

Newsletter SPRING 2020

Edited by Dr Hetty Lalleman

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear colleagues,

The past few months the executive committee of FEET has met frequently! This is unusual, but we had some important matters to handle rapidly.

First of all, AlfaGraphics told us rather abruptly that it was terminating the publication of the European Journal of Theology. Providentially, thanks to the efficiency of Pieter Lalleman, the editor of EJT, we were able to sign a contract with a new publisher, Amsterdam University Press.

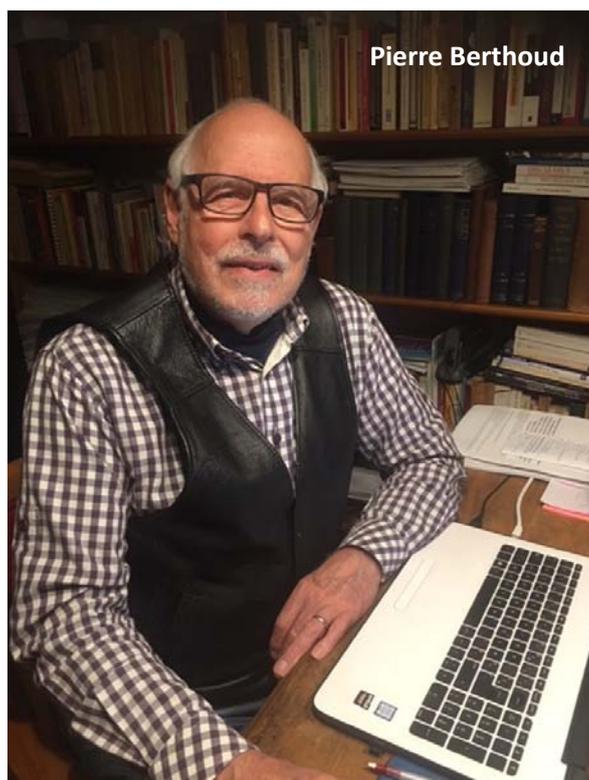
Secondly, due to the coronavirus epidemic the question of having our biennial conference as scheduled in Prague (28–31 August 2020) was also on the agenda. After considering different options the committee decided to replace it by a shorter visio conference, which will take place on the 28th and 29th of August 2020. The theme remains the same and all five main speakers will present their papers, followed by a time of discussion. This of course does not exclude the possibility of having other events during the coming two years.

Finally, the committee took some time to revisit and review its policy statement. A modified version of the present statement, especially with regards to future developments of FEET, will be discussed in June and will then be presented to the general meeting in August.

Actually, these added virtual committee meetings were a blessing! They helped us to be more creative and efficient, to better appreciate the complementary nature of each other's contributions and to grow in our fellowship. We are very thankful for this good team spirit.

IN THIS ISSUE

A word from the chairman	1
The FEET video conference 2020	3
The new FEET website	5
Changes for the European Journal of Theology	6
News from the Caucasus	7
'In the day of adversity, consider!'	8



For some of us it was a surprise to discover that these special and unusual two months of confinement, far from being a time of leisure, were very full and demanding! They were also an occasion for thought and the re-evaluation of our priorities before the Lord as we were confronted with so many uncertainties and the fragility of our human condition. What seemed so firm and permanent suddenly became wobbly and provisional!

In some recent articles André Comte-Sponville, a well-known French philosopher, makes some interesting comments on the panic generated by the epidemic and amplified by the media, especially with regards to the reality of death. It is as if our contemporaries suddenly discovered that they were mortal! Covid-19 has compelled them to consider a reality they desperately wanted to ignore because they see death as a failure! In order to reassure them, this is what Comte-Sponville says:

I have good and bad news to share with you. The bad news is that we are all going to die. The good news is that most of us will die from other causes than the Covid-19.

He goes on to say that 'finitude, failure and obstacles are fundamental to our human condition. We will continue to be panicked by every epidemic until we accept death.'

To admit the reality of death is to give us the means to appreciate life. Thus 'we love life all the more, as we become aware of its brevity, its fragility and its value.' In other words, we must make the best of human existence because there is nothing after death! ¹

This awareness requires that we live a more intense life while recognising such core values as justice, love, generosity, courage and freedom.

There is wisdom in Comte-Sponville's approach, in his emphasis on the precious character of life on earth, on the importance of recognising our finiteness, the limits of our human condition and on the importance of ethical standards.

One gets the impression, though, that he has drawn on the Judeo-Christian heritage but without its world- and life-view. He clearly rejects the existence of a sovereign and personal God before whom we are accountable and with whom we can relate. We are the only actors in this world and beyond its horizon there is nothing! His acceptance of the limits of human life, especially of death, is more akin to resignation.

In contrast the Scriptures emphasise the scandalous nature of death in a broken world. Death is the ultimate enemy whose power is related to sin, qualified as rebellion against our ultimate Vis-à-vis and his wisdom. It is precisely because the Bible distinguishes between the origin of being and the origin of evil, that sin, suffering and death are a tragedy. A tragedy we can face without fear because the triune God has reversed the course of history in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In him we have passed from death to life, a life that transcends the earthly horizon.

May the Holy Spirit give us the wisdom to be, in the midst of a troubled, faltering and weeping world, ambassadors of good news, of peace, comfort and lasting hope!

Pierre Berthoud, Chairman

¹ A. Comte-Sponville, «Laissez-nous mourir comme nous le voulons» *Le Temps* (Société et culture), 21 avril 2020: «Ne tombons pas dans le sanitaire correct» (Société), *Le Point*, N° 2487, 23 avril, 2020.

FEET video conference August 28–29, 2020



Due to the COVID-19 restrictions the FEET Conference cannot take place as planned in Prague. We are now inviting you to our **video conference** on the same subject and with the same main speakers:

Discerning the Work of the Holy Spirit in and Through the Church

Friday, August 28, 2020

Afternoon **Introduction** and address by the chairman of FEET, **Prof. Pierre Berthoud** (*Aix-en-Provence, France*)

Prayer and Bible Reading: Isaiah 61 – **Dr Hetty Lalleman** (*Spurgeon's College, London*)

First paper: **"The Holy Spirit in the Bible"** – **Dr Ksenija Magda** (*University of Zagreb, Croatia*) followed by discussion

Second paper: **"The Work of the Holy Spirit in, through and outside the Church: A New Paradigm"** – **Prof. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen** (*Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena/CA, USA; University of Helsinki, Finland*) followed by discussion

Evening **FEET General Assembly**

Saturday, August 29, 2020

Morning **Prayer and Bible Reading:** Acts 2 – **Prof. Evert van de Poll** (*EEA Theological Commission; Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven, Belgium; Nîmes, France*)

Third paper: **"The Transforming work of the Spirit in the worship of the Church"** – **Prof. Terje Hegertun** (*MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Oslo, Norway*) followed by discussion

Fourth paper: **"The Transforming Work of the Spirit in the personal life"** – **Dr Pablo Martinez** (*Medical Doctor and Psychiatrist, Barcelona, Spain*) followed by discussion

Afternoon Fifth paper: **"The work of the Holy Spirit through the witness of the Church in the public sphere"** – **Prof. Corneliu Constantineanu** (*'Aurel Vlaicu' University, Arad, Romania*) followed by discussion

Conclusion

A growing interest in the work of the Holy Spirit is evident in our time. We see this not only in the growing worldwide Pentecostal and charismatic movements, but Christians in many churches are longing for spiritual renewal and the fulfilment of their mission and ministry in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The biennial FEET conference will deal with these themes from a theological perspective. We will discuss the dialogue between the Pentecostal and charismatic movements and traditional churches, and provide biblical perspectives on the work of the Holy Spirit, on worship, on the spiritual gifts and on spirituality in Christian ministry.

Although we very much regret the renunciation of the personal meeting in Prague in view of the present circumstances, we expect also in this reduced virtual format a dynamic exchange and a lively discussion on this challenging topic.

FEET warmly invites theologians from all over Europe to this discussion at its 2020 video conference. You are most welcome!

Registration: please go to www.feet-europe.org
or send an e-mail to Dr Klaus Bensel: secretary@feet-europe.org
Those who register will receive the texts of the lectures by e-mail a few days before the conference.
Those who already registered to come to Prague will be refunded in full.

Price: The FEET video conference is free of charge. There will be expenses for the technical management, so we will gratefully receive voluntary donations. These can be given on the FEET website.

Times: Exact times to be confirmed



NEW FEET WEBSITE: <https://feet-europe.org>

The printing company AlphaGraphics has decided to stop the production of journals. They were the company which produced the four so-called Paternoster Journals after the demise of the publishing house Paternoster Press over ten years ago. This decision became effective on 1 May. As a result, FEET needs a new publisher for the European Journal of Theology. More about EJT elsewhere in this issue.

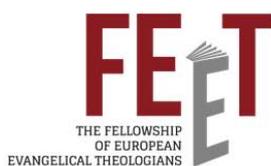
AlphaGraphics were also running the combined website of EJT and FEET, so FEET also lost its website with the blogs, the communication within our fellowship and the announcements of our conferences and other activities.

The FEET Executive Committee realised that we cannot exist without a website, but our budget is not large enough to pay a large IT company to build us one. To this need Jakub Cerny responded. He is a son of our Executive Committee member Pavel Cerny from Prague. Jakub is an IT man who works privately for different companies internationally. He was kind enough to register for us a new domain name and to develop a new website designed for our purposes, which he is now hosting. Jakub did this work free of charge as his contribution to the ministry of FEET for the benefit of the European churches and we are very grateful to him! He also trained his father, Pavel, to enable him to operate this new communication tool and to add up-to-date information and materials. We are enjoying our new possibility to communicate with our co-workers and the wider public. Do go and have a look!



Pavel Cerny

<https://feet-europe.org>



[Home](#)

[About](#)

[Conferences](#)

[Journal](#)

[News & Blog](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Contact](#)



European Journal of Theology
Europäische Theologische Zeitschrift
Journal Européen de Théologie

CHANGE OF PUBLISHER

In November 2019 AlphaGraphics, the publisher of our journal, the European Journal of Theology (EJT), decided to stop printing it. The reason for their decision was not that the Journal is not viable, but that they want to focus on their core activity (printing) without investing in new software for administration. The last issue produced by AlphaGraphics was issue 29.1 (April 2020), which the subscribers have now received.



At the request of FEET, the publication of EJT transfers to Amsterdam University Press (AUP). On April 30, we signed a contract with AUP for the production and administration of our Journal, and they will produce issue 29.2 (October 2020). Preparations for this issue are well under way. Among other things it will contain articles by Professor Alan Millard and Dr Frank Hinkelmann, plus numerous book reviews.

Our contract with AUP is initially for three years but we are expecting a long and fruitful cooperation with this professional publisher. Because of privacy rules, AUP and we are depending on EJT subscribers to transfer their subscription. If you want to continue to receive EJT, or to subscribe for the first time, please contact subscriptions@aup.nl to subscribe directly with them.

We are conscious of mistakes in the subscriber administration of AlphaGraphics, for which we apologise. We lost libraries and possibly individuals as subscribers due to administrative errors. If you were affected, please contact us via our new website. Older issues of EJT up to 2013 can be found online at https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_european-journal-theology_01.php.

Please pray for our work in this time of transition, that EJT will come through it stronger and win subscribers. If you enjoy the Journal, please consider recruiting a new subscriber for us. And why not write an article or book review? We are keen to receive articles from all corners of Europe! They can be sent to the editor, Dr Pieter J. Lalleman, at p.lalleman@spurgeons.ac.uk.

The Executive Committee of FEET

News from the Caucasus

The Board of the Sola Forum would like to thank you for your support of the work of the Forum until now. We have a number of exciting developments to report.

The 2019 Forum once again took place in the Sulkhani Saba University in Tbilisi in November. It was preceded by a meeting of the members of the Sola Forum Board with the Rector and Dean of the University. These conversations were very helpful and were accompanied by the guarantee of longer-term commitments to the Forum by the University and the offer of academic support to the University from the Forum and its network of academics. Encouragingly, the University is planning to develop a theological PhD programme.

The Conference itself was well attended. The SKSK (= IFES in Georgia) partnered with the Forum in ensuring its smooth running and the talks were generally of a higher standard than in earlier gatherings. The theme was 'Evangelical Ethics in Challenging Times' and speakers were drawn from Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Equally encouraging was the range of church backgrounds of those in attendance. Independents, Baptists, Pentecostals, Catholics, the Salvation Army, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church were among those represented. It was also encouraging to receive support (not least in papers) from the emerging Georgian Evangelical Alliance.

A range of subjects was explored at the Forum. This included more general questions of methodology and translation of ethical texts and inter-religious ethical reflection, to remaining human in times of artificial intelligence, the Georgian Christian view on war, Christian ethics and the economy, abortion and the status of the embryo, marriage and divorce, the ministries of women and migrancy and refugees. On the Sunday following the Conference a group of those present for the Forum were expertly guided around Tbilisi by Gevorg Harutyunov to view the locations associated with its Armenian heritage.

It was incredibly encouraging that SKSK was subsequently nominated for and won the prestigious 'Promoter of Tolerance' Award from the Georgian Government. The Sola Forum played a major role in the process of the nomination and the decision.

After the Forum the membership of the Board was extended. We now have two Armenian representatives,

two from Georgia, one from Ukraine and one from the United Kingdom. Apart from anything else, the larger team has made it possible for the Board to work more efficiently. It has also encouraged them to 'firm up' the mission statement and vision, and to determine the next steps required to promote the work. At present, we are planning the next Forum for October 30–31, 2020, entitled 'Christian Fellowship in a Divided Church: Experiences and Possibilities'. Another subject under discussion is to promote the translation of seminal theological texts with the intention of encouraging the growth of indigenous theological reflection and scholarship.

The Board is very encouraged by the support it has received from many different quarters, which has stimulated their own vision and activity. We would like to express our gratitude for any kind of encouragement and support you have provided in the preparation of and during the implementation of Sola Forum.

The Sola Forum Board

Sola Forum is organised in association with SKSK (IFES in Georgia), FEET (Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians) and Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani University in Tbilisi.



Tatiana Kopaleishvili

Sola Forum Board:

Dr Tatiana Kopaleishvili (Georgia)
 Dr Stephen Paul Dray (United Kingdom)
 K. Susanne Steinbauer (Germany/Armenia)
 Valeriia Chernobai (Ukraine)
 Artur Asaduriyan (Armenia)
 Teona Menabdishvili (Georgia)

International Advisory Board:

Prof. Pierre Berthoud (France)
 Dr Leonardo de Chirico (Italy)
 Dr Derek Copley (UK)
 Dr Pieter J. Lalleman (Netherlands/UK)

Earlier this month the Faculté Jean Calvin, to which our Committee members Gert Kwakkel and Pierre Berthoud are connected, sent the message below to its supporters.

In the day of adversity, consider!

'In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider/look (Heb.). God has made the one as well as the other in such a way that no one can find out what is to happen next.' (Ecclesiastes 7:14)

The temptation to underestimate evil

Admittedly, we have all underestimated the frightening efficiency and the extremely rapid spread of the coronavirus within the populations of the world, in particular in the West. Our scientific experts as well as our health and political authorities have been to a large degree complacent in taking belated action against the epidemic. They did not take sufficiently into account the experience of some Asian democracies, where authorities and populations were well prepared and equipped to face such a plague.

However, in a world where evil is a dynamic force, governments must recognise its devastating thrust. Without this acknowledgement of the virus-like ability of evil to creep maliciously into the heart of the city, government will never be prepared to confront it. By taking adequate measures to identify and to face up to it, leaders demonstrate that they really take to heart the protection and the well-being of the people for whom they are responsible.

The work of the Creator is undoubtedly good, but since the emergence of sin in the world at the dawn of history, human beings and the whole of creation as well as civilisations, however accomplished they may become, live under the shadow of death. To ignore this fact is to call down upon us times of disenchantment, even tragic and bitter times!

In the passage quoted above the teacher of wisdom urges us to be happy in the day of prosperity, but he also invites us to carefully consider the days of adversity that disrupt our lives.

Shaken foundations

Undoubtedly, immersed as we are in a society that extols the well-being of the body, material prosperity and peace at all cost, we have been shaken to the very depth of our beings by the extent and the magnitude of the evil that, like a tsunami, has spread so devastatingly and

overwhelmed more than half of the world population! All our professional, economic, political, cultural and sports activities have been placed on standby mode and even come to a halt. In one word, the foundations of our world- and life-view and of our civilisation with its values, certainties and lifestyle are faltering. Our successes suddenly seem very fragile. What has happened, for instance, during this time of confinement, to our freedom of movement and travel, not to mention our freedom of enterprise? Has humanity, the measure of all things, the ultimate reference point, after all built the mansion of its civilisation on sand?

The point is not to underestimate our achievements, the feats and the conquests of modern times, but to give them their proper place, where they help us to better fulfil our human mandate and our calling to community. For our enterprises, however remarkable or ingenious they may be, bear the marks of our brokenness and can only fail when we seek to build a promethean utopia! Since the Tower of Babel, human history is littered with the corpses of such chimeras.

What stance should we then adopt with regards to this sudden and major crisis that has taken such a magnitude? Ecclesiastes gives us a few leads to enlighten our path.

God reigns

First of all, the book reminds us that God is sovereign and that nothing escapes his ultimate will. This of course doesn't mean that we are not responsible for the way in which we manage creation and govern the city, especially when we go through a devastating storm and are threatened by a severe upheaval, but that the Lord presides over the destiny of our world and of our lives. We do not surrender to fate nor yield to the whims of chance, for God reigns and that makes all the difference! Even when we are under the impression that the Lord is silent, he is present and he speaks to us. But as Elihu, the young wise man of the Book of Job, says, we are

not aware of it and do not take heed! God meets us in the intimacy of our beings and reveals himself to us and instructs us by dreams, visions and even during acute sufferings (Job 33.14–19). Such is the work of the Spirit who moves mysteriously in the depth of our hearts in unison with the written and Incarnate wisdom of our heavenly Father.

Discernment

Secondly, and because of what has just been said, Qohelet¹ invites us to consider, to pay attention and to ponder rather than to flee from reality or to minimise it, to offer ready-made solutions or to hide behind the knowledge of experts. To understand or discern what is happening, in the light of the divine word, is vital when we are confronted with such dramatic and uncertain circumstances. Indeed, within the Christian worldview, discernment enlightens and nourishes the integrity, the compassion and the hope of the believer. When he prayed for the Philippians, Paul asked God that their 'love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that they may approve all that is excellent.' (Ph. 1: 9, 10). In a world of communication, discernment is the *antidote par excellence* to untruth, misinformation and dissimulation. It is 'the power to tell the good from the bad, the genuine from the counterfeit, and to prefer the good and the genuine to the bad and the counterfeit'.² In other words, discernment combines wisdom with significant practical choices; a wisdom inviting us and enabling us to evaluate and to appreciate the allegations of truth while prompting us to understand that we are part of a real and broken world where the power of evil is at work. As we understand the reality of our world, we can all the more live and act accordingly in the light of God's wisdom. Discernment urges us to search for truth regardless of its source because it alone enables us to resist evils and scourges and to slow down their progression. But, beware! Our apprehension of truth, however real it may be, is never exhaustive. Only our ultimate *Vis-à-vis*, the fountain of all wisdom in whom we trust, holds this prerogative!

¹ The Hebrew name of Ecclesiastes.

² Often attributed to Samuel Johnson, the famous 18th century English writer, essayist and moralist, this quotation was in fact written by C. G. Osgood as a part of a 1917 preface to James Boswells 'Life of Samuel Johnson' (Samuel Johnson's autobiography).

³ Since the writing of these thoughts the French Constitutional court ruled that the government must lift a blanket ban on meetings at places of worship imposed as part of the measures to combat the coronavirus.

Some paths of reflection

Finally, Ecclesiastes invites us to cast a lucid and kindly gaze on the major crisis of civilisation we are experiencing, as we witness the rapid and disconcerting collapse of our system of values and achievements that seemed so well established, permanent and meaningful. With this in mind I would like to share some thoughts with you:

- The time has come for us to redefine the foundations of our faith and our priorities. In addition to our personal relationship with the Lord, however important it may be, are we ready to take part in the life and affairs of the city in response to the cultural mandate the Lord gave us in creation? Admittedly, we are not of the world, but we are in the world. Our faith is not limited to the private sphere of our lives, because the Word of God also sheds light on its public sphere. It is our duty to face the challenges of our time and to understand how divine wisdom enlightens them, taking as examples Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, Esther in Persia and the early Church in the Roman Empire. It is easy to get caught up in the comfort of our well-being to the detriment of a thoughtful examination of our culture, of a lifestyle and of an action that might even trigger opposition.

Recently I saw again the movie '*Les Misérables*' by Tom Hooper, based on the novel by Victor Hugo, where God is clearly present in the life of the city. As I reflected on the movie and the present epidemic, I was struck by the absence of a Christian voice on the television programmes and radio stations in France dealing with this major crisis! God, our churches, the Christian critical appraisal of the situation and testimony have become largely insignificant in our ultramodern society. Secularisation having restricted Christians to the private sphere, will it now confine them to a clandestine existence?³

- The widespread upsurge of creative imagination and generosity demonstrated to the population, particularly to the victims of the epidemic, to the elderly people, to the weakest and to the underprivileged, represent a significant feature of this trial. A similar gesture of solidarity was expressed in the spring of 2019 when fire seriously damaged Notre-Dame de Paris. Such expressions of creative liberality are traces of common grace and the lingering footprints the waning Christian faith has left on our civil societies. As Luc Ferry, a contemporary agnostic French philosopher maintains, one of the major contributions of the Christian faith

has been to enhance the love of one's neighbour, a mirror image of the Creator's love for his creatures. Consciously or unconsciously, our contemporaries are still inspired by this long-standing cultural heritage. It is a possible and promising meeting point in our desire to share the Gospel with our peers.

This generosity and creativity are in striking contrast with the lack of preparation and the wavering of the political and public health authorities of our country. Apart from a few exceptions their rhetoric and actions reveal grey areas that generate many unanswered questions...! However, this should not prevent us from praying for our authorities as they seek to manage the crisis, where everything seems to slip between their fingers. As they face such tough issues, they also need wisdom and discernment!

- The sudden appearance of calamities and hardships is often a salutary wake-up call and triggers a vital soul-searching process. During such trials and sufferings, which have no apparent or obvious value in and of themselves, the Lord is at work as he speaks to us to bring us closer to himself. He presses us, who are living in the shadow of death, to a radical change of mind, to become conscious of and acknowledge our fragility, our misery, to find again the path to humility, of life and of hope. Indeed, as St Augustine says so well, '... you (God) have made us for yourself, and our heart is

restless until it rests in you'.⁴ This particular work of the Lord brings to mind the tragedy of the exile of the people of Judah. After recalling, through the prophetic word of Jeremiah, the disaster that the unfaithful and idolatrous people had brought upon themselves, the Lord declares his firm intention to restore his covenant, to gather his people and to have them remain securely in their homeland: 'I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and all my soul' (Jeremiah 32:41, NIV).

The end of the tunnel

Such deeply moving love and grace, flowing out of the very heart of God, have been fully revealed in Jesus Christ, in his life, death on the cross and glorious resurrection. The Son of God is henceforth our mediator and our intercessor with the Father. The Spirit of wisdom, while speaking to our hearts, convinces us of the loving kindness of our Lord. Yes, as Ecclesiastes said so well, the Lord has wrapped up our future in mystery, but we are neither troubled nor without hope, for it is hidden in God, in his love, stronger than any plague, than even death itself. Let us never forget that the goodness and the faithfulness of the Lord move faster and better than the coronavirus. The little and bright light at the end of the tunnel that kindles our hope is not a mirage!

⁴ *Confessions*, Book I, i (I), translation Henry Chadwick.

Pierre Berthoud

THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ARE:

Pierre Berthoud, France, chair; email chairman@feet-europe.org

Klaus Bense, Germany, secretary; email secretary@feet-europe.org

Gert F. Hain, Germany, treasurer; email treasurer@feet-europe.org

Stanislaus Alexiev, Bulgaria

Pavel Cerny, Czech Republic

Leonardo De Chirico, Italy

Stephen Dray, England

Anne-Marie Kool, Hungary / Netherlands

Gert Kwakkel, Netherlands / France

Hetty Lalleman, England / Netherlands

Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, Denmark

Pieter J. Lalleman attends the Committee as editor of EJT.