

## **ECPR GENERAL CONFERENCES**

### ***SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL HOSTS***

#### **A. GENERAL ORGANISATION: WHO DOES WHAT**

The General Conference is organised in the format of sections, panels and papers. There is also a plenary lecture and a special section organised separately from the general programme. The General Conference has taken place five times before:

- 2001 Canterbury, UK (1200 attendance, including the International Relations conference)
- 2003 Marburg, Germany (900 attendance)
- 2005 Budapest, Hungary (1350 attendance)
- 2007 Pisa, Italy (1700 attendance)
- 2009 Potsdam, Germany (2200 attendance)
- 2011 Reykjavik, Iceland. Approximately 1700 participants are expected to attend.

The ECPR Executive Committee is responsible for overseeing the general organisation of the Conference, for the selection and appointment of the Organising Team, which is composed of the Academic Convenors (the Academic Director of the ECPR and the member of the Executive Committee who holds the portfolio for the General Conference), the local organising committee chair, the Administrative Director of the ECPR and the member of Central Services staff responsible for the day to day organisation of the conference. This organising team is delegated responsibility for the conference organisation, for approving and monitoring the budget and for ensuring that the academic programme is broad and balanced. Whereas the ECPR Executive Committee is responsible for deciding on the academic programme for the Joint Sessions, the Academic Convenors of the General Conference generally have a good deal of autonomy. They select the sections and are responsible for ensuring that section chairs organise these according to established criteria and deadlines. The Academic Convenors are also responsible for the timetabling of panels.

The local organiser's role for the General Conference is similar to that of the Joint Sessions, except that the financial burden of covering local costs is lighter, because registration fees are designed to cover most organisational costs. Local hosts are, however, expected to try to find sponsors for social events such as receptions. The local organiser, together with colleagues/assistants is responsible for ensuring that local facilities are adequate for the needs of the Conference; for making appropriate arrangements for accommodation of participants; for arranging any social events and for the day-to-day running of the Conference itself. The local organiser is responsible for the allocation of panels to rooms and for ensuring that the facilities in the panel rooms are adequate.

The ECPR Central Services are responsible for ensuring the Conference is properly publicised and that the different aspects of its organisation are properly coordinated. That is, it ensures that the web site is kept up to date, the relevant people are informed of deadlines,

obligations and so on. Central Services staff are responsible for handling all organisational queries, for on-line registration and for producing the final conference programme.

The budget is drafted by the Organising Team along with the ECPR's Treasurer.

## **B. PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS/LOCATION REQUIREMENTS**

**Registration:** At least 6-8 people (graduate students have been employed in all past conferences) are needed throughout the conference, with more on the first day when most people will register. (Central Services staff are also available to help.) At registration, participants are usually given a pack of information about the host institution and locality, including maps, information about catering, transport, panel rooms, etc., as well, of course, as the conference programme booklet. Sponsors may be willing to provide small gifts or contribute towards the costs of items such as the conference wallet and badges (in return for advertising).

**ECPR-Office:** Needs to be somewhere central, preferably with a PC and printer. Ideally, a photocopier too. This is somewhere members of the Executive and Central Services staff can leave coats, papers etc., so it needs to be lockable and as close to the book exhibition/registration etc as possible.

**Book Exhibition:** Should be located in a central area where all participants have easy access and will visit frequently, i.e. by tea/coffee facilities and information desk. It needs to be in a large enough area so that receptions/coffee breaks sponsored by publishers can take place there and ideally needs to be locked up securely when not staffed during the evenings and at night. This is often the most difficult thing to find a location for.

**Plenary Lecture/Round Table:** Lecture theatre needed to accommodate approximately 250 people. The previous lecturers at the General Conference have been Jean Blondel, Ken Newton and Pippa Norris and Stefano Bartolini. Unlike the Rokkan lecturer at the Joint Sessions, who normally has a strong local connection, the idea has been to have a speaker with a very strong ECPR connection, so it should be someone who has made a very positive contribution to the Consortium. The lecturer should be agreed by the Organising Team early in the planning of the conference. If there are round tables, these too should be agreed by the Organising Team early in the planning process.

**Panel Rooms (approximately 30):** These can vary in size enormously in order to accommodate panels that are likely to attract a lot of people or else have a very specific minority interest. It is important to know well in advance how many will be available, so that the Academic Convenors know how flexible they can be in accepting section proposals. As with the Joint Sessions, it is best for them to be located within easy distance of one another.

**Information Desk:** Needs to operate throughout. People staffing the desk need to have excellent English, a knowledge of the local layout and to be able to help with all types of queries, eg. local transport, restaurants, library, photocopying facilities, etc. Probably can be staffed by graduate students.

**Meeting Rooms:** Needed for members of Executive (one room for up to about 15 people), as well as standing or research groups. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know ahead of time

how many and when these will be needed, but where possible, they can be located in panel rooms during lunch breaks.

**Computer Room:** Computing facilities need to be available to enable participants to check e-mail whilst they are at the Conference. It is also important to try to provide Wifi for those with laptops.

**Catering:** Coffee/tea and light snacks should be available throughout the Conference in a central location. Demand is high first thing in the morning, mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Ideally a low-priced buffet/cafeteria style lunch should be planned. Preferably something which people can buy on a day to day basis. If the Conference is centrally located in a city, it is likely that there will be food outlets closeby, so lunches need not be organised specifically for participants.

**Accommodation.** Local organisers need to decide whether they wish to handle this themselves, use an agency or simply provide participants with a list of hotels and leave them to make their own hotel reservations. Handling the accommodation is a great deal of work, so the latter might be the better option. It is best to block book a range of hotels, though university accommodation could also be used. There should be some very cheap accommodation available for students.

**Transport:** It is useful to give participants as much information in advance as possible, so that they can plan their travelling and budget for it. Is it recommended to travel by car? Will participants be able to park? Or train? Or by plane? The local organisers need to ensure that they provide the Central Services with this information at least 6 months before the conference takes place, so that participants can refer to the website when organising their travel.

## C. SOCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

**Receptions:** These very much depend on whether sponsors can be found. Publishers may be willing to sponsor modest receptions at lunch time (which would take place in the book exhibition area), but evening receptions are normally sponsored by the city or region where the conference takes place. One reception should take place immediately after the plenary lecture.

**Dinner for plenary lecturer and conference organisers:** Should take place immediately after the lecture and reception. Approximately 40 people.

**Other events:** local organisers should investigate possibilities for excursions and concerts to coincide with the conference. Participants would be expected to pay for these.

## D. MEETINGS

**Site visits:** A site visit should take place as soon as possible after the decision to host the conference has been made, so that the Organising Team can meet, look at the local facilities, discuss the general organisation and timetable for the conference and draft the budget. A further site visit should be made by the Organising Team approximately a year before the conference and then again approximately 3 months before the conference.

**Other meetings:** The academic convenors need to meet to agree the sections and, after the final paper deadline, the final academic programme. Team meetings can also be scheduled to coincide with other ECPR events, so that there is an opportunity to catch up.

## **E. PUBLICITY & INFORMATION**

The Central Services staff are responsible for ensuring that the Conference receives proper publicity.

**WEBSITE:** The ECPR web site will contain all information relating to the Conference, including announcements, guidelines and online forms for those wishing to propose sections, panels and papers. Details of the timetable and academic programme and online registration information and forms, travel and accommodation information, information about local restaurants, etc.

The quality of the information on the web site is entirely dependent on the Organising Team, so it is important to decide early on how this will be managed. For example, will the ECPR website include links to the local site/s, or will the local organisers send information to the Central Services? st institution establishes a link with the ECPR site and is responsible for local information

**ECPR ELECTRONIC BULLETIN:** Information for participants is included regularly in the electronic bulletin, which is sent out on (approximately) a monthly basis.

**FINAL PROGRAMME:** This will be included in the conference wallets, which participants receive at registration. It contains a list of participants and papers, conference highlights, a map showing where panel and meeting rooms are located, local information – maps, restaurants etc. and some practical information, such as where to find the nearest bank. Local organisers may be able to get local companies or publishers to sponsor this, in order to offset some of the production costs. The Central Services and local organisers should liaise over who will produce this (though the printing would need to be done locally).

## **F. LIAISON BETWEEN ECPR CENTRAL SERVICES AND LOCAL ORGANISERS**

The organisation of the General Conference involves an enormous amount of exchange of information between staff at the ECPR Central Services and the local organisers, mostly by e-mail. It is a good idea for local organisers to delegate the main administrative responsibility to a secretary or administrator, who will work part time for a number of months, assisted where necessary by graduate students. In the immediate weeks before the Conference, it may be necessary to have someone working full-time.

Local organisers will need to provide the Central Services with:

- **Contact information:** the names of the organising committee, the name of the administrative officer, e-mail address, web site address, logo etc. for all publicity information
- All local information about the social programme, accommodation arrangements, travel information etc, so that this information can be put on the web site as early as possible.

Central Services staff will need to provide local organisers with the following information:

- Details of the sections, panels and papergivers. A Microsoft Access database is used for this purpose. The database is compiled at Essex, then transferred to the host institution a few weeks before the Conference, so that it can be used to produce the list for registration, badges etc.
- Details about other meetings which will take place, such as those of ECPR standing groups, Executive Committee, research groups etc.

Central Services staff will also try to give help based on previous experience, for example, in designing the accommodation/hotel booking form, arrangements for registration, etc.

#### **G. LIAISON BETWEEN ECPR CENTRAL SERVICES AND THE ACADEMIC CONVENORS**

Because the academic side of the Conference is organised almost entirely on-line, it is essential that the website is kept up to date. This means that full and accurate details of all the sections and their convenors, all panels and their chairs and all papergivers should be forwarded by the Academic Convenors to the Central Services as soon as they are available.

The Academic Convenors are also responsible for timetabling the panels and for ensuring, in doing so, that similar topics (and people) do not overlap and that any specific requests are taken into account. When finalised, the timetable should be sent to the Central Services.

It is very helpful if all those in the Organising Team are kept informed – even of things that may not be immediately relevant - since we are all learning as we go along and input is (usually) welcome.

#### **H. BUDGET & SPONSORSHIP**

The costs of organising the Conference will vary a great deal, depending on the country and institution where it takes place. Registration fees are designed to cover all costs – both local and at the Central Services, as well as all planning meetings. This means that it is crucial from the outset to agree a budget as accurately as possible, based on local costs (so that registration fees can be set accordingly). Local costs are largely based on whether charges are made for rooms and/or whether it is necessary to employ administrative/student assistants. Other costs (such as tea & coffee, receptions, wallets & badges) do not vary a great deal from place to place. The budget should be the main agenda item for the first site visit.

Things to budget for:

- **Planning/organisation meetings:** An initial site visit, a further organisation visit approximately one year before and a final visit by Central Services staff approximately 3 months before. Other meetings may be held during the Joint Sessions.
- **Administrative/secretarial assistance:** The amount of time and, therefore, cost of this will depend largely on whether the host institution is handling all the

hotel/accommodation bookings. Administrative assistance is also needed at Essex for general queries and registration.

- **Web site:** If there is a comprehensive web site, less time will be spent answering queries from participants, so the cost of maintaining this should also be taken into account.
- **Seminar/lecture rooms, OHPs, Powerpoint facilities etc.**
- **Student help** at registration and for information desk, for assisting before the conference with signposting, stuffing conference wallets, setting up tables for the book exhibition etc. During the conference, students are needed to assist with all aspects of the local organisation, but their specific responsibilities depend on local circumstances. As many as 30-40 students were on call to help at the Budapest and Pisa conferences.
- **Dinner** for conference organisers: for approximately 40 people.
- At least one **reception** (the reception on registration day takes place in the book exhibition area and is paid for by the publishers).
- **Final programmes and conference wallets.** It may be possible to get local sponsorship for this – from a bank, hotel chain, airline etc.
- **Travel and accommodation:** for Academic Convenors, Central Services staff, Administrative and Academic Directors, round table participants, special section convenor, plenary lecturer.

As a registered charity, the ECPR does not have large reserves available to cover the costs of the General Conference and, in fact, the budget is calculated to achieve a surplus in order that other ECPR activities, such as the Graduate Conference, can be subsidised. This is done by pricing registration fees at an appropriate level and also by trying to raise sponsorship to cover the cost of specific items. The organising team works together on this, but there is a natural divide, whereby the local organisers approach local authorities and businesses for items such as:

- Receptions and other social events
- Tea/coffee
- The use of lecture theatres and panel rooms
- Conference wallets and badges
- The costs of the plenary speaker

Central Services staff always approach publishers – especially those with which the ECPR has a formal publishing relationship with – to sponsor items such as:

- Advertising in the conference programme
- Receptions/coffee breaks
- Conference wallets and badges

The special section was originally designed as a vehicle for obtaining funding to help support the organisation of the conference – in Marburg, for example, the topics were chosen specifically to attract funding from the DfG.

**I. FURTHER INFORMATION**

A General Conference handbook has recently compiled and this is circulated to all members of the Organising Team.