

Consortium for European Research with Election Studies (CERES)

Report from the Chairs of the Executive Board by Mark Franklin and Sylvia Kritzinger (co-chairs)

CERES was founded at the time of the ECPR General Conference in Reykjavik, August 2011, at an open meeting attended by 48 individuals representing election studies throughout Europe. At that meeting the draft statutes were adopted. Those statutes set out that “The CERES Association provides technical and methodological support for research on electoral democracy and a platform for collaboration of national election studies with each other and with the European Election Studies (EES)”. Not stated in the Statutes is a hope that CERES will facilitate the creation of a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) under the auspices of the EU's DG Research, providing security of funding for research on electoral democracy in the member countries of the EU and at the EU level. The statutes call for there to be a “General Meeting ... held at the fringes of the bi-annual General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) held in odd calendar years.” Such a meeting was held in conjunction with the ECPR General Conference held in Bordeaux in September 2013. This report is prepared for the next such occasion, the General Meeting to be held in conjunction with the Montreal General Conference of the ECPR in August 2015.

CERES currently has no funding and hence no support staff. Thus, among many other deficiencies, it has no permanent website – merely a web page associated with the Chair's personal website (www.eui.eu/Personal/Franklin/CERES.html) – soon to be transferred to the Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute.

More importantly, lack of support staff means no-one to peruse Calls for Proposals coming from the EU. This lack of staff is responsible what might be the greatest failure of the past two years – the greatest failure since CERES' formation – our failure to learn of a call last year for proposals to acquire ESFRI Road Map status (the list of infrastructures in line for consideration as potential ERICs) – but see below. One matter high on our agenda for the forthcoming Board Meeting (to be held in Mannheim in November) will be to ensure that such a lapse (if it was) does not occur again.

We also take this opportunity to ask all CERES members to inform a member of the Board if you hear of any Call from DG Research that might be construed as a call for infrastructure proposals.

In fact, it is not clear whether, even had we known of the Call, we would have been able to meet the conditions for participation, which seemed to be designed to exclude any but hard science applications. Steps to obtain hard science credentials are not out of the question and will be discussed at the Board meeting in Mannheim (see below).

Despite this possible lapse, CERES did undertake a variety of activities over the two-year period between General Meetings, of which the most important was a meeting of National Election Study Principal Investigators held at the University of Gothenburg in December 2013 to evaluate the possibility of establishing a module of questions to be included either in national election studies or as a stand-alone module for the CSES, European Values Study, European Social Survey or other vehicle. The two-day conference was successful in laying the groundwork for such a module, but the project foundered on the problem of finding a vehicle appropriate to the task. Approaches to the CSES appeared unpromising and the larger project was dropped, though a two question module (see the CERES website) was recommended for inclusion in national election studies as space might be available.

The Gothenburg meeting's main benefit was to provide a second opportunity (the first was a Workshop held at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in February 2013) for National Election Study PIs to work together collaboratively, honing the links that might one day be required for productive negotiations with the CEC and providing legitimacy to CERES as a functioning association.

A third meeting of PIs will be held in conjunction with a Workshop to be held in Mannheim in November this year, celebrating the 35th anniversary in 2014 of European (Parliament) Election Studies.

The Mannheim workshop will also provide the opportunity for a meeting of the CERES Board, which, among other things, will consider the problem of obtaining the credentials that would permit future applications for ESFRI Roadmap status. That meeting will, it is hoped, include presentations of the various CERES activities begun at the time of the NIAS workshop (see the Report from the Chair 2013).

(Signed)

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