ISHA Policy Paper 2020

The following Policy Paper was made in order to outline the basic principles and plans of the International Board and Council of the International Students of History Association (ISHA) for the term of 2020. For the second time, the ISHA term follows the calendar year, which means that the new ISHA Team has started on 1 January and will stay on board until 31 December. The registration process, to be a registered association under German law (Eingetragener Verein) is finally finished, but ISHA is still trying to get recognised as a charitable non-profit (gemeinnützig) organisation which will hopefully happen this year. The new officials will continue in the steps of the previous Officials and use the good foundation that was laid by them.

Communication & Transparency

As communication and transparency was one of the main focal points during the last term, we continue to improve the processes and mechanisms regarding these topics during our term. Last year’s plan to improve communication with the sections has been set in motion and we plan to proceed with the premise. We will keep on updating our contact list for sections, members, partners and patrons. There is also an extensive list of universities and faculties that still lacks depth, but this term we plan to add more details to it. A basic, but well-maintained structure is key to be able to apply a better communication strategy and to gather new ideas, new contacts, and new opportunities from outside our direct surroundings, to be able to expand our network in a more sustainable way.

In the contemporary world the role of social media steadily increases, while ISHA is still falling behind in terms of media. In this term we are going to boost our presence through various platforms to reach out to more people, particularly in the student demographic. We plan to do that by adding the Webmaster to the PR Committee, who will constantly be informed about news and changes within ISHA and about projects of our partners. This way, we cut out the middleman between the Webmaster, who is essential for our virtual identity and its practical part, and the PR Committee that is, among other things, responsible for the theoretical part of our external image. There will also be many initiatives that will give our members, who are not a part of the International Board or Council, an opportunity to get familiar with our structures, benefits of being a member and our Officials in general. By creating this opportunity we aim to embellish our outer image and encourage our members to ask questions, give new impulses and suggestions, as well as to critique certain aspects of ISHA that in their opinion need changing. Moreover, there are many groups, both internal and external, on various platforms made by the previous Officials that we aim to bring back to life or intensify their usage.
There will also be a tenacious tendency to improve our internal communication by seeking out new mechanisms, apps, and programs that provide a clear sound, satisfactory picture, and general accessibility.

Committees

Being a member of a committee is the single most powerful and transparent way for an external member to have an influence in the decision making, structure changing and overall contribution to ISHA. For the time being, there are five committees, namely; the Fundraising Committee, the Project Management Committee, the Public Relations Committee, the Training Committee and the Alumni and PhD Network Committee. Each member of ISHA can be a part of an unlimited number of committees, but for the optimal influence and results, a general suggestion is to pick one to be a member of. Committees will be led by willing and motivated Council members who will need to report on the progress and activities on biweekly Officials meetings as the spokespersons. The International Board will encourage and incite projects, committees’ meetings, and remind spokespersons to send their written reports for the GA. All the committees will be heavily promoted, especially ones that lack members in order to keep the workload balance between Council members stable and to attract people to join and maintain the sustainability and utility of a committee. Benefits for the deserving committee members will also be thought of, which will be communicated in later newsletters and GAs. Committees will have the following tasks:

- Fundraising Committee: They will seek out funding opportunities, grants, and potential sponsors who might be able to contribute to our association and the planned events. Therefore, the quality of the new projects, policies, and programmes would be increased. Now that the process of becoming a charitable association (by German law) is entering its final stage, the Fundraising Committee will be able to support ISHA’s events and projects in a more prominent manner. Economic proficiency and experience with applying for grants is desirable for this committee.

- Public Relations Committee: The PR Committee will focus on heightening the publicity and transparency of all seminars and other events, as well as the work of the Officials. Moreover, we will put an accent on local sections and their activities to showcase hardworking sections that will serve as an example to other sections. This will be done by using promotional material such as merchandise and social media. The Webmaster will play an important role here and will also be heavily included in the theoretical part of the PR work. Creativeness, openness, and business skills are crucial for this committee.

- Project Management Committee: The PMC will try to give valuable advice to the sections organising events, regarding the application process and general organisational questions of the seminars. More prominence will also be given to the communication with the organising teams. The sections should hand in their applications for organising a seminar to the PMC, which will then subsequently express their opinion to the General Assembly. Punctuality, orderliness, and previous event organising experience will come in handy for this committee.

- Alumni & PhD Network Committee: They will contact ISHA alumni and PhD students so as to make the Alumni and PhD Network more active and thereby gain support
from them and include them in the organisation of PhD activities taking place at seminars. They will also organise ISHA Alumni events.

- Training Committee: The goal of this committee is the raising of the academic standards with particular regard to abstracts, applications, and presentations, thereby providing ISHA members with valuable skills for their further academic career. They will organise separate workshops on ISHA seminars tackling one of the “soft” skills on each seminar.

**Structure, Statutes, Membership, Sections**

To be recognised as a charitable association under German law means that we have to continue adapting parts of our Statutes and structures. “Think Tank for Changes to the Statutes and Standing Orders” is still in place. As we go through our term we will reread the Statutes, remove redundant articles, add clearer explanations, and vote for necessary changes on the GA, first for the sole reason of being recognised as a charitable association, then for the general improvement of ISHA. We will try to look upon more experienced student organisations for structural and practical changes. There are still some misconceptions about the membership in ISHA which we plan to solve by making comprehensive schemes and flowcharts that will be shared around. The relics of previous ISHA structures are still rooted in our basic conception of ISHA, namely sections, which also need to be explained more thoroughly.

**Consolidation/expansion**

Experience has taught us that it is easier to establish a section than to maintain its activity through generations. That is even more true now-a-days with the booming student mobility programs that disperse our members around the globe. More often than not, city sections and individual memberships do not go hand in hand. Students come and go, leaving the section without fresh members and a section dies out. Nevertheless, it creates an excellent opportunity for ISHA people who take part in student mobility programs to spread the word about ISHA in cities where ISHA has no section. That is an issue that ISHA has been dealing with for more than a few years. The ratio between consolidation and expansion has always been debated about, but as every previous International Board, we will try to excel in both fields. There are certain sections with great potential that just lack international attendance; however, we plan to attract them to restart going to seminars. On the other hand, there is a constant need for a balanced expansion of ISHA. One of the first steps towards it is the forming of the ISHA Expansion Think Tank, whose goal is to discuss possible opportunities for establishing new sections. Our goal is also to establish an Expansion Committee in future. One way of consolidating the sections is to create ISHA identity with perks, merchandise, giveaways, public promotions, Youtube clips, and movies from the seminars. That atmosphere is bound to get people to share their ISHA experience with other members of their community and attract students all over the world.
Partners/Associate Partners

While ISHA has quite the numerous network of partners and associate partners, cooperation and communication with some of them is, sadly, not on the adequate level and has to be renewed, which will be one of the main projects this year. This was already started at the very end of the last term with the renewal of the partnership contract with EGEA to continue our friendship and interdisciplinary cooperation. Immediate reestablishment of contact with our Patrons will be an important point in our term. Since our last big project with EGEA did not get funds, we plan to cooperate with our Partners on smaller and more realistic projects. Although there is a tendency to expand our network of Partners and Patrons, the prerequisite for that is to make stronger ties and conduct better communication with existing Partners and Patrons.

Academic Standard

One specific element of ISHA has been in a steady downward glide for more than a decade. High academic standard is something all International Boards had strived to, but not many achieved. Our team is determined to make some changes there by putting an accent on the Training Committee. We plan to have special Training Committee Workshops that will deal with the “soft” skills, for example, quotation, writing an abstract, public speaking, writing a paper, giving a presentation, moderating a workshop, etc. This is something that everybody involved in academia will appreciate and have a use from it. That way, our members get training that they can use in future seminars, which will in turn almost definitely increase the academic quality of a seminar. There will always be new and inexperienced applicants, but by implementing this strategy we will create academically competent members who can pass this knowledge to future generations. With that being said, the distinction and balance between educational and academic elements needs to be considered. That is also why the Training Committee is of utter importance for this term.

The above mentioned goals can only be achieved through cooperation and support of our entire community. The key is in the balance, careful and patient planning, and good communication. We all share one common idea and that is to take ISHA to the great new heights.

Yours sincerely,

In name of the International Board and the Council of the International Students of History Association (ISHA)