

**CONSTITUTION: RINGS** – The International Research Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies

**Preamble**

*This constitution is a transitional document and it is planned to move to a more permanent document within three years.*

**Name**

1. The name of the association is: *RINGS* – The International Research Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies.

**Registered office**

2. The association is to be located at the Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Karlstad, Linköping and Örebro Universities

**Duration**

3. The duration has been entered into for an unspecified period of time.

**Purpose**<sup>4</sup>. The purpose of this association is:

- a. to promote advanced, critical, transformative, self-reflexive gender<sup>1</sup> and feminist research;
- b. to advance excellence in disciplinary/transdisciplinary gender and feminist research
- c. to promote transnational research collaboration between member institutions in advanced Gender Studies and related studies;
- d. to create virtual and physical meeting places for different generations of gender scholars

**Actions**

5. The association will seek to fulfill its purpose through:

- a. building an effective network for taking gender and related inequalities and discrimination more seriously in research;
- b. developing effective strategies for developing such research;
- c. critical self-reflection;
- d. inviting dialogue with political institutions;
- e. systematically organizing knowledge, know-how and an inventory of funding options for joint projects, and research collaborations;
- f. promoting researchers' mobility, and organizing a programme for exchanging scholars between member institutions;
- g. providing a platform for promoting and supporting educational activities. Such plans need not to activate the network as a whole, but could be arranged in smaller constellations, after agreement between individual member institutions.
- h. promoting networking with other relevant associations.

**Budget**

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<sup>1</sup> Gender in this context is intended to have an expansive inclusive meaning across many fields.

6. The budget of the association consists of:
- a. contributions by member institutions (subject to discussion by the Executive Committee concerning capacity to contribute);
  - b. funding from a range of government and non-government agencies approved by the Executive Committee
  - c. income from capital or property;
  - d. proceeds of events organized by the association;
  - e. subsidies, gifts, testamentary disposition, and legacies;
  - f. other benefits.

### **Calendar and Language**

7.1 The association year runs from January first up to and including December thirty-first.

7.2 The working language of the association is English. However, in official documents, the title and aims should be presented in several languages where possible.

### **Membership**

8.1. The association shall only have institutional members, not individual members.

8.2. For hereafter “members” means “institutional members”.

8.3. The Executive Committee can establish additional conditions for membership through the association’s by-laws.

8.4. Membership is not limited to any location or nationality, as long as affinity with the association’s purpose is demonstrable.

8.5 Institutions or similar units applying for membership should normally fulfil *one or more* of the following criteria in relation to Gender Studies and related studies:

- Host a visiting scholars programme at postdoctoral level, or comparable advanced research level;
- Offer a masters and/or doctoral programme in Gender Studies or related studies;
- Have a professorship, or similar research leader, specifically entitled in Gender Studies or related studies;
- Have an official ‘centre of excellence’ or equivalent status granted by, for instance, the university or funding agencies;
- Conduct excellent research in the field of gender scholarship.

8.6 Other criteria can be used by the Executive committee on the basis of specific contexts and the availability of resources.

### **Membership application**

9.1. Application for membership is by written application to the membership secretary.

9.2. The Executive Committee decides on membership.

9.3. Should the Executive Committee decide not to admit an applicant, it is required to provide the applicant with a written decision including the reasons for its rejection normally within four weeks.

9.4. In the case of non-admission by the Executive Committee, the General Assembly can still decide to admit the applicant by a majority.

## **Membership duties**

10.1. Members are required to pay yearly membership contributions, which can vary by world region, as determined by the General Assembly.

10.2. Contributions are due at the start of the association year. Contributions are non-refundable, including in cases of cancelling of membership during the year.

10.3. The contributions of those members not joining at the beginning of the year are pro-rata.

## **Termination and resignation of membership**

11.1. Membership expires in each of the following cases:

- a. resignation by the member;
- b. termination by the Executive Committee in the association's name;
- c. termination by the General Assembly;
- d. dissolution of the institutional member;
- e. The institutional member no longer exists.

11.2. Should a member wish to resign membership, this should be done in writing no less than four weeks before the end of the association year.

11.3. Membership can be terminated by the Executive Committee for reasons such as if a member does not pay determined contributions, if any other commitments to the association are not met, or if the association does not choose to extend the membership for other relevant reason.

11.4.. Termination of membership in the name of the association is performed by the Executive Committee; the Executive Committee is required to inform the member in writing, including the reasons for expulsion.

11.5.. The member can appeal against termination of membership by the Executive Committee through the General Assembly.

11.6. The General Assembly can decide by a two-thirds vote to terminate a membership; it can only do so if the member in question is acting in defiance of the association's statutes, by-laws, or decisions, or if the member is unreasonably disadvantaging the association.

11.7. Immediately after its decision has been made, the General Assembly is required to inform the member in writing, including the reason for termination.

## **Suspension of membership**

12.1. The Executive Committee can temporarily suspend a member for a duration of up to three months; the Executive Committee is required to inform the member in writing, including the reasons for the suspension.

12.2. While suspended, members cannot benefit from membership privileges, but are still required to pay contributions.

12.3. The member can appeal against the suspension by the Executive Committee through the General Assembly.

### **Appeals by members**

13.1. A terminated or suspended member can appeal against termination or suspension respectively with the General Assembly within four weeks.

13.2. The General Assembly is required to inform the appealing member of its decision in writing and within four weeks.

### **Executive Committee / Transitional Executive Committee**

There is a Transitional Executive Committee and the plan is to move to an Executive Committee within three years.

14.1. The Executive Committee consists of three to seven people drawn from three to seven institutions, though it also retains its authority if there are less than three people/institutions on the board; in that case the Executive Committee is required to call a General Assembly to fill the vacated positions within two months after its number drops below three.

14.2. The General Assembly chooses the Executive Committee from the association's members.

14.3. The General Assembly appoints the chairperson, secretary and treasurer from the Executive Committee; these positions are required to be filled by three different members; the General Assembly is also allowed to appoint a vice-chairperson, vice-secretary, or a vice-treasurer to replace or assist the appointed chairperson, secretary, or treasurer.

14.4. The chairperson, secretary, and treasurer are required to be of age.

14.5. The Executive Committee or a group of at least two members can nominate candidates; candidates should provide written confirmation of candidacy.

14.6. Nominations not originating from the Executive Committee should, along with the candidate's written confirmation of candidacy, be submitted to the secretary of the Executive Committee at least one week before the General Assembly.

14.7 The membership of the Executive Committee should regularly rotate among the member institutions, with attention paid to the diversity of institutional representation, for example, in terms of structures of inequality and discrimination.

### **Executive Committee: suspension and termination**

15.1. The General Assembly can suspend or terminate Executive Committee members.

15.2. If suspension is not followed by termination within three months, the Executive Committee member is reinstated.

15.3. Any decision to suspend or terminate Executive Committee members has to be made with a majority of at least two-thirds of the present or represented members at the General Assembly.

### **Executive Committee: term of office**

16.1. The General Assembly appoints Executive Committee members for three years; after that period Executive Committee members are immediately eligible for re-election, but no more than once.

16.2. Executive Committee membership ends when:

- a. the General Assembly terminates it;
- b. membership to the association is terminated;
- c. the Executive Committee member resigns; on resignation, the Executive Committee member is required to give at least twenty-eight days' notice.

16.3. Should Executive Committee membership end due to the passing of the three-year term without the appointment of a successor, the Executive Committee member remains on the board until the General Assembly has appointed a successor or decided that a successor is no longer necessary, unless the Executive Committee member is no longer reasonably able to fill the position.

### **Executive Committee: meetings and decision-making**

17.1. The Executive Committee meets as often as the chairperson or at least two other Executive Committee members deem necessary, but at least once two times a year. Such meetings may be 'virtual' rather than face-to-face.

17.2. Executive Committee meetings are announced at least 10 days beforehand, and normally a month in advance.

17.3. The Executive Committee can only make decisions when at least two-thirds of its members are present or represented.

17.4. Decisions shall be taken with the simple majority of members present.

17.5. In the event of a tied vote the chairperson reopens the discussion; should the vote tie again, the chairperson has the casting vote.

### **Executive Committee: limited powers**

18.1. Without approval by the General Assembly the Executive Committee is not allowed to make decisions that bind the association or have a greater financial stake than €10,000.00.

18.2. Without approval by the General Assembly, the Executive Committee is not allowed to enter into agreements concerning the buying, transfer or encumbrance of real estate, to enter into agreements in which the association commits itself to stand surety or severally co-debtor, makes out a cause for a third party or commits itself to standing surety for the debts of a third party. Only the association itself can invoke the lack of approval by the General Assembly.

### **Tasks of the chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and membership secretary**

19.1. The chairperson is responsible for:

- supervising the upholding of the association's statutes and by-laws, and the performing of the association's decisions;
- chairing the meetings of both the Executive Committee and the General Assembly.

19.2. The secretary is responsible for:

- (delegating the) note-keeping of all meetings;
- (delegating) all of the association's correspondence;
- (delegating the) writing of the association's annual report;
- (delegating the) management of the association's archives.

19.3. The treasurer is responsible for:

- (delegating the) management of the association's funds and keeping its financial books;
- (delegating the) collection of receivables and payment of the association's debts;
- (delegating the) writing of the annual financial report;
- (delegating the) writing of the annual budget.

19.4. The membership secretary is responsible for:

- (delegating the) membership applications and the list of members.

19.5. The Executive Committee should ensure the General Assembly can always be informed about the association's financial situation and commitments.

## **Representation**

20.1. The association can also be represented by, apart from the entire Executive Committee, two Executive Committee members acting in concert, as long as at least one of them is the chairperson, secretary, or treasurer.

20.2. The Executive Committee can grant one or more Executive Committee members a full or partial authorization to represent the association; such an authorization is to be provided in writing. The Executive Committee is required to disclose to third parties any full authorization through publication in the register of the Chamber of Commerce where this association has been registered.

20.3. A member can grant another member the authority to represent her/him at a General Assembly and speak or vote on her/his behalf; such authorization is to be provided in writing; a member can only represent one other member.

## **Convening the General Assembly**

21.1. The Executive Committee convenes the General Assembly as often as it deems necessary, but at least once a year.

21.2. The letter of invitation to a General Assembly meeting is normally sent or handed out at least six months before the date of the meeting, and in emergency at least six weeks in advance of the date of the meeting.

21.3. Any member has the right to put issues on the agenda of the General Assembly; issues can only be included when they are submitted in writing to the secretary at least ten days before the meeting; the secretary is required to distribute these submitted issues in writing to all members at least seven days before the meeting.

21.4. The chairperson and secretary act as chairperson and secretary of the General Assembly; if the chairperson or secretary is absent, another Executive Committee member will act as chairperson or secretary; if no replacement is thus found, the General Assembly provides such itself.

21.5. A General Assembly can also be convened by the Executive Committee if at least a tenth of the members demand it; these members need to do so in writing, also providing their reason for calling a meeting; the Executive Committee is required to convene that General

Assembly within twenty-eight days; if the Executive Committee has not done so within this time, the members themselves can convene a meeting in the way described in this article or through an announcement in at least one website that is well-frequented by members or through a well-known mailing list or otherwise appropriate online channel; in that case the General Assembly itself will provide for chairing and taking notes of the meeting

21.6. Only members are allowed to be present at the General Assembly, unless the General Assembly decides to invite certain non-members.

### **Voting rights and quorum during General Assembly**

22.1. Only members have the right to vote.

Each (institutional) member has two votes in the General Assembly, which can be distributed between up to two individuals.

22.2. Unless the statutes stipulate otherwise, the General Assembly takes its decisions with a majority vote.

22.3. The General Assembly can only make decisions when at least a quarter and a minimum six of the members are present or represented.

22.4. If the required number of members is not present or represented at a General Assembly, a new meeting can be convened at least fourteen but at most twenty-eight days afterwards, at that meeting – regardless of the number of present or represented members— decisions can be made on the same agenda issues as the previous meeting with a majority of at least two-thirds of the votes.

22.5. Votes on persons have to be made in writing, but when none of the members objects, the General Assembly can also make its decision by acclamation.

22.6. If votes on persons not dealing with elections are tied, a revote is called; if votes tie again, the motion is rejected.

22.7. In elections any votes on persons should be made by an absolute majority; should none of the candidates reach a majority, a revote is held between those persons with the highest number of votes, taking care that there is at least one more candidate on the ballot than there are vacancies; this revote is decided by the majority of votes.

22.8. Votes on business are made by a show of hands, unless the Executive Committee or the General Assembly decides on a written vote.

22.9. In the event that votes on business tie the motion is rejected.

22.10. Blank and invalid votes do not count.

22.11. All written votes should be held with unsigned, closed notes.

### **Standing orders**

23.1. The Executive Committee can make by-laws, which need to be confirmed by the General Assembly.

23.2. By-laws can be changed through decisions of the General Assembly.

23.3. In exception to article 25.2., the General Assembly decides on approval of/changes to the by-laws through a theretofore called General Assembly in which at least a tenth of the members is present or represented, and with a majority of at least two-thirds of the vote.

Article 25 applies in all other situations.

23.4. By-laws must not contravene the law or the association's statutes.

### **Conferences**

24.1. The association will organize an international (academic) conference at least every three years.

24.2. Further regulations concerning the triennial conference can be set out in the by-laws.

### **Annual accounts**

25.1. Annual meetings will be held within six months of the expiration of the association year.

25.2. The agenda for the Annual meetings should include the following items:

- a. the annual accounts;
- b. the report of the Auditing Committee and the appointment of a new Auditing Committee;
- c. the provision of any vacancies;
- d. the determination of the annual contribution.

25.3. The annual accounts should include: the annual report of the Executive Committee, a financial balance sheet, an overview of income and expenses, a membership listing, as well as comments on these items.

25.4. During the annual meeting, the treasurer should provide accountability for her/his financial administration.

25.5. Before approving the annual accounts, the General Assembly can decide to have an accountant or other specialist check the accounts.

### **Budget**

26.1. Within three months of the expiration of the year of accounts the Executive Committee sets a budget for the coming calendar year and distributes it among the members; this budget should be accompanied by comments and explanations.

26.2. The General Assembly is required to confirm the budget set by the Executive Committee before the end of the association year.

### **Committees and working groups**

27.1. Both the General Assembly and the Executive Committee may initiate committees or working groups.

27.2. The General Assembly annually appoints an Auditing Committee of three members without seats on the Executive Committee to study the financial accountability of the Executive Committee; this auditing committee reports its findings to the General Assembly.

### **Donors to the association**

28. Donors to the association are persons or institutions that have declared themselves willing to contribute to the association.

### **Dissolution and amendment to the statutes**



29.1. The General Assembly can decide to amend the statutes or dissolve the association; such a decision can only be made in a theretofore called General Assembly in which at least two thirds of the members are present or represented, and a majority vote of at least two-thirds is in favour of amendment or dissolution.

29.2. Should the quorum mentioned in article 32.1 not be present or represented, the Executive Committee can convene a General Assembly in the above-mentioned manner, to be held at least fourteen but at most twenty-eight days after the first meeting; in that second meeting said decision can only be made through a majority vote, irrespective of the number of members present or represented.

29.3. A meeting as designated in article 32.1 should be convened by the Executive Committee at least twenty days beforehand, informing the members that an amendment to the statutes or dissolution of the association is on the agenda.

29.4. The Executive Committee should disseminate the proposed amendment to the statutes to the members at least fourteen days before the meeting or make the amendment available for inspection by members, until the end of the day of the meeting.

### **Liquidation of the association's assets**

30.1. After the decision has been made to dissolve the association, the Executive Committee is appointed liquidator of the association's assets, unless the General Assembly decides to appoint another body.

30.2. Any remaining financial assets should be allocated by the General Assembly in accordance with the purpose of the association.

30.3. After liquidation, the annual accounts and other documents will be kept for at least seven years in the care of the person appointed to do so by the General Assembly.