

FEDERATION SPELEOLOGIQUE EUROPEENNE



FSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING Sunday 17th of September 2017 during the 11th EuroSpeleo Forum in Ferrières/Belgium

Reported by Michael Laumanns

The FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held on 17th September 2017 in Ferrières (Belgium) during the 11th EuroSpeleo Forum. Ged Champion (FSE President) chaired the GAM.

The FSE Bureau members and the member organization delegates wished to express their gratefulness to all organizers of the 11th EuroSpeleo Forum for their warm welcome.

FSE General Secretary Martina Drskova was excused due to private matters.

Participants present at the GAM

Voting delegates: Ged Champion (FSE President, UK + Proxy IE), Michael Laumanns (FSE Vice-Secretary, DE + Proxy DK), Ernest Geyer (FSE Vice-Treasurer, AT), René Scherrer (CH), Jean-Claude Thies (LU), Silvia Goutier (NL + Proxy PL), Alena Gessert (Proxy SK), Antoniya Vlaykova (BG), Michel Isnard (FR), Joël Fontenelle (BE, replacing Jean-Marc Mattlet), José Sérgio de Sousa Barbosa and Flavio Lucas (PT), Uros Aksamovic (Proxy HU), Henk Goutier (Proxy GE), Lluís Domingo and Hilario Ubiedo (Proxy ES).

Non-voting participants: Mladen Garasic (FSE Vice-President, HR), Uros Aksamovic (RS), Amparo Perez (translator ES).

Excused (no Proxy): Finland, Greece.

Absent (no Proxy): Albania, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine.

1. Opening of the GAM:

In the name of the FSE Bureau the FSE President Ged Champion welcomed all participants. The agenda has been proposed by the Bureau and was distributed in time to member organizations. The GAM commenced at 9H30.

2. Quorum of voting delegates and adoption of the agenda

The FSE counts 31 members. The quorum of at least 15 votes was reached with 17 voting countries present or represented. The GAM accepted the Agenda.

3. Approval of membership fee payments for 2016+2017

Payments were received in time (before 31st of March 2017) and approval was given to countries having made their payment, except Albania, Turkey and Monaco. Monaco has not paid its FSE contributions for 3 consecutive years and lost its FSE membership according to the FSE Statute (Article 7).

4. Approval of the 2016 GAM report (held in Dalesbridge, UK)

The report was distributed to all delegates/organizations. Spain, in person of Lluís Domingo, correctly claimed that it was not mentioned of having been present at the 2016 GAM, which is herewith remedied. The 2016 GAM report was approved with that amendment at unanimity (**Annex 1**).

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. Monaco's membership in FSE has now ceased. However, the club from Monaco is a member of the Fédération Française de Spéléologie (FFS) and thus represented through FFS in the FSE.

6. Report of the Bureau 2015-2016

The following Bureau report was unanimously approved:

At the 2016 General Assembly (GAM) in the UK we managed to find a recruit for the post of the Vice-President as well as the position of Vice-Secretary. However, a new vacancy has arisen for the post of General Secretary. After two years of service, Martina Drskova, resigned from her position as General Secretary. The FSE Bureau therefore, wishes to express its gratefulness to Martina for devoting so much of her time for the work in FSE during her two years tenure.

The follow-up of the General Assembly meeting at the 5th EuroSpeleo Congress in Austwick/Dalesbridge in August 2016 kept all Bureau members busy until the end of that year. One of the outcomes of the 2016 GAM was the election of a new chairperson for the European Cave Rescue Commission and the development of preliminary Internal Regulations for that Commission. Such regulations had not previously been established and this created a severe gap in the statutory texts of FSE. These Regulations are on the agenda of today's GAM meeting.

Also, a reform of the terms of reference for EuroSpeleo Forums/Congress procedures was intensively discussed and new guidelines have been established by the FSE Bureau. The new Guidelines can be consulted on the FSE website.

After a relatively slow start at the beginning of the year 2017, Bureau work accelerated sharply and since April 2017 there have been many new applications for EuroSpeleo Projects, this prompted detailed and complex discussion with member country organizations which included a response to the changing situation in Serbia and more globally, preparations for the 17th UIS Congress in Sydney.

For the latter event FSE strived to finalize the cooperation agreement with the Asian Union of Speleology (AUS) which has been supported by the GAM 2016. This agreement was finally concluded and has entered into force on the 15th Sept 2017 with the signature of FSE President Ged Campion.

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.

For the time being the FSE Bureau has decided to cease publication of the EuroSpeleo Magazine. However, on behalf of the GAM, we would like to thank Mihaela Micula for the excellent two editions that were produced.

The FSE involvement of a UIS-led karst-related project in Cyprus, funded by the EU Commission, is ongoing. Furthermore, FSE became involved in a TransReg EU-Programme on Mediterranean show caves. We wait to learn more on that in the Report of the FSE Contact Group on Show Caves which is on the agenda today.

Work of the ECPC in the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in Brussels is also ongoing on a strengthened level. The work of the ECPC continues to be one of the most active commissions in the FSE. We will hear a detailed report from the ECPC President today.

Members of the Bureau joined the following national and international caving events: Italian caver's meeting in Lettomanoppello (Oct/Nov 2016), German annual conference in June 2016, 17th UIS Congress in Sydney in July 2017, as well as the Austrian Congresses in 2016 (Baden) and 2017 (Eisenerz).

7. Financial report 2016 (Annex 2)

The treasurer, Henk Goutier, informed the members on income and expenditure. At 31st Dec 2016 the FSE net assets amounted to € 34,978.53. The financial situation of FSE is stable and healthy. Currently, FSE has no other cash income except member contributions and sales of FSE items such as T-shirts.

8. Report of the FSE Treasury Auditor 2016 (Annex 3)

The auditor, Jean-Claude Thies, has checked the 2016 accounts on 25th August 2017 and recommended discharge of the treasury. The 2016 financial report was approved and discharge for the treasury given unanimously by the GAM.

9. Election of the FSE Treasury Auditor for the next period 2017

Jean-Claude Thies agreed to continue and was elected unanimously as there was no other candidate.

10.+11. Annual report of the Protection Commission and its Workgroups 2016-17 and Report on FSE membership in the European Environmental Bureau (Annex 4)

FSE President Ged Campion outlined the importance of ECPC and our membership in the EEB because it allows FSE to influence European environmental legislation. 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. The 4th EuroSpeleo Protection Symposium at the EuroSpeleo Congress 2016 in the UK was a success. The next

symposium will take place at the EuroSpeleo Forum 2018 in Austria. The European Cave Protection Label award 2017 was given to the Verein für Höhlenkunde in Obersteier (Austria) for the renaturation of a karst spring used for water supply. Applications for the 2018 award are very welcome. For the work program of ECPC the Commission is urgently looking for more members to cover the workload. The ECPC report and the EEB report were agreed upon at unanimity.

12. Report of the European Cave Rescue Commission (ECRC) (Annex 5)

ECRC chairwoman Antoniya Vlaykova presented her report. At the end of 2016 Internal Regulations for the ECRC were drafted (to be voted by the 2017 GAM, see agenda item 23) and distributed together with an open letter to member countries to nominate delegates to the ECRC. The nominations made so far by Luxembourg, Portugal, Switzerland and Turkey are regarded only to be a start and delegates from all FSE members are welcome and needed. The GAM welcomed the nominations so far made unanimously. Antoniya also informed about the 11th European Cave Rescue Meeting that will take place between 5-8 October 2017 in Sofia (BG) where participants from nearly all FSE member countries are present. The report was agreed upon at unanimity.

13. Report about the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) 2016-2017 (Annex 6)

FSE Vice Secretary Michael Laumanns informed about the cooperation agreement between FSE and the Asian Union of Speleology which entered into force recently. Details on the ESPs 2016-17 are described in the annex and thus not repeated here. Statistics on the ESPs between 2012 and 2017 were provided which show that a few members are underrepresented in the EuroSpeleo Projects (UK, Spain, and Italy). FSE has started an awareness campaign with presentations already made at UK and Italian cavers meetings. The proposal of translating the ESP guidelines into Italian and Spanish was made and Michael was tasked to follow this up. The report was agreed upon at unanimity.

14. Report of the Speleo-TV FSE Workgroup

The Workgroup chair, Elina Saarinen, was excused. The Workgroup remains small and not many new videos were received (most videos were shared through other video platforms like Youtube). FSE Treasurer Henk Goutier will contact Elina whether she is in the position to provide a work plan for the future of the workgroup. In the absence of a work plan (or a reply) the next GAM should decide about a termination of the activity. The GAM took note of this.

15. Report from the Contact Group on Showcaves

Vice Treasurer Ernest Geyer reported orally on the planned activities of this newly formed Contact Group and transmitted greetings from Fritz Oedl. The list of European show caves is in progress. Timeline for results: the EuroSpeleo Forum 2018 in Austria where a symposium on show caves will be organized by the Contact Group. FSE became an associated member of the Interreg Cave Med Project (Show cave conservation, management, education and networking in the Mediterranean). All this was welcomed by the GAM.

16. 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 and help by updating the FSE website. All this was noted with satisfaction by the GAM.

17. Report on our partnership with the International Union of Speleology (UIS)

FSE, being now the first "Associated speleological organization" to UIS, and joined the UIS meetings in Sydney. FSE Vice-President Mladen Garasic was re-elected at the UIS congress in Sydney as one of the Adjunct Secretaries of UIS (for a term from 2017 to 2021). Emphasis was given to the "International Year of Caves" in 2021, which coincides with the UIS Congress in Lyon.

18. Report from the delegates about opening to new members

FSE Vice-President Mladen Garasic reported about a joint project of UIS and the EU-Commission in Cyprus, where for the first time participants - interested in speleology - from southern and northern Cyprus are involved. He took active part in this project that may lead to the formation of a Cyprus speleo organization. More details will be known towards the end of the year.

No other significant new information on other non-member countries was provided.

19. Organization of EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF) 2018-2020

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

2019: 13th ESF near Sofia from 26-29 September 2019. Invitation thanks to Bulgaria (BFS). The event is dedicated to the upcoming 90th anniversary of the organized speleology in Bulgaria.

2020: There is no invitation yet for 2020. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the foundation of FSE. Our Spanish colleagues will ask their General Assembly about the possibilities for hosting an ESF in 2020 in Spain. This was appreciated by the FSE GAM.

2021: It could be explored to combine an ESF with the UIS Congress in Lyon.

20. Annual Fees 2018 & 2019, Provisional Budget 2017 and 2018 (Annex 7)

No changes regarding the membership fees were proposed. This was unanimously accepted by the GAM. The GAM was also unanimously in favor of the 2017/18 Budget proposals.

21. Election of President, General-Secretary (Annex 8) and Vice Treasurer

In the absence of other candidates FSE President Ged Campion and Vice Treasurer Ernest Geyer were unanimously re-elected for a new term of service until 2021.

One candidature was received for the post of FSE General Secretary. Ms. Alena Gessert introduced herself to the Bureau. She stated that her candidature is fully supported by the Slovak federation SSS. The GAM warmly welcomed the candidature and Alena was elected at unanimity for a term ending in 2021. The GAM took this opportunity to thank the outgoing General-Secretary Martina Drskova for her work and support of FSE during the last 2 years.

22. Elections for FSE Commissions

Only the post of the chair of the Speleo-TV Workgroup was open to election. Pending a decision of the future of the Workgroup to be made by the GAM 2018, the current chairwoman, Elina Saarinen, was re-elected in absence for a new term of 4 years.

23. Adoption of the Internal Regulations of the European Cave Rescue Commission (Annex 9)

The GAM agreed to the Internal Regulations of the ECRC unanimously.

24. Miscellaneous

The FSE Bureau informed the delegates that Vice Secretary Michael Laumanns will try to continue with the EuroSpeleo Newsletter.

The delegates were further informed about cancellation of the sponsoring contract between Beal Ropes SA (France) and FSE by Beal in the 32nd calendar week 2017. However, FSE will try to convince Beal about a continuation of their engagement. Timeline: end of 2017.

The Spanish delegates informed about an environmental project on Methane gas in their country. They also informed about an expected change of cave research permission procedures in Cantabria where many foreign groups are active. This triggered another discussion on creating an FSE database on all legislation and procedures of significance for cavers in all European countries. However, such an exercise would be extremely cumbersome for a Bureau that works on a volunteer basis, also taking into account that such regulations are in a constant change. Instead of a (most likely permanently outdated) database speleologists planning cave research abroad are invited to contact the relevant national or regional federations.

The GAM closed at 11H40.