

A REPORT ON THE 21ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF SLOVAKIA

The 21st General Assembly of the Ethnographic Society of Slovakia (ESS) took place on 25 March 2021. Even though it is challenging to maintain contact in this strange and difficult period caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was possible to hold this meeting online thanks to the efforts of the General Assembly of the ESS and its chairperson Dr. Martina Bocánová.

All the more welcome was the presence of international participants, namely Dr. Jiří Woitsch from the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Chairperson of the Czech Ethnological Society, Dr. Jana Pospíšilová from the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and Associate Professor Miroslav Válek from the Institute of European Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno.

The meeting opened with a presentation by Professor Zuzana Beňušková on the transformation of the ESS in the context of historical events, focusing on its institutional development through a chronological overview of important figures and activities from the early 1950s up to 1989 and on to the present. The cross-section of the activities of the ESS in all areas of its operation was accompanied by ample photo documentation, conjuring a sense of nostalgia among many.

With a short tribute, the participants honoured those ethnologists who have passed away in the past three years and whose endeavours have left a significant impact. Those who have left us include Mgr. Zuzana Profantová, CSc.; PhDr. Božena Filová, CSc.; PhDr. Irena Pišútová, CSc.; Prof. PhDr. Ján Michálek, DrSc.; PhDr. Ondrej Demo, CSc.; and Mgr. Wojciech Dudziak.

The general assembly was divided into three parts. The first part provided a summary of the activities carried out by the ESS and an evaluation of the results obtained over the last election term as well as its future prospects. The second part was dedicated to the recognition of the efforts of the members of the ESS from 2018 to 2020 in various areas and to the appointment of a new

honorary member. The third part consisted of the election of officials and members of the incoming main committee.

The activities carried out over the last election term were summarized in the comprehensive “Report on the Activities of the ESS” drawn up by Dr. Bocánová. She focused on the publication of the journal *Etnologické rozpravy* [Ethnological Debates] and the ongoing efforts of the editorial department to improve its quality, drawing attention to the problem of the financial security of the publication that has arisen from the limited sources of income of the ESS itself. As chairperson, Dr. Bocánová highlighted the activities of the committee in the field of promotion and popularization of the ESS, especially through Internet communication and the use of social networks, which also serve

as a place for the presentation of research and promotional and publication outputs of individual members of the society and its departments. The archival activities of the ESS and the development of an online library played an important part in this respect. The report also documented the involvement of the ESS in the organization of conferences, student academic activities, and the *Etnofilm Čadca* film festival alongside the society’s cooperation with partner societies domestically and abroad.

In 2018 the ESS was accredited by UNESCO as a non-government organization, stimulating its activities in the field of cultural heritage, particularly living heritage. Dr. Ľubica Voľanská and Dr. Jana Ambrózová in particular have been actively engaged in this process. Their active engagement could also help reinforce the role and status of non-profit organizations in relation to UNESCO.

The pedagogical department, led by Professor Beňušková, played an important role in the ESS in regards to the accreditation of study fields, particularly in relation to the classification of ethnology within the system of sciences. She also focused on supporting students’ academic activities, primarily as part of a nationwide presentation in the form of the Students’ Scientific Conference.

An essential factor for the smooth functioning of the ESS in various fields are finances and their management; this was very accurately and comprehensively explained in the report by the ESS treasurer, Dr. Juraj Janto. He graphically presented the sources of income and areas of expenditure using specific data. The financial management of the society was also audited by Associate Professor Katarína Košťalová and Dr. Dita Andrušková; they concluded that these has been the best financial management results thus far, highlighting in turn the improvements in the payment of membership fees and in the search for new sources of funding.

The majority of the participants’ contributions to the discussion during the meeting revolved around the need to encourage the younger generation of ethnologists in particular to join the society. What also resonated was the necessity to enhance cooperation and mutual communication between academic

and university departments and museums, cultural and educational institutions, and other centres or organizations operating in individual fields of ethnology; this was made clear by the repeated calls for the establishment of specialized working groups. A remark was made during the discussion about the need to process a professional bibliography as an important part of the informational foundation of ethnology. The IT field also plays an important role in the documentation process.

In accordance with the agenda of the general assembly, the plenum approved the updated articles of association of the ESS following a consultation process and the final incorporation and adoption of proposed changes. In the second part of the meeting, which was devoted to the results obtained and activities carried out by the ESS members, Katarína Holbová was appointed a new honorary member. With many years of active research and documentation, promotional, publishing, and organizational activities under her belt, she has significantly contributed to the shift in the understanding of ethnology both in academic circles and among the general public. She worked for many years at the Tekov Museum in Levice as an active expert in the field and she has retained her expertise even after ceasing her professional activities. The ESS also awarded prizes for academic and promotional activities carried out from 2018 to 2020.

The third part of the general assembly focused on the election of the new ESS management. The election was preceded by a speech by Dr. Katarína Popelková, who was nominated for the position of chairperson of the society; she is an academic at the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, a member of the ESS, and a member of the editorial board of *Etnologické rozpravy*. Popelková presented her vision for the society's future, identifying the efforts to expand the active membership base and being open to establishing new working groups as key priorities which were to be determined by their clear and specific purpose.

While being a proponent of the continued publication of *Etnologické rozpravy*, Dr. Popelková suggested reconsidering its publication in printed form due to the high costs that this entailed. Her priorities as the candidate for the position of chairperson also included the further improvement of communication through the society's website and more flexibility in the publication of projects and activities. During an online round of voting by secret ballot in accordance with the ESS statutes, a new ESS chairperson, ESS treasurer, and main ESS committee were elected for a period of three years starting on 1 April 2021:

PhDr. Katarína Popelková, CSc. (the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences) – chairperson

Mgr. Dominika Lešková (the Department of Ethnology and Museology, Faculty of Arts of Comenius University) – treasurer

Members:

PhDr. Martina Bocánová, PhD. (the Western Slovak Museum, Trnava; the Department of Ethnology and Non-European Studies, Faculty of Arts of University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius)

Mgr. Miriama Bošeľová, PhD. (the Department of Ethnology and Folklore Studies, Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University)

Mgr. Eva Dudková (the Slovak National Museum, Martin)

Mgr. Lucia Ditmarová, PhD. (the National Centre of Culture and Further Education)

Doc. PhDr. Hana Hlôšková, CSc. (the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)

Mgr. Zuzana Panczová, PhD. (the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)

Substitutes:

Mgr. Mária Mizeráková (the Centre for Folk Art Production)

Prof. Mgr. Katarína Slobodová Nováková, PhD. (the Department of Ethnology and Non-European Studies, Faculty of Arts of University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius)

Auditors:

Mgr. Dita Andrušková, PhD. (the Záhorie Museum, Skalica)

Mgr. Juraj Janto, PhD. (the Department of Ethnology and Museology, Faculty of Arts of Comenius University)

Once the resolution of the general assembly was approved by the ESS plenary, all of the activities on the meeting agenda were completed. All relevant documents and evaluation reports will be made available on the society's website at www.nss.sav.sk.

One election term has ended. Even though its final year was undoubtedly challenging due to the ongoing global pandemic, ESS managed to maintain its professional status as a society of ethnologists largely thanks to the efforts of chairperson Dr. Bocánová, the treasurer Dr. Juraj Janto, the members of the committee, the editorial board of *Etnologické rozpravy* led by Associate Professor Tatiana Bužeková, and all active ESS members, whose work helped maintain the status and the strong position of ethnology in society. We wish the new committee a lot of enthusiasm, inspiring ideas and opportunities, and active members who are ready to put these ideas into practice.

Zdena Krišková