

EUROPEAN FORUM MINUTES

August 6, 2005 — 8.00-10.00am

Turku, Finland

Chairman: Birgit Svensson

Reporters: Mary Wardrop and Gloria Redston

The program brochure included:

- ♦ The *Constitution/International Standing Rules* and European Forum Goals for 2004-2006
- ♦ Meeting Agenda
- ♦ Minutes of the European Forum meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 28, 2004
- ♦ European Forum Rationale
- ♦ Nomination Forms for Forum members 2006-2008
- ♦ 2004-2006 European Forum Members

WELCOME

After the chairman welcomed everyone, she asked that the title of the Meeting, 2005 International Convention be amended to European Conference. It was agreed. She introduced Gisela Baronin von Engelhardt who was to give the Word of Inspiration.

WORD OF INSPIRATION: Gisela Baronin von Engelhardt

Gisela was honored to be invited and felt that the *Word of Inspiration* was expected to be philosophical. However, she was going to share her thoughts on goals and actions for the European Region. She compared Florence Nightingale to Annie Webb Blanton as two women who thought that feelings were wasted when expressed in words. They should be put into actions. Gisela stated that we must develop programs which will attract new members by meeting the needs of active teachers. We must strive to get our seminars acknowledged by our governments. We should consider an addition to the name of Delta Kappa Gamma so it is more readily understood and does not need complex explanations. We should follow Purpose 7 and make ourselves more visible to the general public. Europe is now a strong region. Our goals should be apparent. *"A goal is like a road map. Goals help us with personal and professional lives rather than following what other people want us to do or accomplish."*

BUSINESS MEETING

- ♦ The reporters, Mary Wardrop and Gloria Redston (GB) were introduced and the role of the time keepers, Loetitia Stone and Bettina Kulsdom (GB) was explained.
- ♦ Minutes of the Forum in Minneapolis, USA 2004: The minutes were approved and signed.
- ♦ Report 2004-2005 European Forum: Birgit Svensson reported that the committee had held a fruitful meeting in Malmö and had communicated regularly by e-mail. She referred to the goals set by the committee (page 7). The leadership/management seminar (item H) which had preceded this

conference attended by 15 members proved to be most successful. It was hoped that this would become a regular part of the Committee's work.

- ♦ Proposal: To minimize expense by waiving a conference fee and offering hospitality to encourage participants from other member countries to attend state conferences. Joan Carroll commended sponsorship for younger members. All agreed. The proposal was passed and the Forum Committee was asked to clarify.
- ♦ EuForia: Joan Carroll explained the history and distribution of EuForia. It was sent by electronic mail 3 times a year in October, February and June. As photos can cause a problem for some members, she would only use a limited number. Especially good ones would be sent to state organization presidents in future. Written contributions should be limited to 500 words. State organization presidents were responsible for arranging distribution to members without e-mail. Joan apologized for the most recent problems which had been unforeseen when she changed to Broadband. The next deadline would be 20 September. She urged members "Share news – Celebrate achievements – Give dates of events - Keep information coming. Thanks for support!" On behalf of the members, the chairman expressed gratitude to Joan for all her hard work on EuForia.
- ♦ Process of nominating new officers for the Forum 2006-2008. Forms on Pages 10 & 11. Nominations to be received by March 1, 2006.
- ♦ AOB. Kate York, Great Britain state president, said that it had been suggested that there should be a European Achievement Award. She asked for comments. Birgit Svensson asked for approval. Cor Wolff-Heins seconded. There was one vote against. Dorothy Haley said that it would be very difficult to administer and before the idea could be accepted there needed to be guidelines. Sigrun Klara Hanesdottir thought that it was a very good idea and suggested that the Forum Committee should formalize its purpose and organization. Forum Committee to plan.
- ♦ Business Meeting closed at 8.50 a.m.
- ♦ Attendance: Finland-12; Germany-9; Great Britain-18; Iceland-11; The Netherlands-13; Norway-19; Sweden-27; USA-5; TOTAL-114

The speaker, Marianne Skardeus set the Forum a challenge: *"Where would it be more appropriate to discuss diversity than within an international society encompassing fourteen different countries but united as educators by our common objectives – or seven Purposes?"* She described the process by which the culture in which one was raised was considered to be entrenched in the consciousness. It was essential to set aside the prejudices and move beyond any threats to one's own way of life. In order to welcome other cultures and assimilate newcomers required an open-minded approach to other experiences and a willingness to move outside the known to learn about the culture of others. In the natural world, we welcomed diversity. We should celebrate the unique nature of each individual and not concentrate our prejudices on visible or audible differences; names, hair color, language, age or dress code. Labels we imposed on others nourished prejudice and could lead to stereotyping, intolerance and false conclusions about personalities – by race, gender or mental abilities. However, diversity could be rewarding especially where employers used these differences to enhance organizations. *We have to ask ourselves:* Are we open minded? Do we treat everyone in a fair and just way? Courageously, Marianne drew two examples from the experiences of her own early years as an educator where language deprivation hindered effective communication and led to violence by one of the two Greek students. The second example portrayed a lack of appreciation of a Romanian immigrant's musical gifts and created an unhappy student, who then chose to opt out of taking full advantage of the educational system by not attending classes. Fortunately over the next 30 years, matters had improved and Marianne turned to a more recent example of which she was familiar at the University in Borås, Sweden (or as she called it the University College of Diversity). In spite of an academic background, it had become apparent that the first generation of immigrants and refugees had been obliged to accept menial jobs not commensurate with their qualifications. Thus their self-esteem had been eroded and a waste of the resources they could offer. There was a knock on effect, for their children had begun to turn away from academic careers. Subsequently, strenuous efforts have been made to address the issue. Closer co-operation with supportive groups had redressed the balance. Personal mentors and individual programs then supplemented original cultural differences and achieved encouraging results. The speaker quoted research from the Runnymede Trust in which diversity was described as adding another dimension to equal opportunities. She urged her audience to celebrate differences in each unique individual and finally posed the question: *"Is the right to equal treatment, also the right to be different?"* In appreciation of her most interesting presentation, the audience joined Sandra Blacker in warm applause for Marianne's expert discourse on "Diversity – Threats or Opportunities?"

Anne Aalto and Britt Heikkilä, Sweden reported on their experiences of working in an international school of nine hundred 13-16 year-olds where 36 students coming from 15 countries spoke 17 languages. The main goal was to integrate the pupils as quickly as possible through an intensive course in Swedish. Opportunities for personal and social relationships were created to dispel misconceptions on topics of teenage interest through discussion. Parents, too, were encouraged to join in activities, visits and projects to minimize conflicts and misunderstandings. Cor Wolff-Heins, The Netherlands outlined the history of immigration from former Dutch colonies where differences of appearance had caused mistrust and discrimination in the indigenous population. Workers from Mediterranean Europe had filled jobs for which there was a shortage of skills in the Netherlands. As families joined these immigrants, early difficulties in coping with the language presented educational limitations. Although in time qualifications to degree level were achieved, discrimination still surfaced when applying for employment. Sensitivity and support had to be encouraged to demonstrate that diversity was not a threat but an opportunity to enrich society. Kristrun Isaksdottir, Iceland explained that at first there was opposition to immigration in Iceland. Currently, however, the challenge of integrating new people into a small population is being encouraged. Grants are available from the Ministry of Education and a special school has been established in Reykjavik where individual learning paths and ICT programs have been developed. She reported that valuing and celebrating diversity within an atmosphere of fellowship and teamwork had resulted in learning to respect and the celebration of other cultures. Astrid Skaaland, Norway spoke of her own experience of living abroad in seven different countries over nine years with her young family and how it took her at least six months to settle in on each occasion. Astrid now teaches Norwegian as a second language to immigrants and her empathy was apparent. She stressed the importance of recognizing that refugees, asylum seekers or those joining their relatives brought a variety of experiences to their new country. They needed understanding in meeting the challenges awaiting them. Relieved to have escaped from war, terror or poverty, many of her students were eager to learn the language but it took longer for them to adjust to a new environment because of their previous history. Psychological problems inhibited their learning and had to be dealt with sympathetically. Teachers were keen to build trust and mutual respect and sought to solve these problems at an early stage with particular expertise.

CLOSING—At the end of the meeting the chairman presented each of the participants with a red rose. She asked that the minutes of the Forum would be circulated via EuForia and closed the meeting at 09.56 am.

THE DELTA KAPPA GAMMA SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR EUROPEAN ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The European Forum will present the following proposal in San Diego for an European Achievement Award (EAA).

PROPOSAL

An EAA to be given biennially in recognition of distinguished service given to The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International in Europe:

- ♦ Procedure
A name will be submitted by each European State Executive Board to the chair of the European Forum by October 15, 2006, for decision of recipient at November 2006 Forum meeting. After the first year, the deadline for submissions will be October 15 in even-numbered years.
- ♦ Award
The award is a specially designed pin, paid for by Euro 50 from each state organization in Europe.
- ♦ Criteria
The recipient will be someone who:
 - a) has worked on expansion in her own State Organization;
 - b) has improved public relations and visibility of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International;
 - c) has increased membership;
 - d) has given lectures and/or workshops at Delta Kappa Gamma meetings;
 - e) supports and mentors other members of Delta Kappa Gamma; and
 - f) is active in the development of the European Region.
- ♦ Submission
A recommendation form to be completed by State Executive Board. This form will be created by the 2006-2008 European Forum.

2004-2006 EUROPEAN FORUM CHAIRMAN AND REPRESENTATIVES

- ♦ Finland..... Marja-Liisa Lehtikoinen
- ♦ Germany..... Gisela Baronin von Engelhardt
- ♦ Great Britain..... Sandra Blacker
- ♦ Iceland..... Sigridur Jónsdóttir
- ♦ Norway..... Berit Theien
- ♦ The Netherlands..... Ria Bleeker
- ♦ Sweden..... Birgit E. Svensson, Chairman

The 2004-2006 European Forum members are proud to introduce the incoming members for the 2006-2008 biennium:

2006-2008 EUROPEAN FORUM CHAIRMAN AND REPRESENTATIVES

- ♦ Finland..... Marja-Liisa Lehtikoinen
- ♦ Germany..... Gisela Baronin von Engelhardt
- ♦ Great Britain..... Kate York
- ♦ Iceland..... Helga Thorlacius
- ♦ Norway..... Bjorg Naking
- ♦ The Netherlands..... Ria Bleeker, Chairman
- ♦ Sweden..... Carin Ahlberg