

International Students of History Association
International Board 2004/2005



Report on the IB Policy 2004/05

What have we done with ISHA?

About 1.5 year ago we decided several things needed to change in order to make ISHA a healthy organization again. For several years, communication was on a rather low level, there wasn't any progress on enlargement of the organization and in general, ISHA wasn't really managed. The website as well as the info on it was extremely outdated and there weren't any financial records whatsoever.

In the beginning of our term we presented a paper in which we wrote down several goals. This was to make clear what our vision at the beginning of our term was. By doing this ISHA had a way to judge us and it provided us with a to-do list. In the years before our term there never was an indication of an IB policy and no tradition of writing policy papers, and that was one of the things we wanted to improve.

Let us state that as IB we had a great time. It was a lot of work but also very fruitful. There was so much to be done that there was quick progress and it made us happy to see ISHA involvement growing. But let's get on with the list with goals as we stated them in our policy paper:

“Driving back from Pula to The Netherlands, suddenly the International Board of ISHA, we brainstormed a bit on the things we hoped to achieve. Shortly, we'll try to:

1. *Get our finances at order, trace as good as possible what happened to ISHA money past years and start a financial administration, and improve our financial situation*
2. *Get other sources of income next to the membership-fee*
3. *Have a decent administration and relevant contact information for all ISHA sections*
4. *Get a bunch of new sections involved*
5. *Have a good website, that looks good enough to represent our organisation to people that know nothing about us*
6. *Improve communication between members, IB and ISHA people in general*
7. *Get a degree of continuity into the organisation, prevent information getting lost or forgotten, make it easier for boards to follow each other”*

In the rest of this final report, we'll stick to these points to explain what we've done last year. We tried to explain what our starting point was, what we did, why we did stuff the way we did it and how it worked out. Where we thought it useful, we gave some well-meant advice for future IBs that might be worth considering. At the end we give a few details about issues that aren't included in the mentioned seven points.

1. *Get our finances at order, trace as good as possible what happened to ISHA money past years and start a financial administration, and improve our financial situation*

At the start of the year a wallet was handed over to the IB, containing several receipts and a sum of money. However, in spite of the few receipts that were in the wallet there was no telling where the money came from, or what payments had been made in recent history. This was a situation that had to be changed. At that time ISHA had access to its own bank account in Switzerland at the Swiss Post, but this account was unnecessarily costly, because it was an account in the Swiss currency unit. This meant that almost every transaction made from or to this account would be subjected to change-rates. At the end the IB decided that it would probably be the most convenient to open a new account in the currency euro, from which all the payments would be made. After many visits and calls to the Swiss Post this goal was

finally achieved. The money in the wallet was counted by the treasury committee and this was put into the account.

Then there was the question of what had happened with the ISHA money in past years. Mostly this was all very hard to find out, but we managed to track down an address of a former board member who managed to inform us that there was a large sum of money somewhere on a Belgian account that belonged to ISHA. After writing back and forth however, we neither know how much money is actually involved, or how to get at this sum of money. Maybe our successors will be luckier in this matter.

In spite of this setback the financial situation of ISHA was somewhat improved. Because many members paid their fee, and because Carnival, which traditionally costs a lot of money, was self-sufficient, the association now has somewhat of a financial reserve. In the future however, it could be wise to extend this reserve to a more substantial amount.

2. Get other sources of income next to the membership-fee

We tried to look for financial support. Many years ago ISHA got an EU grant sometimes, but this was impossible for us due to the fact that we're not a European organization anymore (since the statute change in 2002) but a Swiss one.

Further, we tried to contact universities for sponsorship, where we particularly aimed at internationally orientated ones. There was no success here, but not too many were contacted. This idea might be used in the future again, for which we recommend to make use of the Council for contacting universities as well.

We also tried to make ISHA merchandise in order to generate money. Plans ranged from cups to lighters to T-shirts. In the end we created T-shirts. This was not a financial success as we didn't make money on it. In order to keep the shirts affordable, we calculated a very small profit margin on each one. Since we lost a few, they only cost money. No financial success, but for the idea of enforcing the "ISHA community" it worked.

Carnival (which is hopefully to be published soon) turned out to be self-sufficient, for which the editor should be credited.

3. Have a decent administration and relevant contact information for all ISHA sections

Last year there was no record of all the active sections or how to contact them. The lists were really old. At the beginning of the year we checked all the active sections and took their contact information. This is all done and put online.

Furthermore, Dominic started to create a digital archive. He traced a lot of digital information on ISHA and put it together. He also put all his works with it, including all the master-files of logos and the website. In the future, information can be easily passed on and edited.

4. *Get a bunch of new sections involved*

During the year we had some promising signs about new sections. We had quite some mail correspondence but those contacts (among others with Palermo, London, Ankara, several cities in Serbia and Montenegro, Nigeria and Bangladesh) didn't lead to the concrete result of people showing up. We have some hopes that some of these places might join in the future anyway, some contacts are still kept.

The new sections that were present were Amsterdam, Utrecht, Venice and Presov. The biggest success is Utrecht, given that they are organising the next ISHA conference and are printing this year's Carnival. The other sections, although they had a good time, have showed up only once so far, but we hope to keep them active with ISHA.

To improve our chances of finding new sections, we created a list of all old ISHA sections that were in existence during the past with their contact info. This list can be used as a tool and updated by coming boards.

If a future IB is looking for a way to expand ISHA outside Europe, it might be an idea to check out Israeli universities; after all, it's probably hard for them to establish good international contacts with their neighbouring countries.

5. *Have a good website, that looks good enough to represent our organisation to people that know nothing about us. Also upgrade PR.*

This took our secretary a lot of time. Not only was a complete new structure necessary, but also Dominic needed to come up with a plan for a new style for which he needed to create a lot of images. We think this was a success. The site is there and working. During the year we heard a lot of good comments, also from non-ISHA members.

The site works, and enables ISHA material to be downloaded. There is a forum where latest information is posted and discussions are being held. Some even about historical topics □ Minutes, seminar reports, statutes and a flyer can be downloaded. Finally there is a gallery with some nice (presentable) pictures of ISHA events.

To continue with PR, during the year Dominic made several logos which sections could use for organizing. For promotional uses we created a poster and with the help of Alan Götz an ISHA flyer. The 50 T-shirts we printed might not have given us any financial boosts, but as far as we're concerned they look good and are a way to make us shown as well.

6. *Improve communication between members, IB and ISHA people in general*

Things we stated in the past were that there hardly was any communication between the IB, the council and ISHA in general. This was one of the main reasons why ISHA policy failed in the past years. Also the one functioning thing, the ISHA List, was getting spammed more often and starting to get irritating.

The new website contributed massively to more communication in ISHA. This went from picture exchange, discussions on ISHA policy, historical subjects and current world topics, and much much more. Also personal messages could be sent much easier than before, without

needing somebody's e-mail address. Further, reports and pictures of events, promo-material, etc. all became accessible for every interested individual.

Having an IB that was living so closely together greatly improved communication between us. We met frequently and had plenty of occasions to discuss policy. We hope this example will be followed.

Because many things needed to change at the start of our term, we had to ask advice and contact a lot of our members. We think this stimulated communications and it also increased open discussions about policy.

Last, we kept the ISHA List, and made it almost impossible for ill-willed individuals to spam it; people applying for it must first be admitted by one of the moderators now. Next to all other ways of communicating, the ISHA List still has an important function for ISHA.

7. Get a degree of continuity into the organisation, prevent information getting lost or forgotten, make it easier for boards to follow each other

As IB we showed (or at least we tried to show) commitment and involvement. We hope that most people think the last year was standard and that this is the way to act as ISHA board. We were present at every seminar (except the local meeting in Zagreb, unfortunately). We tried to do our work and finish our tasks. We hope that in the coming years, others will show the same.

We are happy to see that for this year this will be the case, we have the utmost trust in the 2005-2006 IB.

Also, just before the Zurich seminar last summer, the former and new IB had a meeting in Lloret de Mar (yes, a strange place to have a meeting about work). Here we were able to discuss ISHA and pass on information.

For continuity's sake, we also planned to write some guides, "What to do as an ISHA official", "How to organize a seminar". Unfortunately, we haven't been able to complete this project. We still hope these papers will appear in the future and are more than willing to contribute to them, if a future IB would like to pick them up.

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