

FEDERATION SPELEOLOGIQUE EUROPEENNE



FSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING Saturday 28th of September 2019 during the 13th EuroSpeleo Forum in Dolni Lozen/Bulgaria

Reported by Michael Laumanns

The FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held on 28th September 2019 in Dolni Lozen (Bulgaria) during the 13th EuroSpeleo Forum. 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 organizers of the 13th EuroSpeleo Forum for their warm welcome and excellence in organizing this year's EuroSpeleo Forum.

Participants present at the GAM

Voting delegates: Ged Campion (FSE President, UK), Alena Gessert (General-Secretary, Proxy SK), Michael Laumanns (FSE Vice-Secretary, DE + Proxy DK), Ernest Geyer (FSE Vice-Treasurer, AT + Proxy AM), René Scherrer (CH), Jean-Claude Thies (LU), Silvia Goutier (NL + Proxy BE), Antoniya Vlaykova (BG), Michel Isnard (FR), Vitor Amendoeira (PT), Csaba Egri (HU), Manuel Gonzáles Morales and Hilario Ubiedo de Oñate (ES), Teo Barisić and Neven Šuica (HR), Miha Čekada (SL), Jelena Calić (Proxy RS), Ferdinando Didonna and Ricardo Corazzi (IT), Spencer Coca (RO), Elina Saarinen (FI), Ewelina Raczynska (Proxy PL), Bülent Genç (TR).

Voice (but no vote): Paul Cadas (GR)

FSE Bureau members (no vote): Mladen Garasic (Vice President, HR), Henk Goutier (Treasurer, NL)

Absent (no valid Proxy): Georgia, Ireland, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Sweden, Ukraine.

Guests in the room (no vote, no voice): Gyula Hedegüs (HU), Uroš Akšamovič (RS), Igor Ardeti and Rosario Ruggieri (IT), Fernando Pires (PT), Taraneh Khaleghi (AT), Fritz Oedl (AT), Johannes Mattes (AT), Joerg Dreybrodt and Dominik Fröhlich (DE), Josiane and Bernard Lips (FR).

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 9H13.

2. Quorum of voting delegates and adoption of the agenda (Annex 1)

The FSE counts 31 members. The quorum of at least 16 votes was reached with 23 countries present or represented (physical presence of 20 delegates/representatives entitled to vote + 3 valid Proxies given to another country). On proposal of the FSE Bureau the GAM agreed unanimously to merge agenda items 3 and 5 (Treasury information), as well as 13 and 22 (Speleo TV Workgroup) to one item each. Also, Item 20 (elections) was completed for the election of the FSE Auditor.

3.+5. Approval of membership fee payments 2018/2019 + Situation of the 30 FSE member countries

All 2019 Payments were received in time (before 31st of March 2019) and approval was given to countries having made their payment. Turkey has fully paid all its arrears. Armenia, as a new FSE member since 2018 has paid its fees for 3 years in advance. Andorra, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Russia, and San Marino are not yet FSE members, and Monaco and Albania have lost their membership at the end of 2018. From the remaining European countries no speleological organizations are known yet.

4. Approval of the 2018 GAM report (held in Ebensee/Austria)

The report was distributed to all delegates/organizations. It was accepted at unanimity (Annex 2).

5. See agenda item 3

6. Report of the Bureau 2018-2019

The following Bureau report was unanimously approved:

Since the last General Assembly Meeting in Ebensee (Austria) the FSE had e-mailing exchanges on an almost daily basis. On initiative of the Vice-Treasurer the Bureau also had several Skype sessions, which proved to be very useful.

Considerable work had to be invested in maintaining the system of sponsoring European projects, such as the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP), the EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF), as well as the EuroSpeleo Protection Label (ESPL). The reporting period saw a record-breaking amount of EuroSpeleo Projects. In consequence, FSE ran out of equipment items from its Official Partners in June 2019 and not all the attested projects were able to receive equipment support in the amount they theoretically would have been eligible to, which was partly remedied by an increase of the financial support provided to each project (600 EUR each for 2019 projects). The shortfall of equipment sponsoring led to changes in our guidelines for ESPs. Also, due to other reasons, the EuroSpeleo Forum (ESF) guidelines as well as the EuroSpeleo Protection Label (ESPL) guidelines were updated. The new guidelines can be consulted on the FSE website. Also, the Internal Regulations of the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) were agreed upon.

FSE, also through ECPC, supported the “Clean of the Dark Initiative”, launched by our Italian colleagues. This could become a Pan-European activity.

An Internet Cloud archive of FSE, which was already tested since a while by some Bureau members, was found very helpful and highly necessary for the FSE archive. Consequently, the access to the Cloud space was made accessible to the whole Bureau members. This will enable a sustainable filing system even with future staffing changes in the FSE Bureau.

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.

Five volumes of the EuroSpeleo Newsletter with information on FSE activities and projects were released by the Bureau and disseminated to members since the last General Assembly.

Members of the Bureau joined the following national and international caving events (financed by those individuals): Casola in Italy (November 2018), Man and Karst Conference in Ragusa (June 2019), Brazilian annual meeting in Bonito (June 2019), Swiss caver’s meeting in Interlaken (August 2019), German annual meeting in Nesselwang (August 2019), Asian Transkarst in Bohol/Philippines (September 2019), Armenian Conference “Caves as Natural and Cultural Monuments” in Yerevan (September 2019). FSE’s participation (1 person) at the French annual congress in La Ciotat (June 2019) was paid from the FSE Budget because this was an official mission to clarify cooperation with FFS on the 2021 EuroSpeleo Forum which will be organized in conjunction with the UIS congress in Lyon.

FSE also provided patronages for the Italian caver’s meeting Casola 2018 (November 2018), for a French-Belgian expedition to Laos (planned for 2019), and the Italian Speleo Days (October 2019).

7. Financial report 2018 (Annex 3)

The treasurer, Henk Goutier, informed the members on income and expenditure. At 31st Dec 2018 the FSE net assets amounted to € 36,434.81. The financial situation of FSE is stable and healthy.

8. Report of the FSE Treasury Auditor 2018-2019 (Annex 4)

The auditor, Jean-Claude Thies, has checked the 2018 accounts and found them correct and precise. He recommended discharge of the treasury. The 2018 financial report was approved and discharge for the treasury given unanimously by the GAM.

9.+10. Annual report of the Protection Commission and its Workgroups 2018-19 and Report on FSE membership in the European Environmental Bureau (Annex 5)

ECPC chairman Jean-Claude Thies presented both reports. The ECPC report and the EEB report were agreed upon at unanimity as annexed hereto.

11. Report of the European Cave Rescue Committee 2018-19 (ECRC) (Annex 6)

ECRC chairwoman Antoniya Vlaykova presented her report (annexed), which was agreed unanimously. She informed the GAM about the necessity to create a description of the mandate and tasks of the ECRC in order to distinguish it from the European Cave Rescue Association (ECRA), both of which are working closely together. Whereas the latter is an organization of cave rescue organizations, ECRC sees its mandate in mediating information between professional cave rescue and individual speleologists in FSE member countries. This will help to make a clear distinction between ECRC and ECRA. She will make proposals to the Bureau. She also informed the GAM about the following new members in the ECRC Board: Teo Barisič (HR), Robert Anzič (SI), Fernando Caro Antúnez (SP) and Gyula Hegedűs (HU).

12. Report about the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) 2018-2019 (Annex 7)

FSE Vice Secretary Michael Laumanns informed about changes in the EuroSpeleo Project Guidelines which now allow to decrease equipment support for recurrent projects. This should prevent from running out of equipment sponsoring items as FSE ran out of items in summer 2019 due to an unexpectedly high number of EuroSpeleo Project applications received. The ESP report was agreed upon at unanimity.

13. + 22. Report of the Speleo-TV FSE Workgroup + Decision on its continuation

The Workgroup chair, Elina Saarinen, orally presented the activities of the currently fairly dormant workgroup. This report was unanimously agreed by the GAM. The GAM further decided to integrate SpeleoTV (preferably under a new denomination) in the new FSE website, which is planned to be developed in 2020.

14. Report from the Contact Group on Showcaves

The Workgroup chair, Fritz Oedl, reported orally on the European Showcave Symposia held in Ebensee and in Dolni Lozen, which were well attended. A list of over 700 European show caves has been compiled. All delegates were invited to give their feedback on that list; the written procedure to update the list is going well. All this was much welcomed by the GAM and a lively discussion commenced on increasing the links between showcaves and speleologists (e.g. an online voting platform on the sustainability and quality of showcaves).

15. 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 and all reports of EuroSpeleo Projects are included in the WikiCaves database. WikiCaves currently provides major translation assistance e.g. for the EuroSpeleo Newsletter and keeps the FSE website and domains up-to-date. All this was noted with satisfaction by the GAM.

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

Ged Champion informed that the relations with UIS develop very well. 2021 will be both the "International year of Caves" and the year of the UIS Congress in Lyon.

17. Report from the delegates about opening to new members

There are no new major developments since the 2018 GAM, except of that a speleological organization in Cyprus is in the process of being formed, covering both southern and northern Cyprus (information by Mladen Garasic).

18. Organization of EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF) 2020-2022

2020: This is the 30th anniversary of the foundation of FSE. Spain offered to host the 14th EuroSpeleo Forum in Burgos, which is surrounded by many important caves, at end of July 2020. Further information is expected soon. This was warmly welcomed by the GAM.

2021: Combination with the UIS Congress in Lyon would be best. UIS and FFS have agreed with that. Discussions on details are going on.

2022: There is no official offer yet, but ideas were discussed to conduct an ESF in the framework of the Italian event "Man and Karst" organized in Sicily/Italy.

19. Annual Fees 2020 & 2021, Provisional Budget 2019 and 2020 (Annex 8)

No changes regarding the membership fees were proposed. This was unanimously accepted by the GAM. The GAM was also unanimously in favor of the 2019/20 Budget proposal.

20. Election of Vice-President Vice-Secretary and Treasurer as well as Treasury Auditor

Vice-President Mladen Grasic and Vice-Secretary Michael Laumanns do not strive for another 4year term in office. The GAM elected Michel Isnard (FR delegate) as new Vice-President and Joerg Dreybrodt (DE, supported by the German federation) as new Vice-Secretary; both unanimously. The FSE Treasurer, Henk Goutier (NL) has applied for another 4year term in office and was re-elected by the GAM at unanimity.

Regarding future elections the GAM wished to have more transparency on vacancies and candidates in advance of the General Assembly Meeting. The FSE Bureau will follow this up.

Jean-Claude Thies agreed to continue for the next period (2019) as the FSE Treasury Auditor and was elected unanimously as there was no other candidate.

21. Election for FSE Commissions (ECPC president) + Approval of the revised Internal Regulations of the ECPC (Annex 9)

Jean Claude Thies (LU) was re-elected at unanimity as president of the European Cave Protection Commission for the period 2019-2023. There was no other candidate. He introduced the revised Internal Regulations of ECPC, which is their first update since its introduction in 2010. The IR was agreed upon unanimously by the GAM.

22. See agenda item 13

23. Miscellaneous

There are currently 2 organizations (FHS and HSS) representing Greece in FSE, following a special GAM decision in 2018. Both organization have agreed upon a joint representation in FSE and in the past often have made it possible for members from one of the organizations to execute the Greek GAM vote. However, FHS as waived such an agreement before the 2019 GAM with the result that Greece had a voice in the GAM, but no vote. Paul Cadas, being a member of HSS and the Greek Vice-Delegate in FSE, expressed his strong disappointment about this development and asked the FSE Bureau to be more proactive in solving the internal Greek problems. The Bureau also regretted the situation caused by the FHS waiver, but reminded that in several member countries problems with more than one organization exist and FSE cannot slip into the role of a mediator for internal difficulties. Such problems must strictly be solved on the country level.

Paul Cadas also recalled that Greece has lost a lot of active cavers due to the ongoing financial crisis. Thus, problems occur with paying the annual FSE fees. Greece was asked to provide a new number of cavers so that the FSE invoice could be adopted accordingly.

Spencer Coca (RO) emphasized the need of youth activities through FSE and its members, due to a demographic problem following the lack of young cavers. This was supported by Joerg Dreybrodt (DE). A lively discussion took place on this issue. As a first step the existing youth activities should be collected and a strategy developed. The FSE Bureau will follow this up. Delegates were asked to report back to the FSE Bureau.

The GAM closed at 12H02.