



European Same-Sex Dance Association

ESSDA AGM 2014 Minutes

Friday 13th June 2014, Empress Ballroom, Blackpool

Attending: Dörte Lange (Germany, DVET and TTC Rot-Gold Köln), Vernon Kemp (UK, UKSSDC), John Church (UK), Penny Johnson (UK), Angela Brooks (UK), Yvonne Settle (UK), Tori Settle (UK), Jocelyn Pearson (UK), Jo Chilvers (UK), Mary White (UK), Ingeborg Petersen (Germany), Benedict Kraus (UK), Patrick Sharkey (UK), Mary Matthews (UK), Carley Hanlam (UK), Alex Lewalle, Sören Stauffer-Kruse (UK), Thorsten Reulen (Germany, Pink Ballroom), Michal Vaníček (Czech Republic, CSSDA), Hadass Armon (UK), Davy Brocatus (Belgium), Diana Vinke (Netherlands).
The quorum of 5% of the members was reached.

Chair: Hadass Armon, Co-President

1 Opening

Attendees are warmly welcomed by our Co-Presidents to the Annual General Meeting 2014 held at the Empress Ballroom in Blackpool.

Sören needs to leave right after the opening, due to final preparations for the competition.

2 Approval of the minutes ESSDA AGM 07/08/2013

The minutes of the 2013 AGM had been published on the Essda website end of 2013 and had been emailed to all Essda members two weeks before the 2014 AGM. The chair asks whether there are any comments or questions related to the minutes. Since there are not any, a vote to approve the minutes is proposed by Vernon and seconded by Dörte.

3 Annual Report August 2013-2014 by the Secretary

The Annual Report by the secretary had been mailed to all Essda members two weeks before the AGM. The chair thanks the secretary for the good job she has done and asks her to highlight the main topics covered by the report. This triggers a discussion for some topics: the Senior Age category (see Section 6), communication (see Section 4), member commitment and support (see Section 4), and support and quality of local competitions (see Section 7).

4 Financial Report August - December 2013 by the Treasurer

Copies of the financial report are handed out. Davy points out that due to the change of the organisational year, the report only covers five months: from the previous AGM in Antwerp to the end of 2013. In this period only few money transfers have been done. The year 2013 is closed with a positive result of €996,-.

The question is asked whether there is another way of collecting the membership fee because the costs involved for a money transfer from a non-European country are almost as high as the membership fee. Working with a standing order might be less expensive. The board will investigate this option.

Hadass remarks there seems to be a gap, a split between the extent to which countries are represented at dance competitions and the extent to which these countries are supporting the dance community, the exception being the UK. German dancers do not seem to be willing to pay the €10,- for an individual membership. What is the reason for this? Dörte answers that they do not see the necessity for this, they do not see the benefits of being a paying Essda member. Hadass asks whether Dörte can take this 'gap issue' to DVET.

Related remarks are made: members do not see who / what Essda is, what Essda stands for, and what Essda does. Suggestions that are made to do something about this include the use of the Essda Facebook page to communicate what the benefits are, involving national associations by writing a letter, and demanding a €10,- membership for participation in future dance competitions with adequate notification of this in advance. The board will explore these and other options in their next board meeting(s). Another suggestion is to ask national associations for a small additional fee for each of their paying members. But the board had already approached the national associations about this option and some of them appeared not to be able to implement this for various reasons (see Section 7 of AGM 2013 minutes for a more detailed account).

5 Re-election of ESSDA board members

As was announced as part of the invitation for the AGM, for two board members their term had ended: Frank Morche and Diana Vinke. Only Diana is standing for re-election. No candidacies for the position of board member were received prior to the AGM. This means that for next year the Essda board will consist of six board members: Hadass, Davy, Michal, Thorsten, Sören and Diana.

The board is lacking a Membership Officer and a webmaster. This will be communicated on the Essda website and Facebook page. Asking people personally often works better so everyone is asked to check if they know someone who has experience as a webmaster, and if so to ask this person to step forward and get in touch with an Essda board member.

Another suggestion that is made is to announce the AGM differently, to make it more appealing for members to join the meeting, for example by announcing it as a heated debate.

6 Change of Senior Age Category in the ESSDA Competition Rules

The proposed change of the Senior Age Category in the Essda Competition Rules had been included in the Annual Report: a minimum age of 45 years for both partners of a dance couple. The reason for proposing this change was that there are too few competitors for two different senior competitions and it was felt that, given the average age of competing dance couples, a minimum age of 35 years is not really 'senior'. A discussion arises on the step from a minimum age of 35 / 40 years to 45 years. An argument in favour of the new minimum age criterion is that couples with a minimum age of 35 / 40 years are felt to be strong enough to compete in the open (age) competition. An argument against this new age criterion is that for dance partners who differ greatly in age it takes much more time before they can enter the Senior age Category compared to dance partners who have about the same age.

This discussion leads to a new proposal for defining the Senior Age Category: a dance couple has a minimum combined age of 90 years and the youngest partner must be at least 40 years of age at the time of the completion. The chair asks who would be in favour of these new criteria. A majority of the attendees are in favour, with two attendees against the proposal and one attendee abstaining from expressing an opinion. The board will discuss this new proposal at their next board meeting, taking into account the discussion and members' opinions.

7 Goals and Plans for 2014 – 2015 and beyond

As briefly touched upon in the overview the secretary gave of the Annual Report, the board has done a survey among Essda member associations to learn how they look upon Essda's role and upon goals to be accomplished in the years to come. The outcomes of this survey have been included in the Annual Report. The members present at the meeting are asked for their remarks on the outcomes and for their suggestions.

The board is asked to set a limit to spectator and competitor fees for dance competitions: The fees for Cleveland are unacceptably high. Davy answers that we have been trying to do something about this and that we have reached our limits to get these fees reduced.

Some options for supporting and raising the quality of local competitions are suggested:

With respect to supporting local competition organisers: Davy points out that this issue was already raised in Budapest, two years ago. Since then the board has tried to implement the Essda label, which in essence is a quality label, and to increase member commitment and involvement. We encouraged organisers to go for the Essda label and get additional publicity for their competition. But we have not succeeded with the Essda label, maybe because we did not communicate our goals and intentions clearly enough to competition organisers. A remark is made about the costs involved: if an Essda board member needs to be present, the local organisers have to cover these costs, which is not feasible for many organisers. Is the presence of a board member really required to monitor if the Essda Competition Rules are applied? Might it be possible to do a check on the organiser's competition website, and ask somebody / an official who will be there anyway to check on this during the competition and report this back to the Essda board? Can this be a rolling thing and ripple out? We can start by making a list of people who know how to apply the Essda Competition Rules, for example the chairs of judges, and see how this list can be expanded because we will need quite a lot of names. Dörte comments that this would work for the German competitions.

With respect to 'quality of judges': Vernon is against well-performing on dance competitions being a qualification for becoming a judge because many (former) competitors appear not to be able to step out of their own class. A criterion for him is that a judge is qualified for judging both ballroom and Latin. Dörte puts forward that for Germany a database has been made, containing the names of judges who have judged same-sex competitions. This might work but only if such a database contains a mix of experienced and new judges (so it should not be a closed system, keeping the same people in it and not giving room for new people).

8 Update EuroGames 2015 in Stockholm

Hadass gives a brief account of the negotiations with respect to the EuroGames 2015. Agreements have been made and a copy of the license has been sent for signing. Support of the EuroGames dance competition is crucial so Hadass urges everyone to join the competition in Stockholm, as a spectator or a competitor.

9 Q & A

- Mary White: for the Pink Juke Box Trophy offering hosted housing is appreciated very much. She suggests promoting hosted housing for the EuroGames in Stockholm, too.
- Michal: offers to become Membership Officer now that Frank Morche has resigned from the Essda board.

The meeting is closed with mutual thanks between the board and the other participants.