

AEJ UK SECTION CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR AGM - January 17 2018

Last August we sadly recorded the death of Roger Broad, a founder member of the Section. A memorial event for him will be held at the Reform Club in Pall Mall on 2 February from 3 -5 pm. Acceptances very soon please to Sarah Broad on the email sent out to members.

In 2017 the Section's membership remained close to a record high with 42 paid-up members. Lunchtime meetings were very well attended and some were newsmaking – e.g. John Kerr who told us authoritatively that in legal terms the UK's Article 50 notification of Brexit is reversible up to April 2019 when we are due to leave. Our future meetings will try to help members to keep track of the unfolding drama.

The European Parliament's London office continues to allow the AEJ to use the Europe House meeting rooms for our events free of charge. However, heavy pressure of other bookings means we now have to reserve meeting dates 3 months or more in advance, rather limiting our options. We are always on the lookout for members' suggestions for good speakers, with contact details please.

Thanks to David Barker our website has a wealth of topical content on Brexit-related issues and thanks to willing members all our on-the-record meetings are written up on the site for the reference of all. Firdevs Robinson has also kept up the AEJ's profile on Twitter and Facebook.

Members also continue to receive notices about selected non-AEJ events of interest, such as the recent London vigil for Daphne Caruana Galizia, the assassinated Maltese investigative journalist, and various EU-related meetings and debates.

Our financial situation is healthy, as the Treasurer's report shows, despite a period in 2017 when the costs of catering at lunches proved hard to keep in balance. Members asked to bear in mind our need to contain costs by moderate consumption of wine and avoiding late cancellations at lunchtime events.

We are constantly trying to boost attendance at meetings through contacts with the FPA and various media. We are pleased to have added several new members lately, and a hopeful sign is that several City journalism students have asked to stay on our mailing list after attending our lunches. We continue to encourage younger journalists to attend and become members.

One innovation was the pre-Xmas informal social gathering that took place at the Old Bank of England pub in Fleet Street. The experiment can be repeated if there is enough interest.

2018 is the 50th anniversary of the birth of the UK section and an opportunity to celebrate our half-century with a special event – hopefully with a professional as well as a social element, to be decided.

International: 7 Section members participated in the excellent Vilnius Congress in November, where the proximity to Russia prompted fascinating debates about disinformation, fake news and survival strategies for serious journalism. The AEJ's international profile is growing thanks to engagements with European institutions and our participation in international advocacy efforts especially on media freedom and journalists' safety in Turkey and elsewhere.

Thank you for renewing your AEJ membership again.

William Horsley