Chair, who thanked board members for their participation and support.

10. Rabbinic Report

The Chair handed over to Rabbi René Pfertzel who referred to the reports by both ERA and the European Bet Din (EBD) in the 2019 Report, but added the following – (a) Rabbi Tabick had left the meeting but had confirmed that she and her colleagues would not be travelling for the foreseeable future due to the pandemic and therefore all sittings of the EBD would take place online, with the exception of one taking place in Prague in October 2020. (b) The Central European countries were setting up their own Bet Din and Rabbi Tabick would be available to support this arrangement. (c) In addition to the meetings and activities in the report, an ERA group had met online with Rabbi Sergio Bergman and representatives of the CCAR. A senior group of ERA members would be meeting to discuss the future development of ERA.

In response to a query from Joyce Bigio regarding the number of conversions by the EBD in 2019 as well as how many members of ERA there were, Rabbi Pfertzel said he would did not have this information to hand but would provide it to Joyce after the meeting.

11. Brussels Office Report

The Chair handed over to Bill Echikson and Jesse Goldberg who referred to their report in the 2019 Report, but added the following – (a) the Brussels Office is working with CEJI, A Jewish Contribution to Europe, B'nai Brith, European Jewish Students, and the European Jewish Heritage Association on the Networks Overcoming Anti-Semitism project (NOA) and this is progressing well. (b) the Brussels Office is also putting together a lay service leader training project with the backing of the Rothschild Foundation and there is good interest from our communities, with 15 candidates having applied so far. (c) The Office was also involved in expanding the Know Your Neighbour project so successfully developed by our communities in the Netherlands and would be introducing online interviews and presentations and webinars.

12. Any Other Business

The Chair advised that the Honorary Secretary had not been notified by any Member within the relevant time period of any matter or issue to put before the European Assembly and that the time allocated for the meeting had now run its course.

The Chair then thanked John Cohen, Deborah Grabiner (the EUPJ Administrator) and Adam Martin for all their work in organising this first online meeting of the European Assembly. She also urged anyone with any questions or queries to contact the EUPJ Management Committee. The Chair thanked all present for attending the 2020 European Assembly Meeting, wished everyone L'shana Tova and declared the meeting closed at 18:06 pm (BST).

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Chair of the European Assembly Meeting