



**Minutes of the Online Annual General Meeting of
Utopian Studies Society / Europe
15th July 2022, University of Brighton**

Present: **Chair:** Gregory Claeys, **Secretary:** Justyna Galant, **Treasurer:** Zsolt Czigányik, **Committee Members:** Adam Stock, Antonis Balasopoulos, Artur Blaim, Fátima Vieira, Julia Ramírez Blanco, Laurence Davis, Lisa Garforth, Nathaniel Coleman, Nicole Pohl, Sorin Antohi, Susanna Layh, and 41 ordinary members.

1. Gregory Claeys opens the USS/E 2022 AGM. Lisa Garforth makes an announcement regarding the ongoing online USS/E Elections (of Chair, Treasurer, and 13 Committee Members) and poll on the proposed changes to the USS/E Constitution. Justyna Galant notes that the voting will close at 3pm GMT and the results will be announced during the USS/E 2022 Brighton closing session on Friday 15th July.
2. **USS/E ELECTIONS:** Introduction of candidates for the Chair, Treasurer, and Committee members (in alphabetical order). The following persons introduce themselves for the duration of 2 minutes each: Gregory Claeys, Zsolt Czigányik, Burcu Kayışçı Akkoyun, Sorin Antohi, Barnita Bagchi, Artur Blaim, Julia Ramírez-Blanco, Nathaniel Coleman, Susanna Layh, Nicole Pohl, José Eduardo Reis, Adam Stock, Fátima Vieira.

Election results announced during the Conference Closing Session on 15th July.:

Via email sent at 4:58 on 15th July, the returning officer Lisa Garforth informs that the electronic survey has been running since 2pm on the first day of the conference Tues 13th July. It closed at 3pm today Friday 15th July.

96 members verified that they are eligible to vote by presenting at the current or past conferences and have submitted their preferences. LG has filtered the electronic survey results to remove 10 incomplete and unsubmitted responses (automatically collected by the software) to ensure that no member has voted twice.

The following 13 of 15 nominees received the most votes, thus being elected as the **USS/E COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Burcu Kayışçı Akkoyun
Sorin Antohi
Barnita Bagchi
Artur Blaim
Julia Ramírez-Blanco
Nathaniel Coleman
Susanna Layh
Ewa Majewska
Nicole Pohl
José Eduardo Reis
Alexandra Sippel
Adam Stock
Fátima Vieira

CHAIR

Gregory Claeys is elected as Chair with 75 votes for, 21 abstentions (96 voted).

TREASURER

Zsolt Czигányik is elected as Treasurer with 72 votes for, 24 abstentions (96 voted).

CONSTITUTION

All proposed changes to the Constitution were accepted.

Vote to accept changes to Point 2 of the USS/E constitution: 70 agreed, 22 disagreed (92 voted).

Vote to accept changes to Point 4 of the USS/E constitution: 78 agreed, 11 disagreed (89 voted).

Vote to accept changes to Point 5 of the USS/E constitution: 72 agreed, 14 disagreed (86 voted).

Vote to accept changes to Point 8 of the USS/E constitution: 80 agreed, 11 disagreed (91 voted).

Vote to accept changes to Point 9 of the USS/E constitution: 79 agreed, 10 disagreed (89 voted).

Vote to accept new rule to the USS/E constitution: 71 agreed, 18 disagreed (89 voted).

NOTE: Completion of the 6 questions on changes to the USS/E constitution were NOT compulsory on the survey. This means that respondents could submit their responses relating to USS/E elections without taking a position on changes to the constitution, and explains why on all these questions we have fewer than 96 responses.

The proposed changes to the USS/E Constitution, marked in orange type:

POINT 2. OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION

Membership shall be open to anyone with an interest in the study of Utopianism, all participants of any USS conference will be counted among its members and their email addresses will be added to the Society's mailing list. **Members of the Society are individuals who pay Society Fee. All members of the Society are entitled to vote in Society elections and on all matters decided on during the Annual General Meeting and are eligible to be elected for office.**

1. a) **The Society Fee is separate from the Conference Fee. It is not possible to participate in a USS/E Conference without paying the Society Fee. It is possible to be a member of the USS/E without attending the USS/E conference/s.**
2. b) **Exemptions to the Society Fee will be provided based on the individual's circumstances and granted by the 3 Society Officers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer). The Society Fee for those exempt will be covered with Society funds.**

POINT 4. OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION

All USS/E conferences will be hybrid events. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Society shall be held online during every USS/E conference.

- a) **The quorum for the AGM of the Society shall be 10 30 members. If the quorum is not reached, another meeting is called within 30 minutes.**
- b) **All voting on Society matters and voting for positions within the Society will take place electronically. All members of the Society (as defined in point 2. above) are entitled to vote. The voting will start at the start of the annual USS/E conference and close at the end of the day when the AGM takes place. Results will be announced at the conference closure.**

POINT 5. OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION

At the Annual General Meeting, a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, all other officers, and a Committee of up to 15 members will be elected.

- c) **The maximum size of the USS/E Committee will be 21.**
- d) **The Committee members will be the 3 Officers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) and up to 18 members, which number includes Conference Organiser(s) invited to join the Committee every year prior to USS/E conference they organise and remain on it for the duration of 3 years in total.**

POINT 8. OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION

Officers of the society (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer plus EDI and ECR and any other new officer roles, with the exception of Website Officer not subject to rota) may hold their positions for a maximum of two three-year election cycles (six years in total), after which they will not be eligible for re-election. In case the number of candidates for USS/E positions exceeds the number of positions, those with the largest number of votes will be deemed elected.

POINT 9. OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION

Information on the elections to any positions within the Society and the bio-notes of the candidates will be sent out to all participants of the USS conference in advance of the AGM (if possible, one month before). Nominations for membership of the committee and the office-bearers will be made in writing in advance of the meeting. In this case no nominations are taken from the floor at the AGM. **No nominations for any positions within the USS/E will be taken from the floor at the AGM.**

Additional rule:

The Committee is required to make decisions about Society procedures, 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.

3. Artur Blaim postulates that, in a gesture of “decolonisation,” USS/E members should be encouraged to pay more attention to how they pronounce non-English-language names and take care to try to pronounce all names as close to the original as possible.
4. **ECR and EDI OFFICERS’ PRESENTATIONS:** Brief presentations on their functions are given by the Early Career Researchers’ Officer – Rhiannon Firth and Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Officer – Heather Alberro.

Artur Blaim voiced his strong objection to Darko Suvin’s statement that a cavil had been used in the act of nomination of the Chair and pointed out that the principle of non-retroactivity constitutes the basis of any society worthy of its name. He also expressed his hope that DS’s statement would not be used as a pretext for initiating any activities aimed at undermining the integrity and proper functioning of the USS.

5. **USS/E CONFERENCE PLANS FOR 2023:** On behalf of Corin Braga, Justyna Galant offers a presentation of Cluj-Napoca, Romania and Babeş-Bolyai University as the prospective organising venue of USS/E 2023 Conference. Zsolt Czigányik notes Cluj has an international airport and is well connected with many European countries by rail. Gregory Claeys notes that the Society’s members should be encouraged to reach the conference venues by trains.

Fátima Vieira expresses an opinion that the hybrid event format is not the best form of USS/E meetings, noting a preference for in-person meetings and adding that if hybrid events are to take place in the future it is worth considering organizing online presentations and in-person presentations on separate days.

Ibtisam Ahmed notes that in-person only participation would be an obstacle for disabled members, possibly preventing them from participation in USS/E events. JG

reiterates FV's proposal regarding online and in-person conference days during future USS/E conferences and notes that it would help avoid the problem of accessibility.

GC informs that the prospective venue for 2024 conference is Istanbul, but notes that no specific arrangements have yet been made. JG emphasises that any member of use can offer to organise a use conference in their university (as also stated in the society website). Offers to be addressed to use secretary or directly to the chair.

Objection is raised with regard to the proposed 2023 Conference venue as Romania is ranked as one of the last countries in the list of LGBTQ+ countries. Ibtisam Ahmed agrees and adds that it is worth discussing whether a USS/E Conference should take place in a country where some of the Society members may not feel safe. It is agreed that the USS/E Committee will discuss the issue.

6. Minutes for the AGM of the USS/E Porto 2021 conference are unanimously approved after having been circulated to all members via email.
7. Zsolt Czigányik presents a Treasurer's report which is then unanimously approved.
8. Gregory Claeys offers a vote of thanks to the Brighton 2022 Conference Organisers.