

MINUTES of the EUROPEAN FORUM MEETING
ΔΚΓ INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION IN CHICAGO
Saturday 25 July 2008 at 10.30 am

Welcome:

Ria Bleeker, Chairman of the Forum welcomed 42 European participants plus one guest from the USA. Janny Kisteman from the Netherlands gave the word of inspiration. The Chairman introduced the following:

Reporters: Marja-Liisa Lehtikoinen (Finland) Mary Wardrop (Great Britain)

Time Keepers: Unity Harvey and Gloria Redston (Great Britain)

Business Meeting:

There was a request from Sweden that a paper which had been presented with the Forum booklet should be discussed during the meeting. The Chairman deferred this item to Any Other Business on the Agenda.

1. MINUTES of the previous meeting in London (4 August 2007)

Marika Heimbach asked for an addition to section 10 on page 7. This should have included a reference to her suggestion for an initiative to exchange hospitality between member countries. The proposal to accept the Minutes was agreed by a majority vote.

2. EUFORIA – Regional Communication in Europe

The Regional Director, Trijny Schmitz du Moulin, reported that she had discussed the publication of EuForia with Joan Carroll, the editor and she had subsequently corresponded with her. Trijny had expressed concern that after so many years, Joan would find it a burden to continue as editor. Perhaps another country would consider taking it on? Joan has volunteered to continue editing and was applauded for her work. Marianne Skardéus, Sweden, commented that she found the newsletter very useful. Reorganisation could be discussed later. She suggested that a link could be made to a European Home Page website.

FORUM COMMITTEE 2006-8

The Chairman shared her reminiscences of the 2006-8 biennium. She thanked all the Committee members and named those present on this occasion including the Regional Director. Trijny responded that she almost felt like an official member of the Forum Committee as she had been made so welcome, although her role was indeed ex-officio. The Chairman thanked those who had prepared the Committee minutes during the biennium, in particular Marja-Liisa Lehtikoinen and Kate York.

4. INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS 2008-2010

Ria Bleeker introduced the Committee for the next biennium giving some details of their professional expertise. When they returned home, the state presidents of Denmark and Estonia, new to ΔΚΓ membership, said they would be discussing the role of a representative for the Forum Committee with their members.

<u>Finland</u> Eija Paukkuri	<u>Germany</u>	Christa Dunker-Hopferwieser
<u>Great Britain</u> Diana Bell	<u>Iceland</u>	Helga Thorlacius
<u>Norway</u> Astrid H.Bie Skaaland		
<u>Sweden</u> Carin Ahlberg	<u>The Netherlands</u>	Vivian Repko

5. SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS ARISING FROM LONDON 2007

[Page numbers refer to the Minutes from the Forum in London]

COMMUNICATIONS (page 9 of the programme for Chicago)

1.1. Kate York explained the intricacies of the Data Protection Act affecting the production of a Data Base in some countries and whether email could be used for this purpose. Perhaps the arrangements could be made satisfactorily through communication with the state presidents? Iceland suggested that teachers of a particular subject area would find this most useful. Kate suggested that she could proceed in the first instance with those countries which were in agreement.

1.2. One page on each country's website could be utilised.

- 1.3. The DVD produced by Janny Kisteman was now available for 15 dollars. Each European country would be given one free copy. Janny was applauded and Marika Heimbach noted that the DVDs could be duplicated. Kate York had shown a copy to the current Golden Gift recipients at their recent seminar – a great promotional tool!

FINANCIAL MATTERS: (page 9)

- 2.1. The Chairman explained that travel costs for the European Director at one Euro per member had been agreed by 6 European countries at the Regional Conference in Malmö in 2001. Some countries had already sent their contributions and she urged other state treasurers to comply. Trijny had expressed her appreciation to the two state treasurers who had sent the money. Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir advised that these contributions should be kept separately from the money allocated by HQ. An email receipt would be acceptable. Bettina Kulsdóm explained that the procedure had been written into Great Britain's Financial Policy. A vote was taken and the majority of eight to one in favour of implementing this contribution to the Regional Director was announced by the Chairman.
 - 2.1.1. It was agreed by a majority vote that the European Achievement Award would be discussed at the next Forum Committee Meeting. Suggestions for formal arrangements would be put to European members in due course.
 - 2.1.2. A new process for reimbursement for travel expenses for Forum representatives to meetings would be discussed at the next Committee meeting and suggestions would be taken back to the members.

PRE - CONFERENCE SEMINAR: (page 10)

- 3.1. It was agreed that a shooting script be adopted so that the pattern of a Pre-Conference Seminar from the immediate past two Regional Conferences would be continued. Forum Committee members were urged to report on details and dates to their countries' members immediately after the November meeting. Thus travel plans could be made in good time.

LETTER FROM SWEDEN: (page 11)

- 4.1.1. Opinions were aired about the purpose of the Forum – educational, building relationships within the Region, the need for prompt communication with the involvement of each state president, in addition to the Forum representatives meeting together. The Chairman clarified the dual purpose of the Forum meetings at Conventions and Regionals – business and exchange of educational practice. The Forum Committee had requested extra time for meaningful discussion. Dorothy Haley, the first recipient of the European Regional Achievement Award in 2007, observed that the brooch or pin awarded in future should entail less expense, so that money might be sent to countries where the needy could benefit.
- 4.1.2. Participation in state conferences in other countries: It was pointed out the suggestion of waiving the costs of the registration fee for visitors, was only a recommendation. Gitta (Germany) repeated her previous proposal that the state presidents should be more involved in recommendations taken by the Forum and Ingrid Sternqvist (Sweden) seconded this.
- 4.1.3. It was suggested that the Forum divide in smaller groups for work and use e-facilities for communication. Trijny Schmitz du Moulin agreed that it was a good idea for the future. Dagmar Ullmann pointed out that a network was possible but needed investigation of how many had access. Kate York pointed out that it was already in use (page 64 in Chicago conference book). Marika Heimbach suggested a list of members willing for contacts. The question is who will compile the list.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A) SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Swedish Administrative Board had submitted a paper outlining comments about the Forum in general.

- i) They noted that members who attended international Conventions and European Regionals were able to take part in educational topics. However, these were not always communicated to the general membership afterwards.
- ii) A European website could be developed which highlighted issues of interest to all members including points raised by keynote speakers and the subsequent discussion.
- iii) Modern ICT – email, video-conferences, telephone meetings, web communication, Skype could be utilised to maintain contain instant messages through sustainable resources. Thus, Sweden suggested expensive travel costs could be minimised and a concern for the environment demonstrated. Furthermore

the EuForia email newsletter could act as a European Homepage, with useful updating and opinions sought and ideas exchanged.

The state president of Estonia expressed an interest and offered the expertise of her members. Marianne Skardeus suggested that a steering group might be formed. Dagmar Höra agreed that younger members would be particularly interested. Trijny, the European Director commented that it was vital that all communications should be read and a prompt response made. Kate York (GB) Marika, Coby van Klaveren and Kitty Kruyswijk (the Netherlands) put forward useful ideas and Ingrid Sternqvist urged members to make a start in envisioning the future. The possibilities for a practical and economic website could be explored.

B. Sigrún Klara suggested that we should thank Joan Carroll most sincerely for all her hard work over so many years and that she should be asked to continue for the present whilst further developments could be researched. There was unanimous applause.

C. Sigrun Klara, supported by other Icelandic members outlined her ideas for further expansion, possibly in the other countries of the United Kingdom, Ireland and elsewhere in the global scene, comparing the international outlook of the Soroptimist Society.

iii) Ann-Charlotte Berglund presented a gift to Ria Bleeker, the Forum Chairman. Trijny, the European Regional Director was praised for her enthusiasm and extensive travelling all over Europe during the biennium. A booklet with reminiscences from all nine European countries was presented to Trijny – “a gift from the heart” whereupon Trijny thanked everyone for their support.

ELSEBETH GABEL AUSTIN: THE DANISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Chairman introduced the speaker, the state president of Denmark. Elsebeth outlined her experience as an English teacher of both upper secondary pupils and adults, having been appointed as a National Advisor for English in 2004 by the Ministry of Education, she was currently the Principal of Hjørring Gymnasium and HF.

Elsebeth described the preparation for Higher Education – teaching methods in “a democratic classroom” with decisions being made and teachers and students working together. Discussion and continuous dialogue were considered to be very important. There had been a radical reform of the educational system three years previously. Subsequently, projects were now being developed with a cross curricular approach and with frequent oral examinations. This has enabled the students in a small country to communicate successfully elsewhere and encouraged educational establishments to offer a wide selection of foreign languages for further study. Danish teachers were allowed flexibility within the framework of a basic national curriculum and with greater financial independence than formerly. The examination certificate awarded to successful candidates at the end of the upper secondary course gave access to Higher Education in Denmark.

Elsebeth expressed the view that the challenges she faced daily were similar to those of her audience. Teamwork was essential and the demands made on Principals were many, especially if standards were not met.

Unfortunately, Elsebeth was unable to expand further as time was limited on this occasion.

After thanking Elsebeth for her presentation, the Chairman closed the meeting.