



Giant salt crystals in a cave on Mt. Sedom (Dead Sea, Israel), EuroSpeleo Project ESP 2022-12 (Bulgaria).

Photo: Agnes Berentés



This Newsletter is issued by the Bureau of the European Speleological Federation (FSE)

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FSE moves on - the next Team

After 33 years of existence, the FSE saw an important change in its Bureau. It is the first time since 1994 in the FSE history that 3 new persons were elected to the Bureau at the same time, which are half of its members. This fact is an opportunity to merge existing workflows with new ideas and it is also a challenge for the new Bureau.

The composition of the current Bureau is the following: President: Jean-Claude Thies (LU); Vice-President: Christiane Meyer (CH); Secretary-General: Alena Gessert (SK); Vice-Secretary: Fedele Messina (IT); Treasurer: Henk Goutier (NL); Vice-Treasurer: Ernest Geyer (AT).

But let's not forget to thank the outgoing members of the FSE Bureau for their passion to work for the federation. The former president Ged Campion who was in the Bureau since 2005 and who was president for the past 10 years. We also have to thank

Joerg Dreybrodt and Michel Isnard for their time in the Bureau.

The European cavers and their organisations, all members of the FSE have expectations from the federation and it is our mission trying to satisfy these as much as possible but also with respect to the limited possibilities that the federation has.

Many years ago, the FSE has established commissions and working groups to give interested cavers from different organisations the possibility working together on dedicated topics. Debating on cave rescue topics or insurances for rescue teams are only two of many topics of the European Cave Rescue Commission (ECRC) while protection and conservation of caves and karst beside international cave politics and honouring successful and important projects with a protection label, are part of the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC). Both commissions saw an impressive growth in interested commission members and the importance of our commissions cannot be underestimated.

Recently the General Assembly agreed on the introduction of a new working group inside FSE, the "European Children and Young Cavers" (ECYC) with the main focus to help our next generation of young cavers to learn treating our caves and karst areas with respect and helping them to preserve these natural beauties also for their children in the future.

Other commitments of the Bureau are the adaptations of our statutes and internal regulations which we would like to adapt to a modern and helpful tool with which we can work in the coming years. We are also working on a new patronage and funding system

FSE Partners





The new FSE Bureau, from left to right: Fedele Messina (Vice-Secretary), Ernest Geyer (Vice-Treasurer), Alena Gessert (General Secretary), Jean-Claude Thies (President and President of the European Cave Protection Commission ECPC), Antoniya Vlaykova (President of the European Cave Rescue Commission ECRC, BG), Christiane Meyer (Vice-President), and Henk Goutier (Treasurer) (photo: Taraneh Khaleghi).

to support books, films and other media projects. Such projects are not only interesting for the author but the majority of cavers all over can access the outcome through archives or libraries.

On the other side, the member-organisations do have some obligations as well. Being part of the FSE means also taking responsibilities. The delegates or vice-delegates are requested to be active, i.e., with their presence at FSE's annual General Assemblies, motivating colleagues to join the FSE commissions and working groups, also triggering their organisation to host a EuroSpeleo Forum or even a EuroSpeleo Congress. Informing caving clubs in their country about the EuroSpeleo Projects, Labels and all other activities of the federation is a further part of their mission.

The federation currently comprises organisations from 31 European Countries and there is still room for a few that we did not reach up to now, but one of the wishes of the current FSE Bureau is to have an exchange with all possible candidates.

The FSE Bureau, the commission and working group members in addition to the member organisations and their own members, together we form the European speleological community, all under one umbrella federation, the FSE.

The President of the FSE

15th EuroSpeleo Forum (ESF) in Breitscheid (Germany, 17-21 May 2023)

About 350 cavers from 15 European countries gathered between 17th and 21st of May 2023 in the small village of Breitscheid (Hessen, Germany) to experience great hospitality with an excellent catering team, professional presentations, sportive and scientific field-trips, many workshops and sales stands, including FSE's official partners Aventure Verticale (AV) from France and Scurion from Switzerland. The FSE Bureau used the presence of the sponsoring partners to introduce the new Bureau members and to foster the valuable relationship with AV and Scurion. Photographs of the get-togethers were published on the FSE Facebook page at

https://www.eurospeleo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Bureau_AV.jpg and https://www.eurospeleo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Bureau_Scurion.jpg

FSE was very visible at the event with a sales stand, an exhibition and plenty of displays and banners.

It was the first EuroSpeleo Forum ever held in Germany, and it was organized in a sustainable manner with local food and beverage supply and caves within walking distance of the event. The organizers received financial support (750 EUR) from FSE as well as rope sponsoring from FSE's official partner Korda's (Spain). Aventure Verticale also donated items for the winners of the "Speleo-Olympics" during the ESF.

Cave and Karst related events

For more detailed information please consult the list of European caving events at the FSE website:

<https://www.eurospeleo.eu/events/>

15 - 17 September 2023

Hidden Earth 2023, Bristol, Gordano Sports Centre, UK -

<https://hidden.earth>

20 - 24 September 2023

5th Int. Meeting of Cavers in the Moravian Karst, 2nd

Specialized Conference "Karst, Caves and People 2023"

Sloup, Czech Republic - <https://www.speleo.cz/karst2023>

21 - 24 September 2023

Cave Bear Symposium - Urwelt-Museum, Bayreuth, Bavaria, Germany - https://www.eurospeleo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/28th-International-Cave-Bear-Symposium-2023_Second-Circular.pdf

29 September - 1 October 2023

4th Int. Congress of Speleology in Artificial Cavities

"Hypogea 2023" - Palazzo Ducale, Genova, Italy -

<https://hypogea2023.it/en/>

12 - 15 October 2023

Cave Rescue Meeting - Mira de Aire, municipality of Porto de Mós, Portugal (Pre-Meeting 11-12 October) -

<https://caverescue.eu>

12 - 15 October 2023

Int. Speleo Camp in Hypogenic Karst - Caravaca de la

Cruz, Murcia, Spain - <https://espeleo2023.adenow.es>

19 - 22 October 2023

3rd Balkan Speleological Conference - Sofia, Bulgaria -

<https://u.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=XZf7aWVZCtRnyGXeaSu7txp9lbWcB5vlRsKk> (1st circular)

26 - 29 October 2023

Speleo-Austria 2023 - Bad Mitterndorf/Tauplitz, Austria -

<http://www.hoehle.at/wordpress/startseite/jahrestagung-des-verbandes-oest-hoehlenforschung/>

27 - 31 October 2023

SUICRO Irish Caving Symposium - Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland (UK) -

<https://www.facebook.com/CavingSymposium2023>

1 - 5 November 2023

Italian International Speleo Meeting - Costacciaro, Umbria, Italy - <https://costacciaro2023.it/>

2 - 5 November 2023

3rd Int. Congress of Karst, Speleology and Enhancement of Natural Heritage - Rabat, Morocco -

<https://speleorabat23.sciencesconf.org/?forward-action=index&forward-controller=index&lang=en>

18 - 19 November 2023

Scientific Speleological Days, 26th Edition - Han-sur-Lesse, Belgium) - <https://sites.google.com/view/jss2/>



Further documentation and study of salt caves in Mt. Sedom (Israel)

From 10 to 18 March 2023, the 3rd international expedition to the salt caves of Mount Sedom, organized by the Israeli Speleological Association (ISA), took place.

The expedition's main objectives were to re-survey the Sedom and Peteq cave systems as the current maps are from the 1980s. Both caves are located on the eastern side of Mt. Sedom and resurge to the Dead Sea.

The old map of Sedom Cave showed a length of 1,799 m. During the expedition, about 2.7 km were surveyed, new passages and new entrances were found (currently 9 in total) - some of them were surveyed, the others remained as objectives for future exploration. Sedom Cave resembles a complicated maze system with galleries on more than 5 levels.

Peteq Cave's old map displays only the main branch and the main pit with a current total length of ~200 m. Last winter a side gallery was discovered with a significant continuation that still needs much more exploration. This side gallery also contains beautiful and rare formations such as large salt crystals and beautiful salt stalactites.

On the last days of the expedition a completely new cave was found, named Erzsébet Cave.

Participants from 8 countries - USA, Bulgaria, Hungary, UK, France, Czech Republic, Germany and Israel - joined the expedition. The project was supported by a financial grant of FSE as well as a rope sponsoring from FSE's official partner Korda's (Spain).



FSE is
a member
of the





Tipan Cave (photo: E.Claes).

Tipan Cave Expedition (Philippines) achieved its targets

A group of Belgian, Dutch and Philippino cavers revisited Tipan Cave in the Naga municipality of Zamboanga province on the island of Mindanao in March 2023. The cave and neighboring karst sites are part of the newly created Naga-Kabasalan Protected Landscape Area.

The objectives of the expedition were to finish all survey work in the Tipan cave system, identify and explore other caves in the area, assist with academic research, photo documentation, support local organizations and caving infrastructure as well as setting up an infrastructure for a multi-year project. Local scientists, cave enthusiasts and staff of the Protected Area were greatly involved in the exploration work and their contribution proved to be indispensable for the success of the expedition.

Until 2020 Tipan Cave was surveyed to about 9 km in length. The 2023 expedition ended with a total of 11,171 metres mapped in the cave system. Several nearby caves, mainly in the north of the system, were discovered and mapped, with future options to link them to the Tipan system. Forty-eight cave entrances are now registered in the Protected Area. Extensive photo documentation and biospeleological research was made. <https://www.eurospeleo.eu/2023/06/13/esp-2023-02-tipan-cave-expedition-philippines/> (full report).

The expedition received a financial grant from FSE as well as equipment support by FSE's official partner Aventure Verticale (EuroSpeleo Project ESP 2023-02).

Recent ISCA Newsletters

The latest newsletters of the Int. showcaves Association are available at <https://www.i-s-c-a.org/newsletters>

EUROKARST 2024 Conference in Rome

The next edition of the biannual international conference on karst hydrogeology EUROKARST will be organized in the campus of Sapienza University in Rome between June 10 and 14, 2024.

The conference is aimed at presenting the latest news on hydrogeological research on karst aquifers and, societal development and environmental protection.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.eurokarst.org>

UIS Commission on Volcanic Caves - e-Newsletter #81 released

The latest electronic Newsletter of the UIS Commission on Volcanic Caves has been published in late August under its new editor Carlos Benedetto (Argentina). Over 57 pages it reports about administrative issues of the Commission (e.g. a list of its 82 members and an outlook to the next Commissions Symposium on the Galapagos Islands). There are also articles on the Agropits in lava streams on Lanzarote, new lava tubes on La Palma and an extended report on a Swiss-German expedition to the lava caves at the Virunga volcanoes in Uganda, including many photographs and surveys.

The Newsletter can be downloaded from the website

<http://www.vulcanospeleology.org/>



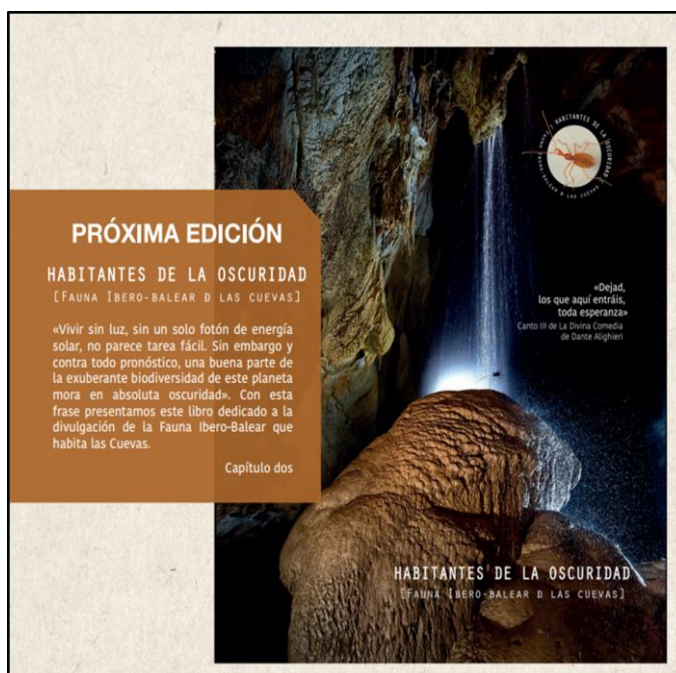
Symposium "Protection of Gypsum Karst" in Walkenried (Germany) yielded strong impact

The German Speleological Federation, in co-operation with the IUCN/WCPA Geoheritage Specialist Group/Cave and Karst Working Group, and the BUND Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt, and Lower Saxony, conducted the above-mentioned symposium between 1st and 4th June 2023.

An online seminar took place on 1st of June with speakers from all over the World. All presentations are still available at <https://www.youtube.com/@vdhk5006/featured>

The following 3-day symposium gathered participants from nature protection NGOs, the gypsum industry, nature protection authorities (e.g. the EU Commission), and speleological federations (including FSE president J.-C.Thies) to improve gypsum karst protection.

The symposium concluded with a field-trip in the surroundings of the village of Walkenried, during which the problems created for the partly old beech forests by gypsum mining on the gypsum hills was demonstrated.



The 2023 EuroSpeleo Protection Label goes to Ireland

The European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) of the FSE is pleased to announce that, following the evaluation of the applications received, the EuroSpeleo Protection Label 2023 has been awarded to the Cork Speleological Group (CSG) from Ireland for their project "Digging into the Past: Preservation Ireland's Cultural Heritage through Cave Exploration".

Caves have been used for millennia as both a place of refuge and a sacred space, and Ireland's cultural heritage is often intrinsically tied to these places. Irish caves have significantly contributed to our understanding of past peoples and landscapes, with recent archaeological research from a number of caves drastically altering our knowledge of human and animal habitation in Ireland,

Comprehensive publication on the biospeleology of Spain released

The Sociedad Entomológica Aragonesa (SEA), in collaboration with the Spanish Federation Confederación de Espeleología y Cañoes (CEC) as well as many Spanish cave experts and biologists, has recently released the book "Habitantes de la Oscuridad. Fauna Ibleo-Baleár de las Cuevas". The very well-produced book features over 700 pages a state-of-the-art compilation of the current knowledge on the Spanish biospeleology. There is a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T54O1A0yNsA> and the book can be obtained through the Internet.

and upcoming publications expected to advance the scientific record even further. The project 'Digging Into the Past: Preserving Ireland's Cultural Heritage through Cave Exploration' will build strong relationships between archaeologists and cavers and help cavers understand the importance of preserving cultural heritage in any exploration, particularly where digging is involved.

The need for archaeological and cultural considerations when evaluating the significance of caves has been highlighted in the 'Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection (2022)' and one of the key objectives of the ECPC is to generate knowledge about the scientific value of caves and karst, to identify and promote suitable and effective methods of their preservation. In line with this, technical guidance, in the form of a cavers handbook, on how cavers should proceed with cave exploration (particularly regarding sediments), in areas with the potential for significant cultural and heritage impact, will be produced and distributed. This work will be carried out by Cork Speleological Group in collaboration with experts from a number of research institutions, using both archaeologists expertise and cavers local knowledge to help preserve Ireland's heritage.

The project received a financial grant of 800 EUR as well as equipment from FSE's official partner Aventure Verticale.

ECPC - Commission members for the next 4 years

Following the FSE GAM in Breitscheid, Germany on May 20th, the team of the European Cave Protection Commission now starts its work for the next 4 years (2023-2027).

17 members from 12 countries build the new commission and their ambitions are enormous as the protection of caves and karst play more and more an important role in Europe and elsewhere. The composition of the commission for the next years is as follows:

Valentina Balestra (IT); Katharina Bürger (AT); Stanimira Deleva (BG); Ferdinando Didonna (IT); Philippe Fleury (FR); Oier Gorosabel (ES); Hannes Köble (DE); Christa Locke (DE); Ioana Meleg (RO); Ruđer Novak (HR); Kaloust Paragamian (GR); Fabio Stoch (IT); Jean-Claude Thies (LU); Jure Tičar (SI); Jan Urban (PL); Bärbel Vogel (DE); Alexander Weigand (DE)

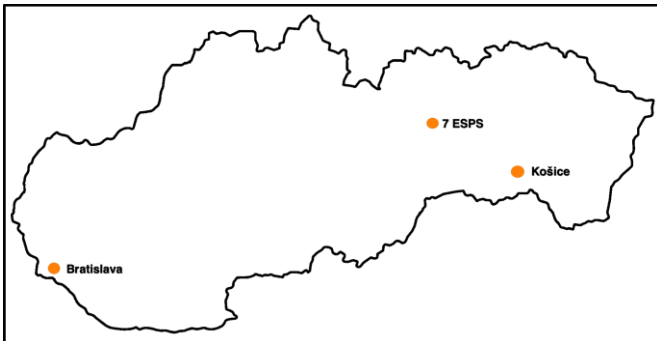
Some of the tasks of the commission are biospeleological research; pushing cleaning activities and leading cavers to 'sensitive caving'. And of course the commission will work for the annual EuroSpeleo Protection Label, a Cave Protection Symposium in 2024, listing lost caves in Europe and collecting general data about caves in Europe. The commission further represents the FSE in international environmental organisations i.e. EEB. Many commission members are subscribed to working groups in EEB or other coalitions to represent FSE and to defend the interests of karst, caves and also groundwater.

Look out for our activities on our website:

<https://www.eurospeleo.eu/ECPC>

You can also subscribe to our information mailing list via our website.

Jean-Claude Thies, ECPC President



Next EuroSpeleo Protection Symposium 2024 in Slovakia

The 7th EuroSpeleo Protection Symposium will be organised by the European Cave Protection Commission and the Institute of Geography, Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University Pavol Jozef Šafárik from Košice, Slovakia.

"WATER in Caves and Karst"

Understanding - Vulnerability - Protection

The Symposium will be held at the training facility of P.J. Šafárik University, Danišovce in the Košice Region, in Eastern Slovakia from 09th to 13th of September 2024.

The first circular is foreseen to be released by the end of this year.



FSE is a member of EEB

EEB, the "European Environmental Bureau" (<http://eeb.org>) is the largest network of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe. It currently consists of over 180 member organisations in 40 countries, including a growing number of networks, and representing some 30 million individual members and supporters. The vision of the EEB is: A better future where people and nature thrive together.

Further EEB stands for sustainable development, environmental justice, global equity, transparency and participatory democracy. It promotes the principles of prevention, precaution and the polluter pays.

EEB is based in Brussels in Belgium and in 2024 the organisation will celebrate its 50 years of existence.

EEB also is a member of the "The Green 10". (<https://green10.org>).

FSE is a full member as "European Network Organisation" since 2011 and held a position in the EEB Board since 2015. As the EEB has changed its governance system in 2023, the seat of the FSE in the EEB Board has become a seat in the EEB Council. The current session with our mandate will run up to 2025. Note: Beside the FSE, there are also the German Federation VdHK, and the Italian Federation SSI, both national full members of the EEB.

Various members of our protection commission ECPC are subscribed to EEB Working groups like Biodiversity, Water, Soil, International Environmental Governance or Law and Justice in order to discuss and defend the interests of caves and karst beside groundwater and minerals (i.e. gypsum karst).

For this year's annual event held in Stockholm (Sweden) in early May, the ECPC President has been representing the FSE in internal meetings as Board, Council and General Assembly. Beside internal meetings, the EEB, together with the "Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)" organised a public conference with the topic: "Our common future: For a European Green Deal 2".

The picture above shows Bärbel Vogel, VdHK President and ECPC Member, the EEB President Johanna Sandahl and Jean-Claude Thies, ECPC President (photo: Sonia Goicoechea).



New FSE working group „European Children and Young Cavers“

During this year's FSE General Assembly a new working group was officially established - European Children and Young Cavers (ECYC).

The ECYC intends to promote and support especially children and young cavers in speleology. Children are always open for new interesting activities, especially in nature. They do like sports and at the same time they are curious to discover and understand the world around them. But for children it is often more difficult to get in touch with the speleo community. Therefore it is only logical to focus with one working group especially on children and young people.

The European speleological community has gained knowledge and experience in underground exploration, science and protection, from which the next generation should benefit. There are already cavers, who are supporting young cavers and children on regional or even national level. The motivation of the ECYC is to unite our energy and experiences throughout Europe and develop further good practice examples on European level for the benefit of the next speleo generations.

The range of possible activities and projects is quite big, for example, preparation of educational material about cave related topics (e.g. science, cave protection, technics) in different languages, speleo training, support for science projects in schools and youth groups related to caves and karst, support for cave protection activities, support for mapping and cave photography workshops especially for young people, an online exchange platform especially for children and young cavers, Young Cave Art Contests, Support for Cave Photographer Workshops for children and young people and many more.

The first public meeting of the ECYC took place successfully at the EuroSpeleo Forum 2023 in Breitscheid (Germany).

For the ECYC it is clear that the children and young people are worth to be in our spotlights. If you are also interested to put the children in your spotlight, get in touch with us at youngcavers@eurospeleo.eu

Christiane Meyer Head of the European Children and Young Cavers Working Group (ECYC)

Photo below: the first meeting of ECYC, from left to right: M. Voß (DE), L. Ketter (DE), C. Meyer (CH), J.-C. Thies (LU), A. Gessert (SK), M. Amparo Perez (ES) and C. Boes (LU) (photo: E. Geyer).



European Children and Young Cavers Working Group (ECYC) - Questionnaire

As one of the results of the last General Assembly Meeting of the FSE a new working group was founded - "European Children and Young Cavers (ECYC)". The Working Group is chaired by the new FSE Vice-President Christiane Meyer.

This new working group will serve all children and young cavers in Europe, to help them to discover the fantastic world of caves and karst. The range of possible activities and projects is quite big, speaking of school materials/activities, youth camps, support of youth groups, speleo training, children books, preparation of material/books for kids concerning geology, biology, climatology, hydrology and many more.

As a first step we would like to gather information about what is already being organized on national level.

Therefore we would like to ask you to send us information about how you support children and young cavers in your country and what you think, this working group should focus on. For us it is important to know the status quo in Europe to efficiently organize our work for the best outcome for the kids. We send this message to you all, because you are the key to sustainable youth promotion in Europe. Our children should benefit from the knowledge and experiences of the „older“ caver generation. Moreover the ECYC would like to help to strengthen the exchange among the FSE member countries, so that everyone can benefit from the experiences of the others, learn from each other and develop further good practice examples on European level.

We kindly ask you to complete this online questionnaire until 01.10.2023. The questionnaire is available at:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd56thbU7pZJTWad_IOLaAQ0Yj1BLMJcv23oBGcljeFIN3FQ/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0

Speleo Austria 2023

From 26-29 October 2023, the international conference Speleo-Austria 2023 and the annual meeting of the Austrian Speleological Association will take place at the foot of the largest karst plateau in the Alps, the Totes Gebirge, in Tauplitz (Styria, AT). Conference venue is the city hall of Tauplitz. All Information at

<http://www.hoehle.at/wordpress/startseite/jahrestagung-des-verbandes-oest-hoehlenforschung/>

