

# FEDERATION SPELEOLOGIQUE EUROPEENNE



## FSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING Sunday 14th of August 2016 during the 5th EuroSpeleo Congress in Dalesbridge/Austwick, UK

Reported by Michael Laumanns

The FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held on 14<sup>th</sup> August in the Dalesbridge Center near Austwick (UK) during the 5<sup>th</sup> EuroSpeleo Congress. Ged Campion (FSE President) chaired the GAM. The FSE Bureau members and the member organization Delegates wished to express their gratefulness to all organizers of the 5<sup>th</sup> EuroSpeleo Congress for their warm welcome. FSE General Secretary Martina Drskova was excused due to family matters.

### Participants present at the GAM

**Voting delegates:** Ged Campion (FSE President, UK), Michael Laumanns (FSE Vice-President, DE), Ernest Geyer (FSE Vice-Treasurer, AT), René Scherrer (CH), Mladen Garasic (HR), Jean-Claude Thies (LU), Silvia Goutier (NL), Alex Pologea (RO, Proxy), Petar Beron (BG), Didier Cailhol (FR), Elina Saarinen (FI), Guido de Keyser (BE), Vitor Amendoeira (PT, Proxy), Mateusz Golicz (PL), Michele Sivelli (IT), Vasilis Trizonis and Paul Apostolos Cadas (GR), Szabolcs Leél-Össy and Vice-Delegate Csaba Egri (HU).

**Excused (no Proxy):** Martina Drskova (SK).

**Absent (no valid Proxy):** Albania, Denmark, Turkey, Lithuania, Ukraine, Monaco, Moldova.

**No vote:** Francisco Martinez (CEC) (ES), Antonia Vlaykova (BG), Vanyo Gyorev (BCS) (BG), Hugh Norton (IR), Marko Zakrajsek (SI), Uros Aksamovic (RS).

### 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 commenced at 13H08.

### 2. Quorum of voting delegates and adoption of the agenda

The FSE counts 30 members. The quorum of at least 15 votes was reached with 17 countries present or represented (physical presence of 17 delegates/representatives entitled to vote). Greece was entitled to vote on the GAM according to Agenda item 5. The GAM accepted the Agenda.

### 3. Approval of membership fee payments for 2015+2016

Approval was given to 26 countries except Monaco which has not yet paid its contributions for 2015 and 2016, as well as Albania, Turkey, and Spain, which have made no payment for 2016.

### 4. Approval of the 2015 GAM report (held in Auletta, 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. Andorra, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Russia, and San Marino are not yet FSE members. There are no speleological organizations known from Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Holy See and Malta. In Monaco only one speleological club exists, which has not paid its FSE fees for 2015 and 2016. Consequently, Monaco's membership in FSE will cease if no payment will be received in time. However, the club from Monaco is a member of the Fédération Française de Spéléologie (FFS) and thus represented through FFS in the FSE.

Georgia has submitted an application for FSE membership (see Agenda item 16).

The GAM was informed about the situation in Spain where the former federation FEE legally ceased to exist at fall 2015. Two new speleological organizations were founded in Spain: ASEDEB and CEC. Representatives of CEC joined the 2016 GAM and reported about their organization: CEC has bought the library, archives and the trademarks of FEE. It represents 11 of the 13 Spanish regions. CEC handed over a written statement of their situation to FSE (**see Annex**). About 7.600 Spanish cavers were said to be members of CEC, which represents about 80% of the Spanish caving community. As soon as possible CEC intends to apply for FSE membership, accompanied by a proof of their number of members through their insurance as well as a payment of the 2016 Spanish contributions as soon as they receive the invoice from the FSE Treasurer. This statement was warmly welcomed by the GAM.

Both Greek federations, the Hellenic Federation of Speleology (FHS) and the Hellenic Speleological Society (HSS) have agreed on a joint representation for the 2016 GAM in writing (**see Annex**), which was acknowledged by the GAM, enabling Greece to vote.

## **6. Report of the Bureau 2015-2016**

The following Bureau report was unanimously approved:

At the 2015 General Assembly it was possible to fill the post of the General-Secretary. However, the post of Vice-Secretary still remained vacant. We hope that the existing vacancy can be filled during the 2016 General Assembly to have a fully staffed FSE Bureau again.

All Bureau members had almost daily exchanges of e-mails and many telephone consultations, both internal and external. Main achievement was the launch of an occasional electronic EuroSpeleo Newsletter. This is actually the third attempt to release an FSE Newsletter with the previous tries having been of no endurance. Indeed, the continuous production of a bi-lingual Newsletter proved to be quite time-consuming. Since November 2015 two issues of the Newsletter were released, which only was possible with the kind help of FSE treasurer Henk Goutier (who created the layout and does the final editing), Valerie Penny (for the English proofreading) and our partners from WikiCaves (for the French translations). We hope to establish this Newsletter as a permanent publication organ of FSE.

Another comprehensive reform of the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP) was launched in February 2016, following a request by our equipment sponsors, who inquired on a speedy reporting from project organizers for their social media. For more details see the agenda item 11. This also led to a complex update of our sponsoring contracts with Aventure Verticale, Beal Ropes and Scurion.

FSE Vice-Treasurer Ernest Geyer and Vice-President Michael Laumanns were present when the Asian Union of Speleology (AUS) was formally created at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asian Transkarst Conference last November. AUS now has a very similar Statute to FSE. During the AUS inauguration meeting FSE handed over a draft cooperation agreement to the AUS President (Dr. Haryono from Indonesia) which now needs confirmation by both General Assemblies in order to enter into force.

FSE President Ged Champion was actively involved in the time-consuming preparation of the 5<sup>th</sup> EuroSpeleo Congress 2016.

The FSE Facebook page, updated regularly by Henk Goutier, is continuously visited by thousands of cavers and non-cavers thus representing an excellent outreach for European speleology. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo>. Also, with the help of our partners of the WikiCaves organization we are able to update the FSE website on a regular basis.

The US-based organizer of an EU-funded karst- and cave related research project in northern Cyprus strived for co-operation with FSE, namely with mediating European experts for the project.

FSE is now represented in the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) by a member of ECPC.

Members of the Bureau joined the following national and international caving events: celebration of the 50th anniversary of UIS in June in Postojna, 2<sup>nd</sup> Asian Transkarst Conference in Lichuan/China, German annual conferences 2015 in Königssee and 2016 in Rübeland (DE), Belgian Caving Days in Mozet (BE), and the Austrian 2016 annual conference in Mitterbach am Erlaufsee (AT).

## **7. Financial report 2015 (Annex)**

The treasurer, Henk Goutier, informed the members on income and expenditure. At 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2015 the FSE net assets amounted to € 34,203. The financial situation of FSE is stable and healthy allowing for an investment to produce a new stock of T-Shirts, Jackets etc. for sale.

The auditor, Jean-Claude Thies, has checked the 2015 accounts on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2016 and recommended discharge of the treasury (**Annex**). The 2015 financial report was approved and discharge for the treasury given unanimously by the GAM.

#### **8. Annual report of the Protection Commission and its Workgroups 2015-16 (Annex)**

ECPC chairman Jean-Claude Thies reported on the progress made by ECPC. This included the Workgroups for Shale Gas and White Nose Syndrome, which are currently inactive. A Facebook page was set up to regularly inform about the ECPC work. Major achievement was the organization of the 3-day (including the field-trip) Cave Protection Symposium at the EuroSpeleo Congress 2016. The ECPC report was agreed upon at unanimity.

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

Jean-Claude Thies reported that FSE membership in the EEB keeps the European cavers in close touch with the EU environmental issues. FSE (through ECPC) is now a member of the Board of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in Brussels and thus directly involved in the EEB decision-making. Bärbel Vogel occupies this job for the FSE. ECPC is active in the EEB workgroups "Water" and "Biodiversity". The "Nature Alert" campaign of EEB, striving to maintain the strong European nature protection standards, where ECPC actively took part, was a big success. ECPC will be present at the upcoming EEB General Assembly in Vienna in September 2016 with a representative and an FSE/ECPC poster presentation.

#### **10 Report of the European Cave Rescue Committee (ECRC) (Annex):**

A written report was received after the GAM (Annex). ECRC chairman Christian Dodelin orally reported about the French cooperation in rescue matters with Brazil, China, and Russia. This report was accepted with one abstention by the GAM. He concluded that ECRC cannot receive direct funding from the European Commission (like individual FSE member countries). Therefore, he wished to resign from his post (see agenda item 22).

The following discussion showed preference of FSE Delegates that ECRC should create a European-wide "skill register" for cave rescuers. Also openness towards all possible organization forms of cave rescue was favored as the situation in FSE member countries differs. The Slovenian representative informed that the Slovenian Cave Rescue has registered in the Civil Protection Register of the EU Commission now enabling them to perform cross-border rescue operations. This could be promoted also in other FSE member countries.

#### **11. Report about the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) 2015-2016 (Annex)**

Details on the ESPs are described in the annex and thus not repeated here. The number of projects accepted and the number of participants are stable. Delegates were informed about a change in the ESP Guidelines making it now obligatory for project organizers to provide speedy reporting and photographs for the social media websites of our equipment sponsors. The report was agreed upon at unanimity.

#### **12. Report of the Speleo-TV FSE Workgroup**

The Workgroup chair, Elina Saarinen, reported orally. The Speleo-TV Facebook group has about 900 followers. However, the Workgroup remains small and not many new videos were received (most videos were shared through other video platforms like Youtube). The Workgroup has no own Youtube Channel yet. The workgroup will make a proposal how to revive the video channel. The GAM took note of this report.

#### **13. Report from the Contact Group on Showcaves**

The chair of the Contact Group, Fritz Oedl, reported orally on the planned activities of this newly formed Contact Group: the Contact Group is currently busy with drafting a list of all European show caves and their contact data. After the drafting process Delegates will be asked to cross-check this list. As soon as this will be completed the Contact Group intends to step into contact with all the show caves to seek further cooperation. Timeline for results: the EuroSpeleo Forum 2018 in Austria. This was welcomed by the GAM. The French delegate informed about a planned Workshop on show caves in France (Ardèche) and invited interested cavers to participate.

#### **14. International Caving Expeditions database (ICE db) and cooperation with WikiCaves (info)**

No representative of WikiCaves could join the GAM. Treasurer Henk Goutier, who maintains the contact with WikiCaves, reported orally: The ICE db is steadily growing. The idea is to provide all speleologists with data and contact information about caving areas world-wide. All reports of EuroSpeleo Projects are now also available on the WikiCaves website. WikiCaves currently provides major translation assistance e.g. for the FSE Newsletter. All this was noted with satisfaction by the GAM.

#### **15. Report on our partnership with the International Union of Speleology (UIS)**

FSE, being now the first “affiliated speleological organization” to UIS, was invited to join the UIS Bureau meeting scheduled to be held at the EuroSpeleo Congress 2016. The FSE President, Ged Campion, is the FSE contact point for UIS. Relations to UIS will further improve by the candidature of M. Garasic for the FSE Bureau (agenda item 21), as he currently serves also as one of the Adjunct Secretaries of UIS.

#### **16. Application of Georgia to become an FSE member (Annex)**

A representative of Georgia could not join the 2016 GAM. The Georgian application letter was discussed in detail and the GAM decided unanimously to grant FSE membership to Georgia with the Speleological Society of Georgia will represent this country in FSE.

#### **17. Change of the Internal Regulations of FSE: Introduction of an External Auditor (Annex)**

The inclusion of an auditor in the Internal Regulations of FSE (see section 5, paragraph 19b) was unanimously agreed upon by the GAM (see the amendment in red color in the English text of the Annex). On the website a French text will be published aside the English text.

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

This agenda item will from now on be presented in a smaller format as the previous country-by-country deliberations were regarded as being too time-consuming, inconclusive and repetitive. Only new developments and information will be discussed in the future. Main news following the information provided in the 2015 GAM report were as follows:

- Belarus (Silvia Goutier): there is a caving club existing with 2 sections in different cities. They currently discuss internally about an FSE membership. To be continued.
- Bosnia Herzegovina: Mladen Garasic investigated the situation. There are apparently 2 clubs/federations existing but the situation remains unclear. To be continued.
- Montenegro: FSE received a letter from the Biospeleological Society of Montenegro requesting information on membership. The discussion with our Montenegro colleagues revealed that there are other speleological organizations existing in the country and they were advised to come up with a joint proposal for FSE membership.
- Cyprus: the difficult political situation, especially those of Northern Cyprus, was briefly discussed. Only the Republic of Cyprus can currently become a member of FSE.

#### **19. Organization of EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF) 2017-2019**

2017: Bulgaria cancelled its initial invitation (now 2019). Belgium stands ready to host a EuroSpeleo Forum at the “Speleological Days” in 2017, being the 11<sup>th</sup> ESF.

2018: 12<sup>th</sup> ESF from 23<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> of August in Ebensee, Oberösterreich, Austria (Motto: “Speleology-Connecting Science”); website is online: <http://www.eurospeleo.at/index.html>.

2019: Bulgaria (Dryanovo).

#### **20. Annual Fees 2017 & 2018 (Annex), Budget 2016 and Provisional Budget 2017 (Annex)**

No changes regarding the membership fees were proposed. This was unanimously accepted by the GAM. The GAM was also unanimously in favor of the change in the 2016 Budget (€ 3,000 for new sales items like T-Shirts) and the provisional FSE budget 2017.

#### **21. Election of Vice President and Vice-Secretary**

Vice-President Michael Laumanns (Germany) has informed the Bureau in writing that he wishes to resign from his post and change to the position of Vice-Secretary which is vacant since 2014 as he anyway is managing the EuroSpeleo Projects assigned to the Vice-Secretary post. As there were no

other candidatures for the position of the Vice-Secretary the GAM elected Michael Laumanns with one abstention as new Vice-Secretary for a term of service until 2019. This vacated the post of FSE Vice-President. One candidature was received from Mladen Garasic (Croatia) (**Annex**), who was elected by the GAM with one abstention as FSE Vice-president until 2019.

#### **22. Elections for FSE Commissions:**

Only the post of chairman of the European Cave Rescue Commission was open to election. As the current ECRC chairman, Christian Dodelin, wished to resign from his position Ms. Antonia Vlaykova from Bulgaria (BFS) introduced herself and applied for the post. As there were no other candidatures the GAM elected Antonia Vlaykova at unanimity for a 4-years term as ECRC chairwoman (until 2020).

#### **23. Decision on a co-operation agreement with the Asian Union of Speleology (AUS) (Annex):**

Following discussions at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asian Transkarst Conference in Lichuan/China in November 2015 FSE has prepared a draft cooperation agreement with AUS. This was accepted unanimously by the GAM. FSE President Ged Campion will sign the agreement and hand the copies to AUS Vice-President Zhang Yuan Hai from China who joined the 5<sup>th</sup> EuroSpeleo Congress. The agreement will enter into force as soon as AUS president Eko Haryono (Indonesia) counter-signed the agreement and will send it back to FSE.

#### **24. Results on the idea of establishing a EuroSpeleo Rescue Solidarity Fund:**

Michael Laumanns introduced the subject, which is a follow-up from FSE fundraising activities resulting from the accident of a Spanish caver in Peru in 2014 where FSE has promised to suggest remedies in case of accidents that entails high rescue costs. The proposal to create a EuroSpeleo Rescue Solidarity Fund has been discussed at the 2015 GAM and FSE has made a call-up in its first Newsletter to all member countries and their Delegates to reply to the proposal. The result was nil. Consequently, it is regarded that a EuroSpeleo Rescue Solidarity Fund currently does not receive any strong support by FSE members. However, should the situation arise in the future, the idea can always be re-vitalized.

#### **25. Miscellaneous**

Insurance questions were again risen by various Delegates. Bilateral contacts to the French Delegate were recommended as the French insurance provider (AXA, via the broker Gras Savoye) doesn't offer its services on a Pan-European basis. The creation of a European data base for caving insurance could be a possible task for the new ECRC Chairwoman with the assistance of the FSE Bureau members.

The response of delegates on FSE call-ups was very weak recently. Delegates were reminded that they are OBLIGED to further distribute FSE messages in their countries.

FSE Vice-Secretary M. Laumanns informed the Delegates about the system of membership in FSE as several organizations have asked for an FSE attestation stating their organization being a member of FSE: according to the FSE Statute not national organizations are members of FSE but countries represented by a recognized speleological organization. These organizations are recognized by the GAM making the decision on the countries membership.

M. Laumanns also informed the GAM that the FSE application to become an NGO of the Council of Europe (CoE) failed as FSE currently does not fit into the priorities of the CoE (**Annex**).

M. Laumanns also informed about the creation of a list showing all the cave rescue emergency numbers and contact data in FSE member countries (**Annex**). This will be subject of further update and will be published on the FSE website as soon as possible.

**The GAM closed at 16H30.**