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European Sociological Association President's Report, 1997-1999

The ESA was formally established in 1995, at the Second Conference of European Sociology in Budapest. In 1997, during and after the Essex Conference, the present Executive Committee was elected which held its constituent meeting in November 1997, and named its officers. Since then, three more Executive meetings have been scheduled (including one immediately before the beginning of the Amsterdam Conference); in addition, the Program Committee and the Publications Committee have pursued their activity at separate meetings.

In this second two-year period of its formal existence, the ESA has made large strides towards solidifying its institutions and expanding its reach:

- The range of **Research Networks** has been widened, and other RN's continue to be proposed or encouraged. Most RN's have created their own infrastructure for facilitating communication, and some have held meetings of their own (cf. Report by Marlis Buchmann).
- The **program for the Amsterdam Conference** has been prepared and put in place, and has attracted a growing number of participants in spite of the increased participation fee (cf. Report by Mojca Novak).
- The **channels of communication** – Newsletter, e-mail lists, web pages – have been expanded and are now used for the current exchange of information as well as for occasional debates such as on language policy (cf. Report by Robert Miller).
- The **ESA publications** – the new Journal *European Societies* and the Book Series *Studies in European Societies* – have been successfully started; especially the Journal represents a heavy commitment by the Association as it is included in the membership package, and it has taken a sustained effort to put its editorial structure in place (cf. Report by Thomas Boje).
- The **financial situation** has been stabilized; even though the ESA receives no subsidies, and relies almost entirely on members' contributions, it can now cover its (modest) operations without undue financial risk-taking (cf. Report by Thomas Boje).

The long-range problems that we have faced and tried to solve during these two years can be summarized under three labels:

- **Problems of external visibility and impact:**
In addition to facilitating the intellectual exchange among European sociologists through its Conferences and Research Networks, the ESA is needed and should become visible as the voice of European sociology. The new ESA Journal and Book Series are important steps in this direction. Other steps will be the creation of better links with other European social science organizations and with the EU's research programs.

- Problems of **organizational strength**:
ESA membership is increasing, but still very unevenly distributed among the countries and regions of Europe. This is also a question of openness to national sociological traditions and their languages. The links to the National Associations of sociology are unevenly developed as well.
- Problems of **efficiency and continuity**:
A fairly large Executive Committee is necessary for representing the many regions, fields and approaches of European sociology. It will however be useful to find ways of increasing the efficiency of governing and administering the Association, and of securing the continuity of work from one Executive Committee to the next.

These problems notwithstanding, it should be emphasized what we have achieved so far. The founding of the ESA has occurred as an initiative from below, without support from any supranational organization or long-standing network. The fact that the ESA is alive and well is a tribute to the many individuals that have been willing to give freely of their time and competence.