



July 2020 my last newsletter Dave Watterson

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The committee met twice in June - without face-masks. We used a Zoom video-webinar.



Top row: Dave Watterson, Franka Stas, Bernhard Lindner

Second row: Odilon Dubost (interpreter), Claire Auda (interpreter), Eugy Van Gool

Third row: Wolfgang Allin, Andrzej Przeździecki, Thomas Kräuchi

Bottom row: Halvor Larsen, Mitze Chapovski, Tatiana Alahverdzhieva

Our main topic was a proposal by NSFF (Norsk Selskap For Fotografi), the Norwegian national organisation. They suggested an event to bring the UNICA family together online. Each UNICA member organisation will be invited to choose a 20-minute film programme to be shown online. There will be no jury and no judging. The films need not be new ones. Few national organisations

have had their usual festivals in 2020. We ask only, that the films be “new to UNICA”. We hope to see work, which could not be fitted into programmes in previous years for reasons of timing or balance. It will help if they do not depend on dialogue, because subtitles on small-screens can be hard to read.

Viewing will probably be during the last week of August. Our secretary-general will write to member countries with details very soon.

THIS IS NOT THE PLAN FOR ALL FUTURE UNICAs!

A vital part of UNICA is bringing together film enthusiasts from many countries. It is during casual conversations, jokes over drinks and shared experiences, that valuable connections are made between people. As soon as it can be managed, UNICA will return to events where we meet in person, where there is competition and awards. And when the World Minute Movie Cup can be run!

Possibilities for future UNICAs



Italy is considering **Montecatini Terme** a spa town in Tuscany during August 2021. The nearest airports are Pisa and Firenze

Ukraine plans to host UNICA 2022, probably in **Kherson** a university town on the Dnieper River. Fly to Kherson via Kiev.



Farewell from Dave

At the meeting on 28th June I resigned the UNICA Presidency.

In the early UNICA years, presidents often served just one year, but my five-year contribution was not much by comparison with some of my predecessors. I never knew the legendary **Josef (Jup) Walterscheidt** who served 22 years as president after 4 years as vice-president. The first president I did meet was the energetic **Max Hänsli** who served 15 years at the top, after 20 years as the film librarian. My immediate predecessor was **Georges Fondeur**, who served 6 years after 3 years as legal adviser.



This picture taken at UNICA 2017 in Dortmund shows (left to right) Dave Watterson, Max Hänsli and Georges Fondeur.

My UNICA history

I had been running the website of IAC (the British national organisation) for many years. In 2008, after UNICA abandoned its informal paper magazine *UNICA News*, I established the unofficial website www.unica-news.com I had attended UNICAs since 2000 and was on the jury in 2005 and 2014. In 2013 **Arie de Jong** asked me to take over the official UNICA website. That was a daunting experience and taught me a lot about the organisation.



Georges Fondeur announced that he would resign when the 2015 UNICA took place. Six months before the election there was only one candidate for the presidency, **Artashes Hovenessian** – the enthusiastic leader of Armenia’s non-commercial film makers. A committee member since 2012, he had battled with colleagues over his proposals for the future of UNICA.

(You can see them at www.unica-news.com/arts-ideas-for-unica.html)

I thought members should be given a choice between his radical ideas and a more traditional approach, so after much discussion with Jan, my wife, I stood for election. Later Artashes stood down, so in the end the voters did not have much choice!

The importance of balance

I wanted to introduce some balance into UNICA. There was a perception that it was dominated by German-speakers from central Europe. This may have been the result of having had dynamic German-speaking presidents for 43 years. The German-speaking lands send the most people to the UNICA ... but is this cause or effect?



*By Nikodem Nijaki - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16923612>*

I encouraged several people I had got to know over the years to stand for election. The previous committee had 6 German-speakers and 4 using other languages. After the election it was 6 other languages and 4 German.

For many years the committee at most times had 9 men and just one woman. After “our” election there were 7 men and 3 women. The committee beforehand was dominated by people who had served for a long time. I admire and respect those people, but every organisation needs fresh blood. We brought in 5 complete newcomers.

[You can see a historical list of UNICA Committee members on www.unica-web.com/COMMITTEE/history_of_unica_committee_presidents.html]

Secretaries-general



*Top row: Arie de Jong
Middle row: Jan Essing, Georg Schörner
Bottom row: Jacqueline Pante, Halvor Larsen*

The President is the figurehead, but the real powerhouse of UNICA has long been the secretaries-general. For the previous 21 years Dutch men had filled that role: **Arie de Jong** and **Jan Essing**. Arie also established and ran the website until I took over in 2013. In 2015 the president and secretary-general retired, so both posts had to be filled by newcomers.

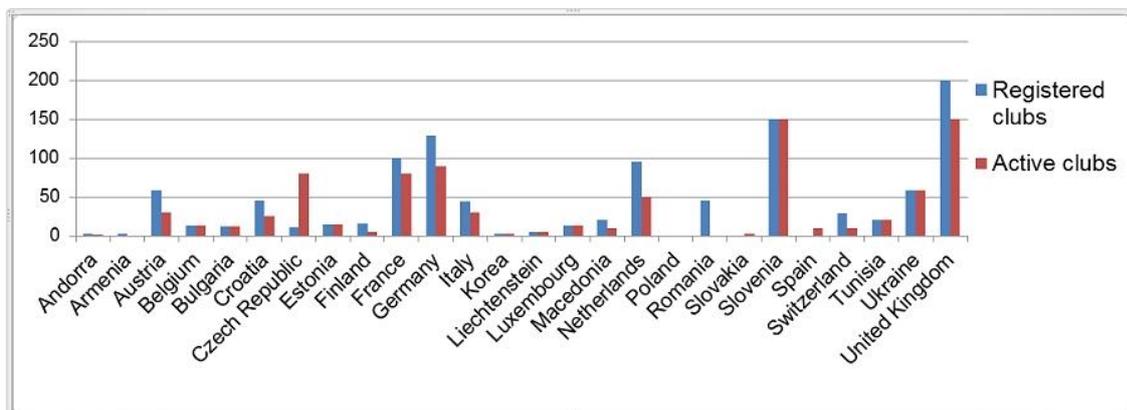
Georg Schörner – an old friend and fellow juror – was pushed by his national organisation into standing for secretary. Though a regular attendee at UNICA Congresses, there were aspects with which he was not immediately familiar. Emails flew between us and we would meet occasionally in Austria to discuss the work. After a year he had to give up his committee role on health grounds.

Jacqueline Pante was persuaded to take the job on and did it for three years, despite having a full-time career which involves a great deal of travelling. She too had often been a member of the UNICA jury, but was not aware of all the background detail at first. That meant more emails and increasing use of the website for forms and information.

To replace her we leaned on **Halvor Larsen** to tackle the work. It is a task on which he has hardly started because of the interruption in all our lives caused by the pandemic.

2015-6: The Questionnaire

Like any established organisation, a lot of UNICA's information was based on the knowledge of individuals – information which is all too easily lost. One of our first big projects was a survey of UNICA members. A questionnaire was sent, and a follow-up. The results can be seen at www.unica-web.com/members/more-about-unica-members.html.



It was not perfect, but offered a start. I hope it may be repeated occasionally to keep the information up to date.

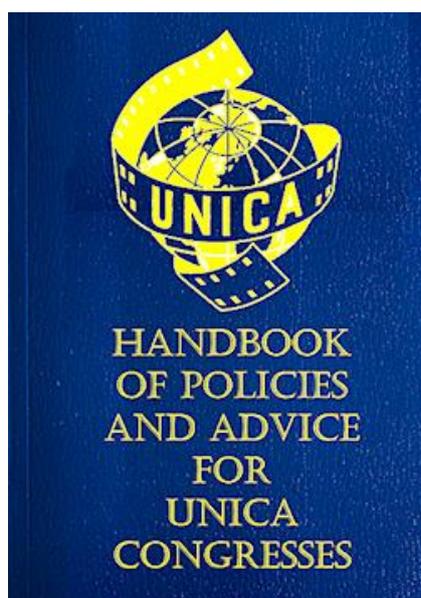
Three years later my friend **Kate Sullivan**, set out to learn more about the individual clubs within our member organisations. She invited them to make short films about themselves and the results are beautifully presented at www.unica-web.com/common-pages/kate-qrproject.html



2016-7: Updating the Statutes and Regulations (a bit)

We began to tackle the UNICA Statutes and other formal documents, which needed detailed revision. For example, references were often made to “federations”, though several members do not have that type of structure. On the advice of UNICA’s most respected translator, Jean-Claude Lejosne, our members are now known as: national organisations, organismes nationaux, nationalen Gremien. The committee were given more powers to amend regulations rapidly. A reduction from 7 to 5 jurors at the annual competition was agreed.

2017-8: How to organise a UNICA Congress



Changes in the personnel of most member organisations meant that few of their officers had experience of how we worked. If they wanted to organise our annual Congress and festival, where did they start? For many years they began with a two-page mimeograph prepared by Zuzana Skoludova, which helped but did not begin to cover everything. So, the Handbook project was established. It has so far produced two editions. The current one can be found at

www.unica-web.com/ENGLISH/permanent-english-pages/handbook.html

2015-date: Jeunesse / Young UNICA Workshop

Various attempts had been made since at least the 1980s to encourage young film makers to take part in the UNICA competition. The concept of workshops for youthful film makers was given a great boost at UNICA 2007 in Liptovský Mikuláš, when Zuzana Skoludova obtained funding for a separate workshop, separate accommodation and a group of experienced tutors. We decided to promote Young UNICA Workshops as a regular part of every annual event, where possible.



In 2016 UNICA in Suceava (Romania) set a high standard. Sadly, Dortmund in 2017 could not afford one. But since then in Blansko (2018) and Zeist (2019) workshops have thrived. Much of this is due to the effort and enthusiasm of Franka Stas. Budgetary provision was made for a UNICA subsidy to those taking part.

2015-date: building relationships with the “Eastern Bloc”

A sad relic of the cold war was the feeling that UNICA did not give so much weight to members in former Eastern Bloc countries. I was delighted to welcome more enthusiasts from those lands to the committee: Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Poland and Slovakia. Jan and I accepted invitations to festivals in Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine.

2015-2019: travel



Jan and I do not enjoy the process of travel. As I am based on “the island” my trips always began with hours in airports, sometimes odd nights in hotels between legs of the journey, ages on trains and buses. But I did travel a great deal, even in the run-up to my election:

2015		
March	Utrecht (NLD)	Dutch UNICA Promotion Day
June	Suceava (ROU)	guest of the committee on site inspection
September	St. Petersburg (RUS)	UNICA 2015
2016		
February	Mohelnice (CZK)	funeral of Ctirad Stipl (former editor of <i>UNICA News</i>)
March	Dortmund (DEU)	committee meeting and site visit
	Berlin (DEU)	East-West Festival
May	Lenzing (AUT)	Festival of Nations
	Pozega (HRV)	Croatian One Minute Film Festival
June	Hamburg (DEU)	Eurofilmer jury
	Blansko (CZE)	Golden Sun Festival
	Ústí nad Orlicí (CZE)	Czech Video Salon
August	Suceava (ROU)	UNICA 2016
October	Bratislava (SVK)	committee meeting
December	Paris (FRA)	meeting with FFCV (French National Organisation)
2017		
March	Blansko (CZE)	committee meeting and site visit
May	Ruse (BUL)	Danube Festival
June	Lenzing (AUT)	Festival of Nations
	Nitra (SVK)	Cineama Festival
July	Berlin (DEU)	East-West Festival
	Suceava (ROU)	Video Arts Festival
August	Dortmund (DEU)	UNICA 2017
November	Zurich (CHE)	committee meeting
	Tbilisi (GEO)	Sunrise Festival
2018		
March	Bratislava (SVK)	committee meeting
May	Lenzing (AUT)	Festival of Nations
August	Blansko (CZE)	UNICA 2018
September	Skadovsk (UKR)	Kinokimeria
November	Ternat (BEL)	committee meeting
2019		
May	Konin (POL)	OKFA Festival
June	Lenzing (AUT)	Festival of Nations
August	Zeist (NLD)	UNICA 2019
November	Merano (ITA)	committee meeting



2015 – date: UNICA in the Internet age

My role for almost 4 years was combined president and webmaster. We do a lot of our work on the internet, including these newsletters! The old and new websites contain masses of information and news. We all research with Google and talk with Zoom. We plan journeys, book hotels and prepare maps with information found online. In August we will watch UNICA films online.

At the start of my term in office the future of the UNICA paper archives was a big question. Now the issue is how best to preserve the Minutes, Reports, Announcements, pictures and social interaction which is primarily digital.

2015 – date: Languages

For 36 years **Jean-Claude Lejosne** translated for UNICA. He was a film maker whose career was as a top-level translator, consultant on machine translation and a teacher of interpreting, who was regarded with awe and affection by his students and fellow-teachers as a guru.



For many years business had been done in French and German. He successfully argued that English should be added. When I first came to festivals, he would translate from one UNICA language into the other two. Indeed, he would sometimes translate from a Slavic language into all three UNICA ones.

He began to bring to our annual congresses some of his students, so that they could develop their interpreting skills. The translations were sequential. In the public forums of those times, I used to enjoy saying something slightly cheeky in English, then hearing it translated into much more decorous form in French and German.

Eventually UNICA took the expensive step of each year hiring translation booths, transmitters and headsets – so that simultaneous translation was possible. You can imagine how that speeded up everything.



When Jean-Claude retired in 2010, **Claire Auda**, one of his former pupils and now herself a tutor at the translation school took over. But not long afterwards the school closed that department so the supply of students dried up. Then Claire married and began a family, which took her out of the scene.

So, in my time as president translation was always a problem.

We were on good terms with many of the students, who were by now freelance translators and several helped us from time to time, but we have to pay at least a token price for their work. That means not every document can be professionally translated. (“Translation” refers mainly to written words; “Interpreting” to spoken words.)

To help, I challenged my schoolboy French and German which had lain dormant for decades. We called in favours from UNICA visitors and their partners. Luckily computer translation has steadily improved. Now documents like this one are mainly translated using a program called DeepL (www.deepl.com) then amended manually. It is not perfect, though usually understandable.

But much of that work has fallen to me. My last task will be preparing versions of this newsletter in French and German!



I am not complaining about all this, just explaining

Eventually the stress of UNICA worry and work began to depress me. That's when I decided to quit before the expiry of my second three-year mandate.

I resigned on 28th June.

There has been a lot of fun involved. I have learned to acknowledge names which sound strange or even ridiculous in my native tongue. I have got to know warm-hearted, generous people who share their time and knowledge freely.

I have had kisses from more women than at any other time in my life! (pre-Covid-10 of course.)

I have visited exotic and impressive places, tried intriguing meals and drunk more than was good for me. I have seen fascinating films and discussed them with people whose views and understanding are sometimes completely different from mine. I have talked to a Korean nun about Buddhism, a Czech engineer about beer and video connections, a Slovak historian about the early days of cinema, a refugee in Austria about his life, a Ukrainian film star about his career, a Belgian about the organisation of festivals, a Georgian about tourism and opera, enjoyed Parisian patisserie with the French, schnapps with Croatians, curry-wurst with Germans, kimchee with Koreans ... a ton of happy memories.

Thank you everyone who worked with me, on the committee or in various countries. Thanks to all those who greeted me with a smile, a hug or a kiss. Thanks also to those who held their tongues and did not object when I tried something they did not like. Above all I thank my wife, Jan, who has always supported me in this task.

Now I hand on the toil and the fun to others. **Bernhard Lindner** has chosen to remain as Vice-President, though he will lead the committee for the next year. After that, he too will retire, so we will need a new leader.

Over to you.

