

HISTORY OF THE UIGSE

The adventure of the UIGSE /FSE started on November 1st 1956, in Cologne, Germany. Some young men, from different nationalities and Christian confessions, gathered for a common reflection. At that time, the traumatism caused by World War II was still very present. Then the idea of launching the Federation of European Scouting (FSE) appeared. It was meant to be very modestly a sign of peace on this continent. In a few lines, I suggest to give you a general view of the main steps of this providential and fruitful epic. In order not to bother you with a lot of dates, I am going to present you this 50 year long history in seven steps. My aim is to enable you to have a quite precise idea of the main periods on half a century.

1. From 1956 to 1962, the period of “stammering”:

At that time, there were some units in Germany, England, Belgium and France. The first symptoms of the big changes of the Western society were impregnating Western Europe. People were groping to find new ways. The FSE did not escape from this trend.

In 1960, a first Eurojam took place in France with 400 participants. Previously, an international camp had taken place in Germany in 1957.

2. From 1963 to 1969, the steady bases of the FSE were established:

The Core texts were redacted (Statutes, Religious Directory and Charter). The contacts with the French Administration led to the acknowledgement of the Association of European Guides and Scouts (AGSE). From 300 members in 1963, the association had several thousands at the end of the 60ies. England and Germany disappeared; so FSE was composed only of Belgium and France.

In 1964, the second Eurojam took place in Germany with 700 participants. In 1968, the third one took place in France and also gathered 700 participants.

3. From 1970 to 1975, a very hard period on the scout level as well as on the spiritual level:

Attacks from outside were particularly scathing. In spite of that, the progression of figures went on to reach 19 000 members in 1975. The territory structures were gradually settled. The initiatives of many leaders gave a great and contagious dynamism.

The Canadian association joined us in 1973.

In 1975, it was the Holy Year. In September, 500 Guides and Scouts of Europe on Saint Peter's square, in Rome, took part in the Pontifical Audience. To everyone's surprise, Pope Paul VI declared that he greeted the Scouts of Europe and that he had a great confidence in them. You may imagine the enthusiasm raised by these words among the AGSE. The fact of knowing that our work was recognised and appreciated was a providential encouragement that gave us a long-lasting dynamism.

4. From 1976 to 1986, a very rich period, although it remained very difficult because of the hostile environment:

The AGSE was now quite structured and its members worked hard to go on developing it.

In 1976, Italy and German KPE became members of the FSE. At that time the International Union of European Guides and Scouts (UIGSE – FSE) appeared.

In 1977, the German EPE (Evangelic association) and Switzerland were created.

In 1978, Spain and Portugal joined us.

In 1981, Austria did the same.

Then, in 1984, the fourth Eurojam took place in France. It took a much bigger dimension: 5 000 participants.

On Palm Sunday of the same year, Pope John Paul II gathered young people from the whole world for a great jubilee. 500 French Rovers and Rangers were in Rome.

5. From 1987 to 1989, it was a period of transition for the UIGSE, which was becoming more and more autonomous towards the AGSE:

During that period, the AGSE went on recreating all the tools of the scout method, to enable its male and female leaders to have all documents adapted to each pedagogical branch. Of course, that work was shared by the new associations that wished it.

1989 was a very specific date since the wall of Berlin was knocked down and gradually whole Central and Eastern Europe were set free from the Marxist yoke that reduced the populations to slavery in a materialistic and atheistic utopia.

6. From 1990 to 1995, it was the great period of creations in Central and Eastern Europe:

In 1991, Hungary and Rumania joined us; in 1992, Lithuania did the same, as well as Poland.

Other contacts existed that became real in the following years.

Unfortunately, internal difficulties in the UIGSE slackened this dynamism. Simultaneously, the AGSE went through a very hard period towards the French Administration that nearly suppressed its official agreement.

In spite of that, the fifth Eurojam took place in Italy, with 7 000 participants, and Pope John Paul II granted us an audience in Saint-Peter's basilica.

7. From 1996 to 2003, a period of consolidation and deepening:

Poland began to develop in an very promising way. It committed itself to organise the 6th Eurojam in 2003.

In 1997, Latvia joined the UIGSE; in 1998, Albania did the same.

New contacts were taken: with Bulgarians (Orthodox) welcomed as "aspirants" by the Federal Council of 2002; with the Orthodox Russian association called ORIOUR, recognised as an "observer" in 2003.

In 2003, the 6th Eurojam took place in Poland; it gathered 9 000 Guides and Scouts of Europe. At the same time, the Pontifical Council for the Laity (CPL) recognised the UIGSE/FSE as an association of lay faithful (August 26th 2003).

Today, the adventure goes on! The UIGSE, with its 55 000 members, is gradually organising its structures to be able to answer to its mission, as much as possible, towards Christian scouting.

The UIGSE has kept and reinforces the bases of scouting founded by Father Jacques Sevin in link with Baden-Powell. As soon as 1965, it adopted Father Sevin's ceremonial in its Core texts.

We are all the heirs of this providential march, through each of the associations composing the UIGSE. We are all actors of the development and the flourishing of the Union. Our testimony must awaken and lead young people from Europe and from the world on Jesus' steps. Every one of us is an indispensable worker of this construction!

Some dates:

1st November 1956 FSE,

1960: 1st Eurojam (France),

1963 : Core Texts,

1963 : Belgium,

1964: 2nd Eurojam (Germany),
1966: creation of the guide section
1967: Training camp programme,
1968: 3rd Eurojam (France),
1970: 1st Mac-Laren,
1973: 1st Senamco,
1973: AEBP Canada joins
1975: Pilgrimage to Rome,
1975: The FSE Road,
1976: Italy, KPE,
1977: 1st Charlemagne,
1977: EPE, Switzerland,
1978: Spain, Portugal,
1980: 1st international days
1980: 1st arrival to Santiago de Compostela
1981: Austria
1982: 1st congress of religious advisers, AESQ
1984: 4th Eurojam (France),
1984: Youth Jubilee (Rome),
1989: WYD, Santiago,
1991: Hungary, Rumania,
1992: Lithuania,
1994: 5th Eurojam (Italy),
1995: Poland,
1996: 2nd congress of religious advisers
1996: Latvia,
1997 : Albania,
1999 : Russia,
2003: 6th Eurojam (Poland),
2004: 1st council of general commissioners,
2005: 1st week-ends of general commissioners,

2006 : 3rd congress of religious advisers,

2007 : 1st Euromoot (Slovakia, Poland).