

Report of the Development Commission of the AIEB

Preamble

As of August 2016 the Development Commission of the AIEB consists of the following members (listed alphabetically):

1. Bucossi, Alessandra (co-ordinator)
2. Eliades, Ioannis
3. Fledelius, Karsten
4. Mariev, Sergei (co-ordinator)
5. Merianos, Gerasimos
6. Milanovic, Ljubomir
7. Nikolov, Angel
8. Preiser-Kapeller, Johannes
9. Spieser, Jean-Michel
10. Stathakopoulos, Dionysios
11. Whately, Conor
12. Woloszyn, Marcin

The e-mail addresses of the members of the commission are:

alessandra.bucossi@unive.it, ioanniseliades@gmail.com, karsten.fledelius@gmail.com, s.mariev@lmu.de, gmerianos@eie.gr, milanovic.ljubomir@gmail.com, anikolov2003@yahoo.com, johannes.preiser-kapeller@oeaw.ac.at, jean-michel.spieser@unifr.ch, dionysios.stathakopoulos@kcl.ac.uk, c.whately@uwinnipeg.ca, marcinwoloszyn@gmail.com

The present report consists of three parts. **Part I** retraces some milestones in the history of the commission to better explain its role within the AIEB and the aims of its activities. **Part II** contains a report about the activities of the commission over the past years. **Part III** contains Final Recommendations elaborated by the coordinators, which were discussed, significantly amended and approved during the meeting of the commission which took place on Wednesday, 25th of August 2016 in Belgrade.

I. History of the Development Commission of the AIEB

This section retraces some important milestones in the history of the Development Commission of the AIEB. The purpose of this section is not merely historical. The documents quoted below identify **the aims of the activities** of the Commission and its **goals and objectives**.

The idea to create the commission was a subject of several discussions prior to the Congress of the Byzantine Studies in Sofia 2011 (see e.g. the letter from Rosemary Morris, July 2011, quoted below). At the general Assembly held at Samokov on 26 August 2011 the decision to establish a Development Commission was postponed. Following a new proposal from Tim Greenwood in Spring 2013 the Bureau of the AIEB encouraged the creation of the Commission (see letter from Athanasios Markopoulos, Spring 2013, quoted below). On

02.07.2013 Prof. Markopoulos invited a number of members of National Committees to participate in the work of the commission (see letter of invitation from Athanasios Markopoulos from 02.07.13 quoted below), leading to the creation of the provisional commission consisting of A. Bucossi, Lj. Milanovic, A. Nikolov, J.-M. Spieser, D. Stathakopoulos and M. Woloszyn. During the Intercongress in Athens (held on 20/22 September 2013) a provisional commission was expanded to its present state of 12 members, through the addition of the following members: I. Eliades, K. Fledelius, S. Mariev, G. Merianos, J. Preiser-Kapeller and C. Whately (see the excerpts from the minutes of the Intercongress quoted below).

Letter from Rosemary Morris, July 2011:

This item is at the end of the Agenda for the General Assembly of the *AIEB* to be held at Samokov near Sofia on 26th August, 2011; it may therefore be useful for colleagues to have in advance a short explanation of the rationale behind the proposal. The Executive of the UK *Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies* (the British National Committee of the *AIEB*) has recently been discussing ways in which our own Society may engage more widely both with the Byzantine academic community and with a more general public which is interested in all aspects of Byzantine Studies. The Annual General meeting of *SPBS* (held at our annual symposium in Newcastle in April 2011) heard a number of speakers make suggestions about how the international society might seek to break down the barriers which exist between 'professional Byzantinists', independent scholars with no academic affiliation and, indeed, the wider public. We would like to propose, therefore, that *AIEB* sets up a Development Commission to investigate, in particular:

- Expanding the *AIEB* website, to include research papers, archaeological reports and reviews with the possibility of a 'chat room' function that will allow Byzantinists and the interested public to communicate directly with each other in their local languages.
- Raising the profile of the Association, for example by supporting major exhibitions and other media (films, television, press) activity concerning Byzantium.
- Partnerships between the Association and other relevant groups to promote issues of mutual interest (e.g. Friends of Mt Sinai; Friends of Mt Athos; Heritage groups supporting specific regions and monuments etc).
- Encouraging and promoting the careers of younger colleagues.
- Identifying ways in which the Association may reach out to all those interested in Byzantine Studies, whatever their professions.

Organisation:

- The Development Commission should be of a small size (perhaps four members initially), all from different national associations and with at least two members under 40.
- It should conduct its meetings by e-mail, via website or SKYPE.
- It should present proposals to the International Bureau of *AIEB* by early in 2013 with a view to final presentation and implementation at the next Inter-Congress meeting of *AIEB*.

Rosemary Morris (Chair, British National Committee of *AIEB* and *SPBS*).
July, 2011.

Letter from Athanasios Markopoulos, Spring 2013:

Dear colleagues,

You may remember that on the occasion of the General Assembly of the AIEB in Samokov on 26 August 2011 the decision to establish a Development Commission (proposition from Prof. Rosemary Morris / UK, see annex, *below*) was postponed (see the website of AIEB, *s.v.* International Bureau). On 16 April 2013, the British National Committee (Dr Tim Greenwood) made new propositions how to manage a swifter beginning of activities of this Commission.

Slightly modifying Dr Greenwood's suggestions, the Bureau offers to every National Committee the possibility to put forward until 18 June 2013 the latest one person as a possible member of the Development Commission. From this list of candidates the Bureau will select up to six persons and invite them to discuss immediately possibilities for future work and to come up until the end of August 2013 with proposals to be put before the Intercongress meeting of the AIEB in Athens (September 2013). The "provisional" commission should be reappointed in Athens (enlargement possible).

If you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact with me.

Yours sincerely,

Athanasios Markopoulos
Secretary of the AIEB

Letter of invitation 02/07/2013

Dear colleagues,

I would like to inform you that the Bureau of AIEB at its meeting held in Istanbul on June 25th, decided unanimously to invite you to participate in the work of AIEB as members of the Development Commission.

Please let me know if you agree. I would also like to ask prof. J.-M. Spieser to accept provisionally the function of the speaker of this Commission.

Our intention is that you begin immediately your work, so that prof. Spieser will be able to give his first report to the delegates of the AIEB on the occasion on the Intercongress meeting in Athens (20-22 September 2013). Furthermore, the Bureau decided to send you, after your reply, all the material concerning the Development Commission in order to give you all necessary information (British initiative, activities of the Bureau since then etc.).

I hope that your answer will be positive.

Sincerely yours,

Athanasios Markopoulos

Excerpts from the minutes of the Intercongress of the AIEB

Le Président rappelle ensuite que la Commission développement actuelle est provisoire. Le secrétaire général dresse la liste de ses membres :

J.-M. Spieser
A. Bucossi
D. Stathakopoulos
Lj. Milanovic
A. Nikolov
M. Woloszyn

Le bureau propose que ces personnes soient confirmées par un vote. L'AG est consultée sur des propositions de membres supplémentaires.

Le comité grec propose E. Merianos

Le comité chypriote propose Io. Eliades

Le comité autrichien propose A. Rhoby

Le comité allemand propose S. Mariev

Le comité danois propose K. Fledelius

Le Bureau pose toutefois une objection sur la candidature d'Andreas Rhoby, lequel préside déjà la commission Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae et est très actif dans la commission d'épigraphie. Une fonction supplémentaire, au sein de la Commission développement, représenterait un nombre excessif de responsabilités. Le comité autrichien propose alors J. Preiser-Kapeller.

G. Greatrex rappelle qu'il avait proposé un membre de la part du comité canadien. Il le propose à nouveau: Conor Whately. Un premier vote porte sur le nombre des membres de la commission, porté à 12.

Le vote donne :

- 1 voix contre

- 8 abstentions

- le reste des votants pour

Un second vote porte sur la composition de la commission, pour laquelle on propose les 6 membres de la commission provisoire, et les 6 nouveaux noms susmentionnés: l'AG accepte cette composition à l'unanimité moins une abstention.

II. Activities of the Commission

Already at the Intercongress in Athens Prof. J.-M. Spieser presented a **first report** of the commission (see below quotes from the minutes of the Intercongress in Athens 20/22 September 2013). Following the expansion of the Commission in Athens its members concentrated their activities on a number of issues related to the design and functions of the website of the AIEB and in particular sent a **survey** to all national committees. The result of this survey was **communicated to the bureau of AIEB** on 18/11/14 (see report by the development commission sent on 18/11/14 quoted below). Following this report, the commission received a **reply from the president** of the AIEB on December 18, 20 (quoted below). Taking up the remarks formulated in the response of Professor Koder, the final remarks in the response to the survey by Elizabeth Jeffreys (quoted below) and seeking to fulfill other tasks with which this commission was entrusted, it elaborated a series of **proposals**. The commission **met** on 24 August 2016 in Belgrade to discuss the suggestions formulated by the coordinators of the commission, Alessandra Bucossi and Sergei Mariev. During this meeting the proposals have been significantly reworked and received the title Final Recommendations (Part 3 of the present document). Sergei Mariev was invited by the Bureau of the AIEB to **present the report** on the activities of the commission during the general assembly of the AIEB on August 26, 2016 in Belgrade.

Quotes from the minutes of the Intercongress in Athens, 20/22 September 2013:

Le rapport de la Commission développement est présenté par J.-M. Spieser (comité suisse). Les membres de cette Commission ont repris les suggestions du comité anglais et déployé 2 axes de réflexion :

- le développement du site web

- les relations publiques

1) site web: J.-M. Spieser développe toutes les questions associées:

- création d'une mailing-list: la question des destinataires et des contenus se pose immédiatement;
- répandre de l'information: définir l'accès. Le système de la Newsletter paraît compliqué, implique beaucoup de travail, pose à nouveau la question des destinataires. Il paraît préférable de lui substituer la publicité des informations sur le site. Dès lors, il faut déterminer qui doit gérer la publicité des informations : passer par un webmestre (soit un technicien professionnel, solution onéreuse ; soit un collègue qui a les compétences – et la disponibilité – pour s'en occuper). Qui envoie les informations destinées à être publiées ? Les Comités nationaux ? Les individus ?
- les informations à publier: la liste comprend les projets en cours, conférences, congrès, colloques, éditions, traductions... et les listes des offres de bourses, contrats et postes;
- les liens vers tout ce qui touche au monde byzantin;
- la question délicate du forum de discussion, qui ne peut être public, mais restreint aux seuls membres de l'AIEB.

2) Partenariats et relations publiques. Là encore les propositions sont multiples:

- Ce que les membres peuvent prendre en charge: la création de collaborations avec les associations culturelles, régionales, patrimoniales, etc. Il conviendrait que le bureau lançât un appel aux comités nationaux pour faire remonter les collaborations déjà existantes et les propositions. Il faudrait également élargir les invitations aux colloques à des collègues sur des champs voisins afin d'enrichir l'interdisciplinarité et les intérêts croisés et mutuels entre champs scientifiques. Enfin fournir du matériel pédagogique pour les écoles. Pour tout cela, il faut définir ce qui est le fait du bureau et des comités nationaux;
- certaines suggestions paraissent difficiles à réaliser:
 - o soutenir des manifestations, expositions, médias : ce sont des opportunités locales, l'AIEB n'aura pas les moyens de faire sponsor;
 - o les opérations en direction du public : il faudrait que la plus grande partie du site soit accessible à tous;
 - o deux propositions particulières: «la route byzantine» (à l'image de la Romanesque Strasse en Allemagne) et les supports d'information sur les sites archéologiques.

Report by the Development commission, sent on 18/11/14

Survey on the AIEB website

The committee for the development of the AIEB website started its explorative work sending a survey to all the national committees in order to understand if they visit the AIEB webpage, if they find it useful and if they had suggestions on how to improve it.

Unfortunately we have received only 10 answers. We are well aware of the fact that we receive hundreds of requests everyday and that it is very time-consuming to reply to every single email; however, from the messages we have received, it appears clear that the low number of answers depends on the fact that the national committees perceive the AIEB as a “distant” organisation which does not provide update information (apart from details on the international congress - but even in this case the most reliable sources of information is not the AIEB but are the websites of the organizers).

There the countries that have replied:

1. Austria
2. Canada
3. Israeli
4. Italia
5. Serbia
6. UK
7. Slovakia
8. Belgium
9. Greece
10. Germany

Results of the survey:

The majority of the committees do not check regularly the AIEB site because they have the perception that it rarely gives up-to date information.

Only the Canadian committee stated that a website with an updated info page would be a “dedoublement” of other services (newsletter of the Italian Committee, Byzness [Oxford] site), while the others would be happy to have an AIEB website that could function as an information hub.

We asked what kind of news they would like to find, suggesting some topics of interest. They replied that all our suggestions can be considered important and useful:

- a) Information about the next congress (although usually the most reliable sources are the organizers’ websites);
- b) Information about the conferences concerning the Byzantine world, including, conferences where the Byzantine world is neither the main nor the unique topic;
- c) Information about available positions, including doctoral and postdoctoral possibilities for young scholars.

Amongst the other topics suggested by the committees we can find:

- The news often report about endangered cultural artefacts (damage caused to archaeological sites, endangered sites) from the Byzantine period. On occasion, the leadership of the AIEB takes action by writing letters to the relevant politicians, etc. It would be good to have a segment of the AIEB website dedicated to this cause.
- Information about
 - doctoral works, published and in progress,
 - events such as museum exhibitions, extraordinary archaeological finds,
 - links to relevant web sites,
 - contact details of scholars and lists of publications,
 - new relevant books,
 - most importantly – to get regularly email alerts about new information to be found on the AIEB web.

Given the fact that all seem to be interested in having a constantly updated website, we asked them if they were ready to provide details on events, scholarships, publications etc.

They all (apart from the Canadian committee, which is more doubtful because of the “dedoublement”) declared they are ready to collaborate and they asked also to create a newsletter to be sent to a mailing list of scholars.

Although these answers are very positive when we asked “One of the recent innovations of the website is the possibility for each national committee to have a dedicated page where each committee can put his own news. Have you already used this possibility?”, the answer was negative. It seems that the national committees would be happier to have a link to their own websites, more than creating an extra page for the AIEB website.

They all would be interested in seeing the presence of AIEB on social networks, tools that nowadays are the easiest to be checked and updated. It is crystal clear that behind the presence on social networks there is a human being who updates them!

What conclusion may we draw from these remarks? Actually our commission is very grateful to the British Committee and, principally, to Elizabeth Jeffreys, who signed its report, for the final remarks of its answers. It is worth to quote these lines before commenting them:

“The AIEB would perform a very useful service if a way could be found to post notices of conferences, scholarships, jobs etc visibly to all – not buried on a National Committee’s page. This would, of course, require the services of someone who would be willing to receive notices and then post them – (...) If it became clear that notices were posted on the AIEB site quickly and regularly then, by a snowball effect, traffic would increase. Ultimately this process could be extended to details of courses, podcasts, archaeological reports etc. But the first step is make the site attractive as a source of easily accessible information. It would be very good if this could be accomplished before the Belgrade Congress!”

Suggestions:

1. It would be very useful for all researchers in our field to find collected somewhere details on conferences, scholarships, jobs etc. and not to have to look in various sites of national committees or depend on lists which not everybody knows.
2. This is possible only if someone takes the charge of posting regularly the notices he will get. It should be decided who may send notices to this person, who is in charge. Our point of view is that every researcher could do it directly. Having an intermediary, president, secretary or somebody else at the level of the National Committees would delay the circulation of information.
3. We wish therefore that the bureau of the AIEB looks for a scholar who would accept this duty. We may say that, in our commission, some people would surely be ready to do it.
4. A link should be available on the AIEB website allowing those who are interested in getting the AIEB newsletter to give their e-mail. For this news-letter to be known, it should be sent automatically to the president and secretary of each national committee.
5. The repartition of information, for each national committee between its actual site and the dedicated page on the AIEB site should be decided by each committee. But we suggest that each national committee should at least put on the web site of the AIEB the names and mail addresses of its president (and if they want of some other members from its bureau). The national committees, which cannot afford to maintain a website, could use this place for their news.
6. We think that the most of the news circulating in the national committees may be of interest of our whole community and therefore deserve to be available on page dedicated to every national committee which is available on the AIEB website (this should be valid even for the committees which have their own web page). Of course, it is up to these committees to decide how to manage this question, but we propose that at least the information mentioned above under point 5 is given.
7. It should be made sure, that all national committees have the id and the password, which allow them to get in their pages (for instance, the Swiss National Committee did not yet get it).

Answer December 18, 2014 from Johannes Koder

“In this context it is, I think, essential to have in mind, that the budget of the AIEB is limited – as a consequence it is up to the members of the AIEB, the national committees, to inform within the web site of the AIEB in time about any news (congresses, symposia, new publications, advertising of academic positions, ...).

As you mentioned also yourself in your letter to the national committees: *It must be obvious for all of us that these informations can only be available, if each national committee sends them regularly to the general secretary of the AIEB, who is in charge of the web site.*”

18.12.2014

III. Final Recommendations

Taking into account the reply from Johannes Koder (quoted above), the suggestions formulated by Elizabeth Jeffreys (quoted above) and seeking to address some of the questions that had been put forward in the period leading to creation of the commission (see Section I of this document), during the meeting held in Belgrade on Wednesday 25th of August 2016 the Development Commission discussed and approved the following final recommendations.

A. AIEB and its website as an international "hub" for Byzantinists

The AIEB and its Website should function as the international hub for Byzantinists, this means that the website should become a place where the most recent relevant information (on conferences, projects, exhibitions, but also job openings etc.) can be found; to achieve this result we consider of fundamental importance the creation of:

- a mailing list
- a frequently updated website (not necessarily identical with the current website, but linked with it)

The presence of the AIEB on Social Networks is also considered as extremely desirable.

The creation of such this virtual hub does not presuppose any financial effort on part of the AIEB, to address the concern expressed by Prof. Koder in his reply from December 18, 2014. A successful operation of this virtual hub presupposes the activities of a "content editor", who would be willing to offer his/her time and effort to serve the worldwide community of Byzantinists.

The "content editor" should have two tasks:

- 1) to receive notes on relevant initiatives and news from all partners (national committees, research institutions, cultural organizations such as museums and libraries, individual researchers etc.), circulate this material via a newly created mailing list, make this information available on a website and archive this information.
- 2) to proactively approach all national committees and relevant institutions, at least once a month, and solicit them to provide information that can be published via the newly created mailing list and on the corresponding website.

Taking into consideration that the activities of a "content editor" is a time-consuming task, we suggest assigning this role on a temporary basis, and only for a limited period of time, and rotating the duty among the members of the Development Commission and/or other candidates proposed by national committees. The rotation of this task will ensure that the "virtual hub" draws on the rich experience of different "content editors" and their familiarity with the activities of the countries which they are most familiar with. Each "content editor" in office should rely on the support of the Development Commission in general and the coordinators of the commission in particular, whose task should be to ensure the rotation of

the "content editor" role and to provide technical and logistical support to the person who is holding this office.

The development commission is asking the General Assembly of the AIEB for a mandate to undertake all necessary steps in the nearest future to put the plans outlined under point A above into practice and to ensure successful operation of this "hub" at least until the next Intercongress.

B. Appendix

During the Belgrade International Congress the members of the Development Commission had the opportunity to speak to various participants; on the basis of these exchanges the Development Commission would like to add a final suggestion that could enrich the structure of the future international congresses. Since today academic research depends almost exclusively on grants and funds obtained through research projects and international partnerships, the future international congresses would be extremely useful occasions, especially for younger scholars, if they became not only a place in which research is shared, but also a place to find partners for future research projects. A special "forum" could be dedicated to the presentation of funding opportunities and networking. Invited speakers from various European and Non-European associations and institutions, which fund research and encourage scholarly cooperation and exchange, could be invited and given a dedicated slot of time to present the existing research funding opportunities and research cooperation schemes. Following the presentations, interested researchers should be allowed an appropriate amount of time to meet and discuss in order to facilitate networking and exchange of ideas.

The Development Commission thanks the AIEB Bureau (2011-2016), welcomes the newly elected AIEB Bureau and confirms its willingness to continue to serve the international community of Byzantinists in order to implement the proposals contained in this document.

Place and Date:

Belgrade, 24 August 2016

Members present:

1. Bucossi, Alessandra (co-ordinator)
2. Eliades, Ioannis
3. Mariev, Sergei (co-ordinator)
4. Milanovic, Ljubomir
5. Preiser-Kapeller, Johannes
6. Spieser, Jean-Michel
7. Stathakopoulos, Dionysios
8. Woloszyn, Marcin