

## Minutes of the 45th General Meeting Agros, October 8th – 10th, 2021

### Partner towns present:

Agros, Altea, Bad Kötzing, Bellagio, Bundoran, Judenburg, Köszeg, Preveza, Rokiškis, Sesimbra, Siret, Sušice, Türi.

### Partner towns present via Zoom:

Chojna, Granville, Holstebro, Meerssen, Niederanven, Rovinj/Rovigno, Sherborne, Skofja Loka.

### Partner towns not present:

Asikkala (failed login in Zoom), Houffalize, Marsaskala (advance notice), Oxelösund, Sigulda, Tryavna, Zvolen.

The mayor of Agros, Michalis Constantinides, welcomes everyone in “the most beautiful municipality in Cyprus”. He expresses his hopes that the pandemic will pass and that everybody can travel again. He thanks Nicolas Christofi and Andreas Latzias for all preparations of the General Meeting, all towns present and hopes everybody will stay safe and healthy.

The president of the Douzelage, Annigje Kruijtbosch, thanks Agros for organizing the General Meeting (GM) under these difficult circumstances. Many delegations did not make it to Agros because of last minute problems with flight schedules, and part of the delegations are present online due to COVID-19 restrictions. She cannot thank former vice-president Mike Balfour enough for selecting Agros as a new member in 2011, the town is beautiful.

### 1. Opening of General Meeting

The president of the Douzelage, Annigje Kruijtbosch, opens the GM and welcomes all delegations on behalf of herself and the vice presidents, Mette Grith Sørensen, Miha Ješe and Tibi Rotaru. It is finally possible to organise a GM and we are all happy to be able to see each other again, either in Agros or online.

The agenda is approved and two topics are added to the agenda:

- The online Language Café in Niederanven (11.)
- Global Greening, Bundoran (11.)

### 2. Approval of the Asikkala GM minutes

The minutes of the 2019 GM in Asikkala are unanimously approved.

### 3. Approval of the accounts 2019 and 2020 (January 2019 - December 2020)

Due to COVID-19 and the problems with flight schedules, the treasurer Harry Crombag is not present, nor the two auditors Sheryl van den Berg (Niederanven) and Olga Melkusová (Sušice). To be able to proceed with the approval of the accounts 2019 and 2020, the presidency has asked Donatella Gandola to step in and check the accounts online. She advises the GM positively, stating that the treasurer has done an excellent job.

Donatella Gandola (Bellagio) and Veronica Marešová (Sušice) are appointed as auditors for 2022.

#### 4. Annual Douzelage membership

The presidency proposes to keep the annual fee for Douzelage towns at a level of:

- € 100,- for 2020;
- € 175,- for 2021;
- € 350,- for 2022. This includes the costs of the translation equipment.

The General Meeting unanimously agrees with the proposal.

#### 5. Functions within our organisation

The presidency proposes to reimburse travel and accomodation expenses for the GM for those people that perform necessary activities for the GM. The proposal is as follows:

	People	Situation now		Proposed situation	
		Transport *	Hotel/food **	Transport *	Hotel/food **
Translators	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Former presidents	3	No	Yes	No	Yes
President	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vice-president	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Secretary	1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Treasurer	1	No	No	Yes	Yes
Minutes secretary	1	No	No	Yes	Yes
Chair EM	1	No	No	Yes	Yes
Chair YM	1	No	No	Yes	Yes

\* Expenses covered by Douzelage Europe

\*\* Expenses covered by hosting town

Wolfgang Kerscher (Bad Kötzing) asks if the budgets of Douzelage allow these expenses. If the town contributions are sufficient to cover these costs.

Vice president Miha Ješe states that Douzelage is financially healthy and that this proposal will not change much. He stresses the fact that all the people, within the above mentioned functions, need to be present at the meeting and therefore should be compensated for their trip and stay.

Veronica Marešová (Sušice) asks for the need for a minutes-secretary. This can be organised in many ways without someone travelling around Europe. The president answers that this is open for debate, but that the quality of the minutes is important. Finding different solutions for this every year does not guarantee minutes of sufficient quality.

The GM votes in favour of the proposal unanimously.

## 6. Changes in the constitution of Douzelage

The proposals are provided in a separate annex to the agenda.

### Amendment to paragraph 3. Participation

In the 2018 GM in Oxelösund there was a unanimous vote to keep Sherborne as a member of Douzelage. At that time the outcome of the Brexit-deal was not clear. Member towns expressed concerns about funding by the EU if and when Sherborne stays within Douzelage. The presidency had stressed the fact that Douzelage as an organisation does not receive funding by the EU, only individual projects requested by a Douzelage town/ngo receive funding. Sherborne has stated that it will either find funding for themselves - when not provided - to be able to participate, or, when necessary, it will stay out of a project. Funding does not stand in the way of a membership of Sherborne.

The proposed amendment for paragraph 3. of the constitution, the subject "Participation" is to add a section B. as follows:

Participation.

- a. Membership of the organization is restricted to one town from each of the member states of the European Union.
- b. **Towns of former European Union member states or committees of these towns can be members of the Douzelage if the other members agree by a formal majority.**

Veronica Marešová (Sušice) asks if the amendment of the constitution should allow European countries like Norway and Switzerland to join Douzelage. Vice president Tibi Rotaru points out that this is a different discussion, that the amendment is specifically proposed to make membership of Sherborne possible.

The delegations of Altea and Sesimbra express their appreciation for Sherborne as an active member, but they are hesitant to change the constitution, fearing it will change the spirit of Douzelage. Béla Báthly (Köszeg) stresses the fact that the constitution should serve Douzelage, not limit. When times and circumstances change, the constitution should be adapted accordingly.

Wolfgang Kerscher (Bad Kötzting) explains - in response to earlier raised questions - that the voting in a GM is only secret when there is an election. All other subjects, also changes to the constitution, should be voted upon in an open way by raising hands.

The presidency explains the proposed amendment. It is solely meant to make it possible for Sherborne to stay member of Douzelage, as voted for in 2018, and does not change Douzelage fundamentally.

The amendment to paragraph 3. of the Douzelage constitution was unanimously accepted by the GM.

Mike Balfour (Sherborne), present via Zoom, expresses 'unbounded gratitude' on behalf of the whole Sherborne Douzelage committee.

#### Amendments to paragraph 4. Organisation

The proposed amendments are:

- 4b. **The General Meeting will be chaired by the President or, in his/her absence, one of the three Vice-Presidents. The Education Meeting will be chaired by the President of Education. The Youth Meeting will be chaired by the President of the Youth.**
- 4c. **All Presidents and Vice-Presidents shall be elected for a term of three years. They are eligible for re-election. Each must be a citizen of a different town. All positions have a maximum term of six years (twice three years) with the exception of the Youth President. He/she will be elected for one term (three years). The President and Vice-Presidents will be elected by an absolute majority at a general meeting of The Douzelage, nominations having been received by the Returning Officer and circulated by him/her at least four weeks before the meeting at which the elections are to be held. The Returning Officer will be appointed at the previous meeting of The Douzelage. The President of Education will be elected within the Education Meeting. The Youth President will be elected within the Youth Meeting. Procedure as mentioned before.**

**As for the voting: Each delegation may cast two votes in the GM, one vote in the EM and two votes in the YM.**

Veronica Marešová (Sušice) thinks the President should appoint the Youth President. The YM consists of youngsters who rarely come back the next year. Many of them are very young and know too little about Douzelage. The candidates should be of a certain minimum age.

Ovidiu Oniciuc (Siret), Youth President, substantiates that the youth is able to decide their own path.

Skofja Loka sends two youngsters to every Youth Meeting, one has already visited a Youth Meeting, one is new. It is a way that guarantees continuity.

Holstebro adds that campaigning can start before the meeting, so everyone present know what is at stake and who are the candidates. The President says the presidency should not overrule the YM. The (preferable) age of those attending the YM is between 15 and 25 years old.

Maria Crnac-Rocco (Rovinj/Rovigno) has a suggestion in addition to paragraph 4b. of the constitution. Whenever the President is not able to attend the GM, he/she will appoint one of the Vice-presidents to chair the GM.

The presidency acknowledges the importance of this amendment. It will be put on the agenda of the next GM in Skofja Loka (August 2022).

Béla Básthly (Köszeg) questions the need for two votes per town. Bad Kötzting agrees, a town should express one opinion not two. Holstebro thinks two votes is preferable as different opinions can be expressed by one delegation.

The presidency would like to further discuss this point in the next GM.

All delegations present - except for Sušice - vote in favour of the amendments to paragraph 4. of the Douzelage constitution.

#### 7. Social Media and PR

Douzelage presidency prepares to make two videos:

- A video celebrating 30 years of Douzelage. Shane Smyth (Bundoran) and Julian Preidl (Bad Kötzting) will interview you today, and everyone who has old film footage from 30 years ago is welcome to share it with Shane and Julian.
- An institutional video explaining Douzelage of about 60 – 90 seconds.

## 8. Past projects and activities within our towns

### Chojna

- The Erasmus+ project “Quality in vocational training through Euroapprenticeships” organised a 4-week work experience for 30 students of Technical College with a specialist units of IT, construction, catering and hotel management. Participating towns were Köszeg, Marsaskala, Siret.
- The Erasmus+ project “Towards Zero Waste” was created to meet young people’s needs in the area of skills and abilities connected with protection of environment, ecology, influence on local communities in order to promote proecological attitude and behaviour, to initiate actions raising awareness of existing threats against the environment and above all to emphasise influence of each human being on the world. Participating towns were Köszeg, Marsaskala, Siret and Konya (Turkey).
- The Erasmus+ project “From training to work” is vocational mobility of students from technical and vocational school in Chojna. Students of catering, hotel management, construction and IT from technical secondary school as well as car mechanics from vocational school will have a four week apprenticeships in companies in Köszeg, Marsaskala and Siret.
- The “Digital citizen in digital world” project improved the knowledge and abilities of the students allowing them using the digital technology in a safe and effective way. 40 students plus teachers from Complex of Upper Secondary Schools in Chojna have participated in the project, students from receiving schools from Finland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia.

Cezary Salamonczyk expresses the wish on behalf of Chojna to also be invited for projects that are initiated by other member towns.

### Bundoran

- The project “Global Greening”: 12 of our partner towns (with 15 landmarks) turned green to mark the Irish national holiday St Patrick’s Day in 2020 and 2021. Bundoran thanks all towns and invites all towns in the GM to participate in 2022!
- The project has generated publicity for Douzelage as well, for instance in Bad Kötzting and Bundoran.

### Köszeg

- From August 26th to 28th Köszeg was the host of the third meeting of the project “Juniors for seniors – active ageing”. 11 Douzelage partner towns participated in discussions and shared best practices on how to connect generations to prevent the elderly from being excluded from society.
- Köszeg opened a Europe Park in which Douzelage is well presented. Among it a display cabinet in which typical artisanal products from Douzelage towns are shown. Köszeg repeats the request to receive town stories. These will be incorporated on interactive information boards.
- Köszeg has also joined an Erasmus+ project that involves a small company in Judenburg called Ideum and three school districts from Köszeg, Styria and Bavaria.

### Judenburg

- From the 23rd to the 25th September the 4th project “Juniors for Seniors – Active Ageing” zoomed in on transport and accessibility for seniors. Eight partner towns presented the obstacles and best practices in their towns and discussed the different ideas and solutions.
- By the end of June 2021 there was a festival in Judenburg: “Summer Vibes”. During this festival a few of the partner towns of Douzelage were present.

### Granville

- At September 20th 2021 students from the Lycée Julliot la Morandiere in Granville and their teachers, together with students from Asikkala, helped to clean the beaches, assisted by a youth integration and training organisation. It is part of an Erasmus+ project with Asikkala, set up after the teachers from both towns met in Asikkala in 2019 during the Douzelage Education Meeting.

## 9. Ongoing projects and activities within our towns

### Škofja Loka

- The project “Juniors for Seniors – Active Ageing” consists of six different projects, organised in different Douzelage towns:
  - o A Mayors Meeting on “Participatory Budgets” in Škofja Loka September 2019 (14 towns)
  - o Introductory meeting in Škofja Loka in September 2020 (9 towns)
  - o The mentioned meeting in Köszeg, August 2021 (11 towns)
  - o The mentioned meeting in Judenburg, September 2021 ((8 towns)
  - o In April 2022 there will be a meeting in Bad Kötzting on Flats for seniors and youngsters (11 towns)
  - o The final meeting will be in Škofja Loka during the GM in August 2022.

## 10. Banner

During the GM 2022 in Škofja Loka the new banner will be officially presented. Miha Ješe shows a photo of the new Douzelage banner. It is truly beautiful. Thank you, Škofja Loka, for the assembling and manufacturing.

## 11. Future projects and activities within our towns

### Niederanven

Sheryl van den Berg expresses many thanks on behalf of Niederanven for all warm condolences for the loss of Marie-Antoinette Paquet-Tondt.

- Niederanven organises a language café or Sproochecafé for immigrants who want to learn the languages spoken in Luxemburg. During COVID the Sproochecafé went online, which turned out to be a success. Niederanven is launching the idea of a project for learning the languages spoken in the Douzelage towns in the setting of an online Sproochecafé. Anyone who is interested is invited to join. Rovinj-Rovigno shows interest in the Sproochecafé and asks for the specifics.

## 12. Website Douzelage Europe

The website for Douzelage Europe, [www.douzelage.eu](http://www.douzelage.eu), is the official showcase of Douzelage. The president asks the member towns for more input on projects and events to publish on the website.

Another platform that is used is Facebook. This is more used to publish “the fun part”. Every member town should have an administrator for the Facebook page and upload Douzelage activities.

## 13. Autumn Meeting Mayors of Douzelage

The presidency calls for towns who may be interested in organising a mayors meeting. The costs of a meeting, hosting only half of Douzelage towns, which is a realistic number, with two delegates per town, are about € 7.000,-.

Sherborne expresses the desire to organise a mayors meeting.

Köszeg warns for the fact that a mayors meeting may hollow out the GM. Mayors have a strong desire to make decisions. It is important to involve the mayors, but perhaps not on a yearly basis, separate from the GM. Rovinj-Rovigno states that it is important to keep the mayors involved as they decide on the finances.

#### 14. **Program for further General Meetings**

- 2022 Škofja Loka
- 2023 Rovinj–Rovigno
- 2024 Marsaskala
- 2025 Preveza will discuss the hosting of the 2025 GM within the municipality.

#### 15. **Presentation of Škofja Loka 2022 and setting a date**

Škofja Loka proposes to hold the GM from the 25th to the 28th of August 2022. The dates are chosen by several participants of the Education Meeting as the best dates inbetween the Summer holiday and the start of the new schoolyear. Sušice, Rovinj–Rovigno and Meerssen fear that the students are still on holiday and will not participate.

The majority of the GM votes in favour of the proposed dates, Škofja Loka will start with booking the hotels.

#### 16. **Rovinj-Rovigno 2023**

The dates for the GM in 2023 will not be in August, but April or May 2023.

#### 17. **New chair for Education**

Pirjo Ala-Hemmilä from Asikkala has stepped down as president of the EM, because of a new and different job. She no longer lives in Asikkala. Jože Bogataj (Škofja Loka) will serve as acting president until the next EM in 2022.

#### 18. **Elections Board of Douzelage in 2022**

The president states the following: "Statutory the board will step down in 2022. Due to Covid-19, the board feels that we have not completed their tasks entirely. During our terms we have introduced - among others - a new website, the use of social media (facebook and instagram), a new Douzelage banner, more workshops during GM's and the Mayors Meeting.

The board still needs to work on the visibility and implementation of the results of our projects and wants as many professionals (municipality and otherwise) to benefit from these results. (The current project on Juniors for Seniors is already taking large steps.)

Although the Youth section is enthusiastic and motivated, more visibility (website and other) would also be preferable.

The board would like to work on the above topics and asks for prolongation of their second term with two years (till 2024)."

Sherborne reacts by emphasising that this must be an exception, not a new rule. The six year term always guarantees 'a fresh wind' within Douzelage.

Sušice asks if this also goes for the presidency of the EM. The presidency says this prolongation is only for the GM presidency.

All delegations present vote in favour of the prolongation of the term of the presidency until the GM in 2024.

## 19. Douzelage 30th anniversary

The president reads a letter of founding father Karel Majoor who tells about his experiences over the years with Douzelage and his memories of the very beginning in 1991.

“Dear Douzelage delegates, assembled in Garieis (agreeable) and Filoksenos (hospitable) Agros,

It's a pleasure for me as first previous president of the Douzelage to address me to you to wish you a very successful and fruitful 45th General Meeting, convening for the first time in Agros.

I am very happy and proud that what started 30 years ago as an idealistic project to lessen borders and create friendship and understanding between fellow European citizens still prospers and grows. It's your challenge and demanding task to continue and deepen this Bond, not killing like 007, but thrilling as 027!!

In that spirit I thank you on beforehand for your energy and enthusiasm, your zest and optimism, your tolerance and mutual understanding.

May our Douzelage in that way continue to prosper and bear fruit. I am looking forward to meet you again, hopefully next year in Skofja Loka.

For you know : C'est la chance de notre ère : Européens en amitié ! It's the chance of our lifetime: being Europeans in friendship!

Karel Majoor, (honorary) president 1993-1996”

The presidency has made special certificates for the delegates who joined the first meeting as 'founding fathers' and hands them over to those delegations. The ones who are not present will receive the certificate by mail.

## 20. Any Other Business

All towns thank Agros and the presidency for organising the GM.

## 21. Closing the General Meeting 2021

The president closes General Meeting 2021 - the first hybrid GM ever - and expresses her gratitude for a fantastic program by Agros and the way all delegations have dealt with the more difficult issues on the agenda and the unusual circumstances under which this - hybrid - meeting was held. Douzelage Agros and the delegations made the best of it, either present in Cyprus or online..



### To-do list or do-not forget list

#### ad 3.

Donatella Gandola (Bellagio) and Veronica Marešová (Sušice) are appointed as auditors for the GM of 2022 in Skofja Loka.

#### ad 6.

Amendments to paragraph 4b.

"Whenever the President is not able to attend the GM, he/she will appoint one of the Vice-presidents to chair the GM." will be put on the agenda of the next GM in Skofja Loka (August 2022).

Amendments to paragraph 4c.

The need for two votes per town or change it into one will be further discussed in the next GM.

#### ad 7.

If you have Douzelage film and photo footage of around 30 years ago, please share this with Shane Smyth and/or Julian Preidl. They are composing a film of 30 years of Douzelage.

shane@discoverbundoran.com

julian@preidl.de

#### ad 8.

For the interactive information boards Kőszeg encourages you to send them interesting historical facts, a legend, a tradition, a special food dish etc. Things your town is proud of and is worth sharing. Please provide them with a short story (10-20 sentences) and a photo related to the story or about your town. The deadline has long passed. Kőszeg would like to start preparing the design of the boards soon.

#### ad 11.

Niederanven is launching the idea of a project for learning the languages spoken in the Douzelage towns in the setting of an online Sproochecafé (language cafe). Anyone interested?

#### ad 12.

The website for Douzelage Europe - [www.douzelage.eu](http://www.douzelage.eu) - needs your input. Please keep on sharing your Douzelage projects, events, exchanges etc.

Same goes for Facebook. Does your town have an appointed administrator for Douzelage Facebook to upload your town activities? If not, please look for one and contact us.

#### ad 13.

The idea to have the new tradition of a Mayors Meetings within Douzelage and with what frequency should be discussed further. It will be put on the agenda for the next GM.

(The next one will be held in Bad Kötzing during the event 'Juniors for Seniors' in April 2022. Sherborne also expressed the desire to organise a mayors meeting in future.)

#### ad 14.

Preveza will discuss the hosting of the 2025 GM within the municipality.

#### ad 17.

We will start the procedure for a new chair of EM.

**Last but not least the presidency would like to ask you when you are not able to attend a GM to check in online and... stay online for the whole duration of the meeting.**