

# History and future activities of the European Speleological Federation FSE

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## Abstract

In 2020 the European Speleological Federation FSE had its 30th anniversary. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic this milestone will be celebrated at the 2022 International Congress of Speleology (ICS) with special attention to what has been achieved in the past 30 years and the plans for the future.

We will highlight the major achievements of the past 30 years and the importance of the FSE for its 31 member countries. An overview of the FSE Commissions and working groups will show the importance of the FSE for the European caving community. Moreover the FSE established the immensely successful EuroSpeleo Projects, launched in 2005, greatly benefitting member countries and their caving clubs. Each year 10 to 15 projects are supported and bring together more than 300 cavers from more than 40 countries in join up pan-European activities both in and outside Europe.

We will also explain how to participate in and benefit from the EuroSpeleo Projects. We will bring forward the future plans of the FSE concerning the activities of the commissions, FSE communication channels and collaboration with other related organisations.

## Résumé

En 2020, la Fédération Spéléologique Européenne FSE a célébré son 30e anniversaire. À cause de la pandémie de COVID-19, cette étape sera célébrée lors du Congrès de l'UIS 2022 avec une attention particulière à ce qui a été accompli au cours des 30 dernières années et aux futurs plans.

Nous soulignerons les réalisations majeures des 30 dernières années et l'importance du FSE pour ses 31 pays membres. Un aperçu des commissions et groupes de travail FSE montrera leur importance pour la communauté spéléologique européenne. De plus, la FSE soutient les projets dits EuroSpeleo Projects, lancés en 2005, comme l'avantage le plus évident pour les pays membres et ses clubs de spéléologie. Chaque année, 10 à 15 projets sont soutenus et rassemblent plus de 300 spéléologues de plus de 40 pays dans des activités paneuropéennes conjointes en Europe et hors d'Europe.

Nous expliquerons également comment participer et bénéficier des projets EuroSpeleo. Nous présenterons les futurs plans du FSE concernant les activités des commissions, les canaux de communication du FSE et la collaboration avec d'autres organisations apparentées.

## 1. Three decades of the European Speleological Federation FSE

The European Speleological Federation FSE is an international organisation of European member countries (also being member of the Council of Europe and the United Nations) and are represented by their national organisations. The FSE, formerly FSCE then FSUE, was founded in 1990 in Udine, Italy, promotes sport and scientific speleology.

In 1990 speleological organisations from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, The Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain set the basis of the federation in a spirit of mutual collaboration and speleological development. The FSE encompasses speleology in all its forms.

The FSE is actually composed of 31 member countries, is governed by a board and sets up and organises all activities and structures necessary to reach its goals in order to promote speleology and cave and karst protection.



Figure 1 : present logo of the FSE

## 2. The foundation of the FSE in 1990

The FSE, formerly FSCE (CE stands for European Community) then FSUE (UE stands for European Union), was founded in 1990, the first published info on the foundation of the European Speleological Federation is reported in an article that appeared in the 1990 ALP magazine (Tavagnutti 2020) and by Arrigo Cigna in *Speleologia* (Cigna 1990).

During the XVI National Congress of Speleology held in Udine (Italy) from 6 to 9 September the Speleological Federation of the European Community was officially born. The 8th of September 1990 all countries present finally signed the constitution document "The Treaty of Udine" and the statutes of the "Fédération Spéléologique de la Communauté Européenne" FSCE.



Figure 2 : Author: Claude Mouret (FR) 1990 Udine, IT. First Bureau: (from left to right) Gérard Duclaux (FR) vicepresident, Bernard Urbain (BE) secretary, Andy Eavis (GB) treasurer, Bernhard Krauthausen (DE) president

## 3. The first decade 1990-2000

Right from the start a number of possible projects were presented. The first running years had many startup talks, all had to be organized, statutes, internal regulations, subscription rates, designing letterheads, logo, stickers, projects, schedule and frequency of future meetings, official representations in Brussels at the EC Commission, etc.

Some of the most important aspects of speleology for the FSCE were cave rescue, education and training, cave and karst protection, scientific research and cooperation among all European national organisations. After the FSCE had finally settled on a running process of meetings and tasks the European Community (EC) had been enlarged in 1995, and this brought new member countries like Austria, Sweden and Finland.

1995 also was a year of changes inside the FSCE. The General Assemblies changed from a biannual to an annual status. By that time the discussions on a single European Caving Insurance was finalized. The discussions however took a while but the list of really interested countries however was too restricted to be effective. In the nineties, the support of major European events had been put into the hands of the

FSCE. Following the "2nd European Speleological Congress" in Helecine, BE in the year 1992 was the 3rd issue organised in Lisbon in 1999. The 1st was in Sofia, BG in the year 1980.



Fig 3 : first issue of the EuroSpeleo Newsletter in 2000

Another major step in going public was the printed identity of the European Federation. The "EuroSpeleo Newsletter" was realized with the help of the French Speleological Federation in 2000. It was actually Number zero. It was printed in 2200 copies.

## 4. The second decade 2001-2010

In 2003 the name of Federation Spéléologique de l'Union Européenne (F.S.U.E.) was adopted by a vote of the General Assembly on the 8 June 2003 in Ollioules (France).

In the FSUE General Assembly on 23rd -25th of August 2005 in Kalamos, Greece the first idea of specific commissions was discussed especially on cave conservation but only in 2007 the *European Cave Protection Commission* was constituted and published the FSE European Speleological Charta for Cave Protection. In 2008 the 1st *EuroSpeleo Protection Symposium* was held in the Vercors, France during the 4th EuroSpeleo Congress.

Since 2007 FSE promotes EuroSpeleo Projects, one of the most important federation initiatives, from exploration expeditions to scientific conferences, from training to didactic or artistic projects, with over a hundred european projects granted, and 10 to 15 new requests every year, the FSE EuroSpeleo Projects have shown their great interest to bring the European cavers together to develop creative and dynamic new speleological projects.

In 2008 finally the actual name was born as European Speleological Federation (F.S.E.) Fédération Spéléologique Européenne (F.S.E.) and became a non-profit organisation based in Luxembourg-Ville in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. From this moment on all countries that belong to the Council of Europe can become a member of the F.S.E. The F.S.E is patronized by the International Union of Speleology UIS.

In 2008 a petition was brought to the European Parliament. This is a written declaration on the protection of caves as a cultural, natural and environmental heritage The declaration struggled to pass in the European Parliament although a general support from national caving organization was launched and supported by a specific campaign on the internet and cave media.

In 2010 the FSE launched the Petition to Stop Trade, Import and Export of Cave Contents, save the hole world - support cave protection in Europe.

## 5. The third decade 2011-2020

The first EuroSpeleo Protection Label (ESPL) was granted to Coliboaia Cave - Protecting a Unique Prehistoric Site by Asociata Speleologica Speowest Arad from Romania. The scope of the ESPL is to support active cave protection in the speleological associations and clubs, committees, national commissions, etc, and to share this knowledge throughout Europe.

Since October 2011 The European Speleological Federation is part of the European Environmental Bureau EEB, the largest network of environment protection NGOs in Europe and since 2015 the FSE is holding a seat in the Board of the EEB.

In 2012 the European Cave Rescue Commission (ECRC) was established in order to promote co-operation between the cave rescue organizations of each member country and to exchange information. Also in 2012 Speleo-TV was born as a project of the FSE, the main purpose of Speleo-TV is to offer the opportunity for all the cavers to connect and share their underground explorations and works with the speleological community in Europe and all over the world. Speleo-TV serves also as a directory for speleological films.

In October 2013 the FSE Facebook page was created and more than 6.000 people followed this page in December 2020.

In 2016 the 5th EuroSpeleo Congress was held in Dalesbridge, Yorkshire, UK organised by the British Caving Association on behalf of the FSE. with over a thousand participants.

During the EuroSpeleo Forum in Austria the Contact Group on Show Caves that was established in 2014 organized in 2018 the 1st EuroSpeleo Show Cave Symposium.

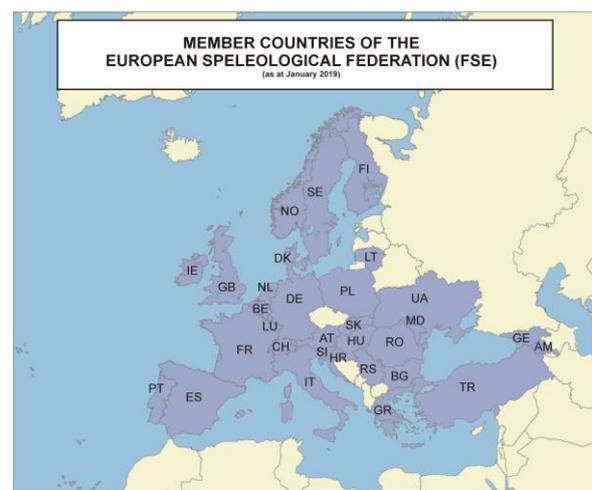


Figure 4 : Map showing the FSE member countries in 2019

## 6. Future activities of the FSE

In the coming period the FSE will mainly focus on the following :

- reflection on the conditions for applying for the EuroSpeleo Projects and try and make them as inclusive and transparent as possible.
- setting up initiatives for young cavers to be more involved in scientific aspects of speleology and (inter)national organisations
- keeping and enlarging the karst and cave protection agenda as a priority mission for the FSE
- establishing better exchange of information and knowledge between european cave rescue organisations
- improving the communication channels of the FSE ; webpage, social media, newsletter etc.
- strengthening the cooperation between national european and international caving organisations
- supporting the organisation of EuroSpeleo forums, congresses and symposiums



Figure 5 : Author: Taraneh Kaleghi (AT) 2019 Dolni Lozen, BG, Actual 2021 Bureau from left to right: Jean-Claude Thies (LU) president of the ECPC, Alena Gessert (SK) General Secretary, Antoniya Vlaykova (BG) president of the ECRC, Michel Isnard (FR) vice-president, Henk Goutier (NL) treasurer, Ernest Geyer (AT) vice-treasurer, Ged Campion (GB) president and Joerg Dreybrodt (DE) vice-secretary.

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FSE - website related documents : <https://www.eurospeleo.eu/en/documents.html>