DRAFT MINUTES

31th Meeting of the IUC Association Assembly

and

36th Meeting of the IUC Association Board

Held in Zagreb, at the Institute Ruđer Bošković (IRB) on 8 December and through internet from 8 to 22 December 2023.

PARTICIPATED in Zagreb: Nada Bruer Ljubišić, Berta Dragičević, Sigmund Grønmo, Hrvoje Kraljević, Krunoslav Pisk, Zvonimir Šikić, Ksenija Turković, Dušica Vujaklija (as a candidate member of the Association)

PARTICIPATED online: Wieger Bakker, Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund, Milena Dragičević-Šešić, Peter Fischer-Appelt, Frank Laubert, Geoffrey Nice, Hans Egil Offerdal, Pavao Rudan, Snježana Prijić-Samaržija, Hans Joachim Seitz, Ivan Šimonović, Aleksandar Štulhofer, Mitja Žagar

A quorum is established by participation of 20 out of 30 members.

All the documents – including reports, were circulated to all members before the meeting.

Prof. Pisk opened the meeting and greeted all present.

Prof. Grønmo conveyed warm regards to everyone from Prof. Ørjar Øyen.

Prof. Pisk reminded the Assembly that the organization of an IUC Association started in 1994 to secure the legal and organizational framework for the functioning of the IUC as consortium of universities and its programmes. He introduced dr. Duška Vujaklija, course director of the longstanding IUC programme on Microbial Metabolites.

The IUC Assembly meeting will last until 22 December, and members would be able to react through internet.

1. Ms. Bruer presented the report on recent developments.

In 2023 there were 56 IUC programme with 2005 participants, 193 of them online. 9 programmes have been cancelled due to organisational or financial reasons. Trend towards in person meetings continued. Majority of programmes were held in person, and technology was used only sporadically when certain lectures were not able to come. Only 8 programmes were structured in a hybrid way, while 24 programmes worked only in person. The average number of people physically present at the programme was 33. The decrease in number of participants from last year is only noted for online participants, not in-person participants, so the figures for participants are close to pre-pandemic times. However, the number of conferences is in the upward trend, while the number of courses has declined from pre-pandemic times even up to 30%.

Prof. Šimonović held a meeting with the Minister of science, Prof. Fuchs at the end of the last year discussing mid-term possible developments and the possible increases of the coefficients to University of Zagreb, so that IUC could have the third full time employee before. The Minister showed willingness to find a solution for these issues as well as for the continuation of the Ministry support. The contract with the Ministry was signed in April on 100.000 Euro, and IUC Association received 10% of funds. The remaining funds would come after the final report is accepted at the end of the year. There were 169 grantees from the Croatian Ministry Scholarship. 3 grants were issued from SE European Scholarship fund and 6 grants from Marija and Mirjan Damaška funds. Reports are being prepared for both Ministry and Prof. Damaška.

Prof. Šimonović, Prof. Pisk and Ms. Bruer held a meeting with rector of University of Zagreb, Prof. Lakušić and Vice-rectors professors Pentek and Ostojić at the very end of the last year. Rector Lakušić presented the intentions of University of Zagreb with the building while the IUC delegation presented the operation of the IUC as well as its historical identity. Since the contract between IUC and University of Zagreb has expired with the beginning of the 2023, it was agreed that University would send a new version. The new contract suggestion was received only at the following meeting between Prof. Šimonović and rector Prof. Lakušić on 9 May. This meeting was attended also by vice-rector Prof. Pentek and Mr. Frano Hartman, Head of the CAAS and director of Dormitory and Ms. Bruer. University of Zagreb delegation presented their view that the IUC should cover its part of utility costs, a percentage in the investment as well as the commercial fees for the rent of the space. In this suggestion, minimum of funds was set, but the maximum was unlimited. University of Zagreb leadership also expressed their position that the rent of the space would not be crucial if the Dormitory would have better occupancy. Ms. Bruer reminded about higher Dormitory prices, not competitive to the new dorm of University of Dubrovnik. It was agreed that detailed analysis of possible dormitory prices and its occupancy would be made available to the IUC, while IUC would make additional efforts to secure new programmes that would cover the occupancy of the dormitory. Unfortunately, the IUC is still waiting for the information necessary to respond to the proposal of the new Agreement with the University of Zagreb. The IUC received information from the Dormitory about the total revenues in 2022 coming from IUC programmes, but without the information on the IUC’s percentage in the Dormitory’s operation although reminders were sent on more occasions. Unfortunately, University of Zagreb has not delegated a representative to be a part of the IUC Executive Committee /vice-chair of the EC. Vice-rector prof. Pavičić has been present at the May meeting while there was no representative at the October meeting.

In May the contract for Nikolina Vekić has expired. Ms. Heli Hajdić Nikolić, General Secretary of the University of Zagreb has found a way to continue her employment for half time at the University of Zagreb, arranging a tender for a long-term substitute for the currently absent colleague. The tender has been announced in mid-April but there was a short break for Ms. Vekić which has been covered by the full-time contract with the IUC Association, to be continued for half time, once the half time University of Zagreb contract would come into force again. Unfortunately, University of Zagreb could not secure a full-time position for Ms. Vekić – as it was arranged with the Ministry, since the contract between the IUC and University has not been signed.

The IUC office has applied in February to the Fulbright specialist programme that envisioned the engagement of a prof. of East European history John Cox from North Dakota State University to help activate academic staff of the region in the IUC academic programmes. The are still no results from this tender. Only the final review is pending.

University of Zagreb management has introduced a new regulation according to which working weekends are no-longer being paid for, but instead a free day can be used in other parts of the year when there are less activities. Working holidays remain to be paid. Due to the work overload the IUC office staff has no space to be using additional free days, due to numerous working weekends. After consultations with DDG and the Executive Secretary, DG decided that IUC staff will be compensated for working weekends from IUC’s Association resources. The IUC office has received specific instructions from the University of Zagreb, prohibiting Office to communicate with media regarding the University of Zagreb without its prior approval. The DG suggested to the Executive Secretary to interpret that instruction narrowly, meaning that it is relevant only for matters related to the University of Zagreb and instructed the Executive Secretary to freely communicate to media on matters that pertain the IUC Association and its programmes. If necessary, DG will engage with the University of Zagreb accordingly.

Prof. Seitz printed the Academic programme brochure for 2023 as each year. This is the most valuable contribution to the visibility of the IUC.

As part of the EU WITEA project Ms. Vekić took part at the workshop held at Hellenic Mediterranean University in Crete in January and on a project meeting in Brno in April. The IUC has carried out its part of the project: organising dissemination event that took place in Dubrovnik from 29 to 31 March. The project has passed the final evaluation and would get the full planned financing.

IUC is involved in the special academic programme in memory of Kathy Wilkes, together with University of Oxford and Herbert Simon Society in Turin. IUC hosted a conference in 2022 while in 2023 the IUC was to send two lecturers (Prof. Zvonimir Šikić and Prof. Dunja Jutronić) and a moderator (Prof. Prijić Samaržija) to Oxford. In 2024 the conference would take place in Turin and again the IUC would need to send two lecturers and a moderator and this should also be accepted as a part of the IUC Association programme for 2024.

Ms. Bruer took part in the Rectors’ Forum of SE Europe and W Balkans, that took place in Rijeka on 4 and 5 September. This participation was enabled by Prof. Prijić-Samaržija, who was elected as Forums’ President for next 2 years. Ms. Bruer presented the work of the IUC and as a follow-up send specific information to different regional rectors.

The IUC office had one intern that unfortunately left the IUC ahead of the scheduled time due to personal reasons. Due to very high costs of living in Dubrovnik the office was not able to secure any other intern, so student support was hired. Even this was a challenge due to work fluctuation of students and from July to September 3 different students worked in the office. It is becoming more difficult to secure interns in the period when the IUC needs help in the office due to high living costs and inability to get the room in the dorms since they also rent rooms at commercial prices.

The IUC Auditor Mr. Offerdal has advised the EC to engage in the operational plan for the future of the IUC in the following directions:

• Generally: make a strategic operational plan for investing certain amount of money of the current financial balance within the next 2-3 years. These should be invested – in a coherent and responsible manner – in activities that can contribute to boost the academic output, profile, visibility, and recognition of the IUC as a relevant and solid centre for advanced studies.

• Concretely: evaluate the tasks undertaken by staff at the IUC office as well as the workload. Which tasks are important; is the office properly staffed given the high volume of activities; are there important things that should be done that (due to lack of capacity) are neglected; are there functions that can, reasonably, be offloaded/outsourced, etc.?

• Concretely: consider how the IUC can take better advantage of its web page, social media, and other electronic instruments as tools for the goal of expanding academic- and educational activities / including possibly Alumni club

Based on these suggestions, DG, DDG and ES had number of meetings and decided to move cautiously forward, to keep the financial safe-cushion for the unexpected developments and move in the direction of engaging course directors to make scientific output available and visible, organizing modules that are part of longer programs from (coalitions/consortia of) partners and exploring possibilities of BIP (Blended Intensive Programmes) and Micro-credentials. This project is ongoing.

Due to the fact that the IUC logo is no longer compatible for the use on the contemporary digital media, the IUC office has worked with (different) designers in order to find a new solution that would be both compatible with contemporary use and visually and symbolically acceptable. At the last meeting of the EC the solution of the designer Pero Mrnarević has been accepted by the EC and the office would undertake the transition to the new visual identity during next 6 months.

Prof. Grønmo commended the level of activity that is shown in the report. Noting that the number of participants is high although number of courses decreasing is a sign of a good potential and shows interest for the IUC. However, the stagnation of cooperation with University of Zagreb could be a sign of lack of knowledge about the IUC. He noticed that it is disappointing that historical role of the IUC is not there, so the IUC has a task and challenge to improve this situation. He suggests showing that the work that is done is increasing the value of the IUC for the University of Zagreb.

Ms. Dragičević referred to the recently published paper about the operation in the building run by University of Zagreb which can lead the reader to the misunderstanding that it is being handled by the IUC and that the IUC is earning money from commercial activities in the building and suggested to ask for additional explanation being published since one cannot forbid institutions to give information about their activities. The image of the IUC could be tainted with the newspaper article. She also reminded the Assembly that the building has been given to the University by the city for the IUC activities.

Prof. Grønmo expressed strong disagreement with the policy of banning University employees to communicate with the media. Since this may have effect to the independence of the IUC as a Centre, it could not be accepted.

Prof. Pisk stressed that the activities of the IUC Association will and are public, according to the Association Charter, so it is our duty to communicate with the press.

Since, according to the law the IUC staff are employees of University of Zagreb and legally the employer has the right to make these kind of restrictions, Prof. Šikić suggested to make “off the record” statements or that other functionaries of the IUC (Director General) or the Association (President), who are not employees of the University make these statements to the press.

Prof. Turković affirmed that the employees own the loyalty to the employer, but in some recent cases in the court for human rights in Strasbourg Croatia lost. The situation where IUC employees would be at risk should be avoided, but it is bad for the University to make such restrictions.

Some members of the Association suggested that the statement regarding the mentioned article is issued and signed by someone else, rather than the office.

With no online comments the report was unanimously approved.

1. Ms. Bruer presented the financial report for 2023 in Zagreb, while the same document was circulated among all members. This is the preliminary financial report since the final one can only be made at the very end of the year. Income in fees would be close to expectations while contribution from the Ministry should also arrive by the end of the year. Expenditures were according to plans, while some 6000 Euros was spent more on scholarships due to higher costs. Also, University of Zagreb has not sent the bill for utility costs. Final numbers would depend on this bill. Mr. Offerdal would do the final auditing in spring 2024 and prepare the final financial report. His financial report for the year 2022 as well as the final Budget for 2023 are part of this financial report.

Members of the Association reviewed and unanimously approved the financial report for 2023.

1. Ms. Bruer presented the preliminary budget for 2024. It has been accepted at the October EC Meeting and it planned the deficit that would be taken from the incoming balance (IUC reserve) to undertake tasks from the Item 13 of the Report (academic visibility and social media coverage). It also included recent inflations in expenditures as well as the compensation to the staff for working on weekends since this is no longer being paid by University of Zagreb. However, IUC is writing to the Ministry to ask for additional funding that would compensate inflation, since long-term deficits are in no way sustainable.

Prof. Turković offered some good practices from her programme to advertise academic activities and attract more courses (which are in decline). One is to suggest to course directors to use their IUC course to advertise their programme to Erasmus students. Another is that the IUC course is integrated in the module for law students and offers them ECTS points after competition. She also informed the Assembly that the programme of EU Substantive Criminal law has applied for additional sources from the American Embassy for part of the programme regarding LGBTQ topics.

Dr. Peter Fischer Appelt expressed his reservations regarding the budget proposal with such a high deficit. His suggestion was to reduce the deficit to zero by reducing following items: Travel expenses, Scholarships IUC, web development, equipment, Miscellaneous, Transfer to University of Zagreb, Earmarked projects, IUC, visibility, including book and online courses/working paper expenses. He also suggested increasing the income as of academic year 2024/2025 by charging from every course and conference participant a fee of 50 Euro, with reduction for courses with themes proposed by the IUC – EC. He also supports more course directors to run EU supported courses, but that no such programmes are being run directly by the IUC. His suggestion is to reduce the workload of the Secretariat, rather than increasing it. His final suggestion is not to follow the proposed project of investing into IUC visibility or structuring an alumni since those project may not be efficient.

Mr. Laubert also expressed reservations regarding the preliminary budget since in his view there is no acceptable balance between the income and expenditures. If it is an exceptional individual case, he would not object but such a systemic development he finds threatening. He noted general development in collection on fees and reminded that the IUC fully depends on the Ministry’s annual contribution. Therefore, he suggested finding ways to reduce the IUC’s expenses. He also suggested not enlarging the course and conference program but focusing on certain topics which could be promoted by granting course directors and participants some discount on their fees, also carefully calculated. Along with the DG’s initiative to establish new programs on cross-cutting topics, he also suggests: “The crisis of democracies through creeping erosion”. His suggestion to the DG and the EC would be not to fall short of a final reserve of 100 000 EUR to keep the IUC infrastructure on the safe side.

Mr. Offerdal responded to Mr. Laubert by stating that although the deficit is not sustainable in the long run, it has been a political decision by the IUC EC to bring down the accumulated savings, and to invest in the future relevance of the IUC and, consequently, future increased incomes; thus, it has been done on purpose. He also agreed that the strong dependency of the IUC on the grant from the Ministry has repeatedly been addressed in the auditor's reports over the years, and it is still among others – (the most crucial one being the relevance of the IUC as compared to other similar actors in the field) the biggest threats to the future operation of the IUC. He agrees that from a purely financial point of view, the IUC should have a 'cushion' to rely on in case of unexpected happenings. However, it would be extremely difficult to cut expenditures, without putting the relevance, and the future of the IUC into play. He suggests finding a way to increase the incomes and to diversify risk of dependency on the grant from the Ministry. But also enabling the IUC to provide a relevant 'product' to the various actors (donors, academic community, universities, students, staff etc. etc.) in the 21st century. He would include these addressed issues in the upcoming annual auditor's report (to be presented at the EC meeting in May 2024).

With two votes against (Dr. Fischer Appelt and Mr. Laubert), the Budget has been accepted by the majority vote.

Prof. Pisk concluded that Minutes of the Association board along with comments of two members that were against as well as response of the Auditor, would be submitted to the DG, DDG and EC members for the May EC meeting.

1. Programme for the 2024 has been submitted for review. 60 programmes have been announced while it is still expected to receive some announcements for fall 2024. Prof. Grønmo noted that the high level of activity is a good sign.

All members unanimously accepted the programme for 2024.

1. Suggestions for the new IUC Association members have been circulated to all through mail by the president of the Steering Committee Prof. Bakker. All are longstanding course directors and IUC friends: Dr. Vuko Brigljević, Prof. Ethel Brooks, Prof. Andrea Feldman, Dr. Simona Kuti, Prof. Lee Kendall Metcalf, Dr. Dušica Vujaklija and all have been unanimously accepted and welcomed into the IUC Association.
2. Suggestions for the members of the IUC Association governing bodies have also been circulated to all through mail by the president of the Steering Committee Prof. Bakker. Those were:
* As President: Krunoslav Pisk;
* As Executive Secretary: Nada Bruer Ljubišić;
* As Members of the Board: Sigmund Grønmo, Hrvoje Kraljević, Milena Dragičević Šešić
* As Members of the Supervisory Board: Hans Joachim Seitz, Vida Demarin, Aleksandar Štulhofer

All nominees have accepted the nomination. There were no other counter-proposals.

The suggestion was unanimously accepted. Prof. Pisk thanked members for re-election and mentioned that according to Croatian law the President must be Croatian citizen while the Vice-president may be foreign. He also noted that there is an excellent overlap with people who are in Association and are and used to be in IUC governing bodies which gives an institution a coherent structure.

As a part of the meeting of the IUC Association board it was suggested to nominate Prof. Sigmund Grønmo as a Vice-president of the IUC Association and members of the Board unanimously accepted the suggestion.

1. Different topics were discussed, namely at the meeting in Zagreb. Prof. Turković emphasized that the IUC can rely (more) on the support from professors from University of Zagreb who are organizing courses. She mentioned that the Dean of Law faculty is giving app. 1300 Euro to each international course, or 2600 for each conference, so these funds can be used to either cover course or conference fees or expenses of incoming lecturers.

Prof. Grønmo also suggested activating course directors from University of Zagreb to influence the governance of the University. One suggestion might be to invite past and current course directions to an informal meeting organized by the IUC. Topics that could be discussed is how the IUC could be improved and how to improve the relations to University of Zagreb. By inviting them would be also mobilizing them in a positive and instructive way.

Prof. Pisk reminded that similar meeting has been organized when the IUC was facing the stopping of financing through the Ministry, so course directors were signing the petition to continue with the support of the IUC.

Ms. Dragičević referred to some of the topics that have been brought up. She noted that the functioning of the IUC is a miracle – despite of all odds. The visibility of the Centre in Croatia is rather low and intellectuals do not know much about it. Although the Centre does not have a good self-promotion, people keep coming and that is also a promotion. As far as renovation of the building that University of Zagreb claims costs so much, she reminded that Croatia is full of EU money, so one must be prepared to use it. She regretted that much energy is lost instead of getting together and working toward the same goal since the IUC provides much invisible income from different parts.

Prof. Šikić noted that members of the University governance today are not connected to the IUC in any way. Without connections they do not understand the mission and the building, looking at the strictly civil engineering point of view is a financial burden.

Dr. Vujaklija noted that as an organizer of a programme, she is only noticing the increase in prices for dormitory rooms while in the same period the rooms nor the offer has not improved.

Prof. Turković reminded the Association members that the administration of University of Zagreb, when looking at Dubrovnik, sees also their operation as CAAS. So, it would be important to demonstrate what the added value of the IUC is.

Prof. Grønmo suggested inviting the leadership of University of Zagreb for the meeting with representatives of course directors, as well as the ministry representative – to enhance the knowledge about the IUC in both institutions.

Prof. Pisk concluded that as the IUC Association is a legal umbrella for the operation of the IUC as a Centre, the Association would wait for the decisions and operation of the DG, prof. Šimonović and other members of the IUC Governing bodies, while all decisions would be communicated with Association members.

With the date of 22 December 2023, the meeting was closed.

Draft minutes:

Nada Bruer Ljubišić Krunoslav Pisk

Executive Secretary President