

***The President's report on the CoRep,  
its responsibilities, actions and developments***

***Dear Members of AESOP's Council of Representatives (CoRep),***

*This report presents the results of the questionnaire conducted between January and March 2014 among the members of the Council of Representatives.*

*Gert de Roo*

*President of AESOP*

23 CoRep members gave substantial feedback.

## **Second best candidate for Annual Conference Elections**

### **Question 1**

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*The CoRep will meet on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March this year in Lisbon. We invited Lisbon to take over the responsibility of organizing the CoRep and Heads of School meeting the moment we knew Hamburg would not be able to host us in time. We assumed Lisbon would be willing to host Aesop and its activities, as it applied for hosting the 2015 Annual Conference. Lisbon lost its bid becoming second after Prague in elections by the CoRep in Gdansk 2013. These elections lead to a debate about how to consider a second best position, in case the proposal is outstanding and all have confidence in the school's organizing talents. The debate ended in concluding that the 'election rules' were not such that Lisbon could be asked 'on spot' to organize the follow up of the 2015 Aesop Annual Conference. The Exco was asked to work out a strategy that makes sense in future cases with two outstanding but competing proposals. In the future the Exco will advise the CoRep to decide about the follow up position. At the CoRep meeting in Gdansk it was also agreed we would reconsider Lisbon's proposal in this respect. Two remarks have to be made: One is Lisbon now hosting the CoRep meeting is not in any way related to this reconsideration – we needed an alternative for Hamburg, we needed it fast, and we knew about Lisbon's positive attitude. Two is the year of the follow up, not being 2016 but 2017. In 2016 Aesop goes to Rio, where we will have the global world conference. This brings me to the following options:...*

- a. I appreciate the Gdansk outcome. A change of rules has to be announced way in advance for all schools to be aware of the change, and in support of a fair competition. Therefore I would like to see a round of elections to take place regarding the 2017 Annual Conference, inviting all schools to apply, including Lisbon*
- b. I appreciate the Gdansk outcome. The 2017 Annual Conference is still far away. In Lisbon the situation might change drastically in the meantime, which makes me uncomfortable to allocate already now responsibilities to that school. Therefore I would like to see a round of elections to take place regarding the 2017 Annual Conference, inviting all schools to apply, including Lisbon*



- c. *Lisbon is now the scene for the CoRep and HoS meeting and has been given a wonderful opportunity to present itself. Therefore it would be a bit too much to see Aesop going back to Lisbon already in 2017*
- d. *Lisbon taking over the CoRep and HoS meetings from Hamburg is much appreciated. Therefore I would say, if they prove to be capable to do this why not allow them to host the 2017 Annual Conference*
- e. *At the Gdansk meeting Lisbon came with an outstanding proposal, in which I had full confidence. Therefore I would appreciate Lisbon to be invited to host the 2017 conference, of course if Lisbon is still willing to stick to their Gdansk proposal*
- f. *Other:*

## Analysis

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**Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey, 22 answered question 1. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 22. However two members favoured both D and E, which in outcome share the same results (therefore we reduced both to one each)**

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*

- A. **(54,5%)** I appreciate the Gdansk outcome. A change of rules has to be announced in advance, to be aware of change, and in support of fair competition. I would like to see a round of elections to take place regarding the 2017 Annual Conference, inviting all schools to apply, including Lisbon (12)
- B. **(9,1%)** I appreciate the Gdansk outcome. The 2017 Annual Conference is still far away. In Lisbon, the situation might change drastically in the meantime, which makes me uncomfortable to allocate already now responsibilities to that school. I would like to see a round of elections to take place, inviting all schools to apply, including Lisbon (2)
- C. **(--)** Lisbon has been given a wonderful opportunity to present itself. It would be a bit too much to see Aesop going back to Lisbon already in 2017 (0)
- D. **(9,1%)** If Lisbon prove to be capable to take over the CoRep and HoS meetings, why not allow them to host the 2017 Annual Conference (2)
- E. **(27,3%)** In Gdansk, Lisbon came with an outstanding proposal in which I had full confidence. Therefore I would appreciate Lisbon to be invited to host the 2017 conference, of course if Lisbon is still willing to stick to their Gdansk proposal (6)



## Comments

### **B; comments concerning not allocating the Annual Conference to Lisbon yet, but re-inviting Lisbon to a new round of elections.**

- “In the case of new elections, it seems reasonable that Lisbon’s efforts in the previous years will be taken into account by the representatives (For example by explicit mentioning by the Exco)”

### **General comments**

- “It is the most fair way to make a choice I think”
- “Too much attention is given in the selection process to the city itself and the university’s organization skills. Though being important, additional attention should be paid to the topics and contents that may focus the conference”



## Accreditation (Q 2 &3)

### Question 2

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*Accreditation and quality assurance systems are around for decades. However not all schools make use of them, and the existing systems differ one from the other for several aspects, procedures and reasons. The concept itself of 'quality' significantly varies in different countries and disciplines. Recently this issue has also been considered and discussed by some planning associations, such as ECTP, in order to achieve more internationally based and homogeneous accreditation/quality assurance systems. Therefore AESOP wants to know Corep members' opinion about some aspects of this issue in their country/school, in order to consider and develop future actions in the field, being aware of the cultural and national differences in each school.*

*Are formal procedures of accreditation and quality assurance for planning degree programmes already established in your university/country?*

- a. No
- b. Yes, with a focus on academic excellence (summative assessment of knowledge and high-level skills)
- c. Yes, with a focus on consistency according to set specifications: eg. reducing study times and lowering drop-out rates
- d. Yes, stressing 'fitness for purpose': the purpose may be customer-defined (eg. practice relevance for professional bodies) or institution-defined (eg. adequacy for the job market)
- e. Yes, stressing 'value for money' (market-driven approach): emphasis on how cost-efficient education is achieved
- f. Other:



## Analysis

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Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey all answered question 2. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 23.

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*

***Are formal procedures of accreditation and quality assurance for planning degree programmes already established in your university/country?***

- A. **(17,4%)** No (4)
- B. **(60,9%)** Yes, with a focus on academic excellence (14)
- C. **(21,7%)** Yes, with a focus on consistency according to set specifications (5)
- D. **(17,4%)** Yes, stressing fitness for purpose: the purpose may be customer-defined or institution-defined (4)
- E. **(8,7%)** Yes, stressing 'value for money' (market driven approach) (2)

## Comments

### **D; comments regarding accreditation procedures stressing fitness for purpose**

- "I am speaking from the point of view of a planning school that contributes to an 'urbanism' degree. We are not separately accredited for planning"

### **General comments**

- "We don't have that system, but national evaluations of academic quality are made, the latest in 2013. An acceptable European standard is needed"
- "Establishment of procedures of accreditation and quality assurance is just starting"
- "The procedures of accreditation for planning degree programmes in Greece are art of those established for all engineering degree programmes and are organized by the Technical Chamber of Greece"
- "In the evaluation (every 6 year) conducted by an independent (Dutch/Flemish) academic accreditation committee, AESOP membership are mentioned and the school's achievements are also assessed in the context of AESOP requirements. It is fair to say that these norms are not an overriding interest for the committee. If AESOP wants have a more influential role in this area, it should seek a relationship with the accreditation committee."



### Question 3

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**1. To your experience the accreditation and quality assurance system of your school would require improvements and/or changes in order to**

- a. Improve international quality assurance and accreditation, considering the growing demand for cross-national mutual recognition of educational achievements*
- b. Match curricula contents with professionally relevant learning outcomes*
- c. Allow more flexibility in the curricula structure and contents, due to the specificities of planning (eg. interdisciplinary studies)*
- d. Enhance academic freedom and innovation in the face of the dictate of the university and/or the profession*
- e. We do not have such a system*
- f. Other:*

### Analysis

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**Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey, all answered question 3. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 23.**

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*

**The accreditation and quality assurance system of your school would require improvements in order to:**

- A. (60,7%)** Improve international quality assurance and accreditation (14)
- B. (39,1%)** Match curricula contents with professionally relevant learning outcomes (9)
- C. (21,7%)** Allow more flexibility in the curricula structure and contents, due to the specificities of planning (5)
- D. (4,3%)** Enhance academic freedom and innovation in the face of the dictate of the university and/or the profession (1)
- E. (8,7)** We do not have such a system (2)



## Comments

### General comments;

- "I am hesitant to suggest more assessment and more requirements put on our schools (in NL). The evaluation load is already high. Nevertheless it could be helpful when AESOP would provide some input for accreditation committees (This would mean concise presentation of its guidelines and a good timing of presenting these guidelines to the committee)"
- "Our school of architecture is just undergoing an accreditation assessment process with NAAB (American Board of Architecture). We are waiting for the final outcome of the accreditation process. Besides that, we have a national assessment process. Therefore, I do not think that the school will get shortly in a European process."
- "We don't have that system, but national evaluations of academic quality are made, the latest in 2013. An acceptable European standard is needed"
- "Establishment of these procedures has just started"





## **InPlanning, AESOP's Digital Publishing Platform (Q 4-8)**

### **Question 4**

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*With AESOP's investment in InPlanning suddenly various opportunities emerge of importance to AESOP, its activities and its members. One of them is the possibility to keep on publishing products (books, journals, reports) of high quality in any language other than English and not appreciated by commercial publishers. These products might still be essential for disseminating knowledge to students. The Planning Schools in The Netherlands have taken the initiative to using the InPlanning platform precisely for this reason. They have put together an editorial board with the responsibility to keep up the quality of the products, including a blind peer review process for academic books. Here the question is:*

*Would this initiative be of value to the country you represent?*

- a. No, we still have plenty of options to get products published in our own language*
- b. No, because it will be hard to get this organized in our country in a proper way*
- c. No, we only use products in English, and there are plenty of these already*
- d. No, InPlanning is a digital platform, and our schools are not yet ready for this*
- e. Yes, publishing of our products in our own language is very much under pressure*
- f. Yes, despite the fact we use English products only*
- g. Yes, considering that InPlanning will offer products for a price which is lower than commercial publishers charge*
- h. Yes, InPlanning offers a digital platform, which is a massive step forward*
- i. Yes, InPlanning is offering a European market, which is important to us*
- j. Other:*



## Analysis

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**Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey, 21 answered question 4. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 21.**

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*

### **Would this initiative be of value to the country you represent?**

- A. **(9,5%)** No, we still have plenty of options to get products published in our own language (2)
- B. **(--)** No, because it will be hard to get this organized in our country in a proper way (0)
- C. **(--)** No, we only use products in English, and there are plenty of these already (0)
- D. **(--)** No, InPlanning is a digital platform, and our schools are not yet ready for this (0)
- E. **(--)** Yes, publishing of our products in our own language is very much under pressure (0)
- F. **(--)** Yes, despite the fact we use English products only (0)
- G. **(33,3%)** Yes, considering that InPlanning will offer products for a price which is lower than commercial publishers charge (7)
- H. **(42,9%)** Yes, InPlanning offers a digital platform, which is a massive step forward (9)
- I. **(33,3%)** Yes, InPlanning is offering a European market, which is important to us (7)

### *Comments*

#### **A; Comments regarding having plenty of options to get products published in own language;**

- “As very small Department at an University of Applied Sciences, we have academic publications only in exceptional cases; most of our published materials are brochures and booklets to be target at local/regional actors and clients”

#### **General comments;**

- “I don’t have enough knowledge of InPlanning to say yes or no”
- “Collaboration between the two planning schools in Greece is essential in this respect”
- “I do not see the point of making a separate e-publishing platform when there are others with a very wide reach already in existence – for books, papers, slide shows, etc. I do think it would be useful to produce a biography of e-publications relevant to spatial planning”
- We need further information about the platform before taking final decisions.



## Question 5

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***And would you be willing to start initiatives such as in The Netherlands to make use of AESOP's InPlanning Platform?***

- a. No, there is no interest for this in my country*
- b. No, I have no time, but others might very well be interested in participating*
- c. Yes*
- d. Yes, including setting up a national or language related editorial board*
- e. I am from The Netherlands and already involved*
- f. Other:*

### Analysis

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**Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey, 22 answered question 5. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 22.**

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*

**Would you be willing to start initiatives such as in The Netherlands to make use of AESOP's InPlanning Platform?**

- A. (--) No, there is no interest for this in my country (0)
- B. **(27,3%)** No, I have no time, but others might very well be interested in participating (6)
- C. **(18,2%)** Yes (4)
- D. **(31,8%)** Yes, including setting up a national or language related editorial board (7)
- E. **(13,6%)** I am from the Netherlands and already involved (3)



## Comments

### **B; comments regarding potential interest of others to start initiatives regarding InPlanning**

- “The organization of national resources has to be investigated in order to carry it out. It is however a good idea”

### **General comments**

- “I don’t have enough knowledge of InPlanning to say yes or no”
- “I am based in the Netherlands, and not involved”
- “For HSR Rapperswil I may say that there is no interest. Maybe at Zurich, with a more international orientation and allure, an interest is given”



## Question 6

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*AESOP expects a serious growth of Open Access initiatives. Therefore AESOP is considering investing in a framework that allows InPlanning to support Open Access journals. It is also a strategy allowing AESOP to facilitate its own journal(s). The Young Academics are already working out plans in this direction. What is your opinion in this respect?*

- a. *Yes, this indeed is an important development in which AESOP has to invest*
- b. *Yes, AESOP should have its own journal(s), and this could be the way to go*
- c. *Yes, but only if costs are reasonable*
- d. *Yes, but only if a strong editorial board supports the initiatives and quality is considered crucial*
- e. *No, this is not what AESOP should do: Open Access is not AESOP's core business*
- f. *No, this will be too much of a responsibility for AESOP*
- g. *No, this will be too costly and too energy consuming for AESOP. This should be left to commercial parties*
- h. *Other:*

## Analysis

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**Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey, all answered question 6. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 23.**

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*

**AESOP is considering investing in a framework that allows InPlanning to support Open Access journals. It is also a strategy allowing AESOP to facilitate its own journal. What is your opinion in this respect?**

- A. **(26,1%)** Yes, this is indeed an important development in which AESOP has to invest (6)
- B. **(8,7%)** Yes, AESOP should have its own journal(s), and this could be the way to go (2)
- C. **(34,8%)** Yes, but only if costs are reasonable (8)



- D. **(34,8%)** Yes, but only if a strong editorial board supports the initiatives and quality is considered crucial (8)
- E. **(8,7%%)** No, this is not what AESOP should do: Open Access is not AESOP's core business (2)
- F. **(4,3%)** No, this will be too much of a responsibility for AESOP (1)
- G. **(13%)** No, this will be too costly and too energy consuming for AESOP. This should be left to commercial parties. (3)

### *Comments*

#### **A; comments concerning investment in the development of Open Access journals by AESOP**

- "I don't think there is a need for an AESOP journal, it could however be good if AESOP would promote existing open access journals"

#### **G; comments concerning investment in Open Access being too costly and energy for AESOP**

- "There are plenty of opportunities for publishing open access journals without AESOP. Open access will become important but is not needed for planning – there is not the demand or need to publish quickly. If AESOP wants to start a new journal then let's talk about that. Note that open access journals charge a fee to authors"



## Question 7

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***Nowadays most of us are part of editorial boards of Journals and Book Series which are run by commercial publishers. In case AESOP is going to develop further its InPlanning Digital Platform how to involve our planning community in these activities?***

- a. *I believe our planning community should be actively invited to invest time and energy in this project*
- b. *The CoRep should have a task in motivating colleagues to participate in AESOP's InPlanning Digital Platform initiative*
- c. *I strongly favour a national approach and would leave it to the countries to invest or not*
- d. *InPlanning should develop through self-organizing mechanisms which also will make clear (or not) if InPlanning is competitive enough to be an alternative to commercial publishers*
- e. *Other:*

## Analysis

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**Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey, all answered question 7. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 23.**

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*

**In case AESOP is going to develop further its InPlanning Digital Platform, how to involve our planning community in these activities?**

- A. **(26,1%)** I believe our planning community should be actively invited to invest time and energy in this project (6)
- B. **(52,2%)** The CoRep should have the task in motivating colleagues to participate in AESOP's InPlanning Digital Platform initiative (12)
- C. **(--)** I strongly favour a national approach and would leave it to the countries to invest or not (0)
- D. **(30,4%)** InPlanning should develop through self-organizing mechanisms which also will make clear (or not) if InPlanning is competitive enough to be an alternative to commercial publishers (7)



## *Comments*

- No comments





## Question 8

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***With AESOP's InPlanning operational and some of the AESOP Thematic Groups generating a variety of initiatives, meetings, books, special issues, videos, powerpoints and a lot more, we are just one step away of producing MOOC's. MOOC's are Massive Open On-line Courses. AESOP could invest in these MOOC's offering the Thematic Groups to using InPlanning, and building on theme related MOOC's. All schools could benefit from the courses being put together. What to do?***

- a. Yes, please, do investigate this further as it would again be a major step forward to what AESOP is doing already*
- b. Yes, do invite the Thematic Groups to bring together their products in such a way a high quality course might emerge out of this*
- c. Yes, please do so, as it will be interesting to see how these initiatives can be supportive to schools and their programs*
- d. Yes, do so, but particularly for courses of interest to PhD programmes*
- e. Yes, do so, in particular for themes which are innovative and new*
- f. No, I do not see this investment to produce lecturing programmes of use to AESOP's members*
- g. No, these products are the responsibility of individual member schools*
- h. No, these courses are not yet proven useful*
- i. No, these courses are too general for individual schools and programmes*
- j. Other:*

## Analysis

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**Of the 23 Representatives that returned the survey, all answered question 8. Total N of respondents to this question is thus 23.**

*Answers (multiple answers possible)*



**AESOP is just one step away of producing MOOC's, AESOP could invest in these MOOC's offering the Thematic Groups to using InPlanning, and building on theme related MOOC's. All schools could benefit from the courses being put together. What to do?**

- A. **(30,4%)** Yes, please, do investigate this further as it would again be a major step forward (7)
- B. **(30,4%)** Yes, do invite the Thematic Groups to bring together their products in such a way a high quality course might emerge out of this (7)
- C. **(34,8%)** Yes, please do so, as it will be interesting to see how these initiatives can be supportive to schools and their programs (8)
- D. **(21,7%)** Yes, do so, but particularly for courses of interest to PhD programmes (5)
- E. **(8,7%)** Yes, do so, in particular for themes which are innovative and new (2)
- F. **(8,7%)** No, I do not see this investment to produce lecturing programmes of use to AESOP's members (2)
- G. **(8,7%)** No, these products are the responsibility of individual members schools (2)
- H. **(13%)** No, these courses are not yet proven useful (3)
- I. **(8,7%)** No, these courses are too general for individual schools and programmes (2)

#### *Comments*

#### **A; comments regarding further investigation of MOOC – investment and development**

- “This is a very interesting idea for a community of planning schools. Developing a good MOOC is very different from simply recording existing lectures, requires significant resources and requires careful consideration of the goals that one wants to achieve with it. It would be wise to ask a group of wise man and woman from the AESOP community to prepare a draft position paper (for discussion in Utrecht?)”

#### **G; comments concerning MOOC's being responsibility of individual member schools**

- “Aesop might concentrate on encouraging universities to provide open web-based learning in planning, raising awareness; providing directions to learning opportunities and perhaps accrediting or ensuring quality”

## ***Additional comments / ideas / proposals***

- “We are now discussing how to get our national network to work in order to improve our engagement in Aesop. For instance the digital platform, could be a link both international and national, but it also has to do with resources at different schools.”
- “Take some time to discuss this carefully and at length. Discussions are meant to make change people's minds. That does not always happen overnight. On top of that there is added value in discussing.”
- “There should be a restructuring of the Conference Tracks. Some are too general (Rural and Regional Planning), while others are too focused (Energy, Food and Urban Metabolism - Governance of Climate Challenges in Deltas). In relation to urban planning, there is no general track but only two focused (Urban Design and Public Realm - Housing, Cohousing and Neighbourhood Planning). A variety of 'new' trends in urban planning cannot be easily allocated in tracks (city marketing/branding, event planning, time planning, leisure planning incorporating tourism, sport, and cultural planning etc.). Various significant issues such as creative cities, smart cities, European Cultural Capitals, safe cities, healthy cities, underground cities, quality of urban life etc. are 'initially' left out. Also, the cultural dimension of planning is mainly represented in relation to the past (Planning History and Cultural Heritage).”

