

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
Meeting of the European Forum: Wednesday, 21 July 2010, Spokane, USA

1 Welcome: Diana Bell (Chairman) welcomed members to the Forum.

2 Words of Inspiration: Heli Pikkila (Finland) spoke about Soile Yli-Mayry, a Finnish Painter. Her parents were deaf/blind, and she interpreted for them. Painting was a comfort, and although she became a teacher, she always wanted to be an artist. She has now been painting for over 25 years, exhibited in New York, Miami and all over Europe, and has developed her own style, mainly using a palette knife. Her main theme is humanity, and alienation from nature in an urban setting. She never gave up her dreams: she is a passionate woman who is an inspiration to us all.

3 Business Meeting: Diana introduced reporters (Mette Heiberg and Diane Billam), timekeepers (Unity Harvey and Lavinia Soul), and those organising attendance sheets (Ingibjorg Jonasdottir and Anu Joon).

In Memoriam: deceased members were honoured.

Minutes of Oslo 2009: were agreed as a true record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

Euroforia: a vote of thanks was given to Joan Carroll, and to Barbara Kern who proof-reads. Diana reminded members that back copies are on the European website, together with minutes of previous meetings.

Financial Accounts: Diana pointed out the \$3000 grant given by the Society. Board and Lodging costs were very low as people gave hospitality or shared rooms. The Euroforum speaker from Estonia was given a grant. Euro-website starter and annual costs are included. The accounts were agreed.

Aims, Goals and Strategic Plan for 2008-2010: the report is printed in the Convention Booklet.

Carol Mueller (USA) was welcomed by Diana. She remembered attending the European Regional Conference in Reykjavik, expressed a strong affiliation with this group, and hoped to attend in Baden Baden next year.

Introduction and Installation of Officers of European Forum Committee 2010-2012: those members present introduced themselves (Diane, Mette, Ingibjorg and Catherine).

Introduction of the Nominated Regional Director 2010-2012: Birgit introduced Kate York as our nominee. Kate joined DKG in 1987, becoming a school head in 1988. A few years later she became a Soroptimist and has been President of her club on 2 occasions. Within Great Britain, Kate's involvement with DKG was mainly at chapter and state level until 2000. Her school was the venue for Gamma Chapter meetings. As she retired, she had more time to attend Regional and International events, and very much enjoyed attending meetings and conventions in our European member states. She went to the installation of both Denmark and Estonia, and is keen to support both new and existing member states. Kate spent a number of years as an inspector of independent schools, is a licensed Pastoral Assistant in the Anglican Church, and supports students in training for lay ministries. She is a trustee of a charity supporting young families experiencing problems, and is also a Governor of 2 secondary schools, one independent and one in the state sector.

European Website: Management Committee: Diana thanked Eyglo Bjornsdottir for making our website so easy to access. Webmasters have been given permission to put material forward to the European Website, but each state needs to check that everyone is happy to have their picture published. We need a management committee in case of difficulty. There was discussion of the best number of members

for this, and Birgit reminded members that this is not a responsibility of the European Regional Director but is clearly of great interest to her. We have rules set up which Diana will distribute to State Presidents and Webmasters. An interim committee of the Forum Chairman (Eija Paukkuri), Regional Director (Kate York), Gloria Redston (GB Webmaster), Riita-Liisa Arpiainen as representative of the Communications Committee, and Eyglo Bjornsdottir (Webmaster) was agreed, and the final composition of the committee can be agreed at the next Regional Conference.

The Role of the European Forum was reported on.

Other Business: Sigrun Klara Hannesdottir (Second Vice President) thanked members for their support during her 2 years of office. She has sat on the Constitutional Committee, and has tried to emphasise the international aspects of the organisation. She mentioned one Panel during the convention which will look at projects in different countries, including 3 from Europe and one from Guatemala, and another on the European qualification framework. She sought support from members in attending these Panels, and also asked for people to put themselves forward to assist with projects such as expansion into other countries.

Diana thanked Birgit for all she had done on our behalf as European Regional Director in the past 2 years, and presented her with a gift.

Lecture: Cor Wolff-Heins introduced Ria Bleeker, saying that she had done so much at chapter, state and regional level, and professionally. Ria spoke on `Diversity in Culture and Religion in Amsterdam Schools – connected with Quality in Education`. Ria stated that quality of education is about developing the talents of students as far as possible. The Dutch Inspectorate of Schools assesses quality of education in schools, and reports on individual schools against defined benchmarks. Good schools are not re-inspected, but poorer schools can be revisited without warning. The Inspectorate encourages schools to maintain and improve the quality of education, and politicians maintain a close interest. The Netherlands emphasises language education: its population is 16 million, of whom many are not Dutch in origin and Dutch is therefore not their first language.

Vocational education in particular emphasises citizenship. Attainment targets are set up, and there is considerable interest in the number of hours of education students receive, and the qualifications of teachers. Dutch schools receive a lump sum they can spend how they decide, but have to account for everything. There is a high level of autonomy. Ria asked for examples from other countries.

Heli Piikkila (Finland): there is a pilot project for feedback mechanisms for counselling services, with questionnaires for all parties involved. This is part of the quality assurance system.

Margarita Hanschmidt (Estonia): they have no inspectorate for primary schools, but priority is given to feedback from students, who may not have a full understanding of what is required.

In Germany the Lande are responsible for education. The Government sets out the rules. Inservice training for teachers is being improved, but better teacher training is required. 96 items are being inspected but results should not be made public. About 5% are not up to scratch.

In the Netherlands, results are published in newspapers.

Gudrun Nylander: in Sweden there is a database of results for every school.

Kate York (GB): in England all inspection reports are available on a website, both state and private.

Marika Heimbach (Germany): with a population of 82 million, there are problems with the education of those at the bottom. Politicians do not understand what the problems are. Money is being spent without evaluating the results. The best teachers are needed for the youngest children.

Birgit Svensson (Sweden): the number of private schools was increasing. Quality is difficult to define: what is being judged? The curriculum is common across the whole country: money comes partly from central funds, partly local. There is an inspectorate.

Eija-Liisa Sokka-Meaney (Finland): the role of the inspectors is now advisory, and provincial officers have more an educational/in-service role in organising courses. Finnish teachers have some autonomy within the curriculum. There are more people coming in from other countries than used to be the case. UNICEF, in evaluating child welfare, did not rate Finland very highly in some areas such as family relationships and social skills. Countries doing well have close family relationships.

Ingibjorg Jonasdottir (Iceland): they have been trying to bring in inspection but lack of money has prevented it. Teacher training is being re-evaluated: trying to establish what they will need to do in the future and adapt teacher training accordingly.

Carol Mueller (USA): in the USA each State is responsible. Licensed teachers have to undertake regular training.

Gudrun Nylander (Sweden): communities are re-evaluating what is needed from the education system.

Unity Harvey (GB) emphasised the importance of school and class size.

Ank Janssonius (Netherlands): some children come into school already disadvantaged and cannot catch up.

Evelyn Goodsell (GB): over her career there has been a reduction in parent support, and also in capabilities of children coming into school.

Heli Piikkila (Finland): to help policy makers we must have an evidence base.

Ria Bleeker (Netherlands) summarised: everyone works hard to enable children to keep up with the modern world. Teachers need continuing professional development.

Close of Business Meeting: Diana thanked Ria for her valuable contribution, and brought the proceedings to a close.

Numbers attending: Estonia 2, Finland 6, Germany 6, Great Britain 8, Iceland 3, The Netherlands 6, Norway 2, Sweden 8, USA 4 (total 45).