Annual General Meeting 2019

The AGM took place at a well-attended Coffee Morning at the end of February.

The President reported on another busy and successful year for the association and gave thanks to all those who had worked hard on behalf of the members including two long-standing committee members – Richard Cruse and Martyn Symons – who had decided to stand down.

The retiring Treasurer spoke of a year of mixed fortunes with some unfortunate one-off losses but an underlying position which was still solid, a viewpoint endorsed by new auditor Véronique Vogt.

The President returned to the theme of planning for the long-term future and emphasised the danger of allowing the current trend for slow reduction of membership and loss of younger people to continue. Véronique Heller-Clauss, on behalf of the committee, made very clear presentations on the Strategic Review carried out last year (and continuing) and the results of the survey carried out in the last few months of the year.

You will find more detailed information about these exercises in this and future editions of the newsletter.

As always, if you have any questions about this or any other issues relating to the association please contact a committee member.
Strategic review: a tool to prepare the future

The ESC Committee is committed to providing the smooth running of the association: planning and running of events, production and distribution of the newsletter, updating of the website, managing of finances... on a day-to-day basis. However, every organisation needs to think about the long term and therefore needs a strategy.

You may wonder why we need what we called a "strategic review". The answer may not seem obvious to everybody. Indeed, organisations need to be prepared for the future, find ways to distinguish themselves from others, need stability to maintain themselves, need a common framework of reference everyone can refer to, need to keep overview to avoid fragmentation, and need guidance for the actions that it performs. Without any of these the risk of drifting away with the winds of change is simply too great.

A sub-group of the Committee therefore took a fundamental look at our strengths and weaknesses and developed a mission and a vision for the ESC in order to be able to formulate goals and objectives.

Five fundamental goals came forth during the reviewing process:

- Review and update the management processes of the association on a regular basis;
- Boost participation of younger people, families and children;
- Increase the attractiveness of the activities to a wider audience;
- Enhance awareness and positive image of the ESC in the Strasbourg area;
- Celebrate the diversity of membership within the association.

In future issues of the newsletter we will go into the details of each goal and describe the objectives. Stay tuned.
Outcome of the Membership opinion survey

One of the goals of the ESC Committee within our strategy review process which took place in 2018 was to conduct a membership survey to get a better understanding of the needs, interests and motivations of our members in order to improve our service.

The survey was sent out mid-November to the 134 members whose emails we have on file with various reminders either by e-mail or an article in our newsletter before it was closed around 4 weeks later.

Of those 134, 54 members took the survey, which corresponds to a response rate of 40 %. So a special thank you to all those who took the time to help us make ESC serve you better.

Age of members – a majority of baby-boomers

Without any surprise, responses showed that 72 % of our members are over 60 years old. This type of demographic information will help the Committee in the future to plan events that are appropriate to this group as well, of course, to the other generations.

Length of membership – a story of halves

One thing which appears very quickly is that out of those responding nearly 50 % have been a member of the ESC for over 10 years.
Annual events

Each year, the ESC organises five major events starting with the New Year’s Party and the Burns Supper in January, followed by the BBQ and Picnic in the Summer and then the Bonfire Night in the Autumn.

Of these events, the BBQ is the most popular with a participation of 57% of the respondents followed by the Burns Supper with 41.5%. The New Year’s Party and the Picnic reached 30% and Bonfire Night 24.5%. 17% of the respondents did not attend a major event.

Monthly events’ appreciation

Unsurprisingly, the coffee morning is the most popular monthly activity even though we know that it is mainly attended by those people who are not working anymore (over 60) as they take place on a Thursday morning.

Of the 38 respondents who generally attend the coffee morning, 18 rated them as very good, 12 as good, 7 as fair and 1 as poor. The afterwork apéros come in second place. Of the 28 respondents who generally attend the afterwork apéros, 13 rated them as very good, 13 good and 2 fair.


**Suggestion of events**

When asked about other types of activities to be looked at for the future, the following suggestions were proposed: a visit to the tram depot, the Lycée Hôtelier and an outing to Kirwiller. Music and dance events including the May Ball, as well as conferences, historical outings, theatre, more sport events and walks were also on your wish list. Wine and cheese tastings, potluck lunches and dinners were also suggested.

In the future, we hope to use this type of survey to help us design the programme for activities, as well as to get feedback after these events.

**ESC Communication tools**

The newsletter is your favourite source for information (94 %) on what is going on within the ESC, followed by e-mails (89 %). The website site and the facebook page achieved respectively 41 % and 15 %. Both the newsletter (40 %) and the e-mails (39 %) were rated as being very useful. It is well known that email updates and newsletters are preferred communication mediums for the baby-boomers.

![Communication tools chart]

**Membership**

Two of the questions on the survey asked why you joined the ESC and what you appreciated most being a member. Most of you indicated that it was to meet and exchange with English speakers. A large majority of you appreciate the socialising, friendship aspects and the variety of events offered by the ESC. Concerning involvement within our association, 10 people left us their names to mainly help out with regard to the organisation of major events. Thank you to those who volunteered. We will contact you in due course.

**Key takeaways of the Committee**

Thank you again for your participation in this survey. We hope more of the ESC members will participate in such surveys in the years to come. Below, please find what the Committee takes away from the survey on the following page:
The age trend of our membership needs to be looked into if we want our association to survive:

➢ We will have to look for younger members and factor into our planning activities younger members may wish to attend. Introducing “a bring a younger friend programme” could be a possibility.

➢ Our longer serving members will of course not be forgotten.

Members like the events they attend. We will take your comments and suggestions on board and see what could be added.

The newsletter being the favourite source of information, we aim to make it even better and as part of the upgrade, we would like to give it a title. Suggestions would be more than welcome. Do not hesitate to send your ideas to contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com

Going forward, surveying our membership will become a regular activity to make sure we meet the requirements of our members.

Finally, if you would like to receive a copy of the full report, please contact Véronique Heller-Clauss at veronique.heller.clauss@gmail.com and she will send you a copy.

**Newsletter service**

The newsletter is the main tool for the ESC to keep members informed of planned activities, once agreed with the committee. Thanks to the participation of volunteers who kindly write reviews, it also gives feedback on past events so that all can get a flavour of what happened if they’d like to get involved on further occasions. It is also possible to place an advert for a private event or a call for help.

In order to make sure your requests and offers are taken into account in due time, it is necessary to follow a set schedule. Please refer to the "newsletter publication" box to find the next issue deadline for sending items. The deadline is updated in every issue. Illustration pictures are needed as .jpg files, sent as attachments separately from text.

If you opted to be sent the newsletter by post only, you may not receive additional information which was not ready in time for the monthly issue and is consequently sent via the newsletter email list. Occasionally there can regrettably be a mistake in a contact or a last-minute change and in that case, an update needs to be sent, again via email.

This is why we recommend that you ask to receive the newsletter by email. If you do not have a computer or an email address, maybe you can find an ”internet friend”, another member who would be kind enough to call you if an update is sent out? Also be aware that you can get help from Bill regarding internet technologies during the Coffee morning.

Additionally you can visit our website at www.esc-alsace.org
 Monthly Coffee morning: Thursday 21st March - 9.30 to 11.30

Come and catch up with ESC members and visitors at our monthly coffee mornings at l’Escale! The following dates are: 25/4, 23/5, 20/6. (there is a break during July and August) The Escale community centre (L’Escale, centre socio-culturel de la Robertsau, 78 rue du Docteur François) is our regular home and has good parking facilities whilst it is within a five-minute walk of bus routes 6, 15A and 30.

The tables are always nicely filled, especially at Christmas and Easter, by our team of volunteers. In April it would be nice if you could bring a special Easter cake/dessert to supplement our offer.

You can also ask for advice and help with your computer at our IT table held by Bill. And speak to Nigel or Gaby should you have a question to put to the Committee. For further information: contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com.

No need to sign-up. We hope to see you there!

Would you like to have Lunch after coffee morning? - 12.00

When I first launched my project, it was intended for a Saturday, with a view to attracting younger and working members who are unable to attend Coffee-mornings.

But, when a few members were interested last year, I had reserved a table for 8 at a cheap brasserie in Robertsau “Au Tivoli” after Coffee-morning. The experience had been quite disappointing, especially because, Thursday being market day, the place was overcrowded (and the waitress somewhat impatient).

Now, two members recently suggested (again) that some of us should have lunch together after Coffee-morning and I assume a few other people might be interested as well...

I propose booking a table for 12.00, after March Coffee-morning, at restaurant/pizzeria “LE 2” (formerly “Chez FRANCHI”) situated 8 avenue de l’Europe, just after the bridge, by the Orangerie and opposite the Council.

There’s a small parking lot (6-8 cars) and I’d have to reserve one day ahead.

Thus, I suggest having a try there this month, but I’ll need to know the names of all members interested by 8pm on Wednesday, March 20th.

Dany Gay-Mink
Email: danielle.gay.minck@orange.fr
Tel. 03.88.31.11.95
Spring Walk at Rothbach: Sunday, 24th March - 10.30

Join us on our first walk of the season starting from Rothbach. We will walk through the forest up to Lichtenberg castle passing by the sandstone quarry, ruins from a 13th century chapel and some graves from the 1870 war. There are some great view points (Strasbourg cathedral can be seen from the Schaenzel on a good day). Distance around 11km and gradient about 200m. Hope to see you then.

Meeting place and time: Crédit Mutuel Car Park, Rue Frédéric Lienhard, Rothbach at 10.30am

Directions: When you come into the village follow signs to Reipertswiller turning left after the church onto the D528. The bank is on your right just before the river Rothbach. There is a sign to ‘Moulin Gerlinger’.

Contact Polly at: 03 88 07 04 93 / 06 72 71 90 41 / polly.stotz@gmail.com

Guided tour in English, Musée Würth: Saturday, 27th April - 10.30

We invite you to a guided tour in English of the Namibia exhibition at the Musée Würth in Erstein. This is an exhibition of forty contemporary artists who live and work in Namibia.

It profiles a fertile and creative art scene, that of a fledgling nation deeply marked by its independence in 1990.

Two generations of artists are showcased: a generation born just before independence who share the same historical, social and political affiliation and an earlier generation who lived under South African occupation and apartheid.

Through the works shown major themes are explored such as Namibian landscape, overconsumption, social inequality and communication.

Tour cost: 8€ per adult (subsidised membership price) - 10€ for non-members

Time/Date: 10.30 am. Saturday April 27th - For tour meet at 10.15 at front desk

To register please email: maggie.vautheny@gmail.com

If anyone needs a lift to the Museum please contact Maggie and she will put you in touch with someone who might be able to help.
**Cultural Tour - l’Aubette 1928: Saturday, 23rd March - 14.30**

For the next cultural event, we invite you to a guided tour in English of the Utopian modernist rooms in the Aubette, as designed by Theo van Doesburg, Jean and Sophie Arp, created in 1928 and following the destruction of the interior of the building during the Franco-Prussian conflict in 1870. It was referred to as “the Sistine Chapel” of the modern art.

This visit is of particular interest because one of our ESC members, Donatella Andrei, is the granddaughter of Paul Horn, the architect who commissioned the redesign of the interior of l’Aubette and project managed its implementation.

After the tour, Donatella invites you to tea at the Hotel Hannong* which her grandfather built on the remains of the Hannong faience factory and which is still managed by her cousins. Today there is a display about the history of Hannong and l’Aubette.

**Tour Cost:** 8€ per adult (subsidised membership price) – 10€ non-members

**Time/Date:** 14.30 on Saturday 23rd March 2019: For tour, meet at 14.15 in passageway between Bouchara and Marionnaud

* 16.30 for tea at Hotel Hannong, 15 rue du 22 novembre, 67000 Strasbourg (5 minutes’ walk from l’Aubette)

**Please register both for tour and tea at esc.events.67@gmail.com**

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**Monthly after-work apéro: Friday, 12th April - 18.30**

Our next monthly after-work apéro will take place at the lounge-bar of Hôtel GOLDEN TULIP, 9 rue des Magasins, Strasbourg (situated behind Les Halles gare routière) on Friday, 12th April from 6.30pm onwards.

The usual formula: everybody pays for his/her drinks and the ESC offers the appetizers. No need to register.

* photo credit https://hoteletlodge.fr/hotels/ambiance-design/golden-tulip-astrasbourg/
A memorable afternoon in India by the European Parliament

Fashion designer and ESC member Leena Bansal had invited members of the ESC to a showcase of her own label INDIBALA on Feb. 26 at her beautiful home near the European Parliament. And what a wonderful display it was: scarves, shawls and ponchos made of cashmere wool, wool and silk, silk, pashminas... beautiful and sensuous to the touch, dazzling and more subtle colours and patterns.

What makes pashmina so special?

Originated in high altitudes (usually Cashmir and Nepal) pashmina is the most noble, the most ancient and the most luxurious variety of cashmere wool.

It is shorn from the winter coat of the Changra goat, where it is the finest and the softest: under its neck and from its underbelly. This down of “pashm” is a kind of hyper-cashmere that the goat only produces in extreme conditions, i.e. above 4500 m altitude. It is therefore traditionally gathered only in the Himalayan foothills. One goat produces about 150g pashmina per year.

In spring, when she sheds her winter coat, it is carefully “combed” so as to select only the silkiest, finest and longest hairs, which are a guarantee of quality.

Whereas the diameter of the cashmere’s fibre is below 19 microns, that of the finest pashminas is less than 15 microns. The weaving style of the pashmina is so thin, light and delicate that a whole shawl can pass through a ring!

It was difficult to choose between all these gorgeous items!

Exhilarated by our purchases we delighted in the delicious finger food that Leena had prepared for us. Looking out onto the lawn in front of her building we saw that a stork had come to visit!

Then her friend Jasmine Singh gave a very interesting presentation of Ayurveda and of different techniques she practices in her studio.

Below are the impressions of the only gentleman present among the ladies.

Christine Secouet

An appointment with oneself!

As we left the apartment where the invitation to spend an ‘Indian evening’ had taken place, this neat and tidy phrase, ‘an appointment with oneself’, resounded in my mind and I felt it was an immense takeaway for me after the talk on Ayurveda.

(...)

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(...)

An appointment with oneself!
The other ‘takeaways’ for most of my fellow guests were lovely colourful scarves from the INDIBALA collection of fashion designer, Leena Bansal.

The talk given by Jasmine Singh, practitioner of Ayurveda, took us briefly through its history, its importance as a traditional medicine and explained in detail some of its different elements: doshas (vatha, pitha, kaptha) and the five elements from which they are composed (air, fire, water, earth, ether); the 7 chakras*, (from the root chakra at the bottom which is basic trust to the crown chakra at the top which is spirituality) and the sixth chakra, the third eye.

Jasmine concluded the talk with an exercise which brought home the importance of breathing which is, of course, natural but most of us ‘do not do it properly’. The technique involved breathing deeply to include the diaphragm, blocking one’s breath and then slowly breathing out and blocking one’s breath once again before resuming the exercise over a short period of time. For those who doubt its benefit, try it as for me it is now ‘an important appointment with myself’ and it does me wonders.

*energy centres or transformers

**The Missing Question**

A lot of fun, a lot of laughter and a joyful dance by the winning team! That was the ESC Women’s Day Quiz on 8 March. One question was missing, however. What are the origins of International Women’s Day?

In the early years of the twentieth century, a confluence of ideas and actions in European and North American countries led to the establishment of International Women’s Day, first celebrated in 1910. It was inspired by the women garment workers’ strike and march in New York City in February 1908. The Socialist Party of America proclaimed 28 February National Women’s Day in 1909. These women garment workers have been remembered and celebrated in poetry and song, most notably by the song Bread and Roses (YouTube link).

At the International Conference of Working Women in 1910 in Denmark, delegates unanimously voted to establish an international women’s day. Spearheaded by Clara Zetkin, a passionate orator and women’s rights campaigner, the idea gained support across much of Europe in the following years. (...)
In the turmoil leading up to the Russian revolution, women organised an international women's day march on 8 March (23 February on the Russian calendar) 1917. The male revolutionary leaders were not pleased: they wanted the women to wait until the May First workers’ protests. The women did not wait.

During World War I, women across Europe and North America were divided among those who, as pacifists, opposed war and those who supported their countries’ war efforts. Celebrations of International Women’s Day faded into the background except in the Soviet Union and other communist countries.

The re-emergence of International Women’s Day celebrations worldwide

With the growing second wave of feminism in the 1960s, the day re-emerged as a day of activism. Women’s groups were joined by male friends, partners and allies in calling for equal pay, political rights, reproductive rights, shared housework and childcare, an end to violence against women and more.

The United Nations declared 1975 as International Women's Year and has celebrated 8 March as International Women's Day ever since. The theme for 2019 was “Think equal, build smart, innovate for change”.

At the community and grassroots levels, thousands of demonstrations were held around the world, with women and their allies focused on burning issues affecting their lives. While the UN celebrations tend to include speeches by notable personalities, the grassroots women’s groups usually organise non-violent mass marches and creative events with singing and dancing in the streets.

Marilee Karl
Book club's monthly reading: “The World According to Garp” by John Irving

In this convention-defying book, the author describes the tragicomic life of an eccentric writer, Garp (his only name; long story), interspersed with some large chunks of the protagonist’s eclectic written work. We also learn a lot about Garp’s mother who becomes an early feminist icon in the US after the publication of the autobiography detailing her single-minded approach to life (and conception!).

This complex work is full of dark scenes of violence and sex but always artistically – and often hilariously – presented, and the themes providing fuel for debate are numerous:

- The eternal conflict between love and lust and the ambivalence between lust and hatred
- The complexity of sexuality, with issues of rape, extreme feminism, transgender and asexuality all included
- The ever-present anxiety of parents for their children’s safety
- Opposition between an articulate, talented storyteller and those who are voiceless (or have even lost their tongue).
- And amongst the Freudian mayhem there’s also a lot to learn about the lives of writers and publishers.

In conclusion, the book first published in 1976 is still highly topical and, as Irving suggests at the end of his book, if we saw ourselves as all ‘terminal cases’ we might also laugh and joke at our tragedies.

Christiane Lehmann

Interested in joining the book club? Contact Joelle: joelle.glore@gmail.com

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<th>French Conversation</th>
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| chez Frederick & Maryline William-Smith  
7 rue des Ducs, Vieux-Cronenbourg, Strasbourg  
(trams A/D station Ducs d’Alsace)  
on alternative Fridays from 2 to 4pm  
contact: Nigel  
nigelpermaul@gmail.com  
Phone 06 75 63 89 98 | The French conversation group meets twice a month on a Wednesday from 2.30 to 4.30,  
at the Tea Room « Patrick »  
5 rue de Verdun, Strasbourg.  
If you are interested get in touch with Colette at  
contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com  
Phone 03 88 20 21 17 |

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| The German group meets fortnightly,  
on Tuesdays from 1.30 to 3.30 pm,  
in « Café Rapp », Haupstr. 104, Kehl.  
Contact: Bernard Greiner  
bernard.greiner@numericable.fr  
Phone 03 88 66 32 06 | The Spanish conversation group plans to meet once a month on a Wednesday from 2.30 to 4.30,  
at the Tea Room « Patrick »  
5 rue de Verdun, Strasbourg.  
If you are interested get in touch with Colette at  
contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com  
Phone 03 88 20 21 17 |
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**Newsletter Publication**

We’ll publish your announcements/advertisements each month, space permitting and limited to 100 words. Advertisements will be repeated twice only and please let the Editor know by the first of the month if you need your ad repeated. This service is free to ESC Members, non-members €40, which should be included with submission. Items for publication should be in English.

Please forward items by e-mail to Catherine Manini at esc.newsletter.67@gmail.com

The next newsletters will be issued at the following dates: 23/4 - 20/05 - 17/06

Deadline for next copy: Sunday 14/04/2019 - 19.00
ESC Subscription Form 2019

Annual Fees: Family/Business: €30. Students/Au pairs: €12

Membership runs from 1st January to 31st December.
For further information about payment email “contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com”

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If you have given us an email address we will automatically send you the newsletter by email. If you do not have an email address, or prefer to receive a printed copy by post please tick here.

Postage is one of our highest costs - please consider this option carefully.

Completed application forms should either be given to the Membership secretary at an ESC coffee morning, or posted, with your cheque made payable to “English Speaking Community” to:
Mike Wraith, 7 rue Lovisa, La Robertsau, 67000 Strasbourg

If you have used our Paypal option would you please enter the reference here: ____________________________ and email a completed membership form to: contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com

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Enter comments or interests here: