

FEDERATION SPELEOLOGIQUE EUROPEENNE



FSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING Saturday 25th of August 2018 during the 12th EuroSpeleo Forum in Ebensee/Austria

Reported by Michael Laumanns

The FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held on 25th August 2018 in Ebensee (Austria) during the 12th EuroSpeleo Forum. Ged Campion (FSE President) chaired the GAM.

The FSE Bureau members and the member country delegates wished to express their gratefulness to all organizers of the 12th EuroSpeleo Forum for their warm welcome and acknowledged that the EuroSpeleo Forum in Ebensee was the largest speleological event that ever has taken place in Austria (hosting nearly 700 participants).

FSE General Secretary Alena Gessert was excused due to family matters.

Participants present at the GAM

Voting delegates: Ged Campion (FSE President, UK), Michael Laumanns (FSE Vice-Secretary, DE + Proxy DK), Ernest Geyer (FSE Vice-Treasurer, AT), René Scherrer (CH), Jean-Claude Thies (LU), Silvia and Henk Goutier (NL, FSE Treasurer), Antonia Vlaykova (BG), Michel Isnard (FR), Guido De Keyzer (Proxy BE), Vitor Amendoeira (PT), Csaba Egri (HU), Pepe Serrano, Lluís Domingo and Hilario Ubiedo (ES), Teo Barisic and Nenad Buzjak (HR), Miha Čekada (SI), Jelena Čalić (Proxy RS), Ferdinando Didonna and Michele Sivelli (IT), Spencer Coca (RO), Elina Saarinen (FI), Mateusz Golic (PL).

Excused (no Proxy): Greece.

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

Non-Voting Bureau members: Mladen Garasic (FSE Vice-President).

Guests: Milosch Dryjanski from Austria, Bärbel Vogel from Germany, Encho Enchev from Bulgaria, as well as Uros Aksamovic and Darko Dragulovic from Serbia, Joerg Dreybrodt from Germany, George Veni (UIS/USA), Shamvel Shahinian (Armenia).

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 9H10.

2. Quorum of voting delegates and adoption of the agenda

The FSE counted 30 members. The quorum of at least 15 votes was reached with 20 countries present or represented (physical presence of 20 delegates/representatives entitled to vote). On proposal of the FSE Bureau the GAM agreed unanimously to change the Agenda with replacing the old item 21 (New ECPC Board members; this could be dealt with as a Bureau decision) by introducing the new item 21 (Accession of Armenia to the FSE) and to merge agenda items 14 and 22 (Speleo TV Workgroup) to one item.

3. Approval of membership fee payments for 2017+2018

Payments were received in time (before 31st of March 2018, for Turkey in July 2018) and approval was given to countries having made their payment, except Albania and Lithuania, who have not paid their fees.

4. Approval of the 2017 GAM report (held in Ferrières/Belgium)

The report was distributed to all delegates/organizations.

Uros Aksamovic from Serbia, being present as a guest in the room, questioned that he was incorrectly listed as a non-voting participant for Serbia at the 2017 GAM. He said that in his view he represented

Serbia in 2017 and stated that the GAM appeared to have an unspoken acceptance of him representing Serbia and exercising the Hungarian proxy. However, the Bureau responded by clarifying the following: There was no problem with Uros Aksamovic executing the vote for Hungary as he held a valid proxy for it. On the proxy form a President of a national organisation can choose "Solution 1" if its delegates, who are officially on the delegates list, are unable to attend the GAM. By filling in Solution 1 the president of this organisation appoints a temporary delegate for the GAM so that he/she can vote ("I, as president, mandate the following member of our national organisation to represent it officially as our delegate because he will be present at next FSE GAM"). This option on the proxy form enables an organisation more easily to appoint a temporary delegate. By appointing a temporary delegate, the FSE statutes are fully met.

Regarding the representation of Serbia and the allegation of an unspoken acceptance of Uros Aksamovic representing Serbia it was recalled that such acceptance not being possible according to the FSE regulations, as a representation can only be made by someone being a delegate/vice delegate or holding a valid proxy, which was not the case. The proxy for Hungary was totally separate from the issue of the representation of Serbia at the 2017 GAM.

Uros Aksamovic also disputed that the necessary quorum for the 2017 GAM has been reached. Both the Bureau and the GAM noted, however, that at that time an anomaly concerning the representation of Serbia had existed, and this had possibly confused the way looking at the situation. Following the aforementioned clarifications the Bureau insisted that the necessary quorum for the 2017 GAM had been achieved.

Uros Aksamovic also asked why certain documents relating to Serbian membership had not been sent to his organization. The Bureau said that these would be sent asap.

Following these clarifications, the 2017 GAM report was accepted as unanimous (**Annex 1**).

5. Situation of the 30 European member countries

The Treasurer provided an overview about the 2018 contributions paid. Andorra, Armenia (see agenda item 21), Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Russia, and San Marino are not yet FSE members, and Monaco has lost its membership at the end of 2017. There are no speleological organizations known from Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Holy See and Malta. Lithuania did not pay the 2018 membership fee. Albania will lose its membership if their arrears will not be settled until end of 2018.

6. Report of the Bureau 2017-2018

The following Bureau report was unanimously approved:

Since the last General Assembly Meeting in Ferrières (Belgium) the FSE Bureau dealt with a number of significant issues with e-mailing exchanges on an almost daily basis.

A dispute between two organisations in a member country occurred, with both organisations claiming to be the only one who represents that country in FSE. Only after time-consuming e-mailing exchanges, internal coordination within the FSE Bureau and repeated checks in the FSE archive a conclusion on the representation issue was found and transmitted to both respective organisations.

Another member country inquired for a possible reduction of its annual membership fee. A solution was proposed to that member by the FSE Bureau. Fortunately, the respective member country was finally able to procure its regular fee for 2018.

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). This was necessary because one Official Partner had to be replaced by Sacid-Korda's from Barcelona being now FSE's new rope sponsor. Also, Aventure Verticale (AV) has reduced its engagement and made it conditional to new criteria. This led to substantial changes in our guidelines and the application forms for ESPs, ESFs and the ESPLs. The new guidelines can be consulted on the FSE website. The new cooperation agreement between FSE and the Asian Union of Speleology was successfully deployed with two joint EuroSpeleo Projects in Cambodia and Vietnam.

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 were able to update the FSE website on a regular basis.

The Bureau also dealt with the requirements of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regarding the FSE website and the FSE Projects. Substantial amendments of guidelines and changes regarding FSE media were made, which kept the Bureau busy throughout June 2018. Thanks to Henk Goutier for fundamental guidance and a lot of work on this issue.

Four 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 (on own costs): Italian caver's meeting in Finale Ligure (Nov 2017), Czech annual caver's meeting in Sloup (April 2018), German annual meeting in Iserlohn (May 2018), and several capacity building events for cavers in Cyprus. Members of the Bureau were also involved in the organization of the current EuroSpeleo Forum in Ebensee.

FSE also provided patronages for a 2019 French-Belgian expedition to Laos, for the Italian caver's meeting Casola 2018-Nuvole (to be held next November), and the Italian Speleo Days (6-7 October).

7. Financial report 2017 (Annex 2)

The treasurer, Henk Goutier, informed the members on income and expenditure. At 31st Dec 2017 the FSE net assets amounted to € 36,593.93. The financial situation of FSE is stable and healthy.

8. Report of the FSE Treasury Auditor 2017

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

9. Election of the FSE Treasury Auditor for the next budgetary period 2018-19

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 2017-18 and Report on FSE membership in the European Environmental Bureau (Annex 3)

ECPC chairman Jean-Claude Thies presented both reports and provided additional information related to the report in oral form. The ECPC report and the EEB report were agreed upon at unanimity as annexed hereto.

12. Report of the European Cave Rescue Committee (ECRC) (Annex 4)

ECRC chairwoman Antonia Vlaykova presented her report, which was agreed unanimously.

13. Report about the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) 2017-2018 (Annex 5)

FSE Vice Secretary Michael Laumanns informed about UIS also having now established a funding system for speleological events and expeditions, which is seen as a positive development complementary to the FSE EuroSpeleo Projects. Members were encouraged to apply also for UIS support of their activities. The ESP report was agreed upon at unanimity.

14. + 22 Report of the Speleo-TV FSE Workgroup (Annex 6)

The Workgroup chair, Elina Saarinen, presented the activities of the currently fairly dormant workgroup. A number of proposals were made to increase activity: videos made by EuroSpeleo Projects (if any) could be added to Speleo-TV (the FSE attestation letter will be amended accordingly). The Speleo-TV workgroup mailing list will be updated. Consequently, the GAM decided to continue with the Workgroup for the time being and Ferdinando Didonna from Italy joined the Workgroup.

15. Report from the Contact Group on Show Caves

Vice Treasurer Ernest Geyer reported orally on the activities and transmitted greetings from Fritz Oedl. 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. A Show Cave Symposium was held at EuroSpeleo Forum in Ebensee which was well attended and where a fruitful exchange has taken place. All this was much 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 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 help updating the FSE website. All this was noted with satisfaction by

the GAM. A proposal was made to establish a link between WikiCaves and Wikipedia, which will be further explored.

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

Ged Champion informed that the relations with UIS continue to develop very well. Complementary work exists between commissions in both organisations. 2021 will both be the “International year of Caves” and the year of the UIS Congress in Lyon.

18. Report from the delegates about opening to new members

There are no new major developments since the last GAM report, except that a membership application from Armenia was received (see agenda item 21).

19. Organization of EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF) 2019-2021

2019: on occasion of 90 years of organized speleology as well as 45 years of cave rescue in Bulgaria, BFS will invite to the 13th EuroSpeleo Forum (26-29 September 2019) in Dolni Lozen, close to Sofia. A website will be available soon.

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. This was warmly welcomed by the GAM.

2021: combination with the UIS Congress in Lyon would be best. However, UIS and FFS need to agree with that. UIS already has indicated that a combination of events would not be a problem.

20. Annual Fees 2019 & 2020, Provisional Budget 2018 and 2019 (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 2018/19 Budget proposal.

21. Accession of Armenia to the FSE

The head of the Speleological Center in Yerevan, Prof. Shamvel Shahinian, briefly informed about the situation of cave research in Armenia, the number of Armenian cavers, and expressed the wish of Armenia to become a member of FSE in 2018. A delegate and a vice-delegate have been nominated. The FSE contributions for 3 years were already paid in advance. The GAM warmly welcomed Armenia as a new member to FSE with membership starting in 2018.

22. See agenda item 14

23. Consequences and measures following the new Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the EU (Annex 8)

Henk Goutier presented the new FSE Privacy Policy, which makes it necessary to inform FSE members what personal information FSE collects and why this is done, how the information is used and how individuals can access, delete and update information about them. For this reason, a Privacy Policy has been developed by the FSE. This policy was discussed in a lively way and was finally adopted unanimously by the GAM. FSE now will publish it on its website and distribute a message through a silence procedure with adequate deadline to all Delegates and Vice-Delegates seeking their consent that FSE receives and store their data and publish it on the FSE website in the members’ directory until their replacement.

24. Miscellaneous

The FSE Bureau informed the delegates that volunteers are sought for reducing the workload of the Bureau; especially for staffing the FSE stand during the EuroSpeleo Forums and other events.

Bärbel Vogel informed the Delegates about the creation of a new Technical Committee on Karst within the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) - for details see EuroSpeleo Newsletter from July 2018 (page 4) available in French and English at the FSE website. She recommended to all FSE members to contact their national ISO delegate in order to gain involvement in the work of this Committee. An Action Team of the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) has been formed to assist FSE members with all related questions.

Uros Aksamovic again questioned the representation of Serbia at the 2017 GAM in Belgium. The chair of the meeting stopped the discussion and suggested to him that he would make a formal complaint to the FSE Bureau on the procedure and that the Bureau would deal with this.

The GAM closed at 12H55.