

## Online Committee Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> December 2021, 10am UTC

Present: **Chair:** Gregory Claeys, **Secretary:** Justyna Galant, **Committee Members:** Artur Blaim, Julia Ramírez Blanco, Sorin Antohi, Susanna Layh, Zsolt Czigányik.

**Apologies** from Antonis Balasopoulos, Adam Stock, Andrew Milner, Fátima Vieira, Jorge Bastos da Silva, Laurence Davis, Lisa Garforth, Michael Kelly, Nathaniel Coleman, Nicole Pohl, Pavla Veselá.

Gregory Claeys opens the meeting.

Given the fact that there is no quorum for the Committee meeting and in view of the fact that practical decisions have to be made regarding the 2021 Porto elections, the Committee agrees to make the necessary decisions and postpone all other decision-making to future meetings, while making recommendations with regard to the issues raised.

### I. SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP VOTE.

GC notes that in view of the vote the Society's membership's took on the 2022 USSE conference venue, the procedure should be adopted for all relevant future occasions when voting by Society membership is required. Rather than taking votes from the limited number of participants of a given conference's AGM, ballot forms will be circulated to all membership from the USSE mailing list, which would be in agreement with the principle that USSE membership is constituted by all individuals who have attended one or more of the Society's conferences. GC poses the question of the exact time when the electronic vote by USSE membership is to take place: 1) members vote during the AGM itself (a period of 1,30 min of the Porto AGM), or 2) the ballot is activated in advance, allowing members a longer time to vote, and devoting the AGM to the tabulation of the votes. GC notes that he believes that option 2) seems more sensible. Justyna Galant raises the question of the possible space for discussion of the issues to be voted on. Artur Blaim responds that in case of the officers' elections, membership has received the candidates' nominations well in advance of the Porto conference and that no discussion around the officers' election seems necessary. AB adds that the other matter can be addressed and discussed during the Porto 2021 AGM slot, with all from the mailing list also being invited to participate in the AGM and in the discussion. Gregory Claeys notes that the Secretary needs to prepare two ballots: 1. Election of the USSE officers, 2. proposed constitutional measures, and circulate 1. to the membership in advance. Artur Blaim suggests focusing on choosing the time-slot for the officers' elections, and considering 2 options: 1) the vote by the 2021 Porto AGM can be considered already open and, therefore circulated asap, since the USSE membership has already voted for the 2022 conference venue, 2) the voting starts at the beginning of the conference, as was the case during the 2016 Lisbon USSE conference. AB suggests choosing option 2. commencing the vote at the start of the conference and closing and announcing the results during the AGM. GC notes that electronic elections with ballots sent out to the entire Society membership would make the officers' elections more democratic than ever before. Julia Ramírez Blanco notes that it would be advisable to give the membership a longer time to decide of the vote, suggesting a period of a month in advance of the conference. AB agrees, adding that the longer time to contemplate the vote is not possible only on the occasion, given the time constraints, but is much recommended in principle. GC confirms, adding that during the future votes, a longer period for consideration will be given. Justyna Galant suggests that for future votes, all relevant information should be circulated to the membership a month in advance of

the conference, allowing a period of around 2 weeks to elicit questions, modifications, comments, etc. from the membership (which would allow the committee to modify the matters voted on if a need for that arose), after which the actual voting takes place. Susanna Layh points out that members are most probably primarily interested in a debate during the AGM itself. Lisa Garforth agrees and adds that from the 2022 Brighton event onwards it would be advisable to allow voting until the end of the conference to. GC suggests that the ballots should be open until the end of the Porto AGM and, in response to LG's suggestion, points out that the AGM should preferably be organised at the beginning of the future conferences. LG agrees, adding that then conference will then close with a brief slot during which results can be announced. Zsolt Czigányik points out that some time should be given to the organisers before the announcement of the results. JG agrees, noting that the returning officers need time to consider the fairness of the election process. All agree that the vote on USSE officers during the 2021 Porto conference starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the conference and finishes 14:50 Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>.

## II. BRIGHTON 2022 CONFERENCE FEE and SOCIETY ONLINE CONFERENCE FEES.

GC points out that there is no charge for the Porto 2021 conference, but that Brighton organisers will need to charge for online participation. GC notes that he is against introducing a fee in case of online conferences. Sorin Antohi notes that the Society's inclusivity and openness, and policy of attracting as many interested individuals as possible, are valuable and make USSE exceptional among academic societies. Lisa Garforth points out that a modest registration fee for online participation should be considered as a help for the organisers. Julia Ramírez Blanco suggests the option of no fee for participants whose institution cannot pay the conference fee and for unaffiliated scholars. Artur Blaim objects to charging a fee for online conferences but suggests the possibility of a voluntary donation. Justyna Galant suggests that the Society could agree on a small fixed online conference fee to be paid in addition to the 12 EURO Society fee. Zsolt Czigányik agrees with Lisa Garforth that a modest fee for online participation could be charged for presenting a paper during a conference, whereas participation in a conference with no paper would be free of charge. ZC supports the idea of moderate conference fees, with the possibility of waiving the fee in certain justified circumstances. ZC suggests raising the Society fee of currently 12 EURO to 20 EURO. With regard to the previously raised point, Lisa Garforth agrees that an online participation fee should be subject to the particular circumstances of the various participants not to exclude participation in USSE conferences.

## III. CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES.

The committee agrees that the measures listed below be circulated as part of the agenda to the membership for consideration, discussed during the 2021 Porto AGM

The proposed constitutional measures:

**Constitutional measure 1. DEFINITION OF AN AGM.** In reference to § 4-5 of the Society's Constitution (<https://utopian-studies-europe.org/constitution-and-regulation/>), an AGM is constituted from all members of the Society who have participated in any Society meeting. Participation is defined as having given a paper at a meeting of the Society, and being on our mailing list. All AGMs are henceforth defined as virtual.

**Constitutional measure 2. VOTING BY THE AGM.** Items to be voted on will be circulated by the Secretary, and a ballot form provided to the entire membership, who will vote electronically. Members will normally be given about two weeks to

deliberate and vote on issues put forward by the Committee, and on the election of officers and the Committee.

**Constitutional measure 3. COMMITTEE ELECTIONS.** The Committee's maximum size is fifteen. If more than fifteen candidates for the Committee are nominated, those with the largest number of votes will be deemed elected. (The Chair, Secretary and other officers are *ex officio* members of the Committee).

**Constitutional measure 4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS.** In reference to § 9 of the Society's Constitution (<https://utopian-studies-europe.org/constitution-and-regulation/>) nominations for membership of the Committee and the office-bearers will be made in writing in advance of the meeting. Officers of the Society and Committee members are elected by the membership of the Society. This ballot will be sent approximately one month in advance, with the declaration confirming that the person voting has participated in one or more of the Society's conferences, and is therefore entitled to vote. Brief c.v.s and nominations will be included with the ballot. The results will be announced at the end of the relevant conference.

**Constitutional measure 5. COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING.** In the event that the Committee is required to make decisions about Society procedure, for instance in the choice of a future conference venue, where time may be of the essence, and consultation with the membership may be unwieldy, it may by majority vote take preliminary decisions, such as soliciting proposals, without recourse to an AGM. An AGM will normally vote (electronically) to accept or reject such proposals.

Gregory Claeys thanks the committee members and closes the meeting.