

EUPRERA Discussion paper (White Paper)

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1. Preface

The following “White Paper” was written to open a strategically oriented discussion for EUPRERA BoD and EUPRERA members in 2005 concerning the strategic positioning of EUPRERA in a changing situation. The most important aim of this paper should be to help to continue the process of professionalization of EUPRERA. It entails some organizational, structural and activity-related considerations as well as suggestions that were developed on the basis of the following:

- existing documents [a) Paper: The restructuring of CERP Education/Meeting in Brussels 12/12–13/1998; b) Minutes BoD Meeting Basel 03/11/2000; c) Strategically Positioning EUPRERA by Gerhard Bütschi, July 2002, d) EUPRERA Mission Statement and bylaw decisions]
- my personal experiences as president (2004) as well as a member and as a BoD member of EUPRERA, and
- my expert knowledge as a speaker of the PR division (three years) and as president (three years) of the German Association for Public Communication and Media Studies (DGPuK) and also as a speaker and BoD member of other Scientific Associations in Germany
- my expert knowledge as a member of different committees of the German Association of Public Relations (DPRG)
- proposals which have been made by other persons

2. Changing Situation

The new situation of EUPRERA is marked by

- An increasing number of members, primarily institutional members, which is a result of a growing educational field in Europe which in turn is a result of the growth of the professional field in different countries and a growing need for professionalization
- Its own annual conference which is of a sufficient or even good scientific quality since some years

- The implementation of international standards (vetting procedures)
- Therefore resulting in a certain stability and scientific attractiveness of EUPRERA, concerning its existence as an international association of academics (and some practitioners) in Europe and beyond
- An uncertainty as to whether EUPRERA should be active only in Europe or also beyond

3. Objectives of EUPRERA

The primary objective of the association should be to initiate, coordinate, collect, inform and communicate about excellent public relations research in Europe. We need to foster a *continuous information exchange* among researchers (and interested practitioners) in order to establish and hold internationally *high quality research standards*.

A second objective should be the exchange of information about educational models, programs and academic courses in PR in Europe and beyond, and to discuss educational standards and programs. In this context it could be helpful, to develop certain *principles, guidelines and set of contents of excellent public relations education programs*, i.e. a position paper similar to the existing American papers. In accordance with the Mission statement of EUPRERA, one connected objective should be the ongoing analysis of education models in different countries in order to connect this type of education with the practical field. The study and promotion of public relations methods should be included.

A third objective should be to engage in *lobbying within the European Union* to position and promote EUPRERA as the most important institution responsible for public relations research and education in Europe.

4. The structure of EUPRERA

The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the highest authority of the organization. All ordinary members of the organization constitute the general assembly. Members have been invited to meet annually. During the last few years the General Assembly has met after the end of the conferences (Leipzig was the first exception) and in most cases only a few members were present and attended. In Leipzig (probably because of the different timing) a greater number of members par-

ticipated at the General Assembly. In order to have a lively General assembly in the future where each member really has the chance to participate in the association's life, and also increase the degree of democratic participation I propose the following:

- a) to continue this procedure to meet *during* the conference, not after,
- b) and at the same time I suggest, to meet only once every *two years* instead of every year.

Instead of meeting every year formally we should introduce an "Information Hour" at our annual conferences which is not only open for non-members but also should be as attractive as possible in stimulating members to participate in projects, conferences, committees, etc. And we would have the General assembly with elections of the Board of Directors only every two years. The BoD as well as members of EUPRERA, present at the General Assembly should *nominate future members of the Board of Directors*, following the bylaw proposal we decided in Leipzig. These proposals would have consequences for BoD members and especially for the president elect, the president and the past president.

The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors consists, by virtue of their office, of the president, the past president, the president elect, and the general secretary (= core board). The latter is appointed by the three former on the recommendation of the president. The president can *add to a maximum of ??? operational members* to the Board of Directors if it deems this necessary for the adequate annual operation of the organization.

The Board of Directors *nominates the president elect*. To that effect, EUPRERA needs at least eight board members on an operational level. The board members should know the working procedures of EUPRERA at least for *two or three years* before he or she can be elected as president elect.

The current board members are:

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|---------------------|---|
| President: | Eric Koper |
| Past President: | Günter Bentele |
| President Elect: | Betteke van Ruler |
| Secretary General: | Anne Marie Cotton |
| Research Committee: | Inger Jensen Susanne Holmström |
| Education: | Sue Wolstenholme |
| News & PRIME: | Julia Jahansoozi |
| Congress Organizer: | Jose Viegas Soares (Lisbon 2005) Eric Koper (Preston 2006) |

Strategy:

Sven Hamrefors

Paul Horsle

The President

The president represents EUPRERA to its external publics, at the General Assembly, and at official occasions. The president will be elected out of the Board of Directors.

The President – accordingly to the proposals made above – should be elected for *two calendar years*. This – longer – active period would put more emphasis on the significance of the president's political function. In this case the commitment of a president elect would be for six years, a term of office as president elect (2 years), a term of office as president (two years), and one term as past president (2 years). To serve for EUPRERA for six years instead of three may seem to be a disadvantage on the surface (for the individual person). In fact, it guarantees better involvement in the organization's internal processes that helps improve its performance. Another beneficial aspect would be that the election itself would be more relevant and attractive.

5. Committee development of EUPRERA

EUPRERA can (and should) establish certain specific committees, which are devoted to thematic and organizational purposes. Besides the existing committees we further could develop an education committee and a promotion/public relations committee. Furthermore, we should continue in building and be active in special working groups (like a "body of knowledge working group" etc.)

6. Annual Conferences

The next congresses will be held in Lisbon (2005, 10–13 November), in Preston (2006, 06–09 September), and in Lund and Roskilde (2007, Autumn). Proposals for future congress venues and themes can be sent to Anne Marie Cotton. We do need clear selection procedures for the future. Up to now the BoD decided on the basis of existing proposals. In future there could be a formal election procedure during the General Assemblies, where to meet in future years. New proposals (city, year and theme of a conference) should be discussed during BoD meetings and presented at General Assemblies. Annual conferences should be known about three to four years in advance.

Vetting of Papers

The EUPRERA scientific committee – the person responsible for the research committee together with the so-called “congress coordinator” – has the responsibility to secure the process and quality of congress.

The vetting is done by (at least) two EUPRERA (scientific committee) members and (at least) two local or national reviewers who usually are nominated by the congress organizer. The congress coordinator must be an active member of EUPRERA – and he/she should have right to invite appropriate keynote speakers and he/she should have the right to make last decisions, because he/she is the responsible for the congress. The congress coordinator and the individual responsible for the EUPRERA research committee are excluded from this as they cannot participate in the vetting procedure as reviewers.

The papers are addressed to the congress organizer who takes care of their anonymity before sending them on to the congress coordinator. Based on the number of submitted papers, the congress coordinator will decide about the paper's repartition. All papers will be vetted by a minimum of two reviewers.

Points will be marked by the members of the review group supervised by the congress coordinator.

Student Paper Sessions

In order to support and promote young talented students, we should think about providing them an opportunity to present their research projects. This could be realized in form of exhibit boxes or special student paper discussion sessions.

7. Prospective developments

EUPRERA or IPRERA?

Even though EUPRERA still has an identity as an European organisation, we are welcoming more and more international participants from outside Europe at our annual conferences. This is an outstanding achievement but it puts a question on the table: Should EUPRERA be an international institution with global intentions? Should EUPRERA change to IPRERA? My preliminary answer:

Yes and no! EUPRERA should be perceived (and is perceived as I hope) as a liberal international organization that, of course, accepts international partici-

pants as members and as congress visitors. But right now, it seems to be too early to position EUPRERA as IPRERA (International Public Relations Education & Research Association (IPRERA) at a global scale. But that might have to be discussed in a couple of years from now.

Regular PhD. Students meetings and presentations

To support talented PhD. Students, we ought to establish regular meetings (in combination with the annual conferences). At these meetings PhD. Students could and should present and discuss their (scientific) research projects on an European/international level. We should nominate a coordinator for such an activity. Of course in this dimension EUPRERA should cooperate with prime.

I hope that many of EUPRERA members will discuss this paper. EUPRERA BoD will discuss it too, and will probably add further proposals and after that we should discuss it (and make decisions) in Lisbon 2005.