

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### The constitution changing process

#### **Creating a new Official Dress of FEPTO: How we may adapt the FEPTO Constitution to contemporary Needs**

*Fred Dorn*



With respect to the theme of the actual Annual Meeting, putting the human body in the center of consideration, we may assume that FEPTO, as an organization, is a human body as well. Humans are the only living beings who are in need of clothes, to protect themselves against cold and heat. Moreover, clothes have to be functional depending on what they are needed for - for work, for business, for free time. And, of course age is a factor: Children have to change their clothes more often because they wear out or become too small. And clothes may become unfashionable, even outdated.

We may consider the constitution as a “dress” our organization has been wearing for more than 25 years now, and we may say that by now it has not only become out of fashion, but it is worn out and too small. So it is inevitable that it has to be adapted to actual needs.

All of us have our experience with buying new clothes – considering different aspects of purpose, need, usability, practicability, necessity. It is a decision we may make on our own or by the help of a partner so that the new garment may really fit to all requirements and needs it has been bought for. This is sometimes really difficult, but nevertheless necessary. And I think, concerning the body of our organization this process is now due to take place. But of course, its management is much more complicated, since it is not a real human being in need of new clothes, but a collective one. Hence many different aspects have to be taken into account in order for the new garment to be suitable, useful, practical. A democratic process has to be organized so that at the end the new garment will be tailor-made to all the needs of a modern organization acting internationally with the claim to be

- taken seriously and respected,
- able to act on the European Stage,
- accepted by all of its members.

The process to produce a “tailor-made” constitution started a few years ago. We discussed it in Pravetz and in Tallinn, worked on it in Small Groups and finally prepared a draft to be presented in Ohrid. The discussion will be a “try on” how the new “garment” fits to the needs, suggestions and wishes of all of us as well as to the legal and organizational necessities and requirements that have to be respected.

Afterwards, the supposed changes agreed upon by the GA will be given back to the council who then will prepare a definitely tailor-made suit of our constitution – also satisfying the needs and wishes of our community as corresponding to the legal and organizational requirements.

Below you will find overworked and shortened an introduction to the process of Constitution Changing I published in NL19.2. I explain shortly the main points and the necessity of the process of Constitution Changing, the structural, legal and organizational requirements that have to be thought of and kept in

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mind.

At the end, you find attached the actual version of the Draft Constitution as it has been worked out by Nikos Takis, Chantal Neve Hanquet, Judith Teszary and me at our meeting in February in Munich. For the past two years, Frank Sielecki has also participated in this process. The contribution of the small group formed during the Tallinn Annual Meeting in 2019, must be noted. The small group consisted of all the above, plus Victor Semenov, Elisabeth Apter, Tetiana Shyriaeva and Inna Branneva.

#### Thoughts and Reflection on Constitution Changing

The foundation of FEPTO leads back to the year 1992 – then named first ISCOPE later on ESCOPE (European Study and Co-ordination of Psychodrama-Education) and, finally in 1996,

FEPTO in Belgium as an international non-profit organization according to Belgian law. The then agreed and adopted Constitution concedes that “a number of terms contained in it may, in the future, require more precise definition” (Preamble). Now, more than 25 years later, considering the history and changes in European society since then and the growth of FEPTO as well (about 60 member-institutions out of 27 countries) it is really necessary not only to find a “more precise definition” of terms, but also to redefine and to define the **global aims, purpose** and **concrete goals**. Further more, the **usability** and **practicability** of the constitution have to be reconsidered and adapted to the actual needs, thus to enable our organization to be an active and respected partner on the European Stage contributing to the welfare of European society by the development of Psychodrama in training, research and practice.

There is a difference between **usability** and **practicability**. **Usability** means how to make use of the constitution as a tool, thus to define

- The location of the organization
- The relationship between members and institutional bodies (GA, Council)
- Decision Making in accordance with democratic rules
- The term of office of the Council
- Number of Council members and their responsibilities
- Limitation of re-eligibility
- Regulation of voting procedures
- Responsibility for the organization in total.

These questions have to be dealt with and decided in the constitution, to make it slim and supple, easily to be handled.

On the other hand, **practicability** concerns all issues that should **not** be regulated in the constitution, but in by-laws, thus to enable the GA as well as the Council to adapt their activities to actual needs to be decided upon easily by the GA or the Council without touching and changing the Constitution – which in such cases requires a qualified majority of 2/3 of its members (Art. 10).

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To these practical issues belong

- Financial affairs: fixing and changing of membership fees, budgeting, regulation of scholarships etc.
- Rules of procedure for the Council and the GA
- The organization and developing of networking – enjoying the possibilities digitization offers
- The conditions of application for financial support of projects in the name of or with the support of FEPTO, clearly defined and budgeted by the responsible organizers.

So the focus of our changes concentrated on the usability of the Constitution according to our practical experience and actual needs. Consequently, some regulations were put in the by-laws, thus to make the constitution manageable and smooth. So, once having decided on the new Constitution the work will go on in order to work out practicable by-laws. This will not only be a progress in giving to our organization a reliable legal structure, it thus will also be enabled to act adequately and promptly.

#### Main proposals of Constitution Changing

**Art. 3.5 Membership:** The membership issue is a very sensitive question that should be changed in accordance to actual needs and the development of the organization. Hence we propose to regulate the items of Art. 3.1 – 4 in the by-laws.

**Art. 5 Council:** The term and the number of Council members are crucial for the well functioning of the Council. There are different opinions how long the term of the Council should last and of how many members the Council should at least consist of. The proposed regulation allows flexibility but of course it has to be discussed and decided. As well there is the question whether the re-eligibility of council members should be limited to two or three terms.

**Art. 7 Admission and Removal:** The sensitive question of compulsory ending of membership will be regulated in the by laws.

**Art. 9 Voting:** This article touches the sensitive difference between individual members (especially founding members) and institutional members. A clear regulation will have to be found in the by-laws as we suggest.

Obviously, we put important regulations to be met and decided into the by-laws. Hence the work on changing the Constitution will have to be continued.

We are thankful to the working group for its contribution to the preparation of the preliminary version of the new constitution that appears below.

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