

Minutes of the European Forum Committee Meeting
Saturday 31st October 2015
Department of Physical Geography, Stockholm University.

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 09.30. Ingrid Stjernquist, Chair of the European Forum, welcomed everyone.

Present: European Forum Committee 2014-2016

Estonia: Liilia Oberg, Finland: Heli Piikkilä (Treasurer), Germany: Dagmar Ullmann, Great Britain: Diana Bell, Iceland: Krístrún Ísaksdóttir, Norway: Ingrid Christiansen, Sweden: Ingrid Stjernquist, The Netherlands: Riet Smits.
European Regional Director (ex officio) Marianne Skardéus.

Minute takers. Morning: Krístrún Ísaksdóttir and Diana Bell.

2. Approval of the minutes from the European Forum meeting in Borås.

These were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

3. Finance Report and Budget.

- **Financial Report:** Heli Piikkilä (EF Treasurer) presented the Financial Review for 1st July 2014-30th June 2015. There is €380 remaining, but this changes all the time. In this revised budget 90% of travel costs for the EF committee meeting in Paterswolde were paid for, printing costs were €100 rather than €50. Hosting costs were as presented in Borås, €274.
- **European Forum Budget for 2015-2016:** This was revised in October to show that 73% of travel costs for the EF Meeting in Stockholm could be paid, plus €60 per person towards hotel costs. It was agreed to send Eygló Björnsdóttir, EF Webmaster, €20 for website costs.
- **Meeting Budget:** Costs of printing the agenda booklet for the International convention in Nashville were discussed, also possible costs of the meeting room, although it was believed this would be paid for by headquarters. It was agreed there would probably be no need for a microphone. The budget for 2015-2016 was agreed.
- **Regional Director's travel expenses:** Heli provided a breakdown of the amounts paid by countries in November 2015. Estonia €42, Finland €100, Germany €35, Great Britain €43, Iceland €330, The Netherlands €48, Norway €80, Sweden €285. Sweden will pay the RD directly so there are no transaction fees. There was concern this would not show on the budget, it was agreed to show it as 'to pay on account'. Last year there was €718 in the budget. Marianne Skardéus said she had been invited to visit Turku, and was going to Reykjavik, also by invitation. She was in Oslo last year. She intends to attend all state conferences, but has not yet visited Germany, she has now been invited to attend.
- **European Achievement Award:** €25 per country to be collected next year, 2016. The committee all agreed to repay Ria Bleeker the €100 that she contributed towards the cost of the pin that was awarded in 2015, which cost €300 not the €200 budgeted. The possibility of using DKG Award Jewellery was discussed, but it was felt as this was not original others could wear a similar pin. It was agreed to ask Ria to see if it was possible to find someone to make a simplified design at €200 (keeping the 'female' symbol), which could be used for other years as well.

The report was accepted and Heli was thanked for her work.

4. Letter to Headquarters regarding financing of the Regional Director's Expenses.

It is hoped that this proposed amendment to the International Standing Rules, (During her biennium the European Regional Director shall attend her eight area state conferences), will lead to some discussion at the meeting in Nashville regarding financing this travel, but agreement is not expected straight away.

The Netherlands feel DKG has a top-down approach and it should be more democratic. We should knit-together the European Forum and the Regional Director, building networks and supporting our European 'platform'. It was agreed to use arguments in Nashville regarding our different countries, education systems etc. All agreed that Robert's Rules were difficult to understand. It was noted that e-mail discussion when preparing the amendment form was useful.

5. The European Forum: Vision for Europe.

We need to report to the convention in Nashville about what we had achieved.

Each member was asked about their vision.

- ▶ **Ingrid Christiansen:** Find inspiration for our work in our country and in Europe. Pay attention to children and

women's rights all over the earth. Co-operate and support each other across borders.

The word 'European' gives authority to the organisation – gives an international dimension and shows we are connected. There is an understanding and respect for other countries and how they organise themselves. We are an information source for our own country and other countries' members.

- ▶ **Kristrún Ísaksdóttir:** Because of our different situation - countries, languages etc, we use the internet and website more. We exchange good practice within DKG, inspire and help others, but finding time to do this is a problem. Translating our languages is also a problem when we try to make exchanges with our work. It might be useful to outline a project on a simple form so members would know what the work is about.

Sister chapters are a good way to show co-operation between boundaries as are mutual visits to state conferences. We could try and arrange that at least one member from another country goes to each state conference. All dates of state conferences are on the internet and we could add who is going from each country. Interraction goes through all suggestions.

We need more countries – Poland, Belgium, France etc. The European Conference is a way for everyone to join in.

- ▶ **Riet Smits:** By networking we learn about cultural and educational differences and similarities. We all want to educate our students as well as possible. Networking allows us to understand more about the different European Education systems.
- ▶ **Liilia Oberg:** It is interesting to hear how other countries education systems work. Useful to have links between members and countries. Having two members - president and EF member is useful as more people take part.
- ▶ **Diana Bell:** We should investigate EU finance to support sending members to our conferences. (Three members with EU contacts said they will investigate to see what is possible). We are using the website more and need to support the webmaster by sending her information to be put on the web..
- ▶ **Dagmar Ullmann:** In order to attract younger members in Europe the new DKG leaflets should have a more modern and professional look. The German flier also needs revision. (Iceland has an A4 booklet, copies were given to everyone for information). We need to use the website for networking, perhaps each country should take it in turn to present their special interest. European members of International committees could write reports in a more informal way for the web. As well as invitations to events such as state conferences, we could invite members to attend chapter meetings in our countries.
- ▶ **Heli Piikkilä:** We have similar problems and could publish issues important to us such as women's rights, refugees and young children's education. EU money is difficult to apply for. We could be more effective.
- ▶ **Ingrid Stjernquist:** Expansion is important, we are Northern European mainly. We should be looking at Poland, Czech Republic, France etc. HQ seems to have a queueing system on expansion. Lyn Schmid has said it is expensive to expand – Denmark was expensive and then finished.

General discussion followed. Marianne told us about using money from a special Swedish fund for a good seminar in Estonia. We could possibly use EU money for a pre-conference seminar, but might need to keep it separate from DKG. We might invite members from Poland etc. Ingrid S spoke on EU finance for a conference where she is working with Iceland, Sweden and possibly Denmark. We might need an organisation behind us to work with the EU when many of us retire.

Visiting others is important. Riet explained that in The Netherlands they look at the website each meeting so members know what is going on. Members don't look at the DKG material because it looks old-fashioned. Dagmar showed us an up-to-date *Opportunities Through DKG* leaflet which we agreed was much better.

Ingrid S explained that Sweden has a number of different groups that join together for lobbying and co-operate with other organisations. Riet said that we can develop ourselves, but we are still a hidden organisation for women. What is our goal? Other organisations are clear on what they do, we find it difficult to say who we are and what we do. Ingrid C said in Norway they use *value discussion*. What do we stand for, what might others be interested in? They have found new aspects that are good for DKG. It was agreed that we hardly ever discuss our purposes and how we implement them.

Ingrid S summarised what we had been saying.

- Make our European profile more visible.
- Networking, visiting European conferences.
- Website - developing our European profile.
- Money for EU for working together, pre-conference and expansion.

Website. It was suggested that one person from each country should be responsible for a topic. Everyone taking part

from chapter to European level. Riet explained that everyone in her chapter was a member of a committee, these included organising an exchange with Germany and raising money for refugees.

6. The European Forum Strategic Action Plan 2014-2016: Revisions

♦ SERVICE:

A.2. Remove, A.3. Online sessions , add were *Go To Meeting*, remove 'ongoing', add 'continues'.

B.1. Put in, 'Borås completed', and 'Nashville planned November 2015'.

It was agreed that all completed tasks should be moved to the the bottom of each section.

♦ COMMUNICATION:

A.1. Remove 'ongoing', add 'continues'.

A.2. Remove 'Agreed in Paterswolde'.

A.3. Members considered that the web committee, Estonia, Sweden and Iceland (Webmaster Eygló) was not functioning. Suggested one member from each country be a link, and another group as technical support.

♦ ENCOURAGES CO-OPERATION BETWEEN MEMBER COUNTRIES, INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEES AND THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR:

Needs revising as we are repeating ourselves. B.2. Remove 'ongoing', add 'completed'. (meeting organised by Marianne at the EF in Borås) .

♦ MEMBERSHIP:

A.1. Remove. A.2. Remove. A.3. Correction: Report on ~~which ways~~ ~~which~~ that have been successful.

A.4. Add 'Interview younger members regarding their vision and interests for the website'.

♦ FINANCE:

A.1. Add the words 'European Forum' before committee members. A 2. Add 'November 2015'.

♦ HISTORY:

A.1. This was part of being visible. Useful to have a list of European Presidents with dates. Article about the development of the European Region was put on the website in August. Add the names of key women who developed our region to the website.

♦ CELEBRATION:

1. The Founders. Area representatives and international Presidents should be included, also chapter presidents. This should be moved to HISTORY and become point number 2.

1.3. Completed. Joan Carroll has been thanked for her work on EuForia.

Discussion followed regarding looking forward, more pictures of younger women and asking what do younger members want from DKG, what is their vision? Standardising information from each country. Should we take the responsibility for asking questions and interviewing younger members? We should formulate questions, maybe asking three things they want from us.

The history part of the website acts as our archive. It was suggested that we only need short pieces, maybe 5 lines each. There is a list of Regional Directors and information about their bienniums in the booklet from Borås.

Break for lunch, the meeting recommenced at 13.15.

Minute Takers. Afternoon: Ingrid Christiansen and Diana Bell.

7. EuForia and the European Forum Website.

Ingrid C read a letter from the Norwegian Board which queried who would edit EuForia if it continued and suggested a fusion of Euforia and the website. Discussion continued regarding working in English and members being very busy. In some countries few members were reading EuForia. Riet reported from The Netherlands that they wanted to keep Euforia and this was supported by Estonia. Different possibilities were discussed regarding translation, someone to take charge and be responsible. Riet offered to be editor to keep Euforia going.

The Forum agreed on the following solution:

- Euforia will be published twice a year, in February and September.
- It will be connected to the Website.
- The State President, or another person in each country, will write a short article of 300 words maximum. These articles could take a theme or topic such as quality of education, refugees, follow-up on the Regional Conference speakers etc. One suggestion was to ask each country to take a month each.
- Photographs should be encouraged.

- Dates of State Conferences are to be put on the web. (Marianne will help with these).

As the costs of developing the website are large, using free websites such as *Webly*, which is easy to manage, were discussed. It was pointed out that HQ may not authorize these sites. Members said that our website is a bit static and like an archive. We need more articles, news especially for young people. We must ask Eygló, our webmaster, for her suggestions regarding change and development of the website.

It was suggested that we look at rearranging the headings on the website to put, for example, publications under one heading.

Ingrid S will gather information from now on until the meeting in Nashville about what ought to be on the European Website and write an outline paper.

8. Schools for Africa Project.

Norway asked which countries support this project, and if so by how much? Besides Norway, only Great Britain has supported *Schools for Africa*. All the other six countries focus on their own projects. There were concerns raised regarding knowing where the funding goes to in large projects.

9. Planning the Forum Meeting at the Convention 2016 in Nashville.

The Business meeting will take place according to the usual format.

The question of keynote speaker was discussed. There were a number of suggestions including following up Katrin Sacs talk, 'involvement not integration' - the refugee question, adult education from the refugee angle, getting more men into teaching and integrating Syrian female teachers.

Dagmar suggested Gitta Franke-Zöllmer from Germany, a prominent leader of the Trade Union for teachers in Niedersachsen. She is working for quality in education for all, aiming to reach foreign teachers as well. She is also fighting for female teachers' rights.

Ingrid S suggested a panel discussion on, 'changing demands on teachers'.

Marianne suggested Kajsa Andersson from Linköping, Sweden, an award winner for her school leadership. She has a positive attitude and has worked with migrants. She is leading a school with 95% of the pupils coming from outside the Nordic countries.

Members will see who is available and travelling to Nashville.

Sister chapters were discussed. There are links between chapters in The Netherlands and Germany, Finland and Estonia and Norway and Sweden. These links are friendly and informal.

10. The future development of EF had already been discussed

The following thoughts were stressed:

1. Inspiration for the work in the home country
2. Cooperation and support across borders
3. EF represents an important connection and information source for the member countries
4. Authority is given to the organization by being represented in many countries
5. How are we going to get more young members in DKG?
6. Understanding and respect for each other, regarding problems and organizing of education in other countries
7. Establishing sister chapters across the borders
8. Attention to women's and children's rights and equalities.

11. European Forum Committee Membership

The member countries have different rules regarding membership and length of service. This may result in a total change of forum committee members next year.

Proposal: The European Forum Committee recommends to The State Executive Boards that at least three members are re-elected to the committee so there is continuity of membership in 2016-2018.

Ingrid Stjernquist closed the meeting by thanking all for their contribution and for developing the network in Europe. The meeting closed at 16.00.