



Public Informal Meeting

02/10/99 Lisbon (P)

Start of the meeting: 11:45 AM

25-30 presences

To start the meeting, Andy Eavis (GB), actual president of the FSCE thanks the Portuguese society for making this meeting possible and welcomes everybody interested in the work of the federation. He introduces the FSCE bureau members and excuses George Theodorou from Greece who apologises for not being present.

1) Situation of the FSCE

Andy Eavis gives a short history of the FSCE and explains the aims that the federation has:

getting money from the EU
cooperation between different EU countries
bringing the European cavers together
promoting cave rescue and a common insurance policy

He explains also that it is not the aim of the FSCE to run a competition against the UIS, but more or less an addition to the UIS.

The problems that have made the FSCE running at a slow level are probably due to the fact that cavers are lazy in organising congresses and doing paperwork.

Jean-Claude Thies (L) FSCE treasurer, describes himself more as an administrative caver rather than a technical caver. He explains about the difficulties in getting money for projects from the EU. As project ideas must fit into prepared structures and deadlines for entering a proposal are very short, it is nearly impossible for hobby cavers to setup a project in this time. Due to this problem no project was funded during the last years.

2) Cave Rescue Research Questionnaire by Jean-Marc Mattlet (B)

Jean-Marc has setup a questionnaire to gather all information concerning cave rescue. The results will be stored in a database and published in form of a booklet to help cavers planing their exploration to other countries and in case of a need have all necessary information to organise a rescue on site.

This is not a very big project but will help every caver. The work will also need to be extended to non-EU countries, as many cavers go to the eastern countries for their expeditions.

3) Enlargement of the FSCE to Non-EU Countries by Olivier Vidal (F)

First Andy Eavis gives a short introduction to this topic. Olivier than presents some interesting opinions about this theme. Related to the fact that the FSCE is not getting money from EU institutions there is no argument not to accept members from non-EU countries. Some observer countries to the EU are potential countries for caving, therefore he asks if it would be possible to opt for some sort of "associate member status" inside the FSCE. Potential countries are: Poland, Slovenia, Check Republic, Iceland,.....There are however other situations that could cause problems:

- clash-problems with UIS
 - EU problems when applying for some restricted projects
- This cannot be decided today but should be investigated until 2001.

(H. Stünzl, CH) "Why should there be such a hard lined structure as we don't work on politics" He is very keen on an "associate member status"

(P. Bosak, CZ) This would be a very interesting change of the FSCE statutes which will take at least 2 years to realise. In the point of view of getting money from Brussels and making it accessible for non-EU members, it is important to do this step.

(P. Bosak, UIS Secretary General) He remembers 1956 when the UIS was founded. The origin was in Europe and then spread over to the entire world. As Secretary General of the UIS he can under no way support the opening of the FSCE to non-EU countries.

(B. Krauthausen, D, former FSCE president) He remembers a paper from a high ranked politician who was very critical about increasing the EU. First we should try to make the FSCE run on the current base and after this there is still time to open the structure for other countries.

(Mr. Orbito, P, Ministry of Environment) It is very difficult to get money from the EU but not impossible, i.e. last year they got 1.000.000 PTE for a project in a National Park. Regional development is very important inside the EU. The right partner has yet to be found to get this money from the commissions. The FSCE has to give the guidelines and then apply for financial aid.

(A. Eavis, FSCE) Presenting projects is the first step, then fitting them into existing EU programs.

4) European Year for Cave Protection by Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns (B)

Jean-Pierre makes a proposal to organise a special "European Year for the Protection of Show-caves". As show-caves are the "carte de visite" of caves and a majority of people do visit them. In his opinion show-caves should be protected more and through them everybody should be sensitive in protecting caves. As administrative matters take time, such a "year" will not be possible before 2002-2003.

5) Relationship FSCE - UIS

(Andy Eavis, FSCE) He always considered the FSCE as a part of the UIS, say a part of the world caving. If the FSCE is aiming for competition against the UIS we are facing considerable problems.

(Owen Clark, GB) Will there be other "subdivisions" of the UIS, following the European example?

(Pavel Bosak, UIS) There are already other subdivisions like the FELAC in South America. One of the main roles of the FSCE should therefore be spreading information only on a regional level rather than expand on an international level.

It will be very difficult to opt for financial help for a show-cave project when the FSCE has to apply at the EU's Sport Commission at the DGX. The UIS applied at UNESCO with the result that caving is a too small institution to get public interest, as Jean-Claude Thies (L) said: "...in the underground none is able to see us and therefore none is interested in sponsorship".

There are plans to reclassify show-caves into heritage caves but there is no huge lobby for this.

(Olivier Vidal, F) There is currently no direct communication between FSCE and UIS, every institution is able to survive by its own. As a new "country" is growing, the "European Union", this country needs its own caving federation which has been actually imposed by the European Commission due to common interests and rules inside the EU.

FSCE and UIS are not competitive parallel institutions but the UIS will always stay on top of the list. UIS > FSCE > National federation > clubs.

6) Divers

Jean-Marc Mattlet (B) presents the "4th European Caving Expedition Symposium" held in Profondeville, Belgium on the 29/04-1/05/2000 and invites everybody in taking part at this important meeting.

Owen Clark (GB) is testing used caving ropes and likes to work together with other national bodies for an exchange of information and finding a common test procedure for this purpose. In case other countries have such a commission they are invited to get into contact with him. End: 12:45 PM