



*European Same-Sex Dance Association*

## **Annual Report August 2013 – May 2014 by the Secretary**

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## **1. Project ESSDA 2020**

At last year's AGM in Antwerp the board stated the goals that we want to achieve: have high-quality same-sex dance competitions, and strengthen the national associations and ESSDA by enhancing commitment and involvement of individual dancers and supporters. In order to accomplish the former we had tried introducing an ESSDA-label. For the latter the introduction of an individual membership through membership of a national association was proposed, a topic that had already been put forward at the General Meeting in Budapest. At the national as well as the European level we need a broader base and a sound structure if we want to have high-quality same-sex dance competitions. Some of the attendees thought the proposed change would provide a logical structure. But at the same time it was felt that national associations would need more time for this and that the proposal needed to be elaborated in more detail.

As a result the chair proposed to set up a working group consisting of representatives of various national associations. The assignment of this working group is to come up with a proposal for (individual) Essda membership as well as for voting rights, taking into account the differences among national associations, in the broader perspective of a longer term vision.

In the first meeting after the AGM the board discussed this topic and felt the need to have a vision and strategy first, in order to provide a frame for the working group. But during the discussion we thought it would be more appropriate to ask our membership what they see as the main focal points for ESSDA for the years to come. So it was decided to do a survey among the national bodies by email. The text of this email and the response from six national bodies have been included in the Appendix.

In order to be able to extract main focal points for ESSDA, the issues and topics these six national bodies raised were categorised first. The issues were mostly presented as topics for 'ESSDA' but in one case explicitly for 'the ESSDA board'.

Focal points for ESSDA for the years to come (see Appendix) for details / examples:

- enhance / strengthen / promote the quality, identity and perception of same-sex dancing
- enhance / secure the quality of adjudicators for same-sex dance competitions
- provide a platform for adequate, clear and up to date information on same-sex dancing, competitions, competition results, ESSDA finances and ESSDA achievements
- coordinate and support European as well as local competitions
- intensify collaboration between ESSDA and national bodies for mutual benefit
- set limits for competition and spectator fees / find funding for individual dancers

The board would like to discuss these focal points at the AGM, extract concrete actions from them and look for ways to accomplish (and possibly fund) them.

## **2. Senior age category for dance competitions / Competition Rules**

At the previous AGM it was decided to experiment with an additional age category for senior competitions: a 45+ category next to the existing 35+ category. The idea was that larger dance competitions in Europe might have room for two senior competitions.

As it turns out, none of the European competitions have offered two senior competitions since this decision was taken at the AGM in August 2013.

In the spring of 2014 the UKSSDC raised this topic at their meeting. They feel that the same-sex dance competition community is too small to support having a senior 1 and a senior 2 competition:

tournaments do not have the time or the resources to run a senior 2 event so realistically they only run a senior 1 event. The minimum age for this, 35 years, is much too young given our demographics. So 35+ is not really felt to be senior, which puts the 'real' seniors into a category in which they have to compete against strong 35-year-old couples. They proposed that tournaments only run one senior competition for which each partner of a dance couple must be at least 45 years old without any further 'combined age' requirements. Senior couples will still be allowed to enter two competitions (16 + and 45 +) if they want to.

This proposal was put forward and discussed at one of the Essda board meetings. It was accepted unanimously.

The corresponding rules about senior competitions in the Essda Competition Rules will be adjusted accordingly:

3.4.b Senior competitions: the following criteria shall be met by couples wishing to compete in the senior competitions:

3.4.b.i both partners shall be at least 45 years old on the day of the competition.

3.4.b.ii not applicable anymore so will be deleted

3.4.c not applicable anymore so will be deleted

The revised version (review and textual improvement of Rules 1 to 7), together with the change in the senior age category will be published on the ESSDA website after this AGM.

### **3. Financial matters**

The presentation and discussion of the Financial Report 2012-2013 at the previous AGM triggered a discussion about the appropriateness of spending Essda money on professional consultancy, so a fee for time spent by a board member on supporting organisers of EuroGames / European Championships. Since no agreement was reached on this topic the board agreed to discuss this in their board meeting and come up with a proposal. It also gave rise to a discussion about the license fee itself. One proposal was to split up the license fee in a fixed and variable part: a fixed part for the license and a variable part for travel and accommodation costs, and to include this in the bid. The amount for the variable part depends on how much support is required for preparation and organisation, so on how often an Essda board member has to travel and spend time on it. Since no agreement was reached on this topic either, the board agreed to discuss this in their meeting, too. The board has had two long discussions about the license fee and the license agreement. Except for the two co-presidents, the other board members did not really know what is in the license agreement. So first many questions were asked and discussed to establish what the license agreement is all about, what organisers get in return for the fee they pay. A copy of the agreement itself was also shared with all board members.

Then the fee to be paid for the license itself (€2500,-) was discussed as well as options to reduce the costs involved and to work with a license fee that consists of a fixed and variable part. Quite a large part of the fee is for the trophies. The remaining part is for expenses made by the Essda member who provides support (travel and accommodation for one or more support visits), certificates that are handed out (couples in the finals who have not won a trophy), meals and drinks for competition

officials, and if applicable additional costs for shipment of the trophies. Part of the fee also has to be kept aside for unexpected costs.

Up to now the full amount of €2500,- has been required for the organisation of the EuroGames. For now it does not seem feasible to reduce the fee for a license agreement or to work with a fixed and variable part for the license fee. After this discussion the decision was taken to maintain a fixed amount of money for the license fee and to keep this at €2500,- .

In order to arrive at a board decision on the professional consultancy fee board members were first asked their opinion n whether or not to ask a fee for consultancy on top of money covering travel and accommodation costs. In order to take a decision this topic was put to the vote. A majority of the votes was in favour of not charging a fee for consultancy. So this is what we would like to share with our membership: Essda board members will not charge a fee for time spent on consultancy in case of supporting organisers of EuroGames / European Championships.

Another suggestion that was made at the previous AGM was to include more detailed information in the Financial Report about expenses made by board members. The board understands the need to be as transparent as possible to our membership about financial matters. In the financial report August 2013 – December 2013 the treasurer has complied with the request to provide more detailed information.

#### **4. European Championships 2014 / EuroGames 2015**

Much time and energy has been devoted to having European Championships in Blackpool in 2014, and a same-sex dance competition at the EuroGames in Stockholm in 2015. Both Davy and Hadass have been involved with Blackpool 2014. Davy has been the liaising partner between ESSDA and the organising body in Blackpool, establishing the agreement to make it happen and for the European Championship to be help there. Both Davy and Hadass helped with choosing the panel of judges. Hadass will be more involved with constructing and running the competition. Diana will be liaising partner between competition officials, registration desk and other volunteers.

Hadass held negotiations with the organisers of the EuroGames 2015 in Stockholm. ESSDA and the organisers have come to an agreement that the European Championship will run under the auspices of ESSDA, with ESSDA guiding it all the way through. The challenge in Stockholm is that there is not a local Same-Sex body to work with and so we will have to look for a way to find a dancing institution willing to aid in the creating of the competition.

#### **5. Communication**

In the past year it still turned out not to be feasible to publish two newsletters on same-sex dancing news beyond topics by the ESSDA board. Instead, several news topics have been shared with our membership either on the website, by email or on ESSDA's Facebook page.

Publishing competition results and more in general keeping the website up to date have been discussed at board meetings several times. The board member involved could not spend the time required for this due to personal and work circumstances. As part of these discussions it was suggested to ask for organisers to submit competition results in a fixed format. This would make it easier for site visitors to go through these results and find relevant information. It was decided not to

do so for the time being because it would require much more effort and time from organisers to comply with this.

Another observation that may or may not be related to this is that the Facebook page is used to announce same-sex competitions.

It might be worthwhile to discuss with our membership how, where and by whom news items could or should be shared, and for what kind of information or news the website should be used.

## 6. The Board and (re-)elections

Last year two candidates applied for a position in the ESSDA board and were accepted by our membership at the AGM: Michal Vaníček (Czech Republic) and Sören Stauffer-Kruse (UK). At the AGM Thorsten Reulen (Germany) offered to fill in the remaining vacancy. Even though the proper procedure for co-opting was not followed, Thorsten was accepted as a temporary board member. This resulted in the following composition for the ESSDA Board 2013 – 2014:

Hadass Armon (UK)	Female Co-President
Davy Brocatus (Belgium)	Male Co-President and Treasurer
Diana Vinke (Netherlands)	General Secretary
Frank Morche (Germany)	Membership Officer
Michal Vaníček (Czech Republic)	General Board Member
Sören Stauffer-Kruse (UK)	General Board Member
Thorsten Reulen (Germany)	General Board Member

The following Board members' term comes to an end in June 2014:

Diana Vinke (stands for re-election) and  
Frank Morche

This means that there is room for one new board member (the ESSDA Constitution says that that the Board should consist of at least 5 and no more than 9 members and that the number of board members can be specified in the Bylaws; our Bylaws specify that the Board shall consist of 7 members).

The Board has informed ESSDA members about this vacancy but has not received any applications.

31 May 2014

Diana Vinke

Secretary to ESSDA Board

## **Appendix Outcomes ESSDA 2020 Survey**

### **REQUEST MAILED TO NATIONAL BODIES**

“The world of same-sex dancing is evolving and ESSDA is looking ahead to 2020. The ESSDA board is getting in touch with all national bodies to find out what your members would like ESSDA to focus on.

We would like for you to ask your members (have a discussion with your board members or your wider membership at your next AGM) what they see as the five main areas ESSDA should focus on. We will then collect the feedback from all national bodies and develop a strategy for the coming years.”

### **RESPONSES FROM SIX NATIONAL BODIES HAVE BEEN CATEGORISED AS FOLLOWS:**

#### **Judges:**

- Investigate the possibility of training for adjudicators for Equality dance-sport events and establish a database of adjudicators who are qualified to judge equality dance-sport competitions. (board)
- Commitment to the quality of the judges, giving them knowledge about equality dancing
- increase / secure the level of quality of judges, e.g. by releasing a judging licence for same-sex dancing (in Hungary, for example, judges for same-sex dancing not have relevant mainstream dancing background, so they cannot gain a judging licence)... Maybe a European Same-Sex license?
- Set up a list of judges of same-sex dancing to let the event organizers know who is able to judge their competitions. Maybe also create some rules how to get a judge licence. The mainstream judges should be at least somehow instructed before - our dance category is still a bit different and we have to respect it. I would also give a possibility to same-sex dancers to judge the competitions (of course if they are not dancing there). I think the medal from the highest category might be a good qualification for doing this.

#### **Quality / identity of same-sex dancing:**

- to strengthen the excellence /identity of equality dancing (especially in the ladies section), not going to be a copy of mainstream dancing
- Liaise closely with the organizers of large international gay sports events, e.g., EuroGames and Outgames, to ensure the enhancement of the status of dance-sport and ensure the high quality of the dance-sport competitions. (board)
- Archive of same sex dancing - homepage for active members, journalists and others, which presents same-sex competitive and social dancing with all its differences. Could inspire to a systematic understanding of the breadth of same-sex dancing and culture.
- set up a list of trainers to let dancers know the possibilities of training with experienced trainers

#### **Information / communication:**

- Issue regular reports about its ongoing activities and future planning to the national bodies and their membership. (board)
- Website: with information about tournaments, results and news (the old one was clearer and more helpful)
- Make the ESSDA website clearer and more useful. We are still missing a quality competition service and there are also for example no information about members, national bodies, local dancing and so on. Also the design could be more attractive even for casual visitors.
- Establish a clear and universal system how to get and present results from the ESSDA competitions. All the results should be presented as soon as possible and in a comprehensible form

- All the expenses of ESSDA should be transparent and members of ESSDA should have a chance to check them
- Increase ESSDA's visibility, also in terms of what ESSDA achieves from a membership point of view, e.g. ask competition organisers to give Essda members a discount for participant / spectator tickets. Another idea might be to send a mail to all members about the results of the 'Essda 202' survey

#### **Promotion same-sex dancing:**

- Intensify, and in some cases establish, (board) contacts with dance-sport federations (mainstream) to further the positive perception of equality dancing
- Develop and carry out (board) a PR campaign to
  - o Inform and encourage new equality dancers
  - o Disseminate information and issue press reports to the media and regional and international (mainstream and Equality) dance-sport federations
- Information and promotion/boost in the public
- Support people who are interested in same-sex dancing and motivate them to start. Also motivate current competitive couples. For most dancers it is very demotivating when they realize, that they have to spend hundreds of Euros for fees and travel costs, just to join the competition, and then, even if they win, they get nothing except a medal. Maybe we should think also about financial prizes, at least for the finalist or winners.

#### **Coordination / support of competitions / collaboration:**

- Establish and carry out a plan to better coordinate the competition calendar. (board)
- Suggestion of competition rules (as you do)
- Coordination and support of international competitions, especially European Championships
- Collaboration with the Equality-Sports-Associations of the different countries
- Collaboration and affiliation between established dance organs without drowning out our uniqueness in terms of sportsmanship and sociability. Mapping out how it has been achieved in different countries and what the perspectives are.
- The importance of the local same sex competitions. How can the local comps draw on Essda. How can Essda draw on the local comps. How does ESSDA see itself in relationship to the comps? As part of this: The relationship between local competitions and European championships (Nordic withdrew its application to host the European championships 2013 because we felt the cost was too high and the legal implications and practical conditions difficult to accept.) The local comps should feel represented by Essda and not exploited (I realize that exploitation was never the intention, but it suggests that the relationship between Essda and local comps may be a sensitive matter.)
- Organise European Championships
- increase / secure the level of quality of competitions
- a way to control the voting with respect to the big differences in the number of (sometimes straight) members of the national bodies
- have one truly 'senior' age category

#### **Funding / sponsorship / fees:**

- Funding and sponsorship: International comps are the way to keep competitive same sex dance dancing alive and vibrant. The cost for the dancers and supporters are very high. Can we think about finding means through funding or sponsorship?
- Set limits for the registration fees, especially for World and European Championships