



The 14th EuroSpeleo Forum on display at the Museo de la Evolucion Humana in Burgos (Spain).

Photo: Michael Laumanns



This Newsletter is issued by the Bureau of the European Speleological Federation (FSE)

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Editorial

The recent months have seen a number of important speleological events which were held in Europe, such as the 18th ICS in Le Bourget-du-Lac (France) and the 14th EuroSpeleo Forum in Cantabria/Burgos (Spain) and

we are looking forward to more such fruitful face to face meetings coming up soon (see the list of events on page 3 of this Newsletter).

Please forward this Newsletter as widely as possible to caving clubs and individual cavers.

The FSE Bureau

Revised Guidelines for EuroSpeleo Projects

The EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP) support international projects open to the participation of speleologists from all FSE member countries and have a multidisciplinary dimension. ESPs support activities in the spirit of the Guiding Principles of the International Year of Caves and Karst: Explore, Understand, Protect!

ESPs fund activities related to cave & karst exploration worldwide, e.g. expeditions, conferences/meetings, conservation activities, and biospeleology. Media (e.g. books and films) are also supported by FSE but follow other application criteria outside the ESPs.

ESPs fund every individual, club, local organisation and national commission in a country being member of FSE.

The application now needs to be accompanied by descriptive texts how the project accommodates five criteria: innovation & documentation, science, diversity, partnerships, and education & conservation. The application needs to be transmitted at the latest 3 months before the project (2 month if only a financial grant is applied for).

The FSE Bureau will decide on the amount of funding on the basis of the information provided in the application. The new guidelines and the application form are available for download at <https://www.eurospeleo.eu/eurospeleo-projects/>

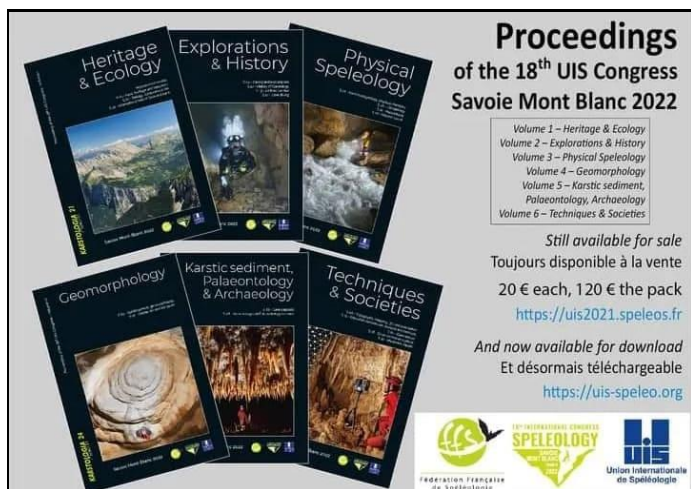
New FSE Website online!

You may have noticed that the FSE Website has been unavailable for a while due to a hacking attack. It is with great pleasure that we can announce that, with the brilliant help of Francesco Maurano from Italy, FSE is now back online after only a short period (link see above). We also took the opportunity to modernize the appearance of our Internet pages. Some pages are still under construction but content will be added step by step.

The Website is now available in all FSE languages (merely by electronic translation though).

FSE Partners





New UIS Bureau elected

The Union Internationale de Spéléologie (UIS) at its General Assembly in Le-Bourget-du-Lac has elected a new Bureau to conduct the daily business of the organisation:

Officers:

President: Dr. Nadja Zupan Haina (Slovenia)
 Secretary General: Dr. Johannes Mattes (Austria)
 Vice President of Administration: Zdenek Motyčka (Czech Republic)
 Vice President of Operations: Nivaldo Colzato (Brasil)
 Treasurer: Dr. Mladen Garasic (Croatia)

Adjunct Secretaries:

Prof. Jose Calaforra (Spain)
 Ged Campion (United Kingdom)
 Marc Mentens (Philippines)
 Dr. Mario Parise (Italy)
 Dr. Patricia Seiser (USA)
 Nathalia Uasapud (Colombia)
 Bärbel Vogel (Germany)

FSE congratulates the new Bureau members for their election and thanks the outgoing UIS Bureau members for their many years of excellent service.

Cave Diving Expedition Megalodontencanyon siphon, Hirlatzhöhle (Austria) (ESP 2022-01)

Hirlatzhöhle is Austria's 3rd longest cave with a total length of over 113 km. The current focus of exploration is at the far west, the far east and the highest parts of the cave. All those areas are only accessible by long bivouak trips lasting several days. Diving in Hirlatzhöhle has also been of interest for a long time - there are several sumps to be found in the cave. One sump remained to be dived until February 2022 is the siphon at the end of Megalodontencanyon in the west of the cave. A first attempt to dive that sump by Peter Hübner and Barbara Wielander in February 2019 revealed that the spacious underwater passage continues as big as before. It is believed that the water in this sump drains into Waldbachursprung, a spring approx. 140 m below Megalodontencanyon.

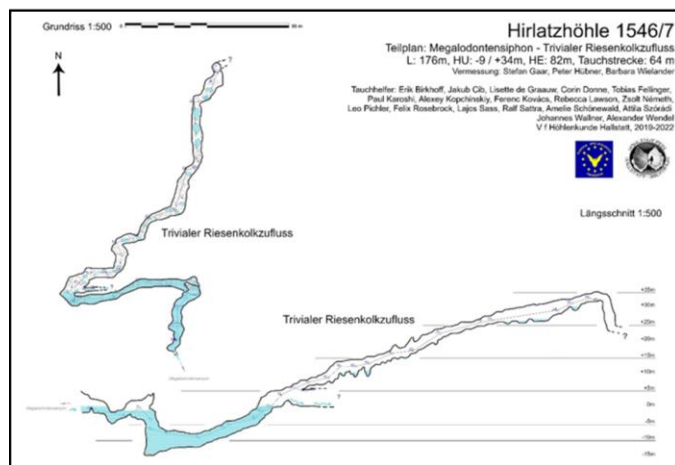
A previous first attempt to dive the sump in the Megalodontencanyon was abolished when the divers had used up the planned one sixth of their total air supply.

Now, aided by an international support team, consisting of six cavers from Hungary and the Netherlands, Barbara Wielander (A) and Stefan Gaar (D) managed to dive through the siphon in Megalodontencanyon.

Around noontime on Monday 23rd May the team reached the sump, where crystal clear water was encountered. The sump proved to be very easy and comfortable to dive (as opposed to the access through the canyon before) - the maximum depth was 10 m, the water continued to be very clear, and there was enough space for both divers to comfortably dive side by side and enjoy the dive. As we were diving into the sump downstream (with a little current due to the water flowing through the canyon) caution was taken regarding the air supply, on the way in.

After only 6 minutes (respectively a distance of 65 m) we managed to surface again and found ourselves in a spacious chamber where the stream disappears again into a narrow canyon that could maybe be explored by cavers not worrying about tearing their drysuits on sharp Megalodont fossils in the walls.

We were more interested in a gallery leading upwards at an angle of approx. 30° and managed to follow this roomy passage easily. After only a few metres the water of the stream could not be heard anymore. Deep water filled pools along that passage suggest that this gallery is flooded at least occasionally. After surveying approx. 100 m in this gallery, a pit was encountered where we stopped the survey.



Survey and profile of the newly discovered passage beyond Megalodontencanyon siphon.

This successful cave diving expedition received EuroSpeleo Project status and was supported by a financial grant of the Fédération Spéléologique Européenne (FSE) as well as a rope donation by FSE partner KORDA'S.



Cave and Karst related events

For more detailed information please consult the list of European caving events at the FSE website:

<https://www.eurospeleo.eu/evens/>

22 - 26 November 2022

20th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology -

Dak Nong Province, Vietnam - <https://20isvdaknong.com/>

7 - 11 December 2022

Risorgenze 2022, Meeting of the Italian Cavers - Cagli (PU), Italy - <https://scintilena.com/category/risorgenza-2022/>

27 - 31 March 2023

17th Multidisciplinary Conference on Sinkholes and the Engineering and Environmental Impacts of Karst -

Tampa, Florida, USA - <http://www.sinkholeconference.com/>

4 - 7 May 2023

4th Int. Planetary Caves Conference - Haria, Lanzarote,

Spain - <http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/4thcaves2023/>

17 - 21 May 2023

Annual meeting of the German cavers & 15th EuroSpeleo Forum (tbd) - Breitscheid/Hessen, Germany

22 - 26 May 2023

14th International Symposium on Pseudokarst - Sudetes,

Poland - <https://14pseudokarst.wonders4you.com/>

26 - 30 June 2023

NSS Convention - Elkins, West Virginia, USA -

<https://nss2023.caves.org>

14th EuroSpeleo Forum (ESF) in Spain a great success

About 200 Spanish speleologists as well as guests from Israel, Bulgaria, Austria, Switzerland, France, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Germany joined the 14th EuroSpeleo Forum in Burgos/Spain (9-11 September) as well as its pre-Congress in Cantabria (Ramales de la Victoria and Arredondo, 5-8 September). The event was also the 11th congress of the Spanish federation.

The pre-congress, held in a beautiful landscape, had many fieldtrips to sportive caves as well as show caves, including impressive prehistoric sites. Introductory presentations on the big Cantabrian cave systems provided a good overview. Also, social events like life-music and buffets in the evening contributed to strengthen contacts with cavers and scientists.

The main congress took place in Burgos, about 150 km further south. As the world-famous hominid site of Atapuerca is close to the city, the Museo de la Evolucion Humana provided excellent facilities for the meeting, which was very well organized with further fieldtrips, many interesting presentations, equipment- and bookstands as well as a lot of posters and exhibitions. The highlight of the congress was the final lunch in a beautiful restaurant in the outskirts of Burgos, which was designed like a prehistoric cave.

FSE was well-represented at the event with Secretary-General Alena Gessert as well as Vice-Treasurer Ernest Geyer, who were invited to all official presentations, and contributed to the program on the history of FSE and the EuroSpeleo Projects. The FSE sales stand was well

EuroSpeleo Projects recently accepted by FSE

ESP 2022-09; Skalar 2022 (Slovenia)

ESP 2022-10; Man and Karst Conference (Italy)

ESP 2022-11; Expédition NEUA Thailand (Belgium)

Recent ISCA Newsletters

The July/August, September/October and November/December newsletters of the Int. showcaves Association are available at

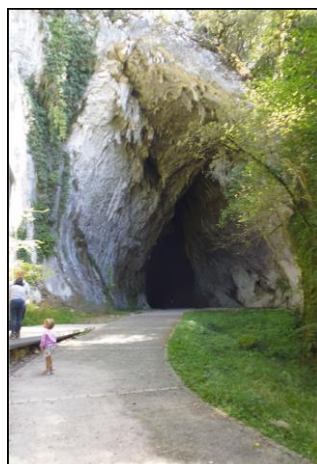
<https://www.i-s-c-a.org/clanok/272-isca-newsletter-july-august-2022>

<https://www.i-s-c-a.org/clanok/275-isca-newsletter-september-october-2022>

<https://www.i-s-c-a.org/clanok/277-isca-newsletter-november-december-2022>

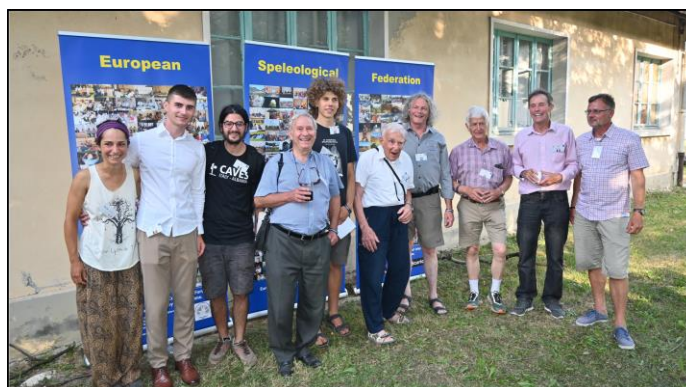


14th ESF: Opening of the event, entrance of Cueva Cullalvera in Ramales, and cave excursion during the main congress in Burgos (photographs: E.Geyer, M.Laumanns, Congress Organization).



frequented and FSE also contributed to the exhibitions. The FSE banners were extensively used by the organizers to give FSE a good visibility.

The event was a great advertisement for Spain and the new Spanish federation CEC.



The Past, the Present, and the Future: FSE founders Claude Mouret, Arrigo Cigna and Andy Eavis, ECPC president J.-C.Thies, FSE Board members G.Campion and J.Dreybrodt, as well as the four scholarship winners (photo : E.Geyer).

30th anniversary of FSE

On Tuesday evening July 27, 2022, the Fédération Spéléologique Européenne (FSE) celebrated, pandemic-delayed, its 30th anniversary as part of the 18th International Congress of Speleology with an Apéro (= a social custom in France that combines enjoyment and conviviality), attended by a large number of international guests, including George Veni (president of the UIS). The FSE delegates provided food specialties from their countries - the selection ranged from Greek olives, Belgian beer, Dutch sweets to Austrian wine, in addition to Italian and French specialties. Four founding members of the FSE were also present at this celebration - Arrigo Cigna (Italy), Andy Eavis (UK), Claude Mouret (France) and Jean-Claude Thies (Luxembourg). The FSE was founded in 1990 in Udine (Italy).

Awards were also presented during this event - Jean-Claude Thies handed over the European Cave Protection Label 2022 (ESPL) to Francesco Maurano (Italy). Furthermore, the prizes for the "FSE Caves and Karst Art Contest 2021/22" were handed over by Taraneh Khaleghi - the first prize went to Olivier Gradot (France) for his sketchbook: "Exploration Diary" - his 17-pages book shows his memories of exploring caves together with his friends. Other prizes went to Petru Merinu (ceramics, Romania), Maya Da Fonséca Castejon (mixed technique, France), Melvin Lefèvre (art photography, France), Tomaž Nedoh (music, Slovenia) and Silvia Goutier-Juffermans (poetry, Netherlands). A total of 88 art works from all over the world were submitted for the contest.

Also, the FSE-Scholarship winners Luisa Dainelli (Italy), Alessandro Marraffa (Italy) Lukas Grbac-Lackovic (Croatia) and Driga Florin Ilie (Romania) gave a short speech.

Parallel to this event, which was considered by many to be a highlight of the 18th ICS, an exhibition on the 30 years of history of the FSE also took place throughout the congress.



Scurion®



Handover of the ESPL 2022 award (photo: E.Geyer).

EuroSpeleo Protection Label 2022 awarded to the Italian project "Microplastic pollution in karstic and cave aquifers (MPKCA)"

Microplastics (sized <5 mm) are a heterogeneous group of solid polymers containing particles that origins from primary production or from the degradation of larger plastic materials (secondary production). Microplastic particles are a global problem. A growing volume of microplastics is found in the environment, including the sea, and in food and drinking water also coming from karst aquifers.

Once in the environment, microplastics do not biodegrade and tend to accumulate unless they are specifically designed to biodegrade. There are increasing concerns about the presence of microplastics in different ecosystems (such as in groundwater), their impact on the environment and human health.

However, microplastic pollution in caves and karst aquifers is still poorly studied and the main goal of the MPKCA project of the Federazione Speleologia Campana (Italy) is to create specific sample methods and equipment for research in caves and karst springs, to be shared with the international speleological community.

For some of the resurgences examined (where the location of the upstream sinkhole is known) we expect to find microplastics. For resurgences without any known inflow the situation needs to be verified. The plastic waste arriving in a cave pollutes the underground habitat but we do not know yet how much microplastic is generated inside the caves by the flow of the water or already enters the caves with surface or underground flows respectively. Consequently, the project will target these questions.

The projects aims to be a pilot project which can be extended to the whole territory of Italy. Also, not only speleological organisations could be involved in the project to improve the protection of karst waters and caves. In the long term the capacity of speleologists in assessing and studying the microplastic contamination in caves will be increased

The MPKCA Project was awarded the EuroSpeleo Protection Label 2022 at anniversary event of FSE in Le Bourget-du-Lac (France). The project received a financial grant of 800 EUR as well as a headlamp from FSE sponsor SCURION.



Participants of the 15th ECRA meeting (photo: E.Kelf Flek).

15th European Cave Rescue Meeting

The 15th European Cave Rescue Meeting (29th September - 2nd October) took place in the beautiful ancient village of Rudice, in the Moravian Karst, Czech Republic. The meeting was organized by the [Cave Rescue Service](#) of the [Czech Speleological Society](#) under the auspices of the [General Directorate of the Czech Fire Rescue Service](#), the [Governor of the South Moravian Region](#), and the [UIS](#). It was the largest ECRA event ever with 138 participants from 20 countries and 39 organizations (ECRA meetings are open not only for cave rescuers).

A pre-meeting program was prepared for September 28th and 29th. Sportive trips were provided to Stará Amatérská Cave - which is a part of the Amatérská Cave (Amateurs' Cave) system, the longest cave in Czech Republic, 44 km in length, underground rivers and an abundance of white formations. Another trip went to Rudické propadání Cave. Other field-trips included the show caves of Výpustek and Punkva, the latter of which is part of Amateurs' Cave.

Friday 30th October was the first official day of the 15th European Cave Rescue Meeting in the House of Culture in Rudice, with offices, meeting rooms, restaurant and a speleo bar.

After the opening ceremony the program continued with presentations, demonstrations, meetings and discussions of the ECRA commissions. ECRA has four commissions on medical, cave rescue diving, technical, and passage enlargement issues. Several lectures were devoted to the topic of bad (noxious) air in the context of underground blasting, from chemical and medical perspective. Under the Your Contribution section, there were presentations on rescue in salt caves and its special techniques, which are unusual for European cave rescuers (Yoav Negev, Israel), on the cooperation between the Czech Cave Rescue and the Fire Brigade Service (Libor Matuška, Jaroslav Weiter, CZ), the [incident with three Polish explorers trapped in Lamprechtsofen](#) (Kurt Dennstedt, Austria), on the longest rescue operation in the history of the Hungarian Cave Rescue ([the cave diving accident in Kossuth Cave near Jósvalfő](#)) (Gergely Balazs, Miklos Nyerges, Hungary), as well as a presentation for the students of the Rescue & Safety School on a rescue exercise (Marek Vocac, Norway).

Cave rescue techniques also work well in animal rescue, as shown by two presentations: "A dog rescue mission" (Jessica van Ord, USA) and "Rescue of a beaver" (Dinko Novosel, Croatia).

In the commission for the enlargement of passages there were lectures about pyrotechnic material like pyro cartridges as well as an outdoor demonstration. The technical commission had exchanges on radio location equipment, cave GPS, radiophone and Nicola IV and had a practical demonstration on techniques for stretcher manoeuvres with few people and less equipment. The medical commission did demonstrations of new technical equipment (e.g. mobile ultra sound device) and gear (e.g. patient's sleeping bag) with practical training sessions and had some presentations about recent cave rescue operations in Switzerland and UK. The cave diving commission held a workshop and a practical exercise: pulling a stretcher with a scooter, how to protect drilling devices under water during diving, full face masks, and various stretchers in siphon rescue.

On Friday evening the movie "Thirteen Lives" about the 2018 Thai cave rescue in Tham Luang was shown, with official permission of Amazon, thanks to John Volanthen, one of the British cave rescue divers.

The annual ECRA General Assembly took place on Saturday morning and was led by Dinko Novosel, President of ECRA, with the usual administrative reports being presented. The heads of the ECRA commissions and work groups reported on the activities of the past year. Under the technical commission a new working group was created, that will deal with communications with the first aim of cataloging the available devices for use in rescue. A new membership application was received from the Spanish Speleology and Canyons Confederation (CEC), which was unanimously accepted. Congratulations!

ECRA grows and already has 33 members from 25 countries.

The evening program started with keynote speeches: "The ECRA - 10 years of progress" by Pete Allwright, Honorable Member of ECRA, was dedicated to [ECRA's anniversary](#). Following that our hosts, the Cave Rescue Service of the Czech Speleological Society, presented "40 years of Cave Rescue" in the Czech Republic.

The meeting finished traditionally with a great party.

The next ECRA meeting will be held in Porto de Mos, Portugal from October 12-15, 2023. The meeting will be organized by the Portuguese Caving Federation on behalf of ECRA.

Many thanks for the excellent organization and atmosphere to the whole team of the Cave Rescue Service of the Czech Speleological Society.

More about ECRA:

Website:

<https://caverescue.eu/>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/ECRA.rescue>

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6zPwLh6M-MpW8LtJulvMg>

Antoniya Vlaykova, President of the Cave Rescue Commission of the European Speleological Federation & Iris Koller, Austrian Cave Rescue Association (ÖHR)