



EUDEC newsletter

September 2009



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EUDEC Annual Assembly

30 JULY - 3 AUGUST 2009, CIESZYN, POLAND

David French (Poland)

Here's a brief bit of feedback from the first EUDEC Annual Assembly, which took place in Cieszyn, southern Poland from 30 July - 3 August 2009.

Participants represented 11 European countries, namely: Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, and UK.

There were over 60 active participants at the Assembly. And when you add the family members of the participants and Ola Matyska's group of students from Lodz, Poland, who took part in some sessions and the evening programme, we reach over 90. Leonard Turton, our elder statesman, was the most senior person involved and Oskar French – at 2 years old – the youngest.

This was the first Annual Assembly, sandwiched between last year's EUDEC Conference in Leipzig, Germany and next year's due to be held in the UK. The Assembly has quite a different focus than the conference. It is essentially an internal EUDEC event, run for and by the members. It gives us an opportunity to focus specifically on EUDEC, rather than on the theory and practice of democratic education. Those of us who attended both the 1st Conference and the Assembly now know the different aims, focus and rhythm of the two events, which is sure to help us in the future.

The three main focuses of this first Assembly were:

- * The Guidance Document (GD)
- * Workgroups
- * The election of new officers

Probably the biggest task that we faced was putting the finishing touches to – and ratifying – the Guidance Document, which the Council – but chiefly Michael Sappir and Rachel Roberts – have been working hard on this past year. The entire proposed restructured GD was ratified, with some amendments discussed and voted on in Assembly and a few dozen more postponed for online discussion and Referendum.

The next chief focus was the *Workgroups*. The following workgroups were formed: outreach, website, research, exchange programme.

Elections for EUDEC officers to the *Council*, *Oversight Committee* and *Auditors* took place.

The following nine people were selected by the membership:

Members of the Council

David Simonsen (Denmark)
 Dragana Bolješić Knežević (Croatia)
 Leslie Ocker (Germany)
 Michael Sappir (Germany)
 Christel Hartkamp (The Netherlands)
 Benni Schmutzer (Germany)
 Aurélien Giraud (UK)
 Imogen Wright (UK)
 David French (Poland)

Most of the former EUDEC Council decided not to run for another term of office. Of the former Council the only two members to run again were Leslie Ocker and Michael Sappir. Of the remaining officers: Leonard Turton, Niklas Gidion, Martin Roberts, Rikke Knudsen, Zsa-Zsa Tempest Shea, Jacob Ott and Thea Leonhart did not run for re-election.

The new council met twice on Monday, and all left with a clear idea of the most urgent tasks facing them in the coming months. The new Council members are sure to benefit from the experience gained by Leslie and Michael over the last two years. Former Council members and Chloe Duff, EUDEC Conference 2010 organiser, will work with Council as Project Associates and therefore be able to contribute to all Council debates, but without voting on outcomes.

Elections took place for the two new EUDEC organs, with the results looking like this:

Oversight Committee

Christian Pittner (Germany)
Zsa-Zsa Tempest Shea (UK)
Leonard Turton (UK)

Christian Pittner will also take on the role of Ombudsman.

Auditors

Peter Hartkamp (The Netherlands)
Robert Welti (Germany)

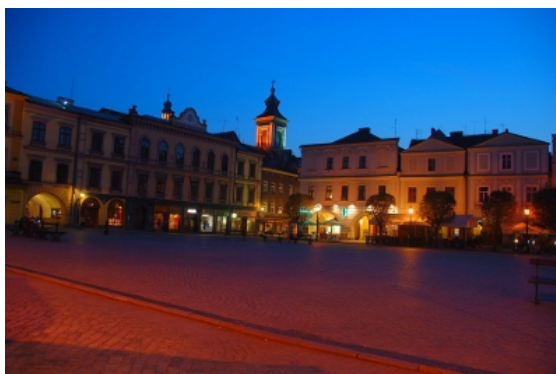
We were also pleased to hear about the founding of the first two Regional Chapters: Germany and Switzerland. We trust we won't have to wait long for further chapters to be founded in other parts of Europe.

Our thoughts are already beginning to turn to the 2010 EUDEC Conference to be held in UK. Chloe Duff was at the Assembly gathering suggestions from members. She will be working closely with the Council throughout the year in the run-up to the Conference.

Speaking as the Assembly's main organizer, I did my best to find venues near the centre of town which were close to each other. I also tried to make participants' time after the working day enjoyable, so we organised a few events in the evening to enable us to chill, get to know each other and have some fun. I would say the little town of Cieszyn was an excellent venue for the Assembly.

In finishing I'd just like to make the point that the way forward for EUDEC depends on the contributions of all the members. We need to maintain the momentum of the workgroups that was begun in Cieszyn. And every one of us can make a difference in other ways, like keeping up to speed with developments and posting our views on the Forum, staying involved with existing workgroups, starting or joining a new one, or by founding a regional chapter where we live.

We made a great start at this year's Assembly, so let's build on it.



On some challenges and victories of the Poland Assembly

Michael Sappir (Germany)
EUDEC Council Chair

During the opening session of the Assembly, I talked about Council's evolving vision for EUDEC, and I talked about how the meeting Poland is a critical point in our development towards that vision. It is clear that the first step on the way to EUDEC's future is decentralization. So long as EUDEC was managed and developed by Council, there was a hard limit on what we could achieve. But as of Poland, that is no longer the situation. Members are now independently involved in EUDEC, in Regional Chapters and in

Workgroups. Working together in this dynamic way, the sky is the limit. But it was not easy to get here.

Leading up to the Assembly, my main concern, my main project, was the Guidance Document, which I started restructuring in September of 2008. Decentralization was the central concept of the restructuring, the main reason I made this effort. However, it was clear that if only a handful of members give us their feedback on this proposal, the Assembly could become very difficult – new issues

would come up and there would not be enough time to properly discuss them all.

And indeed, understandably, very few outside Council read the 9,300-word mammoth, and more amendments were proposed in Poland than we could ever hope to handle in Assembly. Most of these were postponed for online discussion and voting. Yet even so, the sheer amount of topics we had to handle during the final plenary sessions on Sunday, August 2, was enormous. The only solution was to be very quick about things – discussions were limited, short, fast-paced, and followed one another in rapid succession.

This was a necessary measure, but we should never take it again. Sitting in front of the assembled members, managing the agenda and speakers' list, I had to make all efforts to make the proceedings fair – and understandable. I had an unfair advantage – I had been preparing myself for months. I am still in awe at how well everybody kept up and managed to seriously consider new matters in such a rapid meeting – especially when

so many of those present are not native speakers. It feels good to be in an organization where people are willing to bear these difficulties in order to realize our common vision.

Nonetheless, this was a very dangerous situation. Members may lose track, and decisions may be made simply for the sake of “getting it over with”. I do not know what we should have done differently, but I am certain the general situation was one I don't want EUDEC to ever get into again. Thankfully, we will likely never have to pass a proposal as long as the Guidance Document again.

Still, at the end of the meetings on that hot summer day in Cieszyn, I was left with the feeling of a job well done. We had all done some difficult work, but we had done it well, and I believe the decisions we made in Cieszyn will serve us well in shaping EUDEC's future.

Thanks, everyone, for participating in these important discussions and for keeping such a happy atmosphere throughout the Assembly. I look forward to the next two years of working with all of you.

Feedback from the Assembly

I liked the Assembly a lot. I have been aware in advance that this meeting mainly would be about organizational stuff. So I didn't expect it to be just a fun meeting. But in spite of (or maybe because of) all the work on formal issues it has actually been a fun meeting! That was amazing!

I was particularly happy about the approach Michael Sappir took on leading the plenary sessions. If you want to

get a lot of work done by a big group of people in a plenary session, you need to stay focused on the issues at hand and you have to apply some formal parliamentary procedures. Michael did that amazingly well. It sometimes has been difficult, because we didn't have all procedures worked out yet. Not only did we have to decide on a lot of issues but at the same time we had to figure out, which procedures we will follow to take these

decisions! This is a particularly delicate situation (which in my opinion is typical for young democracies).

We will probably still have to work quite a bit on parliamentary procedures, but I think that we need to get used to such procedures as well. I would be happy to contribute to the advancement of our internal parliamentary procedures, as I'm interested in this field.

Henning Graner (Germany)

This was my first EUDEC experience and it completely exceeded all my expectations. I was blown away by the amount of interesting, motivated and passionate people I met all working so hard and together, united as an organisation. I have the job of organising the EUDEC Conference 2010 and have come away from this feeling completely inspired, supported and confident about the task ahead of me. I felt empowered by being part of a democratic process, something I haven't really felt since I was at school 10 years ago which, to me, proves how important democratic education is. I feel really

proud to be representing EUDEC and promoting EUDEC's work.

Chloe Duff (UK)

We went to Poland because our mum and dad would like to open a free school in Croatia. We would very much like for that to happen so we can go to that school with our friends. It was great in Cieszyn, we became friends with three wonderful girls from Denmark and had loads of fun with them and are looking forward to our meeting in Devon next year. They are lucky because their mom has already started a free school. All the adults we met were nice and some were also funny, especially David French. He was very funny. Mom was in meetings all day, but that was fine because we understand that it had to be done if she wants to open a democratic school one day. It was so great to speak English and find out about other people. We go back to school in a couple of days and will be counting days till we meet with our EUDEC friends again.

Yelena and Lana (Karlovac, Croatia)



Workgroups

Dragana Bolješić Knežević (Croatia) and Christel Hartkamp (The Netherlands)

EUDEC Council, Workgroup Coordinators

At Cieszyn, there were many workgroups that people who attended the EUDEC 2009 Assembly could opt for. However, for various reasons only five workgroups got started. They are: Website, Outreach material, Democratic Education Teacher Training Programme, Research on Democratic education and Database. All the groups have posted their goals on wiki (www.eudec.org/wiki/). You can go there and check up on them, perhaps even join one of the groups or start a new one. The Lobbying group has only one member so far. Peter Hartkamp is coordinating that group and is in obvious need of members as groups are usually not one-man bands.

The Council elected Christel Hartkamp and Dragana Boljesic Knezevic to the office of Workgroup Coordinators. These two ladies are serious about their job and have sent an e-mail to everyone in the workgroups outlining communication and reporting.

The purpose of workgroups is to have work done as a group. The Coordinators are there to coordinate the work and report to the Council and the community on any developments. Hopefully, workgroups will be sizzling with activity and there will be much to report on.

Best regards and lots of success and joy in your work!

Regional Chapters

Benni Schmutzer (Germany) and David French (Poland)

Regional Chapters coordinating team

EUDEC was founded by European educators to develop, support and promote democratic education in Europe. The main driving force in the first two years of its existence has been the 11-member Council. The Annual Assembly in Cieszyn moved EUDEC's work on in several ways and introduced new entities to the organisation. A new Council was elected with members drawn from: Croatia, Denmark, Poland, the Netherlands, Germany and UK. Workgroups were initiated and Council members were elected

to new roles.

One crucial development for EUDEC is its Regional Chapters. The bulk of EUDEC's work up to now, as I mentioned, has been carried out by the Council. Now is the time for EUDEC to begin to grow locally in Chapters. Germany is represented by the largest number of EUDEC members, and it comes as no surprise that they were quickest off the mark in creating the first Chapter. Surprisingly perhaps, Switzerland is the second country to have created a Chapter.

We hope for an energetic and fruitful symbiosis between the pan-European Council and the Chapters.

Benni and David have drawn up the following aims for the Regional Chapter coordinating team:

- * Clear lines of communication with Chapter Councils or contact people. Creating and updating an information bank for Chapters. Facilitating contacts between Chapters (including online audio conferences or chats).
- * Supporting contact people in countries without Chapters.
- * Assisting contact people in countries without Chapters to create a

Chapter.

- * Organising workshops for Chapters during EUDEC Conferences and Assemblies.
- * Searching for potential contact people in countries without official contacts but with EUDEC member representation.

Countries with Regional Chapters

Germany

Contact person: Guido Klein

Switzerland

Contact person: Daniel Hunziker

EUDEC Conference 2010 in England

Chloe Duff (UK)

Conference coordinator

Here is an update from England on the preparation of the EUDEC Conference 2010.

We are still in the early stages of preparation. So far we have been looking into potential venues, exploring possible sources of funding, discussing the content of the conference and trying to gather feedback from EUDEC members.

I would like to thank everybody who took the time to complete the survey that we sent out. We have had some brilliant suggestions and ideas from people which have been really inspirational and a huge help.

I am very lucky to have the assistance of the Steering Group with the organisation of the conference. This group is

made up of a selection of people from Sands (students and a teacher) and some ex-Sands students. We are also advertising for volunteers in particular areas of expertise, for example, advertising, to join the Steering Group.

We are working closely with Anna Leatherdale from The Phoenix Education Trust UK, whose knowledge and experience in fundraising and events organisation are a huge benefit to us all. I for one am learning a lot from working with Anna and from the experience of organising the conference in general.

I am really excited about the conference. I quite often have moments throughout the day where I suddenly realise that I have got an amazing job

which is such a good feeling. The Steering Group and I are really committed to making this event a huge success. We really want as many EUDEC members to attend the conference as possible. We are hoping to make it accessible to as many people as we can and hope that you are starting to feel excited about it as well.

We should have a venue confirmed

soon, so once this has happened I will be in touch and people can start to register!

If anybody has any more suggestions or needs to get in touch with me about anything please feel free to email me at chloeduff2010@googlemail.com

I will be in touch soon with another update.

A day at the imPuls Schule

Aurélien Giraud (UK)



On the 27th of August I spent a day at the *imPuls Schule* in Switzerland. The school is located in Schindellegi, a small village close to Zürich. When travelling up to the village of Schindellegi the views of Lake Zurich down in the valley and of the surrounding mountains are astoundingly beautiful. And the magic even reaches your ears, as you can hear the bells that cows carry around their necks.

When I arrived there at about 9 o'clock Boomer, the school's dog, was the first to welcome me. Then Daniel Hunziker, the founder of the school, introduced me to the school, and I soon met Bea, who also works at the school.

Daniel was having a meeting with some pupils, and I was told to feel free to

tour the school. So I wandered around, meeting some kids in rooms and corridors.

At the moment there are around 25 pupils at the *imPuls Schule*, and the building is rather big in comparison.

First I saw two spacious rooms for administration and a room with lots of material to learn mathematics and science. (Most of it looked like Montessori material, but I am no expert.) There were four pupils in another room, which seemed to be dedicated to academic studies: lots of space to sit down and work, a computer connected to the internet and against a wall many boxes, which were organised thematically by subject and academic level.

I also discovered a spacious and very well-equipped dining room with tea prepared by some pupils waiting on the bar for anyone to drink. By that time a rock concert seemed to be starting in the common room! There I found almost every pupil from the school. They were all on stage, preparing the choreography, except for the young guitarist and the young drummer, who were performing

Smoke on the Water, by Deep Purple.

There was also a room for painting, where a few unfinished paintings were resting on an easel, waiting to be finished. Finally I had a look at the woodwork shop, where a few pupils were building a small boat and in which many tools were hanging on the walls around bigger machines.

When Daniel came out of his meeting he introduced me to some pupils who wanted to be active in, and represent, EUDEC Switzerland and we had a nice chat about EUDEC.

At the end of the morning there was an extraordinary judicial committee meeting. Unfortunately for me everybody spoke Swiss German so understanding the conversation was pretty hard! I understood that a few pupils had gotten into mischief on the day before, and at the beginning of the meeting they were asked for suggestions on how they could repair it. They proposed a few things that were discussed and a solution was reached pretty smoothly.

A pupil also proposed that the school buy skateboard ramps. He passed pictures of the products with prices from an internet retailer, and a short discussion followed.

After the meeting it was time to go and fetch the food for lunch with the school bus. I joined Daniel and two girls in the bus. During lunch a few pupils were in charge of serving the food, and it worked very well. They were also in charge of the washing up and cleaning the room after lunch.

The “after lunch meeting” started at 2pm. Some pupils suggested that everybody go to the river which flows behind the school. This was quickly approved and off we went! About half of us went into the water, which – I can tell you – was pretty cold! The others stayed on the shore throwing stones in the water, having a chat in the shade, or simply enjoying the sun. When we came back to school it was time for everybody to clean and tidy the space before leaving. A very short meeting closed the day, and all the pupils rushed out!

I have spent a very nice day there, met very friendly people and I really enjoyed the atmosphere. I thank Daniel, Bea and all the children for letting me be part of their community for a day. You can find more about the imPuls Schule at <http://www.impuls.ch/>.

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