

President's report 2022 AGM

Activities during the past year

The past year continued to be a very busy time for the Montessori Europe Board; we communicated virtually and provided opportunities for our members to connect, engage and reflect on our monthly webinars and weekly website inspirations. The website, launched last summer, is our main means of communication and our media posts reflect our activities and serve as prompts for the members and guests to engage with current issues concerning education.

The three Saturday summits organised and delivered by the board facilitated more in depth exploration of issues relating to technology, offered practical ideas for the classroom and opened door for more engagements with adolescents which we hope to extend further during the Congress by facilitating Adolescent Open Space. Our aim is to give a platform to this age group and connect them with issues relating to sustainability and climate challenges.

Our working groups, led by Board members continued to promote Montessori research, sustainability and engaged with young people benefiting from Montessori secondary education and their teachers. We have also given our partners and sponsors the opportunity to promote their products and projects and we thank everyone for their continued support for our work. Our thanks also go to all the speakers and facilitators of our webinars who have so generously shared their expertise and time with the participants.

As our doors opened to 'post pandemic' life, we have come to realise that our Webinar audiences prefer to listen to recordings of these events in their own time, rather than committing to a set time webinar event. This change will be reflected in our plans for connecting with the community during the coming year.

Rationale for Amsterdam 2022 congress

We were excited by the opportunity to plan for a face to face congress in October as the pandemic restrictions gradually eased. At the same time, it was daunting to commit to an expensive venue as Covid continued to raise its head in unexpected ways. None the less, we have taken the bold decision to hold the congress in Amsterdam – which seemed to be such an apt place for our re-

connection not only with our past but also with teachers and administrators of today. We welcomed the generous offer from the Metis Lyceum to use their incredible school as a venue for the congress. The physical space at the school has also prompted a rethink of the congress format, allowing us to engage in small groups and facilitate more in-depth discussions.

Board Elections and office organisation

During the year we have thanked Stephanie Probst for her diligent administrative support and have employed Sandra Springer in the role of General Secretary. Sandra joined the office at the height of the congress preparations and has been a quick learner to the intricacies of our operations.

We have also explored best ways of ensuring financial and legal aspects of the organisation as Joerg Boysen leaves his post of treasurer, after more than 10 years of service on the board, this October. We have come to totally rely on Joerg's expertise and it will be hard to fill his shoes, we will also miss his sense of humour and deep commitment to the organisation. However, we hope that our solution will provide the organisation with the necessary expertise and continuation as Wendelien Bellinger takes over the role. We will also welcome two new members of the board; we look forward to working together in the future.

Membership

The board's efforts to grow the membership through more interactive website, higher social media presence, and special webinar offers to members, as well as the restructure of the membership fees have not really brought the anticipated increase in members. This is disappointing; we feel it also reflects the fast changing communication landscape and online opportunities to access professional development and engage with like-minded groups. The post pandemic "new normal" offers Montessori Europe the opportunity to address its members and re-think how we engage with the community in the future. The response to the congress highlights the fact that ME is known for its annual congress and that having the opportunity to meet face to face continues to be very attractive for our members and their friends. Often whole school teams welcome the opportunity to visit new places, see Montessori practice and engage in conversations about children and their teaching.

Engagement with the wider community

Board members have contributed to two important Montessori publications – The Montessori Handbook edited by Angela Murray and her team and to be published by Bloomsbury in March 2023 and Montessori Perspectives, to be launched at our Congress reception on Saturday evening.

We have also contributed to a presentation to a Conference in Poland and to an online Montessori journal published in Greece.

We have engaged with an Erasmus project focusing of use of technology in Montessori classrooms.

Looking forward

The three working groups will continue virtual connections with members focusing on sustainability and climate, research and work with adolescents and their teachers.

We will also continue the monthly publication of our Sunday inspirations and we will ensure that our communications via newsletters and social media will remain frequent and engaging.

We look forward to organising the next Congress, with the help of our Polish colleagues, as we come to explore issues of social justice and their relevance to our daily work with children and young people.

I would like to thank members of the board for their hard work in ensuring that ME is a vibrant and engaging organisation. My special thanks go to Joerg for his dedicated service to the organisation. I would also like to thank our members for their ongoing support.

Barbara Isaacs

7 October 2022