

Reforming the INF-FNI

Background

I resigned from the INF-FNI Central Committee on January 12, 2016, so that I could provide all of the member federations with my personal opinion of how the INF-FNI should be reformed. I could not wait until the next congress because motions have to be presented at least four months prior to the congress in order to be considered. Also, I believe that the federations need an opportunity to have discussions on this topic prior to arriving at the congress.

I tried to make changes during the three years that I was on the Central Committee but I was unable to have any meaningful impact. As such, I now leave it to the federations to force change if they agree with me that change is needed.

I want to stress that this is not a criticism of the people in the Central Committee (CC) or Executive Committee (EC). They all work very hard in their roles and I am certain that they are doing what they believe is right for the INF-FNI. But I disagree with the direction that they are taking. Furthermore, some of the issues that I am addressing predate the current EC and CC. The INF-FNI does many things simply because of tradition.

I also wish to declare that I did not use any INF-FNI resources to create or distribute this report. I waited until after my resignation to begin the process of writing these recommendations. I used the email list that the INF-FNI often makes public when it sends messages where all of the federation email addresses are visible in the "to" field. Thus, anyone who gets a copy of the email can see the entire list (e.g. January 11). This is a mistake in my opinion. Each email message sent by the INF-FNI should be customized using a newsletter system such as Mailchimp or ConstantContact.

Introduction

I believe that there is an important need for the INF-FNI to exist for the following reasons:

- 1) **Credibility** – An international body gives naturism more credibility. Each member of the INF-FNI can present itself as part of a worldwide movement.
- 2) **Globalization** – The world is becoming smaller because of the internet, which means that people look beyond country borders for information.
- 3) **Consistency** – Only by joining together internationally and agreeing on fundamentals will we ensure that the naturist movement is presented with some level of consistency (e.g. definition of naturism).
- 4) **Influence** – By having international representation, we give the impression of a united and organized movement (even if that is not always accurate).
- 5) **Community** – Federations need a way to share information with each other and learn from one another. The INF-FNI can collect information internationally, analyze it, and then disseminate it.
- 6) **History** – There is accumulated value and credibility in the fact that the INF-FNI has been in existence since 1953.

In its current state, the INF-FNI does not achieve most of the above and is therefore not worth the money that is being contributed by the federations.

Recommendations

1. Naturism as an Ideology or Philosophy

The INF-FNI needs to remember that naturism is an ideology or philosophy, not an activity. While events, clubs and resorts where naturism happens should be supported, the INF-FNI should be more focused on promoting naturism itself.

2. Serving the Federations

The INF-FNI exists for the federations. It is not a governing body, and therefore, has no authority over the federations. The INF-FNI must recognize that it exists to serve its members, who are the federations.

3. Individual Naturists, Clubs and Resorts

The INF-FNI should not be attempting to serve anyone or any group other than the federations. It is the job of federations to serve individual naturists, clubs and resorts in their respective countries. This point may seem a bit redundant to the point above, but it needs to be emphasized. For the last few decades, the INF-FNI has frequently attempted to expand its mandate by reaching naturists, clubs and resorts directly. One of the worst examples of this was the publication, in the early 2000s, of the magazine *Naturist International*, which was in direct competition with most federations' own magazines.

4. Communication

Because the INF-FNI cannot act directly in any country, its main activity is or should be communication. The INF-FNI should be collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information. It should be taking positions on issues of international importance and coordinating international public relation and media activity around them.

The INF-FNI should be extremely active in communicating the messages of naturism on the web and in social media. Currently, those activities are sporadic and inconsistent at best.

Most importantly, the INF-FNI should be communicating with federations in as many ways as possible. Currently, the EC feels that it is the responsibility of the federations to find the information. Given that the INF-FNI exists to serve the federations, it should be made as easy as possible for the federations to get the information they need in the manner that they prefer. In my opinion, that means communicating the same message repeatedly and in multiple places.

5. Being International

The INF-FNI must remember that it is international and efforts must be made to always include the entire world in its initiatives. In many cases, that international attitude will be somewhat abstract given the reality that most naturism is in Europe. But it is important to maintain the strength of being an international organization for credibility and to help build the movement outside of Europe. For example, until a few years ago, the INF-FNI referred to non-European countries as “overseas.”

Events organized by the INF-FNI should always be called “international” and open to everyone, even if in reality they are only attended by Europeans.

6. Budget

The INF-FNI is currently sitting on about half a million Euros. While most of that money is allocated to specific accounts, it is not being assigned to any actual projects. The amount is so large that the EC has been warned that INF-FNI could lose its non-profit status.

Specifically, money should be spent on employee support. The INF-FNI should not count on volunteers to run the office. Paid staff would ensure timely and consistent operations. Maintaining the website, participating in social media, responding to inquiries, and communicating with federations should be done by staff.

7. Staff

The staff should be naturist. They should be passionate about the movement. Otherwise, how will they be inspired to do a good job? Can you imagine a church hiring an administrator who is an atheist?

8. Decisions and Direction

The INF-FNI Central Committee (CC) should make most decisions. The Executive Committee (EC) currently sees the CC as advisors and auditors, not part of the decision making process. Yet, that is clearly not the situation described in the INF-FNI statutes:

§ 11: Central Committee

8. The president and his two vice presidents form the Executive Committee (EC). The EC will prepare the meetings of the Central Committee (CC) and carry-out the decisions of the CC. The EC can take urgent decisions between the meetings of the Central Committee.

9. Central Committee Meetings

The INF-FNI CC should meet electronically on a monthly basis. While regular meetings of the CC were not practical in the mid-to-late twentieth century, we now have free and easy access to electronic video conferencing tools such as Skype and Google Hangouts. At my suggestion, we did have a few CC video conferences. However, they were always viewed as casual discussions. I believe that they should be treated as formal CC meetings. Minutes should be recorded and distributed to the federations so that everyone can see what the INF-FNI is doing and accomplishing.

The INF-FNI CC should continue to meet in person twice per year. Despite the ease of electronic communications, in person meetings are still very valuable as they are more productive and promote a feeling of teamwork.

10. Expectations

Federations must be realistic in their expectations. It is impossible for the INF-FNI to act or intervene directly in any country. It has no legal authority nor does it have the resources.

Also, operating an international organization is expensive. A lot of time and money is needed for communication, translation, travel, and administration.

11. Federation Involvement

The federations must get involved. The majority of the CC comes from small federations: Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland, formerly Canada, and currently New Zealand. The one key exception is the Netherlands, who has regularly provided a CC member in the last few years.

The federations who contribute the most money, and who, because of their size, have the greatest resources must get more directly involved.

12. Congress

The congress should be moderated by an independent person. Current and past EC have exercised too much control over the agenda and the discussion. It is intimidating for delegates who are often new to the congress.

13. Headquarters

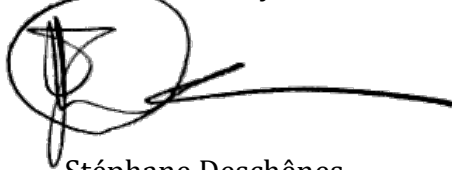
The Office should be near a major city. Being in Hörsching (Linz) Austria makes no sense. It is about two hundred kilometers from the Vienna international airport, which itself is not a major transportation hub. Except for the current president, the location is difficult and expensive for CC members to visit. If the president changes, nobody will visit the INF-FNI office.

The INF-FNI office should be located near a major air and rail transportation hub such as Paris (CDG), Frankfurt (FRA), or Amsterdam (AMS).

14. EUNAT

EUNAT is really the same as the INF-FNI. A lot of time and money is wasted by having two organizations. The reality is that the INF-FNI does very little for federations outside of Europe. That is why those federations pay only half as much as the ones in Europe. A EUNAT meeting should be an INF-FNI meeting and vice versa. What is good for naturism in Europe should be good for naturism everywhere. Making everything that EUNAT does open to participation by all federations would cost nothing. Most federations outside of Europe would not be able to participate. But the possibility of participating would make those initiatives international.

Yours naturally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'S' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Stéphane Deschênes
INF-FNI Assessor for non-European Countries
(September 2012 – January 2016)