

European Union of the Deaf

Minutes

18th General Assembly

Athens, 17-18 May 2003

FINAL VERSION

EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

***MINUTES
of the
18th General Assembly Meeting***

17-18 May 2003

Athens, Greece

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MINUTES

1. Welcoming address

EUD President, Knud SØNDERGAARD (KS), opened the 18th EUD General Assembly meeting, and welcomed the delegates by expressing that it was nice to see 15 countries present: 14 members and Norway as affiliated member. He also specially welcomed Hungary and Cyprus as observers. He reported that Italy was not attending and also EUD Director, Helga STEVENS could not be present, since she was running for the Belgian elections, scheduled for Sunday 18 May 2003.

KS noted that the invitation for the EUD General Assembly had not been sent out in the required time according to EUD internal rules. He apologised for this and asked the members of the General Assembly to formerly approve the meeting, which they did.

KS informed that DDL had sold the house situated on Rue Franklin 110 in Brussels, Belgium after it had served as EUD office for 12 years. He also informed that the year 2003 was the European Year of People with Disabilities, and as previously announced, EUD had set up a special homepage www.eudeaf2003.org for this purpose. KS briefly described the work EUD had done since the General Assembly had held its last meeting in Madrid, Spain, in May 2003. EUD had worked primarily in area of Sign Language recognition within the EU and the Council of Europe. He encouraged the EUD members to find a volunteer for the EUD office, since there was a lot of work to be done and only very limited staff.

2. Roll call

2.1 Delegates:

Helene JARMER and Günter ROISS (ÖGLB-Austria), Bernard FLEURES and André LATHOUWERS (BDF-Belgium), Anne VIKKELSØ and Dan OLVHØJ (DDL-Denmark), Annuka HIEKKANEN and Rami LEHTINEN (FAD-Finland), Rudi SAILER and Thomas WORSECK (DGB-Germany), Adrien PELLETIER and Patrick FOURASTIE (FNSF-France), Agapi DIMOPOULOU and Ioannis CHRISTODOULAKOS (HFD-Greece), Charles GREHAN and Alvean JONES (IDS-Ireland), Jacques BRUCH and Marc WALERICH (VGSL-Luxembourg), Armando BALTAZAR and Arlindo OLIVEIRA (FPAS-Portugal), Luis J. Cañón REGUERA and Feliciano SOLA LIMIA (CNSE-Spain), Lars-Åke WIKSTRÖM and Tord LIND (SDR-Sweden), Tyron WOOLFE (BDA-United Kingdom), Boris PAVLOFF and Jan BLOEMKOLK (Dovenschap - The Netherlands).

Sonja MYHRE HOLTEN and Hanne BERGE KVITVAER (NDF-Norway) as affiliated members.

ENS, Italy, had withdrawn its delegates to the General Assembly, due to fear of SARS.

2.2 Observers:

John BROWNLIE, (BDA-UK)

Hilde HAUALAND, University of Oslo, Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Studies
György MIKESY, Hungarian Association of the Deaf
Cyprus: Doros RIKKOU and Antigoni CHRISTODOULAKOU

2.3 EUD Board:

Knud SØNDERGAARD (President), Markku JOKINEN (Vice President), Terry RILEY, Helly CHRISTOPOULOU, Amilcar MORAIS (All Members)

2.4 Staff:

Margit ANDREASEN (EUD Administrator). Apologies from Helga STEVENS (EUD Director).

2.5 Interpreters:

Brigitte FRANÇOIS and Gerdinand WAGENAAR

KS informed that four countries had not paid their membership fee to EUD for 2002. According to the EUD statutes these countries in question would normally not be allowed to vote. The EUD Board had discussed the matter and proposed that the General Assembly accepted to make an exception to the statutes, but for future General Assemblies, outstanding payment of the membership fee would mean no voting rights. The Assembly approved the proposal. KS did not want to name the countries in question, since the delegates from these countries had already been made aware of the matter. Feliciano SOLA LIMIA, CNSE-Spain, asked the members in question to inform the General Assembly about their reason for not paying the membership fee. Lars-Åke WIKSTRÖM, SDR- Sweden, apologised to the Assembly, because SDR was one of the members who had not paid their membership fee. He informed that it was due to a lack of standard routine regarding this payment to avoid such a situation in the future, where they had simply forgotten to pay it. He encouraged EUD to create a routine procedure for collecting the membership fees, in order to help the members to remember it. Germany was surprised to learn that they too had not paid, and they would take the matter to the DGB Board.

3. Adoption of the Agenda for the General Assembly 2003

KS went through the Agenda of the General Assembly meeting, and made the following comments to the delegates:

- Regarding point 10, KS informed that EUD had received a motion from Germany after the deadline for submission of motions had been passed, so the motion could not be taken into consideration. Germany explained that due to the limited time the members had had to forward motions, it had only been six weeks, they had not been able to send it earlier.
- The aim of point 8 (on EUD action plan) was to have an open discussion, where the delegates could contribute with their thoughts.

France said that there did not seem to be a point dealing with EUD action plan 2003-2004. KS explained that this was under point 14.2 and 14.3 but an additional point was added to the agenda as point 8.1: EUD action plan for 2003-2004. KS explained that the EUD Board had not put it on the agenda because the European Commission only recently had sent the requirements for the funding for year 2003-2004. It had therefore been impossible for the EUD Board to draft a proposal for an

action plan. Hungary noted that during that period new countries would join EUD and asked the members to bear this in mind when discussing the item.

The agenda was approved.

4. Follow-up on the Minutes of the General Assembly 2002 (held in Madrid, Spain)

KS informed that written comments regarding the draft minutes should be forwarded to the EUD office within 1-2 months (as agreed at EUD GA 2000). No comments had been received, so KS called on the General Assembly to formally adopt the minutes of the 17th General Assembly of EUD. The minutes were adopted. The delegates had no further comments regarding the minutes from the EUD General Assembly 2002 held in Madrid, Spain.

5. EUD Annual Report 2001-2002: presentation

KS informed the General Assembly that the Annual report 2001-2002 had been sent to the members in November 2001. It had also been sent to the European Commission, which had required a few changes to the text of the report and explanation of the finances. It also asked that the non-discrimination logo be added to the front page and on all future publications such as EUD Update, etc. EUD had changed the report accordingly, and provided extra explanation, and sent it back to the Commission, which unfortunately had not yet responded by the time of the General Assembly. The response of the European Commission could influence the finances, since the Commission had not paid the second half of the funding, and would not do so until they had approved the report. KS stressed the importance of this information for the members since it explained why EUD had not been able to reimburse some members. The matter was discussed in further detail under the item of finances.

6. Financial Reports

KS said that it could nearly be considered an EUD tradition to present the finances in a quite complicated way, but that the tradition would hopefully be changed this year since the EUD Board had assigned a new person to present them, Helly CHRISTOPOULOU (HC), EUD Board member.

6.1 Financial Project Reports: presentation and ratification

HC presented the finances and made clear for the assembly that EUD was receiving two different funding grants from the European Commission. One was for the daily running costs of EUD, the so-called co-ordination budget, and the other was for projects funding.

From 1997-1998 the financial year ended with a deficit of 2786.68 €. The budget for the period 1997-1998 is closed.

The next budgetary period is 1998-1999 during which no shortfall occurred. The budget was perfectly balanced. The budget for the period 1998-1999 is closed.

The year 1999-2000 produced a provisional shortfall of 2118.23 €. As KS informed earlier, EUD had not received the money, and was still discussing with the European Commission whether they would pay it or not.

For the year 2000-2001, the period showed a shortfall of 5222,63 €. EUD had received a letter from Mr SINNOTT, European Commission, explaining that they would not cover this amount, so this additional shortfall has to be added to the previous year's shortfalls.

For co-ordination budget 2001-2002 there was a shortfall of 21 863,18 €. EUD is still waiting for the European Commission to send the rest of the allocated grant.

KS added that for the past 8 months EUD had been waiting for the final part of the grant of the co-ordination budget for 2000-2001. HS had informed KS that the European Commission most probably had accepted it but that the money had not been sent yet.

HC informed the Assembly that EUD still needed to find 14548,79 € to balance the finances of 2001-2002, since the EUD has to contribute (co-fund) the budget with 45 % itself. This would mean that each member should pay an additional 1039, 20 € each.

Germany asked how EUD had dealt with the co-funding in the past. KS answered that EUD sent an application to the European Commission with the budget of 181.366 € including staff cost etc. The European Commission funded 55% of this budget, which is roughly 100.000 €, the rest EUD had to find itself. That year we ended up with a lower financial balance than budgeted so both the European Commission and EUD contributions were lower than usual. But nevertheless, EUD still need to find this money itself.

Germany responded to KS's answer with another question, asking how the EUD Board had considered covering the deficit to begin with since they must have been aware of it. He asked if it was not possible to find some projects and use some of the money from these projects to cover the shortfall.

KS answered that years ago the European Commission was very generous regarding funding, and some years EUD could actually save money for the future, but these days were over and now EUD has used all the money saved. The system is today set up in such a way, that if you have a deficit you will have to cover it yourself and it is not possible to take the money allocated for administration within a project toward the running cost of the administration for the EUD office. This so-called "double funding" was not allowed by the European Commission and is strictly controlled.

For the period 2002-2003, EUD had received the first amount from the European Commission, but not yet the second amount of 50 000 €, which would be received after submission of the final reports.

Germany said that it was possible to do foresee that EUD might have a similar shortfall for the period 2002-2003 as it had during the previous year. He asked how the EUD Board had considered avoiding this.

HC replied that the EUD Board had considered the matter and proposed to have each member contributing with 1750 €.

After having given an overview of the co-ordination budget, HC then moved on to presenting the different projects EUD had run during the past years.

The UN Standard rules seminar held in May 1998 in Lelystad, the Netherlands. Had a shortfall of 1479,75 €, which EUD had covered with its own money.

Regarding the Euro project, the final accounts for that project were closed. EUD had to pay back 8008 € back to the European Commission since that was the amount received too much from the Commission. Spain informed that they had taken part in the Euro project and held a seminar for which they had not received the reimbursement from EUD. They had contacted the EUD office, which had explained the lacking reimbursement with the fact that the European Commission had not paid EUD yet. Spain underlined that the accounts showed that EUD had received the money and asked the EUD Board to explain why Spain then had not been reimbursed.

KS responded that EUD indeed had received the money from the European Commission, but not from the three Euro partners who shared the responsibility for the project. Until all three partners had paid EUD, EUD would not be able to reimburse the members who had held seminars.

Spain thanked KS for the verbal answer but stressed that they would have appreciated if the EUD office had send a formal letter. If EUD is unable to reimburse Spain or other member organisations it should inform us in writing. KS would bring the matter to HS, and promised that if HS would not send the letter KS would.

Germany explained that regarding the Euro project partnership they had agreed to become partners with the understanding that it would not cost very much. The German delegate further added that the shortfall of 17 000 € which Germany is expected to participate covering comes as new information!

KS said that it is common knowledge that EU projects require a number of partner organisations, and added that there is an existing document signed by all the partners containing a commitment for the financial contribution. KS informed that EUD was unable to accept DGB's verbal explanation, and that if they had a problem co-financing the Euro project, that they should then ask their fellow members to assist financially.

Ireland said that it looked like IDS owed EUD 5000 €, but this was not the case. Ireland had some expenses, which EUD had to cover a part of and EUD had never done this. IDS accepted to cover these outstanding amounts theelves, but now it looked like the IDS owed EUD 5000 €. KS answered that all comments were minuted and that HS would follow up on the matters raised. Ireland added that EUD had not reimbursed their travel expenses for the last three years and IDS was very annoyed about this situation, Seemed that EUD was holding back the reimbursements because they thought IDS was not paying the 5000 € that EUD thought IDS owed.

The Danish delegate supported Ireland and said that there was a clear problem, and IDS deserved a decent answer.

Ireland informed that they had emailed HS many times the question, but never received any answers. They expressed their deep disappointment with the fact that HS was not present at the General Assembly to answer the questions.

HC further presented the accounts, and on the item of the EUD website project for the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003, the budget was very clear, and balanced so far. EUD had received the first and final grant for the project.

Germany noted that the people who have participated in the filming in Helsinki, Finland for the website had not yet been reimbursed. He also asked how EUD would co-fund the website project, since it required a co-funding percentage of 20 % equivalent to 17 223, 57 €.

HC explained that this indeed was a problem since EUD had no money in the bank. MJ asked whether the members were ready to support EUD, informing that HS dealt with the overall project finances but not the details regarding how to cover an eventual short fall, which was why the EUD Board called upon the EUD members to support EUD financially.

KS said this was a recurring problem in EUD and asked the General Assembly to discuss the issue of "EUD's income". He teased the delegates present by saying that a raise of the membership fee to 5000 € would solve all problems now and in the future.

Sweden proposed that each member country included in their national budget a post reserved for EUD, maybe of 5000 €. The Swedish delegate stressed the importance of not labelling the amount "Membership fee EUD", since the members of the national Deaf association might find it expensive, but instead call it "international activities".

KS asked the assembly to include contributions to EUD in their national budgets. He informed that DDL had been doing so for fifteen years.

TR saluted DDL and other countries that have done similar to support EUD. TR stressed that it was not only a question of economy but of philosophy, of will in the member countries to support EUD regularly. TR underlined that the organisation of EUD is best represented with the General Assembly not the EUD Board.

Austria expressed that EUD's way of working is problematic in regards to funding. It is clear that Austria supports EUD, but in order to assist in the co-funding of projects ÖGLB needs to plan ahead and include the costs in its budget, otherwise it is not possible to allocate money for projects.

The Danish delegate requested that the information given verbally during the General Assembly meeting was sent in written form to make the financial situation of EUD more clear to the EUD members.

KS said the problem was also due to very short deadlines for project applications. Information and guidelines were sent to EUD office in the beginning of May, which leaves only six weeks to prepare the funding activities etc. The website project application was prepared within one month. If it were possible to contact the EUD members within such a short period and receive responses, then EUD would not have similar situations in the future.

KS encouraged the members to bear in mind that only five European Disability NGOs received funding from the European Commission, and therefore EUD should be very proud of this. The EUD Board had also recently been told that EUD was likely to be funded again for the next year 2003-2004, which was very positive information.

Spain expressed its support to the EUD Board and said that they were doing a tremendous job. The Spanish delegate asked the General Assembly to take into consideration that the EUD office might not be working very well, but that this was due to the very limited staff employed. Spain expressed confidence with the EUD Board and applauded the Board members for the fact that EUD is one in five to receive funding. He also asked the EUD Board to come with suggestions in regards to how to solve the deficit problem.

HC rounded off this point on the Agenda by encouraging the General Assembly to come up with ideas on how to balance the accounts, now that they had been given a clear overview of the status of the financial situation of EUD.

6.2 Co-ordination Financial report 2001-2002 as submitted to the European Commission: presentation and ratification

This point was included in coordination overviews, and was therefore already treated under point 6.1.

6.3 Financial accounts for the calendar year 2002: presentation and ratification

KS informed that the financial accounts for the calendar year 2002 had been distributed for information only, since they were not very detailed since they only recently had been finalised and had been prepared to have them audited by an external company reviser. The total asset was 138.919 €, and a loss of 23.348 €. KS further informed that the auditor had approved the accounts.

IDS raised a question regarding the expenditures for EUD General Assembly 2002 held in Madrid, Spain. IDS had not received any reimbursement. The Netherlands delegate also said they had not received anything. KS explained that the European Commission had not sent any money yet, so EUD was not able to reimburse its members. IDS replied that other members had been paid so why not IDS? IDS had contacted EUD on several occasions but never received an answer. KS said that he would check with HS why she had not followed up on the matter.

Germany remarked that the accounts should show the payments, which still had to be made, to make the financial situation of EUD clear. KS answered that he did not have the details of the accounts with him, and since HS was not present it was not possible to provide IDS with an answer. He promised to take the matter to HS.

6.4 Financial accounts for the period January – April 2003: presentation

KS presented the accounts for the first four months of 2003. He pointed out the expenses for travel and representation. It showed that HS had travelled to many conferences representing the EUD in the past four months, which was very positive for EUD.

KS apologized for the financial documents not being very clear before asking the members to approve them

Germany said that due to the many open factors so he felt the assembly was unable to approve the accounts. DK commented that not approving the finances would create a problem for EUD with regards to the European Commission. KS said the European Commission only focused on the audits approval, they do not request a formal approval from the General Assembly so there would not be any problem.

Spain said if these open factors did exist they should be minuted and dealt with. Postponing it to next year would not solve anything.

Germany said that the issue which Ireland had brought up showed that the accounts were not complete and questioned the 8000 € which was in the bank. Maybe this money belonged to Ireland?

KS faxed HS at home to be able to provide the members with an answer fast. HS replied and KS informed Ireland and Germany. The problem was not solved, but KS promised it would be followed up on, and EUD would contact Germany after the General Assembly meeting to get Germany's approval of the finances. In the mean time KS suggested to adopt the accounts provisionally, and that leave it to the Board to clarify information. The members would later be asked by email to adopt the finances formally.

Sweden and Spain expressed their confidence in the EUD Board that it would keep working on solving the matter of Ireland and Germany. Portugal supported this view.

The General Assembly approved the finances under the condition that the EUD Board followed up on the matters concerning Ireland and Germany.

The problem of not receiving responses to requests affected other members as well. KS said the EUD Board would bring to HS' attention that she needs to respond faster and more efficiently to requests from members.

6.5 Benefits from membership of EUD

MJ presented an overhead with the benefits of joining the EUD. The Board clarified what the members gained from their membership of EUD. This had not previously been clear to all members so the Board had decided to produce a document explaining this more in depth.

MJ went through the benefits one by one, and stressed that especially in the field of recognition and awareness raising/acceptance of Sign Language a lot had been done.

MJ also explained that EUD need financial support from its members since it finances about 34-40 % of the budget itself.

Sweden asked to have the information sent to all members in order for them to disseminate it in their associations to create a better understanding of the importance of EUD.

Spain said they translated the EUD Update and sent it to their members for information. Other members expressed the same.

MJ added that the EUD Board is also working hard for EUD and members should keep in mind that this is voluntary work.

Germany suggested that each NAD's financial expert or person responsible for the funding of the NAD should hold a common meeting to share ideas about efficient fund raising.

7. Report on EUD 2003 website project

MA briefly informed the members about the EUD 2003 website: www.eudeaf2003.org.

Spain proposed to add links the NAD's homepages to the site in order to make their members aware of its existence.

It was also suggested to add EUD's account number on the website in order for people to donate money.

Denmark complimented the work done on the website but stressed the need of updating it to avoid it getting boring for visitors.

MA responded that a part of the home page is a calendar, which contained information on events and activities of the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003. The aim was that this part of the home page would include information, which often got updated, but this of course would depend on the members, since it would be their responsibility to update it with national information.

MJ added that the companies who created the home page were two Finnish companies and the FAD owned the one responsible for videos in Sign Language. He made the point to inform members that Deaf Associations could also take part in bids, because they possess a knowledge that is very rare and thus can be valuable in procurement calls.

Germany said that www.eudeaf2003.org is a good example of an accessible homepage for Deaf people.

Austria informed that they were trying to put a part of their text on their homepage in Sign Language during this year.

France informed about the "Websourd" project, a homepage divided up in different parts for Deaf, hearing and interpreters, each with information relevant for that party. The website would be open in September 2003.

The delegates present at the Assembly were asked if they had already visited www.eudeaf2003.org, but only about one fourth responded positively.

8. Summary report on EUD Action plan for 2002-2003

KS informed the members about EUD's work during the past year.

EUD had spent a lot of time lobbying the Council of Europe regarding Sign Language. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had adopted Malcolm BRUCE's report on Sign Languages. It was now up to the Council of Ministers to follow up.

With regards to the Charter of Regional and Minority Languages EUD is still working very hard towards the inclusion of Sign Language into the charter, trying to work closely with the EBLUL to achieve this.

The UN Convention, which is currently being discussed, receives a lot of comments from the disability organisations such as the WFD. EDF is also very active in this area.

In 2004 the European Union will enlarge and this will also influence EUD. The EUD Board has planned to hold a small meeting in Montreal, Canada in July 2003, during the WFD congress, to inform potential members about EUD and its work.

EUD has very limited resources, which are being used in the field of SL at the moment and therefore it is not very active in the field of Cochlear Implantation. EUD has received a letter from EURO-CIU, the European association of CI users, asking support for adopting a new sign for CI. EURO-CIU finds the sign which is widely used at the moment pejorative. It was decided that EUD's position regarding such an adoption is similar to the position taken at the General Assembly 2002, when discussing the matter of adopting a common sign for the Euro. EUD can not tell Deaf people which signs to use, they are free to do so themselves, and the natural use of a sign will eventually decide which one is considered to be "correct".

FEPEDA

KS informed the General Assembly about the meeting which he had had with the President of FEPEDA, Ms Lena FERNSTRÖM. It was a good and positive meeting. FEPEDA does not have a clear view on how to cooperate with the Deaf community. Maybe it is a good idea to invite FEPEDA to send an observer to the EUD General Assembly 2004. The members indicated that it would definitely be a challenge to have them as observers, and some supported the idea, but that it depended on the official opinion of FEPEDA in relation to EUD's core politics. The Board of FEPEDA had for the time being five out of six Board members in favour of Sign Language. At the EDF General Assembly 2001, FEPEDA was elected into the Board of the EDF, and the EUD won no seat. KS said he supported the idea to invite them in order to have a better cooperation also considering their position in EDF Board. The only problem could be that the coming FEPEDA President will be from Spain, and she seemed to oppose Sign Language. FEPEDA and EUD do have many things in common, i.e. they both want more subtitling and good education, but our views are different on how to do it in practice.

Spain informed that there is a big problem within FEPEDA. Some members claim that they speak on behalf of FEPEDA at important conferences (i.e. the NGO Forum in Madrid, Spain on 7-8 April 2003) when they do not. They express views against Sign Language without having a mandate for it.

Denmark said that the Danish parents association have clear policy papers regarding their supportive attitude towards Sign Language. This document would be good to have in case FEPEDA express themselves against Sign Language on behalf of all the national parents associations.

The delegates very briefly described whether they had a good or a bad relation with their national parents association, and their opinions about Sign Language:

- UK: NDCS is affiliated to FEPEDA, and they like everything from oralism to Sign Language.
- Austria: Bad relation they are in favour of the oral method.
- Belgium: FFSB has regular exchanges with the French-speaking parents association and they occupy the same office building; FEVLADO: there are contacts but they tend toward oralism.
- DK: Yes, previously described.
- Germany: There are two org. One for Deaf (supports Sign Language) and one for Hard of Hearing children's parents (against Sign Language).
- France: We used to have a very bad relation, but now there a parents association, which is in favour of all methods, which make them kind of neutral in regards to supporting SL.
- Finland: Good, on the Board of FAD there is a parent representative.
- Greece: Yes, cooperation with specific schools but no actual parents organisation.
- Ireland: IDS has no relationships, but the situation is similar to the situation in Germany: two groups of parents, and the one, which does not support Sign Language is member of FEPEDA.
- Luxembourg: the single association of parents of Deaf children in Luxembourg is APEC (Association des Parents d'Enfants du Centre de Logopédie), where the Centre de Logopédie is the single school for deaf children. APEC is member of FEPEDA. And VGSL has a relation with APEC if there are common political actions given.
- The Netherlands: We work in the same building they support us 100 %.
- Portugal: We talk.... They accept Sign Language to some extent, but this is not on paper. Their official opinion is in favour of oralism.

Norway has two different parents' groups: one group for Hard of Hearing people one group for Deaf people, they each have good contacts with their respective Hard-of Hearing and Deaf organisations. There is also a group of CI implant users.

France said that FEPEDA must accept that Deaf people can be represented by Deaf people. FEPEDA must limit itself to representing Deaf children.

MJ asked if the General Assembly could accept to invite the president of FEPEDA to the next EUD General Assembly to present their position. The assembly approved.

Austria added that maybe the FEPEDA representative could observe some of the General Assembly meeting, but not all points on the agenda.

Spain raised the question whether EUD should also accept observers from the CI users association EURO-CIU in the future?

Sweden replied that EURO-CIU has the same problem as FEPEDA: their members from northern European countries are in favour of Sign Language but the members from southern European countries are against.

TR noted that having observers who did not agree with EUD open up for the possibility to exchange views and come to a better understanding of each other, but also stressed that they would not stay for the whole time but just for the relevant points.

KS resumed the discussion and said that EUD will send a letter to FEPEDA inviting them to send a representative for EUD General Assembly 2004.

Interpreters at EDF committee meetings and other EU meetings

KS informed that in relation to interpreters there are some serious difficulties with regard to EDF committee meetings. At the moment EDF only agreed to pay for one, and EUD should maybe have a clear position towards this situation to be able to inform EDF and other organisers for future conferences and the use of Sign Language interpreters.

EUD has sent a paper regarding Sign Language interpreting to delegates and they were asked to send their comments to the EUD office. MA added that the problem regarding international Sign Interpreters was also due to the lack of such interpreters. She encouraged the members of EUD to send names of good international interpreters to the EUD office in order to add these to the list EUD office has of international interpreters.

DGB-Germany proposed that EUD organise congresses just like WFD. They argued that this would strengthen the position of EUD in Europe. KS commented on the proposal by saying that EUD had held such a conference in relation to its 15th anniversary in 2000. The point would be discussed further under item 14.2

8.1 Future work of EUD.

Germany said that EUD had changed from the time of its set up. It originally focused mostly on information exchange between members and now it focuses primarily on political activity. In the future more attention should be paid to funding and financial activities. Politically EUD has come a long way, but it is important to make these policies come into action, and that is connected to a financial debate.

France said that they were organising a big conference "Europe for elderly Deaf people" in Strasbourg, France in 2007 and it would like to make this a European conference with the support of EUD.

TR informed that EUD had held a conference on this theme many years ago. Maybe the report could be re-modified and sent out to the NADs to be used again. TR said that it had not really been followed up on.

Hungary noted that with regard to the forthcoming enlargement, it is necessary to consider what it will mean in term of new EUD structure also relating to interpretation.

KS said that EUD was aware of this and would look into possible funding and inform Hungary and other associations which could be interested in programmes dealing with the enlargement process.

9. Ratification of membership of Iceland

A year ago, EUD had accepted the application of the Norwegian Deaf Association as affiliated member. Now Iceland has applied too to become an affiliated member of EUD. The EUD Board had discussed the application and saw no problem in accepting Iceland as affiliated member. The Assembly voted in favour of ratifying the membership of Iceland. Unfortunately Iceland had not been able to send a representative to the current General Assembly meeting.

10. Motions tabled

MOTION 1- Submitted by Belgium:

"Accessibility is a hot topic in Belgium. Private as well as government organisations seem to take this issue more and more serious. This is also for deaf people an interesting evolution, but we crave for information and standards regarding accessibility for deaf. Therefore we believe it might be interesting if the EUD could coordinate a European project in which this topic is fully investigated rather than that the member does the screening, checking and standardisation on its own without any European context."

André LATHOUWERS took the floor and presented the Belgian motion on accessibility. He said it was the first time that Belgium presented a motion for the EUD General Assembly.

The Assembly discussed the motion and found it very important, but did not agree whether it should be a responsibility for EUD. Spain said they already have a manual for this covering many different areas. It was proposed that each NAD send material covering the topic to the EUD office that would then assemble the information. BDA asked to focus on Deaf Sign Language users, otherwise we will have too many pages on the needs of the hard of hearing. Germany suggested that one NAD take on the responsibility since EUD had very limited staff.

The Assembly discussed the theme of accessibility and agreed that there are many aspects to it, i.e. access to emergency services, access to information in every day life as part of life quality.

The Assembly adopted the proposal to send any information they have to the EUD office. Later the responsibility of analysing the information and making an overview could be given to a NAD. The information should be sent in English.

MOTION 2- Submitted by Sweden:

"Many times SDR has faced difficulties concerning sign language interpreters at congresses and other international events.

The organiser has required the interpreters to pay participation fee or other fees. We have to stress that the interpreters are INTERPRETERS and not participants. They must be regarded as "hearing aids" because without interpreters deaf people cannot participate fully.

Therefore EUD is requested to prepare a policy document, which could be disseminated internationally, in order to avoid such problem in the future. It is important that organisers are aware of the capacity of sign language interpreters.

Therefore it must be stressed that the interpreters are not participants but a prerequisite of the participation of deaf people.

SDR urges EUD to prepare a policy on sign language interpreters in congress situations, which is to be disseminated internationally."

Lars Åke WIKSTRÖM presented the Swedish motion, and said that in Sweden this issue was most discussed. One of the recurring problem was that Sign Language interpreters were often asked to pay a registration fee to be able to attend the conferences as interpreters. A recent example of this was the ESMHD conference to be held in Salzburg, Austria on 21-24 May 2003.

It was agreed that the EUD Board should look further into the matter and prepare a EUD draft policy based on a paper written by Lorraine LEESON, which was emailed earlier to the delegates. The policy proposal would be sent out to all delegates before next EUD General Assembly.

MOTION 3 – Submitted by the EUD Board:

"The EUD Board proposes to give full voting rights to EUD Affiliated members. This is in order to give those members a say in EUD matters, on equal footing with Full members. To this end the EUD Statutes need to be amended. Please see attached the EUD statutes as amended."

TR presented the motion put forwarded by the EUD Board.

The members discussed whether the affiliated members should pay a full membership fee together with full voting rights. The members further discussed the potential consequences in the future if more European countries also applied for affiliated membership of EUD. It might cause problems with 45 countries in Europe but only 15 in the EU. Sweden said the problem could be solved if affiliated membership was open to EFTA members only. KS said that article 3.3.1 in the EUD statutes already stated this by saying that only EFTA countries can become affiliated members. MJ stressed that the statutes could be changed again if necessary. Germany suggested that the EUD Board investigated the articles in question and come with a new proposal next year for how to deal with a situation of too many affiliated members.

The motion was adopted by the General Assembly under the condition that the EUD Board looked at the balance of power (voting rights) between full and affiliated members.

MOTION 4 – Submitted by the EUD Board:

"The EUD Board proposes to raise the membership fee for Full members to 2000 € per year, up from 1000 € per year. This is due to the fact that European Commission funding continues to decrease and also because it is not acceptable that only one or two members take great responsibility for EUD. To keep EUD financially strong, is the responsibility of EACH member."

For this motion Norway was able to vote due to the adopted motion 3.

TR presented the motion put forward by the EUD Board.

Norway proposed to raise their own membership to 500 € in sympathy with the membership raise of the full members and also to prepare Norway gradually to a future full membership fee in case Norway joins the EU and the NAD of Norway can become a full member.

France asked the Assembly to take into account that with EU enlargement, Central and Eastern European countries might become full members of EUD and those NADs might not be able to afford such a high fee. TR responded that this would be discussed in one of the workshops to be held on Sunday 18 May 2003. Luxembourg asked that EUD considered the size of Luxembourg and made an exception so Luxembourg was not to pay 2000 € as large countries. TR responded that the EUD Board would take this into account.

The motion was adopted by the General Assembly.

Sweden stressed the importance of a deadline for paying the fee. TR said that the EUD Board would follow up on it and send reminders to members to pay.

11. Adoption of Resolution from EUD Seminar on Bioethics and Genetics

MJ presented the resolution from the seminar held on 16 May 2003, with the comments received during the seminar. The Assembly discussed the exact wording of the resolution, but could not yet agree on all the details of the text. So it was decided that the EUD Board would continue the work on the text and send it out to the members later.

Germany raised the formal question regarding whether unanimity had to be reached for a document to be called a EUD policy. MJ answered that this was not the case, and that each country was free to use the EUD policy for inspiration to draft their own national policy if they did not feel they could support the EUD policy. If the EUD Board would meet in June 2003, the revised text would be sent out to all members be commented by 30 June 2003. *(Note from EUD secretariat: the June EUD Board meeting was cancelled due to financial restraints.)*

12. Report on the relationship with EDF and EDF activities

KS informed about the relationship with EDF, and followed up on last years discussion about not having a EUD representative on the EDF Board. He also said that EUD had sent a letter to the EDF President with amendments and comments regarding the proposed revision of EDF statutes. EDF had not responded to this letter, but it was clear that many amendments would not be adopted.

Germany asked KS to explain the motivation for amending the EDF statutes. KS explained that the background for the letter was the fact that FEPEDA has a seat on the EDF Board, which is a problem for the EUD since FEPEDA claims to be "an organisation of disabled people" while in fact only EUD can claim to be such an organisation. FEPEDA can only say that they represent Deaf children, not Deaf adults. Deaf people are the only group of disabled people which is confronted with the problem of "competition" with a European parents' organisation. For example, Blind people do not have the same problem since there is no European parents' association of the blind in EDF.

HS and HC would be the EUD delegates at EDF General Assembly to be held in Athens, Greece on 23-24 May 2003. They would follow up on the matter.

KS said that the EUD Board had not had the opportunity to meet and look together at the proposed revision of EDF statutes. His personal opinion was that EDF should have parents associations as secondary members. MJ explained the exact wording of the part of the EDF statutes, which EUD disagreed with. It was concerning the representation of disabled people who could not represent themselves, and therefore were represented by parents. The problem was that it did not specify which criteria must be fulfilled before disabled people can be seen as being unable to represent themselves.

MA presented the conclusions of the small questionnaire sent out to all members, asking them about the relationship with their National Disability Council (NDC). The survey had not been very extensive but nevertheless important information had been retrieved. Most countries had a good relation with their NDC. Many countries expressed that their NDC did not consult them regarding issues, but whenever the NADs took a matter to their NDC, they listened to them. MA said that this was very important to note, since it meant that the members could influence the NDC's decisions if they were active within their NDC.

The NADs who had not yet responded were reminded to send their answers to MA who would include them in the statistics of the survey.

The Assembly asked about the aims and the follow up of the survey. It was meant to see whether serious problems existed in the relationship between the NAD and the NDC. If so, then EUD would inform EDF about it. Fortunately, overall the working relationship seemed to be fine.

13. Information from EUDY

Amilcar MORAIS, President of EUDY, presented himself and informed the Assembly about EUDY's activities. Last year a youth summer camp had been held in Rome. Due to a lack of European or national funding for the camp, EUDY was very grateful to ENS for having covered many of the costs. 26 people had attended the camp, which was rather a limited number, but it had nonetheless been very successful. EUDY also held its General Assembly, together with elections, since these are held every two years. The EUDY General Assembly drew up a resolution concluding that there were problems with participation of Deaf Youth at national level. EUDY encouraged NADs to support their national Youth associations.

AM further informed that regarding EUDY's statutes, there was problem concerning the age limit. EUDY has defined youth as aged between 18-30 and the EU guidelines set the limit at 35.

One of the priorities of EUDY is to follow the enlargement of EU very closely and a set of guidelines had been drafted. Furthermore EUDY has applied for SIG status within the WFD, and is looking forward to the response of WFD to this request.

AM informed that the next EUDY youth camp will be held in 2004 in the Netherlands.

AM thanked EUD very much for its support and also encouraged NADs to support the National Deaf Youth Associations.

14. Workshops:

TR informed the Assembly about how the Workshops would be carried out. The two first workshops would be discussed in plenary and the last one would be discussed in small groups.

14.1 EU Enlargement: consequences for EUD and how to approach National Deaf Associations in accession countries

Germany informed about the experience they had with training seminars for the former East Germany. The seminars were a big success and it would be a good idea to do the similar thing with the enlargement countries: Inform them about EU and EUD, how funding is provided etc. It is important to take into consideration that EUD members also need to prepare mentally for the new members, who might be different from the other EUD members by their political experience.

The members discussed that it would be a two-way process where EUD new members learn from the old members, and vice versa. EUD new members should not be expected to adjust themselves following a current structure of EUD, a new structure should be developed to suit both new and old members' needs. Ireland added that for the training it was important to have a basic knowledge of the political system of the new EUD members countries beforehand. Learn about the context they live in order to have a more successful seminar targeted at the weaker sides of their organisation.

The delegate from Hungary expressed that the Deaf Associations of the Eastern European countries do have more experience and information than most West European NADs might think. The countries have had access to information for the past ten years and a lot have changed.

Germany and UK suggested that a partnership was established between an Eastern NAD and a Western EUD in order to exchange and work in a partnership for strengthening and smoothening the process of enlargement, and discussed what would be EUD's role in this work. The Assembly agreed that EUD could co-ordinate but would not be responsible of monitoring the partnerships nor establishing them.

The EUD Board noted the ideas proposed and would follow up on them.

14.2 EUD 20th Anniversary in 2005: ideas and proposals

Following up on point 14.1 the Assembly discussed whether the anniversary could be held in the east of Europe as an act of welcoming the new EUD members. KS informed that at the moment EUD holds its General Assembly in the country, which holds the EUD presidency. For the future however EU is at the moment discussing how the future presidency rotation should be made due to a future Europe of 25 countries. The decision will be made in the Council of Ministers at some point in the future.

A few countries were proposed to serve as a probable location: UK, DK and Luxembourg.

Regarding a theme, UK suggested "20 + " since EU would maybe consist of 20 or more countries. The theme should not necessarily be Deaf related. Greece "20 Years one vision one reality". Hungary "A European Deaf Community". Austria said that it was more important to discuss the content rather than the title of the Anniversary.

EUD Board would follow up and asked the Assembly to take the matter home to their associations and discuss it there and then later on send the thoughts and proposals to the EUD Board.

14.3 EUD Vision

This workshop took place in four different groups discussing the theme of "EUD Vision" after having been informed about the current aims and Vision of EUD which are:

EUD Vision:

To promote, advance and protect the rights and interests and opportunities for Deaf people in the European Union. Emancipation and equal opportunities are key philosophies towards achieving an equal position in society and being recognised as full citizens in our own right.

EUD aims:

- Recognition of the right to use sign language/s;
- Empowerment through communication and information; and
- Equality in education and employment

The groups each presented a brief resume of their discussion within the group.

Thomas WORSECK presented the results of Group 1: We want the recognition of Sign Language written into EUD's long term visions, since it is a key element. Regarding the aims, I do not think we agree on the practical ... we need some kind of monitoring about how a recognition impact on the quality of life. The aim of empowerment is a bit vague, and we would like to have it more clarified. We would like to add "social life" too the last aim of "Equality in education and employment" We also would like to propose a fourth aim. Regarding access to i.e. emergency services but it should not be restricted to this; it should be about accessibility in general.

Patrick FOURASTIER presented the results of Group 2: The 15 members of EUD should agree on a policy towards recognition of Sign Language. If a country does not follow this it should be addressed to the European Court of Justice. In relation to ai, we think that telecommunication is very important. All the different equipment is not standardised. Regarding transport we need better visual access, and this should also involve a certain degree of harmonisation within Europe. EUD should gather the different standards. Education in/through Sign Language should be set as a high priority and Deaf people should be involved in the tuition. Bi-lingual education should be developed in co-operation with deaf teachers who would decide on curriculum etc.

Alvean JONES presented the results from Group 3: We had a long discussion. We accept the vision as it stands but to the aims we have some comments. Regarding Sign Language it needs to be monitored, like Group 1 proposed. Legal recognition, which is not enforceable, is not enough. In relation to information, it does have a role in the second aim, and should be kept because it is very

important now and in the future. There should be equality in education; Deaf people should not be discriminated against in educational settings, neither in life in general, i.e. in the employment context. The social life is also affected by discrimination. Deaf children need to learn Sign Language when they are young, and hearing children as well could get used to Sign Language and to Deaf people.

Austria mentioned the point Belgium had made the day before regarding access to technology. This area should be added to the list of EUD ai. EUD should be ahead with the development of technology to make sure that our needs are respected in new developments.

KS thanked MJ and HC for their help chairing the workshops.

15. Places and dates for future EUD General Assembly Meetings

Germany proposed to have the GA at the same date every year in order to be able to plan ahead and make sure of being able to attend the assembly.

KS informed that in November 2003 EUD would send a report covering the finances until August 2003. He further informed that the Board would like to propose that the Annual General Assembly was moved to the month of November, to facilitate the procedures regarding the application and the financial reports. The Assembly discussed whether to hold the EUD annual General Assembly in November instead of May, but an informal vote showed that a large majority did not support this idea.

The month of the annual EUD General Assembly will therefore not be changed, but will still be in May.

The EUD Board would discuss the location and the dates for the General Assembly 2004. Regarding Germany's proposal, the Board would look into finding dates for the next years to come.

France proposed to host the EUD General Assembly in 2007 because of the 110th anniversary of the FNSF.

Germany proposed to have a EUD congress every four years and maybe this could be joined with the FNSF 110th anniversary.

16. Any other business

Two documents were distributed to the delegates. Both would be sent out by email later on:

- Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1598)
- EUD model letter to follow up on Recommendation 1598.

IDS said that for the Sign Language day held in the European Parliament in December 2001 the Irish Deaf Association FOR the Deaf sent two delegates, but IDS which is an association OF the Deaf where not invited and thus were not present. IDS had sent an email/a letter mentioning the matter to EUD, but had not received a response. KS promised to follow up on it and look further into it. *(After the meeting it appeared that it was a UK conference in Derby, UK – not a EUD conference).*

Austria said that they feel it was necessary to change the structure of the EUD General Assembly. At the moment some members know a lot about what will be discussed others know less. There should be time for more discussion and information exchange.

Sweden informed about the EDF Youth Disability conference taking place in Athens, Greece, at the same time as the EUD General Assembly (16-17 May 2003). The Youth Conference had passed a resolution concerning the closure of special schools including Deaf schools. The Deaf delegates present had opposed the decision but an Italian hard of hearing person had supported it and it had been passed. The Swedish delegate urged all delegates to follow up on this matter of great importance in from their national Deaf associations. *(Note from the EUD secretariat: the amendments proposed by the Swedish Deaf delegate were ultimately adopted so in the declaration/resolution there is a reference to the rights of sign language users).*

KS thanked Ioannis YALLOUROS, HFD Secretary General, for helping to prepare the General Assembly and also thanked the cameraman who had filmed everything. Both received a box of Belgian chocolates. He also thanked HFD for its help in organising and for hosting the dinner Saturday night.

KS declared the EUD General Assembly 2003 closed and wished everybody a safe trip home.

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Minutes drafted by Margit ANDREASEN, EUD Administrator on 18.05.2003

Revised by Helga STEVENS, EUD Director on 07.07.2003 and Knud SØNDERGAARD, EUD President on 13.07.2003.

Revised by the Secretariat on 21.11.2003 following amendments proposed by Members and the decisions of the Board on 15-16.10.2003.

Note: This EUD General Assembly was also videotaped. The tapes are kept at the EUD office.

Signatures:

Knud SØNDERGAARD, EUD President

Margit ANDREASEN, EUD Administrator

Parliamentary Assembly

Assemblée parlementaire

Recommendation 1598 (2003)¹

Protection of sign languages in the member states of the Council of Europe

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls its Recommendation 1492 (2001) on the rights of national minorities, and particularly paragraph 12.xiii concerning sign languages.
2. The Assembly takes note of the reply by the Committee of Ministers to this recommendation, contained in Document 9492. It regrets that the Committee of Ministers did not make a pronouncement on the opinions delivered by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) and by the Committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Disabilities (Partial Agreement). This reply warrants, if any justification were needed, the Parliamentary Assembly's concern that the rights of sign language users should be incorporated into a specific legal instrument, or into an additional protocol to the charter, without prejudging the position that may be adopted by the organisations representing deaf people.
3. The Assembly recognises sign languages as the expression of Europe's cultural wealth. They are a feature of Europe's linguistic and cultural heritage.
4. The Assembly also recognises sign languages as a complete and natural means of communication for deaf people.
5. The Assembly takes the view that official recognition of these languages will help deaf people to become integrated into society and gain access to justice, education and employment.
6. The Assembly acknowledges the importance of a detailed study of requirements, necessarily preceding the framing of any policy on sign languages. It stresses the need to involve users of these languages in the process.
7. The Assembly observes that a number of member states have introduced programmes in support of sign languages. Although all experience a shortage of sign language interpreters, this demonstrates the strength of demand and the positive and inclusive social benefits such services provide.
8. The Assembly takes the view that official recognition of sign languages will facilitate the training, recruitment and retention of more interpreters.
9. For the above reasons, and in the knowledge that only action at European level will afford a solution to this problem, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers devise a specific legal instrument on the rights of sign language users, and accordingly:
 - i. instruct the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe to undertake a preparatory study in consultation with national experts and representatives of the deaf community in order to clarify outstanding issues in regard to the protection of the use of sign languages;
 - ii. define clear goals to be achieved, exact deadlines to be met, and resources and methods to be used, founded on a full study of requirements

EUD GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2003:

MOTIONS

EUD has received four motions for the EUD GA 2003. They are listed below.

MOTION 1 – submitted by Belgium

“Accessibility is a hot topic in Belgium. Private as well as government organisations seem to take this issue more and more serious. This is also for deaf people an interesting evolution, but we crave for information and standards regarding accessibility for deaf. Therefore we believe it might be interesting if the EUD could coordinate a European project in which this topic is fully investigated rather than that the member does the screening, checking and standardisation on its own without any European context.”

MOTION 2 – submitted by Sweden

“Many times SDR has faced difficulties concerning sign language interpreters at congresses and other international events.

The organiser has required the interpreters to pay participation fee or other fees. We have to stress that the interpreters are INTERPRETERS and not participants. They must be regarded as “hearing aids” because without interpreters deaf people cannot participate fully.

Therefore EUD is requested to prepare a policy document which could be disseminated internationally, in order to avoid such problems in the future. It is important that organisers are aware of the capacity of sign language interpreters. Therefore it must be stressed that the interpreters are not participants but a prerequisite of the participation of deaf people.

SDR urges EUD to prepare a policy on sign language interpreters in congress situations, which is to be disseminated internationally.”

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The EUD Board proposes to give full voting rights to EUD Affiliated members. This is in order to give those members a say in EUD matters, on equal footing with Full members. To this end the EUD Statutes need to be amended. Please see attached the EUD statutes as amended.

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The EUD Board proposes to raise the membership fee for Full members to 2000 € per year, up from 1000 € per year. This is due to the fact that European Commission funding continues to decrease and also because it is not acceptable that only one or two members take great responsibility for EUD. To keep EUD financially strong, is the responsibility of EACH member.

EUD GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2003:
PROPOSALS REGARDING FUTURE EUD GAS

1. The EUD Board would like to propose to have the EUD General Assembly take place in the month of November or December (preferably the second half of November or early December). This would follow the contract periods more closely which currently run from September till August of the following year. This way the EUD General Assembly can also follow more closely the reports submitted to the European Commission.
2. EUD has received two proposals to host the EUD GA in the future.

PROPOSAL submitted by Luxembourg re EUD GA 2005

“Would it be a good idea to organise the 20 Years of EUD together with the EUD GA in Luxembourg in 2005?”

PROPOSAL submitted by France re EUD GA 2007

“Our National Union of the Deaf persons of France allows to announce you with pleasure the official candidature to organise the General Assembly of the EUD in 2007, on the occasion of the 110th Anniversary of FNSF.”