



ISKCON

REGIONAL GOVERNING BODY

Founder-acarya His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada

**Euro RGB meeting
Villaggio Hare Krishna, Italy
May 18-19, 2023**

Total number of members: 24
Voting members: 15
Quorum: 8
Voting members present: 12
Non-voting members present: 4

Attendance

PRESENT – VOTING MEMBERS

1. Bhaktivaibhava Swami (GBC for Albania, Czech Republic, Finland, Macedonia, Slovakia, Co-GBC for Bulgaria and Romania)
2. Hrdaya Caitanya dasa (GBC of Andorra, Gibraltar, Portugal, Spain, New Mayapur; coGBC of Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and France, except New Mayapur and Dole; Euro RGB Secretary for Benelux)
3. Janesvara dasa (Almviks Board; Euro RGB Secretary in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark)
4. Jai Nitai das (Euro RGB 1st vice-chairman, Zonal supervisor for UK)
5. Krsna Premarupa Dasa (Euro RGB Chairman Zonal supervisor for Switzerland and Lichtenstein)
6. Lalitanatha dasa (Euro RGB Secretary for Denmark)
7. Madhu Sevita dasa (GBC of Cyprus, Greece, Villaggio Hare Krishna, Milano Area, South Umbria, southern Italy, Rome Area, Malta, San Marino; Co-GBC of Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and France (except Dole) – present online for the part of the meeting)
8. Mahaprabhu dasa (Minister of ISKCON Communications Europe)
9. Prahladananda Swami (GBC for Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Montenegro, Poland, and Serbia; Co-GBC for Slovenia; Sannyasa Minister)



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10. Tapas dasa (TP Stockholm; Euro RGB Secretary in Sweden)
11. Trilokatma dasa (Euro RGB 2nd vice-chairman, Zonal supervisor for Slovakia, Albania, and Macedonia)
12. Trisama das (Chair of the Polish National Council)

PRESENT – NON-VOTING MEMBERS

1. Divya-prabandha dasa (Chair of Croatian National Council)
2. Madhava dasa (Member of the Spanish National Council)
3. Mahendra dasa (Chair of Bulgarian National Council)
4. Tapo-divyam dasa (Chair of the Finnish National Council)

PRESENT – GUESTS

1. Govindananda dasa (Croatia, ISKCON resolve trained mediator)
2. Varnasrama dasa (Czech Republic, representative of the LNS Committee, presenting for the agenda topic on Lokanatha Swami)

NOT PRESENT – VOTING MEMBERS:

1. Dina-sharana devi dasi (GBC of Germany-Austria-Liechtenstein + Switzerland-Dole)
2. Krsna Ksetra Swami (Minister of the Ministry for Cow Protection and Agriculture)
3. Radha Krishna dasa (GBC for Hungary, Romania, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey)

NOT PRESENT – NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

1. Dayananda Swami (zonal supervisor for UK)
2. Nrsimha Krsna dasa (zonal supervisor for Turkey)
2. Parabhakti das (TP Villa Vrindavana, Italy)
3. Svayam Bhagavan Kesava Swami (zonal supervisor for UK)
4. Tarakanatha dasa (zonal supervisor for UK)



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MINUTES

Srimad Bhagavatam verse was read for the inspiration of the assembled devotees.

1. Membership

Krsna Premarupa dasa is Euro RGB Chairman.

Jai Nitai dasa is Euro RGB First Vice-Chairman.

Trilokatma dasa is Euro RGB Second Vice-Chairman.

Mahendra dasa was elected as a prospective Executive Committee (EC) member who will join it after the main Euro RGB meeting in autumn.

Seven new members were accepted over the email, prior to meeting: Dayananda Swami, Divya-prabandha dasa, Madhava dasa, Parabhakti dasa, Svayam Bhagavan Kesava Swami, Tapo-divyam dasa, and Tarakanatha dasa.

All the present devotees were reminded of the Code of Honour and rules for the meeting.

Amendments to Resolution 22/09-01 on membership in the Euro RGB body were unanimously accepted. The full resolution, including the amendments, reads as follows.

Resolution 22/09-01a on the membership in the Euro RGB

The membership of the Euro RGB is defined in the following way:

1. Fully-voting members

- Global GBCs (with European Responsibilities)
- Zonal Supervisors / Euro RGB Secretary
- Chairmen of National Councils (if there is no Zonal Supervisor for that country) - Euro

Ministers

To become a fully-voting member, everyone has to go through the procedure of first holding the Assisting position for one year, then holding the Acting position for one year, and then becoming a Fully voting member. This rule is equally applied to chairs of National Councils.



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Anyone taking up these positions (GBCs, zonal supervisors, chairmen of NCs, Euro ministers) are required to go through the procedure to become a fully-voting member of the Euro RGB body as a part of their service. The no-objection rule is applied and new members are automatically accepted over the email as soon as they fulfil the requirements as per resolution. (Euro RGB EC will send an email to the whole body informing them about the new candidate and, if there are no objections within the 2-weeks deadline, they will be welcomed to the Euro RGB email conference and invited for the next in-person meeting when their membership will officially start.)

2. Guests - fully participating in meetings without voting rights
- Invited guests such as resident sannyasis, gurus, and senior preachers spending at least 8 months in Europe

3. Topic Presenters

- Devotees invited for the specific topic only

-end-

Resolution 23/05-01 on the membership in the Executive Committee (EC)

During the Euro RGB (May) Mid-term Meetings, the Euro RGB body will elect the trainee Second Vice-Chairman.

That elected trainee Second Vice-Chairman will join the EC meetings between Mid-term and Main Meetings (May-September) in order to familiarise themselves with the work of the EC, but without voting rights.

After the Main Meetings in (November) Autumn/Fall, according to the standard rotating system, the current Chairman leaves the EC, Vice-Chairman becomes the new Chairman, Second Vice-Chairman becomes the new Vice-Chairman and the newly elected EC member then becomes the Second Vice-Chairman with voting rights.

-end-

2. Activities of the EC in the past period

Krsna Premarupa d gave a report on topics and issues EC has been dealing with since the last meeting. It was concluded that there is a need to establish a clear procedure on how complaints are being handled within the leadership structure.



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3. GBC succession

The question of succession was again discussed and several challenges GBCs face in their areas were communicated: absence of clear service description; no clarity on why we exist or at least expressing it clearly and no clear strategy of applying it in practice; difficulties in finding the qualified devotees who are willing to do this service.

If there are no qualified devotees, we need to work towards getting them up to the standard by educating them. GBC College, for example, is a good educational opportunity for prospective leaders. But the best option is to find devotees who are eager to serve the mission, have spiritual depth, has a good ability to interact with devotees, etc. There are many considerations that make a good leader and once such devotees are identified, they can be given the education to equip them better for the service.

4. Nomination of Krsna Premarupa d to become a GBC

The Euro RGB Body supported the nomination of Krishna Premarupa Dasa as a GBC for the Germanic countries at the last meeting in September 2022. Consequently, the National Councils of the Germanic yantras sent a nomination letter to the GBC Nomination Committee in October 2022.

Till today, more than eight months later, the nomination process has not yet officially begun. From the exchange with the Nomination Committee, it is expected that the procedure will start within the next couple of weeks.

Action Point: The Euro RGB EC Secretary will send a reminder to the GBC Nomination Committee to ensure the start of the process.

5. Euro RGB Statute

Euro RGB body supports the initiative to create a Euro RGB 'Roles and responsibilities of the Euro RGB' paper.

Action point: EC will work on the proposal for this paper and present it at the next Euro RGB meeting.



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6. Anonymous voting/survey system

Euro RGB members were reminded of the Members' platform that was used previously and will continue to be used in the future. The platform also has the option of surveying which is a helpful tool when there is a need to hear the opinions of all the members. It also has the option of anonymous voting which can be used when appropriate.

7. Mid-term meeting May 2024

The next mid-term meeting in 2024 will be held on 9th and 10th of May.

Action point: EC will determine the venue for the meeting amongst the available places in Europe.

REPORTS

8. New budgeting system

At the last Euro RGB meeting the new budgeting system was approved and EC was asked to implement it. The implementation is under the way and it became obvious that some adjustments to it could be made based on the feedback from different yatra's.

Action point: EC will present at the next Euro RGB meeting a finalized structure of fees and, if needed, a new proposal of an upgraded budgeting system.

9. ISKCON Global Property Office (IGPO)

Parabhakti d was elected as a Continental Officer for Europe within the ISKCON Global Property Office. He got in touch with European GBCs individually and with the whole Euro RGB body in order to acquire needed information on ISKCON properties and trustees in Europe. A handbook on all property-related matters is being prepared by the IGPO which will be issued within the short time and shared with all concerned parties (GBCs, leaders, trustees, etc.). Possibly, a presentation at the next Euro RGB meeting and/or ELM can be organized so devotees can familiarize themselves with its contents.



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Action point: Present leaders are requested to get in touch with Parbhakti d and reply to his inquiries if they haven't done so far.

10. Ahimsa milk

The GBC resolution by which all the dairy used for the Deities comes from protected cows by Janmastami 2022 didn't yield the expected results. Though there is some modest advancement across the Europe, still there is a lot of space for improvement. In numbers – Europe currently has 160 cows, calves, bulls and oxen and the actual need is almost 900.

Suggestions given to the Euro RGB members by Syamasundara d, assistant to the minister of the European Ministry for Cow Protection and Agriculture, in order to improve the situation are:

- Keep the topic alive in presentations, National Council Meetings and temple council meetings;
- Try and allocate a national dairy coordinator if you don't already have one;
- If you need help reach out to the Ministry and its representatives;
- Work with your farms to increase their capacity;
- Work with your national bodies to add more regional farms;
- Encourage your temples to support and work with their farms.

11. European Pilgrimage Network Initiative

The Initiative is at the moment on hold due to some organisational and personnel setbacks but as soon as these are resolved, it will continue.

12. Devotee Care initiative

The mission of the Devotee Care initiative “is simple, we want every devotee to be spiritually happy, materially well-situated, and positively identifying with ISKCON as a caring society”.

Based on the GBC resolution from 2019, every temple is encouraged to hold the Devotee Care Course (DCC) for all care-givers and administrators in order to embed the culture of care within devotee communities. The course is approximately 20 hours long and



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can be spread over several days. It is a very interactive, constructive and productive course which ends up with development of a strategic plan. It has been already held in France, Ireland, Germany and the UK, and other yatras are welcome to invite Jai Nitai d (dco@krishnatemple.com) based in Bhaktivedanta Manor, UK to conduct the course.

13. CPO Europe

Citrarupini dd gave a general report on recent activities of the Child Protection Office. The main issue the Office was dealing with was the recent unfortunate events that happened in our movement and their repercussions. Different secular child protection organisations from across the Europe, with whom CPO developed good working relationships over the years, contacted CPO and requested explanation as they were previously given assurances that our movement has child protection as a top priority. Dealing with these organisations somewhat stalled the regular activities which usually focus on education and prevention. A more detailed report which will cover this aspect of CPO's functioning will be given at the next Euro RGB meeting in the autumn.

14. ISKCON Communications Europe

Mahaprabhu d, the minister for ISKCON Communications Europe ministry, gave a report on their activities:

- In September 2023 the new executive board was elected with the following members: Parabhakti dasa, Kamala Priya dasi, Hrishikesh dasa, Mahaprabhu dasa.
- During the General Assembly, new members were added: Czech, Slovakia, Denmark, Slovenia, and Latvia.
- The new version of the ISKCON Interfaith booklet has been printed.
- ISKCON Communications Europe Leadership Team Executive Council met twice in Brussels, Belgium in 2023.

Mahaprabhu d also reminded Euro RGB members that ICE legal entity serves ISKCON Europe by administering the accounts for the Euro RGB and TOVP.

There is a need to identify national Communications Directors from several important yatras who still don't have them. That can be accomplished with the help of GBCs, zonal supervisors and other leaders. Countries that don't have directors are: UK, Ireland, Belgium, Portugal, Germany, Poland, Romania, Greece, and Serbia.

Plans for the future:

- Organise a conference in the European Parliament on religions and the environment together with other Religious Organisations;



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- Organise a Christian Vaisnava Dialogue conference;
- Partner with other organisations to do research determining which state Church systems in Europe are discriminatory and non-discriminatory in order to lobby for reforming their systems for better;
- Organize meetings with representatives from different religious background – Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, as well as vice president of the European Parliament and advisor to the Vice President of the European Commission.

15. European Leaders' Meeting (ELM)

The European Leaders' Meeting (ELM) will happen 30.9.-1.10.2023 in New Vraja Dhama, Hungary. Krsna Premarupa d, as a representative of the EC, is participating in the organisational meetings for the meeting. The invitation for participation will be sent out soon to the wider community of devotees.

PRESENTATIONS

16. Code of ethical behaviour

A presentation on the paper 'Code of ethical behaviour', which has been voted into ISKCON law by the global GBC body in August 2021 has been made by Yogesvara d who compiled the paper. The paper is available on the Members' platform as well as on the website www.iskconethics.com.

DISCUSSIONS

17. Internal communications

Lalitanath das presented the need for upgrading the internal communication within the European yatra by pointing out that effective communication is crucial to the functioning of any organization, ISKCON included. ISKCON has a communications departement dealing with the external audiences but there is no department to ensure a smooth internal communication between its different parts.



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Resolution 23/05-02 on forming the Internal Communications Committee

Euro RGB is forming the Internal Communications committee which will explore the topic of how to upgrade the way Euro RGB body communicates its purpose and activities. The convocation of this committee is as follows:

- Lalitanath das,
- ex officio representative of ISKCON Communications Europe,
- ex officio representative of the Euro RGB EC.

The committee will report at the next Euro RGB meeting in September 2023.

Some of the questions to explore are:

- What do we want to communicate – only one or combination of the three general topics? The three general topics are:
 - o Euro RGB-related matters
 - o Activities/initiatives endorsed by the Euro RGB
 - o Activities of European yatras
- How do we want to communicate it?
- What are the further steps after September 2023?

-end-

18. Increasing guruship in Europe and guru training

The need to increase the number of and presence of initiating spiritual masters in Europe has been voiced. Taking a shelter of a spiritual master and initiation, which are one of the first angas of bhakti, are happening less and less and it is one of the duties of us as the Society to arrange for that to happen if we want our congregation to advance spiritually. The importance of instructing spiritual masters (siksha gurus) has also been pointed out as they also play a major role in one's advancement.

The point of education was also mentioned – education for those who are taking up the service of guru but also for those who are looking forward to being a disciple. For that end, a guru training is provided as well as disciple course. (A presentation on guru training is available on Members' platform.)

A concern was raised about young, unqualified persons just taking up the service because we need 'numbers' – the point is in quality, not the quantity.



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The guru training mentioned here is an interim guru training and assessment program (Phase I), which is a mandatory requirement to commence the service of diksa-guru in ISKCON until the full program (Phase II) to prepare diksa-gurus is available and approved by the GBC. See also GBC resolution: 702.01: ISKCON Spiritual Masters: Qualifications and training – Interim Training Program for ISKCON Diksa-gurus — 2022:

<https://gbc.iskcon.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GBCResolutions2022.pdf>

19. Preaching strategy and book distribution for Europe

Since the last meeting, when it was decided that these two points will be discussed and thought about at each Euro RGB meeting, the EC decided that they will be joined into one point until there is more clarity and concrete action.

Book distribution leaders across the Europe are encouraged to invite Visvambhara d (visvambhara.grappa@gmail.com) to come for talks and inspiration, as well as connect with Divya Nama d (divyanama@krishnatemple.com) who is European Coordinator for the Bhadra Campaign to make pledges. Trai d was proposed as a possible Minister for Book Distribution in Europe. (A presentation on this topic is available on the Members' platform.)

20. Lokanath Swami decision

At the last Euro RGB meeting, a decision was taken that Euro RGB is not welcoming Lokanath Swami in Europe to visit, preach and initiate. As after that several complaints to that decision were made, the EC encouraged GBCs to increase representation of local yatras in the Euro RGB body by inviting chairs of National Councils and zonal supervisors who were not yet members of the Euro RGB to join. Also, several meetings with the 'Lokanath Swami Committee' were held and their representative, Varnasrama d, was also invited to the meeting to make a presentation. After a lengthy discussion and vote, it was decided that the decision made at the previous meeting still stands without any change.

A letter for European Leaders was immediately released upon reaching the decision on the 19th of May:

Euro RGB Statement Regarding Lokanath Swami Status in Europe

Having received feedback and requests from some members of our European devotee community, the Euro RGB body set forth to review and discuss the previous resolution made regarding Lokanath Swami (22/09-03). To this end, the Euro RGB body spent a considerable



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amount of time in meetings discussing the issue, we invited guests to present and also thoroughly reviewed the GBC statement on this matter.

Some lessons learned include: better communications, more representation and consideration of the needs of the greater devotee community in such matters. To this end we are trying to be more effective as an RGB body. For example, seven new members were elected to the Euro RGB at this meeting to increase the representation and current members were encouraged to improve communications with local leaders.

The Euro RGB body has been invested with the right to make a decision based on the input that we have been given and thus after much intense discussion, have concluded that it is in the best interest and needs of a majority of our community to uphold and support the previous Euro RGB body decision which reads as follows:

Resolution 22/09-03

Based on the 'GBC decision regarding Lokanath Swami' approved on July 20th, 2022, the Euro RGB body is requesting Lokanath Swami not to visit, preach or initiate in ISKCON projects and communities in Europe.

This resolution is not permanent and may change, especially if the GBC body is presented with new evidence and their decision is altered, otherwise the Euro RGB will not review this decision again. It should also be noted that the Euro RGB is making no statement or declaration which has not already been stated in GBC documentation.

We do acknowledge the impact this decision will have on devotees across our European community and the rest of the world. Therefore, we wish to offer support and encouragement to those affected by this challenging and faith-testing situation. We sincerely pray that we are all able to take shelter of the Supreme Lord, His Holy Name and together cross over these challenging times.

Yours in Service,
The Euro RGB EC
Krishna Premarupa dasa
Jai Nitai dasa
Trilokatma dasa
On behalf of the Euro RGB