

Report on Activities of the Law Section of Academia Europaea

The Law Section of the Academy was established in September 2009 at the Naples Annual Conference. Until then, lawyers, members of the Academy, were members of the Social Sciences Section. At that point in time, only the membership, i.e. lawyers, members of the Social Sciences Section were known and Joseph Straus, Munich, was appointed as the first Chair. As it turned out, the number of Section members was relatively modest (57) and the history of the years preceding its establishment has shown a more than modest number of new admissions (15 between 1989 and 2000 and 11 between 2000 and 2009!). Moreover, the geographic spread of membership could have been characterized as relatively poorly balanced and a bit overaged. All in all, not exactly ideal conditions for any joint activities.

Therefore the first move of the Chair was to undertake measures necessary to establish the Section Committee. With the help of the wise advice of Professor Stig Strömholm, Uppsala, one of the former Presidents of the Academy, a number of distinguished members was identified as candidates for the Committee. Eventually, the Committee was constituted and received the necessary approval. It is now composed of Professors Dagmar Coester-Waltjen, Göttingen, William R. Cornish, Cambridge, Attila Harmathy, Budapest, Walter van Gerven, Leuven, Eivind Smith, Oslo and Ditlev Tamm, Copenhagen. Thanks to the efforts of the Committee members, the membership of the Section in 2010 and 2011 has increased by 11 members, from Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Switzerland. These were the first steps in the right direction, but still insufficient to meet the justified expectations for the performance of the Section. The main deficit has to be observed in the fact that the number of members particularly from France, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Scandinavian Countries, as well as from East, and South-East Europe by no means reflects the admirable achievements of many distinguished colleagues from those countries. Thus, it remains as one of the central and most important tasks of the Section's Committee and its Chair to continue with the efforts to identify and propose distinguished colleagues particularly from those countries for membership. *It goes without saying that all Section Members are kindly invited and encouraged to follow suit and submit proposals to the Section's Chair for new members* (using the forms available online from Academy's Homepage: http://www.acadeuro.org/fileadmin/user_upload/member_sections/AE-Nomination-Form.pdf).

As the second issue of considerable importance for the Law Section, the program of annual conferences of the Academy has been identified. Whereas in Leuven Professor van Gerven delivered a European Law related lecture in the main program, the Paris Congress remained "law free", despite the fact that the Section offered contributions related to the general theme of the conference, namely chemistry, such as liability in the area of chemistry, and on issues surrounding genetically modified organisms. The Section was even able to organize some funds for the expected travel and other expenses of the speakers.

In order to attract also members of the Law Section to attend and actively participate in annual conferences, it seems crucial to have at least one law-related topic in the main program. For this reason, the local organizers of the next annual conference to be held in Bergen, Norway, in September 2012, and the Law Section Chair had preliminary discussions in Paris on topics, which potentially would be of particular interest and could be covered by Law Section members. As such were identified, for instance legal issues related to deep sea drilling, issues surrounding exploitation of Arctic's natural resources, protection of marine fauna, issues related to pollution of the sea, etc. Among the members of the Law Section is a great number of highly qualified specialist in the field of the law of the sea, thus, one could be confident that if an agreement can be found between the local organizers for the Bergen conference and the Law Section Committee, lawyers will be able and willing to make a visible contribution to the 2012 Annual Conference and make it attractive even for a broader audience. If that would be publicized adequately in advance, for the first time more Law Section members will be seen in Norway.

It is a declared goal of the Law Section to intensify its activities in the framework of the Academy and to contribute to its successful activities. However, once again, the Section needs to increase the number of members, broaden its geographic coverage and take care of a balanced interdisciplinary representation.

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Joseph Straus, Chair