

# FEDERATION SPELEOLOGIQUE EUROPEENNE



## FSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING Saturday 23rd of August 2014 In Baile Herculane, Romania

reported by Michael Laumanns

### Introduction

The FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> August in Baile Herculane (Romania) during the 9th EuroSpeleo Forum, organized by the Federatia Romana de Speologie (FRS). Ged Campion (FSE President) chaired the GAM.

The FSE Bureau members and the member organization delegates wish to express their gratefulness to FRS for its warm welcome at the 2014 EuroSpeleo Forum.

### Present participants at the GAM

**Voting FSE Bureau members:** Ged Campion (President, United Kingdom), Michael Laumanns (Vice-President, Germany), Olivier Vidal (General-Secretary, Proxy from Monaco), Ernest Geyer (Vice-Treasurer, Austria).

**Non-voting Bureau member:** Henk Goutier (Treasurer, Netherlands)

**Voting delegates:** Benoit Lebeau (Belgium), Patrick Deriaz (Switzerland), Mladen Garasic (Croatia), Jean-Claude Thies (Luxembourg), Silvia Goutier (Netherlands), Bogdan Badescu (Romania), Ivan Nastic (Serbia), Pavol Kočiš (Slovakia), Selcuk Canbek (Turkey). Matej Mihalovsky (Slovenia) joined the meeting later.

**Voting delegates after approval according to agenda item 3:** Petar Beron (Bulgaria), Didier Cailhol (France), Csaba Egri (Hungary).

**Non-voting delegate:** Paul Cadas (Hellenic Speleological Society HSS, Greece).

**Excused (Proxy to):** Italy (DE), Sweden (DE), Spain (UK), Ireland (UK), Lithuania (LU), Monaco (General-Secretary).

**Absent/Excused with no Proxy:** Albania, Denmark, Ukraine, Finland, Norway, Portugal, Moldova, Poland, Slovenia (for parts of the meeting), and the Greek delegates from the Hellenic Speleological Federation FHS.

**Responsibles of FSE Commissions:** Ioana Meleg (ECPC- President) and Christian Dodelin (EuroSpeleo Rescue Commission - President).

**Observers:** Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns (UIS) and Laurence Tanguille (President FFS).

### 1. Opening of the GAM:

In the name of the FSE Bureau the FSE President Ged Campion welcomed all participants. The agenda has been proposed by the Bureau and was distributed in time to member organizations. The GAM started at 13H45.

### 2. Quorum – Presentation of voting delegates and observing countries

The FSE counts 31 full members. The quorum of at least 16 votes was reached with 21 countries present or represented (physical presence of 15 delegates + 6 proxies).

The General Assembly accepted the Agenda, including a new proposal to change the Internal Regulations under item 22.

### 3. Approval of membership fees payments for 2013+2014

Approval was given to 31 countries except Fyr. of Macedonia which has not yet paid its contributions for 2014 and the three previous years.

#### **4. Approval of the 2013 GAM report (held in Casola Valsenio, Italy)**

The report was distributed to all delegates/organizations. It was approved at unanimity.

#### **5. Situation of the European member countries**

The Treasurer provided an overview about the contributions paid. Only the Fyr. of Macedonia is in arrear with its payments and thus has currently lost its membership. The Czech Republic has not yet become a member of FSE. There are no speleological organizations known from Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia and Malta. Furthermore the European countries Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Holy See, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Russia, and San Marino are not yet FSE members.

#### **6. Report of the Bureau 2013-2014**

The following Bureau report was unanimously approved:

As usual the FSE Bureau has been extremely busy during this period. With more and more countries wanting to join the FSE our population of cavers has increased. In order to aid communication a Facebook page of the FSE has been launched by FSE treasurer Henk Goutier. The page received ten thousands of visitors so far and proved its high value during the recent accident in the German Riesending Cave which was high profile on media all around the world. The page, which is updated on a nearly daily basis, can be visited even without having an own registration on Facebook. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo>. So stay tuned.

With regard to the rescue operation the high professional standard of European cave rescue was definitely proven by conducting one of the most difficult rescue operations that have been carried out so far on this planet. Our sincere thanks goes to the Italian, Swiss, Croatian, Austrian and German cave rescue experts who have made this incredible success possible. Our thanks also go to the many other European cave rescue organizations who offered their assistance to the Germans.

In February/March it was discovered that the multi-million Euro ERASMUS Programme of the EU potentially covers a large number of European speleological events especially those related to youth education. Precondition to participate in these funded programs is a registration of the national caving organizations at the EU website. The registration only takes 15 minutes to receive a so-called "PIC-Code" making your speleo organization eligible to participate in the ERASMUS program. Consequently, FSE registered in March and has got its own PIC Code. However, in order to be able to launch Pan-European youth projects it would be advisable that all FSE member organizations should have a PIC registration. So far only a few members have a PIC registration. So please urgently check out the ERASMUS website and make your registration. The FSE is ready to assist you with any questions that may arise.

FSE was approached by a new organization called "European Network of Outdoor Sports" in March. ENOS is looking for members from the caving scene. As the request was targeted towards the FSE member organizations, the FSE Bureau decided to inform its members about ENOS but not to become a formal member of ENOS due to possible double membership. The ENOS website is [www.nature-sports.eu](http://www.nature-sports.eu).

In 2014 the EuroSpeleo Projects became one of the main services of the FSE to its members with 12 projects received so far and recognized, which is an annual record since the launch of this activity. All these projects are currently financed from the FSE's restricted budget only and donations would be more than welcome to enhance European inclusiveness of speleological activities.

The EuroSpeleo Magazine is firmly positioned on our website and special thanks for its high quality should go to the editor Mihaela Micula and her team.

In May and June 2014 the FSE Bureau decided to introduce several improvements with regard to the management of the EuroSpeleo Projects. It was stated by our ESP partners (Beal, AV Equipment, and Scursion) that sponsoring items cannot be shipped to places outside Europe any more. Furthermore, country participation in the ESPs will from now on be regularly checked by the FSE Bureau. Respective information and recommendations to the project organizers were included in the attestation letters of FSE for each new project. Also, attention will be given to projects organized in countries or with participants where their national organization has not paid its contributions to the FSE.

In early June FSE beside other European and American environmental organizations joined a letter of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB/Brussels) to the European Commission. The purpose of this letter was to avoid weakening of European regulatory standards on chemistry products by negotiating of the Free-Trade Agreement between the USA and the EU (TTIP-Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) aiming to avoid negative effects for public health and the environment. Chemical substances often pollute underground aquifers.

Members of the Bureau participated in the German annual speleological congress in Waischenfeld (May/June 2014) and the French annual congress in Isle sur le Doubs (June 2014).

#### **7. Financial report 2013 and 1st semester 2014 (Annex)**

The treasurer informed the members that the cashbox previously kept by the General-Secretary was abolished and all payments are now made through the FSE bank account. The auditor, Jean-Claude Thies has checked the accounts and recommends approval of the treasury. However, he reminds the Bureau for two long overdue changes in the Internal Regulations:

1. anchoring the annual audit of the FSE accounts.
2. anchoring the maximum annual travel costs per Bureau member (250 €), which is currently only set down in a Bureau meeting report.

The financial report was approved unanimously.

#### **8. Annual report of the Protection Commission 2013-14**

The ECPC President, Ioana Meleg, presented an action plan ECPC has decided upon in Casola: the ECPC will be restructured from workgroups to Action Teams. Furthermore, the cooperation with the Council of Europe should be strengthened and a change in the FSE Statutes is proposed for this reason (see agenda item 10). The 2014 EuroSpeleo Protection Label was granted to the Belgian protection project «Atlas Wallon du Karst - Bassin de la Basse Lesse» of the Commission Wallonne d'Etude et de Protection des Sites Souterrains.

The ECPC report was agreed upon at unanimity.

Ioana Meleg informed the GAM that she cannot continue with her post of ECPC President and resigned from this post. A new candidate could not yet be found and the Bureau as well as the member states will continue to find a suitable candidate. Ioana remains a member of the ECPC and agreed to act as interim chair up to the next GAM in May 2015.

#### **9. Report about the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) 2013-2014**

In average about 570 € of financial grants were disbursed in the period in question per project. In addition, sponsoring items were received by most of the approved ESPs. Despite the short period in this report the diversity of project organizers and participants increased notably compared to the previous report (2012-13), which is encouraging. Also more non-FSE countries participated in the ESPs. The top countries participating in the 2014 ESPs are Bulgaria (5 ESPs), Poland (5 ESPs), and Germany (5 ESPs), with Bulgaria having most participants/organizers. There were 7 exploration projects, 3 training events, 1 conference, and 1 cave protection event so far approved in 2014. The ESP guidelines and the application form will be updated soon with a view for easier use by applicants.

The report was unanimously accepted.

#### **10. FSE Statutes changes for our participatory status with the Council of Europe (Article 5) (Annex)**

Viorel Lascu explained the reasoning behind the proposal. There is no change of substance included but only rephrasing of activities already done by the FSE. Without the language proposed the Council of Europe will not recognize FSE as a cooperation partner with participatory status.

The proposal received the necessary 2/3 majority with 19 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

#### **10b. Statutes changes about Bureau members mandate term (Articles 12b & 25) (Annex)**

The substance of the proposal is to allow Bureau members to finish their full regular 4 year term in case their mandate will be withdrawn from member organizations. This will make it easier for the Bureau to arrange for replacements. The proposal is linked to an additional proposal (see agenda item 21a. During

the discussion member organizations expressed the wish that withdrawals of mandates should be accompanied by a proper reasoning.

The Statute change of Articles 12b and 25 was unanimously accepted.

#### **11. Report of the Speleo-TV FSE workgroup.**

The workgroup chair, Elina Saarinen, could not come to the GAM. Speleo-TV is up and running with in average of 3 videos uploaded per month. New uploads will be advertised on the FSE Facebook page. There was no workgroup meeting in the reporting period.

#### **12. Report on our membership in the European Environmental Bureau ([www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org))**

Jean-Claude Thies reported that the EEB strives for a renaming. The majority of the GAM representatives supported the name "Environment Europe", which we present as our favorite to the EEB Board. The voting on the name will take place in December 2014.

#### **13. Report from the delegates about opening to new members**

The GAM in Casola authorized some delegates to step into contact with European countries which are not yet members of FSE. The results were as follows:

- Andorra (Olivier Vidal): there is a speleo federation in creation and they consider a membership application to FSE.
- Armenia (Michael Laumanns): e-mails and letters to Samvel Shahinian bounced back. Further tries will be made for contact.
- Azerbaijan (Ernest Geyer): there are apparently no cavers in Azerbaijan and the mountaineering federation has no caving section. There is no reply from the national university yet.
- Belarus (Silvia Goutier): there is a caving club existing with 2 sections in different cities. They currently discuss internally about an FSE membership.
- Bosnia Herzegovina: no news. Mladen Garasic will take over to make contact.
- Georgia (Magdalena Stamenova): no information. Ged will ask Magdalena about state of play.
- Iceland (Michael Laumanns): e-mails and letters to the Islandic Speleological Federation bounced back. Further tries will be made for contact.
- Liechtenstein (Partick Deriaz): currently no new information.
- Russia: no progress. There are many caving clubs but no national federation existing. Apparently no Russian caving club is in the position to start an initiative for founding an overarching structure.
- Estonia + Latvia (J.-C. Thies): there are apparently singular cavers in both countries. Further efforts will be made to get into contact with them.
- Malta (Ged Campion): there is a curator of a show cave who regularly researches bats. Ged Campion to further discuss membership.
- Cyprus: whereas Cyprus is an independent state its northern part is occupied by Turkey. Both in the south and in the north there are speleologists. FSE intends to contact both northern and southern Cyprian cavers simultaneously with full information given to the Greek and Turkish member organizations.

#### **14. Representation of FSE inside ENOS (European Network of Outdoor Sports)**

Reference is made to the Bureau's report (agenda item 6 above). FSE will not become a member of ENOS. In case FSE members want to join ENOS it would cost them 100 € per year in contributions. Concerns by some delegates about whether ENOS would favor caving competitions (which are refused by FSE) were confirmed to be unreasoned.

#### **15. Report from EuroSpeleo Magazine FSE workgroup**

At the moment of the GAM 2014 the chair of the workgroup and Magazine editor, Mihaela Micula, had resigned for personal reasons from her post. Due to circumstances (which have realized after the GAM 2014) this resignation could be subject of being revoked and work with the EuroSpeleo Magazine could continue.

### **15b Report of the European Cave Rescue Committee (ECRC):**

The ECRC President, Christian Dodelin reported from the meeting on cave rescue during the EuroSpeleo Forum. Thirty cave rescue experts participated in that meeting. A charter of 6 points was approved at that meeting. It includes e.g. establishing guidelines for cross-border rescue operations, which are foreseen to be presented at the GAM 2015 in Italy. Closer links between ECRC and the national organizations are foreseen to be established. The ECRC President outlined that the ECRA (European Cave Rescue Association) does not consist of cavers. The German FSE delegate informed about the view of the German Speleological Federation that ECRC and ECRA should be brought together - the 2015 cave rescue meeting in Switzerland could be a good opportunity to start with that (ECRA participation was confirmed).

### **16. Information on the International Caving Expeditions database (ICE db)**

The database is maintained by FSE partner Wikicaves (Grotto Center). No news to report.

### **17. Links to FSE website from the websites of member organisations**

It is envisaged to present to a later GAM a proposal for introducing in the Internal Regulations of FSE a paragraph dealing with obligatory weblinks to FSE from member organization homepages.

### **18. Report about UIS Associated Organization application**

The latest General Assembly of UIS has decided to introduce the new status of "Associated Speleological Organizations" in the UIS Internal Regulations. FSE has recently applied for this membership status in the UIS and the application will be dealt with in November. The application doesn't entail financial contributions to the UIS. This would allow FSE to participate in UIS meetings as observer without voting right. The FSE president, Ged Campion, will be the FSE contact point for UIS.

### **19. Organization of EuroSpeleo Forums 2015-2018**

2015: (29th May - 2nd June) in Pertosa-Auletta (Salerno), Italy.

2016: (6th-13th August) in Ingleton, Yorkshire Dales, UK

2017: to be determined

2018: (date to be determined) in Ebensee, Oberösterreich, Austria.

### **20. Annual Fees 2015, 2016 & 2017 (Annex), Provisional Budgets 2014 & 2015 (Annex)**

The fees 2016 as annexed to this report were approved by 19 votes in favor, one vote against and one abstention.

The provisional budgets 2014 and 2015 as annexed to this report were adopted by 19 votes in favor and two abstentions.

Jean-Claude Thies was confirmed as FSE auditor by acclamation by the GAM.

### **21a. German/French proposal to change the Statutes (Article 12a) about Bureau members candidatures (Annex)**

This proposal strived to introduce a new rule in Article 12a of the FSE Statute making it obligatory for non-delegate candidates for a Bureau post to present a written agreement from their national organization. The proposal was discussed in length and its advantages and weaknesses were outlined with a lively participation of delegates. The proposal was finally approved by 14 votes in favor, 5 abstentions and 1 vote against as annexed to this report.

### **21b. Election 2014-15 of FSE Vice-Secretary and 2014-18 ECPC President**

There were no candidates found for the above-mentioned vacancies. Elections were postponed.

### **22. Miscellaneous**

The GAM decided with 20 votes in favor and 1 abstention to introduce in the Internal Regulations a new paragraph on how decision making in the FSE Bureau must be done (annexed hereto).

Dr. Friedrich Oedl from the Austrian show cave Eisriesenwelt announced the creation of a contact group that in the future may organize workshops and participate in EuroSpeleo Forums. Dr. Oedl will submit a concept paper which will be distributed to all FSE delegates/organizations.

The Treasurer, Henk Goutier, asked the delegates to send all major national events to the FSE Bureau so that they can be put on the events calendar at the FSE Facebook page. This enables a better coordination in events and prevents that similar events take place at the same time in Europe.

The GAM was closed at 19H30.