

## **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 **Tuesday 31 August 2021** 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 Judía Progresista Bet Shalom de Barcelona) Spain, Stéphane Bédèr (Assemblée du Judaïsme Libéral) France, Rabbi Sergio Bergman (WUPJ) Argentina, David Bernstein (Platform of Liberal Jews Switzerland) Switzerland, Joyce Bigio (Federazione Italiana Ebraismo Progressivo) Italy, John Clark (Or Chadash, Vienna) Austria, Yael Cobano (Comunidad Judía Reformista de Madrid) Spain, Franca Coen (Federazione Italiana Ebraismo Progressivo) Italy, John Cohen (EUPJ) UK, Bill Echikson (International Jewish Centre) Belgium, Ben Fantini (Federazione Italiana Ebraismo Progressivo) Italy, František Fendrych (Židovská liberální unie, ZLU) Czech Republic, Rabbi Andrew Goldstein (EUPJ) UK, Deborah Grabiner (EUPJ Office) UK, Tamás Gróf (Sim Shalom Congregation) Hungary, Marek Jezowski (Beit Polska) Poland, Peter Jossi (Platform of Liberal Jews Switzerland) Switzerland, Michel Kahn (Assemblée du Judaïsme Libéral) France, Miriam Kramer (EUPJ) UK, Sara Losch (Union Progressiver Juden in Deutschland) Germany, Rabbi David Maxa (Ec chajim, Praha) Czech Republic, Celia Naval (Assemblée du Judaïsme Libéral) France, Anna Nosková (Ec chajim, Praha) Czech Republic, Eliza Panek (Ec Chaim Synagogue, Warsaw) Poland, David Pollak (EUPJ) UK, Marianne de Ross-Norden (Nederlands Verbond voor Progressief Jodendom) Netherlands, Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild (EUPJ Rabbinic Assembly) UK, Daniel Rux (Ec chajim, Praha) Czech Republic, Gordon Smith (EUPJ) UK, Carole Sterling (WUPJ) Canada, Fredy Sussman (Comunidad Judía Bnei Israel de Galicia) Spain, Rabbi Edward van Voolen (Abraham Geiger Kolleg) Germany, Robert Weiner (EUPJ) UK, David Weis (Liberal Jewish Community Luxembourg Esch/Alzette) Luxembourg, Paul Winter (EUPJ) UK, Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz (Ec Chaim Synagogue Warsaw) Poland and Maksymilian Wudecki (Beit Polska) Poland.

### **1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

The Chair advised that a quorum was present and welcomed everyone to the 2021 European Assembly Meeting, saying it was the second and hopefully last Assembly meeting to be held entirely online. She thanked everyone for being so patient while a technical difficulty was resolved at the start of the meeting. 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, Leslie Bergman (Honorary Life President), Arthur Buchman, Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Amanda Gipson, Marc Konczaty, Gilbert Lederman, Sven Parsser, Rabbi René Pfertzel, Rabbi Danny Rich, Rabbi Jackie Tabick, Jesse Weil and Jonathan Wootliff.

The Chair then introduced EUPJ Vice President, Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, who made the opening prayer. The Chair thanked AG for his long service to the Movement as Chairman and Vice President, together with his rabbinic roles. The Chair then 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 Deborah Grabiner.

### **2. Approval of Minutes of the 2020 European Assembly Meeting held via Zoom**

The Chair advised that the minutes of the European Assembly Meeting held online via Zoom on 6 September 2020 were included in the EUPJ Annual Report for 2020 ("the

2020 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 Robert Weiner and seconded by Tamás Gróf.

### **3. Welcome by WUPJ President and Chair**

The Chair introduced Carole Sterling (CS), the Chair of the WUPJ, and welcomed her to her fifth 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 then introduced Rabbi Sergio Bergman (RSB) the President of the WUPJ, who thanked EUPJ leadership, lay leaders and rabbis. He felt honoured to be WUPJ President, even though he was unable to meet in person and travel to the regions due to Covid. WUPJ is here to empower, collaborate and to have a round table to discuss and learn from the movement's needs. During the past year WUPJ held a unique virtual Connections 2021 conference which had been postponed from 2020. RSB was proud of the content and opportunities, despite the extra pressure and the next hurdle is to reopen Beit Shmuel and the WUPJ offices. RSB would like to honour Rabbi Dick Hirsch by preserving his legacy by creating the Rabbi Dick and Bella Hirsch Fund and to dedicate the re-opening of Beit Shmuel to them, which will be close to fifty years since Rabbi Hirsch's ambition to move the WUPJ's headquarters to Jerusalem. RSB said that there is a big challenge in Europe, being the past and future of the Movement with its different countries, languages, traditions and diversity of Jewish life. Europe is an "incubator of Social Impact" of new ideas like the Jewish Effective Giving Initiative by the founder Adam Azari from Poland, who followed the Effective Altruism Movement for many years, and to now try and develop it across the world. It is an exciting project and the WUPJ is now open to develop it across the Progressive world. The opening of the Abraham Geiger facility in Potsdam is an amazing achievement. WUPJ is working with all the European seminaries, in Germany, in London, in Paris and the Netherlands to headhunt future candidates and the other challenge is to connect Russian speakers in Europe and to move away from the FSU division of countries and give them their own identity. RSB thanked EUPJ Chair, Sonja Guentner, and the lay leaders in Europe and wished everyone Shana Tova. The Chair thanked Rabbi Bergman for his encouraging words and future plans.

### **4. Chair's Report**

The Chair referred the meeting to the detailed Chair's Report included in the 2020 Report and it was noted that all activities had been reported to the Executive Board in 2020/21. The Chair added the following items – (a) she would like to reiterate her thanks to all attendees and other volunteers, without whose help EUPJ would not have achieved all its activities. (b) She shared her gratitude for the help and support of the EUPJ Management Committee, EUPJ's administrator, Deborah Grabiner and WUPJ's leadership, Carole Sterling and Rabbi Sergio Bergman. (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 2020**

The Chair thanked David Pollak (DP), who had retired as Vice-Chair Finance at last year's European Assembly and had taken on the portfolio of Vice-Chair Special Assignments. However, DP graciously stayed on as acting Treasurer until a new appointment could be made and was responsible for finalising the 2020 Accounts and Finance Report, for which the Chair thanked him. DP then retired from the EUPJ

Board and ManCom at the end of April and Paul Winter was co-opted onto ManCom and the Board as acting Vice-Chair Finance. Paul is eminently qualified for this role, having previously served as the Treasurer of the Movement for Reform Judaism in the UK.

The Chair advised that the Finance Report and 2020 Accounts were quite detailed but invited questions before putting them to the meeting for approval. Peter Jossi of PLJS Switzerland queried whether all the funding for the EUPJ Biennial Conference 2020 had been finalised and repaid, if required. David Pollak, who had been co-chair of the conference with Alex Dembitz (AD) confirmed that donations to support the Next Generation delegates were held in an account by GIL Geneva. When it had been concluded that the conference would not take place in its original format it was agreed that AD would confirm with the donors to the conference whether the funds could be reserved for further use or should be refunded. EUPJ then invited delegates to donate some or part of their conference registrations into a newly created Next Generation Leadership Development Fund (NGLDF), and many did so. The details of this fund are documented in the accounts and the funds are available to support youth activities, now or in the future. It was confirmed that there are no financial liabilities between either EUPJ or GIL and vice versa. The President, Gordon Smith, thanked the conference committee for their extremely hard work and was deeply saddened that the conference could not take place. He confirmed that no monies were held over by the EUPJ and that EUPJ was waiting to hear from AD following his discussions with the donors. The President suggested that a separate meeting should be convened to discuss this issue.

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 David Weis and seconded by David Bernstein. 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 on page 4 of the 2020 Examined Accounts. The report shows no criticism of the accounts and that they comply with the UK's Charity Commission rules.

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 2020 and to re-appoint them as Independent Examiners for EUPJ's accounts for 2021 – the wording of the resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System and the resolution was proposed by John Clark and seconded by David Bernstein. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the resolution was approved.

## **7. Resolution to ratify the decision to admit Ec chajim Praha as Constituent Member.**

The Chair reminded the meeting that it is the Executive Board which decides upon applications for membership, which it does upon the recommendation of the Management Committee (ManCom) after a full due diligence, but that this is then subject to ratification by the European Assembly.

The Chair advised that in late 2020 the EUPJ received an application from **Ec chajim Prague** requesting to be admitted as a Constituent Member of the EUPJ and that the EUPJ ManCom did a full due diligence and review in respect of Ec chajim, but was already fully aware and knowledgeable of this community as EUPJ had been involved with and supportive of this community since its inception. Rabbi David Maxa, was the rabbi of this community and provided a detailed rabbinic report, but a favourable report was also obtained from Rabbis Pfertzel and Tabick. The EUPJ was also provided with all the documentation and information which EUPJ normally requires from prospective members. The Chair then advised that the EUPJ ManCom unanimously endorsed this application and that the Executive Board, at its meeting on 21 March 2020, unanimously voted to admit **Ec chajim Praha, of the Czech Republic** as a Constituent member. A report from Ec chajim, Praha was included in the Annual Report.

The Chair invited the European Assembly to ratify the decision of the Executive Board to admit Ec chajim, Praha and the following resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System - "Resolved that the decision by the EUPJ Executive Board on 21 March 2021 to appoint Ec chajim Praha of Prague in the Czech Republic known as Ec chajim, as a Constituent 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 Celia Naval and seconded by Rabbi Edward van Voolen. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the resolution was unanimously approved. The Chair welcomed Rabbi Maxa and Anna Nosková who were attending the meeting and thanked them for their inspirational work. The meeting wished the community Mazel tov.

## **8. Ec Chaim Synagogue of Warsaw - Status Update**

The Chair confirmed that Ec Chaim Warsaw had been upgraded from Associate Member to Constituent Member, and reminded all present that the admission of this community was dealt with in detail at the 2020 European Assembly meeting. At that meeting Ec Chaim Warsaw was admitted as an Associate Member, but with a route to full membership to be determined by the EUPJ ManCom – and the Chair referred to paragraph 9 of the minutes of the 2020 meeting on pages 36 and 37 of the Annual Report.

The Chair went on to advise that, although the status of Ec Chaim was left to ManCom to determine, she have already fully updated the Executive Board and thought it useful to update the membership as well. The reason for the decision to initially make this community an Associate Member was to give time for Ec Chaim to meet with delegates from Beit Polska (then the only full member in Poland) and Beit Warszawa (a member of Beit Polska) to attempt to resolve a number of issues between them, and this process was agreed to by Marek Jezowski (the board member representing Beit Polska). EUPJ then appointed David Tilles (who was integral to facilitating the entire process and who is on the board of Or Hadasz, our Associate Member in Krakow) to oversee these discussions, which commenced before 31 December 2020 but, due to COVID restrictions, were not completed by the end of 2020 and ManCom agreed to extend the time period so that the communities could continue with their discussions.

Discussions continued during 2021 and the EUPJ ManCom were finally advised by David Tilles, Marek Jezowski and Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz of Ec Chaim that "*the two communities' managements have remained in positive collaborative mode, made progress on the issues both parties had raised and are hopeful for more positive*

*achievements in the near term.*” Marek Jezowski has stated that “*Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz notified me a week ago that he has applied to EUPJ for review of his community's status and asked whether I would support his motion, which I gladly do*”. Marek Jezowski also provided ManCom with a summary of the discussions and agreements between Beit Polska, Beit Warszawa and Ec Chaim.

The Chair then advised that ManCom was of the opinion that a huge step forward in the relationship between these communities had been achieved and that negotiations and discussions were carried out in good faith, and look likely to continue on this basis. At its meeting on 13 July 2021, ManCom reviewed the status of Ec Chaim Warsaw, looked at all the facts and reports and took account of the feedback from David Tilles and Marek Jezowski, especially the fact that discussions had taken place cordially and in good faith. Accordingly ManCom, as it was empowered to do by the Executive Board and the European Assembly, was satisfied with the outcome of these discussions and passed a formal resolution determining that Ec Chaim Warsaw should become a Constituent Member with effect from the close of business on 20 July 2021, the date of the following meeting of the Executive Board.

The Chair then said it was her great pleasure to formally welcome Ec Chaim as our second full member in Poland and looked forward to a growing and co-operative relationship between it and our other Polish communities. The chair welcomed Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz and Eliza Panek from Ec Chaim who were attending the meeting, and pointed out that a brief report about this community can be found on page 22 of the Annual Report.

## **9. EUPJ Officers and Board Members**

The Chair advised that the terms of office of certain of the Officers of the EUPJ would end at the meeting and some were entitled to be re-appointed for additional terms. She 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.

The Chair then mentioned those whose terms end at this meeting or who were standing down. They were the following:

- Rabbi Andrew Goldstein – one of EUPJ’s Vice-Presidents. The Chair had already thanked Andrew and hoped that he would still be available to provide his wisdom and sound judgement her and ManCom;
- Rabbi Danny Rich – the representative of Liberal Judaism in the UK – The Chair thanked Rabbi Rich for all his hard work and tireless support of the EUPJ and hoped that he would still be available to provide his commitment to the movement in the future.
- Gilbert Ledermann – the representative of both Beth Hillel and IJC in Belgium.
- Marc Konczaty – one of the representatives of AJL, the French Assembly.

The Chair pointed out that both Gilbert and Marc had been instrumental in a number of projects and mentioned specifically the excellent Shabbaton in Brussels and the support given to her and Carole Sterling to meet French representatives when it was still possible to travel.

The Chair then advised that, as stated in Item 9 of the Notice of meeting, EUPJ needed to elect a new Vice-Chair Finance and the nominated candidate is Paul Winter. Paul is a senior partner at SPW Chartered Accountants in London, and specialises in providing assistance to high technology based companies, assisting them in developing their accounting and reporting requirements, and also specialises in tax affairs of family companies and their directors. Paul was introduced to the meeting. He

explained that he had been involved with the EUPJ for the past two months getting to grips with its finances. He shared that he had served as treasurer at both the Movement for Reform Judaism in the UK as well as at Alyth Synagogue. The Chair confirmed that Paul was unanimously recommended by the ManCom and Executive Board.

The Chair then invited the European Assembly Meeting, unless there were any questions, to vote for this nomination using the Zoom polling system to approve the appointment and the following resolution was posted on the Zoom Polling System - "That the appointment of Paul Winter to the Executive Board in the position of Vice-Chair Finance is hereby approved".

The resolution was proposed by Robert Weiner and seconded by David Bernstein. All delegates were given the opportunity to vote using the Zoom Polling System, which showed that the resolution was unanimously approved.

The chair then dealt with representative appoints to the Executive Board by Constituent Members, both new representatives and those being appointed for a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> term. The Chair explained that these appointments are rights granted under the constitution and so no vote is required, but she would announce these to the meeting –

- By the Netherlands Verbond – Sven Parsser for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term and Marianne de Roos-Norden for her first term;
- By Liberal Judaism in the UK – Rabbi Charley Baginsky for her first term;
- By Or Chadash Synagogue in Vienna – John Clark for his 3<sup>rd</sup> term;
- By AJL, the French Assembly, Celia Naval for her 3<sup>rd</sup> term, Stéphane Bédèr for his 2<sup>nd</sup> term and Michel Kahn for his 1<sup>st</sup> term;
- By Shir Hatzafon in Copenhagen – Arthur Buchman for his 3<sup>rd</sup> term;
- By the Liberal Jewish Community of Luxembourg – David Weis for his 2<sup>nd</sup> term;
- By PJLS, the Platform for Liberal Judaism in Switzerland, David Bernstein and Peter Jossi, both for their 3<sup>rd</sup> terms.
- By the Executive Board in respect of Hungary, Tamás Gróf for his 3<sup>rd</sup> term.

The Chair pointed out that board representation for countries with more than one member and no national union, are made by the Executive Board and that the appointments in respect of the Czech Republic and Belgium, as well as Spain will be dealt at future board meetings.

## **10. Rabbinic Matters**

The Chair referred to the detailed reports for the European Rabbinic Assembly (ERA), the European Beit Din (EBD) and the Central European Beit Din (CEBD) that were included in the Annual Report on pages 13, 14 and 15 respectively. She said that, as the CEBD is the newest institution, she would hand over to Rabbi David Maxa to give a brief report. Rabbi Maxa thanked the EUPJ on behalf of his rabbinic colleagues in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic and said how privileged they felt to be admitted into the EUPJ family of rabbinic institutions and thanked the Chair who helped set up this Beit Din. It was his privilege to work besides Rabbis Misha Kapustin, Thomas Salamon, Anita Kantor, Tom Kučera and Stas Wojciechowicz in these countries in the operations of the CEBD. The first sitting of the CEBD will be at the beginning of October in Prague.

## **11. Brussels Office Report**

The Chair advised that a full report on the activities of the Brussels Office was included in the Annual Report on page 11 with many links to the full spectrum of projects and

activities taking place. The Chair encouraged the delegates to look at the new pages of the website and the corresponding PR on these projects. The Executive Board has been kept up to date on the activities of the Brussels Office.

## 12. Any Other Reports

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.

## 13. Any Other Business

### (a) The Proposal to encourage communities to ensure full marriage equality

The Chair advised that on 3 July 2021 EUPJ held its first ever Pride Shabbat, which was extremely successful and hoped that this will become a regular feature on our annual programme. David Weis was the main mover behind the Pride Shabbat and has proposed that the EUPJ adopt a resolution encouraging our communities to ensure full marriage equality. The detailed wording of this proposal had been on the EUPJ website since 2 August and was endorsed by the ManCom and Executive Board. The Chair thanked John Clark and Rabbi Grodensky for their work on this project too.

The Chair handed over to David Weis who shared the proposal on the screen and described the thinking behind the proposal. The details were self-explanatory based on a proposal at the 2013 WUPJ International Assembly and followed up by the EUPJ Pride Shabbat. The floor was opened to questions. Peter Jossi informed the meeting that a public vote will be held in Switzerland at the end of September on the same issue. The Chair proposed that, as there were no further questions, that the meeting vote on this proposal nomination using the Zoom Polling system, "that the following resolution be and is hereby approved (as shared on the screen) and would be included in the minutes". The resolution was proposed by Miriam Kramer and seconded by Rabbi Edward van Voolen. The resolution was adopted by the meeting. The full wording of the resolution is as follows:

*"EUPJ Proposal to encourage its communities to ensure, wherever possible, full marriage equality before the next EUPJ biennial meeting.*

- *Whereas the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ) condemns all forms of bigotry and discrimination in our society as being incompatible with the preservation of human dignity which is destructive of tzelem elohim, and;*
- *Whereas the EUPJ upholds the principle of treating all people equally whether by gender, age, colour or sexual preference, and;*
- *Whereas the EUPJ has long championed full equality of women in our movement and in society generally and strived to eliminate gender-based stereotypes, and;*
- *Whereas the 2011 International Assembly of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) called on all institutions, colleges, congregations and youth groups to give equal opportunity to gay and lesbian bisexual transgender and inter-sex members (GLBTI), especially in terms of leadership and learning and to be aware of gender issues when developing study curriculum, and;*
- *Whereas the 2011 International Assembly of the WUPJ called on all institutions associated with the WUPJ to treat GLBTI couples in the same manner as married heterosexual couples and families, and;*
- *Whereas the 2013 International Assembly of the WUPJ called upon all institutions associated with the WUPJ to promote marriage equality within our movement, and to join with others to support legislation to help guarantee the legal rights of*

*GLBTI couples to marry civilly and religiously, and to secure their marital legal rights in full equality to heterosexual couples;*

- *Following the EUPJ's first Pride Shabbat on 3 July 2021, the first regional event of its kind within the WUPJ, and in view of a worrying backsliding of human rights, in particular for GLBTI people, in many parts of the EUPJ region, EUPJ HEREBY reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the equal rights of all its members, whatever their gender orientation or identification, and encourages its communities to ensure, wherever possible, full marriage equality."*

The President, Gordon Smith, then thanked Sonja Guentner for all her work in a very difficult year, particularly, as we have not been able to meet in person but said that she had risen to the occasion at ManCom, the Executive Board and at the European Assembly as well.

The Chair then thanked John Cohen and Deborah Grabiner for all their work in organising this 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 2021 European Assembly Meeting, apologising for the delayed start and, wished everyone L'shana Tova and declared the meeting closed at 18:26 pm (BST).

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Chair of the European Assembly Meeting