

President's report 2022-23

Inspired by last year's Amsterdam congress the Board recognises that the congress is the key activity for Montessori Europe. The realisation spurred the Board into action in preparation of the 2023 Congress. Furthermore, the warm welcome and visit to the Faculty of Social Sciences at The University of Gdansk in late January inspired our congress planning which was so aptly titled Promoting Solidarity and Social Justice in Montessori Education. The facilities enabled us to plan for doubling the usual workshops, to organise a full programme for Friday, introduce the Adolescent Forum and focused panel discussion on Sunday morning. At all times we were mindful of our vision to connect with the Montessori community and critically engage with Montessori values and practice in the service of the child.

Working groups

ME's strategic aims focus on Sustainability, Research and Secondary Education. These aims are promoted by our working groups which engaged with the community during the year. They also prepared the Research Day, Adolescent Forum, and Erdkinder workshop, Sustainability and Peace presentation delivered in Gdansk within the Open Space programme on Friday afternoon. During the year we held two virtual meetings with National Organisations looking for way of further engagement with these groups.

Membership

We have grappled with challenges of static membership over the past six years despite all the Board's efforts to attract more members during and post Covid years. We researched our membership records and have come to realise that successful congresses do not necessarily bring new members and that our congresses are usually attended by more non-members than members, yet the non-members are not tempted to join. We also recognise

- "competition" from well-established Montessori associations and newly created organisations,
- availability of plentiful free online professional development offerings,
- pressures of work Montessori educators face every day,
- limitations of our own offering to members.

It is within this context that we would like to highlight the fact that the income from membership does not meet the running costs of the organisation, as demonstrated by the financial report. Whilst we always aim to have a congress surplus to cover this gap, and do have stable financial resources to manage this risk, we are keen to explore new ways of managing the organisation.

Governance and human resources

As we prepare for Board elections in 2024, we would like to inform members that both the President Barbara Isaacs and Treasurer Wendelien Bellinger will not stand for re-election in 2024 due to family reasons. We invite members to put themselves forward to serve the community by becoming Board members, or to recommend suitable candidates. Kindly note that, according to our regular election cycle, further three Board positions are due for re-election in the same year.

We also recognise that to continue with the high-quality communications and with the preparation of the next congress, the organisation needs to be supported not only by the committed volunteer Board but also by a highly skilled paid administrator and congress organiser, going beyond the

current budget for the ME General Secretary. This is likely to further impact the administrative costs of the organisation. We will be seeking to fill this role in 2024.

Way forward

As stated in this report, there is some significant “housekeeping” work to be done by the Board. As we explore how best to manage the organisation, we would like to pause preparations for a congress in 2024, continuing instead with the next congress in 2025. This does not signify a reduction of our efforts to deliver future congresses. On the contrary, we are confident to return with renewed energy and bright ideas in the very near future. We will share our plans and communication in our newsletters.

Barbara Isaacs

29 September 2023